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George W. Bush, Policy Selling and Agenda-Setting after 9/11

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Chapter Two

George W. Bush, Policy Selling and Agenda-Setting after 9/11

This chapter explores how the George W. Bush Administration set the political agenda and sold counter-terror policies after 9/11. George W. Bush set the agenda for a global terrorism war and sold policies accordingly. His rhetoric pushed a threat that was evil, resilient, and existential. The goal here is not to reiterate every policy and occurrence that happened in Bush's Global War on Terror, but rather to focus on the themes of Bush's post-9/11 rhetoric and set the stage for a robust comparison with the rhetoric and policies of Barack Obama and Donald Trump in subsequent chapters.

Bush's statements, of course, need historical context so we will begin with a short history of how other recent presidents have spoken about the terror threat. Afterward, the chapter will delve into a discussion of Bush's rhetoric bolstered by findings from the database on presidential speeches about terrorism. Note that frequency charts refer to the number of speeches wherein Bush 43 elicited a certain theme or used a certain term rather than the number of total times a theme or term was mentioned by Bush in his speeches. In other words, if the President used the term "insurgent" five times in a speech, it would still count as one speech wherein the term "insurgent" was used. The same applies for the charts on thematic content and linkages. The notion here is to look for trends among a broad set of speeches and not to let repetition within one speech skew the results.

A Brief History of Presidential Terrorism Rhetoric

Carol Winkler writes that "Terrorism is perhaps the most emotive, pejorative term in the English language." The problem is that "The nation's leadership has used it to justify policies and actions that the American public would abhor in virtually any other context"¹. To Winkler, terrorism "demarcates the unacceptable"². Winkler argues that casualty figures are not the reason behind the obsession with terrorism. Rather, "Terrorism functions as a signifier of American identity, defining what the nation stands for and against. The term divides those who are civilized from those who are uncivilized, those who defend economic freedom from those who would attack America's way of life, and those who support democracy from those who would disrupt it"³.

During the Vietnam War, the Communists were portrayed as terrorists⁴. Later, a wave of mostly nationalist terrorism, frequently directed at Americans and taking place more regularly in the Middle East, became a focus of President Ronald Reagan in the

¹ Winkler, Carol K. *In the Name of Terrorism: Presidents on Political Violence in the Post-World War II Era* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press 2006), pg. 1.

² Ivie, Robert, "Fighting Terror by Rite of Redemption and Reconciliation," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 10: 2 (2007), pg. 224 in Winkler, *In the Name of Terrorism*, pg. 189.

³ Winkler, *In the Name of Terrorism*, pg. 2.

⁴ Winkler, *In the Name of Terrorism*, chapter 2.

1980s⁵. President Reagan, in 1985, stated that terrorism was being used “as an instrument of state policy,” connecting terrorist acts to state actors⁶. Still, the Cold War and the nationalist nature of terrorism made the question of to whom to affix the terrorist label a convoluted one. For instance, did American support of El Salvador equate to state sponsorship of terror?⁷ And what of its support of the Saudis?⁸ In combatting terrorists, Reagan employed Cold War discourse and described the terrorists as “cowardly” and “uncivilized”⁹. Framing the fight against terrorists within the Cold War narrative took terrorists out of the sphere of criminal matters and into a new framework of war¹⁰. This ambiguity over the term “terrorism” by the American government has, of course, carried over into the present.

In a May 1985 speech, Reagan reformulated the fight against terrorism. No longer would he say that the Soviet Union was behind all international terrorism. Instead, he named five states who were state sponsors of terrorism: Iran, Cuba, Libya, North Korea and Nicaragua (Syria and South Yemen, identified for these purposes by the State Department, were curiously not on the list)¹¹. Mirroring George W. Bush’s future “Axis of Evil” formulation, Reagan fabricated connections between these state sponsors implying that the group of states amounted to a criminal syndicate¹². Also like Bush 43, Reagan framed the battle over terrorism as one over the future of democracy and civilization¹³. In addition, the Reagan administration justified preemptive use of military force to fight state-sponsored terrorism¹⁴.

Winkler finds that both Reagan and Bush 43 pushed for preemptive war in response to terrorism through a series of rhetorical sleights. Both leveled *ad hominem* attacks on their respectively alleged state sponsors of terror (Saddam Hussein in Bush’s case, Libya’s Muammar Qaddafi in Reagan’s)¹⁵, both highlighted the brutality these leaders delivered upon their own people, and both extrapolated to “publicly accuse their enemies of planning to extend their terrorist acts to America”¹⁶. Winkler holds that this treatment came despite neither Qaddafi nor Hussein directly attacking Americans. In this way, the presidents also framed Saddam Hussein and Muammar Qaddafi as terrorists with global ambitions¹⁷. Both Reagan and Bush 43 rhetorically equated

⁵ Winkler, *In the Name of Terrorism*, pg. 65.

⁶ Winkler, *In the Name of Terrorism*, pg. 71.

⁷ Winkler, *In the Name of Terrorism*, pg. 72.

⁸ Winkler, *In the Name of Terrorism*, pg. 73.

⁹ Winkler, *In the Name of Terrorism*, pg. 81.

¹⁰ Winkler, *In the Name of Terrorism*, pg. 82.

¹¹ Winkler, *In the Name of Terrorism*, pg. 84.

¹² Winkler, *In the Name of Terrorism*, pg. 86.

¹³ Winkler, *In the Name of Terrorism*, pgs. 86-91.

¹⁴ Winkler, *In the Name of Terrorism*, pg. 93.

¹⁵ It is important to note here that despite Reagan’s assertions, an investigation by Italy and Austria concluded at the time that Syria was in fact the state sponsor behind the bombings in question, which had taken place in Rome and Vienna (Winkler, Carol, “Parallels in Preemptive War Rhetoric: Reagan on Libya, Bush 43 on Iraq,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 10: 2 (Summer 2007), pg. 316).

¹⁶ Winkler, “Parallels in Preemptive War Rhetoric,” pgs. 309-311.

¹⁷ Winkler, “Parallels in Preemptive War Rhetoric,” pgs. 311, 318.

Qaddafi and Hussein's threatening words with actions – at least potential ones¹⁸. Interestingly, Winkler finds that the oft-mentioned gassing of the Kurds may have been carried out by Iran¹⁹. Her statements regarding the purported innocence of Qaddafi and Hussein, however, stretches the truth or may rely on technicality given that Saddam Hussein fought the Gulf War against Americans and Muammar Qaddafi was behind a slew of international terrorist incidents.

