

The Iraq War Discourse of President George W. Bush: Reconstituting the Soviet-style
Threat, Justifying American Power and Manifesting the Unipolar Worldview

by

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Abstract: The ubiquity of American power throughout the world lends significant salience to Presidential rhetoric. In the months following the September 11, 2001 attacks upon the United States, the ethos of the Presidency allowed George W. Bush to single-handedly bring the issue of Iraq to the forefront of world discourse, portending the American intent to use hard power to uproot Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein. As the War in Iraq loomed over the globe, and the President made the case for aggressively dealing with the Iraqi dictator, significant dissonance was displayed by a variety of opponents to its prosecution. However, such dissonance may not have been predicated as much upon the concept of disarming and/or eliminating Saddam Hussein as it was perhaps based upon the manner in which the rhetorical case was presented to the world community. Bush's rhetorical attempts to persuasively establish a linkage between the Iraq issue and the greater War on Terror led to questionable philosophical and strategic arguments. Cold War concepts of Manichaeism and evil were amalgamated with undergirding concepts of American Exceptionalism and American unipolarist philosophy to dominate the President's message. It is contended here that Bush's strategy was and remains to create the image of a new opposing pole in order to justify American unipolar hegemony, and the persuasive influences employed by the President were a troubling concoction for much of the world audience; the dissonance displayed was rooted not in the justice of the war, but rather in the overt justification of American hegemony. In the end, the raw display of American power on the persuasive front and in Iraq—dictating action rather than successfully persuading doubters of its prudence—won the day; but it indeed may have been somewhat of a political and philosophical Pyrrhic victory, auguring greater political troubles ahead for the United States of America.

The contemporary study of American Presidential rhetoric is of great import. The application of power is often legitimized through rhetorical persuasion; and, in the case of American Presidents, such power, and its concomitant rhetoric, becomes the fulcrum upon which many global issues turn. Regardless of the oratorical ability of the individual President, the language, tone, style and substance of messages delivered by American Chief Executives in a world reduced to the scale of a global village are more often than not incisively scrutinized by myriad and often disparate audiences according to their own perspectives, and often for their own ends. The motivation for such scrutiny is the ubiquitous effect that policy decisions made in the United States can potentially have on the rest of the world. Such potential is, of course, based upon the unprecedented power that the United States possesses at this point in history, and is distinctly predicated upon an American President's ability to enact many aspects of policy expeditiously—unchecked by Congress, or a contending, counterbalancing world power. It has been noted that the United States of America “bestrides the globe like a colossus,”¹ and this has become the operant and generally accepted (if grudgingly by some) norm in the world ever since the collapse of the Soviet Bloc. Based upon a President's very words, leaders of sovereign nations are at times compelled to make decisions in reaction to American desires, rather than as a result of their own proactive motivations.

Given that the significance of the study of American Presidential rhetoric, beyond historical value, lies in the ubiquity of American hegemony, which influences every facet of the culture of the globalized world, it stands to reason that, beyond the immediate implications of the rhetoric, the long-term consequences of the chosen rhetorical

¹ Nye Jr., J. S. (Winter 2002/2003). “Limits of American power.” *Political Science Quarterly*, 117, 4, pp. 545-560. Quoted from “America's World,” *The Economist*, 23 October, 1999.

stratagems must be given careful consideration. The determinants that formulate American foreign policy strategy are myriad, and Presidential rhetoric emanates from the carefully constructed messages that portend future American action, which, in turn, directly affect international reactions.

For instance, in the recent case of President George W. Bush's persuasive attempt at garnering domestic, and especially international, support for the prosecution of war against Saddam Hussein's despotic regime in Iraq, a significant lacuna emerged between the perspective of the United States and many in the world community. The question that must be posited here is whether this veritable chasm resulted from the policy direction alone, whether it was a consequence of the manner in which the message was delivered to the world, or whether it was a combination of the two. This gives way to the purpose of this study, which aims to dissect the public political rhetoric of President George W. Bush in the months leading up to the prosecution of the War in Iraq. The goal of this endeavor is to: (1) identify the most significant of the varying audiences to which the President directed his persuasive rhetoric; (2) explicate the strategies he utilized to achieve maximum persuasion; (3) theorize about the influences that undergirded and contributed to the chosen form of the rhetoric in order to determine the cause of the weighty domestic and international dissonance that arose; and, finally (4) ponder whether the strategies undertaken by the President are more damaging to American global prominence in the long-term than is readily obvious.

Analytical Approach

This speech analysis will focus upon addresses made by the President between September 12, 2002 and March 17, 2003. The President's September 12, 2002 speech to

the United Nations can be seen as the moment at which President Bush garnered the complete focus of the world upon Iraq. In turn, March 17, 2003, seemed a fitting place to halt analysis of the speeches—not because the President would significantly change his approach thereafter—but rather because it was on that date that the deadline for Saddam Hussein to abdicate power and leave Iraq to avoid war was set—and ignored by the Iraqi despot. Because the President spoke on the issue nearly every day during the given time period (sometimes multiple times in the same day), and his message and approach remained solidly consistent, it was possible for the purposes of this study to select representative speeches for analysis. A total of fifteen speeches are quoted in this study, chosen for their significance, or overall representative nature. The inclusion of every speech would have been superfluous as the President spoke on the issue in one forum or another on a daily basis—with each speech mirroring the others. Additionally, two speeches are quoted from outside of the timeframe in order to set context for specific points.

The critical approach utilized to examine the President’s rhetoric reflects best Kenneth Burke’s (as communicated by Karlyn Kohrs Campbell) “Dramatistic Approach” to Criticism. As Campbell asserts in explicating the application of Burke’s approach,

Dramatistic Criticism analyzes language and thought as modes of action rather than as means of conveying information. This system rests on the assumption that man is a symbol-using creature and that the most crucial element determining changes in attitude and action is the creation and identification of meaning.²

She goes on to point out that the audience is integral in this approach because he/she/they must interpret the meaning based upon their own perspective. She asserts that there is an ethical element to such criticism, and stresses the value in “judging the consequences of a

discourse or a genre on society and in judging the consequences of the formal elements of a discourse or a genre on future rhetorical activity.”³ Consideration of the discourse’s influence on the decision-making process of the audience(s) and the ethics of the given approach would do this.⁴

This study will apply the following aspects of Dramatistic critical scrutiny: (1) *The Verbal Behavior of the President*: In discerning the rhetor’s purpose, “[t]he critic must attempt to recreate the ‘universe of discourse’ or the system of thought that the rhetorician tries to create through his action.”⁵ This will be done by interspersing concepts that, it is contended here, are fundamental to the arguments made by the President in his War rhetoric. (2) *The Symbolic Strategies of the President*: According to Campbell, divining the President’s language techniques while remaining cognizant of the external influences (i.e., the War on Terror and events in Iraq) which encourage a specific use of strategies by the rhetor is important. This study will attempt to scrutinize the President’s linguistic and strategic choices according to what have been revealed through research to be arguably the most salient influences. (3) *The Situational Truths Affecting the President’s Approach*: This aspect entails the consideration of the factors and overarching conditions that cause a specific audience to react to and interpret the received message in their own specific way. Campbell imparts that “The critic must explain the fusion of elements that creates acceptance for a way of perceiving and structuring reality.”⁶ This will be accomplished by interspersing historical factors that influenced the

² Campbell, Karlyn K. (1972). *Critiques of Contemporary Rhetoric*. Belmont CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., Inc., pg. 32. See also Burke, Kenneth (1962) *A Grammar of Motives and A Rhetoric of Motives*. New York: Meridian Books.

³ Campbell, pg. 34

⁴ Campbell, pp. 34-35

⁵ Campbell, pg. 36

⁶ Campbell, pg. 36

President and his audiences. (4) *The Genre of the Discourses*: This aspect entails determining the relationship between various discourses linking multiple speeches on the subject. By examining the President's rhetoric during the emotional and military build-up from September 12, 2002 to March 17, 2003, it is a given that all of these speeches are related by the subject matter: Iraq. (5) *Ethics*: Campbell asserts that this aspect is accomplished by "[a]ssessing the consequences of rhetorical acts for society,"⁷ and for this case, the world at large. This study will, in its limited capacity, attempt to discern how the President's Iraq War rhetoric, for good or ill, will affect the audiences, and the nation.⁸

Framing the Rhetoric: The Determinants of President Bush's Approach

The Historic Rhetorical Advantage of American Presidents

The precipitate rise in the salience of Iraq as an international issue of contention in 2002 was not due to any discernible or sudden act of provocation committed by Saddam Hussein. Nor was the perpetual, and often blatant, defiance of the wishes of the international community by the Iraqi despot the central provenance for the urgency with which his Regime was suddenly scrutinized. Instead, the international significance that the Iraq issue took on is more precisely attributable to the substantial rhetorical influence of the office of the President of the United States. Through persuasive public speech, President George W. Bush was able to garner the focus of the nation, and the world, upon that Middle Eastern nation—disrupting a perceived stasis of power in the region. Saddam Hussein's rancorous behavior, so long tolerated by the world prior to, and certainly since, the 1991 Gulf War, would arise as an expedient pretext for the President's message of

⁷ Campbell, pg. 37

⁸ Campbell, pp. 36-39

decisive action. Exemplary of this raw Presidential rhetorical power, and representative of Bush's cognizance of it, is a portion of a speech he made on December 3, 2002:

September the 11th delivered a chilling message to our country, and that is oceans no longer protect us. And therefore, it is my obligation to make sure that we address gathering threats overseas before they could do harm to the American people. And that's why—*that's why I elevated the issue of Iraq*⁹ (emphasis added).

The intrinsic urgency of the statement, succinctly communicated through the designation of Saddam Hussein as an imminent threat, is bolstered by the rhetorical association of the Iraqi despot with the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and with the vulnerability that the American people have felt in their wake. Moreover, the President makes tacit reference to the inherent power of the office he holds, by introducing the notion that what he "elevates" *becomes the issue*.

President Theodore Roosevelt attributed the unique persuasive prerogative American Presidents command to the very nature of the office itself, which he dubbed the "Bully Pulpit." His cognizance of the innate significance of Presidential courtship of the people through public oratory was, however, somewhat of a revelation in his own day. The office had not always been considered so. In fact, prior to the early twentieth century, Presidents spoke directly to the American public only on rare occasion. Aside from the constitutional responsibility of presenting a State of the Union address directly to Congress, most Presidential discourse was limited to direct dealings with the other branches of government, and even then was often restricted to written, rather than direct dialogue.¹⁰ Thus, when, in 1906, Teddy Roosevelt overtly campaigned for public support

⁹ Bush, President George W., "Excerpts from the Remarks by the President in Louisiana Welcome, December 3, 2002." Louisiana, 3 December 2002.

<<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/09/20020912-1.html>> (1 September 2003).

¹⁰ Gelderman, Carol. "All the President's Words." *The Wilson Quarterly*, 19, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 68. 8 November 2003.

<<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=1&did=000000004595591&SrchMode=1&sid=8&Fmt=3&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=PQD&TS=1068322508&clientId=13322>>. The Presidential reticence to propound issues directly to the American public, and the public's acceptance of this approach as appropriate, are a reflection of a time in which the nature of the American Presidency was defined far differently than today. Exemplary of this attitude, Gelderman writes, "Even Abraham Lincoln rarely addressed the public. Indeed, Tulis points out, during a rare speech on the eve of the Civil War, Lincoln

of a railroad regulation measure called the Hepburn Act—essentially going over the collective head of Congress—he did more than win the immediate battle; he changed the very nature of the office itself to become what political scientist Jeffrey Tulis has dubbed the “rhetorical presidency.”¹¹

Indicative of the immediate hold such a concept had on Teddy Roosevelt’s successors, Woodrow Wilson would state in 1913 that it is fundamentally necessary for a President “to woo public opinion, for he ‘has no [other] means of compelling Congress to accept his initiatives.’”¹² For Wilson, the Framers’ vision of coequal branches of government attending to separate responsibilities—fostering an efficient government—was a myth, and in actual practice a hindrance to efficiency. Wilson’s philosophy relegated Congress to a secondary position of sorts. As Crockett attests,

Thus, Wilson took a system of coequal branches pursuing different functions and redefined it as one in which Congress plays second fiddle to a newly invigorated executive, performing primarily one function. A system designed to allow the president to engage in energetic leadership during crisis times now calls for the president to do so at all times, and a system designed to give Congress first place in the deliberative process now makes the president the *uber*-representative.¹³

Indeed, Wilson’s legacy as President reflected a keen ability to propound issues and influence people.¹⁴

was cheered enthusiastically when he declined to utter a word about ‘the present distracted condition of the country.’”

¹¹ Tulis in Crockett, David A. “George W. Bush and the Unrhetorical Rhetorical Presidency.” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 6, no. 3 (2003) 465-486,

<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/rhetoric_and_public_affairs/v006/6.3crockett.html> ((26 November 2003)

¹² Gelderman, 68 online

¹³ Crockett, 469

¹⁴ Schlesinger, Arthur J. “Back to the Womb.” *Foreign Affairs*, 74, no. 4 (July, 1995) pp. 2-8.

