D.S. Mukhortov, E.E. Polikarpova

The concepts friend and foe in 2001–2018 US presidential rhetoric

Calling some nations an enemy and others a friend is an effective manipulative tool with US presidents. It helps them keep the public unaware of the real state of affairs as people are gullible and would trust anything the leader of the nation may say, it enables him to build up the right policy, and, ultimately, secures him power as long as he can cajole people into voting for him. Alliances with other countries and presidents are made and broken due to the political and economic situation in a country. This makes the number of enemies and allies varying from year to year and today's ally may be tomorrow's enemy. This article discusses shifts in the concepts FRIEND and FOE in American presidential rhetoric between 2001 and 2018. The communications under analysis include presidential inaugural addresses, addresses to Congress, UN General Assembly, NATO headquarters, US Senate, Democratic National Convention, Economic Crisis speeches, commencement speeches, press conferences, interviews, and debates. The analysis applies a framework approach originated by Charles Fillmore and elaborated by Russian scholars. It is argued that the friend-foe opposition in American presidential rhetoric is subject to change as presidents may pursue different strategies of self-presentation and self-affirmation, not to mention manipulative tactics designed to promote the USA in the geopolitical arena and keep any country under control.

Keywords: *concept, frame, slot, American presidential rhetoric, concept FRIEND, concept FOE, manipulation, political discourse.*

Когда американские президенты записывают одни страны в друзья, а другие — в недруги, они самым эффективным образом проводят манипуляторные действия с массовым сознанием. Избиратель по своей доверчивости оказывается в неведении о реальном состоянии дел в международных отношениях и тем самым позволяет президенту корректировать политику наиболее удобным для него способом, чтобы в итоге заполучить необходимые голоса на выборах. Дружеские союзы США с другими странами выстраиваются в зависимости от политической или экономической ситуации, поэтому количество друзей и недругов разнится год от года. В настоящей работе проанализирована американская президентская риторика на протяжении последних семнадцати лет (2001–2018) с целью выявления семантических изменений во фреймах концептов FRIEND («ДРУГ») и FOE («ВРАГ»). В результате изучения разножанровых выступлений Дж. Буша-мл., Барака Обамы и Дональда Трампа стало возможным сделать вывод о том, что наполнение концептов в президентском дискурсе зависит от избираемых конкретным президентом стратегий самопрезентации и самоутверждения, а также манипулятивных тактик, направленных на продвижение интересов США на геополитической арене и удержание под контролем любых стран в мире.

Ключевые слова: *концепт, фрейм, слот, американская президентская риторика, концепт ДРУГ, концепт ВРАГ, манипуляция, политический дискурс.*

Introduction

Over the last century, world politics has been determined by superpowers, the USA being one of the biggest. Throughout history Americans have had to fight to become an independent nation, abolish slavery, secure equal rights and pursue the American dream. 9/11 claimed lives of several thousand people and made an indelible imprint on the modern history of the US and the rest of the world. This is when the USA began its war on terror that became a red line in the American presidential rhetoric.

Hostile and friendly are an essential part of political discourse. The image of an enemy becomes a manipulative tool which politicians use to convince the public that there is a common goal in fighting against someone hostile to them, and all for the sake of keeping power. Politicians are constantly seeking allies with other countries, and their choice depends on a country's political and economic situation and its influence in the world. The number of American enemies and allies varies from year to year and today's ally may easily turn into tomorrow's enemy.

This article seeks to show how US presidential rhetoric has shaped concepts FRIEND and FOE over the past two decades. It aims to trace three American Presidents' attitudes towards their allies and foes with the intent to analyze the concepts in terms of form, content and dynamics. It is argued that the enemy-friend opposition is subject to change and serves as a tool for self-presentation and political manipulation [1].

An attempt is made to go over official speeches of George W. Bush, Barack Obama and Donald Trump from 2001 to 2018, including presidential inaugural addresses, addresses to Congress, the UN General Assembly, NATO headquarters, the US Senate, the Democratic National Convention, the Economic Crisis speeches, commencement speeches and press conferences, interviews and debates. The analysis hinges on the framework approach developed by Charles Fillmore [2]. It is designed to systematize the knowledge about the concepts by studying frames made up of slots. Agienko [3. P. 22], among others, suggests a four-stage analysis of the concept, which is accepted in this paper too: exploring the concept's etymology, defining its motivating factors, studying the history of its meaning, and finally, analyzing semantics of its synonyms for a better understanding of the constituent properties.

