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## Introduction: Discourse, War and Terrorism

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## Introduction

### Discourse, war and terrorism

Adam Hodges and Chad Nilep

#### 9/11 and the emergence of the “war on terror” discourse

The events of September 11, 2001 produced an abundance of reactions. The events of that day, as well as responses to them, have been discussed, debated, and critically considered by a range of scholars. Many specific treatments of 9/11 have emerged from the fields of political and cultural studies, where the critical lens has focused on the events, their history or consequences. James F. Hoge, Jr. and Gideon Rose (2001), for example, provide a collection of essays that explore the historical causes and political consequences of 9/11 in *How Did This Happen? Terrorism and the New War*. Other scholars have focused on the ends of al Qaeda and the 9/11 hijackers in an attempt to unravel Osama bin Laden’s motivations for the attacks on the World Trade Center. Michael Doran (2001) argues that the underlying goal was not war with the United States, but rather to strengthen bin Laden’s brand of radical Islam and to drive a wedge between Muslim citizens and pro-western governments in the Middle East. Doran suggests that the US response has only helped to inflame an Islamic civil war sought by bin Laden. In other treatments, scholars like Noam Chomsky (2001) have focused more directly on American foreign policy. In *9/11*, Chomsky attempts to provide a serious response to the question of “why” the events happened by taking into account America’s past foreign policy. The contributors in Daniel J. Sherman and Terry Nardin’s (2006) *Terror, Culture, Politics: Rethinking 9/11* examine not policy but cultural patterns – in art, literature, the media, law, etc. – that have shaped responses to 9/11. Other scholars have examined the role of neo-conservative ideology in the shaping of American reactions to 9/11. For example, Sut Jhally and Jeremy Earp (2004) document how the events of 9/11 were used by neo-conservative forces within the Bush administration to realize unrelated (but conveniently linked) foreign policy objec-

tives – particularly, the war in Iraq. David Harvey (2005) explores the geopolitical and economic underpinnings of the neo-conservative ideology that underlies the Bush administration's vision for the world.

Among the various journal articles, collected volumes and monographs that deal with 9/11, some have turned an eye toward language. Richard Jackson (2005), for example, dissects the language used to manipulate public anxiety over the attacks as part of a broader discussion on ethical values and democratic participation. John Collins and Ross Glover (2002) provide “a user's guide” to the “war on terror” with a collection of essays that cover key terms such as “freedom”, “justice” and “terrorism.” In a more general examination of language and war, Mirjana N. Dedać and Daniel N. Nelson's (2003) volume, *At War with Words*, examines both the language associated with war and the wars fought over language. In addition, journals such as *Discourse and Society* (Martin and Edwards 2004) and the *Journal of Language and Politics* (Chouliaraki 2005) have released special issues dealing with 9/11 and the Iraq War.

While much of the academic literature related to 9/11 has focused on the events themselves, this volume attempts to build upon those scholarly contributions noted above that have placed language under the critical lens. As such, we focus directly on the discourse generated in the aftermath of 9/11. As scholars working within the area of language and society have long recognized, discourse does more than merely reflect events that take place in the world; discourse interprets those events, formulates understandings, and constitutes their sociopolitical reality. The 9/11 Commission, the non-partisan body formed in the United States to investigate and write the official narrative of the events, states at the beginning of its Executive Summary, “At 8:46 on the morning of September 11, 2001, the United States became a nation transformed” (NC 2004: 1). Yet any transformation that has taken place – and one could certainly argue that various types of transformations have occurred – was affected through the use of language. Both the immediate reactions to events unfolding on that day, and understandings that have since come about are realized through discourse and human interaction. Language is used to create meanings; and the process of meaning making is inherently political in that it is imbued with relations of power that come together to maneuver, contest and negotiate the meanings at stake.

In response to events like those of 9/11, language formulates the questions and frames the responses. The initial question of “why?” is a cry for meaning to be made out of the devastation. Did it happen because “they hate our freedom,”<sup>1</sup> or was it “blowback”<sup>2</sup> for America's past imperial actions, an unintended consequence of the world's sole superpower wielding its hegemony in ways that have sewn disdain overseas? Language, entwined with power, frames and positions the response.