While terrorism was less prominently discussed during the Clinton era, President Bill Clinton did face a number of domestic and international incidents including the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing and the 1998 attacks on US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania²⁰. Clinton believed that he was facing a new “modern terrorist threat” that included cyber-attacks and terrorists looking to use weapons of mass destruction²¹. Clinton portrayed these new terrorists as an internationally connected syndicate that could and would attack anywhere – including America²². Deviating from Reagan, the Clinton administration enshrined terrorists as “nonstate, criminal actors”²³. Significantly, President Clinton in 1996 stated that Osama bin-Laden was “the preeminent organizer and financier of international terrorism in the world today”²⁴.

Drawing a line between Islamic fundamentalists and moderates that would be touted extensively by John Esposito and others post-9/11²⁵, Clinton stated in 1994 that, “what the United States wants to do is to stand up against terrorism and against destructive fundamentalism, and to stand with the people of Islam who wish to be full members of the world community, according to the rules that all civilized people should follow”²⁶. Clinton's rhetoric, then, looked a lot like Obama's in that Clinton sought to tone down the threat after an era of playing it up²⁷.

George W. Bush's Rhetoric Post-9/11: Emotion and Conflict

George W. Bush's response to 9/11 was emotional and marked specifically by anger²⁸. After a senseless attack that killed nearly 3,000 people, the American public

¹⁸ Winkler, “Parallels in Preemptive War Rhetoric,” pg. 314.

¹⁹ Winkler, “Parallels in Preemptive War Rhetoric,” pg. 320.

²⁰ Winkler, *In the Name of Terrorism*, pgs. 127-131.

²¹ Winkler, *In the Name of Terrorism*, pg. 130-132.

²² Winkler, *In the Name of Terrorism*, pg. 134.

²³ Winkler, *In the Name of Terrorism*, pg. 135.

²⁴ Winkler, *In the Name of Terrorism*, pg. 139.

²⁵ See, for instance, Esposito, John, “Islam and Political Violence,” *Religions* 6: 3, pgs. 1067-1081.

²⁶ Winkler, *In the Name of Terrorism*, pg. 154.

²⁷ See Rubin, Gabriel. *Freedom and Order: How Democratic Governments Restrict Civil Liberties after Terrorist Attacks—and Why Sometimes They Don't*. (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books 2011), chapter 7 and Windmaier, Wesley W. *Presidential Rhetoric from Wilson to Obama: Constructing Crises, Fast and Slow* (New York, NY: Routledge 2015).

²⁸ Windmaier, *Presidential Rhetoric from Wilson to Obama*, pg. 105 and Rubin, Gabriel and Christopher Salvatore, “Spitting Bullets: Anger's Long-Ignored Role in Reactions to Terror: An Examination of College Students' Fear and Anger Responses to Terrorism,” *International Social Science Review* 95: 2 (September 2019).

was shocked and looked to the President for leadership. As Jeffrey Simon writes, “Terrorism is a complex and frightening experience for the general public and it becomes natural to look toward Washington for guidance and reassurance”²⁹. Bush captured the anger of the moment when he famously stated on September 20, 2001, “Every nation in every region now has a decision to make: either you are with us or you are with the terrorists”³⁰. On September 11, President George W. Bush declared the inception of a “war against terrorism”³¹. Bush went on to widen the scope of the War on Terror in his January 2002 State of the Union address where he labelled Iran, Iraq and North Korea as an “Axis of Evil” – once again, the similarities with Reagan’s five state-sponsors of terror should be emphasized. The Bush Administration’s 2002 National Security Strategy would go on to justify preemptive strikes by stating “the greater the threat, the greater is the risk of inaction”³². To his credit, Bush, like Clinton before him, was careful to separate terrorists and Islamic extremists from those who adhere to “the peaceful teachings of Islam”³³.

After September 11, 2001, the Bush Administration adopted a strategy that would seek to eradicate al Qaeda while also preventing terrorists and their supporters from acquiring weapons of mass destruction³⁴. Bush saw terrorism post-9/11 as a new and different threat – an assessment Clinton held about the terror threat of the 1990s³⁵. Even the threat of non-state actors was not something new – Clinton and even Reagan had dealt with the same³⁶ – and one can go back to the anarchist wave of terror in the late 19th and early 20th century to see the great effect of non-state actors on world politics well before the dawn of the 21st century. While the characteristics of the terrorists were not new, the magnitude of the attack was certainly unprecedented³⁷. Thankfully, no terror attack before or since even registers within the same order of magnitude in terms of property damage and casualties.

It was in the immediate aftermath of the attacks that Bush began to establish the themes that would be repeated throughout his presidency regarding terrorism. The war would be a fight between good and evil and one that would not end until “every terrorist group of global reach [had] been found, stopped, and defeated”³⁸. Bush played on public fear and hope in how he framed the conflict with terrorists and used this rhetoric to successfully (and easily) win approval for the conflict in Afghanistan³⁹. A

²⁹ Simon, Jeffrey. *The Terrorist Trap: America’s Experience with Terrorism*, 2nd edition. (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press 2001) in Ivie, Robert L. *Democracy and America’s War on Terror* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press 2005), pg. 127.

³⁰ Windmaier, *Presidential Rhetoric from Wilson to Obama*, pg. 106.

³¹ DiMaggio, Anthony R. *Selling War, Selling Hope: Presidential Rhetoric, the News Media, and U.S. Foreign Policy since 9/11*. (Albany, NY: SUNY Press 2015), pg. 18.

³² Windmaier, *Presidential Rhetoric from Wilson to Obama*, pgs. 106-7.

³³ DiMaggio, *Selling War, Selling Hope*, pgs. 18-19. Speech by George W. Bush on 9/20/01.

³⁴ Winkler, *In the Name of Terrorism*, pg. 156.

³⁵ Winkler, *In the Name of Terrorism*, pg. 159.

³⁶ Winkler, *In the Name of Terrorism*, pg. 162.

³⁷ Winkler, *In the Name of Terrorism*, pg. 162.

³⁸ DiMaggio, *Selling War, Selling Hope*, pg. 19. Speech by George W. Bush on 9/20/01.

³⁹ DiMaggio, *Selling War, Selling Hope*, pg. 25.

more fine-grained analysis of the themes Bush employed in his terrorism rhetoric will be examined later in this chapter. The use of these themes by Presidents Obama and Trump will be compared to their use by President Bush in subsequent chapters.

