

THE REACTION POST · FIELD NOTE 01

Same Forum, Two Grammars of Power

Milei enlarged the conflict.
Kast redefined what victory requires.

“It is a global battle between good and evil.”

JAVIER MILEI · OPENING

“Chileans did not elect me to defeat the left.”

JOSÉ ANTONIO KAST · CLOSING

LISA ZANOTTI · SEPTEMBER 2026

Two presidents spoke from the same stage to the same political network. Their speeches were almost identical in length. Yet they used the occasion to perform different political tasks.

Opening the Fifth Regional Meeting of Foro Madrid in Santiago, Javier Milei described the moment as a global battle between good and evil.¹ Closing the meeting, José Antonio Kast told the audience that Chileans had not elected him to defeat the left.²

It would be tempting to read this as a contrast between a polarising radical and a newly moderate president. But Kast did not abandon the ideological core shared by the speakers at Foro Madrid. Nor did he renounce the electoral defeat of the left. Instead, he reorganised that project around a different political task: demonstrating that the right can govern, deliver results and broaden its legitimacy.

Milei enlarged the conflict. Kast redefined what victory requires after an election has been won. One spoke the grammar of mobilisation; the other, the grammar of government.

The central finding. The contrast is rhetorical and positional, not evidence of programmatic disagreement. Milei directs political intensity towards a global enemy. Kast redirects it towards the work of governing.

Why this matters beyond the speeches

The durability of the radical right may depend less on every leader speaking the same language than on its ability to combine different political functions. Some leaders keep supporters mobilised by intensifying conflict. Others make the same ideological project appear competent, institutional and capable of governing.

For journalists, policy professionals and democracy practitioners, the practical implication is important: tone is not a reliable proxy for ideological distance. A more institutional register need not indicate programmatic moderation. It may instead mark a transition from mobilisation to consolidation.

Focusing only on inflammatory language can therefore obscure a consequential development. The project that defines a political enemy must also persuade a broader public that it can administer the state, respond to social demands and remain in power. Milei and Kast offer a particularly clear view of those two tasks being articulated within the same transnational network.

Same stage, different political work

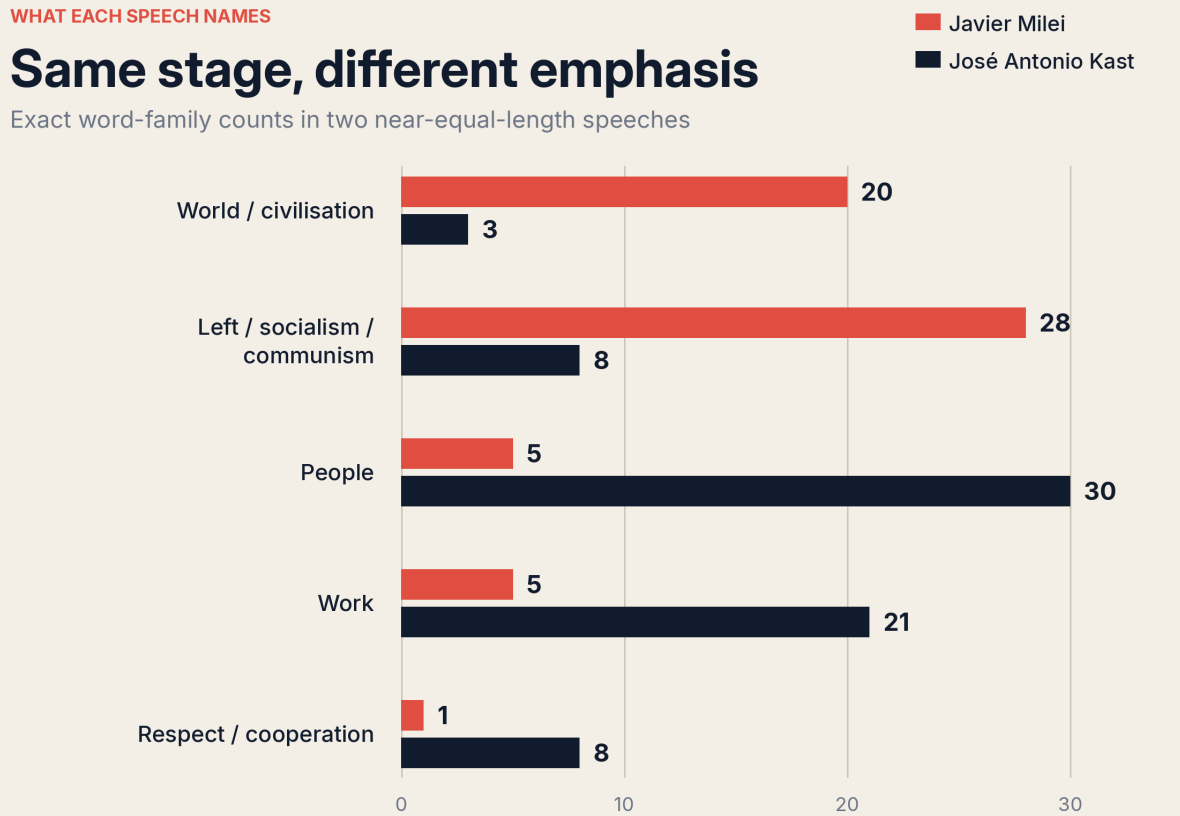
The setting provides an unusually clean comparison: the same event, a substantially similar audience, a shared ideological environment and two speeches of nearly equal length. After removing the speakers' introductions, Milei's address contains 3,885 alphabetic words and Kast's 3,801.

