

Anna Starobinets

PSC 393

March 16, 2020

A War of Deception: The Symbolic Politics of the Iraq War

Introduction:

Language plays a central role in the relationship between people and politics, and due to the lack of direct interaction that we have with politics, we tend to look to authorities to give us guidance on what to believe, especially in a time of crisis. The tragic events of September 11th made many Americans feel small and powerless, so when the government proposed a grandiose plan to fight global terrorism, which included an invasion of Iraq, it was not surprising that many people were on board. In any war, language is an essential element of propaganda, used to urge people to support the government's actions without reflecting on the consequences. During the Iraq War, the Bush administration was extremely tactical in their use of metaphors that would fit people's moral frames and appeal to their values in order to convince them the war was a good idea. They constructed their narrative so carefully, that despite the lack of evidence existing to support many of their claims, they still managed to convince people to accept their metaphors and be able to view the war as just. At first glance, it's hard to understand why people accepted the administration's claims, even when presented with direct evidence to contradict the administration's rationale for war, such as: the lack of a link between Saddam and Al Qaeda, the absence of proof that Saddam actually possessed any WMDs, and the logical conclusion that large numbers of Iraqi people would be the ones killed in the war.

In his book, "Moral Politics," cognitive linguist George Lakoff, offers insights as to why the rhetoric of the Bush administration was so effective. Lakoff explains how metaphors shape

the way we think about the world and claims that “much of moral reasoning is metaphorical” (5) which is why the way we perceive information is determined by metaphors, not by facts. He also claims that many of our thoughts are unconscious because we use an elaborate system of concepts, of which we are not aware of, when we think. Once these concepts, or frames, are constructed, we process information through them and when certain facts don’t fit our frames, we are more likely to ignore those facts or adjust them to fit our frames, rather than question the frames themselves, which results in strong use of confirmation bias. The Bush administration used the American public’s fears of terrorism, stemming from the September 11th attacks, and the pre-conceptions people had about Saddam Hussein from the First Gulf War in 1991, and was extremely tactical in its use of metaphors to justify the Iraq War. By analyzing the language and rhetoric of the Bush administration, it is evident that their strategic employment of metaphors, most notably the “Nation as a Person,” along with the heavy use of symbolic language, including terms such as “war on terror,” “weapons of mass destruction,” and the defense of key American values like “freedom,” evoked powerful emotions within the American public and convinced them that the only way to defeat terrorism and defend American values was to go to war with Iraq and remove Saddam Hussein from power

Literature Review:

A lot of literature has discussed the lies that the Bush Administration told, to justify the Iraq war, along with the metaphors and symbolic terms they used to frame their claims, to appeal to people’s emotions. In his article, “Metaphor and War, Again.” George Lakoff discusses how many of the same metaphors that were used in the 1990 Gulf War, were being brought back. The central metaphor in U.S foreign policy is that “A Nation Is A Person,” which Lakoff builds off of

to explain how various parts of the war were justified. Sovacool and Halfon explore the characteristics of the Iraq war, and the reconstruction that came after, as a discourse that the Bush administration used to justify the war. Discourse refers to “a historically emergent systems of objects, concepts, categories, and theories that mutually reinforce each other, thereby stabilizing meaning and identity” (Sovacool and Halfon 2007). Certain discourses become dominant and institutionalized over time and tend to generate certain policy narratives that also become dominant (Sovacool and Halfon 2007). However, in order for discourses to maintain their dominance and appearance of truth, they also must remain unchanged which explains why the Bush administration’s consistent use of the metaphors that fit into the “nation as a person” system, along with claims about the links between Saddam and al Qaeda, essentially became unquestioned truths to the American people.

