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Discursive Constructions of Global War and Terror

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13 Discursive Constructions of Global War and Terror

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Introduction

As globalization scholars widely acknowledge, we live in a world of cultural flows (Appadurai 1996). National borders no longer tightly constrain the movement of "ideas and ideologies, people and goods, images and messages" (Appadurai 2001: 5). Of particular importance for discourse scholars is the "flows of representations, narratives and *discourses*," as Fairclough (2006: 3) emphasizes (emphasis in the original). In his discussion of "mediascapes," Appadurai (1990) points out how the interconnectedness of the world's media plays an important role in disseminating messages and discourses around the world. As these representations enter local contexts, they may be reworked and reshaped in line with local assumptions and conventions. In the study of language and globalization, we therefore need to pay close attention to the way discourse travels around the world and is taken up and reshaped by actors in local situations.

To these ends, the Bakhtinian perspective on language provides a useful framework for exploring the global interconnectedness of discourse. Bakhtin (1981, 1986) emphasizes that language use does not take place in a vacuum; rather, all language use is fundamentally dialogic in nature. In their examination of political discourse in the media, Leudar and colleagues (2004) adapt these ideas in their notion of a "dialogical network." As they explain, "media events, such as television and radio programs, press conferences and newspaper articles are networked: connected interactively, thematically and argumentatively" (Leudar et al. 2004: 245; see also Nekvapil and Leudar 2002). At the global level, we can observe how political discourse that emanates from Washington shapes and is shaped by discussions that take place in Europe, in the Middle East, and elsewhere. Against the backdrop of the Bush administration's 'war on terror,' to what extent does such a dialogical network impact on the way war is justified and understood around the world?

In this chapter I examine the dialogic connections involved in the global interchange of ideas about terrorism and the 'war on terror.' Discourse moves across

national boundaries in a manner that shapes global relations and actions, and reshapes the dialogue that takes place within local contexts. To explore these processes, I discuss three contexts in detail. In the first, I examine recent work by Zala Volcic and Karmen Erjavec on the appropriation of the Bush administration's 'war on terror' discourse by Serbian intellectuals (Volcic and Erjavec 2007, Erjavec and Volcic 2007). These young Serbs incorporate this discourse into their own project of imagining and shaping contemporary war and politics, as well as geography and history. The second context discusses research undertaken by Becky Schulthies and Aomar Boum on the recontextualization of terrorism discourses on Al-Jazeera (Schulthies and Boum 2007). Their work underscores both the importance of discourse emanating from Washington and the way in which Middle Eastern commentators rework its language in light of their own cultural assumptions. For the third context, I provide my own analysis of the dialogic connections found in George W. Bush's speeches where he uses reported speech frames to recontextualize the words of Osama bin Laden as part of his discursive construction of the 'enemy' in the 'war on terror.' As Bush provides his own preferred reading of bin Laden's words, he reshapes these words in a way that works to justify his administration's 'war on terror' and war in Iraq. Before exploring each of these contexts, however, I begin with a theoretical overview of the Bakhtinian concept of dialogism, contextualized within the framework of global cultural flows.

Dialogism and Global Interchange

Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) notion of dialogism, which Kristeva (1980) rearticulates with the notion of intertextuality, is useful in the analysis of global discursive interchange because it emphasizes the connections across multiple discursive encounters where issues are contested. Intertextual relations are implicated in a process whereby the discourse is lifted from one setting – in other words, decontextualized – and brought into another discursive encounter, or recontextualized (Bauman and Briggs 1990; Briggs and Bauman 1992). Entextualization, the act of turning a piece of discourse into a text and of moving it from one context to another, allows social actors to bring with the text, to varying degrees, its earlier context, while also transforming the text in the new setting.

The interconnectivity of discourse appears in different guises. The incorporation of previously uttered quotations into a current context is one way in which discourse connects across situations of use. Yet the concept of dialogism, as expressed by Bakhtin (1981, 1986), holds that any use of language is effectively implicated in a wider dialogue. Within the context of a political speech, for example, where the role of the audience is limited to non-verbal responses (applause, cheers, jeers), the speaker must account both for the immediate audience and for "an indefinite, unconcretized *other*" (Bakhtin 1986: 95), or for what Bakhtin calls "a higher *superaddressee*" (*ibid.*, p. 126). Such political speeches build upon what has already been said (perhaps in a previous speech or media

commentary), anticipate potential responses (both from the present audience and from a wider public), and formulate arguments in an attempt to overcome possible objections (which may follow at a subsequent time and in another place). In this way discourse enters into a speech chain (Agha 2003) where "the utterance is related not only to preceding, but also to subsequent links in the chain of speech communion" (Bakhtin 1986: 94).