Far from being novel, Bush's narrative about terrorism was borrowed. This time from the Cold War⁴⁰. The war on terrorism would represent an ideological battle between civilization and "evil." As will be seen in the data analysis, "evil" was a recurring theme of Bush's, particularly in the immediate aftermath of the attacks. The President sought broader powers and connected al Qaeda to the Cold War by emphasizing that al Qaeda's global spread implied a goal for world domination⁴¹. Obviously, however, al Qaeda was far less powerful and capable than the Soviet Union had been. The comparison was spurious at best.

One of the Bush Administration's main linguistic responses to 9/11 was to embed it in the framework of a "real war" fought "on many fronts"⁴². To this end, the war on terror was framed as expansively as possible (a war against an evil ideology) rather than as narrowly as possible (a war against a militant group based in South Asia). For instance, on May 1, 2003, Bush declared that, "From Pakistan to the Philippines to the Horn of Africa, we are hunting down Al Qaeda killers"⁴³. Aligning with the "many fronts" mentality, Bush portrayed the Iraq War as one "battle" in a larger war⁴⁴. Bush's expansive definition of terrorism and the conflict it engendered was shared by America's adversaries. This was an unfortunate outcome because Bush's portrayal of the conflict reinforced the claims made by al Qaeda. Osama bin Laden, after all, portrayed the conflict with the United States as one of the Muslim world against Westerner conquerors⁴⁵. The outcome was that both sides adopted a clash of civilizations mythology and applied it to the conflict⁴⁶. While Bush and his people, borrowing again from Clinton, labeled bin Laden and his group as "false prophets" who had twisted Islam⁴⁷, Bush's own narrative proved to be fatalistic and Manichaeic.

It is important to note here that George W. Bush made a whopping 85 terrorism-focused formal speeches after 9/11 in 2001 alone and 169 such speeches in 2002 (see Chart 1.1). Jeffrey Tulis observes that like his father, George W. Bush was a reluctant and not particularly gifted speaker⁴⁸. However, the 9/11 attacks forced Bush to make multiple major speeches. Unfortunately, he used his bully pulpit to try to convince Americans of a crisis that didn't exist – the threat of the Iraqi regime⁴⁹. The Bush Administration successfully linked Saddam Hussein to Osama bin-Laden – two figures

⁴⁰ Winkler, *In the Name of Terrorism*, pg. 166.

⁴¹ Winkler, *In the Name of Terrorism*, pg. 168.

⁴² Hodges, Adam. *The "War on Terror" Narrative: Discourse and Intertextuality in the Construction and Contestation of Sociopolitical Reality* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press 2011), pg. 23.

⁴³ Hodges, *The "War on Terror" Narrative*, pg. 53.

⁴⁴ Hodges, *The "War on Terror" Narrative*, pg. 55.

⁴⁵ Winkler, *In the Name of Terrorism*, pg. 184.

⁴⁶ Huntington, Samuel. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. (New York: Simon & Schuster 2011).

⁴⁷ Winkler, *In the Name of Terrorism*, pgs. 186-187.

⁴⁸ Tulis, Jeffrey. *The Rhetorical Presidency*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 2017), pg. 218.

⁴⁹ Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency*, pg. 219.

who were decidedly not working together. One was a secular anti-Islamist Muslim, the other a religious radical. Regardless, the administration connected Iraq with Afghanistan using the “many fronts” logic (both wars symbolized the fight against terrorism)⁵⁰. Further, Bush and his people played up the tenuous links between Iraq’s government and international terrorism⁵¹. One way they did this was by extrapolating into hypotheticals as the President did on October 7, 2002 when he stated that, “All that might be required [for a WMD terrorist attack] are a small container and one terrorist or Iraqi intelligence operative to deliver it”⁵².

Further, Adam Hodges, through careful textual analysis, notes the litany of ways that President George W. Bush connected terrorism to war. Even going so far as to state that terrorists are “successors to fascists, to Nazis, to Communists, and other totalitarians of the 20th century” on September 20, 2001⁵³. On October 6, 2005, Bush repeatedly reiterated the ideological aspect of the fight with terrorists, linking their ideologies time and again to “the ideology of Communism”⁵⁴. This link, of course, connects the war on terror to the Cold War.

As Table 2.1 shows, George W. Bush made a concerted effort to link terrorists to weapons of mass destruction. President Bush made 61 speeches where he sought to link terrorism to WMD in 2002 alone. In later years, while his frequency of speeches linking terrorists to WMD waned, the percentage of speeches in which he did so shot up. Bush pushed the terrorism-WMD connection hard in 2006 and 2007 as he sought to re-emphasize the threat of terrorism to an increasingly weary American public. Terrorism, to Bush, was an existential threat. He linked terrorists to existential threats to America in 47 speeches in 2001 and 2002, in 45 speeches in 2005 and 2006, and in 33 speeches in 2007 and 2008/9.

[Insert Table 2.1 Here]

If terrorism was an existential threat where “evil-doers” could ignite weapons of mass destruction against Americans, then anything and everything needed to be done to prevent it. George W. Bush’s invasion of Iraq, expansion of executive power and *global* war on terror filled this need. Wars abroad were complemented by civil liberty reductions and increased surveillance at home. The Department of Homeland Security was formed out of disparate departments and handsomely funded. The USA Patriot Act gave law enforcement new tools to surveil Americans. And, as will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3, CIA black sites and Guantanamo Bay opened the door to “extralegal,” indefinite detention and “enhanced interrogation techniques.”

The Iraq-Al Qaeda link allowed the Bush Administration to portray the threat of nuclear terrorism as a likelihood. The ingredients were there. All that was needed was

⁵⁰ Hodges, *The “War on Terror” Narrative*, pgs. 72-73.

⁵¹ Hodges, *The “War on Terror” Narrative*, pgs. 75-76.

⁵² Hodges, *The “War on Terror” Narrative*, pg. 74.

⁵³ Hodges, *The “War on Terror” Narrative*, pg. 35.