Following the initial “why” come a series of “who” and “what” questions. What was attacked on 9/11? We require an answer beyond the obvious physical buildings that were felled. Were the buildings symbols of “democracy” or “civilization”? Were they symbols of “military might” or “economic power”? The answers raise new understandings and new questions: Was it “an unprovoked attack on democracy,” as President George W. Bush has proclaimed (e.g. 2006)? Or was it that “they attacked American foreign policy,” as political scientist Chalmers Johnson (2001) has argued? And who are “they” anyway? Who is it that attacked “us”? In response to these questions, we want more than just a list of names; we want to know what the attackers represent and how we should react to them. This in turn requires us to decide who “we” are, since the negotiation of identities involves an intersubjective process of meaning making. Questions of personal, national, and other identities are deeply implicated. All of this is achieved through language use; and this is where we place the focus in this volume in an effort to understand the way that discourse shapes and is shaped by sociopolitical activity in response to 9/11, war and terrorism.

Out of the tragedy of 9/11 arose the rhetoric of the “war on terror,” a lens through which US foreign policy and domestic politics have been refracted, bent and one might even say distorted for the better part of the Bush administration's tenure. The “war on terror” discourse constrains and shapes public discussion and debate within the US and around the world as social actors in Europe, Asia, the Middle East and elsewhere evoke its language to explain, react to, justify or understand a broad range of political, economic and social phenomena. The aim of the papers collected here is to explore the discursive production of identities, ideologies, and collective understandings in response to 9/11 within the United States and around the world. At issue are how enemies are defined and identified, how political leaders and citizens react, and how members of societies understand their position in the world in relation to terrorism.

### Critical approaches to discourse in politics, society and culture

The contributors to this volume represent a consolidation of diverse sub-fields involved in the critical study of language, coming from backgrounds in sociocultural linguistics, as well as communication, media, cultural and political studies. A critical perspective and a focus on discourses of war and terrorism in light of 9/11 provide the central organizing principle shared among all the chapters.

By “critical”, we mean to imply a broad understanding of critical scholarship. On a general level, such scholarship is characterized by careful analysis of empirical data. Moreover, it entails a certain amount of distance from the data in order to

examine the issues from a wide, considered perspective. Yet critical scholarship does not pretend to operate from an Archimedean point outside the social world it studies. Critical scholarship recognizes that such a view from nowhere does not exist, and that analysts are also participants in the world under study. Our subject positions as scholars must therefore be taken into account. In addition, critical scholarship is motivated not only to study society for what it is, but for what it might become. In this way, critical scholarship desires to expose existing wrongs in society in an effort to shape a better world. Critical approaches, therefore, take a keen interest in understanding the workings of power in an effort to counter abuses of power.

The contributions to this volume derive from a diverse tradition of critical study across the social sciences. Scholars in a vast array of disciplines can be seen to draw generally on the tradition of critical theory (Horkheimer 1972). While its outlines are too broad to detail in a brief introduction, this “critical pool” also includes significant contributions from the fields of linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics, among others.<sup>3</sup> Many of the chapters in this volume fall within the school known as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).<sup>4</sup> CDA is not so much a single theory or set of methods as an orientation to the study of *language in use* – that is, language embedded within its social context, or language “as a form of ‘social practice’” (Fairclough and Wodak 1997: 258). CDA and its precursor, Critical Linguistics (CL) (Fowler et al. 1979), echo the Bakhtinian (1981, 1986) idea that language is never neutral. Language use – and the use of all social signs – emerges from sociocultural interaction, motivated by the struggles among different groups (cf. Maybin 2001: 65). The emphasis on discourse also reflects a broader focus on “all forms of meaningful semiotic human activity seen in connection with social, cultural, and historical patterns and developments of use” (Blommaert 2005: 3, cf. Martin and Wodak 2003: 4). This broad focus on semiotics is apparent in the analysis of war photography (Machin, chapter 7) in addition to the various forms of speech and text examined elsewhere in this volume.

While the contributions share a critical focus, their specific theoretical frameworks and methodologies vary considerably. In part, this stems from the diversity of approaches adopted by critical discourse analysts; in addition, it reflects an aim to bring together various critical tools in order to enhance our understanding of these theories and methods as complementary rather than competing. The volume attempts to strengthen an interdisciplinary approach to language and power that may lead to a more meaningful interpretation of social processes, such as the formation of identities and ideologies in political and media discourses in the aftermath of events like 9/11. Let us briefly highlight some of the key frameworks found in the chapters.

