

The Iraq War and Presidential Rhetoric of the War Against Terror

Patrick R. Reck, McNair Scholar, Penn State University

**Faculty Research Adviser: Rosa A. Eberly, PhD
Associate Professor of CAS and English
Communication Arts and Sciences and English Departments
The College of Liberal Arts
Penn State University**

Abstract

This article examines the role of the President Bush's official rhetoric in shifting the focus of the war on terrorism from Afghanistan to Iraq. Using theoretical and critical frameworks from rhetorical studies, I conduct a close textual analysis of presidential addresses from Sept. 11, 2001, to the invasion of Iraq in March 2003 to explain the patterns and evolution of this rhetorical movement. By studying the Bush administration's discursive construction of the war in the context of dominant Western ideology, I explore how and why, at its inception, this Iraq war was largely unchallenged in the United States as an appropriate action in the war against terrorism. The findings centralize around categorizing the president's arguments into rhetorical genres and stasis questions as well as addressing why alternative responses were not explored.

Introduction

President George W. Bush's justifications for invading Iraq in March 2003 presented the American public with a rhetorical quagmire. Framing military operations as a necessary action in the war on terrorism, President Bush spoke of evidence that portrayed Saddam Hussein's regime as an imminent threat to international security and claimed an inherent connection between the dictator and the September 11th attacks. Illustrating Hussein's history of violence, aggression, and oppression as well as his repeated violations of the United Nations' nuclear and biological weapons disarmament sanctions following the Gulf War, the claims were compellingly effective. Iraq was not cooperating with the United States and, therefore, would be regarded and neutralized as if they were the terrorists responsible for the 9/11 attacks. However, President Bush's decision to wage a war against terrorism was never presented as a forensic argument to defend the practicality and reasoning of a metaphorical war.

Bush's epideictic and deliberative speeches on September 11, 14, and 20, 2001 decisively made the assumption that terrorists attacked the United States because they "hate our freedom" (Bush 1). By ignoring the history of U.S. intervention in the Middle East and Osama bin Laden's internationally proclaimed reasons for a jihad, President Bush's conclusions concerning present and future actions cannot and should not have been supported by his forensic claim.

Argumentative problems persist because not only did Bush mislead the public about causality issues, he also never addressed definitional questions concerning peace, freedom, democracy, terrorism, and war. By including means of diplomacy, law enforcement, and weapons in his definition of war, the president effectively silenced any oppositional arguments in the government. The divisive nature of his rhetoric created an atmosphere of fear that threatened to associate dissent and public criticism with opposition and, consequently, terrorist organizations. As the key terminologies for the war on terrorism and as the phrase itself, continually appearing in the media, became common national vocabulary, all citizens understood the case for invading Iraq through this metaphorical frame and understood their role to be patient, praying, and passive citizens. The country was described as being at war in the present tense yet describing military operations in future tenses. This incongruity made it difficult for citizens to discuss alternatives to war in Iraq. And the president's rhetoric did as much to define what happened as it did to limit the discussion of possibilities outside of war.

In times of crisis, it is natural for the collective body to be afraid and to look for answers from leaders about the future of national safety and security. On September 11th, the entire nation looked to the president and listened to his words. America took comfort in his speech and had faith in President Bush's judgments and decisions. But as an elected representative, bound to his oath of office, given consent to rule in the interests of the will of the people of the United States of America, why wasn't the president more open and judicious about his deliberations? Why was a declaration of war so quick to come from our highest podium? And why was the president's administration so eager to enter another conflict before the rebuilding in Afghanistan was stabilized and completed?

With citizens' inability to examine the military intelligence that provided the evidence supporting the claims Iraq was an imminent threat to U.S. security, the nation stood by as President Bush ordered troops into Baghdad. Months after the May 1, 2003 speech where the president declared major military action to be completed, documents, such as the Downing Street memo and Joseph Wilson's New York Times article, surfaced challenging the validity and truthfulness of the intelligence reports central to supporting the case for war.

Now approaching the midway point of the fifth year of U.S. armed forces involvement, it is imperative to understand how the administration used rhetorical strategies to shift the public's focus of the war on terrorism away from Afghanistan and turned its sights on Iraq. We have lost nearly 3,800 U.S. soldiers in Iraq (Iraq Coalition). The *Washington Post* reported 655,000 Iraqis had died as of October 2006 (Iraq Coalition). The *Boston Globe* cited analysts who calculated the war spending to be nearly \$1 trillion (Bender). And, now, as the Taliban and other terrorist organizations regain power in Afghanistan, questions about the decision to divert forces to Iraq continue to swell and gain force in the currents of public debate. With debt and death tolls endlessly increasing, the American people must examine the war on terrorism and determine for

ourselves whether or not President Bush's vision of praying, patient, passive citizens is the audience we want to become.

