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The Politics of Representation and the Social Order: In the War on Terror

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
Requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Sociology

by

Gordon C. Chang

Committee in charge:

Professor Hugh Mehan, Chair
Professor Richard Biernacki
Professor Gary Fields
Professor Bennetta Jules-Rosette
Professor Masao Miyoshi

2008

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2008

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PREFACE

Many important sociological scholarships have been based on detailed examination of social practices. Some research closely studies the mundane, routine order of everyday and institutional lives—such as telephone conversations, family dinner, laboratory research, classroom lessons, medical consultation sessions, and the activities of joke, play, and presentation of self among peers in daily settings. Some research examines the constructs or construction processes of phenomena that are seemingly extraordinary or exotic to average readers—such as tribal societies or religious communities living with awkward beliefs and rituals, gang members patrolling territories, drug-users communicating and expressing their experiences to outsiders and foreigners, and schizophrenics maneuvering the worlds they see.

Both kinds of literature challenge the sanity of the readers, and more so of the researchers. For, before long, the line separating the mundane and the extraordinary—and the normal and the abnormal—becomes trickily blurry. The so-called extraordinary no longer appears so once we unpack and learn of their systematic construction in extreme details. Conversely, the mundane is no longer mundane once we realize so much is hidden in there. What makes the researcher, then, when devil-worshippers, suicide cults, cannibals, serial killers, maniacs, witchcraft practitioners, drug-ring leaders and their clients all appear to be very “normal,” sensible, and methodical people, all the while such acts as clapping to a good show, cheering at a football game, talking with one’s partner and friends, having dinner with family and co-workers become so political, complex, arduous, and effortful?

But this risk of ‘going insane’ carries great potential benefits that are essential to the sociological enterprise. First and foremost, cumulatively the scholarships enhance our ability to observe, imagine, and understand conceptions of *human variety* as articulated by C. Wright Mills, who notes, “What social science is properly about is the human variety, which consists of all the social worlds in which [humans] have lived, are living, and might live” (Mills 1959:132). More particularly, these scholarships contribute to our understanding by offering a “science” of how social forces and social facts operate (have operated, are operating, might operate) in diverse scenes of social life, through appearances that are complex and manifold but through processes that would prove to be strikingly intelligible and even similar, such as the enactment of rituals and symbols, the use of gestures and gazes, the deployment of narratives and metaphors, and the breaching and repairing of normative order.

Close studies of social practice enhance readers’ ability to see, document, and imagine the operation of social forces in ways that are close to the scenes and texture of the world, in which human behaviors and practices are complex, ceaseless, situated (situation-specific), and reflexive. Together they present a rich, cumulative stock of scholarly knowledge on the operation of social facts, *potentially* helping people to move “back-and-forth over the time of social things” (Lemert 2006:xiii) as they try to make sense of and meet social challenges in front of them, whether they be about improving the education system, bettering care for the elders, preventing global warming, constructing convivial and satisfactory workplaces, or mitigating family, ethnic, and global conflicts at the policy, organizational, or conversational levels.

This dissertation examines the practices of political legitimation. It is a focused study of the process and methods by which the George W. Bush Administration legitimated the War on Terrorism and related policies during the early period of the war, between 2001-2004. The War on Terrorism has become an intelligible “collective reality,” not only being evoked to inspire and constrain actions among the American populace but also among international governments. The operational research questions of this study are: *How did this reality come about, how was it maintained in the current of changing events, how was it used to justify social actions and corresponding outcomes?*

This analysis can be considered as the examination of an extraordinary case, an ordinary one, or neither. The George W. Bush’s post-9/11 discourse shocked many scholars and observers for its extremities. The dichotomization of world politics in good versus evil terms, blatant evocation of religious symbols and personal beliefs, the rallying for the liberal use of U.S. military power, the refusal to acknowledge empirical and moral ambiguity, and the riding roughshod over serious, vocal international oppositions can appear to many readers to be extreme compared to recent U.S. presidential administrations as well as leaders of industrialized nations today.

But this analysis will show some impressively intricate, coherent, and rich qualities of the political knowledge system espoused by the Bush Administration. Underneath what can seem to be improvised statements of rousing claims and brazen lies, the coherent, intelligible “reality” was, first of all, maintained by successfully legitimating a set of deep premises in the discourse system. In this case, the set of

premises—rooted in the cultural foundation of the American civil religion—was that innocent, good America was at war with evil, secretive, terrorist enemies who hated its embodiment of freedom and democracy (see my discussion on the “the War on Terrorism script” later). Once these premises were passed as universally acceptable in the discourse—not necessarily in the sense that everyone believed in or agreed with their validity, but that it was socially acceptable for the political administration to publicly treat them as real phenomena—then many further interpretations and calculations based on these premises also became conceivably acceptable. The acceptability of specific interpretations relied on multi-layered and elaborate *knowledge-making practices* conducted in discourse. Hence, we see the processes of the administration artfully mobilizing investigative resources and machineries, substantiating claims and narratives with empirical facts and figures, weighing costs, benefits, and risks of political measures, and refuting counterarguments and contradictory evidence. These practices served to elaborate upon the coherent reality by flexibly assimilate unfolding events and new information presented onto the political stage over time. While the legitimacy created by the administration did not last forever, they were long-lasting enough to have produced important social and historical effects.

Considering this case in the broader scene of politics, perhaps this administration’s legitimation practices for uses of social forces are not as extreme as one may initially expect. Partly, all world and nations’ histories—particularly pertaining to war, colonization, revolution, and slavery—seem to be weaved together

by hundreds of cases of extreme expression of social forces grounded in artfully legitimated beliefs. Even without visiting the too-distant histories of foreign countries, the internment of Japanese Americans in 1940s, the U.S. intervention in Korea in 1950s, the nuclear arms race during the 1950s and 1960s, the military campaign in Vietnam during the 1970s, and the mass incarceration and neoliberal policy movements in the United States between 1970-1990 have all received nearly consensual support from Democratic and Republican politicians at *some* time; congressional records, court proceedings, and presidential speeches would attest to these extreme policies' legitimate qualities as if they were self-evident and commonsensical. In fact, this study, too, will reveal how powerful voices in “conversations” with the Bush Administration overwhelmingly treated its arguments to be within bounds of reasonableness and acceptability—contrasting starkly to those arguments by enemies which were depicted as utterly outrageous, irrational, dishonest, “crazy,” and nonsensical. Bush’s reasoning, for example, appeared to be completely intelligible to British Prime Minister Tony Blair and even reproduced by many Democratic Party politicians.

Overall, whether one views the Bush Administration’s legitimation practices to be mundane/normal or an extraordinary/abnormal, this study aims to show how social practices and social forces have operated, are operating, and could operate in the scene of today public political discourse—in multifarious appearances and through basic, intelligible processes. That procedural construction of a socially meaningful reality in the 21st century context, in which the unleashing of social forces leading to killing and

sacrifice are deemed justified and worthwhile, inform us about the significance of symbolic processes in human societies.

Although this research centers on an in-depth analysis of political legitimation processes and epistemic practices, to a limited extent it also speaks to a range of other issues and topics, notably the nature and limit of human knowledge in relation to the prospect of existential absurdity, the political properties of the American civil religion, contemporary American and international political conditions and mechanisms, the role of political agency in influencing history, the phenomenon of post-9/11 political transformation, and, more particularly, the acts and deeds of the Bush Administration as documented by specific analytic techniques. All these questions have motivated me to conduct and complete the study, and I hope readers who stumble upon miscellaneous partial findings will find them to be pleasant, complementary additions to the overall account of the politics of representation.

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I always wonder how different my life would be, or at least my career would be, without great teachers. During my academically underperforming years in Hong Kong, several kind and understanding teachers that helped me sustain an enjoyable school life and acknowledged my strength (in Chinese composition then) amidst my weaknesses. My high school teachers at Alameda High School, California, fueled my curiosities in academic and intellectual matters and encouraged my path in the humanities and social sciences; Ms. Andrea Szeto, Mr. Robert Rodd, Ms. Jacques Davis-Martin, Mr. Steve Caziarc, and Ms. Susan McAllister made those impressionable years doubly more exciting. During my undergraduate years I encountered a number of professors who were willing to converse with me extensively during office hours and beyond, which consequentially shaped my intellectual and political perspectives: Hugh “Bud” Mehan, Melvyn Freilicher, George Lipsitz, Masao Miyoshi, Ebbe Ebbesen, and Kimberly Jameson. Ebbe Ebbesen and Kimberly Jameson from the Psychology Department particularly deserve credits for their openness and investments on students who may disagree with them, with me being a living test case. Patricia McDonough, John McNeil, Arthur Cohen, Peter McLaren, and Frederick Erickson extended critical support and kind ears during my years at the UCLA Graduate School of Education and beyond.

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Chapter 3, in part, is a reprint of the material as it appears in *Discourse and Society*, 2008, Chang, Gordon C.; Mehan, Hugh B., Sage Publications, 2008. The dissertation author was the primary investigator and author of this paper.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Politics of Representation and the Social Order: In the War on Terror

by

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Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

University of California, San Diego, 2008

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This thesis empirically examines how a political administration in power legitimates important and controversial policies in public political discourse over a period of time. Based on an in-depth study of the “politics of representation” processes surrounding the early U.S. War on Terrorism between 2001 and 2004, utilizing more than 1,500 public speeches and documents as data, it shows how the George W. Bush Administration developed and applied a cultural script—the War on Terror script—to create and sustain a socially intelligible “reality” (collective representation) with implications for world politics through its incremental interactions with other political players in public discourse. The constitution and

maintenance of this “reality” depended on complex and artful epistemic and discourse practices, including using selective facts, deploying linguistic devices, connecting to deep-seated cultural conceptions, analyzing cost and benefit, mobilizing investigative resources, and enacting coercive political actions. These elaborate representational practices assembled otherwise unconnected events and ideas into intelligible, coherent, meaningful order in different epistemic forms, consequently legitimating many important political decisions that have grave societal and historical effects while suppressing oppositional voices and challenging contradictory evidence.

In contrast to existing analyses and criticisms of the Bush Administration’s legitimation effort that focus on practices of misinformation, cultural appeal, or arbitrary rhetorical exercises, this research shows the artful uses of a discourse legitimation tool—the script of the War on Terrorism—that flexibly incorporates and integrates facts and events presented on the political stage over time and sustains many policy arguments pertaining to the War on Terrorism. Showing the richness and versatility of the War on Terror knowledge system, this analysis speaks to the larger issue of the practical formation of political ideology for war by calling attention to the powerful—but often invisible—uses of deep cultural premises in political reasoning and the incredibly elaborate discursive and evidential mechanisms sustaining those premises. It makes a case for sociological researchers to move beyond interrogating thematic and contextual meanings espoused by public political actors into dissecting situated discursive and epistemic practices upholding those meanings.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION: THE SOCIAL ORDER AND THE POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION

I. The Ambiguous Ground of Knowledge and Its Unambiguous Effects

In our everyday life-world, the meanings of objects and situations are ambiguous to us to varying degrees. There are many taken-for-grant assumptions we operate upon without notice with regard to people, events, and physical objects. There are also plenty of things we feel unsure of or know nothing about, such as the formation of a storm in Antarctica, an unreported military conflict in a foreign place, the law of science 250 years from now, and whether a friend likes us or not. The knowledge we are so certain of or take for granted now may seem inaccurate or non-useful in the future, and everything we know now was initially unknown to us. Our lives, in summary, are drenched in influxes of ambiguity and clarity of meanings.

Regardless of whether our knowledge is true, its existence does not merely produce true, absolute effects on our actions (as the Thomas Theorem suggests) but also hold our worlds together. We *know* that the world is not ending in the next ten minutes, and this knowledge affords us to avoid being in a state of panic, calling up our loved ones to say ‘good bye,’ and to continue read the following pages in leisure. Likewise, we *know* our beloved family member of ours would not suddenly tear off their skins and reveal a robotic body in the upcoming family dinner, which afford us to treat them more or less like we have before. Everything we *know* about the reality that is relevant to our lives’ operation at the moment—be it true or false, about science or

about morality, about politics or about beauty—shapes the order of our world at the moment in time.

Some societies in earlier history took particular sets of knowledge to be true, knowledge that is likely to be disagreeable from contemporary standpoints and understandings. Nevertheless, such knowledge sets—and modes of epistemic processes associated with them—give rise to peculiar social order at a particular time. For example, at some locations in medieval Europe where state and religion intertwined, judicial authorities had accepted duels (or “trial by combat”) to be a fair way to settle certain disputes between freeman of equal ranks outside of regular tribunals, often on the premise that God would be on the side of the winner.¹ More notorious to us today are “trials by ordeals” of various kinds, which were institutionalized in order to test the innocence of the accused. The accused parties were asked to perform such painful tasks as eating dry bread and cheese without water, dipping hands in boiling water, holding glowing iron with their bare hands, and walking over red-hot blades of ploughshares. Signs of choking or vomiting as well as visible physical damage after a brief period were interpreted by judging legal authorities as evidence of guilt. Again, the evidential relationship between a claim of guilt and a fact from a test was based on the fundamental assumption that God would

¹ There is a variety of traditions regarding the exact forms and rules of the duel (Jones 1932; Snell [1911]2006). Sometimes the accusers and accused could designate a warrior to fight on their behalf, sometimes both parties (or the combatants who fought on their behalf) were required to stake their lives to the procedures. There were also variations as the issues of disputes where these methods could be applied, the degree of involvement of judicial authority, the requirement of social standing of participants, and so on.

have intervened to protect the innocent and would not do so for the guilty (Henderson 1910; Snell [1911]2006).

Historical records of these precedents are impressive not just in their exoticism but also the richness and rigor in reasoning they reveal. One of the fundamental factors that enabled these practices to be carried out is one set of premises uniformly accepted by the societies: (A) the existence of *one* just and Almighty God (B) who takes an active interests in social affairs and personal conducts, and (C) religious-political officials were authorized, privileged interpreters of His will. Based on these understanding, judicial battles and trials by ordeal resembled solemn Durkheimian rituals, in which a social collective entered relations with the sacred according to elaborate, clearly specified procedures. The bread and cheese, boiling water, glowing iron, and heated ploughshares were all consecrated with specific texts being recited, which explained the rationale of the tests. The amount of bread and cheese, the number of ploughshares, the number of days for the wounds to be examined, as well as the quality of armors in battles were detailed, and the accuser could be fined (or killed, in the case of judicial battles) if the accused ended up passing the tests. As an indicator of seriousness, these rituals often required the representative of a group or a party to repeatedly perform the rituals invoking the name of God during oath avowal or consecration procedures—which are no small matter for serious believers. For example, Snell ([1911]2006: Chapter XI) describes how the ordeal by eating bread and cheese (i.e., “The Judgment of the Morsel”) was performed:

The priest wrote the Lord’s Prayer on the bread, of which he then weighed out a certain quantity—ten pennyweights—and so likewise

with the cheese. Under the right foot of the accused he set a cross of poplar wood, and holding another cross of the same material over the man's head, threw over his head the theft written on a tablet. He placed the bread and cheese at the same moment in the mouth of the accused, and, on doing so, recited the conjuration: "I conjure thee, O man, by the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost and by the four-and-twenty elders, who daily sound praises before God, and by the twelve patriarchs, the twelve prophets, the twelve apostles, the evangelists, martyrs, confessors, and virgins, by all the saints and by our Redeemer, our Lord Jesus Christ, who for our salvation and for our sins did suffer His hands to be affixed to the cross; that if thou wast a partner in this theft or didst know of it, or hadst any fault, that bread and cheese may not pass thy gullet and throat, but that thou mayest tremble like an aspen-leaf, Amen; and not have rest, O man, until thou dost vomit it forth with blood, if thou hast committed aught in the matter of the aforesaid theft. Through Him who liveth."

With religious-political authority avowing to the Almighty, participants and socially honorable witnesses swearing by oath in ceremonies and committed to consequences, and elaborate procedures executed in care and consistency, the institutionally generated knowledge found their grounds in the social reality of people. The epistemic underpinning of the trials and prosecutions were intricately, dynamically, and coherently connected to the larger system of ideology, epistemology, authority, and material conditions that organize *their* whole societies.² However hollow and arbitrary we may think of these underpinnings today, they helped to produce true and real effects in sustaining and shaping the order of their world.

II. The Ordering of Knowledge and Meaning

Meaning and knowledge systems are critical to social order, but what exactly is knowledge, how does it come about, and how does it change? Literatures across

² This is not to say everyone adopted the knowledge wholeheartedly without skepticism or resistance. Rather, the elaborate knowledge system was coherent and distinct enough that resistance and skepticism could be directed.

social science and philosophy provide the portrait that knowledge and epistemology are stunningly diverse in their forms. Many elements could considerably go into the “equation”: mental image, language, deductive logic, inductive reasoning, symbolic association, inner dialogue and narration, conscious and unconscious processing, innate faculty, memory, schemas, attention, intuition, values, emotions, categories, sensory experiences, calculation, and so on. Whereas these factors more or less address how knowledge arrives ‘inside the head,’ in recent years many scholars are attending to how knowledge is derived in situated social domains. In order to investigate how knowledge and meaning are ordered socially, they venture to investigate such ingredients as institutional settings, discourse processes, social conventions, societal dynamics, and power relations.³

There are many ways by which knowledge may be assembled, and scholars investigate these elements in varied combinations and different depths depending on the phenomena being studied, the method of investigation, and the questions of interests. The case study to be presented in this dissertation, too, will examine particular aspects of knowledge and epistemic processes expressed in language use. For instrumental purposes of that discussion, let us operationally define knowledge as

³ This trend is evident in the emergence of sociolinguistics from linguistics, social semiotics from semiotics, cultural psychology from psychology, and social epistemology from epistemology. The rapid development of many interdisciplinary fields such as discourse analysis and communication (cf. mass media and propaganda studies), as well as academic paradigms such as “distributed cognition” and “activity theory,” have fostered this recent trend. The influence of the works of Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu in the contemporary theoretical scene should not be easily dismissed. By the discipline’s orientation, sociologists interested in knowledge and epistemology have always adopted a strong interest in their social dimension; the historical developments of symbolic interactionism, sociology of knowledge, ethnomethodology, and the umbrella paradigm of “social constructionism” are exemplars.

*a state of apprehension and understanding arrived from a particular way by which data are related to theory*⁴ and examine several forms of knowing under this definition.

Everyday Knowledge

We unconsciously (or pre-consciously) use knowledge for mundane affairs everyday. Facing a delicious meal, we know what food is eatable and how to get an appropriate portion of them into our mouths in order to achieve the dual objectives of pleasure and survival. Alfred Schutz (1967) terms this kind of taken-for-granted knowledge as a *stock of knowledge*. Although this type of knowledge seems to be preconscious, Schutz theorizes that it is acquired through subjects' repeated encounters with the world, and its integrity depends on continual unproblematic encounters during its application. Unsuccessful or problematic instances of application may lead to the explication, re-examination, and re-construction of our knowledge base (Schutz and Luckmann 1973).

For example, as we begin our morning walking on a pavement, we make our first step with confidence, which come from past experiences, that the ground would not be a visual illusion for a hole or an abyss. The success of our first step would once again serve as a form of data to validate our preconscious theory that 'walking on the pavement would be physically safe.' However, our stock of knowledge could temporarily "explode" when certain encounters challenge a person's state of

⁴ This definition has a notable biased focus toward knowledge about *what* something is as opposed to knowledge about *how* to do something. This bias resulted from a compromise between a search for instrumental clarity of the following discussion and a strive for definitional comprehensiveness; it does not intend to discount the 'know-how' as a form of knowledge.

understanding—for example, in a scenario where a step leads to a loss of balance. If situations allow, we could choose to avoid attending to these anomalous “data” and resume our normal patterns of everyday life based on the existing stock of knowledge. Or, we may take proactive actions to examine the validity of our knowledge and modify it accordingly. One possibility would be to relegate the new data into some existing categories of understanding, such as the quick discovery that ‘I lost my balance because of my knee problem instead of the ground.’ We may also make some existing schemas more inclusive by expanding them; seeing the ground we stepped on was covered by dirt may lead us to expand the concept of ‘unsafe ground’ to all grounds that are covered by dirt. Or, we may construct a new theory to accommodate this new kind of data; if we see the ground we stepped on was distinguished by a special shininess, we may treat ‘shiny ground’ as a new object with new properties—henceforth we know that ‘walking on the pavement would be physically safe as long as I do not step of shiny grounds.’ Overall, these innermost knowledge processes function to render previously unfamiliar and atypical data as familiar and typical, thereby allowing us to continue to effectively navigate our everyday life.

Arguments

While Schutz’s model of knowledge and epistemology are largely spontaneous and non-conscious, human can develop knowledge using much more elaborate and conscious epistemic methods. One form of knowledge, which is widely utilized in institutions as well as everyday life, is *arguments*. Breaking away from the understanding that formal logic and deductive reasoning accurately depict epistemic

practices of people in the real world, Stephen E. Toulmin formulated a theory of practical arguments ([1958]2003), which inspired numerous philosophical and argumentation studies. Toulmin conceives of arguments (mostly verbal and textual) to be fundamentally based on a relational system between (1) claims, (2) data, and (3) warrants. When a claim is supported by an adequate amount of data (i.e., grounds) and the underlying linkage between data and claim (i.e., warrant) is legitimate to the audience, then the claim should be legitimate and justified. Other activities, such as backing warrants with additional data, rebutting potential counterarguments, and using qualifiers to reduce the certainty of conclusion can be seen as strategies to strengthen the structural coherence of an argument. Such coherence is key to cohesive knowledge and meaning.

One major distinction between this notion of argument and its counterpart in the absolutist paradigm is the emphasis on the ‘field-dependent’ character of an argument’s explanatory merit. Under Toulmin’s conception, the explanatory power of an argument is partly social and situational instead of universal. Hence, a justified warrant is not necessarily a transcendentally true warrant, and a strong argument is not necessarily a timelessly correct argument (Toulmin 2001; Hitchcock 2005). It is possible for a warrant to be legitimate in the 1950s but not in the 2050s and vice versa, in Russia but not in Estonia. It is also possible to have two contradictory arguments that seem equally strong.

A more ambiguous issue is whether there is also a universal, or ‘field-invariant,’ dimension to an argument’s explanatory power. Argumentative reasoning,

in Toulmin's view, is valuable not just because it is a way of "arriving at ideas" but also gives a way "testing ideas critically" (Toulmin, Rieke, and Janik 1979:9). Many claims can be tested via rigorous legal, scientific, or other kinds of argumentation. Such tests, if properly conducted, could potentially provide justified conclusions whose explanatory merit would cut across situation and culture from the view of a clear-headed, well-informed, and committed audience (cf. Van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2003).

The trickiest issue probably lies in distinguishing between 'field-dependent' and 'field-invariant' when comparing arguments. This task is noticeably easier if the question of interests concerns a definite occurrence and involves a claim is more physically, consistently, and objectively verifiable by data—such as 'whether John Doe killed Mary Chan' and 'whether cold fusion could be produced.' But concerning many social and moral issues where subjectivity and speculation reign and the rightness of judgment lacks physical verifiability, a clear delineation between field-invariant field-dependent elements seem impossible (Willard 1983). Judgment of invariance, then, requires a significant leap of faith in the truthfulness of its warrant, which makes it overlap with *belief* as a knowledge form.

Corrigible and Incorrigible Beliefs

While all forms of knowledge involve certain premise or assumption, but at times that assumption is brazen and bold. In the language of argumentation theorists, people often hold knowledge to be true even when data and warrant may be inadequate. Such a form of knowledge, which is also important in guiding life's

meaning and action, may be called *belief* (or, associatively, *belief system*), which can be heuristically classified into four types along with two axes.

The first axis draws the distinction between conscious and unconscious belief. At one end of the spectrum is *conscious belief*, which characterizes a situation in which people holding a premise (or a set of premises) to be true while being aware of the weakness of their data or assumptive link. At the other end of the spectrum is *unconscious belief*, which refers to the scenario whereby people holding a premise (or a set of premises) to be true while being unaware of what they do not know. The origin of the world's creation, humans' fates after death, the existence of supernatural being (and its respective properties) are issues without universal, objective answers; yet explanations on these matters are abundant, and the beliefs they generate existential confidence to varying degrees.

The second axis considers the differences in the belief's rigidity. Some people's beliefs are modified when contradictory data are presented. For example, a person may believe "All swans are white" because (a) all the swans the person has seen thus far (i.e., the data) are white, and (b) the person has the idea that his or her exposure to swans is extensive enough to represent the property of swans in generality (i.e., the assumptive proposition, or the warrant). When a black swan is suddenly in view, he or she may well modify his or her knowledge base accordingly, perhaps changing the belief to "Most swans are white" or merely weakening the confidence on the matter. For such instance, we may identify the person's belief to be *corrigible*. In contrast, if the person does not modify the existing belief and insist that "All swans are

white,” perhaps further dismissed the animal to be a chicken or duck, we may characterize the belief and its underlying propositions (or warrants, presumptions) to be *incorrigible*.

The origin of the concept of “incorrigible propositions” (Gasking 1956; Mehan and Wood [1975]1983) is rooted in anthropologist Edward Evans-Pritchard’s field research among the Azande tribe in Africa during the 1920s, in which he documented a reasoning practice (and by extension a discursive practice) now known as “oracular reasoning” (Evans-Pritchard 1937; Pollner 1973, 1987; Mehan 1990). The Azande tribe was observed to believe in the predictive power of the poison oracle, which Evans-Pritchard identified as a poisonous substance created by “a red powder manufactured from a forest creeper and mixed with water to a paste” (Evans-Pritchard 1937: 260). (The conception of poison is absent in the tribe.) Upon questioning the oracle, the Azande members fed the substance to a chicken, the survival/death of the chickens represented a yes/no answer to the question asked. Evans-Pritchard found that when members of the Azande tribe were faced with evidence that seemed to contradict the predictions made by their oracle—for example, crops failed even after farmers made the proper sacrifices—the members did not abandon their beliefs in the power of the oracle. Quite the contrary, they used the seemingly contradictory evidence to validate the mystery of their basic beliefs, such as proclaiming that they did not purify themselves sufficiently or that the sacrifice was done hastily. Such statements that repel challenging evidences are called “secondary elaborations of

incorrigible propositions.” Incorrigible beliefs, then, are held together by secondary elaborations.

Although Evans-Pritchard’s work depicted oracular reasoning as exotic and primitive, western society is certainly not immune to its use.⁵ In fact, when pushing the idea to the extreme, every bit of knowledge seems to be grounded in a leap of faith—even in the realm of mathematics (Gasking 1956; see also Livingston 1986). Pollner (1987) observes that the mundane, orderly quality of everyday and institutional life is maintained by holding certain ideas fairly incorrigible and unchallenged, thereby repelling possible contradictions and anomalies in representations. When we are in court for a speed violation hearing, the claim “I drove at 100mph on Adams Avenue and I did not at the same time” is contradictory partly because a thesis is taken for granted: ‘There is only one world.’⁶ Hence, it would be ineffective for us to argue that there are indeed two overlapping worlds operating on parallel space-time, so that ‘I drove at 100mph on Adams Avenue and, at the same time, I did not do so.’ From this point of view, a degree of trust and confidence is required for all knowledge to hold true; without some assumptions being unchallenged, the phenomenological world would be incredibly disorderly and fragile.

⁵ Some exemplary cases of oracular reasoning uses include ancient Greeks (Fontenrose 1978), medieval mystics (Cohn 1977), Puritan witch hunters (Rosenthal 1993), modern witches and magicians (Luhrmann 1989), Christian fundamentalists (Lofland 1977), and scientists (Gould ([1981]1996).

⁶ As a side note, Luhrmann’s study (1989: 287-293) shows that the community of magicians in England in the 1980s often adopt “two worlds” and “relativist” approaches to justify their beliefs and practices. The former approach refers to the view of magic and science are both true but somehow incompatible and inconsistent with one another, yet members do not attempt to justify or explain such contradictions. The latter approach refers to the view that the power, merits, and objectivity of science and magic to have independent truthfulness that do not necessarily disturb or contradict one another, since all truths—be it magic or science—is relative and contingent.

But more importantly, just because knowledge is grounded in a leap of faith does not necessarily mean it does not overlap with “truth.” Beliefs can certainly overlap with truth.

Narratives

Narrative, or story, is another epistemic form by which people create meaning and gain understanding. Narrative has a general structure: it describes *particular events that happen to particular characters over particular time* (cf. McAdams 1993:30). This structure captures some meaning that is difficult to capture using other epistemic forms, because some meaning must be located in a particular context—in the intersection between characters, events, and time. Altering one aspect of a narrative—e.g., the same events happening to a different character, or the same character experiencing the events at a different time order—would also alter the meaning of the narrative. Thus, the “data” that narrative processes are not three independent elements but three elements ordered into integral units, and the (thematic) meanings that these units generate can be seen as “theories” as they potentially shape or validate audience’s emotions, views, and action.

This power of narrative to capture particular meaning enables a reader to relate to important human experiences generated in tragedy, comedy, mystery, romance, and so forth. Reading or listening to a story—fictional or otherwise—may enable readers *know* more about human experiences. This process happens primarily by, in George Herbert Mead’s expression, readers being able to mentally ‘put themselves in others’ shoes.’ Furthermore, readers of a story are often drawn into cycles and climaxes,

exposed to conflict and reconciliation, and introduced to problems and resolutions in the stories. As Jerome Bruner (2002: 63-87) notes, these situations are often social situations in idealized forms and thereby link to people's real-life situations and experiences in interesting ways. Hence, narrative could potentially educate and inspire people about how particular human problems are overcome.

Aside from its experiential and inspirational functions, narrative also contains explanatory power in the traditional sense. In order to make sense of a phenomenon, we often ask such questions as 'what happened' and 'why it happened' in order to form a view on what should be done. And answers to these questions often take on a narrative format, which ties relevant human and environmental elements into a cohesive entity that serves as an explanatory answer.⁷ Legal institutions often rely on narratives to decide whether to convict a person and how much penalty to apply; historians often debate about past events and academic prejudices to determine the 'true' course of history.

As a form of knowledge, narrative is sometimes treated as inferior to other forms mostly due to its arbitrariness and bias on the one hand, and its experiential-emotional appeal on the other (see Polletta 2006: 82-108). We know the maxim that

⁷ Rebecca Emigh cogently summarizes two general types of causality: "There are general uses of causality, first, the logical relation between abstract properties, and second, an explanation of a historical contingent outcome. The first definition implies that prior events cause an outcome when the outcome always occurs after the prior events. Second, events are causal when a sequence of events produces an outcome within a particular context. The first definition of causality is often accomplished methodologically through variables, the second, through narrative, a description of a sequence of events" (Emigh 1997:662).

Narratives obviously associate more with the latter notion of causality—that is, "events are causal when a sequence of events produces an outcome within a particular context." For example, if the event "the Allies surrounded Germany" is followed by the event "Hitler hung himself," in a narrative, and if the narrative "makes sense," then an implicit causal explanation is given (see also Abbott 1992; Gaddis 2002).

‘history is written by the victors,’ and people often write and re-write their personal narratives (life-story, personal myths) as a way to interpret and re-interpret the meanings of their lives or particular experiences (Bruner 2004). There seems to be much room in the selection of facts and events to be included in a story as well as the assignment of protagonist and antagonists. These issues render narrative to be seen as *just* a story with an extremely loose connection to “truth” and “reality.”

Yet, it is important to acknowledge the potential epistemic rigor involve in narrative. Historian Hayden White (2001: 376-377) formulates two central criteria to ensure narratives have some degrees of “truthfulness”: (1) the narrative needs to be “presented as a *literal* (rather than *figurative*) representation of the events”; (2) “the plot type used to transform the facts into a specific kind of story were presented as inherent in (rather than imposed upon) the facts.” Falling short of these two criteria, a narrative becomes an “imaginary” story rather than a “real” story, a “false” story rather than a “true” story. Therefore, many important points in historical narrative can be verified and overturned. Moreover, while individuals can live with relatively twisted or false personal narratives until they die, a narrative that is coherent in structure, accountable to facts, and comprehensive of events seem to be able to produce healthier individuals in general, at least from the point of view of clinical psychologists (cf. McAdams 1993:28; Pals 2006). Therefore, aside from evocative, sensational, and captivating qualities, truthfulness and rigor serve pragmatic functions in the narrative form of knowledge.

Symbolic Association

People comprehend simple and complex reality through symbolic associations. We may *know* that the movement of an eyelid by another person in a situation symbolizes a “wink,” which in turn may symbolize a show of friendliness or interest toward us. In other words, we associate the data with preconceived ideas that we learned from previous interpersonal or observed encounters (cf. Mead [1934]1962; Geertz 1973; Schutz and Luckmann 1973: 3-18).

People often acquire symbolic associations unconsciously; numerous mechanisms and institutions in society serve to reinforce the association between particular conceptions and particular signs (i.e., data). One underlying mechanism behind developing such associations is the repetitive exposure to the concomitant presence of a thing (sensory data) and a concept. Ritual processes, for example, has the function of repeatedly relating abstract concepts (e.g., about the sacred) with concrete observable signs (data) for cultural members, resulting in the phenomenon that a knowledge (or symbolic association) system that organizes the society stubbornly survives long after the death of individuals (Durkheim [1915]1965). At the more basic level, behavioral scientist Ivan Pavlov’s famous experiment with his dogs shows that when a particular sign (e.g., sound of a bell) is simultaneously present with and a stimulus (e.g., food) for a prolonged period of time, then the sign gradually become associated with the stimulus, such that the sign itself (i.e., the sound of a bell) produce similar physiological effects as the food. Likewise, anthropologists have observed that human taxonomy is often not merely derived from differential properties

of objects but *also* from cultural factors. Different ways in which societies teach its members to associate objects with concepts led people to make sense of sensory data differently, seeing different schematic type-subtype relationships. Hence, the green and blue colors (data) which may be taught to have an unambiguous distinction in one society may be “invisible” to a person raised in another society; a pictorial object that appears to be closer than another may actually appear to be farther for a person raised in a different cultural environment for a similar reason (cf. Deregowski 1976; Hardin and Maffi 1997; Jameson 2005; Jameson and Alvarado 2005). Conceptions of beauty are also developed via subtle symbolic association processes within a social environment, contributing to observable cultural differences.

The power of symbolic associations in constituting subjects’ knowledge has not gone unnoticed by all social members. In fact, symbolic associative processes have been consciously manipulated and contested. Modern advertising consists of repeatedly associating a company brand with an idea within an advertisement. Hence, the brand of Nike may be attached to the idea of boldness, Apple to intellectual independence, and Snapple to sex—or, one brand to different ideas for different audiences at different places and time (Goldman and Papson 1996; Holt 2004). Jules-Rosette (2007) offers a case study of black performer Josephine Baker (1906-1975), whose life was co-constructed by the signs and images that she creatively enacted as well as those imposed upon her by critics and in mass media. During her lifetime Baker was associated with a savage, an innocent Cinderella, a sincere integrationist, a radical and reckless activist, a caring mother, a victim in financial ruins, a victorious

performer, among others. Her “self” and the idea of Josephine Baker were not owned by her or by outsiders; they were instead constituted in the contestation and negotiation activities between her and others in different moments and situated environments.

The brief review of these several forms of knowledge—stock of knowledge, argument, belief, narrative, symbolic association—by no means captures the incredible diversity in human methods of knowing. Neither are these five epistemic forms mutually exclusive to one another. There are certainly narrative accounts and beliefs within arguments, stock of knowledge and arguments in narratives, arguments in belief, and so forth. Nevertheless, contrasting their differences here will help us see more precisely how political “knowledge” is artfully assembled by political actors in public discourse.

III. Studies into The Politics of Representation

Knowledge does not only exist inside the head of individuals but also resides in the broader domain of society. When Emile Durkheim ([1895]1938, [1893]1984) argues that “social facts” help to constitute order in society, he partly means that there are numerous invisible, mundane, ritualistic, and extraordinary practices upholding order (ways of thinking and ways of acting) of social members often by the means of rules, symbols, rites, language, punishment, and miscellaneous knowledge devices. Such knowledges, sustained and constituted by social facts, are treated as true, legitimate, and sacred in society. Such layers of knowledge—often imposed upon children and adults via continuous socialization and representational practices—enable

basic social order to occur; deviation or challenges toward them could potentially cause disruption of a social group's order and/or dramatic reactionary responses from social members in defense of normative beliefs.⁸ It is partly the successful institutionalization and enactment of 'social facts' that renders a diverse set of knowledge resting on ambiguous ground the status of clear, legitimate truths (the status of "facts"), helping to sculpt potential chaos into a stabilized social order.

Indeed, modern institutions are often designated the responsibility to construct coercive bodies of knowledge and representations and to enact actions based on them. Schools at all levels (primary, secondary, tertiary) construct formal distinctions between "good" and "bad" students, awarding the former group with credentials, positive labels, monetary awards, and access to good jobs while denying the latter group as much access to these benefits (Spring 1989; Mehan [1993]2000; Varenne and McDermott 1998). Judges make decision about what practices are legal or illegal and why they are so, punishing individuals and sanctioning organizations accordingly. Police officers are legally permitted to identify, arrest, and detain criminal suspects according to certain guidelines, thus shouldering certain decision-making power regarding how physical or weaponry forces and interrogation techniques could be applied in the process. Hence, the utterances made by school officials, parents, judges, police officers—and by extension congressional representatives, psychiatrists, doctors, engineers—are not just empty breeze when they are articulated in the right

⁸ Emile Durkheim defines "social fact" as any fixed or non-fixed way of acting (or thinking) that is "capable of exercising on the individual an external constraint" or is "general throughout a given society, while at the same time existing in its own right independent of its individual manifestations" (Durkheim [1895]1938: liii, 13).

time, place, and manner. Their speech-acts constitute “social facts” in that they inherit and apply coercive power, carry a degree of moral power (or moral force) within a society, serve as resource to constrain and enable social action, and help to put a social system into order.

But the way by which such coercive bodies of knowledge come about—and relationally the way by which society is put into order—is hardly free of conflict. In fact, it requires the continuous suppression of or negotiation with challenging voices, elaborate reinterpretation or redefinition in light of new “data” or situations and repeated legitimization through routinized or ritualized representations. After all, societies do change and sometimes in abruptness and violence. Based on earlier writings (Holquist 1983; Shapiro 1988), Mehan broadly identified “the politics of representation” as *the competition or conflict that takes place among individuals, institutional agents (those speaking on behalf of an organization or institution), or groups over the meaning of ambiguous events, objects, and situations in the world* (cf. Mehan and Wills 1988; Mehan 1990, [1993]2000). This is a particularly critical discourse and social process that creates and shapes legitimate knowledge at the local, institutional, and global levels. It usually involves multiple parties deriving somewhat incompatible representations of the same phenomena or situation and strive to make their respective representations dominant. The means being deployed are not just image and language but also money, authority, and material force. The politics of representation is quite encompassing in social life. When this process is more informal, unregulated, and local, it can take place in a coffee shop among friends or at

a dinner table among family members; the victor may disproportionately influence ‘local history’ (Erickson 2004: 48-49) which inevitably shapes the evolvement of later events and relationships—that is, ‘local future.’ When the process is more formal, institutionalized, and global, it gives rise to parliamentary debates, business meetings, courtroom presentations, and moderated electoral debates. In such cases, the victor may disproportionately influence institutional and global history, determining whether a person is sent to death or an asylum, how a social group is to be continuously subjugated, which country gets invaded and bombed, and how history textbooks are to be written.⁹ One frequent result of the politics of representation is the production of a situation where many interpretive meanings are sharpened into one in which a single stable meaning prevails at a circumscribed setting (Mehan and Skelly 1988; Mehan et al. 1990; Mehan [1993]2000).¹⁰ The sign of a complete victory is especially shown

⁹ Certainly, local interactions can have cumulative influence on the global order, and global interactions among institutional agents could influence the lives and the discourses at the local level (Erickson 2004: 48-52, 107-133).

¹⁰ Three reasons may explain why modes of discourse and meanings may converge. The first and most obvious reason is the power factor. That is, when the more powerful people ‘win out’ by verbal means or the means of violence in the competitive process of the politics of representation, so that the less powerful get coerced, silenced, shouted down, physically destroyed, or imprisoned. The voices of the powerful can be amplified loud and clear; the voices of the less powerful are muted or weak. The winners may institutionalize systemized ways of speaking, thinking, and acting to the degree that people become unaware of the fact that their talks, ideas, and actions help reproduce of a particular power order, and that better alternatives are possible.

Second, ecological or structural or institutional limitations may impose victory. For example, the determination of civil innocence or guilt in the U.S. legal system is confined by the ultimate endpoint of the U.S. Supreme Court consisting of a vote among nine justices. At the final stage, the words of a five-people majority have the power to determine the legal outcome of a specific case and also influence future legal rulings; the words of a four-people minority have lesser power. Congressional votes can also be seen as a mechanism in determining the victors in the politics of representation; heated debates over the passage of a law can be put to an end by the action of a vote, in which the “winners” and “losers” would be determined. Even in informal settings, people’s lifespan and energy are finite; they cannot engage in the politics of representation forever; instead, they need to go to work and go about their everyday business.

when selected interpretive meanings (or knowledges) become taken-for-granted, singular truths while possible alternatives become invisible, unimaginable, and/or nonsensical (Gramsci 1971; Mehan and Willis 1988; Fairclough 1995).

Dominant Representations

While the most prevalent and pervasive forces may also be the most imperceptible, many contemporary scholarships are instrumental at “de-naturalizing” the natural, exposing the invisible, and/or re-politicizing the apolitical. Among influential thinkers of our age, Michel Foucault’s writings ([1961]1988, [1976]1978) vividly demonstrate how peculiar human activities—e.g., behaviors related to sex and madness—are represented differently between *and* within historical eras where different complexes of power exist. These varying representations always correspond to different practices of regulation and discipline and always bear subtle relationships to complexes of power along the themes of domination and resistance. Edward Said’s works (Said 1978, [1981]1997) draw attention to the persistent representation of Asians and Middle-Easterners in Western society to be mystical, pre-modern, naked, anti-reason, technologically backward, economically impoverished, dictatorship-prone, and incapable of self-government. These representations in literature, cinema,

Thirdly, the dialogical process may lead to convergence of ideas. Philosophers and theorists like Hegel and Habermas have held this position, particularly Schutz and Luckmann (1973:4) who provide a useful framework for the discussion of intersubjectivity. According to Schutz and Luckmann, people can interpret the experiences of others (e.g., seeing the color red) only by relating to their own common experience. Only through social interaction can two people or two groups achieve any possible common understanding of the world. The dialogic process, then, is a mechanism for achieving intersubjective understanding, and therefore the convergence of meanings. Of course, speech contestation—such as arguments between children—can hardly be equated with dialogic process that leads to development of intersubjectivity or convergence of meaning (e.g., Tannen 1988; Goodwin and Goodwin 1990; Grimshaw 1990).

and mass media thematically help to justify colonial and neo-colonial policies with regard to occupation and war (see also Higgins forthcoming). Noam Chomsky (Herman and Chomsky 1988; Chomsky 2002: 37-69) analyzes the operational relationships between money, politics, and mass media machinery in the United States. He shows how choices of language in political news reporting—such as ‘national interest,’ ‘special interest,’ ‘defense,’ ‘democracy,’ ‘terrorism,’ ‘containment,’ and ‘peace process’—are selectively applied to favor the interests of American business and political elites who share a strong policy consensus on many domestic and foreign issues. They have been particularly successful in controlling representations over America’s military interventions; dissenting voices are excluded in most cases and attacked whenever they do surface. The works of these influential theorists uncover the dominant representations that are sustained by centralized power in society, representations that in turn shape societal culture and political opinion of the masses.

Scholarships have also been conducted to challenge social knowledge that perpetuates particular local order. Hugh Mehan and colleagues, for example, studied the social construction of “educationally handicapped” students in the 1980s U.S. schools by analyzing the politics of representation involved in that construction (Mehan et al. 1986; Mehan [1993]2000). The case study demonstrated that both the institutional positions of the speakers and the genres of speech were most important in determining the outcome of disputes over whether a child receives the label of learning disabled during local placement meetings. The schools relied on a highly

controlled discourse process that privileged the voices of psychologists, who have the tendency to locate the child's problem 'beneath the skin and between the ears.' Parents and teachers—who have knowledge of the child's problem in contextualized situations in school and at home over time—do have the opportunities to speak during placement meetings, but their voices made weaker and less authoritative by the institutional arrangements of the meeting. Their reports often faced questions or interruptions from committee members whereas the psychologists report was uncritically accepted in just about every case. The children being discussed were excluded from the placement meetings altogether; they “spoke” only through school record, parent's testimony, and the psychologist's assessment. Ultimately, the schools had created a situation where the psychologists had undue power in the politics of representation process, even in cases where the psychologists' own “data” were inconsistent and ambiguous.¹¹

The Role of Agency

Analysis into the politics of representation can potentially expose the pertinacious and pervasive aspect of stabilized knowledges in society; it can also reveal how particular creative exercises in representation by social agents may influence the final outcome of a particular phenomenon. Goodwin's well-known study (1994) of the Rodney King trial shows an interesting example. In March 1991, African-American motorist Rodney King was stopped by white Los Angeles police

¹¹ Recent studies show that the exact psychology evaluation mechanisms have changed over time (mainly from IQ tests to medical screening), and culturally endowed parents in higher-income settings could even use expert evaluation processes to gain advantages for their children (see Ong-Dean 2004, forthcoming; Smardon 2006). These studies also affirm that the general pattern of institutional practice identified in Mehan et al.'s study—namely, the exclusion of sociocultural and contextualized knowledges—arguably has not changed much since the 1970s to now.

officers for traffic violations and was video-captured to be beaten with metal clubs by police officers. The tape, made by an amateur, broadcast on television generated public outrage. When the four police officers were put on legal trial, prevailing public opinion was they would be convicted for excessive use of force. When the jury acquitted all police officers, the verdict triggered massive civil disobedience in Los Angeles, which are now known as either the L.A. “riot” or the L.A. “uprising” (depending upon one’s perspective).¹²

One main question in the study was: how did an event that seemed to be so self-evident from the video—specifically, the blatant abuse of police power and physical force by the police officers—was not judged illegal in the initial trial? Racism could be a possible answer (an explanation which inspired the civil unrest), but Goodwin’s study revealed the elaborate techniques by which the defense lawyers deployed to argue that the police officers were exercising discipline and control during King’s arrest. Using slow-motion and frame-by-frame analysis of the video, the defense lawyers constructed a coding scheme, intended to show an “escalation/de-escalation framework.”¹³ This framework, which was actually taught in the police academy as an official guide for appropriate use of physical force, instructs police to escalate the use force when a suspect displays an aggressive behavior, and to de-escalate force when the suspect displays cooperative behavior (Goodwin 1994:618).

The defense lawyers then—by the use of visual devices, finger pointing, and a verbal

¹² A year later in 1992, the case was re-tried. Two police officers were convicted for the violation of King’s civil rights and two others were acquitted (Goodwin 1994:615).

¹³ “In order to measure police perception, a coding scheme for the escalation of force was applied to the tape: (1) if a suspect is aggressive, the proper police response is escalation of force in order to subdue him; (2) when the suspect cooperates, then force is de-escalated” (Goodwin 1994:616).

narrative—directed the jury to a “close cognitive scrutiny” of King’s body. Small movements were made larger by enlarged, cropped photographs. White lines were placed around King’s body to focus attention on him, not the police officer’s actions. By narrating the events in terms of moments in which the movement “starting to rise” and the moments showing the renewed application of force, the defense lawyers accomplished the task of introducing the escalation/de-escalation framework as a relevant and legitimate way of seeing the events of Rodney King’s beatings. “Once the defense’s coding scheme is accepted as a relevant framework for looking at the tape, the operative perspective for viewing it is no longer a layperson’s reaction to a man lying on the ground being beaten but instead a microanalysis of the movements being made by that man’s boy to see if it is exhibiting aggression” (Goodwin 1994:621).¹⁴ Hence, the politics of representation process powerfully influenced the construction of the police officers’ innocence—a socially legitimate judgment validated by the court (at a point in time).

A more global example may also show that under particular circumstances, representation exercised by particular agents seem to significantly influence the outcome of history, and perhaps in ways that are not entirely explainable. Scholars of

¹⁴ Goodwin (1994:616) argued that the success of the defense lawyers’ version of events was due to their strategy of convincing the jury not to treat the tape “as a record that spoke for itself” but to embed the events “within the work life of a profession”. According to Goodwin, a key difference in the second trial, in which two police officers were convicted, was that the plaintiffs were able to construct a different context and different framework, which they failed to do in the first trial. For example, the motive behind the police officers’ beating was “teaching a lesson to a man who had been disrespectful to them,” and King’s body movements (such as the cocking of a leg) was presented as natural muscle jerk after being hit with a club, instead of “displays of incipient aggression.” King’s lawyers’ portrayed the police officers who were in the background of the scene as “nonchalantly watching a beating rather than poised to subdue a still dangerous suspect” (p. 621).

Cold War discourse (Chilton 1985; Nathanson 1988; Mehan, Nathanson, and Skelly 1990) have argued that there were several critical moments after WWII, the happening during which significantly shaped the process of the Cold War. “Critical discourse moments” are moments where stabilized meanings over phenomena suddenly become ambiguous and changeable and where public (re)definition and clarification are in demand (Chilton 1987). The alleged threat of the Soviet Union that later justified the Cold War was a peculiar socio-historical construction by U.S. political officials according to Nathanson (1988; see also Barnett 1977; Wolfe 1979), since the existence of a Soviet threat was initially seen as ambiguous. Prior to 1946, the United States leaders knew of the depleted military forces of the Soviet Union. Contradictory evidences were available, however, to indicate whether the Soviet Union was worthy of partnership and alliance. These mixed evidences had produced competing perspectives over how the U.S. may act as a world superpower, whether to reconcile with communist and socialist ideologies, how to not go against the widespread sentiment for international peace after WWII, and what to do with nuclear weapons development. Such uncertainties over the intentionality of Soviet leaders as well as its own policy direction were manifested in (if not led to) the Truman Administration’s erratic strategies of dealing with the U.S.S.R. prior to 1946.¹⁵

¹⁵ Nathanson reported, “The erratic character of the new Truman Administration’s foreign policy in 1945—its fruitless alternation between threatening and conciliating the Soviets on virtually every issue from Poland to the atomic bomb—perfectly reflects this ambiguity. Thus Truman scolded Molotov mercilessly over Poland in April and then sent Harry Hopkins to Moscow in June to smooth things over. And after saying nothing about Soviet actions in Rumania and Bulgaria for months, the Administration spoke out strongly in June, only to end the year by deciding to settle for insignificant concessions before giving the Soviets what they wanted: U.S. recognition of all three communist governments” (Nathanson 1988:444).

A historical turning point seemed to occur in 1946 where ambiguities were suddenly converted into clarity. This turning point was manifested in scholar-diplomat George Kennan's secret cable from Moscow on February 22, 1946. Up to that time, most U.S. government officials who sought to interpret Soviet behaviors came up with ambiguous answers; "And as long as the ambiguity was recognized, negotiations were also seen as reasonable and necessary" (Nathanson 1988:454). Kennan's Telegram, however, provided clear answers: the Soviet Union was an unambiguous threat to the United States and this threat was based on deep-seated cultural ideologies. To counteract this soon-to-be powerful international rival aspiring for world domination, the United States should not seek negotiation; the Soviet threat could only be directly confronted. Nathanson argued that the Long Telegram did not provide new information about Soviet conduct; instead, it offered a new script and a new interpretation. The Long Telegram,¹⁶ written in the format of a scholarly political analysis, was basically an analysis of the "political personality of Soviet power" by the means of analyzing deep-seated ideologies that informed the rulers of Russia through history. This Telegram gained traction within U.S. foreign policy circles so speedily that by September of the same year, White House special counsel Clark Clifford reported an official consensus advising against any policy of compromise and instead endorsed a rearmament program centering on atomic and chemical weapons (Nathanson 1988:445). An important point is that once this script became dominant, it almost did not matter what Soviet leaders did—everything fell under this new,

¹⁶ The central excerpt of the Long Telegram was published in *Foreign Affairs* in 1947 as "The Sources of Soviet Threat."

powerful representation system.¹⁷ After 1946, alternative voices favoring a reconciliation strategy were silenced; Secretary of Commerce Henry Wallace, for example, was asked to resign from the Truman Administration's cabinet. Other seemingly counter evidence of Soviet good will were kept concealed from the public and most members of Congress and remained classified (Nathanson 1988:464).

In the long run, the successful initial construction of the Soviet threat as a socially legitimate concept helped justify the exponential development of (and spending on) nuclear weapons programs as well as U.S. actions against alleged communist and socialist groups and regimes across the globe and at home, under the labels of "deterrence" and "containment" strategies (Mehan, Nathanson, and Skelly 1990). The process of this Cold War multiplied the U.S. military supremacy over any other nations of the world, and the so-called eventual "victory" in this Cold War put the United States as the world's lone super power, constructing a so-called 'unipolar' global order during the 1990s (Buzan 2004).

IV. The Case Study on the War on Terrorism Discourse

As a social and discourse process, the politics of representation embeds knowledge-making activities consisting of human constructing complex mechanism of knowledge that relates facts to claims (or theory). It embeds multiple voices in conflict and/or agreement with one another, involves uses of institutional and material power, includes the breaching and perpetual construction of social order, and impels public meaning to flow between the states of clarity and ambiguity. As political

¹⁷ If we follow the content of the Telegram, Russia's inaction, for example, could be interpreted a sign for their beliefs that 'truth is on their side and they can therefore afford to wait.'

speakers represent phenomena in public domain act in accordance with appropriate time, place, and manner, their actions are socially and politically relevant, and they push the world forward by the institutional powers vested in them.

This dissertation analyzes a case in which the politics of representation process among driven by (and occur among) political leaders significantly shapes the social order at the national and international levels; it studies the legitimation and delegitimation practices of the U.S. War in Terrorism by the George W. Bush Administration between 2001 and 2004. The U.S. War on Terrorism, and especially the War on Iraq, is a catalyst for the weakening of U.S. power in the international realm (Buzan 2004; Walt 2005; Stiglitz and Bilmes 2008) and has affected domestic politics and civic life in America and the Middle East (Kellner 2005b; Katz 2007). These effects are in no small part related to how the Bush Administration initially represented the episode of 9/11 and subsequently mobilized and legitimized the wars on Afghanistan and Iraq.

In late-1980s Hugh Mehan, Charles Nathanson, and James Skelly (see Mehan and Skelly 1988; Nathanson 1988; Mehan Nathanson and Skelly 1990) collaboratively devised a methodological approach to study public discursive interactions among political players that did not occur face-to-face in real-time. To phrase it differently, their project involved turning international political discourse into a “social fact”—or into an observable *social* thing—that can be subject to methodical analysis. The application of this “politics of representation” method—which has precedents in face-to-face interactional research and roots in the sociological schools of

ethnomethodology, phenomenology, and symbolic interactionism—into the study of non-face-to-face political discourse marked the main contribution of these authors.¹⁸

Adapting their approach, this politics of representation study will incorporate certain selected voices from powerful domestic and international public players rather than just dissecting one voice hermeneutically, textually, and exegetically. It will place those voices in ‘dialogic’ (Voloshinov/Bakhtin [1929]1994) terms rather than only in contrastive terms, with the ‘dialogues’ being how different voices address the similar political events, how they address one another referentially, and/or how a voice changes over time as new political situations unfold. Furthermore, it will not restrict the analysis to one kind of speech act (e.g., *just* metaphor, frame, grammar, or narrative) but treat different kinds of speech-acts as a form of “discourse strategy” enacted in the particular political contexts.

These approaches lend power to researchers to provide a richer description of how power plays out in contested politics over time, convey the underlying cultural ethos of an era in which key political decisions are made, and demonstrate the functional significance of particular deployment of speech-acts in specific contestation activities. Somewhat different from research efforts that primarily aim at critiquing political and institutional discourses (e.g., Kellner 2005b, 2007b; Gusterson 2008) and/or make visible the presence of discrete, pertinent frames and representational devices (e.g., Collins and Glover 2002; Edwards and Martin 2004; Lakoff 2004; Dupret, Nevapil, and Leudar 2007, 2008), the methodology pursued by Mehan, Skelly,

¹⁸ Hugh Mehan, personal communication, 23 October 2008.

and Nathanson place these diverse actions in a particular narrative context described by the researcher. This mode of study describes to readers how meaningful representations are constituted and transformed by reflexive discourse actions enacted within *particular interactional contexts* among powerful actors on the political stage. In doing so, it highlights the importance of reflexive practices between powerful players in the contextual emergence of particular dominant representations, which serve to construct particular phenomena.

Diverging from their methodology, this study will devote much closer attention to the issues of knowledge and knowledge-making practices in discourse. By their research strategy, these authors of Cold War discourse privileged broad coverage of exemplar voices and discourse strategies and their functional implications in particular contexts; however, they did not uncover the complexity within the internal meaning systems—particularly their epistemic foundations and cultural affordance. While they were successful in highlighting the fact that the Cold War political order was shaped by contingent, strategic uses of discourse, but without describing the richness of constructed ideological knowledges and the complexity of legitimation practices—for example, what data were available and how are they were related to theories in different ways—their research underspecified the complicated and artful qualities involved in the enterprises of political legitimation and knowledge construction.¹⁹

¹⁹ Although such omission is hard to specify just by looking at the studies, but we know the omission occurred because even everyday, mundane reasoning were perplexed and complicated (from the lens we have already discussed).

