

# **Public Speaking in International Fora**

Rhetorical strategies, coherence and responsibility in political discourse

Niini Vartia-Paukku

Academic dissertation to be publicly discussed, by due permission of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Helsinki, in Lecture room 6, Metsätalo, Unioninkatu 40, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 2020, at 12 o'clock.

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **PUBLIC SPEAKING IN INTERNATIONAL FORA**

Rhetorical strategies, coherence and responsibility in political discourse

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The study focuses on public discourse in the context of the United Nations and the European Union. Public speaking has a dominant role in these multi-lateral organisations, which were both initially established to secure world peace and international stability.

This is a cross-cultural study that examines rhetorical strategies used by political leaders of UN and EU member states to position themselves in statements expressing coherence and societal responsibility. It also examines if and the extent to which the rhetorical strategies chosen by the leaders manifest socio-cultural tendencies. On a more theoretical-methodological level, I have in this study asked what public speaking analyses can add to well-established approaches like pragmatics and discourse analysis in order to give a deeper understanding of international communication.

The data for the study consist of introductions to public speeches by delegates (from Brazil, France, Jordan and the United States) at the United Nations General Assembly plenaries in 2006–2015, speeches by the Prime Ministers of the European Union member states (Britain, Finland and France) in 2004–2005, and Part 1 of the strategy report of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations initiative. The notion of positioning (Bamberg 1997, De Fina 2013) from narrative analysis was used as an additional method in this data-driven study.

The findings suggest that public discourse in formal institutional settings need to be approached as a socio-cultural phenomenon. The results show that linguistic strategies of self-presentation and politeness used to construct coherence reflect socio-cultural patterns, e.g. data from member-states with high power distance manifest most

communicative acts of complimenting. The results further suggest that actors can self-position themselves and their nation in global leadership by using a number of linguistic strategies. The study also illustrates how actors seek balance between socio-cultural responsibility and global societal responsibility in their political discourse. The findings are significant particularly in the context of global peace building, in which rhetoric is assumed to be neutral, objective and non-biased. The findings are acutely relevant in the post-truth era, when audiences question to what extent public speakers, and politicians particularly, are responsible for their statements.

Additionally, the study shows that rhetorical choices construct future realities (Verschueren 1999). By using deictic pronominal markers in their public speeches, the leaders of Britain, France and Finland positioned themselves as proponents of the integrating European Union in 2004-2005. In hindsight, one can see that these nations later developed their relationship with the EU as their political leaders had implicitly indicated in their public speeches years earlier. The data also indicate that religions continue to have both an implicit and an explicit influence on public discourse.

For future systematic analysis of public discourse the study suggests aligning and re-contextualizing resources representing expertise in academic intercultural pragmatics and international multi-lateral organizations. Such a hybrid approach to analysing public discourse could prevent misunderstandings and potential conflicts based on misinterpretation of positioning strategies due to historical, socio-cultural or political factors. The results indicate that in the context of formal, political public speaking the expiry date for traditional cultures (cf. Blommaert 2010, 2015) has not yet been reached.

Key words: public speaking, public discourse, rhetoric, coherence, responsibility, intercultural pragmatics, United Nations, European Union, stability, peace

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Common abbreviations used in the text:

AOC Alliance of Civilizations

EU European Union

GA General Assembly

UN United Nations

Br Britain

Fi Finland

Fr France

## **FOREWORD**

My personal journey in the field of intercultural communication must have started in England, where I uttered my very first word ‘da!’. Learning first Russian ‘yes’ delighted my Russian-speaking Polish nanny, and probably appalled my Finnish parents. In later years, living on several continents across the world gave us new perspectives on the words we utter, privately and publicly. In Australia we were encouraged to speak English with our own accent, in South Africa to learn new languages from Tswana to Afrikaans, and in England to remember that our linguistic history remains embedded in us. In France we practiced the art of eloquent debates on and off stage, in Canada most gracious discourse habits, and in Asia the very joy of communication itself. I would like to thank every friend and colleague I befriended during our long journey: you have enriched my life beyond measure.

Finally, it was during the public speaking sessions at the Capital Speakers in Washington D.C. that I decided to start my academic research in international public speaking. Representatives of different countries used Aristotelian ethos, pathos and logos in their speeches with special dignity. I realized how public speaking constructs common ground and trust between people, and nations.

I remember with deep gratitude the late Professor Matti Rissanen (University of Helsinki), who gracefully supervised my MA thesis. He not only taught me how to complete my thesis remotely, but also how to graduate while transiting between continents.

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Helsinki, October 2020

Niini Vartia-Paukku

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

International organisations like the United Nations and the European Union are extremely important domains for the development of international co-operation, the enhancement of global stability, and for the construction of new realities where international conflicts abound. Official public discourse in international fora has been a prime method for maintaining harmony in the world in the past, and will no doubt continue to be in the future.

In this cross-cultural study I have examined the public discourse presented by leading politicians from UN and EU member states that represent divergent regional, geo-political and linguistic areas. The main aim of the study is to investigate how rhetorical strategies to express coherence and responsibility in public discourse in international fora develop – or impede – international harmony and understanding. Additionally, the study examines if institutional political public speaking follows a universal pattern, or whether discursive strategies chosen by international actors show evidence of pertinent socio-cultural (i.e. regional, national, cultural or religious) tendencies.

This study applies concepts from pragmatics, intercultural pragmatics and intercultural communication studies, as the aim is to depict the variety of rhetorical choices used by speakers/writers to position themselves in their public discourse. First the study examines the notions of responsibility and blame as they are manifested in Part I of the strategy report of the Alliance of Civilizations (AOC, currently ‘the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations’). Next, the study focuses on the notions of coherence and responsibility manifested in the introductions of speeches delivered at the UN General Assembly plenaries by official delegates of the UN member states Brazil, France, Jordan and the United States. Finally, the focus is on public speeches from three European Union member states, namely Britain (the United Kingdom), Finland and France, to examine how their political leaders positioned themselves towards coherence in the European Union in their public speeches in 2004-2005.

I take the view that responsibility and coherence belong to the same family of concepts, albeit having their specific definitions. They both refer to inclusion rather than to exclusion of others. They are both needed to establish harmony between people, societies and nations. It is hard for coherence to prevail without responsibility,

and vice versa. This conceptual conglomerate is thus referred to as ‘coherence-responsibility’ in this study.

This study of public discourse in international fora is thus built up around three recurring themes: rhetoric, coherence-responsibility and culture. The scope and significance of these three concepts have changed noticeably in recent years, both in general discussions and in academia.

First, patterns of rhetoric are changing. The Roman orator Quintilian defined rhetoric as *ars bene dicendi*, ‘the art of speaking well’. We may ask if rhetoric, or public discourse, has become estranged from classical ethics of oratory, even more so in the era of alternative facts and post-truth communication. By public discourse the study refers to ‘social processes of talk and text in the public domain, which have institutionally ratified consequences’ (Sarangi 2011:248). In the genre of political public discourse, ‘institutionally ratified consequences’ may point to positive or negative developments in trust-based supra-national organisations like the United Nations and the European Union.

Contemporary technological development in information transfer and mass movement of people on our globe has made an impact on traditional socio-cultural patterns of discourse in communication communities (e.g. Blommaert 2010, 2015). The pertinent question is whether professional discourse, in this case political public discourse in international fora, has lost the traits of local accentuation and cultural tokens in this process.

Secondly, on our multipolar globe the concepts of international coherence and responsibility have changed in the international competition for dominance in the material and ideological global terrain. Speakers and audiences in the 21<sup>st</sup> century question the extent to which public speakers, and politicians specifically, are responsible for their public statements. International communication and mutual trust leading to responsible, sustainable relations between people and peoples is needed to sustain the balance (e.g. Appiah 2007, Eatwell 1997, 2018). World leaders face new challenges in their international political public discourse, as they try to build bridges between hybrid societies and find a strategy to establish a more coherent world society.

Thirdly, the definition of culture has been vehemently debated in academia for decades. From defining culture from an essentialist point of view which overemphasised consistency within a cultural group, contemporary definitions portray culture as a constantly changing phenomenon. Culture is seen as ‘liquid’ or ‘ocean’ (e.g. Dervin 2011, Fang 2012), thus emphasising the fluid element of culture in contemporary, diverse societies. However, whatever definition of the multitude of definitions for culture we adopt, we are likely to agree that culture is an intrinsic element in societies; there is no culture-free society.

This pragmatic analysis (Verschueren 2009) has both cross-cultural and intercultural dimensions (Sarangi 2009): cross-cultural in the sense that it compares the occurrence of different language use in the data; intercultural in the sense that it aims to contribute to a deeper understanding between writers, speakers and audiences who represent different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. As the actors in the data largely represent member states of the United Nations and the European Union, the reference ‘international communication’ is also used as a virtual synonym to intercultural communication. This study brings to the foreground political public speaking and public discourse in international fora as an acutely relevant focus of study.

In the following sections I will briefly introduce the three pillars, rhetoric, coherence-responsibility and culture that form the triangular base for this study, and I will deal with these notions in more detail in later chapters.

### 1.1 Rhetoric

Rhetoric, especially the classical rhetoric of public speaking, had recently begun to lose its significance as an object of study in scholarly research. – ‘Whoever would do research on public speaking anymore?’, I was asked at the beginning of my project while visiting an American university – ‘it is a thing of the past!’ Many scholars raised concern about this lack of research in classical rhetoric, however, as a few universities had already integrated departments of rhetoric with other disciplines in universities such as departments of communication or English literature studies. In an effort to bring researchers of rhetoric together, Lunsford (2009), who was editing a new publication on Rhetorical Studies, remarked how difficult it was to bring together the different roadmaps of interdisciplinary rhetoric.

However, public speaking regained its status as a noteworthy object of academic research and genre at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, partly due to globalisation (e.g. Hum and Lyon 2009). As connections between different ‘public speaking cultures’ developed worldwide and as scholars became curious about the remarkably different rules of public speaking prevalent in various cultural regions, rhetoric was gradually, and almost automatically brought back to the frontline of research. However, Hum and Lyon remark (2009) that there is a notable lack of account of research and theories in cultural comparative rhetoric from cultures other than the Western rhetoric.

Particularly Asian scholars in other genres in intercultural communication welcomed comparative studies warmly. Many of them had repeatedly remarked that there was an imbalance in the field: prevailing theories in intercultural communication studies in fields such as professional and business discourse were largely based on an Anglo-Saxon worldview and on practices in western countries (Miike 2008, Shi-xu 2009, Fang 2012). Furthermore, their research on the influence of culture on communication focused primarily on interpersonal communication (Gudykunst et al 1996, Valo 2000), not on public speaking.

What, then, constitutes a good formal public speech in international speaking fora? Ancient orators like Aristotle and Quintilian upheld notions like integrity and truth in public speaking, suggesting that speakers were responsible for the words they said in their speeches. Contemporary (western) rhetoric continues to be based primarily on the authority of Aristotle’s doctrines. Aristotle divided rhetoric into three genres: political, forensic and ceremonial, of which the first is the prime focus of the present study. Needless to say, formal speeches in international institutions typically also include a ceremonial dimension, either in formulas of deference or other communicative acts of politeness typically salient in formal public speeches, such as addressing members of the audience by their appropriate titles. Although my focus has been on examining rhetorical strategies of coherence and responsibility rather than on persuasion as such, it is evident that Aristotle’s persuasive means of ethos (ethics and moral), logos (logical arguments) and pathos (emotions) underpin the study. In the domain of rhetorical responsibility in particular, it is not only words that bring trust to a speaking situation, but the moral and personal ethics of a speaker may also influence the illocutionary act and the perlocutionary effect (Austin 1962, Searle 1969) of a political speech.

The better organised the speech, the more the speaker is believed. That was, indeed, solid advice to public speakers before the new interconnected world exposed a variation of views as to what constitutes an organised, well-sequenced speech. It can still be argued that the typical basic parts of a speech are the introduction, the body and the conclusion (e.g. Lucas 2015, Zarefsky 2017). But whether the emphasis in these parts of speech is on ethos, pathos or logos depends partly on socio-cultural preferences and is naturally also influenced by the context of the speech.

Public speeches in international organisations such as the European Union and the United Nations are typically delivered by high-level representatives, namely presidents, prime ministers or other distinguished governmental officers, who have been elected to office in member states. Each public speaking forum has its own protocol that speakers are advised to follow. These requirements have an effect on the linguistic features of public discourse. At the UN General Assembly (GA) plenary debates, for example, each annual session is given a theme that the speakers either follow during their allocated speaking time, or fail to follow. Public speeches are typically delivered to an audience. The audience at the GA plenary debate may be representatives from all the 193 member states, which tends to be the setting on the first days of the general debate, or speakers may end up talking to a nearly empty hall.

## 1.2 Coherence-responsibility in public discourse

Coherence in this study refers to a communication context in which actors share a common understanding of what is decent and ‘good’. As such, coherence presumes responsibility, and vice versa. By international responsibility I refer to a global phenomenon that includes integrity, suggesting that human integrity translates into dignified intercultural communication between people and peoples, especially in the genre of formal public speaking.

The ideal of classical rhetoric was to speak to the audience with integrity and to speak well. According to the Roman orator Cicero (106–43 BC), ‘the individual is a locus of integrity and that fundamental character must be reserved. If it is not, any battle for the social good is lost before it has begun’ (Woolf 2015:184). As a locus of integrity, an individual orator had then and today still has more influence and more social responsibility in mediating ‘the social good’ than those who are less frequently in public fora.

The state and status of integrity, described by contemporary dictionaries as ‘moral excellence’ or ‘honesty’, certainly represents itself differently in contemporary societies from the way it was manifested at the time of Aristotle or Cicero. ‘Integrity’ and ‘ethics’ in domains such as public discourse tend to be substituted today by the somewhat more dynamic notion of ‘responsibility’. Integrity as a notion is individually oriented, whereas responsibility is more anchored to social and societal aspects. Besides, as a wider but perhaps looser epistemic concept, the notion of responsibility crosses both contemporary academic and societal boundaries with greater ease than integrity and ethics. As Lakoff points out (2016), responsibility is a common phenomenon in economics, law and medicine, but still less used in the traditional field of linguistics (see also Sarangi 2016, Solin and Östman 2016). Lately ethics, as a formal study of morality has become a focus of research in academic fields. The phenomenon of responsibility has also become more deployed in communication and various embedded markers of responsibility are investigated in notions such as intentionality, epistemic stance and self-other relations (see Östman and Solin 2016).

International public discourse may manifest varying forms and levels of coherence-responsibility depending on its communicative setting (e.g. formal versus informal, individual versus collective). Accordingly, politicians speaking to international audiences may use implicit (Östman 1995) or explicit linguistic markers to express their sense of coherence-responsibility in relation to their audience, to other nations, to the topic of their discourse or any other current issue at hand.

To construct coherence in a public speaking setting, contact with the audience is typically established in the very opening words of a speech. I argue that how speakers linguistically position themselves in their opening words largely constructs the socio-cultural setting of the speaking situation of their public discourse and implicitly portrays how they will position themselves vis-à-vis issues brought up in the introduction of the speech. This topic of constructing coherence with the audience is examined in Chapter 9.

Contemporary guidebooks on the art of public speaking (see e.g. Lucas 2015, Zarefsky 2017) continue to emphasise speakers’ special responsibility of having ethically sound goals, ethos, in their public discourse. As in recent years, however, the

development of digital social media has made it possible for anyone to deliver ‘a public speech’ incognito, this new social-media-based genre of public discourse has re-conventionalised some of the traditional ideals of the genre of public speaking: rhetorical devices seem to be valued more for their impact on virtual audiences than for their truth or for the taking-of-responsibility they express (cf. ‘the open society’, as introduced by Popper, 1945).

### 1.3 Culture – from static to fluid

Culture has been redefined in past years and continues to evolve, even to the point of at times having become a concept of non-existence in communication studies. It may be challenging to investigate cultural aspects of different linguistic communities, as the concept of culture is frequently understood as a notion suggesting division, contradictions and socioeconomic differences. In the earlier models from the 1960s onwards, culture was seen as a static phenomenon compared to the dynamic, constantly changing and fluid concept of culture prevalent in current theories. Blommaert (1991, 2015) among many others remarks that ambiguous definitions have been given to culture. Still today the concept continues to be disputed to the point that there has been a shift of paradigm even in intercultural communication studies.

In this interdisciplinary study culture is looked at as a social model of communication patterns adopted by a communicative community. A person can choose to accept or ignore the code of conduct that is salient in his/her cultural community. As Holliday (2013) argues, culture is construed and negotiated, accepted or not by individuals, in multicultural, multilingual and multinational societies. Not seeing culture as a-taken-for-granted variable (e.g. Sarangi 2009), in this study I sought to find out if there is evidence of socio-cultural macro-level systems potentially influencing the choice of rhetorical patterns in contemporary institutional public discourse (see also Verschueren 1999 for macro-processes in language use).

In this study of international public discourse, although the focus is largely on the societal macro-level (as the speakers in this study represent their member-states in the UN and the EU), the focus of the systematic analysis is on micro-level interaction (see Verschueren 1999). Following the argumentation by Verschueren (1999: 228-229) this study does not aim to look at the phenomena of intercultural and international communication as ‘anything special, but simply as just another instance of linguistic

behaviour', subject to the same types of influences as other communicative events (cf. Sarangi 2009).

In short, in current transcultural societies individual identities are seldom formed in one cultural community, as diverse cultural inputs contribute to making cosmopolitan communicators with hybrid cultural identities. Language and culture influence each other (Hinnenkamp 2009, Scollon and Wong Scollon 2001, Wierzbicka 2006). While a lot of cross-cultural research in recent decades has focused on conversational studies, cross-cultural studies have largely neglected the genre of public speaking.

#### 1.4 Research questions and overview of the study

To reiterate, the focus of this interdisciplinary study is on public discourse (Sarangi 2011), written and spoken, in two international organisations, the United Nations and the European Union. The study examines how public discourse in high-level international fora such as the United Nations and the European Union manifests expressions of coherence and responsibility, essential elements in constructing and maintaining international stability.

Additionally, this cross-cultural study examines if and how the rhetorical strategies expressing coherence-responsibility manifest potential socio-cultural features. It is thought that in today's post-globalised, hybrid societies (Blommaert 2015) macro-level (e.g. Verschueren 1999) regional, national or societal linguistic systems based on linguistic conventions and preferences in societies have ceased to influence discursive practices. In this study, the aim was to find out if such macro-systems continue to have an impact on official political public discourse in international fora.

These aims can be formulated as two overriding research questions:

1. How are issues related to coherence and responsibility manifested in political public discourse?
2. How do rhetorical strategies used by international actors manifest culture-bound tendencies?

On a more theoretical-methodological level, the study furthermore asks what public speaking analyses can add to well-established approaches like pragmatics and

discourse analysis in order to give a deeper understanding of international communication.

Pragmatics in this study is interpreted as ‘the cognitive, social, and cultural science of language and communication’ (Verschueren 2009). In the pragmatic approach, using language is making choices (Östman 1986, Solin and Östman 2016) and language users generate meaning in a social world (Verschueren 1999). I examine how rhetorical choices expressing coherence-responsibility in public discourse by leading politicians in the UN and the EU explicitly and implicitly generate meaning and construct reality. Furthermore, my aim was to find out if the strategies chosen are implicitly anchored (Östman 1995) to linguistic practices in different societies (see also sociocultural responsibility, Solin and Östman 2016).

This analysis is highly relevant in the international terrain, as the data for this study were selected from distinctly different geo-political and linguistic regions, categorised in the UN as ‘Latin American and Caribbean states’, ‘Western European’, and ‘Asia-Pacific states’ (UN handbook 2017-2018). Additionally, for the analysis of speeches in the EU I selected data from a typical array of EU member states: France as a founding member of the EU, Britain as a representative of the so-called core countries (from 1975 till 2020), but where critique on the EU came ‘from the inside’ (eventually ending with Brexit), and Finland as a representative of smaller states, a member since 1995. As a contrast, Part I of the report of The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations represents multinational authorship.

The study looks at how speakers position themselves (Bamberg 1997, De Fina 2013) in relation to their audience in the openings of their speeches, and how at the macro-level the state leaders position their nations in the world community. Since the aim of my study was to hear ‘the voice of a member state’ in international organisations where all member states need to be heard, the study does not concentrate on finding out who wrote the speeches or how they were written, nor does the study focus on personal and other factors that may have had an impact on the rhetorical choices in the public speeches.

Chapters 1 to 5 describe the terrain in which this study is situated, and give background information on the initiative and the arenas chosen for the focus of this study, namely the Alliance of Civilizations (AOC), the United Nations (UN) and the

European Union (EU). In Chapter 6 I examine approaches to analysing public discourse, introducing pragmatics and intercultural pragmatics, and elaborate on analysing socio-cultural variation in discourse. Chapter 7 presents the data and the methodology used in the study, describing the three diverse approaches taken to investigate the three datasets.

Chapter 8, Building Bridges across International Divides, is the starting point of the empirical part of this study. The pragmatic analysis of Part I of a document of the UN-based initiative the Alliance of Civilizations constructs a cognitive conceptual setting for the study as a whole and serves as a background for the ensuing analyses of public speeches in international fora. By providing a conception of how international political actors position themselves to construct responsibility in their public discourse and by taking note of culture-bound variation in the choice of rhetorical strategies in official public discourse, we can hopefully promote intercultural understanding between actors representing a diversity of perspectives, and at the same time contribute to efforts of constructing stability in and between international societies. In the pragmatic analysis of rhetorical strategies in Part I of the report, which depicts the AOC's effort to develop sustainable communication between societies, I also paid attention to how the agencies position themselves to express blame in their evaluations of global conflict issues.

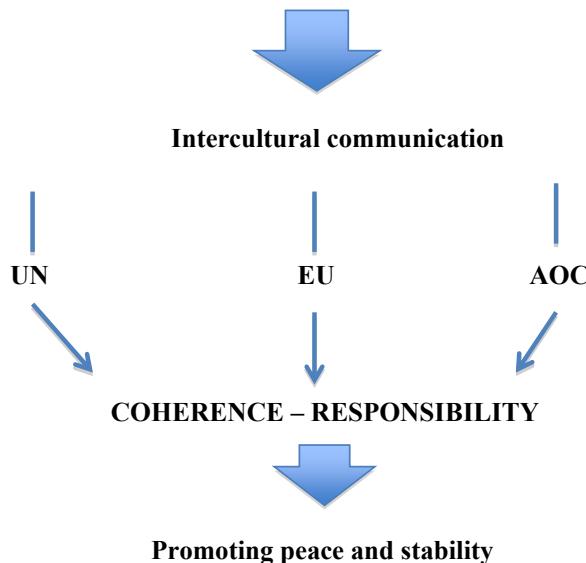
Chapter 9 examines official public speeches at the United Nations General Assembly, focusing on rhetorical strategies constructing international coherence and responsibility salient in the introductions of the speeches. The focus is on the introductions to speeches by the official delegates of Brazil, France, Jordan and the United States at the General Assembly plenaries. The opening discursive formulas are often overlooked as conventional formalities expressing politeness or even politic behaviour (Watts 2003). I argue that a speaker begins to construct the socio-cultural setting in the speaking situation by the very opening words delivered. Chapter 9 examines further if the way speakers position themselves in their opening words is reflected in the way they position themselves to express international societal responsibility to issues they bring forth in the introductions of their speeches.

Chapter 10 examines public speeches by the British, Finnish and French Prime Ministers to see how the national leaders position themselves in relation to the

European Union in their public discourse. The analysis of the inclusive and exclusive pronouns used by leaders of member states in their public speaking in 2005–2006 gives an indication of the direction that the nation in question would take years later in the European integration process.

The concluding chapter draws together the main arguments and results of the study and elaborates on how the findings of this study of public discourse can be a step, even if only a small step, in efforts to develop a deeper understanding of implicit and explicit markers of coherence-responsibility in international communication.

## PUBLIC DISCOURSE IN INTERNATIONAL FORA



**Figure 1.** Framework of the study.

Figure 1 illustrates how this cross-cultural study is situated in the framework of intercultural communication. One of the aims in the original strategy documents of the United Nations (Charter of the United Nations, [www.un.org/en/charter-united-nations/](http://www.un.org/en/charter-united-nations/)) and the European Union (A peaceful Europe – the beginnings of cooperation, <https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/history/1945-1959>) was to maintain

international peace and stability. Accordingly, the Alliance of Civilizations (<https://www.unaoc.org/>) functions in the area of international stability and peaceful co-existence. In this study I investigate how the notions of coherence and responsibility – essential elements in maintaining international harmony – are constructed in the public discourse by the leading politicians in these organisations. I also sought to find if potential socio-cultural tendencies, such as rhetorical preferences and discourse practices (Sarangi 2009:100) or ‘conventionalized idiom of behavioural cues’ (Goffman 1963: 243) are manifested in rhetorical strategies expressing different levels of coherence-responsibility.

## **2. ‘TALK AND TEXT’ IN PUBLIC FORA**

Seldom has public discourse as a genre been exposed to such changes in the area of international communication as in the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium. In this chapter I examined the effects of globalisation on discourse, beginning with an examination of the genre of public discourse as ‘talk and text’ (Sarangi 2011), drawing attention to specific features in political rhetoric and discussing western models in communication theories.

### **2.1 Talk and text**

The terms ‘public speaking’, and ‘rhetoric’ are often used interchangeably. Swearingen and Schiappa (2009) among other scholars of communication remark that ranks of scholars outside the discipline of communication studies use ‘rhetoric’ so freely that basically anything can be called ‘rhetorical’. Schweißgen and Schiappa (2009: 2) describe changes in contemporary and international practices of rhetoric as follows:

Simple comparisons with a classical paradigm are long gone, replaced by more nuanced definitions and redefinitions of what rhetoric is, how it is used, and how it may best be observed and studied. The classical concept of ‘audience’ has long since been widened to include readerships, communities of discourse, and the formation of voluntary political and religious communities.

Zarefsky (2009: 433) defines public discourse as ‘situated rhetorical practice’, which according to Zarefsky ‘places the object of study where text and context, theory and practice, rhetorical situation, and rhetorical artifact all meet’ (2009: 450). His definition suggests that a public speech is a product of a rhetorical transaction in a particular context; in this study the prime contexts are the public sphere of the European Union and the United Nations. Accordingly, Sarangi (2011:248), having defined public discourse as ‘social processes of talk and text in the public domain which have institutionally ratified consequences’, goes on to elaborate on the microcosmic and macrocosmic social order within sociology, in the following manner in reference to public discourse (2011: 251):

... while the ‘micro’ deals with social action and agency in the local, interactional sense, the ‘macro’ is geared towards social structure. It may be

tempting to equate the micro-macro distinction with the private-public dichotomy [...] but such an attempt is unlikely to be productive. [...] The micro-interactional turn in sociology [...] is in some way to be contrasted with the macro-social turn in linguistics (the critical linguistic tradition) and such orientations have had a considerable impact on the conceptualisation and analysis of public discourse.

What Sarangi talks about as a macro approach geared to social structure is essential in dealing with the genre of public speaking, and especially political public discourse. The text and talk in political settings by official representatives of nations undoubtedly have institutionally ratified consequences.

Blommaert (2005) refers to discourse as all forms of meaningful semiotic human activity that are present in social, cultural and historical patterns in us. Blommaert later (2013) suggested the concept of ‘superdiversity’, depicting the complexity of social configurations in our contemporary world society. Due to migrations of people and the digital revolution, speech communities are no longer areas of immobility, but open to significant linguistic changes. From the research point of view ‘superdiversity’ and changing discourse patterns in hybrid societies (Hinnenkamp 2009) make analysing cultural discourse with traditional tools complicated.

Historical evidence of the tradition of public discourse is found in all cultures, often in the form of preserved sermons or speeches about public issues. Cicero and Aristotle already identified different genres of oratorical performances. The first formal anthologies of speeches were published in Britain in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Typically, institutional ‘talk and text’ differ considerably from other genres. Institutional public speaking has features of formality foreign to many other genres, such as conversational language (Sarangi 2011, Scollon 2012, Verschueren 1999). Furthermore, in institutional speaking situations speakers and the audience each have their specific roles and responsibilities. In supranational institutions such as the United Nations and the European Union, speakers and writers typically adhere to such commonly accepted codes of conduct.

## 2.2 Political rhetoric

The data used in this study represent political public discourse; political in the sense that the text and talk by the official and political representatives of the UN and EU member states are delivered to recipients in political and institutional contexts.

Referring to the power of political speeches, Charteris-Black (2014:84) suggests that language is considered crucial in determining social power relationships and argues that all societies are formed around power relations. Verschueren, on the other hand, talks about ‘institutionally defined power’ (1999:91), which can also be applied in this study: through public discourse in high-level international organizations leaders of nations have the power to construct political realities. Although my focus is not the concept of power in political public discourse as such, societal power politics is naturally a strong undercurrent in the international public discourse analysed in the study. Official and professional politicians have the power to make choices in their rhetorical strategies, by explicit statements, by implicit insinuations or by completely but consciously failing to mention a pertinent current concern. Anderson’s (2006) suggestion of nations – or nation-ness - being imagined communities and cultural artefacts, emphasises the significance of language. The theory of imagined communities may be even more valid in the virtual reality of global politics today, as national leaders’ words on digital platforms such as twitter may guide future steps of nations in the world society. Attali (2006) among others suggests that this rapid change in the flow of information progressively reduces the role of national societies, sector by sector (cf. Weiss and Daws 2007). Such a tendency may eventually erode the political power of rule-based supranational organisations such as the UN and the EU.

Zarefsky (2009) considers public discourse as being crucial to the survival of democratic societies. Each society and each era selects the linguistic strategies that it needs for its communicative purposes. Official representatives of member states in international organisations can choose to use rhetoric that either benefit political and economic rapprochement between nations or prevent or delay the process. Discourse patterns or utterances may have their roots so deep in the history of a communication community that their origin is no longer recognisable by contemporary utterers or writers, nor their audiences. This becomes particularly evident in Chapter 10 of this study, which has an analysis of the political rhetoric of prime ministers in Europe, a continent that in 2005 was at the crossroads of becoming a unified union, or not.

## 2.3 Western models of public speaking

In traditional early research in linguistics, discourse, very often as texts, was analysed without consideration of its context, as if it took place in a vacuum, apart from cultural, social, political or religious surroundings. This approach was also in common use in the research on rhetoric. However, a new phase of doing research on public speaking became evident in the latter part of the twentieth century (Swearingen and Schiappa 2009), as rhetoric was now to be studied from an intercultural perspective. According to Hum and Lyon (2009) this new focus required cross-cultural sensitivity: it was appropriate to apply broad but culturally based definitions of rhetoric in comparative studies.

Hall (1992) suggests that all theories are cultural products produced under particular conditions by particular people in particular places. Accordingly, it has been widely argued in academia that theories and concepts prevalent in international communication arise from western traditions (e.g. Chen 2002, Dervin 2011, Holliday 2011, Scollon and Wong Scollon 2003). Consequently, lecturers in contemporary public speaking courses present diagrams of how to construct a public speech for diverse audiences, concentrating on aspects such as deductive and inductive constructs, issues of (in)directness, collective versus individual approaches, listening habits etc. (see e.g. Zarefsky 2017).

The Western tradition aims for clarity (clarity as defined by western values) in the transfer of information between two communicants, in line with what Grice (1975:45) suggested in his Conversational logic. The cooperative principle of Grice (1975) serves as a fundamental base for public discourse:

Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. (1975:45)

Grice's formulation suggests that human beings are rational and cooperative communicators, whose communication is relevant and primarily intended to transfer information, and his cooperative principle and his four maxims of conversation were created for clarification of this cooperative principle. Grice's maxims, which have been applied over recent decades to various discourse genres, in their pragmatic essence are analogous to methods used in enhancing a person's public speaking skills:

1) Quantity (make your presentation as informative as is required, and not more than required) 2) Quality (do not give false information or information for which you lack adequate evidence) 3) Relation (be relevant) 4) Manner (be brief and orderly, avoid ambiguity and obscurity). Based on Grice's maxims Lakoff (1975a) and Leech (1980) later formulated another maxim, namely the maxim of politeness (see also Brown and Levinson 2002). If speakers follow Grice's maxims of being informative, truthful, relevant and clear, they inherently construct mutual trust and develop responsibility between themselves and the audience. However, all maxims of Grice, though they can no doubt contribute to making a successful public speech, cannot be universally accepted: communication communities tend to have diverse ways of interpreting qualities mentioned in the maxims. Scholars criticised the maxims for being based on western traditions (e.g. Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper 1989).

The maxim of politeness, though not necessarily contributing to the information transfer in a speech, no doubt contributes efficiently to co-operation and coherence in a communicative situation. Politeness strategies tend to imply indirectness, avoidance of conflict, and manifestations of appreciation towards collective characteristics of a communication community (e.g. Blum-Kulka et al 1989, Brown and Levinson 2002, Lakoff 1975a, Leech 1980, Watts 2003). Kádár and Mills (2011) elaborate on researchers' potential subjectivity in comparing cultural politeness norms by suggesting that generalisations in research should only be made after first having described cultural politeness norms objectively and in terms of variability. Only then can generalisations be made in comparing politeness behaviour e.g. in East Asian cultures and cultures where norms for polite behaviour are English-based. Examining cultural characteristics in diverse societies may cause challenges, as discursive variation occurs within societal communication communities. Cook (2006) made studies of the way Japanese speakers tend to switch between formal (with honorifics) and informal styles and suggests that this kind of communicative pattern is more a norm than an exception.

Rhetorical strategies of politeness in different cultures have been investigated by a technique of 'cultural scripts'. Goddard (2009) and Wierzbicka (1997, 2003, 2006) use this approach based on combined approaches from both semantics and cross-cultural pragmatics to understand relevant culturally important words (e.g. for local values and social categories) from the perspective of the speakers themselves.

Through a constrained language of simple words and grammatical terms that have equivalents in all languages they have examined cultural scripts describing culture-specific ways of showing feelings, using linguistic tropes and the like. Naturally these cultural scripts change and evolve over time and do not exist within specific geopolitical borders and social space. Approaching politeness research cross-culturally has brought various theoretical frameworks into the field of politeness research (e.g. Ide 1989, Mills and Kádár 2011). There is more on various aspects of politeness in Section 7.2.3.

## 2.4 Globalisation and discourse

In the disciplines of social sciences the concept of globalisation was used as early as in the 1980s and even before that, but generally the notion of globalisation as a term referring to increasingly interconnected nations and people across the globe became widely recognised only in the 1990s. The new wave of globalisation, invigorated by technological innovations in knowledge transfer, connected socio-cultural sectors across the globe and at the same time had a strong impact on communicative patterns in societies across the globe (see e.g. Hum and Lyon 2009).

Globalisation essentially refers to the development of a borderless world, in which nation states and cultural differences gradually disappear. The rapid development in information technology and digitalisation speeds up the unifying process in all sectors of society, even in language use, transforming the world into a global village. Yet, ‘sociolinguistically, the world has not become a village’, argues Blommaert in the opening statement of his book *The Sociolinguistics of Globalization* (2010:1). He suggests that globalisation ‘has spawned its own discourses-on-globalization, thus making it into a self-conscious and seemingly autonomous political, economic, cultural and intellectual project’ (2010:1). According to Blommaert, there is a ‘complex web of villages’ created by globalisation and connected by unpredictable ties that need to be understood. Somewhat similar is Fairclough’s suggestion (2006) that globalisation is a historical discontinuity, as it creates new genres and new relations between genres.

As more than 60 million refugees are leaving their homes and emigrating to different regions and countries, the phenomenon of globalisation requires a new understanding and probably new tools for analysis in contemporary research. As political events and

developments continue to reposition cultures and religions globally, focus has turned to developing tools for sustainable intercultural dialogue, particularly as the on-going globalisation process initiates political and cultural trends that are hard to predict. Furthermore, for a researcher of intercultural communication the intensely interconnected world represents a new kind of context. Guilherme and Dietz (2015) suggest that as a scholar investigates globalisation, or cross-cultural issues for that matter, from any global location, his/her own location in the process of globalization is supposed to prevent fundamental understanding of those equally locked into other positions in that process. Blommaert (2015), on the other hand, argues that people holding such views must have missed some central features of globalisation, such as the centuries-long history of globalisation and its influence across boundaries, which has created ‘diverse cultural and social features sharing a number of fundamental assumptions and characteristics’ (2015: 22).

As already been discussed at the beginning of this study, globalisation seems to have an effect on rhetoric, on coherence-responsibility, on culture, and even on the international fora of the UN and the EU, in other words all central elements in this study. Furthermore, phenomena such as ‘superdiversity’ (Blommaert 2013) and hybrid societies (Hinnenkamp 2009) largely challenge Foucault’s (1971) suggestion of a nation being ‘a discursive formation’. We need to bear in mind that being internationally interconnected is not a product of our generation. Yet being so intensely interconnected due to the rapid technological development is, and that development has dramatically changed global communication patterns. Regarding international public speaking, new technology has had the effect of providing politicians access to international public arenas, integrated through networks of real-time information transfer. Contemporary politicians and national leaders may have vast virtual audiences, who can instantly critique or applaud their performances in all corners of the world. That being so, it is natural that globalisation involves growing interdependence of nations. This rapprochement, be it political, economic or encompassing cultural values, is noticeably reflected e.g. in speeches of politicians at the United Nations in the 2010s.

However, it remains to be seen whether globalisation is, after all, a pendulum-like movement. Contemporary societies have started to pay more attention to regional

politics and local matters. The re-emergence of nationalism, and interpretation of global political and economic matters through local and regional perspectives, especially in the European Union (e.g. Eatwell 1997, 2018) may lead to disagreements, if not intercultural conflicts.

We could say that globalisation has influenced the research into the public speaking genre in two diverse ways. First the technological development in communication transfer turned the attention of scholars away from the phenomenon of public speaking, as discourse studies were more focused on intercultural conversational studies, often on the then newly-developed social media. The second phase of globalisation that inter-connected cultures worldwide made scholars realise that public speaking, as a genre, was approached and valued differently in different discourse cultures (see Hum and Lyon 2009, Zarefsky 2009). Contrastive rhetoric, later relabelled intercultural rhetoric, brought new interest and trends into the research of public speaking globally. Instead of analysing structural and grammatical features of a speech *per se*, scholars became more interested in investigating how different phenomena such as individualism-collectivism, directness-indirectness were manifested in speeches and why a certain form of politeness was chosen in a particular communication community (Blum-Kulka 1989, Kádár and Mills 2011, Ogiermann 2016). Also, it became significant to study the effect of a speech on an international audience, as expectations of public speeches tended to vary in different countries (e.g. Lucas 2015, Zarefsky 2017). It became evident that researchers needed more knowledge of the specific cultural context of a speaker, as they carried out their pragmatic research on rhetorical choices in discourse in e.g. Arabic countries, Japan or in East Asia (see e.g. Farghal and Borini 2009, Cook 2006, Kádár and Mills 2011).

Prior to globalisation, studies in rhetoric focused largely on specific phenomena such as public discourse as a means of empowerment, or public discourse as a formation of collective memory (Zarefsky 2009). Zarefsky remarks further that in analysing historical political speeches, the focus tended to be on the personality of speakers as political leaders rather than on the public discourse as such, or on comparing cultural discursive patterns in rhetoric. The few earlier efforts to establish cultural studies in comparative rhetoric (e.g. Kennedy 1998) were widely criticised for their western ideals. According to Hum and Lyon, (2009) a lack of publication of analyses and theory in non-Western cultures was the prime difficulty for the development of

comparative rhetoric. They argue that rhetoric from another culture is still not examined for its own worth. Hum and Lyon call for openness to new definitions and methods and for a critical awareness of the ethics of speaking. They remark that some contemporary scholars even avoid using the construct ‘the rhetorical tradition’ due to its problematic (*ibid.* 2009:155) Western origin.

To summarise, this chapter has looked at public discourse as ‘text and talk’, and examined the tradition of political rhetoric, which according to Zarefsky (2009) is an inherent element in democratic societies. Grice’s maxims were evaluated from a perspective of public speaking, bearing in mind that public speaking studies tend to be based on ideals of Western rhetorical traditions. Rhetorical politeness, an innate element in the diplomacy of institutional public discourse, was looked at from a cross-cultural perspective. With regard to politeness strategies, such as directness and indirectness of speaking, there is considerable variation in discourse preferences in cultural communities (see e.g. Chen 2002, Salo-Lee 2006, Shi-xu 2009). Globalisation contributed to the development of cross-cultural studies in the genre of public discourse. As using language is making choices (Östman 1986, Verschueren 1999), we may ask about the extent to which rhetorical choices that leading international politicians make in their public ‘text and talk’ contribute to coherence-responsibility in societies.

In the next section I will examine in detail the essence of culture, the multitude of approaches to defining culture and how culture and discourse are intertwined.

### **3. ON DEFINING CULTURE**

Culture takes diverse forms across time and space. This diversity is embodied in the uniqueness and plurality of the identities of the groups and societies making up humankind. As a source of exchange, innovation and creativity, cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature. In this sense, it is the common heritage of humanity, and should be recognized and affirmed for the benefit of present and future generations. (UNESCO, Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, Article 1)

#### **3.1 Culture redefined**

A generally-held view is that due to our inter-connected world, characteristics of different cultures lose their significance and at the same time models of communication become more universal. If this were to be so, we must ask which global sector chooses and determines the norms and guidelines for this contemporary universalism. Before answering those questions we need to know what is understood by culture. Besides, we need to ponder how culture and communication are interconnected. In this chapter I have tried to answer these questions and clarify the framework of culture within which this study is situated.

In intercultural communication studies, much research has been based on theories of Hofstede and especially on his original definition of culture as being ‘the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another’ (2001:9). This definition by Hofstede, together with his idea of four, later six, national dimensions of culture, has been the dominant paradigm in intercultural communication studies, especially in business management literature, during the past three decades. In his pioneering research involving cross-cultural organisations across the world, Hofstede used simple terms to analyse the complex phenomenon of culture. His four dimensions for dominant patterns in culture, namely power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism-collectivism, and masculinity-femininity, which he originally suggested after detailed analyses of business managers’ work-related value orientations in over 50 countries, became a systematic framework for assessing national cultures and cross-cultural differences in organisational cultures. Hofstede later added a fifth dimension, namely long- and

short-term orientation towards time in his cultural dimensions, and eventually a sixth dimension of indulgence versus restraint. Scholars readily accepted the model of Hofstede's national dimensions that were easy to measure, and references to his work are frequent in the literature of intercultural communication.

Though many scholars (e.g. Schwarz 1992, Trompenaars 1995, Triandis 2003, Earley & Ang 2003) have continued doing research within the same basic paradigm of Hofstede's national dimensions, their work, sometimes more scientific, sometimes more practically oriented, did not essentially change the paradigm that Hofstede had created. Schwarz, who had a more universal perspective on intercultural communication, considered values to flow from our most basic human needs whereas Hofstede accentuated the influence that nationality had on human behaviour. Both Schwarz and Hofstede used statistical analyses of survey data from individual respondents.

Building on Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Trompenaars studied a person's adaptation in cultural contexts, particularly organisational business contexts, and introduced also the aspect of self-examination to the field of intercultural communication research. Similarly, Earley & Ang (2003) emphasised adapting behaviour as a person encounters diverse norms and traditions in a new cultural context and accentuate motivation influencing an individual's reaction to social situations. Earley & Ang were among the first scholars to introduce the notion of 'cultural intelligence', i.e. a person's ability to adapt to new cultural settings.

However, in the disciplines of intercultural communication studies and in linguistics, particularly in intercultural pragmatics, Hofstede's theory of culture being the 'collective programming of the mind' caused some concern. According to Atkinson (2004), the question is whether the location of culture is indeed in 'the brains of people, or does it somehow exist mostly out in the social world'. Atkinson continues to say that for most anthropologists, the answer is clear: culture is embodied in symbols and institutions. He further emphasises the co-effect of smaller cultures such as student culture, classroom culture and professional-academic culture, which all have an impact on people's behaviour in the same manner as their national culture does. When culture is divided into smaller interacting units, a more complex notion of interactions of different cultural impacts becomes evident; communication cannot be

analysed solely on the basis of the national culture of an individual. This has become the main criticism of Hofstede's pioneering work. However, Hofstede's emphasis in his analysis of international business organisations was on social behaviour rather than on communication itself. Despite strong criticism, Hofstede remains the emeritus of intercultural communication studies and his work continues to have a notable impact in the field of intercultural communication, particularly in international business and management research.

Partly because of globalisation the discipline of intercultural communication studies experienced such a reconstruction of theories during the early 2010s that even the conceptual legitimacy of 'culture' itself became questionable. Culture was considered to represent negative attitudes such as implicit discrimination, colonisation of minorities, stereotyping etc. The very notion of a national culture, especially in reference to bigger global nations, was considered to implicitly refer to power-hungry imperialists, whose prime intention is to impose a foreign language, religion and other cultural traditions on their subordinates. As a consequence, research on minorities and cultures that have been subject to political and cultural oppression has been the focus of study in current intercultural communication research.

Furthermore, due to this shift of paradigm, or crisis of paradigm as some may call it, intercultural communication studies shifted from stereotype-based analyses towards a more hermeneutic approach (Salo-Lee 2006, Illman and Nynäs 2005, Dervin 2011, Fang 2012). Following this reconstruction, roughly speaking, two prime avenues in intercultural communication research remained: one that regards the theories of Hofstede, the unofficial establisher of intercultural communication studies, as still applicable and the other which strongly criticises his national dimensions of culture.

