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Discourse, Knowledge and Ideology: Reformulating Old Questions

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Introduction

In this paper I would like to reformulate a number of old questions and make some new proposals about the relationships between discourse, knowledge and ideology. This is obviously a vast field, so that in a single paper we can only touch upon a few issues. One of these issues is the question whether all our knowledge is ideological, as is often assumed, also in critical discourse analysis. Another issue is how ideology and knowledge are managed in discourse production and comprehension.

The present discussion takes place within my earlier research on ideology (Van Dijk, 1998), and on the basis of my current work on knowledge and its relation to discourse (e.g., Van Dijk, 2001).

More traditional approaches to ideology negatively define it in terms of misguided beliefs, false consciousness or similarly vague notions. In more recent work, for instance in political science or social psychology, ideologies are simply taken to be belief systems.

Although integrating some aspects of these earlier approaches, I have proposed to develop a new, multidisciplinary theory of ideology basically defined in terms of the foundation of the shared social representations of social groups. For instance, a racist ideology could be the basis of the attitudes people share about immigration, integration or foreigners on the labor market. Such ideologies are not arbitrary collections of social beliefs, but specific group schemata, organized by a number of categories that represent the identity, the social structure and position of the group, such as ‘our’ appearance, activities, aims, norms, group relations and resources.

Many questions are still unresolved in this tentative theoretical framework, such as the precise relations between social group structures and the mental organization of ideologies: Indeed, what groups typically develop ideologies and which do not?

One fundamental problem is the relation between ideologies and other social representations shared by groups and their members. Thus, I just suggested that ideologies are typically the basis of social attitudes. We may for instance have progressive, conservative, feminist or anti-feminist opinions about, for instance, abortion, divorce and many gender relations. That is, attitudes are (also) organized in terms of their underlying ideologies. Indeed,
it is often through their (expressed) attitudes about social issues that we recognize a racist or an antiracist person when we meet one.

Since socially shared knowledge is also a form of social representation, it would follow that if ideologies are the basis of social representations, also our knowledge is ideologically biased. This is indeed often the case, and much modern work on ideology assumes just that, namely that our socially shared knowledge cannot possibly ‘escape’ its ideological boundedness.

Although this thesis may well be (roughly) true for some kinds of knowledge and groups, I think it is too strong, too vague and too general, and should be rejected. In other words, in my theoretical framework it would simply be inconsistent to assume that all knowledge is ideological. Rather, I propose that each culture has a Common Ground of generally shared, undisputed, and hence un-ideological or pre-ideological knowledge.

Such cultural knowledge may well be found ‘ideologically biased’ by other cultures, by people of the same culture in another period, or indeed by a critical analyst. The crucial criterion, however, is that within the group itself there is consensus about the fact that their shared Common Ground knowledge is ‘true’, and not an ideological fiction. This may appear for instance in the fact that such knowledge is generally presupposed in such a culture, also among groups that are ideological opponents.

Notice that I do not propose to re-establish the old opposition between knowledge and ideology, where knowledge is simply true belief, or the sociological ‘facts’, and ideology false belief, as is the case in most classical disputes, both Marxist and anti-Marxist. We shall see that group knowledge may well be ideological, but that there must be cultural knowledge that is generally shared and pre-ideological in a culture.

Knowledge

Of course, the argument about the (non-)ideological nature of knowledge hinges not only on a sound theory of ideology, but also on a theory of knowledge. We here enter a vast area of scholarly speculation, for instance in epistemology, and a host of theory fragments, for instance in cognitive science and the social sciences. Again, I can only highlight a few points of an old debate, ignoring huge areas of knowledge studies.

The classical definition of knowledge in epistemology is ‘justified true beliefs’, although in the last decades this definition has met with all kinds of objections, which however do no fundamentally affect the overall approach. In my view, this definition is at least partly misguided. For instance, it embodies the notion of ‘truth’, which I think is a notion that only applies to statements or assertions, under specific pragmatic conditions, and not to thoughts or beliefs. At most, beliefs are ‘about’ something.
Cutting a complex discussion short, I shall follow a less philosophical route, and define knowledge rather in pragmatic terms of beliefs and knowledge criteria that are socially shared. Thus, if I say that Mary ‘knows’ that Peter is ill, or that the moon is a planet of the earth, this implies first of all that according to me Mary believes something that I also believe about Peter or the moon. Even if Mary says that she knows that Peter is ill, but I believe she is only guessing, and/or I know for a fact that Peter is not ill, I would not describe Mary’s beliefs as knowledge, but as (mere) belief. And when I describe my own beliefs as knowledge, e.g., explicitly as ‘I know that \( p \)’, or simply by asserting \( p \), this implies that I think that I satisfy the culturally relevant criteria that allow me to describe or think of my belief as knowledge, for instance, because I myself feel, observe, conclude or have reliable information that \( p \) is the case.

