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Law and Power vs. Violence and Terror (a Political and Forensic-Linguistic Point of view)

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LAW AND POWER VS. VIOLENCE AND TERROR (A POLITICAL AND FORENSIC-LINGUISTIC POINT OF VIEW)

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I A Brief History of Forensic Linguistics

Initially, the growth of forensic linguistics was slow. In unexpected places there appeared isolated articles in which an author, often a distinguished linguist, analyzed disputed confessions, or commented on the likely authenticity of purported verbatim records of interaction, or identified and evaluated inconsistencies in language which had been attributed to immigrants or aboriginals by the police in their written records of depositions, or assessed the linguistic similarity of rival trademarks (Eades 1994; Levi 1994a, b; Shuy 1993, 1998, 2002b).

The cases in which expert evidence has been commissioned from linguists range from disputes about the meaning of individual morphemes in a trademark dispute and of individual words in jury instructions, through the 'ownership' of particular words and phrases in a plagiarism case, to accusations in certain murder cases that whole texts have been fabricated. Usually, the linguist uses standard analytical tools in order to reach an opinion, though very few cases require exactly the same selection from the linguist's toolkit. Occasionally, however, cases raise new and exciting questions for descriptive linguistics, which require basic research, such as how can one measure the 'rarity' and therefore the evidential value of individual expressions, or how can one assess the reliability of verbal memory.

Early forensic linguistic research originated in a wide range of disciplines: linguistics, law, psychology, anthropology and sociology and included topics as diverse as handwriting analysis, forensic phonetics and role of the linguist as an expert in court, covering work in Australia, Europe and North America. Research since 1990 has continued to come from all these disciplines, making forensic linguistics a multi- and cross-disciplinary field, with any up-to-date bibliography now reaching considerable proportions by comparison with the early work, including analyzing political speeches which have raised a lot of controversy like Osama Bin Laden's and doubting their authenticity.

(1) On Forensic Discourse Analysis

In 2003 Michael Stubbs, in The Third Sinclair Open Lecture (Stubbs 2004), asked the question: what happened to discourse analysis? The term 'discourse analysis' is now found preceded by a wide range of modifying adjectives: anthropological, child, cognitive, critical, educational, ethnographic, feminist, legal, medical, multimodal, political, psychotherapeutic and, of course, forensic discourse analysis. The answer, then, to Stubbs' question is clearly that discourse analysis has proliferated and branched off into a number of specific sub-domains, one of those being forensic discourse analysis. It is, like many of its sisters, concerned with specific institutional functions and uses of language. Indeed, the adjective institutional is one of those that can be found modifying the term 'discourse analysis', as is the adjective social. One of the primary concerns of forensic linguistics is with institutional discourse and its intersection with lay and social meanings.

What do forensic linguists do?

Forensic linguists are most frequently called in to help to answer one or both of two questions: what does a given text 'say' and who is its author? In answering these questions linguists draw on knowledge and techniques derived from one or more of the sub-areas of descriptive linguistics: (phonetics and phonology, lexis, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, discourse and text analysis). For this reason, just as some of those within the general field of linguistics often prefer to distinguish themselves as phoneticians, lexicographers, grammarians or discourse analysts, so within forensic language analysis there are two distinct sub-classes of expert, forensic phoneticians and forensic linguists.

The forensic linguist is concerned not with deciphering words, but rather with their interpretation. The meaning of phrases or even individual words can be of crucial importance in some trials. Perhaps the most famous British example comes from the 1950s, the case of Derek Bentley and Chris Craig. Bentley, already under arrest at the time, was said to have shouted to Craig, who had a revolver in his hand, "let him have it, Chris"; shortly afterwards Craig fired several times and killed a policeman. There was a long debate in court over the interpretation of Bentley's ambiguous utterance, which was resolved in favour of the prosecution's incriminating interpretation, "shoot him" rather than the defence's mitigating "give him the gun"; this made Bentley an accessory to murder, for which he was convicted and later

hanged. (Coulthard, Some Forensic Applications of Descriptive Linguistics, 5:18)

II Law, Text, Terror

The relationship between law and terrorism has re-emerged recently as a pressing issue in contemporary jurisprudence. Terrorism appears to take law to its limit, whilst the demands of counter-terrorism hold the cause of justice in contempt. At this point the case for engaging alternative intellectual approaches and resources is compelling. Ian Ward argues that through a closer appreciation of the ethical and aesthetical dimensions of terror, as well as the historical, political and cultural, we can better comprehend modern expressions and experiences of terrorism.

The Age of Hysteria

The rhetoric of terrorism and counter-terrorism, post-9/11, is all-consuming. It seeks to persuade us that our lives will never be the same again. Terrorism is an ultimate expression, something which in its aesthetic form Enlightenment philosophers presented as the sublime. Ours is an ‘Age of Terror’, because we are told it is, and because we tend to believe the rhetoric; one which, we are further assured, post-9/11, lays waste to all the cozy complacencies of liberal democratic politics, and its law. It is part of a wider descent into an age of ‘global anarchy’. Ours is, therefore, also a ‘new’ terrorism, far more terrifying than any terrorism that has gone before. We should be terrified, the logic proceeds, we are right to be terrified. The future is bleak.

It finds a harrowing depiction in J.G. Ballard’s novel Millennium People. Of all the contributions to the emergent post-9/11 ‘genre’, Ballard’s portrayal of our shared fate, terrorist and counter-terrorist alike, as ‘apostles’ of a ‘new kind of alienation’, best captures the intensely pessimistic mood of so many who presently presume to chart our future. Of all the terrors that a terrorist act insinuates, the possibility that it conceals nothing at all, that it is wholly devoid of meaning, is perhaps the most terrifying of all.

Politicians, of course, live by hyperbole. President Bush warned of a ‘lengthy campaign’ against terrorism, one that will dictate whether ‘civilization’ can defeat the forces of ‘evil’. It will be the defining battle for ‘progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom’. In similar tones former German Chancellor Schroeder confirmed that 9/11 represented a ‘declaration of war against all of civilization’. The idea of an apparently indefinite ‘war’ against terrorism has taken hold. ‘We are at war, and it is a

world war' according to one senior US military official. America must engage a 'new set of totalitarian enemies' intones Vice-President Cheney. 'Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists', the President warned the world nine days later. There were no longer any 'shades of grey'. In his State of the Union address to Congress in early 2003, Bush famously described an 'axis of Evil, aiming to threaten the peace of the World'. And somewhere between the co-ordinates of the axis could be found the terrorists, 'them', the 'other'. The world must choose, Bush reasserted, either to be 'with us or against us'.

