
THE PLURALIST CONTEXT MODEL IN OBAMA'S CAIRO SPEECH: A RHETORICAL SEMIOTIC-COGNITIVE APPROACH

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to excavate the subjective Context Model that President Barack Obama has semiotically drawn upon in his Cairo speech on 4 June 2009. Towards this end, I employ a theoretical and methodical triadic model: 1) van Dijk's (2008, 2009a, 2009b) socio-cognitive approach, 2) the semiotic approach developed by Ferdinand de Saussure (1916/1983) and Charles Peirce (1931-1958), and 3) the rhetorical principle of "amplification" (Weaver 1971; Perelman 1982). In the present study, this composite approach operates at the level of discourse and text meaning, where I investigate the macropropositional content of the speech and its bearings on the pragmatic (political and religious) *significations* of linguistic signs in the speech (e.g. ISRAELIS, PALESTINIANS, MUSLIMS, KORAN); and the rhetorical effect of these linguistic signs as realized in the thematic *amplification* of certain topics, which are addressed by Obama in the same speech. There are three main findings in this study. First, both the global and local meanings associated with the linguistic signs and sign-complexes, used by Obama in the Cairo speech, are motivated and controlled by a Pluralist Context Model that brings together the US and Islam. Second, the semiotic structure of Obama's Cairo speech is rhetorically oriented towards *amplifying* topics that pluralize both Americans and Muslims worldwide. Third, there is great potential for developing an integrated rhetorical semiotic-cognitive approach that offers new insights in analysing political discourse.

1. Introduction

Since his 2007 presidential election campaign, Barack Obama has proved to be the creator of a 'grassroots' movement, which has politically won him American populist support. Olive (2008: 6) clearly articulates this aspect: "Enough Americans were hungry for a new vision of America that on its strength alone Obama built the biggest grassroots political movement in U.S. history in 2007-08." Indeed, Obama has been trying to channel a similar kind of politics into the Muslim world. This has been partially achieved by a number of rhetorical devices. Olster (2009: 1) explains that "Obama impressed Muslims with his humility and respect and they were thrilled by his citing of Quranic verses."

In his speech in Cairo University on 4 June 2009, Obama was particularly concerned with staging a new reconciliatory discourse that could pluralize both the US and worldwide Muslims after his predecessor George W. Bush Jr., whose tenure was

characterized by a political conflict between the two forces and thus perpetuated a long history of tension between the two worlds of Islam and the West.

The present study addresses the following overarching question: What is the subjective Context Model that Obama has semiotically drawn upon in his Cairo speech on 4 June 2009? The answer to this question can be an important clue to the subjective mental representations that pragmatically control the *semiosis* – “the action of signs, the activities of representing or interpreting” (Lidov 1999: 15) – and that rhetorically forge *persuasiveness* in Obama’s Cairo speech. The *semiosis* in the speech can be analysed by synergizing the semiotic approach towards the linguistic sign (Saussure 1916/1983; Peirce 1931-1958) and the socio-cognitive approach, which has been introduced and developed in discourse studies by van Dijk since 1984 (van Dijk 1984, 1987, 1991, 1993, 1995, 1998, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2009a, 2009b). Apropos *persuasiveness*, it can be detected by incorporating the rhetorical principle of “amplification” as part of the foregoing synergetic approach, where linguistic signs are emphatically and prominently contextualized in the macropropositional content of the whole speech (see Subsection 2.2 below).

Indeed, Windt (1990) has paid special attention to the political rhetoric of the presidents of the United States, particularly insofar as the interface between political thought and political action is concerned: “Political rhetoric creates the arena of political reality within which political thought and action take place. Among the politicians who seek to erect this linguistic colosseum, none is more powerful than the president of the United States” (Windt 1990: 1). One can gather from Windt’s argument that both political cognitions and political actions are the outcome of political rhetoric. It is thus the persuasive element that mobilizes political discourse towards the achievement of certain political goals; a point that will shortly be handled in Subsection 2.3 below.

Here is the overall structure of the paper. First, in Section 2, I set out the theoretical framework used in this study in terms of three strands: a) arguing for the possibility of integrating semiotic and cognitive approaches (Subsection 2.1), b) expounding on the macropropositional content that contextualizes the pragmatic significations of linguistic signs (i.e. words) in text (Subsection 2.2), and c) elaborating on the rhetorical principle of “amplification” as an essential part of the semiotic-cognitive approach in this study (Subsection 2.3). Second, in Section 3, I sketch out the research methodology with a focus on the research data and the procedure corresponding to the theoretical framework. Third, in Section 4, I conduct the analysis of the data. Finally, in Section 5, I conclude by summarizing the main findings in the study and future research.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. *Towards a semiotic-cognitive approach*

“Language,” writes Saussure (1916/1983: 15), “is a system of signs that express ideas.” Saussure, being one of the founding fathers of semiotics, conceived of a science which he termed “*semiology*”; it “*studies the role of signs as part of social life*”

and it “would investigate the nature of signs and laws governing them” (*ibid.*; italics in original). This form of structuralist semiotics, where the social dimension of the sign is discarded or at best marginalized, has been implicitly critiqued in critical linguistics: “an enquiry into the relations between signs, meanings and the social and historical conditions which govern the semiotic structure of discourse” (Fowler 1991: 5). In this sense, given the Saussurean (*ibid.*) assumption that linguistic signs “are not abstractions”, they can be critically examined in text by pinning down their social and historical conditions, which have partially constituted the common sense of these signs via the “habitualization [and officialization] of meaning” (Fowler 1996a: 46).

However, it should be mentioned that here I deliberately avoid Saussure’s well-known dyadic model of the sign as a combination of the “signifier” and the “signified”, not least because this model reduces the signifier-signified relation to being a mere arbitrary bond. This necessitates the study of how the semiotic structure of discourse is governed; and it is possible at this point to entertain Voloshinov’s (1973: 9) generalization that “[e]verything ideological possesses semiotic value.”

Linguistic signs (i.e. words) can be ideologically predicated on fixed political and/or religious meanings in discourse. Also, they are used (and perhaps made) to tell some aspect of truth and thus hide another. The Italian semiotician Umberto Eco has been preoccupied with the interrelation between signs and truth. This is clear from Eco’s (1976: 7) definition of *sign*: “A sign is everything which can be taken as significantly substituting for something else. This something else does not necessarily have to exist or to actually be somewhere at the moment in which a sign stands for it.” As such, the nature of signs is highly subjective, in that they are readily open to multiple interpretations that are made by different discourse communities.