This very succinct account, which ignores many complications that are less relevant for this paper, shows that our everyday concept of knowledge involves the following features:

1. The cognitive nature of knowledge: Knowledge is a kind of belief.
2. The social nature of knowledge: Knowledge is belief that satisfies cultural criteria of evaluation.
3. The relativity of knowledge: Knowledge is socially or culturally relative.
4. The subjectivity of knowledge (or knowledge attribution): Knowledge is relative to the knowledge of the person(s) who describes or attributes such knowledge to others.

In this brief characterization we see that an appropriate theory of knowledge involves cognitive, social and discursive dimensions. The cognitive dimension, namely that knowledge is some kind of belief is virtually undisputed. The social dimension is implicit in the well-known condition that knowledge only counts as such when it is ‘justified’ – so as to rule out as knowledge someone’s beliefs that happen to correspond to the facts but that are the result of lucky guessing but not founded on culturally accepted criteria of ‘verification’.

If ‘truth’ is defined in such a more social way, e.g., in terms of agreement, sharing or social criteria, then there is no problem to use that notion. However, we do not accept the objectivist or universalist conception of truth as something that applies to beliefs (or indeed statements) in an absolute, socially context-free way. In the same way as knowledge is bounded to knowing people, we assume that ‘truth’ is related to people who assign truth to beliefs or statements, and not an abstract property of statements or propositions, as is the case in logic and much of epistemology.

The discursive dimension is relevant in the sense that in everyday or specialized discourse, beliefs are only actually described as ‘knowledge’ under specific conditions, such as agreement between the speaker and the knower. Indeed, notice that if such agreement does not exist, many
languages mark that difference, as in the following examples with *that* and *whether*, respectively:

(1a) Mary knows that John is ill.
(1b) Mary knows whether John is ill.

In (1a) both speaker and Mary know that John is ill, but in (1b) Mary’s knowledge is not shared by the speaker. And as a recipient we are unable to infer from (1b) whether or not John is actually ill. Below, we shall come back to several other ways knowledge is related to discourse, but we need to emphasize already at this point that knowledge is closely linked to socially shared beliefs.

**The cognitive dimension of knowledge**

After these brief and more general remarks on knowledge, we obviously need to spell out the various theory components in some more detail. If knowledge is a kind of belief, and beliefs are mental phenomena of some kind (in this paper we ignore the neurological basis of these phenomena), that knowledge also needs to be analyzed in terms of some mental structure, such as representations, networks, etc.

Despite much research in cognitive psychology and Artificial Intelligence, and today more generally in cognitive science, about knowledge and its mental structures and processes, it is still not quite clear what actually counts as knowledge in psychology or what not. In the psychology of discourse processing, the vague notion of ‘knowledge of the world’ is being used, maybe with some remarks on their representation as some kind of script, frame or similar structure, but there is no strict distinction between knowledge and belief. Indeed, this distinction is, as we have seen, not merely cognitive, but especially also social: knowledge is belief that is accepted to be about events that are the case according to the social criteria of a culture.

What we do not know exactly, however, is what beliefs are, cognitively speaking. We might simply say that they are mental representations of states of affairs – things or people having some property or relationship – but such a definition introduces perhaps more problems than it resolves. Both cognitively and philosophically important, however, is the fact that beliefs are *about* something – or ‘intentional’, in the philosophical sense of the term. Someone who believes that *p* thinks that what *p* is about, say its referent, is (possibly) the case. In everyday discourse this usually means that someone believes things about what is called the ‘real world’, but in many situations, such as religious beliefs, or beliefs about fictional or future worlds, we also admit that beliefs need not be about the real world. An erroneous belief in that
case is merely a representation of a state of affairs that does not exist in the world, and that hence is only mentally ‘real’–for-the-believer.

These reflections at the borderline of philosophy and cognitive psychology seem to suggest that we might need an even more fundamental concept, namely that of a thought, such that beliefs are some kind of thought, namely thoughts about some real or fictitious state of affairs. That is, we may think virtually anything, but do not always actually believe them to correspond to reality or some fictitious ‘world’. Thus, we may simply entertain thoughts such as ‘that a/the cow is flying’ or ‘my being transparent’, without actually believing them, i.e., without relating them to facts in the real world – except of course to myself as thinker. I shall not further develop these ideas here, but merely stress that the very notion of belief might itself need further cognitive foundation.