In the "natural histories of discourse" (the title of Silverstein and Urban 1996), the repetition of texts across discursive encounters inevitably involves reshaping those texts to some degree. As it was expressed by Becker, any use of language – what he calls *linguaging* – consists in "taking old language [...] and pushing [...] it into new contexts" (Becker 1995: 185). In this process, prior text is not just repeated but reworked. The reshaping of prior text may occur with varying degrees of fidelity toward its meaning in the 'original' context. As Kristeva points out, repetition may be done "seriously, claiming and appropriating it [prior text] without relativizing it" – or the process of recontextualization may introduce "a signification opposed to that of the other's word" (Kristeva 1980: 73). Bakhtin (1981) speaks of a "double-voiced discourse," which "serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author" (p. 324). Double-voiced discourse may be uni-directional when another voice is sympathetically represented, or vari-directional when the representing voice is critical toward the one represented (Morson and Emerson 1990: 149ff.; see also Rampton 1995 and 2006 on stylization). In its extreme form, resignification may move into the realm of parody (Bakhtin 1981: 340; Coupland 2007: 175; Álvarez-Cáccamo 1996: 38).

Previously uttered discourse commonly enters new contexts as reported speech. The importance of reported speech in the Bakhtinian perspective is underscored by the significant discussion of the phenomenon by Voloshinov, who characterizes reported speech as "speech within speech, utterance within utterance, and at the same time also *speech about speech, utterance about utterance*" (Voloshinov 1973: 115; original emphasis). Voloshinov's comments highlight the capacity of reported speech not just to represent pieces of previously uttered discourse, but to *re-present* what has been said elsewhere by others – that is, to recontextualize a prior utterance with different shades of meaning (Voloshinov 1971). As Buttny reminds us, "Reporting speech is not a neutral, disinterested activity" (Buttny 1997: 484). The contextualization of prior words within the reporting context imbues them with new connotations and interpretations, as will be illustrated later in the chapter.

Dialogic interchange at the global level can be seen operating in recent sociolinguistic research that examines the impact of global linguistic flows on local communities of interaction. As the language of hip-hop spreads, for example, it is taken up in local contexts, where it is refashioned or 'glocalized' (Alim and Pennycook 2007; Pennycook 2003, 2007; Sarkar and Allen 2007). The forms of language associated with English and hip-hop therefore become hybridized (Bakhtin 1981) or indigenized (Appadurai 1990) as they mix with local languages.

As a result, hip-hop language may not only act as an index of transnational identity, but it becomes a fluid resource for shaping new local identities. In the realm of media advertising, Piller (2001) shows how the insertion of English into German advertisements does symbolic work by constructing a cosmopolitan identity for the product's targeted consumers. While the advertisements often draw upon the hegemonic influence of English as a global language to achieve an authoritative voice, Piller (2001) notes that, "as people appropriate the discourses of multilingual consumerism for their own ends, the ways in which they do so are no longer controlled by the original advertisers" (p. 181). English is symbolically reworked by local actors in such instances. Also looking at the symbolics of global English in local interaction, Bucholtz and Hall illustrate the use of the English language by self-identified lesbians in New Delhi, India, where these women view English "as the appropriate medium for the expression of a progressive sexuality, rejecting Hindi as indexical of backwards and discriminatory attitudes about sex" (Bucholtz and Hall 2008: 419). In this setting, English possesses what the authors call "sociosexual capital" in the construction of local sexual identities. These examples provide glimpses into the way transnational linguistic flows enter new contexts. As Blommaert (2008) summarizes in his own work on transnational flows of English and literacy skills, 'glocalization' involves the flow of resources into a local symbolic economy, where those global resources are transformed accordingly.

At bottom, global discourse flows are enabled by the global media landscape, which connects myriad texts and voices together in a dialogical network. It is against this backdrop that I examine the global circulation of discourse about war and terror. Even widely circulated discourses, like those associated with the Bush administration's representation of the 'war on terror,' are subject to reshaping as they enter new settings; and the discourse of the Bush administration is itself embedded within the global dialogic connections that exist on the global level. I now turn to three case studies that examine these issues in more detail.