<http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:pqd&rft_val_fmt=ori:fmt:kev:mtx:journal &genre=article&rft_id=xri:pqd:did=000000006656203 &svc_dat=xri:pqil:fmt=text&req_dat=xri:pqil:pq_clntid=13322> (23 November 2003). Wilson’s legacy, of course, to most contemporary Americans has much more to do with America’s 1917 entrance into World War I, his 14 Points for Peace and the concept of the League of Nations. America had always been internationalist when it came to commerce and culture, but had been just as assertively isolationist with regard to foreign policy dealings with the other great powers of the world, heeding to the sage advice of such immortal and quintessential American statesman as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson who advised American leaders to always “steer clear of permanent alliances.” With the traditional European balance of power imperilled in Europe, Wilson persuaded the isolationist majority (if for a brief time) in the United States that American entrance into the war was necessary to accomplish a higher moral calling. Wilson, cognizant that national interest would not persuade his detractors, espoused the loftier goals of

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By the time Franklin Delano Roosevelt came to office, persuasive Presidential speech was an essential component of the President's function. From his measured utilization of persuasive rhetoric attempting to counter the debilitating pessimism inherent to the Great Depression, to the contentious national debate in which he battled public dissonance over the war in Europe in the late 1930s and early 1940s, which pitted isolationists—in the public and in Congress—against his own prescient vision of the necessity of American involvement on an international scale,¹⁵ FDR in particular is singled out by many as a master of persuasive Presidential oratory.¹⁶

With the advent of such now ubiquitous phenomena as satellite television, the internet, and other tools of globalization, combined with the centrality of the United States as the globe's lone superpower, contemporary American Presidents are often speaking to multiple audiences simultaneously. Due to this, American Presidents employ significant calculus in developing their public speeches. In the age of globalization and post-modernism,¹⁷ in which messages are received and simultaneously transmitted by various branches of media and official outlets (e.g., other governments) for what is often instantaneous dissemination and consumption by peoples of all persuasions throughout the world, it stands to reason that many Presidential messages are layered for multiple audiences. The seemingly universal access to instantaneous information confirms the

establishing a new world order—a new balance of power through the rubric of a League of Nations that would settle and avoid international disputes, engendering a more peaceful world. International enthusiasm for the concept, and the man, ran high. Domestic isolationism, however, rapidly dismantled his dream, giving credence to his own 1919 prophecy that, were the League of Nations to fail, then, he said, “I can predict with absolute certainty that within another generation there will be another world war.” His remarks were prescient indeed.

¹⁵ Schlesinger, 2 online

¹⁶ Gelderman, 68 online. The “fireside chat” became a common term among Americans, and the effectiveness of his communicative ability is reflected in his indefatigable electability—he died 83 days into his fourth term. Surprisingly to some, during his more than 12 years of Presidential communication and leadership, FDR only delivered 28 such chats. The general impression among most today that there were so many more “fireside chats” is attributable to the resonance and effectiveness of the few that he actually held. His words were used sparingly, but carried significant weight.

¹⁷ In this case a plurality of interpretations of what, if any, “truth” is attached to rhetoric by the audience. See pg. 253 in Sturken, Marita, and Cartwright, Lisa (2001). *Practices of looking: An introduction to visual culture*. New York: Oxford University Press.

overt complexity of “[t]he global media landscape of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.”¹⁸

Due to the transition of the American Presidency from relatively private office to that of the public symbol of American government, the quality and permanence of Presidential rhetoric has at times been diluted by its ever increasing quantity.¹⁹ However, issues that garner the most Presidential attention, and therefore rhetoric, distinguish themselves to the world as issues of salience—issues that must be confronted. To that end, it is reasonable to infer that all Presidential rhetoric is noted, but repetitive Presidential rhetoric becomes meaningful—and the subject matter becomes central, especially when it has direct effect on the particular audience.

Concepts of the Nature of American Power Briefly Explicated

As Presidents became more influential out of necessity, the nation became more prominent on the world stage largely through the incremental demise of the old world order of powers through catastrophic world wars. An American sense of destiny was infused within the effective application of the nation’s growing power and influence.²⁰ The transcendence over time of American power, prestige and influence is thought to be best attributed to the U.S.’ overall post-World War II strategy in its leadership of the rest of the West against Communism: the so-called Cold War Hub-and-Spokes Model. As Peter Gowan explains:

¹⁸ Sturken & Cartwright, pg. 183

¹⁹ Gelderman, 68 online. Gelderman imparts that, “[a]lthough [Teddy] Roosevelt and Wilson wrote their own speeches, the plebiscitary presidency they introduced gave rise to a new speechmaking machinery in the White House. A president who leads a nation rather than only a government must be a loquacious president, and most recent ones have been loquacious to a fault. This change has been abetted but not caused by the rise of television and other mass media. Gerald Ford, not generally remembered as a man of many words, delivered a speech on average every six hours in 1976 (including such things as press conference announcements as well as formal speeches). Jimmy Carter addressed his countrymen even more often, adding 9,873 single-spaced pages to the Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States. Ronald Reagan increased this bulk with another 13,000 pages, and Bill Clinton, in his first year as president, spoke publicly three times as often as Reagan did in his first 22 months.”

²⁰ See pp. 17-31 in Kissinger, Henry (1994). *Diplomacy*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

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this deep structure derived from the ability of the United States to create a particular kind of hub-and-spokes structure of relations which ensured that for each of the main core capitalist states its political relationship with the U.S. hub was more crucial to its vital interests than any other possible relationship with any other power.²¹

Through this structure, then, the United States maintained itself not just as the largest capitalist country among capitalist countries. Rather, it became the integral center of world capitalism—upon which all aspects of capitalism became increasingly dependent. Instead of brute force and direct control, America exercised, and in many cases continues to exercise through the perpetuation of this strategy, what is deemed as “Soft Power” by Joseph S. Nye Jr. of Harvard University.

Soft Power can be characterized as nearly irresistible influence, when properly utilized, that leads to an amicable acquiescence by a subordinating power, or powers, to, in the current case, the United States’ wishes. Such influence is not predicated directly upon military power or strong-armed tactics (i.e., Hard Power), although such possibilities would lie in the background as an augmentation of this soft influence. Rather, it is predicated upon the notion that the interconnectivity of the “hub” nation with those it wishes to influence, coupled with the notion of its magnanimity and benevolence, and a general acceptance of its culture as agreeable, encourages cooperation to occur long before any drastic means of pressure would ever need to be implemented, or even considered.

The U.S.’ integral involvement in formulating organizations that regulate the course of economics, politics and defense throughout the world has solidified America’s potential to wield soft power over the years. The creation of such extra-governmental world institutions and pacts as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade

²¹ Gowan, P. (Jul/Aug 2003). U.S. hegemony today. *Monthly Review*, 55, 3, pg. 30.

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Organization (WTO), the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), among others, in the second half of the twentieth century, enabled the United States to enhance its soft power by creating liberal international economic rules and institutions that were consistent with the liberal and democratic structures (such as concepts of capitalistic free-trade in more open markets) that America unswervingly espouses with freedom. Concomitant to the general need for U.S. leadership in the face of the Soviet threat, the creation of these institutions allowed and indeed fostered U.S. power to become ever-increasingly legitimate, and appropriate, in the eyes of others, and America therefore encountered less resistance over the years to its wishes. American culture and ideology became attractive to people all over the world, leading to a general willingness to follow America's lead in most, if not all, matters that America deemed important.²²

However, it must be noted here at the outset that such leadership—the maintenance of hegemony—though tangible and necessary in the short term as the world transitioned from the Cold War to a new reality, was becoming increasingly difficult to justify in the eyes of the world for the long-term. The absence of a clear and present danger threatening to overwhelm the West and its ideologies led to the genesis of a rational issue for debate expressed by many of the U.S.' stalwart Cold-War allies. At its heart was a questioning of the necessity of America as a hegemonic leader. In other words, in the wake of a general recognition of some impermanent form of unipolarism

²² Nye, online. Nye therefore contends that the base concept, then, of soft power is that if a nation in the position of the United States can establish international rules that are consistent with its society, it will be less likely to have to change—and less likely to be challenged for its leadership role. If it can help support institutions that encourage other countries to channel or limit their activities in ways it prefers, it may not need as many costly “carrots and sticks” to encourage their acquiescence in various matters. “In short, the universality of a country's culture and its ability to establish a set of favorable rules and institutions that govern areas of international activity are critical sources of power.”

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(rather than the bipolar norm which had engendered American leadership) as a logical consequence to the winning of the Cold War, the world's Western powers, complicit in U.S. hegemony in fighting the Soviet Bloc, were largely becoming reluctant to accept a transition to this state as a more permanent status quo (this will be expanded upon later in relation to the President's rhetoric). To that end, "French foreign minister Hubert Vedrine argued in 1999 that the United States had gone beyond its superpower status of the twentieth century," by stating that "U.S. supremacy today extends to the economy, currency, military areas, lifestyle, language and the products of mass culture that inundate the world, forming thought and fascinating even the enemies of the United States."²³ Indeed, as the Clinton Administration found, such questioning became more and more vociferous, and may have even contained some limited (if clearly palpable) rancor toward the United States and its position of dominance:

Europe responded to American unilateralism with a quest for a renewed multilateralism to diminish U.S. dominance. France assumed the lead in the new pursuit. French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine dwelled on the need for Europe to counterbalance the United States. He instructed the French International Relations Institute: "We cannot accept either a politically unipolar world, nor a culturally uniform world, nor the unilateralism of a single hyperpower. And that is why we are fighting for a multipolar, diversified and multilateral world." He informed French ambassadors in August 1997: "Today there is one sole great power-the United States of America... [T]his power carries in itself, to the extent that there is no counterweight, . . . a unilateral temptation [and] the risk of hegemony." France, he assured the ambassadors, intended "to contribute . . . to the emergence of several poles in the world capable of being a factor of equilibrium." Addressing the French Institute of International Relations, he wondered whether the United States could accept having real partners. Europe's opposition to American unipolarism reached far beyond France to include spokesmen of Germany, the Netherlands, and other members of the European Union. Dutch Prime Minister Wim Kok declared, in March 1998, that the EU should increase Europe's power in the world and make it "a counterweight to the United States."²⁴

Significantly, this level of feeling was, and still is, not universal as Nye points out by stating, "Some countries chafe under the weight of American power more than others.

²³ Nye, online

²⁴ Graebner, online

Hegemony is sometimes used as a term of opprobrium by political leaders in Russia, China, the Middle East, France, and others. The term is used less often or less negatively in countries where American soft power is strong.”²⁵ Nevertheless, the preponderance of opinion among the U.S.’ allies was clearly swinging more and more toward the desire for self-empowerment.

The Immediate Political Climate Affecting the Rhetoric on Iraq

Despite these undertones, America’s importance to the world’s stasis of power became abundantly clear as the twenty-first century began. On September 11, 2002, much of the world had commemorated the first anniversary of the terrorist attacks on the United States perpetrated by 19 Al Qaeda hijackers. September 11, 2001 had by this time become more than a historical date for Americans; indeed, its very utterance had become a veritable clarion call to action among a majority in the United States.²⁶ The President, perhaps cognizant of the enduring significance of the terrorist attacks to Americans and the world, declared just days after the September 11, 2001 attacks that “this administration has now found its mission.”²⁷ That mission was to decisively and unequivocally respond to the deaths of over 3,000 civilians (not to mention the symbolically significant destruction of world landmarks on American soil); and to further take proactive steps to eliminate the threat of further catastrophic terror to the citizens of

²⁵ Nye, online.

²⁶ Reflective of this notion was a statement made by the President on September 11, 2002 at a commemoration held on Ellis Island, in which he stated, “There is a line in our time, and in every time, between the defenders of human liberty, and those who seek to master the minds and souls of others. Our generation has now heard history’s call, and we will answer it.” See “Our Generation had Now Heard History’s Call.” *The Washington Post*, 12, September 2002, pg. A34.
<http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:pqd&rft_val_fmt:kev:mtx:journal&genre=article&rft_id=xri:pqd:did=000000172885281&svc_dat=xri:pqil:fmt=text&req_dat=xri:pqil:pq_clntid=13322> (15 November 2003).

²⁷ Bruni, Frank. “For President, A Mission and a Role in History.” *New York Times*. (Late Edition (East Coast)). New York, N.Y.: Sep 22, 2001. pg. A.1. See also “A Call to War,” *The Washington Post*. (Final Edition) Washington, D.C.: 21 September 2001. pg. A.36.<http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=z39.882003&res_id=xri:pqd&rft_val_fmt=ori:fmt:kev:mtx:journal&genre=article&rft_id=xri:pqd:did=00000081712779&svc_dat=xri:pqil:fmt=text&req_dat=xri:pqil:pq_clntid=13322.

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the United States, and beyond. This approach would come to be identified as the newly formed “Bush Doctrine,” the tenets of which displaced

the passive deterrent posture of Cold War years—a posture that made a virtue out of being defenseless against the greatest danger—with a more dynamic strategy depending heavily on preemption and active defense. The president and his key advisers believe the diverse menagerie of menaces the nation now faces includes some adversaries who cannot be deterred, and therefore have to be killed or disarmed.²⁸

Enemies would be confronted before they could act, and American power would be utilized in a more proactive manner—reversing any hints of the nation’s isolationist past, or its strategy of Cold War *détente*. Hard power would be more of an option—and sometimes the first option.

The most tangible immediate response by the Bush Administration was the declaration of a U.S. led global War on Terrorism. The people of the United States, needing little persuasion, supported the President in numbers never before seen in history as the President’s public approval ratings soared to, and remained at record setting levels (and continued to dwell at a significantly high level up to the prosecution of the War in Iraq).²⁹ NATO invoked its own doctrine, Article Five of the NATO charter, originally designed for a rapid response to Soviet aggression, by declaring that the attack on the United States was tantamount to an attack on the Alliance itself.³⁰

²⁸ Thompson, Loren B. “The Bush Doctrine.” The Wall Street Journal. (Eastern edition). New York, N.Y.: 13 June 2002. pg. A.16

²⁹ Gregg II, Gary L., “Crisis Leadership: The Symbolic Transformation of the Bush Presidency,” *Perspectives on Political Science* 32, no. 3: 143. Summer 2003
<http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:pqd&rft_val_fmt=ori:fmt:kev:mtx:journal&genre=article&rft_id=xri:pqd:did=000000417036251&svc_dat=xri:pqil:fmt=text&req_dat=xri:pqil:pq_clntid=13322> (8 November 2003).