Here I am particularly interested in the different readings coming out of discourse practice, which refers to “the activity of reading a text, and making a coherent understanding of it in line with the context (for example, reading purpose, spatial location, background knowledge, the nature of the participants)” (O’Halloran 2003: 10). In fact, a semiotic perspective towards the symbolic nature of words could reveal the underlying pragmatic significations carried over by the lexis associated with a discourse practice as defined above. “Semiotics”, Carravetta (1998: 24) maintains, “studies all cultural processes as processes of communication.” Therefore, according to him (*ibid.*), “each of these processes would seem to be permitted by an underlying system of signification.”

In the present semiotic-cognitive model of word meanings, such an underlying system of signification is pragmatic in the Peircean (1931-1958) sense of “semiotics”: how (and *not* what) signs (and certainly words) mean to the perception of the interpreter:

A sign ... [in the form of *representamen*] is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the *interpretant* of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its *object*. It stands for that object, not in all respects,

but in reference to a sort of idea, which I have sometimes called the *ground* of the representamen (Peirce 1938-58, 2.228, cited in Chandler 2007: 29).

One useful study that applies Peirce's triadic model of the sign is offered by Bazzi (2009). In this study, she explains how the political sign of "Hezbollah" is subject to different interpretations across the opposing discursive representations of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the news. Bazzi illustrates the semiotic activity of "Hezbollah", using the semiotic triangle based on Peirce's model: a) the Representamen is the word-form "Hezbollah", b) the Interpretant (or sense) is "freedom fighters vs. terrorists", and c) the Object (or referent) is "legitimate organization vs. militant group" (Bazzi 2009: 19f). Based on this analysis, Bazzi (*ibid.*: 20) has reached the conclusion that "Peirce's representation of the action of the sign is fundamental to our understanding of the subjective and cognitive dimensions of context, since the political sign can only make sense and be relevant when it is shared between the sign producer and the interpreter of the sign."

In this way, the activity of the linguistic sign – be it political, religious, or otherwise – is part and parcel of what van Dijk terms "Pragmatic Context Models": "specific mental models of subjective representations (definitions) of the relevant properties of communicative situations, controlling discourse processing and adapting discourse to the social environment so that it is situationally appropriate" (van Dijk 2009b: 65). These (semantic) mental models are in turn defined by van Dijk (*ibid.*) as "the subjective representations of the events and situations observed, participated in or referred to by discourse." At the socio-cognitive level, the representamen-interpretant activity of the sign can trigger desired or undesired conceptual images that bear relevance to the communicative situation as well as to the discourse participants. A good example is the word 'democracy' as a political sign. "The meaning of the word *democracy*," Chilton (2004: 48) argues, "is not waiting to be discovered in some objective realm; it is in the mind, or rather the interacting minds, of people in particular times and places."

However, it would be more analytically revealing if a linguistic sign (e.g. the word *democracy*) is investigated in its contexts (i.e. respectively, at discourse and text levels). This is what can be collectively termed as the contextualization of linguistic signs (see Subsection 2.2). Also, it would be equally analytically revealing if the rhetorical dimension of the contextualizing linguistic signs has been incorporated as part of the semiotic structure of political discourse (see Subsection 2.3).

2.2. *Macropropositions and signification: contextualizing linguistic signs*

From a semiotic perspective, words, viewed as linguistic signs, have two complementary aspects: 'value' and 'signification' (Hodge & Kress 1988: 16-18). According to Hodge & Kress (1988: 16), whilst the aspect of 'value' refers to a place in the language structure, whose natural environment is text as the material product of discourse, 'signification' amounts to "a relation of reference, existing outside language." It can be said, then, that the aspect of linguistic-sign 'signification' goes beyond the textual towards the discursive (see the distinction between *discourse* and *text* below).

Thus, a linguistic sign has significations which are pragmatic in nature, born out

of different discourse practices; in this way, one and the same linguistic sign (say, the word *Islam*) may well derive different significations from opposing discourses (e.g. anti- and pro-Islamic). It is those different significations of the linguistic sign that contribute to the reader being “discursively equipped, prior to the encounter with the text” (Fowler 1996b: 7). Hence the emergence of what O’Halloran (2003: 20) describes as “text bias”: “a form of semantic-syntactic manipulation which only has the potential to manipulate at the discourse (I) level.”¹

The contextualization of linguistic signs (or words), I argue, can be systematically achieved by virtue of the potential correspondence between *signification* and *macropropositions*. Such a contextualization aspect can be a significant clue to the pragmatic *significations* underlying the linguistic signs used in political discourse and its material instantiations of texts. This necessitates a distinction between *discourse* and *text*:

Discourse is not a product; it is a process. To analyse it we need to look at both the text itself and the interaction and context that the text is embedded in. A text is part of the process of discourse and it is pointless to study it in isolation. It is the product of a meaning-producer (encoder) and a resource for a meaning-interpreter (decoder) (Talbot 2007: 10).

As mentioned earlier in Subsection 2.2, unlike the aspect of linguistic-sign *value*, the aspect of *signification* lies outside language structure, or text as a material product; rather, it is discursive in nature. Thus, given the above-mentioned distinction between *discourse* and *text*, *signification* can cognitively operate as a specific mental model of subjective representations that underlies the value-aspect of the linguistic sign and that renders the text (or parts of it) biased. That is, *signification* can be an essential part of a pragmatic Context Model that controls discourse processing and adapts discourse to the social environment towards the (rhetorical) fulfilment of an overall communicative purpose (see van Dijk 2009b: 65 in Subsection 2.1).

However, the fulfilment of a communicative purpose entails coherence, or what de Beaugrande & Dressler (1981: 4) describe as “continuity of senses”, whereby “the configuration of CONCEPTS and RELATIONS which underlie the surface text” are “mutually accessible and relevant.” Should the cognitive construct of coherence fail to obtain, a text will cease to be a sensically continuous communicative event. It seems then that the notion of coherence is not strictly textual; rather, it is the result of representations in the minds of text recipients. There must be a cognitive basis for such mental representations.

Van Dijk (1980: 200) demonstrates that “the local analysis of discourse and action” (i.e. “microstructures”) is not enough “without an additional account of global organizational principles of sequences of sentences and actions.” Towards this end,

¹ In another position of this publication, O’Halloran (2003: 12) distinguishes two kinds of discourse. Discourse (1) refers to “the coherent understanding the reader makes from a text”; this kind of discourse includes “how the values of the reader, the reading context and so on affect the reading of the text in the production of coherence.” Discourse (2), according to O’Halloran (2003), is the Foucauldian version of discourse, which refers to “the way in which knowledge is organised, talked about and acted upon in different institutions.”

van Dijk (1980: 201) offers a cognitive analysis of “macrostructures”, drawing upon what he terms “the *cognitive sets* of a language user or participant”, viz. “knowledge and beliefs”, “wants, wishes, preferences, interests, tasks, purposes, attitudes, values, and norms.” Van Dijk (*ibid.*: 201) reached an important conclusion: “it is plausible to assume that if a language user has specific interests or tasks, the information of topics during comprehension of discourse may be different from that of other individuals with a different cognitive set.” Actually, throughout the different publications by van Dijk, there has always been a systematic correlation between the “semantic macrostructures” of global discourse meanings and the microstructures of local text meanings (van Dijk 1977, 1980, 1995, 2009b; van Dijk & Kintsch 1983).