Perspective can help; but not that much. Statistics are cold. Three thousand died on 9/11; more American troops have since died in Iraq in the futile pursuit of an illusory 'war on terror', and still more will follow. There were fifty times as many victims of the tsunamis in the Indian Ocean in 2004. Each year, 3,000 American women are killed by abusive husbands. Each day, around the world, more than 20,000 die of starvation. In Africa alone 3,000 children die each day from malaria. But there is nothing particularly fascinating or thrilling about drowning or starving, and no one seems particularly inclined to go to war against easily preventable diseases. In a world of impressions and rhetorical frenzy, cold facts are of limited value. Hyperbole devours perspective. The discourse of terrorism today is an apocalyptic one; both terrorists and counter-terrorists prefer it that way.

In the perception of many, far too many, particularly outside America, the 'new world order' has morphed into a new US imperialism, whilst terrorism, especially the terrorism of militant Islam, has emerged as a virulent allergic response. Responses to 9/11 merely serve to confirm this suspicion. Most obvious is the National Security Strategy, or 'Bush Doctrine', an expression of US 'exceptionalism', and the quasi-legal authority for the 'war against terror'. Arguments regarding the legal efficacy of this 'war' continue, just as do those which test the novelty of the unilateralism of which it is an expression. Bush's administration has tended to pronounce a more visceral justification. Thomas Friedman puts it bluntly. Regardless of the legal shadow-boxing, post 9/11, the US 'needed to hit someone in the Arab-Muslim world', to flex a little muscle and vent a little spleen. Looking back more than a year after 9/11, the Washington Post was prosaic. 'All you need to know' was that 'there was a before 9/11, and there was an after 9/11'. And, it continued, 'After 9/11 the gloves came off'. It was a time, as the Chicago Tribune confirmed, when it was 'Ok to let boys be boys again'; untrammeled by the twin restrictions of uppity women and irritating human rights conventions.

Terror and the Sense of Fear

We live in apocalyptic times; apparently. Ours is a terrifying age, or so we are told, time and again. In his State of the Union address in January 2002, President George W. Bush sagely advised his awed audience that:

> "Thousands of dangerous killers, schooled in the methods of murder, often supported by outlaw regimes, are now spreading throughout the world like ticking time bombs, set to go off without warning." (George, W. Bush, January, 2002, Union Address).

We should be troubled by this; not by the thought that there are thousands of these killers wandering the streets, but by the presumption that we should believe such nonsense. As Benjamin Barber argues, the pressing of a 'war on terror', and the myriad imperial jaunts that it entails, depends upon embedding a sense of 'fear' in the collective mind of America and its allies.

Bush's observations, raising images of streets packed with explosive-carrying terrorists, resonate with the closing passages of Joseph Conrad's novel The Secret Agent. At the close of his novel, Conrad leaves his reader with the image of a demented professor busy making bombs and scurrying round the streets of London with them strapped to his person, 'like a pest in the street full of men'. Conrad, as wanted his audience to be troubled. But he also knew that he was fantasising. Bush, however, was not speaking in a spirit of irony. He believed it.

The rhetorical struggle is, then, a treacherous one, engaged in a linguistic environment, to borrow Derrida's phrase, of 'semantic instability'. The 'first symptom of the barbarization of thought', as Ahdaf Soueif reminds us, 'is the corruption of language'. And few discourses are more readily corrupted than the terrorist; a discourse which, by definition, represents a 'distortion in communication'. The problem is that we, the audience, are the third party to this corrupted discourse. We have to try to make some sense of all this, pick our way through the heroes and anti-heroes, the mythologies and the realities. We have to try to work out what 'insurgents' are, and what they do, when they are terrorists and when they are not. We are left to muse on the pretended distinctions between 'coercive interrogation' and torture, to ponder the differences between lawful and 'unlawful' combatants, when rendition is ordinary and when it is 'extraordinary'. (Ward, Text, Context, Pretext – Critical Issues in Discourse Analysis, 1:37)

III Replication of Violence Thoughts on International Terrorism after September 11th 2001

(1) A New Kind of 'International Terrorism'

President Bush declared that other countries could be either 'with us or with the terrorists' in this 'first war of the twenty-first century', 'a new kind of war', a 'crusade' (all Bush's terms). On 23 September a missive allegedly from Bin Laden was sent to a satellite television station in Qatar, al-Jazeereh, stating that it was the duty of everyone who professed the Islamic faith to wage a holy war against the 'American crusaders'. (Gupta, Political Language and Metaphor: Interpreting and changing the world, 2)

(2) Slippery Slopes in Political Discourse

Conceptual Metaphor Theory

Within CDA, as in classical Marxist social analysis, language is not accredited independent explanatory force. Language use, including the use of metaphor, is analyzed as an instrument of power, as something that political actors 'stand outside' (to use a conventional metaphor) and may use to communicate, legitimate, and/or mask political interests. In the first issue of Discourse & Society, van Dijk (1990) discusses how power abuse and social inequalities are legitimized through rhetoric and persuasive argumentation and through controlling semantic content. 'Manufacture of consent' and 'mind management' take place through language, and in this perspective, metaphor is a rhetorical figure that functions to represent and naturalize things and events in ways that favor some and disfavor others. The critical aim of CDA resides in unmasking such ideological representations, 'to show the contingency of existing social arrangements: to expose to scrutiny claims of inevitability' (Fairclough et al. 2004: 1). Such increased awareness of the ideological functions of particular linguistic practices may, consequently, stimulate politics that can reduce injustices connected to social inequalities.