“Identity, or what it means to be American,” (Sovacool and Halfon 2007) was greatly emphasized by the metaphors and terms used by the administration as they commonly addressed protecting our own freedom and the freedom of the Iraqi people. “Threat assessment, or the identification and construction of threats and representations of danger that justify military policy and interventions” (Sovacool and Halfon 2007) was also prominent in the administration’s language as they carefully constructed a narrative that made Saddam appear as a grave danger that needed to be defeated, hence justifying going to war. The administration conceptualized Iraq in terms of a single person, Saddam Hussein, and framed every action as being taken against him specifically, and not the people of Iraq. Because Saddam was our enemy, Iraq was our enemy and had to be defeated to preserve our national interests, which included being healthy and strong. Framing the war as a way to preserve national interests was a very wise choice because within discourse, “language of terrorism had increasingly become the generic signifier of threat,”

(Sovacool and Haflon 2007). The administration used systematic politics of mass deception based on lies to create a “war on terror” rhetoric, in an effort to manipulate the American public into a sense of fear which would lead them to support their agenda (Kellner 2007). In an interview, former National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski claimed that the administration “exploited 9/11, relying on highly effective demagoguery in which sadly the President played a leading role” (World Policy Journal 2007). Despite never explicitly stating that Saddam Hussein played a role in 9/11, by consistently linking Saddam to al Qaeda and terrorist activities, Bush was able to provide a context from which the American people could make such a connection (Gershskoff and Kushner). Even when the mission in Iraq began to show cracks and the 9/11 Commission concluded that there had in fact, not been any connection between 9/11 and Iraq, the Bush administration continued to speak about those rhetorical connections, and the public continued to believe them (Kellner 2007). According to John Zaller’s theory of public opinion, when elite discourse tends to favor a certain policy, the public only hears one perspective and tends to agree with it, (1992) which explains why in the absence of alternative information, the relatively uninformed American public was quick to align with the Bush administration’s perspective.

The Nation-Person metaphor also allows for the creation of a Self-Defense/Rescue Story which was also used to justify the war. Along with framing Saddam, and therefore Iraq, as a major security threat, the Administration’s language also created the image of the Iraqi people as helpless victims under Saddam’s villainous rule. The United States took on both the roles of the hero and the victim because while terrorism had become a threat to our nation and we needed to defend ourselves, we were also going in to liberate Iraq and rescue them from a tyrannical regime, therefore allowing them to be free. This ties into the American identity because, one of

the central values to Americans is freedom. Our country has a “long and contested history of defining, determining, and defending freedom,” (Foner 2013) and therefore, it is not surprising that framing the decision to go into Iraq as a rescue mission to guarantee freedom to the Iraqi people was so effective. Due to its importance to the American identity, freedom has frequently been used throughout history to mobilize support for war, (Foner 2013) and in his statements beginning immediately after 9/11, Bush “repeated constantly that the war against terrorism was being fought for ‘freedom,’” (Kellner 2007) which incorporates two of the main symbolic phrases that I am analyzing in my work. Conceptualizing Iraq in this way also greatly helped justify the war in the mind of Americans because they were assured that the U.S was going in to help the victims, and not injure them even more. Additionally, the presence of WMDs in Iraq, and “the claims that Saddam’s WMDs posed a direct threat were most effective in sustaining political support for the war,” (Pfeiffer 43) because made Saddam Hussein appear as a direct threat to America. Despite the absence of the WMDs and the lack of a connection between Saddam and the 9/11 terrorist attacks, people were so traumatized by 9/11 that they were willing to support the war effort to prevent an event like that from ever reoccurring.

Given the research in this area, a lot has been done on the rhetoric of the Bush Administration in the lead-up to and during the Iraq war, but little attention has been given to the public speeches delivered by Bush himself. Pfeiffer does a deep analysis and provides evidence that proves Bush’s claims were false, and also dissects various government documents from the CIA, the Department of Defense, along with news articles from the *New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *CNN*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. Lakoff, on the other hand, does a thorough job of outlining the metaphors used by the Bush administration to justify the war and puts them into context. Both of these sources greatly contribute to my research as they give me a starting