The present study attends to the same systematic correlation, where there is a shift from the (semantic) macrostructure of “macropropositions” to the *significations* of linguistic signs used in text. The former aspect is concerned with “what discourses are (globally) about; they are mostly intentional and consciously controlled by the speaker; they embody the (subjectively) most important information of a discourse, express the overall ‘content’ of mental models of events” (van Dijk 2009b: 68). Thus the socio-cognitive model of “macropropositions”, which has been detailed in van Dijk & Kintsch (1983), conveniently opens up the analytic possibility of all textual propositions being potentially distilled into one macroproposition. As such, at least in theory, macropropositions – in their capacity as discourse macrostructures – can act as a socio-cognitive environment wherein the religious or political significations of a linguistic sign are embedded as “global meanings that are consciously controlled by the speaker [as well as the audience]”; and further are constituted as part of the subjectively prominent information of a discourse in a way that expresses “the overall ‘content’ of mental models of [discourse] events” (van Dijk 2009b: 68).

However, such “mental models of events” cannot be secured without the persuasive dimension of discourse, which is negotiated between text producers and their audiences. Hence, the rhetorical aspect cannot be dismissed as irrelevant in the present theoretical framework. This aspect is the focus of Subsection 2.3 below.

2.3. *The rhetoric of amplification*

Rhetoric, in Aristotle’s classic definition, is “an ability to observe in each case the possible means of persuasion” (*Ars Rhetorica* I.2.1355b 25-26). It is hardly surprising that the rhetorical and the political are dialectically inseparable. “The notion of rhetoric”, Wetherell argues (2001: 17), “comes from ancient studies of political oratory” after all. However, Wetherell continues to argue, rhetoric has a certain “modern resonance”, suggesting that “discourse is often **functional**” (Potter & Wetherell 1987, cited in Wetherell 2001: 17, emphasis in original). This may lead us into the serviceable concept of “rhetorical discourse”, probably first introduced by Bitzer (1999: 217), where the pragmatics of the rhetorical situation renders discourse argumentative in essence, with the express purpose of persuading or dissuading an Other.

As such, the contextualization of linguistic signs in the semiotic structure of discourse, which reflects a Context Model that is appealing to some audience, is part and parcel of “rhetorical discourse”. This is particularly so should certain topics be

thematically amplified. Repeating, restating, aggregating and accentuating certain linguistic signs that are propositionally prominent in a given political discourse would definitely contribute to what Weaver (1971) refers to as “amplification” in traditional rhetoric. According to him, rhetoric is “an art of emphasis” (Weaver 1971: 173). Nevertheless, the fact remains that emphasis could itself be a means of persuasion. Also, Jasinski (2001) argues that the rhetorical principle of “amplification” generally denotes “the various linguistic and discursive devices such as repetition, restatement, aggregation [...]” (Perelman 1982, cited in Jasinski 2001: 12).

The present rhetorical dimension of amplification should, then, be an ideological component of political discourse; it is pervasive in the emphatic language that is controlled by a Context Model that is based on the political cognition of the text producer, who peculiarly holds his or her own political beliefs and histories. Speaking of politicians in general, and presidents in particular, Windt (1990: 4) argues that they “define issues within the context of their political beliefs, traditions, circumstances, past, history, and political affiliations.” However, it should be noted that an essential part of this ideological context is the text producer’s knowledge of the audience’s political cognitions, which do shape the ideal Context Model, and thus motivate the semiotic structure – lexical, syntactic, or pragmatic – of political discourse. This may explain why certain linguistic signs are more thematically prominent than many absent others in one text.

3. Methodology

3.1. *Data*

In this study, the data I use for my analysis is the web-based script of Obama’s speech which was delivered in Cairo University on 4 June 2009. The speech can be found online: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/jun/04/barack-obama-keynote-speech-egypt>.

The rationale for selecting this particular speech is twofold. First, there is a unique compatibility between the subject matter of the speech and the geopolitical context in which it was delivered (see Section 4). The speech addresses the possibility of a new beginning between the US and Muslims around the world; it was deliberately delivered in Egypt as an Arab Muslim-majority country which has been historically recognized as the heart of the Arab-Muslim world, and furthermore has long had a political role in most of the Arab-Muslim states. Second, Obama’s Cairo speech has achieved a high degree of what Teubert (2007: 80) calls “textual relevance”, i.e. the speech has left a good deal of traces in the subsequent texts in international and Arab media discourse.

3.2. *Procedure: macropropositional analysis*

The methodological procedure followed in this study corresponds neatly with the theoretical framework proposed in Section 2. I analyse the macrostructure of Obama’s Cairo speech. I shall set out with the specification of the macropropositions

(i.e. major themes and topics) that constitute the discourse global meanings of Obama's speech. Thereafter, I shall analyse the designated macropropositions of the speech and their discursive role in the contextualization of the relevant linguistic signs, and their rhetoric of amplification, as used by Obama in his Cairo speech. This can contribute to revealing the religious and/or political *significations* of such linguistic signs in the speech, as well as their potential rhetorical effect on the addressees, be they Muslims or non-Muslims.

4. Analysis

Following the discourse-analytic tradition of van Dijk, I shall begin by analysing the semantic macrostructures of Obama's Cairo speech as reflected in the macropropositional content of the speech. Indeed, this analysis has a close bearing on the political and religious significations of Obama's use of certain frequent linguistic signs and their amplified rhetorical effect. This should take us back to the potential correlation between the significations of linguistic sign (its referential meaning(s) outside text) on the one hand and van Dijk's (1983, 1995, 2009b) conception of "macropropositions" (see Subsection 2.2) as well as Weaver's (1971) and Perelman's (1982) rhetorical principle of "amplification" (see Subsection 2.3) on the other.

Obama's Cairo speech can be said to revolve around six macropropositions whereby we can explain the significations of linguistic signs or the historical, political and religious meanings that are encoded into some of these linguistic signs, but are beyond the textual boundaries of the speech:

- M1: Obama expressing respect for the city of Cairo and the two institutions of Al-Azhar and Cairo University in Egypt.
- M2: There is a present tension between the United States and Muslims, with historical forces.
- M3: Obama seeking, and explaining how to stage, a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world.
- M4: Islam and America are inseparable.
- M5: There are (seven) issues that human beings have to confront.
- M6: Obama inviting Muslims and non-Muslims to find a human common ground.