Partly caused by the effect of globalisation on culture, theory building in intercultural communication research turned several fields of cultural studies into oceans of theoretical uncertainties, where new paradigms were called for (e.g. Dervin 2011). If we think that the beginning of intercultural communication research was Hall's Silent Language in 1959, we see that during the following almost six decades the notion of culture has been defined and redefined by scholars, by speakers as well as audiences. From typical sociological metaphors of culture, such as culture is 'an onion' (Hofstede 2001) or 'iceberg' (Trompenaars 1995), scholars have now turned to

metaphors describing culture as an ‘ocean’ (Fang 2012) and culture as a ‘liquid’ (Dervin 2011) to portray the fluid element of culture. Fluidity no doubt emphasises the impression of culture as being a constantly changing phenomenon. It cannot be given; it is chosen. However, the limitless fluidity of cultural definitions and the notion of cultural re-creativity need some constraints, as Burke (1992) suggested more than twenty years ago. The current focus in defining culture is on co-active dynamics and choice, as when Fang (2012: 25) suggests that each culture as a ‘unique dynamic portfolio of self-selected globally available value orientations’. Fang introduced the Chinese view of Yin and Yang into the definition of culture in business management studies by stating that any culture has inherently paradoxical values which complement each other to shape a holistic, dynamic culture. Chen (2002:179) suggests that Chinese dialectical thinking considers the paradox of values as ‘interdependent opposites’, whereas the Western approach considers them ‘exclusive opposites’.

Traditions and norms of a community seem to have an impact on the identity building of its members. This should not be ignored in intercultural communication studies. Appiah reminded us in his lecture (at Princeton in 2008) that intercultural communication has to be made worthwhile for all participants, which means that ethnic, religious, social or national identities of participants need to be respected, and here we presuppose that respect includes the respect for their socio-cultural traditions. It is understandable that postmodern individuals do not want to restrict their opportunity to choose for themselves as to what they accept and adopt from a certain culture. In the words of Appiah (2007a: 155–156):

There has never been a state without some influence upon the character of its citizens... Autonomy, we know, is conventionally described as an ideal of self-authorship. But the metaphor should remind us that we write in a language we did not ourselves make. If we are authors of ourselves, it is state and society that provide us with the tools and the contexts of our authorship; we may shape our selves, but others shape our shaping.

No doubt many postmodern individuals prefer to decide for themselves what impact linguistic patterns of a state, ‘a system of shared meanings’ or ‘a consensus’ has on their behaviour and their reasoning.

It is self-evident that causes and consequences of imbalance in political power structures are also reflected in academic paradigms and theory building. Scholars

(e.g. Dervin 2011, Holliday 2011) are critical of some concepts in intercultural communication research because they are discriminatory, e.g. reference to colonialism in unequal terms, preference for analyses based on western thinking, acceptance of dichotomies etc. When describing the current global political and economic situation, ‘the context where we are nowadays leading our lives, or to put it in better terms, being lead across them’, scholars Guilherme and Dietz (2015:1) categorise the situation as ‘The Crisis’ and call it ‘as plural as it can be’. The authors suggest: ‘while in [sic] the surface it is an economic, political and social crisis, it goes deeper into the ontological and epistemological meaning of the whole humanity’. The authors criticise academia for the general frameworks of north-versus-south and Eurocentric conceptual frameworks prevalent in academia. The authors argue that for the sake of scientific accurateness it is important to identify the different layers of meaning for concepts like ‘interculturality’ and ‘multiculturalism’. To enhance the views into intercultural studies from this perspective, Guilherme and Dietz (2015) call for the ‘multiculturalizing’ of education to meet the new challenges in heterogeneous societies and in defining multiculturality and interculturality (2015: 2):

Looking back at the twentieth century, we certainly cannot avoid evoking two world wars, the boom of international policy, decolonization and postcolonialism, intensification of globalisation, the technological impetus and, as a result, wider and wider mass mobility. In addition, we can neither ignore the civil-rights movements, globalization or social movements, or the development of sociological studies nor the emergence of new nation-states and new societal paradigms that have, in the meantime, been validated. This is where we stand now, when we attempt to define multiculturality, interculturality and transculturality, that is, by holding ourselves to ‘the old and the new’ that, however, differ according to whichever perspective we take – geographical, historical, cultural, political, ideological, sociological – in order to explicate social complexities such as ‘multiculturalism’, ‘interculturality’ or ‘the transcultural’.

The point that Guilherme and Dietz elaborate on in their study is that although terms like intercultural and multicultural are now becoming common in academia as well as in official policy documents, and are often considered to be universal signifiers, the terms themselves carry positive or negative connotations. They criticise the prevailing ‘either-or’ perspective based upon generalisations as well as upon unilateral understanding of other views (2015:5). These views elaborated by Guilherme and Dietz are popular in intercultural communication research of contemporary Europe.

In our interconnected world, nations become culturally diverse and ideologically pluralistic and each cultural societal unit tends to be construed with its specified political, economic and religious underpinnings. To understand socio-cultural dynamics in international communicative patterns better and to bring forth reliable results in their research, a worthy effort could be to integrate several approaches and methods of analysis in doing contrastive studies in international public discourse.

Depending on their disciplinary background, e.g. history, philosophy, psychology, anthropology or linguistics, scholars view culture from different perspectives and focus their empirical analyses on specific issues such as societal hierarchy, collectivism, political power, minority issues, feminism and the like. In this study culture is considered from the perspective of communication, from a linguistic pragmatic point of view, examining the influence of culture as a discursive identifier in the genre of public speaking. This examination of culture is carried out through exploring what common codes of communication public speakers from different cultural speaking communities share with each other, and which they do not share. The basic assumption in any inter- and intra-culture communication is that codes for shared communication exist so that meaningful exchanges of information can take place. In political public speaking at international organisations such as the European Union and the United Nations, general prevalent codes for shared communication are largely established at each institution. That is, speakers at the UN are expected to more or less follow the official code of conduct that is typically used in the organisation, such as limiting the length of their speeches to 15 minutes, delivering the speech at normal speed to make simultaneous translation possible, exiting immediately after they have finished speaking and so on.

Besides textual analyses, exploring the relationship between societal value orientations and value preferences towards public speaking in a given society contribute to revealing the prevailing patterns in public speaking in societies. Anthropologists realised early in their explorations that what is considered good in one culture may not be considered good in another culture (see e.g. Marett 1931, Mead 1934). Accordingly, we might expect that notions such as coherence or responsibility can be perceived from varying perspectives by politicians coming from diverse value systems (see e.g. <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org>) with regard to e.g. individualism versus collectivism and direct-indirect communication models.

In this section, I discussed how the pre-2010 definitions of the notion of culture have been widely contested and reassessed. However, to end this section I would like to refer to Rorty (1982,1995), who argues that every person has his/her own personal vocabulary due to their socialisation into a culture and into specific linguistic practices. These lexicons change as our personalities change with time and as the surrounding world changes. Rorty further expands the concept of personal vocabulary by stating that a person does not have anything in him/herself except what he/she has received from outside influences (cf. Appiah 2007a: 155-156). He suggests that to understand the reasons behind one's way of acting or communicating in a certain manner better, one should take a sociologist's look at one's life and ask how they as historians would analyse the causes behind their own actions. However, we can never completely distance ourselves from our personal lexicon and the product of socialization that we carry with us. All description is subjective, and takes place in a context.

To sum up, the definition of culture has been modified considerably during the last few decades. Instead of defining culture as static, even to the point of culture being inherited as a lump of rituals, norms and understandings from one generation to another, the current theories, both in social sciences and in linguistics, emphasise the hybrid and fluid feature of culture. Culture is construed and negotiated (Holliday 2013), accepted or not by individuals, of their free choice, in post-globalised societies that are multilingual, multicultural and multinational. In my approach to the international data of public discourse, I see the phenomenon of culture as twofold: it prevails first in society, its history, traditions, norms and rituals and then in the mind of a person being a member of that society. The effect of culture on an individual depends on how one positions 'self' in this constantly evolving context, where culture and an individual are in consistent dynamic interaction and where both sides transform each other in an on-going mutual 'negotiation'. The ideological aspect of culture, meaning how beliefs, ideas or opinions are expressed in a specific culture, can be analysed from the point of view of how these concepts are discursively used (see e.g. Verschueren 2012) in a narrative.

In the next section I will take a closer look at how culture and language are intertwined.

### 3.2 Culture carried into rhetoric

The Finnish public speaking tradition is said to have originated from sermons (Valo 2000). From churches, the tradition of public speaking gradually became a genre accepted in other fora. Did it carry with it linguistic strategies of the sermons or the vocabulary of the Bible with it? According to Turja (2014), Finnish parliamentarians referred to the Bible more than to any other book in their speeches in the Finnish Parliament. This is a typical example of how culture is embedded in rhetoric. However, implicit references to the Scripture may or may not be heard by modern ears. Allusions, quotations and metaphors in political speeches may have their roots so far back in the history of a speech community that the connection remains hidden to most of the audience.

There has been a long-lasting debate about the relationship between culture and language at least since the beginning of the 1920s. ‘The linguistic relativity principle’, the approach supported in several ways and to different degrees by scholars like Boas, Sapir, Whorf and others, suggests that one’s native language influences one’s ways of thinking and even defines our experience. Researchers of culture and linguistics have vehemently criticised the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis and especially its stronger version, the linguistic determinism view. The weaker form of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, also called the linguistic relativism theory, has similarly caused concern to researchers, even though later it was agreed both in linguistics and in anthropology that culture and language are interlinked (Hinnenkamp 2009). This new approach has built a new defence for the weaker form of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. Although most researchers have situated themselves at a distance from the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, it is generally thought that some ideas from this approach have influenced even traditional approaches to culture. ‘Culture is to be found within the use of language’ (e.g. Hinnenkamp 2009:188). Views such as ‘thinking for speaking’ (Slobin 2006) and contemporary studies on the concept of ‘direction of fit’ (e.g. Levinson and Wilkins 2006) take a more moderate view on how languages shape the way we perceive reality, e.g. by suggesting that specific properties and preferences in languages such as the expression of space and temporal relations can have an impact on rhetorical choices in narratives.

As linguists turned towards pragmatics in the early 1960s, emphasising the importance of the use of language in context, the concept of culture was gradually re-imported into studies of language. Anthropology and sociology had dealt with language and contexts, but in linguistics pragmatic approaches were not properly introduced and properly established until the late 1970s and early 1980s. While discussions about the essence of culture as ‘given’ versus ‘produced’ continued for years, once it was generally recognised as a ‘stay-in’ parameter in the study of discourse, the notion of culture was seen to influence most communication, on all levels and in all speaking communities. Not only in linguistics but also in other disciplines many varied interpretations of the definition of culture led to theoretical re-considerations, and new avenues of research were later developed e.g. in intercultural communication studies (Hofstede 1991, Hall 1976, Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey 1988).

In the field of pragmatics, Hinnenkamp reminds us (2009) that in pragmatics the cultural and social has been part and parcel of the term ‘language’, to the point that the notion of intercultural communication is almost a tautology. Contemplating how in intercultural communication studies the loci of culture need to be made relevant in the encounter, Hinnenkamp (2009:190) points out:

Thus, culture may be located in the style of a speaker, in his or her ways of speaking, of structuring arguments or of sequencing information units. It may be located in aspects of behavioural competence such as politeness, deference, or proper conduct. It may be located in the ‘language’ competence, in native vs. non-native proficiency. It may be located in nonverbal signals, such as gaze direction or territoriality. It may be located in switching between language varieties. It may be located in stereotyped behaviour, in opinions, attitudes and worldviews. It may be located in the available power resources.

Minor differences in the language use in any of these loci influence communication, be it a political public speech or an encounter between two interlocutors. As language games, according to Wittgenstein, are embedded in the way of life (*Lebenswelt*), culture is strongly embedded in the language used in a particular language game area.

To a certain extent the link between culture and language became a reality to scholars through pertinent misunderstandings that took place when information got transferred from one cultural community to another. Cultural collisions experienced by e.g. American volunteers, staying in other countries with the Peace Corps in 1960s,

motivated the Peace Corps to develop courses on intercultural awareness, the first of their kind. Also in the 1960s, a new awareness of the multicultural reality of immigrant communities in the USA, and also in Europe in the 1970s, contributed to the fact that academic institutes both in the USA and Europe responded to the need to establish faculties of intercultural communication.

As discussed in earlier chapters, globalisation has been a significant cause of variation in the contemporary discourse in global communication communities. Information technology makes it possible for language to travel virtually, without immediate interconnection to culture. The rapid global development, making English the global lingua franca, brought up the question of whether language and culture continue to be closely tied together. And if they were, whose cultural constraints were embedded in the global English language. Linguists examined if cultural metaphors, euphemisms, idioms and other cultural features travel with the language or whether globally used English is gradually evolving into a cultureless language, if such a thing exists. Many questions emerge from this pragmatic turn, such as what variation is seen in the structure, syntax and phraseology of the global English language, or whether the globalisation process enriches or simplifies the vocabulary of a language used on all continents. It remains to be seen if there will be many English languages or just one English with cultural variations, and if English will influence other languages as in Latin changed European languages in the Middle Ages, or the influence of French from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

A mistake that scholars in contrastive studies tend to make is to categorise any persistent salient variation in linguistic strategies as being of a cultural origin. Another typical assumption that scholars in cross-cultural studies may make is to ignore the influence of their own cultural, political and societal background in the evaluation of linguistic samples, especially if their motivation for the investigation is to reveal cultural differences in the use of language. Sarangi (2009:100) illuminates this matter further by stating that, ‘there is certainly a danger if pragmatic accounts of cross-cultural and intercultural discourse embodies an essentialist view of culture and uses it as a taken-for-granted variable in understanding and describing communicative differences’. He continues his elaboration by stating that

... the goal for discourse oriented research in intercultural settings is not to use culture as an explanator of communicative behaviour in an unproblematic way, but to make attempts to understand how and when ‘culture’ – in the sense of discourse practices and rhetorical preferences – plays an active role in shaping and influencing our meaning making endeavours (2009:100).

The cultural link to language and vice versa is an interlink that has been studied widely, (see e.g. Carbaugh 1990, Connor 2008, Goddard 2009, Hinnenkamp 2009, Wierzbicka 1997, 2003). However, as Hinnenkamp (2009:188) suggests, the paradox remains, namely the notion that whatever definition of culture we adopt, we still have difficulty in showing how communication is bound by culture and how culture expresses itself in communication (2009:188):

Even this phrasing of the problem is misleading, because it suggests two separate entities – *communication* and *culture* – whereas it has to be shown that the one is an integral part of the other, that culture is to be found *within* the use of language, just as every *Sprachspiel* (language game), to use Wittgenstein’s phrase, is embedded in the *Lebenswelt* (way of life) of the speaker and his/her group. Separating ‘communication’ and ‘culture’ would imply that certain forms of communication could be *a-cultural* or *culture-free*, totally untouched by the communicator’s sociocultural background. The juxtaposition of language *and* culture can therefore only be a provisional, yet necessary, analytic form of meta-discourse.

Returning to Blommaert’s (2013) argument that superdiversity has changed many practices in linguistic studies so much that traditional tools for analysing linguistics and cultural settings need to be readjusted, this approach calls for a remapping of the whole sociolinguistic scene as the complexity of multilingual and multicultural communities in contemporary societies has affected the communication patterns to the point that discourse has lost its predictability.

Some researchers, including the author of this study, suggest that superdiversity caused by migration and mass movement of people around the globe rapidly changes the linguistic landscaping of a region and the cultural influence on languages. However, on the other hand newcomers to a foreign country tend to adapt their traditional discourse patterns to the prevalent local discursive patterns, in the same way as they tend to adapt their social behaviour to the prevailing culture-specific norms and practices in a given community in order to facilitate their integration into the new environment. In this process, newcomers do not necessarily change their traditional discursive patterns in inter-person, micro-level communication contexts, when communicating with representatives of their own cultural background, yet

communication with the mainstream society is more likely to follow the discursive patterns prevalent in the society. Examples of such adjustments are many especially in nations like Australia, Canada, the United States, France, and even in Finland, where immigrants from diverse cultural backgrounds seek to be socially integrated in their new home societies (Valo 2000). As countries become pluralistic, individuals in hybrid societies have many, not only social and cultural, but also linguistic identities that they need to adapt to in their new circumstances (Blommaert 2013, Chen 2002, Dervin 2011, Fang 2012).

As a scholar, I am aware of my own cultural limitations. Having a Finnish background, despite having spent thirty years in hybrid societies on several continents, I admit that my analysis (see e.g. Appiah 2007) of political public discourse is undoubtedly influenced by my western views and discursive preferences, and potentially by norms and practices in Finland, a small, northern UN and EU member state. However, my focus on potential macro-level linguistic patterns prevalent in societies is not based on a simplistic conceptualisation of culture, such that considers culture to have regional and national borders. It is based on an understanding that the constantly changing culture (Blommaert 2013, Dervin 2011, Hinnenkamp 2009) is always there: there are no culture-free societies. My concern is, however, that if we as scholars focus too intensely on examining micro-level, interpersonal communication, we may lose the ‘big picture’ in international public discourse. Furthermore, I think that scholars from international backgrounds tend to find alternative perspectives on challenges in intercultural communication, not regardless of, but because of their ‘culturally tilted’ perspectives on communication and general linguistic behaviour.

To sum up, as language and culture are intertwined, culture influences the formation of language and language transforms the culture. After the Whorf-Sapir hypotheses in the 1930s that strongly overemphasised the effect of culture on language, culture was gradually re-introduced into linguistics after the 1960s, largely due to challenges caused by pertinent misinterpretations in communication between interlocutors from different cultural communities. Culture, now portrayed as fluid and changing, is constantly defined and redefined by contemporary scholars from different disciplines.

In the next chapter I will discuss the concept of responsibility particularly from the point of view of how integrity and different levels and forms of responsibility are reflected in rhetorical choices in discourse.

## **4. INTEGRITY, RESPONSIBILITY AND DISCOURSE**

### **4.1 Integrity and ethics – the basis of responsibility**

The diplomacy involved in political public speaking in international fora characteristically presupposes that statements delivered by official representatives of nations be ideologically constructive and convey ethical ideas. The integrity of a speaker is often measured by their words. In the ethical realm the sphere of integrity is a complicated parameter to measure in a speaker, if not for the lack of methodological tools, but also for standards that need to be set as groundwork for an ethical examination by – whom else but the researcher her/himself. This proves to be even more challenging, as axioms of general truths, or even politeness rules for that matter, have varied interpretations in different discourse communities. Plato advised that speakers should speak the truth, and nothing but the truth. Plato particularly emphasised that the aim of rhetoric is not to win over minds of people nor to manipulate them, but to bring out the truth. Indeed, traditionally, oratory refers to speaking justly and taking responsibility for the words delivered and deeds done. More than 2,000 years ago, Quintilian, the Roman rhetorician, defined oratory as ‘the good man speaking well’. Although ‘the good man’ and ‘speaking well’ do not explicitly refer to the notion of responsibility, they belong to the same family of concepts. Quintilian, more than Cicero or other ancient orators, considered not only the techniques of speaking but also speakers’ moral character in evaluating their art of oratory. In his *Institutio Oratoria* Quintilian considered wisdom, goodness and eloquence to be inseparable. These ideas of ancient orators suggested that the art of rhetoric attains its completeness not solely through words but also through orators’ actions and deeds.

Dictionaries define integrity as wholeness, uprightness and honesty. Both civic virtues and good citizens tend to be defined in various manners according to the norms prevalent in a culture and the integrity of a speaker accordingly. Culture as a system of norms and attitudes has an impact on the way citizens express integrity in their discourse, and on how they interpret Aristotle’s *pathos*, *ethos* and *logos* in international political speeches. Audiences in international fora tend to be perplexed when contemplating how variation in ethical values in speeches reflects moral norms in a given society.

It was Plato who first taught us that politics is the art of caring for souls, and Cicero argued that society must reproduce itself by producing good citizens. Thus, good citizens, possessing qualities of integrity and responsibility, are societal products and good perhaps only in comparison to those who are not so. In considering integrity and ethics in society Woolf (2015:169) poses the question of what ethical theory is and continues to contemplate as follows:

Is its purpose to imply that there is a mechanical method, to be uncovered by the theory in question, of arranging our values? That indeed seems to misrepresent the complex way that different values compete and co-operate both within and across individuals and societies. If a purported ethical theory ends up failing to capture this organic quality of lived human experience and decision-making, we must ask whether the notion of a theory, with its necessary generalizations and simplifications, is helpful or even applicable in the ethical realm.

Public speaking is one of the ways politicians use to guide their audiences into developing new perceptions in their political, economic or social surroundings. Now another question arises: would one single unethical utterance in an otherwise plausible public speech have impact on the ethics and integrity of the whole discourse, including the dignity of the speaker? The audience may also wonder if the borders of responsibility expressed by a political speaker go beyond words into the actions taken regarding the topic at hand.

Contemporary governments are traditionally elected to office to better the circumstances in society; at least they hope to set guidelines for such a development. Accordingly, we expect their representatives in the public speaking sphere to do so, particularly in international organisations like the European Union and the United Nations. In international arenas such as the European Union and the United Nations plenary speakers make statements and send messages that should be comprehensible across political borders and cultural boundaries. As official representatives of their nation states speakers are also expected to show moral responsibility to their audience and to use language that follows the ethical principles of public speaking.

In this section the concepts of integrity and responsibility have been discussed and it has been suggested that the principles suggested by ancient orators like Plato and Cicero can still be valid in contemporary public speaking. Public speaking is a genre that aims to influence an audience, and integrity and responsibility have traditionally

been considered worthy qualities of a good speaker. Understandably integrity and responsibility are universal concepts, yet not necessarily accentuated in a similar manner in communication communities across our globe.

#### 4.2 Responsibility in linguistics

Although philosophy, ethics and other academic fields have their own definitions of responsibility, scholars have until recently questioned why ‘responsibility’ should be a topic of research in linguistics. However, Lakoff (2016) suggests that scholars from any academic discipline would benefit from deploying a linguistic perspective on responsibility in order to acquire a proper understanding of the very concept. As responsibility is typically expressed through communication, i.e. through linguistic (syntactic and lexical) as well as paralinguistic strategies, Lakoff (*ibid*) points out how speakers can choose linguistic devices to mitigate or avoid responsibility. Lakoff further elaborates whether speakers are responsible for all parts of their communication, both words and gestures.

Modern dictionaries define ‘responsible’ through notions such as ‘being answerable’ and ‘liable to be called to account’, even ‘culpable’. The concept of responsibility has failed to receive a universally accepted definition, and scholars (e.g. Harmon 1995:5) even argue that due to such conflictive meanings the notion of responsibility seems paradoxical.

Approaching the concept of responsibility from a pragmatic-linguistic perspective, in the words of Solin and Östman (2016:4):

Responsibility has to do with how we position ourselves in context, in relation to our sense of ourselves, of agency, and in relation to our sense of others and of authority.

Thus, rather than being a static phenomenon, responsibility evolves between communicants, in a similar manner as relations are perceived as emergent, dynamic and fluid, as negotiated and construed in interaction. Solin and Östman (2016:7) suggest further that there are three levels of responsibility that can be used as bases for linguistic-pragmatic studies. First, the sociocultural responsibility, related to societal and group ideologies, refers to values and practices of the culture in which a person is operating. The second level refers to interpersonal responsibility, in relation to one’s co-participants in a communicative setting. The third level implies

responsibility to self, in relation to one's 'internalised', subconscious values and attitudes. The model of the three levels suggested by Östman and Solin forms a wider framework in this study, through which I examined potential manifestations of culture-bound linguistic strategies deployed in international public discourse.

Among the types of responsibility, such as legal versus moral, natural versus contracted responsibility, the distinction between collective versus individual responsibility is essential in connection with public discourse. Collective responsibility in the context of public discourse would refer to a speaker's responsibility related to e.g. cultural values and norms in a society where one is operating.

#### 4.3 Responsibility versus coherence

Speakers and audiences of the 21<sup>st</sup> century question the extent to which public speakers (politicians specifically) are responsible for their public statements. Has public speaking become estranged from the ancient ethics of oratory, even more so in the era of fake news and post-truth communication? For speakers to reflect accountability in front of their audience, they need to be capable of building bridges between themselves and the addressees. Responsibility presumes coherence in a relationship. By coherence I have referred to a context in which actors share a common understanding of what is decent and 'good', in the Quintilian sense. It is the action that 'emerges when speakers and listeners – or writers and readers – perform their individual actions in coordination, as ensembles' (Clark 1996:3). Thinking thus, responsibility cannot exist without coherence, and vice versa. In this study the assimilation of these two notions with regard to international political, economic and societal coherence and responsibility is referred to as coherence-responsibility in the analyses dealing with functions at state level.

Both in ancient oratory and in contemporary high-level public discourse the speakers, 'the wise men', are generally assumed to contribute constructively to societal coherence. Speakers in international high-level fora such as the United Nations are expected to position themselves responsibly to assuage threatening conflicts and react wisely in crisis situations. As leading international politicians, they practise a particular virtue, *ars bene dicendi*, in their discourse, or at least aim to do so.

My prime focus in this study is at the macro-level, sociocultural aspect of coherence-responsibility. The notion of coherence-responsibility in the initiative of the Alliance of Civilizations and the speeches of representatives of member states at the United Nations and the European Union is reflected on in relation to the socio-cultural background of the speakers, in reference to their respective audience and in the way they position themselves towards the topic under discussion. The public tends to perceive speakers in organizations such as the United Nations as responsible protectors of global political, economic and societal issues. An essential focus of this study is to analyse what is spoken about at these international organisations, and to examine the evidence of how speakers from different global regions position themselves towards the issues at hand in their public discourse. My understanding of how the interdependence of positioning and coherence-responsibility functions in public discourse is depicted in Figure 2.

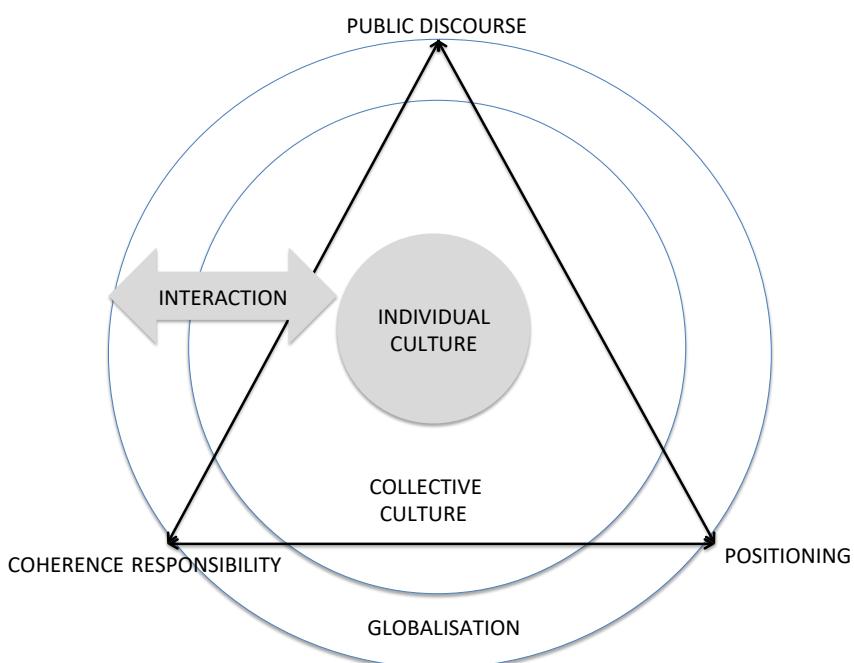


Figure 2 illustrates how a person's individual culture within distinct collective cultures prevalent in communication communities influences globalisation and is under its influence. In any socio-cultural settings the linguistic positioning of the actors (Bamberg 1997, 2012, De Fina 2013) and the manner they construct coherence-responsibility in their narratives is reflected in the choices of rhetorical strategies in their public discourse.

In several disciplines such as economics and business studies the notion of responsibility has been used extensively and recently it has become a worthwhile phenomenon of study also in linguistics. Words being prime conveyors of responsibility, the level and intensity of responsibility can be expressed through deploying different rhetorical devices in discourse. The positioning of speakers/writers is dynamic and changes in public discourse.

Political public discourse in institutions such as the UN and the EU offers representatives of nations a unique channel to express coherence-responsibility. The suggestion by Solin and Östman (2016) that responsibility can be expressed at three different levels will be interpreted as a speaker's collective socio-cultural level of responsibility in this study, a speaker's individual level in relation to other interlocutors, and the speaker's inner, subconscious level. In other words, speakers' accountability is examined regarding how they position themselves towards political, economic, social and cultural themes in the debates, towards the international audience and the way speakers implicitly express their emotions and opinions.

In the next chapter I will introduce the international organisations that are the focus of this analysis of international public discourse, namely the UN-based initiative the Alliance of Civilizations, the United Nations General Assembly, and the European Union.

## **5. ARENAS AND INITIATIVES – IN SEARCH FOR STABILITY**

Both the European Union and the United Nations were originally founded to foster international understanding and co-operation, to sustain stability between nations ([www.un.org/en/charter-united-nations/](http://www.un.org/en/charter-united-nations/), <https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/history/1945-1959>). Likewise, the prime aim of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (<https://www.unaoc.org/>) is to enhance international communication between representatives from different cultural communities in order to promote global stability. In the next segments I will briefly look at the background of the AOC (currently UNAOC), the UN and the EU.

### **5.1 The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations**

The Alliance of Civilizations (later named the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations) was initiated by former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, co-sponsored by the governments of Spain and Turkey and established at the United Nations in 2005 ([www.unaoc.org](http://www.unaoc.org)). The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations considers global cross-cultural education, expanding opportunities for youth, proactive strategies addressing migration and the informative role of the media as primary policies of the organisation. In its vision statement the UN Alliance of Civilizations ‘works toward a more peaceful, more socially inclusive world, by building mutual respect among peoples of different cultural and religious identities, and highlighting the will of the world’s majority to reject extremism and embrace diversity’ (*ibid.*). The Alliance maintains a global network of partners including states, organisations and the private sector to improve cross-cultural relations between nations and communities. In 2019 the role of women as mediators in peace building became a new area of focus for the initiative.

A High-Level Group of experts was formed by Mr Annan to explore the roots of polarisation between societies and cultures today, and to recommend a practical programme of action to address this issue. Since its inception, the UNAOC has become a leading United Nations platform for intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation ([www.unaoc.org](http://www.unaoc.org)). In 2006 the High-Level Group published the initial strategy paper. In the policy recommendations the AOC report calls for a renewed commitment to multilateralism stating that it is ‘incumbent upon states to reinforce multilateral institutions – particularly the United Nations – and to support

reform efforts that will strengthen the capacity and performance of these institutions' (p.19) and also calls for responsible leadership. The report remarks that in the current climate of suspicion and fear in societies across the world, leaders and shapers of public opinion, given the influence and the respect they command, have a special responsibility to promote understanding among cultures.

Part I of the report of the High-level Group (2006) of Alliance of Civilizations is the focus of my analysis. Chapter 8 *Building Bridges across International Divides* gives further detailed information of the Alliance of Civilizations.

## 5.2 The United Nations and global stability

In October 1937 President Franklin D. Roosevelt of the United States suggested in his public speech in Chicago an idea for a universal peace organisation to prevent another conflict like the First World War that had devastated Europe. The United Nations, which for the first time in the history would include the whole globe, became a reality a few years later. In 1944 official representatives from China, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the United States held deliberations on the matter in Washington DC, and a year later on 26 June 1945 delegates from 50 founding states signed the Charter of the United Nations.

From the beginning the United Nations was to be an organisation to maintain security and peace between nations, as the Charter of the United Nations indicates (Weiss and Daws 2007:300). Finding solutions for international conflicts continues to be a prime function of the UN in our contemporary world, where pertinent international conflicts continue to cause global instability. With 193 member states the UN today is a seat of global governance, where ideological outlines for future global development have been drawn up. The UN has initiated various projects to promote co-operation and understanding between nations: in 2000 the UN member states signed The Millennium Development Goals (MDG) (Weiss and Daws 2007), calling for development in global economics, and in social and in environmental matters. Despite these grand visions, the UN Millennium Goal report published in 2015 proclaimed that conflicts, as they continue in fragile and conflict-affected countries, remain the biggest threat to human development.

The Charter of the United Nations envisions that as approximately one third of the world's population of more than seven billion can speak English, this common language could be expected to serve as a tool for developing mutual understanding between peoples. However, the global lingua franca has been unsuccessful in bringing nations closer in their ideologies: pertinent international conflicts point towards an opposite development. The question emerges whether language as an instrument possesses the required elements for developing sustainable global co-operation.

Democratically thinking, global norms are set in the auditoriums of the United Nations, as the General Assembly is the arena where all member states have an equal opportunity to influence procedures for global development (Manhire 2017, 2019). The Plenary sessions held at the General Assembly once a year, usually starting in September, focus on general themes, which are decided for the debates after consultation with member states. Thus, public speeches by official representatives of member states deal with global concerns such as poverty and global food crisis, the UN's role in global governance and especially issues of how to prevent international disputes and bring about adjustment or settlement of international conflicts by peaceful means. The Millennium Development Goals and a regular follow-up of how the member states follow the accepted goals is one of the ways in which the United Nations influences the global political, economic and societal development.

Decision making in the General Assembly requires two-thirds majority of those present and a vote is required when the General Assembly handles important questions such as peace and security, election of members to organs and expulsions of members (Manhire 2017, 2019). All other decisions require a majority vote, and every country has one vote. In its relations with other UN bodies, the GA's position resembles that of the legislature within a national government. It can choose the states that serve in the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. Though the UN Security Council deals with issues of peace and security, the General Assembly may also consider disputes that are likely to lead to war and can meet in special sessions in emergencies or to discuss conflict situations.

As such it is natural that competence in intercultural understanding, diplomacy and ability to build mutual trust between nations cannot be over-emphasised in the proceedings at the General Assembly. The United Nations considers communication

instrumental to the advancement of international development. The importance of influencing decision making through public speeches at the plenary sessions of the General Assembly cannot be underestimated, especially as today the UN is the only contemporary forum with the legitimacy to represent all peoples in the world.

Especially in our increasingly interdependent world, political leaders who can analyse the socio-cultural state of our globalised world and envision its future are most likely to guide societies into progress. As traditional national societies have become hybrid cultural diversities, a new kind of communication competence is required from leaders in intra- and international relations. Amid social and economic crises, it is mutually beneficial that active agents correctly interpret the rhetorical strategies that representatives of different cultural societies use as they express their responsibility towards matters causing conflict.

### 5.2.1 Public speaking at the General Assembly

Themes chosen for the General Assembly plenary sessions usually reflect current world situations (see Appendix 1 for themes in the GA 61–70 sessions). Global instability is reflected in the themes chosen for the general debates in 2009, 2011 and 2012, as each of them focus on settling disputes by peaceful means. GA sessions in 2006–2015 discussed either the development of UN initiatives, such as the post-2015 development agenda, or they focused on UN’s role in global governance.

The United Nations has been criticised for ‘too many speeches’ and lack of action. Even at the UN’s 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in January 2020 the UN Secretary-General remarked in his speech to the General Assembly that amid geopolitical tensions, the climate crisis, global mistrust and the downsides of technology, commemorating the anniversary ‘with nice speeches won’t do’. Also, as the UN was established on democratic principles, the organisation is constantly criticised, in particular by the smaller nations, for preserving the undemocratic system of ‘veto power’ that the permanent members of the Security Council (China, France, Russia, United Kingdom and the United States) have. By using their power to veto, each of these permanent members can block a possible UN response to a crisis situation.

### 5.3 The European Union and European unity

By 2020 the European Union has faced pertinent challenges in its economic and political efforts to construct European coherence amid its members. Jean Monnet, one of the founders of the European Union emphasised the importance of culture (Eatwell 1997) in the European integration process. Tiilikainen (1998) suggests that one of the key questions in Europe's integration process is the question of 'the *nature* of the Europe that is being constructed' (1998:3). She emphasizes that the differences concerning European political unity can be explained through differences in the political culture and traditions that have a significant historical origin. According to Tiilikainen, the persistent problems in envisioning Europe's future arise largely from the religious histories of nations, as The Reformation created historical divisions not only in religions in Europe but also in its political thinking.

The European Union was founded primarily to prevent the rise of extreme nationalism that had resulted in the Second World War in Europe. The European Coal and Steel Community, which was formally established in 1951, was the foundation for building future European unity, and in 1957 the European Economic Community was established to promote economic co-operation and understanding between European nations (Lewis and Amin 2017, Kershaw 2017). In the 3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium the member states continue to look for European unity based on shared history, shared culture and shared values. However, member states continue to have persistent challenges in this undertaking that is no doubt one of the most daring economic, socio-political projects of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. There still is no European reality, only national and international efforts to find a united view into the European future. Problems are raised by immigration, regionalism, by expansion of the EU and debates of the European integration itself. Political and social aims of member states tend to be hidden in the linguistic diplomacy of the public discourse on EU arenas, where member states make efforts to express their sense of responsibility of building a sustainable European Union.

This chapter has discussed the role of the Alliance of Civilizations, the United Nations General Assembly and the European Union from the perspective of international co-operation and intercultural communication. Both the European Union and the United Nations look for future strategies that are mutually accepted and

consolidated by their member states, such that are more inclusive of both the public and the private sector, and the civil society in their member states. Likewise, the Alliance of Civilizations aims to contribute to developing intercultural understanding in all sectors of societies by acting as a bridge builder across societal divisions.

In the next chapter I will examine the methodological framework where this study is situated. I will highlight different approaches to analysing public discourse with a special focus on pragmatics and intercultural pragmatics and explain the methods used in this research project.

## **6. APPROACHES TO ANALYSING PUBLIC DISCOURSE**

### **6.1 From pragmatics towards intercultural pragmatics**

My earlier reference to the philosophical pragmatist Rorty serves as a bridge from philosophical pragmatism to linguistic pragmatics, though historically these two approaches do not belong together. However, pragmatists and linguistic pragmatics have a number of preferences in common: they both look for new openings into the cognitive, social and cultural study of language and communication. Both views open doors to other disciplines and consider language to be strongly influenced by contextual factors.

There is no clear-cut definition to what pragmatics is, neither is it clear where to situate pragmatics in the field of linguistics. Pragmatics is sometimes considered to be a subcategory of sociolinguistics, or the other way around. Philosophy, as suggested earlier, is one of the main foundations of linguistic pragmatics. The variety in the available definitions of pragmatics – ‘a relation of signs to interpreters’ (Morris 1938), ‘doing things with words’ (Austin 1962), ‘the study of language use’ (Verschueren 1999) or ‘language and context’ (Levinson 1983) – indicate that the boundaries of pragmatics are wide and fuzzy. According to Verschueren ‘pragmatics does not constitute an additional component of a theory of language, but it offers a different perspective’ (1999:2). Verschueren further clarifies the essence of pragmatics by defining the pragmatic approach as ‘the cognitive, social and cultural study of language and communication’ (2009:1).

From the point of view of this specific study, pragmatics represents a systematic analysis of language and communication from a cultural perspective. It embraces approaches from a divergent spectrum of disciplines that have converging interests in how language functions. I used this pragmatic approach on language (Verschueren 1999) to investigate public speaking situations in traditions with divergent backgrounds. Pragmatics, as the study of language ‘in relation to language users as biological and cultural beings’ (Östman 1986:16-17) gives tools for this study, as it

analyses the different ways a message is implicitly anchored – to speakers’ attitudes, to aspects of the on-going interactive situation, to the social and cultural setting, to our ideological perceptions, and so on.

Hence research in pragmatics is primarily interested in “what happens in communication over and beyond the propositional information that interlocutors and producers want to convey in their message”.

Östman and Simon-Vandenbergen (2009) argue that the beginnings of pragmatics was already to be seen in the work of J. R. Firth (1890–1960), whose approach to language differed from the contemporary American approach into language study as well as from salient theories in Europe, namely those of the Saussurean school. According to Östman and Simon-Vandenbergen, Firthian linguistics is so closely related to pragmatics that Firth’s ‘insistence on the importance of embedding every utterance in a ‘context-of-situation’ would surely today render him a position in the center of pragmatics’. ‘So much so’, claim Östman and Simon-Vandenbergen that ‘one could argue that the reason why Firth has been considered vague and abstract in his writings, both by his contemporaries and by subsequent theoreticians, is really that he was doing pragmatics’ (2009:142).

That said, the pedestal of pragmatics was probably laid out in linguistics earlier than the ‘pragmatics’ label became accepted in linguistic analyses and probably at the same time in more than one specific research project globally. However, we can no doubt claim that from its very surge into the linguistic field, pragmatics has gathered more and more supporters and has opened doors to understanding the multiple factors that are involved in producing language and in making linguistic choices, be it in informal face-to-face interaction, in dialogues between international institutions or in public speaking of authorities in meetings of the General Assembly of the United Nations, for that matter.

Essentially, pragmatics is a study of language use from all dimensions (The International Pragmatic Association; <https://pragmatics.international>), meaning all one can do with language. And what can one do with language? ‘Inform, persuade and entertain’, teachers of international public speaking classes probably emphasise. ‘Practice synchronic global info sharing’, may be the linguistic focus of the online generation. In Firthian linguistics, meaning implies choice, at all levels. This is a notion that M. A. K. Halliday (1978) later formalised in his theory of systemics and social semiotics. Östman (1986) further developed the distinctions Halliday made into also covering the implicit in language.

Language opens perspectives that according to the pragmatic approach we are only just beginning to recover. We define discourse in this study as having a context. Hence, we can generalise that words give meaning to discourse, and vice versa. There is a constant symbiosis between those two elements: context gives meaning to discourse and discourse gives meaning to context, intermittently or continually. In studying public discourse this interplay between context and discourse is an important aspect: politicians often pave the way for the future of a nation by creating new realities through the words they utter, and yet they need to listen to their audiences to be able to do that, at least if the politicians have been democratically elected for leadership. That being the case, those giving political public speeches do well if they develop their pragmatic competence (Kasper 1997), an ability to understand the intended meaning of a speaker. Politicians succeed if they have social, cultural and political knowledge of their audience, any future audience for that matter, as products of their speeches often become historical memos of their time. Speakers need pragmatic competence in choosing politeness strategies that are suitable for each culture, especially in cultures where power is distributed unequally between individuals or communities (see e.g. Hofstede 2001 for power distance, and the politeness principles in Leech 1980).

Often borders of linguistic disciplines and sub-disciplines are vague and even overlapping. Thus, boundaries of pragmatics come close to those of sociolinguistics in my study on intercultural communication, as cultural effects on language are investigated in both those disciplines. According to Östman (1986:16–17) pragmatics ‘deals with the study of language form and content in relation to language users as cultural beings’. Likewise, Verschueren emphasises the cultural study of language and communication. Östman suggests by ‘implicit anchoring’ that speakers’ messages are implicitly anchored to speakers’ attitudes, social and cultural setting and ideological perceptions. This approach opens new perspectives to investigating cultural constraints behind politician’s rhetorical choices, implicit or explicit, in public speeches. According to Östman, those doing pragmatics want not only to bridge the gap between what takes place in the ‘world outside’, in context, and what happens in language, but scholars want to retain the fluidity and the dynamics of the interaction between language and behaviour generally (2011:1). In this study particularly the pragmatic dimension of politeness is applicable in examining how

speakers from different socio-cultural backgrounds choose rhetorical strategies of politeness in formal speaking contexts. The different ways to define and approach the vast field of pragmatics can be found in e.g. Handbook of Pragmatics Online by the International Pragmatics Association (IPrA) at <https://benjamins.com/online/hop/>.

## 6.2 Intercultural pragmatics

Intercultural pragmatics, as a subfield and an integral part of pragmatics, uses pragmatic research methods on more than one language or on cultural factors causing varieties in the use of one language. In studying different discourse systems from various cultures, we need to understand speakers' value systems to get a clear message of what a speaker wants to say. Difficulties in interpretation of discourse can arise equally between two participants in a conversation as between a public speaker and his/her audience for the reasons that Scollon and Wong Scollon (2003:175) refer to as differences in belief about

... whether humans were essentially good or evil, their religion, their kinship relationships, their sense of in-group loyalty, their understanding of egalitarianism and hierarchy, their emphasis on individualism or collectivism, whether they conceive of language as being used primarily for information or relationship, whether negotiation or ratification of those relationships is thought to be primary, or the assumptions they make about the most effective ways of socializing ...

Naturally an intercultural perspective is relevant in any pragmatic analysis. However, intercultural pragmatics has a specific focus on exploring how language is shaped by culture and how culture is shaped by language. Since Grice (1975), researchers in linguistic pragmatics have tried to explain and show evidence of why speakers do not manage to convey their informative intentions literally to their respective audiences. The Gricean co-operative principle and its maxims of conversation, steps in the global efforts of trying to find solutions for preventing misunderstandings in communication, in this case in intercultural communication between leaders of societies globally, have not ultimately succeeded in creating tools for interpreting implicit messages of speakers from different backgrounds. And this challenge is not only a challenge of our inter-connected world today only. Even in the fourth century rhetoricians such as Donatus and Servius investigated this pertinent hindrance in inter-human communication.