point to go off of. My own research connects the war metaphors outlined by Lakoff and Bush's arguments for war that Pfeiffer presents, by analyzing how these metaphors were used as lies in President Bush's speeches, in an attempt to fill the current gap in research. By knowing which claims were lies and how they were spun, along with the metaphors that were used to spin them, I am able to more easily identify these lies and metaphors when reading Bush's speeches. This allows for better analysis and a more concrete understanding of exactly how the administration was able to so effectively spin the truth and convince the American people to support the war effort. My research is also an extension of the work done by Gershkoff and Kushner, as I also look at the use of symbolic terms like "Iraq" and "terrorism," but also focus a lot of attention on the use of metaphors in Bush's speeches, specifically those revolving around the "nation as a person" metaphor.

Methodology

While there has been a lot of research done on the metaphors and symbolic language used to justify the Iraq War, there has not yet been an in-depth analysis of the metaphors and symbolic language used specifically by President Bush in his speeches. I looked directly at some of the key speeches that Bush made prior to and during the war, including his September 20, 2001 Address to Joint Session of Congress and the American people, the October 7, 2002 "Address to the Nation on the Threat of Iraq", the March 17, 2003 "Address to the Nation on Iraq," the March 16, 2003 Statement at the Atlantic Summit, the May 1, 2003 "Mission Accomplished" Speech, and the 2002, 2003 and 2004 State of the Union Addresses, and recorded which metaphors and symbolic terms he used. I chose these speeches because they cover the spectrum of metaphors and symbolic language used by Bush very well. They are also some of the more

well-known speeches, which suggests that they would have been more influential in shaping public opinion about the war. I looked at the speeches chronologically in order to see if Bush maintained the same rhetoric throughout the war's duration, or if he changed certain messages as the war progressed.

The main metaphor used in all of his speeches is the "Nation as a Person," from which various smaller metaphors are built off of, such as the Ruler-for-State Metonymy, the rescue and self-defense narratives, and the self-interest narrative, among others. Symbolic language was also heavily used by Bush in his speeches to convey a larger threat than what was actually present. This symbolic language included terms like "war on terror," "weapons of mass destruction," along with language that conveys the defense of key American values such as "freedom." When carefully looking at each speech, I noted instances where Bush used the metaphors and symbolic terms and categorized them based on what they were conveying, along with the context in which the speeches were delivered in. While this analysis will be extremely inciteful for gaining an understanding of how the Administration convinced people to agree with the war, there are, of course, limitations. One of the limitations is that I'm only examining eight speeches from before and during the war, which only captures a small period of time and therefore does not give a full picture of the rhetoric used. Second, while applying Lakoff's cognitive linguistic theory to the Bush's rhetoric leading up to and during the war is a novel approach, it may not render any new information that prior research has not already discussed. However, looking at key speeches made by the president will provide for a good understanding of the story that the administration was attempting to portray, since Bush's speeches are the ones that were most likely heard by the public, and arguably, the most influential ones.

Address to Congress 2001: A Fight for Freedom and the Threat of Terrorism

Bush gave this speech about a week after 9/11. He used the word “freedom” 13 times in this speech, which is strategic since it is a very important value to Americans and therefore, they will be more than willing support efforts to defend it. He also used the word “war” 12 times, which automatically creates the association in people’s minds that the only logical response to the attacks is war. Bush proclaimed that we were “called to defend freedom” as “the advance of human freedom...now depend[ed] on us,” and described the terrorists as “enemies of freedom [who] had committed an act of war against our country.” Bush asked the American people to “uphold the values of America” assuring them that “as long as the United States of America is determined and strong this will not be an age of terror, this will be an age of liberty, here and across the world.” This was an argument to encourage Americans to be enthusiastic about fighting terrorism and priming them to support any future efforts against it, hence the massive support that the administration was able to garner for the war. The words “war” and “fight” traditionally have negative associations and therefore are not likely to arouse positivity and hope in people. However, Bush framed the war on terror to be a “fight for all who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom” all of which are words that have positive connotations to Americans. The war was therefore not seen as an aggression on our part, but an act of defense, which ties into the self-defense/rescue narrative. Bush claimed that this was “not just America’s fight” and “what [was] at stake [was] not just America’s freedom.” Not only were we defending ourselves, we were defending the world, and especially the Iraqi people, from terrorism, and promoting freedom. Bush claimed that America would “lift a dark threat of violence” and that we would rally the world to our cause “by our efforts, by our courage” which contributes to the narrative that America is a hero, saving the world from terrorism. He proclaimed that “the war on

terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there” and “it will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated” which primed Americans to expect further action.