³⁰ Kaminski, Matthew, Hofheinz, Paul & Frank, Robert. “Geopolitics Breaks Both Ways for the U.S. --- NATO Takes Singular Step Of Support After Attack; Elsewhere, It's Tougher.” The Wall Street Journal. (Eastern edition). New York, N.Y.: 13 September 2001. pg. A.16.
<http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:pqd&rft_val_fmt=ori:fmt:kev:mtx:journal&genre=article&rft_id=xri:pqd:did=000000080521094&svc_dat=xri:pqil:fmt=text&req_dat=xri:pqil:pq_clntid=13322>

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Domestically, a patriotic fervor had swept the United States, undergirding the President's strong support. The demand to buy flags was unquenchable, and displays of unity were evident from bumper stickers on cars, to mass e-mails displaying the World Trade Towers or ridiculing Osama bin Laden, to signs on businesses and homes alike declaring such patriotic phrases as "united we stand." Blood donations reached unprecedented levels, as well as charitable donations to a wide array of organizations. The heroism of rescue workers, firemen and police officers who perished in the attacks was celebrated, and their collective memory codified into the American narrative. Leaders such as New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani—controversial only days before—became a symbol of stalwart leadership in a time of terrible tragedy. Sporting events were postponed for a full week after the attacks, and many questioned the true worth of their own occupations in the wake of the finality of the tragedies.

The government was reorganized profoundly with the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security; an umbrella department designed to increase the cohesiveness among formerly separate sub-agencies in anti-terror efforts. Emergency powers were given to the government and the Justice Department to deal with the threat of a repeat attack of the same, or greater, magnitude in the United States. The Patriot Act, giving broad powers to American law enforcement to extra-Constitutionally act against citizens or individuals perceived to be a threat to the nation (provided there existed appropriate pretext), was proposed by the President and enacted into law by Congress. Thousands of citizens suspected to be in some way affiliated with Al Qaeda or like organizations were detained without access to attorneys or normal Constitutional means of defense. The concept of safety trumped the significance of individual rights for those

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who would be suspected of nefarious intentions.³¹ The defense of American ideals came with restrictions. Patriotic fervor muffled protests, and dissension was at times interpreted as divisive, rather than democratic.

The U.S. Congress, and much of the world, initially gave the President unwavering support in the War on Terror. The conflict was soon framed by the United States' administration as a battle for the survival of Western Democratic civilization, as President Bush proclaimed that "you are either with us, or you are with the terrorists," thereby rhetorically compelling nations to take sides in a struggle of good versus evil.³² Traditional American allies—and even nations not often inclined to work in lock-step with the United States—pledged and actively offered their support. Such support allowed the Global War on Terrorism to begin in earnest.

Although fought on many fronts (e.g., diplomatically and financially), the most tangible response that signalled the initiation of the war was the U.S.' swift military annexation of power from the Muslim fundamentalist Taliban in Afghanistan through the combined use of the Northern Alliance, U.S. Special Forces and overwhelming U.S. air power in October and November of 2001. Such activities could not have met with such high degrees of rapid military success were it not for the logistical cooperation of nations such as Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and others in the immediate region.

With the expeditious fall of the Taliban regime, and the subsequent establishment of a successor government in Kabul, American public and media speculation turned to the next plan of action to be taken by the United States. For instance, *Fox News* in the United States sent reporter Geraldo Rivera on a world tour to nations that, according to

³¹ Bassiouni, M Cherif, (30, December 2001). "Beware Patriotism when It Seeks to Take Away Rights." Chicago Tribune (Chicagoland Final Edition); pg. 3.

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the U.S. government, were known to contain elements of significant Al Qaeda influence, such as Somalia and Yemen, to attempt to determine if one of these would be the U.S.' next military target. Yet, despite this wild speculation and conjecture, there seemed to be many clear indications that the Regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq was the singular nation in the cross hairs of the United States as the next target for the War on Terror. Though at times clandestine, rumblings about the possibility of finally "eliminating" the problem of Saddam Hussein in Iraq were quite evident at various levels within the Bush Administration and Congress immediately following September 11, 2001.³³ No direct connection would ever be established (as of the time of this writing) between the Regime of Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda, or the September 11 attacks, yet the U.S. increasingly reserved its most bellicose rhetoric for Iraq as the next front for the military side of the Global War on Terrorism. As speculation on the feasibility of eliminating Saddam Hussein increased in the White House, the U.S. Congress and in the press, tensions on many fronts were ratcheted upwards.

As 2002 segued into 2003, and the prosecution of an overall War on Terror continued, the President made Saddam Hussein the focal point of more and more of his public rhetoric. The consistency of Iraq as a central subject of many of the President's speeches soon augured an inevitable transition from oratory to action against the recalcitrant Middle Eastern nation; and, in turn, that inevitability galvanized an already extant domestic and international opposition on multiple levels to contest American power through the immediate opposition of the war. In the coming months, as the U.S. military gathered with significant strength in the deserts of Kuwait, there developed

³² President Bush, addressing Congress and the Nation on September 21, 2001.

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across the globe an ever increasingly tangible state of dissonance displayed in the concurrent forms of public protest—both on the streets and via the internet³⁴—and diplomatic haranguing in international political forums such as the United Nations.³⁵ It was in the face of this very public acrimony at home and throughout the world that President Bush would wage a rhetorical battle of ideas and go on to “respectfully disagree”³⁶ with the protesters and his ever increasingly boisterous political opponents, emphatically continuing to make his case for war. It is that rhetorical case for war with Iraq, the Presidential effort at mass persuasion of various and often disparate audiences, which garners the focus of this study.

Analysis of the President’s Speeches

General Analytical Impressions: Framing the Analysis

Either the Iraqi regime will give up its weapons of mass destruction, or, for the sake of peace, the United States will lead a global coalition to disarm that regime. If any doubt our nation's resolve, our determination, they would be unwise to test it.—*President George W. Bush at the signing of the Iraq Resolution, October 16, 2002*

³³ The Associated Press. (2002, October 8). Blair backs Bush on ousting Saddam. *The New York Times*. Retrieved October 8, 2002, from <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/international/AP-Blair.html>?

³⁴ The public sense of defiance culminated in a set massive, coordinated protests held throughout the world on February 15, 2003. See Cowell, Alan. “1.5 Million Demonstrators In Cities Across Europe Oppose a War Against Iraq,” *New York Times* (Late Edition (East Coast)). New York, N.Y.: Feb 16, 2003. p. 1.20, Frankel, Glenn. “Millions Worldwide Protest Iraq War; Coordinated Effort Yields Huge Turnout in Europe” *The Washington Post*, Washington, D.C.: Feb 16, 2003. p. A.01, MacFarquhar, Neil. “Iraq Pins Hopes on Antiwar Mood at U.N. and in Streets Around the World,” *New York Times*, (Late Edition (East Coast)). New York, N.Y.: Feb 23, 2003. p. 1.12,

³⁵ Such diplomatic dissonance came to a head on March 6, 2003. See Richburg, Keith B. & LaFraniere, Sharon. “No Force Yet, Three Nations Say; France, Russia, Germany To Oppose U.S. at U.N.” *The Washington Post*. Washington, D.C.: Mar 6, 2003. p. A.19. In the article, the rift is succinctly summarized: “France, Russia and Germany jointly declared today that they would block a new U.S.-backed U.N. resolution authorizing war against Iraq, further complicating Washington's hopes for quick passage of the measure.”

³⁶ The President uttered those exact words on February 18, 2003 in response to the protesters. He touted that such protests reflected the best and truest nature of democracy, but the threat posed by Saddam Hussein was underestimated by the opposition. See Komblut, Anne E. “President Undeterred by Antiwar Protests,” *Boston Globe*. Boston, Mass.: Feb 19, 2003. p. A.1, & Lynch, Colum. “Bush to Work for 2nd U.N. Resolution; President Says U.S. Ready to Act if Council Fails to Take Tough Stance on Iraq,” *The Washington Post*. Washington, D.C.: Feb 19, 2003. p. A.24

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There was remarkable consistency in the structure, manner, and tone of the President's speeches as the war approached. During study, two discernible, but related, speech patterns arose, which were ostensibly predicated upon the nature of the physically present, primary audience. The structure of the President's speeches deviated somewhat according to whether the primary audience was strictly domestic (therefore indirectly targeting international audiences, allowing them to be voyeurs through the content of the messages), or whether international audiences were more directly targeted (even if the speech was given in the United States). For domestic audiences, for instance, there was a tangible "evil to good" pattern, in which the President would perpetually begin by defining Saddam Hussein as the antithesis to what is good, and then proceed to close each speech with an appeal to the innate goodness of the American people, and the righteousness of the cause in Iraq. Conversely, for primarily international audiences, the President tended to be much more reliant upon a pragmatic review of the evidence (or, more precisely, Saddam Hussein's history that acted as evidence), attempting to mollify the concerns of those audiences through logical, rather than emotional appeals (although it must be noted that logical and emotional appeals were not mutually exclusive in any of his speeches, and were in fact present in all cases to a greater or lesser degree). However, the core messages themselves were essentially invariable as the President's clear overt intent was legitimization of military action to depose Saddam Hussein. These strategies will be explicated in far greater detail below.

The immediate, and therefore primary audiences (i.e., the actual people in attendance) for a large portion of the political speeches given by President Bush on the subject of Iraq were domestic groups inclined to display outward signs of agreement

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through applause. This was arguably a planned portion of the President's persuasive approach to his greater audiences. The display of outward signs of agreement would tend to suggest (to those amenable to the concept and perhaps ignorant of the reality otherwise) widespread acceptance of the President's proposition of forcefully confronting Saddam Hussein. The amiable tone taken by the President in his speeches was further reflective of an implicit strategy to communicate the notion of acceptance to audiences seeking such heuristic cues. He never invited debate through alluding to the possibility that he may consider another course. Rather, his consistency suggested that he felt he had made the correct decision, and possessed majority support for it. Occasionally, President Bush would allude to the notion that he had not yet decided to prosecute the war—but, in this case, actions on the ground and other rhetorical references trumped this ambiguous rhetorical alternative to action.

The President further conveyed an image that there existed acceptance of his proposed course of action by continuously simplifying the issue, therefore inferring that his audiences already possessed a deep understanding of the nuances of the Iraq situation, and that their affirmative decision of support was therefore clearly justifiable. At the same time, the President would often communicate an awareness of the significant dissonance felt and displayed by many American people, as well as international audiences minimizing their strength, effect and wisdom rhetorically. Bush mostly played to the displays of acceptance he was receiving by classifying dissenting people and nations as outsiders, or backward thinking, and as counter to common sense and “the norm.” The hard and fast Bush philosophies inherent in the so-called Bush Doctrine—preempt rather than await attack, the notion that nations can only either be “with America

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or with the terrorists,” and the refinement of the Clinton “Rogue States” worldview with the more specific “Axis of Evil”—amalgamated to present the American people with a perception that seemed more than clear that action in Iraq was necessary. As a rhetorical extension of the War on Terror, the War with Iraq became logical based upon the perception of a clear and present threat—even when the factual bases for that association were often dubious at best.

It may be helpful to reiterate in greater detail that although, as has been mentioned above, all of the President’s speeches were tailored for wider audiences, the primacy of the immediate audience demonstrably dictated many aspects of the structure of the speeches. The clear uniformity in the messages inherent to the speeches was, perhaps unto itself, indicative of the resolve of the President and the inevitability of the prosecution of the war, save complete acquiescence by Saddam Hussein—or his convenient elimination by other Iraqis. While some of the President’s tactics deviated according to the primary domestic or international nature of each audience, it must be noted that enthusiasm for or opposition to the policy itself was not divided along those lines clearly. One can conceptually divide these audiences into two distinct groups: the “believers” and the “unbelievers.” The believers in the President’s approach to Iraq were those who can be considered as the American right-wing political elite, many different groupings of American citizens who believed in the cause for a variety of reasons, and complicit nations sympathetic to the U.S. cause (perhaps for their own ends as much as anything else). The unbelievers can be characterized as an amalgam of a number of, at times, disparate groups; dissenting American citizens of all sorts; nations, such as many of America’s traditional allies in Europe and contending powers such as Russia and

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China, all basically vehemently opposed to the concept of the war and the American power they were unable to halt; and the so-called “Axis of Evil” nations. Nevertheless, analyzing the President’s speeches along the lines of such affiliations is intrinsically difficult, if not impossible. Instead, an attempt will be made to roughly divide the analysis into the President’s domestic considerations—and applied strategies—and his international approach. With few exceptions, the President’s primary audiences were domestic, and therefore domestic appeals were paramount within his speeches.

Angst Accentuated: Fear Appeals to Accomplish Domestic Persuasion

We must, and we will, prevent terrorist groups and outlaw regimes from threatening the American people with catastrophic harm.—*President George W. Bush during his Weekly Radio Address to the Nation, December 7, 2002*

In nearly all of the President’s public speeches to friendly domestic audiences, Iraq and the urgency to take on Saddam Hussein was immediately associated with the overall War on Terror. In doing this, the President automatically characterized Saddam Hussein conceptually as a “grave threat to peace.”³⁷ This nexus was not created in a concrete way (beyond making non-specific references to the existence of intelligence which was never revealed for public consumption), as no concrete evidence was ostensibly available.³⁸ Rather, it was done rhetorically, utilizing the President’s inherent

³⁷ Bush, President George W., “President Bush Outlines Iraqi Threat.” Cincinnati, Ohio. 7 October 2002. <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/09/200209121.html>> (1 September 2003), and many other speeches.

³⁸ See Coll, Steve. “Saddam was Sure of his own Survival; Aides Say Confusion Reigns on Eve of War.” *The Washington Post*. Washington, D.C.: 3 November 2003. p. A.19. Implicit in the claims made by the President that did not have solid evidentiary backing (such as those detailed above) was a clear reliance upon the prestige and reputation of the U.S. intelligence community, and the possibility that the American government was privy to vital information of which the rest of the world was not cognizant. Such suggestions today remain as dubious as when they were first broached, leading to the notion that there may have been at least some exaggeration in these claims, as demonstrated through the evidence presented above. However, in retrospect, it is worth noting that, according to a Cole’s *Washington Post* article, it is also quite possible, if not probable, that Saddam Hussein had misled everyone around him. In the report, U.S. interrogators when questioned about the lack of progress that pervades the search for the weapons that the world thought Saddam possessed, have stated that in all of their interrogations, each Iraqi military officer or government official denies having had possession, or access to any chemical or biological weapons. Paradoxically, however, each army officer in particular was of the fervent belief that all of the Iraqi units around his position *did* have such weapons. Therefore, it may be more accurate to posit that Saddam Hussein had deceived *everyone*.