Scholars agree that the line between contrastive approaches and intercultural pragmatics is a vague one and the latter has grown out of the former. Intercultural pragmatics is a natural perspective on any communication, regardless of how we define ‘culture’, and is pursued by researchers when analysing various pragmatic issues such as politeness, the force and intent of speech acts and contextualisation cues (Gumperz 1982a, Sarangi 2009, Scollon & Scollon 2003).

- Is ‘intercultural pragmatics’ an oxymoron then? we may enquire in the words of Jacob Mey (2004:31), who defines pragmatics as ‘the study of use of language in human communication as determined by the conditions of society’ (2004:36). Since culture is an integral part of society, and vice versa, all pragmatic study of language has a cultural aspect. Mey points out that the ‘pragmatic turn’ in linguistics started not from inside linguistic science, but was ushered in by workers in neighbouring, related fields such as philosophy and anthropology (2004:37). Mey draws attention to the fact that culture, having its roots in a particular practice, presupposes a cultivator, someone who produces a *cultura*, at the same time regretting that culture is often considered to be some “durable good” (p.31). Even contemporary researchers occasionally refer to the concept of culture only in a metaphoric way, ignoring the local, human aspect of all culture.

Halliday (1978) is a ‘functionalist’, and views language as a device designed to accomplish communicative ends. In current intercultural pragmatics and within the broader field of intercultural communication this approach to language is of particular importance, as it aims to develop practical applications for facilitating intercultural communication and intercultural understanding, e.g. by analysing causes and effects of linguistic and behavioural cross-cultural misunderstandings (e.g. Jameson 2007, Salo-Lee 2006, Trompenaars 1995, Wierzbicka 1997, 2003).

The borders of intercultural pragmatics overlap with the discipline of sociolinguistics. Following the suggestion by Brown and Levinson (2002:281) that ‘sociolinguistics should be applied pragmatics’, we can consider intercultural pragmatics to be applied pragmatics.

As noted earlier, contrastive analysis and intercultural pragmatics are fields of study that intertwine in their approach to analysing language. Contrastive rhetoric maintains that language is a cultural phenomenon, and each language has its unique rhetorical

conventions. Contrastive rhetoric uses textual analysis and genre analysis to examine language use. Since Kaplan's pioneering work (1966) in which he first analysed differences in discourse organisations in different languages and linked those to the respective cultures of language users, new emphases have been found. Along with recent developments, Kaplan's idea of the first language background being the decisive parameter in foreign language use, the focus today has turned to more ethnographic approaches. Even the title 'contrastive rhetoric' – due to the critique it has been under – was changed into 'intercultural rhetoric' (e.g. Connor et al. 2008) and other, smaller units of cultures, such as disciplinary cultures were introduced into this approach.

Atkinson (2004), who was concerned with the definition of culture in contrasting rhetoric, suggests in his essay *Contrasting rhetorics / contrasting cultures*, why contrastive rhetoric needs a better conceptualisation of culture. He criticized the fact that in contrasting rhetoric, culture is often perceived as a received culture i.e. as a culture that is static in society and is inherited by its members. Contrary to such traditional views, current definitions of culture highlight the cultural change, disruption and discontinuity, caused by globalisation, which create cultural hybridity. Atkinson argued in 2004 that as text-analytic tools become more wide-ranging, there is a temptation to pay less attention to culture than previously. He writes (2004:287) as follows:

The notion of culture is still a “great unknown” in CR [contrastive rhetoric] studies, and increased attention to it and its analysis will do much to put the field on a more secure and better-recognized academic footing, as well as to make it more relevant to our students’ lives.

More than ten years from the statement above, culture has now received increased attention both in and beyond academia. Current study of cultural influence on communication tends to take a more hermeneutic approach towards culture within intercultural pragmatics and other fields of language studies (Illman and Nynäs 2005, Appiah 2007, Scollon 2012).

In short, pragmatics is the study of language in context and the use of language. As an approach to language it 'takes into account the full complexity of its cognitive, social and cultural (i.e. 'meaningful') functioning in the lives of human beings' (Verschueren 2009). Pragmatics looks for the implicit (Östman 1986) in discourse.

What speakers say implicitly they need not be responsible for. The field of pragmatics has developed into several branches, of which intercultural pragmatics focuses on investigating especially how culture influences communication.

### 6.3 Variation constructing social meaning

Eckert (2012) suggests that there is at present ‘a third wave’ of studying variation in language. In the past decades linguistic variation has been studied from angles that have shared a similar perspective, i.e. they focus on apparently static categories of speakers. A similar approach was salient in the early days of intercultural communication research, in which discursive constructs, e.g. national identities, were frequently equated with category affiliation. Eckert (2012) suggests that in ‘the third wave’ of studying variation in language, variation does not simply reflect, but also constructs social meaning and hence is a force in social change. According to Eckert (2012: 97-98)

... the entire view of the relation between language and society has been reversed. The emphasis on stylistic practice in the third wave places speakers not as passive and stable carriers of dialect, but as stylistic agents, tailoring linguistic styles in ongoing and lifelong projects of self-constructions and differentiation. It has become clear that patterns of variation do not simply unfold from a speaker’s structural position in a system of production, but are part of the active – stylistic – production of social differentiation.

Eckert emphasises that style in discourse is ideological at its foundation, and ‘the stylistic form of propositions is very much a part of their meaning’. This sociolinguistic approach partly coincides with the approach to pragmatics prevalent in this study, in which I explore choices of traditional and non-traditional culturally influenced constructs in public discourse in the AOC document, the UN General Assembly plenary sessions and the EU. More specifically, in the data of public discourse used for this study, political leaders can generate new global approaches and meanings that were non-existent *a priori* in the politics of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium. In international fora where global political leaders convene for official debates, dominating global superpowers have a natural advantage over smaller states to accentuate political issues at their pleasure, and even initiate new global approaches to contemporary issues. Choosing implicit or explicit rhetorical strategies, speakers can generate or de-generate societal collectivism, distance, cohesion, responsibility and

the like. In the words of Verschueren ‘language is the major instrument in attempts to construct meaning’ (1999:8), in other words language users generate meanings that exist (or do not exist) in the social world.

To sum up, in these sections I have described the methodological framework of this study by giving an overview of pragmatics (as the study of language in use) and its subcategory intercultural pragmatics. As a subfield of pragmatics, intercultural pragmatics incorporates features of intercultural interaction into mainstream pragmatics (Kecske 2013). This particular field that first emerged in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century had its first academic journal ‘Intercultural Pragmatics’ in 2004. It needs to be noted at this point that although intercultural pragmatics particularly highlights the influence of cultures in language use, culture represents just one parameter among a manifold of equally important parameters influencing communicative behaviour. This note becomes acutely relevant in doing research on the role of national cultures in our contemporary hybrid societies, which contain diverse communication communities and discursive models. Variation in discourse can bring about social change, a relevant note in political public speaking in international diplomacy.

## **7. DATA AND METHODS**

In this chapter I discuss the material and the methods used in the present study.

### 7.1 Data

The focus of this study is public discourse in three organisations focusing on developing international and intercultural affairs, namely the European Union, the United Nations and the UN-based initiative, the Alliance of Civilizations. Each of these regional and global organisations was initiated largely for the purpose of maintaining peace and stability in the world. The data selected for this study consist of:

- 1) Part I of the initial strategy report of the UN-based initiative the Alliance of Civilizations, AOC (2006)
- 2) Introductions in public speeches by official representatives of the UN member states Brazil, France, Jordan and the United States at the United Nations General Assembly plenaries (2006-2015, N=40, ten per selected member state. See Appendix II for a list of the speeches)
- 3) Public speeches by the Prime ministers of the EU member states Britain, (the United Kingdom), Finland, and France (2004–2005, N=27, eight speeches from Britain, eight from France and eleven from Finland. See Appendix III for a list of the speeches)

The significance of intercultural communication in maintaining intra- and international relations in these high-level international and global organisations is becoming acutely relevant, all the more so as both these rule-based systems, the UN and the EU, show signs of disarray in their internal collaboration (Eatwell 1997, 2018, Lewis and Amin 2017). While the world continues to be led by dominant powers such as the United States, China and Russia, in the EU and the UN the voice of smaller states is traditionally also heard. That is, through linguistic strategies the national leaders in the EU and the UN have a possibility to position not only themselves but also their nations on the economic, political and socio-cultural global map. In these international fora political leaders can choose to include and exclude political, economic and social factors as they position themselves (Bamberg 1997, 2012) in

their public speeches. They can construct meanings (Verschueren 1999) that exist, or do not exist, in the present and future realities. The data of this study comprise of political speeches delivered by national leaders to their audiences, rather than debates or dialogues, where the audience present can respond to and comment on the speeches.

Public discourse in the framework of peace building becomes a particularly sensitive genre in the area of conflict management, in which participating actors aim to position themselves so that they can approach culture-specific rhetoric objectively and interpret implicit socio-cultural strategies constructively in their efforts to develop harmony and stability in and between diverse societies. This is the field where initiatives such as the UN-based AOC operate.

Next, I will illustrate in detail the data selected, beginning with the Alliance of Civilizations, established in 2005.

1) The report of the High-Level Group, published in 2006, available on the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations website (<https://www.unaoc.org>), illustrates the strategy of the AOC initiative. It consists of two parts, of which Part I is the focus of my analysis. Part I (19 pages of total 56 pages) states the general framework of the initiative, covering topics under headings such as ‘Bridging the World’s Divides’, ‘Guiding Principles’, ‘The Global Context’, ‘The Political Dimension’ and ‘Towards an Alliance of Civilizations: General Policy Recommendations’. Part II illustrates the main fields of action, presenting recommendations and their implementation.

In the EU and UN data, the focus is on interlocutors representing specific nations, whereas in the AOC High-level Group there are delegates from different geographical regions, representing twenty different nations.

2) The data from the United Nations consist of introductions to the official speeches by representatives from four UN member states, namely Brazil, France, Jordan and the United States, delivered at the General Assembly plenaries 61-70 held in 2006–2015. The themes for these plenary sessions are listed in Appendix I. Typical themes for GA plenaries during 2006–2015 covered issues like peaceful mediation of global crises, poverty, climate change and the future development of the United Nations organisation.

For many national delegates public speaking at the UN meetings is the main tool available to contribute to intercultural communication and sustainable co-operation between member states. The General Assembly is a seat of deliberation where speakers from all UN member states can influence decision-making in global governance.

The nations selected for data represent divergent geo-political and cultural regions. According to the United Nations Handbook 2017–2018 (pp. 16–17) these nations are categorised in the following regional groups: Brazil as ‘Latin American and Caribbean states’, France as ‘Western European and Other states’, Jordan as ‘Asia-Pacific states’. The United States is not categorised in a regional group but attends the meetings as an observer of the ‘Western European and Other states’ group.

By ‘opening words’ in the speeches I refer to the first structural parts in speeches, the statements that speakers use to first address their audience. Opening words typically include mentioning of dignitaries present and/or politeness strategies traditionally used in formal public speaking. I make a distinction between ‘opening words’ and ‘introduction’. ‘Introduction’ refers to the first part of the speech, where the speakers preview the body of the speech and reveal the topic (e.g. Lucas 2015).

Official English translations of speeches are used, provided by the United Nations or by the nations’ delegations. English translations are used in the study to see how an English-speaking addressee receives speeches.

3) The data from the European Union, which is the focus in Chapter 10 titled *Where is Europe in Political Public Speaking?* examines British, Finnish and French perspectives on European integration. The data comprise political public speeches delivered by the Prime Ministers of Britain (the United Kingdom), Finland and France delivered in English, Finnish and French, respectively, in formal speaking contexts during 2004–2005. The data include eight speeches for France, eight for Britain and eleven speeches for Finland, representing about 16,500 words for each set of data. The data were selected from the official governmental websites of the Prime Ministers.

In the next few sections I introduce the linguistic perspective from which I approach the material. I will also illustrate how the approach chosen is used in the empirical cases.

## 7.2 Methods

On a theoretical and methodological level, this study seeks to bring the perspective of ‘public speaking’ to contemporary language studies and give it a respectable status in cross-cultural and intercultural studies. Public speaking and public discourse in general can be seen as one of the prime elements that hold multi-cultural, multi-issue organisations such as the UN and the EU together (cf. Zarefsky 2009). Discussing the methodological pluralism in contemporary public discourse studies, Zarefsky remarks: ‘there is no predetermined method; rather, the scholar’s approach is seen as arising from the nature of the subject matter and the scholarly purpose’ (2009:448).

Pragmatics suggests that language needs to be examined according to ‘the different ways a message is implicitly anchored to attitudes, ideologies and context/s so that we can obtain a better understanding as to what happens in communication over and beyond the propositional information that interlocutors and text producers want to convey in their messages’ (Östman 1995:4). Language users generate meanings in a social world (Verschueren 1999, Östman 1986), and variation in discursive choices constructs social reality (Eckert 2012).

In this study I investigated if and how rhetorical choices (cf. negotiability in Verschueren 1999) made in contemporary public discourse manifest the notion of coherence and responsibility, essential elements in constructing international stability. Additionally, the study examines the extent to which discourse practices and rhetorical preferences (Sarangi 2009) used in the public statements are implicitly anchored to socio-cultural settings (Östman 1995, Solin and Östman 2016). These aims can be formulated into the following two research questions:

1. How do representatives of member states in the United Nations and the European Union position themselves for the purpose of constructing coherence-responsibility in their public discourse?
2. How do rhetorical strategies used by international actors to indicate coherence-responsibility manifest culture-bound tendencies?

In order to find answers to these questions from a linguistic point of view I examine the three sets of data from three slightly different perspectives:

1 – I approached political discourse as a narrative, focusing primarily on how actors position themselves (Bamberg 1997, 2012) as active agents to construct coherence-responsibility. I also examined the rhetoric of blame in the statements (Chapter 8).

2 – I applied a hybrid text-driven approach to examine the types of linguistic devices used in public speeches to regulate the effect of rhetoric constructing coherence and responsibility. The focus is primarily on deixis (Brown and Levinson 2002, Charteris-Black 2014), particularly inclusive and exclusive pronouns (Cramer 2010, DeFina 1995, Mühlhäusler and Harré 1990) and modality (e.g. Brown and Levinson 2002, Charteris-Black 2014, Palmer 1986), especially deontic modality. Attention is also paid to the lexical choices (Östman 1986, Verschueren 1999, see also White 2002) in the speeches, in collocations (Östman 2005) and particularly in co-occurrences of words with positive or negative connotations (White 2002) (Chapter 9). Additionally, markers of positive politeness and thematic distribution in the introductions are examined, and what is said in the speeches between the lines, or not at all.

3 – I approached political speeches by primarily using one ‘tool’, namely focusing solely on the inclusive-exclusive use of the pronoun ‘we’ (Cramer 2010, Mühlhäusler and Harré 1990) to examine how speakers position themselves (Bamberg 1997, De Fina 2013), implicitly and explicitly, to construct coherence in public discourse (Chapter 10). Choosing one perspective of first person plural pronouns and their collocation patterns instead of a hybrid method as such manifests evidence of the power of pronouns to construct coherence in political public discourse.

The next section shows how the three approaches have been applied in the three data sets (presented in Chapter 8, Chapter 9 and Chapter 10), respectively.

### 7.2.1 Methodology in empirical studies

In the first study presented in Chapter 8 the focus is on how the concepts of responsibility and blame manifest in Part I of the AOC document. The second study in Chapter 9 focuses on coherence-responsibility in public speeches at the UN General Assembly. In the third study in Chapter 10 the focus is on the notion of coherence in public discourse in the European Union.

Chapter 8 examines how actors in the report of the Alliance of Civilizations initiative position themselves (Bamberg 1997, 2012) in their rhetoric that expresses the concept of responsibility, and the notion of blame (Solin and Östman 2016). Overlapping forms of responsibility, such as institutional, moral, socio-cultural and self-other responsibilities (see e.g. Baier 1991, Sarangi 2016, Östman and Solin 2016) were categorised as ‘societal responsibility’ in order to compare how the agents position themselves 1) to construct and attribute societal responsibility in international settings 2) to construct the rhetoric of blame and 3) to compare the rhetoric of these two phenomena in the AOC document. Responsibility includes the notion of what the problems that need to be resolved are (e.g. Smiley 1992), which is relevant in this narrative analysis. Regarding identifying the problems causing conflicts it is essential to find out how language users generate meanings (Verschueren 1999:8) in discourse, to make observations on who controls the choice of rhetoric used in describing global conflicts. Applying the concept of subject positioning (Bamberg 1997, De Fina 2013) proved to be a particularly suitable methodological tool in this context.

Chapter 9 first focuses on how the official delegates of Brazil, France, Jordan and the United States constructed coherence in addressing their audience at the General Assembly plenaries. Here the parameter of coherence was seen as an interactive achievement (Clark 1996, for coherence see also Tanskanen 2006), in the sense that it is not the texts that cohere but the people who make the texts. Markers of e.g. positive politeness (Brown and Levinson 2002) were examined to see how the delegates constructed common ground with the audience and whether there was consistent socio-cultural variation in the strategies used by the speakers to interconnect with the audience. Expressions of societal responsibility were investigated by using the concept of subject position as the main methodological tool. Different agencies in subject position were categorised: ‘the first person singular pronoun’, ‘nation’, ‘regional group’, ‘the United Nations’ or ‘world’. To see how speakers ‘regulate’ (reduce or increase) the level of responsibility, I investigated linguistic phenomena such as deictic pronouns, modality, collocations and lexical choices with positive and negative connotations. Additionally, the thematic distribution in the introductions to speeches was categorized, including omissions of topics by speakers.

Finally, in Chapter 10 the focus is on examining how leading politicians of Britain, Finland and France positioned themselves in the European Union to construct

coherence in the Union in their public speeches by using deictic pronouns. The focus is on the use of the first person plural pronoun ‘we’ ‘me’ and ‘nous’ (in speeches delivered in English, Finnish and French, respectively) and their syntactic and case-dependent morphological variants. The Prime ministers did not construct coherence vis-à-vis the European Union only by the choice of exclusive and inclusive (e.g. Cramer 2010, Mühlhäusler-Harré 1990) pronominal devices. Attention was also paid to what was said between the lines, or not at all.

In the next section, I will illustrate some aspects of positioning used in my analysis.

### 7.2.2 Positioning and discourse analysis

Positioning theory (Bamberg 1997, De Fina 2013) used in the analysis of narratives of public discourse enhances the conception of how actively speakers from different national societies engage themselves in their statements. According to Bamberg positioning takes place on three levels and thus three different questions can be asked: 1) How are the characters positioned in relation to one another? 2) How does the speaker position him or herself to the audience? 3) How do narrators position themselves to themselves? De Fina (2013:47) applied these three positioning levels and highlighted how level 3 positioning allows for an analysis of connections between narrators’ micro and macro identities, in other words between their local identity claims and their positioning in relation to social processes such as culture and society at large.

All three questions can be asked to investigate how speakers position themselves to construct coherence with their audience. They can position themselves as subjects or objects in a narrative. Speakers can use deixis (see e.g. Charteris-Black 2014, Levinson 1983, Verschueren 1999), especially the inclusive and exclusive pronouns (Cramer 2010, Mühlhäusler and Harré 1990) to modify their positioning in their discourse. Inclusive pronouns evoke the sense of rapport between the speaker and his/her audience. The exclusive ‘we’ excludes people who are being addressed. At the macro-level approach an analysis of pronouns can be used as a tool to show how leaders of nations position themselves – and their nation – with respect to the integrating European Union. The benefit of using positioning theory becomes evident in analysing the distribution of responsibility or blame, especially in exposing potential overemphasis on specific socio-cultural perspectives in areas where multi-

polar views representing objectivity are expected. Mühlhäuser and Harré (1990:175) further suggest that by using the pronoun ‘we’ instead of the first person singular ‘I’ diminishes the responsibilities of the speaker.

Figure 3 illustrates some elements that influence and are influenced by how actors position themselves in international public discourse in the data.



**Figure 3.** Positioning in international public discourse.

How actors position themselves in public discourse in international settings is influenced by the institutional code of conduct in the discourse context (such as the United Nations and the European Union), by norms and values in societies and by speakers’ personal beliefs.

Different dimensions of positioning are discussed in further detail in Chapters 8–10, which contain the empirical studies.

In the following sections I report on aspects of politeness (7.2.3) and collocations and modality (7.2.4), which are dealt with in detail in the actual analyses.

### 7.2.3 Markers of politeness

Discursive politeness has been the focus of vast amounts of research (e.g. Brown and Levinson 2002, Goffman 1967, Ide 1989, Lakoff 2005, Ogiermann 2016, Scollon and Wong Scollon 2003, Spencer-Oatey 2002, Watts 2003). However, in the area of public speaking and international diplomacy, politeness issues have been largely neglected.

Politeness and coherence tend to be inter-related and interdependent (Östman 1986). I examine how speakers use the communicative acts of politeness (Brown and Levinson 2002, Scollon and Wong Scollon 2003, Watts 2003) in the opening words of their speeches to greet the audience and construct coherence in the speaking situation.

Addressing members in the audience by using their titles is an effective politeness strategy in public speaking, when used diplomatically to convey respect and esteem e.g. for formal rank of dignitaries at the United Nations General Assembly. Östman (1986, 1991) emphasises especially the addressor–addressee relations in the choice of interactional strategies of politeness. In public discourse deference and respect between the speaker and the audiences contribute to maintaining social relationships in institutional settings. Watts (2003:23) reminds scholars that there is no idealised, universal scientific concept of politeness or impoliteness that could be applied to social interaction across cultures and languages.

### 7.2.4 Collocations and modality

The concept of collocation (Östman 2005) has to do with the tendency for lexical words to repeatedly co-occur. In the analysis I paid attention to lexical words, and to grammatical words that co-occur in discourse, noting particularly constellations that have positive and/or negative connotations (cf. White 2002).

Regarding the notion of responsibility, analysing collocations in rhetorical strategies in political public discourse can help expose the socio-cultural standing of actors (not to mention propaganda or manipulation). In other words, qualitative analysis of collocations is used as an aiding tool to see how collocations are used in constructing meaning (Verschueren 1999) in intercultural settings. This method reveals e.g. how speakers/writers collate words and/or concepts to fortify, often implicitly (Östman

2005), their positioning in the narrative, particularly in distributing responsibility to various agencies.

According to Palmer (1986:16), modality can be defined as ‘the grammaticalisation of a speaker’s (subjective) attitudes and opinions’. Modality (e.g. Charteris-Black 2014, Brown and Levinson 2002) is explored primarily in reference to duty, necessity or even command, as it is used to enforce the illocutionary act and perlocutionary effect (Austin 1962, Searle 1969) of utterances. In the data, deontic modal verbs, such as ‘must’ occur typically in rhetorical strategies attributing responsibility to actors and agencies.

Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used in the study, although my focus is on a text-driven qualitative approach.

The following chapters contain the empirical case studies.

*People should take responsibility for who they are, what they do, what they value, and what they believe in.*

G. Picco, Personal Representative to the Secretary-General for the United Nations Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations (1999)

## **8. BUILDING BRIDGES ACROSS INTERNATIONAL DIVIDES**

**Constructing responsibility in peace building:**

**United Nations Alliance of Civilizations**

Addressing the world that is ‘alarmingly out of balance’ the Alliance of Civilizations (hereafter AOC) states in its opening document that ‘the need to build bridges between societies, to promote dialogue and understanding and to forge the collective political will to address the world’s imbalances has never been greater’. The AOC initiative, established in 2005 and currently called the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, ‘seeks to address widening rifts between societies by reaffirming a paradigm of mutual respect among peoples of different cultural and religious traditions and by helping to mobilize concerted action toward this end’.

This chapter focuses on Part I of the initial report of the AOC from which I have examined rhetorical choices indicating how the authors position themselves to express societal responsibility for promoting intercultural understanding and for preventing conflicts in the world. The focus is on whether there are socio-cultural tendencies manifested in the discursive patterns in the document of this multicultural initiative, which aims for a comprehensive, multi-polar approach.

The Secretary-General Kofi Annan of the United Nations launched the Alliance of Civilizations in 2005 on the co-sponsorship of the Prime Ministers of Spain and Turkey in an effort to bridge the world’s divides. The aim of the initiative was to reduce global and local polarisation by developing more inclusive societies and promoting global respect for cultural and religious diversity. The High-level Group of the Alliance of the Civilizations, representing distinguished members from all continents, recommends a multilevel program to assist in diminishing hostility among the nations, emphasising priority areas such as education, youth, migration and media.

International conflict prevention is a sensitive terrain of rhetoric in international relations and calls for a comprehensive approach. Examining markers of responsibility and socio-cultural features in documents of multi-cultural peace-building initiatives is most relevant as authors of these public discourses themselves represent different socio-cultural, ideological and religious communication communities.

### 8.1 Global stability

The aim of the AOC is to assess new and emerging threats to international security and to identify collective actions, at both the institutional and civil society levels, and to address these trends. Concerned about the imbalances in global power structures and guided by the United Nations Charter, the AOC stresses the need to develop discourse in international relations and stresses the importance of a multi-polar approach:

... The Alliance of Civilizations must examine – within a multi-polar and comprehensive approach - the state of relations between diverse contemporary societies, their world-views and the reciprocal perceptions that shape these relations. (AOC 4.1)

The initiative was established on the efforts of earlier projects such as the Dialogue of Civilizations, which emphasises that the hearts and minds of the next generation are the real object of the dialogue among civilizations. Receiving the report of the Alliance of Civilizations in Istanbul on November 13, 2006 the Secretary-General of the United Nations reminded the audience that differences in opinion, in culture, in beliefs, in ways of life have long been a driving force of human progress. He called for an end of preconceptions, stereotypes and resentment in international relations especially between Muslim and the so-called Western societies:

In the twenty-first century we remain hostage to our sense of grievances, and to feelings of entitlement. Our narratives have become our prison, paralyzing discourse and hindering understanding...  
(<http://www.un.org/press/en/2006/sgsm10733.doc.htm>)

According to the Secretary-General, closer proximity and improved communication in our globalised era have often led to tension and mutual distrust rather than mutual understanding. The Secretary-General emphasised how in the current climate of fear and suspicion we need to embrace differences and stressed that “the idea of an

alliance of civilizations could not have been more timely” (*ibid.*). He called for public authorities and all individuals to take responsibility for forming the political and cultural climate in our societies.

In 2019, more than a decade later, the global community is still marked by rising intolerance and extremism. Despite continued efforts by multilateral institutions to develop international relations, intercultural conflict prevention initiatives are needed to promote societal dialogue, even more so in the current communication environment highlighted by phenomena such as ‘fake news’ and ‘alternative facts’. Our contemporary global coexistence no doubt represents a reality that is foreign to the ideals presented in the UN Charter, those of equality, promoting social progress and bettering standards of life. Guided by the principles in the Charter, the AOC report does reverberate the dignity and worth of all people. The implication of the rhetorical strategies in the report, embedded with moral and social responsibility, is that all nations, cultures and religions are equal and interdependent ‘in their quest for stability, prosperity and peaceful co-existence (AOC: 1.4).

Rhetorical constructs of impartiality and credibility are assumed to be salient in conflict-prevention, the strategy of which is to find values and truths that can be consolidated by all parties involved. This shared framework of truths includes a shared understanding of responsibilities between agencies, be they individuals, communities or entire civilizations. A salience of rhetorical manifestations referring to different forms of responsibility such as institutional responsibility, task responsibility and moral responsibility are no doubt manifested in their public documents. Forms of responsibility often overlap. Sarangi (2016) notes the similarity of moral and causal responsibility, two distinct forms of responsibility underpinning initiatives aiming for societal stability. Here we need to be reminded of how discourse constitutes social reality and according to Foucault (1971) it legitimizes one way of thinking over another. This argument by Foucault can become a sensitive issue when we think of responsibilities in multi-lateral conflict management: if actors in a specific international communication context can position themselves, however implicitly, to assign and distribute responsibility, they tend to legitimize one way of thinking over another.

In short, the notion of impartiality represents a challenge in intercultural discourse in all societal sectors. Regarding initiatives in conflict prevention, an underlying assumption is that rhetorical strategies in their public discourse display considerable impartiality and represent objective political, economic and cultural realities. Impartiality is assumed to be the basis for formulating rhetorical constructions that distribute responsibilities in international initiatives for peace and stability.

The next section is a brief look at the concept of truth, a core issue in the field of conflict prevention and peace building.

### 8.1.1 Positioning and truth

Lakoff (2016) points out how even a general law can make perfect sense to some and may harm others. In her words:

... members of different groups, having very different experiences of the world, construct reality very differently and hence tell radically different stories about ‘what happened’ and ‘whodunit’. So a law that may work well for, and make perfect sense to, members of a powerful group may do harm to members of minority or disempowered groups. The stories encoded in legal statutes are not given or obviously true, but must be developed and contested again and again: a society has the responsibility to both make and vet the laws and the stories behind them. (2016:25-26)

A similar type of a hermeneutical approach (see e.g. Illman and Nynäs 2005, Fang 2012), as depicted in the passage above, is no doubt beneficial when analysing divergent interpretations of global crises or cultural conflicts between communities, where multiple sources tend to relate conflicting narratives of causes of conflict (cf. Hinnenkamp 2009:188). We could call this positioning to inspect a situation from a specific perspective ‘a contextual truth’. How then do we distinguish between fact, fiction and belief in accounts by opposing parties, especially in inter-religious dialogue? Departing from the idea that most of our beliefs are true, Rorty (1995), a pragmatist-philosopher, tended to view truth as almost dispensable. Deliberating on the subjectivity of a communicator Rorty suggests that ‘most beliefs held by anybody are justifiable to us’ (1995:287), thus approaching the concept of a contextual truth. As Aristotle and Plato contemplated how ethical principles govern and regulate the genre of public discourse, Plato emphasised the importance of truth and moral standards in public discourse. No doubt Grice’s (1975) maxim of quality also reminds a communicator not to say what is false but to make one’s contribution one that is true.

In short, as peace initiatives place the emphasis on the respect of diversity, which often means different positioning and perspectives on what is ‘the truth’ in a conflict situation, one of the challenges in promoting inter-cultural understanding is to consolidate a shared set of so-called contextual truths.

## 8.2 Focus of research

This data-driven chapter examines rhetorical choices manifested in the initial report of the Alliance of Civilizations initiative to find out how the actors position themselves with respect to taking societal responsibility for promoting peace and preventing conflicts in the world. Societal responsibility is used here to refer to various displays of responsibility such as institutional, moral, socio-cultural and self-other responsibilities (Baier 1991, Sarangi 2016, Solin and Östman 2016). Differences between the various types of responsibility can be nuanced. Accordingly, as in my data of formal, institutional public discourse, different types of responsibility tend to overlap and assimilate and when categorising, I opted to classify them under the general category of societal responsibilities. I chose this approach, since in addition to analysing the construction and attributions of societal responsibility I compared the results with how the rhetoric of blame is construed in the document. Attributions of blame are often made on the basis of our own points of view (Smiley 1992) and how we position ourselves socio-culturally, politically and ideologically in relation to the issues under discussion (see also Bamberg 1997, 2012, Bucholtz and Hall 2005). Responsibility includes the notion of what the problems that need to be resolved are (Smiley 1992). It is often a question of who ‘controls’ the choice of rhetorical devices that dominate the discourse of a communicative event, as e.g. in the classic example of referring to conflicting sides as ‘terrorists’ versus ‘freedom fighters’.

Additionally, I investigate potential sociocultural features and culture-bound markers salient in the report. Attention was paid to lexical choices or concepts that potentially lack mutual understanding in an intercultural communication situation. Using language is making choices (Verschueren 1999, Östman 1986); in the Firthian school meaning implies choice. As the AOC functions in a linguistic framework of formality and multi-lateral neutrality (cf. White 2002) characteristic of the United Nations, examining potential implicit socio-cultural undercurrents in rhetorical choices is acutely relevant.

The examples in the study are marked following the numbering used in the official report of the Report of the High-level Group of the Alliance of Civilizations published in 2006 (e.g. AOC 1.3).

### 8.3 Societal responsibility – institutional agency

Reflections of societal responsibility are embedded at the beginning of the Alliance of Civilizations report as it begins with the title *Bridging the World's Divides*. Instead of solely presenting a problem: *world's divides*, the report implicitly suggests a solution by including the verb *bridging* in the title and by giving it prominence by mentioning it first – as the topic or theme of the report. The choice of words (Verschueren 1999, Östman 1986,) suggests that the new initiative should counter global misconceptions and imbalances that continue to deepen mistrust in and between societies. The agencies position themselves to present the solution rather than a complexity of problems (cf. Eckert 2012), even though injustice and inequality in contemporary societies continue to threaten international stability:

(8.1) Our world is alarmingly out of balance. For many, the last century brought unprecedented progress, prosperity and freedom. For others, it marked an era of subjugation, humiliation and dispossession. Ours is a world of great inequalities and paradoxes: a world where the income of the planet's three richest people is greater than the combined income of the world's least developed countries, where modern medicine performs daily miracles and yet 3 million people die every year of preventable diseases; where we know more about distant universes than ever before, yet 130 million children have no access to education... (AOC 1.1)

Contrasts between those who have and those who have not establish contextual cohesion in the introduction to the report and highlight the urgent global need to 'bridge the world's divides'. The example above manifests collocations (Östman 2005) of words with positive assessments such as 'progress', 'prosperity' and 'freedom' versus 'subjugation', 'humiliation' and 'dispossession' that have negative connotations (see White 2002). These rhetorical choices are given without identified subjective agents. To make abstract formulations more tangible and to illustrate the gravity of global circumstances, the sufferings of ordinary people are exemplified: '3 million people die every year from preventable diseases', '130 million children suffer from consequences of great inequalities in a world'. Including numbers in the formulations further accentuates the severity of the situation.

Although the unequal economic balance is introduced at the very start of the report, Part I of the report focuses largely on themes other than economy, namely on effects of political and societal issues, on socio-cultural and inter-religious relations. Through contrasts such as ‘prosperity and freedom’ versus ‘humiliation and dispossession’ prevailing on the globe, the actors no doubt implicitly awaken the sense of moral responsibility (Sarangi 2016) in their recipients, regardless of the their social, political or economic background. The juxtaposition of those who have and those who have not in the economic world, in modern medicine etc. highlights the need for responsive action to be taken by the whole globe:

(8.2) An Alliance of Civilizations must by nature be based on a multi-polar perspective. As such, the High-level Group has been guided in its deliberations by principles which set out the framework for promoting a culture of dialogue and respect among all nations and cultures. (AOC 2.1)

To be precise, development towards global stability can only be met through a project under the auspices of a global institution such as the United Nations:

(8.3) An increasingly interdependent and globalized world can be regulated only through the rule of law and an effective multilateral system, with the United Nations system at its core. (AOC 2.2)

The urgent task of rectifying global paradoxes constitutes the *raison d'être* of the Alliance of Civilizations. Its mission to promote dialogue and understanding between the world's divides is illustrated in the following manner:

(8.4) The Alliance seeks to address widening rifts between societies by reaffirming a paradigm of mutual respect among peoples of different cultural and religious traditions and by helping to mobilize concerted action toward this end. ... it evaluates relations between diverse societies and examines the emergence of the contemporary trend toward extremism with special attention to relations between Western and Muslim societies, bearing in mind that such characterizations do not reflect the vast diversity within each society. It recommends a practicable program of action for states (at national, regional, and local levels), international organizations, and civil society, which it hopes will assist in diminishing hostility and in promoting harmony among the nations and cultures of the world. (AOC 1.5)

To illustrate the gravity of relations between societies the metaphor ‘widening rifts between societies’ increases intensity in illustrating the problem between societies (for metaphors in discourse see e.g. Charteris-Black 2014). The societal responsibility of the AOC entity is to develop mutual respect among peoples. To effectuate this mission the report concentrates largely on relations between Muslim and Western

societies, and on the trend toward extremism as it recommends a program of action to diminish hostilities between peoples. To foster cross-cultural harmony and enhance global stability:

(8.5) ... the Alliance of Civilizations affirms a broad consensus across nations, cultures and religions that all societies are bound together in their humanity and interdependent in their quest for stability, prosperity and peaceful co-existence. (AOC 1.4)

The AOC report abounds with metaphors illustrating global harmony, such as the ‘all societies are bound together in their humanity’, appealing to the emotions of the recipients. The authors at the same time typically call for collective societal responsibility based on human rights and democratic governance as illustrated in the following statements:

(8.6) A full and consistent adherence to human rights standards forms the foundation for stable societies and peaceful international relations... These rights should therefore be considered inviolable and all states, international organizations, non-state actors, and individuals, under all circumstances, must abide by them. (AOC 2.3)

(8.7) Democratic governance that is representative of citizens and responsive to their needs and aspirations provides the most effective means for individuals to achieve their full potential. To be successful, democratic systems must emerge organically from within each society’s culture, reflecting its shared values and adapted to the needs and interests of its citizens. (AOC 2.7)

Following the aspirations of the UN Charter the AOC report sets objectives for its future functions based on the ideals of global ‘adherence to human rights’ (2.3) and to ‘democratic governance’ (2.7). Statements with such noble aspirations no doubt ideally reconstruct global accountability especially in the context of the United Nations, which *per se* represents the cornerstone of global security and stability. Well knowing that ideals of democracy hardly prevail in all UN member states, the agencies of the AOC report position themselves to give advice on how to improve prevailing circumstances: ‘to be successful, democratic systems must emerge organically from within each society’s culture, reflecting its shared values ...’. Although the actors choose to refer to abstractions like ‘democratic systems’ and ‘culture’, thus avoiding subjective rhetorical devices, the message is clear: societal responsibility is called for from leaders of societies, who must also respect their

culture's shared values and thus show socio-cultural responsibility (Solin and Östman 2016) as they develop their societies.

To sum up, this section has given an idea of how the Alliance of Civilizations positions itself in the context of an “increasingly complex world where polarized perceptions, fueled by injustice and inequality, often lead to violence and conflict, threatening international stability” (AOC 1.2). The Alliance of Civilizations is positioned in this unstable global setting as a multi-lateral UN based active agency that ‘seeks to address widening rifts between societies by reaffirming a paradigm of mutual respect among peoples of different cultural and religious traditions’. Abstract words with positive assessments (White 2002) predominate the illustration of a better world, e.g. ‘peaceful co-existence’ (1.3), ‘progress’ (1.3), ‘freedom’ (1.1), ‘mutual respect’ (1.5), ‘human rights standards’ (2.3), ‘shared values’ (2.7) and ‘harmony’ (2.8). Metaphoric formulas such ‘all societies are bound together in their humanity and interdependent in their quest for stability’ (AOC 1.4) are salient in the data. Rhetorical constructions indicating collectivity such as ‘bound together’ and ‘interdependent’ confirm that the whole humankind is called on to take responsibility in the quest for global stability.

Expressing tangible actions of institutional responsibility, the Alliance of Civilizations has mobilised a concerted action toward this end by establishing a practical program that emphasises social areas such as education, youth, migration and media. The program is recommended for national, regional and local levels in states, for international organisations and civil society.

Discourse expressing general societal responsibility is naturally characteristic in the documents of the United Nations, which as an institution constitutes a paramount political organisation that bestows legitimacy to nations and where its constituent members rightfully follow the principles of the Charter of the United Nations in their deliberations. It is characteristic of the AOC report to follow these general UN guidelines as it expresses international societal responsibility often through figurative language use, which is manifested throughout the AOC report.

The next section examines in more detail how actors in the AOC initiative assign societal responsibility to distinct societal agencies.

#### 8.4 Assigning responsibility to specific agencies

How agencies assign societal responsibility and attribute blame in public discourse in the area of conflict prevention becomes explicitly evident in how they position themselves towards issues that need to be solved. A range of linguistic devices can be chosen by communicators to enforce or avoid responsibility (Lakoff 2016) and to lay the blame on actors. According to Verschueren (2012) context, discourse and action are interwoven on multiple levels. Below I examine how duties are assigned in the AOC report to specific agencies in the multi-level constellation of responsibilities, which aims to promote intercultural relations and global harmony.

Direct assignment of responsibility for developing international relations and promoting peace in specific political and geo-political contexts is frequently demonstrated in the report, as the following example illustrates:

(8.8) The international community should respond with a sense of responsibility to the political and humanitarian crisis in Iraq. (AOC 5.9)

Although ‘the international community’ is a vague expression that covers basically the whole globe, the context makes it clear that the reference is to the official state level and regional agencies of the international community. The deontic modal verb ‘should’ stresses the obligation of the international community to act in this specific situation in Iraq. Using a similar rhetorical strategy deploying a deontic modal verb, responsibility is assigned to governments:

(8.9) ... foreign governments should be consistent in their support for democratic processes and not interfere when the results do not fit their political agenda. (AOC 5.10)

(8.10) ... we believe that governments should take a strong stand against the desecration of holy sites and places of worship and take responsibility for their protection. (AOC 5.15)

Paragraph 5.10, which includes the first statement above, deals with political pluralism in Muslim countries and suggests that one of the factors contributing to the polarisation between Muslim and Western societies is the repression of political movements in the Muslim world. The report calls for ruling parties in the Muslim world to provide space for non-violent parties in societal matters and calls for foreign governments to co-operate in these efforts reminding all of us that this call for expanded political pluralism applies to all nations. A call for societal and moral

responsibility by governments is expressed explicitly by stating that ‘foreign governments should be consistent in their support for democratic processes and not interfere when the results do not fit their political agenda’, as depicted in the example from AOC 5.10.

In AOC 5.15 moral responsibility is again assigned to governments. The chapter argues that governments should take a strong stand to promote a culture of freedom of religions, stating that particular attention should be paid to preserving holy sites and religious monuments. In the example the deontic modal auxiliary ‘should’ is subordinated to the hedge ‘we believe’, which mitigates the perlocutionary effect (Austin 1962) of the statement. ‘We’ refers to the AOC. The attribute ‘strong’ in ‘a strong stand’ again enforces the illocution.

The following example explicitly indicates distinct agencies’ responsibility for promoting international relations:

- (8.11) In the current climate of fear and suspicion that grips communities throughout the world, leaders and shapers of public opinion have a special responsibility to promote understanding among cultures and mutual respect of religious belief and traditions. (AOC 5.16)

The subject position of ‘leaders and shapers of public opinion’ in promoting understanding among cultures adds to the force of the statement above. This call for leaders and shapers of public opinion to be responsible for promoting understanding in societies is further enforced by the rhetorical construct that follows: ‘Given the influence and respect they command, it is their duty to avoid using violent or provocative language about other people’s beliefs or sacred symbols’ (AOC 5.16). Also the rhetorical choices of ‘responsibility’ and ‘duty’ in 5.16 leave no doubt as to the role of ‘leaders and shapers of public opinion’ to develop the language use and the discourse climate in societies as they avoid using provocative language ‘about other people’s beliefs or sacred symbols’. Again to emphasise the gravity of dangers in international relations and to arouse emotion (e.g. Charteris-Black 2014:160) metaphors are effective in ‘the climate of fear and suspicion that grips communities’.

Passive rhetorical constructs and impersonal formulations are characteristic of formal public discourse in documents like the AOC report. However, the active voice of the High-level Group is also heard in the text. The following piece of discourse from the

general AOC policy recommendations construes a discursive connection between the distinguished committee of experts behind the Alliance of Civilizations and the recipients of the document:

(8.12) The High-level Group therefore calls for a greater role and involvement of civil society in the mechanisms for the advancement of its recommendations and, in particular, for the peaceful resolution of conflicts. (AOC 5.17)

The High-level Group (positioned as a subject) calls for civil society to do its part in advancing the aims of the AOC initiative. This choice of positioning by the committee adds to the human identity construction of the initiative with these indices to persons behind the Alliance. The central importance of civil society is further emphasised in the report by the statement ‘political action taken without the support of civil society often falls short of effecting a lasting change’ (AOC 5.17).

In other words, the AOC report assigns responsibility to different societal sectors such as international community, governments, leaders and shapers of public opinion in communities, and to civil society. This type of distribution of responsibility is typically formulated as an institutional advice: ‘the international community should respond’ (5.9) ‘governments should be consistent’ 5.10, ‘shapers of public opinion have a special responsibility’ (5.16). However, there is an occurrence of a more ‘personal’ type of an assignment of responsibility in the document as the distinguished High-level Group takes a subject position in calling the civil society to take greater involvement for the peaceful resolution of conflicts (5.17).

Calls for societal accountability tend to be enforced through verbs of deontic modality indicating obligation such as ‘should’ or ‘must’; thus indicating also moral societal obligation, e.g. with regard to the adherence to human rights: ‘... all states, international organizations, non-state actors, and individuals, under all circumstances, must abide by them’ (2.3). Stronger modal auxiliaries are not used, such as ‘have an obligation to’.

The next paragraph illustrates how agencies of the AOC position themselves in relation to attributing blame in the report.