More relevant for the topic of this paper, however, is another matter, namely, that of the diversity of knowledge. The commonsense notion of ‘knowledge of the world’ covers various kinds of knowledge. By way of summary, we propose for instance the following properties of different types of knowledge, namely

5. Kind: Knowing that (representation) vs. knowing how (procedures)
6. Social scope: Personal, interpersonal, social (group), cultural.
7. Referent level: Specific/particular, general events/states.
8. Ontology: Real, concrete, abstract, fictitious, historical, future, etc. events.
9. Strength: Being absolutely sure vs. being more or less sure.

These type criteria can be combined into a large variety of types of knowledge, each with its own type of representation. Thus, we first meet the familiar distinction between procedural (knowing how) and ‘declarative’ (representational) knowledge. And then among the representational types of knowledge we may include knowledge about personal events that are typically associated with episodic (personal) memory of personal experiences, whereas interpersonal knowledge is characteristic of interaction, social knowledge shared by a group and cultural knowledge by all competent members of a culture, the latter types associated with social memory.

Although some of these distinctions have been made, for cognitive or social reasons, it is obvious that they are not sufficient. Much sociocultural knowledge is general or abstract (as is our knowledge about groups or social events such as eating in restaurants), but we also socially share knowledge about specific events, such as the S11 attacks or the Holocaust. And we may know about actual events or event types in what we take to be the ‘real’ world, but also about what happened in a novel or movie, what will happen soon, or about abstract linguistic or
mathematical facts, thus anchoring the ‘facts’ we know in a rich ontology of different worlds, situations or other realms we may think about.

Finally, it makes sense to differentiate knowledge by its strength. We generally distinguish between knowledge and (mere) beliefs, and we might of course call beliefs the kinds of knowledge we are not absolutely sure of, but both in everyday situations and in scientific interaction and discourse, we usually have a less strict concept of knowledge. Many people may know that Amsterdam is the capital of the Netherlands, but few would bet their head on that, thinking that maybe it is The Hague after all…

This typology is obviously not merely an epistemological exercise, but also cognitively relevant. We have seen that some distinctions may involve different kinds of long term memory, such as episodic vs. semantic (or rather social) memory. Events about concrete events such as the S11 attacks have the event structure of mental models, but general knowledge about attacks are rather script-like, and lack the specifics of events (time, place, actors, etc.).

Strength of belief is probably related to the complex process of reasoning, inferences and the network of relationships tying knowledge items with more or less strict knowledge criteria. Thus, I am generally surer of what I have actually seen myself, than what I know from (even a reliable) source, more confident of beliefs I share with others than what I only believe myself, and rely more on what has proved to be the case many times than what only happened once, etc. Thus, we have a very complex, culturally shared, implicit ‘theory’ of what things or events are more or less surely the case for us in our everyday lives. Scholarship has developed its own methodological criteria to do the same.

Finally, this knowledge typology is also rooted in discourse and interaction. That is, the various kinds of knowledge are differently associated to implications and presuppositions in text and context. Thus, personal knowledge is in principle not presupposed in any discourse, but needs to be asserted when relevant. Interpersonal knowledge may be presupposed in conversation, but not in public discourse. Group knowledge only provides the presuppositions for discourse among group members, and needs to be socially acquired so that it cannot be presupposed in didactic situations or intergroup communication. Cultural knowledge also needs to be acquired, but once acquired it is presupposed in all discourses by all competent members. It only may need to be made explicit in intercultural encounters – unless it is universal knowledge of some kind. In other words, there is a complex pragmatic-semantic system in which various kinds of knowledge of speech participants control the way information remains implicit or is explicitly formulated, is presupposed, reminded, recalled or asserted.

Similar remarks may be made for the discursive correlates of the other types of knowledge. General knowledge may be expressed in generics, whereas specific knowledge may require definite expressions, and unspecific knowledge indefinite expressions. Depending on the
language, we may similarly have a rich variation of the expressions that signal the degree of reality or confidence of our knowledge. Counterfactual statements, modal expressions, and other markers may signal whether or not our statements should be interpreted in the real or in other situations or worlds. Adverbs as well as modal expressions may finally signal how sure we are of the things we more or less firmly believe in. The same is true at the level of discourse organization, where news, stories, histories, theories, predictions, etc. both structurally and semantically are associated with different kinds of states of affairs (past vs. future, abstract vs. concrete, etc.).