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ethos in place of demonstrable evidence, lumping American enemy with American enemy to create the image of an alliance, or at least relationship, that augured the notion that the United States could ultimately expect an attack of greater proportion than September 11—and that such an attack was almost assuredly to come from Iraq in one form or another. To this effect, during the January 28, 2003 State of the Union Address, the President stated “Imagine those 19 hijackers with other weapons and other plans -- this time armed by Saddam Hussein. It would take one vial, one canister, one crate slipped into this country to bring a day of horror like none we have ever known. We will do everything in our power to make sure that that day never comes.”³⁹ Similarly, the President stated in Louisiana on December 3, 2002 that:

We've got to be wise about how we view the world and make sure that the new arrangements, the new alliances aren't allowed to develop. An alliance, for example, where a nation that has weapons of mass destruction uses a *shadowy terrorist network as a forward army, perhaps encouraging them to attack America without leaving any fingerprints*⁴⁰ (emphasis added).

Here, the imminence of an attack masterminded by Saddam Hussein and perpetrated by a surrogate such as Al Qaeda is forcefully inferred. Such imminence harkens back to the same general concepts regarding the Soviet Union during the Cold War in that the Soviets were always portrayed as an antithesis to America, poised to strike. Robert Ivie illustrated this through a rhetorical examination of President Ronald Reagan in 1984. Reagan's stance of strengthening America through military build-up and standing down the Soviet threat led to his ultimate 1983 designation of the Soviet Union as an “Evil Empire.” Reagan's rhetoric often decivilized the Soviets as “a natural menace,” and alluded to a Manichaeian paradigm—a dichotomous paradigm pitting good versus evil in an almost apocalyptic struggle—in which the American led West and the Soviet led East were demarcated by symbols such as the Berlin Wall, which represented to Reagan, “a

³⁹ Bush, President George W., “Excerpts from the State of the Union regarding Iraq,” Capitol Hill.28 January 2003. <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/09/200209121.html>> (1 September 2003).

⁴⁰ Bush, December 3, 2003

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meeting place of light and shadow, tyranny and freedom. To be here (the Berlin Wall) is truly to stand on freedom's edge and in the shadow of a wall that has come to symbolize all that is darkest in the world today."⁴¹ This already extant notion was largely responsible for the American motivation to consolidate its power and influence with its Western and world allies, but was given an indelibly graven image by Reagan's rhetoric.

More lengthy excerpts of President Bush's rhetoric display the continuity in thought with the Reagan designation of Manichaeism, and garner even more insight into the rhetorical strategy of fear. Observe the remarks to this effect made by the President in Cincinnati on October 7, 2002 near the very beginning of the speech:

The threat comes from Iraq. It arises directly from the Iraqi regime's own actions—its history of aggression, and its drive toward an arsenal of terror. Eleven years ago, as a condition for ending the Persian Gulf War, the Iraqi regime was required to destroy its weapons of mass destruction, to cease all development of such weapons, and to stop all support for terrorist groups. The Iraqi regime has violated all of those obligations. It possesses and produces chemical and biological weapons. It is seeking nuclear weapons. It has given shelter and support to terrorism, and practices terror against its own people. The entire world has witnessed Iraq's eleven-year history of defiance, deception and bad faith.

We also must never forget the most vivid events of recent history. On September the 11th, 2001, America felt its vulnerability—even to threats that gather on the other side of the earth. We resolved then, and we are resolved today, to confront every threat, from any source, that could bring sudden terror and suffering to America.⁴²

And again to this effect in his December 3, 2002 speech, the President stated:

But September the 11th brought home a new reality, and it's important for all our citizens to understand that reality. See, a lot of us, when we were raised, never really worried about the homeland. We all believed that two oceans would forever separate us from harm's way, and that if there was a threat gathering overseas, we could pick and choose whether or not we wanted to be involved in dealing with that threat. September the 11th delivered a chilling message to our country, and that is oceans no longer protect us. And therefore, it is my obligation to make sure that we address gathering threats overseas before they could do harm to the American people.

And that's why—that's why I elevated the issue of Iraq. That's why I took our message of peace and freedom to countries around the world. I want them to understand the nature of the man who runs Iraq is the nature of a man who doesn't tell the truth. He says he won't have weapons of mass destruction; he's got them. He's not only got them,

⁴¹ Ivie, Robert L. (1984). Speaking "common sense" about the Soviet threat: Reagan's rhetorical stance. *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 48; pp. 39-50. pg. 42

⁴² Bush, October 7 2002

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he's used them. And he's not only used them in his neighborhood, he's used them on his own people. That's the nature of the man with whom we deal.⁴³

Continuing on this theme, and incorporating the Bush Doctrine as a solution to the threat, the President stated unequivocally on December 7, 2002 (the 61st anniversary of Pearl Harbor, it must be noted) that “[d]isarming that regime (Saddam Hussein in Iraq) is a central commitment of the war on terror.”⁴⁴ President Bush’s message clearly drew no line of demarcation between Al-Qaeda and Iraq, most likely because, for those who supported the war, no line needed to be drawn. They were content to accept the concept of a nexus as a rationale. It was a rhetorical revitalization of the concept of the nefarious, common enemy.

Building Upon Fear Appeals through Propositions of “Evidence”: Saddam Hussein as Imminent Threat and the Reconstitution of the Soviet-style Menace

Some have said we must not act until the threat is imminent. Since when have terrorists and tyrants announced their intentions, politely putting us on notice before they strike? If this threat is permitted to fully and suddenly emerge, all actions, all words, and all recriminations would come too late. Trusting in the sanity and restraint of Saddam Hussein is not a strategy, and it is not an option.—*President George W. Bush, State of the Union Address, January 28, 2003*

All of the President’s speeches dissected for this study contained such heuristic cues, harkening back to Cold War rhetoric, such as the designation of Saddam Hussein as a threat; all of which are predicated upon fear. Some empirical studies, though not all, in the field of communication have demonstrated that a high level of persuasion can be attained through the use of such appeals. This is precisely because the rhetoric of a speaker with an ethos such as the President carries such weight and believability, especially for audience members who do not cognitively consider the matter to be a central issue for their own existence. They will rely upon such cues and speaker ethos to

⁴³ Bush, December 3 2002

⁴⁴ Bush, December 7 2002

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decide as to the veracity of the policy.⁴⁵ To this effect, President Bush often made some form of evidentiary case, the complexity of which depended, it would seem, upon the nature of his immediate audience, in order to reinforce the perceived veracity of his assertions that Saddam Hussein was a grave threat to the region, the world, and most significantly to the United States—or at least to values and ideals that Americans hold dear. The question became, then, was the significance of the Iraqi threat, the imminence of attack by Saddam Hussein, exaggerated by reality of the September 11 terrorist attacks, or was it simply rhetorically exaggerated by the President to garner maximum support for the impending war?

Since the first Gulf War, the American media had regularly focused upon Saddam Hussein, reviewing his history and documenting his actions as often as any other leader in the world. Due to this, the President's audiences were familiar with the man, his history, and his nature. Few if any could argue that Saddam Hussein's regime was anything but despotic, tyrannical and unbelievably cruel. Iraqi citizens of all religious, racial, and social classifications suffered at worst torture and death, and at best oppression under his rule. Moreover, few if any could argue that Saddam Hussein was anything but a megalomaniac driven by the wild ambition of eliminating Israel and uniting the Arabs, through conquest if necessary, as one nation under his dictatorial rule. His well documented admiration of Joseph Stalin and Suleiman the Magnificent (or Conqueror) as authoritarian idols to be emulated bolsters the notion that, were he to be given opportunity, conquest and subjugation would be his method of diplomacy.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Perloff, Richard M. *The Dynamics of Persuasion*. Hillsdale, NJ: Laurence Erlbaum Associates, Inc, 1993. Pp. 159-166.

⁴⁶ The Associated Press. (2002, April 8). Blair backs Bush on ousting Saddam. *The New York Times*. Retrieved 18 October 2003, from <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/international/AP-Blair.html?>

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Having grown up poor and abused, Hussein as a young man joined the Ba'athists during the post British Colonial Rule political maelstrom that engulfed Iraq. Instability was the order of the day as Saddam cut his teeth with the socialistic, pan-Arabist political party as an enforcer and assassin. Exiled to Egypt in the mid-1960s after a failed attempt on the life of a then Iraqi leader, Hussein returned to Iraq in 1968 when the Ba'ath party finally seized power, and he rapidly rose through the ranks. Since taking power in 1979, brutally executing dozens of fellow Ba'athists as "traitors" and "enemy conspirators against the government" on live television, Hussein proved himself to be something less than a good neighbor on the regional front. His 1980 invasion of Iran, in which he enjoyed overwhelming covert support from most of the rest of the world as the stalwart barrier against the Shi'ite Islamic revolution that the Ayatollah Khomeini was intent upon spreading throughout the Muslim world, ended in a bloody stalemate. Chemical weapons were used by his forces—an illegal act internationally, but acquiesced by the West and his neighbors in favor of the service he provided in bottling up Iran. In 1990 he invaded Kuwait without any real pretext or provocation (Iraq charged Kuwait with drilling sideways under ground to draw oil for the Rumaila Oil Fields, among other things⁴⁷). He was, of course, eventually rebuffed by the U.S. led coalition.

His legacy of belligerence also included (1) a robust nuclear program twice dismantled; once by the Israelis in a daring 1981 bombing mission and once by the defection of his sons-in-law who revealed the scope and detail of his plans to Western inspectors. (2) The attempted, and nearly completed manufacture of a "Supergun," a cannon directed at Israel which would have been capable of firing Nuclear shells over

⁴⁷ Alnasrawi, A. (2001). Iraq: Economic sanctions and consequences, 1990-2000. *Third World Quarterly*, 22 No. 2, 205-218.

Jordan into the Jewish state. (3) The usage of chemical weapons to kill some 5,000 ethnic Kurds in the north of Iraq in 1988; it is contended that Saddam Hussein had/has a particular hatred for Kurds, as his abusive father is rumored to have been a Kurd, rather than an Arab. This becomes particularly ironic considering his affinity for Suleiman the Magnificent, a Kurdish conqueror ruling the Seljuks. (4) His active drainage of the Southern Iraqi marshlands traditionally inhabited by the Shi'ite Arab Muslims of Iraq, in an active effort to exterminate their way of life—and therefore, them. And, (5) His overt promises, in order to garner Arab World support, to families of Palestinian suicide bombers of up to \$25,000 for their “heroic actions” while at the same time temporarily suspending oil exports that produced the revenue that fed his people as a show of solidarity with the Palestinians.⁴⁸ Additionally, and perhaps significantly, a plot launched by Saddam Hussein to assassinate President George H.W. Bush in a 1993 visit to Kuwait was foiled, and resulted in a decision by President Clinton to bomb Iraq in retaliation.⁴⁹

Given the undeniably deleterious nature of Saddam Hussein, one can see how arguments predicated upon fear, and therefore portending a sort of world Manichaeism—a dichotomous paradigm of good versus evil—could conceivably be an effective, if not accurate, mode of persuasion when speaking to diverse and often disparate audiences.

⁴⁸ Reuters (2002, October 8). Iraq suspends oil exports to support Palestinians. *The New York Times*. Retrieved October 8, 2002, from <http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/world/international-energy-iraq.html?>

⁴⁹ See the following: Alnasrawi, A. (2001). Iraq: Economic sanctions and consequences, 1990-2000. *Third World Quarterly*, 22 No. 2, 205-218. Also see Isenberg, D. (2001). Out of the ashes: The resurrection of Saddam Hussein. *Middle East Policy*, 8 Iss. 1, 161-163. And the following Senate Hearings: United States Senate:Committee on Foreign Relations; Subcommittee on Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs. (July 31, 2002/August 1, 2002). *Hearings to examine threats, responses and regional considerations surrounding Iraq*. (107th Congress). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Found on <http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov> on 15 November 2003.; United States Senate:Committee on Foreign Relations; Subcommittee on Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs. (June 28, 2000). *The liberation of Iraq: A progress report* (106th Congress). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Found on <http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov> on 15 November 2003.; United States Senate:Committee on Foreign Relations; Subcommittee on Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs. (March 1, 2000). *United*

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Harkening back to Ivie's review of Reagan's relegation of the Soviet Union as "Evil Empire," Bush utilized the already universally known nature of the man to constitute him as a threat.

Posited as a pretext for American action—in self defense—the level of threat Saddam Hussein actually posed remains a point of contentious debate to this very day, and will not be answered here. However, one must consider the possibility Saddam Hussein's Regime, friendless in the world, had little to gain except its own destruction had it ever decided to attack the United States—even circuitously through a surrogate. Nevertheless, America had been attacked by Al Qaeda, and most Americans, unaware of the deep and inherent differences between Muslim Fundamentalists and secular Pan-Arabists such as Saddam Hussein (not to mention the contentious relations Shi'ites and Sunni Muslims often have), had no other basis by which to differentiate the two—save careful and copious personal study of the issue. Therefore, an association of the two, even conceptually, carried great weight.

Though it is quite likely that Iraq's government revelled in the attacks on America, and made tacit statements publicly to that effect, it is far from evidence of a linkage to Al Qaeda. Osama bin Laden is a Sunni Muslim of an extreme Wahhabi fundamentalist persuasion (Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab was an 18th century Muslim cleric who influenced the tribe/family that was the ancestors of the Saudis, who took control of the Arab Peninsula soon after World War I⁵⁰). In stark contrast, Saddam Hussein and his ilk are secular pan-Arabists, and Muslims only in the loosest sense of the

States policy toward Iraq (107th Congress). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Found on <http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov> on 15 November 2003.

