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REFERENCES


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In its first incarnation, *The Soft Power of War* appeared as a special issue of the *Journal of Language & Politics* in 2005 to provide a scholarly response to the public discourse surrounding the war in Iraq. Now compiled as a book, the six contributions in the volume are made accessible to a wider audience. Each chapter explores political and/or media discourses implicated in the justification of war or the imagining of ‘international community’.

In ‘The language of neofeudal corporatism and the war on Iraq’, Phil Graham and Allan Luke problematize how scholars often help reify capitalism, which ‘tends to overwrite alternative political economic understandings and analyses’ (p. 14). In their chapter, they set out to provide such an alternative understanding, claiming that instead of living within a ‘capitalist order’, we live in a system best characterized as ‘neofeudal corporatism’ (see also, Graham and Luke 2003). To be clear, they do not wish to argue that we have returned to the medieval system of feudalism, but to point out the similarities between that system and modern corporatism (as well as to distinguish corporatism from capitalism).
Central to neofeudal corporatism is a militarized public consciousness that supports the maintenance of a professional military class – or in President Dwight Eisenhower’s terms, a permanent military industrial complex. Moreover, ‘the current expression of feudalism’, as Graham and Luke argue, ‘is largely discourse-driven, amplified and accelerated by systems of mass mediation’ (p. 32). Graham and Luke start with the historical example of the Committee on Public Information during World War I, which was established to ‘prepare’ the United States for that war. They end by citing the extensive involvement of today’s military in Hollywood ‘productions designed to inculcate faith in military ideals among the public’ (p. 31). As they note, the ‘particulars of these general strategies for militarizing bodies politic . . . are achieved by means of the most effective forms of mediation available and enacted by the most legitimate speakers of the day’ (p. 31).

Legitimate speakers, of course, include government officials; and Norman Fairclough, in ‘Blair’s contribution to elaborating a new “doctrine of international community”’, analyzes ‘doctrinal’ speeches given by British Prime Minister Tony Blair before and after the events of 9/11. In these speeches, Blair lays out a new vision of international relations and global security amidst the use of force in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq. The analysis illustrates how the project of re-imaging ‘international community’ is an ongoing process that ‘develops and shifts in response to changing events and circumstances’ (p. 51).

Moving from Britain to Spain, Teun Van Dijk, in ‘War rhetoric of a little ally: Political implicatures and Aznar’s legitimatization of the war in Iraq’, focuses his analysis on the political implicatures found in Aznar’s speeches to the Spanish parliament. At issue are the pragmatic or contextual inferences derived from this discourse, inferences that require an understanding of both the local political context in Spain and the global context of the impending war against Iraq. Van Dijk discusses the basis for such understandings in terms of ‘context models’ – that is, the mental models held by participants, which takes into account their knowledge about the current communicative situation as well as the political situation in Spain and the world. The resulting political implicatures represent the ‘political “subtext” of the speeches’ and define ‘the political functions of the speech in the political process’ (p. 83).

The dialogic context of Aznar’s speeches is important for the implicatures to take effect. Through his speeches to the Spanish parliament, Aznar is also speaking to a broader audience in that the media and ‘public at large are critically listening’ (p. 71). Many of the implicatures in Aznar’s speeches are aimed at refuting criticism of him within the public debate over war with Iraq. For example, his emphasis on ‘peace’ helps refute criticisms that ‘Aznar and his government have been widely accused of warmongering’ (p. 73). As van Dijk illustrates, Aznar couples ‘peace’ with ‘security’. In presenting the slogan ‘peace and security’ (paz y seguridad) in his speeches, the implicature reads ‘peace, but security’. As van Dijk explains, this implicature takes the form of an apparent concession. The first part – peace – creates a positive self-presentation ‘comparable to the
well-known counterpart in racist disclaimers ("we are not racists") (p. 78). Here, the positive self-presentation emphasizes that ‘we want peace’ or ‘we are peaceful’. ‘The crucial, second part then becomes the essential condition and the principal aim of the discourse’ – namely, the thrust of the discourse focuses on security and ‘talk of the national security state’ (p. 78). This allows Aznar to paint his opposition as unrealistically focused on peace at the cost of security. In contrast, Aznar shows that he is the one working for the best interests of the nation.