Engaging with the more detailed features of the political of representation involves some trade-offs, notably in terms of the diversity of voices and the number of conversational events it could possibly cover. Correspondingly, such an engagement allows for us to exhibit the complex dimension and oft-hidden features involved in the general enterprises of political legitimation and knowledge-making. This tradeoff is invaluable for our purpose because, as this study will show, these nuanced, artful activities, as *international* or *global social facts*,²⁰ influentially direct social forces and actions enacted between and within state institutions, including the bettering of diplomatic relations, the unleashing of life devotion and violence, and the investment of economic resources, the methodological tradeoff is worthwhile. If these activities are not easily and straightforwardly done, or the works of legitimation and knowledge-making are conducted smoothly typically without notice until our close scrutiny, then there will be values into exhibiting how well political actors conduct these consequential acts in the scene of today's politics.

This study examines how the Bush Administration interacted with its relatively powerful opponents during three periods of the War on Terrorism. Appendix A presents the structural organization of the chapters. The first period, labeled "Buildup toward the War on Afghanistan," spans from 11 September 2001 to early October 2001 when the military operation (officially titled "Operation Enduring Freedom") started. I will describe how the Bush Administration connected this war to the theme

²⁰ Durkheim and Mauss ([1913]1971) first discussed this conception in an essay entitled "Note sur la notion de civilization [Note on the Notion of Civilization]." This notion has been mentioned by some contemporary scholars who study international tourism, international relations, human rights, and international law (Lanfant 1980; Malkki 1992; Lanfant, Allcock, and Bruner 1995; Woodiwiss 2003; Kolodziej 2003, 2005; Baxi 2005).

of War on Terrorism and to the events of 9/11 by constructing and applying a “War on Terrorism script,” which is grounded in the institution of American civil religion. The discourses of relatively powerful dissenters include progressive establishments, religious organizations, major civic groups, and miscellaneous public intellectuals will also be examined.

The second period, “Buildup of the War on Iraq,” spans from January 2002 to March 2003, the period between when Bush declared Iraq to be a member of the “axis of evil” in his State of the Union speech and the beginning of the military operation (officially titled “Operation Iraqi Freedom”). During this period, the Bush Administration sought international support for the invasion of Iraq. Yet, many nations opposed this action and voiced their opposition through the United Nations. Even though these dissenters did not succeed in stopping the U.S. invasion of Iraq, they prevented the United Nations from granting approval and symbolic support for those actions.

The third period, labeled “Containing Backlash to the War on Terrorism,” spans from January 2004 to November 2004; the major events occurred during this period were two major scandals—(a) the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse scandal and (b) the reported absence of weapons of mass destruction of Iraq—both of which occurred during the year of the 2004 U.S. Presidential election. During this period, Bush and his supporters sought to defend the courses of action U.S. had taken in the War on Iraq to the world while maximizing public support in the reelection. Many western governments, international human rights organizations, and U.S. congressional

representatives spoke out against the prisoner abuse scandal. U.S. presidential candidate John Kerry and his campaign supporters from the Democratic Party explicitly challenged the Bush Administration on both the Abu Ghraib scandal and the absence of WMD in Iraq. How the critics mounted their opposition and how the Bush Administration countered these critics reveal how new political norms and power relationships are constructed through discourse contestation and negotiation.

The documentary materials for this analysis are drawn from a number of archival sources. The main corpus consists of speeches by President Bush, public or official statements by political leaders and organizations, transcripts of mass media debates, institutional documents and report. In sum, a total of more than 1,500 original documents were examined, coupled with a variety of secondary sources (see Appendix D for description).

Research Procedures

There are two waves of data collection and analysis. The first started in June 2003, a month after Bush declared the end of major military operation in Iraq. The second wave started in September 2004, two months before Bush was re-elected as President in 2004. My initial methodological approach concerning the collection and analysis of discourse materials is similar to ‘grounded theory’ (Glaser and Strauss 1967) or ‘analytic induction’ (Robinson 1951; Mehan 1979). Without a set agenda or hypothesis to test, I started my analysis by reviewing some collected data with regard to periods one and two—namely, the major speeches, testimonies, or government reports delivered or released by the Bush Administration immediately after 9/11 and

before the War on Iraq. I marked down quotes and utterances that indicated the reasoning behind the course of recommended action (e.g., how to respond to 9/11, whether to invade Iraq) as well as the overall depiction of various situations, until identifiable patterns started to emerge that seemed to adequately characterize the Bush Administration's discursive positions and strategies. Meanwhile, I also collected miscellaneous voices of dissenters and critics who proposed alternative courses of action and sought to depict the situations differently, performing the same methodological procedure as I did for the corpus pertaining to the Bush Administration's discourse.

Once I determined the central theme of the study to be discursive construction of knowledge—what have been called 'ways of knowing,' 'modes of argumentation,' and 'conventions of reasoning' elsewhere (Chang and Mehan 2006, 2008)—much more fine-tuned and strategic efforts were used to analyze the data. The central unit of analysis of the study can be articulated as *epistemic (or knowledge-making) practices* as reflected in uses of language. As such, the basic methodological procedure involves segregating (1) claims (theoretical points) and (2) data (evidential facts) in public political statements on particular topics, seeing how the former element relates to the latter in various ways by various speakers. To fully explicate such relationships, I deployed a mix of discourse-analytic concepts and methods associated with argumentation, narrative, syntax, membership categorization, grammar, metaphor, and dramaturgical script; these concepts and methods would be discussed as the study's narrative proceeds.

The quotes presented in this dissertation are selected based on how well they—despite their apparent diversity—help to reveal an overall pattern by which the Bush Administration and various parties practiced knowledge-making to support or delegitimize a general case for the War on Terrorism. In some cases, the quoted texts may represent what I observe to be repeated patterns of utterances. In other cases, the expressions may only be uttered in one or two occasions but those occasions may be of special symbolic or institutional importance and are widely broadcasted. My analysis reports whether the selected texts represent repeated or one-time expressions, but invariably, these texts are selected with the goal of illustrating the Bush Administration’s arguments on different topics and patterned reasoning practices. Particularly, they help to show the intertextual and dialectical nature of discourse strategies, revealing the manner by which strategies used in one historical moment are built upon and “afforded” by previous discourse (cf. Voloshinov/Bakhtin [1929]1994; Erickson 2004). Unless noted otherwise, texts in italics are phrases, words, or passages that I want to emphasize in the discussion; they do not represent the speakers’ emphasis in prosodies or tones.

This study of the War on Terrorism discourse will not be complete, and it needs not be so to be of value. Sociologist Harold Garfinkel (2002: 169-170) notes, “every *topic* of order—every topic of order, logic, meaning, reason, and method—is eligible to be found as a *phenomenon* of order.” This order—perceived by us or by the social actors under study—is “an achievement in as of practical actions” that can be subjected to examination and display. A *complete* account and description of a social

order, such as “the War on Terror,” would be impossible to conduct. As Frederick Erickson (2004: 107-133, 190-198) repeatedly states, millions of local-level and bottom-up actions go into generating what is considered to be a globally coherent phenomenon, and there are many top-level and top-down processes as well. In addition, what an order is largely depends on perspectives; what “War on Terror” appears to me is perhaps different from how a conservative group at Texas would see it, which would be different from an Arab helping to topple Saddam Hussein’s statue, or one whose house is raided by American troops, may see it.

Given the limitations, what I have attempted is to examine an order that, on one hand, can be discerned and displayed by me and intelligible by the readers. It is partly accomplished by first introducing the readers a synthetic model of knowledge that they can use to unpack political knowledge the way I will do so in the study. In addition, demonstrating “mutually intelligibility” among discourse actors—for example, how a reporter’s comment may be understood by a politician or vice versa, how other discourse actors react to a particular claim, how a politician re-interprets his/her previous position—will also help *us* (those of us using the framework presented in this chapter) analyze how *they* (the local discourse participants we study) understand each other publicly and orient themselves in the activity of ordering knowledge within the domain of public political discourse. These methodological procedures will convey a new state of understanding intelligible for readers willing to adopt the lens I proposed (cf. Rawls 2002: 31-32).

CHAPTER 2: LEADING SEPTEMBER 11 INTO THE WAR ON AFGHANISTAN

I. Religious Doctrine and the Religious Mode of Representation

Robert Bellah (1968, 1980a, 1980b) argues that citizens in the United States of America, a secular nation with a constitutional separation of church and state, is historically guided by a civil religion (or a ‘religion of the citizen’).²¹ The “American civil religion” (Bellah 1968:6) is associated with the mythology represented in the Declaration of Independence, especially with the notions of liberty, equality, justice, and human happiness. It is also based on the conception of a Supreme Being above the nation.²² Like civil religions of other countries, it plays a role in reconciling the highest political authorities with the highest religious authorities in America in specific ways, thereby synchronizing political and moral lives of citizens, particularly in times of national disunity, uncertainty, and challenges.

American political leaders often invoke American civil religion in political speeches as a strategy to maximize political legitimacy. U.S. Presidents have invoked civil religion to legitimize major military and political actions, from the American

²¹ Bellah invoked Rousseau, who wrote: “Religion, considered in relation to society, which is either general or particular, may also be divided into two kinds: the religion of man, and that of the citizen....The [latter], which is codified in a single country, gives it its gods, its own tutelary patrons; it has its dogmas, its rites, and its external cult prescribed by law; outside the single nation that follows it, all the world is in its sight infidel, foreign and barbarous; the duties and rights of man extend for it only as far as its own altars. Of this kind were all the religions of early peoples, which we may define as civil or positive divine right or law (*Social Contract* Book IX)”.

²² While the word ‘God’ is often contained in American legal documents and used in political settings, the concept is only loosely affiliated with Christianity and is associated with a broader conception of Supreme Being above the nation. Bellah (1968:10) writes: “What we have...from the earliest years of the republic is a collection of beliefs, symbols, and rituals with respect to sacred things and institutionalized in a collectivity. This religion—there seems no other word for it—while not antithetical to and indeed sharing much in common with Christianity, was neither sectarian nor in any specific sense Christian.”

Revolution and the Civil War to President George H.W. Bush's war in the Persian Gulf and President Clinton's war on Kosovo (Bellah 1968, 1980b; Pierard and Linder 1988; Craige 1996; Coles 2002a, 2002b). For example, in the face of many casualties and pressure among the anti-war Democrats who wished to strike a peace settlement with the Confederate states during the American Civil War, Abraham Lincoln stated in the famous Gettysburg Address that Union forces, fighting against the expansion of slavery, should continue "the unfinished work which they [the soldiers killed] who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced" for the cause that "all men are created equal," that "we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom."²³ Addressing the decision to annex and colonize the Philippines, U.S. President William McKinley had once expressed that Filipinos as "as our fellow-men for whom Christ also died" and it was therefore in accordance with God's will and grace to "take them all, and to educate [them], and uplift and civilize and Christianize them."²⁴

²³ Abraham Lincoln, "Address Delivered at the Dedication of the Cemetery at Gettysburg. November 19, 1863," *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln, Volume 7*, edited by Roy P. Basler (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1953), pp. 22-23.

²⁴ An interview occurred between General James Rusling and President took place on 21 November 1899, during which McKinley stated: "**When I next realized that the Philippines had dropped into our laps I confess I did not know what to do with them...** I went down on my knees and prayed Almighty God for light and guidance more than one night. And one night late it came to me this way—I don't know how it was, but it came: (1) That we could not give them back to Spain—that would be cowardly and dishonorable; (2) that we could not turn them over to France and Germany—our commercial rivals in the Orient—that would be bad business and discreditable; (3) that we could not leave them to themselves—they were unfit for self-government—and they would soon have anarchy and misrule over there worse than Spain's was; and **(4) that there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them, and by God's grace do the very best we could by them, as our fellow-men for whom Christ also died. And then I went to bed, and went to sleep, and slept soundly, and the next morning I sent for the chief engineer of the War Department [i.e., map-maker], and I told him to put the Philippines on the map of the United States [pointing to a large map on the**

Woodrow Wilson, in an attempt (which ultimately failed) to convince the U.S. Senate to ratify the Treaty of Versailles and approve U.S. participation in the League of Nations, delivered a moralistic speech expressing that God was leading America into the destined way to champion liberty to “free men of every nation from every unworthy bondage,” as America had done in WWI.²⁵ Franklin D. Roosevelt, trying to move the United States away from a neutral position during World War II, explained to the public about the danger of Nazi Germany by saying that if Hitler was to triumph, “The Bible as Holy Writ would be replaced by *Mein Kampf*... ‘The god of Blood and Iron’ would take the place of ‘the God of Love and Mercy.’” (Pierard and Linder’s 1988:179)

Harry Truman justified American participation in the Korean War by arguing that the United States is “defending the right to worship God—each as he sees fit according to his own conscious,” which is against the international Communist

wall of his office], and there they are, and there they will stay while I am President!” James F. Rusling, “Interview with President William McKinley,” *The Christian Advocate* 78 (22 January 1903), p. 17.

²⁵ In Wilson’s original words: “The war and the Conference of Peace now sitting in Paris seem to me to have answered that question.... It was our duty to go [into the war], if we were indeed the champions of liberty and of right. We answered to the **call of duty** in a way so spirited, so utterly without thought of what we spent of blood or treasure, so effective, so worthy of the admiration of true men everywhere, so wrought out of the stuff of all that was heroic, that the whole world saw at last, in the flesh, in noble action, a great ideal asserted and vindicated, by **a nation** they had deemed material and now found to be **compact of the spiritual forces that must free men of every nation from every unworthy bondage**. It is thus that a new role and a new responsibility have come to this great nation that we honour and which we **would all wish to lift to yet higher levels of service and achievement**. The stage is set, the **destiny** disclosed. **It has come about by no plan of our conceiving, but by the hand of God who led us into this way**. We cannot turn back. We can only go forward, with lifted eyes and freshened spirit, to follow the vision. It was of this that we dreamed at our birth. America shall in truth show the way. The light streams upon the path ahead, and nowhere else.” Woodrow Wilson, “President Woodrow Wilson Presents the Treaty of Paris to the Senate,” History Matters: The U.S. Survey Course on the Web, (New York and Fairfax, VA: City University of New York and George Mason University), 11 July 1919, <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/4979/> (accessed 14 June 2008).

movement that “denies the existence of God and, wherever it can...stamps out the worship of God.”²⁶ To justify U.S. involvement in Vietnam, Lyndon B. Johnson once made the case that America needed to fulfill God-given destiny to spread freedom and growth across the world instead of remaining as an isolated oasis of liberty.²⁷

Numerous other examples abound. But in summary, we can conclude that American civil religion, initially developed by the founding members of the nation as an answer to America’s radical religious (denominational) pluralism, has been

²⁶ The exact statement from Truman was as follows: “In the world at large, as well as in our domestic affairs, we must apply moral standards to our national conduct. At the present time our Nation is engaged in a great effort to maintain justice and peace in the world. An essential feature of this effort is our program to build up the defenses of our country. There has never been a greater cause. There has never been a cause which had a stronger moral claim on all of us. **We are defending the religious principles upon which our Nation and our whole way of life are founded. We are defending the right to worship God**—each as he sees fit according to his own conscience. We are defending the right to follow the precepts and the example which God has set for us. We are defending the right of people to gather together, all across our land, in churches such as this one. For the danger that threatens us in the world today is utterly and totally opposed to all these things. The **international Communist movement** is based on a fierce and terrible fanaticism. It **denies the existence of God** and, wherever it can, it **stamps out the worship of God**. Our religious faith gives us the answer to the false beliefs of communism. Our faith shows us the way to create a society where man can find his greatest happiness under God. Surely, we can follow that faith with the same devotion and determination the Communists give to their godless creed.” Harry S. Truman, “Address at the Cornerstone Laying of the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church,” Harry S. Truman Library and Museum (Independence, MO), 3 April 1951, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=280&st=&st1=> (accessed 15 June 2008).

²⁷ Specifically, Johnson stated: “In our relations with the world we shall follow the example of Andrew Jackson who said: “I intend to ask for nothing that is not clearly right and to submit to nothing that is wrong.” And he promised, that “the honor of my country shall never be stained by an apology from me for the statement of truth or for the performance of duty.” That was this Nation’s policy in the 1830’s and that is this Nation’s policy in the 1960’s. Our own freedom and growth have never been the final goal of the American dream. **We were never meant to be an oasis of liberty and abundance in a worldwide desert of disappointed dreams. Our Nation was created to help strike away the chains of ignorance and misery and tyranny wherever they keep man less than God means him to be.** We are moving toward that destiny, never more rapidly than we have moved in the last 4 years. In this period we have built a military power strong enough to meet any threat and destroy any adversary. And that superiority will continue to grow so long as this office is mine—and you sit on Capitol Hill. In this period no new nation has become Communist, and the unity of the Communist empire has begun to crumble.” Lyndon B. Johnson, “State of the Union,” Miller Center of Public Affairs (Charlottesville, VA), 4 January 1965, <http://millercenter.org/scripps/archive/speeches/detail/4000> (accessed 15 June 2008).

modified by American Presidents in a variety of ways in discourse for a variety of purposes. Certainly, civil religious rhetoric is not present in all political justifications and different Presidents utilize it to different extent; the point is that it has been a oft-used cultural repertoire used by American Presidents to important legitimate important policies.

Since the events of September 11, we have witnessed yet another dramatic transformation of American political discourse, in which a civil religion discourse has increasingly been invoked by the Bush Administration as the way to legitimate its political and military actions (cf. AbuKhalil 2002; Juergensmeyer 2002; Lincoln 2002; Kellner 2003; Chilton 2004; Leudar, Marsland, and Nekvapil 2004). While we often think that religious discourse works powerfully because it resonates with the public's faith and therefore satisfies an essential aspect of human need, in the following analysis I hope to demonstrate how this mode of discourse works in a subtle manner to legitimate military action—specifically, how it mediates the construction of knowledge and meaning.

In this study, I begin by descriptively contrasting a religious mode of discourse with a rational, an intellectual, and a legal mode of discourse. These modes of representation do not merely vary from one another in terms of the content of meaning being conveyed. I seek to demonstrate that a mode of representation is intimately connected to a mode of generating knowledge, and deploying one mode of discourse

rather than another entails shifting the very standards and manners of reasoning.²⁸ As such, the religious mode of representation as deployed by the Bush Administration went beyond having the power to resonate with the American public at a time of crisis; it also had the unusual power in generating a coherent political understanding and informing specific courses of actions when much of the available information was scarce and ambiguous.

II. Resolving the Ambiguity of the 9/11 Events: The War on Terrorism Script

The events that transpired in New York City, Washington D.C. and rural Pennsylvania on September 11, 2001 were initially highly ambiguous. Having lived in a period of domestic peace, technological development, and illusory economic boom since the 1980s, and having bathed in a sense of military invincibility following the end of the Cold War, the U.S. experienced a series of shocking “attacks” on some of its most significant buildings and national icons. The emotions of panic, horror, confusion, and anger have been documented and discussed by various scholars (see Calhoun, Price, and Timmer 2002). These events ruptured the existing beliefs and normal patterns of American lives and generated a public crisis; in sociological terms

²⁸ The term “religious mode of representation (or reasoning, discourse, action)” may convey the perception that it is associated with superstition, irrationality, and blind faith—especially when we discuss them along with the “rational mode of representation (or reasoning, discourse, action).” These perceptions do not reflect my position, which aligns with the observation that specific ways of speaking, thinking, and acting within religious institutions differentiate them from other institutions (Keane 1997). The ways people speak and act (interact) in a family is generally different from the ways they speak and act in a courtroom, and what is accepted as legitimate knowledge (and evidence) in a courtroom is generally different from what is accepted as legitimate knowledge (and evidences) in casual, personal conversations among friends. These conventions of speaking, thinking, and acting are often instrumental in holding the order of these institutions together (cf. Mehan 1979; Pollner 1987; Maynard and Clayman 1991: 404-408; Drew and Heritage 1992). Extending these insights, I seek to show that by deploying different sets of institutional metaphors, discourse players tacitly advocate different conventions of knowledge—and, by implications, different ‘standards of proof’—in politics.

proper, this was a “breach” of the normal order (Schutz 1962; Garfinkel 1967; Foucault [1969]1972: 31-49).

Social scientists demonstrated that people strive to create new, coherent meanings after breaches that allow them to resume stable patterns of everyday life and they often do so by resorting to their existing knowledge base (Garfinkel 1967; Weick 1995; Vaughan 1996; Perrow 1996). But searching for clear answers in such an uncertain and chaotic world and constructing coherent meanings about such ambiguous events was difficult after 9/11. In addition to the uncertain identities of the attackers, it was not clear whether the attacks were targeted against institutions of global capitalism, as the World Trade Center symbolizes, or were they primarily targeted against the United States as a military nation, since the Pentagon was hit as well, and whether more attacks were forthcoming. At this time of extreme ambiguity and uncertainty, the Bush Administration presented a coherent representation of the events. I call this the War on Terrorism script.

A script, in its literal meaning, is written for a play that introduces its plot, stage/setting, characters, and so on. In its sociological meanings, a script—such as a sacred cultural script—is a cultural meaning system that provides people tools to interpret and understand events (Nathanson 1988). A complete script, according to Kenneth Burke’s theory of dramatism, explains to an audience the *act* (what was done), *scene* (when or where it was done), *agent* (who did it), *agency* (how is it done),

and the *purpose* (why is it done) of humans' actions (Burke [1941]1967, 1989:139),²⁹ such knowledge guide and mediate the actions of social actors as they navigate the dramatic world.

An Overview of the Good vs. Evil Plot

A plot with actors, notably heroes and enemies cast in either supernatural vs. natural or good vs. evil terms, was constructed within the War on Terrorism script. In supernatural versions, the enemies were described as “evil,” and the conflict was “good vs. evil.” In natural versions, the enemies were described as barbaric and animal-like, or they were depicted as possessing some essentialist personality characteristics—e.g., the enemies “like” to terrorize, “like darkness,” “like” to hide in shadows, or they were “cold-blooded” killers. This naturalistic description casts “civilization vs. barbarism.”

A synthesis of these two manufactured characterizations of terrorists as “man-made evil” and the conflict as “freedom vs. fear.” When Bush said “freedom and fear are at war,”³⁰ he on the one hand personified freedom and fear, and on the other hand alluded to the human desire for freedom and the human fear of fear. Such a juxtaposition unambiguously asserts that some people (i.e., the Taliban, Saddam

²⁹ Discourse analysts have argued that social representation in the form of a cultural script, like a “restaurant script,” helps people interact in unfamiliar situations such as going to a new restaurant and to quickly construct coherent meanings out of ambiguous events (Schank and Abelson 1977; Van Dijk 1980). Coinciding with these findings, studies in the sociology of culture and media inform us that for a cultural script to be powerful, it needs to be easily accessible to the public, to offer an internally coherent explanation, to resonate with existing opinions and structures, and to be highly resolved toward action (Schudson 1989).

³⁰ George W. Bush, 20 September 2001, “Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the United States Response to the Terrorist Attacks of September 11,” House Chamber, U.S. Capitol, Washington, D.C., *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 37(38), pp. 1347-1351.

Hussein) do not “like” freedom while others (i.e., the citizens of the United States) do. Both of these characterizations are grounded in the American civil religion that valorizes freedom and asserts the inherent goodness of U.S. society. Regardless of whether the mode of discourse is composed of natural or supernatural characterizations, the Durkheimian conception of religion³¹ remains in all of them, and the American civil religion formed the core assumptions under both the good vs. evil and civilization vs. barbarian versions of the plot.

Day 1 and 2: Grounding the War on Terrorism Script in the American Civil

Religion

It is startling in retrospect to see that much of the War on Terrorism script was formed on the day of September 11 and how little the script has changed in subsequent months and years. Bush’s statement to the nation on the evening of September 11 laid

³¹ Durkheim defines religion as follows. “A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them... religion must be an eminently social thing” ([1912]1995: 44). Other scholars (Leudar et al. 2004) have contrasted the Bush Administration’s (also the Tony Blair Administration’s) “moralistic” discourse with bin Laden’s “religious” discourse. Such a characterization is legitimate, since bin Laden’s speeches have more explicit and direct references to religious doctrines and supernatural entities in comparison. We characterize Bush’s discourse as “religious” according to Durkheim’s definition, on which the theory of American civil religion is based. According to this definition, religion does not have to involve supernatural entities; instead, the major criteria are sacred-profane relationships coupled with the existence of a moral community. In the case where both bin Laden and the Bush Administration asserted rivalry between moral camps where there are no neutral grounds (see Lincoln 2002), the distinction between religious and moral is therefore almost indistinguishable according to a Durkheimian definition. Yet, the commonsensical notion of institutional “religion” could still be legitimately applied for Bush’s speeches, since the “good vs. evil” dichotomy in many of Bush’s early speeches was mentioned alongside with supernatural references or Christian doctrine (e.g., quotes from the Bible, phrases of “God Bless America”). Overall, the different choices of labeling the mode of discourse as “religious” or “moral” are based on—depending on the needs of specific arguments—analysts’ strategic emphases on the commonalities and distinction between different kinds of texts and actions.

the basic groundwork for the War on Terrorism script. In the speech,³² he explained the events as “a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts,” perpetrated on “our biggest building,” by terrorists who are “evil” and have “the very worst of human nature,” through the means of “mass murder” (as opposed to suicide bombings), because “we’re the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world.” He contrasted the evil *acts* with another set of good *acts*: Rescuing victims, “caring for strangers and neighbors,” and “giving blood,” which transpired at the *scene* of “pictures of airplanes flying into buildings, fires burning, huge structures collapsing.” The *agents* of these good acts were “all Americans from every walk of life” and “the best of America,” who had the *agency* to “unite in our resolve for justice and peace.” Their *purpose* was to “defend freedom and all that is good and just in our world.”

This explanation of motive casts good vs. evil, and invokes the American civil religion, because it was not just *any* good in battle with just *any* evil. The good was specified as America that loved freedom and was “the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world.” The evil was referred to the entity, terrorism, raging against it.

This rationale of ‘good America’ versus ‘evil Terrorism’ was a theme that U.S. citizens would hear repeatedly. The same speech opened up a new act, a new narrative: “America and our friends and allies join with all those who want peace and security in the world, and we stand together to win the *war against terrorism*” (emphasis added). This characterization of “good vs. evil” was not a product of a

³² George W. Bush, 11 September 2001, “Address to the Nation on the Terrorist Attacks,” Oval Office, The White House, *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 37(37), pp. 1301-1302.

political mode of discourse, as was “England vs. Germany” during World War I and II. An unusual aspect of this script is it promotes war not against *terrorists* which are tangibly humans and mortal, but wages war against *terrorism* which is an idea, a concept. The plot of the War on Terrorism script contains an eternal tension between good and evil; the *scene* of battle, therefore, is not circumscribed by time and place. The scene was transformed from one of civil society to one of national security state in a condition of pure war (Virilio and Lotringer [1983]1997).

30 Days Following 9/11: Elaborating and Solidifying the War on Terrorism

Script

The good vs. evil explanation, the American civil religion invocation, and the declaration of war on an abstract concept (i.e., terrorism) summarize some main features of the War on Terrorism script—that is, the content of its meaning system. While the basic elements of the War on Terrorism script were formed before September 12th, throughout the rest of the month of September, the Bush Administration solidified this script by repeatedly elaborating it. Bush did so primarily by placing specific meanings derived from the War on Terrorism script on a wide range of ambiguous, or sometimes ordinary, events. This discourse strategy was repeated many times.

Let us consider two illustrative examples. When celebrating rescue work in New York City on 18 September 2001, Bush claimed that “our compassion and generous citizens have led the first phase in the war on terrorism” and “have sustained and strengthened the home front”:

In the week since the attack, **our compassion and generous citizens have led the first phase in the war on terrorism.** They have **sustained and strengthened the home front.** Today, I'm joined by representatives of charities which have brought relief to citizens in New York City and Virginia, Pennsylvania. **We've got representatives of firefighters, police officers, entrepreneurs who have helped out all across America....** The world watches **the great country called America**, and they say: What will they do? What will Americans do? And what **they've seen is the best of America.** They've seen leadership, they've seen courage, and as importantly, they've seen compassion. Citizens near Ground Zero in New York have **provided sandwiches**, drinks and clean clothes to the tired and hungry rescue workers. **And in one of America's greatest traditions**, a handful of entrepreneurs from Springfield, Virginia **collected \$600 by selling lemonade**, and gave it to the Red Cross. **These acts of generosity and kindness** are spreading all across America.³³

A series of ordinary events and objects were thus given extraordinary meanings.

Delivering sandwiches, drinks, and clothes, were connected to warlike activities—that is, “‘leading’ the first phase in the war on terrorism” and “‘strengthening’ the home front.” The actors in charity and rescue work thus became actors in a war (i.e., soldiers) who were motivated by the characteristics of kindness, generosity, and compassion. In this “situation” linguistically defined by Bush as real, Americans were not confused, paralyzed, or exhausted; on the contrary, Americans were fighting in a war against a concept known as terrorism and they helped sustain the home front.

And on 10 October 2001, when the FBI released the “Most Wanted Terrorist List,” Bush stated:

I'm pleased to be back at the FBI to **unveil a new line of attack on our war against terrorism:** the Most Wanted Terrorist list. **Terrorists try to operate in the shadows. They try to hide. But we're going to**

³³ George W. Bush, 18 September 2001, “Remarks Honoring Charitable Organizations,” The Rose Garden, The White House, *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 37(38), pp. 1331-1333.

shine the light of justice on them. We list their names, we publicize their pictures, **we rob them of their secrecy.** Terrorism has a face, and today we pose it for the world to see... **The men on the wall have put themselves on the list because of great acts of evil.** They plan, promote and commit murder. **They fill the minds of others with hate and lies.**³⁴

An event that could otherwise be bureaucratic and ordinary—making a list—was thus represented as supernatural and extraordinary. Publicizing a list of wanted terrorist names and pictures became “unveil[ing] a new line of attack” in the War on Terrorism, because it “[shone] the light of justice on them.” Through the pragmatic uses of language and its relation to a cultural meaning system, the United States was defined as “winning” at a time when none of the listed terrorists had been captured.

Establishing Evidence for the War on Afghanistan

When military actions against the Taliban became tangible, the word “war” was no longer merely a metaphoric expression. Bush’s War on Terrorism script translated a war against terrorism from an abstract concept into a war not only against a terrorist group, but also into a war against a state. Bush’s rationale for an act of war was to enforce a doctrine that he promulgated immediately after 9/11: The U.S. Administration will not only hold the terrorists who committed the attacks accountable but any one who aids them.³⁵ This doctrine was novel and radical for the U.S. in the

³⁴ George W. Bush, 10 October 2001, “Remarks Announcing the Most Wanted Terrorists List Bonaparte Auditorium,” Federal Bureau of Investigation Headquarters, Washington, D.C., *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 37(41), pp. 1448-1449.

³⁵ For example, “We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them.” George W. Bush, 11 September 2001, “Address to the Nation on the Terrorist Attacks,” Oval Office, The White House, *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 37(37), pp. 1301-1302; “We will hold those who are responsible for the terrorist acts accountable, and those who harbor them.” George W. Bush, 13 September 2001, “Remarks in a Telephone Conversation With New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and New York Governor

field of international politics, since the definition of “terrorists” was broad and many nations could immediately qualify as candidates for U.S. retaliation.

In order to minimize opposition and maximize support, the Bush Administration attempted to link the 9/11 attacks, Osama bin Laden, and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Establishing this link enabled the Administration to exploit the sympathy surging up within the U.S. public and the international community after the 9/11 events and justify invading Afghanistan.

There was never specific empirical evidence to link Afghanistan (or the Taliban regime) to 9/11 events, however. At the initial stage, the U.S. government did not *substantiate* the involvement of al Qaeda in the 9/11 events, relying only on uncertain intelligence information to assert that al Qaeda was the group that organized the 9/11 attacks. The link between bin Laden and the 9/11 events was also not proven; bin Laden was then only identified as a “prime suspect” of 9/11. The Taliban was identified as a regime that “harbors” bin Laden and al Qaeda members; the link was therefore even more circumspect.

George Pataki and an Exchange With Reporters,” Oval Office, The White House, *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 37(37), pp. 1304-1308; and “We will not only deal with those who dare attack America, we will deal with those who harbor them and feed them and house them.” George W. Bush, 15 September 2001, “Remarks in a Meeting With the National Security Team and an Exchange With Reporters at Camp David, Maryland,” *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 37(38), pp. 1319-1321. Also: “All I can tell you is that Osama bin Laden is a prime suspect, and the people who house him, encourage him, provide food, comfort or money are on notice. Last Tuesday—last week, I spoke clearly about our nation’s policy. And that is, we’re going to find those who—**those evildoers, those barbaric people who attacked our country and we’re going to hold them accountable, and we’re going to hold the people who house them accountable;** the people who think they can provide them safe havens will be held accountable; the people who feed them will be held accountable. And the Taliban must take my statement seriously.” George W. Bush, 17 September 2001, “Remarks to Employees at the Pentagon and an Exchange With Reporters in Arlington, Virginia,” *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 37(38), pp. 1324-1327.

Bush adopted a discourse strategy in the face of these empirical ambiguities. He shifted the debate from a legal or rational mode of discourse to a (civil) religious mode of discourse to legitimize his proposed military actions on Afghanistan. This move changed what would count as “evidence” of links between the Taliban and the terrorists or terrorism. Consider the following interaction between Bush and a reporter on 19 September 2001; the reporter asked Bush to respond to the countries that expressed uncertainty about waging war on terrorism and cited China’s statement that “any strike must be preceded by irrefutable evidence.”

REPORTER: Can I follow on one point? Do you to your mind have **irrefutable evidence** that links al Qaeda, and specifically Osama bin Laden to these attacks?

PRESIDENT BUSH: When we take action, we will take action because **we believe**—because **we know we’ll be on the right**. And I want to remind people that there have been terrorist activities on America **in the past, as well**. And there has been—indictments have been handed down.³⁶

Notice that Bush did not answer the reporter’s question directly. Instead of following the reporter’s line of questioning that would require a presentation of empirical evidence connecting al Qaeda and bin Laden to 9/11, Bush claimed ‘knowing one is on the right’ as a sufficient justification for undertaking a military action. While the reporter asked for evidence specifically linked to the coordination of the 9/11 attacks, Bush asserted the U.S. knew it was on the right and invoked al Qaeda’s and bin Laden’s involvement in terrorist attacks *from the past*. On the surface, this interaction

³⁶ George W. Bush, 19 September 2001, “Remarks Prior to Discussions With President Megawati Sukarnoputri of Indonesia and an Exchange With Reporters,” The Oval Office, The White House, *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 37(38), pp. 1337-1340.

seems strange because the information in Bush's answer seemed discontinuous from the information requested in the question. If Bush was to act within a rational mode of discourse, he would have either provided examples of such evidences or stated that he did not have such evidences. Instead, Bush responded by introducing a different convention governing modes of acting; he argued that it was legitimate to enact a strike if "we know we'll be on the right." By speaking outside the convention of a rational mode of discourse, Bush tried to make people think and act in accordance with different convention—one that focuses on moral righteousness.

This change in convention from empiricism to morality assisted Bush to legitimize a War in Afghanistan. Whereas Bush did not have the evidence to legitimize military actions in a rational mode of discourse, he had evidence to legitimize such actions in a religious mode of discourse. There is an obvious difference in difficulty between evidencing a specific, technical claim on the coordination of 9/11 versus evidencing a broad, moral claim on this issue. The evidence required for the coordination of 9/11 events was much more difficult to attain in the sense that only a narrow set of empirical evidence would qualify as supporting the claim. The evidence required for the moral claim that the U.S. is on the right was much easier to attain because a very wide range of objects or information could validly be invoked to support the claim. Readily available facts include the U.S. rescuing Europe, resisting fascism in World War II, and ending communism during the Cold War.

The President's address to a Joint Session of Congress on 20 September 2001 was the first time that the Bush Administration openly condemned the Afghanistan government, made official demands on the Taliban regime, and warned that if the Taliban did not "hand over the terrorists" then the Taliban would "share in their fate."³⁷ In that speech, Bush asserted that "The leadership of al Qaeda has great influence in Afghanistan and supports the Taliban regime in controlling most of that country." Again, Bush did not provide empirical evidence for a connection between the Taliban and al Qaeda; instead, he linked these entities together by their association with the concept of terrorism—a concept containing principles that are in oppositional relation to those contained in the American civil religion.

The leadership of al Qaeda has great influence in Afghanistan and **supports the Taliban regime** in controlling most of that country. In Afghanistan, we see **al Qaeda's vision for the world**. Afghanistan's people have been brutalized—many are starving and many have fled. Women are **not allowed to attend school**. You can be **jailed for owning a television**. Religion can be practiced only as their leaders dictate. A man can be jailed in Afghanistan if his **beard is not long enough**. The United States respects the people of Afghanistan—after all, we are currently its largest source of humanitarian aid—but we condemn the Taliban regime. (Applause.) It is not only repressing its own people, it is threatening people everywhere by sponsoring and

³⁷ Bush stated: "And tonight, the United States of America makes the following demands on the Taliban: **Deliver to United States authorities all the leaders of al Qaeda who hide in your land**. (Applause.) Release all foreign nationals, including American citizens, you have unjustly imprisoned. Protect foreign journalists, diplomats and aid workers in your country. Close immediately and permanently every terrorist training camp in Afghanistan, and hand over every terrorist, and every person in their support structure, to appropriate authorities. (Applause.) **Give the United States full access to terrorist training camps**, so we can make sure they are no longer operating. These demands are not open to negotiation or discussion. (Applause.) The Taliban must act, and act immediately. They will hand over the terrorists, or they will **share in their fate**." George W. Bush, 20 September 2001, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the United States Response to the Terrorist Attacks of September 11," House Chamber, U.S. Capitol, Washington, D.C., *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 37(38), pp. 1347-1351.

sheltering and supplying terrorists. By aiding and abetting murder, the Taliban regime is committing murder.³⁸

A wide range of empirical phenomena are mentioned in the above quote; but with the exception of the move in the first sentence, most of them were irrelevant to the connection between al Qaeda, the Taliban, and the coordination of the 9/11 events. Instead, Bush mentioned this lengthy list of empirical phenomena because his strategy was to provide evidence of the similarities in the character of the enemies that were associated with terrorism. By labeling them all as evil, he both claimed a link between the Taliban, al Qaeda, and bin Laden and legitimized military actions against them.

The Reciprocal Relationship between Script and Evidence

Hence, the War on Terrorism script enabled the U.S. public to construct coherent meanings during and around many ambiguous situations. Reciprocally, empirical events viewed from the War on Terrorism script could be used as evidence to support the propositions contained in it—e.g., America was good, terrorism was evil, America was overcoming evil. This reciprocal relationship is demonstrated in a speech on 11 October 2001, which he delivered to the children of America after the combat in Afghanistan started:

Before we leave, I want to make a special request to the **children of America**. I ask you to join in a special effort to help the **children of Afghanistan**.... This is an opportunity to help others, while teaching our own children a valuable lesson about service and **character**. I hope school classes or **Boys and Girl Scout troops**, other youth organizations will participate in any way to **raise the money to send to the children. Wash your car. Do a yard for a neighbor.** And I

³⁸ George W. Bush, 20 September 2001, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the United States Response to the Terrorist Attacks of September 11," House Chamber, U.S. Capitol, Washington, D.C., *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 37(38), pp. 1347-1351.

hope the adults will help them, as well. **Ultimately, one of the best weapons, one of the truest weapons that we have against terrorism is to show the world the true strength of character and kindness of the American people.**³⁹

This message, different versions of which Bush repeated from 9/11 through the build up to the War on Iraq, enabled people to organize their lives around a coherent meaning system and construct evidential support for the War on Terrorism script. On one hand, it related otherwise ordinary activities—i.e., raising funds for good causes—to the War on Terrorism and acts of “kindness” were portrayed as “one of the best weapons, one of the truest weapons that we have against terrorism.” On the other hand, it affirmed the ‘America is good’ proposition contained in the War on Terrorism script by relating otherwise ordinary activities of goodness (i.e., charities) to “the true strength of character and kindness of the American people.” In fact, the act of dropping food aside alongside bombs in Afghanistan were also cited as evidence of America’s goodness.⁴⁰

Religious Representation of Public Strategic Justifications

The War on Terrorism script also informed strategic discourse in profound ways. The genre of strategic discourse is prevalent in U.S. government departments,

³⁹ George W. Bush, 11 October 2001, “The President’s News Conference,” The East Room, The White House, *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 37(41), pp. 1454-1462.

⁴⁰ Bush stated: “There is no question that we’re inflicting pain upon the Taliban government. There is also no question that we’re a compassionate nation; at the same time we do so, **we’re dropping airlifts of food and medicine**, so the innocent citizens of that country can survive the brutal winter. As I walked up, I saw some of the schoolchildren here holding dollar bills. We’ve got schoolchildren all across the country out raising a dollar to send to the children of Afghanistan. We’ve got boys and girls from all religions and all walks of life who have heard the call to love a neighbor just as they’d like to be loved themselves. The evildoers have struck our nation, but out of evil comes good. We are a good, kind-hearted, decent people, and we’re showing the world just that in our compassion and our resolve. (Applause.)” George W. Bush, 17 October 2001, “Remarks to the Community at Travis Air Force Base, California,” *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 37(42), pp. 1502-1504.

political think tanks, and official reports; it often provides unified, articulate justifications of a particular set of policy agendas—both internally to specific network of people and externally to the public. Even though strategic discourses used by governmental personnel and “defense intellectuals” (Cohn 1987) take the form of impersonal calculation and the tone of impartial judgment, they are permeated with assumptions of morality, values, and interests. Consider the example below:

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: One has to recognize the possibility, the **probability** that at some point these terrorist sponsoring nations will provide these kinds of capabilities to terrorist networks.

HOST: Probability? You believe there’s a **strong possibility**, **probability**, that there could be a chemical or biological attack on the United States?

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: I guess the way I’d phrase it is that we know **of certain knowledge** that the **nations on our terrorist list**⁴¹ have weaponized chemical and biological weapons, and **we know** that a number of them are seeking nuclear capabilities. And **we know** that they have **close linkages** with **terrorist networks**, and that in many cases, they have sponsored **terrorism**. Therefore, it **doesn’t take a leap of imagination** to expect that at some point those nations will work with those terrorist networks and assist them in achieving and obtaining those kinds of capabilities.⁴²

⁴¹ The United States created a list of ‘state sponsor of terrorism’ since 1979. According to an annual government report from the U.S. Department of State (2001), the seven designated state sponsors were Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Syria, and Sudan. Libya was officially dropped from the list in the 2006 report due to alleged cooperation, and Iraq was dropped in 2003 after the ousting of Saddam Hussein’s regime. Interestingly, Iraq was dropped from the list in February 1982 when the United States wanted to prevent Iran from being a victor of the Iraq-Iran war. See *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2001*, U.S. Department of State, May 2002, <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2001/pdf/> (accessed 16 June 2008); *Country Reports on Terrorism 2006*, U.S. Department of State, April 2007, <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2006/> (accessed 16 June 2008); and Battle (2003).

⁴² “Secretary Rumsfeld Interview with NBC “Meet the Press” with host Tim Russert,” U.S. Department of Defense, 30 September 2001, <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=1947> (accessed 16 June 2008).

Note that the probability of a chemical or biological attacks is not based on physically verifiable evidence of weapons and their transfer. Instead, it is chiefly based on the commonality of the shared characteristic of being ‘terrorist.’ Of course, given enough empirical data regarding detailed relations among groups—and ideally physical proof of weapons transfer activities—it is possible to establish the likelihood of such a horrific occurrence via a more empirical analysis. The power of Rumsfeld’s rhetoric lies in the ability to bypass the use of detailed empirical investigation by the sheer use of labeling. The label “terrorist” serves to unify many entities (nations and networks) as one group, leveling out potential differences among them and simultaneously rejects the possibility that these groups may develop a unified ideas and attitudes toward the United States because of common shared political experiences. Although terrorism is typically referred to as the adoption of an asymmetrical military strategy⁴³

⁴³ For example, “No one definition of terrorism has gained universal acceptance. For the purposes of this report, however, we have chosen the definition of terrorism contained in Title 22 of the United States Code, Section 2656f(d). That statute contains the following definitions: The term “terrorism” means **premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience.** The term “international terrorism” means terrorism involving citizens or the territory of more than one country. The term “terrorist group” means any group practicing, or that has significant subgroups that practice, international terrorism. The US Government has employed this definition of terrorism for statistical and analytical purposes since 1983.” *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2001*, U.S. Department of State, May 2002, p. xvi, <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2001/pdf/> (accessed 16 June 2008).

An almost identical definition is used in *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, except highlighting the shared belief and effort among them: “The enemy is not one person. It is not a single political regime. Certainly it is not a religion. The enemy is terrorism—**premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents.** Those who employ terrorism, regardless of their specific secular or religious objectives, **strive to subvert the rule of law and effect change through violence and fear.** These terrorists also **share the misguided belief** that killing, kidnapping, extorting, robbing, and wreaking havoc to terrorize people are legitimate forms of political action.” The White House, *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* (Washington D.C., The White House, February 2003), p. 1,

against established states, the War on Terrorism script renders the label to be linked to internal, essential, flawed character of people. It is uncustomary for one to assume all “serial killers” would be good friends with one another or all “criminals” in prison would help one another, because we attend to differences, disunity, and relations among them. However, the War on Terrorism script helped to level out the differences among terrorists nations and groups by spotlighting commonalities in their character—to the degree that, according to Rumsfeld, it “doesn’t take a leap of imagination” to know collaborations and weapon transfer would take place at some point.

Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, a prominent figure among neoconservatives (and later nominated by Bush as President of World Bank in 2005), had also expressed a similar mode of strategic reasoning as Rumsfeld:

DEPUTY SECRETARY WOLFOWITZ: [Al Qaeda are] involved in the [USS] Cole, they’re involved in the Philippine hijacking plot, they’re involved in the previous World Trade Center bombing. And then what I suppose is the main thing we know post-Sept. 11, which is that **some number of the people** in those planes have been pretty clearly identified as members of **al Qaeda**. The other thing, which I tried to emphasize, is that while **there’s a lot we know, there’s also a lot that we don’t know. We don’t know how they were able to organize an operation as sophisticated as that. We don’t know everyone involved. We don’t know all the networks that may have supported them.** And while we expect to learn more as this campaign proceeds, we also have to recognize that—I think the metaphor of **draining the swamp** applies—you can work as hard as you can to **find as many snakes** as possible, but if you can dry up the place where they live, that’s even more effective than trying to do both.

REPORTER: When you mentioned, when you first started talking to us, you said al Qaeda and possibly, I think, other organizations or other networks—have you identified or do you have information that there was cooperation between al Qaeda and any other groups in the attack on New York and Washington?

DEPUTY SECRETARY WOLFOWITZ: The important point is—and again, this is something I stressed to them, we know these groups **cooperate with one another extensively**, and we **can't wait until we prove that one particular group was involved in a particular operation before we consider them dangerous...** we're not going to wait until they're proven—in our view they've **already been proven dangerous and deadly** and we're going to take them out wherever we can find them.⁴⁴

The radical strategy being proposed is the attack of al Qaeda *and* other terrorist groups via attacking the states supporting them. International uses of military forces are somewhat hindered, at least normatively, by the principle of state sovereignty—therefore, physical evidences of planned aggression of the other side are often presented in order to legitimize military actions. Such material evidences of collaborative international terrorism could potentially be found and used, but Wolfowitz's statement is powerful in that it argued why those evidences were not needed for justification and legitimacy purposes. Wolfowitz's discourse was not merely a justification tool for the attack against al Qaeda and Afghanistan; instead, it was a colossal strategic discourse that served to legitimate the plan to invade Cuba, Iraq, Syria, Iran, North Korea, Libya, and other countries that were already listed, or were to be listed at the will of the U.S. government, as 'state sponsor of terrorism.' The snake-swamp metaphor characterized the symbolic relationships between groups

⁴⁴ "Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz En Route from Brussels," U.S. Department of Defense, 27 September 2001, <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=1941> (accessed 28 May 2008).

and countries, even if the exact collaborative relationships between them and various governments may be nonexistent.

III. Contesting the War on Terrorism Script

The War on Terrorism script proffered by the Bush Administration was not the only representation available after 9/11. Immediately after the series of events in New York City, Washington D.C., and Pennsylvania, many community groups and individuals—particularly those with established status in progressive, grassroots politics or long-standing involvement with peace, religious, and human rights issues—generated their own “scripts” and ways of representing the events. Their concern about the aftermath of the events and their institutional standing prompted them to react negatively to the Bush Administration’s War on Terrorism script.

In this section, I analyze these alternative modes of discourse along the following dimensions: the way in which the events of 9/11 were represented, the explanation of the motives of the perpetrators, the course of action recommended in response to 9/11, the mode of argumentation, and the standing of the author or voice of the critical texts. I distinguish three major variants emerging during the latter days of September 2001, which I would label as (1) *intellectual*, (2) *rational*, and (3) *legal* modes of representation.

Representing the Events of 9/11

After examining several dozens of statements proffered by individuals and organizations, my first observation is that almost all alternative discourses represented the events in humanitarian terms. Using phrases such as ‘tragic,’ ‘horrific,’

‘horrendous,’ ‘sad,’ ‘cruel,’ ‘traumatic,’ and ‘major atrocities,’ the acts were said to cause ‘indescribable sufferings,’ ‘wounds,’ ‘injuries,’ loss of ‘families and loved ones,’ ‘genuine sorrow and affliction.’ The people who lost their lives were described as ‘innocent civilians’ and ‘victims.’ Like the Bush Administration, these alternative voices went to great lengths to condemn the 9/11 attacks that led to the loss of life of many innocent civilians.’⁴⁵

In condemning the events in humanitarian terms, alternative modes of representation differed little from the Bush Administration’s representation. The alternative scripts differed from Bush’s War on Terrorism script in their *explanation* of the motives of the perpetrators, recommended courses of action, and the manner in which they legitimated their argument.

Explaining the Motives of the Perpetrators and Recommended Courses of Action

The critics and dissenters using legal and rational modes of representation did not discuss or speculate on the possible motives of the perpetrators. They focused their attention on ‘what to do’ (how to act to prevent similar occurrences) rather than on ‘why it happened.’ These modes of representation were mainly used to stress the

⁴⁵ A representative example can be found in a “Joint Statement of Principles” signed by 48 civil and religious organizations, including many major organizations, such as Save the Children USA, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, Union of American Hebrew Congregations (now Union for Reform Judaism), and National Council of the Churches of Christ USA. These organizations proposed “ten core principles that should guide the response to these attacks.” The first proposed principle was “Condemn the Attacks”; the statement urged “all governments and all people to stand against these and other indiscriminate attacks directed at **innocent civilians**.” The second proposed principle was “Mourn the **Victims**”; the statement elaborated, “We mourn the loss of **innocent lives** and express our solidarities with the **victims** and their families.” “Joint Statement of Principles: Signed by 48 Humanitarian, Religious, Human Rights and Civil Liberties Organizations.” *Center for Economic and Social Rights*, 13 September 2001, http://www.cesr.org/Emergency%20Response/joint_statemnet_of_principles.htm (accessed 20 July 2004).

need for cautious and measured political responses—as opposed to initiating a war based on reckless and unrestrained emotions. Because the causes of the events were uncertain, they called for an “investigation” of the facts. They stressed the use of factual information and empirical evidence, rather than emotions and subjective values, to guide actions.

Intellectual mode of argumentation. An intellectual mode of argumentation concerning public policy places events within a broad historical, political, and sociological context. Like the rational mode of argumentation described below, the intellectual mode of argumentation applies logical-empiricist principles governing correct or appropriate inferences and logical consistency to an analysis of existing documents, records, policy statements, speeches.

Critics who used an intellectual mode of representation placed the 9/11 events within the context of the history of U.S. foreign policy, including U.S. ties with terrorists. They related the *scene* and *act* of the 9/11 events to the *scenes* and *acts* of events in other parts of the world, particularly those events that were connected to U.S. foreign policies. Renowned critics Noam Chomsky, Howard Zinn, Susan Sontag, Arundhati Roy, and Edward Said, as well as some radical progressive groups such as the Black Radical Congress, the International Action Center, and the International Socialist Organization are typical of those who invoked this mode of representation.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ See Black Radical Congress, “Terror Attacks of September 11, 2001,” *Z Communications*, 11 September 2001, <http://www.zmag.org/brccalam.htm> (accessed 14 July 2004); Noam Chomsky, “A Quick Reaction,” *CounterPunch*, 12 September 2001, <http://www.counterpunch.org/chomskybomb.html> (accessed 14 July 2004); International Action Center, “International Action Center Statement,” *Progressive Activism in Austin, TX*, 11 September 2001, http://www.progressiveaustin.org/iac_wtc.htm (accessed 14 July 2004);

Historical events that were repeatedly invoked included the 1998 U.S. bombing of a pharmaceutical factory in Sudan, the U.S. sanctions and bombings in Iraq, and the U.S. military interventions in Libya and Nicaragua; some also cited the U.S. involvement in the Israel-Palestine conflict and its past involvement with bin Laden and al Qaeda. The following statement by Howard Zinn is a succinct example of a critic trying to understand and explain the motives and reasons for the events of 9/11 from an intellectual point of view:

We need to think about the **resentment all over the world** felt by people who have been the victims of American military action. In **Vietnam**, where we carried out terrorizing bombing attacks, using napalm and cluster bombs, on peasant villages. In **Latin America**, where we supported dictators and death squads in **Chile and El Salvador and other countries**. In **Iraq**, where a million people have died as a result of our economic sanctions. And, perhaps most important for understanding the current situation, in the occupied territories of the **West Bank and Gaza**, where a million and more Palestinians live under a cruel military operation, while our government supplies Israel with high-tech weapons. We need to imagine that the awful scenes of death and suffering we are now witnessing on our television screens have been going on in **other parts of the world for a long time**, and only now can we begin to know what people have gone through, **often as a result of our policies**. We need to understand how some of those people will go beyond quiet anger to acts of terrorism.⁴⁷

International Socialist Organization, "Statement on the Air Attacks in New York and Washington, D.C.," *Progressive Activism in Austin, TX*, 12 September 2001, http://www.progressiveaustin.org/iso_wtc.htm (accessed 14 July 2004); Edward Said, "The Events and Aftermath," *Z Communications* (originally published in *The Observer*), 16 September 2001, <http://www.zmag.org/saidcalam.htm> (accessed 14 July 2004); Howard Zinn, "Violence Doesn't Work," *Z Communications* (originally published by *The Progressive*), 15 September 2001, <http://www.commondreams.org/cgi-bin/print.cgi?file=/views01/0915-02.htm> (accessed 15 July 2004). See also Arundhati Roy, "The Algebra of Infinite Justice" *Z Communications* (originally published in *The Guardian*), 29 September 2001, <http://www.zmag.org/roycalam.htm> (accessed 14 July 2004).

⁴⁷ Howard Zinn, "Violence Doesn't Work," *Common Dreams* (originally published by *The Progressive*), 15 September 2001, <http://www.commondreams.org/cgi-bin/print.cgi?file=/views01/0915-02.htm> (accessed 15 July 2004).

Zinn reminded his readers that the U.S. has supported cruel military dictatorships that have ravaged their people and encouraged them to understand how victims would rise up against the U.S. government which they think terrorizes them.

Differences in semantic meanings aside, Zinn encouraged people to think like an intellectual. Under the convention of an intellectual mode of discourse, the modes of action would ideally be guided by such standards as rigorous sociopolitical analysis, a critical and reflexive attitude, a strong ethical conviction, open discussion and inquiry, mastery of facts, and a coherent worldview—standards that are claimed by both progressive and conservative intellectual establishments. Operating within this convention, the facts mentioned by Zinn are both global and historical, and they are interweaved into a coherent narrative that corresponds with his sociopolitical worldview as known within the progressive intellectual community. Zinn did not explicitly provide an explanation of the cause of the 9/11; but, he was against a mode of acting that did not subscribe to the standards mentioned above—such as one that only looked at 9/11 as the sole context or one that is solely based on anger. This mode of argumentation would institute a convention in which argumentation would be based on legitimate global and historical knowledge, with the emphasis on the accuracy of technical facts accompanied by cogency of interpretations. It invited people to conduct intellectual analysis of the phenomenon before them, and thereby to learn more history and empirical facts and to develop an intellectual worldview.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ We may consider Noam Chomsky's widely circulated response to the events published on September 12th, which began with the following statement: "The September 11 attacks were major atrocities. In terms of number of victims they do not reach the level of many others, for example, Clinton's bombing of the Sudan with no credible pretext, destroying half its pharmaceutical

Rational mode of argumentation. A rational mode of argumentation (which could also be appropriately termed as “technocratic” mode) stresses the uses of reason, the weighing of evidence, and assessing costs vs. benefits as ways to explain events. These elements stand in stark contrast to reliance on unconstrained emotions or unsubstantiated assertion to justify goals and means to achieve goals. The rational mode of representation is much more ahistorical than the intellectual mode we just described.⁴⁹ Dissenters using this discourse are much less likely to refer to previous U.S. actions than those employing the intellectual mode of representation. They are more likely to assess the internal logic of a political or policy position. The following excerpt from a letter signed by over 1,800 academics and experts, published on the Foreign Policy in Focus (FPIP) website on 20 September 2001, presents a rational assessment of the internal logic of Bush’s War on Terrorism script:

supplies and probably killing tens of thousands of people (no one knows, because the US blocked an inquiry at the UN and no one cares to pursue it). Not to speak of much worse cases, which easily come to mind. But that this was a horrendous crime is not in doubt.” Noam Chomsky, “A Quick Reaction,” *CounterPunch*, 12 September 2001, <http://www.counterpunch.org/chomskybomb.html> (accessed 14 July 2004). Unlike Bush who constructed his explanation in religious and moral terms, Chomsky represented the events in socio-historical and political terms. He tried to put the 9/11 attacks in a socio-historical context that included other acts of terror, including the U.S. bombing of Sudan. Chomsky went on to say that “The primary victims, as usual, were working people: janitors, secretaries, firemen, etc.” While 9/11 was of course an unusual event to the American public, by referring to the history of political conflict and atrocities in which the United States was involved, Chomsky represented the events as unexceptional and the victims as working people “as usual.” He further said, “The events reveal, dramatically, the foolishness of ideas about “missile defense,” thereby lambasting the administration for investing in clumsy weapons systems ill-suited for practical situations. Hence, by placing the 9/11 events in a global and historical context, Chomsky synchronized the 9/11 events with the state of knowledge he has personally espoused, and many progressive intellectuals have shared, all along.