### *Theoretical frameworks*

Much work done within Critical Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis has adopted the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), originally developed by M.A.K. Halliday (1985, *inter alia*). According to J.R. Martin and Ruth Wodak (2003), “Halliday’s critical contribution has been to develop theory for building grammars of meaning which can then be used to track the materialization of social activity in discourse” (3). SFL theory centers on language function, and outlines three interdependent functions of language: the ideational, interpersonal and textual. These functions are concerned with the propositional content (i.e. referential meaning), the relationships among speakers, and the structure of the message, respectively. The unit of analysis in SFL is the text – itself a form of social action – and the lexico-grammar is modeled with the text in mind, taking into account the three levels of meaning represented by the three analytical functions described above (cf. Kress 1995, Halliday 1978). Annita Lazar and Michelle Lazar (chapter 3), David Machin (chapter 7), Annette Becker (chapter 9), and Majja Stenvall (chapter 11) each use SFL to varying degrees in their analyses. Both Becker and Stenvall adopt the Appraisal framework, an extension of SFL. The Appraisal framework provides a model for isolating the linguistic resources involved in the creation of evaluations, attitudes and emotions (Martin 1997).

From cognitive linguistics, the study of metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, Lakoff and Turner 1989) has provided valuable contributions to the analysis of political discourse (Chilton 1996, Chilton and Lakoff 1995). The contemporary theory of metaphor outlined by George Lakoff (1993) forwards the notion that metaphor is a cognitive phenomenon. Rather than an occasional figurative device, Lakoff shows us that language as a whole is largely metaphorical. Metaphors make use of a *source domain* as a basis of comparison for a *target domain*, and rely on semantic *frames* (Fillmore 1982, 1985), or areas of experience, that allow us to draw correspondences between source and target. The most common metaphor post-9/11, of course, is that of a “war on terror.” Thus we hear ample rhetoric filled with lexical correspondences associated with a war frame for describing 9/11 and the struggle against terrorism more broadly (Lakoff 2001, Hodges 2004). Metaphors such as the “war on terror” allow us to draw upon previous areas of experience in order to understand new events and phenomena. Consequently, as Norman Fairclough (1989) notes, “Different metaphors imply different ways of dealing with things” (120). Matteo Stocchetti (chapter 12) makes use of these ideas in his discussion of the “crusade metaphor.” In addition, Annita Lazar and Michelle Lazar examine metaphors in their analysis of rhetoric used by current and previous US administrations.

Multimodal analysis, pioneered by critical linguists (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001, *inter alia*), provides an approach to the analysis of social actors that examines how they are represented both linguistically (van Leeuwen 1996) and visually (van Leeuwen 2000, Machin and van Leeuwen 2005). David Machin adopts this approach in order to examine how soldiers, enemies and civilians are positioned for the viewer in photographs provided by commercial image banks for various media outlets.

Contributors to this volume also employ methods drawn from the field of linguistic anthropology. An important element of anthropological investigation – one shared by researchers in communication and media studies – is ethnography. Zala Volcic and Karmen Erjavec (chapter 10) employ ethnographic methods in their collection of interviews with young Serbian intellectuals to illustrate the way these intellectuals have appropriated the “war on terror” discourse to characterize their own position in the recent conflicts of their region.

Of importance for Becky Schulthies and Aomar Boum (chapter 8) are the Bakhtinian ideas of dialogism, heteroglossia and entextualization. In the dialogic emergence of culture (Tedlock and Mannheim 1995), discourse emerges in a particular socio-historical context where participants appropriate, challenge, and negotiate meanings (Bakhtin 1981: 428). This process of entextualization is central to Schulthies and Boum’s analysis of the way programs on Al-Jazeera recontextualize Bush administration rhetoric. We also see this interdiscursivity (Fairclough 1992) at play in Zala Volcic and Karmen Erjavec’s examination of the appropriation of the “war on terror” language by young Serbs.

As these processes unfold, we see the emergence of identities. Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall’s (2004) *tactics of intersubjectivity* provide a model taken up by Adam Hodges (chapter 4) to investigate the construction of sociopolitical identities. Bucholtz and Hall echo Pierre Bourdieu (1978, 1984; see also de Certeau 1984, *inter alia*) in the notion that social differences are discursively constructed rather than waiting to be found. We see this process of differentiation (Wodak 1996) in the construction of identities throughout the book. Zala Volcic and Karmen Erjavec bring a perspective from cultural and media studies to the study of identity as they explore binary positions in terms of Stuart Hall’s (1989) “discourse of difference.”