Rhetorical Operations

Rhetoric and its ability to enable collective action are intertwined with the operation of a democratic society. Without the means to persuade an audience to a consensus manner of thinking and subsequent course of action, personal interests could never be reconciled with the good of the general order. And without a form of government that allows freedom of speech, rhetoric would be confined to government propaganda and back-alley soap boxes. Yet, no society is free from the dangers of rhetoric that can incite the irrational behavior of an entire nation. History tells a cyclical story of how time and again a national leader or public figure persuaded an audience, through either factually-based or mythically-created circumstances, to condone and even carry out deplorable actions, sometimes condemned only by the victims.

In the United States of America, we, the citizens and inhabitants of this nation, have been subjected to national rhetoric throughout our lives. It has normalized ideology that centralizes on promoting patriotic pride and hegemonic values that can undermine our perceptions of people outside of our culture. Today, most significantly, rhetoric shapes our perceptions of the global war on terrorism. As President Bush defined the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon as acts of terrorism when addressing the nation on the evening of September 11, 2001, he told of the American people to allow the government to wage a war against global terrorism(1). When his administration achieved the desired public response, Bush began enacting foreign and domestic policy that was not in the interest of protecting the American people, but that in-line with private interests or a preconceived agenda. U.S. military forces attacked the government of Afghanistan in October 2001; troops were then redeployed in March 2003 to invade Iraq. At the time, few people publicly dissented. Now, as more and more citizens want to look critically at the call-to-arms sounded in the shadow of 9/11, understanding how rhetoric shaped the course of events is the penultimate step to avoiding similar deceptions in the future.

When speaking of rhetoric, most studies refer to Aristotle's principles, recorded in his text *Rhetoric*. He defined rhetoric as "the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion"; within this art Aristotle identified three primary elements that determine the effectiveness of a rhetorical act in lieu of mankind's inability to discover the certainty of truth: ethos, the credibility of a person's character, pathos, the ability of a speaker to control the emotions of an audience towards a desired response, and logos, the content of a speech proving an apparent truth through reasonable argument (Aristotle 24-5). The tradition of rhetoric has been carried into the present by contemporary rhetoricians. Thomas Benson, a Penn State Professor of Communication Arts and Sciences, defined rhetoric as "essential to the crafting and communicating of human knowledge; to the construction of self, the other, and society; to the

inducement of cooperation and conflict” (Benson xii-xiii). As postmodern thinkers have created discourse with Aristotle’s and modern rhetoricians’ ideas, the symbolic persuasion of dialectic construction has taken on a much broader definition.

Rhetoric is not confined to spoken or written words but exists everywhere in the discursive fabrications of society. Modern theories of “social construction”, as originally coined by Berger and Luckmann, posit that the existing “social order is a[n]...ongoing human production” where mutual perceptions of shared behaviors shape cultural environments and are then habituated into institutions in which every individual subject to that institution then conforms to an established role (Berger and Luckmann 51-61). Individuals perform every action largely unaware of the cultural rhetoric that shapes their identity and their relation to the rest of society. Through the framework of social construction theory, rhetoric is defined more by its ability to affect action than its media of conveyance.

Within a democratic society, the quality of public discourse correlates to how closely citizens rhetorically criticize the ideological construction of democratic values in the operations of society. Sonja Foss defined rhetorical criticism as analyzing the “process of thinking about symbols, discovering how they work, why they affect us, and choosing to communicate in particular ways as a result of the options they present” (Foss 3). If citizens or elected representatives are given ample opportunities to discuss and propose solutions and policies to public problems while attempting to understand their responses to the negative symbols of diverse ideas, then the people could effectively govern themselves. In the United States, our national identity is closely tied to this ideal of direct democracy. Yet, the operation of our democracy remains a point of contention among scholars from an array of disciplines.

As it functions as rhetoric to the citizens of this country, conceptions of democracy, as explained by Robert Ivie in *Democracy and America’s War on Terror*, contain two counterfactual notions emerging from the conflicting views held by the Constitution’s Founding Fathers (Ivie 11). Although during the formation of this country there were voices calling for governing practices to be ruled by the will of the people, many members of the Constitutional Convention shared James Madison’s republican notions of government and “did not seek to involve the general public in political debate” (Schudson 46). This fear of the public’s inability to self-rule without succumbing to the pathos of any public speaker representing foreign interests has been normalized to coincide with the pride of national identity, symbolically linked to the democratic form of government (Ivie 12). The public is presented with two threats to this democracy. When modern leaders evoke the mythic history of democracy, they implement “a rhetorical dynamic that promotes excessive fear of the domestic as well as the foreign Other” (12).

Within the United States, as many opponents to the formation of a direct democracy feared, the rise of “demagoguery” through a “rhetorical president” began with Theodore Roosevelt’s presidential ascension (18). A “rhetorical president would appeal directly to the general public without conferring with the elected representative bodies as a means of dominating public persuasion and undermining rational deliberation in Congress (18). Political figures, capitalizing on the appeal of and opportunities created by Roosevelt’s approach to rhetorical presidential leadership, continued utilizing rhetorical strategies that purposefully ignored logos in favor of coercive tactics, invoking pathos to inspire the audience toward the desired action (Tulis 117). In times of war or political crisis, these rhetorical strategies that appeal to the audience’s fear from any threat to social stability become particularly effective in manufacturing consent to political policy and/or military action. In January 2001, George W. Bush assumed this role of the rhetorical president. Eight months later, he would declare the beginning of the war on terror and mark the continued decline of rational public debate. However, academia continues to seek to understand our rhetorical spheres.