⁵⁴ Hodges, *The “War on Terror” Narrative*, pg. 38.

for the established terror state and terror cell connections to be activated⁵⁵. Bush again toyed with these possibilities stating on October 2, 2002 that, "Even a dictator is not suicidal, but he can make use of men who are"⁵⁶. While Saddam Hussein was careful not to make statements threatening U.S. targets, George W. Bush still publicly framed the Iraqi government as linked to al Qaeda creating "a merged, homogenous collective of terrorists and state sponsors" wherein the words of Osama bin Laden were grafted onto the Iraqi threat. As Winkler summarizes, the Bush Administration purported that "the expressed intentions of bin Laden and other members of al Qaeda" represented a "valid justification for the use of force against Saddam Hussein"⁵⁷. It is well known by now that the 9/11 Commission found no evidence of any link between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda⁵⁸. The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace found the same stating that, "There was and is no solid evidence of a cooperative relationship between Saddam's government and Al-Qaeda... There was no evidence to support the claim that Iraq would have transferred WMD to Al-Qaeda and much evidence to counter it... Administration officials systematically misrepresented the threat from Iraq's WMD and ballistic missile programs beyond intelligence failures"⁵⁹.

Testament to the power of presidential war rhetoric, by August 2003 polling showed that 7 in 10 Americans believed that Saddam Hussein played a role in the 9/11 attacks⁶⁰. Through the wanton use of "fabrication, exaggeration,...and questionable sources" the Bush Administration was able to concoct a threat in Iraq that moved the nation toward war and tricked the public⁶¹. The power of presidential rhetoric on terrorism and war could not be more evident.

Adam Hodges notes the media's role in projecting these threats by repeating the President's words as soundbites⁶². The immediate aftermath of 9/11, when the public was decidedly behind the President, "emphasized the power of the president to construct fear, as transmitted through a compliant media system, and to amplify preexisting fear in the American mind"⁶³. The media also rephrased key "speech frames" introduced by the President. For instance, on October 8, 2004 the *New York Times* noted that "Iraq is the central front in the war on terror" and on September 24, 2006, CBSNews.com stated that "fighting the terrorists in Iraq keeps them from attacking America"⁶⁴. These statements became part of the national consciousness and, to that end, could be viewed by some in the public as common sense. Hodges points out that a counter-narrative did exist. For instance, on February 24, 2004, *The Wall Street*

⁵⁵ Hodges, *The "War on Terror" Narrative*, pg. 77.

⁵⁶ Hodges, *The "War on Terror" Narrative*, pg. 79.

⁵⁷ Winkler, "Parallels in Preemptive War Rhetoric," pg. 315.

⁵⁸ Winkler, "Parallels in Preemptive War Rhetoric," pgs. 317-318.

⁵⁹ Cirincione, Joseph, Jessica T. Mathews, and George Perkovich, *WMD in Iraq: Evidence and Implications* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace 2004), pgs. 7-8) in Winkler, "Parallels in Preemptive War Rhetoric," pg. 320.

⁶⁰ Winkler, "Parallels in Preemptive War Rhetoric," pgs. 323-324.

⁶¹ Winkler, "Parallels in Preemptive War Rhetoric," pg. 325.

⁶² Hodges, *The "War on Terror" Narrative*, pgs. 90-91.

⁶³ Hodges, *The "War on Terror" Narrative*, pg. 100.

⁶⁴ Hodges, *The "War on Terror" Narrative*, pg. 93.

Journal referred to “the Bush Administration’s so-called war on terror”⁶⁵. Unfortunately, this counter-narrative did not stop the march to war.

Bush, Terrorism and Evil

The Bush Administration used its words and policies to “view terrorism through the prism of war,” to employ “the rhetoric of evil” and to engage in “the rhetoric of the scapegoat as an exercise in blaming rather than problem solving”⁶⁶. This “public exercise in extreme Othering,” Robert Ivie argues, undermined American democracy⁶⁷. Terrorism is not a new problem, but the way the George W. Bush Administration dealt with it, employing a series of dichotomies such as “good vs. evil” and “us vs. them,” made the problem worse. It eliminated areas of gray. It ignored domestic terrorists. It divided the world⁶⁸. In the years after 9/11, George W. Bush would categorize the terrorist enemy as “evil,” “without mercy,” “savage,” “totalitarian,” and as enemies of the civilized world⁶⁹.

In the following chart, the number of times George W. Bush called terrorists “evil,” “murderers”-or-“killers” (grouped together as “killers”) or “enemies” in his speeches on terrorism after 9/11 is depicted. Note that while Bush used the term evil heavily in 2001 and 2002, by 2003 he nearly completely stopped using it. This is consistent with the trend for policy selling/agenda-setting that we will see in further charts. A period of hammering home a point is followed by a period of quiescence on that point. The reason is that the policy has been sold or the agenda set and the President then moves on to other issues. One may counter that Bush’s dismissal of the term “evil” could be chalked up to other factors such as the ineffectiveness of using the term. That alternative hypothesis does not align with evidence as Bush’s use of the term “evil” coincided with the successful passage of legislation and policies that he desired including the USA Patriot Act, the war in Afghanistan and the Iraq War.

[Insert Chart 2.1 Here]

Terrorism can be seen as “performance violence” and the Bush Administration performed its own symbolic violence in return⁷⁰. This created a conflict wherein the “reciprocal satanization of enemies by both sides mark everyone as legitimate targets of escalating violence”⁷¹. The Bush Administration established an Orwellian world of paradoxes. As Ivie writes:

⁶⁵ Hodges, *The “War on Terror” Narrative*, pg. 101.

⁶⁶ Ivie, *Democracy and America’s War on Terror*, pgs. 128-130.

⁶⁷ Ivie, *Democracy and America’s War on Terror*, pg. 129.

⁶⁸ Ivie, *Democracy and America’s War on Terror*, pgs. 132-136.

⁶⁹ Ivie, Robert, “Fighting Terror by Rite of Redemption and Reconciliation,” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 10: 2 (Summer 2007), pgs. 230-232. Quote cites George W. Bush speeches from 2004 to 2006.

⁷⁰ Ivie, *Democracy and America’s War on Terror*, pg. 136; Juergensmeyer, Mark. *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press 2000).

⁷¹ Ivie, *Democracy and America’s War on Terror*, pg. 137.

“In using law as a weapon to defeat terrorism, civil rights would be sacrificed. In fighting repressive regimes, freedom of speech would be curtailed. To uncover hidden terrorist cells, citizens were to spy on one another. To increase airport security, agents would resort to racial profiling...To bring terrorists to justice, citizens’ privacy rights would be breached and legal representation denied. To kill terrorists, civilians would be reduced to ‘collateral damage.’ To act patriotic was to silence political dissent”⁷².

By employing the theme of evil, the Bush Administration made a preemptive war against Iraq possible⁷³. Such a conflict leaned on an impassioned public, the dismissal of rational investigation and a muddying of the boundaries between Osama bin-Laden’s group and Saddam Hussein⁷⁴. “Terror trumps democracy in the prevailing hierarchy of political aims and measures when demagogues play the rhetorical card of evil,” Ivie concludes⁷⁵.