The study of narrative has been taken up by various researchers, many with a focus on personal narratives – that is, narratives told by individuals about personal experiences (e.g. Ochs and Capps 2001, Riessman 1993, Linde 1993). Adam Hodges extends narrative approaches (Bruner 1991, Labov 1972, Labov and Waletzky 1967) to the study of public political speech to offer a complementary perspective to work already done on political narrative within CDA (e.g. Martin and Wodak 2003, Wodak and van Dijk 2000).

The social theories of Michel Foucault have played an important role in the frameworks adopted by cultural and discourse analysts. Notably, Foucault’s (1972) idea of a “discourse formation” is employed by Annita Lazar and Michelle Lazar in their exploration of the socio-historically contingent field of statements that make up what they call the “New World Order” discourse.

Finally, feminist theory is important to the critical approaches presented here. Katherine Lemons (chapter 5) engages especially with Lila Abu-Lughod’s (2002) discussion of the situated nature of liberation, which calls for “recognizing and respecting differences” in the situated meanings of liberty, rather than “seeking to ‘save’ others” (783). Moreover, Lemons extends Leila Ahmed’s (1992) discussion of discourses on the veil in colonial Egypt and other uses of feminist rhetoric as a tool of colonialist power. Contemporary discourses in the US and elsewhere, which propose to “save” Muslim women, erase individuals’ own agency and leave them no position from which to speak (cf. Spivak 1988).

While qualitative analysis is the favored approach for nearly all of the contributors in this volume, Gregory Stoltz’s (chapter 6) examination of how the term “Arab” is used in the American press is a notable exception. His chapter provides a glimpse of how quantitative methods can be integrated with CDA.

As evidenced in this sketch of the major frameworks and ideas used throughout the book, there is no single theory or methodology appropriate for the critical analysis of discourse. Rather, the variety of approaches offered in this volume provides a plethora of choices for researchers engaged in critical scholarship. As a result, we hope the perspectives in this volume will be of interest to students, teachers and researchers of language and politics from a variety of fields interested in media and political discourse. We now turn to a thematic overview of the individual chapters.

### *Overview of the chapters*

Conceptually, the book begins with an examination of discourses that emanate from within the United States, including presidential speeches and media representations. From there, the book broadens into the international arena with a focus on various countries as well as international media outlets. Additionally, the themes found in these papers move from a specific focus on the American administration to more general discourses on 9/11, terrorism, and war, concluding with a critical inquiry into the politics of fear that underlies many of the discourses examined throughout the volume.

In “‘Emerging Threats’ and ‘Coming Dangers’: Claiming the Future for Preventive War,” Patricia Dunmire examines ways that speakers lay claim to the future in political discourse. Her analysis of the National Security Strategy of the United

States, as well as speeches by President George W. Bush suggests that the US administration places itself in a privileged position in relation to knowledge of – and agency over – the future. This vision of the future has important consequences, as it helps to establish the administration's view of a (potential) future as true and inevitable, and paves the way for “preemptive war”<sup>5</sup> to preserve a naturalized view of global interests.

Annita Lazar and Michelle Lazar argue in “Enforcing Justice, Justifying Force: America's Justification of Violence in the New World Order” that the mode of world-making explored by Dunmire is not unique to the administration of George W. Bush. Their analysis of speeches by three US presidents – George H.W. Bush, William J. Clinton, and George W. Bush – suggests that a project of constructing a New World Order by mixing the language of policing and that of war has been an ongoing US project since the end of the Cold War.

In “The Narrative Construction of Identity: The Adequation of Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden in the ‘War on Terror,’” Adam Hodges examines the role of presidential rhetoric in the imposition of sociopolitical identities on the world stage. In a series of speeches prior to and after the invasion of Iraq, George W. Bush constructs an enemy such that Saddam Hussein's Iraq and Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda network are sufficiently similar so that a strike against one is justified by its equivalence to a strike against the other. The resulting narrative legitimizes the administration's pre-9/11 policy of “regime change in Iraq” in relation to its conflict with al Qaeda to the extent that many Americans believe the two entities collaborated together prior to 9/11, a fact refuted in the 9/11 Commission Report.