The first macroproposition is a summation of the opening paragraph in the speech, where Obama shows reverence to the city of Cairo and the two institutions of Al-Azhar and Cairo University in Egypt. That is to say, Obama explicitly marks out the socio-spatial context of his speech, with a particular semiotic focus on the global geopolitical context of the country of Egypt and the city of Cairo as well as the local academic context of the Islamic institution of Al-Azhar and the secular University of Cairo. This can be diagrammatically shown in Figure 1 below:

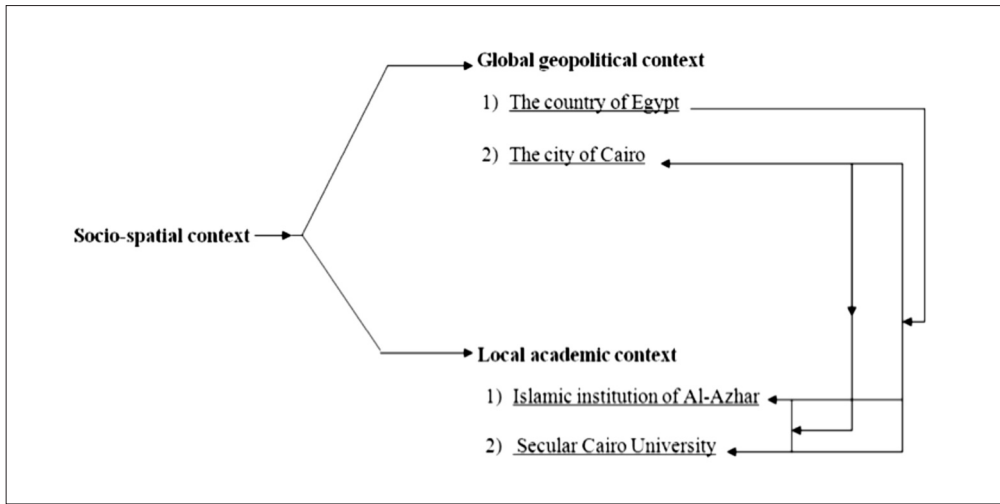


Figure 1. The socio-spatial context of Obama’s Cairo speech

Here, as a rhetorical means of persuading his immediate audience, i.e. Egyptians, Obama amplifies certain historical significations that have long been encoded into the linguistic signs of CAIRO UNIVERSITY, AL-AZHAR, and EGYPT. Taken together, the socio-political significations of CAIRO UNIVERSITY and EGYPT are especially relevant to the major theme of Obama’s Cairo speech. Cairo University has been regarded as an intellectual secular force in the politically radical change of Egypt from a monarchy to a republican state since the revolution of May 1952. It was then that the University of Cairo was exploited as an “Ideological State Apparatus” (Althusser 1971) via which the socialist ideology was promulgated in the Egyptian society by the Nasserite military regime. Furthermore, the sign EGYPT is associated with certain mythical meanings that have arisen out of the Nasserite nationalistic discourse, where Egypt has always been represented as the “heart of the Arab world”, the “elder sister of all Arab countries”, and so forth. Thus, the signification of this sign coheres with the core theme of Obama’s Cairo speech, that is, seeking a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world (as stated in M3 above).

Also, the sign CAIRO UNIVERSITY has its own institutional significations, which Obama was probably aware of at the time he delivered his speech. By taking place *in* Cairo University, the speech has an institutional legitimacy and authority. As typical of Oriental-Arab culture, the University has had a prestigious social position as *the* natural habitat of the academic think tank in society. After all, this academic setting presents Obama as if he were an expert University Professor who teaches a far less sophisticated audience of students, who should in turn take his lecture-like message in absolute confidence without contesting such a quasi-academic source of information. AL-AZHAR has also its own special religious significations as the oldest Islamic institution of Arabic literature and Sunni Islamic learning in the world; it has symbolic meanings of teaching and learning Islamic law or

Shari'ah. Thus, speaking of educational practice, Al-Azhar and Cairo University represent the religious and the secular, respectively. This kind of juxtaposition is controlled by a Pluralist Context Model that would appeal to both Islamists and secularists inside (and probably outside) contemporary Egypt.

Paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 are summarized into M2: there is a present tension between the United States and Muslims, with historical forces. This is the part where Obama faced one historical tension head-on. Socio-politically sensitive issues have been raised and clashing significations have been stirred up. Obama starts from the present US-Muslim tension, which goes back in history to a macrocosmic politico-religious conflict between the West and Islam. And, with the US imposing involvement, this conflict has been made more complex. "Relations", Saikal (2000: 164) wrote, "between the Muslim world and the Christian West, led by the United States, are complex and multidimensional." Probably, this has led Obama to bring in his speech the sign-complex SEPTEMBER 11 2001; the sign has had spatio-temporal significations of a time of hatred between the US and Islam – two ideologically opposed worlds on religious and political grounds. For example, there are the Christian world vs. the Muslim world and the largely pro-Israel world vs. the vehemently anti-Israel world. Upon this dichotomy, a chain of connotations were explicitized by Obama in the form of evaluative signs: "HATRED rather than PEACE ... CONFLICT rather than the CO-OPERATION that can help ..." (Paragraph 4; my emphasis). At this point, Obama just diagnosed the present US-Muslim tension – again, by persuasively amplifying its relevance to the present-moment crisis holding between the two parties – and traced its historical roots, without setting any prescription for reforms. The latter aspect is the essence of M3: Obama seeking, and explaining how to stage, a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world.

Paragraphs 5-8 are distilled into M3 in a way that reflects Obama's conscious rhetoric of emphasizing the importance of pluralism, which is based on a reconciliatory discourse. Not only does Obama "seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world", but he also offers a rather skeletal framework for achieving this goal. Indeed, the peak of Obama's reconciliatory discourse is captured in the categorical statement "America and Islam are not exclusive" (Paragraph 5), wherein the binary-opposite significations holding between AMERICA and ISLAM are explicitly negated or, more accurately, mystified. The conscious rhetoric of pluralism is even more emphatic in Obama's construction of his own personal narrative: "I am a Christian, but my father came from a Kenyan family that includes generations of Muslims" (Paragraph 7). Here, it is a religious kind of pluralism; the two signs CHRISTIAN and MUSLIMS have a signification of religious co-existence, which is an essential part of M3: "the how of staging a new beginning between the [Christian] US and the Muslims around the world."

One important semiotic feature that has emerged out of the Pluralist Context Model of Obama's Cairo speech is the explicit intertextual reference to the Holy Book of Muslims (the Koran): "As the Holy Koran tells us: 'Be conscious of God and speak always the truth'. That I will try to do – to speak the truth as best I can [...]"