State of the Union 2002: Rescuing the World from Terrorism

The 2002 State of the Union Address was the first one after the events of 9/11 and the start of the war in Afghanistan. Bush knew Americans would be watching, so he assured them that “Iraq continue[d] to flaunt its hostility toward America and to support terror” and that “states like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, aiming to threaten the peace of the world,” which automatically connects Saddam to the terrorists, making it easier to justify waging war against Iraq. It also appeals to the American value of peace, which Bush claims is being threatened by Saddam, and therefore, must be defended. He warned Americans that “we can’t stop short. If we stop now—leaving terror camps intact and terror states unchecked—our sense of security would be false and temporary” which was a way to prime Americans to be ready for more war, fought in the name of freedom and security. He also stated that Saddam’s regime “had already used poison gas to murder thousands of its own citizens,” which contributed to the idea that Saddam was a murderous tyrant. Bush warned that “the price of indifference would be catastrophic” which was a way of priming Americans to accept that war would be a necessary defense against terror. Bush urged everyone to contribute to helping and spreading good in the world, claiming that he knew “we [could] overcome evil with greater good.” He argued that beyond the objective of eliminating threats, our goal was to achieve “a just and peaceful world beyond the war on terror,” which contributes to the idea of America as the hero in the rescue/self-defense narrative, as he claims it is our job to help the world find peace and freedom.

October 7, 2002 Address to the Nation on the Threat of Iraq: Rescuing Iraqis from Terrorism

This speech was one of the first times that Bush solely focused on the threat of Iraq. He began by directly classifying Iraq as a “grave threat to peace” and announced, “America’s determination to lead the world in confronting that threat.” He claimed that “the fundamental problem with Iraq remains the nature of the regime, itself” because “Saddam Hussein is a homicidal dictator who is addicted to weapons of mass destruction.” Bush reminded Americans that the U.S “[had] never permitted the brutal and lawless to set history’s course,” which referred to Saddam, who was the villain and a threat to the world, and reestablished the U.S’s role as a hero, arguing that “we [would] secure our nation, protect our freedom, and help others to find freedom of their own.” Bush stressed that people everywhere prefer “freedom to slavery; prosperity to squalor; self-government to the rule of terror and torture,” and as a friend to the Iraqi people, the U.S would help them achieve those things. Additionally by stating that “America is a friend to the people of Iraq,” and reassuring that we were only targeting “the regime that enslaves them and threatens us,” Bush reinforced the ruler-for-state metonymy in which any action against Iraq was targeted only at Saddam and not the Iraqi people. He also mentioned the massive amounts of WMDs that Saddam has produced and used against his own people and his neighbors, such as “horrible poisons and diseases and gases and atomic weapons.” This served as a fear tactic to get the American people to support the war, while portraying the Iraqi people as Saddam’s victims. In this speech, Bush also makes an effort to establish a connection between Saddam and various international terrorist groups, claiming that “we know that Iraq is continuing to finance terror and gives assistance to groups that use terrorism to undermine Middle East peace.” He claimed that Iraq and al Qaeda shared a common enemy, the

United States, and that “Saddam Hussein's regime gleefully celebrated the terrorist attacks on America,” which strengthens the idea that he was somehow involved in 9/11 in the minds of Americans. Bush concluded his speech by assuring the American people, “we will meet the responsibility of defending human liberty against violence and aggression,” and “by our actions, we will secure the peace, and lead the world to a better day” which reiterated America’s role as the world’s hero.