⁴⁹ This mode of representation often intersects with an intellectual mode and a legal mode of representation, but it is also different in some aspects. It neither calls for an intellectual worldview grounded in a global mastery of facts, nor does it call deferral of the mode of action to legal bodies and institutions.

We stand opposed to the massive, widespread, and prolonged military response, as foreshadowed by the military language of the Bush administration officials. **Such posturing will not end terrorism.** Rather, such a response is **likely to result in more civilian casualties, cause greater political violence, and engender new acts of terrorism** against innocent people.... **Unleashing vengeance** through overwhelming U.S. firepower will prove an **ineffective** and **counterproductive** response to this new scourge of international terrorism. A ‘crusade,’ as President Bush terms it, of American bombers and battleships invading the Islamic world will demonstrate our military might, but it will **diminish the chances** of finding, dismantling, and punishing these terrorist networks.⁵⁰

This letter did not attack the entire War on Terrorism script. It tacitly accepted the endpoint proposed by Bush—confronting terrorism, but it criticized the effectiveness of the Bush Administration’s policies to achieve the goal of ending terrorism.

This mode of argumentation and representation characteristically engages audiences to act like rational strategists and to think in terms of effective and efficient actions. It invited people to conduct careful, calculative assessment of the phenomenon before them and called for restraining personal emotions and embraced a cool-headed, impersonal form of reasoning, assessment, and calculation.

Another illustrative case in point is a statement by Congresswoman Barbara Lee (D-California). On September 14th, the U.S. Congress passed a resolution (H.J.Res.64) by a vote of 420 to 1 to authorize the use of military force by the President; Lee—the lone representative who voted against the resolution—stated the following in her speech to the House of Representatives:

⁵⁰ “Response to Terrorism,” a letter circulated online by Foreign Policy in Focus (FPIF) signed by 1,800 people—mainly academics and foreign policy experts, *Foreign Policy in Focus*, 20 September 2001, http://www.fpif.org/media/releases/2001/092001terrorstmt_body.html (accessed 14 July 2004).

This unspeakable attack on the United States has forced me to rely on **my moral compass, my conscience, and my God for direction.** September 11 changed the world. Our deepest **fear** now haunts us. Yet I am convinced that **military action will not prevent further acts of international terrorism against the United States.** I know that this use-of-force resolution will pass although we all know that the President can wage war even without the resolution. However difficult this vote may be, some of us must urge **the use of restraint.** There must be some of us who say, **let's step back for a moment and think through the implications of our actions today—let us more fully understand their consequences.**⁵¹

Lee combined a statement of humanitarian goals with a rational assessment of the efficiency of Bush's policies to achieve those goals. She also urged that "[w]e must not rush to judgment" and ended her speech by quoting from a cleric who spoke at the memorial service held at the National Cathedral: "As we act, let us not become the evil that we deplore." Like the signers of the "Response to Terrorism" letter (discussed above), Lee did not believe the Administration's policies would be effective means to end terrorism or any moral ends. She explicitly warned against rushing to judgment because, if we are not careful, we would "become the evil that we deplore."

Legal mode of argumentation. A legal mode of argumentation, like the rationalist and intellectual discussed above, employs logical-empiricist principles—but applies them to different texts. Instead of the speeches, government documents and the like—legal arguments are grounded in cases within national and international jurisprudence. Accordingly, a number of critics and dissenters sought to represent the

⁵¹ Barbara Lee, "Barbara Lee's Speech to the House of Representatives, 14th September 2001," *Progressive Activism in Austin, TX*, 14 September 2001, <http://www.progressiveaustin.org/barblee.pdf> (retrieved 14 July 2004).

9/11 events as an act of ‘crime’ or ‘crime against humanity’ not as an act of war.

Consistent with their call for a legal representation of these events, many advocated for having perpetrators prosecuted through legal means and legal procedures.⁵²

The statement below, signed by over 150 domestic and international organizations (including Amnesty International, World Alliance of YMCAs, and World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts), was issued on 21 September 2001, the day after Bush delivered his address to the Congress, which indicated a War with Afghanistan:

At the global level, we want to raise our voices for peace, justice, human rights and the rule of law. Those who have planned, carried out or abetted these **appalling crimes** must be **brought to justice**. This tragedy makes plain the need for **a system of international justice, relying on rules of evidence, proof of guilt, respect for rights and due judicial process**. . . . While **emotions are running high**, we urge **restraint** on the part of political leaders. To react with wisdom and long-term effect, leaders must not act in haste, unilaterally, or indiscriminately. We call for a strong commitment to **human rights, international law and humanitarian concern** in any actions that are taken. We should be motivated by the demand for **justice**, not revenge, and by the pursuit of peace, exhausting all peaceful measures so that many more innocent victims do not suffer. We feel strongly that there is no purely military solution to the kinds of acts that we saw last week. Indeed, **the blunt instrument of war may further intensify a cycle of violence and attract new recruits to terror**. We do not underestimate the difficulty or the urgency of the task facing political leaders. But we are convinced that **a safer world for all can only be achieved by the extension of human rights and the rule of law**.⁵³

⁵² For example, 48 humanitarian, religious, human rights, and civil liberties organizations urged all governments to “**investigate [the] crimes**” and to “pay exceptional attention to protecting civilians and civilian objects from harm as required by **international humanitarian law** such as the Geneva Convention.” “Joint Statement of Principles: Signed by 48 Humanitarian, Religious, Human Rights and Civil Liberties Organizations,” *Center for Economic and Social Rights*, 13 September 2001, http://www.cesr.org/Emergency%20Response/joint_statemnet_of_principles.htm (accessed 20 July 2004).

⁵³ “A Joint Civil Society Statement on the Tragedy in the United States,” a statement signed by 155 U.S. and international organizations, *Civicus*, 21 September 2001,

Parallel to an intellectual mode and a rational mode of discourse, the actors articulating this legal mode of argumentation emphasized rationality over emotions. But instead of urging for individual reasoning, these actors sought to promote legal reasoning and legal procedures to deal with the phenomenon. The labeling of the 9/11 attacks as “appalling crimes” rejected Bush’s characterization of such acts as “war.” The quote explicitly laid out a preferred convention governing ways of speaking, thinking, and acting—one that is based on “rules of evidence, proof of guilt, respect for rights and due judicial process.” Thus, under such a legal convention, any legitimate military or policy actions would have to be legitimized by a legal authority, and any “evidence” or “proof” would also have to be recognized as legitimate by a legal authority according to a legal convention.⁵⁴

Overall, while speakers employing intellectual, rational, and legal modes of representation also expressed their respective sacred beliefs, and some of their beliefs were consistent with the American civil religion, the sacred beliefs were not used to coherently explain concrete empirical events of 9/11. According to these critics, generating a coherent explanation of the 9/11 events depended on pending, meticulous

civicus.org/new/media/JointCivilSocietyStatement-Tragedy-UnitedStates.doc (accessed 24 November 2008).

⁵⁴ There are other examples of documents that contain a legal mode of argumentation. “Human Rights Watch Response to Attacks on the U.S.: Civilian Life Must Be Respected,” *Human Rights Watch*, 12 September 2001, <http://www.hrw.org/press/2001/09/ny-091201.htm> (accessed 14 July 2004); “Amnesty International Urges Bush Administration to Maintain Human Rights Standards in Response to 11 September Attacks, and Warns of Looming Humanitarian Crisis in Afghanistan,” *Amnesty International*, AI Index AMR 51/142/2001, 24 September 2001, <http://web.amnesty.org/library/print/ENGAMR511422001> (accessed 15 July 2004); and New York City Labor, “New York City Labor Statement on September 11,” originally released on 27 September 2001, *Synthesis/Regeneration* 27(Winter 2002), <http://www.greens.org/s-r/27/27-04.html> (accessed 14 July 2004).

investigative efforts; adopting such elaborate epistemic procedures was critical to serving respective sacred ends, such as the promotion of human rights, freedom, truth, and democracy.

IV. Containing Alternative Modes of Discourse

These dissenting voices contesting Bush's War on Terrorism script were not well-represented in the American mainstream media immediately after 9/11. Nor have they ever seriously influenced U.S. foreign policy since then. The mainstream media in the month of September 2001 mostly amplified and circulated the speeches and analyses released by the Bush Administration, selectively broadcasting voices of the 9/11 victims and the images in New York City (Kellner 2003; Chouliaraki 2004; Dixon 2004; Edwards 2004). Members of the Democratic Party by and large reinforced the Bush Administration's depiction or chose to remain silent.

Based on an examination of Nexus database files for major papers and broadcast transcripts, Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) reported that experts consulted by mainstream media after 9/11 were mostly affiliated with centrist and conservative think tanks; experts from progressive think tanks received 11% of citations after 9/11, while experts from centrist organizations received 49% and conservative think tanks received 40%.⁵⁵ The representation of the events advanced by the Bush Administration dominated public political discourse so thoroughly that it

⁵⁵Michael Dolny, "Think Tanks in a Time of Crisis: FAIR's 2001 Survey of the Media's Institutional Experts," Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), *EXTRA!*, March/April 2002, http://www.fair.org/extra/0203/think_tanks.html (accessed 2 August 2004). For a report on media bias on television networks, see Seth Ackerman, "Network of Insiders: TV News Relied Mainly on Officials to Discuss Policy," Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), *EXTRA!*, November/December 2001, <http://www.fair.org/extra/0111/network-study.html> (accessed 2 August 2004).

did not need to respond to these alternative discourses. The lack of engagement by the media and the Democratic Party reinforced their absence.

On some rare occasions, alternative modes of representing the events of 9/11 were introduced into public political discourse. On those occasions, the Bush Administration tended to use discourse strategies that contained these other modes of representation. The following interaction between a reporter, Muslim leaders, and President Bush in the White House on 26 September 2001 exemplifies this containment strategy:

REPORTER: Granted the extremism, do you—and I'd like to ask the Imam the same question—**do you consider bin Laden a religious leader or a political leader?**

PRESIDENT BUSH: I consider bin Laden **an evil man**. And I don't think there's any religious justification for what he has in mind. Islam is a religion of love, not hate. **This is a man who hates**. This is a man who's declared war on innocent people. This is a man who doesn't mind destroying women and children. This is a man who **hates freedom**. **This is an evil man**.

REPORTER: **But does he have political goals?**

PRESIDENT BUSH: **He has got evil goals**. And **it's hard to think in conventional terms** about a man so **dominated by evil** that he's willing to do what he thinks he's going to get away with. But he's not going to get away with it.⁵⁶

In this interaction with the reporter, Bush quickly denied that terrorists had political goals and asserted instead that they had evil goals. Such an exchange demonstrates an interplay around the issue of contextualization (Gumperz 1982), as Bush did not

⁵⁶ George W. Bush, 26 September 2001, "Remarks Prior to Discussions with Muslim Community Leaders and an Exchange with Reporters," The Roosevelt Room, The White House, *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 37(39), pp. 1380-1382.

simply criticize bin Laden as having negative, harmful goals. By insisting on the labels of “evil man” and “evil goals,” Bush removed the analysis from the contextual realm of politics and pushed it into the contextual realm of morality. By attributing bin Laden’s “goals” to an innate, psychological character flaw (“a man who hates” and “doesn’t mind destroying women and children”) with a supernatural pretext (“dominated by evil”), Bush strategically dismissed potential sociological, historical, or political interpretations of the 9/11 events. Because, according to the War on Terrorism script, the terrorists’ preternaturally evil personalities motivated their actions, sociological and political analyses were rendered unnecessary.

Another example of containment occurred when the President was asked about his response toward the overwhelming concern from the Japanese public in Japan supporting U.S. military actions against Afghanistan. He stated to the media on 25 September 2001:

REPORTER: Mr. President, according to an opinion poll, about **90 percent of the Japanese** are concerned that Japan support of the U.S. military action could trigger terrorist attacks on Japan, itself. Do you have anything to say to them to, to their concern?

PRESIDENT BUSH: Well, I think this: **I think 100 percent of the Japanese people ought to understand that we’re dealing with evil people who hate freedom and legitimate governments**, and that now is the time for **freedom-loving people** to come together to fight terrorist activity. We cannot be—we cannot fear terrorists. We can’t let terrorism dictate our course of action. And we will not let a terrorist dictate the course of action in the United States; and I’m sure the Prime Minister feels the same way about Japan. **No threat, no threat will prevent freedom-loving people from defending freedom.** And make no mistake about it: **This is good versus evil.** These are evildoers. **They have no justification for their actions.** There’s no **religious** justification, there’s no **political** justification. **The only motivation is evil.** And the Prime Minister [Junichiro Koizumi of

Japan] understands that, and the Japanese people, I think, understand that as well.⁵⁷

In this exchange with the reporter, Bush counteracted his mentioning of “90 percent of the Japanese” opinions by invoking a religious representation of the situation (“This is good versus evil”), the enemy (“evil people who hate freedom and legitimate governments”) and the enemy’s motivation (“They have no justification for their actions.... The only motivation is evil”). Based on the context of the War on Terrorism script, Bush dismissed the public opinion which is normally central to the operation of a democracy and instead argued that “100 percent of the Japanese people ought to” support Japan’s involvement in the campaign against Afghanistan. A central discourse strategy here is, again, the use of contextualization—Bush legitimized Japanese government’s support by not considering and speaking in the contextual realm of democratic politics, but in the contextual realm of the War on Terrorism script.

V. Modes of Discourse the Afghanistan Government: The War on Islam Script

Through a series of indirect discourse interaction with the Bush Administration, the government of Afghanistan⁵⁸ gradually formulated an epistemic framework that can be called the War Against Islam script. Three days after the 9/11 events when Osama bin Laden was identified as the “prime suspect,” Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar reportedly released a public statement (through its

⁵⁷ George W. Bush, 25 September 2001, “Remarks Following Discussions with Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan and an Exchange with Reporters,” *The Colonnade*, The White House, *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 37(39), pp. 1372-1375.

⁵⁸ Although the Taliban only gained official recognition by several states in the Middle East, it did control most of the territory. In the contrary, the Northern alliance had a seat at the United Nations but was estimated to control only 5% of the country.

ambassador in Pakistan) that condemned the 9/11 attacks and argued that it was impossible for bin Laden to coordinate and plan for the events due to strict restrictions the regime had imposed on him. It defended its giving sanctuary to bin Laden since 1996 as motivated by his past effort against the Soviet invasion and Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.⁵⁹ The motive of the United States to start a war with Afghanistan, Omar argued in a separate radio address, was not because of Osama bin Laden but because it was an imperial power wanting to impose an attack on the state of Afghanistan.⁶⁰

After Bush's declaration that it wanted bin Laden "dead or alive" and would go after those countries that harbored and provided safe havens to him (and the Taliban was specifically mentioned),⁶¹ Omar reasserted to Afghanistan clerics regarding bin Laden's non-involvement with the 9/11 incidents and insisted that he should not be extradited without clear evidence from the United States. Any such evidence, if

⁵⁹ According to a CNN report: "In a statement released through the Taliban's ambassador in Pakistan, Omar condemned the attacks and said it was impossible for bin Laden, who has long been harbored in the central Asian nation, to have been behind them. Omar also said that if the United States acts without evidence it is committing terrorism itself. In the statement, Omar said that there are no planes in Afghanistan, no places to train pilots, and bin Laden has not had the kind of communication that would have been required to plan the attacks. He says the Taliban have isolated bin Laden and have taken away his fax machine, satellite phone, cell phone, computers and his Internet access. Taliban officials have said that if the United States did have evidence against bin Laden, he would be tried before an Islamic court in Afghanistan. The Taliban gave sanctuary to the millionaire Saudi dissident in 1996, mainly, they say, because of his role in war efforts that led to the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan after 10 years of occupation." "Taliban Leader: Prepare for Holy War." *CNN*, 14 September 2001, <http://www.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/asiapcf/central/09/14/afghan.denial> (accessed 19 July 2003).

⁶⁰ The CNN report also stated: "In a 17-minute radio address, Supreme Leader Mullah Mohammed Omar said the Afghan people should not be afraid and that he was not afraid of dying. Afghanistan had been invaded by great powers before, including Britain and Russia, and had withstood the assault, he said. "Now the third empire of the world wants to impose an attack on us," he said. **"As you know better, it is not because of Osama. This is the demonization of Islam"** (ibid.).

⁶¹ George W. Bush, 17 September 2001, "Remarks to Employees at the Pentagon and an Exchange With Reporters in Arlington, Virginia," *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 37(38), pp. 1324-1327.

available, “should be handed over to the Afghan Supreme Court, or let ulema [Islamic scholars] from three Islamic countries of the OIC [Organization of the Islamic Conference] keep an eye on Osama”—a request that the U.S. government immediately rejected. He also warned the clerics that the United States “are trying to finish us on various pretexts,” and that “it is the duty of all Muslims in the world to protect Muslim countries and Muslims.”⁶²

These reports provide a rough sketch of Omar’s explanation of the motives of the 9/11 perpetrators. The 9/11 attacks were condemnable *acts* committed by autonomous *agents* who were disconnected from the Taliban government and from bin Laden in any way; the *scene* of the incidents was restricted to the sites of attacks, and the *purpose* of their actions was yet to be verified.

This explanation suggested the U.S. charges against its regime to be unsubstantiated, and that its insistence on invasion would only show a clear motive that was irrelevant to the 9/11 events. This theory of motive behind U.S. invasion (*act*) portrayed the United States as an imperial power (*agent*) wanting to dominate and finish Afghanistan and perhaps the Muslim world (*purpose*) via the demonization and subordination of Islam (*agency*). The *scene* was set in the long Afghan history of invasion and occupation by foreign, imperial powers—that is, Britain and Russia since the early 1800s. This theory of motive, according to Omar’s rhetoric, was evidenced by U.S. foreign policy behavior—namely, its immediate rejection of any seemingly

⁶² “Taliban Stands by Bin Laden, Wants Evidence,” *IslamOnline.net*, 19 September 2001, <http://198.65.147.194/English/News/2001-09/19/article12.shtml> (accessed 19 July 2003). Two versions of original speech is reprinted at British journalist Robert Fisk’s website, http://www.robert-fisk.com/speech_mullah_umar_sept19_2001.htm (accessed 28 May 2008).

reasonable negotiation and suggestions that the regime proposed as well as its lack of evidence for the link between bin Laden and the 9/11 events. Following these premises, 9/11 was merely a pretext being invoked by the U.S. government to achieve its imperial ambition at a convenient moment.

These messages are largely reiterated, with minor alternation, in an interview conducted between Omar and Voice of America (VOA), part of which was aired and transcribed⁶³ despite the Department of State's effort to suspend the broadcast.

REPORTER: What do you mean by saying America has **taken the Islamic world hostage**?

MULLAH OMAR: **America controls the governments of the Islamic countries.** America keeps after them until they do its bidding, but they are very distant from their own people. **The people** ask to follow Islam, but the governments do not listen. **The people are powerless against their governments** because they are in the grip of the United States. In that way, they become corrupt and ignore the people. If someone follows the path of Islam, the government arrests him, tortures him or kills him. This is the doing of America. If it stops supporting those governments and lets the people deal with them, then such things won't happen. America has created the **evil** that is attacking it. The evil will not disappear even if I die and Osama dies and others die. This is U.S. policy. The U.S. should step back and **review its policy**. It should stop trying to **impose its empire** on the rest of the world, especially on Islamic countries. In the name of humanitarian aid, Americans **brought thousands of Bibles to Afghanistan** and were propagating Christianity. If they dare do that here, can you imagine what they have been doing in Arab countries? **The Muslims understand that. They also know that they can't do anything about it....so they kill themselves in suicide attacks.** They no longer want life on this earth."⁶⁴

⁶³ "Transcript: VOA Interview with Taliban Leader," *Washington Post*, 23 September 2001, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/nation/attack/transcripts/omarinterview092301.htm> (accessed 31 May 2008).

⁶⁴ Another quote demonstrates the same point: "If you look at Islamic countries, the people are in despair. **They are complaining that Islam is gone. Secular law has replaced Islamic law.** But people remain firm in their Islamic beliefs. **In their pain and frustration, some of them commit suicide acts.** They feel they have nothing to lose. If the U.S. really wants to end this evil, it knows

This quote shows again the depiction of perpetrators' motive behind the 9/11 incidents. In contrary to the previous statements, the *act* of suicide attacks was represented in more neutral terms, being neither condemnable nor non-condemnable (at least not in the portion of the published transcript). But the *scene* was still an environment of corrupted Islamic governments collaborating with the United States in arresting, torturing, and killing Muslims. The *agents* of the 9/11 events were powerless Muslims who could no longer accept the loss of Islamic principles in the hands of Islamic governments (*purpose*). Having no other plausible means to change the situation in their countries, a situation in which U.S. mediation and support played a major part, some of the powerless Muslims autonomously committed suicide attacks against the United States (*agency*). This is Omar's explanation as to why "America has created the evil that is attacking it."

An interesting aspect of Omar's statement is the intricate mix between the religious and the political. Contrary to the institutional separation between church and state in secular countries of the West, religion and politics integrate at the institutional and symbolic levels in Afghanistan and several other Islamic states (i.e., Iran, Iran, Pakistan, and Mauritania). Omar spoke of "the people" in reference to all Muslims residing in the Middle East as a group, hence taking Muslims' unity in attitude and belief for granted. He fused suicide bombers' sentiment with those of general

how to do it. It should end its virtual grip on Islam. It should let go. Then it would be relieved forever and the rest of the world can go about its business" (ibid.). This quote shows that Omar attributes the cause of suicide attacks to be relevant to Muslims' desire to pursue the path of Islam. This statement ambiguously portrays that most Muslims (or "true" Muslims) are in a state of pain and frustration because of the secularization of the Islamic world, and some of them took extreme actions as a result.

Muslims, depicting suicide attacks as an extreme manifestation of the sentiment of the Muslim populace. This depiction overlooked the incredible diversity by which Muslims respond to globalization, practice their religion, and perceive political Islam at home and abroad (Roy 2004); one reason is certainly that legitimacy in knowledge and practice (political, civil, and otherwise) is supposed to be derived from a structure of religious authority, according to the civil-religious tradition in Afghanistan developed by Islamic states. Omar sought to represent what could otherwise be understood as a political situation to be a critical religious situation⁶⁵ and implied that Muslims who do not share the same sentiment in light of a pending U.S. invasion to be non-believers or apostates, a view also supported by many Islamic clerics and the fatawa issued by several senior scholars.⁶⁶

Of course, confronting the U.S. militarily would entail a probable immediate defeat in some form, a heavy loss of lives, and the loss of political power in

⁶⁵ The following exchanges (ibid.) highlight Omar's invocation of the Afghan civil religion to explain why resistance to U.S. demands was necessary:

(1) REPORTER: So it means you are not giving Osama bin Laden to the U.S.?

MULLAH OMAR: No. We cannot do that. If we did, it means **we are not Muslims**....That **Islam is finished**. If we were **afraid of attack**, we could have surrendered him the last time we were threatened and attacked...

(2) REPORTER: Why don't you expel Osama bin Laden?

MULLAH OMAR: This is not an issue of Osama bin Laden. It is **an issue of Islam**. **Islam's prestige** is at stake. So is **Afghan's tradition**.

Whether to hand over bin Laden to the United States was stated as "not an issue of bin Laden," nor was it just a legal or political issue of whether to expel a political fugitive, according to Omar. Instead, it was a (civil) religious issue related to Islam's teaching, prestige, and survival. Succumbing to U.S. pressure in fear of attack would mean forsaking one's religion.

⁶⁶ Bush's usage of the word "crusade" in several of his early speeches incited the situation, as it legitimated Taliban's depiction of the situation as a religious war against Islam.

Afghanistan. The following two exchanges from the interview show how these casualties are understood in Omar's War against Islam script:

(1) REPORTER: Do you know that the U.S. has announced a war on terrorism?

MULLAH OMAR: I am considering two promises. One is the promise of God. The other is that of Bush. The **promise of God** is that my land is vast. If you start a journey on God's path, you can reside anywhere on this earth and will be protected....The **promise of Bush** is that there is no place on earth where you can hide that I cannot find you. We will see which one of these two promises is fulfilled.

(2) REPORTER: If you fight America with all your might, can the Taliban do that? Won't America **beat you** and won't your **people suffer** even more?

MULLAH OMAR: On the surface it looks as if that is the case, but I'm **very confident** that it won't turn out this way. Please note this: **There is nothing more we can do except depend on Almighty God.** If a person really depends on God, then he is assured that the Almighty will help him, have mercy on him and he will succeed.

In the first exchange, the reporter probed Omar on the possible consequences of resisting the United States. Omar immediately depicted "war on terrorism" as the "promise of Bush"—that "there is no place on earth where you can hide and that I cannot find you"—and juxtaposed it to "the promise of God," which said it would protect staunch believers on Earth. In this constructed religious situation, complying to U.S. demands then means forsaking the principle of Islam, allowing an imperial power to dominate a religious nation. The second exchange showed how Omar justified the potential human cost of this war in the context of sacred principles. According to the interpretative framework, mass-scale death and suffering were foreseeable consequences of resistance, but—like many heroic battles being fought in

the Middle East in the past—those who fought for Islam would be ultimately rewarded with victory against all odds.

VI. Summary

This chapter illustrates the Bush Administration's use of a religious mode of representation to mobilize the American public and to legitimize the war on Afghanistan and terrorism after 9/11. The Bush Administration propagated a coherent account of these events through the establishment of the "War on Terrorism script" grounded in Bush's version of American civil religion. Even though there were multiple ways in which political players could speak about, think about, and act toward the 9/11 events, the representation and mode of representation proffered by Bush came to prevail over others in the public political discourse.

One distinguished effect of the religious mode of representation was that it enabled the Bush Administration to imbue the 9/11 events and their aftermath with coherent meanings at a time when they were extremely ambiguous. This act was accomplished by instituting a convention for political discourse, in which a mode of knowledge and evidential use became legitimate. Such a shift in the convention of evidential use in turn shifted the convention for legitimizing the policy actions to be undertaken, such as the scaling back of civil liberties, the increase in economic budgets, and the initiation of military actions.

Critics and dissenters using intellectual, rational, and legal modes of argumentation sought to institute different conventions speaking, perceiving, and responding to the 9/11 situations. None of these alternative discourses generated

coherent explanations for the 9/11 events and the motives of the perpetrators. These dissenters and critics failed to construct explanations of 9/11 not because of their lack of wisdom, but because of the modes of discourses they deployed had a general commitment to the logical-empiricist mode of argumentation that required solid, specific, and technical forms of evidence—some of which were not available at the time (and may never be available). Ranging from progressive intellectuals and cautious policy experts to humanitarian groups and religious leaders, critics and dissenters did not claim that they *knew* the motivations of the perpetrators and the causes of the events due to the lack of credible information; many even avoided *speculating* on such issues.

By contrast, the Bush Administration was unambiguous in its definition of the 9/11 situations: The U.S. had been invaded by evil people who hate the American way of life. The War on Terrorism script, steeped in a religious mode of discourse, enabled a much more malleable form of evidence that was made available starting on the same day of the attacks. For instance, “who caused the 9/11 attacks” is an empirical question in the intellectual, rational, and legal modes of discourse, the answer to which requires resource-consuming investigations. However, in a religious mode of discourse, one can answer such questions immediately with a statement such as “evil caused the attacks.” And, when facing scarce empirical evidence specifically demonstrating the connections between the 9/11 perpetrators and Osama bin Laden, al Qaeda, or the Taliban regime, the Bush Administration instead argued that the Taliban regime shared with bin Laden, al Qaeda members, and the 9/11 perpetrators in their

evilness and their hatred toward freedom. By adopting a religious mode of representation, the Bush Administration made use of a series of easily available empirical events—e.g., the Taliban government’s historical connections with al Qaeda and brutal treatment of women as evidence that supported the case for the invasion of Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, after the collapse of its diplomatic efforts, the theocratic government of Afghanistan constructed the War against Islam script as a means to mobilize Muslim citizens against the United States. The script relied on Afghan civil religion as its basis, and it portrayed U.S. invasion as an act of invasion of Islamic territory by a foreign, non-Islamic power. Whether U.S. intended it to be a religious war or just mere imperialist expansion, many Taliban leaders and clerics argued that resistance was a religious obligation among all Muslims, and defending Islam was worth the (immense) human costs associated with war.

VII. Acknowledgement

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CHAPTER 3: ELIDING INTO THE WAR ON IRAQ

Successful in mobilizing a campaign for a war on al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan, the Bush Administration shifted attention to Iraq. To justify an invasion of Iraq, the Bush Administration added a doctrine of preventive war to its War on Terrorism script; it also portrayed Saddam Hussein's regime as an imminent threat and asserted a connection between al Qaeda and Hussein's administration.

There were stronger oppositions to U.S. invasion of Iraq—both domestically and internationally—than there were to the invasion of Afghanistan, but only the international opposition seemed to post discernable barriers. Even though oppositional protests to the War on Iraq developed on an impressive scale⁶⁷ and even though some Democratic Party members contested the Bush Administration's plans, the Bush Administration secured domestic support quite readily. Polling data consistently showed that between 60%-70% of the American public favored military actions on Iraq.⁶⁸ In October 2002, the U.S. Congress passed a joint resolution (296 to 133 in the House of Representatives and 77 to 23 in the Senate) to authorize the

⁶⁷ Aside from sizable protests occurring across the United States, over 155 city and county councils in about 30 states passed resolutions opposing the anticipated military actions against Iraq, including Madison (Wisconsin), Milwaukee (Wisconsin), Seattle (Washington), Austin (Texas), Philadelphia (Pennsylvania), Pittsburg (Pennsylvania), Cleveland (Ohio), Amherst (Massachusetts), Bloomington (Indiana), Chicago (Illinois), Atlanta (Georgia), Chapel Hill (North Carolina), New York City (New York), Detroit (Michigan), Ann Arbor (Michigan), New Haven (Connecticut), Denver (Colorado), San Francisco (California), Santa Cruz (California), Palo Alto (California), and Washington (District of Columbia). "Cities for Peace," *Institute for Policy Studies*, <http://www.ips-dc.org/citiesforpeace/resolutions.htm> (accessed 20 August 2004).

⁶⁸ See *Post-Blix: Public Favors Force in Iraq, But...: U.S. Needs More International Backing* (Washington, D.C.: The Pew Research Center for The People & The Press), 20 February 2003, http://www.pewtrusts.com/pdf/vf_pew_research_international_backing.pdf (accessed 22 August 2004); *What the World Thinks in 2002* (Washington, D.C.: The Pew Research Center for The People & The Press), 4 December 2002, <http://pewglobal.org/reports/pdf/165.pdf> (accessed 21 June 2008).

President's use of military force against Iraq.⁶⁹ In March 2003 the Senate further passed a resolution (99 to 0) stating that it "commends and supports the efforts and leadership of the President, as Commander in Chief, in the conflict against Iraq"; a concurrent resolution was passed in the House of Representatives by a vote of 391 to 11, which said "the Congress expresses the unequivocal support and appreciation of the Nation...to the President as Commander-in-Chief for his firm leadership and decisive action in the conduct of military operations in Iraq as part of the on-going Global War on Terrorism."⁷⁰

The degree of support was entirely different on the international scene. According to reports issued by the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS),⁷¹ people in most Western and Middle Eastern nations, including those most closely allied to the United States, opposed U.S. military action against Iraq; in only two countries in the world—United States and Israel—was popular support evidently greater than 50%. Political leaders from the international community, including the countries of France, Germany, Russia, and China, vocally objected to the U.S. waging war on Iraq; the majority of

⁶⁹ *Authorization of the Use of United States Armed Forces Against Iraq*, S.J.Res.45 and H.J.Res.114, 107th Congress, 2nd Session (10 October 2002), *Congressional Record* 148(133): S10233-S10342.

⁷⁰ *Commending the President and the Armed Forces of the United States of America*, S.Res.95, 108th Congress, 1st Session (20 March 2003), *Congressional Record* 149(45): S4043-S4106; *Expressing the Support and Appreciation of the Nation for the President and the Members of the Armed Forces who are Participating in Operation Iraqi Freedom*, H.Con.Res.104, 108th Congress, 1st Session (21 March 2003). *Congressional Record* 149(45): H2133-H2263.

⁷¹ See Sarah Anderson, Phyllis Bennis, and John Cavanagh, *Coalition of the Willing of Coalition of the Coerced?* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Policy Studies), 26 February 2003, <http://www.ips-dc.org/COERCED.pdf> (accessed April 14, 2003); Sarah Anderson, Phyllis Bennis, John Cavanagh, and Erik Leaver, *Coalition of the Willing of Coalition of the Coerced? Part II* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Policy Studies), 24 March 2003, <http://www.ips-dc.org/COERCED2.pdf> (accessed April 14, 2003); and Erik Leaver and Sara Johnson, "A Coalition of Weakness," *Asian Times*, 28 March 2003, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/EC28Ak01.html (accessed April 14, 2003). See also Sifry and Cerf (2003:505).

the U.N. Security Council also resisted to approving the U.S. to initiate military action against Iraq.⁷²

Even though the United States did not need international support to invade Iraq, it wanted it. A major reason was legitimacy. The more legitimacy the United States could secure for the War on Iraq or for any wars, the more the United States would be able to claim a universal validity for its dogged pursuit of the enemy, its arguments for war, to reinforce its role as a world police force, to increase the morale of U.S. soldiers and the American public, and to sustain its political power on the international scene. In material terms, international legitimacy could also lead to the commitment of extra ground troops and additional resources that would decrease military burden and casualties for the United States.

The United States also desired international support for other reasons; for example, when the government of Turkey initially refused to let the United States use

⁷² Even though some national leaders expressed support, their statements defied the national public's sentiments, and their actual commitment was not strong. The U.S. government claimed that 45 countries have joined "the Coalition of the Willing" to support military action against Iraq, but only two nations—United Kingdom and Australia—committed real troops to the military action. In the first Gulf War, allies sent or pledged more than 295,000 troops to support the 430,000 U.S. troops in the campaign to end the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. By contrast, this time around, the U.S. forces were joined by only 45,000 British and 2,000 Australian troops. Furthermore, many governments that accepted the U.S. position—including such major members as Spain, Japan, Italy, Australia, Denmark, Turkey, and Portugal—did so despite the oppositional opinions of their publics. Furthermore, the United States and Great Britain circulated a draft resolution to the Security Council on 24 February 2003 to which purportedly obtain approval to invade Iraq. Although the resolution never came to a formal vote, it was clear that the resolution was far from getting the required nine votes out of fifteen (a 'supermajority') to pass, even despite a foreseeable veto from France or Russia. See Sarah Anderson, Phyllis Bennis, and John Cavanagh, *Coalition of the Willing of Coalition of the Coerced?* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Policy Studies), 26 February 2003, <http://www.ips-dc.org/COERCED.pdf> (accessed April 14, 2003); Sarah Anderson, Phyllis Bennis, John Cavanagh, and Erik Leaver, *Coalition of the Willing of Coalition of the Coerced? Part II* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Policy Studies), 24 March 2003, <http://www.ips-dc.org/COERCED2.pdf> (accessed April 14, 2003); and Erik Leaver and Sara Johnson, "A Coalition of Weakness," *Asian Times*, 28 March 2003, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/EC28Ak01.html (accessed April 14, 2003).

its territory and military bases as the Northern entry point into Iraq, the situation posted a military barrier for the United States that U.N. support would have mitigated. Allegedly, Saudi Arabia also claimed that it would let the United States use its military bases to attack Iraq only if a U.N. resolution was passed.⁷³ Indeed, although smaller states could hardly influence the status of a superpower, they could do many things to stall, obstruct, and deter policy actions (Walt 2005). Hence, having genuine international legitimacy have subtle strategic benefits. International support also played a role in influencing domestic public opinions; for example, a poll showed that, in mid-September 2002, among the majority (64%) of the American public who favored taking military action in Iraq to remove Hussein's regime, about 39% of them said that they would support a military action "only if allies agree," and about only half of them stated that they would favor such military actions "even if allies won't join."⁷⁴ Because the Bush Administration spent considerable effort and time to maximize international support for the War on Iraq, the United Nations became a crucial site for debate and discursive contestations.

I. Promoting a Legal Mode of Discourse at the United Nations

International leaders who opposed the Bush Administration's War on Iraq voiced their opposition primarily through the United Nations on legal grounds, rather than criticizing U.S. history with Iraq and the U.S. possession of WMD. Although

⁷³ Carl Levin, *Authorization of the Use of United States Armed Forces Against Iraq*, S.J.Res.45 and H.J.Res.114, 107th Congress, 2nd Session (10 October 2002), *Congressional Record* 148(133): S10251.

⁷⁴ "Support for Potential Military Action Slips to 55%," *Pew Research Center for the People and the Press*, 30 October 2002, <http://www.people-press.org/reports/print.php3?ReportID=163> (accessed 22 August 2004).

lacking in enforcement power (especially when the five permanent members are not supportive), the U.N. General Assembly has often been the main forum, if not the only forum, by which many smaller and weaker states could make their voices in the international society (see Bennis 2006). Many international leaders argued that such issues as the ambiguous status of Iraq's possession of WMD, Iraq's violations of international laws and U.N. resolutions, and the possible threat of Hussein's regime posed to the international community—all of which were cited by the Bush Administration as primary reasons for war—should be solved within the frameworks of the United Nations and in a manner that was consistent with international laws. In other words, they sought to encapsulate the discourse around the impending War on Iraq within a legal institution—the United Nations.

Critics and dissenters from various progressive establishments, academic institutions, religious organizations, and political groups also voiced their oppositions to the War on Iraq. Many of them deployed a rational mode of discourse, pointing out the potentially dangerous consequences of setting a precedent of a “preemptive strike” and preventive war, the economic costs for war, the loss of international legitimacies and international allies, and the likely increase of anti-American sentiments. Even though not all of them explicitly endorsed the use of the United Nations as a site to deal with the ambiguous issues related to Iraq's potential possession of WMD, many high-profile groups and figures who had power in the political or public sphere did so.

For example, renowned social critic Noam Chomsky, Former Attorney General (and the co-founder of a major anti-war coalition A.N.S.W.E.R.) Ramsey Clark,

former U.S. Vice President Albert Gore, and former U.S. President Jimmy Carter all made public statements about the danger of a preventive war doctrine and the preferred alternative of dealing with the Iraq situation through the United Nations.⁷⁵

Many dissenters within the Democratic Party, such as Senator Carl Levin (D-Michigan), Senator Mark Dayton (D-Minnesota), Senator Edward Kennedy (D-Massachusetts), Congresswoman Barbara Lee (D-California), Congressman Jim McDermott (D-Washington), and Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-New York) also voiced similar points during congressional debates.⁷⁶ The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a statement in November 2002, claiming that “recourse to force...should take place within the framework of the United Nations”; the special envoy representing Pope John Paul II also issued a statement later arguing that Iraq’s human rights and disarmament issues “must continue to be pursued within the framework of the United Nations.”⁷⁷ Similarly, church leaders of Europe, USA, and

⁷⁵ See Jimmy Carter, “Just War-Or a Just War?,” *The Carter Center* (an op-ed statement originally appeared in the *New York Times*), 9 March 2003, <http://www.cartercenter.org/printdoc.asp?docID=1249&submenu=news> (accessed 22 August 2004); Jimmy Carter, “A Statement by President Carter: An Alternative to War.” *The Carter Center*, 31 January 2003, <http://www.cartercenter.org/printdoc.asp?docID=1165&submenu=news> (accessed 22 August 2004); Ramsey Clark, “Letter on Iraq by Former Atty. Gen. Ramsey Clark to UN Security Council,” *Progressive Activism in Austin, TX*, 29 July 2002, <http://progressiveaustin.org/iraqlark.htm> (accessed 21 August 2004); Noam Chomsky and Michael Albert, “Interview with Noam Chomsky about US Warplans.” *Z Communications*, 29 August 2002, http://www.zmag.org/content/print_article.cfm?itemID=2422§ionID=15 (accessed 22 August 2004); and Albert Gore, “Iraq and the War on Terrorism,” speech delivered at the Commonwealth Club, San Francisco, California, 23 September 2002, <http://www.commonwealthclub.org/archive/02/02-09gore-speech.html> (accessed 22 August 2004).

⁷⁶ *Authorization of the Use of United States Armed Forces Against Iraq*, S.J.Res.45 and H.J.Res.114, 107th Congress, 2nd Session (10 October 2002), *Congressional Record* 148(133): S10233-S10342; *Authorization of the Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002*, H.J.Res.114, 107th Congress, 2nd Session (10 October 2002), *Congressional Record* 148(133): H7739-H7799.

⁷⁷ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Statement on Iraq,” 13 November 2002, <http://www.usccb.org/bishops/iraq.htm> (accessed 10 July 2003); “Statement of Cardinal Pio Laghi,

the Middle East of diverse denominations released a declaration in February 5th claiming that “pre-emptive military strike and war as a means to change the regime of a sovereign state are immoral and in violation of the U.N. Charter,” and they “insist that the carefully designed mechanisms of the U.N. weapons inspections be given the time needed to complete their work.”⁷⁸ Furthermore, many resolutions passed by city councils, including those of Amherst (Massachusetts), Iowa City (Iowa), Chicago (Illinois), Urbana (Illinois), Los Angeles (California), Santa Cruz (California), Mansfield (Connecticut), Philadelphia (Pennsylvania), and New York City (New York) explicitly called for the Bush Administration to work through the United Nations in pursuit of disarmament and anti-terrorism objectives.⁷⁹ In sum, like many international leaders, a sizable number of domestic critics with tangible status and influence in the public sphere attempted to push the discourse around the issues of Iraq’s disarmament and threat into the legal realm governed by the United Nations.

In response to these converged calls for adherence to international institutions and an international coalition, the Bush Administration integrated a religious mode of representation within a legal and rational discourse. For example, the Bush

Special Envoy of John Paul II to President George Bush,” official Web site of the Holy See, Vatican, 5 March 2003, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/special-features/peace/documents/peace_20030306_card-laghi-usa-meeting_en.html (accessed 20 July 2003). See also “A Statement from Religious Leaders in the United States and United Kingdom,” *United for Peace & Justice*, 26 November 2002, <http://unitedforpeace.org/article.php?id=220> (accessed 21 August 2004).

⁷⁸ “Church Leaders United Against War in Iraq,” a statement from European church leaders, meeting in Berlin, February 5, 2003, convened by the World Council of Churches (WCC) in consultation with the Conference of European Churches (CEC), the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA (NCCCUSA) and the Middle East Council of Churches, hosted by the Evangelical Church in Germany, *Evangelical Church in Germany*, 5 February 2004, http://www.ekd.de/english/2409_news_2003_26_head_of_churches.html (accessed 20 July 2003).

⁷⁹ For the texts of these city council resolutions (and others), “Cities for Peace,” *Institute for Policy Studies*, <http://www.ips-dc.org/citiesforpeace/resolutions.htm> (accessed 20 August 2004).

Administration cited Iraq's violations of U.N. resolutions as evidence of the regime's immoral character; this move simultaneously appropriated the authority of the U.N. and placed the U.N. as an institution on the side of civilization. When it became apparent that the United Nations did not support a military invasion of Iraq, the Bush Administration dismissed the United Nations as an 'ineffective' institution to carry out the laws of civilized nations; this move avoided characterizing the United Nations as on the side of 'evil' and avoided disturbing the good vs. evil logic within the War on Terrorism script. The following sections dissect these patterns of exchanges.

II. Placing Preemptive Doctrine within the War on Terrorism Script

During the buildup toward the War on Iraq, the Bush Administration introduced a preemptive doctrine, also called a "preventive" doctrine by critics (Chomsky 2003), to legitimize a potential military action. The Bush Administration argued that a preventive or preemptive military action would be justified when enemy regimes posed a grave threat to the national security of the United States.⁸⁰ "Threats," "risks," and "danger" were vague albeit crucial terms in the preventive doctrine, because it necessitated a process of calculation and assessment of them.

⁸⁰ An oft-cited policy document that articulated this position was *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, released on 20 September 2002. The following quote from the introduction articulated the basic policy doctrine of preventive military actions in the War on Terrorism: "Our enemies have openly declared that they are seeking **weapons of mass destruction**, and evidence indicates that they are doing so with determination... And, **as a matter of common sense and self-defense, America will act against such emerging threats before they are fully formed... History will judge harshly those who saw this coming danger but failed to act.** In the new world we have entered, the only path to peace and security is the path of action." The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, September 2002).

Two elements were central to Bush’s claim for the need to launch a preventive strike: (1) the evil character of the Iraqi regime and (2) its possession of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). According to the Bush Administration’s argument, Iraq’s arsenals of WMD created grave risks and grave threats. Iraq’s ownership of WMD was onerous *because* Saddam Hussein was evil. Many nations possessed WMD, and the United States championed their possession. What distinguished a justified from an unjustified possession of WMD was the “character” of the nations and their leaders: a good nation owning weapons of mass destruction would not lead to mass destruction, while an evil nation owning weapons of mass destruction would (see Figure 3.1).⁸¹ Alleged “terrorist states” which already possessed WMD—Iran and North Korea, for example—were characterized as participants in an “axis of evil” along with Iraq. The axis of evil states were said to acquire WMD not for purposes of national defense but for the purposes of national offense—because they were evil and irrational.

	Legitimate Nations	Illegitimate Nations
Possess WMD?	Yes	Yes
Character	Good	Evil
Politically Justified?	Yes	No

Figure 3.1. Structure of Argument Pertaining to Legitimate National Access to WMD

⁸¹ The following statement delivered at West Point on 1 June 2002 is representative of how Bush presented the argument for a preventive strike, and it illustrated the centrality of these two elements: “The **gravest danger to freedom** lies at the perilous crossroads of **radicalism** and **technology**. When the spread of chemical and biological and nuclear weapons, along with ballistic missile technology—when that occurs, even weak states and small groups could attain a catastrophic power to strike great nations. Our **enemies** have declared this very intention, and have been caught seeking these **terrible weapons**. They want the capability to blackmail us, or to harm us, or to harm our friends—and we will oppose them with all our power. (Applause.)” George W. Bush, 1 June 2002, “Commencement Address at the United States Military Academy in West Point, New York,” West Point Military Academy, New York, *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 38(23), pp. 944-948.

Characterizing Saddam Hussein as Evil

In the 2002 State of the Union Speech, Bush labeled the Iraqi regime, along with the regimes of North Korea and Iran as an “axis of evil.” Claiming that “we know their true nature,” Bush subsequently described these regimes one by one. North Korea was characterized by Bush as “a regime arming with missiles and weapons of mass destruction, while starving its own citizens.” Iran was characterized as a regime that “aggressively pursues these weapons and exports terror, while an unelected few repress the Iranian people’s hope for freedom.” Iraq received the longest and harshest description:

Iraq continues to **flaunt its hostility** toward America and to **support terror**. The Iraqi regime has **plotted to develop anthrax**, and **nerve gas**, and **nuclear weapons** for over a decade. This is a regime that has already **used poison gas to murder** thousands of its own citizens—leaving the bodies of mothers huddled over their dead children. This is a regime that agreed to international inspections—then **kicked out the inspectors**. This is a regime that **has something to hide** from the civilized world.

Thus, the Iraqi regime was characterized by Bush as evil primarily based on its previous use of weapons of mass destruction, which included the use of “poison gas on the Kurds.” This reference was drawn from the period of the Iraq-Iran War in the 1980s and was repeated again either explicitly or implicitly in numerous latter speeches, including Bush’s address to the U.N. General Assembly on 12 September 2002.⁸²

⁸² In which he stated: “We can harbor no illusions—and that’s important today to remember. Saddam Hussein **attacked Iran in 1980 and Kuwait in 1990**. He’s **fired ballistic missiles** at Iran and Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Israel. His regime once ordered the killing of every person between the ages of 15 and 70 in certain Kurdish villages in northern Iraq. He has gassed many Iranians,

Saddam Hussein was also characterized as a “madman”⁸³ or “insane” person, notably in the 2003 State of the Union address:

Trusting in the **sanity** and restraint of Saddam Hussein is not a strategy, and it is not an option. (Applause.) The dictator who is assembling the world’s most dangerous weapons has already used them in whole villages—leaving thousands of his own citizens dead, blind, or disfigured. Iraqi refugees tell us how forced confessions are obtained—by **torturing children** while their parents are made to watch. International human rights groups have catalogued other methods used in the torture chambers of Iraq: electric shock, **burning with hot irons**, dripping acid on the skin, mutilation with electric drills, cutting out tongues, and rape. If this is not **evil**, then **evil** has no meaning...⁸⁴

Saddam Hussein’s evil character was consistently represented by Bush in absolute terms. In the following quote excerpted from his 7 October 2002 speech in Cincinnati, Ohio, Bush stated that the lives of Iraqi citizens “could hardly get worse,” and he compared the evil of the Iraqi regime with that of the Taliban and Stalinist regimes:

Some worry that a change of leadership in Iraq could create instability and make the situation worse. **The situation could hardly get worse**, for world security and for the people of Iraq. The lives of Iraqi citizens would improve dramatically if Saddam Hussein were no longer in power, just as the lives of Afghanistan’s citizens improved after the Taliban. The dictator of Iraq is **a student of Stalin, using murder as a**

and 40 Iraqi villages George W. Bush, 12 September 2002, “Address to the United Nations General Assembly in New York City,” General Assembly Hall, U.N. Headquarters, New York, *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 38(37), pp. 1529-1533.

⁸³ Bush stated, “I want the United Nations to work. I want him to do what he said he would do. But for the sake of our future, now’s the time, now’s the time. For the sake of your children’s future, we must make sure this **madman** never has the capacity to hurt us with a nuclear weapon, or to use the stockpiles of anthrax that we know he has, or V-X, the biological weapons which he possesses.” George W. Bush, 27 September 2002, “Remarks at a Luncheon for Congressional Candidate Bob Beauprez in Denver, Colorado,” *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 38(40), pp. 1639-1697.

⁸⁴ George W. Bush, 28 January 2003, “Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union,” House Chamber, U.S. Capitol, *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 39(5), pp. 109-116.

tool of terror and control, within his own cabinet, within his own army, and even within his own family.⁸⁵

By characterizing Saddam Hussein as evil, insane, and mad, Bush tried to achieve several argumentative goals: to convince his intended audience of the claims that (1) extreme measures such as military actions would be warranted, (2) the U.S.-Iraqi conflict was rooted in his character rather than in sociological, economic, or political factors, and (3) a policy of deterrence would not lessen his threat to the national security of the United States.

Bush propagated the notion that it was necessary to remove Saddam Hussein from power, because the root of the danger resided in his character, rather than economic, political, or sociological factors. He stated on 6 March 2003, shortly before invading Iraq, in a National Press Conference:

The **risk** of doing nothing, the **risk of hoping that Saddam Hussein changes his mind and becomes a gentle soul**, the **risk** that somehow—that inaction will make the world safer, is a **risk** I'm not willing to take for the American people.⁸⁶

Preventing attacks on America, as Bush portrayed in this statement, required a change of soul, rather than a reliance on international institutions; and since Saddam Hussein was not likely to do so, it is extremely risky not to act. This statement highlights Bush's discourse strategy of personalizing the source of the problem and thereby personalizing the solution.

⁸⁵ George W. Bush, 7 October 2002, "Address to the Nation on Iraq From Cincinnati, Ohio," Cincinnati Museum Center, Union Terminal, Ohio, *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 38(41), pp. 1716-1720.

⁸⁶ George W. Bush, 6 March 2003, "The President's News Conference," The East Room, The White House, *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 39(10), pp. 295-305.

This statement is also a good example of how elements of a religious discourse creep into a cost-benefit analysis. While the Bush Administration asserted the risk of not acting is greater than the risk of acting—a seemingly “rational” calculation—the outcome of that cost-benefit analysis (i.e., attacking Iraq is necessary) was made coherent within the War on Terrorism script.

Indeed, Saddam Hussein’s evil character played an important part in Bush’s attempts to justify a preventive war doctrine rather than a policy of deterrence. Mehan and Skelly (1988) observed that the development of nuclear weapons during the Cold war always depended on a constructed enemy. First the U.S. government argued that the development of nuclear weapons was necessary to deter Hitler, and then Japan, and subsequently the Soviet Union. Even though all these enemies had been demonized, during the Cold War, a doctrine of deterrence was established to deal with them once they possessed weapons of mass destruction; in fact, the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty was based on the assumption that enemies could calculate a cost-benefit analysis, where each nuclear country knew that the possible cost of retaliation would be greater than the benefit of nuclear aggression.

Despite the much-celebrated historical success of the doctrine of deterrence in avoiding nuclear holocaust, Bush insisted that a similar doctrine would be questionable in the new context of the War on Terrorism because Saddam Hussein’s sanity was in doubt. Because Saddam Hussein was insane or mad, not rational or logical, the mutually assured destruction logic of deterrence policy would be rendered ineffective. Representative Tom Delay (R-Texas) reinforced this argument on 10

October 2002 in a congressional debate regarding the Authorization For Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution (H.J.Res.114):

Because once a **madman** like Saddam Hussein is able to deliver his arsenal, whether it is chemical, biological or nuclear weapons, there is no telling when an American city will be attacked at his direction or with his support.⁸⁷

In a similar manner, in a widely broadcast TV interview several months after Iraq was occupied on 2 July 2004, Bush explained why he avoided a deterrence policy:

We can't say, Let's don't deal with Saddam Hussein. Let's hope he changes his stripes, or let's trust in the goodwill of Saddam Hussein. Let's let us, kind of, try to contain him. **Containment doesn't work with a man who is a madman.** And remember, Tim, he had used weapons against his own people.⁸⁸

Once the Bush Administration and its supporters established that Saddam Hussein was incapable of the reasoning necessary for deterrence to work, the War on Terror script was invoked in order to justify placing a policy of preemptive war in its place. In the *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, released by the White House in February 2003, the Bush Administration cited Aum Shinrikyo's and bin Laden's past efforts to acquire WMD as examples of a threat.⁸⁹ Listing Iran, Iraq,

⁸⁷ Tom Delay, *Authorization of the Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002*, H.J.Res.114. 107th Congress, 2nd Session (10 October 2002), *Congressional Record* 148(133): H7777.

⁸⁸ George W. Bush, interviewed by Tim Russert, *Meet the Press*, NBC, 7 February 2004, <http://msnbc.msn.com/id/4179618> (accessed 2 August 2004).

⁸⁹ The White House, *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, February 2003). The document stated: "Weapons of mass destruction pose a direct and serious threat to the United States and the entire international community.... We know that some terrorist organizations have sought to develop the capability to use WMD to attack the United States and our friends and allies... The Aum Shinrikyo's unsuccessful efforts to deploy biological weapons and its lethal 1995 sarin gas attack in the Tokyo subway provided an early warning of such willingness to acquire and use WMD. In 1998, Usama bin Laden proclaimed the acquisition of WMD a "religious duty," and evidence collected in Afghanistan proves al-Qaida

Syria, Libya, Cuba, North Korea, and Sudan as the seven “state sponsors of terrorism”

which allegedly contribute to the threat, the publication stated:

Unlike the Cold War, where two opposing camps led by superpower states vied for power, we are now engaged in a war between the civilized world and those that would destroy it.⁹⁰

This statement compared the personalities of enemies during the Cold War and the

War on Terrorism. The War on Terrorism is not a war between two civilized states

that fight for dominance in power, but it is a war between a civilized society and a

barbaric society. The plot of the War on Terrorism script—civilization vs.

barbarism—further mitigated against the possibility of deterrence.⁹¹ Simultaneously,

sought to fulfill this “duty.” The threat of terrorists acquiring and using WMD is a clear present danger” (pp. 9-10).

⁹⁰ The White House, *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, February 2003), pp. 18-19.

⁹¹ Intensions and characterizations aside, Bush also made that argument that the doctrine of deterrence would not work in the new era. Whereas the enemy of the Cold War was a nation that had territory and citizens that could be retaliate by using nuclear weaponry, terrorist organizations are different; they have no state, no territory, and therefore are exempt from retaliatory measures. The quote below from Bush speech delivered at West Point on 1 June 2002 exemplifies this argument: “For much of the last century, America’s defense relied on the Cold War doctrines of deterrence and containment. In some cases, those strategies still apply. But new threats also require new thinking. Deterrence—the promise of massive retaliation against nations—means **nothing against shadowy terrorist networks with no nation or citizens to defend**. Containment is not possible when **unbalanced dictators with weapons of mass destruction** can deliver those weapons on missiles or secretly provide them to terrorist allies. We cannot defend America and our friends by **hoping for the best**. We cannot put our faith in **the word of tyrants, who solemnly sign non-proliferation treaties, and then systemically break them**. If we wait for threats to fully materialize, we will have waited too long. (Applause.)” George W. Bush, 1 June 2002, “Commencement Address at the United States Military Academy in West Point, New York,” West Point Military Academy, New York, *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 38(23), pp. 944-948. Note the reasoning gap: while this argument might legitimize a military action against terrorist organizations, it failed to explain the necessity for military actions against nations—which has territories and citizens to defend. But Bush provided an imaginative scenario—or what has been described as ‘worst case scenario’ thinking (Cohn 1987; Kaufmann 2004) in defense establishment—similar to the one invoked by Wolfowitz and Rumsfeld (see Chapter 2): that is, *if* Saddam Hussein is to collaborate with terrorists, in which case evidence may not be obvious or locatable, *then* military retaliation would not be effective. This mode of strategic thinking was used to legitimate the need to invade Iraq, even though concrete evidence of collaboration was lacking.

the possibility that these states sought to develop WMD for the purposes of national defense and international power were excluded, and the legitimacy for such actions was denied.