⁵⁰ Hourani, A. (1991). *A history of the Arab peoples*. New York: Harvard University Press. pp. 181 & 257-258. See also Fromkin, D. (1989). *A peace to end all peace*. New York: Henry Holt and Company LLC.

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term.⁵¹ The two are natural enemies, and evidence suggests they had no love for each other. After returning from Afghanistan, having fought off the Soviets with American material help, Osama bin Laden was inspired to believe that the mujahadeen (Muslim holy warriors) had defeated a superpower. When Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in 1990, bin Laden proposed to the Saudi Royal Family a reconstitution, under his command, of the mujahadeen to defeat Saddam Hussein. The Royal Family instead chose the United States as protector. Bin Laden and his ilk, wary of the massive military presence of infidels on holy soil, would soon form Al Qaeda to establish a more holy existence, unreliant upon America as benefactor.

The attacks of September 11 were part of a concerted strategy by bin Laden and Al Qaeda to bring about the end of governments such as that of Hussein's. By striking at what bin Laden and Al Qaeda perceive to be the ultimate benefactor of the corrupt, secular dictatorships of much of the Middle East (such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, etc.), the United States, they hoped to foment a grassroots uprising of the *umma* (the wider Muslim population) to overthrow all secular governments in favor of the establishment of a greater theocratic state, with all of its citizens, as Muslims, adhering to a strict and literal interpretation of the Shari'ah (Islamic Sacred Law).⁵² Though Saddam Hussein could certainly delight in American suffering, one could not mistake this for an alliance of any sort with Al Qaeda, given the group's ultimate goals. Further, the reference to Al Qaeda operatives entering Iraq gives the audience the impression that this is done with Iraqi government sanction.

⁵¹ Hourani, pp. 404-405

⁵² Doran, M.S., (2002). *Sombody else's civil war*, in Griset, P.L. & Mahan, S. (Eds.) (2003). *Terrorism in Perspective*. Sage Publications; Thousand Oaks, CA.

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For instance, in his September 12, 2002 speech to the United Nations, the President bolstered his nexus between Iraq and international terrorism through his references to Iraqi support for deleterious actions, while perpetually injecting the U.N. into the picture:

In 1991, the U.N. Security Council, through Resolution 687, demanded that Iraq renounce all involvement with terrorism, and permit no terrorist organizations to operate in Iraq. Iraq's regime agreed. It broke this promise. In violation of Security Council Resolution 1373, Iraq continues to shelter and support terrorist organizations that direct violence against Iran, Israel, and Western governments. Iraqi dissidents abroad are targeted for murder. In 1993, Iraq attempted to assassinate the Emir of Kuwait and a former American President. Iraq's government openly praised the attacks of September the 11th. And al Qaeda terrorists escaped from Afghanistan and are known to be in Iraq.⁵³

To an audience such as many of the American people, such arguments were a clear justification of action to be taken against Saddam Hussein. Indeed, the accuracy of much of the paragraph is indisputable. However, as a testament to the weakness of the President's case to connect Iraq and Al Qaeda specifically—and therefore the War on Terror—the final two sentences are perhaps dubious at best, based upon the nature of Al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein's potential relationship.

Indeed, his final two sentences reflect only a superficial truth. Much of the north of Iraq had become an autonomous region under the control of the ethnic Kurds who had managed to fight off Iraqi troops for years. The enclave was not completely ruled by Peshmerga (Kurdish soldiers) however, and a Muslim fundamentalist group called Ansar al Islam had carved out a small area in a region near the Iranian border for themselves. With philosophical ties to Al Qaeda they established a training base. It was to this area of Iraq, which was not controlled by the Iraqi regime, to which these operatives had fled. Therefore, to those who are informed, no credible evidentiary support for these claims

⁵³ President George W. Bush (12, September 2002)

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was presented, and they can be characterized as highly dubious. But, such an emotional appeal needs not be completely based upon fact; rather, it can rely upon generally accepted perception.

Indeed, appeals predicated upon the fear of those, such as Saddam Hussein, who would destroy values seen to be American staples were an integral part of the President's persuasional plan from the outset, as is evidenced in the October 7, 2002 speech in Cincinnati, where, after reviewing evidence such as that provided above, stated:

“Knowing these realities, America must not ignore the threat gathering against us. Facing clear evidence of peril, we cannot wait for the final proof—the smoking gun—that could come in the form of a mushroom cloud.”⁵⁴ Immediately in the same speech, the President harkened back to Cold War history to add credence to the solutions inherent in his Iraq policy,

As President Kennedy said in October of 1962, “Neither the United States of America, nor the world community of nations can tolerate deliberate deception and offensive threats on the part of any nation, large or small. We no longer live in a world,” he said, “where only the actual firing of weapons represents a sufficient challenge to a nation's security to constitute maximum peril.”

Understanding the threats of our time, knowing the designs and deceptions of the Iraqi regime, we have every reason to assume the worst, and we have an urgent duty to prevent the worst from occurring.⁵⁵

On March 8, 2003, in a radio address to the nation, President Bush again made reference to preemptive action in Iraq as a mechanism to assuage American fears; fears he had brought to salience through his continual focus upon Iraq,

The attacks of September the 11, 2001 showed what the enemies of America did with four airplanes. We will not wait to see what terrorists or terror states could do with weapons of mass destruction. We are determined to confront threats wherever they arise. And, as a last resort, we must be willing to use military force. We are doing everything

⁵⁴ Bush, 7 October 2002

⁵⁵ Bush, 7 October 2002

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we can to avoid war in Iraq. But if Saddam Hussein does not disarm peacefully, he will be disarmed by force.⁵⁶

However, in the face of increasing and often vociferous opposition at home and abroad, to a military solution to the problem of Saddam Hussein's Iraq; and the concomitant alternative assessments of the significance of the threat Saddam Hussein posed, President Bush increasingly espoused his factual case, peppered with emotional fear appeals and Manichaeism, with a much higher, and even nobler cause.

Appealing to the Notion of Duty: American Exceptionalism; America as the Chosen People

And we go forward with confidence, because this call of history has come to the right country. Americans are a resolute people who have risen to every test of our time. Adversity has revealed the character of our country, to the world and to ourselves. America is a strong nation, and honorable in the use of our strength. We exercise power without conquest, and we sacrifice for the liberty of strangers. Americans are a free people, who know that freedom is the right of every person and the future of every nation. The liberty we prize is not America's gift to the world, it is God's gift to humanity—*President George W. Bush, State of the Union Address January 28, 2003*

As a bookend to initiating nearly every speech by identifying the evil against which America was compelled to fight through an association of Iraq and the War on Terror, the moralizing notion of American Exceptionalism, the inherent goodness and greater mission of the American people to not only lead the world, but to assertively propagate liberty and freedom, continually concluded his remarks before the American people, and at times to the world. A concept that has roots in the American pre-revolutionary colonial days, American Exceptionalism would develop to symbolize a commonly held concept that Americans were unique because of their physical separation from the monolithic European powers—which allowed them to develop in different ways than the European ancestors.⁵⁷ This feeling of uniqueness engendered a sense of superiority—in judgement, creativity, and ability. As time has worn on, and America's

⁵⁶ Bush, President George W., "War on Terror Radio Address," Capitol Hill. 8 March 2003.

role in the world has flowered from that of a set of rebellious colonies to that of the world's pre-eminent power, the sense of American Exceptionalism has grown to be interwoven within the fabric of American society. The self impression Americans have held as the world's veritable savior—to an extent in World War I, more so in World War II, and certainly throughout the Cold War—fostered a sense of privilege and duty among many Americans to assert their beliefs and culture to the world for its betterment; the notions of superiority borne out of America's notion (accurate or not) of separation from the world and its problems.⁵⁸

In remarks to the Latino Coalition on February 26, 2003, for instance, President Bush directly referenced, almost quixotically, the exceptional calling that makes the American quest in Iraq more than a duty, but a destiny:

As I said in my State of the Union address, liberty is not America's gift to the world; liberty is God's gift to human -- to the human -- mankind. And that's what we believe. (Applause.)

So in the days ahead, as we deal with this challenge facing our country, you need to know that the value of freedom and liberty will be at the forefront of a policy designed to make the world more peaceful, and a policy designed to protect the American people.⁵⁹

At greater length, the President stated on January 29, 2003—the day after his State of the Union Address—the same quixotic notions at the end of a speech before a gathering in Grand Rapids, Michigan, espousing the concepts of freedom and liberty, and alluding to America's purpose in Iraq as a responsibility, rather than a choice of action:

<<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/09/200209121.html>> (1 September 2003).

⁵⁷ Kissinger, pp. 32-33

⁵⁸ For a much deeper definition of American Exceptionalism, and the notion that it is as bad as it is good, see Lipset, Seymour M. *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword*. New York, Norton, 1996. See also Faust, Drew; Hartog, Hendrik; Hollinger, David A.; Iriye, Akira. "Interchange: The practice of history." In *The Journal of American History*, 90 (2); pg. 576.

⁵⁹ Bush, President George W., "President's Remarks at the Latino Coalition," Capitol Hill. 26 February 2003. <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/09/200209121.html>> (1 September 2003).

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We will free people. This great, powerful nation is motivated not by power for power's sake, but because of our values. If everybody matters, if every life counts, then we should hope everybody has the great God's gift of freedom. We go into Iraq to disarm the country. We will also go in to make sure that those who are hungry are fed, those who need health care will have health care, those youngsters who need education will get education. But most of all, we will uphold our values. And the biggest value we hold dear is the value of freedom. (Applause.) As I said last night, freedom and liberty, they are not America's gifts to the world. They are God's gift to humanity. We hold that thought dear to our hearts.

This is a great nation. America is a strong nation. America is a nation full of people who are compassionate. America is a nation that is willing to serve causes greater than ourselves. There's no question we face challenges ahead of us -- challenges at home, challenges abroad. But as I said last night, history has called the right nation into action. History has called the United States into action, and we will not let history down.⁶⁰

Such notions of liberty and freedom are conceptual ideals which can be considered as triggers for Americans to view issues through the prism of, if not superiority, then certainly magnanimity. The existence and utilization of such notions has garnered significant study by communication scholars, and must be included here.

Michael Calvin McGee in his essay "The 'Ideograph': A Link Between Rhetoric and Ideology," defines the ideograph as:

an ordinary-language term found in political discourse. It is a high-order abstraction representing collective commitment to a particular but equivocal and ill-defined normative goal. It warrants the use of power, excuses behavior and belief which might otherwise be perceived as eccentric or antisocial, and guides behavior and belief into channels easily recognized by a community as acceptable and laudable.⁶¹

To that end, President Bush's invocation of an arguably over-simplistic Manichaeian paradigm in order to foster the limitation of his audience's logical choice on the issue to one of good or evil, and the often quixotic introduction of American Exceptionalism as a motivation for action, were the hallmarks of each speech. The above February 26 and January 29 excerpts were the end to much longer speeches that had covered many topics. The remarks about Iraq are the culmination of the President's message—his most

⁶⁰ Bush, President George W., "Excerpts on Iraq from Grand Rapids Speech," Grand Rapids, MI. 29 January 2003. <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/09/200209121.html>> (1 September 2003).

⁶¹ See pg. 452 in McGee, M. C. (February 1980). "The 'Ideograph': A Link Between Rhetoric and Ideology." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 64 (1980): pp. 442-457.

important item. The central ideographs utilized by the President—freedom and liberty—as conceived by McGee, are vital to the President’s message.

Speaking to immediate audiences whose raw emotions he would perpetually galvanize by recalling September 11—and therefore immediately associating a war with Saddam Hussein to the ongoing War on Terror—the President made a palpable effort to link the hard-line policy toward Hussein with that of a higher, divine calling for the United States. The utilization of ideographs was a tangible component of this approach. Most notably, the President’s association of the negative notion of “threat” with Saddam Hussein, and the positive ideographs of “liberty” and “freedom” with the United States, fell into this category. While it was more than reasonable to argue the tangibility of the word threat as a specific and verifiable reality to Saddam Hussein’s neighbors in the region (which the President often did to international audiences), it took on a more ethereal quality in the context here. Coupled with references to liberty and freedom, the President suggested that Saddam Hussein was not just an enemy to his own people, but a symbolic antithesis, a threat, to the very concepts of liberty and freedom (much like the Soviet Union was in Reagan’s rhetoric⁶²). There was, of course a tangible aspect, given Saddam’s history, to this argument, but the persuasive intent is of paramount importance here.

The concept of a threat, in its juxtaposition to liberty and freedom, was ambiguous unto itself because it did not make clear how they were threatened specifically, and how it related to an American audience safely seated in St. Louis, for instance. If left unchecked, could Saddam Hussein eliminate liberty and freedom from the face of the earth? Was his reach so ubiquitous that the American people could soon be enslaved, as the Iraqis had been for many years, under the yoke of a despot? These possibilities were unlikely to come to fruition to be sure. But, the fragility of freedom and

⁶² Ivie, 1984

liberty has been a central concern in American foreign policy argument since the very beginning of the republic.⁶³ According to Ivie, freedom and liberty have always been associated with vulnerability:

Just as our language is structured by convention to associate good with up, bad with down, truth with light, and falsehood with darkness, freedom is identified by the nation's orators and statesmen as (1) an act of procreation, (2) an experiment, (3) a flickering flame, (4) the hunter's prey, and (5) a heroic struggle. Each metaphor converges on a conception of freedom that stresses its vulnerability: freedom is as precarious (and precious) as the life of any newborn and as tenuous as an untested hypothesis; the beacon of liberty may at any moment cease to shine, its flame smothered by the waters of darkness; in constant search of sanctuary, freedom risks being overwhelmed by barbaric predators; thus, the price of freedom is necessarily high, for the alternatives are enslavement or death.⁶⁴

Such notions are interwoven within historic American narrative, and have served as pretext for war in every previous American conflict. Though the demise of freedom and liberty was certainly not likely to come to fruition under the current, or potential, circumstances, given the U.S. power and Saddam Hussein's inability to escape the "containment" box in which his nation was placed, the familiarity of the tenuous nature of these ideographs served a potent purpose. Bush bolstered these thematic references by inferring a higher mission, a higher responsibility, for the United States when he declared,

As I said in my State of the Union, liberty is not America's gift to the world. Liberty is God's gift to every human being in the world. (Applause.) America has great challenges; challenges at home and challenges abroad. *We're called to extend the promise of this country into the lives of every citizen who lives here. We're called to defend our nation and to lead the world to peace, and we will meet both challenges with courage and with confidence.* (emphasis added)⁶⁵

Suggested here is the notion that American liberty, and liberty and freedom in general, were imperilled by an evil threat, such as that of Saddam Hussein (once again through the establishment of a Manichaeian paradigm). Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, authors

⁶³ Kissinger, pg. 33

⁶⁴ Ivie, Robert L. (1987). The ideology of freedom's "fragility" in American foreign policy argument. *Journal of the American Forensic Association*, 24, pg. 27.