In sum, the many kinds of knowledge structures we have and make use of in discourse production may control many of the semantic and other properties of discourse. Since such knowledge not only is relevant for the speaker but also for the recipient and the shared knowledge (also about each others’ knowledge) of the speech participants, we need a complex mental model of the ‘knowledge situation’ of the communicative event, that is, a context model. That is, the interface between the various knowledge structures of the mind and the actual processing of semantic and other properties of the discourse is managed by a special K-device in our context model of the communicative event. We have only begun to understand some of the complicated work such a device needs to do so that we can speak, write, read and listen adequately in social situations in which many types of knowledge are strategically (made) relevant.

**Discourse and ideology**

In the discussion above about different kinds of knowledge, we already have encountered various elements that border on a debate about the difference between knowledge and ideology. Indeed, the classical distinction between knowledge (epistêmè) and belief (doxa) is closely related to that between knowledge and ideology. This debate on the difference between knowledge and ideology has plagued the social sciences for nearly two centuries since Destutt de Tracy invented the notion of ‘idéologie’ as the science of ideas. Until today, also in Critical Discourse Analysis, we find discussions about whether or not there is ‘objective’ knowledge, or merely social, intersubjective knowledge, and in what respect such knowledges are merely a social construct or ‘true’ about the ‘facts’.

I shall ignore the long history of this debate here and merely examine the relations between ideology and knowledge more closely in the light of my current conceptions of these notions, as well as in relation to a theory of discourse.

We have seen above that ideologies are by definition social, and shared by the members of a group. We have also assumed that they are general, abstract and fundamental, and organize other forms or social representations, such as attitudes. They may involve abstract group
categories, such as identity and group relations, but also collective aims, norms and values. For this reason they often define what is good or bad, right or wrong, but ideologies also control our beliefs about the world, as is the case for religious or scientific ideologies.

In other words, ideologies are pretty close to what we have called socially shared group knowledge above, such as the specific knowledge shared by students, linguists, feminists, stamp collectors or the citizens of Barcelona.

The next question which we should then ask is whether or not group ideologies and group knowledge are simply one and the same thing, or whether it makes sense, at least in a theory of discourse, to make a clear distinction, for instance because they differently affect discourse structures and production strategies.

In my current framework of thinking, it makes sense to distinguish between the ideology of a group, on the one hand, and the other social representations of a group, including their knowledge, on the other. As explained above, ideologies are more fundamental, and at the basis of social group representations such as knowledge and attitudes. This also means that such social representations of a group are necessarily ideologically biased.

This is obvious for such social representations as attitudes, e.g., about immigration, abortion, divorce, the free market, and a host of other attitudes. But what about (specific) group knowledge? I think that such an ideological bias is indeed the case: What (anti)racists know about immigration, feminists about gender, doctors about illnesses, and so on, is indeed knowledge that is in many ways organized according to the ideological parameters of the group, including its aims, interests, etc. That is, group members tend to interpret and represent reality in accordance with what is in the best interests of their group. Of course, for personal reasons, and given different personal mental models and context models, individual group members may of course ‘deviate’ from such a dominant form of social representation.

Note that such biased group knowledge may well be deemed to be mere beliefs or opinions by members of other groups. The criterion we have established for knowledge however is whether beliefs are deemed to represent existing states of affairs by the criteria of epistemic community. In other words, both in their perceptions, interactions or discourses, group members deal with such beliefs as corresponding to the ‘facts’. They presuppose such beliefs in intragroup discourse.

Note though that this restricted form of the hypothesis about the ideological basis of group knowledge does not mean that all knowledge is ideologically biased, as is often assumed. I hold that beyond the group there is knowledge that is not ideological, but widely shared and presupposed in the whole culture. It is this general, cultural Common Ground that is the basis of the whole culture. Without it, people of different groups and with different ideologies would be unable to cooperate or to communicate. Such knowledge is thus, pre-ideological, at least
within a specific period. Of course, this may change historically: What once was consensual ideological knowledge of a culture may become mere belief later (as is the case for instance with many mythical or religious beliefs), and vice versa, for instance when scientific beliefs of a small group of scholars may become accepted as general knowledge later.

We conclude that the question about the ideological nature of knowledge should therefore be resolved in this way: Some knowledge, especially of groups, may be ideologically biased, and yet not be called ideological beliefs by the group itself. On the other hand, in a broader context we must assume general knowledge that is not ideologically biased, at least not within the culture itself. Without such general Common Ground, interaction and discourse both within and between different groups would be impossible. Trivially, in discourse, language users of different social groups need to share at least some knowledge so as to be able to understand each other. Whether later or from a different perspective such Common Ground knowledge of a culture is deemed to be mere ideological belief does not make it less knowledge within the culture itself.