Colleen Kelley argues that George W. Bush’s rhetoric after 9/11 amounted to a form of proto-fascism. She writes that “[t]he modern presidency has been described as rhetorical in that the president acts through the media as a public opinion leader and is the most significant spokesperson for an administration’s ideologies”⁷⁶. Kelley notes that “fascism shares with all totalitarian movements the aim of ‘organizing masses, not classes’”⁷⁷. Kelley shows that Bush’s language after 9/11 hit on many of fascism’s “identifying characteristics”⁷⁸. These include “powerful and continuing nationalism,” “disdain for the recognition of human rights,” unifying against enemies or scapegoats, “avid militarism,” “obsession with national security,” tying together the ruling elite with religion, and “a controlled mass media”⁷⁹. While the Bush Administration varied in how they fulfilled these fascist categories, the rhetoric and response to 9/11 certainly can be seen as proto-fascist when viewed against this rubric. Bush’s speech was militaristic, nationalistic and obsessed with security – though perhaps rightfully so.

Kelley, through careful analysis of statements made by President George W. Bush and his administration officials, shows that the post-9/11 discourse was framed as one of good versus evil⁸⁰ and one where administration propaganda intertwined religious faith with patriotism⁸¹. As Kelley propounds, “Religion [was] the base of George W. Bush’s theocratic, and so paradoxical, enactment of American democracy. It

⁷² Ivie, *Democracy and America’s War on Terror*, pg. 154.

⁷³ Ivie, *Democracy and America’s War on Terror*, pg. 163.

⁷⁴ Ivie, *Democracy and America’s War on Terror*, pg. 167.

⁷⁵ Ivie, *Democracy and America’s War on Terror*, pg. 159.

⁷⁶ Kelley, Colleen Elizabeth. *Post-9/11 American Presidential Rhetoric: A Study of Protofascist Discourse*. (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books 2007), pg. 56.

⁷⁷ Kelley, *Post-9/11 American Presidential Rhetoric*, pg. 7.

⁷⁸ Characteristics of fascism were identified by Lawrence Britt in “Fascism Anyone?”, *Free Inquiry* 23:2 (Spring 2003).

⁷⁹ Kelley, *Post-9/11 American Presidential Rhetoric*, pgs. 80-81.

⁸⁰ Kelley, *Post-9/11 American Presidential Rhetoric*, pg. 160.

⁸¹ Kelley, *Post-9/11 American Presidential Rhetoric*, chapter 6.

is also the foundation of the protofascist rhetoric with which he has constructed [his] vision of a presidency”⁸².

While Kelley’s analysis may seem egregious, fascism is surely not a term of endearment to anyone nor one to be taken lightly, she notes that, “In November 2006, polls by the Ottawa-based EKOS Research group revealed that majorities of people in Canada, Britain, Mexico, and Israel thought only Osama bin Laden and North Korean leader Kim Jong Il made the world less safe than George W. Bush”⁸³. Hartnett and Mercieca agree with Kelley’s condemnation of Bush’s post-9/11 rhetoric. They hold that in an age of mass media “white noise” wherein the mass media serves to confuse and drown out the public voice, we have entered a post-rhetorical presidency. Instead of the President looking to mobilize and empower the people, under George W. Bush the President sought to confuse in order to pursue the policies he favored. Hartnett and Mercieca also note the religious nature of Bush’s speeches, which tie him to proto-fascist discourse⁸⁴.

Policy Selling: From 9/11 to War with Iraq to “Human Rights”

As Robert Ivie writes, “The president’s profile of terrorism, it goes almost without saying, was the single most influential interpretation of the danger at hand. It was his role and the responsibility of his office to shape public opinion, to put events in perspective, and to set the nation on a sensible course of action”⁸⁵. Douglas Kellner argues that post-9/11, Bush manipulated a scared American public through a policy of outright lying in order to achieve his goal of getting America to fight a war against Iraq⁸⁶. In terms of the theory forwarded here, Bush set the agenda by emphasizing a worldwide war on terrorists and sold policies that included the USA Patriot Act⁸⁷ and the war with Iraq.

Jack Goldsmith’s account of serving as head of the Office of Legal Counsel for the Bush Administration highlights many of the malfeasances that the Bush Administration indulged in during its War on Terror. Goldsmith notes that the “underlying commitment” of the Bush Administration was “expanding presidential power”⁸⁸. Goldsmith reports that the CIA was risk averse prior to 9/11 due to its worry about legal liability⁸⁹. While the pressure to do more increased exponentially after

⁸² Kelley, *Post-9/11 American Presidential Rhetoric*, pg. 252.

⁸³ Kelley, *Post-9/11 American Presidential Rhetoric*, pg. 302.

⁸⁴ Hartnett, Stephen John and Jennifer Rose Mercieca. “‘A Discovered Dissembler Can Achieve Nothing Great’: Or, Four Theses on the Death of Presidential Rhetoric in the Age of Empire,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 37: 4 (December 2007): pgs. 599-621.

⁸⁵ Ivie, *Democracy and America’s War on Terror*, pg. 127.

⁸⁶ Kellner, Douglas. “Bushspeak and the Politics of Lying: Presidential Rhetoric in the War on Terror.” *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 37: 4 (Dec 2007), pgs. 622-645.

⁸⁷ For an account of how George W. Bush passed (and re-passed) the Patriot Act by employing fear-inducing rhetoric see Rubin, *Freedom and Order*.

⁸⁸ Goldsmith, Jack. *The Terror Presidency: Law and Judgment Inside the Bush Administration* (New York, NY: WW Norton 2007), pg. 89.

⁸⁹ Goldsmith, *The Terror Presidency*, pg. 95.

9/11, Goldsmith notes that “the institutional factors contributing to risk aversion remained in place, and stood as an obstacle to the White House’s aggressive go-it-alone strategy.” The Office of Legal Counsel proved critical in this respect as they could “provide the legal cover needed to overcome law-induced bureaucratic risk-aversion”⁹⁰.