Their divergent vocabularies reveal what each leader uses the stage to accomplish. Milei mentioned terms related to the world or civilisation 20 times; Kast did so three times. Milei referred to the left, socialism or communism 28 times, compared with eight mentions by Kast. The pattern reverses when the speeches turn to people and governing. Kast used *persona* or *gente* 30 times, compared with five for Milei. Work appeared 21 times in Kast's speech and five in Milei's; respect or collaboration appeared eight times in Kast's and once in Milei's.

WHAT EACH SPEECH NAMES

Same stage, different emphasis

Exact word-family counts in two near-equal-length speeches



Source: complete Foro Madrid speeches · Milei 3,885 words · Kast 3,801

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Figure 1. Exact word-family counts in two near-equal-length speeches.

Word counts do not reveal political meaning on their own. Here, however, they capture two clearly observable ways of organising the same ideological terrain.

Milei builds a global enemy

Milei's speech moves repeatedly across levels of conflict. It begins with Chile's recent history, presents the 2019 social uprising as the result of left-wing ideological colonisation and then expands outwards: from Chile to Latin America, from the region to Europe and from individual parties to an organised transnational adversary.

In this account, the left is not simply a collection of electoral competitors. It is a coherent actor with a long-term strategy, institutional bases and the ability to operate across borders. Universities, the media, political parties, supranational bureaucracies and street mobilisation are assembled into a single narrative of coordinated advance.

The diagnosis produces its own solution. If the adversary is international, the right must also organise internationally. Milei presents Foro Madrid as part of that counter-network: countries must remove the cancer of the left from their own institutions and become strong members of an international alliance built around the ideas of freedom.³

Even the account of his government's economic record serves this antagonistic structure. Fiscal adjustment, deregulation, employment and poverty figures appear not only as policy achievements, but as evidence that the ideological enemy lies. Data become a weapon in the cultural battle.

The speech therefore does not move from mobilisation to government and remain there. Its final passages return decisively to an existential frontier. Good is associated with life, liberty, property and Western civilisation; evil with the radical left and terrorism. The closing message is firmness: no retreat, no compromise and no neutrality.

Milei speaks as both a president and a transnational ideological entrepreneur. Governing validates the battle rather than replacing it.

Kast changes the object of struggle

Kast begins inside the same political story. He recalls the Carta de Madrid, celebrates the regional advance of the right and recounts his own trajectory from marginal candidate to president. Roughly one-third of the way through the address, he tells the audience that defeating the left was not impossible and that they proved it at the ballot box.

The crucial move comes immediately afterwards. Winning, he argues, is not an end in itself. Chileans did not elect him to defeat the left, but to confront organised crime, poverty, corruption and unemployment.