## 8.5 Blame and paradox

In the opening lines of the AOC report, abstract rhetorical devices such as ‘injustice’, ‘violence’, ‘wars’ and ‘acts of terror’ predominated in the rhetorical strategies. These formulations rarely identified a subject or a specific active agency. Later in the same chapter the authors in the AOC report change their rhetorical strategy and identify those who are to blame for causing fear of confrontation in societies:

- (8.13) Some political leaders and sectors of the media, as well as radical groups have exploited this environment, painting mirror images of a world made up of mutually exclusive cultures, religions, or civilizations, historically distinct and destined for confrontation. (AOC 1.2)

These lines draw attention exclusively to ‘some political leaders, some sectors of media, as well as radical groups’. The potential agencies blameworthy of causing confrontation are introduced, yet they are not specifically identified. Using deictic devices like ‘some’ in ‘some political leaders’ increases the ambiguity of the expression. However, the following passage identifies the cause for international instability:

- (8.14) The anxiety and confusion caused by the “clash of civilizations” theory regrettably has distorted the terms of the discourse on the real nature of the predicament the world is facing. (AOC 1.3)

The positioning taken by the authors implies that the theory laid forth by Huntington (1996) is the origin for anxiety and confusion in societies, which in turn has distorted the terms of the discourse of the world’s future, suggesting a global conflict based on stereotyping different civilizations and religions. After introducing ‘the clash of civilizations’ theory the authors immediately position themselves as defenders of a contrary view, which suggests that for centuries the relations between civilizations were based not only on conflicts and wars, but also on peaceful co-existence and constructive exchanges:

- (8.15) The history of relations between cultures is not only one of wars and confrontation. It is also based on centuries of constructive exchanges, cross-fertilization, and peaceful co-existence. (AOC 1.3)

The AOC report consistently aims to counter the misconception of the division into categories like Western versus Muslim:

(8.16) Indeed, the latter stereotypes only serve to entrench already polarized opinions. Worse, by promoting the misguided view that cultures are set on an unavoidable collision course, they help turn negotiable disputes into seemingly intractable identity-based conflicts that take hold of the popular imagination. It is essential, therefore, to counter the stereotypes and misconceptions that deepen patterns of hostility and mistrust among societies. (AOC 1.3)

The statement ‘cultures are set on an unavoidable collision course’ metaphorically warns of the consequences of taking action based on stereotyping, as does also the clause referring to identity-based conflicts that ‘take hold of the popular imagination’, Example AOC 1.3 illustrates how the actors deploy formulations with negative assessments (e.g. White 2002), such as ‘misguided view’, ‘unavoidable collision course’, ‘disputes’, ‘identity-based conflicts’, ‘stereotypes’, ‘misconceptions’, ‘hostility’ and ‘mistrust’ to depict the societal circumstances created by stereotyping. Amid these rhetorical devices in the passage above the choice of the attribution ‘negotiable’ carrying a positive connotation (albeit manifested in a negative statement) indicates that it is possible to better the prevailing circumstances through communication. And that is what the AOC is set to do. The AOC report suggests the following approach:

(8.17) Moreover, classifying internally fluid and diverse societies along hard-and-fast lines of civilizations interferes with more illuminating ways of understanding questions of identity, motivation and behavior. Rifts between the powerful and the powerless or the rich and the poor or between different political groups, classes, occupations and nationalities have greater explanatory power than such cultural categories. (AOC 1.3)

What is notable here is that although the authors positioned themselves to support the conception that ‘political groups, classes, occupations and nationalities have a greater explanatory power’ than ‘civilizations’, their initiative was given the title of ‘the Alliance of Civilizations’ and furthermore, the conceptual framework of the report is constructed within this dichotomy. This problematic positioning is accentuated further in the report as the relations between the Western and Muslim civilizations are presented as an example of divisions in international relations in the report, with the idea that the ‘approach taken by the High-level Group to this issue may serve as a reference for the bridging of other divides in the interest of establishing peace and harmony’ (AOC 4.1). While the AOC consistently argues that the initiative must by nature be based on a multipolar perspective, deploying such a dichotomy potentially

leaves an impression to the recipients that there indeed are two civilizations in dialogue in the world. This approach fails to include the impact of e.g. other major cultures, ideologies and religions in global intercultural communication.

In this section the notion of attributing blame has been examined. The blame for distorting discourse in international relations was placed in the AOC report on the societal anxiety caused by Huntington's theory (1996) of the clash of civilizations, which argues that civilizations are vastly differentiated from each other and suggests that there is a dichotomy between Western and Muslim civilizations. We posed a question whether this negative dichotomy is implicitly embedded in the title of Alliance of Civilizations, especially as the cognitive conceptual framework of the report seems to be partly based on this dichotomy. Additionally, this constellation becomes accentuated in the way the report represents the dialogue between Muslim and Western societies as an example for other global and local divides that need to be bridged.

Hall's argument (1992) that all theories are cultural products could be applied in public discourse studies by examining if agencies involved in an inter-cultural communicative setting evaluate argumentation from cultural positions, under particular conditions and in particular places.

The next section is an investigation of how the agencies in the AOC report position themselves to express socio-cultural responsibility.

### 8.6 Responsibility and socio-cultural values

From the point of view of constructing societal responsibility, the High-level Group of the AOC consistently emphasises that religions can be a source of stability for societies. The following example is illustrative of how the Alliance of Civilizations report accentuates the importance of religions as a source of harmony:

(8.18) Religion is an increasingly important dimension of many societies and a significant source of values for individuals. It can play a critical role in promoting an appreciation of other cultures, religions, and ways of life to help build harmony among them. (AOC 2.8)

In this example rhetorical constructions like 'increasingly important dimension', 'significant source of values', 'promoting an appreciation' and 'help build harmony' in collocation (see e.g. Östman 2005) with *religion* promote understanding of the

critical role of religion in developing intercultural communication. The report suggests that a symbiotic relationship may be emerging between religion and politics, and notes how the secularisation and secularism that were expected to overcome the significance of religious life in societies did not happen. Religions continue to expand their influence in the global world, and their significance in cultures cannot be ignored. The integrity of human life is a key issue in most religions; a human responsibility to take care of each other is a logical consequence of these universal values.

Although the report consistently deliberates on the positive impact of religions in world harmony, it also brings out challenges: ‘The exploitation of religion by ideologues intent on swaying people to their causes has led to the misguided perception that religion itself is a root cause for intercultural conflict’ (AOC 3.8). The report suggests that although in recent years almost every major world religion has established a role in politics, the majority of people reject religious extremism:

(8.19) There is increasing support in some societies for a greater role for religion in public life. Most express this desire in peaceable ways, persisting in a world that many view to be increasingly hostile to faith. But a tiny proportion of religiously motivated groups worldwide take part in acts of violence. (AOC 3.9)

In elaborating on the establishment of Israel and the status of Jerusalem in the section entitled ‘Trends in Muslim societies’, potential causes for the continuing instability in the region are depicted in the following manner:

(8.20) Israel’s continuing occupation of Palestinian and other Arab territories and the unresolved status of Jerusalem – a holy city for Muslims and Christians as well as Jews – have persisted with the perceived acquiescence of Western governments and thus are primary causes of resentment and anger in the Muslim world toward Western nations. This occupation has been perceived in the Muslim world as a form of colonialism and has led many to believe, rightly or wrongly, that Israel is in collusion with “the West”. (AOC 4.4)

The causes of resentment and anger toward Western nations are illustrated in the example above from the point of view of the Muslim world. The blame of causing resentment and anger in the Muslim world toward Western nations is laid primarily on Israel and Western governments. Discursive devices such as ‘perceived acquiescence of Western governments’ and ‘a form of colonialism’ enforce this view,

where the Muslim world is positioned in the role of a recipient, if not a victim (Bamberg 1997, 2012), regardless of the mitigating effect of formulas such as ‘perceived in the Muslim world’ and ‘rightly or wrongly’.

Although it is important in intercultural communication to respect socio-cultural values (Appiah 2008) of participants, discourse lacking a multipolar perspective – which was suggested in the introduction of the AOC report and generally evident in the rhetorical strategies prevalent in the document – can be counterproductive, undermining the objectivity of the report.

Using language is making choices in all contexts, as Verschueren (1999) suggests. The semantic sensitivity of rhetorical choices in a peace initiative can hardly be overestimated even when compared with political public speaking in international arenas or in day-to-day global diplomacy. As a contrast to the former example (AOC4.4), which showed some socio-cultural rhetorical markers, a paragraph depicting the same phenomenon but taken from the general policy recommendations in the AOC report illustrates another positioning by actors:

(8.21) Of primary importance in this regard is the mutual recognition of the competing narratives that emerged following the establishment of the state of Israel. In the eyes of most Jews and Israelis this event was the result of a long-standing aspiration to build a Jewish homeland and was immediately followed by an attack from neighboring Arab countries. For Palestinians and a majority of people in the Muslim world, however, the establishment of Israel was experienced as an act of aggression that led to the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and to the occupation of their lands. It is worth noting that these competing narratives are mirrored in divergent interpretations of recent history: different ways of describing conflicts, occupation, and peace negotiation efforts. (AOC 5.6)

The paragraph above illustrates a more multi-polar view, as it includes different perspectives on the specific event that was depicted from a more socio-cultural perspective in the former example (AOC4.4). The report depicts ‘competing narratives’: the Israeli point of view is represented in collocation with rhetorical markers like ‘long-standing aspiration’ and ‘homeland’. On the other hand, the point of view of the Muslim world is presented in collocation with constructs like ‘act of aggression’, ‘expulsion of hundreds of thousands’ and ‘occupation’. The aim of the Alliance of Civilizations initiative is to bridge such gaps with a dignified solution that is ‘based on the will of all peoples involved in this conflict’ (5.2). This multi-polar

approach is explicitly displayed in the rhetorical strategies chosen for statements in this example, as divergent cultural and social interpretations of an international conflict situation are heard and respected. The report further recommends ‘the development of a White Paper analyzing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict dispassionately and objectively, giving voice to the competing narratives on both sides’ (AOC 5.6).

The following example illustrates the positioning of the authors with regard to hostilities in the history of the relations between Western and Muslim societies:

(8.22) Selective accounts of ancient history are used by radical movements to paint an ominous portrait of historically distinct and mutually exclusive faith communities destined for confrontation. Such distorted historical narratives must be countered. More important for the purposes of this report is the fact that this history does not offer explanations for current conflicts or for the rise in hostility between Western and Muslim societies.

On the contrary, the roots of these phenomena lie in developments that took place in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, beginning with European imperialism, the resulting emergence of anti-colonial movements, and the legacy of the confrontations between them. (AOC 4.3)

Reflecting on historical causes of contemporary conflicts is a delicate issue to be dealt with without a multi-polar approach. As was stated earlier, socio-cultural positioning of agencies has an impact not only on efforts to resolve social and political problems, but also in conceptualising what those problems are (c.f. Smiley 1992). In the passage above, ‘European imperialism’ and ‘anti-colonial movements’ are mentioned to be the roots of confrontations between Western and Muslim societies.

The authors of the Alliance of Civilizations position themselves to examine the history of international relations from an alternative perspective and argue that ‘distorted historical narratives must be countered’. The same kind of critique concerning international issues and in particular the theory building in intercultural communication has been expressed in contemporary international communication studies (Chen 2002, Dervin 2011, Fang 2012, Guilherme and Dietz 2015, Holliday 2013, Scollon and Wong Scollon 2003), in which traditional theories and models have been criticised for being based on western thinking.

The socio-cultural background of active agents tends to have an influence not only on the choice of rhetorical strategies and markers as such but also on how themes are

organised in discourse (Scollon and Wong Scollon 2003, Scollon 2012). We saw earlier in this chapter how the agencies behind the AOC report positioned themselves at the beginning of their report to depicting the global context of the newly formed initiative by illustrating ‘our world that is alarmingly out of balance’ (AOC 1.1). This type of inductive pattern of discourse, which first presents the background and then leads the audience or readers to the main point, is often preferred in non-western countries. Scollon and Wong Scollon (2003) contemplate widely on the causes of this inherent cultural preference for inductive versus deductive rhetorical strategies. They suggest that differences in cultural views on issues of politeness, such as ‘facework’ (see e.g. Goffman 1967), seem to have an impact on how different cultural regions prefer specific discourse patterns.

This section has elaborated on socio-cultural aspects of responsibility in a conflict prevention initiative, in which language use is of primary importance. The authors in the AOC report positioned themselves to evaluate socio-cultural responsibility through issues such as the role of religions’ as a (de)stabiliser in societies, internal and external political threats influencing public life in nations and by expressing concern of prevailing distorted historical narratives that fail to include views from non-western nations. It became evident that socio-cultural positioning of actors in public discourse influences the very conceptualisation of what the challenges and problems are in international communication.

The Alliance of Civilizations report displays rhetorical strategies typical of an inductive discourse pattern, a less preferred approach in western nations, as it opens with a detailed illustration of the context of the initiative.

The next section will further examine in detail the concept of culture-bound markers and their pragmatic implications in public discourse.

#### 8.6.1 Culture-bound markers

We need to pay further attention to culture-bound markers, such as lexical items that are not mutually comprehended in intercultural communication contexts, and also to their pragmatic implications on how agencies position themselves for the purpose of assigning responsibilities in conflict prevention. It is logical for success in international conflict prevention and peace efforts that all participating parties fully

understand the semantics of rhetorical choices used by agencies in the mediating process. This no doubt prevents cultural misunderstandings in the peace process and helps participating parties to consolidate, or not, with the suggested future action.

Accordingly, the Alliance of Civilizations report clarifies the meaning of specific discursive markers that have been used ambiguously by the public and the media:

(8.23) In evaluating the relations between Western and Muslim societies it is important to note that Islamist activism does not necessarily produce Islamist militancy within societies and the latter does not automatically lead to violent confrontation with the West. (AOC 4.12)

The semantic clarification of the word ‘activism’ in this context advances the cognitive conceptualisation of recipients not only in relations between Western and Muslim societies but also in how the notion of ‘activism’ is used in other rhetorical contexts concerning international religious-political relations. The example clarifies that the notion of ‘Islamist activism’ need not automatically lead to confrontation with the West, nor be a hindrance for intercultural dialogue. Mediators take the responsibility for clarifying terms that have become ambiguous in public discourse and thus remove some of the hindrances caused by cultural misunderstandings in intercultural dialogue.

Elaborating on trends in Muslim societies and external and internal challenges facing the Muslim world, the report stresses the fact that not only the future of the Muslim societies but also their future relations with the rest of the world is impacted by ‘who prevails in these intra-Muslim struggles’ (AOC 4.16). The moral responsibility to promote global stability is partly placed on Muslim societies. However, the authors position themselves to approach the challenge also from another perspective and through other culture-bound rhetorical choices:

(8.24) Propagation by Western media and official authorities of oversimplified explanations that either blame Islam as a religion or that falsely pit secularists against religious activists has a detrimental effect. This includes media coverage that gives time and space only to the most extreme of the religious voices in the Muslim world and to the most anti-Muslim ideologues in the West to counter them. Similarly, some media products generated in Muslim countries that presents [sic] mostly or entirely negative portrayals of other communities feeds polarization. The use of expressions such as “Islamic terrorism” in the West and “modern Crusaders” in the Muslim world exacerbates the mutual hostility. (AOC 4.16)

The paragraph above illustrates how ‘over-simplified explanations’ of a religion by media and official authorities can construct a reality that is not acceptable to various participants in conflict prevention. The authors of the AOC report disapprove of Western media coverage that gives time to the most extreme religious voices in the Muslim world. Such tendencies are illustrated by words and formulas with negative assessments (cf. White 2002), such as ‘propagation’, ‘falsely’, and ‘detrimental effect’. On the other hand, the authors position themselves in reciprocity, as they include examples of language use in Muslim societies: formulations such as ‘Islamic terrorism’ and ‘modern Crusaders’ present negative portrayals of other communities thus feeding polarisation. Through these kinds of rhetorical analyses the authors share the societal responsibility and the blame for the causes of the troubled relations between Muslim and Western societies.

Clarification of culture-bound words deployed in intercultural initiatives lays a solid groundwork for efforts to develop intercultural understanding (for cultural constructions vs. shared meanings see Burke 1992, Hum and Lyon 2009). The authors further suggest that a concept with ‘many shades of meaning’ such as ‘jihad’, is increasingly ‘used by extremists to justify violence with little consideration for the historical context and the related religious exigencies that most Muslim scholars agree should inform its application’ (4.17). The report continues to state:

(8.25) When such exhortations to violence by radical factions are picked up and amplified by media and Western political leaders, the notion of “jihad” loses the multiple meanings and positive connotations it has for Muslims and becomes only associated with violent and negative meanings which have been wrongly attributed to the term. (AOC 4.17)

Words can be metaphorically ‘hijacked’ by communication communities, as the passage above illustrates. The report further suggests that distinctions need to be made between interpretations of concepts such as ‘national movements’ and ‘terrorist groups with global ambitions’ (AOC 4.20). For global terrorist groups, the report argues, ‘the clash of civilizations’ (Huntington 1996) is ‘a welcome and potent slogan to attract and motivate a loosely knit network of operatives and supporters’ (AOC 4.20).

To sum up, this chapter (8.6) has offered a discussion of socio-cultural tendencies apparent in the report of the Alliance of Civilizations. Deliberating on the history of

relations between Muslim and Western societies from the point of view of religions, the report suggests that notwithstanding some historical periods of tension and confrontation between adherents of the three major religions, ‘peaceful co-existence, beneficial trade and reciprocal learning have been hallmarks of relations between Christianity, Islam and Judaism from their earliest period until today’ (AOC 4.2). The lexical choices in the title ‘Bridging the World’s Divides’ suggest that the global divides can be bridged; this positive theme is reflected in the ways the report strives for global harmony.

Socio-cultural responsibility in conflict management can cause a challenging situation. It is obvious in the AOC report that socio-cultural responsibility calls actors to respect specific values in distinct socio-cultural societies, yet institutional responsibility and neutrality assumed to predominate in an initiative within the United Nations calls for a multi-polar view on the issues under discussion. The AOC report manifests rhetorical choices, e.g. collocations of words with connotative values (White 2002), which may give the recipients an understanding that the actors position themselves partly on the non-Western side to evaluate international challenges. This was manifested particularly in evaluating the history of hostilities between Muslim and Western societies and in depicting the establishment of Israel.

Section 8.6.1 highlighted the responsibility to establish a common understanding for socio-cultural concepts in international communication. The AOC report manifests several examples of such clarification, as e.g. some historical background of the word ‘jihad’ is included in the document. Assigning future societal responsibilities calls for *a priori* consolidation between culture-bound markers in search of multi-polar solutions.

In the following section I examine how the agencies in the AOC report define ‘us’ by using the first person plural pronoun *we* and examine how societal responsibility is expressed through using pronominal strategies.

### 8.7 ‘Us’ and responsibility

The opening sentences of the AOC report made evident how the use of inclusive first person plural *we* together with its syntactic and case-dependent morphological variants constructed contextual coherence. This is illustrated in the following samples

(italics added) from the beginning of the introduction titled ‘Bridging the World’s Divides’:

- (8.26) *Our* world is alarmingly out of balance. (1.1)
- (8.27) *Ours* is a world of great inequalities. (1.1)
- (8.28) *We* know more about distant universes than ever before... (1.1)
- (8.29) *We* also live in an increasingly complex world... (1.2)

The first person plural pronoun *we*, and its variants contribute to establishing a global narrative in the AOC that excludes no nation, nor individual from the responsibility to contribute to global circumstances. Thus, through a macro perspective on the whole globe the setting construes itself as ‘*our* world’. This salience of first person plural pronouns in the opening paragraph of the report is atypical for Part I of the AOC report, which in general manifests infrequent use of first person pronouns. (Elements of special interest in these quotes have been italicised by the author.)

The use of the pronoun *we* changes in the second chapter entitled ‘Guiding Principles’ in the Alliance of Civilizations report. The authors have first positioned themselves to depict global phenomena such as adherence to human rights standards, international law and to covenants of civilizations and cultures in abstract terms. As the topic of terrorism is introduced, the subjective pronoun *we* is used:

- (8.30) In order to succeed in enabling international institutions and governments to stop terrorism, *we* need to address all the conditions conducive to it, recognizing the links between peace, security, social and economic development, and human rights. (AOC 2.6)

In the relations between Muslim and Western societies, the notion of terrorism has become one of the gravest challenges. *We* as a subjective agent enforces the responsibility of the AOC active agents to address the conditions conducive to terrorism and recognise the interconnection of various societal issues such as social and economic development and human rights in enabling international institutions and governments to stop terrorism.

In the chapter elaborating on general policy recommendations of the Alliance of Civilizations, the first person plural pronoun *we* together with its variants are used consistently as subjective agents. This rhetorical device naturally enhances the

institutional and moral responsibility of the Alliance of Civilization in its mission, as the following examples illustrate:

(8.31) With regard to relations between Muslim and Western societies, *we* must acknowledge the contemporary realities that shape the views of millions of Muslims: the prolonged Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the violence in Afghanistan, and the increasingly violent conflict in Iraq. (AOC 5.1)

(8.32) *We* must stress the growing urgency of the Palestinian issue, which is a major factor in the widening rift between Muslim and Western societies. (AOC 5.2)

(8.33) *Our* emphasis on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not meant to imply that it is the overt cause of all tensions between Muslim and Western societies.... Nevertheless, it is *our* view that the Israeli-Palestinian issue has taken on a symbolic value that colors cross-cultural and political relations ... (AOC 5.3)

(8.34) *We* firmly believe that progress on this front rests on the recognition of both the Palestinian and Jewish national aspirations ... (AOC 5.4)

The inclusive pronoun *we* in example AOC 5.1, refers to the actors in the AOC initiative. In collocation with the deontic modal verb ‘must’ the institutional responsibility of the initiative is highlighted. The AOC calls for the acknowledgment of the prevailing realities in international relations and in international conflict situations. The pronoun *we* no doubt is inclusive of all agencies in the UN-based Alliance of Civilizations, as it aims for a comprehensive, multi-lateral approach. By contrast, the statement ‘the contemporary realities that shape a view of millions of Muslims’ raises questions about excluding other peoples and other religions, whose views contemporary realities may also shape.

According to the AOC document many factors create resentment and mistrust in international relations. One of the main challenges, however, is the growing urgency of ‘the Palestinian issue’ (AOC 5.2), which is called ‘the Israeli-Palestinian conflict’ in AOC 5.3. The AOC expresses societal responsibility by stating that ‘*we* must stress the growing urgency of the Palestinian issue’ in 5.2. Elaboration on the important position of this issue in international affairs is accentuated by using possessive pronouns in examples such as ‘*our* emphasis’ and ‘*our* view’ (5.3). ‘Nevertheless, it is *our* view’, the report states ‘that the Israeli-Palestinian issue has taken on a symbolic value that colors cross-cultural and political relations...’. By these rhetorical

constructs including the use of the first person plural pronoun, the AOC stresses their role in solving these international conflicts.

In the last example above (AOC 5.4) the rhetorical device *we* in ‘*We* firmly believe’ expresses positivity that progress in achieving a just and sustainable solution to this conflict ‘rests on the recognition of both the Palestinian and Jewish national aspirations...’ To bridge these divides, the report suggests, requires a bold vision and courage not only on the part of Israelis and Palestinians, but from all countries capable of influencing the situation.

To sum up, the UN based Alliance of Civilizations aims to eventually include as many member states as possible in its initiative for global peace and harmony. The approach taken is a macro-level approach, the contextual framing being *our* world. In general, Part I of the AOC document does not show consistent use of first person plural pronouns, although the pronoun *we* is salient in the opening paragraph of the document, which depicts the setting for the initiative. Apart from this initial use of the pronoun to construct the setting, the report manifests rhetorical strategies using the pronoun *we* in the context of e.g. the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. This seems to highlight the contribution of the AOC initiative in the crisis, as the inclusive ‘*we*’ tends to be used in a subject position when depicting the situation in the relations between Israel and Palestine, as in ‘*We* must stress the growing urgency of the Palestinian issue, which is a major factor in the widening rift between Muslim and Western societies’ (AOC 5.2). By contrast, as the actors position themselves to deliberate in more detail on political crises such as the 1953 coup in Iran, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the terrorist attack on the United States in September 2001, the use of personal pronouns is not manifested in the rhetorical strategies.

The pronoun *we*, unless deployed as being inclusive of the whole world or a neutral entity tends to reflect divisions. If there are *us*, there need to be those who are not *us*. Inclusion or exclusion is especially relevant in inter-religious dialogue, where diverse approaches tend to originate from fundamentally different interpretations of doctrines.

## 8.8 Institutional responsibility failing?

Despite the fact that multilateral co-operation and civil society activism have succeeded in developing international relations and there have been positive developments in international relations, according to the AOC report ‘a general malaise continues to be felt in many quarters regarding the state of the world’:

(8.35) There is a widespread perception that the multilateral institutions established to advance universal principles and to improve general well-being are ineffective mainly due to the lack of support of the most powerful countries and a real fear that the prospect of a more peaceful, stable, and prosperous future for today’s youth is at risk. (AOC 3.1)

There continues to be international critique about the United Nations’ capacity to improve general well-being in the future. Profound questions about the future government of the world society have been raised. In example AOC 3.1 the authors position themselves to blame ‘the most powerful countries’ for lack of support to multilateral institutions such as the UN. Indeed, typically the loudest critique within the walls of the United Nations is against the more powerful countries such as the United States for not taking on the responsibility to implement the UN resolutions. To counter such trends, the AOC report calls for a renewed commitment to multilateralism:

(8.36) It is therefore incumbent upon states to reinforce multilateral institutions – particularly the United Nations – and to support reform efforts that will strengthen the capacity and performance of these institutions. (AOC 5.11)

At the United Nations, as in other international organisations, it is often the official public discourse that holds the democratic polity together (cf. Zarefsky 2009). Rhetorical choices of societal responsibility in public discourse (de)construct realities. This becomes significant in searching for solutions in international conflict-prevention, when a prime challenge is the kind of future that is imagined by different socio-cultural communities, and the question of who is positioned to select rhetorical constructions to describe it.

## 8.9 Conclusion and discussion

Rhetorical choices in Part I of the document of the Alliance of Civilizations adhere to the formulaic genre- and institution-specific modes of public discourse that are

characteristic of global institutions such as the United Nations. Guided by the ideals in the UN Charter, the AOC positions itself in the global setting of ‘our world that is alarmingly out of balance’, and calls for societal responsibility of governments, international institutions, leaders of public opinion and civil society to take measures to better international relations. The assumption is that responsible language in initiatives aiming for global peace and harmony is constitutive of neutral, objective and non-biased rhetorical strategies. A general conclusion from this study is that responsible language in Part I of the report of the Alliance of Civilizations follows these principles: objective rhetorical strategies typically predominate in the AOC report.

However, the findings indicate occasional occurrences of culture-specific tendencies in rhetorical choices of responsibility. The results suggest that the AOC actors make an effort to position themselves between competing responsibilities, the socio-cultural responsibility calling to respect the values of their respective societies versus the institutional responsibility calling for a multi-polar approach and neutrality in discussing global conflicts. This was evident particularly in how the agencies positioned themselves to expressing responsibility to political challenges such as the prolonged Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is to be noted further that the AOC report manifested two significantly diverse types of societal responsibility for this specific political issue: one that viewed the Israeli-Palestinian crisis from a multi-lateral, institutional point of view and another that accentuated a socio-cultural approach. Socio-cultural positioning of actors was also displayed in rhetorical choices attributing blame on Western societies, as causes of hostilities between Muslim versus the Western societies were evaluated.

This aroused a question about the title *Alliance of Civilizations*. While it is understood that the AOC initiative was planned partly to counter the dominating theory of the clash of civilizations (Huntington 1996), it has been suggested that the rhetorical construct ‘civilizations’ in this context implicitly suggest that the global dialogue takes places between major civilizations. This issue becomes even more relevant as the report focuses largely on the trend of extremism, with special attention to relations between Western and Muslim societies.

The report emphasises that religion has an increasingly important impact in societies and can play a critical role in promoting intercultural harmony. According to the report, the significance of religion cannot be overlooked, especially as in many countries religion influences daily politics. The AOC report tends to give examples of relations between Western and Muslim societies by examining the relationship partly from a Muslim point of view. No doubt it can be beneficial to examine intercultural communication processes from a specific perspective, yet as the AOC document consistently stresses, multipolar perspectives are needed to reach settlements in a multipolar world. This presupposes inclusion of all participating interlocutors in the process of peace.

In conflict prevention and peace initiatives it is essential for interlocutors to define culture-bound rhetorical markers used in discourse prior to assigning societal responsibilities for future processes. The report shows examples of culture-bound words and calls for clarification of their historical roots.

The findings show that societal and moral responsibility in the AOC report is placed primarily on the official leadership of the member states of the UN, which essentially includes the entire world. This notion of global responsibility is expressed throughout the first part of the report, often by using figurative abstract rhetorical strategies which call for those who enjoy prosperity and freedom to work for those to whom ‘freedom from want and freedom from fear appear as elusive as ever’ (AOC 1.1). In this context the agencies consistently position themselves to defend the dignity of all human beings and respect for all human diversity, which is the prime high calling for this initiative and for the United Nations in general.

International public discourse in high-level political arenas such as the European Union, the United Nations and the UN based Alliance of Civilizations aim for the same target: to promote dialogue and understanding between nations. Even though idealistically the contemporary world society embraces universal goals, it continues to be divided into sovereign states governed by their specific national rulings. Still in the 21<sup>st</sup> century these nations too often deploy violent means to achieve not only political, economic and religious gain, but also peace.

It is evident that more research, and using bigger data, is needed in intercultural communication research in the area of conflict prevention. Although words do not

make peace, critical assessment on how agencies are positioned to taking international societal responsibility especially in conflict prevention is a way linguistic pragmatics can contribute to a better world. According to the International Communication Monitoring (Verschueren et al. 2001), a research-based undertaking in the area of conflict-prevention, developments in global power relationships become transparent through a close and continuous analysis of public discourse, which in turn can prevent under-informed decision-making in the political and diplomatic level. The International Communication Monitoring suggests that in this area there is a research gap, ‘sometimes rendering inaccessible the type of knowledge that is needed to observe undesirable developments before these score their effects’ (ICM: 9). In our current era of fake news and ‘post truth’ communication, initiatives focusing on promoting coherence between diverse communication communities in the area of linguistics are perhaps needed more than ever. Multi-lateral co-operation e.g. by developing approaches that align resources representing expertise in the field of intercultural pragmatics and international politics could be systematically re-contextualized in order to develop new models for solving pertinent challenges in international communication.

According to the Alliance of Civilizations, religions, though often implicitly embedded in culture, continue to have a strong impact on socio-cultural appreciations in society, both individually and collectively. As well as in contemporary intercultural communication studies this interdependence deserves more attention also in international diplomacy. As all main religions value human dignity and respect for life in their doctrines, what type of pragmatic variation in inter-religious public discourse has caused current perturbations in contemporary inter-religious dialogue? It is worth pointing out that although inter-religious dialogue is no doubt developed through promoting coherence in high-level organisations like the United Nations, ultimately the inter-religious co-existence can become a reality when ordinary citizens can appreciate the value world of one another, and can accept it, if not identify with it, at least to a point.

Globalisation and the rapid development of information technology were assumed to wipe away culture-bound rhetorical choices in discourse (cf. Blommaert 2015). This small-scale analysis indicates the contrary. Public discourse in a high-level formal document constructed within the global multilateral institute of the United Nations

reflects traits of cultural markers, even culture-bound rhetorical strategies constructing responsibilities. People do ‘take responsibility for who they are, what they do, what they value, and what they believe in’ (Picco 1999), as the rhetorical choices in the data make evident.

## **9. LINGUISTIC POSITIONING IN INTERNATIONAL SPEAKING FORA**

### **Constructing coherence and responsibility: delegates of Brazil, France, Jordan and the United States addressing their audiences at the United Nations General Assembly Plenaries**

When official delegates of the United Nations member states come together at the annual General Assembly plenaries to discuss a wide array of international issues, their public speeches are expected to reflect and touch upon special responsibility and accountability to global societal issues. Public speeches by the delegates of member states tend to have global ramifications, and integrity from speakers is called for.

The focus of this study is to examine rhetorical constructs that the delegates of four UN member states, namely Brazil, France, Jordan and the United States use to express coherence and responsibility in their public speeches at the UN General Assembly plenaries during 2006–2015.

The beginning statements by speakers are often overlooked as conventional formalities expressing politeness. In this chapter I argue that the first few words, with which speakers linguistically position themselves (Bamberg 2012) in relation to their audiences, already begin to construct the socio-cultural reality of the speaking situation and should be seen as cultural phenomena.

### **9.1 Introduction**

Political public speaking at the General Assembly, followed by media and audiences globally, is a sensitive field of communication, one in which expressions of responsibility may lose their force due to a single implicit act of communication, even a gesture that insinuates intentions other than those expressed explicitly. The national delegates at the United Nations General Assembly plenaries tend to focus on global challenges and development of common social, economic and political issues in their speeches. As official representatives of their nations, delegates also draw attention to their national political issues and challenges.

In this study I have sought to find out the extent to which the communicative patterns referring to coherence and responsibility in the public speeches at the GA are anchored to socio-cultural aspects of behaviour, if not directly to ‘the home culture’ of the speakers. In terms of Bamberg (1997, 2012) we could ask: Where is ‘self’ positioned in public speaking? Positioning theory has gradually been adapted from

analysing person-to-person encounters to examining macro-level interaction e.g. between nations.

Nations can be seen as imagined (Anderson 2006) communities; imagined through various narratives (see e.g. Geertz 1973b). In other words a nation and national cultures can be seen as products of discursive strategies. This notion becomes relevant in analysing how national leaders construct their personal and national narratives on international arenas, and how they choose their rhetorical devices (Bamberg 1997, 2012, Eckert 2012, Verschueren 1999, White 2002, Östman 1986) in their public speeches. The point of interest is whether the post-globalised world-society speakers choose a universal discursive pattern (if such a pattern exists) or use linguistic constellations that are largely based on socio-cultural tendencies in their own speaking communities (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989, Goffman 1963, Hinnenkamp 2009, Lakoff 2005). Opening statements of speeches in institutional settings such as the General Assembly manifest markers of deference such as communicative acts of greeting, thanking or complimenting members of the audience. These types of ceremonial communicative acts ('rituals' as Hofstede (2001, 2010) calls them) are considered to be socially essential within cultures.

A scholar doing research on political discourse on issues related to coherence and responsibility will no doubt eventually find explicit tokens of persuasion in the discourse, thus confirming that all interaction and information-transaction can be considered more or less persuasive (Östman 2005). Besides, in analysing any discourse, Östman remarks that we need to pay attention to several levels of communication (*Ibid.* 192):

On one level, we explicitly anchor what we say or write with linguistic units and structures that refer to the time, place, and participants; on this level, we make explicit choices of meaning to construe or co-construe the propositional contents of a message. The alternatives to choose from prototypically constitute the codified form-meaning constellations of a language. At the same time, on another level, we make implicit choices of how to express ourselves in relation to the demands of the cultural context at hand, in relation to our reader or co-interactant, and our attitudes. In this manner we implicitly anchor our discourse to other (especially socio-cultural) aspects of our behaviour.

Next I will briefly illustrate some approaches to how the positioning of 'self' works when addressing an audience.

### 9.1.1 Linguistic positioning of ‘self’

Moghaddam and Harré contemplated ‘how people use words to locate themselves and others’ (2010:2) and how the idea of positioning is founded on interaction and negotiation with other people. The argument by Moghaddam and Harré that people can use discourse of all types to locate themselves and others is also implemented by Bucholtz and Hall (2005), who view identity as social positioning of ‘self’ and ‘the other’ in linguistic interaction. Representing sociocultural linguistics, they argue that since identity is a discursive construct, interactants indexically position self and other in a discourse. Although the principles of Bucholtz and Hall depict identity as emergent in communication encounters different from that in the political public speaking genre, the approach they propose is equally applicable to a speaker-audience encounter; in particular as political speakers tend to construe their identity, and their personal popularity in societies for that matter, through rhetorical devices appreciated by their audience.

Examining how a speaker represents ‘self’ in a speaking situation Mühlhäusler and Harré (1990) argue that speakers use ‘I’ and other first person expressions as indices of locations rather than to denote anything. This is a relevant point in analysing rhetorical strategies that deal with speakers’ active or passive engagement in statements conveying responsibility in public speeches. That said the speaker’s ‘self’ is frequently located in other rhetorical constellations besides the first person pronouns in deictic formulas conveying responsibility, namely in collectives such as organisations, nations, geographical regions and the like. Mühlhäusler and Harré argue that the notion of responsibility is anchored both to the illocutionary force and perlocutionary effect (Austin 1962, Searle 1969) of speakers’ statements.

These empirical studies show how in political public discourse – a specific form of narrative as such – positioning of ‘self’ can be used to modify the type and level of coherence-responsibility of a speaker. Positioning allows speakers to change ‘the role’ that they take in a narrative. Narratives reveal speaker’s identity (Bamberg 2012); this is bound to increase familiarity with the audience and contribute to constructing coherence in the formal speaking setting of the General Assembly. A central aim of narrative analysis is to investigate what a speaker aims to achieve through the act of narrating.

### 9.1.2 Coherence-responsibility in political rhetoric

Coherence in this section of my study (to be revisited from another perspective in the discussion section of Chapter 10) refers to how speakers at the GA position themselves linguistically to create a sense of connection with the audience in the speaking context. Instead of over-emphasising lexical and grammatical cohesive devices as such, I focus on coherence as a phenomenon that emerges when speakers ‘perform their individual actions in co-ordination, as ensembles’ (Clark 1996:3; for coherence see also Tanskanen 2006, Östman 1986, 2016:7).

Tokens of stability and hope for the future are no doubt expected to manifest in political discourse in high-level organs such as the General Assembly. Rhetorical strategies related to societal responsibility naturally point to several types of responsibility, primarily of moral and causal character. Contemporary scholars evaluating qualities and ideals of responsibility in discourse in various professional settings also emphasise the importance of concepts like sincerity (e.g. Solin 2016: 292) and honesty (e.g. Lakoff 2016:32). According to Sarangi (2016:58), the notion or responsibility is manifest in ‘accounts underpinned by agency, intentionality, epistemic stance as well as orientations to self-other relations’.

Positioning themselves as representatives of their nations, speakers at the GA typically express socio-cultural responsibility (Solin and Östman 2016:7) as they raise issues concerning their own nation or region. Also, in international public speaking, responsibility no doubt has to do with our sense of authority (2016: 4). This is bound to cause variation in rhetorical choices in speeches in multi-cultural contexts, as norms and patterns regarding power relations differ in societies (Hofstede 2001, 2010, Trompenaars 1995). Besides, in the formal institutional GA speaking context a speech by a representative of a powerful nation may have a stronger political impact - and often with fewer words - than public discourse by representatives of e.g. smaller states. Moghaddam and Harré suggest ‘it is with words that we ascribe rights and claim them for ourselves and place duties on others’ (2010:3). Those who place duties on others with words are indeed in a position to do so. Harré clarifies the link between discourse and positioning by stating (2012:193) that ‘a cluster of short-term disputable rights, obligations and duties is called ‘a position’, which also has normative and moral implications (cf. Harré and Langenhove 1999). This makes one

assume that speakers cannot claim to position themselves in a narrative such as a speech in a political arena solely for the sake of explaining matters (see also Verschueren 2014 for ideology in language use). According to Bamberg (2012), several other functions are likely to take place when an agent is explaining matters: narrators can simultaneously engage in acts of apologizing, gaining their audiences' empathy or regaining their trust for future political purposes.

In short, positioning of speakers in discourse has normative and moral implications (Harré and Langenhove 1999). The positioning by representatives of member states at GA plenaries as regards global responsibilities can bring about change in societal circumstances globally or open new perspectives into international conflict situations at hand. In a high-level international political forum, a speaker's social status tends to modify the illocutionary force of his/her words. The audience may have presuppositions or expectations of a respective nation's active role in showing and taking responsibility in international affairs. Despite this, since positioning is transformable and dynamic, speakers have an opportunity to redefine their position through prudent rhetorical choices in their public discourse.

Intentional (Sarangi 2016:40), verbal and functional responsibility is more and more called for in the global institution of the United Nations, emphasised in the media by allegations of bribery and misconduct. Such allegations are bound to harm the functions of the UN organisation, which aims to develop the global future envisaged in the UN Charter, a future in which all peoples and individuals from different backgrounds have equal standing and the same privilege, that of respect and dignity.

#### 9.1.3 Code of conduct at the General Assembly

At the beginning of a GA debate, the President of the session regularly reminds speakers of the Rules of Procedure. After the President of the General Assembly has called the meeting to order and the Secretary-General's Report has been introduced, the President of the General Assembly opens the general debate. The tradition for the delegate of the Brazilian government to be the first to take the floor at the GA plenaries is generally followed without exception, unless there is an exceptional crisis in world affairs. The statements given at the General Assembly are simultaneously translated into the UN official languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish. Understandably, public speeches by the Heads of States and officials of

governments are produced in co-operation with official speechwriters, who follow the theme assigned for each plenary session at the General Assembly.

How the audience eventually receives a speech in the GA auditorium is naturally impacted by the very fact that the members of the General Assembly can select when to be present in the sessions and who to listen to. The focus of international attention is usually on the first few days of the GA Plenary sessions, which usually last from seven to nine days, for the plausible reason that the host country United States delivers its statements during these early days of the session. Eventual moral and societal consequences of rhetoric of responsibility in GA speeches are hard to measure. In international relations the ultimate manifestation of accountability only becomes evident in what discursive agents actually do with regard to the issues that they raise in their discourse. However, it is not only what they do, but also what they cause other agents to do (Burke 1950). Responsibility in public discourse refers not only to speakers' ethos or actions taken by speakers but also to the response of their audience. The responsibility of the audience is at least to listen.

## **9.2 Focus of study**

To refocus on the main theme, in this research my aim is to answer the following questions: a) How do official representatives of the UN member states position themselves in their speeches to construct coherence and responsibility? b) To what extent do discursive strategies chosen by the speakers manifest discursive preferences prevalent in different societies?

Additionally, in addressing these questions I want to analyse the extent to which contemporary international speakers follow a universal pattern of opening a public speech in a formal setting.

I argue that the way speakers position themselves to interact with their audience in the opening words of their formal public discourse already starts to construct the cultural reality (see Verschueren 1999, 2009, Eckert 2012) of the speaking situation and should be seen as a socio-cultural phenomenon. Additionally I sought to find out if the communicative pattern speakers use in their opening words to address the audience is reflected in the way they will position themselves towards the issues that they bring forth in the introductions of their presentations.

### 9.2.1 Data

The data used were the introductions in the speeches (N=10 for each nation) delivered at the General Assembly plenaries 61-70 during 2006–2015. The speeches were delivered either by the heads of the state (90 per cent of the speeches of Brazil and France were delivered by heads of state, for Jordan 70 per cent, for the U.S.A. 100 per cent) or by a senior government official such as a Minister for Foreign Affairs. The speakers' similar societal position in their nations and the formal institutional contextual setting of the UN General Assembly contribute to the validity of making such a cross-cultural comparison. The speakers, i.e. the 'delegates' at the GA are also referred to as 'representatives' in this cross-cultural analysis, as they represent specific nations and socio-cultural regions in this study.

In the analysis of the linguistic formulas to construct coherence, the focus is on the very opening statements when the speaker first addresses the audience. The length of the opening statements to interconnect with the audience varies in the speeches by national leaders: the data of Jordan used the most rhetorical strategies including deference to the audience, whereas data from the U.S.A. contained the least such strategies. Additionally, it needs to be noted that the official United Nations documents of the General Assembly public speeches do not consistently include a verbatim account of the words used to first address the dignitaries in the audience (e.g. in the speech by the President of the USA in GA plenary sessions 67 and 68 the words 'Mr. President, Mr. Secretary General, fellow delegates, ladies and gentlemen' were not included). Neither was the traditional religious opening, salient in the Jordanian data, consistently included in the official UN documents of the General Assembly plenaries. In such cases I sought out the complete material from the English translations provided by the national delegations or from video-recordings of the debates held at the General Assembly sessions.

To examine rhetorical strategies referring to the notion of responsibility, the focus is on the introductions (see e.g. Lucas 2015), which traditionally consist of ten per cent of a speech. In a 15-minute speech (circa 2,000 words), which is the UN recommendation for the length of official speeches at the General Assembly, the introductions consist of approximately 200 words. Speakers are assumed to present an outline of their topics in their introductions (Lucas 2015, Zarefsky 2017). Hence, we

expect that introductions give some indication of how speakers express responsibility for matters they bring forth in their public discourse.

### 9.2.2 Method

This chapter uses the hybrid data-driven approach (2) as described in section 7.2.1. In my discourse analysis I borrowed an additional tool from narrative analysis (Bamberg 1997, 2012, De Fina 2013, Georgakopoulou 2011), namely the notion of positioning as applied by Bamberg (1997, 2012). Bamberg particularly emphasises how positioning analysis grants more centrality to speakers' active engagement in the construction process of the narrative.

The linguistic positioning of 'self' in the opening words of speeches were first examined and classified depending on whether the speaker positioned him/herself as an independent actor or as an 'inter-dependent' actor, i.e. representing collectives such as 'government', 'nation' and 'region'.

To generate coherence in the speaking situation, speakers typically follow fundamentals of polite behaviour in order to establish comity and promote rapport in the speaking context through 'strategic conflict avoidance' (Leech 1980:19), which is a normative action in societies universally (Brown-Levinson 2002). Politeness strategies used in the data were analysed and classified in categories such as 'greeting', 'thanking', 'honouring' and 'expressing pleasure'.