Fairclough, who has been particularly concerned with working out a practical methodology for CDA, suggests a threefold analytical division of discourse (1992: 75–7): as text, as discursive practice (the production, distribution, and consumption of text), and as social practice (more general structural and ideological aspects of text and discursive practices). He furthermore suggests that text analysis can be organised under the following four headings: vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, and text structure. (Stenvoll, Political Language and Metaphor: Interpreting and changing the world, 35)

IV Application of Conceptual Metaphor Theory to Political Discourse

Conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) has become widely known for its claims about metaphor as a fundamentally cognitive phenomenon, as opposed to a purely linguistic one. Propounded most notably by Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 1999), and developed by many others in the field of study known as cognitive linguistics, CMT builds on the premise that many expressions in everyday language reflect deep-seated ways of characterizing one conceptual domain, often a more abstract notion, in terms of a different domain, one which is often more closely related to our physical, embodied experience. A frequently cited example from Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 8) is that many expressions in English about time (spending time, saving time, how much time an activity costs us, etc.) reflect a pattern in which TIME is characterised as MONEY. The tradition in the literature is to denote the pattern of A being talked about in terms of B with the formalism 'A IS B' in small capital letters (that is TIME IS MONEY) with 'IS' representing not equivalence, but a partial mapping of some concepts from the second domain, or the 'Source' (in this case, MONEY), onto the first domain mentioned, or the 'Target' (here, TIME). (Cienki, The Replication of Violence: Thoughts on International Terrorism after September 11th, 241)

How Political Metaphors Work (Pathos, Ethos, Logos):

Before turning to the dynamics that drive style changes, we address the question why politicians use metaphors. What advantages result from well-thought-out use of metaphor? Why do metaphors have the effects that they have? In order to understand how the use of metaphor changes, we have to comprehend how metaphorical language works and what effects they have.

As a lot of seemingly unrelated effects are being addressed in the literature, we turn again to Aristotle's triple appeal to structure this short overview. Metaphors are mostly associated with the appeal to pathos. Most scholars equal this appeal to pathos to the appeal to emotion. Metaphors can indeed arouse strong emotions. For example, by describing supposed enemies and all kinds of threats to the Nazi state as dangerous diseases and deadly plagues, the Nazis incited both fear and hatred (Edelman 1977). Also by describing the American enemy as the crocodile which is attacking that innocent child or as Bin Laden assumes (the Islamic nation) is arousing a sense of empathy. Also recent experiments (see e.g. Gibbs et al. 2002; Sopory and Dillard 2002) seem to confirm the relation between metaphors and emotions. Emotions are crucial in metaphorical effects. However, Aristotle did not restrict the appeal to pathos to arousing emotions. His

interest in emotion has to do with how emotions enable politicians to make close contact with their audiences and how emotions affect their judgement (Herrick 2001). As metaphors can make language impressive, emotions can bring the audience into the state of mind that the speaker thinks appropriate.

Furthermore, the emotive aspect of metaphors can also be used to appeal to logos. This may sound a bit contradictory, because viewing reason and emotion dualistically as opposing forces has been a common practice for a very long time. However, advances in neurosciences and cognitive sciences make it clear that rational thinking only becomes possible because emotional experience precedes cognitive processes (Marcus 2002). Emotions direct attention towards the most important thing. In sound byte culture, this need for selection becomes even more urgent. That way political metaphors become clusters of condensed meaning that, for example, can simplify complicated policy proposals.

Finally, metaphors can also appeal to ethos. Studies have shown how using 'images in words' is related to being charismatic (see e.g. Emrich et al. 2001). Politicians who are good at 'painting followers' pictures of what can be accomplished with their help' also can help in 'evoking attributions of greatness among followers' (Emrich et al. 2001: 527). Again, emotions are important, because charisma emphasises the affective bonds between politicians and followers.

A Dynamic Metaphor Style

Politicians use different language styles when confronted with different situations. Being emotive and persuasive is not a condition that has to be fulfilled to the same degree at all times. The 'rhetorical situation' that shapes the context in which politicians create their messages is all but stable (Bitzer 1995). According to Bitzer, the rhetorical situation is defined by, first, the necessity that urges anyone to communicate; second, a specific public that is being targeted; and, third, more general constraints and influences. Earlier research has examined some of them. For example, rhetoric at crisis times is a popular research subject. Lasswell's innovative research illustrates well how during crises an 'ornamental, effect-contrasted, emotive, repetitious and accessory' crisis style becomes important (Lasswell 1949), and De Sola Pool, too, concluded that during peace time, language is more varied than during war (De Sola Pool 1956).

Other more recent research stated that during economic crises, when unemployment rates rise, politicians use more persuasive metaphorical language (De Landtsheer 1994). Also, when soldiers abroad fail to fulfill

their mission, the same is to be expected (De Landtsheer and De Vrij 2004), as well as when extremist political leaders upset the political system (De Landtsheer 2007). What these examples have in common is that the necessities that shape each of these rhetorical situations resemble each other. During all sorts of crises, politicians try to reassure the public and try to manage anxiety and levels of 'social stress' (Fritzsche 1994). Emotive and impressive language may help in achieving this goal. Research also concentrated on the relation between discourse and ideology. Extremists' speeches, whether they are left-wing or right-wing, are more metaphorical than the language of other political groups (De Landtsheer 1998). The rhetorical situations that influence their rhetoric are different. (Vertessen and De Landtsheer, The Replication of Violence: Thoughts on International Terrorism after September 11th, 271:274)

Based on the review of literature, we expect politicians to make an extra rhetorical effort at war time. We assume this effort (the second round for George W. Bush as a president for USA) results in a metaphorical stronger language: politicians use stronger metaphorical language. Triggering emotions in order to persuade really becomes necessary when voters are about to execute their democratic task. Second, previous research shows it might be useful to distinguish between language styles in popular media and quality-guarding media. We argue that politicians' speech in popular media is more sensational and therefore metaphorical than in quality-guarding media. Third, we assume this metaphorical language is part of a broader persuasive language pattern. Metaphors are not the only devices at hands of politicians and media owners, eager to win the votes and to make the biggest earnings.

V The Anti-intellectual Presidency (The Decline of Presidential Rhetoric from George Washington to George W. Bush)

(1) The Rhetorical Presidency

At least since the 1980s, presidential scholars have inverted the presidential instinct that "rhetoric is the solution to the problem" with the diagnosis that "rhetoric is the problem itself." What exactly is this problem though? The conventional wisdom is that presidents are talking too much, in part because "deeds [are now] done in words." Today, we hear the ceaseless "sound of leadership." As campaigns turn seamlessly into governance, we are told that we have entered the loquacious era of the "permanent campaign." To resolve the fissiparous and fragmented institutional environment of American politics, going public to reach the people directly,

rather than inter-branch deliberation, has become the efficient strategy of choice. The American executive today is preeminently a "public presidency", and that all of these accounts focus on the iterative act of rhetoric, rather than its substance.