	Iraq	U.S.S.R.
Character	Evil	Evil
Political Motive	Madness/Insanity	Power Domination
Deterrence/ Containment	Not Plausible	Plausible

Figure 3.2. Structure of Argument Rejecting Deterrence as a Plausible Policy Toward Iraq

A more blunt policy position was articulated by Richard Perle, a renowned pro-war advisor in the Bush Administration.⁹² He argued that Iraq's current possession of WMD and the effectiveness of U.N. inspections were not relevant for determining whether a war was warranted or justified. The excerpted statement from Perle's congressional testimony on 26 September 2002 displays his argument. Even if nothing was found by U.N. inspectors, Iraq still must have possessed the weapons and military action would still be necessary:

Let us suppose that in the end a robust inspection arrangement is put in place after a year or two it has found nothing. Could we conclude from the failure to unearth illegal activity that none existed? Of course not. All we would know is that we had failed to find what we were looking for, not that it was not there to be found. And where would that leave us? Would we be safer—or even more gravely imperiled? There would be a predictable clamor to end the inspection regime and, if they were still in place, to lift the sanctions. Saddam would claim not only that he was in compliance with the U.N. resolutions concerning inspections, but that he had been truthful all along. There are those

⁹² Richard Perle, who played a leadership role in the neoconservative faction of American politics, was appointed by President Bush to be Chairman of the Defense Policy Board, an influential advisory group to the U.S. Department of Defense, from 2001 to 2003.

who would believe him. Given what **we know about Saddam's weaponry, his lies, his concealment**, we would be fools to accept inspections, even an inspection regime far more ambitious than anything the U.N. contemplates, as a substitute for disarmament...⁹³

Perle's argument to set aside inspection regimes in favor of preemptive military action has all the hallmark features of oracular reasoning. He asserts the basic premise of Iraq's WMD stockpile even in the absence of confirming evidence; indeed, he uses the absence of evidence to confirm his underlying premise—rendering his argument incorrigible. His incorrigible proposition was further bolstered by his presumption of the unchangeable character of Saddam Hussein.

III. Fabricating Evidence for Saddam Hussein's Crime

The Bush Administration did not *simply* argue that evil character possessed by Saddam Hussein warranted a need for military action. The Administration made two further specific allegations about the Iraqi government—(1) it possessed WMD and (2) it had collaborative ties with al Qaeda. Much so-called “evidence” was presented to the public at the time, with Secretary of State Colin Powell's presentation on 5 February 2003 to the U.N. Security Council being the culminating event for justifying the War on Iraq. On this occasion, the Bush Administration presented its evidence in the most detailed, coherent, and systematic manner.

The evidence advanced in support of both allegations was highly questionable and strongly questioned. In fact, much evidence was later refuted by the government's

⁹³ Richard Perle, “Statement of Richard Perle, Fellow, American Enterprise Institute, before the House Armed Services Committee, United States House of Representatives,” House Committee on Armed Services, 26 September 2002, <http://www.house.gov/hasc/openingstatementsandpressreleases/107thcongress/02-09-26perle.html> (accessed 11 November 2002).

own reports—the most famous being the uncovering of the falsified document purportedly proving Iraq was buying yellowcake uranium from Niger. Evaluating the problematic use and interpretation of empirical evidence is not the main objective of my investigation; instead, I want to analyze how these allegations are afforded by the War on Terrorism script via the systematic use of tautological and oracular reasoning in the evidencing of claims.

Evidencing the Threat Posed by Iraq’s Possession of WMD

The allegation concerning Hussein’s possession of WMD was a long-standing topic of empirical ambiguity among many experts involved in the international weapons inspection regimes. It was not clear in 2003 whether Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction anytime from the end of the Gulf war in 1991 to then. The discrepancy lay between the number of weapons of mass destruction found by U.N. inspectors in Iraq and the number that the international community estimated that Iraq possessed (see Rangwala, Hurd, and Millar 2003). Former U.N. Chief Inspector Scott Ritter, as well as U.N. Chief Inspector in 2003, Hans Blix, had acknowledged that while it was possible that a large number of WMD remained hidden in Iraq, it was also possible that some WMD had been destroyed by Iraq’s government without documentation.⁹⁴ Concerning nuclear weapons specifically, a report released by the CIA in 2002 stated “...Saddam probably does not yet have nuclear weapons or

⁹⁴ Hans Blix, “Briefing the Security Council, 9 January 2003: Inspections in Iraq and a Further Assessment of Iraq’s Weapons Declarations,” *United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission*, 9 January 2003, http://www.un.org/Depts/unmovic/new/pages/security_council_briefings.asp (accessed 12 September 2004); Scott Ritter, *Frontier Justice: Weapons of Mass Destruction and the Bushwhacking of America* (New York: Context Books, 2003).

sufficient material to make any...,” indicating, at the very least, the U.S. government acknowledged Iraq’s possession of nuclear weapons was extremely ambiguous rather than clear.⁹⁵

The level of threat posed by these potentially existing weapons was equally ambiguous. On the one hand, there were estimates that the majority of such chemical or biological weapons, if existed, would have exceeded their shelf life, their lethality would be drastically reduced, and their further production could be prevented by rigorous international inspections. On the other hand, there were estimates that Iraq *could* possess a “stockpile” of lethal biological weapons, that it was only years away in developing nuclear weapons, and that the regime of U.N. inspections had been ineffective and would continually be ineffective in deterring Iraq in acquiring WMD in the future (Rangwala, Hurd, and Millar 2003). In the face of these empirical ambiguities, the Bush Administration strenuously asserted Saddam Hussein’s possession of WMD and the threat posed by the “unaccounted” amount of WMD.

A tautological explanatory system. The Bush Administration’s use of questionable sources was bolstered by placing this argument within the War on Terrorism script. On multiple occasions, when Bush claimed to present “evidence” for Iraq’s lies and deceptions, he actually invoked the empirical ambiguity around Iraq’s WMD, Saddam Hussein’s historical attempts to acquire WMD, and his history of deceiving inspectors as evidence. Here is a representative quote drawn from Bush’s

⁹⁵ Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), *Iraq’s Weapons of Mass Destruction* (Washington, D.C.: Central Intelligence Agency, October 2002). The full sentence in the document is, “Although Saddam probably does not yet have nuclear weapons or sufficient material to make any, he remains intent on acquiring them.”

speech on 7 February 2003 that asserts the absence of WMD in Iraq as evidence of Saddam's deceitful and evil character:

This is a guy who was asked to declare his weapons, said he didn't have any. This is a person who we have **proven** to the world is **deceiving** everybody—I mean, he's a master at it. He's a **master of deception**. As I said yesterday, he'll probably try it again. He'll probably try to lie his way out of compliance or deceive or put out some false statement. You know, if he wanted to disarm, he would have disarmed. **We know what a disarmed regime looks like**. I heard somebody say the other day, well, how about a beefed up inspection regime. Well, **the role of inspectors is to sit there and verify whether or not he's disarmed, not to play hide-and-seek** in a country the size of California. If Saddam Hussein was interested in peace and interested in complying with the U.N. Security Council resolutions, he would have disarmed. And, yet, for 12 years, plus 90 days, he has tried to avoid disarmament by **lying and deceiving**.⁹⁶

In this statement, Bush did not question how it was possible to “disarm” if the regime did not currently possess the arms. This statement fundamentally assumed that the weapons “unaccounted for” must have existed and Iraq must have knowledge about it, so the absence of them became unambiguous evidence of Iraq's conscious, deceptive behaviors. Powell had made a similar statement on 7 March 2003, immediately after Blix delivered his briefing to the U.N. Security Council:

If Iraq genuinely wanted to disarm, we would not have to be worrying about setting up means of looking for mobile biological units or any units of that kind. **They would be presented to us**. We would not need an extensive program to search and look for underground facilities that we know exist. **The very fact that we must make these requests** seems to me to show that Iraq is still not cooperating.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ George W. Bush, 7 February 2003, “Remarks Prior to the Swearing-In Ceremony for John Snow as Secretary of the Treasury and an Exchange With Reporters,” Outside the Treasury Department, Washington, D.C., *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 39(6), pp. 165-167.

⁹⁷ Colin Powell, “Transcript of Powell's Response to Inspectors' Reports,” *CNN*, 7 March 2003, <http://www.cnn.com/2003/US/03/07/sprtj.iq.un.transcript.powell/index.html> (accessed 31 August 2004).

Reflecting on the Bush Administration's approach to the issue of Iraq's disarmament, Blix stated that "there was a tendency on the U.S. administration to say that anything that was unaccounted for existed" (even though the evidence brought forth to the United Nations "was rapidly falling apart" by March 2003).⁹⁸

This argumentative mode was enabled by taking Hussein's deceptive character as an incorrigible proposition; even if an inspection effort found no WMD in Iraq, this seemingly contradictory evidence would not undo the proposition that the weapons never existed and that Iraq had been honest all along. Instead, such an absence only further affirmed Saddam Hussein's deceptive, evil character. Hence, within this self-justifying explanatory system, the absence of WMD became evidence of Saddam's deceitful character, and Saddam's deceitful character explained the absence of WMD.

Nothing remained ambiguous for long within Bush's and Powell's evidencing system. Saddam's evil character—the very version manufactured by Bush according to the War on Terrorism script—explained every technical ambiguity. This mode of

⁹⁸ Hans Blix, "Transcript of the Interview with IAEA Director General Mohamed Elbaradei and Dr. Hans Blix, Former Head of UNMOVIC," interviewed by Wolf Blitzer in *CNN Late Edition*, International Atomic Energy Agency, 21 March 2004, <http://www.iaea.org/NewsCenter/Transcripts/2004/cnn21032004.html> (accessed 31 August 2004). In this interview, Hans Blix explained retrospectively: "Well, I think it's clear that in March when the invasion took place the evidence that had been brought forward was rapidly falling apart. And we had called attention to a number of points. One was that **there was a tendency on the U.S. administration to say that anything that was unaccounted for existed, whether it was arin, or mustard gas or anthrax**. Another one related to the case that Colin Powell presented to the Security Council about a site in which they held that there had been chemical weapons and that they had seen **decontamination trucks**. Our inspectors had been there and they had taken a lot of samples, and there was no trace of any chemicals or biological things. And the trucks that we had seen were **water trucks**. And, of course, the more spectacular of all was what my friend Mohamed revealed in the Security Council, namely that the alleged contract by Iraq with Niger to import yellow cake, that is uranium oxide, that this was a forgery, and the document had been sitting with the CIA and their U.K. counterparts for a long while, and they had not discovered it. And I think **it took the IAEA a day to discover that it was a forgery**."

argumentation by the Bush Administration reduced complex situations understood fully only by experts into simple facts digestible by the public; it brought the ambiguous Iraq-WMD issues out of the context of expert discourse and placed them into the context of the War on Terrorism script.

Evidencing the Threat of an al Qaeda-Iraq Connection

In addition to portraying Saddam Hussein's regime as an imminent threat because that mad, evil man possessed weapons of mass destruction, the Bush Administration asserted a connection—which was interpreted more specifically as a collaborative relation—between al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein's administration in order to justify an invasion of Iraq. Different from the discourse on Iraq's possession of WMD, which was a long-standing international concern, the discourse on a possible connection between Iraq and al Qaeda did not become prominent until the Bush Administration politicized it in 2002. The allegation of an al Qaeda-Iraq relationship was ambiguous and begged for supporting evidence.

Colin Powell's U.N. presentation on 5 February 2003 was the occasion in which the Bush Administration attempted to lay out the evidence for this connection in the most comprehensive and systematic manner. The main charge in Powell's presentation was that Iraq had collaborated with Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, who was described by Powell as a confederate of bin Laden and al Qaeda:

Iraq today **harbors** a deadly terrorist network headed by Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, an associate and collaborator of Osama bin Laden and his Al Qaida lieutenants. Zarqawi, a Palestinian born in Jordan, fought in the Afghan war more than a decade ago. Returning to Afghanistan in 2000, he oversaw a terrorist training camp. One of his specialties and one of the specialties of the camp is poisons. When our coalition

ousted the Taliban, the Zarqawi [Zarqawi] network helped establish another poison and explosive training center camp. And this camp is located in **northeastern Iraq**. You see a **picture** of this camp...[a satellite photo of a camp followed]⁹⁹

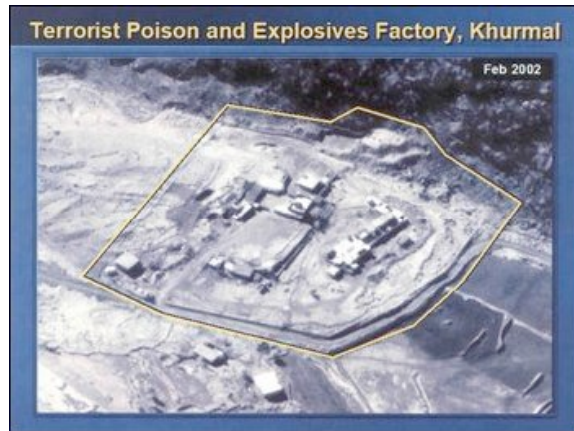


Illustration 3.1. Terrorist Poison and Explosives Factory, Khormal.

While the statement above seemed to suggest that Zarqawi ran a terrorist training camp inside Iraq, the location of the camp was actually in an area outside of Saddam Hussein's control, as Powell shortly acknowledged. However, Powell's argument was that Hussein "has an agent" in the organization who controlled that part of Iraq:

Those helping to run this camp are Zarqawi lieutenants operating in northern Kurdish areas **outside Saddam Hussein's controlled Iraq**. But Baghdad **has an agent** in the most senior levels of the radical organization, Ansar al-Islam, that controls this corner of Iraq. In 2000 this agent offered Al Qaida safe haven in the region.

The validity of Powell's claims has been scrutinized by critics and observers. Some claimed that Zarqawi ran an organization called Tawhid that was separated from al Qaeda; some argued that Ansar al-Islam was a dissident Kurdish Islamic militant group that was opposed to the Iraqi regime, and some asserted that Zarqawi has only

⁹⁹ "U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell Addresses the U.N. Security Council," transcript, *The White House*, 5 February 2003, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/02/20030205-1.html#1> (accessed 3 July 2003).

been a marginal figure in al Qaeda, as shown by the fact that that he did not appear on the FBI's list of 22 most-wanted terrorists.¹⁰⁰ Also, much of the evidence for an Iraq-al Qaeda link provided by Powell was based on defectors' and detainees' accounts, sources that were hardly accepted in the intelligence community as reliable. Again, evaluating whether these claims are potential technical fabrications and fallacies is not my objective; I am demonstrating that Powell often stated events or situations as if they were *self-evident* indicators for a collaborative relationship between Iraq and al Qaeda. Saying that the Iraqi government "has an agent" in a terrorist organization—without mentioning what that agent actually did—is only one example; the following quotes demonstrate that much of Powell's evidence for the Iraq-al Qaeda connection was based on similar supposedly self-evident events:

(1) Zarqawi's activities are not confined to this small corner of north east Iraq. He **traveled to Baghdad** in May 2002 for **medical treatment, staying in the capital of Iraq** for two months while he recuperated to fight for another day.

(2) Last year, two suspected Al Qaida operatives were arrested **crossing from Iraq into Saudi Arabia**. They were linked to associates of the Baghdad cell...

(3) We know members of both organizations [i.e., al Qaeda and Iraq's intelligence service] **met repeatedly and have met at least eight times**

¹⁰⁰ William O. Beeman, "Al Qaeda-Iraq Connection Tenuous at Best," *Pacific News Service*, 6 February 2003, http://news.pacificnews.org/news/view_article.html?article_id=f12575ad6235f37a7d3d2fa8a2aa8207 (accessed 25 November 2008); Julian Borger, Richard Norton-Taylor, and Michael Howard, "Al-Qaida and Iraq: How Strong is the Evidence?" *The Guardian*, 30 January 2003, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,,885032,00.html> (accessed 6 September 2004); Peter Bergen, "This Link between Islamist Zealot and Secular Fascist Just Doesn't Add Up," *The Guardian*, 30 January 2003, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/Iraq/Story/0%2C2763%2C885140%2C00.html> (accessed 6 September 2004); Peter Bergen, "This Terrorist Is Bad Enough on His Own," *New York Times*, 26 June 2004, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/06/26/opinion/26BERG.html?ex=1094616000&en=0e2f4f342f8ed445&ei=5070> (accessed 6 September 2004).

at very senior levels since the early 1990s. In 1996, a foreign security service tells us, that bin Laden **met with** a senior Iraqi intelligence official in Khartoum, and later **met** the director of the Iraqi intelligence service.

This collaborative link is warranted by the War on Terrorism script. Like in the month following 9/11 when Bush used the War on Terrorism script to impose unambiguous, extraordinary meanings on various ambiguous, ordinary events (Chang and Mehan 2006), in a similar manner Powell implicitly deployed the War on Terrorism script to assert a collaborative relationship between Iraq and al Qaeda. When accusing Zarqawi for having received medical treatment and having stayed in Baghdad, Powell curiously did not explicitly state if the events happened with Saddam Hussein's knowledge or support—perhaps because available information did not support such an assertion.¹⁰¹ But even if Zarqawi's medical treatment happened with Hussein's knowledge, the event did not automatically suggest a collaborative relation. From a humanitarian perspective, providing medical treatment could be an act of kindness; but when acts such as these are embedded within the War on Terrorism script they become self-evident, oracular indicators for a cooperative relationship between two evildoers.

¹⁰¹ This information was made available in a news report published in *The Guardian*: "One intelligence source in Washington, who has seen CIA material on the link [between Baghdad and Osama bin Laden], described the case as "soft" and "squishy"... That case relies heavily on a man called Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian member of the al-Qaida leadership who was wounded in the leg in the US-led bombing of Afghanistan. In late 2001, according to US intelligence sources, he sought medical treatment in Iran but was deported and fled to Baghdad, where his leg was amputated. Telephone calls he made to his family in Jordan were intercepted. The question is whether Saddam Hussein's regime knew who he was and whether it offered him any assistance. "Yes, we have him telling his family I'm here in Baghdad in hospital, but he's not saying: 'And by the way, I'm getting all this help from Saddam,'" said a well-informed source in Washington." Julian Borger, Richard Norton-Taylor, and Michael Howard. 2003, "Al-Qaida and Iraq: How Strong is the Evidence?," *The Guardian*, 30 January 2003, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,,885032,00.html> (accessed 6 September 2004)

Like the event of Zarqawi “staying in” Baghdad, the event of (suspected) al Qaeda members “crossing from Iraq into Saudi Arabia” was stated as a self-evident indicator for a collaborative link, when the event actually suggested only that some al Qaeda suspects have been somewhere in Iraq. The arrested al Qaeda suspects could have been crossing national borders for other purposes and were arrested in the process.¹⁰² Powell’s argument gains strength by deriving certain meaning out of ambiguous events embedded in the War on Terrorism script.

Similarly, the events in which Iraqi officials repeatedly met with al Qaeda members were used as self-evident indicators of a collaborative link between the two groups. From a sociopolitical perspective, officials meeting would be put into the context of power relations between institutions, and meanings would be specified from within the actual interactions during those meetings and the artifacts (e.g., contracts) produced by them. Observers who have used such a perspective in analyzing these events have argued that Iraq-al Qaeda relations have been highly ambiguous. They recognize that the Hussein regime and al Qaeda have significant conflicts of interest and competition of values. Any meetings, therefore, were occasions of negotiations

¹⁰² Consider the following information published in *Los Angeles Times*: “In other countries with considerable expertise, investigators said they have come across scattered examples of limited connections: An Iraqi member of Al Qaeda turned up in an Italian case. **There are signs of Al Qaeda suspects moving through Iraq en route to other countries before and after Sept. 11, according to Spanish and French law enforcement. But European investigators said the Al Qaeda presence is stronger in Pakistan, Syria, Yemen and Iran than it is in Iraq.** Since the war in Afghanistan, Iran in particular has become a busy refuge for Bin Laden’s operatives, according to French investigators.” Sebastian Rotella, “Allies Find No Links between Iraq, Al Qaeda,” *Los Angeles Times*, 4 November 2002, <http://www.latimes.com/la-fg-noqaeda4nov04,0,4538810.story> (accessed 31 August 2004).

for power.¹⁰³ By removing Iraq-al Qaeda relations from their sociological, political, and historical contexts and placing them in the War on Terrorism script, however, such meetings unambiguously suggest collaborative relations. The following utterance in Powell's presentation exemplifies this point:

Some believe, **some claim these contacts do not amount much.** They say Saddam Hussein's secular tyranny and Al Qaida's religious tyranny do not mix. I am not comforted by this thought. **Ambition and hatred are enough to bring Iraq and Al Qaida together,** enough so Al Qaida could learn how to build more sophisticated bombs and learn how to forge documents, and enough so that Al Qaida could turn to Iraq for help in acquiring expertise on weapons of mass destruction.¹⁰⁴

Power conflicts and value differences between al Qaeda and Hussein were ignored by Powell; instead, the shared character of the enemy—that is, “ambition and hatred”—was said to be enough of a motivation to transcend their differences and to unite in common endeavors to build bombs, forge documents, and acquire WMD. Powell's presentations show how the War on Terrorism script overpowered a sociopolitical analysis within the Bush Administration.

IV. Integrative Arguments Delivered to the American Public

It is worth noting that Powell's presentation to the U.N. Security Council—while somewhat incoherent—was significantly more systematic and detailed than Bush's presentation during his speeches to the American people from September 2003 to March 2004. Bush's delivery of arguments generally consisted of a listing of many

¹⁰³ For example, see Daniel Benjamin, “Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda are Not Allies,” *The New York Times*, 30 September 2002, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9B04E4D71438F933A0575AC0A9649C8B63> (accessed 25 November 2008).

¹⁰⁴ “U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell Addresses the U.N. Security Council,” transcript, *The White House*, 5 February 2003, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/02/20030205-1.html#1> (accessed 3 July 2003).

allegations with unnamed or unmentioned sources. The following quote succinctly represents how Bush would normally make his case to the American public:

One of the greatest dangers we face is that weapons of mass destruction might be passed to terrorists, who would not hesitate to use those weapons. **Saddam Hussein has longstanding, direct and continuing ties to terrorist networks.** Senior members of Iraqi intelligence and al Qaeda **have met at least eight times** since the early 1990s. Iraq **has sent** bomb-making and document forgery experts to work with al Qaeda. Iraq **has also** provided al Qaeda with chemical and biological weapons training. **We also know** that Iraq **is harboring** a terrorist network, headed by a senior al Qaeda terrorist planner. The network runs a poison and explosive training center in northeast Iraq, and **many of its leaders are known to be in Baghdad.** The head of this network **traveled to Baghdad for medical treatment and stayed for months.** Nearly two dozen associates joined him there and have been **operating in Baghdad** for more than eight months.¹⁰⁵

The above utterance weaved many allegations together. Different from Powell's U.N. presentation, Bush usually did not tell the public the sources of his allegations; he merely mentioned them one after another as if they were a list of known facts. However, the fundamental argumentation techniques were very similar to Powell's; the information provided was in reality based on questionable intelligence information, and many events (e.g., terrorists staying in Baghdad) were treated as solid evidence of Iraq-terrorist ties.

Grammar, Syntax, and the Construction of Political Knowledge

Two other intriguing discourse strategies were prominent in Bush's speeches: (1) the creative organization of the sequences of events, and (2) the creative use of syntax and tenses. These discourse strategies do not simply function to mislead (or

¹⁰⁵ George W. Bush, 6 February 2003, "Remarks on the Iraqi Regime's Noncompliance With United Nations Resolutions 164-165," Roosevelt Room, The White House, *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 39(6), pp. 164-165.

selectively re-interpret) the technical information given to the American people. They also serve the function of constructing a new convention of political reasoning that would advance the Administration's pro-war argument by shifting the kind of evidence required to legitimate military actions against Iraq.

Event-sequencing strategies. In explaining the principle of coherence in discourse, Van Dijk states that the two imaginable facts, two propositions, or two sets of texts, cohere if they are conditionally related—the conditional relations could be an elaborative relation (e.g., statement B is an elaboration of statement A), a general-particular relation, a whole-part relation, a goal-outcome relation, and many others (Van Dijk 1980). Consider the following “story”:

(1) I got a haircut yesterday.

(2) Today my students laughed at me.

Even though these two events can occur separately, when they are uttered together, they create a meaning beyond the sum of the two individual sentences. Furthermore, people listening to these two utterances would most likely assume a causal relationship that says my students laughed at me today *because* of the haircut I received yesterday (cf. Sacks 1974); the two events (and utterances) cohere because readers detect a cause-effect relation.

The manipulation of event sequencing can serve unique functions in political argumentation. Consider the following statement from Bush's speech delivered in Cincinnati, Ohio on 7 October 2002:

Let us first consider the important role of creative organization of sequences of events:

We're concerned that Iraq is exploring ways of using these UAVS for missions targeting the United States. And, of course, sophisticated delivery systems aren't required for a chemical or biological attack; all that might be required are a small container and one terrorist or Iraqi intelligence operative to deliver it. And that is the source of **our urgent concern about Saddam Hussein's links to international terrorist groups. Over the years, Iraq has provided safe haven to terrorists such as Abu Nidal**, whose terror organization carried out more than 90 terrorist attacks in 20 countries that killed or injured nearly 900 people, including 12 Americans. Iraq has also provided safe haven to Abu Abbas, who was responsible for seizing the Achille Lauro and killing an American passenger. And we know that Iraq is continuing to finance terror and gives assistance to groups that use terrorism to undermine Middle East peace. We know that Iraq and the al Qaeda terrorist network share a common enemy—the United States of America. We know that Iraq and al Qaeda have had high-level contacts that go back a decade. Some al Qaeda leaders who fled Afghanistan went to Iraq. These include one very senior al Qaeda leader who received medical treatment in Baghdad this year, and who has been associated with planning for chemical and biological attacks. We've learned that Iraq has trained al Qaeda members in bomb-making and poisons and deadly gases. And we know that after September the 11th, Saddam Hussein's regime gleefully celebrated the terrorist attacks on America.¹⁰⁶

We break down the organization of Bush's argument in Figure 3.3. Bush explained to the American people why there is an urgent concern about Iraq. We want to bring attention to the sudden evocation of events #3 and #6—that is, that Hussein's regime shares a common enemy (the United States) with al Qaeda and it gleefully celebrated 9/11. Except for events #3 and event #6, all other events were allegations of Hussein's links to terrorist groups—not so much different from Powell's presentation to the

¹⁰⁶ George W. Bush, 7 October 2002, "Address to the Nation on Iraq From Cincinnati, Ohio," Cincinnati Museum Center, Union Terminal, Ohio, *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 38(41), pp. 1716-1720.

Claim		Urgent concern about Saddam Hussein's links to terrorist groups.
Evidential Events		Saddam Hussein...
	1	...has provided safe haven to terrorist X and terrorist Y
	2	...has funded and assisted terrorists against peace in the Middle East
	3	...shares a common enemy (i.e., the United States) with al Qaeda
	4	...has allowed or provided (supposed consciously so) medical treatment to terrorists
	5	...has trained al Qaeda members
	6	...gleefully celebrated 9/11

Figure 3.3. Claim and Evidence in President Bush's Argument Concerning Hussein-Terrorist Links

United Nations except for the lack of references to sources. On the surface, these are simply side comments, which add no evidential strength to Bush's argument. But, this kind of argumentative disorganization and incoherence appears throughout Bush's speeches, including supposedly carefully crafted speeches such as the State of the Union addresses of 2002 and 2003. This peculiar, seemingly incoherent sequencing of events actually builds a different kind of coherence—that enabled by the War on Terrorism script.

Applying Van Dijk's framework again, the argument seems incoherent if we regard it as a discussion of a collaborative link between Iraq and terrorist groups. While events numbered 1, 2, 4, and 5 were *specific manifestations* of a collaborative link between Iraq and terrorist groups, events #3 and #6 were not. However, if we imagine the Iraq-terrorists "link" is based upon a religious mode of discourse in the context of the War on Terrorism script, then *all* events—including events #3 and #6—

became *concrete manifestations* of the proposition that Iraq was linked to terrorist groups by their commonality of character—in their acts against civilization and their acts against goodness. Providing safe havens, and supposedly consciously allowing terrorists to receive medical treatment, gleefully celebrating 9/11, and sharing the same enemies are all different parts of the same argument—they are all indicators of the content of the evil character of America enemies. While not every single activity was a violation of international laws or U.N resolutions, and not every activity suggests physical threat, every single one of those activities violated the principles celebrated in the American civil religion.

Furthermore, the meanings of other events were altered because events #3 and #6 were inserted in the narrative. When linked with events #3 and #6, the discussion of the other events (#1, #2, #4, and #5) became more than a list of possible legal violations or assessment of a physical threat; they became part of the discourse about assessing who belongs to which side in the War on Terrorism. Taking this point into consideration, the Bush Administration's participation in the technical discussion of Iraq's WMD capabilities and potential collaborative link with al Qaeda did not necessarily mean a participation of a legal-technical mode of discourse; a highly technical discussion of Iraq's WMD and link with terrorists could only be a part of discussion in the religious mode of discourse.

Syntactic and grammatical strategies. Let us now consider the important role of syntax and tenses in discussing Iraq's disarmament issue. Consider the following seven statements:

- (1) Iraq **has developed** WMD.
- (2) Iraq **possessed** WMD.
- (3) Iraq **possesses** WMD.
- (4) Iraq **is producing** WMD.
- (5) Iraq is developing a WMD **program**.
- (6) Iraq **has** a WMD **program**.
- (7) Iraq **had** a WMD **program**.

In terms of a technical assessment of Iraq's physical threat or a legal assessment of potential legal violations, a difference of a word could make a sea of difference. The prominent concern of the international community after 1991 (the end of the first Gulf War) was the possibility that Iraq still *possesses* or *produces* WMD (statements #3 and #4); such a possibility indicates that Iraq retains the unambiguous ability to cause massive damage to other countries. The meaning of Iraq's ongoing development of a WMD *program* (statements #5 and #6) is more ambiguous. A WMD program could merely be a set of ideas; but without the necessary infrastructure, expertise, raw materials, and technological equipments, pure ideas *per se* could not amount to tangible threats.

The U.N. inspectors who resumed inspection after November 2002 focused on detailed assessment of these two issues—that is, Iraq's possible possession of WMD and the development of an advanced WMD program and capabilities in Iraq. In terms of Iraq's past activities with WMD (statements #1, #2, and #7) these are facts already known to the international community and they were the reasons for the establishment

of the U.N. inspection regime; the facts that Iraq *had* possessed and *had* developed WMD were not evidence for a current, tangible threat to the international community. Therefore, UNMOVIC and IAEA produced statements with precise syntax and verb tense to explain whether they had found any significant WMD, WMD production activities, or any advanced WMD programs. The Bush Administration, by contrast, used syntax and verb tense very unsystematically when assessing Iraq's threat. The Bush Administration often mingled tenses and syntax in the speeches we have reviewed. Consider the following utterance from the 6 March 2003 National Press Conference, shortly before the War on Iraq started:

I believe Saddam Hussein **is** a threat to the American people. I believe **he's** a threat to the neighborhood in which **he lives**. And **I've got a good evidence** to believe that. **He has** weapons of mass destruction, and **he has used** weapons of mass destruction, in his neighborhood and on his own people. **He's invaded countries** in his neighborhood. **He tortures** his own people. **He's** a murderer. He **has trained and financed** al Qaeda-type organizations before, al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations. I take **the threat** seriously, and I'll deal with the threat. I hope it can be done peacefully.¹⁰⁷

The claim and evidence in Bush's arguments in this paragraph is broken down in Figure 3.4. The kinds of events and activities being considered as evidence for Iraq's threat in Bush's speeches are very different from the kinds of events and activities that would indicate Iraq's threat in the U.N. discourse. Except for event #1, all the stated events are irrelevant to the discourse around Saddam Hussein's WMD ownership and technological capabilities in 2003. This is one of the many passages in which Bush invoked Saddam Hussein's *past* use of WMD, *past* invasion of relatively small

¹⁰⁷ George W. Bush, 6 March 2003, "The President's News Conference," The East Room, The White House, *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 39(10), pp. 295-305.

Claim		Saddam Hussein is a threat to the American People.
Evidential Events		Saddam Hussein...
	1	...has WMD.
	2	...has used WMD.
	3	...has invaded other countries.
	4	...tortures people.
	5	...is a murderer.
	6	...has trained terrorists.

Figure 3.4. Claim and Evidence in President Bush's Argument about the Threat of Saddam Hussein

countries, and killing of people in *distant* countries as indicators and evidence of a *current* threat to the American people. Past events and activities—such as the former possession of WMD are not necessarily relevant in a political analysis because past events do not automatically inform the current situation. But Bush's evidential system is enabled by taking these events—i.e., Hussein's past invasion of countries, past use of WMD, and past possession of WMD—out of complicated political historical contexts and placing them exclusively in the religious context of the War on Terrorism script. He is claiming that because Iraq had WMD before, Iraq would use them in the future because Saddam Hussein possesses an evil character; Saddam Hussein's evil character—evident by some past actions of his regime—constitutes the entire *context* of discussion over Iraq's threat to the American people. The possibility that Hussein may not attack the U.S. because of rational self-interest (e.g., fear of retaliation) was not considered.

In sum, what would be a glaring difference of wordings and reasoning in technical and legal discussions have little difference in a religious mode of discourse

in the context of the War on Terrorism script. Such a creative combination of tenses and grammar does not only increase the possibility of confusing the less careful and knowledgeable. As we will see more clearly later, it also allowed the Bush Administration to engage in (or appear to engage in) empirical debates at the United Nations concerning whether the Iraqi regime possessed WMD, while in reality the questions were rather irrelevant to the strength of its current case against Iraq.

V. Legal-Rational Challenges to the War on Terrorism Script

U.N. Discourse on Iraq's WMD

In stark contrast with the the Bush Administration's discourse on Iraq's disarmament which was grounded in the War on Terrorism script, many international leaders and U.N. officials opposed to the impending War on Iraq tried to shift the discourse to a legal-rational mode primarily grounded in the United Nations' charter and procedures. This legal-rational mode of discourse treated Iraq's WMD status as ambiguous. By proposing legal and rational methods of dealing with the concerns revolving around this ambiguity, these leaders suggested more rigorous empirical investigation, urged both sides to follow U.N. bureaucratic and legal procedures, and made resolutions and statements to mediate problematic situations. They designated United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)—headed by Hans Blix and Mohamed El-Baradei respectively—to be the agencies to inspect and evaluate the legal status associated with Iraq's ownership and development of weapons.

The U.N. Security Council passed Resolution 1441 on 8 November 2002, which demanded Iraq to provide “immediate, unimpeded, unconditional, and unrestricted access” for U.N. inspectors to search anywhere and to interview anyone in Iraq. It required Iraq to file a “currently accurate, full, and complete” declaration with regard to its WMD-related activities.¹⁰⁸ Iraq was given a seven-day deadline to accept or reject the Resolution, and Iraq accepted this Resolution on November 13th. The first field mission by U.N. inspectors began on 27 November 2002, and Iraq filed 12,000 pages of documents on December 7th detailing its nuclear, chemical, and biological development activities (see Appendix C).

The United Nations was challenged to verify potentially absent objects, and this responsibility was delegated to the U.N. inspectors. Even though verifying the absence of an object is almost scientifically impossible, U.N. inspectors adopted the strategy of gathering evidence and carrying out empirical investigations until there was enough confidence—presumably among experts—that Iraq did not have WMD capabilities. U.N. inspectors refused to accept Iraq’s argument that the lack of evidence was due to the absence of WMD:

The Declaration [made by Iraq on 7 December 2002] repeats the assertion that there are no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and that there is no more evidence to present. However, in order to **create confidence** that it has no more weapons of mass destruction or proscribed activities relating to such weapons, Iraq must present **credible evidence**. It cannot just maintain that it must be deemed to be without proscribed items so long as there is no evidence to the contrary. **A person accused of the illegal possession of weapons may, indeed,**

¹⁰⁸ *Resolution 1441 (2002)*, document no. S/RES/1441 (2002), United Nations Security Council, *United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission*, 8 November 2002, <http://www.un.org/Depts/unmovic/new/documents/resolutions/s-res-1441.pdf> (accessed 17 September 2004).

be acquitted for lack of evidence, but if a state, which has used such weapons, is to create confidence that it has no longer any prohibited weapons, it will need to present solid evidence or present remaining items for elimination under supervision.

Evidence can be of the most varied kind: budgets, letters of credit, production records, destruction records, transportation notes, or **interviews by knowledgeable persons, who are not subjected to intimidation.** I have not asserted on behalf of UNMOVIC that proscribed items or activities exist in Iraq, but if they do, Iraq should present them and then eliminate them in our presence. There is still time for it. **If evidence is not presented, which gives a high degree of assurance, there is no way the inspectors can close a file by simply invoking a precept that Iraq cannot prove the negative.** In such cases, regrettably, they must conclude, as they have done in the past, that the absence of the particular item is not assured.¹⁰⁹

Even though not explicitly addressed to the United States, U.N. experts also covertly objected the Bush Administration's approval of treating the "unaccounted for" WMD as if they existed. In a briefing to the U.N. Security Council, Blix stated:

One must not jump to the conclusion that they [i.e., the "unaccounted for" numbers of WMD] exist; however, that possibility is also not excluded. If they exist, they should be presented for destruction. If they do not exist, **credible evidence** to that effect should be presented.¹¹⁰

These two quotes illuminate the emphasis on "credible evidence" in decision-making by U.N. inspectors. While the first quote suggested that credible evidence must be presented *by* Iraq regarding the ambiguous situation, U.N. inspectors was in reality constructing "credible evidence" *with* Iraq. In his briefings to the U.N. Security

¹⁰⁹ Hans Blix, "Briefing the Security Council, 9 January 2003: Inspections in Iraq and a Further Assessment of Iraq's Weapons Declarations," *United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission*, 9 January 2003, http://www.un.org/Depts/unmovic/new/pages/security_council_briefings.asp (accessed 12 September 2004).

¹¹⁰ Hans Blix, "Briefing of the Security Council, 14 February 2003: An Update on Inspections," *United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission*, 14 February 2003, http://www.un.org/Depts/unmovic/new/pages/security_council_briefings.asp (accessed 5 January 2005).

Council, Blix proposed actions that could develop the basis of confidence toward the assertion that Iraq did not have WMD. These actions included no-notice inspections, interviews with individuals without Iraq's intimidation, a "prompt access/open doors policy," governmental legislation that prohibited the transport of WMD, and random checks of ground transportation.

U.N. inspectors believed that these continual inspection activities would clarify the ambiguous issue over a period of time, and they called for Iraq and U.N. members to actively participate in this process of evidence-building. Before the U.S.-led military action against Iraq started on 19 March 2003, inspectors were able to carry out these activities without hindrance by the Iraqi government, even though they did meet some obstacles at times. For example, according to Blix's briefings to the Security Council, *some* individuals refused to be interviewed unless Iraqi officials were present or unless the conversations were taped; also, U.N. inspectors at one point faced demonstrations and harassments by some Iraqis, who they suspected were provoked by Iraq's government.

Despite these imperfections, the Iraqi government was impressively compliant compared to their lack of cooperation with U.N. inspectors between 1991 and 1998. Blix reported on 14 February 2003 that the inspection team was able to access the inspection sites without problems, and that they could freely conduct necessary interviews outside of Iraq. When the U.N. inspectors determined Iraq's Al Samoud 2 missiles and some casting chambers—which were included in Iraq's December 7th declaration—to be illegal, Iraq vocally contested the decisions but also allowed U.N.

inspectors to destroy the facilities and weapons.¹¹¹ Iraq also “seem[ed] to have encouraged” individuals to accept interviews according to the terms set by U.N. inspectors, and apparently an increasingly number of individuals were willing to do so, according to Blix’s report on 7 March 2003. This same report explicitly commended the Iraq government’s cooperation; Blix stated that initiatives taken by the Iraqi government “can be seen as ‘active,’ or even ‘proactive.’”¹¹²

Blix also stated that more time would be needed in order to complete the key tasks associated with disarmament and verification; he estimated that “It would not take years, nor weeks, but months” to complete them, given the continued “proactive” stance by the Iraq government. Overall, U.N. inspectors concluded that the inspection regime was a feasible means to resolve the ambiguity surrounding the presence or absence of Iraq’s WMD. Of course, international leaders could have ignored, overlooked, or dismissed the findings of the Blix report, just as many technical reports have been treated, but in that particular occasion most nations’ leading officials—including permanent members who have veto power in the U.N. Security Council—

¹¹¹ Hans Blix, “Briefing of the Security Council, 14 February 2003: An Update on Inspections,” *United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission*, 14 February 2003, http://www.un.org/Depts/unmovic/new/pages/security_council_briefings.asp (accessed 5 January 2005).

¹¹² Hans Blix, “Briefing of the Security Council, 7 March 2003: Oral Introduction of the 12th Quarterly Report of UNMOVIC,” *United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission*, 7 March 2003, http://www.un.org/Depts/unmovic/new/pages/security_council_briefings.asp (accessed 5 January 2005).) Blix stated: “It is obvious that, while the numerous initiatives, which are now taken by the Iraqi side with a view to resolving some long-standing open disarmament issue, can be seen as “active,” or even “proactive,” these initiatives 3-4 months into the new resolution cannot be said to constitute “immediate” cooperation. Nor do they necessarily all areas of relevance. They are nevertheless welcome and UNMOVIC is responding to them in the hope of solving presently unresolved disarmament issues.”

expressively preferred and supported this method over the method of war as proposed by the United States.

U.N. Discourse on U.S. Military Actions

The Bush Administration vehemently lobbied and organized other nations to support and participate in military actions against Iraq. Dissenting nations did not challenge the moral arguments made by the United States warranted by the War on Terrorism script. These nations did not condemn the immorality of the United States' action or challenge the War on Terrorism script by openly questioning the shady history of U.S. foreign policy with Iraq. Historical events that could have been brought up—and have been brought up by scholars and critics include: U.S. past support for Saddam Hussein when he carried out his worst atrocities; U.S. effort to block a U.N. resolution condemning Hussein's use of WMD; U.S. use of the U.N. weapons inspection team to gather Iraq's military intelligence about Saddam Hussein's location; U.S. refusal to lift sanctions on Iraq that continually contributed to avoidable, massive child mortality; and U.S. imposition of “no-fly zones” over two-thirds of Iraq's territory without approval by the U.N. Security Council.¹¹³ These criticisms were avoided; instead, powerful national leaders challenged a possible U.S.-led military action by appealing to the dangerous consequences that would follow if

¹¹³ See Battle (2003); Graham-Brown and Toensing (2003); Klare (2003); Roy (2003); and Wright (2003). See also Noam Chomsky, 2003, “On Iraq,” interview with Noam Chomsky by Michael Albert, *Chomsky.Info* (originally published by *ZNet*), 13 April 2003. <http://www.chomsky.info/interviews/20030413.htm> (accessed 16 November 2008); Alan Simpson and Glen Rangwala, *Counter-Dossier: The Dishonest Case for War on Iraq*, pamphlet of Labour Against the War at UK, *Traprock Peace Center*, 28 January 2003, <http://traprockpeace.org/counter-dossier.html> (accessed 24 November 2004); and Scott Ritter, *Frontier Justice: Weapons of Mass Destruction and the Bushwhacking of America* (New York: Context Books, 2003).

the United States and other countries did not follow U.N. procedures. In doing so, the international community tried to move the discourse from that of war and peace to a legal-rational one based on the institution of the United Nations.

These efforts were exemplified in the statements issued by the major international powers. For example, after a summit in Brussels on 17 February 2003, the European Council, composed of the heads of the European Union (E.U.) governments, issued a statement articulating the E.U. support for continual efforts of inspections monitored by the United Nations; their objective was “the full and effective disarmament [of Iraq] in accordance with the relevant UNSC [i.e., U.N. Security Council] resolutions, in particular resolution 1441.” It explicitly stated “the unity of the international community” was important in dealing with the disarmament issue and “We are committed to the United Nations remaining at the centre of the international order.”¹¹⁴

On 10 March 2003, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan stated strongly in a conference that an invasion of Iraq by the United States without the Security Council approval “would not be in conformity” with the U.N. Charter.¹¹⁵ In the same press

¹¹⁴ “Conclusions of the European Council on Iraq Crisis,” Ref: CL03-055EN, summary statement of European Council’s conclusions on the crisis over Iraq in a meeting in Brussels, *European Union*, 17 February 2003, http://www.europa-eu-un.org/articles/en/article_2047_en.htm.

¹¹⁵ “The Hague, Netherlands, 10 March 2003—Secretary-General’s Press Conference (Unofficial Transcript),” *United Nations*, 10 March 2003, <http://www.un.org/apps/sg/offthecuff.asp?nid=394> (accessed 14 November 2004). In this press conference, Annan expressed this view as he interacted with a reporter:

REPORTER: Mr. Secretary-General, you said that an attack on Iraq without a second Council resolution would not be legitimate. Would you consider it as a breach of the UN Charter?

SECRETARY-GENERAL ANNAN: I think that under today’s world order, the Charter is very clear on circumstances under which force can be used. I think the

conference, Annan attempted to shift the discourse to one based on technical-rational grounds within the United Nations:

Ladies and Gentlemen, the members of the Security Council now face a great choice. If they fail to agree on **a common position**, and action is taken without the **authority of the Security Council**, the legitimacy and support for any such action will be seriously impaired. If, on the other hand, they can **come together**, even at this late hour, to address this threat in a united manner and ensure compliance with their previous resolutions, then the **Council's authority** will be enhanced, and the world will be a safer place.¹¹⁶

On 15 March 2003, about two days before Bush announced the 48-hour ultimatum to Saddam Hussein to leave Iraq, Russia, France, and Germany issued a joint statement, which reflected the same effort of containing the discourse within the United Nations:

France, Russia and Germany, supported by China, have presented proposals with a view to achieving this objective by prioritizing in order of importance the key disarmament tasks and **setting a tighter timetable**. Suggestions have been put forward in the same spirit by other Security Council members. It's on the basis of these efforts that the Security Council's unity can be maintained with due regard for the principles laid down by UNSCR 1441. **A special responsibility falls to every Security Council member to avoid its division at this crucial moment.**¹¹⁷

discussion going on in the Council is to ensure that the Security Council, which is master of its own deliberations, is able to pronounce itself on what happens. **If the US and others were to go outside the Council and take military action it would not be in conformity with the Charter.**

Logistically, violations of U.N. Charter would lead to institutional sanctions only if the U.N. Security Council takes action. Given U.S. veto power in the U.N. Security Council, Annan's statement merely served symbolic purposes and carried no practical sanction authority.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ "Iraq Statement of Russia, Germany and France (Paris, 15 March 2003)," *Embassy of France to the Philippines*, 18 March 2003, http://www.ambafrance-ph.org/newsfromfrance2.php?article_id=429 (accessed 25 November 2008).

None of the major international powers opposing the proposed military action challenged the internal logic of Bush's War on Terrorism script or the moral claims made by the United States, but their practices encapsulated the discourse of war and peace within the mandate of the United Nations. According to this legal-rational mode of discourse, the military action against Iraq by the United States was not mistaken because it inflicted death on innocent populations. Instead, the U.S. was faulted for failing to channel the decision through the United Nations, which was supposed to have the authority to judge any need for military actions.

Representing the United Nations as an International Moral Authority

Many statements opposing the War on Iraq asserted the United Nations as the sole legitimate institutional authority; some of which, however, represented the United Nations not just as a legal-political apparatus but as a moral or sacred institution.

Dominique de Villepin, Minister of Foreign Affairs of France asserted this position on 14 February 2003 in his presentation to the U.N. Security Council:

In this **temple** of the United Nations, we are the **guardians of an ideal**, the **guardians of a conscience**. The onerous responsibility and immense honor we have must lead us to give priority to disarmament in peace.¹¹⁸

On March 7th, he stated again:

As a permanent member of the Security Council, I will say it again: **France will not allow a resolution to pass that authorizes the automatic use of force**. Let us consider the anguish and the waiting of people all around the world, in all our countries, from Cairo to Rio, from Algiers to Pretoria, from Rome to Jakarta. Indeed, the stakes

¹¹⁸ "Situation in Iraq. Iraq/Address by Dominique de Villepin, Minister of Foreign Affairs, at the United Nations Security Council, New York, February 14, 2003," *Embassy of France in the United States*, 14 February 2003, <http://www.info-france-usa.org/news/statmnts/2003/villepin021403.asp> (accessed 31 August 2004).

transcend the case of Iraq alone. Let us look at things lucidly: **We are defining a method to resolve crises. We are choosing to define the world we want our children to live in.** That is true in the case of North Korea, in the case of Southern Asia, where we have not yet found the path toward a lasting resolution of disputes.¹¹⁹

Similarly, Secretary-General Kofi-Annan clearly treated the United Nations as a sacred institution:

War must always be a last resort—arrived at only if and when every reasonable avenue of achieving Iraq’s disarmament by peaceful means has been exhausted. **The United Nations—founded to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war—has a duty to search till the very end of the peaceful resolution of conflicts.**¹²⁰

In sum, some important members of the international community attempted to treat the United Nations as a sacred institution. But in such assertions, the United Nations was not represented as competing or conflicting with the United States over moral values and moral positions, but in terms of a conflict over legal authority for decision-making. Only by ascending to the legal authority of the United Nations could the common moral vision of all good nations—including the United States—be achieved.

The Bush Administration’s Response to International Oppositions

During the period in which the international community stressed the importance of following U.N. procedures, the Bush Administration sought to incorporate the authority of the United Nations within the War on Terrorism script.

The Bush Administration did so by saying Iraq’s violations of U.N. Security Council

¹¹⁹ “Speech by the Foreign Minister before the United Nations Security Council,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, France, 7 March 2003, http://special.diplomatie.fr/article_gb70.html (accessed 31 August 2004).

¹²⁰ “The Hague, Netherlands, 10 March 2003—Secretary-General’s Press Conference (Unofficial Transcript),” *United Nations*, 10 March 2003, <http://www.un.org/apps/sg/offthecuff.asp?nid=394> (accessed 14 November 2004).

Resolutions were not violations of bureaucratic procedures—in which case the U.N. would have imposed sanctions. Instead, they were cited as evidence of the Iraqi regime’s bad character. To maintain the coherence of the War on Terrorism script in the face of international oppositions, Bush represented the international dissenters as congruent with the United States in their moral values (e.g., he reminded his audiences that “The United States helped found the United Nations”¹²¹), but differed in such matters as resolve, effectiveness, capacity, will, backbone, and means:

You clearly named some that—France and Germany expressed their opinions. We have **a disagreement over how best to deal with Saddam Hussein**. I understand that. Having said that, they’re still our friends and we will deal with them as friends. We’ve got **a lot of common interests**. Our transatlantic relationships are very important. While they may **disagree with how** we deal with Saddam Hussein and his weapons of mass destruction, there’s no disagreement when it came time to vote on 1441, at least as far as France was concerned. They joined us. They said Saddam Hussein has one last chance of disarming. If they think more time will cause him to disarm, I disagree with that.¹²²

In the case of Iraq, the Security Council did act, in the early 1990s. Under Resolutions 678 and 687—both still in effect—the United States and our allies are authorized to use force in ridding Iraq of weapons of mass destruction. This is not a question of authority, it is a question of will.... 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.¹²³

¹²¹ George W. Bush, 12 September 2002, “Address to the United Nations General Assembly in New York City,” General Assembly Hall, U.N. Headquarters, New York, *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 38(37), pp. 1529-1533.

¹²² George W. Bush, 6 March 2003, “The President’s News Conference,” The East Room, The White House, *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 39(10), pp. 295-305.

¹²³ George W. Bush, 17 March 2003, “Address to the Nation on Iraq, The Cross Hall, The White House,” *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 39(12), pp. 338-341. Similar statements

This way of representing oppositions served to minimize the contradictions within the War on Terrorism script and maximize the moral legitimacy for a War on Iraq.

International Leaders' Public Reactions on the Day of Invasion

As the U.S.-led coalition forces announced its definite invasion on 19 March 2003, many leaders from both sides of the camps raised their voices. An extensive albeit incomplete compilation of those statements¹²⁴ shows that leaders of coalition countries—most of whom signed on to the coalition in spite of strong domestic oppositions—largely reiterated the Bush Administration's arguments.¹²⁵ Many of

were consistently made at least since September 2002, which indicated a possible future disagreement with the United Nations by the Bush Administration concerning a War on Iraq. For example: "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." George W. Bush, 12 September 2002, "Address to the United Nations General Assembly in New York City," General Assembly Hall, U.N. Headquarters, New York, *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 38(37), pp. 1529-1533. "I went to the United Nations a while ago because I want the United Nations to be effective. It's a different kind of war we face; we face different kind of threats. It makes sense for there to be an international body that has got the **backbone** and the **capacity** to help keep the peace." George W. Bush, 31 October 2002, "Remarks in Aberdeen, South Dakota, Northern State University," *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 38(44), pp. 1893-1898.

¹²⁴ "'Operation Iraqi Freedom': A Compilation of Statements & AMP; Reaction to the Beginning of Military Operations, March 19/23," *The Acronym Institute for Disarmament Diplomacy* (London, UK), n.d.,

<http://www.acronym.org.uk/docs/0303/doc.23.htm> (accessed 21 June 2008).

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* The compilation included excerpted or full statements of the following leaders or offices of coalition countries: Prime Minister of Britain Tony Blair, Prime Minister of Australia John Howard, Prime Minister of Albania Fatos Nano, the Government of the Czech Republic, Prime Minister of Denmark Anders Fogh Rasmussen, the Government of Estonia, Foreign Minister of Italy Franco Frattini, Prime Minister of Japan Junichiro Koizumi, National Security Adviser of South Korea Ra Jong-yil, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia, Foreign Ministry of Lithuania, Prime Minister of the Netherlands Jan Peter Balkenende, Spokesperson of the Nicaragua Government Joel Gutierrez, President of Poland Aleksander Kwasniewski, Foreign Ministry of Slovakia, Prime Minister of Spain José María Aznar, and President of Turkey Ahmet Necdet Sezer.

them supported the general effort to eliminate the dual threat of terrorism and WMD proliferation, inferring that Iraq was a threat to international security. Among the most oft-cited reasons was Iraq's violation of U.N. resolutions and defiant attitudes toward the United Nations Security Council as the reason for the need of invasion. No leaders seemed to be denouncing the United Nations' moral authority or directly doubting the effectiveness of the U.N. inspection process, however. The leaders of Latvia, Estonia, and Britain actually explicated the central role of United Nations in post-war construction and rebuilding.

Leaders who expressed skepticism or objection toward the invasion¹²⁶ did so to varying degrees of severity and force. The milder critics expressed regret toward the failure to resolve the Iraq issue within the framework of the United Nations and the humanitarian costs the military campaign would engender. A number of leaders went farther in commenting on some long-term concerns arise from the coalition's invasion. Leaders of Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon expressed concern about regional stability, with Lebanon President Emile Lahoud stating "We see this aggression today plunging the world into a tunnel where one cannot see the end." A number of criticisms,

¹²⁶ Ibid. The compilation included excerpted or full statements of the following leaders or offices of dissenting countries: Foreign Minister of Austria Benita Ferrero-Waldner, President of Argentina Eduardo Duhalde, Prime Minister of Belgium Guy Verhofstadt, the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina, President of Brazil Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, Prime Minister of Canada Jean Chrétien, U.N. Ambassador of Chile Gabriel Valdes, Foreign Ministry of China, President of Croatia Stipe Mesic, President of Egypt Hosni Mubarak, President of France Jacques Chirac, the Chancellor of Germany Gerhard Schröder, Foreign Ministry of India, President of Indonesia Megawati Soekarnoputri, President of Iran Mohammad Khatami, Information Minister of Jordan Mohamad Adwan, President of Lebanon Emile Lahoud, Prime Minister of Malaysia Mahatir Mohamad, President of Mexico Vincente Fox, Prime Minister of New Zealand Helen Clark, Foreign Minister of Pakistan Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, President of Russia Vladimir Putin, Foreign Ministry of Saudi Arabia, Deputy Foreign Minister of South Africa Aziz Pahad, the Government of Sweden, and the Government of Syria.

however, reflect the sense that the invasion had significant meaning toward a new state of international norm, authority, and order. First and foremost is the general concern that the fact that U.N. authority has been undermined, which might influence its ability in dealing with a host of war and peace issues.¹²⁷ Some leaders—notable examples being the leaders of Brazil, Croatia, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Iran—warned of the potential emergence of a new model or norm of international relations that questions of right or wrong are determined by power—or, specifically, U.S. power.¹²⁸ Russian President Vladimir Putin made a strong gesture; he remarked that the action created a “threat of the disintegration of the established system of international security” and went on to say:

¹²⁷ Ibid. For example:

FOREIGN MINISTRY OF SOUTH AFRICA: [The war] sets a **regrettable precedence** which **undermines the authority of the UN** in dealing global affairs.