State of the Union 2003: Terrorism and WMDs

This speech happened a few months before we officially went into Iraq and therefore Bush had to be extremely tactical in his language use. He told the American people that, the gravest danger facing America and the world, is outlaw regimes that seek and possess nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons,” and “could use such weapons for blackmail, terror, and mass murder (...) or sell those weapons to terrorist allies, who would use them without the least hesitation,” which was an extremely tactical way of garnering support for war. Bush then went on to describe the massive amounts of WMDs that Saddam possessed and all the effort he had put into hiding them from the U.N. Citizens were therefore, able to make the connection between what has been told to them about Iraq, and what the President described as the “gravest danger to the war on terror” and conclude that therefore, Iraq was a massive threat. President Bush directly called out Saddam Hussein and accused him of failing to disarm his weapons from the Gulf War, claiming nothing had restrained Saddam’s pursuit of these weapons He claimed that the only reason Saddam had “gone to elaborate lengths, spend enormous sums, taken great risks to build and keep weapons of mass destruction” was to “dominate, intimidate, or attack,” all of which present a threat to the world and U.S citizens and therefore justify U.S plans to defeat Saddam in

the minds of Americans. He also strengthened the connection association of Saddam with al Qaeda by telling the American people that “Evidence from intelligence sources, secret communications, and statements by people now in custody reveal[ed] that Saddam Hussein aids and protects terrorists, including members of al Qaeda.” While this evidence did not exist, and Saddam did not have any connections to al Qaeda, this claim allowed American people to associate Saddam Hussein with terrorism, something they already viewed as a massive threat, and therefore also perceive Saddam as a threat to our safety and security. Bush warned that “if Saddam Hussein does not fully disarm, for the safety of our people and for the peace of the world, we will lead a coalition to disarm him.” While this is essentially a statement of the fact that we will go to war against Iraq, Bush frames it in a way that it appears to be a rescue mission, by assuring that “we will bring to the Iraqi people food and medicines and supplies — and freedom.”

March 16, 2003 Statement at the Atlantic Summit: Villain & Victim Narrative

Bush made this speech in front of other world leaders, and therefore, he had to really frame the war as a rescue mission in order to justify it. He claimed that “Iraq’s talented people, rich culture, and tremendous potential [had] been hijacked by Saddam Hussein” and that the “Iraqi people deserve[d] to be lifted from insecurity and tyranny and freed to determine for themselves the future of their country.” This served as a way to distinguish between Saddam as the villain and the Iraqi people as his victims and assured the world that U.S efforts against Iraq were all aimed at Saddam. Bush assured the world that U.S would “support the Iraqi people’s aspirations” and work to prevent and repair damage by Saddam Hussein's regime which again played into the rescue narrative. Bush also called upon the international community to join the

U.S in the effort of “helping to realize a better future for the Iraqi people,” which again framed them as the victims who needed to be rescued.

March 17, 2003 Address to the Nation on Iraq: Rescue Narrative and “Nation as A Person”

Bush gave this speech a few days before we formally went into Iraq and therefore, he had to magnify the threat of Saddam as much as possible. He conceptualized Iraq in terms of a single person, Saddam Hussein, and framed every action as being taken against him specifically, and not the people of Iraq. He assured both Americans and Iraqis that “if we must begin a military campaign, it will be directed against the lawless men who rule your country and not against you,” (2003) because the American people had to be assured that the U.S was going in to fight the villain, and not injure the victims even more. He also distinguished between the Iraqi people and Saddam by stating that “unlike Saddam Hussein, we believe the Iraqi people are deserving and capable of human liberty.” He assured the Iraqi people that “the tyrant will soon be gone. The day of your liberation is near,” which also assured Americans that U.S intervention in Iraq would guarantee the Iraqi people freedom from Saddam’s tyrannical rule. This also presented us as the heroes, rescuing the innocent victims from the villain by “tear[ing] down the apparatus of terror” and helping the Iraqi people “build a new Iraq that is prosperous and free.” The hero “balances the moral books” by defending the victim because “just as it is important that financial books be balanced, so it is important that moral books be balanced” (Lakoff 46). Based on how Lakoff defines the terms in *Moral Politics*, by entering this war, the U.S would be threatening Saddam with retribution and offering the people of Iraq restitution on his behalf.