The dominant and most sophisticated account of presidential loquaciousness is Jeffrey Tulis's theory of the "rhetorical presidency". The problem of the rhetorical presidency, for Tulis, is not just in the observation that presidents now talk a lot, as he had already noted in an earlier version of the theory, but in the simultaneous existence of two antithetical constitutions guiding presidential rhetorical choices: first, the original, formal constitution, which respects the equality of the three branches of the federal government and inter-branch deliberation and correspondingly envisions a more reticent president; and second, an organic constitution, which has evolved into being by a combination of necessity and practice that encourages and legitimates presidential rhetorical leadership. Tulis's insight is in characterizing the rhetorical presidency as a "hybrid" institution that emerged in the early twentieth century. The rhetorical presidency was a product of the second constitution superimposed on the original, with the attendant "dilemmas of modern governance" emerging because of the incongruous coexistence of two antithetical constitutions: one proscribing presidential rhetoric, another prescribing it. The dilemma emerged because presidential rhetoric directed "over the heads" of congress toward citizens preempted congressional and inter-branch deliberation during the course of routine politics, but yet was required in moments of emergency. While this insight has advanced our understanding of the processes of institutional change—which are often incomplete and layered—it has distracted us from a proper diagnosis of the pathologies of presidential rhetoric.

(2) Beyond Rhetorical Dilemmas: The Anti-Intellectual Speechwriters

In the 2000 presidential campaign, Bush's witting and unwitting stabs at the intellect became political assets: What Bush understands, and the pundits do not, is that he is a brilliant candidate not despite his anti-intellectualism but because of it. He has stumbled upon a fortuitous moment in which the political culture, tired of wonks and pointy-heads and ideologues, yearns instead for a candidate unburdened by, or even hostile to, ideas.

That a Harvard- and Yale-educated president should find himself so publicly arrayed against intellect and intellectuals—unlike similarly

credentialed presidents like Franklin D. Roosevelt and Kennedy, who courted them—suggests that presidential anti-intellectualism may not be in retreat, but may possibly be advancing. The germ of anti-intellectualism, barely detectable during the founding era, appears to have become a virulent force in our time.

A former speechwriter observed that President George W. Bush, who continues to suffer and enjoy the epithet of a rhetorical philistine, possesses a hunger for detail and subtlety that belies his public rhetorical style. The former speechwriter wrote:

> "Bush was an exacting editor. . . . Bush seldom cited statistics when he talked. But he demanded that they be included on the page. A sentence such as "We're increasing federal support for teacher training" would provoke the marking pen into paroxysms of exasperation. By how much? From what? To what?"

The Jekyll and Hyde faces of the contemporary presidency reveal the disingenuousness of anti-intellectualism. Intelligent men and women are hired to craft speeches that shield, rather than reflect, the true rhetorical identity of presidents from their audiences. This Janus-like quality helps explain why, as government has become more complex, as more expert advice is sought, and as more intellectuals have been co-opted into the machinery of government, the public face of the contemporary presidency remains so stubbornly and increasingly anti-intellectual. It puts the deliberate "anti" in presidential anti-intellectualism, because the guilelessness that presidents project is calculated; their rhetorical artlessness is a honed art and, as Chris Matthews explained, an "enormous science."

To see more precisely how recent anti-intellectual presidents have disregarded the weighing and judging of reasons, we need to look more closely at their words and to observe the increasing recourse to rhetorical tactics that are antithetical to deliberation: applause-rendering platitudes and partisan punch lines, personal persuasion (ethos), and emotional seduction (pathos), will be elaborated on each of these in the following pages.

Here, we examine the last, and therefore most urgent, acts of justification for war in the form of the final speech George W. Bush gave before hostilities began. Bush's explanation for the urgency of war adopted a narrower and more categorical justificatory perspective:

> "We are now acting because the risks of inaction would be far greater. In one year, or five years, the power of Iraq to inflict harm on all free nations would be multiplied many times over. With these capabilities, Saddam Hussein and his terrorist allies could choose the moment of deadly conflict when they are strongest. We choose to meet that threat now, where it arises, before it can appear suddenly in our skies and cities." (George W. Bush, March, 17, 2003, Bush in Iraq).

Bush's speech was probably effective at the time it was delivered. Passionate, assertive, and inspirational rhetoric moves the audience, and that was probably all that mattered. But that is why anti-intellectual rhetoric, in eschewing reasons and arguments that would serve as the basis of deliberation and rational disputation, is dangerous. "We choose to meet that threat now, where it arises, before it can appear suddenly in our skies and cities" is just the sort of sentence that could raise the stubborn hairs on the back of even the most cynical rhetorical scholar, but many Americans have lived to regret their susceptibility to such chest thumping. We were susceptible because we were not invited to think, but to feel and to agree.

Bush tried to inspire via abstract generalization in short, powerful sentences practically devoid of specific arguments. President Bush's words zoomed in on abstract, creedal passions that served not so much an argumentative, but an inspirational purpose:

> "The United States, with other countries, will work to advance liberty and peace in that region. Our goal will not be achieved overnight, but it can come over time. The power and appeal of human liberty is felt in every life and every land. And the greatest power of freedom is to overcome hatred and violence, and turn the creative gifts of men and women to the pursuits of peace." George W. Bush, March, 17, 2003, Bush in Iraq).

Bush's words likely sent an electric charge through a large proportion of his audience. But deciphering the basis for this internal applause identifies the problem of inspirational platitudes devoid of argument. Inspirational language, while it might have unifying, epideictic purposes, tends to discourage dialogue and debate. Indeed, inspirational platitudes are asserted

precisely because they are allegedly so self-evident that they need not be argued for.

Rhetorical “spaciousness” is rewarding precisely because it obscures differences by focusing on a “rhetoric of assent.” As seen in the excerpts above, not one clause in Bush’s peroration contained a specific reference to the mission in Iraq. The paragraph could have concluded practically any foreign policy speech that any president in the last century could have given. If a president’s words are platitudinous and ambiguous, his speeches are substitutable from one occasion to another and so, apparently, would he. Leadership would then become no more than national cheerleading.