The 'War on Terror' Discourse in Serbia

Zala Volcic and Karmen Erjavec's examination of the discourse of young Serbian intellectuals offers a glimpse into how a widely recognized global discourse may be taken up and reshaped within a local context (Volcic and Erjavec 2007, Erjavec and Volcic 2007). In their studies, Volcic and Erjavec conducted ethnographic interviews with Serbian intellectuals aged 23 to 40. Their pool of interviewees included journalists, writers, artists, and politicians; and the interviews took place between October 2001 and the end of 2002, with follow-ups conducted in 2003 and 2004. Questions focused on the Yugoslav wars of the prior decade, as well as on the events of 9/11. As Volcic and Erjavec illustrate, the "anti-terrorism discourse" emanating from the George W. Bush administration in Washington after the events of 9/11 becomes the basis for the articulation of a "Serbian war on terrorism" in the accounts of these young intellectuals.

Volcic and Erjavec summarize the Bush administration's 'war on terror' discourse as follows: "War has been proclaimed; the enemy is Islamic terrorism, personified by bin Laden; and the West has to unite in a war against terrorism" (Volcic and Erjavec 2007: 187). In the renegotiation of Serbian intellectuals' global cultural and political position after the collapse of the Milošević regime, Serbian intellectuals adapt this discourse within their own national context, in order to redefine the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. In effect, the 'war on terror' discourse provides a ready-made template for young Serbians to re-imagine their identity on the world stage, as well as the identity of the 'enemy' they faced at home. Volcic and Erjavec (2007) note: "In the light of the global 'war on terror' discourse, the enthusiastic attempts of the Balkan countries themselves to borrow and exploit the global 'war on terror' in order to remain in the center of global attention are significant and remarkable" (p. 190). Volcic and Erjavec's role as scholars positioned them as representatives of the West in the eyes of many of the interviewees. Accordingly, the Serbian intellectuals couched their political claims in a language that would be likely to resonate with a Western audience – the language of the 'war on terror' – and to allow them to position their situation "in the center of global [or at least Western] attention." In Bakhtinian terms, the Serbians were speaking to multiple audiences at once: the interviewers in particular, and the West in general.

As Volcic and Erjavec illustrate, the young Serbians discursively equate the terrorism of 9/11 with the violence perpetrated by Muslims in the former Yugoslav wars. As summarized in the subtitle to Volcic and Erjavec's article, the sentiment conveyed by these Serbians is that "we were fighting the terrorists already in Bosnia." Notably, the Serbians do not merely refer here to terrorists in a general sense; rather they specifically point to the antagonists of the Bush administration's 'war on terror' to define the enemy they faced. This point is underscored by one informant, who remarks: "It is very tragic, what has happened in the former Yugoslav republics [...] we were fighting the Osama terrorists by ourselves already then" (Volcic and Erjavec 2007: 196). Here the name of al Qaeda's leader is used as an adjective, to personify the concept of 'terrorists' within the Serbian's characterization of his nation's 'enemy.' This allows the informants to paint a picture of themselves as astutely aware of, and involved in, the 'war on terror' long before the USA woke up to the reality of Islamic terrorism on 9/11. As noted by another informant, Serbia's fight in the 'war on terror' stretches back to the 1980s: "Just see what is going on around the world today [...] Some people in Serbia recognized the danger of fundamentalism and terrorism in the 1980s [...]" (ibid.). As the authors explain, "The analogy, 'Serbia is to Muslims as USA is to terrorists,' starts to serve as a strategy of legitimizing the Serbian war against Muslims in the former Yugoslavia" (ibid.). As the young Serbians describe their own experience, they adopt the language of the 'war on terror' to do so.

As the Bush administration uses the term "terrorism" to describe not just the actions of the perpetrators of 9/11 but also those of the enemy faced in Iraq, in the Serbians' accounts the term "terrorism" has also become a catch-all label for any acts carried out by their enemy. That is, the term "terrorism" extends "to all

the violent acts – historical and contemporary – committed against them, the Serbs” (ibid.). In this way Serbian intellectuals rework the ‘war on terror’ discourse so as to represent themselves as positive figures, on the right side of the line drawn by President Bush in the ‘war on terror.’ In the “with us or against us” binary formulated by Bush in his speeches after 9/11, the Serbians discursively position themselves in the former category. They opt into one side of the highly contested ideological divide represented in Bush’s vision of the world. Thus, “in contemporary Serbian discourse, expressions such as ‘war on terror’ or ‘fighting Muslim terrorists’ are turned into legitimate terms designating political wishes of belonging and even legitimizing the violent former-Yugoslav wars” (ibid., p. 187).