Concept has a complex and multi-dimensional structure. Besides the conceptual foundations, it has a socio-psycho-cultural part that contains the associations, emotions, evaluations, images and connotations inherent in a national culture. Most definitions of the concept as a semantic unit stress its linguocultural peculiarity, enabling to label its ethnic and national characteristics [4]. As the Russian linguist Stepanov said, concept is somewhat like a clot of culture in the human mind, it is what helps culture come into the human mentality [5].

Bogomolova and Bochkareva [6] claim that there is no concept that can be fully expressed in speech. And the concepts FRIEND and FOE prove it fully. Besides being a product of an individual cognitive process, they are flexible in meaning and they work through concept-making words that have semantics of their own. Barsalou [7], Burenkova and Giliaseva [8] point out that concepts are always open to further clarifications and modifications. The very opportunity to interpret concepts from various angles proves that the number and content of most concepts can be continually changed. People always learn something new about their environment, their society and the world at large, and as the world is constantly changing, human knowledge should have the flexibility to easily adapt to these changes. The process of conceptualization [9], of development and clarification of concepts, is an important cognitive activity that helps to shape a conceptual system in the human mind, especially when it comes to political discourse and presidential rhetoric. Every separate act of conceptualization deals with problem-solving, which involves conclusions, inferential data, and other logical operations [10. P. 74–94].

Theoretically and practically, the article makes a contribution to the study of conceptual determinants of political discourse. Paradigmatically, it pertains to the idea of Prof. Boldyrev that language operates representational, semiotic, and interpretational knowledge and the 'interpretational function of language' [11. P. 5–13] takes an integral, if not the main, part in the overall analytical strategy in concept learning.

Research provides insights into the key concepts FRIEND and FOE, which should be regarded as an essential knowledge in any dealings with the US. Research enables to see changes to American mentality over the recent past. By saying changes we mean that until 1991, the USA had only one official enemy, the USSR, or communism, to put it wider. After the collapse of the Soviet Union there was a shift in the ideological paradigm. And it presumably took about 10 years to think up a new rhetorical strategy for the leader of the nation to stick to.

Dictionaries define 'friend' as a person or a country that you might work with or share an activity, that helps and supports. An enemy is considered to be a person or a country that hates you and wants to do you harm, that opposes you and that you are competing or fighting with. Our hypothesis is that presidential rhetoric extends the borders of the concepts in question, or endows them with some meaningful nuances.

Method and Analysis

An efficient step in research is to study synonyms of the concept-making words 'friend' and 'enemy' as this enables us to discern shades of meaning in either word and later provide a fuller picture of a frame, "a data-structure, a mechanism for representing a stereotyped situation" [12]. Drawing on the Collins English Thesaurus,

the most frequently used synonyms for 'friend' appear to be *companion*, *pal*, *mate*, *supporter*, *ally*, and *associate*. For 'enemy' the closest synonyms are *foe*, *rival*, *opponent*, *the opposition*, *competitor*, *adversary*, and *antagonist*.

Research shows that the closest synonyms for 'friend' in presidential rhetoric appear to be 'ally' and 'partner' (*Now, Israel is a strong ally of the United States. They will not stop being a strong ally of the United States (Obama, 2010), We must work with our friends and partners to establish a new framework that advances Iraq's security and the region's (Obama, 2012)*), which are an indication that US presidents tend to consider amicable countries either as strategic allies or business partners. The most frequent enemy-synonym that came along is 'terrorist', the rest being 'murderer', 'killer', 'foe', 'adversary', and 'betrayer'. This says that one of the major problems in the US is still a war on terror and an enemy is associated with terrorism.

The list of synonyms enables to fill a frame for the concepts FOE and FRIEND with three main slots: 1) a person or a country, 2) it performs certain functions (e.g., help/support or fight/oppose), 3) it possesses some moral and ethical characteristics (e.g., supportive/reliable or hostile/evil).

Concepts in political discourse are biased and contextually-bound. Scrutinizing the rhetoric of George W. Bush, Barack Obama and Donald Trump enables to regard the concepts through the presidents' thinking patterns. The *frame* FRIEND acquires a slot "organization" (e.g., NATO) and a slot "objectives" as the US friends tend to share the same goals that America do. Therefore, the frame "friend" acquires 4 slots:

1) <u>a person, an organization or a country</u> (e.g., the European Union);

2) <u>performs some functions</u> (*America and our friends and allies join with all those who want **peace and security** in the world, and **we** stand together to **win the war against terrorism** (Bush, 2003)*);

3) <u>has certain objectives </u>(*Together with our friends and allies, America will always **seek a world that extends universal rights** (Obama, 2011)*);

4) <u>possesses ethical and moral qualities</u> (*staunch, close friend*).