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11th, there has been a wealth of research directed towards understanding how the global war on terrorism operates within the political, social, historic, religious, and rhetorical context of the United States. Scholars have conducted thousands of studies to convey a greater understanding of the current global conditions. Ivie’s *Democracy and America’s War on Terror* addressed the response to 9/11 by discussing how threats to the nation can be more effectively resolved by promoting a “robustly democratic idiom” that favors democratic practices and values opposed to degrading public behavior to “antagonistic impulses and aggressive policies emanating from a republic of fear” (3-4). Progressive activist George Lakoff advocated reframing the political debate in this country by utilizing different language that does not limit democratic discussion to the rhetoric used by the Bush administration to elicit consent for war (Lakoff 52-3). The global war on terrorism was studied from a sociological perspective to determine that its rhetoric legitimated aggressive changes in U.S. policy, while effectively concealing the underlying material relations of militarism, oil, and the pursuit of a democratic empire (Blain 1,12). *Fear’s Empire: War, Terrorism, and Democracy* examined the American history of diplomacy and compared the futility and danger of Bush’s strategies for fighting terrorism to the Cold War theory of “containment and deterrence” (Barber 33-5, 97, 121-4). Noam Chomsky has written a series of books including *9-11* that detailed his interviews with various press agencies, shortly following the attacks, in which he discussed the implications of America’s military response for the future of international relations (Chomsky 11-21). Zulaika and Douglass wrote about the mythic nature of modern conceptions of terrorism in order to demystify the “culture of terror” and examine how it replaces the need for legitimate public discourse (Zulaika and Douglass 227-235). The rationales for why the United States went to war with Iraq were explored in great journalistic detail as the frequency of the critical words used by the Bush administration were catalogued according to assigned political contexts (Largio 1-15). Noted journalist Bob Woodward wrote

Plan of Attack to account for how and why the Bush administration “launched a preemptive war” against Iraq based upon information gathered from “behind-the-scenes” discussions within the administration.

In order to support the arguments presented in the emerging discourse about the global war on terrorism, there is also a need to reexamining and reconstituting historic studies that addressed related issues from other time periods and shaped the advancement of rhetorical criticism. Published in 1925, Wichelns’ “The Literary Criticism of Oratory” outlined what methods a critic should use to analyze speeches because of rhetoric’s power to shape history (Wichelns 1-12). Griffin wrote about the importance of shifting the focus of rhetorical criticism from single instances to larger, social movements that demonstrate the language patterns in public discourse (Griffin 9-13). “The Rhetoric of Hitler’s Battle,” written in 1939 by Kenneth Burke, which gave a detailed criticism of how the German ruler persuaded his audience through rhetorical distortions, informed the American public of what to guard against (Burke 33). In the essay “Operation Desert Comfort,” Cloud analyzed the media coverage of the Gulf War to understand how personalized news stories “domesticat[ed] dissent by rearticulating political outrage as personal anxiety,” silencing and pacifying any political opposition by framing the political decision to go to war as an issue that was not to be questioned in the public sphere (Cloud 303, 316). Another study by Cloud, covering the oppressive racism facing cotton mill workers in the southern United States during the 1930’s, explored the “rhetoric of silence” as it relates to “extradiscursive” rhetoric; in other words, it explained how the material relations of power, coercively acting under the threat of force, define what cannot be expressed in an oppressive environment (Cloud 411-418).

This research literature offers insights to the global war on terrorism from multivalent disciplines and focuses. Scholars have placed the wars with Afghanistan and Iraq in the larger context of American imperialism in the twentieth century, and others have studied the specifics of these modern wars in both countries. There has been research studying how the rhetoric of terrorism impacted public discourse and policy that led to the wars with Afghanistan and Iraq. There have also been studies that document the shift in the war on terrorism from Afghanistan to Iraq, tracing the change in the administration’s declared priorities. However, there has not been research conducted to study the rhetorical picture constructed by the president, based on the assumption that citizens’ inability to access classified intelligence reports require us to rely on the President Bush’s reasoned judgment, expressed in his public arguments for public policy. By applying the theoretical frameworks of rhetoric, often used to discuss how the war on terrorism was rhetorically constructed, to the journalistic scrutiny used to document the shift in the war, this research will analyze the presidential rhetoric that created and perpetuated a conception of the American people accepting the invasion of Iraq as the next logical action to win the war on terrorism.

As Americans considering this lack of crucial information, we must adopt the role of the rhetorical citizens, attempting to identify and avoid the rhetorical deception that typically occurs in political appeals to the nation. Using the methods and instruments of rhetorical criticism, this article will explain, analyze, and evaluate the presidential rhetoric leading up to the U.S. military invasion of Iraq in March 2003. It will examine the constructive rhetorical methods that shifted the focus of the war on terrorism from the hunt for Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan to the invasion and removal of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq, demarcating specific addresses from those beginning after the attacks of September 11th up until the invasion.