May 1, 2003 “Mission Accomplished” Speech: Freedom and Terrorism

This is one of the most recognized speeches Bush made in relation to this conflict. He knew this speech would be widely publicized because in it, he was announcing the end of major combat in Iraq. He began by reminding the American people that we went into Iraq and “fought for the cause of liberty and for peace of the world,” and addressed the soldiers, telling them, “because of you, our nation is more secure” and “the tyrant has fallen and Iraq is free.” In stating this, not only does he reassure Americans that we fought for freedom in Iraq, but also reestablishes America as a hero. This allowed Americans to feel proud and gave them further reason to believe that going to war had been the right decision, since our mission was accomplished. Our invasion of Iraq was titled “Operation Iraqi Freedom,” which speaks volumes about how the administration wanted it to be perceived and how important this value is to Americans. Bush further attempted to justify the invasion by asserting that “men and women in every culture need liberty like they need food and water and air” and that “everywhere that freedom arrives, humanity rejoices and everywhere that freedom stirs, let tyrants fear.” This argument pushed forward the idea that freedom was a necessity for the Iraqis to get rid of Saddam’s regime and therefore by bringing it to them, we were doing our duty as the heroes of the world. This again, served as a way for Americans to be able to justify the war in their minds, in case they were beginning to doubt it. Additionally, he made sure to remind Americans that during our mission in Iraq, we had only brought freedom and peace to the Iraqis, and not further injured them. He praised our military for the fact that they were able to “achieve military objectives without directing violence against civilians” which briefly touches on the “Nation as A Person” metaphor in that the threat of Iraq is only associated with Saddam, and not the Iraqi people.

Another major theme in this speech was terrorism, since Bush needed to reassure Americans that Iraq had been associated with the terrorists and therefore needed to be defeated. He claimed that “the battle of Iraq is one victory in a war on terror that began on September the 11th, 2001 and still goes on,” and then spent a long time discussing the events of 9/11 and the threat of terrorism in general. This again, was a way to tie Iraq back into the war on terror to assure people that they knew what we were fighting for and against. He assured Americans that “the liberation of Iraq [was] a crucial advance in the campaign against terror” because “we ha[d] removed an ally of Al Qaida and cut off a source of terrorist funding,” which went back to the administration’s original argument in pushing for the war—that Iraq was directly funding and supporting al Qaeda. According to Bush, because we had defeated Saddam, “no terrorist network [would] gain weapons of mass destruction from the Iraqi regime, because the regime is no more,” which served as a reassurance to Americans that by defeating Saddam, we were more protected against the threat of terrorism. While in reality this wasn’t true, since Iraq was not involved with any of the terrorist threats to the U.S, thinking that this was true helped Americans justify the invasion once again. Despite all these claims about defeating a major terror threat, Bush made sure to remind citizens that “our mission continues [because] Al Qaida is wounded, not destroyed,” which was meant to prepare them for further action that was going to be taken in Iraq. However, because the fact that we would be continuing in Iraq could raise concerns in the minds of some, wondering how long our soldiers would be there, Bush assured them that while “the war on terror is not over, it is not endless.”