Notably, the ‘war on terror’ discourse becomes an important element for the accomplishment of identity work. The ‘us’ versus ‘them’ binary in the Bush administration’s ‘war on terror’ plays upon geographical, racial, and religious differences to distinguish the United States and its allies from Islamic terrorists. The negative images of Islam that underlie this discourse are easily exploited in the Serbians’ own discourse. “By denoting Bosnian and Kosovar Muslims as terrorists, Islamic fundamentalists, and Islamic radicals, the informants reduce all Muslims to a monolithic and irrationally violent ‘Other,’ and in that sense, recycle the Western stereotype about Muslims and Islam (Karim 1997; Said 1978, 1997)” (ibid., p. 193). The Serbians position themselves as the “victims” of actions perpetrated by what they term the “terrorist religion.” Through the use of ‘common-sense’ markers such as “everybody knows” or “we all know,” Volcic and Erjavec’s informants formulate essentialist claims about Muslims – for instance that they are “violent by nature” (p. 194). Another informant remarks: “They do not share the European manners, they are not developed in such a way” (p. 195). The authors note that their informants use the descriptors ‘terrorists’ and ‘Muslims’ interchangeably in talking about the ‘enemy.’ In contrast, in talking about themselves, they use ‘Serbs’ and ‘Europeans’ synonymously.

The global identity categories that underlie the ‘war on terror’ discourse provide a type of template to be applied to the local context of Serbia. Irvine and Gal’s (2000) concept of “fractal recursivity” is useful for thinking through this application of a global discourse to a local context. As these authors explain, “*Fractal recursivity* involves the projection of an opposition, salient at some level of relationship, onto some other level” (p. 38). In the case of the Serbian intellectuals, the dichotomy between the West/Europe/Christianity and the East/non-Europe/Islam is applied within Serbia itself. This allows the Serbians to draw from the negative conceptions of the Muslim ‘Other’ and to align themselves with the West. In this way the Serbians “present themselves as those (misunderstood and betrayed) heroes that have been long fighting the terrorists in Kosovo and Bosnia, which are Muslim countries, in order to defend the Christian West” (Volcic and Erjavec 2007: 187). The mimetic oppositions provide the Serbians with cultural resources to use in the discursive construction of identities in their regional landscape.

Volcic and Erjavec argue that the use of the ‘war on terror’ discourse by Serbian intellectuals works to naturalize and reproduce “a hegemonic global order of

discourse" (p. 197). They illustrate this reproduction by pointing to the overlap of key words used both by Bush and by the Serbian intellectuals in their talk about 'terrorism.' As Bush describes the events of 9/11 so do the Serbians describe their war against Muslims in the former Yugoslavia. In particular, Erjavec and Volcic highlight descriptors that refer to "a crusade against Muslim terrorists" and to "a fight for our freedom and civilization" (Erjavec and Volcic 2007: 129). Volcic and Erjavec therefore argue that the language of the 'war on terror' put forth by the Bush administration becomes further entrenched as a dominant discourse in world affairs. To be sure, although it may be considered 'dominant' in the sense of being widely circulated and recognized, it has also been highly resisted. Nevertheless, where accepted and taken up, as in the case highlighted by Volcic and Erjavec, it provides local actors with a ready-made framework for articulating their own political and militaristic struggles.

Serbia is not the only context in which the 'war on terror' has become reconfigured. Russia provides another interesting example (Volcic and Erjavec 2007: 199; Tishkov 2004). Where convenient, the Russians' war against Muslim separatists in Chechnya has discursively morphed into a fight against terrorism. The connection between Russia's actions in Chechnya and the 'war on terror' has been embraced and reified by President Bush. In speeches delivered in October 2005, for example, Bush cites the school hostage crisis that took place in Beslan in 2004 as evidence of a widespread global 'war on terror' situated on numerous "fronts," including Chechnya. Bush states:

Some have argued that extremism has been strengthened by the actions of our coalition in Iraq, claiming that our presence in that country has somehow caused or triggered the rage of radicals. I would remind them that we were not in Iraq on September 11th, 2001, and al Qaeda attacked us anyway. The hatred of the radicals existed before Iraq was an issue, and it will exist after Iraq is no longer an excuse. ((applause)) The government of Russia did not support Operation Iraqi Freedom, and yet the militants killed more than 150 Russian schoolchildren in Beslan. (Bush 2005)

Here Bush responds to critics who argue that the war in Iraq has nothing to do with 9/11 and the 'war on terror.' In his retort, the president lumps together all acts of violence waged by Muslims as instances of actions of the 'enemy' in the 'war on terror.' Like with the Serbian intellectuals' recontextualization of the 'war on terror' discourse, which is made in order to explain the former Yugoslav wars, Bush applies the 'war on terror' rubric to the Russians' fight in Chechnya. Not surprisingly, in the 2008 conflict between Russia and Georgia, where the United States adopted a decidedly anti-Russian and pro-Georgian stance, the language of the 'war on terror' was conspicuously absent from the Bush administration's descriptions of the situation. The adoption and adaptation of the 'war on terror' discourse has little to do with socio-political realities and everything to do with the discursive framing of those realities. Global actors constantly position themselves in a world marked by widely circulating discourses – like the one about the 'war on terror,' which acts "as a common reservoir and reference point"

(Spitulnik 2001: 112) for interpreting socio-political realities. As Volcic and Erjavec (2007: 199) summarize, "[w]hat one sees globally is the ongoing appropriation of this discourse into local contexts."