The methodology will employ a conceptual framework for addressing the shift as a rhetorical movement within the war on terrorism, which itself is a rhetorical movement within the larger historical context of western hegemonic imperialism. The presidential addresses will be analyzed for the structure of the claims and rhetorical devices in order to identify the audience implied by the speech as the constructed, appropriate public response. The patterns of speech will then be categorized based upon the rhetorical exigency of the situation and evaluated in terms of the public action desired by the Bush administration.

Rhetorical theories will be implemented in order to present a complete picture of the presidential arguments for the war on terrorism, military action in Afghanistan, and then redeployment of troops for military operations in Iraq. The theories will identify five types of argumentative claims, three genres for defining rhetorical situations and the goals of the speaker, and explain how rhetoric constructs an ideal audience. This treatment of the speeches does overlook the rhetorical affect on public perceptions based upon either a televised or printed depiction of the discourse. The affect of media is an area that should be discussed at great length in another study alongside the attention to the close, textual, rhetorical theory interpretations.

In a public address, the audience has a literal reality that does not always coincide with the audience projected by the speaker. Edwin Black wrote in "The Second Persona" that a speaker expresses goals for his or her audience embodied in specific language that conveys the speaker's values; this audience is implied by the speaker, and the audience can, therefore, become the ideal audience when they enact the speaker's roles or by simply adopting his or her language (Black 164-166). The ideal citizen is also constructed through descriptions of "heroic citizenship" (Murphy 194). In a speech, the speaker can describe a person who "represents an ideal public image of citizenship" exemplifying the values of America's democracy (195-196). The problem with recognizing this type of symbolic behavior is that it diminishes the deliberative and rhetorical roles of civically-engaged citizens by idealizing unrealistic, romantic notions of patriotism. If we conform to the language of such citizenship, we are conforming to the role of the implied, passive audience.

Assigning discourse genres is an important part of determining what an argument attempts to do, what course of action or way of thinking it impels the audience towards. There are three rhetorical genres: forensic, epideictic, and deliberative. A forensic discourse attempts to judge the past and determine responsibility or cause. Epideictic rhetoric crafts a definition of the present conditions and identifies the community present, while amplifying its values through exemplary citizens or members. The final genre is deliberative and is used to justify the practicality and expediency of future decisions and actions. In his essay “‘Our Mission and Our Moment’: George W. Bush and September 11th,” rhetorician John Murphy explores how the choice of genre directly following 9/11 shaped Bush’s authority to control the public’s perception of the events (608-610). The rhetorical genres can be further explored with the identification of stasis claims within the text.

Stasis claims answer fundamental questions necessary to formulate a complete argument. They can serve as analysis subgroups when attempting to compartmentalize the components of a speech into a rhetorical pattern that continues unchanged or evolves over time. The first question is that of fact; what happened? From there, the situation requires an accurate label, a definition claim; what should we call it? After the first two claims are satisfactorily answer, then a question of value can be posed; is it good or bad? The fourth question concerns cause and consequence. What made it happen? And the final question is about the future: what should we do about it? By identifying all five claims within a single piece of rhetoric, a critical audience can have a fully realized conception of the argument being presented.

Individual speech analysis will instrument the rhetorical theories discussed above and those found in the body of literature addressing rhetoric and its operation in society. Each speech will be dissected to illuminate the structure of the discourse, tracing the descriptive sequence of arguments and maintaining the original language of the rhetor. Repeated terms and ideographs will be isolated in order to identify the relationship between the discourse and its implied audience’s attitudes and ideology. Then, the persona of both the speaker and the audience will be linked to the historical movement of western hegemony.

After analyzing and categorizing the rhetorical devices within President Bush’s addresses, the article will evaluate the rhetorical movements that aroused passive public support, allowing U.S. armed forces into Iraq. The period between the fall of 2001 and the spring of 2003 will be divided into assigned political contexts based upon the exigency of the rhetorical situation presented. These periods are contextualized within the modern ideological, rhetorical movement of western society’s moral supremacy over “other,” uncivilized and repressive cultures. Identifying the underlying framework of U.S. hegemony will help to understand the reception of the war on terrorism and the subsequent shift from Afghanistan to Iraq. The rhetorical material will then be gathered from President Bush’s addresses beginning on September 11, 2001 to March 19, 2003.

Rhetorical criticism is a values-based judgment. However, it is not President Bush's values or the American public's values that are being judged. The desired action is being evaluated based upon the character of the implied speaker and audience, characterized by ideologically-signifying tokens within the discourse. The immanency of moral judgment in criticism should compel this implied audience to explore and investigate alternative rhetoric and action for the American public as the rhetorical situation demands.