In other words, the knowledge is inherently tied to the epistemic community in which it is defined as such. Does this open the way for general relativism? No, this is a definition of what should be called relative relativism. Indeed, a consequent form of relativism also makes relativism relative. That is, knowledge may or may not be relative to an epistemic community, and be defined as mere beliefs by other epistemic communities, and in that sense it is relative, as it should be. On the other hand, within the epistemic community, knowledge is accepted as reliable belief, as it should be, so that interaction and communication are possible. The epistemic conflicts about knowledge and belief or opinion thus only exist across group and culture boundaries.

**Discourse, knowledge and ideology**

It is within this general theoretical framework that we need to explore in more detail the relations between discourse, knowledge and ideology. We know that knowledge is fundamental for the production and comprehension of discourse. We also have assumed that at least for some aspects of group knowledge such knowledge may be ideologically biased, and this should also be observable in discourse. On the other hand, for the kinds of general, cultural knowledge that is *not* ideological, this should also be observable, for instance in the semantic structures of presuppositions, implications, and other aspects of meaning that are part of the interpretation but not, as such, expressed in discourse.

Let us consider these relationships more carefully by examining an Op-Ed article by Charles Krauthammer, published in the *Washington Post* on September 12, 2001, the day after the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon. Allowing for emotional
outburst after such a horrendous act, also on the Op-Ed pages of a serious newspaper, this article explicitly and openly calls for war. That the beliefs expressed in this article are not mainly the extremist views of a conservative U.S. columnists, but integral part of a dominant ideology that would soon be transformed into concrete policy, may be obvious from the fact that soon after the U.S.A. were going to war in Afghanistan.

The aim of my analysis is to disentangle some of the complex relationships between discourse, knowledge and ideology, and to show in some detail how the knowledge structures involved in the production of this text are partly controlled by underlying group ideologies. Since a full analysis of the relevant semantic and cognitive structures of this text would clearly beyond the boundaries of a single paper, we’ll select some crucial paragraphs (for the full text, see the Appendix). The analysis will proceed paragraph by paragraph, so as to maintain the thematic unity of each fragment. In the analysis, expressions (words, phrases, sentences, etc.) will be printed as italics or in indented cited text fragments in a different type face, and meanings or concepts between single quotes.

To War, Not to Court

by Charles Krauthammer
Wednesday, September 12, 2001; Page A29

This is not crime. This is war. One of the reasons there are terrorists out there capable and audacious enough to carry out the deadliest attack on the United States in its history is that, while they have declared war on us, we have in the past responded (with the exception of a few useless cruise missile attacks on empty tents in the desert) by issuing subpoenas.

Op-Ed articles in most of the Western press are by definition personal opinion texts about recent events. So is this article, and so is its overall conclusion expressed in its headline, enacting the global speech act of a recommendation to go to war rather than to go to court. It may be presupposed that virtually all readers of the WP that day know and expect that many opinion and news articles on September 12, 2001 will be about the terrorist attacks of the previous day. This is the kind of presupposed knowledge we have called public knowledge about specific events. And given the seriousness of the events (defined in terms of its consequences, such as the number of deaths and the ensuing war) and the diffusion of the information about them, it is also the kind of event that defines historical knowledge. That is, knowledge about the event will be generally presupposed within in the discourses of the same culture, and probably across many cultures. More specifically, editorials and opinion articles presuppose at least partly knowledge about events they are about, and when not, the relevant events will be summarized in the beginning of the opinion article.
In this case, we see that this knowledge is also part of the fragment of the context models shared by the author and the public, as is obvious from the extraordinary use of deictic expression *this* beginning the first sentence of the text: In this case, not even a definite description (such as ‘yesterday’s attacks’ or a brief summary of the events) is necessary.

The semantic negation expressed in the sentence *This is not crime* enacts a pragmatic denial presupposing that someone (whose opinion matters and is worth commenting about) has described the S11 attacks as a crime. That is, Krauthammer expresses such knowledge, and thus indirectly states – or reminds the knowing readers – that someone has actually made such a statement. Note that in this case, the knowledge about a specific event is knowledge about an opinion (or about a specific previous discourse expressing such an opinion), thus establishing the usual intertextual relationship between opinion articles and other public discourse.

Besides these specific knowledge items, about specific previous events and previous discourses about such events, the use of the denial also presupposes general, sociocultural knowledge, about crime, more specifically about mass murder, terrorism, and related crimes.