(Paragraph 6). This should be viewed as a continuation of religious pluralism: it is the Christian voice of Obama that identifies with the Islamic voice of the monotheistic God (Allah) by (both) sharing the same propositional content “to tell the truth”. Thus, viewed as a linguistic sign, the word TRUTH has a mixed Christian-Islamic signification, which coheres back to the same kind of religious signification of co-existence rhetorically emphasized by CHRISTIAN and MUSLIMS. Moreover, proceeding with M3, Obama resorts to the discursive strategy of raising the pathos of his predominantly Muslim audience by falling back on the glorious history – Obama being a history student himself – of Islam and Muslim communities:

Extract 1:

As a student of history, I also know civilization’s debt to Islam. It was Islam – at places like al-Azhar University – that carried the light of learning through so many centuries, paving the way for Europe’s Renaissance and Enlightenment. It was innovation in Muslim communities that developed the order of algebra; our magnetic compass and tools of navigation; our mastery of pens and printing; our understanding of how disease spreads and how it can be healed (Paragraph 8).

As the quote above shows, Obama sets up his reconciliatory discourse by drawing on new significations of the signs ISLAM and MUSLIM, viz. historical significations, at some point in this history of ancient Islamic civilization, when science and knowledge had been imported into the then-underdeveloped Europe. Notably, these historical significations strongly suggest the presence of opposite significations of the same linguistic signs ISLAM and MUSLIM at the time of Obama uttering such signs: now Europe (and the US) is scientifically and epistemologically far more developed than current Muslim communities. As such, these *present* and *absent* significations hark back to M3, where it is of historical necessity for both the US and world Muslims to seek a new beginning towards a pluralistic atmosphere.

Paragraphs 9-17 can be summated into M4: Islam and America are inseparable. The overall macropropositional content of these paragraphs may best be described as a meticulously elaborated conclusion of M3: Obama seeking, and explaining how to stage, a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world. It is at this point of the speech that Obama constructs himself as a go-between for the US and Muslims worldwide. Again, Obama keeps reiterating historical significations that have been reconstructed throughout narratives; this can be clear in Obama’s statement “Islam has always been a part of America’s story” (Paragraph 9). Interestingly, here the signification of ISLAM historically shades into that of AMERICA, which is a good example of the rhetorical amplification of the potentially harmonious unity between Muslims and Americans. This has been instantiated in the sign-complex MUSLIM-AMERICAN: “And when the first Muslim-American was recently elected to Congress, he took the oath to defend our constitution” (Paragraph 9). Strikingly, the political signification of this sign-complex is derived from the propositional content of ‘X being elected to the American Congress’, where the identity of X is an amalgam of Islam and America. This fits well in the content of M4, which emphasizes the inseparability of Islam and America.

Much the same political signification has been subtly assigned to the sign-complex BARACK HUSSEIN OBAMA on the rhetorical grounds of emphatically explaining Obama's diverse ethnicity. Obama has consciously referred to his name, "an African-American with the name Barack Hussein Obama could be elected president" (Paragraph 12), with a view to persuading his ethnically diverse audiences of his pluralistic message. Let us capture the signification of this sign-complex by subjecting it to the Peircean triadic model discussed earlier (Subsection 2.1) and see how far it is contextualized in M4:

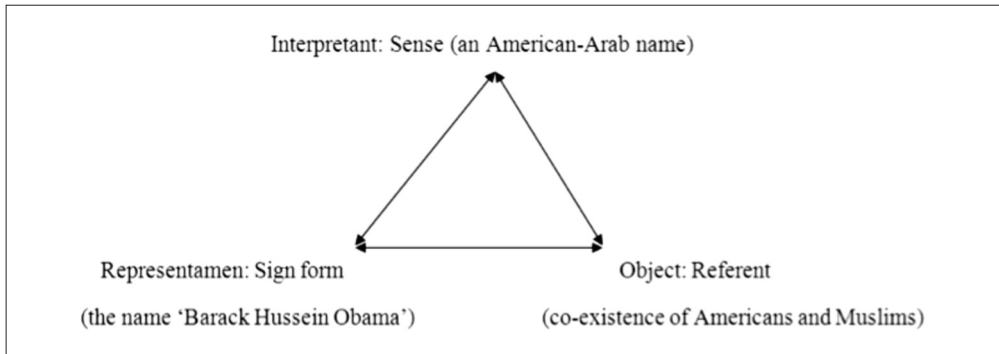


Figure 2. The semiotic triangle of the sign-complex BARACK HUSSEIN OBAMA in Obama's Cairo speech

The semiotic model applied to the sign-complex BARACK HUSSEIN OBAMA above may help us enter the mind of both Obama and his predominantly Muslim audience in Cairo. The signification of this sign-complex rests on three elements. First, 'the representamen' as the form of the sign as encountered in the text, that is, the name uttered by Obama in his speech. Second, the 'interpretant' or what Obama wants his audience to understand, and thus, what is lying there in his (political) mind at the time of uttering the 'representamen'; this is obviously the interpretation of the sign (BARACK HUSSEIN OBAMA) as being an American-Arab name. It is at this level of the interpretant of the sign that Obama draws on one important *cognitive set* of his audience: the background knowledge that Hussein is an Arab Islamic name; Hussein is the name of one of the grandchildren of the Muslims' Prophet (Muhammad). Thus, the middle name of Obama, Hussein, is consciously mentioned in his speech, so that certain Arab-Islamic (desired) images may be triggered. Third, the 'object' is the referent that the name Barack Hussein Obama stands for; that is, bringing together the typically American name Barack Obama and the typically Arab-Islamic name Hussein in a way that enhances the co-existence of Muslims and Americans. Hence *the inseparability of Islam and America*, or M4.

It should be repeated here that this signification of the sign-complex (BARACK HUSSEIN OBAMA) is motivated and determined by the Pluralist Context Model that Obama has been trying to convey to his audience all through his Cairo speech. Note, also, how Obama has rhetorically amplified this personal issue of his diversely

ethnic background for the sake of achieving the political action of bringing together ethnically heterogeneous addressees.