In ‘The Iraq war as curricular knowledge: From the political to the pedagogic divide’, Bessie Mitsikopoulou and Dimitris Koutsogiannis contrast two different sets of pedagogic materials about the Iraq war. The first set of lesson plans, *NewsHour Extra*, comes from PBS. The materials promote critical thinking within a narrow context that ‘excludes any discussion about the necessity of the war or its ethics and focuses exclusively on current events’ (p. 92). As a result, the lessons promote a type of ‘compulsory patriotism’ (Apple 2002: 305). In contrast, the second set of lesson plans, *Rethinking Schools*, provides a decidedly anti-war perspective. Through their own perspectival focus, these lessons also operate within a specific (although alternative) context that ‘leaves out of discussion any arguments of the opposite side’ (p. 95). The authors are not interested in critiquing the materials *per se*, but rather in foregrounding ‘their deeper political nature (Gee 1996)’ (p. 104). They succeed wonderfully in this aim, exposing how the underlying struggle over different political interests and goals plays out within the design of such lessons. Most importantly, they illustrate how the recontextualization of different political and media discourses within the classroom construe very different pedagogic subjects (including both students and teachers). This chapter’s exploration of these issues is particularly critical given the oft-cited role of education in the (re)production of society.

In ‘Computer games as political discourse: The case of Black Hawk Down’, David Machin and Theo van Leeuwen examine a specific example of the military’s collaboration with the entertainment industry, which Graham and Luke allude to in their chapter. The military is not only involved in Hollywood films such as *Black Hawk Down*, a depiction of the 1993 American operation in Somalia, but also in video games where, for example, players take on the role of special operations soldiers involved in the events of Somalia. As Machin and van Leeuwen argue, ‘Today’s most important and influential political discourses are found, we believe, not in newspapers, and certainly not in parliamentary debates and political speeches, but in Hollywood movies and computer games’ (p. 109). Through their multimodal analysis, they illustrate how media such as these contribute to the construction of a militarized culture.

Finally, in ‘Spectacular ethics: On the television footage of the Iraq war’, Lilie Chouliaraki explores the journalistic choices that allow the BBC to cover the bombardment of Iraq objectively while still taking a side in the conflict. By depicting both the ‘sufferer’ (i.e. Iraq) and the ‘persecutor’ (i.e. coalition forces) in non-human terms, the television coverage ‘denies the sufferer his/her humanity
and relieves the bomber of his responsibility in inflicting the suffering’ (p. 133). For example, the ‘sufferer’ is presented through a focus on the ‘buildings’ and ‘positions’ that are bombed (rather than people), while the ‘persecutor’ is often erased in passive constructions. As a result, Chouliaraki argues that ‘the footage ultimately suppresses the emotional, ethical and political issues that lie behind the bombardment of Baghdad’ (p. 133).

In sum, these six papers provide unique and complementary perspectives on the ‘soft power’ of war. They illuminate the interdependencies that exist between politics and media while providing important insights into the capacity of discourse to construct the world and wield power through consensus rather than physical coercion.

REFERENCES


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Ecolinguistics or the field of language ecology is primarily concerned with two major research areas:

1. environmental discourse analysis, often termed eco-critical discourse analysis or the language of ecology and environmentalism; and
2. language ecology and the interactions between humans, mind and environment, often expressed through lexico-grammatical studies of how humans talk about and adapt linguistically to new and foreign environments, i.e. the ecology of language.

Alexander’s focus in this volume is with (1) and in so doing takes a strong political position on many pressing contemporary global environmental and social issues. His contribution to current thinking in critical environmental