Bush spent considerable time and energy “selling” the Iraq War. His emphasis on “evil” and the need to “pull together” proved effective even in the face of a lack of hard evidence for Iraqi weapons of mass destruction⁹¹. Bush purposely “amplified” the threat from Saddam Hussein in order to sell war with Iraq. He repeatedly emphasized that “state sponsors of terror would enhance the sophistication of weaponry used by terrorists,” and argued that the “gathering nexus of terrorist groups, state sponsors of terrorists, and weapons of mass destruction” warranted a preemptive conflict even if the probability of such a nexus amounted to one percent⁹². As DiMaggio avers, “U.S. presidents historically portray instability within enemy countries as a justification for intervention”⁹³. Time and again human rights, security or democracy are touted as the high-minded cause for American involvement⁹⁴. As President Bush stated to the United Nations, justifying a war to presumably establish a democracy in Iraq, “Every nation must have avenues for the peaceful expression of opinion and dissent. When these avenues are closed, the temptation to speak through violence grows”⁹⁵.

Kelley emphasizes that Bush “deliberately manipulated intelligence to justify a war he and his staff were determined to wage for ‘other reasons’ such as manipulating the strategic balance in the Middle East in favor of American interests”⁹⁶. In an examination of Colin Powell’s now infamous February 5, 2003 United Nations speech arguing for war with Iraq, David Zarefsky emphasizes that the intelligence upon which Powell based his claims was faulty⁹⁷. Citing the “Downing Street report,” Zarefsky states that the “Bush Administration made an early decision to remove Saddam Hussein and then shaped its (and the public’s) understanding of events with that goal in mind”⁹⁸.

From the outset, George W. Bush sought to link terrorists to a worldwide conspiracy and emphasized repeatedly that the war on terror would be a long one. Chart 2.2 shows the frequency and percentage of George W. Bush speeches containing the theme that terrorists were part of a worldwide conspiracy. Chart 2.3 depicts the frequency and percentages of formal terrorism speeches where Bush mentioned the theme that the war on terror would be long. As other charts will reinforce, George W. Bush needed to re-sell his terrorism policies, particularly the Iraq War, in 2005 and 2006

⁹⁰ Goldsmith, *The Terror Presidency*, pg. 96.

⁹¹ DiMaggio, *Selling War, Selling Hope*, pgs. 95-98.

⁹² Winkler, “Parallels in Preemptive War Rhetoric,” pg. 320.

⁹³ DiMaggio, *Selling War, Selling Hope*, pg. 221.

⁹⁴ DiMaggio, *Selling War, Selling Hope*, pgs. 220-221.

⁹⁵ Ivie, *Democracy and America’s War on Terror*, pg. 167.

⁹⁶ Kelley, *Post-9/11 American Presidential Rhetoric*, pg. 302.

⁹⁷ Zarefsky, David, “Making the Case for War: Colin Powell at the United Nations,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 10: 2 (2007), pg. 292.

⁹⁸ Zarefsky, “Making the Case for War”; Rovner, Joshua. *Fixing the Facts: National Security and the Politics of Intelligence*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 2015).

which accounts for the jump in the percentage of terrorism speeches containing the theme of a long war during those years.

[Insert Chart 2.2 Here]

[Insert Chart 2.3 Here]

In Wesley Windmaier's account, Bush's response to the 9/11 attacks was "marked by fast-thinking moral absolutism which justified a preemptive war in Iraq to prevent the use of weapons of mass destruction." When those weapons were not found, Bush pivoted to a "freedom agenda," which he touted during his second inaugural address, based on a quest for global democratization⁹⁹. In that address Bush stated that "every man and woman on this earth has rights, and dignity, and matchless value...So it is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world"¹⁰⁰. It is important to note here that Bush's second term saw the Iraq War enter a phase of increasingly bloody sectarian violence, including the infamous destruction of the al-Askari mosque in Samarra in 2006, and a concomitant pressure to seek out diplomatic avenues for recourse¹⁰¹.

Bush's ramp up to the Iraq War successfully connected al Qaeda's plans with those of Saddam Hussein's. Bush did this by portraying Iraq as a "grave threat" to peace that would get "worse with time"¹⁰² and by connecting Saddam Hussein's alleged continued quest to attain weapons of mass destruction with al Qaeda's goal to do the same¹⁰³. The purported plot would be for Iraq and al Qaeda to work together to strike at the United States – presumably with some kind of nuclear or radiological terrorism. Bush and his surrogates repeatedly linked al Qaeda, Iraq and the September 11th attacks¹⁰⁴. For instance, the President declared that, "The gravest danger facing America and the world is outlaw regimes that seek and possess nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. These regimes could...give or sell those weapons to terrorist allies, who would use them without the least hesitation"¹⁰⁵.

The following chart (Chart 2.4) is telling. Here, like in Chart 2.1, we again see what terms George W. Bush used to refer to terrorists in his post-9/11 speeches on terrorism. This time, the descriptors are more concrete as here he refers to America's adversaries as Taliban, some sort of outlaw or terror regime¹⁰⁶, al Qaeda and Iraqis or Saddamists. Note that Iraq and outlaw/terror regimes (not including the Taliban)

⁹⁹ Windmaier, *Presidential Rhetoric from Wilson to Obama*, pg. 104.

¹⁰⁰ Windmaier, *Presidential Rhetoric from Wilson to Obama*, pg. 110.

¹⁰¹ Windmaier, *Presidential Rhetoric from Wilson to Obama*, pgs. 110-111.

¹⁰² DiMaggio, *Selling War, Selling Hope*, pg. 60. George W. Bush speech made in 10/2002.

¹⁰³ DiMaggio, *Selling War, Selling Hope*, pg. 61.

¹⁰⁴ DiMaggio, *Selling War, Selling Hope*, pg. 63.

¹⁰⁵ DiMaggio, *Selling War, Selling Hope*, pg. 62. George W. Bush's 2002 State of the Union speech.

¹⁰⁶ This figure does not include the number of times he calls the Taliban such a regime as they have their own category.

become a rather large concern in 2002 before fading away. This is consistent with the policy selling dynamic depicted in Chart 2.1¹⁰⁷.

[Insert Chart 2.4 Here]

Anthony DiMaggio declares the Iraq War mobilization campaign “one of the most flagrant misinformation campaigns in U.S. history” as evidenced by the findings of the Iraq Study Group¹⁰⁸. The administration’s arguments were fraudulent, based upon flimsy evidence (such as the testimony of a single defector) and intelligence agencies were pressured to produce facts to conform to the administration’s vision¹⁰⁹. As Hans Blix wrote in his book *Disarming Iraq*, “it took much twisted evidence, including a forged uranium contract, to conjure up a revived Iraqi nuclear threat”¹¹⁰. Incredibly, when reporter Martha Raddatz confronted George W. Bush about the nonexistent connection between Iraq and al Qaeda in December 2008, the President retorted, “Yeah, that’s right. So what?”¹¹¹.