It is the same Pluralist Context Model of Obama's speech that drives him to mention the important religious signs of MOSQUE, MOSQUES and HIJAB (Paragraph 13). Here, the partial reiteration of MOSQUE serves the rhetorical purpose of emphasizing Obama's familiarity with Islamic culture. Indeed, so cognitively entrenched in the mind of Muslims are these signs that they have become more or less iconic representations; that is, in the eyes of Muslims these signs – be they semiotically written, spoken or viewed – are inherently Islamic. By mentioning them, Obama does politically capitalize on their strongly positive iconic significations outside his speech; he is aware of their sacred mental representations in the minds of Muslims; so influential is their cognitive impact on a Muslim audience that it should bring Obama closer to the hearts and minds of the members of this audience, especially in a pluralist context of this sort. Within such a context, Obama has categorically stated: "So let there be no doubt: Islam is part of America" (Paragraph 14). There is yet another sign-complex mentioned by Obama, viz. OUR COMMON HUMANITY (Paragraph 15). The ultimate signification of this sign-complex can be said to be inclusiveness, which unifies Muslims and Americans against "the shared challenges" they together face.

Furthermore, Obama has exploited the diverse significations of the sign-complexes FINANCIAL SYSTEM, NEW FLU and NUCLEAR WEAPON and their respective economic, medical and military discourses:

Extract 2:

For we have learned from recent experience that when a **financial system** weakens in one country, prosperity is hurt everywhere. When a **new flu** infects one human being, all are at risk. When one nation pursues a **nuclear weapon**, the risk of nuclear attack rises for all nations (Paragraph 16; my emphasis).

Diverse as these sign-complex significations are, they seem to bear one and the same discourse function of what I can call *the pluralistic inclusiveness of the world* (part of which are Muslims and Americans). This discourse function has been rhetorically enabled by the grammatical parallelism pervading extract 2 above: 'When x happens, y happens'. The grammatical parallelism is packaged in a deterministic sequential order, which is based on the hypotactic clause-complex structure: one clause (dependent clause) is logically dependent on the other (independent clause). Such a grammatical structure persuasively appeals to Obama's emphatic meanings of unity and wholeness as opposed to fragmentation and partisanship. Note also that Obama expresses an eternal universal truth in the simple-present tense of both dependent and independent clauses. Remember that the same Pluralist Context Model motivates Obama's grammar-based consequential deterministic view that the world is one and can never be divided into parts, even in the presence of different religions, ethnicities or tongues.

The most exhaustive and complex macroproposition is M5: there are (seven) issues that human beings have to confront. It ranges over 50 paragraphs (Paragraphs

18-68). At this point, the most important linguistic sign is ISSUES. It has a semantically generic nature. Nouns of this sort are subsumed under the category of 'general nouns' which have "generalized reference within the major nouns classes, those such as 'human noun', 'place nouns', 'fact nouns' and the like" (Halliday & Hasan 1976: 274). Here, the noun ISSUES is a "fact noun" that has a generalized cataphoric (i.e. forward) reference to all the issues specified by Obama across the following relevant paragraphs. Also, importantly, this noun has what Halliday & Hasan (1976: 276) argue to be an "interpersonal function", viz. reflecting the speaker's attitude of 'familiarity' towards certain topics. This is true of Obama's use of the linguistic sign ISSUES, which suggests his familiarity with – if not certainty about – the kind of issues he addresses in his speech. According to M5, he commits humans to confronting seven issues that are relevant to the Context Model he consciously wants to convey. Also, as will shortly be demonstrated, these ISSUES should be semantically oriented towards certain event models; or events and situations that Obama has discursively observed and referred to based on a Pluralist Context Model.

As such, I shall restrict my analysis to the significations of the "issues" referred to by Obama and their contextualization into the macropropositional content of M5. One interesting observation here is that Obama arranges these issues in terms of their thematic significance within his proposed semantic event model, which is in turn governed by the pragmatic Context Model underlying the Cairo speech – Obama's subjective interest in pluralism. Not surprisingly, then, the first issue raised by Obama is VIOLENT EXTREMISM (Paragraphs 19-28). Obama reckons this issue to be a major hindrance to the Pluralist Context Model he wishes to put across to different audience members. One topically relevant statement made by Obama in this regard is the following: "In Ankara, I made clear that America is not – and never will be – at war with Islam" (Paragraph 20). The statement is rhetorically amplified as a definitive commitment that Obama makes for the good of both America and Muslims, bearing in mind the horrible images concomitant with the linguistic sign WAR.

Obama's event model of VIOLENT EXTREMISM is semantically related to three subtopics, which are instantiated by three linguistic signs: AFGHANISTAN and PAKISTAN on the one hand (Paragraphs 21-24) and IRAQ on the other (Paragraphs 25-28). Let us take each in turn.

The significations of AFGHANISTAN and PAKISTAN are topically inseparable from those of VIOLENT EXTREMISM in Obama's speech: "al-Qaida killed nearly 3,000 people on that day" / "al-Qaida chose to ruthlessly murder these people." Understandably, the event model triggered here is 9/11 with all its cognitively repulsive images. However, since Obama is aware of other competing unfavourable Context Models that morally disapprove of the US military presence in Afghanistan, he has discursively made what Currie (2007: 29) refers to as "*rhetorical prolepsis*" (i.e. pre-empting anticipated objections by articulating them): "Make no mistake: we do not want to keep our troops in Afghanistan" (Paragraph 22). The rhetorical prolepsis reflects Obama's cognitive anticipation of objections to the current existence of

US troops in Afghanistan. Perhaps the same discursive strategy of rhetorical prolepsis would have been useless had Obama delivered the same speech to, for example, an Israeli audience who possesses different cognitive sets. Furthermore, such a rhetorical strategy is based on Obama's discursive device of stating the unsaid, which is normally (re-)produced amongst the commons off the political stage. Again, this is to secure Obama's persuasiveness as a politician who is quite aware of the political cognitions of the Other.

Also, in an attempt to downplay those potentially unfavourable Context Models, Obama has made an explicit intertextual reference to the Koran: "The Holy Koran teaches that whoever killed an innocent, it is as if he has killed all mankind; and whoever saves a person, it is as if he has saved all mankind" (Paragraph 23). The intertextuality sets apart al-Qaida members, who are reported by Obama to be "murderers of innocent victims", from the US troops who (according to him) have come to Afghanistan and Pakistan as saviours. No doubt, by so doing, Obama attempts to attach new significations to the signs AFGHANISTAN and PAKISTAN: rather than their being cognitively conceived of as victims of the military atrocities of American troops, they are constructed as being blessed with the US military protection against terrorist VIOLENT EXTREMISM. In fact, Obama has secured the establishment of these new significations of AFGHANISTAN and PAKISTAN by tempering the negative associations of the American military therein: "We also know that military power is not going to solve the problems in Afghanistan and Pakistan" (Paragraph 24).