At this point, we already enter the cognitive, social and discursive realm where knowledge, opinion and ideologies overlap. Indeed, is the categorization of an act of (mass) murder as a ‘crime’ an expression of our knowledge of crime, or of our ideologically founded attitudes about what counts as a crime or not?

As is obvious by the response to his own rhetorical question in the second sentence, for Krauthammer, the denomination of the attacks as a ‘mere’ crime is inadequate. Choosing the alternative ‘war’ as the adequate label, the author presupposes that by his criteria the properties of this act of violence are of another order, namely that of warfare. Obviously, given the prominence of these concepts both in the headline and in the first, thematic, sentences, both for the author and the readers, the first knowledge domains activated for this article are those of crime and war.

Communicative knowledge about opinion articles of the readers generate in that case the expectation that the author will henceforth argue for his standpoint, as expressed in the second sentence. Note that the same context model activates the general cultural knowledge that the *Washington Post* is a conservative U.S. newspaper, and national group knowledge that Charles Krauthammer is one of its (conservative) writers. Applied to his actual expressions and opinions, both his denial and his main standpoint can be found to be consistent with the ideological background of the newspaper and its writers.

Thus, by rhetorically emphasizing the seriousness of the event by declaring it an act of war, the author also focuses on the main distinctive feature between crime and war, namely that a war is an act of aggression between states, or an act of aggression against a nation. Indeed, the terrorist attack against the government building in Oklahoma a few years earlier would not
have been declared an act of war, although initially some attempts were made to link it to foreign terrorists, in particular Arabs or Muslim fundamentalists. In the case of the WTC attacks, there is no evidence as yet about a foreign attack, so the author is merely speculating, as we shall see in more detail below.

Our point is merely to show that the lexicalization (as war) of his definition of the situation as represented by his mental model of the attacks is presented as a re-categorization of the attacks, given his own knowledge of the concepts of crime and war. However, that such a re-categorization is not merely knowledge-based but also ideological, maybe concluded from the fact that attacks allegedly perpetrated by foreign terrorists are called ‘war’ and those of domestic terrorists a ‘crime’. This means that the attacks are not what they may seem, namely the destruction of the WTC or the Pentagon, but an attack on “America”. And it is this definition of the situation that is rooted in a nationalist ideology.

Let us consider the next sentence. This sentence provides an explanation (‘reasons’) of another fact presupposed by the author, namely that there are terrorists out there, a presupposition undoubtedly shared by most readers of the WP: General knowledge about terrorist attacks (murder of civilians) implies that since the attack on the WTC has the properties of a terrorist attack, the perpetrators must be terrorist. There is little controversial about this within the ideological knowledge domain of the authors and most of his readers, but it is worth observing that men who choose to die for a cause by others may be described as heroes. That is, even mere lexicalization is not just an expression of conceptualization based on knowledge, but more profoundly controlled by the ideologies that underlie such group or national knowledge on the one hand, and the ideologically controlled interpretation of the event, on the other hand.

The rest of the sentence expresses the shared presupposed knowledge about the events (that the terrorists must have been very capable and audacious, that it was the deadliest attack on the USA ever, etc.). Maybe such information has been given before, and in this case this fragment would be intertextual, maybe it is an evaluation of the author that is generally shared while easily deducible from the nature of the attacks. In other words, the widely shared mental models of the attacks undoubtedly feature the relevant inferences from general sociocultural knowledge that if several airplanes can be hijacked at the same time, flown to their targets, etc. that this requires planning, organization and audacity. Relevant for my discussion of this observation is that not only the boundaries between knowledge and ideologies are fuzzy, but also those between presupposed and asserted information. Structurally the author presupposes these properties of the terrorists, but at the same time he seems to indirectly argue his case by giving his own opinion about the capacity and audacity of the terrorists. Finally, the expression the deadliest attack on the United States presupposes (historical) knowledge about previous
attacks, and their victims, an item of knowledge that is public, but probably intertextual, having been used by experts (politicians, journalists or historians) before. This is not the kind of sociocultural knowledge that is widely shared in the whole culture or even the nation. In this article, it may thus function as an intertextually based reminder of such historical knowledge.

Presupposed in this sentence is that the terrorists have declared war on ‘us’, a presupposition that might be inferable from the attack, but only under its description as an act of war. Again, we see that what is suggested as being shared knowledge about terrorists and their acts, in fact is an indirect assertion of an ideologically based proposition. This is one of the most pervasive properties of the manipulative use of presuppositions.