FOREIGN MINISTER OF SWEDEN ANNA LINDH: The haste to take a decision on military action ruined the chance for a peaceful solution, it **weakened the UN and thereby a stable world order**.

FOREIGN MINISTRY OF INDIA: It is a matter of grave concern that continuing differences within the Security Council prevented a harmonization of the positions of its members, resulting in **seriously impairing the authority of the UN system**. The military action begun today thus lacks justification.

¹²⁸ Ibid. For example:

PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA MAHATHIR MOHAMAD: Maybe after the attacks on Iraq, their **next target** will be Iran and other nations like Sudan and Libya. These countries have been accused of being ruled with an iron fist, and the US has claimed that they want to liberate the people. ... The superpowers—including the US, Britain and Spain—have **such low morals** to the extent that they are supporting assassination as a weapon of national policy. This is scary as **we do not know who is going to be the next victim**. ... We do not believe that by killing others we can settle any dispute.

PRESIDENT OF CROATIA STIPE MESIC: We cannot accept the establishment of a **model of behaviour in international relations** which would allow, to put it simply, those that **possess force**...to take military action against the regime of any country. For if we accept that in the case of one country, with what **moral right** could we turn it down in the case of another? And...**who will be next?**

If we allow international law to be replaced by “**the law of the fist**” whereby the strong is always right and has the right to do anything and in choosing methods to achieve his goals is not constrained by anything, then one of the basic principles of international law will be put into question, and that is the principle of immutable sovereignty of a state. And then no one, not a single country in the world will feel secure.

In sum, the final determination by the United States to attack Iraq created a momentary breach of the norm shared among world nations, which were critical to the maintenance of international social order.

VI. Summary

The Bush Administration’s use of the War on Terrorism script was even more fanciful in legitimizing the War on Iraq. The religious mode of representation did not only help the Bush Administration paint the United States as good and Saddam Hussein as evil, but it also established the belief that the Hussein regime possessed weapons of mass destruction and had collaborative relationships with al Qaeda. Unlike the buildup of the War on Afghanistan, during which oppositional voices from major players in the discourse convention were minimal, the War on Iraq met a high level of international opposition. It was a particular achievement that while international power players rigorously interrogated the empirical evidence presented by the Bush Administration to substantiate the claims concerning Iraq’s WMD, the Bush Administration successfully used a religious mode of representation to withstand those interrogations in the eyes of the American public.

The War on Terrorism script instituted a system of reasoning, a way of interpreting certain phenomena, and a way of establishing the contexts in which

certain issues appeared. We have demonstrated that the War on Terrorism script was used by the Bush Administration to assess Iraq's threat, to calculate the risk of military actions, to reject a deterrence policy, and to argue for Iraq's possession of WMD and ties with terrorists. Such uses of the War on Terrorism script intersected with normal, commonplace discourse in political and media settings, thus illustrating the fact that a religious mode of representation could operate within seemingly legal and rational modes of discourse. Such uses also reinforced the idea we stated at the beginning of the paper that wartime propagandas could go beyond repeated utterance and amplifications of information. The construction and application of the War on Terrorism script involved the reciprocal process of relating empirical events to various propositions as well as evidencing propositions with empirical events, and through this reciprocal process an elaborate body of knowledge is instituted among the American public.

The interactions between the United States and the United Nations illuminated the negotiations of power and meanings involved in the politics of representation, as well as the kinds of issues considered and not considered in the political discourse. International leaders who opposed military actions as a means to solve Iraq's disarmament problem used the United Nations as a site to contest the U.S. actions. Through the use of the United Nations, these leaders tried to contain the problem arising from Iraqi's potential possession of WMD strictly within a legal-rational mode of discourse; they largely delegated the task of disarmament to U.N. inspectors and the authority for military actions to U.N. Security Council. Empirical findings by U.N.

inspectors were collected, interpreted, and presented publicly, but different conclusions were drawn from them by the majority of the U.N. members and the United States. While inspectors and most members of the U.N. Security Council saw the inspection process as a successful mechanism to disarm Iraq and resolve the ambiguity surrounding Iraq's WMD, the Bush Administration, which constructed evidence and drew conclusions based on the War on Terrorism script, argued that the threat was imminent and ever-increasing.

In part, disagreements over these contrasting conclusions lie on the different emphases on character versus empirical matters in the construction of threat, which are related to the modes of representation being deployed. Whereas the legal-rational mode of representation favored by U.N. inspectors' and international leaders placed the importance of empirical evidence over character, the Bush Administration emphasized the importance of character over empirical matters. According to the U.N. inspectors' arguments, seconded by most U.N. Security Council members, Saddam Hussein could be as evil and WMD-hungry as possible, but so long as facilities were not built, necessary technologies were not attained, and relevant materials to build WMD were not acquired, Hussein's regime could not possibly pose a grave international threat. According to the Bush Administration's argument, the United Nations could try as hard as they could to deter and contain Saddam Hussein, but his evilness and deceptiveness would enable him to eventually transcend any material, earthly barriers imposed by the United Nations—regardless of inspections, monitoring teams, or resolutions.

In the final analysis, the “good vs. evil” plot was not disrupted during the argument between the United States and the United Nations. The United States’ historical violations of international laws and historical support of terrorists and brutal dictators (see Johnson 2000; Boggs 2003) were not mentioned by international dissenters. Iraq’s involvement with WMD was placed either in the context provided in the War on Terrorism script (which suggested that its possession was due to evil intent and its past uses were due to evilness) or in the context provided in the U.N. legal-rational mode of discourse, which exclusively discussed legal violations and empirical investigations and did not challenge the U.S.’ simplistic claims. Reciprocally, the character of prominent international dissenters from France, Germany, Russia, and the United Nations was not openly questioned by the United States—only their “resolve” was. In fact, while conflicts did occur between the United States and several powerful dissenting nations (namely, France, Germany, Russia, and China), leaders from the two opposing sides repeatedly affirmed each other’s friendship and acknowledged each other’s good intention and good nature. These patterns of interaction assured the relationships between the United States and dissenting nations remained largely positive, which left the War on Terrorism script largely intact and unchallenged.

VII. Acknowledgement

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CHAPTER 4: DEMOCRATIC AND REPUBLICAN PARTY POLITICIANS’ REPRESENTATIONS OF THE ABU GHRAIB PRISONER ABUSE SCANDAL

War is a human institution typically characterized by extreme conflicts between one society and another. As a result, the soldier of a society is often endowed with the sacred status of being the delegated defender of a moral institution as well as the delegated executor of moral duties (Marvin and Ingle 1999). The popular representations of soldiers during wartime as unambiguously heroic, moral, or even superhuman are contradicted by the conception that soldiers are fundamentally humans with moral, organizational, and psychological fragilities. Military boot camps, at least in the United States, are set up to erase soldiers’ sense of individuality, to the extent that they must—without the slightest hesitation—kill fellow humans in a face-to-face combat situation upon commands (Grossman 1995). Once entered a battlefield—particularly with the presence of hostile enemies—soldiers experience enormous stress, which is sometimes manifested in the forms of uncontrollable physiological responses (e.g., vomiting, headaches, heart-pounding); prolonged deployment further soldiers’ combat effectiveness and ‘psychiatric fitness’ for war (Watson 1980). Soldiers who have experienced military training and actual combat often return home with grave needs of self-rebuilding and group re-inclusion; the pervasiveness of suicide and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among U.S. veterans confirms the human quality of U.S. soldiers (Grossman 1995). Soldiers are also incredibly capable of committing inhuman atrocities; such atrocities have much to do with subtle group dynamics and processes, ‘psychic numbing’ (or psychological

desensitization) caused by repeated aberrant situations, absolute dehumanized representation of enemies; experience of having nearly absolute power over another human in face-to-face situations, and loops of internal and collective justification (cf. Falk, Kolko, and Lifton 1971: 419-468; Watson 1980; Bostock 2002; Milillo 2006).

Since the U.S. War on Terrorism initiated in 2001, U.S. soldiers have taken up such a cultural role as the defender against secretive, barbaric, ruthless, cunning, immoral, and evil enemies. The Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse scandal that broke out in April 2004 shocked many Americans when graphic images and specific details of prisoner abuse committed by U.S. soldiers in Iraq were exposed in the mass media. This chapter aimed to review how the Bush Administration official and Republican officials discussed and debated this topic with its political opponents from the Democratic Party.¹²⁹ The analysis demonstrates that much of the information flowing from the case was immediately absorbed into the War on Terrorism script in these mass media debates; the debates reveal the extent to which U.S. soldiers were taken for granted as an ideal, abstract people pursuing goals of the American civil religion.

I. Outbreak of the Abu Ghraib Scandal on CBS 60 Minutes II

On 28 April 2004, CBS *60 Minutes II* hosted by Dan Rather aired an interview with Brigadier General Mark Kimmit and other military officials. The program showed photos of Iraqi prisoners in various conditions (see Appendix E). The first photo was a hooded person standing on top of a rectangular object and wearing a black

¹²⁹ This chapter mainly analyzes how Democratic and Republican political officials made sense of the shocking events in public political discourse when it initially broke out. By examining the transcripts of 20 television shows (including *MSNBC Meet the Press*, *CBS Face the Nation*, *CNN Larry King Live*, and *CNN Late Edition with Wolf Blitzer*) and other secondary sources.

robe; his hands, which seemed to be attached with wires, spread out in a position that resembles a scarecrow or a crucifixion. Rather described:

Americans did this to an Iraqi prisoner. According to the US Army, the man was told to stand on a box with his head covered with wires attached to his hands. He was told that if he fell off the box, he would be electrocuted. It was this picture and dozens of others that prompted an investigation by the US Army.

Thirteen more photos were shown throughout the program. Most of them contained nude Iraqi prisoners placed in various positions, such as piling up on top of each other or standing by the wall, and with two U.S. soldiers—one male and one female—smiling and posing to those photos. Between comments made by Brigadier General Kimmit and telephone conversations with military officials and reservists, Rather mentioned accounts of Abu Ghraib detainees being intimidated by dogs, badly beaten, instructed to strike each other, and even raped by a prison staff (a staff translator).¹³⁰ U.S. soldiers were reportedly observing and taking photographs of some of those abuse activities. According to Army Reserve Staff Sergeant Chip Frederick who was being charged with court-martial, officials from military intelligence and CIA, FBI, and other government agencies regularly visited the Abu Ghraib prison, and he was

¹³⁰ Details of these allegations, as well as some unmentioned by Rather, are contained in an investigative report conducted by Major General Antonio Taguba and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) report. The Taguba report, dated 1 April 2004, was made publicly available in early May 2004. The ICRC, dated February 2004, was leaked to the *Wall Street Journal* on 7 May 2004. For a concise review, see Zimbardo (2007a). For original documents, see *Report of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on the Treatment by the Coalition Forces of Prisoners of War and Other Protected Persons by the Geneva Conventions in Iraq During Arrest, Internment and Interrogation* (Geneva, Switzerland: International Committee of the Red Cross, February 2004), *The Guardian*, 11 May 2004, <http://image.guardian.co.uk/sys-files/Guardian/documents/2004/05/11/ICRCreport.pdf> (accessed 23 October 2004); and *Article 15-6 Investigation of the 800th Military Police Brigade*, an internal army report conducted by Major General Antonio M. Taguba and submitted on 26 February 2004, *CBS*, <http://www.cbs.news.com/htdocs/pdf/tagubareport.pdf> (accessed 21 September 2004).

assisting the interrogators. Rather quoted from Frederick's letters and email messages at home, which stated:

Military Intelligence has encouraged and told us 'Great job.' They usually don't allow others to watch them interrogate, but since they like the way I run the prison, they've made an exception. We help getting them to talk with the way we handle them. We've had **a very high rate with our style getting them to break**. They usually end up breaking within hours.

This statement suggests that the abuse were indirectly supported and encouraged by higher ranking military officials. And if Frederick's account is true, then it seemed to squarely contradict the image of U.S. military as liberators of Iraq in the War on Terrorism; journalists, including Dan Rather in *60 Minutes II*, explicitly addressed such a tension. The following exchange in at the end of the *60 Minutes II* program was a prelude of some discourse strategies deployed by the U.S. officials in response to the Abu Ghraib events.

HOST: General, what is the most important thing for the American people—and for that matter, any people who see these pictures and absorb these terrible facts—in your judgment, what's the important thing for us to know about this?

BRIGADIER GENERAL KIMMIT: I think two things. Number one, this is a **small minority of the military**. And number two, they need to understand that **this is not the Army**. The Army is a value—values-based organization. We **live by our values**, some of our soldiers every day **die by our values**. And these acts that you see in these pictures may **reflect the actions of individuals**, but by God, it **doesn't reflect the Army**.

Kimmit presented a theoretical account of the events differing from Frederick's. Just like the meanings of the 9/11 events were initially ambiguous, the meanings of the Abu Ghraib events were also initially ambiguous. Even though the photos revealed

some rather shocking behaviors, the *meanings* of those acts hardly depend just on the photos themselves. Burke's pentad model of dramatism (see Chapter 2) is a useful technique to highlight Frederick's and Kimmit's theories of motive attributed to a particular *act* by relating it to setting in which the act occur (*scene*), the character of the actor (*agent*), the means by which the act is done (*agency*), and the situated intention of the actor (*purpose*) (See Figure 4.1).

Rejecting Frederick's accounts of the events that suggested the acts were commonplace practices generally supported by institutional authority toward the purpose of softening prisoners for interrogation,¹³¹ Kimmit stressed that—even before investigation efforts were completed—the abusive acts shown in the photos were not widespread. Such abusive behaviors were the *acts* of setting back America and dishonoring the U.S. Army; they took place in the *scenes* of Abu Ghraib prisons and were largely limited to them; the acting *agents* were “individuals”—not the U.S. Army as an institution and not America as a nation. The *purpose* of their actions was rather unclear, but whether the abusers were unknowingly follow orders from superiors or to help gather military intelligence, the means they undertook were illegal, reprehensible, abhorrent, and un-American (*agency*). Kimmit rejected the theory that the legal system and military policy supported the acts, although he admitted that a contributing factor—but by no means the main factor—might lie in “leadership, supervision, setting standards.”¹³²

¹³¹ This argument was used in Fredrick's own court cases as well as several other soldiers charged with court-martial (Zimbardo 2007a).

¹³² Consider the following excerpt:

	Staff Sergeant Chip Frederick's Email/Letter	Brigadier General Mark Kimmit
Act (what?)	Assisting the Interrogators ("Good Job")	Dishonoring U.S. Army
Scene (when & where?)	Abu Ghraib Facility	Abu Ghraib facility
Agent (who?)	Facility Staff ("We")	Small number of individuals within the military
Agency (how?)	"The way we handle them"	Violate values of the Army
Purpose (why?)	Getting prisoners to break before interrogation began	Unknown

Figure 4.1. Theoretical Accounts of the Abu Ghraib Events by Army Reserve Staff Sergeant Ivan "Chip" Frederick and Brigadier General Mark Kimmit

Under Kimmit's system of representation, the War on Terrorism script was not contradicted by the Abu Ghraib scandal. Nothing in the photos suggested that America's character was immoral or that the effects of the War on Iraq was negative to the Iraqis. The Bush Administration largely adopted an elaborate version of this system of representation of the Abu Ghraib events in the media, providing spicy metaphors, descriptions, and details. In doing do, they encouraged the public to view

HOST: (Voiceover) We asked General Mark Kimmitt about **understaffing**. For those people, and there are bound to be some, who extrapolate from this and conclude that at least part of it results from the Army being stretched too thin and asked to do too much, your response to them would be what?]

GENERAL KIMMITT: That doesn't condone individual acts of **criminal behavior**. No matter how **tired** we are, no matter how **overworked** we are, no matter how **stretched** we are, that doesn't give us **license**, and it doesn't give us the authority to break the **law**. That may have been a **contributing factor**, but at the end of the day, this is probably more about **leadership, supervision, setting standards, abiding by the Army values and understanding what's right and having the guts to say what's right**.

It is interesting to compare this account with Zimbardo's argument (2007a), which sees that the situation of understaffing along with other situational conditions—such as unclear rules, death of comrades, psychological anxiety and pressure, instituted sleeplessness and boredom—could cause normal, 'good' people to do evil things.

the U.S. Army as initiator of condemnation and as leading prosecutors of unjust events; U.S. responses served as ‘evidences’ that only reinforced premises in the War on Terrorism script.

Additional Representational Spaces of the Abu Ghraib Events

Additional explanations beside Frederick’s and Kimmit’s were also proffered in the public domain. And, depending on the contexts elicited by the speakers, the meanings of the events varied dramatically. For example, Syrian Minister for Expatriate Affairs Buthayna Sha’ban portrayed the prisoner abuse as a “war crime” caused by “American administration’s supercilious view of the Arabs and Muslims” in the larger scene of “the racist campaign against Islam and the Muslims in Europe”¹³³; Saudi Arabia’s Arab News embedded the events in the larger scene of “systematic human rights violations taking place on a daily basis [in Iraq conducted by U.S. military], represented by arrests, storming of houses, imprisonment without trial and torture in prisons.”¹³⁴

Conservative TV host Rush Limbaugh related the behaviors to “boys and girls blowing off steam during a stressful situation,” proclaiming that soldiers under fire everyday were searching for emotional release and were “having a good time”: “This is no different than what happens at the Skull and Bones initiation.”¹³⁵ Also attending

¹³³ The statement is made on 10 May 2004 in *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* (London). See “Reaction and Counter-Reaction to the Abu-Ghraib Abuses in the Arab Media,” Special Dispatch Series-No. 718, *The Middle East Media Research Institute*, 20 May 2004, http://www.memri.org/bin/latestnews.cgi?ID=SD71804#_ednref3 (accessed 3 September 2008.)

¹³⁴ “Arab Media Anger at Prison Scandal.” *BBC*, 6 May 2004, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3689129.stm (accessed 2 September 2008).

¹³⁵ Dick Meyer, “Rush: MPs Just ‘Blowing Off Steam,’” *CBS*, 6 May 2004, <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2004/05/06/opinion/meyer/main616021.shtml> (accessed 2

to situational factors, psychologist Philip Zimbardo related the graphic scene of abuse to the scene of college students participated in the Stanford Prison Experiment in 1971. Zimbardo highlighted how an environment of “diffusion of responsibility, anonymity, dehumanization, peers who model harmful behavior, bystanders who do not intervene, and a setting of power differentials” could make “normal” young people undertake the most egregious acts; the additional environmental factors of secrecy, lack of accountability, confusing authority structure, conflicting institutional demands, suggestive comments by interrogators in Abu Ghraib prison further fueled the deviant human propensities.¹³⁶

Finally, some writers saw that the scene of graphic abuse was reflective of U.S. culture. For example, Susan Sontag stated that “it’s likely that quite a large number of Americans would rather think that it is all right to torture and humiliate other human beings—who, as our putative or suspected enemies, have forfeited all their rights....”¹³⁷ Two writers suggested the image exemplified an extreme version of the

September 2008). Skull and Bones is popularly known as a secret society at Yale University; its initiation rites allegedly include bizarre sexual and Satan-worshipping activities.

¹³⁶ Philip G. Zimbardo, “Power Turns Good Soldiers into ‘Bad Apples,’” *The Boston Globe*, 9 May 2004,

http://www.boston.com/news/globe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2004/05/09/power_turns_good_soldiers_into_bad_apples/ (accessed 3 September 2008).

¹³⁷ Susan Sontag, “What Have We Done?” *Common Dreams* (originally published in the *Guardian*), 24 May 2004, <http://www.commondreams.org/views04/0524-09.htm> (accessed 1 September 2008.). As an aside, Senator Joseph Lieberman made a similar point in a TV interview: “And I want to go back to the first part. Let us acknowledge that **we’re in a war on terrorism**. It’s a different kind of war. If there was a special interrogation unit that really was focused on suspected terrorists, and, for instance, we had such a unit before September 11th, and it could have gotten information out of those terrorists or others working with them that would have allowed us to stop September 11th, **I don’t think there are many Americans who would say we shouldn’t use whatever means are necessary to extract that information.**” “CNN Late Edition with Wolf Blitzer: Interview with Seymour Hersh,” *CNN*, 16 May 2004, <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/040516/le.00.html> (accessed 7 September 2008).

scene of U.S. prisons, where sadistic practices were prevalent and ill treatment was systematic.¹³⁸ Reflecting on CIA's engagement in torture application and research in the U.S. and abroad, historian Alfred McCoy argued that the Abu Ghraib photographs were "snapshots of...CIA torture techniques that have metastasized over the past 50 years like an undetected cancer inside the US intelligence community."¹³⁹

These writers and speakers presented dramatically different theoretical accounts of the Abu Ghraib events based on different existing cultural knowledge; the meanings of the photographs vary according to the contexts (or the *scene*) in which they are viewed in discourse, promoting markedly different implications of actions. The discourse of Republican and Democratic politicians in TV media debates, however, did not reflect this tremendous spectrum of understanding of the photographs. Almost all Democratic party members publicly presented themselves as agents of the American civil religion and most of them approved of Bush's justifications for the War on Iraq and War on Terrorism. At a time when premises of American goodness was brought into question internationally and even domestically, Democratic party members did not challenge the moral character of the U.S. military or of the Bush Administration. Instead, representations by the Bush Administration,

¹³⁸ Matthew Briggs, "From Abu Ghraib to Your Local Prison: Phony Stories, Real War." *Common Dreams*, 20 May 2004, <http://www.commondreams.org/views04/0520-06.htm> (accessed 1 September 2008) Tony Norman, "The Seeds of Abu Ghraib were Sown in American Prisons," *Common Dreams* (originally published in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*), 7 May 2004, <http://www.commondreams.org/views04/0507-07.htm> (accessed 1 September 2008)

¹³⁹ Alfred W. McCoy, "Torture at Abu Ghraib Followed CIA's Manual," *Common Dreams* (originally published in *The Boston Globe*), 14 May 2004, <http://www.commondreams.org/views04/0514-05.htm> (accessed 1 September 2008); Alfred W. McCoy, "The Hidden History of CIA Torture: America's Road to Abu Ghraib," *Common Dreams* (originally published in *TomDispatch.com*), 9 September 2004, www.commondreams.org/views04/0909-16.htm (accessed 1 September 2008).

Republican politicians, and Democratic party members demonstrated a remarkable unity in the belief in the American civil religion, and visible political criticisms were waged within the epistemic parameters of the War on Terrorism script as proposed by the Bush Administration.

II. Representation by President Bush and Secretary Rumsfeld

Basic Theoretical Accounts

The following two exchanges between Bush and the reporters showed the Administration's accounts of the Abu Ghraib scandal and the U.S. response.

(1) REPORTER: What is your reaction to photos of U.S. soldiers abusing Iraqi prisoners? How are you going to win their hearts and minds with these sorts of tactics?

PRESIDENT BUSH: Yes, I shared a **deep disgust** that those prisoners were treated the way they were treated. Their treatment does not reflect **the nature of the American people. That's not the way we do things in America.** And so I—I didn't like it one bit. But I also want to remind people that **those few people who did that do not reflect the nature of the men and women we've sent overseas.** That's not the way the people are, that's **not their character, that are serving our nation in the cause of freedom.** And there will be an **investigation.** I think—they'll be taken care of.¹⁴⁰

(2) REPORTER: Mr. President, thank you for agreeing to do this interview with us. Evidence of torture of Iraqi prisoners by U.S. personnel has left many Iraqis and people in the Middle East and the Arab world with the impression that the United States is no better than Saddam Hussein regime. Especially when this alleged torture took place in the **Abu Ghraib** Prison, a symbol of torture of—

PRESIDENT BUSH: Yes.

¹⁴⁰ George W. Bush, 30 April 2004, "The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Paul Martin of Canada," The Rose Garden, White House, *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 40(18), pp. 708-710.

REPORTER: What can the U.S. do, or what can you do to get out of this?

PRESIDENT BUSH: First, people in Iraq must understand that I view **those practices as abhorrent**. They must also understand that what **took place in that prison does not represent America** that I know. The America I know is a **compassionate country** that believes in freedom. The America I know cares about every individual. The America I know has sent troops into Iraq to promote freedom—**good, honorable citizens** that are helping the Iraqis every day. It's also important for the people of Iraq to know that in a democracy, everything is not perfect, that **mistakes are made. But in a democracy, as well, those mistakes will be investigated and people will be brought to justice. We're an open society. We're a society that is willing to investigate, fully investigate in this case, what took place in that prison. That stands in stark contrast to life under Saddam Hussein. His trained torturers were never brought to justice under his regime. There were no investigations about mistreatment of people. There will be investigations. People will be brought to justice.**¹⁴¹

Figure 4.2 below breaks down Bush's theoretical accounts using Burke's dramatic pentad:

	Abu Ghraib Events	U.S. Response
Act	Abhorrent	Individually disgusted; collective rigorous investigative efforts
Scene	Abu Ghraib facility	American democratic society
Agents	Few individuals	Individuals and collective
Agency	Mistakes	Legal
Purpose	To be investigated	Compassion to serve justice

Figure 4.2. President Bush's Theoretical Accounts of the Abu Ghraib Events and U.S. Responses

The abusive *acts* in the photos were characterized as “abhorrent,” disgusting, and unrepresentative of America; the *scene* where the acts occurred was restricted to

¹⁴¹ George W. Bush, 5 May 2004, “Interview With Alhurra Television,” Interview taped at The Map Room, The White House for later broadcast, *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 40(19), pp. 786-789.

the site of the Abu Ghraib prison; the *agents* were a “few people” who do not “reflect the nature of the American people”; the *agency* was “mistakes” and imperfection within democracy; the *purpose* of those acts was not explained and it was a topic to be investigated.

Concomitantly, Bush put forth a theory of U.S. response to the Abu Ghraib events. At the individual level, the *acts* enacted by Americans were the automated feelings of appall of disgust; at the systemic level, the United States responded by pursuing immediate full investigations to those events. These activities took place in the *scene* of American democracy society, which implies a larger setting of the War on Terrorism given the contrast Bush made with Saddam Hussein’s regime. The *agents* of these activities were Americans as individuals and as members of a nation. The *agency* was legal, investigative, and prosecution mechanisms designed to find truth and justice. The *purpose* to conduct extensive investigations was simply the American compassion to serve justice and democracy.

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, who was under heavy scrutiny in the aftermath of the scandal, articulated a very similar system of representation of U.S. responses. He sometimes excused himself from speculating on the specifics of the Abu Ghraib incidents, eliciting legal reasons.¹⁴² But he did extensively commented on

¹⁴² For example, when asked by TV host Diane Sawyer whether the soldiers were ordered to do what they did, Rumsfeld responded: “I think that one has to recognize that I’m in a position where I am in the chain of command and there is a rule against command influence because it’s possible that one of the individuals engaged in those abuses could allege that if I said something that I had created a situation where he could not get a fair trial, so the people in the chain of command in the Army and through Central Command **have to be quite careful about coming to any conclusions as to what took place...**” “Secretary Rumsfeld on ABC’s Today Show with Diane Sawyer,” news

U.S. responses. Consider Rumsfeld's own public reaction to the event in a television interview with Diane Sawyer at *ABC*.¹⁴³

Oh, **my goodness**. **Anyone, any American** who sees the photographs that we've seen **has to feel apologetic** to the Iraqi people who were abused and recognize that that is something that is **unacceptable** and certainly **un-American**.

The dramatic expression of repulsion ("Oh, my goodness") and leap of judgment ("Anyone, any American who sees the photographs") correspond with the account of U.S. responses formulated by Bush. The feeling of apology in this public performance did not stem from Rumsfeld as an individual or as a Secretary of Defense; the *agent* conducting the *act* (feeling apologetic) was a member of the American nation.

Demarcating unknowns and knowns. The theoretical accounts formulated by Bush and supported by Rumsfeld demarcated a set of known and unknown information relevant to interpreting the situation. Instituting these epistemic instructions (or 'rules') is an important part in legitimating the U.S. military and the American civil religion.

First and foremost, the unknown matter to be investigated, according to Bush's and Rumsfeld's (as well as Rather's and Kimmit's) rhetoric, had significance beyond the technical domain. The investigation was inspired by a discerned contradiction between cultural expectations (theory) about America and the actual occurrence being displayed (data). The line of reasoning is: if the universality and constancy of American character is a given truth, then the acts of Abu Ghraib events would be

transcript, *United States Department of Defense*, 5 May 2004, <http://www.dod.mil/transcripts/2004/tr20040505-secdef0703.html> (accessed 21 September 2004).

¹⁴³ Ibid.

unbelievable—the acts “should not have happened.”¹⁴⁴ However, the acts did happen, and this situation created a puzzle to be solved. In other words, demarcating this matter to be unknown involves an implicit assertion; the contradiction can be seen only if one takes for granted the proposition that ‘America is good.’ If one takes an opposite or neutral view about America’s goodness, then the Abu Ghraib events would not necessarily be perceived as a cultural contradiction—events like Abu Ghraib may even be expected to happen.

Technically speaking, the perpetrators’ motive (*purpose*) was also demarcated as an unknown issue, so as the exact number of individuals involved. This assertion precluded others to speculate on these issues until investigations are completed. While the unknown status of these issues may appear to be a blatant and natural fact, we can see they are products of active representation if we recall how individuals like Rush Limbaugh and Philip Zimbardo drew upon cultural knowledge base to explain the perpetrators’ motives—or, if we recall how the Bush Administration took assumptive leaps of the perpetrators’ motives of the 9/11 attacks, the Taliban regime’s regime motive to harm the United States, and Saddam Hussein’s motive to collaborate with terrorists.

¹⁴⁴ As Rumsfeld expressed in the interview: “Well, it becomes **a fact of life**. It happened. It was a **terrible thing that had happened and it should not have happened**. On the other hand, the **United States is a wonderful country** and it’s **filled with fine honorable people who don’t do things like that**. **And we have armed forces that are filled with honorable people who don’t do things like that**. And what we have here, **I believe**—I hope and pray—is **an exceptional case that should not have happened**. It did happen and it’s regrettable that it happened. But people make their judgments about our country, I think, based on a whole range of things and not simply a terrible situation like this” (ibid.).

In light of these unknowns, there are also some known information that was publicly applied by Bush and Rumsfeld to interpret the situation, some of which were created through expressions and statements. These known facts include: (1) Americans are disgusted and are interested in justice; (2) most U.S. soldiers were doing a good job; (3) the values uphold by U.S. military is honorable; (4) a U.S. soldier caused the scandal to break out; (5) General Antonio Taguba headed an investigation to the matter; and (6) investigation and prosecution mechanisms are in place to ensure justice.¹⁴⁵

Some of these known facts are afforded by the War on Terrorism script and the American civil religion more generally, and some of these facts could be manufactured by government leaders instantaneously. For example, America's disgust and taste for justice were personally expressed by the President and Rumsfeld and asserted to be general properties of Americans; their very public reactions and

¹⁴⁵ The following two quotes by Rumsfeld in the same interview add to the corpus of texts we have reviewed.

(1) Well, it seems to me that the chain of command is the chain of command. And **what we have to do is to—we've got now six investigations under way to determine what took place.** There **certainly is no excuse** for anyone in the armed forces to behave the way these photographs indicate **some individuals** behaved. **We also know** that the **1.4 million men and women in uniform on active duty and the terrific guard and reserve forces are filled with fine, talented, honorable people who don't do that type of thing.** No human being, **regardless of what their training** or anything else, would engage in those kind of acts in a normal, acceptable way. It's **unacceptable.**

(2) It appears that at that prison for a period of time until reported by **the soldier who went into the chain of command and reported it**—and I should add that this was announced by the Central Command on January 16th, a day or two after they—I believe January 16th—a day or two after they received notification from this soldier that something was going on there. The **investigation was initiated** immediately. And **the system works. The system stopped those abuses** months ago and properly so.

discursive commitment reinforced their assertions. The message ‘U.S. soldiers doing a good job’ was declared bluntly, confidently, and sometimes dramatically (e.g., the “99.9%” figure provided by Kimmit)—which showed that the knowledgeable spokespersons had such a firm belief in that very assertion, and they could further evidence their assertion by referring to facts about Saddam Hussein’s evil character and U.S. role as liberators (see Chapter 5). The ethical values of U.S. military could be readily and unambiguously located in the textual doctrines of the institution and codes of ethics—instead of actual acts and behaviors of people in the institutions, which are difficult to document and ambiguous in nature.

A low-level military police officer, Joseph Darby, indeed blew the whistle by turning over a CD containing the images finally publicized in *60 Minutes II*. But linguistic representation mattered in constructing this fact as an evidence for argumentative claims. Darby was not depicted as a troublemaker, a traitor, or an absolute minority. Instead, he was depicted as a member representative of the cultural values of the Army; awarding him with honor and recognition in turn proves the institution recognition of the acceptability of his behavior. An internal investigation, led by General Antonio Taguba, also followed Darby’s reporting; Taguba’s investigation affirmed the existence of “incidents of sadistic, blatant, and wanton criminal abuses” at the prison. Again, Taguba’s investigation was not publicly represented as exceptional or disruptive; this investigation was cited by Rumsfeld as an indication that the system was working in “properly” curbing the abuses. These public *knowledges* about Darby and Taguba could well be challenged in retrospect

based merely on what the two figures actually experienced as a result of their actions;¹⁴⁶ but, they were easily produced in discourse and were instrumental in weaving together a theoretical account used by Bush and Rumsfeld to interpret the grotesque abuses shown in the photos.

Many of the “evidences” being used by Bush and Rumsfeld in their theories were intensely subjective and personal. Statements like “I shared a deep disgust” with the abused prisoners and “any American who sees the photographs that we’ve seen has to feel apologetic to the Iraqi people” were statements of subjective thoughts and feelings. These thoughts and feelings supposedly resonate with the thoughts and feelings of the American public. Because one could not get into Bush’s and Rumsfeld’s—or “any” American’s—head to know what their real thoughts and

¹⁴⁶ Darby, who blew the whistle, was warmly by some soldiers in the military, but he was also hostilely received in his home town in Maryland, labeled as a “traitor” and having his house vandalized. See Dawn Bryan, “Abu Ghraib Whistleblower’s Ordeal,” *BBC*, 5 August 2007, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6930197.stm (13 September 2008); and “Exposing The Truth Of Abu Ghraib,” *CBS*, 24 June 2007, <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2006/12/07/60minutes/printable2238188.shtml> (13 September 2008).) Taguba was reassigned to the Pentagon shortly after the media exposure of the incidents. Interviewed on the record three years later, he said that he was instructed to investigate only the military police at Abu Ghraib, instead of higher up in the chain of command. He was alienated by colleagues at the Department of Defense after assigned to the Pentagon and pressured to retire without clear explanations. Seymour M. Hersh, “The General’s Report: How Antonio Taguba, Who Investigated the Abu Ghraib Scandal, Became One of Its Casualties,” *The New Yorker*, 25 June 2007, http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2007/06/25/070625fa_fact_hersh?printable=true (accessed 13 September 2008); David S. Cloud, “General Says Prison Inquiry Led to His Forced Retirement,” *New York Times*, 17 June 2007, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/17/washington/17ghraib.html?_r=2&adxnml=1&oref=slogin&adxnmlx=1182227000-QD8wb5V9sN7d39ENIzejhw&oref=slogin (accessed 13 September 2008). Furthermore, the abuses might have stopped in Abu Ghraib but serious human rights violations seem to have continued on in Guantanamo Bay and offshore detention facilities. See *Breaking Them Down: Systematic use of Psychological Torture by U.S. Force* (Cambridge, MA: Physicians for Human Rights, May 2005), <http://physiciansforhumanrights.org/library/report-2005-may.html> (accessed 30 August 2008). See also Zimbardo (2007a, 2007b).

feelings were, the validity of the facts in these statements largely depended on the levels of trust, skepticism, and resonance of the audience toward the political actors.

U.S. responses as secondary elaboration. Because the cultural beliefs associated with the American civil religion were challenged by images, secondary elaborations is important in maintaining the integrity of the cultural belief system. Bush's and Rumsfeld's representation of U.S. responses to the Abu Ghraib events—particularly its commitment to investigation and prosecution—functioned as “secondary elaboration” for the defense of the American civil religion.

Consider the following excerpt of Rumsfeld's opening statement at a congressional hearing on 7 May 2004, a widely reported hearing which addressed the prisoner abuse scandal:

However terrible the setback, this is also an occasion to **demonstrate to the world the difference between those who believe in democracy and in human rights, and those who believe in rule by terrorist code. We value human life. We believe in individual freedom and in the rule of law. For those beliefs, we send men and women of the armed forces abroad to protect that right for our own people and to give others who aren't Americans the hope of a future of freedom.** Part of that mission, part of what we believe in, is making sure that when wrongdoings or scandal do occur, that they're **not covered up**, but they're **exposed**, they're **investigated**, and the guilty are **brought to justice**. Mr. Chairman, I know you join me today in saying to the world, judge us by our actions, **watch how Americans, watch how a democracy deals with the wrongdoing and with scandal and the pain of acknowledging and correcting our own mistakes and our own weaknesses.** And then, after they have seen America in action, then ask **those who teach resentment and hatred** of America if our behavior doesn't give a lie to the falsehood and the slander they speak about our people and about our way of life. Ask them if the resolve of Americans in crisis and difficulty, and, **yes, in the heartbreak of acknowledging the evil in our midst**, doesn't have meaning far beyond their hatred. Above all, ask them if the **willingness of Americans to acknowledge their own failures before**

humanity doesn't light the world as surely as the great ideas and beliefs that made this nation a beacon of hope and liberty for all who strive to be free... We say to the world, we will strive to do our best, as imperfect as it may be.¹⁴⁷

Like Bush's statement we have seen, in this statement American investigation was as an evidence to prove its moral superiority over the evil terrorists "to the world." The investigations proved that "those who believe in democracy and in human rights" (*agents*) uncover, expose, investigate, and bring the guilty party to justice (*acts*) in the *scene* of the War on Terrorism. It also proved that Americans had a functioning legal system (*agency*), a character to "strive to do our best" amidst imperfection, and "willingness of Americans to acknowledge their own failures before humanity" (*purpose*). In sum, interpreting the image of prisoner abuse in light of the image of U.S. responses, the scandal actually affirmed, if not proved, American moral superiority and exceptionalism.

There is also a double-edge quality in eliciting "investigations" as positive proof of morality. When questioned by Congresswoman Ellen Tauscher (D-California) in the 7 May 2004 hearing whether early internal reports about prisoner abuses were taken seriously, Rumsfeld responded:

...Of course they're [the reports were] taken seriously. They're taken seriously. **There are 18,000 criminal investigations opened a year in the Department of Defense. You would not open them if you did not take them seriously.** They are the responsibility of the commands.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ "Rumsfeld Testifies Before Armed Services Committee," *The Washington Post*, 7 May 2004, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A8575-2004May7.html> (accessed 28 November 2004).

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

Taking the discussion out of the context of immediate discussion, Rumsfeld's words show the potential problem of using "investigation" as proof of moral exceptionalism. The official reasoning goes: if the U.S. military (or the Bush Administration) indeed is not a democracy- or justice- loving country, then it could not be so interested in conducting so many investigations toward the prospect of prosecution. The very ways U.S. responded to the events therefore proved the democratic, compassionate, and just character that America possesses *all along*, and the act of correcting mistakes evidenced that the U.S. was indeed spreading freedom, justice, and democracy in Iraq. However, if there were 18,000 criminal investigations open every year, this fact also indicated an alarming degree of moral corruption in the U.S. military, which questioned the good and exceptional nature of U.S. soldiers and military officials claimed by Bush and Rumsfeld in other statements. That the investigations were only cited as proof for America's goodness and seriousness to pursue justice in Rumsfeld discourse was not necessarily wrong or fallacious; it did, however, indicate blindness to alternative interpretation outside of the War on Terrorism script. Under this representational scheme, the scores of criminal investigations in the military singularly served as a secondary elaboration of the proposition that 'America is good'—not a fact challenging this proposition.

The War on Terrorism Script Parameters

The system of representation put forth by Bush and Rumsfeld followed what can be called the "War on Terrorism script parameters." Bush and Rumsfeld's explanation of the Abu Ghraib events was not robust or complete; some ambiguity

remained in their theoretical accounts. However, as we have seen, the War on Terrorism script profoundly established certainties and uncertainties of the situation. On one hand, taking premises of the War on Terrorism script for granted have afforded many of Bush's and Rumsfeld's interpretations. At the same time, these premises also restricted the room for potential interpretation in subtle ways.

For example, if it was absolutely certain that most American soldiers had "fine" and "honorable" characters as the War on Terrorism script suggests, then the quantity of *agents* could not be too high, and, according to the standard of U.S. military, their quality could not be heroic, honorable, or standard. Likewise, the *scene* of the abuse was unlikely to be widespread beyond the site of the abuse, and certainly could not be indicative of a grotesque institutional life or a perverted public culture in America. The *agency* could not be on deliberately approved or authorized by the American public; whoever created the institutional conditions of the abuse—even the President or the Secretary of Defense—must have committed an error or mistake of some kind.

It is the imaginative space about plausible knowns and unknowns afforded by the War on Terrorism script that formed a set of epistemic "parameters." Politicians from both parties speculated about and took positions on some specific issues, but these speculations and mutual contestations fell within discernable interpretive limits. The following sections describe how their interpretive and representational practices followed and constituted a set of parameters in discourse.

III. Representation by Republicans

Reinforcing the War on Terrorism Script Parameters

In varying degrees, every Republican representative showing up on TV programs reinforced Bush and Rumsfeld's versions of representation surrounding the Abu Ghraib events and U.S. response. By providing more elaborate articulations and vivid descriptions, they solidified the versions of theories put forth by Bush and Rumsfeld. Four central points were being reinforced:

- (1) Most U.S. military soldiers sent to Iraq were fine and honorable individuals and were not associated with the *act en mass*;
- (2) The *purpose* and motivation behind the *acts*—while remaining ambiguous—were unacceptable and were against American cultural upbringing;
- (3) The *agency* or instruments that gave rise to the acts were ambiguous and were to be rigorously investigated;
- (4) Investigation and legal procedures were mechanisms that symbolize democracy, justice, and freedom; they were mechanisms to deal with lasting ambiguities.

For example, the Chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee John Warner (R-Virginia) stated in one of the TV interview opportunities:

SENATOR WARNER: Well, clearly, these men [i.e., detainees in Abu Ghraib] were held for reasons. They [i.e., the soldiers] had reason to believe that their participation, either on the field of battle or elsewhere, was **against the goals of the coalition forces to bring freedom to Iraq.** But I want to commend the president of the United States, **President Bush. He was the first to step in and apologize.** And each

one of our witnesses [for the Armed Services Committee hearing] today offered the **same apology and total condemnation** of the breakdown of discipline, the non-professional behavior, and the obtaining—if they did obtain, we are not sure of that—**obtaining of information and in fact by means of cruelty that just is not a part of our military history.**

HOST: But do you think it was in response to some kind of encouragement, **some kind of policy** that was higher up than this one MP unit?

SENATOR WARNER: Well, **there we don't have solid facts.** I've always been of the opinion that **our young men and women**, when they leave the towns and villages of this nation, going through the arduous training to become soldiers, sailors or airmen, marines, they're the **finest** that we have. And **they want to go abroad in the cause of freedom** and fight, if necessary, or do their duties and respond to the orders of their superiors, whether that superior be a sergeant or a lieutenant or up the line. **And I can't imagine that all these individuals, collectively put together, got into this unit and suddenly began to do things which are contrary to what they were taught at home as young people and taught in their schools.** If not, someone hadn't instructed them to, in some way, deviate.¹⁴⁹

This quote presents an example of how Bush's and Rumsfeld's theories were solidified. Warner reiterated that the *agency* and *purpose* behind the perpetrators of the *acts* in Abu Ghraib prison were ambiguous—saying that there were “no solid facts.” However, he also solidified the parameters suggested by the War on Terrorism script by stating that the *agents* who committed the *acts* were very few of all military members—elsewhere in his interview he described that “99.9 percent” of the soldiers were courageous and good.¹⁵⁰ The basis for this claim was rooted in the content of the

¹⁴⁹ “Rumsfeld Called to Account,” *Online NewsHour with Jim Lehrer, PBS*, 7 May 2004, http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/military/jan-june04/hearing_5-7.html (accessed 21 September 2004).

¹⁵⁰ SENATOR WARNER: “I’m talking about **99.9 percent** of the men and women of the armed forces who are valiantly and courageously carrying out their missions throughout the world and here at home” (ibid.).

American civil religion and the War on Terrorism script. In the above quote, Warner stated his opinion that the young men and women in the U.S. military wanted to forward “the cause of freedom,” and they are inclined to do so partly because of “what they were taught at home as young people and taught in their schools.” Warner invoked the popular notion—a notion parallel to that of the American civil religion—that homes and schools in America teach values and practices promoting the cause of freedom. This understanding led to his theory that the abusive behavior only constituted 0.1 percent (100 minus 99.9 percent) of all soldiers, because most American soldiers had good characters. In addition, like the Bush/Rumsfeld theory, Warner’s theory rejected the claim that the U.S. military was the *agency* responsible for the events. This point is evident in his argument that “the obtaining of information and in fact by means of cruelty that just is not a part of our [i.e., America’s] military history,” and in his opinion the “arduous training” received by military members successfully push young men and women to become “the finest.” In other words, Warner suggested that military training and military history of the United States were against cruel practices.

Many other Republicans also represented the U.S. soldiers’ characters as collectively good and honorable. These theoretical accounts involve firm assumptions about the pervasive righteousness of typical Americans and the U.S. military.¹⁵¹

¹⁵¹ For example:

(1) REPRESENTATIVE HUNTER: And I have seen that same Army lady now over and over and over again in those pictures. **And the American people need to remember just two numbers, Joe. One is 135,000, because that’s the number of soldiers who are in that theater doing a great job. And the other is six, because it’s precisely six so far who have been charged under Article**

Theory One: Technical, Systemic Failure to Blame

One significant difference I find among the Republicans were those who insisted that only a few people committed the crimes and those who acknowledged that there were broader “system failure” and problems. The following quotes by Senator Lindsey Graham (R-South Carolina) are illustrative of those who acknowledged that there were failure in the “system”:

(1) I think that’s probably the core issue here is we just don’t want a bunch of privates and sergeants to be the **scapegoats** here. And I don’t want any political person to be the **scapegoat**. I think we are dealing with **system failures**. When you say this is a few bad apples, in terms of the values that we represent, these are a few bad apples. In terms of

32 of the UCMJ for criminal activity. *Scarborough Country, MSNBC*, 11 May 2004, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/4961237> (accessed 3 December 2004).

(2) SENATOR GRAHAM: That’s a great question. I want to know who they talked to, what their concerns were, why—who they talked to inside the Pentagon. The good news is that military lawyers take their job seriously. So I want to find out as much as anybody. But **the group beyond the Congress that wants to get to the bottom of this are the men and women in the military**, like professional JAGs, **because what happened in that prison is a stain on their honor.** (*Face the Nation, CBS*, 16 May 2004, http://www.cbsnews.com/htdocs/pdf/face_051604.pdf (accessed 21 September 2004).)

(3) SECRETARY POWELL: Americans are outraged at what they saw. And what I was saying to them, both as a soldier and as a diplomat, this is not the kind of behavior that we will tolerate; and it is **not typical of the behavior of the tens upon tens of thousands of American soldiers** who have served over many years, **bringing peace to places and helping people set up democracies; and it is not typical of the tens upon tens of thousands of American soldiers who are in Iraq now, not doing things of the kind you saw at Abu Ghraib, but quite the contrary, helping the Iraqi people rebuild their sanitation system, rebuild schools and hospitals, helping them get on a path to democracy, helping them create a society that they will be proud of, that the world will be proud of....And let’s give credit to those wonderful young men who are serving their nation so proudly in Iraq and who are serving the Iraqi people so proudly: our troops.** “Interview on ABC’s This Week with George Stephanopoulos: Secretary Colin L. Powell,” broadcasted on *ABC News, U.S. Department of State*, 16 May 2004, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/32506.htm> (accessed 28 November 2004).

the million—thousands of people serving in Iraq, these are a few bad apples. But I think it’s clear to me that we had **system failure**....¹⁵²

(2) One thing I found from these photos, Bob, this is not hazing, these are felony-type offenses. The abuse is real, it’s serious, and the idea that a few rogue MPs directed all this, I think, is gonna be **disproved by the photographs**. ‘Cause when you look at these photographs, you see **military intelligence analysts**, maybe interrogators, present at the abuse situations, and it’s—present during the abuse sessions. So I’ve never believed this was just a few rogue MPs, **but I’m not willing to indict everybody in the system until I have more evidence**.¹⁵³

Graham clearly acknowledged the presence of “system failure” in the U.S. military; in doing so, she tacitly noted that U.S. military system might serve as an *agency* for the Abu Ghraib events. However, the deployment of the “system failure” metaphor was consistent with the meanings suggested by the War on Terrorism script. The script suggested that Abu Ghraib events happened probably because an otherwise good system failed; if the system had not failed, then Abu Ghraib events would not happen. Also, the metaphor is primarily associated with technical failures rather than moral failures. We can see this point clearly in the following quote:

SENATOR GRAHAM: And what will we learn from this prison abuse scandal? Number one, we **didn’t have enough people in place**, they were **poorly trained** and it just failed. **That prison failed**. We need to get to the bottom of it to make sure we don’t let a military unit ever get out of that cont—ou—so out of control again, and we show the world that we’re different, that we lead by example, that we walk the walk, **we’re the good guys**.¹⁵⁴

Graham specified some of the system failures as staff shortage (“didn’t have enough people in place”) and lack of training (people were “poorly trained”); the statement

¹⁵² *Meet the Press*, NBC, 9 May 2004, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/4938258/> (accessed 21 September 2004).

¹⁵³ *Face the Nation*, CBS, 16 May 2004, http://www.cbsnews.com/htdocs/pdf/face_051604.pdf (accessed 21 September 2004).

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

implied technical failure and not other types of problems (e.g., moral behavior of the leadership). As demonstrated in the analysis of the War on Iraq discourse, the role of technical and rational effectiveness did not play a significant role in nullifying the War on Terrorism script. The Bush Administration, for example, represented strong opposition from U.N. members as a disagreement over the effective means of solving the problem of terror, rather than those who challenged the moral legitimacy of the United States.

Furthermore, the nature of technical failure was not fully addressed or specifically identified, as evident by Graham's emphasis that "we need to get to the bottom of it." In other words, while a large part of the failure may have resided in military personnel relatively high in the chain of command, many questions remained ambiguous and were subjects of detailed—and presumably tedious—investigations.

The quote below exemplifies this point:

SENATOR SAXBYCHAMBLISS (R-Georgia): Well, certainly it's possible that could have happened, but we do know, as Joe has indicated, in looking at these pictures, as we did this week, that **there were some military intelligence officers who—military intelligence personnel who were present. Did they influence, and how much did they influence them? I don't know. We don't have the answer to that question. We're going to continue until we find it. But the fact of the matter is that we've got a long ways to go, from the standpoint of investigating and determining just how far up it goes. Where was the sergeant? Where was the first lieutenant?** If those folks didn't know what was going on, then there's a total **failure in the system**, exactly as General Taguba says, and we've simply got to find out **how far up it went.**¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵ *CNN Late Edition with Wolf Blitzer, CNN*, 16 May 2004, <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/040516/le.00.html> (accessed 3 December 2004).

Again, the questions being raised are technical ones—Where was the sergeant? To what degree did military intelligence personnel influence these acts? How far up the chain of command? These questions were not being answered either. But two things were clear: (1) these are questions that the public could not answer; only investigative committees could; and (2) in order to find out answers and facts, there is indeed “a long [way] to go.”

Theory Two: A Few Bad Soldiers To Blame

Some Republican party politicians strongly rejected the explanation that the U.S. military system might be an *agency* contributing to the abusive acts in Abu Ghraib. Consider the following two exchanges:

HOST: But you’re a military man. Do you believe that national reservists would go to Baghdad with hoods or dog leashes and actually undertake that kind of activity without it being devised by someone higher up?

SECRETARY POWELL: **I wouldn’t have believed that any American soldiers would have done any such thing, either on their own volition or even if someone higher up had told them. I’m not aware of anybody higher up telling them.** But that’s why **Secretary Rumsfeld has commissioned all of these inquiries to get to the bottom of it.** What these **individuals** did was wrong, was **against rules and regulations.** It was **against anything they should have learned in their home, in their community, in their upbringing.**¹⁵⁶

Powell denied the theory that there were instructions from higher up contributed to the events. The basis for his belief was partly personal observation (“I’m not aware of anybody higher up telling them”). However, he also made an implicit point that the characters of the American soldiers should have been strong enough and good enough

¹⁵⁶ *Meet the Press, NBC*, 16 May 2004, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/4992558> (accessed 28 November 2004).

to resist command from higher-up—this argument resonates with the War on Terrorism script that places good or evil characters at the center of human actions. When faced with the fact that some American soldiers did commit the abusive acts in Abu Ghraib—a fact that seemed to challenge his argument—Powell accepted the situation as an ambiguity and reverted to investigations as a solution. The following statement by another Republican member shows a similar point:

HOST: Do you think that those people, who have been all pointed to in these pictures, the people from Cumberland, Maryland, do you think that they thought up these methods like banding these guys together in bundles and all these things we are watching in these pictures? Do you think they imagined that kind of misuse of the prisoners, or that reflects what they were guided to do as part of the softening up process for the interrogators?

SENATOR JOHN CORNYN (R-Texas): **I don't think this reflects policy. I think it reflects a lack of training, a lack of discipline, a lack of immediate leadership** in directing these people how to do their job. This was a **handful** of American troops **run amok** and **not acting pursuant to any policy** that we heard about.

HOST: So you believe it was their own imaginations that led them to embarrass these people in this fashion?

SENATOR JOHN CORNYN: **So far.** Of course, what we are concerned about, all concerned about, is additional pictures, photographs, and information that may come out. But so far, it **looks like they were acting on their own.**¹⁵⁷

Cornyn referred the “lack of training” and “lack of discipline” and “lack of immediate leadership” as conditions that contributed to the abusive acts. Thus, Cornyn did acknowledge some technical deficiencies in the military system as possible *agency*. However, Cornyn’s theory emphasized the perpetrators’ own decisions and

¹⁵⁷ *Hardball with Chris Matthews, NBC*, 7 May 2004, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/4945190/> (accessed 4 December 2004).

misbehavior (“acting on their own” and “run amok”) as the primary agency for the Abu Ghraib events. The military system and military policy as a whole was an *agency* to prevent the abusive acts in Abu Ghraib; the Abu Ghraib events occurred because individual soldiers broke them.

Investigations as Secondary Elaborations in the War on Terror Context

While Republican party politicians expressed differing opinions concerning the potential involvement and responsibility of senior military officials, they all supported investigations and legal proceedings as mechanisms to resolve the problems. In fact, concurring with Bush’s and Rumsfeld’s representatives, some Republican political actors represented investigations and prosecution as acts endowed with extraordinary meanings. Legal and rational mechanisms were presented as ideal for treating the remaining ambiguities.

(1) SECRETARY POWELL: **What the soldiers did was unacceptable. Why they did it** will be the source of **investigations** and some of them are **being court-martialed** now. In my conversations with my European friends or other friends around the world, what I say to them is that we are devastated by what we saw at **Abu Ghraib** but now watch what **a democracy** does when it has a problem like this, how we use **our laws to get to the bottom of this**, how we have a **free media**, how we have a **Congress** that is providing oversight to make sure that those responsible are **brought to justice and held accountable**.¹⁵⁸

(2) HOST: Senator McCain, you’re a military man, highly decorated. Do you think it’s plausible that National Guardsmen and Reservists would undertake this kind of activity without being instructed?

SENATOR MCCAIN (R-Arizona): **I don’t think so**. I think that there’s real questions about **this “shift in responsibility” where**

¹⁵⁸ *Face the Nation, CBS*, 27 June 2004, http://www.cbsnews.com/htdocs/pdf/face_062704.pdf (accessed 2 October 2004).

military intelligence people were given authority over the Guards. There are so many questions that need to be answered. And I agree with Joe in this respect. We need to take this as far up as it goes and we need to do it quickly and I am convinced that the sooner we do that, the sooner the United States of America can begin to reassert its rightful place in the world as a leading advocate for democracy and human rights.¹⁵⁹

Powell referred to the empirical ambiguity around the *purpose* (“why they did it”) of the Abu Ghraib perpetrators; McCain referred to the empirical ambiguity surrounding the involvement of the military intelligence people in the Abu Ghraib acts (i.e., the *agents* and *agency* behind the actions). Despite their differences regarding their speculations of the role of military intelligence officials in the Abu Ghraib events, both Powell and McCain supported the investigation and prosecution as the means to deal with ambiguities, and both of them endowed the processes with extraordinary meanings. In Powell’s account, investigations were not represented as ordinary, bureaucratic works; rather, they were “democracy” at work. Powell cited the American legal (“our laws”), political (U.S. Congress), and media (“free media”) systems as valid mechanisms to ensure justice. McCain, not falling short of loftiness in his theory, stated that the sooner investigations and prosecutions were done, the sooner USA “can begin to reassert its rightful place in the world as a leading advocate for democracy and human rights.” In poetic ways, both of them represented investigations and prosecutions as symbolic actions in accordance to the moral code of the American civil religion.

¹⁵⁹ *Meet the Press, NBC*, 16 May 2004, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/4992558> (accessed 28 November 2004).