Defining a New Time: The War Against Terror

Using rhetorical devices relating to ideas of democracy, security, freedom, war, and terrorism, President Bush capitalized on the tragic events of September 11th in order to implement public policy that undermines the civic freedoms of the United States. By defining 9/11 as an act of terrorism and later as an act of war, Bush and his administration constructed a story that told the citizens of this country what happened, why it happened, the response that day, and the preventative measures for similar attacks (1-2). He appealed to the nation's emotion frailty immediately following the attacks and received overwhelming support from the media, Congress, and the American people. President Bush quickly received Congressional approval to use force in Afghanistan, as the Senate passed Joint Resolution 23 on September 18, 2001, which granted the president "the use of United States Armed Forces against those responsible for the recent attacks" (U.S. Senate).

On October 26, Bush signed the USA Patriot Act, in the name of "defeating terrorism, while protecting the constitutional rights of all Americans" (U.S. Congress). This act, as criticized by Sharon Rackow, gives the president and the U.S. Attorney General overarching power that ignores the traditional criminal process in favor of wiretaps that violate the Fourth Amendment; the Patriot Act also permits the government to detain and imprison any person expressing political dissent as a "domestic terrorist," a clear violation of the First Amendment (U.S. Congress 1653). As the public largely remained quiet over the consequences of placing domestic security above the interest of civil liberties, the Bush administration continued to operate against the interests of the American people in the rhetorically declared interest of fighting a war to defend our way of life, defined in the completely subjective rhetoric of terrorism.

The administration's construction of the idea of terrorism or terrorist act operates completely free of any self-reflection directed toward the United States' military action. The United Nations Resolution 1373 defines terrorism as any "threat to international peace and security." The U.S. official code also defines terrorism as:

"a violent act or an act dangerous to human life that is a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or any State, or that would be a criminal violation if committed within the jurisdiction of the United States or of any State; and (B) appears to be intended (i) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; (ii) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or (iii) to affect the conduct of a government by assassination or kidnapping" (U.S. Code, par. 3077, 98 STAT. 2707).

Any critical look at the United States' history will divulge a long list of terrorist acts, as defined by the U.S. code, committed by our government. The historical use of the word "terrorism," as it is often associated with guerilla tactics carried out by small insurgent groups battling the larger forces of a government or institution, often prevents applying the definition of "terrorism" to government military actions (Novotny 1). The hegemonic rhetoric of national identity and the prevalent associations with other cultures, races, and peoples limit our perception of U.S. actions.

Using an uncritical rhetorical conception of terrorism, the United States' military began a campaign to stop threats to security as we consequently became the largest threat. President Bush directed the military into Afghanistan because the country harbored the terrorist organization al Qaeda that carried out the attacks of 9/11. On October 7, 2001, utilizing his power as commander-in-chief granted by Congress in S.R. 23, Bush ordered "strikes against al Qaeda terrorist training camps and military installations of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan" (3-4). So to respond to the attacks on 9/11, our military used violent force to replace the government with one who would conduct policy catering to U.S. interests. This resulted in the deaths of 3,800 innocent civilians of Afghanistan in the first three months of fighting alone, more casualties than the September 11th attacks (BBC). President Bush responded to terror with terror. And as the new government in Afghanistan took control of the country, the Bush administration opportunistically used the rhetorical appeal of its global war on terrorism to redirect its military focus to former ally Saddam Hussein and his regime in Iraq. Bush described his vision of the war against terror to enable him to yield unilateral powers of force.

In the crucial, national addresses on September 11, 14, and 20, 2001, President Bush redefined the geopolitical landscape with several definition and value claims. The president addressed a confused and fearful nation and told the country that the United States and the world were at war against terrorism. What should have been a forensic discussion was, instead, a epideictic and deliberative cannonball. Bush called the attacks "a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts," then said "we go forward to defend freedom and all that is good and just in this world" (1). The values were set: we are good; they are evil, "the very worst in human nature"

(1). He continued to polarize the present conditions. In the war on terror, Bush claimed that any nation who harbored or supported terrorists would be regarded as a hostile regime (2). This claim became more extreme when, on September 20th, President Bush declared “you are with us or you are with the terrorists” (4). He further dictated the course of events by asking the citizens of this country not to debate and discuss what happened and what should be done, he asked the nation to be passive, pray for the victims and their families, participate in the economy, and be patient. The polarizing nature of Bush’s arguments paved the way for uncritical complacency when public debate was needed the most.

And in these critical moments, President Bush committed the worst rhetorical fallacy: he lied about the terrorists’ motivation. In a forensic claim, Bush claimed that the terrorist hate our freedom (1). This idea of the cause and consequence question lies at the base of all epideictic and deliberative reasoning. By not admitting al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden’s anger over previous U.S. involvement in Middle East conflicts and governments, President Bush misconstrued the entire war on terror under false pretenses. Every argument in support of the war cannot proceed without first recognizing why the terrorists believe they need to defend the Muslim faith and its holy land. In the aftermath of 9/11, presidential rhetoric changed the entire course of history. He could have said many things, notions of criminal investigations, international diplomacy, military operations to hunt down Osama bin Laden, but President Bush said war. Using the force of language, Bush’s rhetoric created a reality of its own.