⁶⁵ President George W. Bush, (10 February 2003), *President's Remarks at Religious Broadcasters' Convention*. Opryland Hotel, Nashville, Tennessee. Found on <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/02/20030210-5.html>.

of *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*, assert that “[i]deology is the necessary representational means through which we come to experience and make sense of reality,”⁶⁶ and the President’s efforts were clearly a rhetorical attempt to associate Saddam Hussein with the very personification of evil as a threat to the world status quo; amounting to a catachresis of sorts. In a Burke-ian “God-talk” tactic,⁶⁷ the President further associated liberty with the ultimate form of goodness, God, when he stated “[L]iberty is not America’s gift to the world. Liberty is God’s gift to every human being in the world. ... *We’re called to defend our nation and to lead the world to peace* (emphasis added).”⁶⁸

Moreover, this divine association invoked a greater responsibility for Americans, according to the President. As Americans, the President associated a call to action to defend liberty with his audience by implying a sense of duty to be true to who they are. This lies at the heart of American Exceptionalist thought (in its positive formulation), and implied a predisposed superior nature from which the audience could not escape and through which the audience was virtually required to act—in this case not just to defend liberty, *but to spread it*. Such a stated ideological consciousness, that liberty must overcome its threat, is intrinsic to the reinforcement of liberty itself as an innate aspect of the nature of the immediate, as well as most of the peripheral, audiences. McGee asserts to this effect, “[i]f a mass consciousness exists at all, it must be empirically ‘present,’ itself a thing obvious to those who participate in it, or, at least, empirically manifested in the language which communicates it.”⁶⁹ What is more intrinsically part of the fabric of America than liberty? Sturken and Cartwright reinforce this assertion through their examination of Louis Althusser,

⁶⁶ Sturken and Cartwright, pg. 52

⁶⁷ Burke, Kenneth. 1945. *A grammar of motives*. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press.

⁶⁸ Bush, President George W., “President’s Remarks at Religious Broadcasters’ Convention,” Nashville, TN. 10 February 2003. <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/09/20020912-1.html>> (1 September 2003).

⁶⁹ McGee, pg. 444

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[Louis] Althusser stated that we are “hailed” or summoned by ideologies, which recruit us as their “authors” and their essential subject. By saying that ideologies speak to us and in the process recruit us as “authors,” he refers to the way that we become/are the subject that we are addressed as. This is called interpellation, which refers to a process by which we are constructed by the ideologies that speak to us every day through language and images. In Althusser’s terms, therefore, we are not so much unique individuals but rather we are ‘always already’ subjects—spoken by the the ideological discourses, into which we are born and are asked to find our place.⁷⁰

Therefore, President Bush essentially reified his audience as the defenders and propagators of the ideographs of liberty and freedom through support of military action as a means to that end.

But, the very fact that the President was compelled to make a case, reducing his presentation to that of an over-simplistic Manichaeian paradigm through common ideographs, suggests two factors against which the President was battling: (1) the existence of a high level of dissonance with regard to the fundamental issue at hand within his broader audience, and, concomitantly, (2) the reality that the President’s propounded interpretations of liberty and freedom as American ideals, and the conceptual imminent threat to them personified as Saddam Hussein were not necessarily universally held (at least to the same degrees) within his broader audiences, as would be suggested in the rhetoric of his speech. As Kissinger has attested: “American leaders have taken their values so much for granted that they rarely recognize how revolutionary and unsettling these values can appear to others.”⁷¹

The nature of this battle was therefore the attempted maintenance of social and political hegemony through persuasion. The President’s utilization of simplified ideographs to assert ideology lends credence to Sturken and Cartwright’s observation, in their analysis of the Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci that, “[t]here are two central aspects to Gramsci’s definition of hegemony: that dominant ideologies are often presented as ‘common sense’ and that dominant ideologies are in tension with other forces and constantly in flux.”⁷²

⁷⁰ Sturken and Cartwright, pg. 52

⁷¹ Kissinger, pg. 22

⁷² Sturken and Cartwright, pp. 53-54

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Intertwined with his arguments about the War in Iraq were deeper ideological conceptions of threat, and liberty and freedom. The association of Saddam Hussein with the term “threat” and the association of the United States and its people with the ideographs “liberty” and “freedom” extend deeper than the specific situation of Iraq, and harkens back to the Manichaeian phrase “you are either with us, or you are with the terrorists.” In such a Manichaeian application, there is no middle ground. Though dissension to the policy toward Iraq with regard to the President’s interpretation of these ideographs was tolerated in his rhetoric (the President, elsewhere, saying that he respectfully disagreed with those who opposed the war), it was ignored as invalid, wrongheaded, and perhaps even ignorance on the part of the dissenters. McGee contends to this effect that:

[t]he end product of the state’s insistence on some degree of conformity in behavior and belief, I suggest, is a rhetoric of control, a system of persuasion presumed to be effective on the whole community. We make a rhetoric of war to persuade us of war’s necessity, but then forget that it is a rhetoric—and regard negative popular judgments of it as unpatriotic cowardice.⁷³

In other words, those in power, such as President Bush, interpret the meaning of ideographs and use that meaning to debunk critics.

The assertion of such active, and over-simplified interpretation is not necessarily a component of nefarious persuasive intentions held by the President. Rather, such interpretation reflects the utilization of a veritable “political rule of thumb” whereby the President is attempting to relate to the widest possible constituent audience with which he shares agreement. However, by flippantly eliminating the possibility of a dissenting viewpoint carrying any weight to persuade him to change course, the President in effect alienated a large portion of his audience and encouraged the very dissonance he sought to avoid.

⁷³ McGee, pg. 445

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While audiences inclined to support or accept the President's assertions ingested these messages, a message of a different sort was being extrapolated from many of the same speeches by dissenting international audiences. The rhetoric of persuasion employed by President Bush augured the inherency of a much more feared phenomenon that arguably compelled many nations to resist the American power that would force the prosecution of the war. From their collective perspective, language claiming a responsibility incumbent upon the U.S. to protect and spread liberty and freedom smacked more of the unipolarist philosophy of propagating American democratic values throughout the world as the correct direction of twenty-first century history.

Rhetorically Marrying Unipolarism to the War on Terror

When the Soviet Bloc faltered in 1989 and subsequently collapsed in 1991, the world as a whole recognized without debate, as it had for many years, the preeminence of the United States as the leader to look upon for guidance. It was within the environment of this world acceptance of American power that key figures within and without the government began to openly propound about the philosophy of American unipolarism.

As leader of the world's most prolific power, President George W. Bush's rhetoric reflected a consistent knowledge of the power he wielded, and substantially lacked any willingness to restrain it in the face of dissonance. The disapproval of other nations, and the United Nations as a body, as is reflected in the above quote, was portrayed by the President through his rhetoric more as an obstacle rather than as a barrier to the desired policy. With such heavy-handed diplomacy infused within the rhetoric, one can infer that there is more to the prosecution of the War in Iraq than the simple notion of Saddam Hussein as a threat. Indeed, much of the world's dissonance was arguably based in the concept of American unipolarism, and the potential effect such

a forceful application of the unipolarist agenda would have on the world at large. In order to comprehend the pervasive antagonism many in the world displayed, the concept of unipolarism must be further explicated.

Essentially, global unipolarism is a consequence, if not a dividend, resultant from the ideological triumph of the U.S. led West in the Cold War—the bipolar struggle between Western ideals of individual freedoms and capitalistic economies, and the communist Eastern Bloc led by the monolithic Soviet Union. As the pastoral “uberstate” that led the West throughout this practical and ideological struggle, the United States has harnessed over the years ever increasing power and prestige which, with the elimination of any credible counterbalance, has resulted in a world that can be deemed, for lack of a better term, politically unbalanced. Indeed, out of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, a new age dawned for the United States of America. The world had precipitately shifted from an antagonistically bipolar balance to a unipolar hegemony clearly held by the United States. Quite suddenly, there was no significant threat to America and its leadership—a leadership that had long before become the accepted norm since the end of World War II in the West. The pertinent question that quickly seemed to come to salience for the U.S. and the rest of the world out of the loss of the Soviet counterbalance was: How should—and how would—America use this now relatively unchallenged global hegemony?

The dominant opinion among most right wing policy wonks in the United States—dubbed neoconservatives⁷⁴ today—regarding this question should not be

⁷⁴ Neoconservatism has evolved to become a veritable term of opprobrium in many circles. Its original meaning, referring to the phenomenon of left-wing American intellectuals moving to the right, has deviated greatly in recent years—devolving into a dirty word that is frequently associated with all that is currently believed by many to be wrong with the Bush Administration’s practice of foreign policy.

surprising. Many who opined about it used language eerily similar to what is often heard today from the President and those in power in Washington. There was a strong feeling that this was a unique time in history, affording the United States the unprecedented opportunity to use its influence and power to shape the rest of the world in an image of its choosing. The concept, as ambitious as it seems, resonated—and in fact continues to resonate—throughout the ideological right of America.⁷⁵ In fact, after the implosion of the Soviet Union in 1991, a significant number of hardline anticommunists began to contend that an unprecedented opportunity for the U.S. to use its supreme military and economic powers to “remake the world and put down America's remaining enemies” had come. “They declared that the ‘unipolarist moment’ had arrived: the U.S. needed to use its overwhelming military and economic power to create a new Pax Americana.”⁷⁶ Versions, with few modifications, of a neoconservative, unipolarist ideology were adopted by a

Neoconservatism’s many international—and, notably, some domestic—detractors often assert that the tenets of neoconservatism are synonymous with American arrogance, imperialism and even fascism (though arguments to the latter seem hyperbolic at best). In turn, a majority of domestic critics (Realists and many Liberals) contend that the Bush Administration’s predominantly neoconservative approach to foreign policy largely facilitates the palpable and oft displayed resentment of the United States throughout the world. And, they often assert that the neoconservative approach damages American credibility, inhibiting rather than enhancing America’s ability to lead.

⁷⁵ Foster, J. B. (Jul/Aug 2003). The new age of imperialism. *Monthly Review*, 55, 3, pg. 1. As John Bellamy Foster, in an article entitled *The New Age of Imperialism*, points out, Indeed, a remarkable consensus on underlying assumptions and goals emerged within the U.S. power elite in the 1990s. As Richard N. Haass, a member of the National Security Council in the administration of President George H. W. Bush and the official who drafted the elder Bush's most important statement on U.S. military posture, observed in the 1994 edition of his book *Intervention*: "Liberated from the danger that military action will lead to confrontation with a rival superpower, the United States is now more free to intervene." In accounting for the limitations of U.S. power Haass declared, "the United States can do anything, just not everything" (p. 8). His analysis went on to discuss the possibility of nation-building interventions in Iraq and elsewhere. Another book by Haass, *The Reluctant Sheriff*, published in 1997, referred to the sheriff and his posse, with the sheriff defined as the United States and the posse as a "coalition of the willing" (p. 93). The sheriff and the posse need not worry too much about the law, he noted, but must nonetheless be wary of crossing over into vigilantism.

⁷⁶ Dorrien, G. (8 March, 2003). Axis of one. *The Christian Century*, 120, 5, pg. 30.

number of key figures.⁷⁷ Charles Krauthammer perhaps summarized the essence of the idea best in an article entitled “Universal Dominion: Toward a Unipolar World” in *Foreign Affairs* when he stated: “America's purpose should be to steer the world away from its coming multipolar future toward a qualitatively new outcome—a unipolar world whose center is a confederated West. ... a single pole of world power that consists of the United States at the apex of the industrial West.”⁷⁸ Along this same line, other “hawkish conservatives and neoconservatives” seized upon the idea.⁷⁹ It was at this point that, within the first Bush Administration, a debate—facilitated by the rapid change in the dynamics of the world—took shape. In 1990, then Secretary of Defense (and now Vice President) Richard Cheney commissioned the formulation of a new American strategic plan. With suddenly no Soviet Bloc (the Soviet Warsaw Pact had by now literally crumbled, and Soviet satellite states were now venturing away from Soviet dependence) with which to maintain a *détente*, and a position of unparalleled influence throughout the globe, a plan was formulated under Cheney’s direction by then Undersecretary of Defense Policy Paul Wolfowitz (now Assistant Secretary of Defense), Lewis Libby (now

⁷⁷ According to Dorrien, these included such influential individuals as: “Elliott Abrams, John R. Bolton, William F. Buckley Jr., Stephen Cambone, Richard Cheney, Angelo Codevilla, Eliot Cohen, Devon Gaffney Cross, Eric Edelman, Douglas Feith, Frank Gaffney; Donald Kagan, Frederick Kagan, Robert A. Kagan, Robert Kagan, Lawrence F. Kaplan, Robert Kaplan, Charles Krauthammer, William Kristol, I. Lewis Libby, Joshua Muravchik, Michael Novak, Richard Perle, Daniel Pipes, Norman Podhoretz, Donald Rumsfeld, Ben Wattenberg, James Woolsey, [and] Dov Zakheim.”