To examine agency in rhetorical strategies expressing responsibility the concept of subject position is used as a prime methodological tool to investigate how speakers position themselves as being in control of events, rather than being positioned 'at the mercy of outside forces' (Bamberg 1997:337). Positioning of speakers were analysed and classified in categories such as 'first person singular', 'nation', 'region', 'UN' and 'world'.

The following sections contain the actual analyses and the empirical research.

*“More than ever before, the fate of the world is in the hands of its rulers and leaders ...” –*

President Dilma Rousseff, Federal Republic of Brazil, UN General Assembly, Sept. 21, 2011

### **9.3 Public speeches by delegates of Brazil**

#### 9.3.1 Constructing coherence

During the time sequence of the UN General Assembly Plenary sessions 61-70 Brazil was represented by three state delegates, namely president H.E. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil until 2009, Minister for Foreign Affairs H.E. Celso Luiz Nunes Amorim in 2010 and president H.E. Dilma Rousseff during 2011–2015.

Brazil is a founding member of the United Nations and positioned as a strong active agent in the different functions of the organisation, especially in the UN peace-keeping operations. Being the first to speak in the annual GA debates the representatives of Brazil usually include a general look at the current global circumstances in their speeches. Speeches by the Brazilian delegation are delivered in Portuguese; the official English translations analysed in this study are provided by the United Nations and the Brazilian delegation.

A typical form of address deployed during the opening of speeches by representatives of Brazil is to be consistent in following the official protocol of the GA meetings by first addressing the President of the General Assembly session, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, followed by typical deference formulas such as ‘Your Excellencies Heads of State, Government and Delegation’ to maintain a deferential distance to the officers (Scollon and Wong Scollon 2003) at the Assembly. However, unlike most national speakers examined, the representatives of Brazil frequently engage themselves actively (Bamberg 1997, 2012) through communicative acts such as mentioning names of dignitaries in the audience (in 90 per cent of the speeches) and complimenting members of the audience. This type of address is manifested in the following examples:

(9.3.1) Ladies and Gentlemen, Heads of State and Government, Mr. Srgjam Kerim, President of the General Assembly of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary General of the United Nations, Delegates, I

congratulate you, Mr. Secretary-General, on having been chosen for such high office within the international system. (GA62)

(9.3.2) Mr. President of the General Assembly, Joseph Deiss, Mr. Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-Moon ... (GA65)

Addressing dignitaries individually by consistently using their names maintains the protocol of a formal speaking situation yet increases the sense of togetherness amid the international audience gathered in New York for the first day of GA plenaries. The rhetorical strategy of including names decreases distance to the audience (Brown and Levinson 2002, Scollon and Wong Scollon 2003).

Speakers from Brazil frequently choose a variety of politeness strategies as shown in Table 9-3 (15 references in the data) in the opening words of their speeches. In the first example above the speaker congratulates the Secretary General ‘for having been chosen for such high office within the international system’. Using the deictic pronoun ‘you’, typical in the data from Brazil (four references), also reduces distance to the audience as it addresses members in the audience personally.

Another example of a communicative act of congratulating a dignitary in the audience is seen in the following example:

(9.3.3) Let my first words, Mr. President, be to congratulate you for your appointment to preside over this Assembly. (GA70)

In the first example (9.3.1) the speaker positions himself as an independent agent through using the pronoun ‘I’. Yet by choosing the formula ‘such high office within the international system’ he implicitly positions himself in the framework of hierarchy in the General Assembly (see hierarchy and rank in Brown-Levinson 2002; power-distance e.g. in Hofstede 2001, 2010). A similar pattern referring to power-distance is seen in the rhetorical strategy ‘I congratulate you for your appointment to preside over this Assembly’ in the example above.

In 90 per cent of the Brazilian public speeches the speaker addresses first of all the President of the specific General Assembly present in the session. For a special session, as was the 70<sup>th</sup> birthday of the United Nations in 2015, a formal rhetorical strategy including a full list of dignitaries, was chosen by the president of the Federative Republic of Brazil, as the example below indicates:

(9.3.4) Your Excellency, Morgens Lykketof, President of the Seventieth General Assembly of the United Nations, Your Excellency Ban Ki-moon, Secretary General of the United Nations. Your Excellencies Heads of State, Government and Delegation, Ladies and Gentlemen. It is a privilege to address the General Assembly in this year when the United Nations celebrates its seventieth birthday. (GA70)

The example from GA70 again demonstrates how the Brazilian speakers show deference by addressing the President and the Secretary of the United Nations by their titles and their names, thus constructing coherence between the participants of the meeting.

A strategy for positioning preferred by international political leaders giving public speeches at the GA plenaries is to express gratitude to the institute of the General Assembly. Brazilian representatives deploy this strategy also. In the following example His Excellency, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Brazil positioning himself not only as a representative of the people but also of the Government of Brazil, expresses his gratitude in the following manner:

(9.3.5) It is a great honor for me to come to this rostrum to speak on behalf of the people and Government of Brazil. (GA65)

By mentioning ‘it is a great honor for me to come to this rostrum’, including a deictic reference of place ‘to the rostrum’ to which the UN officers ceremonially escort the delegates, the speaker shows implicit appreciation to the GA. The politeness formula of honoring the possibility to speak is the most used strategy of opening a speech in the Brazilian data (five references of the total of fifteen). A similar kind of appreciation towards the General Assembly, ‘the forum that is committed to being the most representative in the world’ is expressed by Dilma Rousseff, the female President of the Federative Republic of Brazil in her first speech at the UN:

(9.3.6) For the very first time in the history of the United Nations, a female voice is opening the general debate. It is the voice of democracy and equality that reverberates from a forum that is committed to being the most representative in the world. (GA66)

Here the President positions herself at the GA forum as an agent representing a gender perspective (e.g. Scollon and Wong Scollon 2003, Townsend 2012). By using the rhetorical formula ‘the female voice’ in the historic event of being the first woman to open the general debate at the UN, the speaker positions herself not only as a representative and an active agent of women, but as ‘the voice of democracy and

equality'. Nevertheless, the linguistic strategy depicting the voice of democracy and equality 'that reverberates from a forum that is committed to being the most representative of the world' denotes the speaker's contextual connection to the UN institute.

Continuing to position herself proudly as a woman at the highest forum of political public speaking, the following year President Rousseff re-emphasises the significance of her achievement:

(9.3.7) Once again, a woman's voice is opening the general debate of the General Assembly. (GA67)

The example above, embedded with implicit markers of social position: the deictic reference 'once again' to time referring to the repeated opportunity to speak as a woman and the rhetoric choice of 'a woman's voice', position the delegate as an actor for all women in the respected international setting. The implicit indication of respect for the institute of the General Assembly is manifested in the rhetorical devices the speaker chooses in opening her speech: '*a woman's voice*' (only referring to the gender of the speaker, not e.g. to the position of the President of Brazil) '*is opening the general debate of the General Assembly*'. The speaker obviously wants to stress the reverberating significance of the communicative event.

The findings indicate that the opening words of the public discourse of the representatives of Brazil manifest more formal rhetorical strategies when the speaker is representing the nation for the first time at a plenary session, whereas rhetorical choices in the opening statements in subsequent plenary sessions have a tendency to manifest more informal constructs. An example of this informality is the following extract from the opening statement by President Dilma Rousseff on her third annual speech at the General Assembly.

(9.3.8) I would first like to briefly express my pleasure at seeing the representative of Antigua and Barbuda, a country that is part of the Caribbean and is very dear to Brazil and our region, at the helm of the proceedings of this session of the General Assembly. You can count on the permanent support of my Government, Sir. (GA68)

In this example the speaker, positioned as a representative of Brazil and 'our region', states that Antigua and Barbuda, the home of the President of the GA's plenary, is 'very dear to Brazil'. The speaker chooses the discursive device 'dear', with a strong

connotation of familiarity in collocation with the intensifier ‘very’, which further enforces the illocutionary force of the statement referring to the relationship between these nations. The metaphoric linguistic constellation ‘at the helm of the proceedings of this session’ again implicitly refers to one’s position in the hierarchy-framework of the GA institute (cf. Hofstede 2001, 2010). In the position as a representative of the government of Brazil the speaker promises to support the General Assembly chaired by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda. Such rhetorical strategies with emotional connotations (see e.g. White 2002), reducing distance to the audience, are less frequent in the discursive patterns of the other nations in the data. A somewhat similar informal acknowledgment of friendship amid state leaders is evident in Dilma Rousseff’s opening words in her fourth speech in GA69.

(9.3.9) It is a great satisfaction for Brazil, which has the honor and privilege of opening this debate, to have as the President of this session of the General Assembly a son of Africa. (GA69)

Through constellations such as ‘a great satisfaction’ and ‘a son of Africa’, a rhetorical choice connoting motherly affection in the formal atmosphere of the General Assembly, the speaker constructs coherence, even a sense of a UN family in the meeting. The President of Brazil continues her speech by accentuating Brazil’s ties of history, culture and friendship with the African continent, at the same time developing public relations with the President of the 63rd session of the General Assembly and delegates of the African nations in the audience.

In a similar manner connoting familiarity, President H.E. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, being a seasoned speaker at the GA plenaries by the year 2008, opened his speech with the following words:

(9.3.10) It is my great pleasure to greet the President of the General Assembly, my dear friend Miguel D’Escoto. I wish you full success in your mission. (GA63)

Coherence with the audience is naturally increased as the speaker positions himself to engage his ‘dear friend’ in the discourse by greeting him personally and wishing him success. Again, this example from GA63 manifests how it is characteristic for Brazilian speakers in the data to show personal deference to members in the audience. Discursive patterns in the openings of the speakers of Brazil often refer to participants

in the General Assembly personally and even politeness strategies of complimenting refer to persons, usually to the officers on duty at the debate session.

### 9.3.1.1 Markers of familiarity to reduce distance

In short, to construct coherence with the audience the speakers from Brazil tend to position themselves (Bamberg 1997, 2012) as independent actors. Besides traditional formal rhetorical strategies, the speakers interconnect with the audience by using strategies that reduce distance to the audience, such as politeness-strategies including deictic pronouns (Charteris-Black 2014, Levinson 1983) to interconnect with the audience, by addressing members in the audience personally by names and occasionally using expressions with emotional connotations (White 2002), such as ‘my dear friend’ and ‘a son of Africa’. The Brazilian speakers do not hesitate to take a leadership role e.g. in gender issues. In the historic moment at the General Assembly when ‘a female voice is opening the general debate’ (GA66) President Rousseff positioned herself as a representative of global ‘democracy and equality’.

Additionally, the Brazilian speakers constructed coherence by paying compliments and offering motions of support to the presiding officials in the GA auditorium. Such typical politeness strategies included communicative acts of thanking officers at duty and wishing them success. Communicative acts of politeness were typically directed individually to persons rather than collectively to the organisation of the UN or the General Assembly.

Occasionally rhetorical constructions manifested in the opening statements reflected implicit references to the notion of hierarchy, e.g. when a speaker positioned himself to congratulate an officer at the debate for having been chosen for ‘a high office within the international system’. These types of linguistic formulas reflecting power distance are typically manifested in societies with high power distance and low individualism index values (Hofstede 2001, Hofstede et al. 2010).

The delegates tended to deploy more formal rhetoric in their first speaking engagement at the GA plenary. In the following years they positioned themselves to use rhetorical choices implying more informal devices, including markers expressing emotions.

The way the Brazilian delegates construct coherence at the GA plenary sessions is no doubt relevant as the Brazilian representatives are the first delegates to speak at the General Assembly plenaries. Rhetorical markers of familiarity and personal deference expressed through choosing a variety of rhetorical strategies to compliment dignitaries in the audience personally, by including names with titles and using deictic pronouns no doubt contribute to the general sense of togetherness and coherence at the GA debate.

The next section will illustrate how the speakers from Brazil express the notion of societal responsibility in the introductions of their speeches.

### 9.3.2 Responsibility and international co-operation

Brazil, as a founding member of the United Nations and one of the large contributors to the UN budget, has the opportunity to present an assessment of the international situation from a Brazilian perspective in their traditional opening speech of the GA sessions.

It emerged from this study that the speakers from Brazil typically position themselves as strong active agents (Bamberg 1997, 2012) stating their political and economic strategies and opinions explicitly. Positioning themselves mostly as representatives of their nation, the speakers tend to illustrate Brazil's achievements and development in all societal sectors, indicating socio-cultural responsibility (Solin and Östman, 2016) for their own country. Brazil's national societal aims form a conceptual framework for many of the introductions in the speeches by the Brazilian delegation, as is reflected in the speech by President Rousseff in GA69, on the eve of the presidential and congressional elections in Brazil. She states: 'those elections represent the celebration of a democracy we have achieved almost 30 years ago, after two decades of dictatorial rule. Through democracy we also advanced towards the country's economic stability. During the past 12 years in particular, we have consolidated those achievements by building an inclusive society based on equal opportunity' (GA69). The delegates of Brazil tend to use rhetorical strategies including collocations of words and concepts that reflect strong societal development such as 'the celebration of a democracy', the 'country's economic stability', and 'an inclusive society based on equal opportunity'. By these strategic linguistic choices the speaker constructs meaning (Verschueren 1999) and a new national reality.

### 9.3.2.1 Positioning as active agent in leadership

(9.3.11) When I first took the floor from this rostrum in 2003, I stressed the need for urgent and relentless action to fight the scourge of hunger and poverty in the world. (GA61)

In this quote from the introduction of the Brazilian delegate at the UN General Assembly plenary in 2006 the speaker positions himself as an active agent in subject position: since 2003 he has expressed responsibility for the elimination of global poverty. The temporal contingency ‘When I first took the floor...’ and the double subjective I-action form enforce the illocutionary force (Austin 1962) of the statement and highlight constancy (Bamberg 1997, 2012). On the other hand, the abstract rhetorical choice ‘need’ mitigates the sense of direct accountability, as does also the metaphoric formula (e.g. Charteris-Black 2014, Levinson 1983) ‘the scourge of hunger and poverty’, which obscures the concrete object of urgent action. In continuing his speech, the speaker highlights in concrete terms ‘what we are doing in Brazil’:

(9.3.12) We have combined economic stability with social inclusion policies. The standard of living of Brazilians has improved. Employment and income have grown. The purchasing power of the minimum wage has increased. Our resources are scarce, but even so we have achieved surprising results. (GA61)

By these short narrative statements in GA61 the speaker positions himself, ‘we’ being the subject, as a strong active agent expressing socio-cultural responsibility. He gives ample examples, indicating certainty (epistemic modality e.g. Charteris-Black 2014:115), of what Brazil has accomplished in responding to the international call for action and thus fortifies the position of Brazil amid other nations. The moral responsibility of taking action in the speaker’s own socio-cultural region is accentuated by collocating rhetorical devices with positive societal connotations (e.g. White 2002) such as ‘economic stability’, ‘social inclusion policies’ and verbs like ‘improved’, ‘grown’ and ‘increased’. By using such evaluative language (White 2002) the speaker increases the force of these statements, and again, by these dynamic keywords the Brazilian speaker is rhetorically generating meanings in the social world (Verschueren 1999). The reference to ‘our resources being scarce’, an excuse-type expression, duly mitigates moral responsibility for even stronger societal action to remove poverty. Later in the introduction, the speaker returns to the issue concerning

the scarcity of Brazilian resources and refers to societal responsibility by stating the following:

(9.3.13) If with so little we have done so much in Brazil, imagine what could have been done on a global scale, if the fight against hunger and poverty were a real priority for the international community. (GA61)

‘We’, referring to the Brazilians, in the subject position indicates strong agency, while the passive in the following clause ‘what could have been done’ has no such connotation. Implicitly indicating that the fight against hunger is not a real priority for the world by using passive voice in ‘what could have been done on a global scale’ the speaker positions Brazil as an example for the international community to follow, in particular by emphasising the first person plural inclusive pronoun ‘we’ (inclusive from the point of view of Brazil, exclusive in relation to others) as a subject in ‘we have done so much in Brazil’. The speaker implicitly calls for moral responsibility from the international community by using the ‘if-then’ format in the example above. Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger was a prime mission in the Millennium Development Goals that the United Nations published for all its member states hoping that the goals would be globally met by 2015. President of Brazil Lula de Silva had made fight against hunger and poverty a national priority when he became president in 2003. In 2010 the delegate representing Brazil at the GA65 stated that ‘Brazil is proud to have achieved almost all of the Millennium Development Goals’. In co-operation with public and private partners and the UN, Brazil has managed to make progress in this field, although that part of the Brazilian population continues to live in poverty.

As we have seen, the Brazilian speaker in General Assembly 61 positioned himself as an active agent in subject position and began his statement with a time deixis connoting constancy (‘when I first took the floor from this rostrum in 2003, I stressed the need for ...’). He used a similar rhetorical strategy to contrast the present time with the past by using ‘ago’, in the following example in GA64:

(9.3.14) Exactly one year ago, at the outset of the economic crisis that overtook the world economy, I said at this rostrum that history would never forgive us for the serious blunder of dealing only with the impact of the crisis rather than its causes. More than a crisis of big banks, this is a crisis of big dogmas. An economic, political and social outlook held to be unquestionable has simply fallen apart. (GA64)

In the example above the speaker obviously positions himself as an active social agent, if not an advisor, in international affairs, by using the first person singular pronoun 'I' in 'I said'. Reference to 'this rostrum' conveys the authority of speaking at the General Assembly. He had earlier shown moral responsibility in advising the GA audience that if they deal only with the impact of the crisis and ignore its causes, using the metaphoric formula 'history would never forgive us'. Here the moral responsibility of taking action to control causes of the crisis rather than dealing only with the impact of the crisis is assimilated with causal responsibility: the international audience did not adhere to the speaker's prior plea to respond to the looming crisis by identifying the cause, i.e. the crisis of big dogmas. As a consequence, 'now the economic, political and social outlook held to be unquestionable has simply fallen apart'. Using again a metaphor such as 'social outlook ... fallen apart' to refer to the prevailing economic, political and social outlook dramatises the situation and increases the perlocutionary effect (Austin 1962) of the statement. The speaker's effort to find global solutions for global economic and financial crises and issues of poverty no doubt reflects some of Brazil's own efforts to solve their national challenges in these areas.

In the next example from GA62 that was held in 2007, the Brazilian speaker positioned himself to elaborate on 'the groundwork of global development' again by laying emphasis on the economic challenges troubling the globe. By using the first person plural pronoun inclusive 'we' (e.g. Mühlhäusler and Harré 1990), the speaker is obviously positioning himself amid the audience of the distinguished delegates of the UN member states and at the same time among the whole international community, as he states:

(9.3.15) We must overcome the apparently pragmatic and sophisticated notion, which is actually anachronistic, predatory and senseless, that profits and wealth can grow forever, at any cost. There are prices that humanity cannot afford to pay, at the risk of destroying the material and spiritual foundations of our collective existence, at the risk of self-destruction. (GA62)

Such explicit rhetoric of responsibility with regard to global economic challenges and other major issues influencing international matters no doubt positions Brazil among global decision-makers, regardless of the fact that Brazil is frequently criticised for its unequal distribution of wealth at home. The propositions in the example above are stated with certainty: in the first clause the modal adverbs 'apparently' versus

‘actually’ (e.g. Charteris-Black 2014) accentuate that certainty. The speaker criticises the ‘apparently pragmatic and sophisticated economic notion that profits and wealth can grow forever, at any cost’. The deontic modal auxiliary ‘must’ emphasises the intent of the speaker to take responsibility and the intent of all those whom he includes in the first person plural pronoun ‘we’. The speaker evidently uses some irony, thus indicating disagreement (Brown and Levinson 2002), in the rhetorical strategy of contrasting seemingly positive rhetorical devices such as ‘pragmatic’ and ‘sophisticated’ versus ‘anachronistic’, ‘predatory’ and ‘senseless’. At the same time the speaker implicitly constructs two groups who represent these respective views: those who know and those who do not know, positioning himself in the first one. But how can this senseless notion ‘that profits and wealth can grow forever, at any cost’ be overcome? First the speaker removes himself from the consequences of the lack of responsibility by using non-subjective abstract formulas such as ‘humanity’, ‘material and spiritual foundations’ and ‘collective existence’. Gradually the level of responsibility increases in the introduction of the speech as the rhetorical strategies include another ‘we’ referring to the world: ‘If we want to salvage our common heritage, a new and more balanced distribution of wealth is needed, both internationally and within each country’. Eventually the speaker explicitly names who is accountable for developing a balanced distribution of wealth: ‘Each one of us must do our part’. The illocutionary force and perlocutionary effect (Austin 1962, Searle 1969) of the statement is modified by the deontic modal auxiliary ‘must’. A deictic reference to the audience in ‘Each of us’ underlines the fact that no member of the audience is excluded from responsibility.

Plain ambitious intentions manifested in public discourse do not transfer nations to the winners’ category, even though intention is a major factor in producing responsible action. Nonetheless, according to the World Economic Forum, Brazil is currently counted among the top ten economic superpowers in the world. The abundant natural resources and their feasible economic management contributed to the implementation of Brazil’s vision.

In GA69, speaking on the eve of the Brazilian presidential elections the Brazilian speaker positions herself as a representative of her nation as she suggests that Brazil has built an inclusive society based on equal opportunity: ‘The great transformation to which we are committed has resulted in a modern economy and a more modern

egalitarian society'. There is a salience of positive assessments (see e.g. White 2002) such as 'great transformation', 'committed', 'modern economy' and 'a more modern egalitarian society' used in collocation (Östman 2005) with Brazil.

### 9.3.2.2 Gender and responsibility

As we saw in section 9.3.1 focusing on constructing coherence at the GA speaking session, President Dilma Rousseff of Brazil, the first female president in the history of the United Nations to open the general debate at the General Assembly, positions herself as a representative of women. Accordingly, in the following example she positions herself as a representative of half humankind, as she states:

(9.3.16) It is with a sense of personal humility, but with justifiable pride as a woman, that I greet this historic moment. I share this emotion with more than half of the human beings on this planet, who like me, were born women and who, with a sense of purposeful determination are now taking the place in the world they rightly deserve. I am certain that this will be the century of women. (GA66)

In this gendered discourse the speaker increases the impact of being positioned as the woman in a historic moment not only by using subjective clauses with 1<sup>st</sup> person singular pronouns in metaphorically greeting the historic moment, but also by stating that she greets the moment with 'a sense of personal humility, but with justifiable pride as a woman', i.e. by deploying the contrasts of 'humility' and 'pride' to increase the impact of her address. However, the first person singular pronoun 'I' as a subject in 'I am certain that this will be the century of women', in other words the modality indicating certainty (Charteris-Black 2014) leaves no doubt as to the agentive speaker's ambition and accountability to speak for all the women of the world.

An outspoken female leader in international speaking arenas is naturally needed to carry forward the message of women's emancipation and empowering in the world, and the President of Brazil obviously finds pleasure and honour in contributing to that global course in her public discourse at the GA. Accordingly, the following year President Rousseff included humour in her opening speech at the general debate of the General Assembly:

(9.3.17) For many, we women are 'half the sky'. However, we wish to be half the Earth as well, with equal rights and opportunities, free from all forms of discrimination and violence, capable of building our own emancipation and with it, of contributing to the full empowerment of all. (GA67)

The metaphors of women being ‘half the sky’ and wishing to be ‘half the Earth as well’ illustrate the macro-context that the speaker positions herself in. President Rousseff (representing women of the globe through ‘we’) takes full responsibility for ‘contributing to the full empowerment of all’ as women are ‘capable of building’ their own emancipation. Here responsibility is underpinned by self-other relations through the use of the inclusive pronoun ‘we’. ‘Wish’ as a verb does not connote certainty, however, used contrastively in collocation with formulas connoting power (e.g. White 2002) such as ‘half the Earth’, ‘equal rights and opportunities’, ‘free from all forms of discrimination and violence’, ‘capable’, ‘building’, ‘emancipation’ and ‘full empowerment of all’, the less powerful rhetorical choice of ‘wish’ only seems to increase the force of the clause.

Later in the same speech in GA67 Brazil’s president states: ‘A year after my statement at this same rostrum I note that many of the problems that already troubled us in September 2011 remain’. Again the temporal markings ‘a year after my statement …’ convey an implicit message that the audience has not responded to the speaker’s earlier calls for taking responsibility as regards the severe global economic crisis. The emphatic use of the first person singular pronoun in ‘I note’ accentuates the positioning of the leader in the speaking rostrum. The leaders of the developed world have not managed to combine ‘appropriate fiscal adjustment with measures to stimulate investment and demand’. Now the speaker wants to ‘again consider a few of those issues, whose solutions are becoming increasingly urgent’ (GA67).

It is said that the tradition for Brazil to open the GA plenaries is because delegates from Brazil, unlike delegates from other nations, were always willing to speak first in the debate sessions. This tendency to lead is still implicitly reflected in the rhetorical strategies chosen by the Brazilian delegates to actively express responsibility for international affairs at the GA sessions. It no doubt contributes to maintaining Brazil’s prominent position in global gatherings of political leaders.

### 9.3.2.3 Focus on General Assembly, results and determination

To conclude, the findings of this analysis focusing on expressions of responsibility in the Brazilian data demonstrate that the speakers from the Brazilian delegation to the

United Nations General Assembly typically position themselves as active social agents (Bamberg 1997, 2012), if not leaders, in expressing strong societal responsibility to global issues brought forward in their public discourse. Brazilian delegates express societal responsibility to global challenges, such as economic and financial crisis and poverty, more than the other nations in the data (see Table 9-4), despite economic-policy challenges in their own nation (see e.g. Harré 2012:193 for the link between discourse and position).

Speakers typically emphasise societal progress achieved in Brazil by rhetorical choices that convey positive assessments (cf. White 2002) in collocation (Östman 2005) with their nation. Statements are reinforced by epistemic modality indicating certainty as in ‘... this is a crisis of big dogmas’ (GA64) and deontic modality using ‘must’. Time deixis (Charteris-Black 2014, Levinson 1983) is used to remind the audience of the speaker’s prior statements concerning global challenges: ‘Exactly one year ago, at the outset of the economic crisis that overtook the world economy, I said at this rostrum...’ (GA64).

Table 9-4 shows that speakers tend to position themselves primarily as representatives of their nation (eight instances) but also of the UN (five) and the world (five). The delegates of Brazil typically include a national perspective in handling global issues and show socio-cultural responsibility (Solin and Östman 2016) to their own nation. Intentionality being an inherent factor in the notion of responsibility, (Sarangi 2016, see also Verschueren 1999:47), the Brazilian data manifested a salience of markers indicating active agency in proposing initiatives for developing global co-operation, the further development of the United Nations as an organisation, and for women’s empowerment, showing consistent commitment to leadership in global affairs (see Table 9-5 for thematic distribution). However, collocations of abstract words such as ‘outlook’, ‘collective existence’ and ‘humanity’ and metaphoric expressions tend to diminish the force of rhetorical strategies indicating accountability.

A strong gender perspective was displayed in the Brazilian data: President Dilma Rousseff being the first woman ever in the history to open the General Assembly plenary debate session in 2011 positioned herself in the macro-context as a representative of ‘half of the human beings on this planet’ (GA66). The speaker

enforced the power of gender statements by rhetorical devices connoting dominance, such as ‘emancipation’ and ‘full empowerment of all’ (GA67).

Are positioning strategies used by speakers to construct coherence reflected in the way the speakers position themselves to express responsibility? The results indicate that similar types of strategies were used in both contexts. Speakers from Brazil position themselves as strong independent actors to address their audiences in opening their public speeches with rhetorical strategies conveying coherence. Similarly, by using rhetorical strategies with positive assessments the speakers positioned their nation in a leading status in international affairs. Verschueren (1999) suggests that using language is making choices, and making choices is negotiable. In other words, choices are not made according to conventions or strict rules but are based on flexible strategies that are both rational and reflexive. In 2008 (April 17) *The Economist* elaborated that due to Brazil’s strong economy, the nation could become one of the world’s future superpowers. How the delegates of Brazil positioned themselves as societal agents in global affairs at the GA plenaries in 2006-2015 also pointed to that direction: the speakers depicted their national future by rhetorical choices indicating a prominent position not only in the United Nations institute but in the world.

*The 21<sup>st</sup> century world cannot be governed  
with the institutions of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. -*  
President Nicolas Sarkozy, General  
Assembly, 23 September 2008.

## **9.4 Public speeches by delegates of France**

### 9.4.1 Constructing coherence

During 2006–2015, President Jacques Chirac, President M. Nicolas Sarkozy and President Francois Hollande led the French delegation to the United Nations General Assembly plenaries. Exceptionally, the French Minister for Foreign and European Affairs Bernard Kouchner addressed the General Assembly in 2010.

The public statements by the French delegation to the UN General Assembly were given in French. As the French language is characterised by figurative constructions of address in formal written discourse, one assumes similar features to be displayed in the address of French representatives to the audience at the United Nations General Assembly.

#### 9.4.1.1 Deference through markers of formality

General strategies deployed for constructing coherence with the audience in a formal public speaking context is to refer to the dignitaries present in the audience or to the General Assembly that the audience represents, as we saw in the Brazilian data. A typical strategy deployed by the French representatives at the UN General Assembly is to address the dignitaries present by using titles, excluding names. This strategy follows the formal rhetorical pattern of taking distance (Brown and Levinson 2002, Scollon and Wong Scollon 2003) by avoiding tokens of familiarity.

The speakers tend to position themselves by using the first person singular pronoun 'I' and representing the nation, as is seen in the following examples:

(9.4.1) Mr. President of the United Nations General Assembly, Mr. Secretary General, Heads of State and Government, Representatives of the States. In speaking to the General Assembly in France's name today, I am well aware that we all have a historic responsibility in the current circumstances. (GA64)

(9.4.2) Mr. President of the General Assembly, National representatives, Ladies and gentlemen. I come to this rostrum on behalf of France to express my sincere and fervent faith in the United Nations. (GA65)

In the above examples the speaker positions himself as a representative of a collective, namely the nation France. In the first excerpt the speaker then connects with the representatives of other member states in the audience through the formula 'we all', thus constructing coherence with the member states and with his nation. In the second example, positioning himself as a representative of France, the speaker manifests both individual and collective support to the UN as an organisation by figuratively emphasizing his 'sincere and fervent faith in the United Nations'. In the communicative act of complimenting, the French delegations typically direct their words to the UN institute rather than to persons present. That is the most salient

strategy of complimenting in the French data (five references, Table 9-3, category Other) and is illustrated again in the following example:

(9.4.3) Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General, Ladies and gentlemen. Our organization, the UN, is celebrating its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Immense progress has been made since it was founded as an institution charged with keeping the peace. It has succeeded in doing so on numerous occasions. (GA70)

In referring to ‘our organization’, the speaker positions himself and the audience collectively within the institution of the UN. This type of being positioned as belonging to a collective is salient in the French data, more than in the data from the other nations in this study. The example from GA70 manifests how the UN is given explicit support by the hyperbolic attribution ‘immense’ in the rhetorical strategy of complimenting the organisation by the statement ‘Immense progress has been made ...’.

Exceptionally in the following example, President Sarkozy refers to people in the audience as he is giving compliments. In the following example, positioning himself as a representative of France, the president focuses his complimentary tokens personally to the Secretary General of the UN, although the Secretary’s name is excluded from the statement:

(9.4.4) Heads of State and Government, Ladies and Gentlemen. To all of the peoples of the world whom you represent, I bring fraternal greetings from France. Secretary General, yours is an immense responsibility, and France has confidence in you. This is the first time I have come to express myself here in the name of France ... (GA62)

The greeting to the audience includes ‘all the peoples of the world’ represented in the auditorium. The deictic pronoun ‘you’ (Charteris-Black 2014) points to the members of the audience thus constructing coherence in the speaking situation. The expression ‘fraternal greetings’ positions the speaker amid the UN world-family, thus constructing coherence not only with the audience in the plenary but also with all the peoples of the world. Again, the speaker uses a hyperbolic expression in speaking figuratively of ‘an immense responsibility’ in reference to the position of the Secretary General of the UN. Speaking of nation states as an individual person, as in ‘France has confidence in you’, is a conventional way of discussing national affairs (Charteris-Black 2014:207). It is frequently used in diplomatic public speech in

international fora, where speakers represent their countries, as it adds grandeur to the speech, not to say the speaker (see metonymy, 2014:47).

Accordingly, with regard to ‘grandeur’, in the following 63rd session of the General Assembly in 2008, President Sarkozy mentions the following in his opening statements:

(9.4.5) Distinguished Heads of State and Government. Mr. Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. President of the General Assembly, Representatives of the peoples of the world. I bring you fraternal greetings from Europe, Europe, which is conscious of its responsibilities... (GA63)

The delegate of France greets the collective representatives of ‘the peoples of the world’ as a speaker for Europe. Thus, the addresser and the addressee are both manifested as collective agencies; ‘fraternal’ greetings indicate that they belong to the same family, to the same level of hierarchy in the sense of ‘fraternité’. Typical to the speeches in the French data, the speaker again positions himself as a representative of a collective (eight references in the data), in this context to the continent of Europe.

A speaker from the French delegation may also proceed swiftly to the topic of his speech without expressing specific communicative acts of politeness in the form of compliments or motions of support. After briefly addressing the dignitaries at the GA by using plain titles, President Chirac continued his speech concerning the acute crisis in Lebanon:

(9.4.6) Lebanon has again been set ablaze by war, a further manifestation of the interminable conflict in the Middle East whose tragedies have, for sixty years now, punctuated the life of the United Nations. (GA61)

The metaphors ‘set ablaze by war’ and ‘punctuated the life of the United Nations’ and the rhetorical choices of nouns ‘conflict’ and ‘tragedies’ with their negative connotation no doubt have an influence on the emotions of the audience as (cf. Charteris-Black 2014:160) and turn the interest to the topic.

The speakers in the French data do not frequently position themselves as independent agents in the opening words of their public discourse (five occurrences). President Hollande, however, uses that strategy of positioning himself as an independent actor through the first person singular pronoun ‘I’ in opening his speech in GA67. After formally addressing the dignitaries in the audience by using titles, he continues:

(9.4.7) This is the first time that I speak from this rostrum at the United Nations. It is a very moving moment for me ... (GA67)

As we saw in the Brazilian data, the place deixis (Charteris-Black 2014) ‘from this rostrum’ highlights the moment of the speaker’s first speaking situation: it indicates that the speaker gives his presentation anchored to the institute of the UN. Later in the same speech the speaker positions himself as a representative of his nation through the pronoun ‘I’, which is more characteristic in the French data (six tokens in all):

(9.4.8) I am here to talk about universal values, which France has always proclaimed ... (GA67)

Referring to ‘self’ by using the independent, subjective pronoun ‘I’ in the main clause, the speaker then represents ‘self’ dependent on a collective in the subordinate clause. This is a typical example of the use of the pronoun ‘I’ in the French data. In this example above France is again personified when the speaker mentions universal values, ‘which France has always proclaimed ...’ and positions himself as speaking for France.

#### 9.4.1.2 Fraternal politeness and the United Nations

The analysis of the French data indicates that the delegates from France have a tendency to position themselves as agents representing a collective (Table 9-4) when they use the first person singular pronoun ‘I’ in opening their speeches at the GA. French speakers typically positioned themselves as representatives of their nation (six references) or region (two references). Less frequently did speakers position themselves as independent agents (five references). There were three speeches with no reference to ‘self’ in the opening words of the French data.

Results suggest that by using a formal approach, the French speakers maintain a polite distance to the audience at the General Assembly. This is illustrated by the way that the representatives of France refer to the dignitaries and officers in the audience institutionally by their honorary titles (see e.g. Brown and Levinson 2002, Watts 2003) without mentioning their names. Results also indicate that the most salient form of strategy to construct coherence in the session were polite statements referring to the United Nations as an institute rather than to persons present (five references, cf. Table 9-3, the category ‘Other’). These rhetorical constellations include positive, sometimes hyperbolic attribution towards the UN, e.g. when the speaker compliments the UN for

‘an immense progress’ and expresses his ‘sincere and fervent faith in the United Nations’. The opening words by the French delegations included few opening strategies expressing humility, such as in ‘It is an honor’ (one reference), a strategy generally characteristic in the genre of formal public speaking.

In general, the data from France showed notably fewer rhetorical strategies expressing compliments (a total of nine) compared to the data from Brazil (15) and Jordan (31).

#### 9.4.2 Responsibility and global ideas

France as a founding member of the United Nations has had a key role in the work of the institution, especially in human rights. France has maintained an active presence in multilateral organisations such as the UN and the European Union (cf. Chapter 10). It is an active participant in the current efforts to restructure the UN, especially the UN Security Council, in order to make the international organisation more representative of the sum of current global indicators. During 2006–2015 France was represented at the UN General Assembly by president Jacques Chirac, president Nicolas Sarkozy, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs Mr. Bernard Kouchner, and president François Hollande.

The salience of markers of societal responsibility became evident in the French data not only in constant explicit references to the phenomenon of responsibility in the statements, but also in the salience of the total number of active agencies in the data (25 instances). This is more than in the data of the other three nations. The French delegation typically raised issues of peace and security in their public discourse at the GA.

##### 9.4.2.1 Positioning as active agent

What emerges from the analysis is that the speakers from France typically position themselves (Bamberg 1997, 2012) within a collective, and on several collective levels as well as the nation, namely Europe, the United Nations and the world. The inclusion of the speaker in a collective agency becomes evident as the speaker either explicitly names the collective in that context, deploys the pronoun ‘we’, or the pronoun ‘I’ in collocation with a collective, as e.g. when speakers come to the rostrum ‘on behalf of France’ (GA65).

The speakers of the French delegation typically represent their nation (ten instances in all) and the world (six instances) when expressing their responsibility to global issues and matters concerning the UN. In these contexts, the speakers tend to indicate their position as social actors immediately connected to collectives.

In the speech at the GA61, the speaker draws attention to the Middle East crisis, which has for 60 years has ‘punctuated the life of the United Nations’, by stating that ‘Lebanon has again been set ablaze by war’. These metaphors (Charteris-Black 2014, Levinson 1983) emphasise the gravity of the situation, as they increase the perlocutionary effect (Austin 1962) of the utterances. The speaker uses another metaphoric expression to state that this ‘confrontation has become the epicentre of global instability’ and then continues:

(9.4.9) With Resolution 1701 the United Nations is shouldering its responsibilities. The unanimous adoption of this resolution has brought the fighting to an end. France, Europe and Asia have contributed to the strengthening of UNIFIL. (GA61)

These short statements indicate that the speaker is presenting facts and the progressive form of the verb ‘is shouldering’ implies continuity of UN’s responsible role in this confrontation. The speaker tells the audience explicitly first that the institute of ‘the United Nations is shouldering its responsibilities’, and then positions himself to take specific responsibility as a nation: ‘France, Europe and Asia have contributed to the strengthening of UNIFIL’. The references to the UN institutional rhetoric, i.e. jargon such as ‘Resolution 1701’ and ‘UNIFIL’ illustrates the speaker’s emphasis on the institute as the basis for action. Collective agency and action is also implicitly accentuated in the linguistic formula ‘the unanimous adoption of this resolution’. On the other hand, the speaker does not hide the significance of France’s presence in international affairs, as he lists France as a responsible nation in collocation (Östman 2005) with continents of Europe and Asia as contributors to the strengthening of UNIFIL. It is characteristic of the French delegates to mention explicitly the notion of responsibility in their introductions, as the example above illustrated.

President Hollande uses the following type of positioning strategy, as he speaks for the first time at the GA forum:

(9.4.10) I am also aware of a sense of responsibility because France is a permanent member of the Security Council and therefore has duties. (GA67)

By stating ‘I am also aware’, the speaker distances himself from his commitment of being personally accountable as an active agent in the organisation. This accountability is further decreased by another hedge-like rhetorical choice, viz. ‘a sense’ of responsibility. The ambiguity of the rhetoric of responsibility in the first two statements, where focus is on the speaker (i.e. the first person singular pronoun ‘I’), changes when the speaker refers explicitly to the collective agency of France: ‘France is a permanent member of the Security Council and therefore has duties’. The present tense in the verbs ‘is’ and ‘has’ further accentuates the sense of commitment of the speaker (Charteris-Black 2014). The speaker positions himself as a representative of France to express causal responsibility: because France is a permanent member of the Security Council, it has duties. Again, the link between the active agent and a collective, i.e. the Security Council, is salient in the rhetorical strategy used by the speaker.

In speaking to the GA70 Assembly in 2015, President Hollande reminds the audience that despite the immense progress that the United Nations has made, ‘since it was founded as an institution charged with keeping the peace’, the ‘world is obliged once again to face up to great challenges’. These challenges consist of conflicts and wars, terrorism, refugees in the Middle East and Africa, tsunamis, earthquakes and climate change. The introduction continues:

(9.4.11) Faced with these challenges we must all shoulder our responsibilities at our own levels. France, in many domains, never refuses to participate. But France wished to host the Climate Conference ... So in Paris we will need to ask ourselves just one question: is mankind – are we – capable of taking the decision to preserve life on the planet? Yes, that question alone places us in a position of a gravity we could never have imagined for our generation. (GA70)

The active agency constructed in the first sentence through the inclusive ‘we’ in collocation with the deontic modal verb ‘must’ in the metaphoric expression ‘we must all shoulder our responsibilities’ reflects the figurative use of rhetoric of responsibility, which is manifested throughout the introduction of this specific speech at the GA70. ‘France, in many domains, never refuses to participate’ expresses certainty and commitment; yet the linguistic construction ‘in many domains’ mitigates the

commitment of ‘shouldering responsibility’. Rather than referring to individual behaviour when urging actors to take societal responsibility (as in the Brazilian data, in which the speaker used a rhetorical construct: ‘each of us must do our part’) the French speaker uses a collective inclusive pronoun ‘we’ and the abstract metaphoric choice ‘at our own levels’ in stating: ‘we must all shoulder our responsibilities at our own levels’. Here ‘we’ refers to the whole world, as can be understood from the deictic reference to ‘mankind’ in the context. Later in the example above, positioning France as a personified agent by stating that ‘France wished to host the Climate Conference’, the speaker implicated that after failures in climate conferences it is ‘necessary to take the right decision this time’ by the whole international community. He then positions himself within the whole of mankind through asking a rhetorical question: ‘is mankind – are we - capable of taking the decision to preserve life on the planet?’ conveying words of responsibility referring to universal ideals.

Another example of how responsibility is characteristically placed on a collective in the French data is manifested in the speech of the French delegation at GA64. The speaker explicitly positions himself as part of the active agency in the institutional framework of the United Nations:

(9.4.12) In the midst of a financial, economic and social crisis that has no precedent in the history of the United Nations, and faced with the threat of a global ecological disaster, we must now invent a new world where the follies of yesterday are no longer possible. That is our responsibility. (GA64)

Causal responsibility (e.g. Sarangi 2016) is again expressed in the example above. Concerned about the current circumstances through which millions of people are suffering from hunger, lack of water, energy or minimal health care the speaker above calls for inventing ‘a new world’; a typical idealistic phenomenon and a theme in the French data (c.f. ‘building a system of global governance’ in GA65). The time deixis (Charteris-Black 2014, Levinson 1983, cf. Verschueren 1999) ‘now’ intensifies the call for action, yet the modal auxiliary in ‘must’ in ‘we must’ instead of e.g. ‘we are obliged to’ decreases the perlocutionary effect (Austin 1962) and the sense of commitment of the speaker to his utterance. From the context of the speech it becomes evident that the pronoun ‘we’ used as subject in the example above refers to the political leaders of the world present at the GA Assembly, ‘the heads of State and Government, who must restore hope’ (GA64), again including the deontic modal

auxiliary 'must'. Additionally, collocating nouns with negative assessment (White 2002) such as 'crisis', 'threat' and 'disaster' dramatize the situation and thus highlight the need for action. Referring retrospectively to 'the follies of yesterday' that only led to dead-ends, the speaker states: 'This is our responsibility', indicating certainty and commitment.

The example above illustrated again how the delegates of France tend to bring forth the concept of responsibility in their public speeches at the General Assembly. This tendency is manifested in several introductions, e.g. in the speech delivered at GA64, where the speaker emphasises: 'We are politically and morally accountable for the suffering on our planet'. The similar strategy is manifested also in the following example:

(9.4.13) At a time when the world is deeply troubled I have come to tell you, on behalf of Europe, that in the midst of so many difficulties the international community has a political and moral responsibility, which it must shoulder. (GA63)

Although most of the examples depict the speaker as being positioned as a representative of a nation, the UN or the world, the French data also manifests this example above when the speaker rhetorically constructs himself as representing a regional collective, resorting to another type of synecdoche. Positioning himself as the voice of the whole European continent increments the credentials of trustworthiness of the speaker and is bound to give the audience an impression that they are listening to a leading global authority. The pronoun 'I' as subject in 'I have come to tell you, on behalf of Europe' with the deictic pronoun 'you' (Charteris-Black 2014) referring to the audience as a collective, further contributes to constructing an implicit sense of eminence in a speaker calling for 'political and moral responsibility'.