In each speech, the president attempted to convey a sense of completeness, a sense that he was solely responsible for interpreting and determining for the American people the state of our nation. As he addressed a joint session of Congress on September 20th, Bush described the typical role of the president speaking in such a manner as being “to report on the state of the union” (1) But, such a report, Bush said, was unnecessary and self-evident because “it has already been delivered by the American people” (1) He went on to explain that the heroic actions of all U.S. citizens united in patriotism, grief, and resolve were the only explanations necessary to describe the stability of the nation (1-2). This notion permeates the chronology of his addresses because of the privatized, passive role required of the citizens of this nation. It is not wrong to acknowledge the nobility of volunteerism and neighborly support, as he did; it does, however, narrowly define the role of citizen to the private sphere. According to Troy Murphy, this rhetorical construction of the heroic citizen embodying the values of the United States detracts from the discursive negotiation necessary to shape policy to reflect the diverse needs and perspectives of all Americans (196).

President Bush’s synecdochical representation of all U.S. citizens’ perceptions in his discourse, present in both September 11th and 20th speeches, presents the most troublesome obstacles to critically and effectively challenging his decisions. Through this rhetorical tragedy in the epideictic addresses following the terrorist attacks, Bush presented an argument to the American people that he represented as both question and answer (2-6). Essentially, he was

talking to himself, convincing himself and all those who align with the neoconservative values of his implied audience, or those apathetic, silent, or silenced by the force of emotional and moral appeal framing the country's course of action.

The metaphorical frame constructed in the public's mind through Bush's public addresses securely placed the war in Iraq within the rhetorical confines of the war on terrorism. On April 17, 2002, President Bush proclaimed that the operations in Afghanistan had been successful and that Afghanistan was now an ally in the war (1-2). In this transitional period after the October 2001 invasion, Osama bin Laden's name almost completely disappeared from the president's speeches. Only once, in the time period between invasions, was bin Laden mentioned. On September 24, 2002, Ron Fournier of the Associated Press asked the president if he was diverting attention to Iraq because bin Laden could not be found; Bush completely ignored the question, answering only that "Saddam is a true threat to America" (2). Saddam Hussein's name, however, appeared in nearly every speech regarding the war on terror after first being mentioned on October 11, 2001. The major focal shift occurred in Bush's 2002 State of the Union Address on January 29th, where Iraq became the center of attention as a part of the "axis of evil" (4).

Afterward in the September 12th address, President Bush first outlined his rationales for disarming Iraq that became the arguments for war as Bush claimed Hussein had once again violated the trust of the UN (2-4; 1). They were framed by the polarizing claims of the war on terrorism. As each argument appeared again and again in public discourse, it was carefully referenced to the war on terrorism. The topoi were placed side by side in the speeches, often not relying a correlative reference, simply allowing the chronology to disseminate fear. But how could a metaphorical war against an ambiguous enemy be an argument for waging a war against real people? Why had Iraq and Hussein come up after years of dormant public attention? Why was Bush now accusing the president of humanitarian crimes that occurred fifteen years ago when the U.S. supported his invasion of Iran? But most importantly, how could the public question such a war when it is declared a historic battle of good versus evil?

United States' troops invaded Iraq on March 20, 2003 three days after President Bush issued an ultimatum to the Iraqi president in a televised address to the nation: "Saddam Hussein and his sons must leave Iraq within 48 hours (1-2). Their refusal to do so will result in military conflict, commenced at a time of our choosing" (1). President Bush declared Iraq an imminent threat to the safety and security of the United States and the world (1-2). His rationales for this definitional claim included the history of Hussein's military aggression, the violation of past and present United Nations' sanctions demanding complete disarmament, the oppression of the Iraqi people, the possession of weapons of mass destruction, the potential to build nuclear weapons, and the cooperation of the Iraqi government with al Qaeda operatives and, therefore, the assumed connection to the terrorist attacks of September 11th (1-5). Bush first outlined these arguments on September 12, 2002 in an address to the United Nations General Assembly. In that speech he recommended the UN require Iraq to remove or destroy all weapons and related materials, to end

its support for terrorism and act to suppress it, and to cease the inhumane treatment of its civilian population (1-5).

On November 8, 2002, the UN passed resolution 1441, as a final opportunity for Hussein to “comply with its disarmament obligations” (UN 1441). Iraq complied and allowed weapons inspectors back into the country. Chief UN Inspector Hans Blix reported to the Security Council on February 14, 2003 that “[a]ll inspections were performed without notice, and access was almost always provided promptly”; Blix went on to conclude that “[t]oday, three months after the adoption of resolution 1441, the period of disarmament through inspection could still be short” (Blix). However, on March 16th President Bush concluded that the Iraqi regime must be fully disarmed before March 17th or action would be taken to “remove the threat from Iraq”, even though Bush continued to say he acted on behalf of “the just demands of peace and security” (1). Because of the Congressional Iraq Resolution passed in October 2002 and UN resolutions 678 and 687 dating back to the Gulf War, Bush had the authority to use military force in order to remove weapons of mass destruction (2). By May, the president declared that major military operations had ended (1).