The **frame "enemy" is more comprehensive** as it comprises 6 slots:

1) <u>a person, a group of people or an organization</u> (like Osama bin Laden, the Taliban regime, ISIS);

2) <u>from a certain region</u> (e.g., *It was **Afghanistan** where Al Qaeda plotted the 9/11 attacks (Obama, 2011)*);

3) <u>performs some functions</u> (*The Taliban regime is not only **repressing** its own people, it is **threatening** people everywhere by **sponsoring** and **sheltering** and **supplying** terrorists (Bush 2001)*);

4) <u>has certain objectives</u> (*The Taliban regime's goal is **remaking the world** — and **imposing its radical beliefs** on people everywhere (Bush 2001)*);

5) <u>possesses ethical and moral qualities</u> (*Rivals are **tough**, they're **tenacious**, and committed to the long term (Trump, 2018)*);

6) <u>practices a religion</u> (*The terrorists are **traitors to their own faith**, trying, in effect, to hijack Islam itself (Bush, 2004)*).

It must be stressed out that the **slots "region"** and **"religion"** are not distinguished in the dictionary definitions but they are actively used by US presidents and serve as an essential part in creating the concept ENEMY.

The representation of the concept FOE is mostly formed by means of the words 'enemy', 'adversary' and 'foe'. Presidents actively make use of lexemes communicating the idea of hostility — *enemy, terrorism/terrorist, terror, extremism/extremist, dictator, adversary, weapon, destruction, murder/murderer, kill/killer, evil, repress, oppress, threat* (e.g., *We condemn the Taliban regime. It is not only **repressing** its own people, it is **threatening** people everywhere by **sponsoring** and **sheltering** and **supplying** terrorists. By **aiding** and **abetting murder**, the Taliban regime is **committing murder** (Bush, 2001)*).

Terrorists get regular features of murderers and cruel dictators destroying lives and instilling fear. It is noteworthy that although the word 'terrorist' was used by all the US presidents in 2001–2018, in Donald Trump's speeches it acquires an additional connotation of a domestic enemy who is operating within the boundaries of America. Donald Trump accentuates the dramatic rise in illegal immigration which has caused more crimes. Therefore, his concept of enemy includes such characteristics as *criminal, illegal immigrant, terrorist.*

Terrorists and *extremists* are common names for hostile countries. They have become labels in US rhetoric because of their frequent use and accusatory connotations. The words *dictator, tyrant, killer, murderer* repeat-

edly emerge in official presidential speeches alongside with evaluative words *ruthless, aggressive, cold-blooded, evil, motivated by evil* and others.

The enemy is predictably viewed in a negative way, it kills and destroys, creates and supplies weapons of mass destruction and threatens to harm the whole world. Nevertheless, there is an impression that George W. Bush and Barack Obama create an amorphic, cruel enemy that looks like a mythological creature that intends to destroy everything and murder everyone. This effect is produced because of the generalizations like *everywhere, the world's sponsor of terror, any nation* (e.g., *Its [the Taliban regime] goal is remaking the world — and imposing its radical beliefs on people **everywhere** (Bush, 2001), Today, Iran remains **the world's primary state sponsor of terror** — pursuing nuclear weapons while depriving its people of the freedom they seek and deserve (Bush. 2005), **Any nation** that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime (Obama 2009))*. On the contrary, Donald Trump does not pretend to save the world, he appears to be less ambitious as he views his mission in protecting his own country and not the whole world. For him, enemies have more precise characteristics, they are not abstract villains but they are people with 'criminal records' who threaten not the whole world but the peaceful citizens of the United States. (*Nearly **180,000 illegal immigrants with criminal records**, ordered deported from our country, are tonight roaming free to threaten peaceful citizens' (Trump, 2017))*.