The news media mostly bought Bush’s portrayal of Iraq as an imminent threat. Further, research by Brigitte Nacos, et al. shows that increased reporting on terrorist threats was linked to greater public support for the Bush Administration¹¹². The immediate aftermath of 9/11, where the public was decidedly behind the President, “emphasized the power of the president to construct fear, as transmitted through a compliant media system, and to amplify preexisting fear in the American mind”¹¹³.

Yet the President’s popularity – tied to the Iraq War – would soon fade. From 2003 to 2008, support for the Iraq War waned as Americans grew weary of war and saw the project as an inauspicious proposition¹¹⁴. Antiwar sentiment grew in the mid-aughts as Iraq descended into an increasingly bloody civil conflict. Meanwhile, the Bush Administration attempted to fan the flames of public war approval by repeatedly engaging in rhetoric that emphasized fear and the values of democracy¹¹⁵. Concomitantly, Bush’s credibility took a hit as Iraq’s purported weapons of mass destruction were never found¹¹⁶. April 2004 saw more scandal and a greater loss of

¹⁰⁷ It is important to note here that the term “terrorist” was the most heavily used by all Presidents covered since by nature of the way this study gathered speeches, each speech contained some derivation of the word “terrorist” (“terror,” “terrorism,” for instance) at least three times.

¹⁰⁸ DiMaggio, *Selling War, Selling Hope*, pg. 66.

¹⁰⁹ DiMaggio, *Selling War, Selling Hope*, pgs. 65, 67; Rovner, *Fixing Facts*; Zarefsky, “Making the Case for War.”

¹¹⁰ Blix, Hans. *Disarming Iraq*. (New York: Pantheon Books 2004) cited in Kelley, *Post-9/11 American Presidential Rhetoric*, pg. 301.

¹¹¹ DiMaggio, *Selling War, Selling Hope*, pg. 69; Frick, Ali, “Bush on al Qaeda not Existing in Iraq before Invasion: ‘So What?’,” *Think Progress*, 15 December 2008, <https://thinkprogress.org/bush-on-al-qaeda-not-existing-in-iraq-before-invasion-so-what-7ee247bdf220/>.

¹¹² DiMaggio, *Selling War, Selling Hope*, pg. 75; Nacos, Brigitte, Yaeli Bloch-Elkon, Robert Y. Shaprio. *Selling Fear: Counterterrorism, the Media and Public Opinion*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2011)

¹¹³ DiMaggio, *Selling War, Selling Hope*, pg. 100.

¹¹⁴ DiMaggio, *Selling War, Selling Hope*, pg. 105; Feaver, Peter D. and Christopher Gelpi. *Choosing Your Battles: American Civil-Military Relations and the Use of Force* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 2004).

¹¹⁵ DiMaggio, *Selling War, Selling Hope*, pgs. 116-119.

¹¹⁶ DiMaggio, *Selling War, Selling Hope*, pg. 125.

credibility as news of the abuse of prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison broke¹¹⁷. Bush's credibility gap continued to grow as he deflected criticism for Abu Ghraib, instead blaming individual service members for human rights abuses that went on at the prison while still defending "enhanced interrogation techniques" for combatting terrorism. In a speech on May 24, 2004, he emphasized the growth in liberty and potentials for prosperity in Iraq rather than focusing on what had become an international scandal¹¹⁸.

As the post-9/11 fog of war lifted, Bush's preemptive war footing strained his credibility as America had initiated a conflict against a state that had done little to warrant it¹¹⁹. Support for the Iraq War eroded rather quickly, fifteen months after the war began, a majority of Americans viewed the conflict as a "mistake" according to Gallup¹²⁰. Bush's credibility gap led to plummeting public support¹²¹. Meanwhile the thorny issue of the "legal limbo" in which the Guantanamo detainees continued to inhabit and the inglorious moment where the 2,000th American soldier was killed in Iraq (reported on October 25, 2005) certainly did not help the matter¹²².

In response, Bush pressed harder into making speeches about the evils of terrorism emphasizing, for instance, the ruthlessness of the enemy and the pitfalls of creating a vacuum in Iraq (which, of course, would be borne out under Obama's presidency)¹²³. Critically, while Bush rarely referred to violent jihad against America, he started doing so in this period where the war was flagging. Further, he also consistently reiterated the importance of the terror threat during this period. Note the emphasis on violent jihad and the necessity of the war terror in the time period between 2005 and 2006 depicted in both the frequency and percentage numbers in Table 2.2.

[Insert Table 2.2 Here]

By February 22, 2006, when the al Askari mosque was bombed in Samarra escalating the civil conflict in Iraq into an even more brutal phase, Bush's rhetoric linking the Iraq conflict to freedom for the people of the Middle East had become so out of touch that it bordered on the absurd¹²⁴. In January 2007, Bush would announce a surge of 20,000 American troops added to the extant forces already in Iraq. He also acknowledged that the 2005 Iraqi election had not had the desired effect as violence in Baghdad worsened and the destruction of the dome of the aforementioned mosque in Samarra (one of Shia Islam's holiest sites) exacerbated the situation¹²⁵. The surge, unpopular among a growing element of the American public opposed to the Iraq War, stabilized Iraq partly due to the ethnic cleansing that had already gone on in

¹¹⁷ DiMaggio, *Selling War, Selling Hope*, pg. 127.

¹¹⁸ DiMaggio, *Selling War, Selling Hope*, pgs. 127-128.

¹¹⁹ Winkler, "Parallels in Preemptive War Rhetoric," pg. 308.

¹²⁰ DiMaggio, *Selling War, Selling Hope*, pg. 29.

¹²¹ DiMaggio, *Selling War, Selling Hope*, pg. 129.

¹²² DiMaggio, *Selling War, Selling Hope*, pgs. 134-135.

¹²³ DiMaggio, *Selling War, Selling Hope*, pgs. 136-137.

¹²⁴ DiMaggio, *Selling War, Selling Hope*, pg. 139.

¹²⁵ DiMaggio, *Selling War, Selling Hope*, pg. 142.

Baghdad¹²⁶, partly due to the presence of US troops and partly due to the assistance of the Sunni Muslim community¹²⁷.