2004 State of the Union 2004: The Value of Freedom & Why We Stayed in Iraq

This speech took place almost a year after the invasion of Iraq, and therefore Bush had to carefully justify all the actions that the government had taken thus far. The very first thing that Bush addressed was the war on terror and how by helping the effort all around the world, Americans are “bringing hope to the oppressed, and delivering justice to the violent.” This contributes to the narrative of America being a hero in the world, saving the world from terrorism. Bush discussed the success of the U.S mission in Afghanistan, boasting about all the great new things that had been established in their country, all thanks to the U.S “saving them.” This perpetuated the idea of the U.S as the hero of the world and suggested that because of American leadership and resolve, the world was changing for the better. Bush claimed that thanks to the U.S, Saddam’s rule had ended, and the people of Iraq were free, which again, contributes to the rescue narrative. As the invasion of Iraq had ended and people were becoming concerned with why we were still there, Bush argued that continuing efforts in Iraq was absolutely necessary, despite the many failures and protests. He assured the American people that the U.S would continue to make progress in Iraq and ensure that the Iraqi people live in freedom, because the “United States of America will never be intimidated by thugs and assassins,” referring to the people who were angry about the defeat of Saddam’s regime and were rising up against the American troops. This was a repetition of a statement Bush made in his March 17, 2003 Address to the Nation on Iraq, where he said that the U.S would “not be intimidated by thugs and killers.” He also argued that “for all who love freedom and peace, the world without Saddam Hussein’s regime is a better and safer place,” a statement that justified the invasion of Iraq post-facto, because despite all the failures that had been coming to light, in the planning of post-invasion actions, Bush still wanted to assure the American public that invading

Iraq had in fact been a good idea. He painted Saddam as the ultimate evil that served as a barrier to freedom and peace, two key American values, and argued that without Saddam, the people of Iraq were better off. This represented an idealistic viewpoint because it drew attention away from the fact that while Saddam was gone, Iraq was destroyed and the innocent civilians that the U.S had “rescued” from a murderous tyrant, were still suffering. He concluded his speech on a positive note, assuring people that “America [was] pursuing a forward strategy of freedom in the greater Middle East” and “would challenge enemies of reform, confront allies of terror, and expect a higher standard from our friend.”

Summary of Findings:

Through my analysis of Bush’s speeches, I found that his rhetoric remained the same from the lead up to the war and all throughout its duration. He consistently used the “Nation as a Person” metaphor, and made statements relating to the American value of freedom, Saddam’s connection to terrorism, and the presence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. I found a lot more references to terrorism and freedom, than I expected, most likely because they were the easiest associations to make in order to get Americans to support the war. From the moment that the 9/11 attacks happened, members of the administration knew they wanted to go to war in Iraq, and the idea of the “war on terror” gave them the perfect opportunity. Bush made a strategic move by describing the 9/11 attack as an act of war because when he began establishing the connections between Saddam and al Qaeda, and engrained the “fact” that Saddam had WMDs in people’s minds, it became easier to justify an invasion of Iraq as just a part of the “war on terror.” Americans greatly value freedom and fear terrorism and therefore, stressing those to concepts really drew people into supporting the war. Additionally, in order to

make a case for the rescue narrative, Saddam had to be framed as an evil villain, which the administration did by constantly describing the crimes he had committed against his own people and all the weapons he had, which could have been used to harm his neighbors, and potentially even the U.S. Since Bush had already established Saddam as a murderous tyrant and linked him to terrorist activities, it was not difficult to convince people that he would readily use WMDs and attack Americans, just like al Qaeda had, by continuing to describe him using already established metaphors. I noticed that Bush restated a lot of his main claims throughout the speeches, most likely because he wanted to keep his rhetoric consistent, in order to further engrain certain ideas into people's minds and garner their support for the war. His various claims also complimented each other, which helped create a narrative that the American people could easily believe. I did not uncover any new metaphors or themes throughout my research, but I was able to closely analyze how the ones that have already been identified in previous research operated specifically in Bush's speeches. Because previous research had only identified the lies used by the Bush administration, without explaining how they operated, I believe that my analysis makes a contribution to the research available on this subject.