Now, let us discuss Obama's second subtopic IRAQ and its typical event model. Of course, an essential component of this event model is SADDAM HUSSEIN (Paragraph 25), whose significations of "tyranny", "dictatorship", "mass destruction weapons", etc. have served a great deal as an excuse for the current existence of US troops in Iraq. Another essential component of the present event model is the situational context of IRAQIS, IRAQ'S SOVEREIGNTY and ELECTED GOVERNMENT referred to by Obama (Paragraph 26). The significations of these three signs or sign-complexes are relevant to M5, where the issues to be confronted by human beings cannot be separated from the moral code of human rights and political independence. In his speech, Obama has capitalized on these significations in order to create a rationally undisputed ethos via which all different groups – Muslims, Americans, or otherwise – would respect and appreciate his public-spirited initiative: a) America should "leave Iraq to Iraqis", b) "Iraq's sovereignty is its own", and c) "we will honour our agreement with Iraq's democratically elected government" (Paragraph 26).

The second issue in M5 broached by Obama is contextually related by a semantic event model that is predicated on the Middle-East political conflict and instantiated by three linguistic signs: ISRAELIS, PALESTINIANS and ARAB WORLD (Paragraphs 29-41). What is crucial about the significations of these signs is that they are politically sensitive to different group members, e.g. Arab Muslims, Arab Christians, Americans and Israelis. Controlled by a Pluralist Context Model, Obama's account of the (sub)topics related to the Middle-East situation is highly cautious.

Obama's point of departure seems to be mischievously offensive to the Arab audience: "America's strong bonds with Israel are well known" (Paragraph 30). This may explain why he has immediately resorted to the pathos-raising narrative about "the Jewish people" who "were persecuted for centuries," and the "antisemitism in Europe" which "culminated in an unprecedented Holocaust" (Paragraph 31). Striking an ideological balance, Obama has also had recourse to a parallel pathos-raising narrative: "it is also undeniable that the Palestinian people – Muslims and Christians – have suffered in pursuit of a homeland" (Paragraph 32).

It is precisely for the sake of maintaining ideologically balanced representations of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that Obama gave an account of these historical narratives. Even the seemingly biased ordering of the two narratives, where the suffering of the Jewish people came first, has been disguised by the chronological order forced by external historical factors – the inevitable ordering of the two events in history. Thereafter, Obama has made explicit the historical commonality between the two peoples (Israelis and Palestinians): "For decades, there has been a stalemate: two peoples with legitimate aspirations, each with a painful history that makes compromise elusive" (Paragraph 33). In fact, such narratives can be said to be a type of "historical folklore" referred to by Robertson (1995: 73): "Historical folklore can strike a chord in collective memory that will resonate for many generations." On a rhetorical level, then, these historical-folklore narratives have helped Obama achieve one of the important "maxims of moving" tackled by Nash (1989: 50); that is, "empathetic matter": "If a speaker [in this case, Obama] or writer is to move an audience [in this case, Israelis and Palestinians], the theme must be capable of evoking feelings into which the audience can readily enter [in this context, the respective histories of the two peoples]."

Interestingly, such a maxim of moving secures the rhetorical principle of "amplification" par excellence, as it simply restates the political crises of the addressed peoples in a touching, and probably poignant, manner. This should persuasively construct an appealing image of Obama as an expert historian who can manage the present crises however chronic they may seem to be.

Actually, such a discursive point in the speech evinces the Pluralist Context Model that has generated Obama's ideological balance of mentioning relevant favourable narratives about both Israelis and Palestinians. One of the clearest linguistic instantiations generated by such a Context Model in the speech runs thus: "That is in Israel's interest, Palestine's interest, America's interest, and the world's interest."

Continuing with the same ideologically balanced tone, Obama began to propose the responsibilities that each party to the Arab-Israeli conflict must shoulder: 1) "Palestinians must abandon violence" (Paragraph 35) / "Now is the time for Palestinians to focus on what they can build" (Paragraph 36); 2) "Israelis must acknowledge that just as Israel's right to exist cannot be denied, neither can Palestine's" (Paragraph 37) / "Israel must also live up to its obligations to ensure that Palestinians can live, and work, and develop their society" (Paragraph 38); 3) "Finally, the Arab states must recognize that the Arab Peace Initiative was an important begin-

ning, but not the end of their responsibilities” (Paragraph 39). In this connection, the significations associated with PALESTINIANS, ISRAELIS and ARAB WORLD are based on the media stereotypes perpetuated about the belligerent sides. First, the Palestinians are constructed as typically indulging in acts of violence against Israelis; second, the Israelis are constructed as denying the right of Palestinians to exist; third, the Arab states are constructed as being in a constant struggle for demanding the rights of Palestinians. Indeed, here the pluralism that Obama seeks, however ideal it may be, can find its way through the minds of audience members, who are helpless in the face of the military power of the US and Israel that has been mythically constructed via biased media circles.

The third issue in M5 raised by Obama in his speech is NUCLEAR WEAPONS (Paragraphs 42-45). The contextual significations of this sign-complex are based on Obama’s causal attribution, where he attributes the tension between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran to “the rights and responsibilities of nations of nuclear weapons”. Here, Obama has consciously raised the topic of the 1979 ISLAMIC REVOLUTION as a pointer to the “acts of hostage-taking and violence” committed by Iran against “US troops and civilians” (Paragraph 43). This is intended to prepare Obama’s audience to accept the proposition that “the nuclear-weapons race in the Middle-East will have its dire consequences for the whole region” (Paragraph 44). However, the same sign-complex (NUCLEAR WEAPONS) has distinctly different significations in the propositional content of paragraph 45, where “[a]ny nation – including Iran – should have the right to peaceful nuclear power.” Thus, the significations of legitimate nuclear weapons are conditioned by non-military power; that is, the military form of this (nuclear) power is prohibited by the US. This blatant exercise of discursive power is grounded in the official capacity of Obama as the President of the so-called superpower – America.

The fourth issue in M5 that Obama chooses to tackle in his speech is the protean notion of DEMOCRACY. Let us go back to Subsection 2.1 where Chilton (2004: 48) comments on the meaning of the word “democracy” as “not waiting to be discovered in some objective realm”; rather, according to him, “it is in the mind, or rather the interacting minds, of people in particular times and places.” Interesting here is the fact that Obama, drawing on the currently positive connotations of the term in the Arab mind, takes for granted the significations of DEMOCRACY as being a dream for all:

Extract 3:

But I do have an unyielding belief that all people yearn for certain things: the ability to think, the ability to speak your mind and have a say in how you are governed; confidence in the rule of law and the equal administration of justice; government that is transparent and doesn’t steal from the people; the freedom to live as you choose (Paragraph 48).

Notably, drawing upon the same positive connotations of DEMOCRACY, Obama has ignored the typically Islamic counterpart notion of SHURA, i.e. consultative de-

cision-making, which is grounded in the Islamic discourse and textually instantiated in the Koranic text “[...] and consult with them on the matter” (3: 159).