The adversary changes grammatical form. It is no longer primarily a political actor. It becomes a set of problems that a government must solve.

This shift shapes the remainder of the address. Borders are not closed through social-media posts, Kast argues, but through trenches, drones, walls and surveillance. Bureaucratic obstacles are not

removed by denouncing them, but by establishing deadlines and measurable goals. Political patronage is addressed through audits and administrative procedures. Being right, he says, is only the starting point, not an achievement (*tener razón es sólo el punto de partida, no es un logro*).⁴

Kast also directs criticism inwards. He identifies three ways in which his own political camp could fail: treating power as an end in itself, distributing the state among partisan allies and remaining trapped in the dispute with the left. The warning is strategic. Antagonism may generate applause and discipline a party, but it does not resolve the social demands on which governmental legitimacy depends.

This is not a renunciation of the right's ideological core. Kast continues to defend property, security, economic freedom and international coordination among like-minded governments. His formula is opening up, not diluting (*abrirse, no diluirse*).⁵ But he combines that core with institutional preservation, collaboration and respect for political opponents. In a revealing contrast with Milei's attacks on captured media and universities, Kast thanks journalists and academics, praises Chilean institutions and describes former adversaries as present collaborators.

The change is better understood as a presidential grammar than as straightforward moderation.

The movement inside the speeches

The difference appears not only in the aggregate counts, but in the sequencing of the two addresses.

Milei opens with a high concentration of references to political adversaries. His global vocabulary reaches its greatest intensity in the early-middle portion of the speech. Policy performance occupies more of the later sections, but the conclusion returns to antagonism and moral struggle.

Kast moves in the opposite direction. References to people remain present and become more prominent as the speech advances. Work is distributed throughout the address, while collaboration reaches its greatest concentration near the end. Four moments summarise the transition: electoral victory at approximately 33 per cent of the text; the mandate to govern at 40 per cent; a warning against remaining stuck in conflict with the left at 73 per cent; and an affirmation of institutional respect and collaboration at 83 per cent.

KAST'S CHANGE OF REGISTER

From defeating the left to proving he can govern

Four turning points, positioned by share of words elapsed

RED: ANTAGONISM REGISTER · BLUE: GOVERNING REGISTER

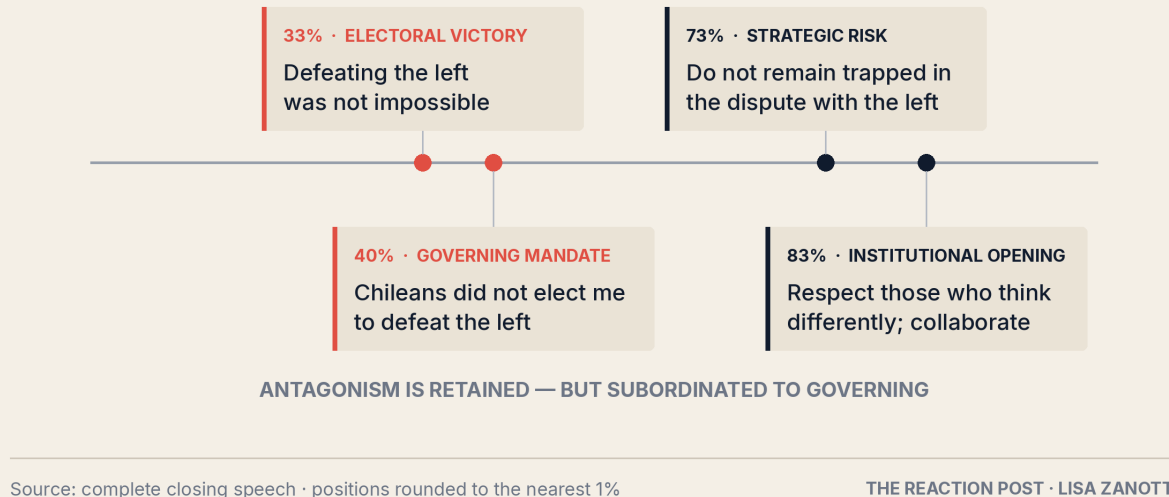


Figure 2. Four turning points in Kast's shift from electoral antagonism to a governing register.