Conclusion:

Manipulation and deception through rhetoric were widely used by the Bush administration to justify the Iraq war. The strategic uses of the "Nation as a Person" metaphor and consistent references to the American value of freedom, Saddam's connection to terrorism, and the presence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, painted a picture of Saddam Hussein, and therefore Iraq, as a prominent threat in the minds of Americans, leading them to support the administration's decision to go to war. These ideas became so engrained in people's minds, that

they were able to dismiss any contradictory information and blindly accepted all the information they were being told. This is a prime example of confirmation bias, which as George Lakoff explains, is a result of metaphorical frames being established in our minds. We process information through these frames and adjust that information to fit our preconceptions. The Bush administration began priming the American people for war against Iraq right after 9/11 because establishing these concepts early on allowed them to easily convince people that the war was justified later. Since people had already been primed to see Saddam Hussein as a threat to both our nation and to the world as a whole, they felt that defeating him was the only way to guarantee security and freedom for everyone.

Works Cited:

- Bush, George H. "Address to the Joint Session of the 107th Congress." *White House Archives*, 20 Sept. 2001, georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/bushrecord/documents/Selected_Speeches_George_W_Bush.pdf.
- Bush, George W. "2002 State of the Union Address." *National Archives and Records Administration*, National Archives and Records Administration, 29 Jan. 2002, georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html.
- Bush, George W. "2003 State of the Union Address." *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 28 Jan. 2003, www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/onpolitics/transcripts/bushtext_012803.html.
- Bush, George W. "2004 State of the Union Address." *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 20 Jan. 2004, www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/transcripts/bushtext_012004.html.
- Bush, George W. "Address to the Nation on the Threat of Iraq." *George W. Bush: Address in Cincinnati on the Case for War on Iraq*, 7 Oct. 2002, americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbushwariniraqcincinnati.htm.
- Bush, George W. "Statement of the Atlantic Summit: A Vision for Iraq and the Iraqi People ." *National Archives and Records Administration*, National Archives and Records Administration, 16 Mar. 2003, georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/03/20030316-1.html.
- Bush, George W. "'Mission Accomplished' Speech." *CNN*, Cable News Network, 1 May 2003, www.cnn.com/2003/US/05/01/bush.transcript/.
- Bush, George. "March 17, 2003: Address to the Nation on Iraq." *Miller Center*, 4 May 2017, millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/march-17-2003-address-nation-iraq.
- Foner, Eric. "The Contested History of American Freedom." *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 137, no. 1, 2013, pp. 13–31. *JSTOR*, doi:10.5215/pennmaghistbio.137.1.0013. Accessed 17 Mar. 2020.
- Gershkoff, Amy, and Shana Kushner. "Shaping Public Opinion: The 9/11-Iraq Connection in the Bush Administration's Rhetoric." *Perspectives on Politics*, vol. 3, no. 3, 2005, pp. 525–537. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3689022. Accessed 17 Mar. 2020.
- Kellner, Douglas. "Bushspeak and the Politics of Lying: Presidential Rhetoric in the 'War on Terror.'" *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, vol. 37, no. 4, 2007, pp. 622–645. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/27552281. Accessed 17 Mar. 2020.

Lakoff, George. "Metaphor and War, Again." *George Lakoff: Metaphor and War, Again*, 18 Mar. 2003, www.ugr.es/~jsantana/liees/metaphor_and_war_again.htm.

Lakoff, George. *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think*. University of Chicago Press, 2016.

Pfiffner, James P. "Did President Bush Mislead the Country in His Arguments for War with Iraq?" *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 1, 2004, vol. 34, no. 1, Mar. 2004, pp. 25–46., doi:10.7765/9781526130969.00011.

Power, Jonathan, and Zbigniew Brzezinski. "War, Peace, and American Politics: Talking with Zbigniew Brzezinski." *World Policy Journal*, vol. 24, no. 3, 2007, pp. 75–82. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/40210222. Accessed 17 Mar. 2020.

Sovacool, Benjamin, and Saul Halfon. "Reconstructing Iraq: Merging Discourses of Security and Development." *Review of International Studies*, vol. 33, no. 2, 2007, pp. 223–243. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/40072163. Accessed 17 Mar. 2020.

Zaller, John R. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge University Press, 1992.