Bush’s words were assuredly poetic and powerful—inspirational platitudes that passed for what some have deemed “brilliance, power and intellectual seriousness”—but if we were moved by the peroration, we were persuaded not by specific facts or precise arguments, but by stoked emotions and psychic urges. We were not asked to deliberate on the urgent issue of war at hand, but merely to join in the president’s war cry. In effect, our assent to a specific policy was craftily borrowed from our consensus on creedal beliefs. (Who isn’t a fan of liberty?) Because persuasion through inspiration and assertion, as opposed to deliberation through justification, assumes the conclusion for which the inspiration is intended, argument is unnecessary. Rather, credibility or strength of personality becomes preeminent (ethos), and Bush’s speech delivered this meta-message effectively with assertive and categorical language.

a. Applause and the Anti-Intellectual Presidency

Platitudes and partisan punch lines have become the coin of the presidential rhetorical realm because they are applause-rendering, and it is applause, rather than deliberation or contemplation, that is the intended effect of most presidential speeches today. This trend dates at least to the late 1940s. Clark Clifford wrote that he initially thought that the “Truman Doctrine” speech was a failure because “there were no interruptions for applause until more than half-way through the forty-minute speech.” Perhaps it was a good thing that the speech was not written specifically for applause. The soundness of a policy cannot be measured by the enthusiasm of the applause received on its enunciation. Speechwriters in the post-Nixon White House, however, have become dedicated wordsmiths, and they work by different imperatives from those of the policymaker. Nixon separated the speechwriting and policy- advising function and in so doing institutionalized a model of presidential rhetoric measured by the number of quotable quotes

and nurtured by applause, imperatives that call for the short and sweet sentences tracked in presidential speeches, as well as for the platitudes and partisan punch lines discussed above. Nixon is said to have tutored his speechwriter David Gergen thus:

> "Let's try this exercise," he suggested. "Each time you send me a final draft, underline the three sentences in the speech that you think the press will quote. We will check the television networks and the papers to see whether they quote those same sentences."

Over time, Gergen recalled, "I came to understand what 'breaks through,' the line that not only snaps but advances the story." Commenting on the drafting of President Ford's nomination acceptance address in 1976, Patrick Butler observes: "We tried as hard as we could to make almost every sentence end with a burst of applause." Most strikingly, we can observe in an internal memorandum by Dan McGroarty, deputy director of speechwriting in the second Bush's administration, the rhetorical ethic of the modern White House:

> "The President, Mrs. Bush and senior staff continue to measure the success of a speech by the number of applause lines. The President interprets long stretches of silence as a failure on his part to connect. From the podium, nodding heads may be nodding off. Let's face it, applause lines are a kind of currency." (Dan McGroaty)

This figure gives us a rough measure of how important applause has become in our own time. The first time applause was registered (parenthetically) in the presidential papers was in Franklin Roosevelt's.

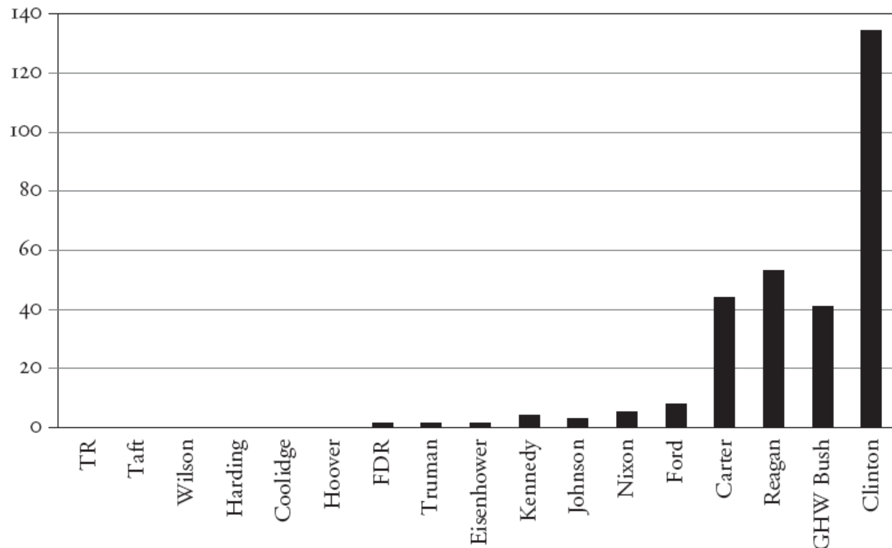

Figure (3): Average Number of Speeches with "Applause" by President.

The same rhetorical ethic appears to exist in the second Bush's White House. There was an average of 71 applause breaks per speech among the seven State of the Union addresses President Bush delivered between 2001 and 2007. That is a lot of clapping for a phenomenon we have come to call the *rhetorical* presidency. This next figure gives us a sense of the duration of these applause breaks in comparison to the actual time that Bush spent talking. On average, the nation was treated to 29 seconds of congressional applause for every minute of President Bush's speech. It seems more apt to characterize Bush here as an "applause-rendering" president rather than as a rhetorical president; after all, a third of the time in his most important rhetorical act as president was spent generating, and then basking in, applause. The label "rhetorical presidency" in highlighting presidential loquaciousness does not convey this defining rhetorical ethic of the anti-intellectual president. (Lim, Elvin T 40:63)

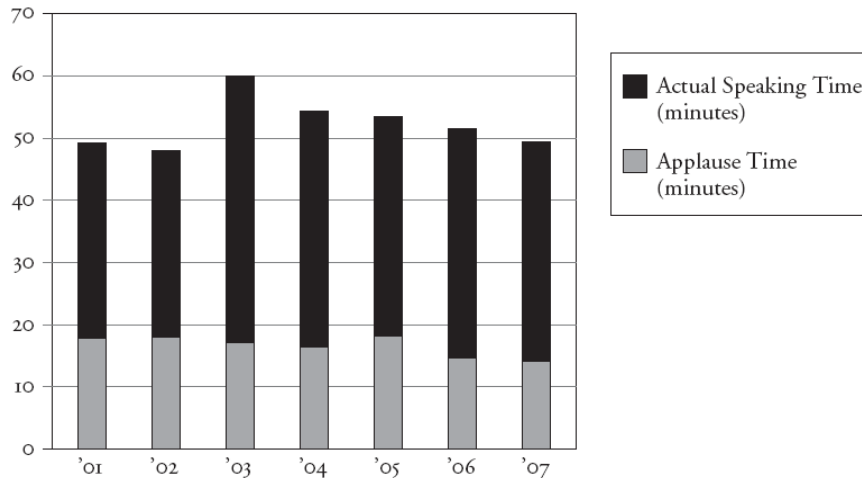

Figure (4): Actual Speaking and Applause Times for G.W.Bush's SOTU Addresses.