The introduction in the speech by the Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of the French Republic, Mr. Kouchner in GA65 gave a typical overview of rhetorical choices that characterise the presentations by the French delegation at the GA debates:

(9.4.14) France's ambition is to be a major actor in building a system of global governance that is more just, more cohesive, more social, and a global order that is organized and regulated around a stronger, more representative and more effective United Nations – a United Nations capable of meeting the great challenges of our century... I am going to talk

about responsibility because we all have responsibilities as citizens, diplomats and political leaders to meet these sufferings, hopes and expectations. (GA65)

In political public discourse, as in all genres of communication, words can create new realities (Eckert 2012, Verschueren 1999). Speaking ‘on behalf of France’ in the opening of his speech, Mr. Kouchner refers to his nation’s ambition to be ‘a major actor in building a system of global governance’. Repetition, as in ‘more just’, ‘more cohesive’ and ‘more social’ reinforces Mr. Kouchner’s statement concerning the new system. Despite the mitigating function of the word ‘ambition’, used as a subject instead of ‘France’, the example above no doubt succeeds in reminding the audience that France has a prime strategic position in building a system organised around ‘a more representative and more effective United Nations’. Collocating linguistic formulas such as ‘a system of global governance’, ‘more just’, ‘more cohesive’ and ‘more social’ with France reinforces the position of the nation as a leading actor as regards the building of a new ‘global order’. These rhetorical choices salient in the French data corroborate with the results that emerged from analysing public speeches by Prime ministers of France with regard to relations to the European Union (cf. the discussion in chapter 10). The notion of responsibility is accentuated again as the speaker talks about not only having generous intentions and then forgetting about suffering and hope. He then reminds the audience that ‘we have responsibilities as citizens, diplomats and political leaders …’, referring to people with different social status in society (GA65).

#### 9.4.2.2 Focus on collectives, members and diplomacy

We have seen that the concept of responsibility is manifest in accounts underpinned by agency (Bamberg 2012) and epistemic stance (Charteris-Black 2014, Levinson 1983). The results from this study show that in the context of the General Assembly public speaking the French delegates portray societal responsibility largely as an institutional phenomenon effectuated within the boundaries of the United Nations; in this context one could talk about institute-based, international co-responsibility. The frequent references by speakers to the organisation of the United Nations (France 28 times, in comparison e.g. to the USA’s 18 times) highlights the sense of the nation’s position in the framework of the UN.

The findings show that the speakers from France have a tendency to position themselves as representatives primarily of their nation and the United Nations as leaders of ideas in the world. These ideational visions become explicitly evident in introductions focusing on e.g. ‘a new world’ and ‘a system of global governance’. In these contexts the notion of responsibility is expressed directly and explicitly: inventing a new world is ‘our responsibility’ (GA64). Examples such as ‘we have responsibilities as citizens, diplomats and political leaders’ (GA65) implicitly indicate hierarchic relations in society. The over-deployment of metaphoric expressions in the introductions tends to mitigate the sense of responsibility. Hedge-type formulas as in ‘I am aware of a sense of responsibility’ also decrease the level of commitment of the speaker to his or her utterance. On the other hand, speakers typically increment the force of the rhetoric of responsibility by using deontic modal auxiliaries of necessity, as in ‘... we *must* all shoulder our responsibilities’ (GA70). Stronger expressions indicating obligation are rarely used in the data.

Table 9-4 shows that speakers representing France were typically positioned as collective social agents, namely as representatives of their nation (ten instances), the UN organization (four instances) and the world (four instances) when expressing responsibility. Positioning as active agents in a subject position or referring explicitly to the notion of responsibility the speakers express societal and moral responsibility towards global challenges, primarily on peace and security issues, the economic crisis, climate change and the fight against poverty (for thematic distribution in introductions see Table 9-5).

Speakers tend to be positioned as representatives of an organised framework even when being positioned as an active agent through the use of the pronoun ‘I’. The inclusion of a speaker in a collective becomes salient through collocations (Östman 2005), e.g. when a speaker refers to himself as speaking ‘in the name of France’.

Similar rhetorical constellations with explicit references to collectives were shown in the speakers’ opening words of their speeches when they first addressed their audiences (Section 9.4.1 Constructing coherence). Accordingly, a similar tendency of being strongly anchored (Östman 2005) in a collective becomes evident in the study presented in the next chapter (Chapter 10), which compares how political leaders

from France, Britain and Finland positioned themselves in their public speeches to integration in the European Union.

In short, the speakers from France typically position themselves as actors in organisational collectives (cf. Hofstede 2001, Hofstede et al. 2010, Scollon and Wong Scollon 2003) expressing global societal responsibility primarily as an institutional phenomenon and by frequently referring to the very concept of responsibility. Socio-cultural responsibility to their own nation was not salient in the data. By contrast, the speakers seemed to be positioned as leaders of new global ideas, showing responsibility for global, regional and UN related matters. By these rhetorical choices the speakers of France indicated that the responsibility of the United Nations is to lead the world idealistically, and in this respect France positions itself as a prime actor within the organisation.

*Global security will long be shaped by what is happening right now in the Middle East ... But no house can be built when its city is burning. And today, the region's fires cannot be ignored.*

- King Abdullah II Bin Al Hussein, King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Sept 24, 2013, General Assembly.

## **9.5 Public speeches by delegates of Jordan**

### 9.5.1 Constructing coherence

His Majesty King Abdullah II Bin Al Hussein of Jordan delivers most of the Jordanian speeches in the data (70 per cent). Other representatives of Jordan to address the General Assembly during the years 2006–2015 were Ministers for Foreign Affairs, H.E. Mr. Abdelelah Al-Khatib in 2007, H.E. Mr. Salaheddin Al-Bashir in 2008 and H.E. Mr. Nasser Judeh in 2009.

The speeches of the Jordanian delegation at the General Assembly bring forth a strong message that efforts for peace in the Middle East region should be taken seriously by the member states of the United Nations. The Syrian crisis was presented as a global humanitarian and security disaster in 2013, yet the situation escalated by year and Jordan repeated the international appeal for peace and security in the region in the subsequent General Assembly sessions.

The speeches by the Jordanian delegations were given either in English (70 percent) or in Arabic. Arabic was included among the official languages of the UN General Assembly in 1973.

It is typical for the speakers from the Jordanian delegation to the General Assembly to address the audience in their opening words with a linguistic formula carrying a religious content (see Table 9-3, category ‘Other’). Most of the speeches in the Jordan data include this religious element, which is delivered either in Arabic, in English or in both languages, as is shown in the speech by King Abdullah II at the 61<sup>st</sup> General Assembly: ‘Bismillah ar-Rahman ar-Rahim; in the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful’. Such linguistic formulae, salient in the Quran, indicate the interconnection between language and religion, both spiritually and stylistically. The perlocutionary effect (Austin 1962, Searle 1969) of culture- and religion-based formulae in public discourse (see also Chapter 8) may cause misinterpretations of the speaker’s illocutionary intent in international speaking fora, especially if the audience is not familiar with the connotation of linguistic constellations used in specific socio-cultural contexts. Farghal and Borini (2009) remind translators that the choice of Arabic politeness formulas may be influenced by factors such as gender, age, power and institutions.

#### 9.5.1.1 Politeness strategies of complimenting

The Jordanian data displays more rhetorical strategies of politeness (a total of 31) to construct coherence in the speaking situation than data from the other nations (Brazil 15, USA 10, France 9) in this study. In the following example, politeness is expressed to the President of the 61<sup>st</sup> General Assembly by the most salient form of politeness strategies in the Jordanian data, namely the communicative act of congratulating (Table 9-3, seven references).

(9.5.1) Madam President, President of 61<sup>st</sup> General Assembly, Her Excellency Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa. Members of the General Assembly: Sheikha Hayah, may I extend the warmest congratulations to you, on your election as President of the General Assembly. Allow me also to say a word of gratitude and admiration to Secretary General Kofi Annan. (GA61)

The superlative form ‘warmest’ in ‘the warmest congratulations’ increases the perlocutionary force of the speakers’ communicative act of congratulating Sheikha Hayah for his position in the GA session. Using the deictic pronoun ‘you’ (Charteris-Black 2014), referring directly to a member in the audience, decreases the distance to the audience. This particular rhetorical strategy of using the deictic pronoun ‘you’ to construct coherence in the speaking session is salient in the Jordanian data. In the example above the speaker chooses rhetorical strategies expressing polite humility by deploying the formula: ‘Allow me also to say a word of gratitude and admiration’ to convey deference to Secretary General Kofi Annan personally. It is notable that the politeness strategies in the Jordanian data refer primarily to persons rather than institutions, as is seen in the example above from GA61.

The manner of congratulating (seven references) and thanking (six references) is an inherent part of public speeches delivered by the Jordanian delegation. This manner of showing deference to the members of the UN institute is consistently emphasised, as the following example illustrates:

(9.5.2) Mr. President. I would like to congratulate you for your election as the President of this 63<sup>rd</sup> session of the General Assembly. I wish you success in guiding it towards strengthening the role of the United Nations in advancing international relations in the spirit of its charter, which is the most important pillar of the rule of the law in international relations.

I would also like to thank your predecessor, His Excellency Srgjan Kerim for the good efforts he made to make the last session successful. Also I would like to commend the Secretary General Mr. Ban-Ki Moon for his efforts to reform this organization ... (GA63).

Rhetorical strategies of showing support and the communicative act of congratulating connect the speaker with members in the audience and construct coherence in the speaking situation. It is notable that the strategy of congratulating members in the audience tends to refer to the rank and hierarchy in the speaking situation, in a similar manner as was indicated in the Brazilian data.

Examples (1) and (2) illustrate a salient characteristic in the Jordanian data of speakers positioning themselves as active independent actors through the pronoun ‘I’ as is illustrated also in the following example:

(9.5.3) It is an honour to join the Assembly today. I congratulate President Ashe on his election and sincerely thank the Secretary-General for his always invaluable work. (GA68)

This type of self-reference through the first person singular pronoun ‘I’ referring to an independent actor is more salient in the Jordanian speeches than in the data of the other nations, as is shown in Table 9-1 (Jordan 16 markers in all, Brazil 10, France 5, USA 3). The time deixis ‘today’ in (9.5.3) further increases coherence in the speaking situation.

As we see in the following example, the speaker again refers to self as an independent subjective actor through the pronoun ‘I’ in the communicative act of complimenting dignitaries in the audience.

(9.5.4) It is an honour to return once again to this historic setting. May I warmly congratulate His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser. Jordanians well remember his distinguished tenure as Qatar’s Ambassador to Jordan. I also express my warm congratulations to the Secretary General on his election to the second term. (GA66)

In a similar pattern the following year the speaker from the Jordan delegation congratulated the President of the Assembly wishing him success in guiding the General Assembly ‘towards strengthening the role of the United Nations in advancing international relations in the spirit of its charter ...’.

There are only five references in the Jordanian data where the speaker positions himself as belonging to a collective. Such a positioning strategy is illustrated in the following example:

(9.5.5) It is an honour to join this eminent gathering. Allow me to extend Jordan’s sincere congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremic. I would like to assure him of Jordan’s full cooperation. May I also express to the Secretary General Jordan’s appreciation for your untiring efforts. (GA67)

In the example above the speaker positions himself as a representative of Jordan, as he extends Jordan’s ‘sincere congratulations’ to His Excellency Mr Vuk Jeremic. Here again, typical to diplomatic public discourse at the UN, the nation is personified

in the constellations ‘Jordan’s sincere congratulations’ and ‘Jordan’s full cooperation’. Linguistic formulas such as ‘sincere’, ‘assure’, ‘full cooperation’ and ‘appreciation’ reflect Jordan’s loyalty. The utterance ‘I would like to assure him of Jordan’s full cooperation’ expresses the level of commitment in cooperation. The repetitive use of ‘Jordan’ enforces the force of the communicative acts of congratulating, assurance of cooperation and the appreciation for the efforts of the Secretary General.

A similar type of a discursive pattern where the speaker is positioned as a representative of his nation is illustrated in the following example:

(9.5.6) Thank you. It is an honour to stand before this distinguished General Assembly. I am here representing Jordan, and as a God-fearing, God-loving human being. I am here as a father who wants his children, like yours, to live in a compassionate and more peaceful world. (GA70)

In this example, the speaker represents Jordan and also parenthood. Speaking for the universal values of peace and justice, the Jordanian delegate opens his speech by positioning himself as ‘a God-fearing, God-loving human being’, bringing to the fore his personal religious stance. Furthermore, by positioning himself as a ‘father’ the speaker calls for a more compassionate world. Rhetorical choices like ‘children’, ‘compassionate’ and ‘peaceful’ (White 2002) are bound to evoke feelings amid the members of the audience as the delegate of Jordan speaks as one of them, as a parent, not as a politician. The deictic use of pronoun ‘you’ in ‘like yours’, when speaking about children, constructs a connection with the members of the audience. The typical politeness strategies inherent in formal public speaking such as thanking and honouring are also illustrated in the speech from GA70 above. Furthermore, a typical pattern for the speakers of the Jordanian delegation is to address the distinguished audience at the General Assembly through the communicative act of congratulating the officers presiding the session, as was already seen in example (4) earlier. That typical rhetorical strategy is illustrated in the following example:

(9.5.7) Mr. President. Allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of this 62nd General Assembly, and wish you success in leading the Assembly’s deliberations. I also wish to extend my thanks to your predecessor, Sheikha Haya Al Khalifah ... (GA62)

The positioning by the Jordanian speakers to the audience is typically person-oriented, as speakers tend to address dignitaries personally in the plenary hall by including names with titles and frequently giving compliments to dignitaries in the audience.

As we have already noted, rarely does a statement by a Jordanian representative begin without special complimentary remarks to the dignitaries in the audience. Yet the public discourse by the Jordanian representative in the 69<sup>th</sup> session in 2014 at the General Assembly manifests the following exceptional choice of rhetoric:

(9.5.8) Bismillah ar-Rahman ar-Rahim. Mr. President. Mr. Secretary-General. Thank you. Distinguished Heads of Delegations. Members of Delegations. What and where is global power? I say that global power is here in this Hall, and it is ours, if our countries work as one. (GA69)

After the formula with religious connotations delivered in Arabic in the opening words the speaker addresses the distinguished members in the audience. It is noteworthy that the speaker addresses both ‘Distinguished Heads of Delegations’ and ‘Members of Delegations’, indicating the difference in their ranks (cf. Hofstede 2001, 2010 about power distance in Arabic countries). Instead of a longer address including a variety of politeness strategies, which is characteristic in the Jordanian data, the speaker at GA69 continues to interact with the members of the audience by posing them a question: ‘What and where is global power?’ By being positioned as a subject in ‘I say’ the speaker gives a conditional answer to the question himself, enforcing the answer by using place deixis (Charteris-Black 2014) ‘the power is *here in this Hall*, and it is ours, if our countries work as one’. The speaker calls for action of all the member states to make efforts to improve the security situation in the Middle East.

#### 9.5.1.2 Connecting with the audience

The findings illustrate how speakers from Jordan position themselves primarily as active independent agents in the opening words of their public speeches. Markers of this type of positioning are more salient in the data from Jordan than in the data from Brazil, France and the USA in this study. This is especially noteworthy as Arab countries are typically characterised as representing a collectivistic society in cultural studies (Hofstede 2001).

The results show that it is characteristic for the Jordanian delegates at the General Assembly plenaries to open their speeches by linguistic constellations with a religious content (90 per cent of the speeches). These linguistic formulae are delivered either in English, Arabic or in both languages.

In the analysis it became evident that the official representatives of Jordan position themselves to interact with the audience at the General Assembly through rhetorical strategies expressing compliments (a total of 31 markers: cf. Brazil 15, USA ten, France nine). Positioning as a subjective agent through first person singular pronoun adds to the force of the compliments. Furthermore, the people-oriented approach in the Jordanian data became salient in showing support to distinguished members in the audience through communicative acts of congratulations (a total of seven markers, compared to none in the French and the USA data). The rhetorical strategies of congratulations, addressed to the acting Presidents of the Assembly, and typically enforced by attributions such as ‘warmly’, ‘warmest’ and ‘sincere’ increased the force of the communicative act. Also the frequent use of the deictic pronoun ‘you’ (seven occurrences) and including names when addressing dignitaries by their title constructs coherence in the speaking session.

A salient use of politeness strategies in formal language is typical in collectivistic cultures that Arabic countries are considered to represent (Hofstede 2001, Hofstede et al. 2010; Gudykunst and Mody 2002). Discursive patterns prevalent in the public discourse by delegates of Jordan, such as beginning a speech by a linguistic formula with religious connotations, the salience of personal compliments to members in the GA audience and the implicit reference to positional hierarchy reflect socio-cultural values prevalent in society (see e.g. power distance, Hofstede 2001). Farghal and Borini (2009) elaborate on the different understanding and encoding of the illocutionary force (Austin 1962, Searle 1995) of Arabic politeness strategies and the challenges that this brings to translating especially religious utterances from Arabic into English. According to Farghal and Borini (2009) inadequate pragma-religious competence can lead to distortion of a message in translation and cause potential communication failures in international settings.

### 9.5.2 Responsibility and global partners

As pertinent political conflicts surround the nation of Jordan it is logical that in their public discourse the Jordanian delegations consistently position themselves to call the world’s attention to the instability in the Middle East. The speakers call upon the United Nations and the whole global society to show more responsibility and join in more actively in making a lasting peace in the region. In their efforts to revitalise the

intended role of the General Assembly of the UN, the Jordanian delegates commit themselves to efforts of rebalancing the relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council of the United Nations.

In international political public speaking, a religious stance taken by an individual or a government tends to draw a divisive line of inclusion and exclusion in international affairs and in peace negotiations between nations in particular. To counter-act such tendencies, the Jordanian delegation calls upon all religions to uphold the notions of moderation and respect in their public discourse and take part in developing a sustainable global dialogue between religions. In 2010 Jordan introduced a draft resolution at the General Assembly for an annual World Interfaith Week during which “the world’s people, in their own places of worship, could express the teachings of their own faith about tolerance, respect for the Other, and peace”(GA65). Four years later the prime message was: ‘Another critical global focus must be a decisive affirmation of mutual respect within and among religions and peoples. The teachings of true Islam are clear: ‘sectarian conflict and strife are utterly condemned’ (GA69).

#### 9.5.2.1 Positioning as active independent agent

Table 9-4 shows how the Jordanian speakers constructed their strategic positioning primarily as representatives of their nation (eight instances) in expressing responsibility mainly on regional matters in their introductions. Peace and security issues were on top of their agenda at the General Assembly plenaries during 2006–2015: 80 per cent of the introductions dealt with the issue of peace.

In GA61 the speaker calls for urgent action from the world community, remarking that the crisis in the Middle East is a crisis of all nations, as ‘there can be no just global order when aggression and occupation are permitted to take the place of international law’. The speaker proclaims:

(9.5.9) Our youth are asking, where is the justice, where is the will, of the global community? We must answer them by establishing a lasting peace, based on the international legality we have pledged to uphold. (GA61)

Rhetorical questions (e.g. Brown-Levinson 2002) directed to the audience are typically answered by the speaker him/herself. In the example above the answer given by the Jordanian speaker to the metaphoric (see e.g. Charteris-Black 2014) question ‘where is the justice, where is the will of the global community?’ manifests markers

of moral responsibility: ‘We must answer them by establishing a lasting peace’. The emphasis is on the first person plural pronoun ‘we’, in the subject position. Most obviously the deictic inclusive pronoun (Mühlhäuser and Harré 1990) positions the speaker and the audience as an active social agent, as the question was asked by ‘our youth’ from ‘the global community’. ‘We’ in collocation with the deontic modal ‘must’ leaves no doubt as to who is responsible for decisive action to establish a lasting peace. Reminding the audience in his introduction that ‘there can be no just global order when aggressions are permitted to take the place of international law’, the speaker calls for peace based on the ‘international legality’ that the UN member states have ‘pledged to uphold’. It is characteristic for the Jordanian speakers to deploy abstract rhetorical choices typical in formal institutional discourse, such as ‘justice’ and ‘will’ in their discourse as they position themselves to demanding moral responsibility for efforts to establish peace.

The representatives of the Jordanian delegation deploy the first person singular pronoun to express societal responsibility in the introductions of their public discourse to refer to the conflict in the region and to issues related to religion. In GA61, His Majesty King Abdullah II starts his speech by welcoming the progress achieved in the UN, especially the recent creation of the Human Rights Council and the Peace-building Commission. The King then proclaims: “I come before you today with a deep sense of urgency” (GA61) and pleads for the international community to act decisively for peace in the Middle East. Focusing on self by positioning himself as subject in ‘I come’ and the discursive choice indicating humility with the reference including the deictic pronoun ‘you’ in ‘before you’ reflect solemnity and respect for the GA audience. The speaker addresses his audience an emotional appeal ‘with a deep sense of urgency’. No doubt the speakers from Jordan use a variety of rhetorical strategies available between polite sincerity and strong determination to awaken their international audience to act in the regional crisis.

However, often when referring to collective organisations or institutions (contrary to the tendency in e.g. the French speeches) the Jordanian delegates tend to refer to partnerships, people working together: ‘Together, we can and must undertake urgent humanitarian and security measures … for dialogue, reconciliation, prosperity and peace’ (GA69), the inclusive pronoun ‘we’ (e.g. Mühlhäuser and Harré 1990) here referring not only to the speaker and the audience but the whole international

community. Speaking about the Syrian crisis in GA68, the President of Jordan calls the conflict ‘a global humanitarian and security disaster’ explaining that extremists have rushed to promote and exploit ethnic and religious divisions and warning that the regional crisis could become a world crisis, as the following extract illustrates:

(9.5.10) To protect the future, our world must respond. The Syrian crisis is a global humanitarian and security disaster. Escalating violence threatens to hollow out the rest of that country’s economic and political future. Extremists have rushed to promote and exploit ethnic and religious divisions. Such a dynamic could crush regional renaissance and put global security at risk. We have a duty to reject those destructive forces. (GA68)

With hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees coming to Jordan and challenging the country’s infrastructure, the delegates of Jordan repeatedly urge the world to help, as the example above shows in the metaphor: ‘... our world must respond’. Again, the rhetorically influential modal auxiliary ‘must’ is used to enforce the statement, but the agency ‘our world’ lacks a definition of who should respond. The short clauses and the verbs in present tense reinforce the certainty of the given facts: ‘The Syrian crisis is a global humanitarian and security disaster’ and ‘Escalating violence threatens to hollow out the rest of that country’s economic and political future’. ‘The Syrian crisis’, ‘escalating violence’ and ‘extremists’, all with negative connotations in this context (White 2002), are in subject positions when the situation is being described and accentuate the need for action. Furthermore, the metaphoric formula illustrating the crisis that could ‘crush regional renaissance’ and the warning of ‘global risk’ are bound to arouse the interest of the GA audience. The attention then turns to ‘we’ as a subject: ‘We have a duty to reject those destructive forces’. The pronoun personifies the agency, (e.g. Mühlhäusler and Harré 1990, Cramer 2010), which includes the speaker, the audience and as indicated by the context also the world. The deictic demonstrative pronoun in ‘those forces’ refers to extremists, who have not yet been clearly defined in the introduction. These types of rhetorical strategies that after metaphoric illustration of the situation gradually engage speakers and their audiences as strong social actors are often used in the data. Besides, in this example above to ‘have a duty’ accentuates the sense of accountability more than the typical deontic modal ‘must’ that is typically used by international delegates in the data.

Speakers from Jordan used various linguistic strategies as they repeatedly called for responsible global action in Syria: ‘Never has it been more important for the world

community to act decisively for peace in my region' (GA61) implies that beyond doubt now is the time for decisive action for peace. Regardless of pertinent calls for peace and security, the statements by the Jordanian delegates at the General Assembly did become a reality, as by 2020 the continuing war has indeed crushed 'the regional renaissance and put global security at risk'. Earlier the delegates of Jordan had warned the GA68 plenary by saying that 'The region's fires cannot be ignored. All the world is in their path.' (GA68). The metaphor (Charteris-Black 2014) of the whole world being 'in their path' is used to arouse personal interest, if not fearful emotions, among the audience.

Seemingly frustrated by the international community's failure to make any progress in the conflict in the Middle East region, Jordanian speakers positioned themselves to take a strong stand on behalf of their nation, as this following example from the speech of the then Foreign Minister of Jordan illustrates:

(9.5.11) Jordan, however, does not accept that these challenges become a justification for abandoning its national priorities in political and economic reform and the achievement of the highest degree of openness and participation. It has, therefore, adopted a national strategy, striking a balance between continuing to effect reform and the protection of its national security. (GA62)

Disappointed by the actions of the UN and the international community, the speaker positions himself as the official voice of Jordan. A strong negative statement reflecting certainty in 'Jordan... does not accept that these challenges become a justification for...' indicates the speaker's full commitment to the facts presented in the utterance. The use of the strong negative 'not' enforces the illocutionary force (Austin 1962) of the statement in this context. However, there is ambiguity in the expression 'these challenges become a justification for abandoning its national priorities in political and economic reform'. The deictic demonstrative pronoun 'these' in 'these challenges' points to the challenges that Jordan, as an integral part of the Middle East region continues to face. The sensitive issue of nations at war causing their neighbours political and economic setbacks is depicted in this cluster of abstract linguistic choices. Furthermore, depicting Jordan in collocation (Östman 2005) with rhetorical constellations such as 'the achievement of the highest degree', 'openness', 'reform', 'protection' and 'national security' highlights the path that Jordan has chosen in this situation of regional instability. The example above illustrates both

causal (Sarangi 2016) and socio-cultural (Solin and Östman 2016) responsibility: if the international community does not guarantee regional stability, Jordan has to act according to its national strategy.

Accordingly, at GA69 in 2014, as challenges continued to cause a global threat with ‘terrorists and criminals’ targeting Syria, Iraq and other countries, the speaker positions himself as a subjective agent representing his nation:

(9.5.12) Our international community needs a collective strategy to contain and to defeat those groups. My country is at the forefront of that effort. We are leading a number of initiatives to counter extremism.  
(GA69)

The deictic pronoun ‘those’ in ‘those groups’ (Charteris-Black 2002, Levinson 1983) refers to those who are not ‘us’. The fact that the speaker accentuates the formula ‘My country’ and the pronoun ‘we’ as subjects in the utterances expressing leadership in initiatives to counter terrorism manifest strong socio-cultural responsibility. Again ‘My country’ in collocation with words that have positive dynamic assessment in the context (White 2002) such as ‘forefront’, ‘leading’ and ‘initiatives’ give an impression to the audience that Jordan represents political leadership: the nation takes responsible measures to stop the escalating violence in the Middle East, and continues to follow its regional strategy knowing that their region ‘can be and must be a house of peace and prosperity...’ (GA68). The gradual change in the subject from ‘our international community’ to ‘My country’ and the exclusive use of ‘we’ (Cramer 2010, Mühlhäusler and Harré 1990) referring to Jordanians enforces the involvement by the speaker in taking responsibility. Besides, the present tenses used in the predicates of the first two clauses in the example above indicate certainty: the speaker is presenting facts. The progressive form in ‘we are leading’ points towards the future (see e.g. Charteris-Black 2014).

Table 9-4 shows how the speakers from Jordan position themselves as representatives of the United Nations less frequently than speakers from the other nations in the data, and avoid expressing strong active agency in that position. In an earlier speech from GA65 the speaker remarks as follows in his speech about the global crises and the need for co-ordinated, multilateral action:

(9.5.13) No country can face these crises, and provide for its future in isolation. The threats are global ... and so are the solutions. A strong, central role for the United Nations is essential. (GA65)

With the background of the previous urgent calls for the world and the UN to act on securing the Middle East region, the speaker's statement about the strong role of the institution of the United Nations being 'essential' sounds rather neutral and less demanding. In GA70, the discourse by the Jordanian representative uses stronger markers of collective responsibility as he delivers a speech concerning the outlaws of Islam, who 'grant themselves to distort the word of God to justify the most atrocious crimes'. The speaker continues to call for collective accountability from the GA audience:

(9.5.14) All of us here are united by our conviction that these forces must be defeated. (GA70)

The rhetorical formulas 'all of us here', with the inclusive first person plural pronoun indicating togetherness, which is further intensified by the place deixis 'here', in collocation with the verbal constellations 'united' and 'must be defeated' indicate a strong active agency in taking responsibility. However, the abstract word 'conviction', although it indicates intentionality (Sarangi 2016) behind agentive action, mitigates the force of the statement as it refers to an attitude rather than to active measures taken.

As was already mentioned earlier, Jordan shows responsibility for promoting international and inter-religious dialogue based on moderation and mutual respect. In GA67 the King of Jordan welcomes the voices of world leaders who stand with Muslims worldwide in rejecting provocations that are dividing different faiths. He states:

(9.5.15) Islam teaches us to honour all human beings, promote tolerance and show mercy. As a Hashemite and a descendant of the prophet Muhammad – peace and blessings upon him – I condemn all acts that vilify the name of the Prophet and falsely use his name or the name of Islam – or any other religion, for that matter – to justify violence and evil acts such as we have recently witnessed. (GA67)

The speaker shows moral responsibility in condemning acts that justify violence in the name of any religion. The subjective singular pronoun 'I' as a strong subjective actor enforces the power of the statement. At the end of the introduction the speaker

reminds the audience how ‘All of us of every faith everywhere must be proactive in promoting understanding and a much stronger global dialogue’ (GA67). The deontic modal ‘must’ in collocation with ‘all of us’ are used to include the whole world into intercultural and inter-religious dialogue (cf. Chapter 8). As we have also seen in the section focusing on coherence in this chapter, allusions to Islam are typically used in diplomatic public speaking in Arabic cultures. Language as a window onto cultural and religious values in societies is especially relevant in the case of Arabic, and cultural misunderstandings tend to occur in translating utterances especially given in historical or religious contexts (cf. Farghal and Borini 2009).

#### 9.5.2.2 References to initiatives, strategy and peace

The delegates of Jordan called for moral and socio-cultural responsibility, not only urging the United Nations, but the whole international community to find solutions for their regional security issues. The findings show how the active agency can be constructed by the notion of subject positioning in utterances referring to societal responsibility and by using deontic and epistemic modalities (Charteris-Black 2014, Levinson 1983) in calls for accountability. Mostly deontic auxiliary ‘must’ is used to enforce the perlocutionary effect (Austin 1962) of the statement, but also stronger linguistic constellations manifested in the data as in ‘we have a duty to reject those destructive forces’ (GA68).

Positioning themselves as strong active agents (Bamberg 1997, 2012) primarily as representatives of their nation (eight instances) the speakers from Jordan used diplomatic approaches varying from polite humility to strong determination in demanding responsible action from the international community. It was exceptional in this study of four nations that speakers express responsibility for their region (11 instances in the Jordanian data). Rhetorical choices with positive assessments (e.g. White 2002) used in collocation (Östman 2005) with constructions indicating responsibility, such as ‘peace’, ‘legality’, and ‘initiatives’, illustrate Jordan’s striving for negotiable solutions. In the institutional setting of the General Assembly, it is typical for the delegates of Jordan to refer to solemn, abstract nouns like *justice* as they call for responsible action in the Middle East. Notions such as justice and dignity are also common causes in the functioning of the General Assembly.

Table 9-4 shows that the Jordanian delegates also positioned themselves as representatives of the UN and the world in drawing attention to the crisis in the Middle East. Their urgent warnings of the regional crisis turning into a global challenge did eventually become a reality. This arouses concern about the efficiency of public discourse at the UN General Assembly, where all nations can speak and be heard. The delegations of Jordan speak about regional challenges, yet the phenomenon of responsibility embraces not only pleas by the delegations, but also deeds by their addressees.

In section 9.5.1, focusing on constructing coherence in the speaking session, we saw how it was typical for the Jordanian delegates to open their speeches with linguistic constellations conveying religious connotations. The role of religion was shown also in rhetorical choices relating to responsibility. The religious conceptual framework becomes evident in rhetorical constellations such as: ‘... humanity everywhere is bound together, not only by mutual interests, but by shared commandment ...to love God and Neighbor’ (GA65), and ‘Islam teaches us to honour all human beings, promote tolerance and show mercy’ (GA67). Table 9-5 illustrating the thematic distribution in introductions shows that besides peace and security issues the Jordanian delegates were positioned as strong actors for UN development projects specifically in the field of inter-religious relations. In their draft resolution for the World Interfaith Week the Jordanian delegates called for global dialogue and understanding in order to prevent geopolitical conflicts caused by people holding different religious views.

To conclude, in the speeches at the General Assembly plenaries the Jordanian delegates call for moral and socio-cultural justice, as they conform to the institutional commitment of the United Nations to maintain their ideal of peace and international moderation. Religion has an impact on the rhetoric of responsibility. In calling for socio-cultural and moral responsibility, the Jordanian delegates typically demand international cooperation and partnership: ‘No country can face these crises, and provide for its future in isolation’ (GA65).

*We cannot look backwards. We live in an integrated world, one in which we all have a stake in each other's success.*

President Barack Obama of the United States, UN General Assembly. Sept 28, 2015.

## **9.6 Public speeches by delegates of the United States**

### 9.6.1 Constructing coherence

In the time scope under analysis in this study President George W. Bush addressed the General Assembly plenaries during the years 2006–2008 and President Barack Obama during the years 2009–2015.

The United Nations was originally established on the ideological foundation of the American values of four freedoms, namely freedom from want, freedom from fear, freedom of expression and freedom of worship. These values, laid forth by president Franklin Roosevelt, became the basic ideals manifested in the United Nations Charter. However, through the years that the UN headquarters has stood by the Hudson river in New York, the relations between the United Nations and the United States have been somewhat constrained. Albeit being the biggest shareholder and one of the most dominant advocates for the UN (Weiss and Daws 2007:9), the United States has been subject to pertinent criticism against the UN, not only by declining to ratify UN agreements accepted by the rest of the international community, but also by retreating from formal multilateral obligations. By disregarding resolutions made at the Security Council and by refusing to pay its dues to the organisation, the USA has showed indifference towards the UN institute. Despite controversies in the relations between the United Nations and the United States, the USA shows deference to the General Assembly by participating in the yearly debate sessions with high-level delegations, traditionally led by the president of the USA.

#### **9.6.1.1 Traditional strategies of politeness**

In 30 per cent of the speeches in the US data the speaker deploys a similar linguistic pattern in each annual General Assembly plenary to open his public speech. This rhetorical model of interaction, which was particularly preferred by President Bush, includes the reference ‘Mr. Secretary General, Madam/Mr. President’, in other words addressing the dignitaries in the audience by using their titles without names, is a

characteristic discursive model in the USA data. These rhetorical strategies are then followed by traditional formulaic constructs in formal public speaking such as ‘distinguished delegates and ladies and gentlemen’:

(9.6.1) Mr. Secretary General, Madam President. Distinguished delegates, and ladies and gentlemen. I want to thank you for the privilege of speaking to this General Assembly. (GA61)

In this first example the speaker chooses a typical rhetorical strategy that fulfils the rules of opening a formal public speech, as it addresses the dignitaries in the audience with respect and expresses appreciation for the privilege of speaking (see e.g. Lewis 1999). We may even ask if this pattern could serve as an outline for a universal model for opening a public speech. The rhetorical formulae express politeness for the leader in the speaking setting, and does not evaluate the ranks of the other members of the audience. Referring to Watts’ (2003) distinction between politeness and politic behaviour, the use of complimentary rhetoric together with other conventionalised formulas of deference in the public speaking genre do not necessarily display politeness, but rather serve as constructing the social framework in the speaking situation.

In the first example above the speaker uses the politeness strategy of ‘thankng for the privilege of speaking to this General Assembly’. The compliment of thanking begins by emphasising the first person singular pronoun ‘I’. This rhetorical choice of positioning ‘self’ as a subjective agent notably personalizes and adds the perlocutionary effect (Austin 1962, Searle 1981) of the statement.

In general, complimentary tokens are less salient (a total of ten markers) in the US data than in the data from Jordan (31) and Brazil (15). President Bush positions himself to open his speech again in later years by expressing deference to the audience: ‘Thank you for the opportunity to address the General Assembly of the United Nations’ (GA62) and ‘ I’m pleased to be here to address the General Assembly’ (GA63) and then introduces the topic. The rhetorical choices of expressing thanks (2 markers in total) and pleasure (1) of addressing the GA tersely express the deferent attitude of the speaker.

In 2009, President Obama represents the United Nations at the General Assembly for the first time. He commences his speech by greeting the audience:

(9.6.2) Good morning, Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General, fellow delegates, ladies and gentlemen. It is my honor to address the Assembly for the first time as the forty-fourth President of the United States. (GA64)

Greetings are usually time-restricted (Levinson 1983:79): ‘Good morning’ can only be used in the morning and this time-deixis used by the speaker in the example above implicitly constructs coherence in a speaking session. Explicit references to time (e.g. Charteris-Black 2014, Levinson 1983) as the expression ‘for the first time’ in the example above are typical in the USA data (seven occurrences) as will be seen in most examples. After addressing the distinguished members and the audience by using appropriate titles the focus turns on the speaker through the formula connoting polite humility ‘my honor’ and thus emphasising deference to the ‘the Assembly’ (a total seven references).

President Obama slightly modifies his preferred discursive model for opening a speech during the following two years. After addressing ‘Mr. President, Mr. Secretary General, fellow delegates, ladies and gentlemen’ Obama again pays deference to the Assembly by stating:

(9.6.3) It is a great honor to address this Assembly for the second time, nearly two years after my election as President of the United States. We know this is no ordinary time for our people. (GA65)

Focusing on ‘self’ in the position of the ‘President of the United States’, in the linguistic constellation ‘after my election as President’ the speaker implicitly reminds the audience of his position as the elected head of the nation. This is a relevant notion at the United Nations, which is originally established for the Nations rather than their governments. Using the collocation of ‘the Assembly’ and ‘the United States’ the speaker is positioned within collectives. This inclusiveness is further emphasised by the plural pronoun ‘we’ in ‘we know this is no ordinary time’ and by the morphological variant of the first person plural pronoun in ‘our people’, connoting coherence at the General Assembly and the world in general.

In the following years rhetorical strategies of conventional politeness are displayed in the opening words of speeches of the American president at the plenaries of the General Assembly. After addressing the dignitaries, using titles without mentioning names of the persons, the discourse continues by either a statement expressing deference or introducing the topic of the presentation.

(9.6.4) It is a great honor for me to be here today. I would like to talk to the General Assembly about a subject that is at the heart of the United Nations – the pursuit of peace in an imperfect world. (GA66)

(9.6.5) Mr. President. Mr. Secretary General. Fellow delegates. Ladies and gentlemen. Each year we come together to reaffirm the founding vision of this institution. For most of recorded history, individual aspirations were subject to the whims of tyrants and empires, and divisions of race, religion and tribe were settled through the sword and the clash of armies. (GA68)

Again time deixis ‘today’ increases the sense of coherence and in the speaking session, as does also ‘Each year’ in the second example above, as it refers to continuity of the GA sessions. The speaker then personalises the institution (e.g. Charteris-Black 2014) of the United Nations by the metaphoric reference ‘at the heart of the United Nations’, reflecting coherence within the institution. The speaker positions himself as an active agent through the first person singular pronoun ‘I’ by stating: ‘I would like to talk to the General Assembly about a subject at the heart of the United Nations’, indicating that the speaker is strongly engaged, and also entitled, to speak about ‘peace in an imperfect world’.

In the opening statements of the speech in the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations in 2015, President Obama began the speech by showing respect to the President of the GA Plenary session and to the Secretary General. He then addressed ‘fellow delegates, ladies and gentlemen’ before reflecting on what the United Nations has ‘helped to achieve’ during the seventy years of its history.

(9.6.6) Mr. President, Mr. Secretary General, fellow delegates, ladies and gentlemen: Seventy years after the founding of the United Nations, it is worth reflecting on what, together, the members of this body have helped to achieve. (GA70)

There is no focus on self in the example above. President Obama opened his speech using a similar rhetorical strategy at GA62, without reference to self as a speaker.

After addressing the leading dignitaries in the session, he stated:

(9.6.7) Sixty years ago, representatives from 16 nations gathered to begin deliberations on the new international bill of rights. The document they produced is called the Universal Declaration of Human Rights... (GA62)

The last two examples illustrate how speakers in the USA data tend to accentuate in their opening narratives the contextual setting of the UN institute and the General Assembly. In these two examples, the speaker positions himself slightly differently to

the UN. At GA70 the speaker used a linguistic strategy connoting coherence within the United Nations, by choosing the linguistic constellation ‘what, together, the members of this body have helped to achieve’. The choice of ‘together’ enforces the sense of a collective, although hedging like the rhetorical choices ‘it is worth reflecting’ and ‘helped to achieve’ can be seen as understatements in depicting the UN achievements. Both (9.6.6) and (9.6.7) again include time deixis ‘seventy years after’ and ‘sixty years ago’.

In the example above from GA62 the speaker elaborates again on the history of the UN organisation, but rather than using a linguistic device indicating inclusiveness he chooses the pronoun ‘they’ to refer to the representatives of the 16 nations, indicating distance more than togetherness.

#### 9.6.1.2 Politic and polite

To sum up, the speakers from the USA positioned themselves through the first person singular pronoun ‘I’ both as independent active agents (three references), and as representatives of different collectives (three references) to open their public speeches at the GA sessions. It is notable that the US data manifested fewer self-references through ‘I’ than the data from the other nations (USA six, France 13, Brazil 17, Jordan 21), particularly as the USA is categorised e.g. by Hofstede (2001) as the most individualistic nation in the world. These results corroborate earlier findings (Vartia-Paukku 2005), which showed how public speeches delivered by American speakers in the formal institutional Chamber of Commerce settings were often speaker-centred yet with consistent references to a collective.

To construct coherence with their audience the representatives of the United States positioned themselves to deploy politeness strategies typical in formal public speaking, such as formulas of thanking and stating that ‘it is an honor’ to speak (total number of references 10, compared to Jordan’s 31, Brazil’s 15, and France’s nine). The speakers typically positioned themselves to address distinguished members in the audience by manifesting formal deference through using titles, without names and without including additional complimentary remarks. Time deixis was used consistently (seven occurrences) in the opening words. The presidents of the United States used linguistic constructs of politeness by referring to the audience as an institutional collective, expressing complimentary remarks to the organisation of the

United Nations and the General Assembly rather than to dignitaries present at the plenary session.

### 9.6.2 Responsibility and duties

Regardless of the continuing constraint between the multilateral institution the United Nations and its biggest shareholder the United States - the *hyper-puissance* as the French tend to call the USA (Weiss and Daws 2007) - it can be noted that the linguistic rapport between the officials of the UN and the representatives of the USA government manifests deployment of respectful diplomatic rhetoric at GA plenaries. It is also notable that each year the American delegation to the United Nations General Assembly plenaries was led by the President of the USA, which indicates that the government of the USA considers the UN GA plenary sessions status-quo official duties: the presence of the Head of the State is required. This is so regardless of many protests urging the USA's withdrawal from the UN. Among other such efforts, the American Sovereignty Restoration Act, a bill that is repeatedly presented to the U.S. House of Representatives, calls for the USA to end its membership of the United Nations.

It can be seen in Table 9-4 that in the data the speakers from the USA positioned themselves as least active subjective agents expressing societal responsibility at the GA among the four nations (USA 11, France 25, Brazil 23, Jordan 20 instances). However, the official American delegates typically remind their audience of their nation's significant role as a founding member of the UN institution. This becomes evident as the speaker refers to the first planning meeting of the organisation in San Francisco (GA63), or to President Franklin Roosevelt's speech at one of the first UN meetings (GA66) and in other contexts where speakers depict specific events in the history of the United Nations (speeches in GA62, GA65, GA68 and GA70). Hence, it is logical that speakers of the USA typically position themselves as representatives of the institution of the UN (six instances), as they remind their audience of their responsibility and duties in maintaining peace and security, promoting global cooperation and advancing human rights.

#### 9.6.2.1 Positioning as active agent

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights ‘stands as a landmark achievement in the history of human liberty’, the delegate of the USA stated in the General Assembly session 62. Recognising the dignity and equal rights of all members in the human family, the Declaration represents ‘the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world’ (GA62). The President of the United States elaborates on the role of the United Nations, reminding the international audience that the standards of the Declaration ‘must guide our work in this world’. He then positions himself to urge the audience for action:

(9.6.8) When innocent people are trapped in a life of murder and fear, the Declaration is not being upheld. When millions of children starve to death or perish from a mosquito bite, we’re not doing our duty in the world. (GA62)

By the negation ‘... we’re not doing our duty’, in other words by attributing the blame on official representatives of UN member states in the audience, inclusive of himself, the agent calls for new measures of accountability. By using formulas with strong negative connotations (for evaluative language see e.g. White 2002) like the metaphor ‘trapped in a life of murder and fear’, and rhetorical choices such as ‘starve’, ‘death’ and ‘perish’ in collocation with the word ‘innocent’ the speaker no doubt aims to awaken the moral responsibility of his audience in order to uphold the ideas of the Declaration. Also, the contrastive rhetoric of ‘mosquito bite’ and ‘perish’ highlights the message of the narrative. The first person plural pronoun ‘we’, as a subjective actor attributing blame to the audience is obviously meant to call all nations to uphold the values of the Declaration. ‘When whole societies are cut off from the prosperity of the global economy, we’re all worse off’, the speaker points out as he completes the construct of repetition. Repetition, a feature generally associated with poetic and literary discourse: ‘When innocent people...’, ‘When millions of children...’ and ‘When whole societies...’ adds emphasis and intensifies the speaker’s message to the audience.