IV. Representation by Democrats

Reinforcing the War on Terrorism Script Parameters

The Democrats, like their Republican counterparts, also represented the Abu Ghraib events and U.S. response within the War on Terrorism script parameters. The critique below by Senator John Edwards, who ran for presidential primary earlier in the year, is representative of the critiques raised by Democrats:

HOST: And the situation has clearly being more complicated, more difficult with these photos that have been released, these allegations of abuse of Iraqi prisoners at the Abu Ghraib prison. Throughout Iraq, throughout the Arab world, indeed throughout the world, people are outraged.

SENATOR JOHN EDWARDS (D-North Carolina): It's a very, very serious thing, Wolf. It **sends exactly the wrong signal**. And serious for at least two very important reasons. Number one, **it says to the Arab world exactly the opposite of the message we want to be sending**. You know, that we want to provide you with the **opportunity to have democracy**, to rule yourself, to have **freedom**. Instead, what they're seeing are these photographs over and over and over. Which means the president, we, the administration, our military leadership, we have got to come out **very strongly condemning** what's happened, make sure we **get to the bottom of it**, and **make sure that it never happens again**. It's also important for our own troops, **the thousands and thousands of men and women who put their lives on the line in Iraq and who are good, able, brave people**, you know, **this is also damaging to them**. And we've got to **get to the bottom of this** and make it clear that **America will not tolerate this kind of behavior**.

HOST: You just heard Seymour Hersh, the author of this article in *The New Yorker*, express his deep concern, alarmed that General Richard Myers, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs, didn't—at least went on television this morning and failed to read this report that one of his own generals prepared, alleging all of these abuses.

SENATOR EDWARDS: It's disturbing that **our senior military leadership**, I'm not specifically [talking] about General Myers, but our

senior military leadership is not stronger and more on top of this than at least it appears right now they are.¹⁶⁰

This excerpt shows a remarkable degree of overlap in content and expression of the discourse between the Democratic and Republican members on TV shows.

On the issue of U.S. response to the events, Edwards' representation was almost identical to many of the conservatives and the ones articulated by Bush and Rumsfeld. Edwards recommended the U.S. political leadership to respond with the *acts* of strong condemnation, prevention, and investigation ("get to the bottom of it"). The recommended response was articulated in the *scene* of the War on Terror, as evident in the mentioning of the U.S. role in the Arab world, specifically related to the objectives of providing them with democracy and freedom. The *acts* of condemnation and investigations were recommended partly because "America will not tolerate" the abusive behaviors being publicized, which presumed some universal values shared by all Americans (i.e., *purpose*). Partly, the *purpose* was to remedy damages done to the "good, able, brave people" in the U.S. military, which reinforced the portrayal of the character of U.S. soldiers as unambiguously good. Perhaps most importantly, the *purpose* was to ensure effective pursuits of the War on Terrorism project, since the Abu Ghraib events posted obstacles for winning the War on Terror.

The only discernable difference between Edwards' account and the Republicans' is the explanation of the Abu Ghraib events. Edwards explicitly mentioned the "senior military leadership" as a mechanism contributing to the abusive

¹⁶⁰ *CNN Late Edition with Wolf Blitzer, CNN, 2 May 2004, <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0405/02/le.00.html> (accessed 3 December 2004).*

acts. However, these leaders were not active *agents* performing the acts; they were responsible for creating *agency* that allowed the Abu Ghraib events to occur. The senior military leaders were criticized for their effectiveness on the job (“not stronger and more on top of” the suspicious issue); the assumption was if the leaders had been effective and strong, they would have prevented the acts. To sum up, what the senior military leadership did wrong was that it did not implement the War on Terrorism project more properly and effectively than it could.

Several renowned Democratic party members who appeared on TV shows represented things in ways that were very similar to Edwards’. They actively participated in constructing the image of U.S. soldiers as unambiguously good and honorable:

(1) SENATOR CARL LEVIN (D-Michigan): I agree, by the way, with everybody that **99.9 percent of our troops are doing the right thing**. What these actions have done, this **leadership failure** has done, is **to stain the honor and the reputation of honorable men and women in the military** and that’s one of the real tragedies, it seems to me....¹⁶¹

(2) SENATOR DIANE FEINSTEIN (D-California): Well, my reaction was disgust. There’s no other way to put it. I think the actions by these people, military people, really disadvantaged **all the valiant military we have all over the world who are doing fine jobs**.¹⁶²

(3) SENATOR JOSEPH LIEBERMAN (D-Connecticut): It’s hard to tell. This is a very serious allegation that Sy Hersh is making. It must, like everything else about the prison abuse scandal, be **investigated**, and the **search of truth** should take us wherever it leads. That’s the only way we’re going to **restore the honor of the United States and**

¹⁶¹ *Meet the Press*, NBC, 9 May 2004, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/4938258/> (accessed 21 September 2004).

¹⁶² *Hardball with Chris Matthews*, NBC, 12 May 2004, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/4969709/> (accessed 3 December 2004).

the honor of the 99.9 percent of American military who live by the law.¹⁶³

The expression of “99.9 percent” was repeatedly stated, as well as the descriptive words associated with “honor.” The U.S. soldiers were described as “doing the right thing” and “doing fine jobs.” They were portrayed as victims in the Abu Ghraib scandal (and/or by the military leadership failure)—not perpetrators.

Theory One: Critiquing Anonymous Authorities and Administrative

Incompetence

These Democrats’ explanation of the Abu Ghraib events differed with their Republican counterparts on the dimension of *agency*—which also have consequences on the dimensions of *scene* and *agents*. Specifically, Democrats were more explicit in recognizing that the *acts* of prisoner abuse probably went beyond the *scene* of Abu Ghraib, that the disgusting behaviors were part of a systemic effort to obtain intelligence (*purpose*), and that *some* officers in military leadership positions probably gave the order to conduct such *acts*—or least they were professionally responsible for the administrative climate in which the Abu Ghraib events occur. Consider the following three quotes:

(1) SENATOR LEVIN: According to the testimony in the **Taguba report**, and even the photographs that reinforce that to indicate some really **strong evidence** that this was an **organized effort to extract information** from the people who were being detained, to get information from them by using MP's to mistreat them in the way that they were mistreated, to **soften them up**. In the words of one of the MP's in the **Taguba report**, this is **more than MP's misbehaving** and conducting themselves in the despicable ways that they conducted

¹⁶³ *CNN Late Edition with Wolf Blitzer, CNN*, 16 May 2004, <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/040516/le.00.html> (accessed 3 December 2004).

themselves. This is, it seems to me, quite clear part of a **pattern, an effort, to obtain and extract** information for the **intelligence folks**. And **they're the ones**, if in fact this is true, that have got to **be held accountable**.¹⁶⁴

(2) SENATOR FEINSTEIN: Well, I think this: this apparently, this degrading terrible humiliating treatment **went on in more than one place**. And I think that what's clear to me is that there was **not a strong chain of command**. And the **Geneva Convention was winked at**. And that **somebody gave the order** that prisoners had to be softened up and **someone came [up] this idea** of doing it this way. **Now, who that was, I have no way of knowing**. But, you know, we have some problems in other places, as well. The important thing, and I think something we should know, we were just able to obtain the ICRC, the **International Red Cross report**, which I believe was finished in February and sent in to the military. And it would seem to me that **very strong action should have been taken at that time based on that report**. And that's something that **we have to look into**, because the report documents some of the behavior. I spent the afternoon reading General **Taguba's full report**, plus what are called the annexes of that report. And I think **he's really to be commended**. He did a **tremendous job of investigation**. **So all the dots are there. He connected them**. And I think the next thing is for the powers that be, in the military, in the CIA, to take a good look at this and take the necessary action, **clean it up**, prevent it from ever happening again, **provide the supervision, the command structure**, that's necessary to do that....¹⁶⁵

(3) SENATOR LIEBERMAN: Yes, exactly. So you ask yourself, naturally, **was this just a group of soldiers who cracked under the stress of war, taking advantage of the power that they had as guards over their prisoners? Or was it in some way encouraged or tolerated or at worst directed by higher-ups?**

HOST: All right.

¹⁶⁴ "Rumsfeld Called to Account," *Online NewsHour with Jim Lehrer, PBS*, 7 May 2004, http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/military/jan-june04/hearing_5-7.html (accessed 21 September 2004).

¹⁶⁵ *Hardball with Chris Matthews, NBC*, 12 May 2004, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/4969709/> (accessed 3 December 2004).

SENATOR LIEBERMAN: And **those questions have not yet been answered. We're going to answer them.**¹⁶⁶

Let us analyze these senators' representations one by one. Levin explicitly identified "intelligence folks" as part of the *agents*; the *purpose* of the acts was to "soften prisoners" and to extract information. In other words, Levin explicitly identified a selective group of people higher up in the chain of command as possible *agents* behind the *acts* of abuses. Even though he saw "strong evidence" that supported his theory, he did not hold that the evidence was strong enough for a definite conclusion; Levin merely stated that "if in fact this is true" (i.e., if the intelligence folks made an organized effort to abuse prisoners in order to obtain information) then they should be held accountable.¹⁶⁷

Similarly, Feinstein acknowledged that some unknown, superior military authority "came up with the idea" and "gave the order" to soften up the prisoners in a terrible manner. She further depicted that the policy environment—in which "there was not a strong chain of command" and "the Geneva Convention was winked at"—gave rise to the Abu Ghraib events. And, she also cited the official negligence of the IRCR report, which reported problems associated with the military administration and possibly with individual military administrators. However, Feinstein also indicated that she did not know the specifics regarding these problematic issues. According to her theory, the key to prevent future occurrence was through effective investigations, a

¹⁶⁶ *CNN Late Edition with Wolf Blitzer*, *CNN*, 16 May 2004, <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/040516/le.00.html> (accessed 3 December 2004).

¹⁶⁷ However, we should keep in mind that Levin placed at least an equal, if not heavier, emphasis on agency rather than agents. While the *agents* were anonymous, Levin presented the *agency* problems related to "a lack of accountability up the chain." *Face the Nation*, *CBS*, 16 May 2004, http://www.cbsnews.com/htdocs/pdf/face_051604.pdf (accessed 21 September 2004).

proper “command structure,” and appropriate supervision. By stating that these actions should be put in place by “the powers that be” in the military and the CIA, Feinstein’s explanation assumed the fundamental problems to be fixed did not correspond to the characters of CIA and military leaders; the problems lied in their administrative competence.

Lieberman’s representation was perhaps the least definitive of all. Even though photos had shown the presence of military intelligence officials, Lieberman did not refute the possibility that it was only a few soldiers “cracked under the stress of war.” Nor did he refute the possibility that the abuses committed by prison guards were “directed by higher-ups.” His theory simply juxtaposed various hypotheses and then implied that none of them were supported by conclusive evidences.

Theory Two: The Fault of Secretary Rumsfeld

Several prominent Democrats called for Rumsfeld’s removal after the Abu Ghraib events. These figures include 2004 Presidential Candidate John Kerry, 2004 Vice-Presidential Candidate John Edwards, Senator Joseph Biden (D-Delaware), 2004 Presidential Primary Candidate and Retired General Wesley Clark, and Minority House Leader Nancy Pelosi. While these voices seemed critical of the Bush Administration, they did not challenge the War on Terrorism script parameters. Rather, these speakers situated their critiques *within* the War on Terrorism script. The result pushed the discourse of problems and solutions surrounding the Abu Ghraib scandal into the bureaucratic realm while reinforcing the War on Terrorism script. While this version of discourse added information and perspectives into the

explanation, the change of meanings was consequential only so far as placing the responsibility directly to the individual national leaders. Such a discursive challenge was inconsequential in terms of changing the American public's perceptions on the nature of war, the moral legitimacy of the United States, the righteousness of the War on Terror, or the truthfulness of the myths surrounding the American civil religion (which depicts America as an embodiment of democracy, freedom, and justice).

Among the TV guests who supported leadership removal, two lines of argument were repeatedly raised. One line critiqued Rumsfeld's leadership and bureaucratic incompetence—such as the dismissal of the Geneva Convention and the dismissal of investigative reports issued by IRCR and other entities—which led to the unnecessary loss of lives and honor of good American soldiers.

(1) SENATOR TOM HARKIN (D-Iowa): Well, what about Secretary Rumsfeld? In January of 2002, Secretary Rumsfeld, when questioned about the Geneva Convention, said it didn't apply to the detainees in Afghanistan. Well, that filters down. You know, Secretary Rumsfeld basically kind of **pooh-poohed the Geneva Convention**. Said it didn't apply.¹⁶⁸

(2) CHARLES RANGEL (D-NEW YORK): Well, it's easy to say that we should apologize, but Rummy, as he's so affectionately known, **had information of these atrocities. He had reports from the Red Cross**. He said he hadn't completed reading it...That's not enough. We're talking about murders. We're talking about torture. We're talking about people being shot down in yards. We're talking about people being sodomized, and he said it happened on his watch, and he's responsible. Well, Senator Harkin is right. **If he didn't tell the Congress and he didn't tell the president, then he has brought shame on the military and shame on the American people**. It

¹⁶⁸ *Larry King Live, CNN*, 7 May 2004, <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0405/07/lk1.00.html> (accessed 3 December 2004).

shouldn't have been that way. **It was a cover-up, and he should resign.**¹⁶⁹

(3) GENERAL CLARK: But I do think that when something like this happens that the prima facie notion of this is this goes **right to the top. What did the president know? What was the atmosphere that the president created? How hard was he pushing?** We know there was a lot of pressure to get intelligence information from these interrogations. And the Pentagon was the action agency on this working with the Central Intelligence Agency in **crafting the rules.** But the **atmosphere in which the Geneva Conventions were more or less set to one side, apparently, would have come from the top.**¹⁷⁰

As an additional example, Minority House Leader Nancy Pelosi, who called for the resignation of Donald Rumsfeld *and* the replacement of the President, stated in a TV interview that she made such a call in order to protect the U.S. troops, whose lives were endangered and whose honorable reputation were “tainted” by the leadership of the Bush Administration. In her opinion, both Bush and Rumsfeld should be removed because their faulty leadership created “the lack of preparation, the lack of equipment, the lack of intelligence, the lack of knowledge” among U.S. Armed forces, a condition which harmed the American soldiers who were risking their lives in Iraq.¹⁷¹

Another line of arguments called for Rumsfeld's resignation just because such an action would better serve the War on Terrorism objectives; it is expressed in the following statements by Clark and Harkin:

(1) HOST: Senator Harkin, why do you think he should resign?

SENATOR HARKIN: Well, for a couple of reasons. First, for the **morale of our troops.** I think if all we're going to do is go after a few

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ *Meet the Press, NBC*, 9 May 2004, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/4938258/> (accessed 21 September 2004).

¹⁷¹ *Meet the Press, NBC*, 30 May 2004, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/5086094/> (accessed 6 December 2004).

of the lower ranking people that were there, and not go after the ones up the chain of command, I think it's going to **send the wrong signal to our troops out there that the higher up you go, the easier it is to get off...** It seems to me that this is such a bad situation that **the only good thing, the only honorable I think for the secretary of defense would be to do to voluntarily step down.** I don't think we're going to **send the right signals to the world** if he stays in there....¹⁷²

(2) HOST: General Clark, do you think Secretary Rumsfeld should resign?

GENERAL CLARK: Well, I think there's really two issues on this. One is his effectiveness and he said he would resign if he felt he couldn't be **effective.** But I think it's really a question of the **credibility of the U.S. mission and how the United States is perceived in the world....** The real question is: "**How is the United States perceived and how seriously are we perceived to be taking this issue?**" I think it **would be very patriotic** if Secretary Rumsfeld resigned. But I do think that the issue **goes beyond the secretary of defense.**¹⁷³

In Harkin's account, Rumsfeld should resign because the action would help maintain "morale of the troops" as well as maintaining "moral high ground" of America.¹⁷⁴ In Clark's account, Rumsfeld should resign because the action would remedy U.S. image in the Arab world as well as promoting democracy in Iraq and promoting U.S. views "of the right way to govern around the world."¹⁷⁵ Either way, Rumsfeld was asked to resign not because of his seeming engagement in administrative cover-up, not because of his bureaucratic mismanagement, and certainly not because of his promotion of the War on Terrorism. On the contrary, according to Clark's and Harkin's statements,

¹⁷² *Larry King Live, CNN*, 7 May 2004, <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0405/07/lk1.00.html> (accessed 3 December 2004).

¹⁷³ *Meet the Press, NBC*, 9 May 2004, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/4938258/> (accessed 21 September 2004).

¹⁷⁴ *Larry King Live, CNN*, 7 May 2004, <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0405/07/lk1.00.html> (accessed 3 December 2004).

¹⁷⁵ *Meet the Press, NBC*, 9 May 2004, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/4938258/> (accessed 21 September 2004).

Rumsfeld was asked to resign because such an action would be “honorable” and “patriotic” in their effects of increasing the morale of the U.S. troops, spreading democracy and freedom around the world, and winning the American War on Terrorism.

Biden’s statement was even more dramatic. When asked for why he would support Rumsfeld’s removal, Biden stated:

Look, Bob, this is a sad moment. I mean, you know, **this is—I—I don’t care about Rumsfeld and Myers.** This administration seems to have lost the **clarity**, its voice. I mean, what we need is **the kind of moral clarity that occurred when the president stood on top of that rubble with the bullhorn and communicated to the American people he understood their feelings**, he knew what they were about and he was determined to change it. Look, what—thi—this has **jeopardized our troops.** It’s **jeopardized our mission.** The rationale for us going in now has been we’re going to restore civil rights and human rights to the people who are in Iraq. What does this say about—what does this **communicate to those millions of people in the Arab world and in Iraq who are looking for us to provide the moral clarity** for their ascension into some kind of democratic position? I mean, it—it—I—this is **so much bigger than Rumsfeld and Myers.**¹⁷⁶

This quote shows Biden’s rationale: Rumsfeld should be removed because it was the way to maintain the moral clarity that Bush had established in the rubble of New York City after 9/11. The call for removal is not due to personal failures but institutional morale, image, and effectiveness. The resignation from a senior official would produce positive evidence about U.S. democratic character for the public in Iraq and the Arab world.

¹⁷⁶ *Face the Nation*, CBS, 9 May 2004, http://www.cbsnews.com/htdocs/pdf/face_050904.pdf (accessed 6 December 2004).

V. Policing the War on Terrorism Script Parameters

The War on Terrorism script was so consistently followed by Democratic and Republican politicians that it is difficult to find any exceptional instances.

Nevertheless, the following two examples—one surrounds the speech-acts of Senator Edward Kennedy (D-Massachusetts) and the other pertains to Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi (D-California)—illustrates that deviation from the established parameters could quickly invite criticism in the discourse environment. Consider the following interaction:

HOST: Duncan, let me begin with you. Of course, you know Ted Kennedy came out yesterday and he compared the American troops that were operating this prison to those that ran Saddam Hussein's torture chambers.¹⁷⁷ Do you believe today's pictures, today's events coming out of Iraq actually undercut his theory a great deal?

REPRESENTATIVE HUNTER (R-California): I think the American people are really upset about this **bashing of America and America's military** which has taken place. And I think Teddy Kennedy has been right in the center of that....**And those 135,000 people** [i.e., U.S. troops in Iraq] **who are doing such a great job need to have some focus on them.** And so I say to my senator friends, **let's get off this thing.** We have compartmentalized it. You have got six Army investigations on it. Those people are going to be the most questioned, most interrogated people in history and most prosecuted. **Let's go to the 135,000 who are in combat right now and help them.**¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁷ According to one news report's description: "Speaking in the Senate on May 10, Kennedy had this to say about the Abu Ghraib prison scandal: "'On March 19, 2004, President Bush asked, 'Who would prefer that Saddam's torture chambers still be open?' Shamefully, we now learn that Saddam's torture chambers reopened under new management—US management.'" Jeff Jacoby, "Ted Kennedy's Anti-American Slander," *The Boston Globe*, 25 May 2004, http://www.boston.com/news/globe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2004/05/25/ted_kennedys_anti_american_slander/ (accessed 4 September 2008).

¹⁷⁸ *Scarborough Country*, MSNBC, 11 May 2004, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/4961237> (accessed 3 December 2004)

This quote shows Hunter as actively policing the War on Terrorism script parameters. The anchor paraphrased a comment by a Democrat that seemed to raise questions regarding the U.S. righteousness in the War on Iraq, and the acts were dramatically labeled as the “bashing of America and America’s military.” He further urged senators to stop public critiques of the Bush Administration officials on the issue of Abu Ghraib and start to help the “135,000 who are in combat right now.” This statement implied that the raising of criticism against the Bush Administration officials somehow hurt the effort in helping U.S. troops in combat.

Consider another example:

HOST: Your counterpart in the House on the Republican side, **Tom DeLay, said this: “Nancy Pelosi should apologize for her irresponsible, dangerous rhetoric. She apparently is so caught up in partisan hatred for President Bush that her words are putting American lives at risk.”**

REPRESENTATIVE PELOSI: Well, I totally disagree. I made the statement that I did, and I think with **great courage**, if I might say about myself **because I am worried about the troops on the ground in Iraq** and wherever our troops serve. I...

HOST: Do you think that President Bush does anything well?

REPRESENTATIVE PELOSI: Of course I do.

HOST: What?

REPRESENTATIVE PELOSI: And this is not about a partisan—this **isn’t about politics. It’s not even about personalities. It’s about policy. It’s a situation where the clear and present danger facing our country is terrorism**, and we’re in this abyss in...

HOST: But where does he show judgment, experience and knowledge?

REPRESENTATIVE PELOSI: **I think he’s a nice person. I think he’s true to his religious convictions. It’s not about personality. I**

think we have to get away from that. Just because we think someone is a good person doesn't mean that they are capable. And I have no dislike for President Bush.¹⁷⁹

Pelosi, who called for the removal of Rumsfeld as well as President Bush for their leadership failure, faced strong criticisms from renowned Republican Tom DeLay. Her criticism was being dramatically characterized as motivated by “partisan hatred” and, more damningly, “putting American lives at risk.” Pelosi defended herself by applying the War on Terrorism script; she related her criticisms to her worry “about the troops on the ground in Iraq” and to the scene of U.S. conflict with terrorism. She elaborated her critique by recognizing President Bush as a “good” and “nice person” with “religious convictions,” just that she believed Bush was incapable—that is, incapable of serving U.S. troops well and incapable of winning the War on Terror.

VI. Summary

When the Abu Ghraib scandal broke the news on 28 April 2004, military spokesperson General Mark Kimmit initiated a theory that functioned to protect the War on Terrorism script. More precisely, he represented the acts of abuse as actions of a few individuals rather than institutionalized practices of the U.S. Army, and he contrasted the reprehensible nature of the abuse with the righteousness of Army values.

President Bush and Secretary Rumsfeld, amidst public outcry, strongly condemned the acts. They decried the “abhorrent” and “un-American” nature of the acts and sought to promote the perception Kimmit had stated: that the acts were not

¹⁷⁹ *Meet the Press*, NBC, 30 May 2004, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/5086094/> (accessed 6 December 2004).

institutionalized practices. They proposed investigative and legal processes as the ideal mechanisms to solve the problem; these proposed solutions were endowed with extraordinary meanings from the War on Terrorism script, as they were contrasted with the enemy's responses in similar circumstances. More significantly, their theories basing on the War on Terrorism script created a set of parameters in which the Abu Ghraib events could be explained. Within these parameters, U.S. soldiers were unambiguously good, the *acts* of abuse were unambiguously wrong and un-American, the *purpose* behind the acts was unambiguously unacceptable. Such parameters would deny allegations suggesting that the *acts* were acceptable by American standard, that American soldiers had engaged in such abhorrent acts *en mass*, or that the *purpose* behind those acts were morally justifiable.

Representations by Republican leaders overwhelmingly reinforced Bush's and Rumsfeld's theories as well as the War on Terrorism script parameters. While there were differences among their rhetoric, those differences were well *within* the parameters. While some Republicans insisted on the theory that the *acts* were most likely to be committed by a few individual soldiers, others acknowledged that there were systemic failures associated with resources and organizational matter, and that a few more senior military officers might be directly responsible for causing the abusive acts. Despite this point of disagreement, all Republicans endorsed the investigative and legal processes and endorsed their extraordinary meanings.

Democrats' representations, although somewhat different from Republican's, were also enveloped by the War on Terrorism script parameters. Democrats were

noticeably different from Republicans in their unhesitant rejection of the “few bad apple theory” and in their acknowledgement of large-scale systemic failure and the probable involvement of some leaders in the top sector of the chain of command. In a sense, their arguments obviously stretched the War on Terrorism parameters farther than the Republicans—but not enough to break it.

Actually, almost all Democrats situated their critiques *within* the War on Terrorism script. The more moderate Democrats supported thorough investigative and legal measures (“get to the bottom of this”) and immediate fixture of systemic, bureaucratic problems (e.g., lack of training); the stated goal was to better serve the unambiguously good U.S. soldiers whose honor was undeservedly “stained” by the scandal. The more critical Democrats laid their blames directly on the most senior military leadership—i.e., Secretary Rumsfeld and General Myers (or even President Bush)—and called for their removal from their positions. These Democrats certainly criticized their leadership failure and incompetence—if not their deliberate dismissal and cover-up of institutionalized abusive activities—as reasons for their removal. However, their calls were unanimously based on the stated goal of reducing harm to the fine American soldiers, to maintain America’s moral authority throughout the world, to promote the American ideals of freedom, democracy, and justice, and to win the War on Terrorism.

In the maneuvering of the politics of representation surrounding the Abu Ghraib scandal, the unambiguously “honorable” character of U.S. soldiers—an imaginary from the War on Terrorism script—served as both a shield and a weapon in

the hands of both Republicans and Democrats. The Bush Administration used it initially to ward off public outcry, and Democrats used it as a weapon to attack it. When Republicans used it as a weapon to attack the Democrats, the Democrats used it as a shield to justify their previous attacks. During this series of discourse interaction, the War on Terrorism script was repaired, and the War on Terrorism project continued to be legitimated by both the Republicans and the Democrats through a religious mode of representation.

CHAPTER 5: THE MEANING OF THE ABSENCE OF WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

Perhaps less shocking to the general American public than the Abu Ghraib scandal was a series of reports released by the Iraq Survey Group (ISG), a fact-finding organization of about 1,200-1,500 people jointly created by the U.S. Department of Defense and the CIA after the U.S.-led coalition successfully occupied Iraq. The most important mandate of ISG was to extensively search for WMD as well as documents pertaining to Iraq's weapons development activities. The pre-war assertion by the United States was that Iraq deliberately concealed stockpiles of WMD from the international society. The investigation team, however, failed to find such alleged stockpiles of WMD despite months of searches. While this finding received much media attention and contributed to public disillusionment, it did not lead to the substantial decline in American public support for the War on Iraq or the moral disillusionment of the larger War on Terrorism project in 2004. This chapter explores the discourse surrounding this finding and argues that the ways the reports were written and presented by ISG spokespersons and the ways the findings were represented by Democratic and Republican politicians helped to mitigate the negative impact.

I. New Information: The Iraq Survey Group Reports

The Iraq Survey Group reports are generally known for two major bodies of overall findings; it simultaneously (1) established the absence of WMD in Iraq (oft-cited by critics of the Bush Administration) *and* (2) suggested the presence of an Iraqi

threat (oft-cited by the Bush Administration). However, these findings were hardly clear, definitive, or straightforward. This section explores some of the nuances, ambiguities, and complexities associated with the ISG reports before discussing how they were subsequently represented by political actors.

No WMD Stockpiles or WMD Programs

The Iraq Survey Group delivered its first report in October 2003. Based on David Kay's testimony to the congressional committees,¹⁸⁰ the group had "not yet found stocks of weapons" but had discovered "dozens of WMD-related program activities" as well as evidence of "concealment effort"—such as deliberately destroyed documents and hard drives. It also claimed to be "uncovering significant information" with regard to biological warfare activities. It cited "a clandestine network of laboratories and facilities within the security service apparatus" undeclared to the United Nations but was unable to determine "the extent to which this network was tied to large-scale military efforts or BW terror weapons"; however, Kay argued that the network indicated the existence of Iraq's preserving particular expertise and facilities, which were "key elements for maintaining a capability for resuming BW production." It also cited witnesses' words as leads to further potential fruitful exploration; for example, one scientist being caught with concealing one vial worth of "live *C. botulinum* Okra B. from which a biological agent can be produced" said that there was a much larger cache that he had refused to conceal. Evidence for chemical and nuclear weapons programs were more scarce, and Kay described several leads

¹⁸⁰ David Kay, "Text of David Kay's Unclassified Statement," *CNN*, 2 October 2003, <http://www.cnn.com/2003/ALLPOLITICS/10/02/kay.report/> (accessed 9 July 2008).

provided by witnesses that were yet to be verified by inspection. However, with regard to nuclear weapons, it argued that “Iraq did take steps to preserve some technological capability,” by which he meant Saddam Hussein had kept intact “key technical groups from the pre-1991 nuclear weapons program” to work on “nuclear-relevant dual-use technologies.” Again, the argument was that Saddam Hussein had an interest in developing WMD in the future, perhaps as soon as U.N. sanctions were lifted (based on selected interview sources). Concerning conventional weaponry, the Iraq Survey Group found solid documentation indicating that Iraq was developing a long-range missile program after it expelled U.N. inspectors in 1998; it had recovered some basic materials for long-range missiles development and had advanced \$10 million to North Korea for further technologies.

Despite these various facts mentioned by Kay that might cast some negative attention on Iraq and Saddam Hussein, it did not prove that Iraq was hiding stockpiles of WMD or had developed a sophisticated program that would constitute a tangible military threat. Besides, data provided in Kay’s report could be interpreted differently. A *New York Times* article released 10 days after Kay’s report¹⁸¹ noted that Kay concentrated on those scientists testifying about Hussein’s development of the programs and made no mention of those witnesses testifying about his abandonment of the program, thereby ignoring factual contradictions; the article also pointed out that Kay somehow failed to mention that the timing in which the scientist had hidden

¹⁸¹ “The Iraqi Weapons Puzzle,” *New York Times*, 12 October 2003, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9F04E2DC123FF931A25753C1A9659C8B63> (accessed 10 July 2008).

the vial of live botulinum bacteria (a substance that could also be used for civilian and medical purposes) among multiple reference strains of other biological organisms dated back to year 1993. It was no news that the Iraqi government was attempting to hide WMD to U.N. inspectors in 1993, but the shelf life of such hidden materials, even if not eventually uncovered, would most likely to expire well before 1998.¹⁸²

Furthermore, the outlawed long-range missile program activities developed after 1998 were significantly curtailed as soon as U.N. inspectors went back into Iraq in late 2002, suggesting that these activities would have been significantly contained if U.N. inspection regime had persisted—if not eventually uncovered and destroyed.¹⁸³

In retrospect, that these “facts” were singled out as the most important discoveries by the Iraq Survey Group provides a further warning sign for those who believed in the existence of WMD in Iraq—the earlier sign being that no WMD was used by Iraq during the coalition invasion. But the October 2003 report was not quite authoritative, as the group was said to be still in data “collection and analysis mode” and was describing only about three months of investigative work. As the search process went on, however, no stockpiles of weapons were found and the number of potential sites—identified through interviews and intelligence—was quickly running out.

¹⁸² See *Unresolved Disarmament Issues: Iraq's Proscribed Weapons Programmes*, UNMOVIC Working Document, *United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission*, 6 March 2003, <http://www.un.org/Depts/unmovic/documents/UNMOVIC%20UDI%20Working%20Document%206%20March%2003.pdf> (accessed 10 July 2008).

¹⁸³ For a comprehensive review of evidence up to Kay's October 2003 report, see Joseph Cirincione, Jessica T. Mathews, George Perkovich, and Alexis Orton, *WMD in Iraq: Evidence and Implications* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, January 2004), <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/iraq3fulltext.pdf> (accessed 20 July 2008).

On 23 January 2004, David Kay made a high-profile resignation from his post for undisclosed reasons. In mass media interviews as well as his testimony to Congress on 28 January 2004, he claimed that he did not believe stockpiles of WMD would ever be found.¹⁸⁴ Aside from concrete evidence with regard to a long-range missile program—which were conventional weapons and not WMD—as well as some “small activities” related to WMD development, there were “no scientist, no documentation nor physical evidence of the production plants” of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons.¹⁸⁵

Kay’s report did not entirely shut the door to a possible groundbreaking discovery, as it was inconclusive and some officials (e.g., Secretary Rumsfeld) insisted that WMD stockpiles might still be found. However, several months later the investigation effort largely came to a close when ISG exhausted all searchable sites and investigative leads. Charles Duelfer, who headed ISG after Kay’s resignation, delivered a report in late September¹⁸⁶ that was considered to be a conclusive document pertaining to the weapons search. The Duelfer report did not add significant evidence to Kay’s report with regard to WMD stockpiles or programs, and it dismissed some of its previous suspicions.

¹⁸⁴ In Kay’s words, “I believe that the effort that has been directed to this point has been sufficiently intense that it is highly unlikely that there were large stockpiles of deployed militarized chemical and biological weapons there.” “Transcript: David Kay at Senate hearing,” *CNN*, 28 January 2004, <http://www.cnn.com/2004/US/01/28/kay.transcript/> (accessed 11 July 2008).

¹⁸⁵ “David Kay: Exclusive Interview,” an interview with David Kay by Tom Brokaw, *Nightly News with Brian Williams*, *NBC*, 26 January 2004, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/4066462/> (accessed 11 July 2008).

¹⁸⁶ Charles A. Duelfer, *Comprehensive Report of the Special Advisor to the DCI on Iraq’s WMD* (Washington, D.C.: Central Intelligence Agency, 30 September 2004). https://www.cia.gov/library/reports/general-reports-1/iraq_wmd_2004/index.html (accessed 16 July 2008).

The Threat of the Iraqi Regime

Of the utmost interest—for the purpose of our discussion—was how the ISG reports afforded the interpretation that Saddam Hussein’s regime was a threat while it concluded with some confidence that Iraq did not have WMD or a major WMD program before the U.S. invasion.

Threat from chaos and corruption. In his January 24th senate hearing, Kay stated that Iraq posed an *even greater threat* than the United States had imagined and portrayed, proclaiming that “the world is far safer with the disappearance and the removal of Saddam Hussein.” The rationale he gave during the congressional testimony, however, was different from Bush’s pre-war assertion. The Bush Administration argument prior to the invasion was that Saddam Hussein posed a grave threat to the civilized world and the United States because he would at some point assist terrorists in using WMD to inflict physical harm and catastrophe. Saddam’s intention and character were the cornerstone of its justification. Kay argued that Iraq had become a chaotic society—or that the Iraqi government had become a chaotic government¹⁸⁷; it was a condition such that some buyers and sellers of WMD could at some point in the future trade WMD (though the ISG had no evidence of an actual occurrence). Saddam Hussein needed not have any direct knowledge about such kind of hypothetical occurrences for the danger to exist. For this reason, “the world is far

¹⁸⁷ David Kay stated: “[Iraqi scientists] describe in Iraq that was really spinning into a vortex of corruption from the very top in which people were lying to Saddam, lying to each other for money; the graft and how much you could get out of the system rather than how much you could produce was a dominant issue.” “David Kay: Exclusive Interview,” an interview with David Kay by Tom Brokaw, *Nightly News with Brian Williams*, NBC, 26 January 2004, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/4066462/> (accessed 11 July 2008).

safer with the disappearance and the removal of Saddam Hussein.”¹⁸⁸ We may represent this line of reasoning in a visual form as follows:

Because:	(1) Iraq was an environment (with a corrupted government and society) conducive to terrorists’ acquiring WMD through trading.
	(2) Saddam Hussein’s knowledge and intention is not connected to the prospect of a hypothetical WMD trading occurrence.
Therefore:	(a) The world is far safer with the disappearance and the removal of Saddam Hussein.
	(b) Iraq was a more dangerous country than anticipated (because the United States relied on Saddam Hussein’s intention as the primary criterion to estimate likelihood of terrorist attainment of WMD in Iraq).

Figure 5.1. Structure of David Kay’s Assessment of the Danger Presented by Iraq

The following exchange between Kay and a MSNBC’s news correspondent also shows this line of reasoning:

KAY: Tom, an imminent threat is a political judgment. It’s not a technical judgment. I think **Baghdad** was actually becoming **more dangerous** in the last two years than even we realized. **Saddam was not controlling the society any longer**. In the **marketplace** of terrorism and of WMD, **Iraq well could have been** that supplier if the war had not intervened.

HOST: But as you know, the administration and its supporters, not just suggest, but insist that there was a real connection between Saddam Hussein and terrorist organizations that would be a threat to the United States.

¹⁸⁸ David Kay stated: “Senator Warner, I think **the world is far safer with the disappearance and the removal of Saddam Hussein**. I have said—I actually think this may be one of those cases where **it was even more dangerous than we thought**. I think when we have the complete record you’re going to discover that after 1998, it became **a regime that was totally corrupt**. Individuals were out for their own protection, and in a world where we know others are seeking WMD, the likelihood **at some point in the future of a seller and a buyer meeting up** would have made that **a far more dangerous country** than even we anticipated with what may turn out not to be a fully accurate estimate.” David Kay, “Transcript: David Kay at Senate hearing,” *CNN*, 28 January 2004, <http://www.cnn.com/2004/US/01/28/kay.transcript/> (accessed 11 July 2008).

KAY: Look, I found no real connection between WMD and terrorists. What we did find, and as others are investigating it, we found a lot of terrorist groups and individuals that passed through Iraq.

Kay offered the central message that the Iraqi government posed a significant threat to the world before the invasion. This claim, however, was not built on solid empirical evidence, since the ISG did not actually find any WMD in Iraq, any actual instances of WMD trading occurrences, any documented plans of trading, and any non-governmental WMD development programs of any significant government capabilities. The only evidence cited by Kay was a state of normlessness and disorder within the Iraqi government before the war—with Iraqi scientists lying to Saddam Hussein, government officials lying to each other, and terrorists ‘passing through’ Iraq (for unidentified reasons). That this environment would eventually amount to terrorists attaining WMD was a new speculation that served to re-justify the U.S. War on Iraq after the old justification started to fall apart.¹⁸⁹

Threat from WMD intent and WMD readiness. Another revised understanding flowing from the ISG investigation was that the Hussein regime’s *intent* to develop WMD and its *readiness* to develop them amounted to a threat. George Bush and Colin Powell had articulated this understanding after the report was released.

¹⁸⁹ Although not imbued with emphasis, this point was briefly mentioned in Duelfer during the October 2004 senate hearing: “I am convinced we successfully contained a problem before it matured into a major threat [of Iraqi CW experts collaborating with anti-coalition forces]. Nevertheless, it points to the problem that the dangerous expertise developed by the previous regime could be transferred to other hands. Certainly there are anti-coalition and terrorist elements seeking such capabilities.” “Testimony of Charles Duelfer Special Advisor to the DCI for Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction,” prepared statement, *U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services*, 6 October 2004, <http://armed-services.senate.gov/statemnt/2004/October/Duelfer%2010-06-04.pdf> (21 July 2008).

Note that Charles Duelfer himself did not explicitly advocate this argument, but it provided materials—from my reading, in a very selective manner—that enabled political actors to assemble this argumentative understanding.

Let us first discuss the manners in which the final report was written, which bear some relations to the larger political debates. The format of the report resembled a political history/political biography instead of a factual analysis (like the Blix report, Colin Powell's U.N. presentation, or previous ISG reports were) or a fact-based strategic analysis (like some CIA intelligence reports). The ISG insisted that readers read its physical findings in the context of the overall report¹⁹⁰ and claimed that policy implications were open for readers' interpretation.¹⁹¹ The tone of the narrative was

¹⁹⁰ The following quote in the report shows how Duelfer implied the exclusive focus on WMD status to be incomplete, artificial, non-synthetic, simple and static (as opposed to dynamic). It urged the readers to exercise judgment based on the dynamics presented in the report.

The goal of this report is to provide facts and meaning concerning the Regime's experience with WMD. It aims to provide a **dynamic** analysis rather than **simple static** accounting of the debris found following Operation Iraqi Freedom. The report will put into context the WMD activities of the Regime and the trends and directions of the Regime with respect to WMD. **Artificially separating the WMD from the Regime would not provide a synthetic picture.** Such a picture would seem to be more instructive than **a simple frozen inventory of the program remnants at one point in time.**

Readers will draw their own conclusions about various national and international actions and policies. This report will, hopefully, allow **a more complete examination of these events** by showing the dynamics involved within the Regime and where it was headed as well as the status of the WMD on the ground in 2003. The events surrounding Iraqi WMD have caused too much turmoil to be reduced to simple binary discussions of whether weapons existed at one moment in time versus another. They deserve at least an attempt to look at the dynamics rather than a description of a single frame of a movie. It deserves calculus not algebra. **This report will deny the reader any simple answers.** It will seek to force broader and deeper understanding from multiple perspectives over time (Duelfer, *Comprehensive Report*, under "Transmittal Message," p. 2).

¹⁹¹ Preceding the "Key Findings" section of the report was a "Transmittal Message" by Charles Duelfer, dated 23 September 2004. The concluding paragraph of the message reads: "Readers of this report **can weigh for themselves** the actions taken by **all governments in response** to

decisively negative toward Saddam Hussein. Although the Duelfer report is presented as disinterested and nonjudgmental, one can discern a rather negative perspective toward Hussein's leadership in the "Transmittal Message" section of the report authored by Duelfer:

***Introduction.* Iraq has endured decades of collapsing hopes and accumulating tragedy. It is numbing to consider the waste of so much human and resource potential. Saddam's ambitions conflicted with the region and the international community. True to his name, he too often chose confrontation over cooperation. Ultimately these decisions led to total collapse....**

The international community has struggled with the Regime. Various attempts to coerce, co-opt, placate, or ignore Iraq produced confusion and inconstancy. It is understandable that **Saddam may not have understood** where international forces were headed. Indeed, the international community's focus on Iraq and WMD was affected by serendipity as well as considered national policies. Had the events of 11 September 2001 not occurred, Saddam might well be still in power. But, **he deeply miscalculated one last time and curtailed his own leadership. Saddam, his family, and cronies rose, enriched themselves, became corrupt, combusted, and collapsed. Saddam's huge commitment to weapons technology consumed the best and brightest and led them to nothing but destruction.** The Fertile Crescent was turned into a land filled with risk and chaos. In many ways the arms inspectors have merely been leading the way in exploring the decay that Iraq became, and, indeed the corrupt systems that grew parasitically on Iraq as it decayed.¹⁹²

This excerpt presented a simple plot summary of the story to be told: "Saddam, his family, and cronies rose, enriched themselves, became corrupt, combusted, and collapsed." Seeing events in this context, the statement attributed many outcomes,

Saddam and his WMD ambitions. It is a **complicated story over a long period of time.** Hopefully, this report **will illuminate some of the important dynamics and the trends**" (Duelfer, *Comprehensive Report*, under "Transmittal Message," p. 12). Note that it prompts readers to interpret governments' responses in the context of the "complicated story" of the report—which is quite limited in its point of view and contextual considerations.

¹⁹² Duelfer, *Comprehensive Report*, under "Transmittal Message," p. 1.

including waste of resources and the final dissolution of his regime, to the ambition, decisions, and actions of Saddam Hussein as an individual—not of the actions of the Bush Administration and the attacking parties, not of international leaders’ interaction with it, and not of the changing attitude toward him by different U.S. presidential administrations.

Whereas Duelfer himself shied away from a direct assessment of Iraq’s threat, the report provided materials for politicians to assemble the argument that Iraq was a threat because it had the *intent* to acquire WMD and the *readiness or capability* to develop it.¹⁹³ The structure of this rejustification can be visually represented in Figure 5.2.

¹⁹³ Bush spoke on the Duelfer report after its release: “The Duelfer report also raises important new information about Saddam Hussein’s **defiance** of the world and his **intent** and **capability** to develop weapons.” George W. Bush, 7 October 2004, “Report on Iraq’s Weapons of Mass Destruction,” The South Grounds, The White House, *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 40(41), pp. 2275-2276. See also “Although No WMD Found, Saddam Had Intent, Capability, Powell Says,” interview of Secretary of State Colin L. Powell by Warren Strobel of Knight-Ridder, *GlobalSecurity.org*, 8 October 2004, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/news/iraq/2004/10/iraq-041008-usia01.htm> (accessed 21 July 2008)). The quote below by Colin Powell shows how the report was represented:

REPORTER: Given that [i.e., the findings of the Duelfer report] and given the report on [Abu Musab al-]Zarqawi that came out last week—maybe there’s a relationship, maybe there’s not—**did the administration miscalculate the threat from Saddam?**

SECRETARY POWELL: **The only thing** that I think we got wrong, really, was that he did not have stockpiles. And I think between what Mr. Kay [former head of Iraq Survey Group] has said and what Mr. Charles A. Duelfer [current head of Iraq Survey Group] has said, it appears they did not have weapons. But I still have no doubt in my mind about the **intention** that he had and the **capability** that he retained. And as you saw from the Duelfer report, he was doing everything he could to get out from under the sanctions. He was cheating on the sanctions. He was deceiving the world, sometimes in ways that are **incomprehensible** as to why he was trying to deceive the world in that way, which was just **putting him at greater risk**. But that’s what he was doing. And the **intention** and the **capability** were there...

Because:	(1) Saddam Hussein had the <i>intent</i> to develop WMD.
	(2) Saddam Hussein had high <i>readiness/capability</i> to develop WMD before the war.
Therefore:	Iraq was a Threat.

Figure 5.2: Structure of Re-justification of Iraqi Threat by the Bush Administration Immediately after the Duelfer Report

With regard to intent, the ISG used interview data with senior Iraqi scientists and officials to conclude that there was a widespread understanding that Saddam Hussein wanted to resume WMD development *after the U.N. sanctions ended*. There was no evidence, however, to suggest that Saddam Hussein would develop WMD before the end of sanctions, perhaps because doing so would provide a reason for the continuation of U.N. sanctions.¹⁹⁴ His intent, furthermore, was not simply based on an evil desire to harm the civilized world by passing WMD to terrorists; it was allegedly caused by his objective to deter a possible attack from Iran—a nation that was also identified as a member of the axis of evil. Hence, his political strategy has been to lobby and bargain for the lifting and relaxation of U.N. sanctions on one hand and to

¹⁹⁴ Duelfer stated in his Transmittal Message: “From the evidence available through the actions and statements of a range of Iraqis, it seems clear that the guiding theme for WMD was to sustain the intellectual capacity achieved over so many years at such a great cost and to be in a position to produce again with as short a lead time as possible—within the vital constraint that **no action should threaten the prime objective of ending international sanctions and constraints**. Saddam continued to see the utility of WMD. He explained that he purposely **gave an ambiguous impression about possession as a deterrent to Iran**. He gave explicit direction to maintain the intellectual capabilities. As UN sanctions eroded there was a concomitant expansion of activities that could support full WMD reactivation. He directed that ballistic missile work continue that would support long-range missile development. Virtually no senior Iraqi believed that Saddam had forsaken WMD forever. Evidence suggests that, as **resources became available** and the **constraints of sanctions decayed**, there was a direct expansion of activity that would have the effect of supporting future WMD reconstitution.” Duelfer, *Comprehensive Report*, under “Transmittal Message,” p. 9.

sustain the intellectual capital and infrastructures needed for a prospective revival of WMD program after the end of U.N. sanctions.

While the Duelfer report depicted Saddam Hussein as the main actor for ending the U.N. sanctions,¹⁹⁵ in reality the act was accomplished through diplomacy and economic negotiation with major powers. The U.N. sanctions were controlled by the U.N. sanctions committee, of which the United States—which held veto power—was a part. Therefore, without U.S. approval, the relaxing or lifting of sanctions could not have occurred. The progressive ‘erosion’ of sanctions was certainly due to Iraq’s successful appeal to powerful allies such as France, Russia, and China with favorable oil export contracts, but every step of so-called ‘erosion’ was also agreed (albeit unenthusiastically) by the United States and United Kingdom; the approval was granted before 9/11 when the Iraqi threat was perceived differently.¹⁹⁶

The language pertaining to Saddam Hussein’s intent was vague in the report. According to the language of the report, Saddam Hussein did not seem to intend to

¹⁹⁵ Saddam Hussein himself had stated in 2000 that sanctions were ‘corroding,’ although he did not mention the specifics. “The stage of embargo corrosion is no longer something which we predict or wait for. It has actually started.” “Saddam: Sanctions Crumbling,” *BBC*, 6 January 2000, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/593012.stm (accessed 18 July 2008).

¹⁹⁶ The relaxation of U.N. sanctions should best be described as a diplomatic negotiation among the five permanent members. After 1998, U.S. and Britain had offered a counterproposal lifting sanctions in limited capacities in exchange of inspections; but the proposal would limit free trade and foreign investment in Iraq, which would limit the profit to be gained by France, China, and especially Russia. Iraq vehemently opposed the ‘smart sanctions’ proposal drafted by Britain and the United States, and Russia especially threatened to veto the proposal on the grounds that the scope of lifting sanctions were not comprehensive enough. This history indicates that the potential threat posed by Saddam Hussein was not considered to be serious at all before the Bush Administration took power. If it did pose any threat, it was perceived by the United States (under the Clinton Administration) and the United Kingdom to be containable through a rigorous inspection regime, not to mention Russia, France, and China which favored a more comprehensive lifting of economic sanctions. See “UN Offers Iraq Sanctions Deal,” *BBC*, 17 December 1999, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/570231.stm (accessed 18 July 2008).

develop WMD *until U.N. sanctions ended*, but it is not clear what would happen if U.N. sanctions were only relaxed and not entirely lifted, or if the lifting of sanctions is conditioned upon the abandonment of WMD development and the continuation of U.N. inspections.¹⁹⁷ The language signified—but without confirming or rejecting—the possibility that the ISG actually have solid evidence proving that Hussein intended to develop WMD as soon as economic sanctions were lifted regardless of the presence of U.N. military sanctions. But this ISG “finding” became a piece of information the Bush Administration would use to argue for the presence of Iraqi threat.

With regard to Iraq’s *readiness* or *capability* to develop WMD, perhaps the most dramatic finding in the ISG report would be that Iraq could have restarted some elementary form of functioning WMD program within several weeks, and a more elaborate one in a few months.¹⁹⁸ However, such ‘facts’ have much to do with the

¹⁹⁷ The U.N. sanctions enacted by the U.N. Security Council (most notably Resolution 687 of 1991) included an economic embargo that forbade countries to have trade relations with Iraq and prohibited Iraq’s importation of an extensive list of items that could be used for foreseeable military purposes (even though they may in actuality be used for civilian purposes). They also contained a military sanctions component that explicitly restricted Iraq’s weaponry development as well as subjected Iraq to continuous on-site inspections to ensure the clearance of WMD it had manufactured. “Ending economic sanctions and ending inspections would not necessarily have coincided and it is not clear which of them was viewed as most troublesome, and why. The UN resolutions provided for the latter to continue even after the former ended, and Saddam had terminated inspections in 1998” (Jervis 2006:43). To simply state that Saddam Hussein intended to reconstitute its WMD development activities after sanctions ended had an obscure meaning. If sanctions were to be lifted entirely (which would inevitably required U.S. approval), then its WMD would be legal within the U.N. framework.

¹⁹⁸ Consider the following statements.

Depending on its scale, **Iraq could have re-established an elementary BW program within a few weeks to a few months** of a decision to do so, but ISG discovered no indications that the Regime was pursuing such a course. In spite of the difficulties noted above, a BW capability is technically the easiest WMD to attain. Although equipment and facilities were destroyed under UN supervision in 1996, **Iraq retained technical BW know-how through the scientists** that were involved in the former program. ISG has also identified civilian facilities and equipment in Iraq that have **dual-use application** that could be used for the

inherent easiness of production of biological and chemical weapons (this is not the case for nuclear weapons, however). For biological weapons, if materials are made available, only a “couple dozen” of experts and facilities are needed that “can be readily assembled from quite simple domestic civilian plants”; a chemical weapons program requires more experts and more elaborate infrastructure, but Iraq already had a usable chemical production structure due to an indigenous chemical industry; hence, it would only take between a few months to two years for them to produce chemical weapons.¹⁹⁹ Hence, the notion of Saddam Hussein retaining WMD capability was mainly based on the facts that he did not disassemble his scientists or avoid developing facilities that could be used for future production purposes. Instead, he sought to retain scientists to work on government projects that would maximize the retention of their technological knowledge (thereby retaining Iraq’s intellectual capital for WMD development); meanwhile, he also sought to develop and refine multipurpose infrastructure that would shorten the time for a potential launching of WMD programs in the future. However, much of this information about Iraq WMD readiness could have been concluded from the U.N. declaration and UNMOVIC’s

production of agent (Duelfer, *Comprehensive Report*, under “Key Findings: Biological,” p. 2).

Over time, and with the infusion of funding and resources following acceptance of the Oil for Food program, **Iraq effectively shortened the time that would be required to reestablish CW production capacity.** Some of this was a natural collateral benefit of developing an indigenous chemical production infrastructure. By 2003, Iraq would have been able to produce mustard agent **in a period of months** and nerve agent in **less than a year or two.** We have not come across explicit guidance from Saddam on this point, yet it was an inherent consequence of his decision to develop a domestic chemical production capacity (“Testimony of Charles Duelfer,” p. 6).

¹⁹⁹ See “Testimony of Charles Duelfer,” pp. 1-8.

2003 inspection reports; the on-site discovery by ISG did not add new and significant information with regard with regard to international understanding of Iraq’s capability before the war.

Two statements in the ‘Key Findings’ section of the Duelfer report were particularly suggestive of the Iraq’s WMD developmental readiness/capability. Both of them were related to its capability to produce biological warfare (BW) agents; one seemed to refer to research activities that have potential dual application (“BW-applicable research”), and the other referred to “BW-related seed stocks.” However, those capabilities were judged to be disconnected from any programmatic weapons production activities. For example:

TABRC conducted research and development (R&D) programs to enable indigenous manufacture of bacterial growth media. Although **these media are suitable for the bulk production of BW agents**, ISG has found no evidence to indicate that their development and testing were specifically for this purpose.

Although Iraq had the **basic capability** to work with variola major (smallpox), ISG found no evidence that it retained any stocks of smallpox or actively conducted research into this agent for BW intentions.²⁰⁰

Whereas the research program and activities cannot be counted as a government-run BW program, and those activities could even be legal under the U.N. framework, but the facts could be calculated by others toward Iraq’s overall WMD readiness and capability.

One of the summary statements claimed: “Iraq retained some BW-related seed stocks until their discovery after Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF)” —a potentially

²⁰⁰ Duelfer, *Comprehensive Report*, under “Key Findings: Biological,” p. 3.

serious charge. But a closer look at the bullet point would suggest an alternative picture:

...Dr. Rihab Rashid Taha Al ‘Azzawi, head of the bacterial program claims she retained BW seed stocks until early 1992 when she destroyed them. ISG has not found a means of verifying this. **Some seed stocks were retained by another Iraqi official until 2003 when they were recovered by ISG.**²⁰¹

Although the actual amount of BW-related materials was minuscule, and it could well be hidden out of an Iraqi official’s individual decision, this “fact” could also be calculated into the overall WMD readiness/capability of the Iraqi regime before the coalition invasion in 2003. In sum, Iraq’s WMD readiness/capability represented in the Duelfer report was a summative account based on an extensive investigation of disconnected objects, instead of finding of any coherent and organized program with sufficient resources to produce chemical or biological weapons of mass destruction.²⁰²

²⁰¹ Duelfer, *Comprehensive Report*, under “Key Findings: Biological,” p. 2.

²⁰² Many democratic politicians focused on the absence of mature physical threats—such as large WMD stockpiles, running programs, and sophisticated production facilities—as the central finding of the Duelfer report, and the finding supported the assertion that the U.N. sanctions regime had worked (or else a mature WMD threat would have been discovered). Other issues discussed in the ISG reports and used by the Bush Administration—such as on the issues of a possible underdeveloped program, of a minimal amount of possible stock of biological and chemical agents, of a summative picture of Iraq’s WMD capability, or of a strategic intention to develop WMD harm the United States—were seen as irrelevant to the overall claim by the Bush Administration about a grave Iraqi threat before the war. For example, following Duelfer’s congressional testimony on October 7, Senator Carl Levin (D-Michigan) was quoted as saying that the public should not be sidetracked by issues that was not irrelevant to the Bush Administration’s case of going to war, which was “the twin arguments that Saddam Hussein had existing stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction and that he might give weapons of mass destruction to al Qaeda to attack us...” Similarly, Senator Jay Rockefeller (D-West Virginia) argued that despite Saddam Hussein’s intentions and deceptive efforts, “the bottom line is Iraq did not have either weapon stockpiles or active production capabilities at the time of the war,” and one fact remains: “the sanctions combined with inspections were working and Saddam was restrained.” Wayne Drash, “Iraq WMD Report Enters Political Fray: On Eve of Debate, Republicans, Democrats Use Conclusions.” *CNN*, 8 October 2004, <http://www.cnn.com/2004/ALLPOLITICS/10/07/wmd.iraq/index.html> (accessed 29 June 2008).

Threat from mystery. Despite a general concession that Iraq probably did not have WMD stockpiles or an active program, the Duelfer report did not close the door to such possibilities; it laid out many issues that have not been verified, and probably could never be. Aside from destroyed computers and documents and sanitization effort, the report stated that much of Saddam Hussein’s WMD development vision was put into practice without direct order from him²⁰³—meaning that scientists and

²⁰³ Consider these excerpts:

(1) For example, given the nature of Iraqi governance, one should not look for much of an audit trail on WMD. Even Saddam’s most senior ministers did not want to be in a position to tell him bad news or make recommendations from which he would recoil. The most successful and long-lived advisors were those who could **anticipate his intentions**. Hence, there was a very powerful role for **implicit guidance**. This was particularly the case for the most sensitive issues—such as actions that related to human rights and weapons of mass destruction. This dynamic limits the evidence that one might expect to find, i.e. **little documentation** and senior advisors who could honestly say they never had instructions on certain matters. This, of course, **makes it risky to draw conclusions about the absence of evidence**, a continuous problem in Iraq (“Testimony of Charles Duelfer,” p. 2).