Chart 2.5 depicts the number of speeches George W. Bush made wherein he linked terrorism to other conflicts or issues. While Bush did link the fight with terrorists to World War II and the Nazi threat and to the Cold War a number of times, Iraq was by far the most common linkage (even including Afghanistan). He also linked the terror threat between 2001 and 2004 to the broader problems and conflicts in the Middle East before dropping that linkage completely. Bush pushed the Iraq and broader Middle East connection hard in the run up to the Iraq War and then did so again as the war faltered, mentioning the link to Iraq in 40 speeches in 2006, in 25 speeches in 2007 and in 25 speeches from 2008 until the end of his term. This second cluster of connections to Iraq proves that he had to re-sell the war to a weary public and to rhetorically push the deeply unpopular surge plan.

[Insert Chart 2.5 Here]

As support for war dropped, Bush employed the narrative of a resilient enemy. Chart 2.6 tracks the theme of the terrorist enemy's resilience in Bush's formal rhetoric. Note the huge jump in percentage and frequency of speeches wherein George W. Bush emphasizes the resilience of America's terrorist foes from 2004 to 2005. Here again we see proof of how policy selling works. Bush needed to make speeches about a topic and set the agenda when he was selling a policy, but once that policy was passed he did not need to continuously harp on it. With the Iraq War, he needed to reiterate the importance of a conflict that was going decidedly poorly and eventually sell a troop surge to the American public.

[Insert Chart 2.6 Here]

Mary Stuckey and Josh Ritter show that Bush's clever use of the term human rights served to dissociate his administration from its own excesses. In response to accusations of torture, Bush stated that, "this is not America" distancing himself from a torture program he enacted¹²⁸. Strangely, Bush claimed that tyrants were ones who committed torture and other human rights abuses while his administration was doing the same. One way he sidestepped this conundrum was by pointing to the "system of law" in America; a system that he manipulated in formulating his "enhanced interrogation" program¹²⁹.

¹²⁶ DiMaggio, *Selling War, Selling Hope*, pgs. 144-145.

¹²⁷ Lynch, Marc, "Explaining the Awakening: Engagement, Publicity, and the transformation of Iraqi Sunni Political Attitudes," *Security Studies* 20: 1 (2011), pgs. 36-72.

¹²⁸ Stuckey, Mary E. and Joshua R. Ritter. "George Bush, <Human Rights>, and American Democracy," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 37: 4 (Dec 2007), pg. 660.

¹²⁹ Stuckey and Ritter, "George Bush, <Human Rights>, and American Democracy," pgs. 659-660.

This convoluted rhetoric, meant to provide cover for policies borne of the war on terror, exemplified Bush's approach. He unequivocally placed certain actions – human rights abuses, for instance – in the realm of “evil” but, in pursuing the so-called evil-doers, had to conduct evil actions of his own including torture and the killing of hundreds of thousands of people in war. Human rights or at least humanitarian intervention became a cover for a wide range of abuses¹³⁰. As Ivie critiques: “What would Americans see if they could reflect the crude image they have made of their enemy directly back upon themselves? They would see a rogue nation of power-hungry religious fanatics attempting to remake the Middle East in their own image by perpetrating immoral acts of violence on a massive scale with criminal disregard for the rules of civilized warfare”¹³¹. In other words, America projected an image of itself onto terrorists; alternatively, one might argue the thirst for revenge among Americans led the country to embody the very terrorists they hated¹³².

Conclusions

George W. Bush pushed a rhetoric of fear onto the American public as exemplified in the evidence presented in this chapter. Here we saw that presidents push rhetoric on specific subjects when they need to sell policies and set the political agenda. The 9/11 attacks set the agenda on terrorism for everyone in America – and, as the following chapters will show, that agenda has been hard to shake. George W. Bush made a slew of speeches in the wake of the attacks in which he pressed a broad agenda due to a purported worldwide conspiracy of terrorists. This expansive agenda, Bush argued, necessitated a multi-front war. Part of this war would mean securing the homeland, which meant the creation of the Department of Homeland Security and the passage of the USA Patriot Act. Next, President Bush used this wide anti-terrorism agenda to connect international terrorists to Iraq and Saddam Hussein. Bush and his administration looked to sell a war in Iraq in 2001 and 2002 after which he became more quiescent and concrete regarding terrorism. In 2005, when Bush's credibility gap grew to the point that he had to stop pretending that all was sunny in Iraq, he began to re-sell the conflict. This time, he emphasized the necessity of the war on terrorism in addition to re-emphasizing the threat of weapons of mass destruction getting into the hands of terrorists, the violent jihad that terrorists sowed, and the resilience of America's opponents.

President George W. Bush was repeatedly successful in achieving the policy goals he sought. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq both met little resistance in Congress despite a large protest movement against the latter war. The USA Patriot Act was passed and re-passed, giving the President new tools for combatting terrorism.

¹³⁰ Stuckey and Ritter, “George Bush, <Human Rights>, and American Democracy”.

¹³¹ Ivie, “Fighting Terror by Rite of Redemption and Reconciliation,” pg. 234.

¹³² Rubin, Gabriel and Christopher Salvatore, “Spitting Bullets: Anger's Long-Ignored Role in Reactions to Terror: An Examination of College Students' Fear and Anger Responses to Terrorism,” *International Social Science Review* 95: 2 (September 2019).

Additionally, Bush was able to reorganize the federal government, creating the new Department of Homeland Security to focus more resources on the threat of terrorism. The surge of troops in Iraq, an unpopular suggestion at the time, was also enacted. Bush also successfully framed terrorists as “enemy combatants,” outside the realms of regular warfare and international law, who needed to be detained at the detention center at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. In sum, Bush’s rhetoric achieved quite a lot. His popularity after 9/11 surely was a help and he used this “social capital” to push a war in Iraq that many saw as unnecessary.

President George W. Bush was able to frame the issue of terrorism as a war against a resilient, worldwide enemy. Some may see this supposition as common sense but it is far from it. He could have focused his actions on al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan. But, instead, he sought to expand the conflict and to remake the Middle East. President Bush did exact some foresight. International terrorism had hit American embassies in Africa and an American naval ship in Yemen in previous years. Focusing solely on Afghanistan, as his critics desired, might have proven too narrow a goal. Overly playing down the terrorist enemy might have also proven foolish.

Either way, President Barack Obama sought to put some of the policy ideas of Bush’s critics into practice when he took power. Obama sought to play down the terror threat and work on repairing relationships with Muslim countries. Still, despite his desire to do the contrary, he maintained and sometimes bolstered many of the very Bush policies that Obama claimed to abhor. In the next chapter, we turn to Barack Obama’s recalibration of the terrorist threat.