President Bush’s arguments for war in Iraq succeeded. Relying on the invalid frames constructed for the war against terror, the discourse followed the dichotomous pattern of having only two choices: good or evil, freedom or terror, action or inaction, heroism or cowardice, us or them. The public was given little opportunity to reflect upon the past 18 months in March 2003. The Bush administration’s careful control of the framing discourse and the American media’s willingness to blindly relay the information kept productive, antiwar conversations from full frequency broadcast. The epideictic and deliberative addresses effectively silenced the cry for forensic investigation when it was needed to judiciously determine the appropriate course of action. This irrational foundation created obstacles to challenging the rationales for invading Iraq. It was possible to deliberate and speculate on alternatives to the war’s momentum, but the persistent insistence on projecting a passive citizenry stifled our conceptions of what would be necessary to observe the deceptive and deceitful nature of presidential rhetoric, to create alternative dialogues, and to enact changes in the U.S. government.

The rhetorical strategies implemented in the war are not unique to President Bush or his administration. They are fundamental notions of identity tied to the social construction of public and private conscience. Bush’s rhetoric capitalized on the basic human instincts of survival in a culture of fear. My safety, our safety was portrayed as more important than the well-being of dark-skinned humans living half-way around the world. It is also natural to want to assume U.S. service members are doing the right thing. When I see my high school friends return on leave from Iraq, I do not want to believe that they have blindly acted unjustly, killing innocent people. I don’t want to believe this because how could I ever tell them they are wrong to follow orders? How could I tell their family that their children are murderers?

The people of America were implicitly told to personalize and stifle these and other notions of American superiority without having the appropriate humanitarian concerns for the citizens of Iraq or Afghanistan. On March 17, 2003, President Bush issued a message to the Iraqi civilians. “[W]e must begin a military campaign...it will be directed against the lawless men who rule your country and not against you” (3). If Bush feels that he can speak and act on behalf of the American people, why would he not feel the same way about Iraqi citizens and Saddam Hussein? It is this lack of critical analysis and self-reflection that allows President Bush’s implied audience to blindly support an argument that now threatens to engulf the entire region in civil war and religious genocide. But what can we do?

As citizens of the United States of America, it is our right and responsibility to uphold the government to the tenets of our constitutive documents. Everyone should begin by learning their rights as laid out in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. Remember that the government is in place to rule by the consent of the will of the people in this nation. When politicians don’t, demand that they do. Read, talk, write, and vote to become informed and active as a citizen. Be critical of the politics and media of our culture and encourage others to do the same. Regardless of political or social positions, look for logical support for any arguments and claims. Only by being assertive about our rights can the American people shape the course of society and change and/or improve the conditions of this country. And just as Burke discussed in 1790, “the desire for national unity, in the present state of the world, is genuine and admirable. But this unity, if attained on a deceptive basis, by emotional trickeries that shift our criticism from the accurate locus of our trouble, is no unity at all” (49).

As citizens reflect on the arguments for the war in Iraq now, it is alarming to read a speech President Bush gave to the UN on September 12, 2002 pleading to resume necessary resolutions to stop a grave and gathering threat that was Iraq:

“We must choose between a world of fear and a world of progress. If we fail to act in the face of danger, the people of Iraq will continue to live in brutal submission...condemning the Middle East to more years of bloodshed and fear. The regime will remain unstable—the region will remain unstable, with little hope of freedom and isolated from the progress of time” (7).

President Bush was right. The citizens of this country did not choose, and our indifference has brought many “more years of bloodshed and fear.”

Bibliography

- Aristotle. Rhetoric. Trans. W. Rhys Roberts. New York: Random House, Inc., 1984.
- Barber, Benjamin R. Fear's Empire: War, Terrorism, and Democracy. New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 2003.
- Bender, Brian. "Analysis Says War Could Cost \$1 Trillion." Boston Globe National News. 1 Aug. 2007.
- Benson, Thomas. Introduction. Landmark Essays on Rhetorical Criticism. Anaheim, CA: Hermagoras Press, 1993.
- Berger, Peter L., and Luckmann, Thomas. The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge. Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1966.
- Blain, Michael. "The Reign of Bush's Terror." Frontiers of Sociology. 6 July 2005.
- Blix, Hans. "Full Text: Blix Address." BBC News. 14 Feb. 2003
< http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/2763653.stm>.
- Brown, David. "Study Claims Iraq's 'Excess' Death Toll Has Reached 655,000." Washington Post. 11 Oct. 2006.
- Burke, Kenneth. "The Rhetoric of Hitler's Battle." Landmark Essays on Rhetorical Criticism. Ed. Thomas W. Benson. Davis, California: Hermagoras Press, 1993. 33-50.
- Bush, George W. "President Bush Addresses the Nation." The Oval Office. Washington, D.C. 17 Mar. 2003.
- . "President Bush Announces Major Combat Operations in Iraq Have Ended." USS Abraham Lincoln. At Sea Off the Coast of San Diego, CA. 1 May 2003.
- . "President Bush Delivers State of the Union Address." U.S. Capitol. Washington, D.C. 29 Jan. 2002.
- . "President Bush: Monday 'Moment of Truth' For World On Iraq." Azores, Portugal. 16 Mar. 2003.