⁷⁸ Dorrien, online

⁷⁹ Dorrien, online. He continues that “The term [unipolarism] didn't catch on, but the idea was seized upon by hawkish conservatives and neoconservatives. Ben Wattenberg urged nervous politicians not to be shy about asserting American superiority: “We are the first universal nation. ‘First’ as in the first one, ‘first’ as in ‘number one.’ And ‘universal’ within our borders and globally.” Because the United States is uniquely universal, he reasoned, it has a unique right to impose its will on other countries on behalf of an American-style world order. With a lighter touch, Wattenberg declared, “A unipolar world is a good thing, if America is the uni.” Joshua Muravchik put it this way: “For our nation, this is the opportunity of a lifetime. Our failure to exert every possible effort to secure [a new world order] would be unforgivable. If we succeed, we will have forged a Pax Americana unlike any previous peace, one of harmony, not of conquest. Then the 21st century will be the American century by virtue of the triumph of the humane idea born in the American experiment.”

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Vice President Cheney's chief of Staff) and Eric Edelman (now Vice President Cheney's Senior Foreign Policy Advisor) that "outlined a policy of U.S. global domination."⁸⁰ This approach, however, was not ushered in cart blanche as policy. Rather, it faced ideological opposition from others with great influence in the first Bush Administration. As Dorrien attests,

Pentagon Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Colin Powell countered with a case for a moderately conservative realism that was backed by Secretary of State George Schultz and National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft. Though Cheney leaned toward Wolfowitz's strategy, the realists held the upper hand in George H. W. Bush's administration. Cheney's attempt to create a new big-picture strategy was derailed by the Persian Gulf War and the leaking of Wolfowitz's plan to the press, and the unipolarists despaired of Bush's lack of ideological vision. A few of them supported Bill Clinton in 1992, largely because Clinton campaigned that year as a democratic globalist.⁸¹

However, those unipolarists who went on to initially support the new Clinton Administration would soon find its foreign policy to be agonizingly similar in multiple ways to the concepts and tenets of unipolarism; yet clearly unsatisfactory to be called unipolarist.⁸²

Although unipolarism as a concept was summarily rejected by the Clinton Administration, many of its tenets were adopted into practice —and world dissonance toward the practices became evident prior to President Bush's ascendance to power. Meanwhile, most of the unipolarists and Pax Americanists had remained within the Republican Party during the Clinton tenure in the presidency. To them, Clinton was not

⁸⁰ Dorrien, online

⁸¹ Dorrien, online

⁸² According to Graebner, attitudes, which reflected the unavoidable influence of the pre-existence of the U.S.' unipolar power supremacy harkened precisely of the kind of unipolarism the Clinton Administration had elected to avoid. The recognition of, and the desire to, maintain the advantages of the United States brought about, within the Clinton Administration, an approach to foreign policy that actually espoused many of the tenets of unipolarism. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, in referring to the country's "benevolent global hegemony", declared in a speech at Tennessee State University that America's "economic power and principles placed the United States at the center of the emerging international order, prepared to lead the world to unprecedented levels of wealth, prosperity, and security. As she phrased it,

acting strongly enough to preserve the American opportunity for the establishment of a unipolar world order. Their disappointment turned to overt action with the 1997 creation of the Project for a New American Century (PNAC) (Cheney, Wolfowitz and Rumsfeld, all prolifically present in the current Administration, were instrumental in its formulation) which gave an organized voice to the unipolarist philosophy.⁸³ By the time President George W. Bush took office, the unipolarism debate had again taken shape. The debate existed because of a diverse cabinet selected by the president. Secretary of State Colin Powell “selectively resisted the aggressive unilateralism of Cheney, Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz.” Prior to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the PNAC co-chair of the authorship of the PNAC defense policy position paper contended that “the unipolarists were losing the argument in the Bush administration.” After the deadly attacks, however, “the unipolarist view of the world blended with the fight against terrorism.”⁸⁴ The conception was simple: there was a fight that the civilized world had to undertake against a common enemy—harkening back to World War II and the Cold War—and the United States, as leader of the civilized world had the opportunity to not only lead that fight, but increase the scope and breadth of its influence while doing it.

‘We stand tall, and therefore we can see further into the future.’ For her, the United States had become the ‘indispensable nation.’”

⁸³ According to Dorrien, “In 1997, a group of unipolarists led by Cheney, Libby, Wolfowitz, Elliott Abrams, Eliot Cohen, Frank Gaffney, Donald Kagan, Norman Podhoretz and Donald Rumsfeld founded the Project for the New American Century (PNAC), which issued a statement of principles that called for an aggressive American policy of global domination. This group forged an alliance with George W. Bush, who carried a personal grudge against Saddam Hussein and who turned out to be a strident unilateralist and debunker of humanitarian nation-building. Two months before the presidential election of 2000, the PNAC unipolarists issued a position paper titled “Rebuilding America’s Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century” that spelled out the particulars of a global empire strategy: repudiate the ABM treaty, build a global missile defense system, increase defense spending by \$20 billion per year to 3.8 percent of gross domestic product, and reinvent the U.S. military to meet expanded obligations throughout the world. When Bush won the presidency, the Pax Americanists (notably Bolton, Cambone, Cheney, Cohen, Cross, Feith, Libby, Perle, Pipes, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz and Woolsey) won numerous positions in his administration.”

⁸⁴ Dorrien, online

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With the goals of the terrorists as the alternative, unipolarism found a vehicle through the U.S. led War on Terror. When one relates the fact that so many unipolarists are present in President George W. Bush's Administration with the rhetorical strategies employed by the President, the argument that their unipolarist vision is a significant (if not the significant) driving force behind the approach becomes compelling; and this notion may go far in accounting for the visible angst displayed by many nations.

Dictation Rather Than Persuasion

Yet, some permanent members of the Security Council have publicly announced they will veto any resolution that compels the disarmament of Iraq. These governments share our assessment of the danger, but not our resolve to meet it. Many nations, however, do have the resolve and fortitude to act against this threat to peace, and a broad coalition is now gathering to enforce the just demands of the world. The United Nations Security Council has not lived up to its responsibilities, so we will rise to ours.—*President George W. Bush addressing the Nation, and the World, March 17, 2003*

With the tenets of unipolarism explicated, and its marriage to the War on Terror articulated, its undergirding effect on the President's rhetoric must be demonstrated. At times, the President's pointed statements for world audiences and those who would oppose U.S. military action seemed to be more dictation from a self-designated pastoral leader than the attempted persuasion of equals:

And my message to Saddam Hussein is that, for the sake of peace, for the sake of freedom, you must disarm like you said you would do. But my message to you all and to the country is this: for the sake of our future freedoms, and for the sake of world peace, if the United Nations can't act, and if Saddam Hussein won't act, the United States will lead a coalition of nations to disarm Saddam Hussein.⁸⁵

Though civil, the President's tone was never conciliatory, and in fact was often purposefully transparent in order to establish the unambiguous nature of his intent for action. Such an attitude, it would appear, undermines American soft power by auguring the inevitability of hard power. On numerous occasions, the President would express

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what he (and therefore the U.S.) thought the United Nations *should be* through what it *should do* in the situation of Iraq's perpetual defiance. He further related that the United States would act either in accord with or in spite of the United Nations—an egregious display of hard power. For instance, the President stated on February 26, 2003 that “[a]fter all, *we* (emphasis added) want the United Nations to be a legitimate, effective body. But for the safety of the American people and for peace in the world, Saddam Hussein will be disarmed, one way or the other. And this nation does so for the sake of peace,”⁸⁶ implicitly suggesting that the legitimacy of the UN exists *at the behest* of the United States, in that the course of action the UN had taken in reaction to American rhetoric, the renewed inspections regime, was not action at all. The excerpt above spells out the intention of the United States to act with or without UN sanction.

At the same time, the unilateralism inherent in these statements was nearly always accompanied by reference to American leadership of a coalition. During his October 7, 2002 Cincinnati Address, the President promised “The time for denying, deceiving, and delaying has come to an end. Saddam Hussein must disarm himself -- or, for the sake of peace, we will lead a coalition to disarm him.”⁸⁷ Likewise, during the State of the Union Address, a speech that would naturally be scrutinized by nations most carefully, the President declared that “[w]e will consult. But let there be no misunderstanding: If Saddam Hussein does not fully disarm, for the safety of our people and for the peace of the world, we will lead a coalition to disarm him.”⁸⁸ Finally, in punctuating this

⁸⁵ Bush, President George W., “Iraq Must Disarm Says President in South Dakota Speech.” Bismark, S.D. 5 November 2002. <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/09/20020912-1.html>> (1 September 2003).

⁸⁶ Bush, 26 February 2003

⁸⁷ Bush, 7 October 2002

⁸⁸ Bush, President George W., “Excerpts from the State of the Union regarding Iraq,” Capitol Hill.28 January 2003. <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/09/200209121.html>> (1 September 2003).

impression, the President rhetorically adduced the notion that many will participate shoulder to shoulder with America in the fight: “We will plan carefully; we will act with the full power of the United States military; *we will act with allies at our side* (emphasis added), and we will prevail.”⁸⁹ Great Britain’s significant participation in the war aside, no other nation would go on to offer any substantial military support or assistance to the effort. However, reflective of the unipolar ideal, the President substituted the rhetorical support received by the United States from many nations as a sign that American leadership is not only desired, but needed by the world. By taking responsibility for actions the rest of the world was (ostensibly) too weak to undertake, the President demonstrated that the United States was fulfilling its duty as the world’s rightful leader; essentially spiting the contending powers that were the President’s detractors.

When targeting international audiences for persuasion, the President’s tone in general was less predicated upon emotional fear appeals, and more upon a methodical approach through historic justification by pointing to Saddam Hussein’s past defiant behavior as the hard evidence justifying the action that the United States would eventually take (though, as mentioned before, for the President, fear and fact were not mutually exclusive from speech to speech). However, an aspect that was also evident was the influence of American Exceptionalist concepts placed in the oft communicated notions that the United States’ leadership was not only still prevalent, but that it was self-justifiably permanent. To bolster this notion, the President reestablished the Manichaeic dichotomous notion of good versus evil. In referring to the options of inaction (i.e., maintenance of the status quo) and action—“dealing” with Saddam Hussein, Bush stated to the UN:

⁸⁹ Bush, 7 October 2002

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Neither of these outcomes is certain. Both have been set before us. We must choose between a world of fear and a world of progress. We cannot stand by and do nothing while dangers gather. We must stand up for our security, and for the permanent rights and the hopes of mankind. *By heritage and by choice, the United States of America will make that stand. And, delegates to the United Nations, you have the power to make that stand, as well* (emphasis added).⁹⁰

By clearly demarcating two distinct sides to the global perspective, Bush left no room for different interpretations, harkening back to his mantra of “you are either with us or you are with the terrorists”; or, for that matter, back to the Cold War rhetoric promulgated by President Ronald Reagan.⁹¹ This simplistic prism positioned the United States as the bastion of goodness and righteousness in the world and a defender of democracy and human rights. American leadership, then, was the only viable option for the world. The President’s final two sentences of a September 14, 2002 radio address to the American people, reiterating the same notion, were most assuredly resonant in the ears of his dissenting audiences, as he illuminated the righteousness inherent in American leadership to guide the rest of the world down the correct path and seemed to almost benevolently grant UN members the right to decide to side with the United States: “By heritage and by choice, the United States of America will make that stand. *And, delegates to the United Nations, you have the power to make that stand, as well* (emphasis added).”⁹²

Essentially, President Bush’s call to action was simultaneously a declaration that the philosophies of containment, and the maintenance, or enhancement, of a status quo, held by most were weak and ineffective, and that their continuance was useless and had to be ameliorated with decisive action. No credence whatsoever seems to have been given

⁹⁰ Bush, President George W., “President’s Remarks at the United Nations General Assembly.” New York, New York. 12 September, 2002. <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/09/20020912-1.html>> (1 September 2003).

⁹¹ Ivie, 1984 & 1987

⁹² Bush, President George W., “Global Message.” Washington, DC. 14 September,

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to alternative approaches to dealing with Saddam Hussein. President Bush's approach seemed to discount the allies as partners, and cast them more in the role of followers in need of guidance. They, through the United Nations, had lost their way. Indeed, the fact that the Iraq issue would never have shifted were it not for the vociferous effort of the United States is all at once a testament to the power of the Americans to direct policy—and a reminder to the other nations of the world of American dominance, as the hub of the West—and now the world. The inherent directness of the message most likely fomented the now tangible desire to resist the wishes of the U.S. for principle's sake.

Even in speeches where the President gave some appearance of approaching the world in supplication by offering American concessions for cooperation, the notion of American dominance came to the forefront. For instance, the President began his September 12, 2002 speech to the United Nations—the speech which best represents the advent of his rhetorical attempts to persuade nations of the prudence of the prosecution of the War in Iraq—with a reference to the commemorations, which had occurred the previous day for the victims of September 11, 2001. In referring to this, he also endeavored to thank the body of nations as a whole for their help in the War on Terror, harkening back to the recent relative success in Afghanistan as exemplary of the power a unified front can bring about. In reestablishing the motives for U.S. action, and in thanking members for their assistance, President Bush established a basis of common ground from which to work.

Continuing on this same line, the President introduced within the same speech a concession (perhaps of convenience) allowing for a possible quid-pro-quo: the return of the United States to participation in UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific

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and Cultural Organization). The United States had left the organization some 18 years before over accusations of inefficiency, mismanagement and Cold War politics.⁹³ Such accusations of inefficiency and mismanagement are exemplary of the U.S. government's overall impression of the U.N. for many years, and a key factor as to why America's U.N. dues had been withheld for a number of years. Now, declaring that "[a]s a symbol of our commitment to human dignity, the United States will return to UNESCO. This organization has been reformed and America will participate fully in its mission to advance human rights and tolerance and learning,"⁹⁴ the President offered an olive branch of sorts, portending a world community that could count on the United States' participation. The gesture was predictably met with applause in the chamber.