Presidents tend to describe and assess **ethical and moral principles of the enemy**, for instance: *'Their [terrorists'] leaders are **self-appointed**. They **hate our freedoms** ...' (Bush 2001), 'These enemies **view the entire world as a battlefield**' (Bush 2002), Russia is **on the wrong side of history**' (Obama 2014), Rivals are **tough**, they're **tenacious**, and committed to the long term (Trump 2018) etc.*

The words *self-appointed, on the wrong side of history* exemplify that American presidents consider their enemies to be a small group of evil people who chose the wrong path in life, yet these people are *tough* and *tenacious*, and one has to admit their existence and keep an eye on them. US presidents tend to highlight the difference between the US as a truly democratic nation, the realm of freedom and human rights, and their enemies, which constantly break human rights and threaten the peaceful life on Earth. The conceptual metaphor 'World is a Battlefield' also adds to the characterization of the enemy as evil incarnate, *brutal, ruthless,* and *tyrannical*. The *concept* FREEDOM becomes a banner for American presidents because whenever freedom is breached, they immediately think it their personal business to revive it.

Research has shown that US leaders tend to use syntactic parallelism, antithesis and repetition to draw a line between terrorists and the rest of the world, to oppose American democracy to perverted views of terrorists. See the examples: ***We** value life; **the terrorists**...destroy it. **We** value education; **the terrorists** do not believe women should be educated...**We** value the right to speak our minds; for t**he terrorists** free expression can be grounds for execution. **We** respect people of all faiths…; **they** want to dictate how to think… (Bush, 2001), They **preach with threats**, **instruct with bullets and bombs**, and promise paradise for the murder of the innocent (Bush, 2007), Terrorists **don't worship God**. They **worship death** (Trump, 2017).*

The slot "religion" in US political communication has always been meaningful as it shows the attitude of US presidents towards the values of their enemies. The religion of terrorists is viewed as a *mantle*'or an *excuse for barbarism and death* (*They have perverted and distorted and tried to **claim the mantle of Islam for an excuse for basically barbarism and death (Obama 2016))**. Initially, religion is based on virtues, but terrorists have reversed the very idea of good and bad. They are called 'traitors' (*The terrorists are **traitors to their own faith**, trying, in effect, to hijack Islam itself (Bush, 2004))* because they reject initial religious values and impose radical ones, in their narrow ideology tools for instruction are bombs and rewards for killing. It is noteworthy that US presidents deliberately contrast the pure, innocent world where people preach virtues, pray to God and seek paradise with the world of terrorists who worship death and promise paradise to murderers. US leaders tend to use syntactic parallelism (*preach with threat, instruct with bullets*) and repetition (*worship God, worship death)* and short utterances to draw a thick line between terrorists and the rest of the world.

It can be stressed out that Barack Obama refused to call terrorists 'Islamic terrorists'. Once he claimed that he did not intend to offend decent and innocent people who practice Islam: *What I have been careful about when I describe these issues [terrorist attacks] is to make sure that we do not lump these murderers into*

the billion Muslims that exist around the world, including in this country, who are peaceful, who are responsible, who are...neighbors and friends.

At the Arabic Islamic American Summit 2017 Donald Trump also pointed out that America is not at war with the terrorists' faith, it is a fight *between good and evil*, terrorism is *not a battle between different faiths, different sects, or different civilizations. This is a battle between those who seek to obliterate human life and those who seek to protect it.* It is quite typical of American presidents to be very careful about who they call their foes.

Considering an enemy as an absolute evil, presidents glorify and even sanctify freedom, human rights, freedom of religion, and the war against enemies is regarded as a sacred mission of saving the world from destruction. America and its leaders are considered to be a Messiah who can impose values and secure freedom from terrorists worldwide. America is regarded as a God-blessed country with a mission to keep peace in the world. In their speeches, US presidents continuously emphasize the myth of their mission to gain and maintain peace, which results in a particular vision of the enemy as a disturber of peace and America as a soldier fighting the evil, with its president at the helm. The *concept* ENEMY overlaps with the American myth that is sustained and developed by politicians who work toward certain goals: *America is a **nation with a mission** (Bush, 2001), We are **fighting evil** (Bush, 2003).*

Discussion

The *concept* FRIEND usually serves as an opposition to ENEMY. American presidents have never seen a whole country as an enemy. They have been friendly toward the Muslim world, demonstrating their respect for their traditions, yet they point out that there are some people who are evil and therefore have to be defeated: *The enemy of America is **not our many Muslim friends**; it is **not our many Arab friends**. **Our enemy is a radical network of terrorists**, and every government that supports them (Bush, 2001).*

The concept FRIEND in US presidential speeches is lexically diverse. Friend-related lexemes like *strong/ unalterable/greatest/stalwart ally, true/trusted/genuine/great friend, great/coalition partner, partnership of equals, strong/economic/enduring/strategic/unique partnership* etc. point at the fact that US presidents appreciate support, cooperation and stable partnership in their international relationships and it is expected that friendly countries share the same interests and goals with the US. The concept FRIEND is quite flexible in the US rhetoric.