It is only then that the author arrives at his main clause and asserted statement, namely that we have done no more than issue subpoenas as a reaction to such acts of war – although he inserts a concessive disclaimer about cruise missiles, immediately ruled out as serious, by the derisive addition that the missiles were limited to a few tents – thereby implying that the USA never responded with full scale war. Obviously, just this brief reference to tents presupposes knowledge about tents, about the Middle East, and perhaps some knowledge about Bedouins. Again, such knowledge is ideologically tainted of course, because it assumes that Arabs usually live in tents. Again, the vast knowledge domains of law and war are applied in order to be able to produce and understand this part of the sentence. The rhetorical euphemism ‘subpoenas’ is intended to emphasize how little the USA has done to fight terrorism.

Of course, those readers who have some more historical knowledge than that presupposed here, might wonder about the Gulf War, the continued bombing of Iraq, the bomb attack against Libya, ordered by Reagan, the bomb attack against a pharmaceutical plant in Sudan, and so on; all U.S. actions hardly targeting mere tents. That is, in order to understand this text, readers need vast amounts of different kinds of knowledge, including historical knowledge about U.S. foreign policy. On the other hand, too much of such knowledge might is counterproductive, at least from the perspective of the authors, while it may produce inferences that are inconsistent with what it stated or implied by the author.

The second paragraph begins with a reference to Colin Powell, whose function would usually be presupposed, but is added here for those who might not know. It does help to know though that Colin Powell is generally seen as been a ‘moderate’ in U.S. international affairs, and more open to the opinions of other countries than some of Washington’s hardliners, both in the White House, in the government as well as in the media, as is the case for Mr. Krauthammer. This would explain the latter’s belligerent critique of Powell, and his emphasis on war instead of justice.

The rest of the sentence again presupposes historical knowledge (about the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor). Since this historical reference has been repeatedly used in the comments on
S11, it should be activated in the minds of the readers, so that no reminding seems necessary here. It needs no further explanation that this ‘historical knowledge’ is itself hardly free of nationalist ideological aspects. Like the present attack, it was an attack on Us. The same is true for the historical reference to Roosevelt, which triggers the historical knowledge or the inference that he was the president at that time. The rest of the sentence then merely can draw the argumentative comparison with the current case, in which Powell speaks about bringing to justice, and Roosevelt did not, and instead pledged to go to war. Undoubtedly, Mr. Krauthammer will have been pleased to know that the current U.S. president, Georges W. Bush, did just like his predecessor and also went to war instead of bringing the terrorists to justice or use non-violent means to stop their actions.

The third paragraphs continues the main argument, namely that only war can stop foreign combatants, thus denying the status of ‘mere criminals’ to the attackers. The metaphorical expression ‘rain destruction’ goes beyond conceptualizing the notion of destroying, and knowledge of warfare and airplanes suggests a more specific interpretation in terms of ‘bombing’.

A surprising turn of argument is provided when the author claims that war was already declared on the USA long ago. Even those readers who have some historical knowledge might wonder who did declare war on the USA, so that to legitimate going to war now. The next paragraphs make clear that it is terrorism, and especially fundamentalist Islam, that has declared war on the United States, which of course is a hyperbolic manner of speaking – part of the usually rhetorical strategy of emphasizing the opponents bad things. Note also the well-known topos that S11 is or should be a turning point, generally repeated in most political and media discourses, whether pro U.S. or anti U.S. As we have seen in today exactly half a year of warfare and its support in the USA, the hawkish decision to go to war, to limit many personal freedoms and to dramatically increase military spending, was indeed a remarkable change brought about and legitimated by S11. Just mentioning thousands of (innocent) victims more is already enough as an argument. Of course, the whole argument hinges upon the tacit assumption that terrorists can only be efficiently fought by military action and violence, an assumption that might be a piece of knowledge for Krauthammer, but might be a mere personal opinion or social attitude for others.

The next paragraph explicitly identifies the post-cold war enemy: foreign terrorists. That is, whereas during the cold war conservative forces in the USA used anticommunism as the dominating ideological framework, Krauthammer now formulates fragments of a militarist antiterrorist ideology. To enhance the description of the enemy as ‘formidable’ the author merely needs to describe some of the elements of S11, as he does in the rest of the paragraph. Since these knowledge elements may be assumed to be known to the readers, this fragment is
partly a reminder of the seriousness of the attack, which is an argumentative step in the negative other-presentation of the terrorists. Note though that although the author reminds the readers of the ‘facts’ of S11, this does not mean that the description of the facts is devoid of ideological implications, as the lexical selection of ‘greatest power on the globe’ suggests. Also, suggesting that the whole nation had to shut down, and the leaders had to hide in shelters, is at most a strongly hyperbolic exaggeration of the ‘facts’, rhetorically relevant to emphasize the strength of the enemy, an argument that is needed to support the main thesis of the article, namely to wage war on them. Again, we see the dynamic relations between knowledge, facts and mere ideological opinions. As we may expect from a text that expresses the ideologically controlled representation of the events in the author’s mental models, the whole situation is defined in terms that suit his argument, as well as his ideological inclination.