In light of US media coverage of the Iraq War, Katherine Lemons, in “Discourses of Freedom: Gender and Religion in US Media Coverage of the War on Iraq,” provides a close reading of several *New York Times* articles in order to highlight how the discursive economy of liberation engages in normative tropes that treat the female body as a mark of relative progress and Islam as a force of repression. She argues that what we see in these representations are normative assumptions with robust but reprehensible histories. The imposition of such assumptions about liberation and feminism omits the possibility of recognizing the legitimacy of different forms of liberty.

In a somewhat different fashion, Gregory Stoltz's reading of the *New York Times* and *Christian Science Monitor* – in “Arabs in the Morning Paper: A Case of Shifting Identity” – shows how, despite a single label, the definition of social groups can be seriously muddled. Stoltz argues that the shifting use of the label “Arab” as a regional, religious, ethnic or altogether different category contributes to the erasure (Irvine and Gal 2000) of the complex and multi-faceted nature of Arab identity and presents a confusing picture.

Media discourse also includes images, and the images of war play an important role in the representation of social actors. In “Visual Discourses of War: Multimodal Analysis of Photographs of the Iraq Occupation,” David Machin shows that, even if the way the media speak and write about war during the past 150 years remains similar, the use of photographs has changed. In particular, the elements that are depicted – and the elements that are ignored – have shifted from war to war. Significantly, the use of commercial image banks and the tendency to treat photos not as documentary evidence but as elements in a visual layout help to conceal the realities of war, and allow talk of peacekeeping and maintaining order to go uncontested.

Moving to a discussion of media in the Middle East, Becky Schulthies and Aomar Boum's depiction of Al-Jazeera in “‘Martyrs and Terrorists, Resistance and Insurgency’: Contextualizing the Exchange of Terrorism Discourses on Al-Jazeera” describes the network's efforts to position itself in relation to both Western standards of objectivity and Arab audiences' expectations of engagement and perspective. In doing so, they explore language used in the network's programs to report, debate and respond to comments emanating from Washington. One result of the network's operations is to open up social space where multiple audiences appropriate and negotiate the meaning of events.

The impact of Bush administration policy after 9/11 – namely, its decision to invade Iraq without approval from the UN Security Council – has been the focus of sharp debate in Europe. In “Between ‘Us’ and ‘Them’: Two TV Interviews with German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder in the Run-up to the Iraq War,” Annette Becker examines such debate from the perspective of domestic German politics. She describes the interactive elements at play when Gerhard Schröder faces media outlets with differing political orientations to discuss the then impending war in Iraq. The result is the creation of an “Us” versus “Them” dichotomy involving not Germany versus a foreign nation, but a dichotomy between rival factions within the German political landscape.

In Serbia, domestic sociopolitical actors have appropriated the “war on terror” discourse for their own purposes, according to Zala Volcic and Karmen Erjavec in “Discourse of War and Terrorism in Serbia: ‘We Were Fighting the Terrorists already in Bosnia...’” Their collection and analysis of interviews conducted in Serbia illustrates a project of imagining and shaping contemporary war and politics, as well as geography and history. Young people construct an analogy in which Serbia is to Muslims in the Balkans as the United States is to terrorists like al Qaeda. This comparison resonates with US discourses conflating terrorists with “Militant Islamists” and casts Serbia as both a victim and anti-terrorist fighter of long standing.

International media, such as the major wire services, play a significant role in shaping emotional responses to terrorism. In “Fear of Terror Attack Persists’: Con-

structing Fear in Reports on Terrorism by International News Agencies,” Maija Stenvall takes a textual approach towards the issue of fear in order to illuminate how reports in AP and Reuters construe emotions such as fear, worry and concern. The result is that abstract fears become “actors” themselves in the response to terrorism.

Finally, fear is an issue that underlies many of the discourses of war and terrorism in the wake of 9/11. The volume concludes with a more philosophical discussion of the role of fear and violence in politics with Matteo Stocchetti’s “The Politics of Fear: A Critical Inquiry into the Role of Violence in 21st Century Politics.” Through his inquiry into the narratives of fear, including a look at the underpinnings of the “crusade metaphor” and the perpetuation of a “clash of civilizations” (Huntington 1993) mentality, his discussion attempts to overcome the “paralysis of criticism” (Marcuse 2002) that often grips society when an enemy is dehumanized beyond the point of rational thought.