Kast does not begin from a different ideological family. He begins with victory over the left and gradually subordinates that victory to governmental responsibility. Milei incorporates governing achievements but ultimately returns them to a global moral conflict.

One ideological core, two political functions

Both speeches defend freedom and private property, connect liberty to order and security, endorse international cooperation among the right and celebrate the electoral defeat of the left. Nothing in this comparison demonstrates a substantive programmatic break between the two leaders.

What differs is the political work performed by each discourse.

Milei supplies scale, urgency and a clearly identified enemy. His speech tells an international network why it must exist and why compromise would be dangerous. Kast supplies execution, institutional authority and the promise of tangible results. His speech tells the same network what it must become if it wants to remain in power.

The combination suggests a possible division of rhetorical labour. Milei mobilises committed audiences through threat, moral polarisation and firmness. Kast seeks broader legitimacy through competence, institutionalism and cooperation. Together, these registers could extend the reach of the same political project: intensity for the core constituency and presidential legitimacy for audiences less receptive to permanent ideological warfare.

This is an interpretative hypothesis, not evidence of deliberate coordination. The speeches do not tell us whether the leaders agreed to perform different roles. They show that a transnational political alliance can accommodate — and potentially benefit from — both.

What to watch next

Kast under pressure. Does he maintain this institutional and collaborative register when his government faces sharper conflict, declining approval or electoral pressure? A governing grammar is most consequential when it survives adverse conditions.

From rhetoric to capacity. Does Milei's call for a global counter-network produce joint initiatives, shared policy positions or durable organisational coordination? Rhetorical alignment is not the same as political capacity.

Repetition across the network. Do future meetings reproduce this functional differentiation? If some leaders repeatedly define the threat while others translate the project into policy and institutional language, Foro Madrid may be developing more than a shared vocabulary. It may be building a repertoire flexible enough to mobilise, govern and expand.

NOTES

¹ “Estamos en una batalla que nos excede a cada uno de nosotros y a nuestras naciones. Es una batalla a nivel global entre el bien y el mal.” Foro Madrid, opening speech, Santiago, September 2026. Translation by the author.

² “Y los chilenos a mí no me eligieron para derrotar a la izquierda. Nos eligieron, me eligieron para enfrentar el crimen organizado, para enfrentar la pobreza, para enfrentar la corrupción, para enfrentar el desempleo.” Foro Madrid, closing speech. Translation by the author.

³ “...quitando el cáncer de la izquierda de sus propias instituciones, para convertirse en un miembro fuerte de una alianza internacional de las ideas de la libertad.” Opening speech. Translation by the author.

⁴ “Y tener razón es sólo el punto de partida, no es un logro.” Closing speech.

⁵ “Pero eso implica abrirse, no diluirse. Implica abrir las fronteras. Implica mirar más allá de la comodidad de encontrarnos entre nosotros. Y ampliarse no es renunciar.” Closing speech.

HOW THIS WAS MEASURED

This Field Note compares the complete opening and closing speeches delivered by Javier Milei and José Antonio Kast at the Fifth Regional Meeting of Foro Madrid in Santiago in September 2026. The master of ceremonies' introduction, each speaker's opening greeting and non-alphabetic tokens were excluded, leaving 3,885 words for Milei and 3,801 for Kast. The opening acknowledgements in both speeches are included in the counts.

The analysis counts five predefined word families and divides each speech into five equal sections. World/civilisation groups *mundo*, *mundial*, *global*, *Occidente* and *civilización*; left groups *izquierda*, *izquierdista*, *zurdo*, *socialismo*, *comunismo*, *marxismo* and *progresismo*; people groups *persona(s)* and *gente*; work groups the noun and verbal forms of *trabajar*; respect/cooperation groups *respeto*, *respetar*, *cooperar* and *colaborar*. Quotations are reproduced in the original Spanish in the notes and translated by the author.

These measures identify differences in emphasis and sequencing; they do not establish intentions, policy distance, strategic coordination or the factual accuracy of either speech.

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