Again, the following year in GA63, the speaker for the United States reminds the GA audience of the noble pledge of the Charter of the United Nations, whose ideals ‘are now facing a challenge as serious as any since the UN’s founding – a global movement of violent extremists’. By using a cluster of metaphors the speaker reminds

the audience how ‘They imperil the values of justice and human rights that gave birth to the United Nations – values that have fuelled unprecedented expansion of freedom across the world’. The speaker then positions himself as an active agent representing his nation as he again calls ‘every nation in this chamber’ to be accountable:

(9.6.9) To uphold the words of the Charter in the face of this challenge, every nation in this chamber has responsibilities. As sovereign states we have an obligation to govern responsibly, to solve problems before they spill across borders. (GA63)

The example above has a similar tone as was evident in the speech from the previous year GA62 when the speaker used the word ‘duty’ and in GA63 a stronger rhetorical choice of ‘responsibilities’ and ‘obligation’. By such lexical choices (Verschueren 1999), a speaker can intensify the meaning of his/her message. It is noteworthy that in this example above the speaker refers to the members in the audience as ‘nations’, which is, indeed, what each member represents. In the UN framework the speaker reminds the audience of the history of the Charter: the founders of the UN ‘met in the shadow of a devastating war, with grave new dangers on the horizon’ and agreed on a historic pledge that has ‘endured trying hours in the United Nations’ history, and it still guides our work today’ (GA63). The delegate from the United States diplomatically positions himself with the member states through using the inclusive pronoun ‘we’ (Mühlhäusler and Harré 1990), though advising the members in the audience, viz. ‘sovereign states’, that they have ‘an obligation to govern responsibly, to solve problems before they spill across borders’. To ‘have an obligation’ has more perlocutionary effect (Austin 1962) than the modal auxiliary ‘must’, which is more used in the data. The speaker reinforces his statement also by using a metaphor to illustrate problems that ‘spill across borders’, instead of stating that those problems cause harm to international relations.

It is typical for the American delegates at the GA to underline the mission of the UN in their introductions (for the USA in 80 per cent of its speeches, compared to France’s 60 per cent, Jordan’s 40 and Brazil’s 20 per cent as shown in Table 9-5). Telling the narrative of the UN, as founders of the institution, the delegates of the USA implicitly emphasise the impact of their own nation in the global framework.

Hence, public discourse of the USA delegation shows consistent appraisals (White 2002, for the choice of words also Verschueren 1999) for the United Nations as a seat

of global dialogue. President Obama, referring to the history of the UN, stated that the leaders who built the UN ‘gave us this institution, believing that it could allow us to resolve conflicts, enforce rules of behaviour and build habits of cooperation that would grow stronger over time’ (GA68). This statement by President Obama describes the approach of the USA speakers, who serve as active agents expressing responsibility typically within the framework of the UN when they deliver public speeches at the General Assembly. Speakers tend to use institutional UN rhetoric, governed by formal, solemn abstract rhetorical figurations, perhaps for the sake of preventing further controversies in the relations between the United States and the United Nations.

The data show little evidence (two instances) when the delegates of the United States positioned themselves as representatives of their nation:

(9.6.10) Out of the ashes of the Second World War, having witnessed the unthinkable power of the atomic age, the United States has worked with many nations in this Assembly to prevent a third world war ... (GA70)

Metaphorically referring to the devastation caused by the Second World War by saying ‘Out of the ashes of the Second World War...’ the speaker begins the utterance that reminds the audience how the USA has worked with ‘many nations in this Assembly to prevent a third world war’, again personifying nations. This way of using diplomacy in positioning oneself among the other actors in the General Assembly again engages the USA as a close ally within the United Nations. The speaker chose a similar rhetorical strategy in the earlier example from GA63, where he used the constellation ‘every nation in this chamber’ to emphasise the responsibilities that all the nations in the GA have together.

Stating an issue at a political forum does not necessarily solve the issue, as pointed out earlier, but upholding the audience’s moral accountability when the world is confronted with grave challenges is how the United Nations representatives can express their individual and collective responsibility in the UN forum of diplomacy.

In the following sample from GA64, President Obama, having been in office for less than a year, elaborates on what the world expects of his presidency. He believes that the expectations are not rooted in him but rather ‘in a discontent with the status quo that has allowed us to be increasingly defined by our differences and outpaced by our

problems'. By using metaphors such as 'rooted in hope' he then elaborates on where the expectations are rooted:

(9.6.11) But they are also rooted in hope – the hope that real change is possible and the hope that America will be a leader in bringing about such change. (GA64)

America is represented as an active agent in bringing about change in the example above from GA64. The word 'hope' repeated three times and with an implicit reference to the future, reinforces the positioning of America as a leader in bringing about change. Over-deployment of abstract, if not romanticised, metaphors such as 'rooted in hope' (favoured particularly by President Obama in the introductions of speeches), diminishes the responsibility directly attributed to the subject. Nonetheless, eloquent rhetorical devices can no doubt be used to construct a sense of responsibility, even more so when they uphold the objectives of the UN's founding Charter.

Speakers from the USA at the GA plenaries do not typically position themselves as representatives of the region, nor of the world, except if the organisation of the United Nations is considered to represent the whole world. Additionally, American delegates infrequently (two items in all) expressed responsibility for global or local matters using the first person singular pronoun as a subjective agent. However, in the following quote, President Obama addresses the Assembly for the first time as the President of the United States in 2009 and he states:

(9.6.12) I come before you humbled by the responsibility that the American people have placed upon me, mindful of the enormous challenges of our moment in history and determined to act boldly and collectively on behalf of justice and prosperity at home and abroad. (GA64)

In this eloquent opening the deictic reference to pronoun 'you' again increases contact with the audience. The president of the United States acknowledges the responsibility 'placed upon me', again using a metaphor, and expresses his determination 'to act boldly and collectively on behalf of justice and prosperity'. The contrast of 'humbled by the responsibility' versus 'determined to act boldly', elevates the style of the speaker's and turns focus on the 'self' of the speaker, the elected leader of the American people. However, such a cluster of metaphorical constructs, including the phrase 'to act boldly and collectively on behalf of justice and prosperity' in its vagueness decreases the sense of accountability. Similar abstract rhetorical devices

were salient in the following sample by President Bush, if we look back at his speech in GA61:

(9.6.13) Five years ago I stood at this podium and called on the community of nations to defend civilization and build a more hopeful future. This is still the great challenge of our time; it is the calling of our generation. (GA61)

Starting with time deixis (Charteris-Black 2014) ‘five years ago’ highlights his prior call at the GA for nations to ‘defend civilization’ in the prevailing ideological struggle between extremist groups that attack nations provoking conflicts. The speaker refers to civilization as ‘a world beyond terror, where moderate people who work for peace’. Such metaphors arouse emotions of the audience and can be seen as efforts to unify the addressees towards a common purpose (cf. Charteris-Black 2014:45). It is the duty of the UN community to defend civilization, and the statement above depicts this mission in abstract figurative terms typical for the rhetoric used at the UN, as we have seen in the examples. The pronoun ‘I’ as a subject in the retrospective statement calling for the community of nations ‘to defend civilization and build a more hopeful future’ reflects the president’s personal intent (Sarangi 2016) to be accountable for constructing a new global reality, ‘the more hopeful world that is within our reach’ (GA61).

The following excerpt illustrates how the speaker positions himself as an active agent as he shares a short narrative depicting American values and ideals in the global efforts for peace and stability (categorised as ‘Other’ in Table 9-4). The tragic account of an American diplomat, who lost his life in an attack on America’s compound in Libya, was presented by president Obama as an introduction to a speech that dealt with international conflicts demanding the lives of innocent people around the world. The respectful narrative of ‘America’s representative’, embodying ‘the best of America’, reflects prime values of the USA - and implicitly the values of the speaker also – and America’s role and responsibility ‘in supporting the birth of new democracies’ in different parts of the world. President Obama states:

(9.6.14) As America’s representative, he helped the Libyan people as they coped with violent conflict, cared for the wounded and crafted a vision for the future in which the rights of all Libyans would be respected. (GA67)

In the Firthian sense, meaning implies choice. The traditional rhetorical strategy of deploying a narrative in an introduction of a public speech here implicitly symbolises

the active agency of the USA in international cooperation. By choosing rhetorical devices with positive assessments (White 2002) such as ‘helped’, ‘coped’, ‘cared’, ‘rights’ and ‘respected’, the speaker implicitly highlights America’s role and responsibility in ‘building bridges across oceans and cultures’ (GA67).

#### 9.6.2.2 Diplomacy, duty and future

The findings indicate that in comparison to the other nations in the data the USA data showed fewer instances of speakers positioning themselves as active agents expressing responsibility (see Table 9-4, the total number of instances: USA 11, France 25, Brazil 23 and Jordan 20). This became evident especially in the categories of ‘region’ and ‘world’, for which there were no occurrences in the USA data.

The findings show that the delegates from the USA positioned themselves both as independent actors and as actors representing the US government, particularly the presidency. It is noteworthy that the USA data had the least self-references through the pronoun ‘I’ in the data, although the United States is considered to be the most individualistic nation (Hofstede 2001, 2010).

However, the delegates of the USA constructed consistent rhetorical strategies to emphasise the significant role of the USA in establishing the United Nations. The speakers refer frequently to specific events in the history of the United Nations, often using time deixis (Charteris-Black 2017, Levinson 1983). At the same time they implicitly emphasise the role and responsibility of the USA, as the UN’s founding member, in past and future global affairs. Speakers consistently uphold the objectives of the UN’s founding Charter (e.g. GA62, GA63) and development of the UN organisation (e.g. GA62, GA63, A65, GA66, GA68, GA70). Accordingly, the representatives of the United States position themselves as active agents primarily within the UN framework in expressing societal responsibility.

Section 9.6.1 on constructing coherence showed that the speakers from the USA refrained from using special politeness strategies, and typically opened their speech with rhetorical strategies traditional in public speaking such as ‘It is a great honour to address this Assembly’ (cf. Watts 2003). Keeping a diplomatic distance to the international audience at the GA is reflected also in how the speakers constructed responsibility in their introductions as the speakers from the USA positioning

themselves as active agents expressing responsibility, except to emphasise the dominant role of the USA as a founding nation of the United Nations and upholding the protocol of diplomacy. Rhetorical strategies aimed for maintaining relationships (Leech 1980) were salient in the data.

Often the notion of responsibility in the USA data is embedded within figurative rhetoric. Metaphor, an essential feature in oratory since classical times, was a salient feature in several speeches (e.g. GA62, GA63, GA64 and GA70). Through lexical choices (Verschueren 1999, Östman 1986) and in particular with words that have strong connotations (evaluative speech e.g. White 2002) speakers evoke emotions in international speaking fora. Rhetorical constellations manifested in the data were often eloquent, as becomes evident in the following poetic quote: ‘We come together at a crossroads between war and peace, between disorder and integration, between fear and hope. Around the globe, there are signposts of progress.’ (GA69). Such metaphoric constellations in the context of constructs of responsibility can convey emotions (Charteris-Black 2014:160) yet avoid references to concrete future actions.

Figurative non-agentive speech does not necessarily imply indifference or no concern for the democratic ethos of the General Assembly, ‘the Global Parliament’. On the contrary, the USA shows diplomatic commitment to the UN in many ways, measurable not only by the elaborate style of speeches, but also by the length of President Obama’s speech at GA69, lasting 39 minutes instead of the recommended 15 minutes.

With regard to thematic distribution in the introductions (as seen in Table 9-5), it emerged from the results that the speakers from the USA made no reference to climate change in their introductions, which now retrospectively-looking was a notable omission in the USA data.

## **9.7 Summary and discussion**

A universal pattern for opening a public speech at the General Assembly might consist of the following internationally accepted utterances:

Mr./Madam President of the United Nations General Assembly,  
Mr./Madam Secretary General, Heads of State and Government,  
Representatives of the States, Ladies and gentlemen.

However, the results of this study indicate that universal patterns of opening a speech are not as such deployed at the institutional setting of the UN General Assembly. Rather, the representatives of different nations use a variety of discursive strategies to convey respect to their audience and construct coherence in the speaking context.

What I want to show in this study is that despite the data representing formal public speeches delivered in settings that have specific conventions for discourse, and regardless of the unifying effect of e.g. globalization on genres of discourse in general, speeches by official representatives of member states manifest consistent socio-cultural particulars.

#### 9.7.1 Coherence in international forum

First I will show an overview of how the speakers positioned themselves to construct coherence. Table 9-1 shows how the speakers from Brazil, France, Jordan and the United States position themselves by using the self-referential ‘I’ in the opening words of their public speeches, either referring to ‘self’ as an independent actor or as a so-called ‘inter-dependent’ actor, a representative of a collective (government, nation or region).

**Table 9-1** Positioning of ‘self’ in the opening words by using the first person singular pronoun ‘I’ as self-reference

	BRAZIL No. of references	FRANCE No. of references	JORDAN No. of references	USA No. of references
<b>Self-reference</b>				
Independent actor	10	5	16	3
Actor representing				
- government	3	0	0	3
- nation	2	6	3	0
- region	0	2	1	0
- other	2	0	1	0
Total of self-references through pronoun 'I'	17	13	21	6

As seen in Table 9-1 there was considerable variation in how the speakers positioned themselves by using the first person singular pronoun ‘I’ to address their audience in the opening words of their speeches at the GA debates. All speakers engaged themselves actively both as independent actors and as actors representing collectives in their opening statements. The data from Jordan manifested most markers (21) of speakers positioning themselves by using the first person singular pronoun ‘I’, in comparison to Brazil (17), France (13) and the USA (six). In addition, the delegates of Jordan positioned themselves more as independent actors (16 markers) compared to the speakers from the other nations, e.g. the USA (three). In the French data there was a tendency for the speakers to position themselves more as actors belonging to a collective such as nation and region than as independent actors.

Table 9-1 shows further that the speakers from Brazil, France and Jordan had a tendency to position themselves as representatives of their nation, while the speakers from the USA did not. In the category ‘Other’ the speaker represents gender (Brazil) and parenthood (Jordan).

A few opening statements manifested no reference to self (30 per cent of the French data, 20 per cent of the USA data, ten per cent of Brazil data, and ten per cent of the Jordan data).

Although representatives from all nations followed the diplomatic protocol of deploying titles and displaying communicative acts of support to the members of the audience and the institute of the UN, there was variation in rhetorical strategies used by speakers from different nations. This became evident in e.g. how speakers from Brazil and Jordan referred to dignitaries in the audience by using titles and including their names, thus enforcing the sense of coherence in their speaking session.

**Table 9-2** Speakers positioning themselves vis-à-vis members in the audience in the opening words of their speeches

	BRAZIL No. of speeches	FRANCE No. of speeches	JORDAN No. of speeches	USA No. of speeches
Reference to				
Audience and UN officials by titles	10	10	10	10
UN officials by titles including names	9	0	8	0

Table 9-2 shows that all the speakers referred to the audience by using appropriate titles. This type of showing deference through linguistic choices such as *Mr. President of the General Assembly*, *Mr. Secretary General* and *Heads of State and Government* is a typical strategy of opening a speech in formal sessions such as the GA plenaries, representing ‘politic behavior’ (Watts 2003) or positional politeness (Brown and Levinson 2002). Table 9-2 further shows that the speakers from Brazil and Jordan typically positioned themselves towards the members of the audience by consistently addressing officers and dignitaries present in the auditorium with their titles and names (Brazil in nine speeches, Jordan in eight). By contrast, the speakers from France and the United States did not use such a rhetorical strategy.

From this simple example in the data it can be seen that although the interactional systematics is largely based on universal principles, the application of such principles differs systematically across cultures and subcultures (c.f. Brown and Levinson 2002, Irvine 2009).

Another method to connect with the audience in the opening words, namely to refer to the members in the audience through the deictic pronoun ‘you’, was used consistently by the delegates from Brazil, France and Jordan, least by the delegates from the USA.

Speakers also used various communicative acts of complimenting to construct international and intergovernmental coherence in the speaking situation. Table 9-3 indicates how delegates from different nations deployed politeness strategies in the opening words of their speeches at the General Assembly plenaries.

**Table 9-3** Constructing coherence through rhetorical strategies of complimenting

	BRAZIL No. of references	FRANCE No. of references	JORDAN No. of references	USA No. of references
<b>Rhetorical strategy</b>				
Greeting	4	2	0	1
Thanking	0	0	6	2
Honoring	5	1	4	6
Expressing pleasure	1	0	1	1
Wishing success	3	1	4	0
Congratulating	2	0	7	0
Other	0	5	9	0
Total number of complimentary communicative acts	15	9	31	10

Table 9-3 shows that the Jordan data more than other national data showed several rhetorical strategies expressing complimentary acts such as wishing success to members of the audience, congratulating or greeting them personally. Such expressive linguistic strategies, typical in Arabic cultures, tend to be considered overtly expressive by actors in western cultures (e.g. Gudykunst and Mody 2002). Table 9-3 demonstrates further that the communicative act of congratulating the President of the plenary and other distinguished officials in the GA session, manifested in the speeches of Jordan (seven references) and Brazil (two references), did not occur in the data from France nor from the United States.

The category ‘Other’ as regards Jordan in Table 9-3 accounts for the opening formulas with connotations to religion (nine references). With regard to France the category ‘Other’ refers to evaluations concerning the institute of the United Nations (five references).

Rhetorical strategies of politeness were notably more salient in nations with a higher power distance index (see e.g. Hofstede 2001, 2010), namely Jordan and Brazil. The data from Brazil and Jordan also showed rhetorical strategies, in which the speakers congratulate dignitaries for their positions in the plenary session, implicitly reflecting a social hierarchy. Based on these findings it is noteworthy that the delegates from Brazil and Jordan positioned themselves primarily as independent actors through the pronoun ‘I’ when they addressed their audience in the opening words, interacting with the audience more on inter-personal than institutional terms.

There was a tendency for speakers from Brazil and the United States to deploy more formal linguistic constructs when they were speaking for the first time as a representative of their state at the UN General Assembly plenary. Speeches in later years showed evidence of less formal rhetorical choices and tended to show markers of familiarity. This type of constructing coherence through markers connoting familiarity was especially evident in the data of Brazil, where the speakers displayed notably more rhetorical references to members in the audience versus organisations, and used familiar expressions such as ‘son of Africa’ (GA69).

Next I will summarize the results from the analysis of the rhetorical strategies that the speakers used to construct responsibility in their introductions.

### 9.7.2 Responsibility in international forum

The results showed how coherence in the speaking situation was primarily constructed by the way speakers positioned ‘self’ (Bamberg 1997, 2012) in their opening words and in terms of politeness strategies that they used to address their audience. The findings indicate that the notion of responsibility was realised primarily in terms of subjective agency when referring to issues related to responsibility. The results suggest that the way the speakers positioned themselves to construct coherence in the opening words of their public speeches gave some indication of the type of

positioning strategies that would be used by speakers to bring up issues related to responsibility, (as shown in sections 9.3–9.6 in this chapter).

Table 9-4 shows how speakers representing Brazil, France, Jordan and the USA position themselves as active agents expressing responsibility for global, regional, UN-related and general affairs at the GA plenaries. ‘General affairs’ include statements with e.g. religious and ideational content. In the categorisation of the table, the speaker is positioned either as subject in the statements or responsibility is explicitly referred to. The pronoun ‘we’ and its morphological variants have been affiliated with categories of ‘nation’, ‘region’, ‘UN’ or ‘the world’.

**Table 9-4** Speakers positioning themselves as active agents expressing societal responsibility

		BRAZIL				FRANCE				JORDAN				USA			
		No. of references				No. of references				No. of references				No. of references			
		Global	Regional	UN	General												
Positioning					Total												
1st person sing.pronoun		1		1	2	1		2	3	1	1	1	3	2		2	
Nation		3	4	1	8	3	1	3	3	10	2	5	1	8	2		2
Region						1			1		1		1				
UN		3		1	5	4	1		5	2	1	1	4	3	3		6
World		3		2	5	2	1		6	1	3	1	4				
Other		2		1	3									7	1	3	11
Total		12	4	2	23	11	3	5	25	6	11	2	20				

Table 9-4 shows there were fewer instances in the USA data (a total of 11 instances) of speakers positioning themselves as active agents expressing societal responsibility in comparison to the data from France (25), Brazil (23) and Jordan (20). We can further see from Table 9-4 that delegates at the GA mostly position themselves as active agents in their roles as representatives of their nation (Brazil eight instances, France ten, Jordan eight) when they express responsibility for global, regional, UN-related or general affairs. However, in the data the speakers from the USA positioned themselves as representatives of the UN (six instances) more often than as representatives of their own nation. Since the GA model functions on the ‘one nation-one vote’ principle, making GA a venue where the voices of all nations are heard, it becomes logical for speakers to deploy the option of positioning themselves also as representatives of ‘the world’. While the delegates from Brazil, France and Jordan had a tendency to position themselves as social actors representing ‘the world’, the delegates from the USA did not.

On the other hand, in Table 9-4 we can also see that most national speakers were positioned to taking responsibility generally on global affairs (Brazil 12 references of the total 23, France 11/25, USA 7/11). By contrast, Jordan expressed more concern for regional issues.

It was evident that speakers changed positioning continuously through various rhetorical formulations. At the same time the distribution of responsibility changed in the dynamics of the speeches. At the linguistic level, issues related to moral, causal and self-other responsibility were often embedded in figurative use of language including metaphors and occasional institutional jargon. Metaphors, emphasising and often dramatizing the situations calling for responsible action, were obviously used to arouse audiences' interest to the topic.

Modality was used to indicate speakers' stance and position towards what they were saying and to convince their audience of the truth of their statements. Speakers tended to convey facts by using predicates in present tense in short utterances such as: 'That is our responsibility' (GA64 France), 'My country is at the forefront of that effort' (GA69 Jordan). The most salient deontic modal auxiliary in the data was 'must'; rarely did the introductions manifest stronger linguistic formulas such as 'to have an obligation to' when issues related to responsibility were presented. The speakers used collocations of words (Östman 2005) with positive and/or negative assessments (White 2002) to reinforce their calls for responsible action. The lexical choices in these collocations effectively reinforced the perlocutionary effect (Austin 1962) of utterances particularly related to responsibility.

#### 9.7.2.1 Thematic distribution

Since one of the primary purposes of the United Nations is the maintenance of international peace and security, the speakers at the General Assembly obviously bring forward pertinent challenges that emerge in the global security environment. This becomes evident in Table 9-5, which shows the thematic distribution in the introductions of the speeches at the GA.

**Table 9-5** Thematic distribution in introductions. The figures indicate the number (and percentage) of introductions with references to the topics in the left-hand column.

	BRAZIL	FRANCE	JORDAN	USA
Peace and security	1 (10%)	8 (80%)	8 (80%)	8 (80%)
Economic and Financial Crisis	5 (50%)	3 (30%)	1 (10%)	0 (0%)
Climate Change	2 (20%)	3 (30%)	1 (10%)	0 (0%)
UN-related issues	2 (20%)	6 (60%)	4 (40%)	8 (80%)
Religion	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (20%)	1 (10%)
Poverty	3 (30%)	1 (10%)	0 (0%)	2 (20%)
Other	2 (20%)	1 (10%)	0 (0%)	2 (20%)

Table 9-5 shows that most delegates focused on peace and security issues in their introductions: eight of ten speeches emphasised peace-related topics in the speeches by the delegates from France, Jordan and the USA. By contrast, in the data from Brazil security issues were mentioned only in one introduction, as their delegates focused mostly on economic issues. What is notable is that the themes of economic and financial crisis and climate change were not manifested in the USA data. Table 9-5 indicates further how UN-related issues were brought up most by the speakers from the USA, as eight speeches by their delegates included rhetorical constructs concerning UN-affairs. UN-related issues were frequently brought forward also by the French speakers (six speeches).

If we look at the themes assigned to the General Assembly plenaries (see Appendix I) in 2006-2015 we can see that they focus largely on global peace and security. Speakers at the high-level GA forum obviously aim to respect the declaration of the World Summit 2005 on ‘Responsibility to protect’, in which the world leaders declare that each individual state has the responsibility to protect its population from acts of violence. Based on this declaration the United Nations has the responsibility to use

appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other peaceful means to protect populations from crimes against humanity. Some of the key words in the themes of the General Assembly plenary sessions 61-70 were ‘global partnership’, ‘dialogue’, ‘international peace’, ‘the role of mediation’, ‘strengthening multilateralism’ and ‘peaceful means’. We have seen in this study that most speakers presented these ideals of the United Nations in their introductions. Looking at the conclusions of the speeches, where the main points of a speech are expected to re-occur (Zarefsky 2017), it could be seen that peace and issues related to stability are consistently referred to by all speakers, including the speeches by the official delegates of Brazil (cf. Table 9-5). Additionally, most speakers emphasized the role of the UN in the efforts of developing global stability and wellbeing in their concluding remarks.

As elected officials for their nations, political leaders are assumed to act in ways that benefit societies. A topic frequently discussed by some, but not all the nations in the data, was the economic and financial crisis, which Brazil presented in 50 per cent of the speeches, France in 30 per cent, Jordan in ten per cent. The speakers from the USA did not focus on economic crises in their introductions. Religion was brought up as a topic in 20 per cent of the Jordanian introductions. Thematic choices in the introductions no doubt reflect delegations’ national interests and at the same time portray current universal concerns such as economic challenges during 2006-2015.

Obviously, these results of a limited study cannot lead to generalisations about speakers’, or even less so about nations’, (dis)interest in specific international topics. Additionally, the fact that the USA and France focused extensively on UN-related matters either gives indication of their dominant position in the UN organisation or perhaps of polite diplomacy towards the functioning of the General Assembly.

#### 9.7.3 Where is responsibility located?

Lakoff (2016) elaborates on situations in which actors’ responsibility is located in accountability to superiors and contemplates whether responsible behaviour is then seen as a personal obligation that is internalized in people (2016:30). If responsible rhetoric is attributed to obligation we need consider to what extent discursive choices of speakers - as actors elected to office - are affected by political demands of their own nations, or a societal system with high power distance (e.g. Hofstede 2001, 2010).

The data showed that speakers tended to express international responsibility in their introductions for issues that were current concerns in their own nations, such as economics and peace and security, and omit issues that were not, such as climate change. Thus it seems that socio-cultural responsibility for their own societies created an initiative to show international co-responsibility for similar global concerns. What official representatives of member states discuss in a global forum such as the United Nations and how they position themselves in international affairs through public speaking at the GA debates provides an assessment of the global political, economic and societal situation of the time. And not only that: speakers' rhetorical choices, and also their rhetorical omissions, can open a window to a nation's future strategies.

The significance of linguistic choices made by a speaker to address members of the global audience represented at the GA is depicted in the way Brown and Levinson (2002: 281) view linguistic form. They suggest that the social valence of linguistic form has two sources:

The intrinsic potential impact that a specific communicative intention may have on a social relationship, and the ways in which by modifying the expression of that intention participants seek to modify that impact – such modification measuring for participants the nature of the social relationship. On this view a very considerable intentional and strategic mediation connects linguistic form with social relationships. In short, language usages are tied to strategies rather than directly to relationships, although relationships will be characterized by the continued use of certain strategies.

Here Brown and Levinson depict primarily interpersonal encounters; however, this study shows that similar conventional ruling is valid in formal public speaking situations. Positioning of speakers towards their audience is tied to rhetorical strategies, and vice versa. By continued use of certain strategies, political speakers construct coherence-responsibility at the GA, at the same time establishing and re-establishing themselves and their nations in the global forum.

#### 9.7.4 Interdependence between nations

The findings of this study underline the fact that in our interconnected world no nation can solve global challenges on their own. As regards responsibility, references to the international community were salient in the speeches of the delegates.

International coherence and co-operation ('we the peoples of the United Nations') and intercultural public discourse in fora like the General Assembly is needed to sustain democratic development in the world society (cf. Zarefsky 2009). In this system each nation has a position, dependent largely on its geo-political and economic position, but also on how a nation self-positions and actively engages itself in public discourse in high-level political settings.

Furthermore, Table 9-4 showed how speakers from different nations avoided 'self'-positioning through the first person singular pronoun in their discourse, thus avoiding taking direct personal responsibility. Is an official delegate at the GA positioned as a stronger active agent expressing responsibility by representing him- or herself, his/her nation or as a representative of the United Nations, which consists of 193 member states? This naturally depends on who is speaking and what power he/she has in the world politics. The question arises whether the voice of a small nation is heard. In contexts of potential regional crises between smaller states, does the General Assembly represent another forum for super-power politics, solely? Demands for showing international co-responsibility e.g. in the Middle East crisis, and warnings of the regional crisis becoming a global threat were heard at the General Assembly debate, but not responded to (see Burke 1950).

Proponents of the so-called secularisation thesis predicted that the phenomenon of religion would have disappeared in the global society by and during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, while there were others who predicted the opposite (c.f. Berger 1999, Huntington 1996, Powers 2010). The latter seem to have come closest to what has actually happened. Considering the impact of religions in international politics in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium, it would be unnatural if public discourse by politicians did not show evidence of explicit or at least implicit rhetorical choices based on religious traditions.

In political public discourse what is left unsaid is highly relevant, and needs further attention in academic research. Omitting issues like climate change in an introduction does not necessarily mean that the matter is not presented at all in a given discourse, yet it may indicate how important an issue is on a nation's official agenda. This study of public speeches shows that there is still much to be done with respect to how speakers negotiate their standing in international speaking contexts by strategically positioning themselves in their public discourse.

## **10. WHERE IS EUROPE IN POLITICAL PUBLIC SPEAKING?**

### **British, Finnish and French perspectives on (de)constructing coherence in the European Union**

The European Union, in a state of disarray, is looking for a new narrative. The future development of the EU and its position in international politics and economy causes pertinent concern not only in the member states but also in global affairs dominated by stronger actors like China, the United States and Russia.

Lewis and Amin (2017:3) suggest that in the future politicians and public may ‘think, feel and act through narratives, and perhaps all the more so during times of disruption and uncertainty when the givens of societal framing and reproduction are destabilized’. They argue that such narratives of Europe are central in understanding the place of Europe in the futures of diverse societies in Europe.

By choosing markers of inclusion or exclusion in their public speeches leaders of the EU member states can position themselves and their nations in the narrative of the European Union. This analysis focuses on the use of first the person plural pronoun and its syntactic and case-dependent morphological variants manifested in the public speeches of the British, Finnish and French Prime ministers in 2004–2005.

The findings show consistent variation in how the political leaders positioned themselves towards European coherence in their speeches. The British rhetoric conveyed distance to the European union and focused on either national or global issues. The French speeches emphasised social, political and cultural unity in the EU. In the Finnish public speeches the majority of the inclusive first person plural pronouns referred to the nation of Finland.

Looking at the results retrospectively today, it can be seen that Britain, France and Finland followed the route of rhetoric shown by their political leaders in their public discourse years earlier.

#### **10.1 Introduction**

The European integration process continues to be challenged by questions concerning immigration, populism, security and defence issues, lack of common understanding of the EU values and also by the very process of the future expansion of the Union (e.g.

Eatwell 2018, Lewis and Amin 2017). According to Lewis and Amin (2017:4), during times of societal uncertainty we need to better understand ‘the stories of identity, union, aversion and belonging’ that Europeans have selected to tell about themselves. Accordingly, Anderson argues that regions, like nations, tend to be constructed by rhetorical means (e.g. Anderson 2006), often through politicians and the political elite that act as region-builders. Coherence in the European Union is a constructive concept, also narratively constructed, like the European identity. It is being created rather than having been born on its own. Such a development was evident e.g. in the Finnish nationalism that was actively constructed from the 1860s onwards among the elite of the country, and slowly spread to the middle class and the rest of society.

Jean Monnet, one of the founding fathers of the European Union, said near the end of his life that if he could start all over again he would start the process of European integration from culture (Eatwell 1997). Accordingly, Smith (1991:174) remarks that if there is a basis for a nation-state of Europe, it is located in the patterns of European culture:

The heritage of Roman law, Judeo-Christian ethics, Renaissance humanism and individualism, Enlightenment rationalism and science, artistic classicism and romanticism, and above all, traditions of civil rights and democracy, which have emerged at various times and places in the continent – have created a common European cultural heritage and formed a unique culture area straddling national boundaries and interrelating their different national cultures through common motifs and traditions.

Tiilikainen (1998) suggests that one of the key questions in the integration project in the European Union is the question about the *nature* of the Europe that is being constructed (1998:3). This debate of the future role of the European Union has continued until now. The very issue is constantly discussed in media and international think tanks, where political actors are not only concerned of the future of the EU in world politics, but also of the relevance of rule-based international organisations in general. Tiilikainen (1998) argues that the different attitudes in how political leaders of European member states relate to political unity in Europe can largely be explained through differences in political culture and traditions of historical origin. According to Tiilikainen, the Reformation divided Western Christianity into Counter-Reformative Catholicism, Calvinism and Lutheranism, which on the basis of their main political emphasis can be characterized as Christian communitarianism, the individualist

tradition, and the state tradition, respectively. According to this view, the Reformation created historical divisions in political thinking in countries like Britain, Finland and even in France, even though in France some Protestant minorities became salient in addition to Catholicism.

Geographical and geo-political facts also continue to have an effect on the construction of European coherence, and on variation in the rhetorical strategies chosen by representatives of member states in their public discourse. A country like France, situated at the ‘core’ of the Union, typically chooses different expressions of fidelity to the partnership with EU than for example the Northern countries. *Je suis Européen depuis toujours* (‘I have always been European’) (France IV p.2) differs notably from the Finnish expression of *going to Europe*, which was commonly used by Finns until recently when planning to travel to countries such as France and Italy. Britain, on the other hand, did not generally feel part of Europe in any idealistic sense (Kershaw 2017). As an island on the edge of the continent, Kershaw remarks, Britain is looking ‘across the Atlantic more readily than across the English Channel’ (2017: 81).

In short, one of the main internal challenges in the European Union today is the lack of coherence among its member states. The question I focused on in this study was how the national leaders of the EU member states position themselves and their nation in relation to integrating the European Union in their public speeches.

## **10.2 Material and methods**

This cross-cultural study addresses some pertinent questions about European unity manifested in the political rhetoric of prime ministers from three European Union member states: Britain (the United Kingdom), Finland and France. The three nations chosen for data represent the typical array of EU member states: France as a founding member, Britain as one of the so called core countries since 1975, and Finland as a representative of the smaller EU states, a member since 1995. In the data, French Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin represents the right-wing UMP party; British Prime Minister Tony Blair the left-wing Labour party and Finnish Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen the liberal Centre Party. The European Union was no doubt one of the most daring economic, socio-political collective continental undertakings of the past few decades. As the predominant political and economic construction that

transformed societal development in each member state in 2004–2005, the integrating European Union was a major factor affecting formal political public speeches by the leaders of member states, in any political setting.

Data from 2004–2005 include eight speeches for France, eight for Britain (referring to the United Kingdom in the study) and 11 for Finland, representing about 16, 500 words for each set of data. The abbreviations Fr for France, Br for Britain and Fi for Finland are used. The speeches are numbered I, II, III, etc. with page specifications. The speeches of Prime Minister Raffarin and Prime Minister Vanhanen were presented in French and in Finnish, respectively. The English translations and glosses are given for each example in French and Finnish. Appendix III shows the list of the speeches included in the data.

Small pragmatic devices such as pronouns carry a great deal of power in political discourse as they help define the way a speaker relates to others (Cramer 2010, DeFina 1995, Mühlhäusler and Harré 1990) and their impact largely depends on the way speakers use them. Thus, the way political leaders of EU member states use the first person plural pronoun to position themselves (Bamberg 1997, 2012) and their nation towards the European Union in their rhetorical constructs is the focus of this study.

The speeches were systematically encoded for the use of first person plural pronouns *nous* (French), *we* (English), *me* (Finnish) and their syntactic and case-dependent morphological variants. The pronouns were then classified according to their reference to local, regional, national, European and global contexts. Categories such as government, society, nation, the European Union, the United Nations, and the global world were established. The category ‘Ambiguous’ includes pronouns that from the context cannot definitely be placed in any one category, or in some cases the pronoun may be used as a way to indicate passive meaning. Furthermore, collocations of the first person plural pronouns with positive/negative nouns and noun phrases were elicited.

The internal validity of the cross-cultural comparison of rhetorical choices in the public speeches of the EU Prime Ministers is improved by the fact that the ministers, all democratically elected political leaders of their nations, have a similar status-quo in society as leading governmental officers, and a largely similar socio-professional

background. The fact that the EU was challenged with internal controversies about its constitution during 2004–2005 accentuated the dominating role in the politics of the European Union member states and in ministerial public speeches, regardless of contexts. By 2005 the national actors in the data were on the point of establishing or had established their self-defined positions within the European Union.

### **10.3 First person plural pronouns and ‘us’**

An overall picture of the use of ‘we’ and its derivatives in the Prime Ministers’ speeches is given in Table 10-1, with the distribution of the use of the pronoun in the data. Table 10-1 indicates where the pronouns in the data point. It is evident at a first glance that ‘we’ is used in the French and the British data to refer evenly to government, society, nation and the audience and to the European Union. In the Finnish data there seems to be a stronger tendency to use first person plural pronouns to refer to the nation. The brackets in Table 10-1 indicate the use of contrastive, emphatic ‘we’ in Finnish, which is further examined in section 10.5.1. ‘Society’ is used as a reference when the internal matters of a nation, such as employment and education are discussed without reference to other nations. The category ‘Nation + nation’ is used about the particular nation of the Prime minister in connection with another nation.

Grammatical structures of different languages significantly influence the use of the pronoun ‘we’. This is notably manifested through the differing quantitative use of French ‘nous’ (213 tokens), English ‘we’ (192) and Finnish ‘me’ (seven, versus 204 cases in which the first person plural pronoun is embedded as a suffix in the grammatical construct) in each set of data consisting of some 16,500 words.

**Table 10-1.** The use of first person plural pronoun ‘we’ manifested in the public speeches delivered by the French, British and Finnish Prime Ministers

WE in reference to	French	British	Finnish
Government	19	23	9
Society	59	22	22
Nation	71	43	155 (5)
Global	1	17	1
Mankind	0	13	0
Reference to the audience	13	31	3 (2)
The UN	0	4	0
The EU	20	19	9
Nation + Nation	6	0	0
Other	9	7	0
Ambiguous	15	13	5
Total No. of references	<b>213</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>211</b>

( ) signifies the use of the emphatic ‘me’ (‘we’) in Finnish

The quantitative findings of the use of ‘we’ in the speeches in the three data sets indicate the general distribution of the use of the pronoun in the data. However, the statistics do not show the presence of ‘a statistical outlier’ in the British data: most (10/19) of the first-person plural pronouns ‘we’ referring to the EU occurred in one specific speech (V) given by Prime Minister Blair, and by contrast five of his speeches had no such occurrences. This specific statistical outlier contains valuable information as such, as it reveals the lack of reference of pronoun ‘we’ regarding the EU in the British data.

The following sections 10.4 – 10.7 are an examination of the qualitative aspects of the use of the pronoun ‘we’ in the political speeches from the Prime ministers of Britain, Finland and France.

#### **10.4 The British view**

The language used by the British Prime Minister in reference to the European Union is polite and diplomatic. Yet rarely does the British Prime Minister use the first person plural pronoun in connection with the European Union. One might even imagine from some examples in the British speeches that the European Union has ceased to exist, or never was initiated.

The use of ‘we’ in the British data is situational, as seen in Table 10-1. Prime Minister Blair refers primarily to the nation but also, more than his French and Finnish colleagues, to the audience, thus constructing coherence with the audience in the speaking situation. Furthermore, Table 10-1 shows that there is a tendency for the speaker in the British data to concentrate on domestic affairs, with strong reference to the nation (43 references of total 192), government (23/192) and society (22/192). The British Prime Minister frequently speaks globally, crossing the European frontiers into world affairs, as if history had already prepared him for that. He speaks of the international community and reducing conflict, making trade fairer, and supporting the developing world:

(10.4.1) This will be a top priority for me personally at the G8 summit in Gleneagles in July, in Britain’s presidency of the European Union from July, at the UN Summit in September and at the World Trade Organisation meeting in Hong Kong in December. (Br II, p.3)

The British Prime Minister sees globalisation as a prime opportunity in the world, ‘not only for higher education sector but for many other highly successful British industrial and service sectors... globalisation was made for Britain’, proclaimed Prime Minister Blair in his 2004 speech on economy addressed to politicians and business leaders at the World Economic Forum in Davos (Br VI, p.3).

Prime Minister Blair uses the first person plural pronoun in reference to the European Union quite restrictively in my data, only when he made his statement on the European Council to the Parliament.

(10.4.2) There were other significant decisions at this European Council. *We* confirmed the conclusion of accession negotiations with Bulgaria and Romania. Both should join in January 2007. *We* decided to begin accession negotiations with Croatia on 17 March 2005, subject to their full co-operation with the International Criminal Tribunal. *We* decided on several new areas of action and co-operation in the fight against terrorism. *We* welcomed the agreement reached with Iran on nuclear issues and future co-operation, following negotiations conducted by the UK, France and Germany. If, however, this process is to succeed, as *we* all want, Iran must sustain its full suspension of all enrichment related and reprocessing activities. (Br V, p.1)

The vocabulary choices are matter-of-fact, lacking the emotional appeal typical of the French political rhetoric in a similar context. *We* in the excerpt above is inclusive of the speaker, but exclusive of the audience. It is used with natural ease, as the speaker himself is personally involved in the European Council decision-making process. ‘*We* confirmed’, ‘*we* decided’, ‘*we* welcomed’ the agreement, all include active verbs of participation, expressions that typically characterize the public rhetoric of the British Prime Minister in other contexts, too.

‘*We*’ and its variants are used in the British data in collocation with expressions like *human rights, action, co-operation, democracy, support, economic advance, job placement policy, stability* and *prosperity*. The political background of the speaker naturally affects the linguistic strategies chosen here, too.

Prime Minister Blair often uses ‘*we*’ in reference to the British government, and frequently when referring to collectives such as NATO. In a statement to the British Parliament on a NATO Summit and European Council in June 2004, ‘*we*’ is used again in evaluating the processes in the NATO meeting:

(10.4.3) *We* endorsed capabilities targets to ensure *we* make the best use of NATO forces. *We* supported the further reform ... *we* agreed to end the NATO mission in Bosnia. (Br VIII, p.1)

Further in the same speech PM Blair mentions the European Council briefly, distinctly diplomatically but from a more distant stance:

(10.4.4) Finally Mr Speaker, on the way back from Istanbul I attended a special European Council. It agreed the Portuguese Prime Minister, Jose Manuel Durao Barroso as the new Commission President. He is an excellent choice: committed to economic reform, committed to the trans-Atlantic Alliance, committed to an EU of nation states. It was a good finale to a brilliant Irish Presidency of Europe. (Br VIII, p.2)

The new Commission President is committed to the British agenda for the European Union; that of economic reform, good relations to the USA and the importance of nation states in the Union. Thus PM Blair uses the exceptionally positive adjective *excellent* in referring to the choice.

The British data show evidence of the use of *we* in reference to the audience more than the data from France and Finland (Br 31/192, Fr 13/213, Fi 5/211). Prime Minister Blair typically creates coherence by engaging the audience through his inclusive use of ‘we’.

The analysis of the British data shows evidence of polite diplomacy towards the European Union if it is mentioned in the discourse at all. European issues are often ignored, and emphasis is either on domestic issues or on world affairs. The rhetoric concerning the EU is matter-of-fact, emphasising economic matters and lacking emotional appeal typical of the French political rhetoric in similar contexts. The EU is seen as one platform of co-operation amongst many others.

## 10.5 The Finnish way

Table 10-1 makes evident that altogether most of the first person plural pronoun and its variants in the Finnish data refer to the nation Finland (160 references out of 211, 22/211 to society and 9/211 to the European Union). Compared to the British data, the reference to the audience is low in the Finnish data (31 references in the British speeches compared to five in the Finnish speeches).

The making of European coherence and identity involves inclusion and exclusion. In order to have a ‘we’, there needs to be those who are ‘not us’. Most of the first person plural pronouns in the Finnish data are embedded in verbs or nouns. However, in Finnish one can accentuate the English ‘we–us’ by using the emphatic Finnish ‘me’, which is used more rarely in the data.

### 10.5.1 Emphatic Finnish ‘me’ (‘we’–‘us’)

The making of European coherence and identity involves inclusion and exclusion. One way of expressing the emphasis on *we* versus *the others* in Finnish is by the use of the pronoun *me* ‘we’, which increases emphasis to the subject, as the conjugation of the verb with the case suffix *-mme* would in itself indicate the 1<sup>st</sup> person plural. In the same manner the possessive suffixes can be used without the genitive forms of the

pronouns, as in ('our membership') *jäsenyytemme*, where the suffix -mme indicates the first person plural genitive. The use of the pronoun in *meidän jäsenyytemme* ('our membership') puts emphasis on the possessive pronoun.