- . "President Declares 'Freedom At War With Fear.'" U.S. Capitol. Washington, D.C.
20 Sept. 2001.
- . "President Outlines War Effort." Virginia Military Institute. Lexington, Virginia
17 April 2002.
- . "President Says Saddam Hussein Must Leave Iraq Within 48 Hours." The Oval Office.
Washington, D.C. 17 Mar. 2003
- . "President Urges Congress to Pass Iraq Resolution Promptly." The Cabinet Room.
Washington, D.C. 24 Sept. 2002.
- . "President's Remarks at the United Nations General Assembly." New York, New York.
12 Sept. 2002.
- . "Presidential Address to the Nation." Treaty Room. Washington, D.C. 7 Oct
2001.
- . "Statement by the President in His Address to the Nation." The Oval Office.
Washington, D.C. 11 Sept. 2001.
- "CBS Poll: 76% Say War's Going Badly." CBS News. 24 May 2007
<<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/05/24/opinion/polls/main2846638.shtml>>.
- Chomsky, Noam. 9-11. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2001.
- Cloud, Dana. "The Null Persona: Race and the Rhetoric of Silence in the Uprising of '34."
Readings on the Rhetoric of Social Protest. 2nd Edition. Ed. Charles E. Morris. State
College, Pennsylvania: Strata Publishing, Inc., 2006. 411-436.
- . "Operation Desert Comfort." Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice. 2nd
Edition. Ed. Sonja K. Foss. Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc., 1989. 303-
319.
- Danner, Mark. The Secret Way to War: The Downing Street Memo and the Iraq War's Buried
History. New York: New York Book Reviews, 2006.

- Foss, Sonja K. Introduction. Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice. 2nd ed. Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc., 1989.
- Griffin, Leland M. "The Rhetoric of Historical Movements." Readings on the Rhetoric of Social Protest. 2nd Edition. Ed. Charles E. Morris. State College, Pennsylvania: Strata Publishing, Inc., 2006. 9-14.
- Herold, Marc. "Afghanistan's Civilian Deaths Mount." BBC News. 3 Jan. 2002.
- Iraq Coalition Casualties. Ed. Michael White. 20 June 2007 < <http://icasualties.org/oif/>>.
- Ivie, Robert. Democracy and America's War on Terror. Tuscaloosa, Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 2005.
- Lakoff, George. Don't Think of an Elephant! Know your Values and Frame the Debate. White River Junction, Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing Co., 2004.
- Largio, Devon M. "Uncovering the Rationales for the War on Iraq: The Words of the Bush Administration, Congress, and the Media from September 12, 2001 to October 11, 2002." Thesis. University of Illinois, 2004.
- Leonhardt, David "What \$1.2 Trillion Can Buy." New York Times. 17 Jan. 2007.
- Murphy, John M. "'Our Mission and Our Moment': George W. Bush and September 11th." Rhetoric & Public Affairs. 6.4, 2003. 607-632.
- Murphy, Troy A. "Romantic Democracy and the Rhetoric of Heroic Citizenship." Communication Quarterly. Vol. 51, Iss. 2, pg. 192; Spring 2003.
- Murray, Mark. "Republicans Abandoning Bush, NBC/WSJ Poll." 13 June 2007
<<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/19209733/>>.
- Novotny, Daniel D. "What is Terrorism?" International Journal of Terrorism and Political Hot Spots. Vol. 1, Iss. 1. Hauppauge, New York: 2004.

- Rackow, Sharon. "How the USA Patriot Act Will Permit Government Infringement upon the Privacy of Americans in the Name of 'Intelligence' Investigations." Nov. 2003, 152. University of Pennsylvania Law Review. 1651-1696.
- Schudson, Michael. The Good Citizen: A History of American Civic Life. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2002.
- Shane, Scott. "Agency is Target in Cheney Fight on Secrecy Data." New York Times. 22 June 2007.
- Tulis, Jeffrey K. The Rhetorical Presidency. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987.
- United Nations. Security Council Resolution 1441. 8 Nov. 2002
<<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N02/682/26/PDF/N0268226.pdf?OpenElement>>.
- United States Senate. J.R. 23. Authorization for Use of Military Force. 18 Sept. 2001
- United States of America Patriot Act. H.R. 3162. 107th Congress. 24 Oct. 2001.
- Wichelns, Herbert A. "The Literary Criticism of Oratory." Landmark Essays on Rhetorical Criticism. Ed. Thomas W. Benson. Davis, California: Hermagoras Press, 1993. 1-32.
- Wilson, Joseph C. "What I Didn't Find in Africa." New York Times. 6 July 2003.
- Woodward, Bob. Plan of Attack. New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 2004.
- Zulaika, Joseba and Douglass, William A. Terror and Taboo: The Follies, Fables, and Faces of Terrorism. London: Routledge, 1996.