It appears that friendship for American presidents is a matter of transformation, the choice lies solely with the USA: *Iraq has gone from a **brutal** dictatorship and a **sworn** enemy of America to an Arab **democracy** at the heart of the Middle East and a **friend** of the United States (Bush, 2009), We have liberated captive nations, **transformed former enemies into the best of friends**, and lifted entire regions of the planet from poverty to prosperity (Trump, 2017).* The superlative form 'best friend' shows that American presidents tend to go to extremes while talking about enemies or friends, and therefore, the position of 'friend' looks rather unstable and unsteady. This is to suggest that there is one step from hatred to love. And if a country is ready to do as told, it can become a friend.

The purpose of friendly countries is usually the same as the USA's; as long as you are in line with America's interests, you can be called a friend. Presidents use the *concept* FRIEND to refer to both countries and people, unlike the *concept* ENEMY where presidents refer to some people or organizations (e.g., *Saddam Hussein, ISIS*), and rarely to a country as a whole.

These are two striking examples for the slot 'objectives': *Together with our friends and allies, America will always **seek a world that extends universal rights** (Obama, 2011), We must work with all of our allies who share our goal of **destroying ISIS** and **stamping out Islamic terror** (Trump, 2017).*

The aims of 'extending universal rights', 'destroying ISIS', 'stamping out Islamic terror' are set with a global reach. Presidents use words 'together' and 'we' to show their readiness to participate in the common cause. The US rigorously protects its own interests and the interests of other countries, especially when they are viewed as allies.

Besides, the US presidents tend to distinguish between partners or allies and friends. Countries should first prove to be reliable allies and only then can become friends, for instance: *Together with **friends and allies***

*from Europe to Asia, and Africa to Latin America, we will demonstrate that the forces of terror cannot stop the momentum of freedom (Bush, 2002), America and our **friends and allies** join with all those who want peace and security in the world, and we stand together to win the war against terrorism (Bush, 2003), Together with our **friends and allies**, America will always seek a world that extends universal rights (Obama, 2011).*

It is noteworthy that the US presidents appreciate their friends as long as they are under their political and economic control. Hence, the image of a friend or an enemy in presidential discourse has a **semiotic function**. It gives countries some social roles, which in fact may serve to limit their independence.

Nevertheless, US presidents do not pretend to show their dominance over other countries. The slot 'a person or a country with certain ethical and moral principles' is filled with words and phrases like *mutual interest, mutual respect, support, cooperation* because both sides should benefit from friendship with the USA, like in the example: *If we are looking at the region as a whole and communicating a message to the Arab world and the Muslim world, that we are ready to initiate a new partnership based on **mutual respect** and **mutual interest**, then I think that we can make significant progress (Obama, 2009).*

Conclusion

To conclude, George W. Bush, Barack Obama and Donald Trump in their public speeches tend to pay particular attention to the representation of an 'enemy-friend' opposition. Research into presidential discourses between 2001 and 2018 has revealed the kind of moods and ambitions America has had over a long period. The concepts FRIEND and FOE help presidents manipulate mass consciousness and sustain the image of America as a country that sticks to democratic values and preserve them all over the world. Given that frames are the elements of social memory that comprise potentially possible and typical information associated with a concept within a particular culture and a frame structure contains general information about a stereotyped situation [13], one cannot but wonder if American stereotypical thinking is ever going to change. Demiankov [14. P. 32–47] points out that cultural diffusion prompts drastic changes to the process of shaping vernacular concepts and cognitive science is yet to describe and explain cognitive mechanisms in the development of civilizational, culture-free, ideas of the inner world of man. In this regard, a question arises as to whether American presidential rhetoric in particular or presidential rhetoric in general may impose a new vision of the concepts FRIEND and FOE.

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Мухортов Денис Сергеевич,
кандидат филологических наук,
доцент кафедры английского языкознания
Московский государственный университет имени М.В. Ломоносова

Mukhortov Denis S.,
Candidate of Philology, Associate Professor
of the English Linguistics Department
Lomonosov Moscow State University

e-mail: dennismoukhortov@mail.ru

Поликарпова Елена Евгеньевна,
магистрант кафедры английского языкознания
Московский государственный университет имени М.В. Ломоносова

Polikarpova Elena E.,
Undergraduate Student
of the English Linguistics Department
Lomonosov Moscow State University

e-mail: dennismoukhortov@mail.ru