The formality of the speeches in these data is seen in the omission of the first person plural pronoun in the majority of verbal constructs, e.g. in constructs like *olemme*, ('we are'), *otamme* ('we take'), *tarvitsimme* ('we needed') instead of using the pronoun to emphasise the subject 'me' of the verb: *me olemme*, *me otamme*, *me tarvitsimme*. Official governmental political discourse in this study represents the formal public speaking genre, which resembles the written genre in its use of the first person plural pronoun. Accordingly, the emphatic Finnish 'me' ('we–us) was rarely manifested in the speeches by Prime Minister Vanhanen: there were seven examples of this particular use of *me* 'we' (five referring to the nation of Finland, two to the audience). The following examples illustrate the use of the emphatic first person plural pronoun to emphasise 'us' versus 'the others' (bold added):

(10.5.1.1) Suomella on rohkaisevaa kerrottavaa Kiinan kaupasta. Siinä missä osa muista (unionin jäsenvaltioista) haluaisi rajoituksia Kiinan tuonnille, **me** olemme uskoneet siihen, että yhteistyö ja Kiinan markkinoille meno auttaa myös meitä. (Fi I, p.2)

Finland has encouraging news to tell about the trade with China. While some other countries (in the union) would like to restrict imports from China, **we** have believed that co-operation and entering the Chinese market will help us, too.

(10.5.1.2) ... olisimmeko **me** yksin oikeassa ja muut 24 maata väärässä. (Fi V, p.3)

... would **we** alone be right in this matter and the other 24 countries wrong.

In the first example above the speaker states how **we** have believed that co-operation with China and entering the Chinese market area would help us, while the other EU member states would like to impose sanctions on Chinese imports. In the second example Prime Minister Vanhanen asks, if we alone (**me**) as a nation could be right and the other 24 nations wrong. The emphatic pronoun is used to emphasise the differing views between the Finnish people with the some of the other EU member states.

### 10.5.2 Reference to nation

Table 10-1 shows how the first person plural pronoun (both emphatically and embedded in verbs and nouns) and its syntactic and case-dependent morphological variants in the Finnish data refer primarily to the nation of Finland. Prime Minister Vanhanen uses expressions like *meillä Suomessa* ('among us in Finland') (Fi X, p. 1) and refers explicitly to the nation of Finland and the Finnish people in his public discourse through the use of the embedded *me* 'we': *Olemme myös osaajavaltio* ('We are also a nation of know-how') (Fi III, p.2), *Olemme ... kovenevalle kilpailulle altis maa* ('We are a country facing stronger and stronger competition') (Fi X, p.3).

In the political rhetoric, the European Union is referred to as an intergovernmental organisation and its activities are evaluated in national terms. 'We' with reference to the European Union is rarely found in the political discourse of the Finnish Prime Minister in the data. The majority of examples using *we* to refer to the EU are found in a speech given by Prime Minister Vanhanen on the special occasion of Europe Day, May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2005. That manifests natural diplomatic politeness. Yet the European Union is mentioned in most of the Prime Minister's speeches as a political and economic arrangement, an organisation from whose membership the nation and the people of Finland can profit from and contribute to.

The attitude taken towards the European Union is generally positive and constructive as is manifested in the following example:

(10.5.2.1) Päätksemme liittyä Euroopan unioniin oli oikea. Jäsenyyspäätös oli Suomelle sekä poliittinen että taloudellinen ratkaisu. Jäsenysaikamme on ollut menestys, unioni on meille oikea viitekehys molemmissa suhteissa. (Fi V, p.1)

*Our* decision (pronoun embedded in noun) to join the European Union was the right one. For Finland, it was both a political and an economic decision. *Our* (pronoun embedded in noun) period of membership has been a success, and for us, the Union has been an appropriate frame of reference both in politics and in economics.

Membership is the key word in the political rhetoric of Prime Minister Vanhanen from Finland when referring to the European Union. When referring to *jäsenysaikamme* ('our period of membership'), the possessive suffixes are used without the genitive forms of the pronouns.

Membership guarantees mutual political and economic benefits in an organisation, without demanding further commitment to integration. The actual status of the Finnish membership is brought forward frequently in the discourse.

(10.5.2.2) Suomen asema unionin jäsenenä on jakamaton. *Emme* ole missään marginaalissa tai lisälauseessa. (Fi IX, p.2)

Finland's position in the union is without question. *We* (pronoun embedded in negative auxiliary) are not placed in any marginal or appendix clauses.

(10.5.2.3) *Jäisimme* automaattisesti pois EU-kumppaniemme kelkasta. (Fi IX, p.3)

*We* (pronoun embedded in verb) would be automatically left out of the company of *our* (pronoun embedded in noun) partners in the EU.

The examples above manifest a typical situation in which Finland as a borderline country, with a long border to Russia, reconfirms its membership. As a reaction to this situation, Finland has found its method of contributing to the European Union, especially in the Nordic Dimension that it introduced to the Union in 1997 as a platform for co-operation between the northern-eastern EU states. In all, PM Vanhanen does not exclusively practice a positive approach. Constructive criticism of the EU is also explicitly expressed:

(10.5.2.4) Euroopan unionin sisäinen kehitys on tällä hetkellä pysähtyneisyyden tilassa. (Fi I, p.3)

The current internal development of the European Union is in a state of stagnation.

In his speech on Europe Day, Prime Minister Vanhanen urged the European Union to keep its eyes open and concentrate on the new global challenges and exceptionally emphasises the pronoun 'we' in referring to the Europeans.

(10.5.2.5) *Meidän* eurooppalaisten on silmien sulkemisen sijasta pidettävä ne nyt tiukasti auki ja keskityttävä edessä oleviin välttämättömiin toimiin. (Fi I, p.2)

Instead of closing our eyes, *we* Europeans need to keep our eyes wide open now and focus on the necessary tasks that lie ahead.

The European Union is mentioned in collocation with nouns such as *jäsenyys* ('membership'), *jäsenyysaikamme* ('our period of membership'), *turvallisuus* ('security'), *kilpailukyky* ('competitiveness'), *muutos* ('change'), *talous* ('economy'), *kriisinhallinta* ('crisis management'). The EU is typically seen as a framework influencing security, competitiveness, politics and the economy in member states.

The results indicate that the Finnish express their loyalty to the partnership in the Union, yet without explicitly expressing a sense of belonging through the use of the inclusive pronoun 'we'. The political rhetoric of the Finnish Prime Minister shows Finland's position in the Union as a member, involved in the process of European integration but on national terms. Although the attitude taken is positive, criticism of economic and political issues is expressed explicitly towards the European Union.

## 10.6 The French eminence

In the French data the European Union is seldom criticised. The political rhetoric of the French Prime Minister does not show evidence of open criticism of the EU; on the contrary, the attitude taken towards the European Union is consistently positive. France and the European Union appear socially, politically and economically closely connected, sometimes as one unity, as is indicated in the following excerpts by Prime Minister Raffarin:

(10.6.1) C'est cela, cette nouvelle Europe, dans laquelle la France pourra faire exister ses idées. (Fr II, p.3)

It is the new Europe, in which France will be able to make her ideas exist.

(10.6.2) ... si nous sommes suffisamment attachés à la défense de ce patrimoine intellectuel, culturel et moral de la France, si nous sommes suffisamment attachés à nos valeurs pour les faire exister au cœur même du projet européen. (Fr II, p.4)

... if we are sufficiently attached to the defence of this intellectual, cultural and moral heritage of France, if we are sufficiently attached to our values to make them exist at the very heart of the European project.

In the French data the European Union is typically seen as a natural continuation of the French ideological domain, its values and ideas. The romanticised vision of the Union representing the new Europe, where French ideas can flourish and where French values exist even in the heart of the European project. The rhetorical choices

in these examples are poetic expressions typical in the speeches of Prime Minister Raffarin.

What is less clear is whether the French are so attached to the values of their culture that they would like them to be the values of the whole of Europe. The French Prime Minister finds it natural to express Frenchmen's wish to construct the European Union '*à notre rythme*' ('at our pace') (Fr II, p.4), to talk about '*L'Europe, notre grand dessein*' ('Europe, our great design') and to remind the audience that Europe needs '*la réussite française*' ('French success') (Fr VII, p.8).

*Nous*, 'we' in reference to the EU is typically used in collocation with abstract nouns and noun phrases such as *l'histoire* ('history'), *valeurs* ('values'), *paix* ('peace'), *l'avenir* ('the future'), *declaration* ('declaration'), *debat européen* ('the European debate'), and *liberté* ('liberty'), i.e. words and phrases that carry strong positive connotations in the context. The European Union is seen as a political, economic and social construction that will gradually embrace the whole of Europe, bringing western development and peace to all its member states (Fr IV, p.2).

The French were pleased with the social and political development of the EU as it was in 2004. Prime Minister Raffarin reminded his audience of how this has not always been the case: at the beginning there were those who believed in an integrated Europe, i.e. a federal Europe, and then there were those – such as the British – who believed in a Europe only as a free economic zone.

(10.6.3) Entre ces deux types d'Europe, il fallait choisir et finalement aujourd'hui, *nous* avons une organisation européenne qui s'est élargie. Le premier mai *nous* avons accueilli dix pays nouveaux, *nous* couvrons une grande majorité maintenant du continent, *nous* avons accueilli ces pays qui avaient besoin de la liberté occidentale pour leur propre développement. (Fr IV, p.2)

Choice had to be made between the two models for Europe, and finally today we have an enlarged European organization. On 1 May we accepted ten new member-states, we now cover a major part of the continent, we welcomed those countries that needed western freedom for their own development.

There is often an ambiguity in the reference of the use of the pronoun 'nous' in the French data. Living at the centre of the European continent, the nation of France and the union have a tendency to merge in the French political rhetoric.

(10.6.4) Comment ne pas réfléchir sur ce bouleversement radical de l'histoire de *notre* continent? (Fr I, p.2)

How not to reflect on this radical upheaval in the history of *our* continent?

enquires Prime Minister Raffarin and refers to the history of *our* continent. Later in the same speech PM Raffarin continues:

(10.6.5) L'Europe est l'oeuvre de *nos* morts tout autant que *la nôtre*. (Fr I, p.2)

Europe has been built both by *our* forefathers as well as by *us*.

In the example above the reference is still to the territory of Europe, built together by past generations and by our generation.

(10.6.6) Cette Europe qu'ont construit de *nos* pères, il *nous* appartient de la transmettre à *nos* enfants. La génération de *nos* parents a construit l'Europe pour faire la paix à l'intérieur de *nos* frontières. Le devoir de *notre* génération, de ma génération est, aujourd'hui, de conforter l'Europe pour faire la paix à l'extérieur de *nos* frontières ... (Fr I, p.2)

This Europe has been built by *our* fathers and *we* must pass it on to *our* children. The generation of *our* parents built Europe in order to make peace inside *our* borders. It is the duty of *our* generation, my generation, to strengthen Europe and make peace outside *our* borders ...

In the excerpt above the reference is still, quite ambiguously, to the land, until the reference to *our union*, becomes clear in the phrase that follows:

(10.6.7) *Notre* union ne peut être fondée que sur *nos* valeurs, sur un humanisme européen initié par l'humanisme français. *Notre* union doit nous permettre de rapprocher *nos* diplomatiies et *nos* armées pour agir, ensemble au service de la paix du Monde. Là est *notre* projet. (Fr I, p.2)

Our union cannot be founded on other values except on *our* values, on European humanism that was initiated by French humanism. *Our* union must make it possible for *our* diplomatic corps and *our* militaries to align their services so that together they can work for world peace. That is *our* project.

In the example above Prime Minister Raffarin hopes that the Union can only be established on the European humanism that France has initiated and together they can defend world peace. In the conclusion to this speech, the French Prime Minister wishes the young people of today would have the enthusiasm to build a strong Europe and thus protect 'la France éternelle!' (Fr I, p. 3).

The European Union represents home ground for the French. Globalization, by way of contrast, causes hesitation. The Prime Minister reassures his audience about the positive challenges of globalization:

(10.6.8) Alors bien sûr la mondialisation est un challenge, bien sûr c'est une compétition, bien sûr c'est difficile, mais *nous* n'avons pas le choix, le monde est comme cela et donc *nous* ne pouvons pas rester spectateurs d'un monde qui vit sans *nous*. *Nous* devons prendre part au développement du monde ...  
(Fr IV, p.1)

Surely, globalisation is a challenge, surely it means competition and difficulties, but *we* do not have a choice, the world is like that, so *we* cannot stay and watch as the world goes on without *us*. *We* need to take part in the development of the world ...

Phraseology like *challenge* ('challenge'), *compétition* ('competition'), *difficile* ('difficult'), *rester spectateurs* ('remain spectators'), *un monde qui vit sans nous* ('the world that goes on without us') and the use of negative statements like *nous n'avons pas le choix* ('we don't have a choice') are uncommon expressions in the data, rarely used in connection with the European Union in the French data.

We have thus seen that the French tradition of highly figurative language use and romanticised expressions of 'grandeur' is notably manifested in the discursive strategies of the French Prime Minister. The assimilation of France and the EU is accomplished through positive collocations often referring to the great future of *our continent*. Sometimes there is an ambiguity in the reference, whether it is to France or to the whole of Europe carrying French values. Victor Hugo, one of the finest masters of French literature, was already envisioning a unified Europe at the Paris International Peace Congress in 1849. This historical tradition is manifested in the use of cultural presuppositions in the discourse of Prime Minister Raffarin.

## 10.7 Together in the (dis)integrating European Union

Who are *we* in Europe? This is no doubt a complex question to be answered by classifying deictic references of simple linguistic tokens such as the first person plural pronoun in the political rhetoric of the EU member states. Yet this linguistic device, a political pronoun or a pronoun of solidarity, as we may call it, indicates how the prime ministers of these three nations position themselves (Bamberg 1997, 2012) with regard to the EU. In this study, it became evident that, besides audience and topic

related factors in a speaking situation, there are three main elements that influence the European coherence.

First, to understand how people in European member states perceive the European Union, one must understand the culture, which construes the identity of each distinct country (Tiilikainen 1998). The linguistic bridge from the Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century into the use of the first person plural pronoun in 2004–2005 European rhetoric may not be fully construable. Yet the results from a limited study like this indicate that, if we accept that historical chains of meanings continue to be embedded in words, this bridge may yet exist.

The second point affecting the use of ‘we’ is the geo-political situation of the country. It is logical for France, situated close to the heart of Europe, to assimilate itself with the European Union. The geographical position of Britain may provide further distance to the European Union: the Union barely exists in the vocabulary of Prime Minister Tony Blair, except in speeches concerning the EU. Finland identifies itself as an official member in the Union, benefiting from economical and political co-operation between the member states. From being a ‘strange relative’ (Tiilikainen 1998) in Europe, Finland continues to approach Europe on political, economic and historical, i.e. linguistic fronts (see Östman & Raukko 1995). Nonetheless, Finland and the Nordic countries in general are still today considered to take distance to the EU.

Thirdly, language as a construct serves as a carrier of culture. Although France, Britain and Finland all represent individualistic cultures, in which independent self-construals traditionally predominate (Gudykunst, Matsumoto, et al., 1996, Vartia-Paukku 2004), France is considered to be the most collectivist of these three nations (Hofstede 2001). Collectivism is generally associated with Catholic cultures and individualism with cultures having a Protestant religion.

Analysing the narrative of Europe as it appears in the public speeches of the leaders of member states by a mere technical analysis of linguistic devices is not an adequate tool to perform a cross-cultural comparison. The researcher needs to have contextual knowledge of the subjects analysed: their social, political, economic dimensions and, more precisely, the mental and spiritual atmosphere prevalent in a nation during the period of research.

## **10.8 New narrative for future**

The results from the empirical studies manifested consistent variation in how the national leaders of Britain, Finland and France positioned themselves in relation to the European Union. The British data showed evidence of distance to European matters and concentration on domestic or global issues. In the Finnish political rhetoric the majority of ‘we’ and its variants were used to refer to the state of Finland. The French rhetoric emphasised the social, political and cultural unity in the European Union.

It is to be noted that even in this small-scale study of public speaking, the divisions manifested in the use of ‘we’ in Britain, Finland and France showed similarities to a view presented by Tiilikainen (1998). She suggested that the reason for the different levels of readiness for European integration is largely due to political traditions in different nations, originating from the Reformation. According to Tiilikainen, the Reformation divided Western Christianity into Calvinism, Lutheranism and Counter-Reformative Catholicism that eventually led to the three lines of European political thinking, namely the individualist tradition, the state tradition and the Christian communitarianism, respectively. Tiilikainen suggests that this division, though certainly not the only division in European political thinking, is significant in explaining the basic difficulties in the efforts to unite Europe under one political rule (1998:53). Being socialized in different cultural environments, with different political values, people tend to have different views on the process of European unification, e.g. the Calvinist political heritage emphasised individualist structures as far as its political doctrine was concerned, whereas the Lutheran political theory centres on the might of the State. The results of the analysis indicate that the use of pronouns of inclusion and exclusion by the representatives of Britain, Finland and France largely followed these historical lines of political thinking. Now, looking at the results retrospectively, we can see how the rhetorical strategies used by the leading national EU politicians, implicitly or explicitly, to position themselves and their nations in the European Union in their political rhetoric in 2004–2005 did indeed envisage the future pathways ahead. The nations have moved in the direction that their leaders implicitly or explicitly pointed to in their speeches from earlier years. Britain voted to leave the EU in 2016. By contrast, president Macron of France, positioning himself as the current leader in the EU, hopes to bring European coherence back again, as Jacques Attali (2018) also recently confirmed. As regards Finland, the nation

continues to be a solid member in the EU, gradually engaging itself more in the multi-lateral co-operation in the Union.

The results from the study show the power of inclusive and exclusive pronouns. Indexing European coherence through pronominal use (e.g. Cramer 2010) is important, even though fictive borders of ‘we’ change with time, within a political speech, even within a sentence. DeFina (1995) suggests that pronominal references reflect the way actors present themselves especially in conflicts.

According to Lewis and Amin (2017), narratives (which are not static but change across Europe) may guide Europe more than public affect and opinion. In their political rhetoric national leaders of the EU member states can choose rhetorical constructs based on their democratically given freedom to draw boundaries of coherence. The audience can either accept the boundaries as defined by their political leaders or disapprove of them. In 2004–2005 the European Union was indeed perceived as a historic international undertaking without predecessors. In such an entity coherence and identity are built on symbols and often on symbols of a collective future, if a collective past is not evident. The European Union used traditional nation building strategies such as a common flag, a common currency, a common passport and the European anthem (<https://europe.eu>) to establish a new identity in its early years. However, this European Union integration process was interrupted unexpectedly in 2005 by the rejection of the EU constitution in France, the core member in the establishment of the European Union. During such ‘intellectual collisions’ in and between nations, be they caused by cultural misunderstandings, religion, nationalism or any other -ism yet to be specified, a search for the causes is called for.

The future of the European Union, suffering from manifold long-term political and economic challenges and also concerns related to security issues, continues to be evaluated by media and by political leaders in international speaking fora (e.g. ‘the Kultaranta talks’ in Finland in 2018). Political actors are concerned that the voice of the European Union, and the United Nations for that matter, is hardly heard in global international affairs. At ‘Kultaranta talks’ Tiilikainen suggested that a potential role of the EU in future global politics could be to solve conflicts by peaceful means, through negotiations. In other words, the EU would return to one of its original missions,

where the understanding of discourse used by representatives from different socio-cultural backgrounds is a constant challenge. Berg (2019) remarks that as the sense of cohesion between countries and groups in countries is questioned, the popular trust in the EU as a political system is questioned as well. The European Union has a 70-year history of integration, based on trust. A new European narrative, based on the collective ‘we’ as ‘us’, would no doubt help build trust and contribute to a more coherent, predictable European Union.

## **11. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS: Institutions and linguistic diplomacy**

The results from this study indicate that public discourse in high-level political institutional settings such as the United Nations and the European Union should be seen as a communicative act that reflects socio-cultural values and norms in speakers' national and regional societies. With regard to international conflict management and peace building, where political public discourse plays a crucial role, this notion becomes acutely relevant.

The approach to international public discourse in the present project was from three general perspectives: First I looked at public discourse as a means of constructing stability between nations and societies globally. Maintaining peace was a prime mission of the United Nations and the European Union, when these organisations were first established to assuage crises in international relations. Secondly, I examined how leaders from different nations positioned themselves (Bamberg 1997, De Fina 2013) in their public discourse to express the notion of coherence-responsibility, an essential parameter as regards international stability. I examined rhetorical strategies that actors used to engage themselves, and their nations, in the construction of coherence and responsibility in their public narratives. Thirdly, I investigated if these rhetorical devices manifested culture-specific tendencies, and to what extent.

In other words my general aim in this study was to examine if public discourse in international fora manifests rhetorical strategies contributing to harmony and stability in our global community, and to what extent. My focus of analysis was on the notions of coherence and responsibility, necessary elements in promoting togetherness between people, societies and nations.

I will first give brief answers to the research questions that I presented at the beginning of my study and then present a summary of my main findings more closely.

How national leaders position themselves in their public discourse in international fora tends to interest the media and the public, both nationally and internationally. The general results portray high-level political public discourse as a formulaic genre that adheres to modes of linguistic diplomacy, such as formal strategies of politeness and linguistic formulas connoting global ideals and universal values. This was to be

expected. High-level political arenas are essential in sustaining communication and co-operation between nations, in the sense of the Charter of the United Nations: ‘We the peoples of the United Nations [are] determined to … reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small’. Quintilian has already accentuated that rhetoric is a strong moral force in societies. Chapters 8, 9 and 10, presenting the empirical case studies, all manifested such markers of universal human dignity, societal justice and equity. To construct coherence-responsibility, speakers used tokens of global or regional coherence (Tables 9-1, 9-4, Chapter 10) and ceremonial politeness strategies (e.g. Sections 9.3.1, 9.4.1). The political leaders positioned themselves as active agents showing societal responsibility to global matters (Table 9-4), the delegates from different nations accentuating various national, regional or world issues (Chapter 9) to promote global development. Such traditional linguistic formulas used in political public speaking convey a sense of continuity in relations, stability and trust, and thus influence international communication and international relations in a positive, constructive manner. Such public discourse can be seen as holding the world together, in the Zarefsky sense. The interconnected world certainly needs institutional arenas in which global ideals are maintained – at least rhetorically.

The passage above partly answers the first research question presented at the beginning of my study:

1. How do representatives of member states in the United Nations and the European Union position themselves for the purpose of constructing coherence-responsibility in their public discourse?

Diplomatically, would be the simple answer. The findings also show how the political leaders use their right to speak to the whole world at the General Assembly plenaries, such as by calling for international responsible action to solve a crisis situation (Section 9.5.2). The national political leaders can also use their moment of public oratory in the international fora to self-position themselves and their nation in global leadership through linguistic constellations (Section 9.3.2). In Chapter 10 the European Union’s prime ministers from Britain, Finland and France positioned themselves, implicitly and explicitly, in their public speeches through using inclusive and exclusive devices to indicate coherence with the EU. All these communicative

acts constructed coherence-responsibility in and between nations, as words generate meaning and construct realities (Verschueren 1999). In the data the way political leaders position themselves in international affairs is largely dependent on their national circumstances (Sections 9.3.2 and 9.5.2). It can also be based on a strategy, a political agenda, which national leaders follow to position themselves and their nation in contemporary international politics (Sections 9.4.2 and 9.5.3; Chapter 10).

That leads us to my second research question:

2. How do rhetorical strategies used by international actors to indicate coherence-responsibility manifest culture-bound tendencies?

The results showed the salience of socio-cultural nuances in the data, pointing to a ‘conventionalized idiom of behavioural cues’ (Goffman 1963:243). First, to construct coherence in the speaking situation, rhetorical strategies used in the opening words showed systematic variation in the linguistic strategies of self-presentation (Table 9-3) and in the politeness formulas chosen by speakers from various nations (Chapter 9), e.g. data from member states with high power distance manifested more communicative acts of complimenting (Section 9.5.11, Table 9-3). Furthermore, culture-bound lexical choices were manifested in the rhetoric of responsibility: Chapter 8 showed how actors needed to balance between global societal responsibility and socio-cultural responsibility in their statements and to elaborate on specific culture-bound expressions in their discourse. Socio-cultural underpinnings were also manifested e.g. in categories such as ‘Western’ and ‘Muslim’ societies discussed in Chapter 8. The impact of religion was manifested in the rhetoric of coherence-responsibility both explicitly (Chapter 8 and 9) and implicitly (Chapter 10). For religion and rhetoric see Chapter 11.2.

On a more theoretical-and-methodological level the study asks what public speaking analyses can add to well-established approaches like pragmatics and discourse analyses in order to give a deeper understanding of communication in international fora. I want to bring in the perspective of ‘public speaking’ and give it a more respectable status in modern day language studies. The findings of this study indicate that for a pragmatic intercultural analysis of public discourse in institutional contexts scholars need to further widen their approach on language and benefit perspectives from different fields and academic disciplines. Public speaking studies offer insights

not only to rhetoric impacted by (power) politics, economics and cultural circumstances in communication communities, but also to ethical values prevailing in contemporary societies. Using readily available theoretical constructs from one discipline may not be the most appropriate methodological approach in such investigations. Calling for wider perspectives, Verschueren (1999:271) suggests ‘a complete reassessment of the human sciences as a network of converging and diverging perspectives on different dimensions of human reality rather than a collection of disciplines’.

### 11.1 Summary of findings

To reiterate, Chapter 8 focused on the Alliance of Civilizations that was initiated by Prime Minister Zapatero of Spain and co-sponsored by Prime Minister Erdogan of Turkey in 2005. As an active coalition at both institutional and civil society levels, the aim of the AOC was to advance mutual respect for cultures and religions in societies globally, representing *per se* a prime official initiative of global societies to develop intercultural communication. Part I of the strategy report of The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, as a published multi-national report, provides a thematic opening for my empirical studies in public speeches at the United Nations and in the European Union.

The study of Part I of the AOC report showed the relevance of paying attention to how actors position themselves in discourse in order to construct responsibility in international public discourse. For the sake of objectivity, actors need to make a choice between rhetorical strategies conveying multi-polar universal societal responsibility and strategies conveying socio-cultural responsibility to norms and values prevalent in specific societies. The question of positioning became particularly relevant in matters concerning inter-religious issues. In the AOC report this was notable not only with regard to the rhetorically sensitive formula ‘civilizations’ deployed in the title of the AOC initiative, but also in presenting the ‘relations between Western and Muslim societies’ as an example for building bridges in societies. This approach applies the controversial dichotomy presented by Huntington (1996) as it emphasises that ‘the approach taken by the High-level Group to this issue may serve as a reference for the bridging of other divides in the interest of establishing peace and harmony’ (AOC 4.1). In Western societies, religions are not

typically explicitly present in political public discourse, regardless of their potential implicit influence on nations' political standing (e.g. Appiah 2007, Beck 2010, Tiilikainen 1998). Positioning themselves between 'western and Muslim societies', in other words, between categories connoting a seeming imbalance, the authors of the AOC initiative accentuate the importance of clarifying nuances of culture-specific rhetorical devices to addressees in order to avoid plausible misinterpretation of culture-sensitive rhetorical markers.

Chapter 9 begins my evaluations of public speeches by investigating how the official delegates of Brazil, France, Jordan and the United States linguistically positioned themselves in the introductions of their speeches as they addressed their audience at the United Nations General Assembly. Such opening words tend to be overlooked as conventional formalities. My argument is that the socio-cultural reality (Eckert 2012, Verschueren 1999) in the speaking situation is already being constructed in speakers' opening words. A general look at the findings show that the speakers from Brazil, France, Jordan and the USA respectively, chose four varying modes of constructing coherence with their audience: 1) conveying familiarity to members in the audience; 2) conveying formal politeness to the audience; 3) complimenting members in the audience; and 4) manifesting neutral politic behaviour. These patterns showed the following distinctive features: There was a tendency for the speakers from Brazil to reduce distance to the audience by positioning themselves to address dignitaries present with formulas connoting familiarity, such as 'son of Africa' (GA69) or 'my dear friend' (GA63) and by always including names with appropriate titles. As a contrast, the delegates from France typically positioned themselves through expressions of formal politeness strategies such as consistently addressing dignitaries in the audience by their titles and omitting their names. The official delegates of Jordan characteristically began their official speeches with a religious greeting and consistently expressed compliments to dignitaries in the audience, addressing them by names. Politic behaviour (Watts 2003) typical in the data from the USA became evident especially in the way President Bush from the United States opened his speeches at the GA deploying the same traditional rhetorical politeness formulas in each consecutive plenary (e.g. including titles without names). In other words, the data did not point to a universal way of opening a public speech in a formal

institutional setting. Based on the findings of this study, in the sense of Wierzbicka (2006), it seems that culture and language are interconnected.

Obviously, one cannot make too far-reaching generalizations based on such a limited set of data. Yet with regard to e.g. Hofstede's (2001; also <https://www.hofstede-insights.com>) national dimensions referring to power distance (Brazil 69, France 68, Jordan 70, USA 40, when a higher score indicates higher power distance), the findings show that the speakers from countries with high power distance deployed more politeness strategies at the beginning of their public speeches (see also power distance practices in GLOBE Study, House et al. 2004).

As regards the salience of collective constellations used by the French delegates to open their public speeches at the GA, the findings corroborate the results manifested in the discursive patterns used by the French national delegates to express responsibility in their GA speeches (Chapter 9). A similar discursive pattern reflecting collectivism is also manifested in the study presented in Chapter 10, in which the Prime Minister of France positioned himself as a strong active agency in the EU integration.

Chapter 9 also showed that there were salient differences in how the speakers from Brazil, France, Jordan and the USA positioned themselves in their introductions to express responsibility towards societal issues. The general findings show that the notion of responsibility in political statements was underpinned by agency, as Table 9-4 shows. My initial assumption in this research project was that the variation in how the speakers from different UN member states positioned themselves when they first addressed their audience would give an indication of how they would position themselves to express responsibility in their introductions. This tendency became evident in rhetorical strategies constructing responsibility, such as self-presentations expressing personal (national) leadership (Brazil); consistently being engaged within a collective framework (France); emphasis on personal coherence and independent agency (Jordan) and salience of diplomatic non-agentive rhetorical strategies (USA). Furthermore, responsibility was also shown in how the speakers handled certain topics in their presentations. Omitting issues like climate change (USA) in introductions at the GA plenaries in 2006–2015 potentially gives indications of how important the topic is on a nation's official agenda. The United States, having

expressed its reluctance to commit to international agreements on climate change in general, eventually announced its withdrawal from the Paris Agreement on climate change in 2017.

The results from Chapter 10 indicate how national leaders of member states in the European Union, namely Britain, Finland and France, positioned themselves to express European coherence in their speeches, and gave implicit indication of their future actions in regard to the EU. During the critical years 2004–2005 in the European Union, the biggest political undertaking of the time, the member states had differing expectations of the European integration. The choices of pronouns indicating European coherence showed evidence of socio-cultural and religious-political (cf. Tiilikainen 1998) tendencies in how national leaders positioned themselves and their nations in relation to the EU. While the Finnish Prime Minister showed prudent institutional commitment to the EU, the French Prime Minister accentuated the social, political and cultural coherence in the organisation. By contrast, the Prime Minister of Britain positioned himself to show distance, if not exclusion from the European Union. The findings manifest how the choice of even small discursive markers such as pronouns in narratives can construct social reality (cf. Verschueren 1999) and the future social reality, for that matter. Indeed, the distancing of Britain from the EU manifested in the data became evident as Britain voted in 2016 to terminate its membership in the European Union. The results, analogous with findings of later studies concerning pronominal use and indexing the European coherence (e.g. Cramer 2010), underline the impact of deictic devices such as pronouns of inclusion and exclusion in political discourse.

## 11.2 Linguistic diplomacy – What's next?

Public speaking will no doubt maintain its position as a prime avenue for political communication in the future, perhaps in different contexts on virtual arenas, available not only to political leaders, but also to ordinary citizens. Reflecting the belief that social reality is constructed through discourse, this study shows the utmost relevance of investigating international public discourse.

I am well aware of the limitations of this study. First, my focus is on textual characteristics in the genre of public speaking, meant primarily for audio-visual and visual appreciation. The approach has its deficits: it disregards salient paralinguistic

features such as gestures and the use of voice, which significantly influence the impact of a speech. However, most methods and theories developed by scholars of communication focus on written material, even in the sector of public speaking. Lakoff (2016:33) suggests the following for discarding the paralinguistic part:

... as hearers, we are less than fully competent to grasp and interpret any lack of correspondence between the verbal and nonverbal aspects of communication. We may sense a mismatch; but we can't quite identify it, since our (verbal) language – so rich in ways of talking about verbal language – is remarkably poor in ways of discussing the nonverbal. And while we feel that it's proper and normal to comment on someone's verbal utterance ... we don't often say, 'What do you *mean* by that smirk?' We do not, in other words, hold speakers to a high level of responsibility for their para- and extra-linguistic performances.

As regards phenomena such as coherence and responsibility, speakers' prosodic features no doubt influence the illocutionary force of rhetorical choices in institutional political public speaking.

Secondly, I could have taken a more systematic methodological approach in my data-driven analysis. However, my aim was to see the value of different approaches and avoid forcing prevalent theories on my data of modern oratory. In the sensitive genre of public speaking, particularly in international organisations such as the United Nations and the European Union, seemingly insignificant discursive choices may cause misinterpretations destabilizing international relations between speakers, if not societies and nations.

Not restricting data, spanning from the UN to the EU, seemed logical. These multilateral coalitions, dominant in the global political terrain for decades, are currently challenged by internal incoherence. New narratives for the future are needed.

Finally, for reasons already elaborated on in the theoretical section of my study, measuring culture in discourse always has risks. Regardless of how we look at the concept of culture, the many potential pitfalls can distort findings in a cross-cultural investigation.

This study is grounded on ideals set by ancient Greek orators such as integrity and respect for the other. I hope the approach will inspire scholars to do more interdisciplinary research on rhetorical strategies in modern oratory to see how speakers position themselves in their efforts to construct coherence-responsibility in

international fora. It is particularly important for scholars to look beyond micro-level communication modes for macro systems that potentially continue to have an impact on speakers' discursive patterns and modes of communicative behaviour; systems that hold together the social 'niches' (Blommaert 2015) in international societies. This would mean increasing focus on exploring similarities in global communication patterns (cf. Wierzbicka 1997, 2006) and norms, in order to construct common ground also in and via public discourse. In the field of intercultural communication studies new modes of rhetoric will be suggested if our focus of interest in cross-cultural discourse analyses turns from differences to shared norms and values in international discourse. As regards analyses of notions such as coherence-responsibility, such approaches on rhetoric undoubtedly contribute to deeper understanding in intercultural dialogue.

Formal public speeches by contemporary political leaders in international fora are expected to express concepts that establish common ground and sustain stability in international affairs. Such traditional formulaic expressions were manifested in the data, in other words rhetorical strategies sustaining international co-operation and relations across the world. Coherence and international responsibility were typically constructed through rhetorical choices that point to the Aristotelian notions of ethos and pathos.

In political arenas like the United Nations and the European Union the ideals of international co-operation should not only be manifested but also heard. However, in contemporary societies trust in the oratory at international institutions is declining. News of corruption and bribery e.g. at the UN causes the public to question if the reality reflected in politicians' official, diplomatic discourse is reflected in their daily deeds. Audiences in the 21<sup>st</sup> century question to what extent politicians are responsible for their public statements. Another concern is if the voice of smaller nations is heard in organisations such as the European Union and the United Nations. Research in contemporary public discourse in international relations is highly relevant in all areas, especially in the era of alternative facts.

One aspect that has not been dealt with systematically in this study, but which has been mentioned in several contexts is the impact of religion. The impact of religion on political rhetoric was particularly salient in the data. Discursive strategies anchored in

religions were explicitly manifested in the report of the Alliance of Civilizations, as it approached global divisions largely through the perspective of religions (Chapter 8). The impact of religions was salient in the speeches by the delegates of Jordan at the UN General Assembly plenaries (Chapter 9). The argument (Tiilikainen 1998) that a nation's religious history can have an impact on how a member-state positions itself towards the European Union was implicitly manifested in the study in Chapter 10 concerning the EU integration.

Anderson's (2006) argument that nations are imagined communities and Bamberg's (1997, 2012) suggestion of nations being based on narratives particularly underline the significance of language in maintaining the state of affairs in a nation, and also in its international relations. Anderson (*ibid.*) further suggests that nations are formulated around notions of religion and kinship rather than on strong political concepts.

Scholars doing research on the impact of religions in intercultural communication are assumed to evaluate also the implicit historical influence of religions on discourse patterns and on the semantics of potential culture-bound vocabularies prevalent in specific discourse communities. And, not least, scholars in the fields of the humanities and sociology are expected to respect *the sacred* in religions. In the words of Beck (2010: 1) 'the sphere of religion relates to that of sociology like fire to water that puts it out'. The future challenge is to develop suitable interdisciplinary tools for analysing the differing impact of religions on rhetorical strategies in political public discourse.

The present study suggests that academic research and general international politics would benefit from projects aligning resources from intercultural pragmatics, intercultural communication studies and international politics. Such initiatives, applying today's methods of digital humanities and large-scale corpus analyses, could contribute to finding signals of distress in public discourse and develop international coherence in and between societies. International public discourse is expected to promote harmony in our world community. Words of aggression construct conflict. Analyses of discourse are thus prime solutions for dealing with such conflict situations (e.g. Östman 1995). Initiatives such as the International Communication Monitor (Verschueren et al. 2001), an academic research-based conflict-prevention initiative, suggests that systematic linguistic analysis of international public discourse

could contribute considerably to preventing conflicts by distinguishing potential patterns of dominance and inequality in international public discourse.

Public discourse is a pivotal part of the functioning of both the United Nations and the European Union. Investigations of such particular contexts-of-situation by themselves indicate that the research methods needed for the analysis of public speaking are not easily satisfied by mainstream methods in discourse analysis. The overarching theoretical-methodological goal of my study was to show the importance of public speaking analyses, and in so doing, to suggest that the expiry date for traditional cultures in the genre of institutional political public speaking has not passed, not yet.

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## **Appendix I**

### **Themes for the United Nations General Assembly Plenary Sessions**

Session 61. 2006. Implementing a global partnership for development

Session 62. 2007. Responding to climate change

Session 63. 2008. The impact of the global food crisis on poverty and hunger in the world as well as the need to democratize the United Nations

Session 64. 2009. Effective responses to global crises: strengthening multilateralism and dialogue among civilizations for international peace, security and development

Session 65. 2010. Reaffirming the central role of the United Nations in global governance

Session 66. 2011. The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes by peaceful means

Session 67. 2012. Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means

Session 68. 2013. The way forward: a disability-inclusive development agenda towards 2015 and beyond

Session 69. 2014. Delivering on and implementing a Transformative Post-2015 Development Agenda

Session 70. 2015. The United Nations at 70 – A New Commitment to Action

<http://www.un.org/en/ga/>

## **Appendix II**

### **Statements by delegates of the UN member states at the UN General Assembly Plenary sessions 61-70 (Chapter 9)**

#### **Statements by the delegates of Brazil**

61st sess. (2006, 19 Sept.) President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva

62nd sess. (2007, 25 Sept.) President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva

63rd sess. (2008, 23 Sept.) President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva

64th sess. (2009, 23 Sept.) President Luiz Inacio Lula Da Silva

65th sess. (2010, 23 Sept.) Minister for Foreign Affairs Celso Amorim

66th sess. (2011, 21 Sept.) President Dilma Rousseff

67th sess. (2012, 25 Sept.) President Dilma Rousseff

68th sess. (2013, 24. Sept.) President Dilma Rousseff

69th sess. (2014, 24. Sept.) President Dilma Rousseff

70th sess. (2015, 28 Sept.) President Dilma Rousseff

**Statements by the delegates of France**

61st sess. (2006, 19 Sept.) President Jacques Chirac

62nd sess. (2007, 25 Sept.) President Nicolas Sarkozy

63rd sess. (2008, 23 Sept.) President Nicolas Sarkozy

64th sess. (2009, 23 Sept.) President Nicolas Sarkozy

65th sess. (2010, 27 Sept.) Minister for Foreign Affairs Bernard Kouchner

66th sess. (2011, 21 Sept.) President Nicolas Sarkozy

67th sess. (2012, 25 Sept.) President François Hollande

68th sess. (2013, 24 Sept.) President François Hollande

69th sess. (2014, 24 Sept.) President François Hollande

70th sess. (2015, 28 Sept.) President François Hollande

**Statements by the delegates of Jordan**

61st sess. (2006, 19 Sept.) King Abdullah II Bin Al Hussein

62nd sess. (2007, 28 Sept.) Foreign Minister Abdelelah Al-Khatib

63rd sess. (2008, 29 Sept.) Foreign Minister Salaheddin Al-Bashir

64th sess. (2009, 26 Sept.) Foreign Minister Nasser Judeh

65th sess. (2010, 23 Sept.) King Abdullah II Bin Al Hussein

66th sess. (2011, 21 Sept.) King Abdullah II Bin Al Hussein

67th sess. (2012, 25 Sept.) King Abdullah II Bin Al Hussein

68th sess. (2013, 24 Sept.) King Abdullah II Bin Al Hussein

69th sess. (2014, 24 Sept.) King Abdullah II Bin Al Hussein

70th sess. (2015, 28 Sept.) King Abdullah II Bin Al Hussein

### **Statements by the delegates of the United States**

- 61st (2006, 19 Sept.) President George W. Bush
- 62nd (2007, 25 Sept.) President George W. Bush
- 63rd (2008, 23 Sept.) President George W. Bush
- 64th (2009, 23 Sept.) President Barack Obama
- 65th (2010, 23 Sept.) President Barack Obama
- 66th (2011, 21 Sept.) President Barack Obama
- 67th (2012, 25 Sept.) President Barack Obama
- 68th (2013, 24 Sept.) President Barack Obama
- 69th (2014, 24 Sept.) President Barack Obama
- 70th (2015, 28 Sept.) President Barack Obama

### **Appendix III**

#### **Speeches by Prime Ministers of EU Member states (Chapter 10)**

##### Speeches by Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin, France

I Commemorative address to the government and military on the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Rouen, April 17, 2005.

II Address to the President of France and the Senate on the constitutional debate of the EU, April 6, 2005.

III Address to the representatives of French employees in the preparation for the National Day of Solidarity, April 28, 2005.

IV Address to representatives of the Chamber of Commerce, governmental representatives and students on the inauguration of the London branch of ESCP-EAP, the European School of Management, November 30, 2004.

V Address to the participants of a conference on the theme ‘The Adolescence’. June 30, 2004.

VI Address to the presidents of the departments and members at the Economic and Social Council on French current events. June 10, 2004.

VII Address to the President of France and the Chamber of Deputies on the occasion of accepting the leadership of a new government. April 5, 2004.

VIII Addressing press to announce his resignation as the Prime Minister of France, and the resignation of his government. May 31, 2005.

### Speeches by Prime Minister Tony Blair, Britain (the United Kingdom)

I Address to journalists after France's rejection of the proposed constitution for the European Union. May 30, 2005.

II Address to an invited audience of representatives of churches and Christian organizations, to pay tribute to the Faithworks movement. March 22, 2005.

III Address to the survivors of the Holocaust on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps. January 27, 2005.

IV Address to politicians and business leaders at World Economic Forum in Davos on poverty in Africa and on climate change. January 26, 2005.

V Address to the Parliament concerning the European Council meeting on December 16/17. December 20, 2004.

VI Address to audience at the University of Napier, Scotland on the theme of economy. December 3, 2004.

VII Address to the audience of Commission for Africa meeting on challenges of the African continent. October 7, 2004.

VIII Address to the Parliament about the European Council and the NATO summit. June 30, 2004.

### Speeches by Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen, Finland

I Address to commemorate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Finland's membership in the EU. Europe Day May 9, 2005.

II Address to the audience at the inauguration of Tietotalo II at the University of Oulu. April 18, 2005.

III Address to the audience at a seminar of 'The Central Organization of Farmers' Co-operation'. April 13, 2005.

IV Address to the project leaders and members of the project 'Communication in Public Administration 2007', on receiving the final report. April 7, 2005.

V Address to the EU Seminar celebrating Finland's ten-year-membership in the European Union. March 4, 2005.

VI Address to the audience at the opening of 'Tieteen päivät', a seminar on current scientific events. January 12, 2005.

VII 'Martti Ahtisaari lecture' on the European Union, Finland and Russia in a seminar at Jyväskylä University November 30, 2004.

VIII Address at the members of the Parliament on the Report of the Future. November 24, 2004.

IX Address to 'Kaleva Seminar on Security Policy' in Oulu. November 16, 2004.

X Address to seminar ‘Finland in the Global Economy’ Dipoli Centre, Espoo. April 16, 2004.

XI Address to the members of the Parliament on Nordic Dimension and current events in the EU. June 8, 2005.

## **PIC Monographs**

- 1 Pekka Kuusisto, 2000. *Ethnicity in print. Implicit manifestations of the construction of ethnicity in British and Finnish newspapers*
- 2 Anna Solin, 2001. *Tracing texts. Intertextuality in environmental discourse*
- 3 Camilla Wide, 2002. *Perfect in dialogue. Form and functional potential of the vera búinn ad + inf. construction in contemporary Icelandic*
- 4 Diana ben-Aaron, 2005. *Given and news. Media discourse and the construction of community on national days*
- 5 Minna M. Paananen-Porkka, 2007. *Speech rhythm in an interlanguage perspective. Finnish adolescents speaking English*
- 6 Eija Aho, 2010. *Spontaanin puheen prosodinen jaksottelu* [Prosodic chunking in spontaneous speech]
- 7 Maija Stenvall, 2011. *Captured by conventions. On objectivity and factuality in international news agency discourse*
- 8 Niini Vartia-Paukku, 2020. *Public speaking in international fora. Rhetorical strategies, coherence and responsibility in political discourse*