(2) “Complicating their lives was the tendency of Saddam to hold his cards close while he allowed minions to debate. Saddam did not lead by espousing detailed goals and objectives. He tended to allow ideas to float up and he would consider them—often never pronouncing on them one way or the other. This meant that much guidance to the government was *implicit* rather than *explicit*. For investigators, a consequence is that forensic evidence of Presidential direction may not exist, but it does not mean that such guidance was not there, but simply that we cannot see it in the usual ways. *Implicit guidance may exist and be of equal or greater importance than explicit direction*. This reality of life in Baghdad under Saddam has the consequence of diminishing the ability to document governmental policies of directions” (Duelfer, *Comprehensive Report*, under “Transmittal Message,” p. 4; italics in original.).

(3) “Often ISG found no evidence of one thing or another. It may be that a more accurate formulation might be we recognized no evidence. This is a fundamental conundrum in assessing alien circumstances. It is vital to understand that in such an environment—an environment alien to those accustomed to Western democracies—implicit guidance from the leader can be as compelling and real as explicit guidance. Indeed, in the security-conscious world of Saddam, *it would be surprising to find explicit direction related to sensitive topics like WMD. This would especially be the case for programs of presidential interest or direction*. It is important to understand what one should expect to see and what one should not

officials could technically hide WMD, destroy documents, and chose to undisclosed items on their own allegedly based on their own understanding of the will of the government. Hence, numerous signs of potential danger were produced from these unknowns. Consider the following two quotes from Duelfer's senate testimony on 6 October 2004:

(1) By 2003, Iraq **would have been** able to produce mustard agent in a period of months and nerve agent in less than a year or two. We have not come across **explicit guidance** from Saddam on this point, yet it was an inherent consequence of his decision to develop a **domestic chemical production capacity**.

(2) Some **activity that might have been** related to a biological program has been examined closely, including work with a bio-pesticide, bacillus thuringiensis. While this work **could have been** related to advancing Iraqi anthrax knowledge, information is **inconclusive**. **This work could and certainly did sustain the talent need to restart a BW [biological warfare] program, we can form no absolute conclusion** on whether this work represented active efforts to **develop further anthrax programs** or not.

The first quote, for example, pointed to Iraq's developing chemical production industry linked to a developing capacity to produce WMD. There was no direct evidence of Saddam Hussein's explicit guidance to use these resources (most of them legal under the U.N. framework) to develop WMD; however, the mere functional relations between physical objects (chemical production and chemical weapons production) served as signs of potential danger. The second quote showed a similar line of reasoning. Although there was no conclusive evidence detailing how some governmental projects were related to the manufacturing of biological weapons, these

expect to see." (Duelfer, *Comprehensive Report*, "Transmittal Message," p. 7, italics in original)

activities (even though legal) were represented as “could have been” and “might have been” related to Hussein’s active effort to develop anthrax programs (and “certainly” helped to strengthen WMD capability). Hence, a wide range of activities and objects—e.g., laboratories, evidence of sanitization of inspection sites, suspicious trucks and activities, miscellaneous declared or undeclared materials—that could not be verified to be related to the purpose of WMD development were assessed by their potential functional utility in the context of WMD readiness. Duelfer did not go as far as Bush’s and Powell’s prewar approach that jumped to asserting these activities as evidence of Saddam Hussein’s association with terrorist activities. However, by rejecting any benefit of the doubt for Saddam Hussein and by relying on a potential ‘implicit guidance’ as the background concept, the Duelfer report kept open many of these activities and objects as *possible* fragmented components of an active, illegal WMD program of a larger scale covertly developed by Saddam Hussein.

This representation is enabled by the mysterious, secretive, ambitious quality of the Saddam Hussein regime depicted in the report. As Duelfer put it in the senate testimony, Hussein was so secretive that “only he knows many of the vital points” about WMD—not even some of his closest advisors have a clear, common understanding about the status of existence of WMD.²⁰⁴ Such secrecy masked the potential for the discovery of real truths:

²⁰⁴ Here is the exact statement: “This applies especially to Saddam himself, who was a special case in all of this. We had the opportunity to debrief him, but **he naturally had limited incentives to be candid or forthcoming at all**. Nevertheless, many of his statements were interesting and revealing. **In the end, only he knows many of the vital points**. Even **those closest to him** had mixed understandings of his objectives. In fact, **there was uncertainty among some of his**

A variety of questions about Iraqi WMD capabilities and intentions remain unanswered, even after extensive investigation by ISG. For example, we cannot yet definitively say whether or not **WMD materials were transferred out of Iraq before the war**. Neither can we definitively answer some questions about **possible retained stocks**. Developments in the **Iraqi Intelligence services** appear to have been limited in scope, but they were certainly **never declared** to the United Nations. What did they really represent and was there a more extensive clandestine activity with another set of technical experts? We cannot say for certain.²⁰⁵

In the end, the Duelfer report virtually claimed that many issues could not be conclusively answered by the investigations—not the WMD stockpiles, not Saddam Hussein’s intent, and not Iraq’s WMD programs and capabilities. The ISG’s failure to find conclusive evidence did not lead to the conclusion that the 1,200-people investigation team had no evidence to conclude anything about the existence of a tangible WMD threat. Instead, the ISG report was written in a way to show that it had evidence of numerous *possible* indicators of the existence of WMD stockpiles and programs and evidence of definite WMD readiness, even though the evidences were lacking in quantity and quality. Such an evidential shortage or uncertainty was at least partially caused by Saddam Hussein’s government—its failure to declare all declarable items, to have a functional and organized government, and to be forthright, transparent, and honest. In this way, the ISG report still left intact the concept of potential danger sketched by the Bush Administration before the war—a danger that that could never be verified or fully understood, a danger that may remain as an eternal mystery.

closest advisors about WMD and whether it even existed” (“Testimony of Charles Duelfer,” p. 8).

²⁰⁵ “Testimony of Charles Duelfer,” p. 7.

II. Assimilating New Information into the War on Terrorism Script

Cost-Benefit Analyses by the Bush Administration

After the controversial resignation and statements by David Kay in January 2004, the Bush Administration was beginning to publicly address the possibility that Iraq did not possess WMD. President Bush did so by emphasizing the negative information about Iraq in Kay's report, citing Iraq's unauthorized materials and activities, its illegal use of the Oil-for-Food program, and Kay's overall assessment that the Iraqi regime was a threat and danger to the world.²⁰⁶ Its basic representational strategy can be seen in his practices of cost-benefit analyses and public threat accounting.

Bush generally argued that (1) although the pre-war calculation *process* was wrong due to bad intelligence, the assertion of Saddam's grave threat has been verified to be correct; and (2) the overall outcome of the war did more good than harm. His statements in *Meet the Press*, hosted by Tim Russert, following the David Kay scandal is particularly revealing of Bush's reasoning framework.

HOST: Now looking back, in your mind, is it worth the loss of **530 American lives** and **3,000 injuries and woundings** simply to remove Saddam Hussein, even though there were no weapons of mass destruction?

PRESIDENT BUSH: **Every life is precious.** Every person that is willing to sacrifice for this country deserves our praise, and yes.

²⁰⁶ For example, see George W. Bush, 2 February 2004, "Remarks Following a Cabinet Meeting and an Exchange With Reporters," *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 40(6), pp. 179-181; George W. Bush, 6 February 2004, "Remarks Announcing the Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction," The James S. Brady Briefing Room, The White House, *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 40(6), pp. 202-203.

HOST: Do you think—

PRESIDENT BUSH: **Let me finish.**

HOST: Please.

PRESIDENT BUSH: It's essential that I explain this properly to the parents of those who lost their lives. Saddam Hussein was **dangerous**, and I'm not gonna leave him in power and trust a **madman**. He's a **dangerous man**. He had **the ability to make weapons** at the very minimum. For the parents of the soldiers who have fallen who are listening, David **Kay**, the weapons inspector, came back and said, "In many ways Iraq was more **dangerous** than we thought." It's—we're in a war against **these terrorists who will bring great harm to America**, and I've asked these young ones to sacrifice for that. A free Iraq will change the world. It's **historic** times. A free Iraq will make it easier for other **children** in our own country to grow up in a safer world because in the Middle East is where you find the hatred and violence that enables the enemy to recruit its killers...²⁰⁷

Relying on David Kay's public statement about the Iraqi threat—that Iraq was more dangerous than he had thought before the war—Bush argued that the soldiers had eliminated a "great harm" to America for years to come, regardless of whether Iraq actually possessed WMD.²⁰⁸ This information is then used in his cost-benefit analysis,

²⁰⁷“Interview with President George W. Bush,” *Meet the Press, NBC*, 8 February 2004, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/4179618> (accessed 1 October 2004).

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.* Tim Russert asked a similar question later; Bush's reasoning method was about the same.

HOST: **In light of not finding the weapons of mass destruction, do you believe the war in Iraq is a war of choice or a war of necessity?**

PRESIDENT BUSH: I think that's an interesting question. Please elaborate on that a little bit. A war of choice or a war of necessity? It's a **war of necessity**. We — in my judgment, we had no choice when we look at the intelligence I looked at that says the man was a threat. And you know, **we'll find out about the weapons of mass destruction that we all thought were there**. That's part of the Iraqi Survey Group and the group I put together to look at. But again, I repeat to you, I don't want to sound like a broken record, but David **Kay**, who is the man who led the Iraqi Survey Group, who has now returned with an interim report, clearly said that the place was a **dangerous place**. When asked if President Bush had done — had made the right decision, he said yes. In other words, the **evidence** we have uncovered thus far says we had no choice.

substantiating the argument that the removal of Saddam Hussein (benefit) worth the injuries and loss of American lives (cost), within the context of Iraq not having any weapons of mass destruction.

But Bush was not merely arguing for the material benefits that satisfy the nation's self-interest. At a deeper level, Bush also made use of the War on Terrorism script to make a symbolic calculation arguing for the *moral benefit* of the war in light of *human costs*. Weighing between the precious but finite human costs (the represented costs) in exchange for what he shortly referred to as fulfilling the 'history's call to America' (the represented benefit), Bush inferred that the overall benefit was worth the cost. As Bush immediately continued after this quote:

And, Tim, as you can tell, I've got a **foreign policy that is one that believes America has a responsibility in this world to lead, a responsibility to lead in the war against terror**, a responsibility to speak clearly about the **threats** that we all face, a responsibility to promote freedom, to free people from the clutches of barbaric people such as Saddam Hussein who tortured, mutilated—**there were mass graves that we have found**—a responsibility to **fight AIDS**, the pandemic of AIDS, and to **feed the hungry**. We have a responsibility. To me that is **history's call to America**. I accept the call and will continue to lead in that direction.

And not only did he argue that the benefit of the war worth the cost of soldiers' lives, Bush also concluded that his motivation to invade Iraq was moral and right. The correct motivation is primarily established by facts that indicate the evilness of Iraq and the goodness of America. Bush saw himself and altruistic U.S. soldiers on the side of the good serving lofty moral purposes from the beginning. He also saw Saddam Hussein was evil; the ISG investigation confirmed, not rejected, this knowledge. The "mass graves" was elicited as an evidential fact to confirm the evil

character of the enemy—and the soldiers and commanders who seek to get rid of this evil enemy was ‘answering history’s call to America.’

Indeed, the Bush Administration used information from the ISG investigations to figure into the symbolic calculation of the worthiness of the invasion of Iraq. Under the calculation scheme, the measurement of outcome is the amount of goodness done relative to the evilness eliminated; the measurement of motivation is the amount of goodness intended relative to the evilness intended. A simple discovery—the finding of mass graves (which was also found by U.N. inspectors in the 1990s)—served as an evidential fact to justify both the ends and the means. The Duelfer report’s extensive overview of Saddam Hussein’s dirty deeds and unclean intentions further provided a reservoir of materials for the Bush Administration to justify its case.

But in my view, material calculation only mattered as secondary importance. The Duelfer report did provide materials about the *intent* and *capabilities* to produce WMD, which helped the Bush Administration to affirm its pre-war tactical calculation to be legitimate and to justify the overall outcome of the invasion on the ground that a major material threat was eliminated.²⁰⁹ However, even these material calculations

²⁰⁹ For example: “But Saddam Hussein **didn’t believe** the United Nations. After all, he’d **ignored** 16 other resolutions. Last night, my opponent said something about, well, maybe another resolution **would have helped**. I just don’t think it’s realistic. **As a matter of fact, the U.N. sent inspectors into Iraq, and as David Kay’s report showed, Saddam Hussein was systematically deceiving the inspectors. Somehow thinking inspectors would have caused Saddam Hussein to change is -- is not very clear thinking. And so at this point in time, I realized diplomacy wasn’t working. And so I had a choice to make: Do I -- do I take the word of a madman and forget the lessons of September the 11th, or take action to defend this country? Given that choice, I will defend America every time. (Applause.)** We didn’t find the stockpiles everybody thought was there. But knowing what I know today, I would have taken the same action. And the reason why is because **Saddam Hussein had the capability of making weapons of mass destruction.** And had the world turned its head, he **would have made** those weapons. Had we hoped that a resolution would have worked, he **would have been able to realize his dreams.** He

were mediated by assumptions (or imagination) about Saddam Hussein’s character—for example, what Hussein “could have” done with minimal materials that he “could have” produced. Hence, threat was assessed done through “worst-case” scenario thinking (cf. Kaufmann 2004).

Secondary elaborations. The new knowledge that Saddam Hussein was probably not hiding WMD disturbed the legitimacy of military actions against Iraq and potentially challenged the Bush Administration’s moral integrity. This chapter has shown how the Administration employed “secondary elaborations” to make sense of the new information in public discourse, thereby reaffirming the presence of Iraqi threat, the goodness of the United States, and the evilness of Saddam Hussein.

Furthermore, the goodness of the United States—or the goodness of the Administration for that matter—was also maintained by the attribution of negative outcomes to the technical failure of U.S. intelligence agencies. This act of attribution served to discourage interpretations that the Bush Administration was never committed to finding the truth and that it was merely looking for an excuse to invade Iraq. One visible political event orchestrated by President Bush was the formation of a commission to look into what was wrong with U.S. intelligence agencies:

Good afternoon. Today, by executive order, I am creating an **independent commission**, chaired by Governor and former Senator Chuck Robb, Judge Laurence Silberman, to look at American intelligence capabilities, especially our intelligence about weapons of mass destruction....Dr. Kay also stated that some pre-war intelligence

could have passed that capability or those weapons on to terrorists that hate us. After September the 11th, that was a chance we could not afford to take. The world is better off with Saddam Hussein sitting in a prison cell. (**Applause.**)” George W. Bush, 1 October 2004, “Remarks in Allentown, Pennsylvania,” *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 40(40), pp. 2198-2205.

assessments by America and other nations about Iraq's weapons stockpiles have not been confirmed. **We are determined to figure out why. We're also determined to make sure that American intelligence is as accurate as possible for every challenge in the future....Our efforts against proliferation begin with and depend upon accurate and thorough intelligence.** The men and women of our intelligence community and intelligence officers who work for our friends and allies around the world are **dedicated professionals engaged in difficult and complex work. America's enemies are secretive, they are ruthless, and they are resourceful.** And in tracking and disrupting their activities, our nation must bring to bear every tool and advantage at our command....And now, as we move forward in our efforts to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction, we must stay ahead of constantly changing **intelligence challenges.** The **stakes for our country could not be higher,** and our standard of intelligence gathering and analysis must be equal to that of the challenge.²¹⁰

This declaration—with a similar one articulated after the release of the Duelfer report²¹¹—shows the mechanism of this secondary elaboration. Even before the investigation begun, the speaker presumed that the problem was caused by a technical failure, taking for granted that the outcome could not be possibly be attributed to the Administration immoral character (i.e., intention to lie) or problematic reasoning and interpretation practices before the war. Embedded in the reasoning is a sequence of

²¹⁰ George W. Bush, 6 February 2004, "Remarks Announcing the Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction," The James S. Brady Briefing Room, The White House, *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 40(6), pp. 202-203.

²¹¹ Bush made a similar in another occasion: "Chief weapons inspector, Charles **Duelfer**, has now issued a comprehensive report that confirms the earlier conclusion of David **Kay** that Iraq did not have the weapons that our intelligence believed were there....The **Duelfer report** makes clear that **much of the accumulated body of 12 years of our intelligence and that of our allies was wrong, and we must find out why and correct the flaws.** The **Silberman-Robb commission** is now at work to do just that, and its work is important and essential. At a time of many threats in the world, the intelligence on which the President and members of Congress base their decisions must be better—and it will be. I look forward to the Intelligence Reform Commission's recommendations, and **we will act on them to improve our intelligence,** especially our intelligence about weapons of mass destruction. Thank you all very much." George W. Bush, 7 October 2004, "Report on Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction," The South Grounds, The White House, *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 40(41), pp. 2275-2276.

reciprocal evidencing. Because the Administration has always had a commitment to finding truth, therefore it formed a fact-finding commission. But what could prove the Administration has good intention? The very act of forming a commission to investigate intelligence failure serves as an evidential fact supporting the assertion of the Administration's proactive desire for truth.

Bush also indirectly rebutted criticisms about his ill intention or moral failure by inflating the stakes of intelligence failure on the War on Terrorism project. According to the discursive system enveloped in the War on Terrorism script, because the stakes for the quality intelligence has always been so high, Bush had no motive to undermine the War on Terrorism project that he himself proposed only to support enemies that were ruthless, secretive, and dangerous. Hence, his good-will was substantiated by the stake of losing the War on Terrorism.

In fact, the Administration's good will was so taken-for-granted as a given truth that the Administration voided the need to investigate itself. The commission the Bush Administration appointed to investigate was "not authorized to investigate how policymakers used the intelligence assessments they received from the Intelligence Community."²¹² Within such an epistemic limit, the failure of intelligence accuracy was automatically not to be attributed to policymakers' misuses and abuse of the information. A report released a year later explained why intelligence had failed. The commission attributed the weakness in intelligence to the intelligence community

²¹² *Report to the President of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: The Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction, 31 March 2005), p.8, *The Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction*, http://www.wmd.gov/report/wmd_report.pdf (accessed 2 July 2008).

personnel's drive to "maintain a status quo that is increasingly irrelevant to the new challenges presented by weapons of mass destruction," complacency in accepting intelligence gaps, and failure to tell policymakers "just how limited their knowledge really is."²¹³ It also stated that "Intelligence will always be imperfect and, as history persuades us, surprise [about WMD] can never be completely prevented."²¹⁴

Epistemic assimilation of new facts. By the last month of the 2004 presidential election, the Bush Administration assembled an extremely complex meaning system about the U.S. War on Iraq and War on Afghanistan that built on layers of knowledge incrementally derived from diverse reasoning practices. It is difficult to reproduce the sense of epistemic culmination without going over entire speeches. Nevertheless, the following excerpt captures some cumulative quality of the knowledge system:

[#1] Before the Commander-in-Chief commits troops into harm's way, he must try all options before military options. And so I went to the United Nations in hopes that **diplomacy** would work, in hopes that somehow the free world would finally convince Saddam Hussein to listen to the demands. The United Nations Security Council debated the issue and voted 15 to nothing to say to Saddam Hussein: **disclose, disarm**, or face serious consequences. I believe that when an international body speaks, it must mean what it says in order to keep this world peaceful. (Applause.) Saddam Hussein **ignored the demands** yet again. Last night my opponent [i.e., Presidential contestant John Kerry] said, well, we probably should have—not "probably"—we should have taken more time and passed another resolution, as if number 18 would have convinced him. We sent inspectors in—the U.N. did—they were systematically deceived. That's what history shows. **My opponent said, we should have left the inspectors in there. Why? I don't know. Maybe Saddam could deceive them even more.** The truth was diplomacy had failed.

²¹³ Ibid., p.4.

²¹⁴ Ibid., p.7.

[#2] And so I now have a choice to make: Do I take the word of a madman and forget the lessons of September the 11th, or take action to **defend this country**? Given that choice, I will defend America every time. (Applause.) [#3] We **didn't find the stockpiles** we thought would be there. We didn't find the stockpiles everybody thought would be there. But I want you to remember, **Saddam still had the capability** of making weapons of mass destruction. He **could have passed** that capability onto an enemy, and that is a **risk** we could not have afforded to have taken after September the 11th. Knowing what I know today, **I would have made the same decision.** (Applause.)²¹⁵

Part one of the excerpt mainly reviewed why 'diplomacy was not working to contain Saddam Hussein.' 'Saddam ignored or refused to listen to U.N. demands to disclose and disarm' and 'the United Nations was ineffective' were 'facts' constructed by the Bush Administration in 2003. They were predicated on the sub-arguments that Iraq's documentary disclosure in December 2002 was non-meaningful, that Iraq's later cooperation with U.N. inspectors was not substantial, that the U.N. inspection process was not succeeding in completing the tasks of disclosure and disarmament, and Saddam's (alleged) efforts to deceive the United Nations was the equivalent of his success in deception. Given these 'facts,' Kerry's idea to rely on U.N. inspection was mocked as result in nothing except having 'Saddam deceiving the inspectors even more.'

Part two of the excerpt—partly built on facts provided in part one—explained the logic behind going to war. It re-invoked the policy doctrine of preventive war established after 9/11, which says that military action would be justified when enemy regimes posed a grave threat to the national security of the United States. Hence, the

²¹⁵ George W. Bush, 1 October 2004, "Remarks by the President at Victory 2004 Rally," McIntyre Ski Area, Manchester, New Hampshire, *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 40(41), pp. 2209-2216.

decision to attack Iraq was based on the motive to “defend America” against a tangible threat which could not be deterred by diplomatic means.

Part three of the excerpt assimilates the ISG investigative findings to support the general theory that Iraq posed a major threat before the war, despite the absence of WMD stockpiles. The Duelfer report was used to support the general case that ‘Saddam had the capability to make WMD,’ which led to the possibility that he could possibly pass on the capability to the terrorists somehow to threaten the United States.

Even though these ‘facts’ and sub-arguments had been contested or were established on arbitrary grounds, at this point they were elicited as singular, taken-for-granted truths. As these facts were uttered together within a short duration, they afforded the establishment of an internally coherent theory of motive about the Bush Administration’s actions during the course of the War on Terrorism.

Cost-Benefit Assessment by John Kerry

Whereas Bush assimilated the ISG findings to bolster its rightfulness of its war decisions, Democratic Presidential candidate John Kerry did the opposite. Kerry used the ISG findings as complementary evidence of Bush’s technocratic amateurishness with regard to the War on Terrorism. This is not say, however, that Bush’s motive or the outcome of the war was cast as immoral. Like the Democrats’ mode of critique during the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse scandal, Kerry generally adopted a technical-rational mode of representation. He specifically charged that the manners by which the Bush Administration evaluated situations and decided on actions were tactically illegitimate and irrational, and these technical defects prevented America to achieve

the intended virtuous ends of War on Terrorism optimally and productively.²¹⁶ New information raised by the no-WMD scandal was absorbed into this system of representation.

Consider the following example:

[#1] Saddam Hussein was a brutal dictator who **deserves his own special place in hell. But that was not, in itself, a reason to go to war.** **[#2]** The satisfaction we take in his downfall does not hide this fact: we have **traded a dictator for a chaos that has left America less secure.** **[#3]** The President has said that he “miscalculated” in Iraq and that it was a “catastrophic success.” In fact, the President has made a series of **catastrophic decisions...**from the beginning...in Iraq. At every fork in the road, he has taken the **wrong turn** and led us in the **wrong direction.** The first and most fundamental mistake was the President’s **failure to tell the truth** to the American people. He **failed to tell the truth** about the rationale for going to war. And he **failed to tell the truth** about the burden this war would impose on our soldiers and our citizens. By one count, the President **offered 23 different rationales** for this war. If his purpose was to **confuse and mislead** the American people, he succeeded. **[#4] His two main rationales—weapons of mass destruction and the Al Qaeda/September 11 connection—have been proved false...by the President’s own weapons inspectors...and by the 9/11 Commission.** Just last week,

²¹⁶ The following quote captures the general way in which Kerry articulated his critique of Bush related to the War on Iraq, “When it comes to Iraq, it’s not that I would have done one thing differently from the President, I would’ve done almost everything differently. I would have **given the inspectors the time** they needed before rushing to war. I would have **built a genuine coalition of our allies** around the world. I would’ve made sure that **every soldier** put in harm’s way **had the equipment and body armor** they needed. I **would’ve listened** to the senior military leaders of this country and the bipartisan advice of Congress. And, if there’s one thing I learned from my own service, I would never have gone to war **without a plan to win the peace.** I would not have made the wrong choices that are forcing us to **pay nearly the entire cost of this war—\$200 billion** that we’re not investing in education, health care, and job creation here at home. \$200 billion for going-it-alone in Iraq. That’s the wrong choice; that’s the wrong direction; and that’s the **wrong leadership** for America.” John Kerry, “Remarks on Bush’s Wrong Choices in Iraq That Have Left Us Without the Resources We Need at Home: Remarks of John Kerry,” *John Kerry for President* (original site discontinued), 8 September 2004, http://www.johnkerry.com/pressroom/speeches/spc_2004_0908.html (accessed 1 February 2005). Note that everything that Kerry would have done differently was technical in nature—getting more international allies, giving U.N. inspectors more time, giving soldiers better equipment and armor, listening to advices, having a better plan, saving money. This critique belongs to a rational mode of representation because it was a critique of an institutional official (i.e., the President) for inefficiency and ineffectiveness in carrying out an institutional goal.

Secretary of State Powell acknowledged the facts. Only Vice President **Cheney still insists that the earth is flat.**²¹⁷

This quote contains many points repeated in Kerry's speeches that challenged Bush's technical assessment. Part 1 challenged the rightfulness of Bush's motivation to go to war, not in terms of moral righteousness (since 'Saddam deserves a place in hell' and his downfall also brings satisfaction to Kerry personally), but in the sense of the proven negative outcomes: chaos in Iraq and decreased security of America. The rest of the excerpt elaborates Bush's technical wrongdoings that led to such a policy failure. Part 3 listed many claims regarding Bush's management mistakes, stating that he failed to clarify war objectives to the American people, made wrong turns at "every fork in the road," led the country to a "wrong direction," and failed to tell the truths about the cost of war and the reasons to go to war. Part 4 further charged that one of the main important rationales—the assertion of Iraq's possession of WMD—were "proved false" by the ISG. Here, the absence of WMD in Iraq were used as an evidence for Bush's management or leadership incompetence and was not explicitly related to Bush's character. Overall, the ISG findings were used by Kerry to assert that Bush miscalculated the need to go into Iraq.

This is not to say that Kerry did not raise *any* moral criticisms of Bush. But when he did he only did so by allusion, inference, and implications. Such observed utterances were isolated and ambiguous—ambiguous in the sense that it could mean a

²¹⁷ John Kerry, "Speech at New York University: Remarks of John Kerry." *John Kerry for President* (original site discontinued), 20 September 2004, http://www.johnkerry.com/pressroom/speeches/spc_2004_0920.html (accessed 1 February 2005))

moral critique or otherwise. The following excerpt contains what I have found to be among the most explicit statement of moral critique of the Bush Administration:

[#1] The American people deserve a commander in chief who **will tell the truth in good times and bad. This president has failed that fundamental test.** When the President is faced with the consequences of his own **wrong decisions**, he doesn't confront them, he **tries to hide them**. The truth is, President Bush has **never leveled with the American people about why we went to war**...how the war is going...or what he is doing to put Iraq on track. [#2] The President **diverted critical military and intelligence personnel** from Afghanistan and the hunt for Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda. He **failed to use the best mountain troops** in the world when we had bin Laden cornered in the mountains of Tora Bora. Instead, he used Afghan warlords who one week earlier were on the other side.²¹⁸

Reading part 1 of the excerpt in isolation, Kerry appeared to be raising a critique of Bush's character alluding to a potential conscious deception, citing that he failed the "fundamental test" of "telling the truth in good and bad times" and "has never leveled with the American people." However, the lexical choices afforded an alternative interpretation—that "failure to tell the truth" in good and bad times could just be caused by sheer leadership incompetence rather than by conscientiousness of character. These utterances were immediately followed by the mentioning of other mistakes Bush committed—i.e., the wrongful diversion of military and intelligence personnel and the failure to effectively use mountain troops to capture bin Laden—which is a clear, direct rational mode of critique. Recall Van Dijk's theory of macrostructure. The meanings of individual sentences are defined by how they cohere with other sentences. Hence, reading part 1 and part 2 together—we can see how the

²¹⁸ John Kerry, "Speech at the University of Wisconsin, Green Bay Remarks of John Kerry," *John Kerry for President* (original site discontinued), 26 October 2004, http://www.johnkerry.com/pressroom/speeches/spc_2004_1026.html (accessed 1 February 2005).

events mentioned in part 1 (‘not telling the truth’ and ‘not leveling with the American people’) is more likely related to an overall, direct critique of Bush being an incompetent leader.²¹⁹

The following statement shows a similar point, whereby the fact the absence of WMD finding was integrated into Kerry’s critique by demonstrating Bush’s incompetence:

One year ago this week, American soldiers raced across the desert to Baghdad. Ten months ago, George Bush stood on an aircraft carrier and proclaimed “mission accomplished.” But today we know that the **mission is not finished**, hostilities have not ended, and our men and women in uniform fight on almost alone with the target squarely on their backs. Everyday, they **face danger and death from suicide bombers, roadside bombers**, and now ironically, **from the very Iraqi police** they are training. We are still **bogged down in Iraq**—and the Administration **stubbornly holds to failed policies that drive potential allies away**. What we have seen is a **steady loss of lives and mounting costs in dollars**, with no end in sight. **We were misled about weapons of mass destruction**. We are misled now when the **costs of Iraq** are not even counted in the President’s budget.²²⁰

The ‘facts’ of Bush ‘misleading’ the public about weapons of mass destruction in 2003 was immediately followed by a statement of him misleading the American about the costs of Iraq in 2004. These could be acts of bad faith—acts of moral failure. But this impression is not supported by additional facts or theory stating, for example, why

²¹⁹ Bush ‘trying to hide consequences of his wrong decisions’ seemed to be a more serious and direct charge of Bush’s moral character, but the potentially immoral motive did not get elaborated. The sentence is immediate followed by how Bush “has never leveled with the American people about why we went to war... how the war is going... or what he is doing to put Iraq on track.” I argue that it gives the impression that Bush ‘tried to hide consequences of his wrong decisions’ for the similar reason as how he failed to level to the American people about how the war is going or how he is doing to put Iraq on track. While it is hard to dissect the text’s meaning at this micro-level, it is clear from the overall corpus that the Kerry campaign did not wage a sustained moral critique of the Bush Administration.

²²⁰ John Kerry, “Protecting Our Military Families in Times of War: Remarks of John Kerry,” *John Kerry for President* (original site discontinued), 17 March 2004, http://www.johnkerry.com/pressroom/speeches/spc_2004_0317.html (accessed 1 February 2005)

Bush pursued a course of deceit. The facts being mentioned concomitantly were mainly the negative outcomes of the deplorable military situation faced by American soldiers, “steady loss of lives,” and “mounting costs of dollars.” These outcomes were led by his poor policy-making behaviors and incompetence to evaluate situations (e.g., training Iraqi police who switched sides). In the end, the act of ‘misleading’ was not embedded in an explicit intention to deceive but in a context of technical failure.

The previous analysis of the Abu Ghraib scandal pointed to a set of parameters of critique set by the War on Terrorism script. These parameters seem to be present in Kerry campaign’s critique as well. Motivational and outcome assessments were linked to the effectiveness of the War on Terrorism, not to the moral righteousness of the project or the American nation. The quote below shows how Kerry lambasted the Bush Administration and it illustrates the contour of Kerry’s parameters:

[#1] I begin with this belief: The **war on terror** is as monumental a struggle as the Cold War. Its outcome will determine whether we and our children live in **freedom or in fear**. It is not, as some people think, a clash of civilizations. Radical Islamic fundamentalism is not the true face of Islam. **This is a clash between civilization and the enemies of civilization; between humanity’s best hopes and most primitive fears.** The danger we face today will become even greater if the terrorists acquire what we know they are seeking—**weapons of mass destruction**, which they would use to commit mass murder. **We are confronting an enemy and an ideology that must be destroyed.** We are in a war that must be won. Americans know this. We understand the stakes. **On September 11th there were no Democrats, no Republicans. We were only Americans. We all stood together. We all supported the President. We all prayed for victory, because we love our country and despise everything our enemies stand for.**

[#2] But three years after 9/11, we see **our enemies striking**—in Spain, in Turkey, in Indonesia, in Kenya, and now every day—in the most despicable and gruesome ways in Iraq, which was **not a terrorist haven before the invasion.** [#3]... We need national leaders who will **face reality**—not only in Iraq but in the war on terror. And we need a

president who has no doubt that the war on terror can and must be won. [#4] **The invasion of Iraq was a profound diversion from the battle against our greatest enemy—Al Qaeda**—which killed more than three thousand people on 9/11 and which still plots our destruction today. [#5] And there’s just no question about it: **the President’s misjudgment, miscalculation and mismanagement of the war in Iraq all make the war on terror harder to win.** [#6] Iraq is now what it was not before the war—a haven for terrorists. [#7] **George Bush made Saddam Hussein the priority. I would have made Osama bin Laden the priority. As president, I will finish the job in Iraq and refocus our energies on the real war on terror.** I will wage this war relentlessly with a **single-minded determination: to capture or kill the terrorists, crush their movement and free the world from fear. To destroy our enemy, we have to know our enemy.**²²¹

The beginning and the closing of the excerpt show that Kerry shared a moral motivation with the Bush with regard to foreign policy after 9/11. In a manner similar to Bush, Kerry represented the War on Terror as a “monumental struggle” between “civilization and the enemies of civilization” and “humanity’s best hopes and most primitive fears.” Within the context of “a war that must be won,” this enemy and its ideology, according to Kerry, is one that “must be destroyed.”

Kerry criticized Bush for outcomes of his policies, citing instances of “the enemies striking” in various countries in “despicable and gruesome ways,” with strikes in Iraq being *the most* despicable and gruesome. Iraq even turned into “a haven for terrorists” as a result of Bush’s policy. These results were not of Bush’s desire, but was resulted from Bush’s “misjudgment, miscalculation, and mismanagement of the war” (part 5). One fundamental misjudgment by Bush, Kerry argued, was the decision to invade Iraq in the first place (parts 4 and 7). The Iraqi invasion was cited as a

²²¹ John Kerry, “Speech at Temple University: Remarks of John Kerry.” *John Kerry for President* (original site discontinued), 24 September 2004, http://www.johnkerry.com/pressroom/speeches/spc_2004_0924.html (accessed 1 February 2005).

diversion of energies and resources from battling against America's "greatest enemy" in the war—namely, Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda.

In summary, this statement shows that while Kerry ferociously criticized Bush, he actively reinforced the premises and goals of the War on Terrorisms script—both the good vs. evil plot and the "war" characterization of the post-9/11 context. Hence, the wrongfulness of motivation and outcome lie in the technical-rational domain rather than the moral realm; the invasion of Iraq was wrong not because it killed and maimed innocent people, but because it was a divergence from the "real" war on terror.

The Bush-Kerry Presidential "Debates"

The two presidential candidates holding different interpretations of the ISG findings faced each other in the televised Presidential debates. Some instances of interaction during the second debate (televised by ABC and moderated by Charles Gibson) display how Bush and Kerry deployed different representational systems to discuss issues related to the ISG findings in them. Consider the first vignette:

PRESIDENT BUSH: You remember the last debate? My opponent said that America must pass a global test before we used force to protect ourselves. That's the kind of mindset that says sanctions were working. That's **the kind of mindset** that said, "**Let's keep it at the United Nations and hope things go well.**" **Saddam Hussein was a threat because he could have given weapons of mass destruction** to terrorist enemies. **Sanctions were not working.** The United Nations was not effective at removing Saddam Hussein.

MODERATOR: Senator?

SENATOR KERRY: The goal of the sanctions was not to remove Saddam Hussein, it was to remove the weapons of mass destruction. And, Mr. President, just yesterday **the Duelfer report told you and the whole world they worked. He didn't have weapons of mass destruction, Mr. President. That was the objective.** And if we'd

used **smart diplomacy**, we could have **saved \$200 billion and an invasion of Iraq**. And right now, **Osama bin Laden might be in jail or dead. That's the war against terror.**²²²

Aside from Bush's misspeaking, the issue of most interest is the opposite portrayal of the effectiveness of the United Nations in containing the threat of Saddam Hussein. Whereas Bush charged that U.N. sanctions were not working, Kerry argued that the U.N. sanctions were working. Curiously, both candidates elicited the Duelfer report to support their contradictory claims. In a later interaction, Bush stated:

PRESIDENT BUSH: That answer almost made me want to scowl. He [Kerry] keeps talking about, "**Let the inspectors do their job.**" It's naive and dangerous to say that. That's what the **Duelfer report** showed. He was **deceiving** the inspectors.

As shown in my previous analysis, the opposite conclusions are based on different practices of risk calculations, which call upon different facts in the report. Seeing a prospective Iraqi threat lying in its *actual*, material possession of WMD or any established mature production programs, as Kerry and U.N. inspectors did, then sanctions were working because the ISG report showed that Iraq did not seem to have WMD, or any active WMD programs for that matter.

On the contrary, Bush had made an elaborate argument that a prospective Iraqi threat residing in (1) Saddam Hussein's *intent* to develop and use WMD and (2) its *potential* to develop WMD. But of course, the mission of U.N. inspection was not meant to fully eliminate Saddam Hussein's psychological intent or all of his so-called capability—caused *mostly* by Saddam's retention of intellectual capitals and other

²²² "The Second Bush-Kerry Presidential Debate," *Commission on Presidential Debates*, 8 October 2004, <http://www.debates.org/pages/trans2004c.html> (accessed 23 October 2004).

resources through legal means. Therefore, the ISG reports did contain usable materials to explain that the U.N. inspectors did not eliminate either dangerous thing, thereby serving as a document to ‘prove’ that U.N. sanctions were not working to eliminate the Iraqi threat.

The following interaction also displays how the Duelfer report was related to Bush’s tactical errors:

AUDIENCE (LINDA GRABEL): President Bush, during the last four years, you have made thousands of decisions that have affected millions of lives. Please give three instances in which you came to realize you had made a wrong decision, and what you did to correct it. Thank you.

PRESIDENT BUSH: I have made a lot of decisions, and some of them little, like appointments to boards you never heard of, and some of them big. And in a war, there’s a lot of—there’s a lot of **tactical decisions** that historians will look back and say: He shouldn’t have done that. He shouldn’t have made the decision. And **I’ll take responsibility** for them. **I’m human**. But on the **big questions**, about whether or not we should have gone into Afghanistan, the **big question** about whether we should have removed somebody in Iraq, **I’ll stand by those decisions**, because **I think they’re right**. That’s really what you’re—when they ask about **mistakes**, that’s what they’re talking about. They’re trying to say, “Did you make a mistake going into Iraq?” And the answer is, “Absolutely not.” It was the right decision. The **Duelfer report confirmed that decision** today, because what Saddam Hussein was doing was **trying to** get rid of sanctions so he could reconstitute a weapons program. And the biggest threat facing America is terrorists with weapons of mass destruction. We knew **he hated** us. We knew he’d been—invaded other countries. We knew **he tortured** his own people....

MODERATOR: Senator Kerry, a minute and a half.

SENATOR KERRY: I believe **the president made a huge mistake, a catastrophic mistake, not to live up to his own standard, which was: build a true global coalition, give the inspectors time to finish their job and go through the U.N. process to end and go to war as a last resort**. I ask each of you just to look into your hearts, look into

your guts. Gut-check time. Was this really going to war as a last resort? The president **rushed our nation to war without a plan to win the peace**. And **simple things weren't done**....²²³

Bush restricted the wrongdoings to the technical-rational domain, and Kerry's critique reinforced the focus. For Bush, the "big questions" about the War on Terrorism would be about "whether or not we should have gone into Afghanistan" and "whether we should have removed somebody in Iraq." These decisions were justified based on personal moral righteousness of the war sustained by verifiable outcomes—i.e., containing a threat and eliminating a hateful terrorist. Hence, Bush stated that he would "stand by those decisions, because I think they're right."

This representation is certainly different a technical-rational mode of discourse, which evaluated the decision to attack Iraq as a question of policy effectiveness. When Kerry stated that he thought Bush "made a huge mistake, a catastrophic mistake, not to live up to his own standard..." he was not talking about Bush's moral mistakes and moral standards. Instead, the standard were tactical in nature, the tactics being the choice not to "build a true global coalition, give the inspectors time to finish their job and go through the U.N. process to end and go to war as a last resort."

Assessing the "mistakes" according to the scale of technical efficiency vs. inefficiency, Kerry assessed that Bush's mistakes were significant and "catastrophic." Assessing the "mistakes" according to the scales of moral righteousness vs. wrongfulness, Bush maintained that he did not commit any mistakes "on the big

²²³ Ibid.

questions.” Overall, the issue at contestation was whether the mistakes carried out by Bush were important or not; this judgment toward this issue varies upon whether one adopts a primarily technical-rational view (proposed by Kerry) or a religious-moral view (proposed by Bush) to evaluate the situation.

III. Summary

The Iraq Survey Group failed to find evidence of WMD stockpiles possessed by Iraq before the war or any major WMD program coordinated by the Iraqi regime. The investigators elaborated on and contextualized this fact in different ways. Chief Inspector David Kay, before his high-profile resignation, asserted that pre-war Iraq was an even greater threat than the United States had portrayed. He reasoned that the threat stems from the unknown degree of chaos and corruption within the Iraqi government, an environment that was conducive to potential trading of WMD materials between terrorists and unmonitored Iraqi official or scientists.

The next chief inspector, Charles Duelfer, delivered the final report in a highly unusual manner. Unlike previous ISG reports that resembled a fact analysis of on-site investigations, the report reviewed Saddam Hussein regime’s past at great length and covered numerous speculative accounts of his political thoughts, intent, tactics, and ambitions. Although the character depiction was not the same as Bush’s,²²⁴ this format of presentation diffused the focus away from the absence of WMD existence in Iraq and provided much citable information—although much of it was old information—about Saddam Hussein’s deceptive and secretive character. The Duelfer

²²⁴ Different from Bush’s pre-war narrative, the report depicted Saddam as a political actor with elaborate strategic goals, rather than the ‘evil man’ or ‘madman’ in Bush’s representation.

report also transferred numerous materials on the Iraqi ground—accrued legally or otherwise—as potential signs of long-term military threat, as these disconnected objects could sum up to a high degree of WMD capability. With this documented *capability* to develop WMD coupled with the documented *intent* to do so, the Duelfer report afforded the Bush Administration’s assessment framework of Iraqi threat.

The Bush Administration’s overall representational approach to was to re-justify the War on Iraq project through a recalculation of Iraqi material threat and a calculation of overall costs and benefit of the war using a moral mode of discourse. Enabled by the rich information provided by the Duelfer report using aforementioned procedures that focused on *intent* and *capability*, Bush’s “threat recalculation” concluded that the argument of the existence of Iraqi threat to U.S. national security remained correct even though the pre-war calculation process was mistaken. He attributed such procedural error to the technical failure of intelligence agencies. Bush also calculated the cost and benefit of the invasion using the War on Terrorism script. Citing signs of horror discovered on the ground (e.g., mass graves, torture chambers), Bush argued the costs paid by American taxpayers and soldiers worth the benefit of liberating Iraqis, and that America’s never-ending desire to bring about such liberation was motivationally legitimate. In sum, both the means and the ends of the War on Iraq were justified.

Presidential candidate John Kerry interpreted the ISG findings differently. Emphasizing the ISG findings of the absence of WMD stockpiles or major programs, he argued that the U.S. War on Iraq—while morally noble in motivation and morally

respectable in some outcomes (e.g., the fall of Saddam Hussein)—was tactically illegitimate. Deploying a technical-rational mode of discourse, Kerry depicted Bush as an incompetent leader, and that his technical ineptitude failed to make war-related decisions that would help America to win the War on Terror. In other words, the ISG findings were proofs of the Bush's incompetence, an incompetence that have led U.S. to deploy wrong means toward counterproductive ends.

In sum, the 'fact' of absence of WMD in Iraq received elaborate re-interpretations by the Republican and Democratic Presidential candidates, generating different meanings. For one, the new information merely indicated some technical weakness of intelligence agencies that could hinder the U.S. virtuous pursuit in the War on Terror. For the other, it indicated the President's technical amateurishness that has led America off the right course: winning the noble War on Terror. Neither interpretation brought to bear the possibility that the problem might originate from the Bush Administration's conscious and unethical representational practice predicated on a persistently selfish, imperialistic foreign policy program to pursue power and resources on behalf of the nation (cf. Kellner 2003, 2005b; Woodward 2004, 2006; Fouskas and Gökay 2005; McLaren 2005).

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

I. Political-Existential Horror

This study tells a story of political discourse. It is a “story” in the sense that a specific set of events occurred among particular characters over time and evoked thematic meaning. In a certain respect, this story has the strong flavor of a horror story. The “horror” does not necessarily come from the lies and deception enacted by a government in public discourse, the imperialist tendency revealed by the United States after September 11, or the rhetorical abuse of democratic and civil religious ideologies to justify violent ends. These themes do emerge—and in these pages readers may find novel information that reinforce these understandings—but they are more extensively explored by scholars and journalists using targeted analytic frameworks and data (Kellner 2003, 2005b, 2007b; Johnson 2004; Woodward 2004, 2006, 2008). As I see it, the most horrifying theme of the story is the seeming arbitrariness of political knowledge relative to its incredible solidity in the discourse system and its grave societal and historical effects.

The major events in this story could be seen as four interconnected sets of “conversations” occurred among discourse actors. In rough chronological order, the conversations occurred: (1) between the Bush Administration and miscellaneous domestic critics and dissenters over the meaning of September 11 and the prospective War on Afghanistan; (2) between the Bush Administration and skeptical leaders and officials in the United Nations over the prospective War on Iraq; (3) between the Republicans and Democrats over the outbreak of the prisoner abuse scandal; and (4)

between the Bush Administration and Kerry's Presidential campaign over the affirmed absence of WMD in Iraq.

In every one of these cases, we see the incredible *diversity* of plausible meanings about many controversial topics: notably the September 11 attacks, the behaviors of the Taliban, the reports by U.N. weapons inspectors, the broadcasted images of prisoner abuse, and the findings of U.S. weapons inspectors. Such diversity contrasted starkly with the incredible *singularity, clarity, and certainty* of meanings asserted by actors in actual discourse that justified uttermost extreme political actions. Most importantly, these occurrences could not be attributed to sporadic innovation of politicians. Instead, a marked degree of continuity runs across the four cases; again and again, the legitimation device that I have called the "War on Terrorism script" was applied creatively to legitimate and defend a series of consequential political acts.

One feature of the War on Terrorism script is its encompassing quality. Many objects, events, and concepts in the world became relevant in the War on Terrorism, including American kids who sold lemonade, Afghan men who had long beards, Afghan women who could not go to school, Iraqi prisoners who were grotesquely abused, the concept of weapons of mass destruction, the concept of suicide bombing, the system of democracy, the decision of war, the events of investigation, the governments of Cuba, Iran, Lebanon, and North Korea, and many more. Somehow, the War on Terrorism script gives all these things and ideas extraordinary social meanings and significance, indicating its boundlessness as a meaning system.

The extraordinary meanings generated from the script were thematically linked to concrete policies and social dynamics. Based on the American civil religion and founded in traumatic events, the script grew beyond being only a system of interpretation but also one that enabled social practices ('social fact') that simultaneously clarified existing states of collective morality in light of new situations and mustered social sanctions (in the form of political decisions) in response. Hence, like the conception of 'Soviet threat' that existed during the Cold War era, the War on terror Script presented a dire collective situation and instigated the intensified surveillance of citizens, limited suspension of civil rights, indefinite detainment of suspects without trial, deportation of immigrants and restriction of immigration, recruitment of soldiers, increase of Presidential authority, and the remorseless procurement of national debt. Even domestic crimes, such as shooting people, surfaced as a form of "terrorism" in news media following the initiation of the War on Terrorism (Altheide 2006: 120-123), a representation that legitimated harsher sanctions against the perpetrators regardless of possible complexity in their motives. On the other hand, the script also helped to generate the conceptions of U.S. members protecting freedom, deterring threats toward civilization, and achieving incremental victories in pursuing political actions. Doubts were occasionally raised about particular approaches and technicalities, at most the effectiveness of specific practitioners, not the fundamentals of the War on Terrorism script. This is comparable to the Azande society as observed by Evans-Pritchard, where "scepticism applies to particular magicians and medicines, not the general theory" (Luhmann 1989:129).

Epistemic Practices

This study demonstrates the detailed way in which discourse actors used the War on Terrorism script to relate facts and events to particular meaning that suggested particular courses of action. Such descriptive details are important, since they show the artfulness exercised by political agents in shaping world events via the use of language and facts. The political agents did not accomplish their works easily and directly by the means of, say, arbitrary labeling, framing, and classification, or simple misinformation for that matter. Instead, the details explored show the nuances, difficulty, creativity, and labor required to achieve discourse objectives successfully—that is, to mold an internally coherent elaborate knowledge system that is accountable to positive and negative ‘facts,’ capable to withstand discursive attacks, and adaptive to changing political topics and situations.

So, the manufacture a claim of the Taliban regime as “terrorist” required the government to go beyond simple labeling, framing, and finger-pointing. One discursive act called for a series of other explanatory acts, such as *why* the regime is ‘terrorist,’ what it has done, what their efforts of reconciliation actually mean, why it did not deserve rights to sovereignty, why we are acting toward it the way we did (military attacks) and not diplomatic negotiations, who do we represent and what our moral mission was, what exact effects did our attack accomplish after the removal of the regime. The knowledge-building operation was much more complicated in the case of Iraq, as it involved claims about weapons of mass destruction as well as stronger challenges from more powerful and credible opponents. In that case, political

agents were compelled to explain why Saddam Hussein posed a WMD threat when so many other nations did not see it, why U.N. inspection process was faulty while their own information was more trustworthy, why the dissenters at the United Nations did not support U.S. actions and why some nations did, and why the ultimate findings by U.S. inspectors proved that the invasion eliminated a threat whereas alternative interpretations were erroneous.

One important way in which the script played in discourse was by providing a set of legitimate, fundamental working assumptions (or working premises) that held together a political ideology and warranted chains of political assertions and conventions. Although an assumption in belief may seem like a trivial thing—there are thousands of beliefs with thousands of premises, and there are no arguments free of assumptions—the consequences of taking a particular premise to be true and holding it as incorrigible can produce consequences that are far ranging and unpredictable. Perhaps we can make a distinction between shallower and deeper cultural premises here. Whereas shallower premises may only affect particular actions or specific arguments within limited time and place, deeper premises could affect actions and ideas spanning across wide-ranging situations. The Azande's incorrigible premise of the existence of the oracle, for example, helped to ground thousands of cultural actions and ideas of the tribe lasting across generations.

Cost and benefit. Premises flowing from the script profoundly construed how critical concepts like *cost*, *benefit*, *risks*, *victory*, *defeat*, and *enemy ties* are conceived, evidenced, and calculated. Consider the notion of the pre-invasion and post-invasion

calculation of cost and benefit. We have seen how the foreseeable human costs of the war were played down by the Bush Administration by juxtaposing them to the benefits of “freedom” and “justice.” Hence, U.S. soldiers and Iraqi indeed paid a price in terms of deaths, injury, and sacrifices, but the premise that Iraqis suffering from extreme brutality of Saddam Hussein, living in a situation that ‘could hardly get worse,’ legitimated the invasion before and after the war.

Lobbying for a military budget increase in 2002, Bush repeated used the expression “the price of freedom,” stating that ‘while the price of freedom is high, it is never too high.’²²⁵ A primary faith was required to substantiate the notion that the proposed military project in Iraq is about protecting and spreading freedom; and the War on Terrorism script provides such a basis. While it is customary to believe human freedom to be priceless, we do see economic prices being placed on freedom in other contexts. *Freedom from jail or prison time*, for example, may be clearly marked in definite monetary amounts in the forms of bail and fine. *Workers’ freedom*—that is, the time that they could have spent do something freely, like acquainting with friends and spouses—may be purchased in the labor market, the price of which is often marked by hourly wages, annual salaries, and/or compensation. In the context of

²²⁵ For example: “My budget includes the largest increase in defense spending in two decades—because while **the price of freedom and security is high, it is never too high**. Whatever it costs to defend our country, we will pay.” George W. Bush, 29 January 2002, “Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union,” House Chamber, The U.S. Capitol, Washington, D.C., *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 38(5), pp. 133-139. “We believe in the dignity of every person. They can’t stand that. And the only way they know to express themselves is through killing, cold-blooded killing. And so we need to treat them the way they are, as international criminals. And that’s why my defense budget is the largest increase in 20 years. You know, **the price of freedom is high, but for me it’s never too high because we fight for freedom**. (Applause.)” George W. Bush, 9 April 2002, “Remarks at a Republican Luncheon in Greenwich, Connecticut,” *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 38(15), pp. 571-618.

freedom as evoked by Bush as a spokesman of the American nation, freedom is a sacred symbol of the civil religion that has been transmitted for many generations. By implications in this context, then, freedom cannot be measured in economic terms; it is a cause that numerous Americans have died and sacrificed for. Translated in into the context of military sought by Bush, the price of freedom is indeed “never too high.”

The similar juxtaposition of human and economic costs with immeasurable moral benefit is also evident in post-invasion rhetoric. Bush repeatedly referenced to “mass graves” and the fall of Saddam’s statue when he sought to argue in his re-election campaign trail about the worthiness of U.S. invasion of Iraq; he seemed to personally believe in the idea when he met Iraqis who expressed their thanks, allegedly breaking down in tears when learning that an Iraqi woman addressed him as “Liberator” (“Muharrir” in Arabic) upon entering the White House’s Oval Office in November 2003 (Woodward 2006:270). Responding to the release of a widely publicized book, *The Three Trillion Dollar War* (2008), coauthored by Nobel laureate in economics Joseph Stiglitz and Harvard professor Linda Bilmes, which estimated the true cost of the U.S. War on Iraq to be at least three trillion (that is, \$3 million millions) if it is to end swiftly, White House spokesperson Tony Fratto reportedly stated:

People like Joe Stiglitz lack the courage to consider **the cost of doing nothing** and **the cost of failure**. One can’t even begin to put a price tag on **the cost to this nation of the attacks of 9-11**.... It is also an investment in the **future safety and security** of Americans and our vital national interests. **\$3 trillion? What price does Joe Stiglitz put**

on attacks on the homeland that have already been prevented? Or doesn't his slide rule work that way?²²⁶

What is most remarkable is not the fact that Fratto disputed the methods of calculation, but the manner by which assumptions associated with the War on Terrorism script grounded his counterargument. The seemingly astronomical financial figure was seemed to weigh against “The cost of doing nothing” against terrorism and “the cost of failure” in the face of terrorism, and it is weighed with the benefit of “future safety and security” and the attacks against America that have already been prevented.

These costs and benefits were financial costs, but they are based on imagined scenarios that terrorists were so evil that they would attack the United States, that the Iraq war has already prevented (not provoked) attacks on the homeland, as well as the presumption that that the enemies could not be deterred by non-military means. Based on Fratto's calculation scheme, “one can't even begin to put a price tag” on the 9/11 events on the United States, which follows the benefit already purchased via the Iraq war. Therefore, the worthiness of spending \$3 trillion is justified as a matter of course.²²⁷

Threat and risk. In addition to the conceptions of cost and benefit, premises from the script also affected the formation of the conceptions of *threat* and *risks* and

²²⁶ Dan Froomkin, “Bush vs. Obama,” *The Washington Post*, 28 February 2008, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/blog/2008/02/28/BL2008022802152_pf.html (accessed 27 September 2008).

²²⁷ Consider a parallel example. As the situation in Iraq seemed to become more stable in late 2007 after years of strife, Bush stated in a televised address to the nation: “Some say the gains we are making in Iraq come too late. They are mistaken. It is never too late to deal a blow to al Qaeda. **It is never too late to advance freedom.** And it is never too late to support our troops in a fight they can win.” George W. Bush, 13 September 2007, “Address to the Nation on the War on Terror in Iraq,” Oval Office, The White House, *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 43(37), pp. 1204-1208.

the appropriate measures to counter them. We have seen how the script, fueled by *worst-case scenario* thinking, has inflated threats and risks exponentially. The possibility of ‘terrorist states providing WMD capabilities to terrorist networks’ was behind the “draining the swamp” policy advocated by Rumsfeld after 9/11, and the possibility of Saddam Hussein handing over WMD stockpiles to terrorists at some point in time justified the invasion of Iraq in Powell’s U.N. presentation before the invasion. These possibilities might appear farfetched in the pre-9/11 nation. But, the script drew together common ties and intention among disparate enemies and foes, placing them in the same side of the fence in the scene of a battle of good versus evil. With the premises that U.S. enemies all hated freedom above all else, all represented the “very worst of human nature,” and shared America as their common enemy, the chance of the enemies uniting together soared dramatically. In other words, the risk imagined by worst-case scenarios corresponded much closer to realistic prediction.