### Limitations and contributions of discourse studies

As Matteo Stocchetti suggests, sanity and humanistic values often become casualties in the discourses of war and terrorism, but do critical discourse studies offer any contribution to the resistance of those casualties? Much academic debate takes place both among practitioners and detractors of CDA about the true value of discourse analysis within the bigger picture of social struggle. For example, Paul Chilton (2005) ponders “whether CDA has any credible efficacy on its own terms, as an instrument of social justice” (21). In other words, does it really provide any tangible benefits outside of the potential academic contributions it may make to the study of culture, language and social practice? Another critique of discourse analytic approaches even questions the value of their potential academic contributions and maintains that one cannot fully understand cultural and political processes without detailed and extended ethnography.<sup>6</sup> Let us take a moment to address these concerns and acknowledge the limitations of discourse analysis before concluding with a discussion of the role it can play within the social sciences.

The importance of ethnography as an accompaniment to discourse analysis should not be discounted or underestimated. Indeed, ethnography can play a vital role in turning textual analyses into fuller explanations of social phenomena (see, for example, van Leeuwen 2005). Discourse analysis can analyze presidential speeches and examine the language circulated among the media, but what are the reactions of an undecided voter in Ohio before the 2004 US presidential election? What does a soccer mom shopping at Wal-Mart really think about 9/11? What effect – if any – do the pronouncements of a member of parliament in Berlin have on a college student in Munich? These are all questions that discourse analysis

cannot answer alone and require ethnography to illuminate. Moreover, since analysts tend to live (and practice discourse) in urban, Western settings, the talk and practices of people in highly dissimilar settings may be even more opaque from the point of view of discourse analysis. To fully understand language in society, additional social analytic methods such as ethnography need to be taken into account.<sup>7</sup> Discourse analysis – including the textual focus of many contributions in this volume – remains but one piece in a larger academic puzzle.

Nevertheless, the focus on discourse taken by papers in this volume does have a role to play in academic explorations of war and terrorism. Insofar as traditional ethnography uses language as a transparent medium to describe meanings often presumed to be stable, the emphasis remains on the events and “not the stories informants create about them” (Rosenwald and Ochberg 1992: 2, Riessman 1993: 4). Discourse analysis, by contrast, shifts the focus towards the stories, the language, and the texts that create the meanings. As a result, one begins to notice the instability of those meanings and the role language plays in their construction.

In his philosophy of language and meaning, Charles Taylor (1985) stresses the constitutive dimension of language, which goes beyond the mere denotation of pre-existing phenomena. Language expresses, creates a public space and then places items into that space. It sets up relations among individuals and establishes shared meanings. In effect, “relations of power and property themselves are not possible without language; they are essentially realized in language” (271).

Where philosophy provides grand theories, and ethnography provides descriptions that can only be gleaned through extended participant observation, discourse analysis provides a focus on the use of language – that is, the precise workings of language too easily overlooked or dismissed as a transparent medium of human interaction. If language is constitutive of social reality – a notion inherent in the discursive turn in the social sciences – then how does the linguistic process involved in the constitution of that reality unfold? How does language stake out, justify and defend positions? How does language define, shape and identify events and individuals? How does language come together in discourse to construct ideologies, beliefs and understandings? In many ways, these questions require a focus on discourse that only close textual analysis can provide. The aim of the volume is to illuminate some of these processes in the critical study of politics, society and culture in the wake of 9/11.

In that case, where do academic explanations of the discourses of war and terrorism leave us with regard to the casualties of sanity and humanistic values pointed out above? Perhaps there is little value beyond any potential contributions to academic theories. But if language plays an integral role in the process of justifying war and violence, in spreading fear and dehumanizing enemies; then it seems inevitable that it should also hold the capacity to address the complexities of events

like 9/11 and construct the ethos to engage in communicative practices capable of checking abuses of power (cf. Foucault 1977: 298). We do not intend to imply that this volume accomplishes these feats, but change is always an ongoing process comprised of many seemingly inconsequential steps. Moreover, the desire to be a part of this process of positive social change remains an important motivation as expressed by many within CDA (cf. Chilton 2005: 21).