The fifth issue in M5 discussed by Obama is RELIGIOUS FREEDOM (Paragraphs 51-56) as a sign-complex whose significations dovetail nicely with Obama’s Pluralist Context Model, which features Obama’s personal narrative as a way of substantiating Christian-Muslim co-existence: “I saw it first-hand as a child in Indonesia, where devout Christians worshipped freely in an overwhelmingly Muslim country” (Paragraph 52). The same Context Model has led Obama to featuring the theme of religion- and faith-based co-existence in his speech: “Freedom of religion is central to the ability of people to live together” (Paragraph 54) and “faith should bring us together” (Paragraph 56). Of course, Obama’s focus on aspects of religion and faith can be ascribed to his background knowledge of the generally positive attitudes towards religiosity in the Arab world – Muslims and Christians.

The sixth issue in M5 is WOMEN’S RIGHTS (Paragraph 57-60), whose pluralistic significations have largely been derived from the two signs of AMERICA and ISLAM: “the United States will partner with any Muslim-majority country to support expanded literacy for girls, and to help young women pursue employment through micro-financing that helps people live their dreams” (Paragraph 60). Thus, rhetorically, Obama is keen to amplify the theme of bringing Americans and Muslims together towards achieving the liberal ethos of women’s equality and their right to education. Hardly, if ever, could an audience contest such a liberal view on educating girls and employing women, except for the extreme radical Muslims (say, in Afghanistan), to whom Obama pays no discursive heed.

The last (seventh) issue in M5 handled by Obama is predicated on the sign-complex ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND OPPORTUNITY (Paragraphs 61-68). Obama has topically dismantled the complexity of this sign by addressing the following themes: 1) developing education by “encouraging more Americans to study in Muslim communities” and “promising Muslim students with internships in America” (Paragraph 65); 2) developing the economy by deepening “ties between business leaders, foundations and social entrepreneurs in the United States and Muslim communities around the world” (Paragraph 66); 3) developing science and technology by America launching “a new fund to support technological development in Muslim-majority countries” (Paragraph 67). Notably, all the different events and situations proposed by Obama are again relevant to a Pluralist Context Model that brings together Americans and Muslims.

Now, we have come to the last macroproposition in Obama’s speech: M6: Obama inviting Muslims and non-Muslims to find a human common ground (Paragraphs 69-76). Obama has had a predilection for closing his Cairo speech by calling upon both Muslims and non-Muslims to “forge new beginning” (Paragraph 69). Here, I argue that, by juxtaposing the two signs MUSLIMS and NON-MUSLIMS, Obama targets the dialectical emergence of another sign, viz. HUMANS, whose significations dictate a particular truth to him: “This truth transcends nations and peoples – a belief that isn’t new; that isn’t black or white or brown; that isn’t Christian, or Muslim or Jew” (Paragraph 71). At the end of Obama’s Cairo speech, such a truth

has been intertextually realized in the form of quotes from the Holy Koran (Paragraph 73), the Talmud (Paragraph 74) and the Holy Bible (Paragraph 75). These three intertextual references have been controlled by Obama's Pluralist Context Model; it is this Model that has motivated Obama's multivoiced discourse, which is instantiated in the intertextual form of his speech. In this speech, Obama cites the same propositional content from the Koran, the Talmud and the Bible, so that he can demonstrate that Islam, Judaism and Christianity have had the same message – peace – viewed as religious pluralism. This message has been explicitized in Obama's concluding statement: "The people of the world can live together in peace" (Paragraph 76).

5. Conclusion: findings and future research

In conclusion, I would like to elaborate on two main findings in the present study, one is analytical and the other theoretical; I then propose the prospect for future research on the same data, Obama's Cairo speech. The first finding can be formulated thus: a Pluralist Context Model has pragmatically motivated and controlled the global and local meanings of Obama's Cairo speech on two integrated levels of analysis, semiotic and rhetorical. Let us discuss each in turn.

First, on the semiotic level of analysis, the overall macropropositional content of the speech has revealed the global discourse meanings associated with the significations of political and religious signs or sign-complexes: ISRAELIS, PALESTINIANS, DEMOCRACY, BARACK HUSSEIN OBAMA, MUSLIM, CHRISTIAN, MUSLIM-AMERICAN, MOSQUES, RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, etc. This form of analysis has demonstrated that Obama's conscious selection and organization of the topics and subtopics were made to pluralize politically and/or religiously heterogeneous social actors in a way that reflected Obama's subjective mental representations of the political and religious co-existence of two socio-historically opposing forces – the US and Islam. Second, on the rhetorical level of analysis, it has been demonstrated that Obama's Cairo speech is oriented towards *amplifying* certain themes with a view to persuading his (non-)Muslim audiences of different forms of pluralism, cultural, religious, economic and political. For example, the following topics have been either repeated, restated, aggregated, or at times made to go two or all three ways, across the whole speech: a) the historical significance of Egypt, Cairo University and Al-Azhar, b) the non-exclusiveness of America and Islam, c) personal narratives about Obama's education, upbringing and ethnicity, and d) scriptural quotes from the Koran, the Bible and the Talmud as the three major religions worldwide, respectively Islam, Christianity and Judaism.

The second finding relates to the theoretical and methodological compatibility potentially holding among three influential approaches: 1) the semiotic approach developed by Saussure (1916/1983) and Peirce (1931-1958), especially the latter, who focused on the interpreter of the sign; 2) the socio-cognitive approach developed by van Dijk across a number of publications that have been predicated on the relations between mind, discourse and society (van Dijk 1984, 1987, 1993, 1998, 2005, 2008,

2009b); and 3) the rhetorical approach instanced by the principle of “amplification” (Weaver 1971; Perelman 1982). In this study, I propose a rhetorical semiotic-cognitive approach for analysing political discourse, more specifically the genre of presidential speeches, which would normally entail a political rhetoric that “creates the arena of political reality within which political thought and action take place” (Windt 1990: 1; also see Section 1 above). This has been empirically shown in the first-part analysis of the study: the “macropropositions” of the Cairo speech have contextualized the linguistic signs that Obama has rhetorically amplified beyond the scope of his speech towards the realms of history, religion, economy and society, so that he can persuade culturally opposed audiences of the necessity of large-scale (and, perhaps, global) pluralism. It is this correlation between the “Context Model” on the one hand and “macropropositions”, alongside their persuasive amplification of relevant topics, on the other that has explained the interrelation between Obama as a sign-user in the Cairo speech and his pluralist political mind.

For future research, employing the same rhetorical semiotic-cognitive approach, I suggest comparing the Cairo speech with other speeches by Obama that were delivered in different geopolitical contexts. This could be revealing of Political-Context-Model variations across such speeches.

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