Conclusion

We may thus continue the epistemic and ideological analysis of the remaining paragraphs of the article by Krauthammer. The points we wanted to make, however, is clear already, namely that it is important to distinguish different kinds of knowledge, that such different knowledges also relate differently to different discourse structures, and that many aspects of knowledge, at all levels, are closely associated to underlying ideologies, making a clear distinction between knowledge and ideology quite difficult.

Appendix

To War, Not to Court

by Charles Krauthammer
Wednesday, September 12, 2001; Page A29

This is not crime. This is war. One of the reasons there are terrorists out there capable and audacious enough to carry out the deadliest attack on the United States in its history is that, while they have declared war on us, we have in the past responded (with the exception of a few useless cruise missile attacks on empty tents in the desert) by issuing subpoenas.

Secretary of State Colin Powell's first reaction to the day of infamy was to pledge to "bring those responsible to justice." This is exactly wrong. Franklin Roosevelt did not respond to Pearl Harbor by pledging to bring the commander of Japanese naval aviation to justice. He pledged to bring Japan to its knees.

You bring criminals to justice; you rain destruction on combatants. This is a fundamental distinction that can no longer be avoided. The bombings of Sept. 11, 2001, must mark a turning
point. War was long ago declared on us. Until we declare war in return, we will have thousands of more innocent victims.

We no longer have to search for a name for the post-Cold War era. It will henceforth be known as the age of terrorism. Organized terror has shown what it can do: execute the single greatest massacre in American history, shut down the greatest power on the globe and send its leaders into underground shelters. All this, without even resorting to chemical, biological or nuclear weapons of mass destruction.

This is a formidable enemy. To dismiss it as a bunch of cowards perpetrating senseless acts of violence is complacent nonsense. People willing to kill thousands of innocents while they kill themselves are not cowards. They are deadly, vicious warriors and need to be treated as such. Nor are their acts of violence senseless. They have a very specific aim: to avenge alleged historical wrongs and to bring the great American satan to its knees.

Nor is the enemy faceless or mysterious. We do not know for sure who gave the final order but we know what movement it comes from. The enemy has identified itself in public and openly. Our delicate sensibilities have prevented us from pronouncing its name.

Its name is radical Islam. Not Islam as practiced peacefully by millions of the faithful around the world. But a specific fringe political movement, dedicated to imposing its fanatical ideology on its own societies and destroying the society of its enemies, the greatest of which is the United States.

Israel, too, is an affront to radical Islam, and thus of course must be eradicated. But it is the smallest of fish. The heart of the beast -- with its military in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Turkey and the Persian Gulf; with a culture that "corrupts" Islamic youth; with an economy and technology that dominate the world -- is the United States. That is why we were struck so savagely.

How do we know? Who else trains cadres of fanatical suicide murderers who go to their deaths joyfully? And the average terrorist does not coordinate four hijackings within one hour. Nor fly a plane into the tiny silhouette of a single building. For that you need skilled pilots seeking martyrdom. That is not a large pool to draw from.

These are the shock troops of the enemy. And the enemy has many branches. Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Israel, the Osama bin Laden organization headquartered in Afghanistan, and various Arab "liberation fronts" based in Damascus. And then there are the governments: Iran, Iraq, Syria and Libya among them. Which one was responsible? We will find out soon enough.

But when we do, there should be no talk of bringing these people to "swift justice," as Karen Hughes dismayingly promised mid-afternoon yesterday. An open act of war demands a military response, not a judicial one.
Military response against whom? It is absurd to make war on the individuals who send these people. The terrorists cannot exist in a vacuum. They need a territorial base of sovereign protection. For 30 years we have avoided this truth. If bin Laden was behind this, then Afghanistan is our enemy. Any country that harbors and protects him is our enemy. We must carry their war to them.

We should seriously consider a congressional declaration of war. That convention seems quaint, unused since World War II. But there are two virtues to declaring war: It announces our seriousness both to our people and to the enemy, and it gives us certain rights as belligerents (of blockade, for example).

The "long peace" is over. We sought this war no more than we sought war with Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan or Cold War with the Soviet Union. But when war was pressed upon the greatest generation, it rose to the challenge. The question is: Will we?