The gesture, to most Americans, was most probably interpreted as a magnanimous measure taken by the United States to participate once again under the umbrella of the UN—as the world's most singularly charitable nation. The timing of the gesture, however, had to have been a bit suspect to the nations listening to the speech, given their awareness of the persuasive intentions of the President. The world's richest nation, which had left UNESCO due to politics, was now reentering for the same reason.

However, always cognizant of the power he wielded, the President quickly reminded the delegates in the same speech of how and why the UN was created. This reminder, coming from the leader of the very power that fostered the UN from its inception, was significant in that it not only reasserted American dominance, but also framed the gesture that President Bush had just made as a sign of American benevolence

⁹³ New York Times, (13, September 2002). "U.S. to Rejoin Unesco's Fold After 18 Years." New York Times. (Late Edition (East Coast)). New York, N.Y.: pg. A.11.

⁹⁴ President George W. Bush (12, September 2002). *President's Remarks at the United Nations General Assembly*. New York. Found on <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/09/20020912-1.html>.

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bestowed upon lesser nations, rather than cooperation with equals. It established in the mind of the immediate audience (the United Nations), as well as peripheral audiences the fact that the United States was, and remains the leader to which other nations must look for guidance in a troubled world. Such a reference suggested the unipolar paradigm in which the United States should be, and will be, paramount into perpetuity. Even when offering give and take, the President positioned America as the dominant party.

Additionally, the President's international audiences were often witnesses to an American attempt to re-establish the notion that there exists in the world a Manichaean paradigm that behooves the world to accept and embrace American leadership. For example, with a reference to the latent, yet ever-potent, dangers posed by Al Qaeda cells strewn throughout the world, resetting the centrality of the War on Terrorism, he endeavored to immediately associate the overall terrorist threat with the Regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq.

Above all, our principles and our security are challenged today by outlaw groups and regimes that accept no law of morality and have no limit to their violent ambitions. In the attacks on America a year ago, we saw the destructive intentions of our enemies. This threat hides within many nations, including my own. In cells and camps, terrorists are plotting further destruction, and building new bases for their war against civilization. And our greatest fear is that terrorists will find a shortcut to their mad ambitions when an outlaw regime supplies them with the technologies to kill on a massive scale.

In one place -- in one regime -- we find all these dangers, in their most lethal and aggressive forms, exactly the kind of aggressive threat the United Nations was born to confront.⁹⁵

In singling out Iraq as a potential source for Al Qaeda terrorists of material and aid, the President suggested to his audiences that Saddam Hussein, above all others, was an inherently clear and present danger to the entire world. More importantly perhaps was the fact that Saddam Hussein was representative of the greater danger, the common enemy

⁹⁵ Bush, 14 September,

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that threatened the world. In his January, 2002 State of the Union Speech, the President had invoked the title of “the Axis of Evil” upon Iraq, along with Iran and North Korea. This new nomenclature harkened back to the Clinton “Rogue States” term⁹⁶ and the Reagan “Evil Empire” references that had so simply defined the world’s power structure. Such references are an explicit signal to other nations that the United States is not reticent to the notion of employing its power against nations that constitute what it conceives to be threats to democracy; and are an implicit confirmation that United States still sees the world as a Manichaeian paradigm.

On March 14, 2003, in a global message released by the President, he stated unequivocally,

Sixteen weeks after the passage of 1441 - and 12 years after the end of the Gulf War - the Iraqi regime has not complied and has not cooperated "immediately, unconditionally, and actively," as required by 1441. ... The world faces many challenges today, and we need a strong UN Security Council - one whose words have meaning, and that has the will to enforce its own resolutions. ... The world has a responsibility to address the gravest threat of our time—the nexus between rogue regimes, WMD and global terrorism—and President Bush is determined to do so, with or without the United Nations.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ According to Graebner, In recognizing that, on the one hand, many were questioning American power, while on the other none were strong enough to challenge it beyond rhetoric, the Clinton Administration bowed to the tradition (and overarching strategy) set by President Ronald Reagan in 1983 when he referred to the Soviet Union as an “Evil Empire.” By making such a rhetorical distinction, Reagan gave overt identity to a tacit concept that dominated the Cold War for decades: the concept of Global Manichaeism. In a bipolar world struggle, the characterization of the Soviet Union as overtly evil automatically applied the opposite identity of goodness to the United States, thereby creating a palpable Manichaeian paradigm. The world, perhaps with some reluctance in certain quarters, accepted this premise. Subsequent to the implosion of the Soviet Bloc and the Soviet Union, no clear (or at least, desirable) antithesis to America was evident, fomenting the desire of many nations to loosen the American yoke on their affairs. The Clinton Administration, in order to ostensibly justify the maintenance of American power, came up with a term that presented the notion of a new Manichaeian axis (which can be seen as the logical prequel in turn to President Bush’s Axis of Evil declaration in December 2001). In 1994, the Clinton Administration identified a new, loosely or perhaps non-confederated axis menacing the world: the so-called Rogue Nations.⁹⁶ Nations such as Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Libya and North Korea fit the bill and became focal points of the rhetoric to assert that the threats to the world’s stability were not eliminated, but simply had deviated since the loss of the Soviet Bloc.

⁹⁷ Bush, President George W., “Global Message.” Washington, DC. 13 March, 2003. <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/09/20020912-1.html>> (1 September 2003).

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This kind of language, coupled with the occasional fear appeal, such as “[t]he first time we may be completely certain he has a -- nuclear weapons is when, God forbids, he uses one. We owe it to all our citizens to do everything in our power to prevent that day from coming,”⁹⁸ was the justification for the maintenance and assertion of a U.S. unipolar hegemony—and not just a pretext for war in Iraq.

One theme that the President constantly mentioned, and was undoubtedly irksome to the U.N. in general and dissenting nations in particular, was the notion of U.N. relevance and legitimacy. Once establishing Saddam Hussein’s Iraq as an imminent threat, he would commonly dictate that action (the kind of action the President was espousing, as opposed to any other, such as the renewed inspections regime) was incumbent upon the U.N. to preserve its own credibility and worth in the world. The salvation of that credibility and worth, he would often contend, could be achieved through the leadership of the United States:

The conduct of the Iraqi regime is a threat to the authority of the United Nations, and a threat to peace. Iraq has answered a decade of U.N. demands with a decade of defiance. All the world now faces a test, and the United Nations a difficult and defining moment. Are Security Council resolutions to be honored and enforced, or cast aside without consequence? Will the United Nations serve the purpose of its founding, or will it be irrelevant?

The United States helped found the United Nations. We want the United Nations to be effective, and respectful, and successful. We want the resolutions of the world's most important multilateral body to be enforced. And right now those resolutions are being unilaterally subverted by the Iraqi regime. Our partnership of nations can meet the test before us, by making clear what we now expect of the Iraqi regime.⁹⁹

This concept was punctuated again on February 26, 2003, to a domestic audience, but all the same for international and oppositional ears:

We will continue to work with our friends, people who understand the value of freedom. We will insist that the United Nation Resolution 1441 be adhered to in its fullest. After

⁹⁸ Bush 12 September 2002

⁹⁹ Bush 12 September 2002

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all, we want the United Nations to be a legitimate, effective body. But for the safety of the American people and for peace in the world, Saddam Hussein will be disarmed, one way or the other. And this nation does so for the sake of peace.¹⁰⁰

By establishing the guiding nature of the United States with regard to the founding of the United Nations, and subsequently laying forth American expectations and desires for what the United Nations should be, the President revealed a small insight into the unipolar world envisioned by the unipolarist thinkers; a world modelled after American democratic values, led by Americans for the betterment of the rest of the world.

Finally, the message to Iraq was perceptually clear. When the President uttered, “[b]ut the purposes of the United States should not be doubted. The Security Council resolutions will be enforced -- the just demands of peace and security will be met -- or action will be unavoidable. And a regime that has lost its legitimacy will also lose its power,”¹⁰¹ there were no alternative interpretations to be made. It was a message of comply or perish. But, perhaps underneath the obvious rhetoric laid slightly more subtle messages for the other members of the Axis of Evil. To both Iran and North Korea, both of whom continue to pursue their own nuclear weapons programs (although North Korea makes no effort to conceal it, Iran still denies the accusations at the time of this writing), the underlying message delivered here augurs similar potential consequences.

The Grand Picture: Conclusions and Questions

The rhetorical strategies employed by President George W. Bush to persuade the nation and the world of the prudence of prosecuting a war with Iraq outlined in this study maintain thematic consistency, even if deviations in its application, dependent upon the nature of the primary audience, occur occasionally. Evident throughout President Bush’s

¹⁰⁰ Bush, 26 February 2003

¹⁰¹ Bush, 12 September 2002

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persuasive rhetoric is the perpetual invocation of a new bipolar structure so familiar to the nation and the globe because of its former manifestation in the Cold War paradigm. This invocation persists in order to predicate the necessity for continued American leadership in the world upon the notion that Western Civilization is continually endangered. This perspective is asserted by painting Al Qaeda, Iraq (and therefore the Axis of Evil as a whole), and world terrorism in general as the new, unified pole against which civilization itself must perpetually struggle for survival—a replacement as it were, of the old Soviet Union. As a concomitant to this dichotomous paradigm, the President also harkened back to the time tested notions of American Exceptionalism, often through the utilization of the ideographs liberty and freedom, to affix a higher purpose to American endeavors in Iraq and against terror. In essence, all of this amalgamated to become an overarching justification for the maintenance of American hegemony, a precursor to the transition of the world's make up to a more permanent American unipolar existence.

Certainly, this observation does not suggest that the existence of forces in the world with nefarious intent is a fabrication of American rhetoric. To the contrary, organizations such as Al Qaeda and nations such as Iraq represent a very real threat to the world's political stasis. However, to infer partnership among them beyond common enmity with the United States, and to quixotically ruminate about the imminence of a nuclear attack by a leader such as Saddam Hussein—ostensibly using Al Qaeda as a surrogate—seem to be more predicated upon the substantiation that there exists a second pole in the world, rather than in a realistic review of the facts, and in turn are arguably quite dubious. Nevertheless, for all of the dissonance displayed in the world, significant support also arose for America's policy approach, at least in rhetorical form; probably as

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much due to American power as to the deleterious nature of those America wished to fight.

In observing all of this, one cannot escape the raw, hard power displayed by the United States throughout this whole episode. What this study has endeavored to question, however, is not whether that power exists, for that is assured; rather, deliberation revolves around how that power has been applied rhetorically, and what implications are consequent to that application. This study made no argument to the pros, cons or appropriateness of the prosecution of War in Iraq on its own merits, as those implications are debatable—and arguably more beneficial than damaging. Instead, it has attempted to call into question the nature of the persuasive approach to “selling” the war.

As has been suggested, many European powers, as well as other nations, have become increasingly resentful of the manner in which the United States has chosen to manifest and maintain its hegemony since the end of the Cold War, and that dissonance was made abundantly clear through the prism of the War in Iraq. Given the simultaneous acceptance of American power and the resentment inherent in how it is applied, it can be argued that *the United States is justifying itself rather than allowing itself to be justified* in this matter. By forcing its wishes upon the international community, rather than diplomatically persuading them through the utilization of soft power outside of a time table—assuaging the doubts of dissenters—the United States appears as, in the words of Sandy Berger, the “hectoring hegemon.” The balance of power politics so prevalent throughout Europe’s history after the defeat of Napoleon up until the First World War, in which the various powers (relatively) abrogated each other’s ability, rather than desire, to

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expand and control one another,¹⁰² was supplanted by the bipolar balance of the Cold War. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, a power vacuum arose which the United States has been able to at least partially fill in the 1990s and into the twenty-first century due to the wide acceptance of its culture and ideals. However, the utilization of hard power—the manifestation of the unbridled ability of the United States to act in its self-interest through the War in Iraq—may augur a renewed desire in the world for a balance of power, rather than a purely American hegemony.

Were one to buy into the righteousness, and veritable inevitability of American unipolarism as the future hegemonic form of the world, two questions become salient based upon the evidence presented in this study: (1) How can the United States ever hope to strategically achieve unipolarism in the first place if the struggle to achieve it is perpetually predicated upon a *bipolar* model to justify American leadership? And, (2) in justifying its own leadership, does the United States indeed inspire other forces in the world to strive to counterbalance American power, therefore ultimately negating any hope of achieving unipolarism? When examining the rhetoric of President George W. Bush during the period leading up to the War in Iraq through the prism of the “bigger global picture,” these two fundamental queries into the structure, application, and inherent logic of the President’s approach seem clear.

In the end, with regard to the limited scope of the War in Iraq, the raw display of American power won the day. But, given the approach utilized to win it, the endeavor may indeed have been somewhat of a philosophical Pyrrhic victory, portending greater political troubles ahead for the United States of America. The President may indeed have squandered an opportunity to establish a greater degree of unipolarism through a more

¹⁰² Kissinger

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“soft powered” approach to the Iraq issue. By instead asserting American will through the preponderance of a hard power approach, the President may have convinced those that America would wish to reshape in its own image that the image of American unipolarism is best characterized as arrogant, and repugnant. Did the United States expend its political capital through the approach it took to prosecuting this war? The question remains open, but this paper has endeavored to offer the view that, in the long term, there are serious potential problems arising from this approach. How can the United States gain world acceptance, rather than acquiescence, to its self-designated rightful place as the world’s leader? One cannot ascertain this with any certainty given the current paradox of American philosophical reliance upon a Manichaeian, bipolar model in which the alternative to American rule is not only evil, but in some ways fabricated. It is herein that lays the paradox that America must face: The heroic nation leading the fight against the enemies of freedom, may indeed be considered by its allies to be the enemy of their liberty.

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