VI Power and Politics in Poststructuralist Thought and its Effect on Political Discourse Analysis

a. Analyzing Political Discourse (Politics and Language)

Politics varies according to one's situation and purposes. But if one considers the definitions, implicit and explicit, found both in the traditional study of politics and in discourse studies of politics, there are two broad strands. On the one hand, politics is viewed as a struggle for power, between those who seek to assert and maintain their power and those who seek to resist it. Some states are conspicuously based on struggles for power; whether democracies are essentially so constituted is disputable. On the other hand, politics is viewed as cooperation, as the practices and institutions that a society has for resolving clashes of interest over money, influence, liberty, and the like. Again, whether democracies are intrinsically so constituted is disputed.

b. **The Role of Religion**

The fact that we have to choose a specifically religious occasion and location in the case of the American text is in itself significant. True, American political rhetoric does include religious language, and religious speech acts. However, these are reserved to particular parts of the structure of public speeches, usually the conclusion. For example, in the 7 October 2001 speech, President Bush concludes with the same formula:

"May God continue to bless America."

Osama Bin Laden concludes his 7 October text with a formula which, though bearing some important differences, is nonetheless similar in crucial respects, namely the 'May God . . . bless . . .' formula, which appears in both cases to assume the authority of the speaker to appeal to God to perform some action benefiting the people whom they claim to be (and may or may not be in fact) representing:

"May God's peace, mercy, and blessings be upon you."

These examples do not of course take account of many other features of the texts which evoke religious concepts and practices indirectly through lexical and syntactic selection. Nonetheless, they show how explicit invocation of a deity is located in these text types.

On the other hand, the translated text of Bin Laden has 'God' nineteen times (and one 'Lord') in about 764 words (approximately 2.6 per cent). While there are clear differences of degree, there is still much of religious significance in the American text that might repay further analysis. In general, it seems that while Bin Laden (and perhaps other Muslim leaders) may make no behavioral distinction between political contexts and religious contexts, between political utterances and religious utterances, western leaders in modern democracies *will* make such a distinction, in certain cases reflecting a constitutional separation of the state and religion. There are clearly modifications one has to make about this statement. One is that in some western states politicians certainly have to take account of religious sensibilities, both in the negative direction of not *offending* any religious group and in the positive direction of *favouring* (maybe despite appearances) some particular group. Equally, I am not suggesting that in the Muslim world (or the western world for that matter) no purely religious and non-political contexts and utterances occur. The generalization is simply that in certain Muslim states or regions, political discourse will be religious, or contain salient religious elements, though there must be differences of degree that it would be of interest to determine. While in the west, the expectation (though not necessarily always the practice) is that political utterances will be secular.

c. <u>The American text and its presumptions about religion</u>

Before leaving the topic of religion-specific conceptions and speech acts, it is important to note that the Muslim hearers of the text would know one other key fact that Bin Laden is associated with a somewhat diverse and

widely spread sect within Islam, the Salafiyya. The Salafis' cognitive script uses concepts of purity and contamination – they believe that a previous era, that of Prophet Mohammed and the first generation of his followers was purer than the present, and that later believers have polluted it. Purity is associated in these kinds of scripts with simplicity, austerity, discipline, authority (often patriarchal) and a return to the past. In turn, the concept of purity, is constructed through more fundamental spatial concepts, including concepts of bounding.

Another ingredient of such scripts is the path concept and its metaphorical mapping onto the target domain that has to do with deontic conceptualisation. This particular metaphor is familiar in many religious systems of ideas, and is of course frequent in the Quranic text. It is a metaphor that can generate several kinds of automatic entailments. The 'right way' for example is an expression that depends on the 'behaviour is a path metaphor' and is associated with several other possible entailments – that guidance is needed, there may be a leader, the path can be lost, people can choose the wrong path, or wander ('stray') from the path, which is typically straight (rather than crooked or devious). This is the schema that accounts for sentence:

> "He whom God guides is rightly guided but he whom God leaves to stray, for him wilt thou find no protector to lead him to the right way." (Bin Laden's Warning, Aljazeera Videotape).

Many similar reformist movements, and precisely the same metaphors, have emerged over the centuries also within Christendom. There is a distinctive feature of the script presumed by Bin Laden that is not hinted at in President Bush's text, although the presumed notion is not entirely foreign to certain strands of Christian thought, specifically Calvinism.

Example (1): When Almighty God rendered successful a convoy of Muslims, the vanguards of Islam, He allowed them to destroy the United States. Bin Laden thus makes assertions that presume the belief that God commits violent and destructive acts, and that these acts are directed, by implication, at the speaker's enemies, and by further implication, those enemies are also God's enemies. What is noteworthy is that Bin Laden here selects his words to avoid direct mention of human victims and agents. This form of verbal evasion (it mitigates the face-threatening act of openly admitting responsibility for killing) is well known, widespread and not of course limited to a Bin Laden. The Agent and Patient roles are not specified,

i.e., assigned overtly to referring expressions. On the one hand it is God who, in Bin Laden's text, is the responsible agent of destruction, rather than the suicide bombers themselves or those who collaborated with them. A further belief system underlies these formulations, as becomes clear in (1). Taking the English translated text, it appears that the suicide bombers ('a convoy of Muslims'), were 'allowed' by God to destroy American people (and buildings). This presupposes that they had the intention to do so and were also the agents of the action, while God removed impediments. The precise conceptual underpinning is not clear, but one interpretation a reader might have is that God had to give permission because the speaker anticipates a possible reader inference that destroying is immoral, unless divinely 'allowed'. On the other hand, the American victims are not mentioned, only the buildings, whereas the sufferings of Muslim people *are* mentioned. The motivation for this is made explicit in (2–3):

Example (2): What the United States tastes today is a very small thing compared to what we have tasted for tens of years.

Example (3): Despite this, nobody cares.