## Conclusion

In order to understand the relationship between discourse and war (including the strategy of terrorism), let us consider Carl von Clausewitz's (1976) maxim that war is simply politics by other means. One may imagine a continuum of political strategy, with war and diplomacy occupying opposite ends. Diplomacy represents the art of communication employed in the service of peaceful cohabitation. As diplomacy's opposite, war represents the breakdown of communication, resulting in physical violence. It is important to note, however, that both ends of this continuum rely crucially on uses of language. The practice of diplomacy relies on dialogue and tireless negotiation in an effort to reach shared understandings among rival groups. War, too, relies on discourse – communication within the group to divide interests and dehumanize the Other as a prelude to violence.

As Paul Chilton (2004) points out, Aristotle's notion that humans are "political animals" rests upon our unique capacity for language, or "the power of speech" (4–5). The capacity for language therefore undergirds human engagement in politics at both ends of the continuum sketched out above; language is a prerequisite for both war and diplomacy. Michael Billig (2003), drawing on Henri Tajfel (1981), provides an extended discussion of the consequences of this idea, which contradicts early beliefs in psychology that associated war with an innate primitive instinct and language with higher thought (McDougall 1920). Billig (2003) writes,

The apparent irrationality of war is not the product of irrational psychological drives, but is the outcome of the seemingly rational human propensity to make sense of the social world. [...] When Bush and the majority of the American people advocated the bombing of Afghanistan after September 11, 2001, they were not responding to a release of innate, instinctual urges. Their collective response was based upon understandings of the social world, which involved a heightened sense of "us" and "them" (xi-xii).

It therefore follows that – in constructing understandings of the social world – language not only holds the capacity for dehumanizing the Other and justifying seemingly irrational actions, but of bridging towards mutual understandings and recog-

nizing the Other as not wholly unlike ourselves. The "tough on security" image<sup>8</sup> embraced by politicians that privileges the use of war over the use of diplomacy in international affairs is merely a powerful narrative constructed, at base, through language. What language creates, language can dislodge and build anew. Only language can create new narratives and images that embrace the diplomatic end of the spectrum as a mark of political strength. In a nuclear age where the power of language to lead us into war and sanitize<sup>9</sup> its destruction presents indescribable consequences for ourselves and the planet, shifting the balance of language use towards the diplomatic end of that continuum of politics remains a vital necessity.

Discourses since 9/11 have constructed the reality and provided the frameworks through which the world now views and discusses war and terrorism. Dissecting these discourses may be one piece in the construction of new ones that bring the casualties of sanity and humanistic values back to life. The primary social function of scholars, after all, is "to influence discourse" (Graham et al 2004: 216). While discourse analysts are no more important than others in this regard, discourse studies can play an incisive role in understanding the workings of the discursive process at play in politics, society and culture.

## Notes

1. The iterations of this rhetoric in George W. Bush's speeches are ubiquitous. For example, in a March 19, 2002 speech at a Republican Party dinner in Saint Louis, he explains: "They hate our freedom. They hate our freedom to worship. They hate our freedom to vote. They hate our freedom of the press. They hate our freedom to say what you want to say. They can't stand what we stand for" (Bush 2002).
2. In an article in *The Nation* a month after 9/11, Chalmers Johnson (2001) describes "blowback" as follows: "Blowback" is a CIA term first used in March 1954 in a recently declassified report on the 1953 operation to overthrow the government of Mohammed Mossadegh in Iran. It is a metaphor for the unintended consequences of the US government's international activities that have been kept secret from the American people." Johnson (2004) further fleshes out this concept.
3. For a discussion of this "landscape of critical approaches", see Blommaert (2005: 5–13).
4. For a historical overview of CDA, see Wodak (2001), Wodak and de Cillia (2006).
5. Noam Chomsky (2003) points out that the Bush administration's policy of "preemptive" war is in actuality a policy of *preventive* war, as it allows for "the use of military force to eliminate an invented or imagined threat."
6. We are grateful for review comments that challenged us to deeply consider this critique.
7. For an example of how extended ethnography can further our understanding of the linguistic construction of culture, see Lindquist (2002).
8. For a discussion on the language of "peace, security and terrorism", see van Dijk (2005: 82–86).

9. Carol Cohn (1987) illuminates the way “technostrategic language” can rationalize otherwise seemingly irrational behavior, namely, the complete destruction of entire cities and civilian populations with nuclear weapons.

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