The script’s premises affected even fine-grained interpretation of threat at the micro level. Investigative journalist Bob Woodward reported that General James “Spider” Marks, a two-star general in charge of ground intelligence before the Iraq invasion, lamented the difficulty in understanding the real meanings of ambiguous events on the ground. Noticing Iraqis loading some objects onto trucks just as Blix’s inspection team arrived at the front gate of a WMD inspection site, with one of the trucks later identified to have reached the Syrian border, Marks remarked that his intelligence unit could do nothing more than to guess and assume what the event meant: “I don’t know if there are bicycles in there from Toys R Us.” Many observed

events could mean something serious—or not at all; the conclusion depended almost exclusively on assumptions. Marks used another expression to describe the situation of not being able to generate definite meaning from observed activities: “You’re a pig looking at a watch” (Woodward 2006:99).

However, if the script’s worldview underlies every observation—that is, if the script’s premises are applied liberally—then many ambiguous data could be transformed into *potential* threat. Colin Powell’s U.N. presentation was an exercise of liberal application of the War on Terrorism script. The events of terrorists crossing the Iraqi border, staying at a Baghdad hospital, or meeting with Iraqi official at a camp in the Kurdish area could have meant multiple things. However, the data were represented by Powell as solid evidence of the threatening collaborative ties between terrorists groups and the Hussein government. Likewise, satellite photographs of moving trucks, ambiguous audio intercept of anonymous sources, cartoon models of mobile weapons laboratories (based on a defectors’ account), and Iraq’s procurement of aluminum tubes Iraq were ambiguous enough to have contradictory speculations about their meaning and credibility. But again, Powell chose to assess the situation exclusively in the light of Iraq’s deceptive character as depicted by the script. He pointed to these data as clear signs of threat—and signs of Iraq’s deception—simply because they *could* plausibly indicate the existence of WMD stockpiles or program in Iraq.

The representation of numerous potentially innocent objects as numerous potentially threatening ones was also done in the Duelfer report. Over the space of

about 900 pages, the ISG report found and depicted that many items “might have been related” to WMD programs, even though they might not. In the light of such kinds of inconclusive evidence, the ISG judged that many pre-war assertions could neither be confirmed nor rejected—these assertions include Iraq operating active WMD programs after 1998 and possessing WMD stockpiles. In doing so, they affirmed and upheld the *potential* existence of those weapons and programs without any concrete, positive evidence. What was conclusive in the ISG report, however, was an account of Iraq’s summative capability to develop WMD *if* certain steps were taken—for example, Iraq “would have been able to produce mustard agents in matters of months and nerve agent in less than a year or two.” Again, capability by itself does not constitute a threat; it becomes a threat only if one adopts the premise that a country would actually apply the capability to develop weapons and use those weapons in international attacks without fear of retaliation. Making the assumptive leap afforded by the War on Terrorism script, in which Saddam Hussein was characterized as evil and insane instead of politically motivated and strategically calculative, Bush argued for a realistic possibility of Saddam Hussein actually producing WMD and passing them onto enemies, supposedly because of the hatred and evil motive he shared with the terrorist. The script, then, enabled Bush to portray the risk of not invading Iraq in 2003 to be so grave that he “would have made the same decision” to attack Iraq even if he had known in advance that Iraq did not have WMD stockpiles or programs.

To sum up: among other things, the study is a demonstration of how knowledge that could seem so arbitrary was solidified through elaborate discourse

practices in politics. *Elaborateness* in epistemic practices and procedures is important, because events do not speak for themselves, and alternative meanings are always asserted by powerful discourse players in public. As a result, artful interpretive/representational practices help to sustain the coherence of meaning system by indicating how it connects to novel events, contradictory data, and recommended actions. Following rigorous procedures to do so lessens the impression of arbitrariness.

However, the analysis shows that epistemic elaborateness and coherence do not necessarily correspond with the “truthfulness” or even “advancement” of knowledge. In fact, a paradox seems to have surfaced: while the elaborateness of political knowledge is key to its coherence, it is also the key to its fragility and weakness in some respect. To put it in extreme terms, the elaborateness of human reasoning and the coherence of epistemic results may positively correspond with the production of faulty knowledge. The more elaborate the reasoning process is, the more systemic epistemic procedures is followed, the more coherent and intelligible phenomena become, and the more the faulty knowledge seems to be true and legitimate. This scenario is comparable to the procedures of medieval judicial and witch-identification practices reviewed in the beginning chapter, and to the analysis of college rankings I have conducted (Chang and Osborn 2005), where the elaborateness in the knowledge-making procedures—indicated by means of specificity, consistency,

labor-intensiveness, resource investment, and public transparency—serves as an irony to the epistemic process all the more.²²⁸

Examining “the politics of representation” has brought to light the presence of plausible alternative meanings at every discourse stage of the War on Terrorism. Those plausible alternatives—which invited alternative courses of actions—were dismissed and explained away precisely through such diverse, artful practices as cost-benefit analysis, risk calculation, labor-intensive investigation, fine-grained data observation, and explanatory narratives according to *specific ways* in which the script were applied to diverse events, objects, and people. Albeit elaborate, coherent, and intelligible, the knowledge system legitimating chains of U.S. policies breaks down if the War on Terrorism script is not adopted, or if the script’s application practices differ systematically.²²⁹ Given such conditions, the facts within an otherwise intricate system no longer have their original meaning. Perhaps the 9/11 attacks were not grounded on “evil” motives but with ones we can sympathize; perhaps bin Laden did not coordinate the attacks, as the Taliban leader Mullah Omar proclaimed; perhaps Saddam Hussein never possessed WMD and his threat was minimal and well-contained; perhaps the enormous economic costs (“the price of freedom”) should not have been expended; perhaps the military investigations did not redeem honor but cover up, perpetuate, and exemplify ongoing dishonorable practices. By implications,

²²⁸ Consider again Evans-Pritchard’s study of the Azande group. Precisely because the oracle expressed in no other means but through specific manifestation—that is, the live and death of roosters instead of audible voice from the sky—specific, legitimate epistemic procedures were instituted to *show* how it worked. Therefore, the detailed epistemic practices could be seen as responsible for the resilience of a potentially faulty belief.

²²⁹ The War on Terrorism script could have systematically been applied to legitimate more peaceful solutions.

then, perhaps the worthiness of the wounds and deaths of U.S. soldiers²³⁰—as well as the wounds, deaths, and miscellaneous losses suffered by soldiers and civilians of attacked countries—have been much exaggerated.

II. Socio-Political Discourse Practices and Global Relations

Faulty knowledge practices were only part of the political problem; the more serious issue lies in the U.S. disturbance of global relations by breaching a set of nonbinding but existent conventions and procedures that have served regulatory power with regard to international violence and security.

The Social Constitution of Global Relations

Global relations are not constituted or maintained simply by “truths,” fixed bureaucratic procedures, or material power; reciprocal actions and perceptions (legitimacy) play an important part in global relations and the international social order (Wendt 1999; Walt 2005). Social constructionist Alexander Wendt (1999: 246-312) characterizes the current international order as *primarily* a structural anarchy—defined as “the absence of centralized authority” (247). This is not to say there are no power differentials or patterns of dominance among states, but that modes of domination among states are mostly informal rather than formal. Nor does anarchy mean that there are no central, international institutions that carry authority. Rather,

²³⁰ According to figures tabulated by independent sources, as of 7 October 2008, about 4,100 U.S. soldiers have died from military operation in Iraq, and 30,600 wounded. 610 U.S. soldiers died from military operation *in Afghanistan*. *Iraq Coalition Casualty Count*, 9 October 2008, <http://icasualties.org/oif/> (accessed 9 October 2008). *Documented* deaths (that is, deaths reported in major news sources) of Iraqi civilians from military and civil violence since the U.S. invasion in 2003 totaled between 88,263 and 96,350. *Iraq Body Count*, 9 October 2008, <http://www.iraqbodycount.org/database/> (accessed 9 October 2008). The number of *actual* civilian deaths is estimated to be much higher.

although regional and global international institutions do exist, state policies are determined by national governments based on the shared principle of national self-determination, and state interests and identity are primarily guided by domestic politics rather than the international system.

The phenomenon of global cooperation can be defined by international conventions and procedures that largely operate on the goodwill of the states that follow them. In other words, international efforts to improve human rights, stop global warming, combat global epidemics, regulation of trade, remedy humanitarian crisis, subordinate selected countries, and enhance collective security (which encompass the issues of armament, terrorism, peacekeeping) rely heavily on *informal social relations* among nation-states characterized by trust, friendship, rivalry, commitment, and interests—elements that are determined by interactions between states over time.²³¹ Between 1988 and 2001, there was a substantial decrease in military spending worldwide (from about \$1200 billion constant 2005 U.S. dollars to \$900 billion), largely attributable to decreased spending by the United States and European countries.²³² This pattern may be partly attributable to the fact that United

²³¹ According to Wendt's framework, in an order of anarchy, relations are maintained by cultures among the states sharing relations with one another as "enemies," "rivals," or "friends." Different from some political theories suggesting that one set of cultural logic undergird international relations (such as Hobbesian rationalism), Wendt saw the reciprocal construction processes among states as essential in making the relations them. Inter-national relations and logic among are "what States make of it" (Wendt 1992), arise through interactions and manifested in reciprocal representations (cf. Der Derian and Shapiro 1989: 3-22).

²³² Original data from Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *SIPRI Yearbook 2008: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (Solna, Sweden: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, June 2008). <http://yearbook2008.sipri.org/> (accessed 15 October 2008). The worldwide military spending has bounced back to the 1988 level (about \$1200 billion) between 2001 and 2007, with increased spending happening across the board in all world regions. See "Table on World and Regional Military Expenditure, 1988-2007," *Stockholm International*

Nations, with support of the United States and other member states, began to develop a more effective framework of peacekeeping and collective disarmament (cf. Gareis and Warwick [2003]2005: 109-121). An even greater factor, however, was that in the so-called unipolar environment following the end of the Cold War, European countries did not feel particularly fearful of (or hateful toward) U.S. military dominance and exercises of international violence, and hence, although economically capable, they chose to divert spending from military development to other social domains (Buzan 2004:55). In fact, although the United States possessed world-class capabilities in multiple spheres, it was in no position to force upon a stable order onto the world given various factors and practical constraints (Walt 2005).²³³ In sum, legitimacy plays a profound role in ordering global relations and hegemony; stability was not merely maintained by material capability, but also by trust, friendship, solidarity, modes of rivalry, and normative procedures.

A radical act performed by the Bush Administration after the 9/11 events was its overt declaration to depart from the international norm of ‘preemptive war’ that generally required physical evidence of concrete intelligible plans as a condition for a justified preemptive attacks. In place of this previous standard, the Bush

Peace Research Institute, 2008, http://www.sipri.org/contents/milap/milex/mex_wnr_table.html (accessed 15 October 2008).

²³³ Barry Buzan has eloquently put it: “It was not unipolarity in the sense of being the potential suzerain core of a world empire or federation. It was not even global hegemony in the sense of having its leadership universally acknowledged and accepted” (Buzan 2004:56). U.S. economic strength has been in steady decline in the global scene. Its share of global GNP fell from almost 50% in the mid 1940s to around 25% in 2000s (Buzan 2004:56). This fall was first attributable to the rise of Japan and Germany, and then by the development of European Union and China (Harvey 2003). This pattern supports the idea that many other countries could probably have a much greater room for military development had they seriously pursued such a course of action.

Administration legitimated an alternative doctrine, which we have labeled as doctrine of “preventive war,” as well as a new convention of reasoning and proof by implications of the War on Terrorism script. The preventive war doctrine’s legitimacy rested on the ideas that the threat and risks were so grave and the enemies so secretive (which were constructs of the War on Terrorism script) that it would be unjust, unfair, and ineffective for America to adhere the old standards of preemption. Hence, this alternative convention theoretically eliminated the need of exact or substantial proof of imminent threat; instead, a threat that is foreseeable according to U.S. government officials would be enough to warrant extreme, preemptive actions.

Donald Rumsfeld articulated three well-known aphorisms—reflective of the Bush’s Administration overall chain of logic—that sounded quite “reasonable.” First, Rumsfeld stated the principle of “unknown unknowns” when it came to threat assessment—that is, a government cannot possibly completely know what it does not know. September 11 was a case in point, and there were other proven threats in the past that were worse than what the U.S. government was capable of knowing and proving. Secondly, in the context of the risk about a threat as grave as ‘terrorist acquiring WMD,’ the definitive proof to such a threat might be catastrophic; as Rumsfeld said, “we don’t want to see a smoking gun from a weapon of mass destruction.” Thirdly, the fact that we may find nothing about a threat cannot prove that the threat does not exist: “the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.”²³⁴

²³⁴ For example:

(1) **Our task, your task ... is to try to connect the dots before something happens. People say, ‘Well, where’s the smoking gun?’ Well, we don’t want to see a smoking gun from a weapon of mass destruction,**” he [Rumsfeld] told

Independently, these three aphorisms—that is, i.e., ‘unknown unknowns,’ smoking guns, and lack of evidence of absence—are agreeable. Combining the aphorisms together as a basis for international convention for legitimate use of violence, however, the result led to an almost complete theoretical deregulation with regard to the issue of international warfare.²³⁵ Existing procedures of international assessment, debate, and approval were theoretically turned upside down; since, from the perspective of any state, the risk posed by a certain enemy can never be estimated or known entirely, that its risk is graver than the state can know at a moment, that the verification of the risk is close to impossible to achieve, and that it would be way too late for the positive proof to presents itself.

the caller, a mother whose son has completed training in the Army and may soon be sent overseas. (“Rumsfeld: No World War III in Iraq,” *CNN*, 15 November 2002, <http://archives.cnn.com/2002/US/11/15/rumsfeld.iraq/index.html> (accessed 21 September 2001).

(2) REPORTER: Regarding terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, you said something to the effect that the **real situation is worse than the facts show**. I wonder if you could tell us what is worse than is generally understood.

SECRETARY RUMSFELD: ... **there are no “knowns.”** There are thing we know that we know. There are known unknowns. That is to say there are things that we now know we don't know. But there are also **unknown unknowns**. There are **things we don't know we don't know**. So when we do the best we can and we pull all this information together, and we then say well that's basically what we see as the situation, that is really only the known knowns and the known unknowns. **And each year, we discover a few more of those unknown unknowns**....There's another way to phrase that and that is that **the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence** (“Secretary Rumsfeld Press Conference at NATO Headquarters, Brussels, Belgium,” *U.S. Department of Defense*, 6 June 2002, <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=3490> (accessed 21 September 2002).

²³⁵ Stretching the U.S. theory to the limit, then, Iran could legitimately attack the United States preventively now, given the repeated verbal threat Bush has publicly issued and the U.S. naval presence and exercises off the Iranian coastline. Lebanon, then, had legitimate reasons to attack Israel any minute, and Israel on Palestine, Venezuela on Columbia, Ethiopia on Eritrea, Pakistan on India, Thailand on Cambodia, and so forth.

The Bush Administration's declaration of this doctrine might have been shocking and alarming initially, but it did not threaten other major international powers. Although the United States might not have followed U.N. procedures appropriately (Bennis 2006: 202-207), there was a symbolic support from U.N. leaders as well as numerous important national leaders. In other words, the pending War on Afghanistan was informally legitimate.

But when the doctrine extended to the case of Iraq, the destabilizing implications became more "witnessable" and "intelligible" (cf. Rawls 2002:19-22, 32) given U.S. practices at and toward the United Nations, such as implying the United Nations to be potentially "irrelevant," agreeing to and then discrediting U.N. inspection process, accusing its lack of "will," "backbone," "resolve," and "fortitude," and asserting its right to attack a country even if the invasion was recognized both formally (in the U.N. Security Council) and informally (by powerful national leaders) to be internationally illegitimate. U.S. actions gradually made visible that some basic norms, rules, and relations related to international stability to be no longer applicable in the new situation; thus, important premises of world stability—resting on U.N. authority and U.S. behavior—were called into question, as reflected in the dramatic statements expressed by Kofi Annan and other national leaders on the day of Iraq's invasion.

Truth, Civility, and Righteousness in the World Order

Even if there is such a thing as an objective, singular, universal, true standard for knowledge and morality, "real" epistemic and moral merits may not bear much

relevance to global relations if the view is not shared by others. Ask any state that attacks another, there is probably a righteous reason there. As Murray Edelman notes, “It is moral certainty, not tentativeness, that historically has encouraged people to harm or kill others....Only in bad novels and comic books do characters knowingly do evil and boast of it. In life, people rationalize their actions in moral terms...”

(Edelman 1988:5). Hence, Hitler claimed to be defending Germany against the disease of world Judaism during WWII, the U.N. Security Council has always claimed to be ensuring collective security in its use of force; Americans had aspired to defend the world from Communism during the Cold War era, just as Russia had vowed to cure the ills of capitalism.

The Bush Administration persistently claimed to have adhered to democratic principles of democracy, civility, and the international law. Jeffrey Alexander (Alexander 2006:53-62; cf. Alexander and Smith 1993: 162-163) displays a set of binary codes of civil versus anti-civil distinctions commonly conceived of in America as universal (see Appendix F). If we borrow this model, we can see that at the rhetorical level the Bush Administration often contrasted the U.S. and its allies with its anti-civil, terrorist enemies through these distinctions.²³⁶

²³⁶ At the level of civilness in motives, for example, America’s project to eliminate terrorism is represented as reasonable, rational, sane, whereas the terrorists that seek to harm America are hysterical, irrational, distorted, mad, and/or brainwashed by ideology. In terms of civilness in relations, U.S. is represented as truthful, altruistic, and critical to the world while its terrorists and terrorist-harboring counterparts are deceitful, greedy, conspiratorial. Finally, in terms of civilness that exists at the level of institutions, Bush contrasted the fairness, equality, inclusiveness, lawfulness (rule-governed) of American institutions to the terrorists’ institutions, which were exclusive, personality-driven, and arbitrary in character.

To the extent that these claims to civility and moral righteousness have an elaborate and internally coherent rationale, it did not make many world powers—or Middle Eastern citizens for that matter—genuinely feel secure, convinced, pleased, or undisturbed toward its actions. U.S. records—including the persistent mismatch between rhetoric and actions and the employment of double standards (Walt 2005: 88-108; Bennis 2006)—may be one contributing factor to such sentiments, but it should not be viewed as the primary cause of the negative disruption of global relations. After all, we cannot assume all international leaders and citizens to be morally righteous, motivationally unselfish, or intellectually equipped.

The U.S. claims of the existence of terrorism's threat, of Saddam Hussein's and the Taliban regime's policies on its people, of its objective to bring forth democracy and freedom in Iraq, of the merit of preventive war doctrine may not be universally seen as false or nonsensical. However, just because these claims are not false or nonsensical does not mean the invasions would not be dangerous or threatening to a stable order. U.S. military and diplomatic actions—regardless of the argumentative merit of its case—could potentially unleash a chain of hazardous possibilities in Middle Eastern countries and beyond. Accelerated militarization, intensified border defense, and new resistance forces could occur across the board in the Middle East and affected every single country in unpredictable ways.²³⁷ These

²³⁷ The Bush Administration, for example, could not anticipate how the invasion in Iraq would ultimately lead to multifold increase in jihadist terrorist attacks worldwide, violent sectarian violence (or “civil war”) among the Sunni and Shiite forces in Iraq, and the rise of Iran as the new hegemonic power between 2003 and 2007 (Woodward 2006, 2008). See also Peter Bergen and Paul Cruickshank, “The Iraq Effect: War Has Increased Terrorism Sevenfold Worldwide,” *Mother Jones*, 1 March 2007, http://www.motherjones.com/news/featurex/2007/03/iraq_effect_1.html

possibilities are more related to the acceptability and responses of other powers based on political interests than the righteousness and truthfulness of the Bush's motives and claims.

Viewing from the opposite angle, faulty political knowledge does not necessarily disrupt global relations or the international system. Consider Luhmann's study of a network in England of devoted believers and practitioners of magic. While the lives of these magicians may indeed surround "outlandish, apparently irrational beliefs" (Luhmann 1989:7), the study showed conviviality, devotion, and immersion in the parts of the members. Their lives were in a livable order. In the case of the Azande, we can see the practical role of "false" beliefs in orienting the internal order of society. And, the New Age spiritualists and the Azande aside, there were millions of people believing in reincarnation currently, and hundreds of millions of more believe in the existence of saviors of different backgrounds and in miscellaneous incompatible beliefs. Needless to say, these intersubjectively shared beliefs most often do not cause nightmarish bloodbaths or blatant group oppression; on the contrary, they may serve as the basis of social order.²³⁸ Such beliefs usually become

(accessed 18 October 2008). A self-fulfilling prophecy might even be unraveling (Walt 2005; Woodward 2006, 2008; Hafez 2007): the invasions could well have helped to actualize or exacerbate threat and evil, creating real problems of evils and threats that to be addressed in all urgency.

²³⁸ As an interesting side note, Dinzlacher (2002) demonstrates that some selected medieval communities or regions used to put animals (dogs, pigs, mice, beetles, oxen) on court trials. Ludicrous and absurd as they may sound, Dinzlacher argues that the trials functioned to affirm the conception that the power of the judicial code applied to every aspect of social life, and such a conception was instrumental in creating law and order in communities, especially those under crisis. "Note that animal trials took place only under extremely unusual circumstances in order to help the local community cope with an otherwise recalcitrant threat—not because they were proven to work but because they created the impression that the authorities were assiduously

dangerous only when they become interwoven with the logic of domination and oppression, intersecting with systems of social relations in particular ways.

The key to a peaceful and secure order, then, may not rely on universal truths inasmuch as stable, functional social relations on which reciprocal actions can be based.²³⁹ The “real” and the “universal” are valuable insofar as they serve as an intersubjective sign that stably, predictably orient how social actions of different parties occur—particularly with regard to the use of violence. The shared principles of basic human rights and national sovereignty theoretically pose the constraint onto the use of international violence—that is, mass killings of civilians or ejection of recognized state governments should not be permitted.²⁴⁰ The international solidarity based on these principles do not need to truly reflect the real, inner interests of international powers, which are constantly in change and transformation. So long as

maintaining law and order in a cooperative and decided manner, even if the delinquents were not human beings” (Dinzelbacher 2002:406).

²³⁹ This idea corresponds with Durkheim’s well-known conception of “justice” in *Division of Labor in Society*. Anne Rawls (2006: 87-89) dramatically characterizes this conception: “Justice as a principle of practices involves pure principles of reciprocity with no belief content: trust” (88). This statement refers to the insight that what is moral or just is defined by participants sharing a mutually recognizable order of socially cohesive relation (that is, the cohesiveness between ‘them’ and the ‘other’), which is sustained through reciprocal practices and mutual engagement.

²⁴⁰ Borrowing Wendt’s theorization effort (1999), such stable relations mostly rely on state leaders taking on the public “role structure” with respect to violence in an environment of anarchy. Instead of a role structure of *enmity* where states represent “the [antagonistic] Other as an actor who (1) does not recognize the right of the Self to exist as an autonomous being” and therefore (2) will not willingly limit its violence toward the Self” (260), the states undergoing conflicts would take on the role structure of *rivalry*: “Like enemies, rivals are constituted by representations about Self and Other with respect to violence, but these representations are less threatening: unlike enemies, rivals expect each other to act as if they recognize their sovereignty, their “life and liberty,” as a *right*, and therefore not to try to conquer or dominate them. Since state sovereignty is territorial, in turn, this implies recognition of a right to some “property” as well....some of these disputes may concern boundaries, and so rivalry could involve some territorial revisionism” (Wendt 1999:279). The Bush Administration discursively characterized the governments of North Korea, Iran, and Iraq as “axis of evil” and therefore warranted forceful removal from office; such discourse practice disturbed the informal principles that posed some social constraints on international powers regarding deployment of international violence.

the powers do not intelligibly undermine this ‘accepted-as-real’ (or accepted-as-universal) principles and *publicly respect this rule* consistently, just having this mutually intelligible structure would help to institute a kind of sustained informal relations, which in turn help to orient the global world with a somewhat stable and cooperative order.²⁴¹

Jean Baudrillard’s provocative theorization of war as a ‘hyperreality’ and ‘simulacra’ ([1981]1994: 1-4, 1991, 2007) provides an additional tool for us to understand the issues at hand.²⁴² Perhaps political representation is not important because it functions to help people delineate truth from falsity (or the real from the unreal) but because it is a way in which discursive actors—including politicians, media reporters, and public spectators—initiate and respond to one another’s representations, because such exchanges constitute a (hyper) reality of its own that has far greater worldly consequences than what ‘real’ truths might originally be.²⁴³ A

²⁴¹ Here, Durkheim’s idea of social facts seem to be applicable onto the global scale; therefore, we may see the discussion to be about *global social facts* where subtle symbolic, intelligible practices among states exert mutual constrain upon one another over the use of violence (Kolodziej 2003, 2005; Baxi 2005). In doing do, we may tentatively adopt a ‘state as person’ (or ‘corporate person’) analogy, which is a common exercise in theory and scholarship on international relations (Wendt 2004).

²⁴² Baudrillard’s writing style and actual works are uttermost obscure and semantically contradictory and is bound to invite multiple uses and interpretations. What I am outlining here no doubt comes from my selected reading of part of his works, drawing on some ideas that I believe are the most basic and consistent, using them for our purposes. Readers interested in his ideas are advised to consult an internet journal, *International Journal of Baudrillard Studies* at <http://www.ubishops.ca/baudrillardstudies/index.html>, where Baudrillard also published some of his latest writings on war, politics, and violence. Kellner’s recent writings (2005a, 2007a) provide a critical but/and excellent overview of Baudrillard life’s work in terms of its applicability to transdisciplinary cultural analysis and social theory.

²⁴³ Utilizing this framework, representational and reasoning practices may primarily be about public relations (PR); they exists as a particular mode of constructing spectacles and sign-systems that drives the real “reality”—which, in the context of present-day world, is accessible only via further spectacles, signs, and mass-mediated representations.

powerful element of this framework is that it blatantly presumes a condition in which fantasy and reality have been rendered to be undistinguishable. Representation, then, does not have to be ‘referentially correct’ in order to have constitutive or regulatory power. So long as truths, civility, and righteousness are made *appear* to be real—made appear to be *socially* real among leaders in the international stage—they would direct and mediate social forces in ways that are somewhat real.²⁴⁴ The major condition is that governments of leading international powers must also be willing to participate in such socio-semiotic practices. The decision to *not* participate in an orderly manner affect the social forces that orient the international social order.

In sum, the problem of absolute knowledge needs not to be completely solved in order to give the world a livable, stable order. The destabilization and reconfiguration of world order by the Bush Administration after 9/11 should not be treated *just* in terms of the material aspects of its actions or that it acted on “false” premises or faulty knowledge on which its actions operate. Rather, these topics should be treated in the contexts of how its actions and practices were being intersubjectively conceived by both international powers and citizens in the Muslim world. Not just whether the Bush Administration was *really* being civil with other nations, or whether it thought it was enhancing collective security of the world, mattered to world dynamic. The fact that its civil, democratic, and righteous qualities were not

²⁴⁴ Combining Durkheim and Baudrillard, we can characterize this way of stabilizing global relations to be construction of an international political culture based on *simulated moral solidarity* (which, according to Baudrillard, has already been a fact of international life for quite some time) among member states in public discourse and the global stage. Such simulated moral solidarity, constituted by *simulated social facts* (or practices) like simulated threat, simulated condemnation, simulated performative acts, and other simulated sanctions measures produce *simulated social force* that regulate “real” relations.

intersubjectively accepted before the invasions (that is accepted to an international audience)—and not reciprocally expressed in witnessable interaction (cf. Rawls 2004: 19-22, 2006: 9, 87-88)—constituted much to the undesired effects to global relations and specific conditions of instability in the Middle East. To put it in a cynical way, if the Bush Administration's claims to righteousness and civility were false, then the main problem was that it did not successfully deceive everyone enough, or entice them enough to elicit supportive signs. In more optimistic terms, if those claims were true, then the main problem was that it failed to sufficiently persuade international powers and citizens of their truthfulness and legitimacy so that they expressed unambiguous symbolic support.

III. The Social Construction of Political Reality

Readers can interpret this narrative about Bush Administration's legitimation endeavors by seeing it as a resourceful corporate actor constructing an ambitious project with both successes and failures over time. The overarching project publicly attempted by the actor after 9/11 was actualizing *winning the War on Terrorism* as an intelligible reality. This phenomenon could be demonstrated in a number of possible ways; for example, having a mass number of 'terrorists' somehow surrendering and confessing their crimes to the world, the killing of a list of iconic 'terrorists' as labeled by the actor, eliminating several governments that allegedly embrace terrorism, affirmation of this 'fact' from credible leaders in the world, decreasing number of terrorist incidents in the world, and so forth. The exact policies to be legitimated in

discourse depended on the actor's decisions on how *winning the War on Terrorism* as a phenomenon was to be defined.

Representation-Action Nexus

There is a profound nexus between representation (or knowledge) and action is profound in the enterprise of political legitimation. Political legitimation was not *just* conducted through discursive actions and representations; many things that were being referred to during legitimation discourse almost required some material basis. For example, to talk about 'the troops in Iraq' implied some real humans having been enlisted and deployed in a place called Iraq prior to the utterance, just as 'Iraq's WMD capability' was a thing established through extensive evaluation and documentation efforts. Certainly, representation and materiality could be unrelated. The corporate actor could choose to claim to have initiated military actions or committed economic resources but never actually did, or to have initiated bombings or acts of sanctions without making the event known to the public. At any time between 2001 and 2004, the actor could even declare, "We have just captured all terrorists in the world today." The risks of losing legitimacy because of such discrepancies varied greatly decision-by-decision, circumstance-by-circumstance; but, to construct the entire *winning the War on Terrorism* phenomenon by mere talk would most likely render it to be extremely fragile in the political arena. The corporate actor we have studied used many 'real' events (or material objects and happenings) to build and assemble the phenomenon to maximize its intersubjective recognizability. Real, physical attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq were materials that went into the corporate actor's effort to

construct the phenomenon of *winning the War on Terrorism*, so were U.S. response toward the Abu Ghraib events, the summative WMD capability of Iraq, the fall of Saddam Hussein's statue, and the capture of Saddam Hussein.

But discourse processes were key in constituting meanings of events and objects critical to constructing *winning the War on Terrorism* as an intelligible phenomenon. The corporate actor did many elaborate things in discourse that shaped meanings; it *took* assumptions for granted discriminately, *brought* selective information to attention, *omitted* particular facts/data consistently, *established* things as evidence, *drew* symbolic associations between things and ideas, *strung* events and characters into a chronological narrative, *collapsed* past and current actions as signs of danger, *rebutted* alternative authoritative definitions, *defended* and *applied* deep-seated cultural premises for interpretation. There were also representation-related practices that occurred that were beyond our awareness or ability to verify directly, such as how opponents and rivals were silenced and punished and how allies were bribed into lending us support.

Accurately specifying the effects of the corporate actor's legitimation practices is an impossible task, since legitimation practices enacted at any given time were entangled with a range of other practices in a context that may or may not be observable by us, and such practices produced innumerable short- and long-term outcomes that are also difficult to delineate in all accuracy. But very crudely, we know that the administration successfully won overwhelming domestic support to invade Afghanistan, somewhat less domestic support to invade Iraq, and marginally

enough support captured to be re-elected in 2004 (and with 51% popular vote over Kerry's 48%)²⁴⁵ despite war-related scandals and technical criticisms. And despite the miserable approval ratings he draws during his second term of Presidency (averaged around 37% from November 2004 to October 2008), polling data in February 2008 indicate that, when given dichotomized response options, most American respondents (59%) believed while 'the United States made a mistake sending troops to Iraq,' most (67%) also believed 'Iraq would be better off in the long run than before the war' rather than worse off.²⁴⁶

The actor did not always get what it aimed for publicly. Despite extensive legitimization effort, it failed to obtain enough votes from the U.S. Security Council to pass a U.N. resolution, to overwhelmingly persuade an international audience of the cause for invading and occupying Iraq, to have enough people of the Iraqi population jumping up and down the streets to greet U.S. soldiers as liberators, to avoid a post-war situation of chaos and violence in Iraq, and to derail the effects of negative publicity resulted from the Abu Ghraib scandal. Even domestically, the decline in

²⁴⁵ "Election Results," *CNN*, November 2004., <http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2004/pages/results/president/> (accessed 7 November 2008). Exit poll showed that most Bush voters (85%) approved of the Iraq War while most Kerry voters (87%) disapproved. "U.S. President/National/Exit Poll," *CNN*, November 2004, <http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2004/pages/results/states/US/P/00/epolls.0.html> (accessed 7 November 2008).

²⁴⁶ The opinions are highly polarized along political party affiliation. While 59% of the respondents supported the statement that 'the United States made a mistake sending troops to Iraq,' the figure was 82% among Democrats, 63% among Independents, and 24% among Republicans. And while 67% of the respondents indicated that 'Iraq would be better off in the long run than before the war' rather than worse off,' the figure was 58% among Democrats, 62% among Independents, and 84% among Republicans. "Iraq War Attitudes Politically Polarized: Republicans Generally Favor the War; Democrats Oppose It," February 21-24, USA Today/Gallup Poll, *Gallup*, 8 April 2008, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/106309/Iraq-War-Attitudes-Politically-Polarized.aspx> (accessed 7 November 2008).

Presidential approval ratings over time—a change from around 80%-90% in late 2001 (even 70% among Democrats) to around 45%-55% in 2004 to around 25%-35% in 2008²⁴⁷—were obviously not desired. Yet, we cannot deny that the actor was *sufficiently successful* in carry out a bouquet of political objectives under the name of *winning the War on Terrorism*, most notably to attack Iraq and be re-elected in 2004.

Exhibiting the Works of Social Construction

This research exhibits complicated and artful *works* performed by the corporate actor (as well as other political actors, to a lesser degree) to construct, modify, and sustained an intelligible reality over time. These reality-construction works—both internally by the actors’ methods relating data to theory using cultural premises and externally by interacting with opponents who advocate different interpretations—were *social* activities. They pertained to the uses of delegated social authority and resources to delineate boundaries of social membership, innate and relational properties of these characters, meanings of their witnessable behaviors, and implications for collective actions. Such processes pertaining to defining facts and events in the world helped to legitimate the corporate actor’s uses of social forces on the society’s behalf and promulgate moral norms nationally and internationally about how collective members ought to act and ought *not* to act.

No work is done generally. As Frederick Erickson concisely stated, “Work is always local in its production. It is done in a particular place, within a particular span

²⁴⁷ “Presidential Job Approval in Depth,” February 1-4 - November 7-9 Gallup Poll, *Gallup*, 3 November 2008, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/1723/Presidential-Job-Approval-Depth.aspx?version=print> (accessed 3 November 2008).

of time. No worker works in general; it is with *this* shovel and *this* patch of soil, *this* screwdriver and *this* screw in this piece of wood, from *this* moment to the next that the work is being done.” (Erickson 2004:13; emphasis in original). Legitimation and reality-construction works exercised in concrete political contexts and were complex in nature. For both the corporate actor and other discourse players on the political stage, discrediting U.N. investigative reports by Hans Blix in 2003 required very different works from representing the 900-page Duelfer report after the invasion, which required different works from responding to graphic report of prisoner abuse broadcasted in *CBS 60 Minutes II* and John Kerry’s discursive challenges. The facts, context, and sociopolitical dynamics were different in each case. Therefore, even though in each case the legitimation practices involved ‘taking premises from the War on Terrorism script for granted to interpret the situations,’ how this act was actually accomplished could not be made clear without examining some concrete practices through exemplary texts and utterances. This study does not present the full context and full complexity of the works being done, of course. The research objective is to display the methods and practices employed by a resourceful political actor in the scene of today’s politics sculpted otherwise ambiguous ideas and things into socially solid phenomena, legitimating political actions of grave historical and societal consequences; this achievement of legitimation by the means of artful uses of cultural premises to construct serviceable knowledge was the main thesis of this study.

These concrete demonstrations may be instrumental for new cult leaders and manipulative politicians interested in transforming ever-more arbitrary conceptions

into ever-more incorrigible knowledge sets that have ever-greater humanistic and societal impacts. Or, they may be instrumental for generating more reflective and sensitive citizens, activists, journalists, and political players, enabling them to decipher more clearly ‘what is going on’ in their social critiques and analyses. How knowledge will be used is unpredictable and can only be preferred by a researcher.

Personally, the process of this research has helped me clarify my discomfort toward popular representations of George W. Bush and his collaborators to be cognitively incompetent or that they have simply driven a nation to war through misinformation and ‘lies.’ I always see the corporate actor as remarkably effective in carrying out its political programs. During my conversations with supporters of the Bush Administration’s invasion plans for Iraq, who I do not consider to be cognitively incompetent so as to buy into the actor’s fallible pro-war arguments, I felt that I could never quite ‘prove’ (though I could ‘argue’) that the corporate actor had performed intentional lies—since discursive and factual inconsistencies could too easily be explained away by mere neglect, incompetence, amnesia, communicative gaps, and changes of views. I have also sensed that many controversial, technical facts were not quite relevant in such discussions as to whether it was a correct decision to attack Afghanistan and Iraq. The process of this research inspires me to propose an additional hypothesis in addition to those popular representations. This hypothesis is the actor had successfully instituted a script, or a “recipe” (Schutz 1944:22), that has guided cultural members to place priority on moral factors (good and bad characters) in interpreting facts and events in the world; the script/recipe was loaded with taken-

for-granted premises that profoundly influence the result of the members' attitudes, understandings, and actions.²⁴⁸ Although this study does not present data from everyday discourse enacted by citizens and soldiers—or it would not be a just a hypothesis—we can consider George W. Bush as model member (or spokesperson) of a sub-cultural group to imagine how this script/recipe may ideally work out at ground-level civic dialogues. The mundane, taken-for-granted manner by which the script was used in the discourse of elected Republican and Democratic politicians in public forum, which we can see from the conversations on the Abu Ghraib scandal, may also help us consider how much such a script/recipe may mediate the views and practices of interlocutors in everyday discourse.

Relating this study to more extraordinary cases from the recent and distant past we may gain a deeper understanding about how social order is constructed and sustained through symbolic processes. Although the extremely abnormal behaviors displayed by participants in suicide groups, Pentecostal religions, China during the Cultural Revolution, Nazi Germany in 1930s and 1940s, judicial institutions in the medieval societies, and so on can be phenomenally astonishing and petrifying, the fact that the socially constitutive processes are strikingly intelligible and even familiar upon closer analysis indicates that we share critical similarities with “those”

²⁴⁸ Schutz writes: “The knowledge correlated to the cultural pattern carries its evidence in itself—or, rather, it is taken for granted in the absence of evidence to the contrary. It is a knowledge of trustworthy *recipes* for interpreting the social world and for handling things and men in order to obtain the best results in every situation with a minimum effort by avoiding undesirable consequences. The recipe works, on one hand, as a precept for actions and thus serves as a scheme of expression....On the other hand, the recipe serves as a scheme of interpretation....This it is the function of the cultural pattern to eliminate troublesome inquiries by offering ready-made directions for use, to replace truth hard to attain by comfortable truisms, and to substitute the self-explanatory for the questionable” (Schutz 1944:501).

participants: we belong to the same class of *social beings*. As such, we are subjected to the influence of social facts actively and reflexively constituted by people in discourse processes and epistemic practices, in which we may take part knowingly and unknowingly. The extreme cases serve as alarming instances in which social facts guide human behaviors coherently and forcefully, generating ways in which our social beings are expressed into peculiar, extraordinary forms of life. The rich, cumulative stock of scholarships on social practice has enabled us to better document, decipher, and exhibit hidden mechanisms and artful practices working to configure particular social order, so we could better construct and comprehend human's life order and life meaningfulness as practical accomplishments.

APPENDIX A

Structural Organization of Chapters

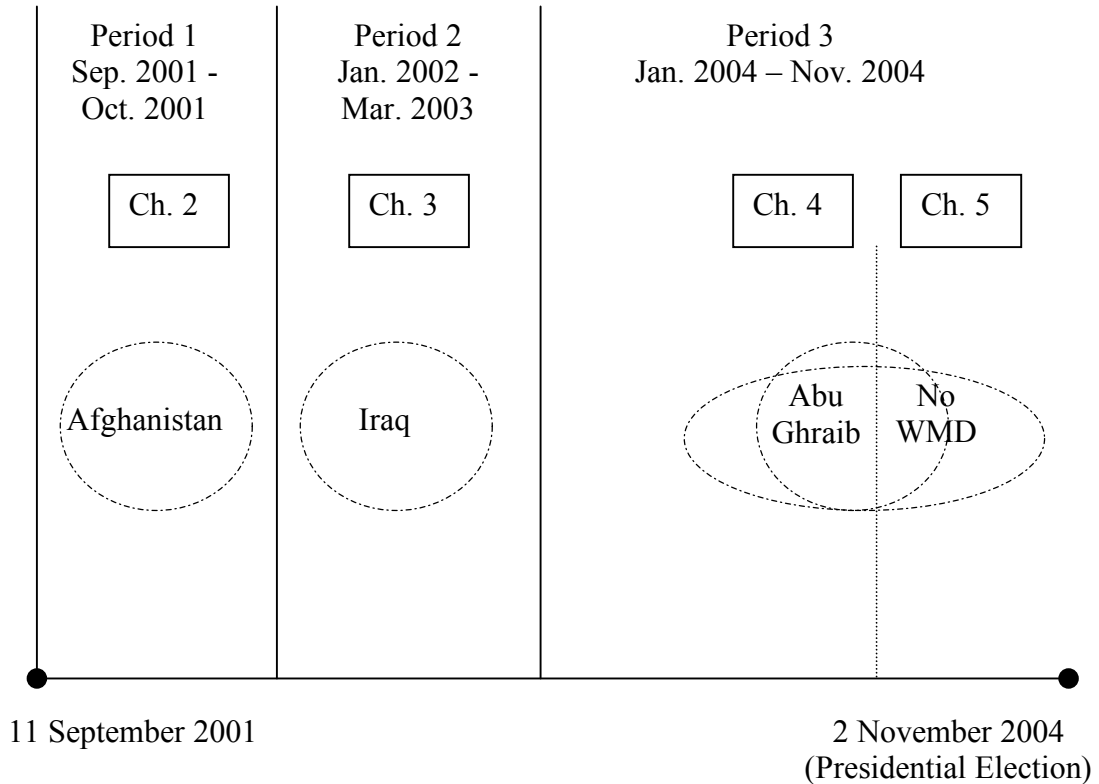


Figure A.1.1. Structural Organization of Chapters.

Chapter 1 discusses theories of knowledge and the politics of representation and introduced the methodology approaches and data collection and analysis of the case study. The four subsequent data chapters (Chapter 2 to Chapter 5) take the form of an analytic narrative; the major events in this story could be seen as four interconnected sets of “conversations” occurred among discourse actors. In rough chronological order, they are the conversations occurred: (1) between the Bush Administration and miscellaneous domestic critics and dissenters over the meaning of September 11 and the prospective War on Afghanistan; (2) between the Bush Administration and skeptical leaders and officials in the United Nations over the prospective War on Iraq; (3) between the Republicans and Democrats over the outbreak of the prisoner abuse scandal; and (4) between the Bush Administration and Kerry’s Presidential campaign over the affirmed absence of WMD in Iraq. Each chapter will be preceded with some background reviews to help contextualize the conversations and discursive topics. Chapter 6 concludes the analysis by drawing thematic connections among the chapters pertaining to the social construction of political knowledge, global relations, and human reality.

APPENDIX B

Selected Key Characters Referenced in the Study

The George W. Bush Administration, 2001-2004

George W. Bush, The President of the United States.

Richard B. Cheney, The Vice President of the United States.

Colin L. Powell, U.S. Secretary of State, head of U.S. Department of State.

Donald H. Rumsfeld, U.S. Secretary of Defense, head of U.S. Department of Defense.

Paul D. Wolfowitz, U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defense, second-highest ranking official in the U.S. Department of Defense.

Condoleezza Rice, National Security Advisor (Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs).

George J. Tenet, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

Chapter 2

al Qaeda, an international jihadist organization founded in 1988, identified and claimed responsibility for the 9/11 attacks.

Osama bin Laden, founder of al Qaeda, given sanctuary by the Taliban regime in Afghanistan at the time of the 9/11 attacks.

The Taliban, a regime that controlled most of Afghanistan since 1996 until U.S. invasion, not officially recognized by most world governments.

Mullah Mohamed Omar, head and leader of the Taliban.

Noam Chomsky, renowned U.S. progressive critic and commentator.

Howard Zinn, renowned U.S. progressive critic and commentator.

Barbara Lee, Democratic member of the United States House of Representatives since 1998. The only congressional representative who voted against a House resolution (H.J. Res. 64) to authorize the use of U.S. Armed Forces in response to the 9/11 attacks.

Chapter 3

Saddam Hussein, President of Iraq since 1979.

Kofi Annan, Ghanaian diplomat serving as Secretary-General of the United Nations from January 1997 – January 2007.

United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM), a U.N. inspection regime established after the 1991 Gulf War to ensure and verify Iraq's compliance with disarmament policies concerning weapons of mass destruction.

United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), a regime established in 1999 to replace UNSCOM to continue monitoring and verifying Iraq's WMD armament status after the discontinuation of ground inspection regimes. Return to Iraq to conduct ground inspection from November 2002 to March 2003.

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), an intergovernmental organization created in 1957 to control the development and use of atomic energy. Also serves as a specialized agency of the United Nations and reports to the U.N. General Assembly and the U.N. Security Council.

Hans Blix, Swedish diplomat appointed by Kofi Annan to be Executive Chairman of UNMOVIC from March 2000 to June 2003, previously served as Director General of IAEA 1981-1997.

Mohamed ElBaradei, Director General of IAEA since December 1997.

Scott Ritter, weapons inspector of UNSCOM from 1991 to 1998, a vocal critic of the George W. Bush Administration's claims about Iraq's WMD threat before the invasion.

Chapter 4

Dan Rather, anchor of *CBS Evening News* who also hosted *CBS's 60 Minutes II* program on 28 April 2004 that broke the Abu Ghraib story.

Mark Kimmit, Brigadier General who appeared on *60 Minutes II* as official spokesperson for the U.S. Military.

Lynndie England, former Specialist in the U.S. Army, appeared on the prisoner abuse photographs broadcasted on *60 Minutes II*.

Charles A. Graner, former Specialist in the U.S. Army, appeared on the prisoner abuse photographs broadcasted on *60 Minutes II* and identified by Joseph Darby to be the provider of two compact discs of photographs.

Ivan “Chip” Frederick, former Staff Sergeant in the U.S. Army, the highest ranking of the six military personnel initially facing legal charges and the only one successfully contacted by *60 Minutes II*.

Joseph Darby, former Specialist in the U.S. Army who also served as a military police at Abu Ghraib prison. Blew the whistle in January 2004 by turning in two compact discs of prisoner abuse images of with an anonymous note to a Criminal Investigation Division (CID) personnel in the military.

Antonio Taguba, Major General who authored an internal investigation report that confirmed widespread occurrence of prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib and recommended corrective actions.

Philip Zimbardo, professor of Psychology at Stanford University, conducted the Stanford prison experiment in 1971 and served as expert witness to testify for the defense of Ivan “Chip” Frederick’s military trial.

Nancy Pelosi, U.S. congressional member who served as Minority House Leader, the minority party’s representative to the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives in Congress.

Chapter 5

Iraq Survey Group (ISG), a fact-finding organization jointly created by the U.S. Department of Defense and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) after the 2003 invasion, mandated to conduct searches for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

David A. Kay, headed ISG in 2003 before resigning on 23 January 2004.

Charles A. Duelfer, succeeded David Kay as head of ISG in 2004.

John Kerry, U.S. Senator from Massachusetts and Democratic nominee for the 2004 Presidential election.

APPENDIX C

Chronology of Events

Key Events Mentioned or Referenced in the Study

(Note: Event dates could vary by one day due to time zone differences.)

11 September 2001. Suicide attacks destroyed the two towers of the World Trade Center and part of the Pentagon, killing more than 3,000 people. Bush stated that American and allies would “stand together to win the war against terrorism.”

13 September 2001. Secretary Colin Powell confirmed Osama bin Laden as a suspect.

14 September 2001. U.S. Congress passed resolutions that authorized the President to use U.S. military forces against those responsible for the recent attacks launched against the United States. The resolution passed by a vote of 420-1 in the House of Representatives (*H.J.Res.64*) and by a vote of 98-0 in the Senate (*S.J.Res.23*).

15 September 2001. Osama bin Laden was identified as a prime suspect of the 9/11 attacks. Mullah Omar reportedly released a statement condemning the attacks and denied the possibility of bin Laden’s involvement, further stating that bin Laden would be tried in the Islamic court in Afghanistan if U.S. provided evidence.

16 September 2001. Osama bin Laden publicly denied responsibility for the 9/11 attacks in a statement published in the Afghan Islamic Press.

17 September 2001. President Bush claimed that bin Laden is wanted “dead or alive” and the United States would go after countries that provide him with “safe havens.”

19 September 2001. Mullah Omar met with over 1,000 clerics in Kabul, Afghanistan, stating it was the duty of all Muslims in the world to protect a pending attacks on Afghanistan by the United States and its allies.

20 September 2001. President Bush addressed a Joint Session of U.S. Congress, in which he condemned the Taliban regime of Afghanistan and announced a list of official demands.

7 October 2001. Major combat operations by U.S. and British forces began in Afghanistan.

14 November 2001. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1378, “Condemning the Taliban for allowing Afghanistan to be used as a base for the export of terrorism by the Al-Qaida network and other terrorist groups and for providing safe haven to

Usama Bin Laden, Al-Qaida and others associated with them, and in this context supporting the efforts of the Afghan people to replace the Taliban regime.”

20 December 2001. The U.N. Security Council passed Resolution 1386 authorizing the creation of an International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) with a mandate to assist the Afghan Interim Authority in the maintenance of security in Kabul and its surrounding areas.

29 January 2002. President Bush delivered the State of the Union address, in which he stated that North Korea, Iran, and Iraq constituted an “axis of evil.”

12 September 2002. President Bush’s UN Address, in which he asked: “Will the United Nations serve the purpose of its founding or will it be irrelevant?”

7 October 2002. President Bush delivered a television address in Cincinnati, Ohio that outlined the threat posed by Iraq, in which he stated, “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.”

10-11 October 2002. The House of Representatives and Senate of the U.S. Congress jointly passed the Authorization For Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002 (*S.J. Res. 45* and *H.J. Res. 114*) by a vote of 296 to 133 in the House and a vote of 77 to 23 in the Senate.

8 November 2002. The U.N. Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 1441, which stated that Iraq was in material breach of its obligations under previous U.N. resolutions and “to afford Iraq... a final opportunity to comply with its disarmament obligations under relevant resolutions of the Council.” It demanded that “Iraq cooperate immediately, unconditionally, and actively with UNMOVIC and the IAEA.”

27 November 2002. First field mission by UNMOVIC and IAEA inspectors began in Iraq.

7 December 2002. Iraq filed a 12,000 report to the United Nations about its past and present WMD development activities in response to Resolution 1441.

19 December 2002. Hans Blix delivered a briefing to the U.N. Security Council primarily regarding Iraq’s December 7 weapons declaration.

9 January 2003. Hans Blix delivered a briefing to the U.N. Security Council with regard to Iraq’s weapons declaration and UNMOVIC inspection activities in Iraq.

27 January 2003. Hans Blix delivered an interim report to the U.N. Security Council about UNMOVIC inspection activities in Iraq.

28 January 2003. State of the Union address by President Bush, in which he stated, "The British government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa."

5 February 2003. Secretary Colin Powell addressed the United Nations.

14 February 2003. Hans Blix reported to the U.N. Security Council on the progress of UNMOVIC's inspection program.

15-16 February 2003. Large-scale demonstrations against a possible war with Iraq took place in major U.S. and European cities.

24 February 2003. The United States and Great Britain introduced a new UN Security Council draft resolution (co-sponsored by Spain), which explicitly stated that "Iraq has failed to take the final opportunity afforded it in resolution 1441 (2002)."

7 March 2003. Hans Blix reported to the U.N. Security Council on the progress of UNMOVIC's inspection program. Elbaradei reported IAEA's assessment that documents showing Iraq's effort to acquire uranium in Niger were forgeries.

10 March 2003. French President Jacques Chirac announced that his country would veto any U.N. resolution authorizing war with Iraq. U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan stated in a press conference that military actions taken by U.S. and coalition forces outside of the parameters of the Security Council "would not be in conformity with the Charter" of the United Nations.

17 March 2003. Bush delivered a 48-hour ultimatum for Saddam Hussein and his two sons to leave Iraq or to be attacked.

19 March 2003. U.S. and coalition forces began major military operations against Iraq.

9 April 2003. Saddam Hussein's statue toppled in central Baghdad with the help of U.S. military.

1 May 2003. President Bush declared that "major combat operations in Iraq have ended."

2 October 2003. David Kay testified in congress with regard to the first ISG report.

14 December 2003. President Bush announced that Saddam Hussein captured alive by U.S. soldiers in a raid on 13 December 2003.

January 2004. Joseph Darby anonymously reported to military authority about prisoner abuse at the Abu Ghraib prison.

19 January 2004. Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez requested an investigation into the detention and internment operations by a military police brigade (800th Military Police Brigade) from 1 November 2003 to present.

23 January 2004. David Kay resigned as head of ISG.

28 January 2004. David Kay testified at senate hearing, stating that “it is highly unlikely” that there were large stockpiles of WMD in Iraq before the invasion.

31 January 2004. Major General Antonio Taguba appointed to conduct an informal investigation into the 800th Military Police Brigade’s detention and internment operations.

February 2004. International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) issued a report to U.S. military documenting instances of prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib.

2 February 2004. President Bush announced the formation of The Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction (the Robb-Silberman Commission) to assess U.S. intelligence capabilities about WMD.

26 February 2004. Antonio Taguba completed and reported its investigation.

28 April 2004. Abu Ghraib scandal broke out on CBS’s *60 Minutes II*.

7 May 2004. Secretary Donald Rumsfeld testified before House Armed Services Committee.

6 October 2004. Charles Duelfer testified to the Senate Armed Services Committee with regard to the comprehensive ISG report.

8 October 2004. The second Bush-Kerry Presidential televised debate, during which issues surrounding the Iraq war was addressed.

2 November 2004. U.S. Presidential Election Day.

APPENDIX D

Description of Data Corpus

The data corpus includes:

- (1) All key speeches on terrorism by President Bush between October 2001 and November 2004, as available at the White House website;
- (2) All congressional hearing testimonial statements (prepared and/or delivered) by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz prior to the War on Iraq posted on the Department of Defense website;
- (3) Documents and speeches that index the Bush Administration's official positions, including the *National Security Strategy*, *National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction*, *National Strategy to Combat Terrorism*, Secretary of State Colin Powell's address to the United Nations, as well as news briefings with senior administrative representatives such as Powell and Rumsfeld;
- (4) Documents, articles, interviews, and speeches that index competing "voices" in the discourse, like those of the Hussein government of Iraq, the Catholic Church, powerful international governments, U.N. weapons inspectors, members of the Democratic Party, human rights groups, and anti-war critics.
- (5) For the discussion of the Abu Ghraib scandal in chapter 4, I examined a collection of transcripts of TV programs (such as *60 minutes*, *Hardball*, *Meet the Press*), in which Republican and Democratic officials debated the prisoner abuse scandal. I also gathered public statements by international leaders and organizations surrounding this scandal. For the discussion of the no-WMD scandal in Chapter 4, I examined a collection of speeches by John Kerry as well as the transcripts of the three presidential debates. Documents containing the voices of critics and skeptics from the international scene were also collected.
- (6) Secondary sources that describe the contexts of these periods, including international and domestic public opinion climates, economic and political conditions of different nations, practices of mass media institutions, military and power compositions, relevant historical events, and miscellaneous policies and programs being proposed and institutionalized.

In addition, many secondary sources that describe the contexts of these periods, including international and domestic public opinion climates, were also reviewed.

APPENDIX E

Images Broadcasted on CBS *60 Minutes II* on 28 April 2004



Illustration A.4.1. Images Broadcasted on CBS *60 Minutes II* on 28 April 2004. Images obtained from Center for Research on Globalization's website: <http://globalresearch.ca/articles/CBS405A.html> (accessed 14 November 2008).



Illustration A.4.1. Images Broadcasted on CBS *60 Minutes II*, Continued.

APPENDIX F

Jeffrey Alexander's Model of Civil Discourse: Binary Structures of Motives, Relationships, and Institutions

Alexander (2006: 53-62) presented a binary model of civil discourse operating at the levels of (1) motives, (2) relations, and (3) institutions arranged in binary structures.

CIVIL MOTIVES	ANTICIVIL MOTIVES
Active	Passive
Autonomous	Dependent
Rational	Irrational
Reasonable	Hysterical
Calm	Excitable
Self-Controlled	Wild-passionate
Realistic	Distorted
Sane	Mad
CIVIL RELATIONS	ANTICIVIL RELATIONS
Open	Secretive
Trusting	Suspicious
Critical	Deferential
Honorable	Self-Interested
Altruistic	Greedy
Truthful	Deceitful
Straightforward	Calculating
Deliberative	Conspiratorial
Friendly	Antagonistic
CIVIL INSTITUTIONS	ANTICIVIL INSTITUTIONS
Rule regulated	Arbitrary
Law	Power
Equality	Hierarchy
Inclusive	Exclusive
Impersonal	Personal
Contracts	Bonds of loyalty
Groups	Factions
Office	Personality

Figure A.6.1. Jeffrey Alexander's Model of Civil Discourse: Binary Structures of Motives, Relationships, and Institutions. Reproduced from Jeffrey Alexander, *The Civil Sphere* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 57-59.

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