Here there is an implicit claim that sufferings can be compared on a scale of magnitude – that is to say, Muslim sufferings (referenced by the pronoun 'we' in (2)), Bin Laden claims, are greater than American ones. This is the mirror image of the American president's representation of the situation: he too omits to mention the sufferings of the others.

d. The American Text: Pluralism, Ambiguity and a Hidden God

What is noteworthy about Bush's text compared with Bin Laden's is not only the recurrence of references to praying but also the extent to which the act of praying is overtly specified. The overall frame that Bush draws on presumes several components. However, Bush does not directly presume all of these components himself; and this itself is another interesting feature. In certain instances he attributes types of praying to other people or groups of people. Underlying this is a kind of religious pluralism, though a limited one. While praying is presumed to be a universal behavior among 'us', it is also presumed that different types of prayer happen among 'us'. Bush does not present universal propositions about the nature of prayer: for example, he will say 'in *many of* our prayers . . . there is *a* searching, and *an* honesty . . .' . In (4) and (5) the different kinds of prayer referred to seem to be clearly attributed to others, thus not necessarily endorsed by the speaker:

Example (4): At St Patrick's Cathedral in New York on Tuesday, a woman said, 'I prayed to God to give us a sign that He is still here'.

Example (5): Others have prayed for the same, searching from hospital to hospital, carrying pictures of those still missing.

However, a significant number of sentences concerning prayer are ambiguous, in the sense that a hearer may interpret the text as either endorsed or attributed, or be uncertain of which of these to select as the intended meaning.

If one turns now to the speech acts of prayer that Bush seems to be performing, these involve making requests in the form 'ask for' (or 'pray for' in the same sense). What is it presumed to be acceptable to pray for? The president does not pray for the destruction of the nation's enemy. His requests do, however, appear to be more numerous than Bin Laden's. There also appear to be two kinds of formulation – one in which requests are made by a collective 'we', and one in which requests are made in the persona of the President. The 'we' formulation is common in forms of Christian ritual where a cleric is making supplications on behalf of a congregation. The sorts of things presumed acceptable to request here include benefits that are unclear in their precise referents, but which fall into broad semantic categories: that God protects ('watches over') some specific group of people, that these people receive certain virtues or psychological attributes in vague future difficulties ('patience and resolve in all that is to come'), and that God gives emotional consolation to those who suffer, by implication those who suffer as a result of the attacks of 11 September.

Thanksgiving is scarcely likely to be the kind of speech act performed in the circumstances. The act of thanksgiving (its close partner being *praising*) is not, however, omitted altogether. While Bin Laden asks God to bless the suicide bombers, and praises/thanks God for them and their actions, Bush thanks God for the lives of their victims. While Bin Laden asks God to give Paradise to the suicide bombers, Bush thanks God for 'the promise of a life to come'. These are approximate mirror images; both men presume prayers of request, the power of God to grant life after death (a felicity condition that is part of both the speech act *requesting* and the speech act *promising*, spelled out by Bin Laden explicitly), and the existence of life after death. It may be that the President's formulation 'the promise of a life to come' is interpretable as unfulfilled, thus somehow intended with less epistemic certainty than in Bin Laden's formulation.

These presumptions are approaching the assertion of doctrine, a role normally carried by clerical authority. This does not necessarily mean that a president is here taking on a priestly role, since the American religious culture could accommodate the notion that any lay person has the right and the knowledge to make assertions of belief. What is happening appears to be that the President, confronted by a devastating event, reaches for discourse that locks into opposing concepts of hope and despair and somehow seeks to reconcile them. But there is more than that; the speech is an act that both draws on and consolidates a politico-religious community, as Carl Marx previously said: "Religion is the opium of the masses". President Bush (or his script writers), in this particular passage and elsewhere, could be seen to be drawing on the collective resources of a current of Christian teaching that has historical discourse antecedents in the origins of the American state. Similar doctrinal strands are suggested by the mention of subordination of the self's will to a higher will. (Chilton 170:189)

VII Compromising the Manichaean Style: A Case Study of the 2006 State of the Union Address

Making references to Biblical language is not uncommon in the rhetoric of civil religion. Embracing the Manichaean style (defined in detail below) is unusual because that sub-genre of civil religion is uncompromising, dividing the world between good and evil, light and darkness. The tragedy of September 11, 2001 allowed the George W. Bush to reinforce his Manichaean style and hence constitute for the first time a large segment of the public that supported his presidency.

After the attack of 9/11, President Bush engaged in series of rhetorical moments. In his address to the nation from the Oval Office, he was stoic; in his eulogy at the National Cathedral Bush was appropriately somber. However, the intensity of his Manichaean style was not fully felt until he delivered his call for action to a joint session of Congress on September 20th. For the first time during the crisis, he defined the enemy in a detailed way and aligned that enemy with the forces of darkness. The United States' mission of spreading democracy was allied with the forces of light. The Manichaean dialectic between good and evil was established: Neutrality was eschewed; nations that harbored terrorists would be considered enemies. There was no middle ground. The crisis and the way he dealt with it were immediately followed by Bush's approval rating shooting to 93 percent, a 43 percent gain from the time of his first Inaugural. Less than five years later in his 2006 State of the Union Address, Bush turned away from this

brand of civil religion dropping the Manichaean style in all matters except for his rhetoric addressing the war on terror. (Smith 4)

Bush and Bin Laden's Binary Manicheanism: The Fusing of Horizons

In the Terror War, both George W. Bush and Osama Bin Laden deployed certain similar figures of speech, fusing their metaphysical and political discourses while reserving the demonology. In his speech to Congress on September 20, 2001 declaring his war against terrorism, Bush described the conflict as a war between freedom and fear. The Terror War was, he explained, a conflict between "those governed by fear" who "want to destroy our wealth and freedoms," and those on the side of freedom. Bush insisted that "you're either with us, or you're with the terrorists," and laid down a series of non-negotiable demands to the Taliban while Congress wildly applauded. Bush's popularity soared with a country craving blood-revenge and the head of Osama Bin Laden. Moreover, proclaiming what his administration and commentators would describe as "the Bush doctrine," Bush also asserted that his administration held accountable those nations who supported terrorism — a position that could nurture and legitimate military interventions for years to come. What was not noted was that the dominant rightwing and Bush Administration discourses, like those of Bin Laden and radical Islamists, are fundamentally Manichean, positing a binary opposition between Good and Evil, Us and Them, civilization and barbarism. It is assumed by both sides that "we" are the good, and the "Other" is wicked, an assertion that Bush made in his incessant assurance that the "evil-doers" of the "evil deeds" will be punished, and that the "Evil One" will be brought to justice, implicitly equating Bin Laden with Satan himself.

Such hyperbolical rhetoric is a salient example of Bush speak that communicates through codes to specific audiences, in this case domestic Christian rightwing groups that are Bush's preferred subjects of his discourse. But demonizing terms for Bin Laden both elevate his status in the Arab world as a superhero who stands up to the West, and angers those who feel such discourse is insulting. Moreover, the trouble with the discourse of "evil" is that it is totalizing and absolutistic, allowing no ambiguities or contradictions. It assumes a binary logic where "we" are the forces of goodness and "they" are the forces of darkness. The discourse of evil is also cosmological and apocalyptic, evoking a cataclysmic war with cosmic stakes. On this perspective, Evil cannot be just attacked and eliminated one piece at a time, through incremental steps, but it must be totally defeated, eradicated from the earth if Good is to reign. This discourse of evil raises

the stakes and violence of conflict and nurtures more apocalyptic and catastrophic politics, fuelling future cycles of hatred, violence, and wars.

The very term "evil" is highly archaic and has a mystifying, supernatural quality that exaggerates the power of the perpetrator so designated. Deploying the discourse of evil also makes Bin Laden and Al Qaeda much more irrational than they in fact are and makes it harder to understand and to defeat them. In fact, the Bin Laden group has a very specific agenda and priorities: to promote Islamic Jihad against the West and in particular to overthrow the current rulers of Saudi Arabia and to create an Islamic Republic there, as has been produced, in different variants in Iran and in the Afghanistan Taliban regime. The U.S. is perceived as the modernizing and secular force in the West, the major support of Israel and Saudi Arabia and thus logically the major enemy of a Jihadist. The Bin Laden network is not just a group of fanatic terrorists but a well-financed and organized network including many mosques, and religious schools, and organizations throughout the world. It has its financial institutions, its business fronts, its charity and religious institutions, and tacit and operative supporters. To defeat the Bin Laden network thus requires not just the destruction of the Taliban and Al Qaeda group in Afghanistan but an entire global network that will require a multilateral coalition and activity across the legal, judicial, political, military, ideological, and pedagogical fronts.

Personalizing the problem as Bin Laden and demonizing him as evil thus deflects attention from the global network of Jihadism and the many dimensions of struggle. It exaggerates the importance of military action as a violent and retaliatory tool of the destruction of evil and decenters the importance of dialogue, understanding, coalition-building, and using the instruments of global finance, law, and politics to isolate and overcome the forces of global terrorism.

It is especially offensive and hypocritical that George W. Bush deploys "evil" as his favorite word for terrorism as it implies that he himself is "good," whereas scrutiny of his biography indicates that Junior is really a very, very bad guy. After years of frat boy ribaldry at Yale, Bush got his father to pull strings so he would not have to go to Vietnam and he got into the Texas National Guard Air Reserves. During his lost years in the 1970s, he reportedly went AWOL for a year from National Guard duty, was a heavy alcohol and drug abuser, and a nairdo- well failure who finally decided to put together an oil company when he was already well into his 30s. Investors reportedly included the Bin Laden family and other unsavory types and his initial company Arbusto went bust and was taken over by

Harken Energy, with family friends again jumping in to bail Junior out. Harken received a lucrative Barain oil contract in part as a result of Bush family connections, and the Harken stock went up. But as a member of the Board of Directors, Junior knew that declining profits figures for the previous quarter, about to be released, would depress the value of the stock, so George W. unloaded his stock, in what some see an in illegal insider trading dump. Moreover, young Bush failed to register his questionable sale with the SEC, although later a paper was produced indicating that he had eventually recorded the sale, some eight months after he dumped his stock (it helped that his father was President when Junior should have been investigated for his questionable business dealings).

George W. Bush was thus hardly someone who could use the discourse of "evil" with impunity and all the denial in the world and bombing of Afghanistan cannot purge him of a lifetime of sleaze, corruption, and hypocrisy. Every time Bush or a member of the Bush administration uses the term "evil" one should put out their crap detector and challenge the speaker to defend what is good about George W. Bush's entire life and political record and those of the domestic and foreign policies of the Bush administration.

Bush continued for months to insist that the Bin Laden terrorists "fear" Western freedom and democracy, as if their hatred were motivated by rejection of positive Western values. No doubt some of the terrorists were motivated by anti-Western hatred of U.S. culture, but it was simply a Big Lie to claim that it was Western values and "our way of life" that were the target of the terror attack. Rather, Arab anger concerning the U.S. and the West was primarily a result of U.S. policies, such as excessive support for Israel and reactionary forces like the Saudi monarchy and U.S. interventions in the Middle East.

Not only has Bush made the discourse of "good" and "evil" impossible to use by honorable people, but also his dualisms between fear and freedom, barbarism and civilization, and the like can hardly be sustained in empirical and theoretical analysis of the contemporary moment. In fact, there is much fear and poverty in "our" world, just as there is wealth, freedom, and security in the Arab and Islamic worlds –- at least for privileged elites. No doubt, freedom, fear, and wealth are distributed in both worlds so to polarize these categories and to make them the legitimating principles of war is highly irresponsible. And associating oneself with "good," while making one's enemy "evil," is another exercise in binary reductionism and

projection of all traits of aggression and wickedness onto the "other" while constituting oneself as good and pure.

It is, of course, theocratic Islamic fundamentalists who themselves engage in similar simplistic binary discourse which they use to legitimate acts of terrorism. For certain Manichean Islamic fundamentalists, the U.S. is "evil," the source of all the world's problems and deserves to destroyed. Such one-dimensional thought does not distinguish between U.S. policies, people, or institutions, while advocating a Jihad, or holy war to eradicate the American infidel. The terrorist crimes of September 11 appeared to be part of this Jihad and the monstrousness of the actions of killing innocent civilians shows the horrific consequences of totally dehumanizing an "enemy" deemed so "evil" that even innocent members of the group in question deserve to be exterminated.

There is no question concerning the depth of emotion and horror with which the nation experienced the first serious assault on U.S. territory by its enemies. The constant invocation of analogies to "Pearl Harbor" inevitably elicited a need to strike back and prepare for war. The attack on the World Trade Center and New York City evoked images of assault on the very body of the country, while the attack on the Pentagon represented an assault on the country's defense system, showing the vulnerability, previously unperceived, of the U.S. to external attack and terror. It is not surprisingly that the country should pull together in the face of such a horrific terrorist assault, but the media in a democracy should provide more clarification of the historical background of the event, intelligent discussion of rational and effective responses, and debate over what responses would be most appropriate and succ successful in dealing with the problem of global terrorism. (Kellner 35:44)

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