Recontextualization of Terrorism Discourses on Al-Jazeera

Discourse, according to Bakhtin, "cannot fail to be oriented toward the 'already uttered,' the 'already known,' the 'common opinion' and so forth" (1981: 279). Becky Schulthies and Aomar Boum (2007) illustrate this point in their work on the recontextualization of western terrorism discourses on the Arab media station Al Jazeera. As in the Serbian context described earlier, political discourse on Al Jazeera television is in a dialogical network (Leudar et al. 2004) with the Bush administration's representation of the 'war on terror.' Al Jazeera was established in 1996, with the help of Sheik Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, Qatar's British-trained emir. Hamad, interested in introducing democratic reforms in Qatar, provided the financial backing for Al Jazeera throughout the first five years of its existence. Both popular and controversial, Al Jazeera provides an Arab-Islamic perspective on regional and world events, much as CNN provides an American perspective (Schulthies and Boum 2007: 147). Al Jazeera's importance in the global media's dialogical network is underscored by its launching of an English-language website, and, more recently, by the affiliated Al Jazeera English broadcast station. Although Al Jazeera's primary audience consists of Arabic speakers in the Middle East, the broadcast station engages directly with discourse emanating from American and European contexts, often by providing direct responses to, or discussion on, statements made by President Bush in the American media.

In their study, Schulthies and Boum (2007) draw from two programs featured on Al Jazeera: *min washington* ("From Washington") and *al-shari'a wa al-hayāt* ("Islamic Law and Life"). In particular, *min washington* offers an important glimpse on the way the Bush administration's discourse about terrorism is taken up and reshaped by social actors in the Middle East. This Arabic-language program, which broadcasts from Washington, DC, focuses on American policy that impacts the Middle East. Discussions are often framed with clips from President Bush's speeches. Thus the insertion of the American president's words into the show is part of the global speech chain that amplifies and multiplies the Bush administration's discourse worldwide (Leudar et al. 2004: 245, 251). Although Bush himself has never appeared on the show, his words "are appropriated and then debated by third party representatives or critics" (Schulthies and Boum 2007: 147). As the show's participants recontextualize these words, the discourse from Washington is refracted and reshaped through the lens of a cultural position decidedly different from the American perspective. As Schulthies and Boum (2007) emphasize in discussing the global dialogic context, "Al-Jazeera, and specifically *min washington*, is an intersecting node of ideas, images, people, and voices that is constantly

being negotiated and reshaped in the dialogic interchange between circulating cultures: Western, Arab, Islamic, American, Arab Nationalist, Secularist, Qatari, Israeli" (p. 154).

Notably, the key phrase forwarded by Bush in the wake of 9/11 to characterize America's response to terrorism, 'war on terror,' is represented on *min washington* not as *harb al-irhab*, 'war on terror,' but rather as *mukafaha al-irhab*, 'terrorism battle' or 'struggle' (Schulthies and Boum 2007: 154). As critical linguists have widely pointed out, language use is never neutral. The metaphorical characterization of the struggle against terrorism as a war carries certain ideological attachments. As Fairclough notes, "Different metaphors imply different ways of dealing with things: one does not arrive at a negotiated settlement with cancer, though one might with an opponent in an argument. Cancer has to be eliminated, cut out" (Fairclough 1989: 120). The Bush administration's conceptualization of America's response to terrorism as a 'war on terror' is a discursive achievement that forwards a set of assumptions on how to deal with terrorism – namely by engaging in real wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (Hodges 2008). The alternative designation on *min washington* reshapes the Bush administration's metaphor for Middle Eastern discussants. It lessens the militaristic connotations associated with a war and characterizes the situation as a struggle.

Also on *min Washington*, the word 'terrorist' is qualified as the 'so-called terrorist,' '*ma yusama bil-irhab*. Schulthies and Boum (2007) explain that this tactic provides distance "from the meaning this term has accrued in Western contexts by visualizing it in quotes, while at the same time indicating [the speaker's] epistemic stance toward the truth-value of its usage by others" (p. 154). In my own focus group interviews with politically involved college students in the USA about terrorism and war, I have found similar tactics used by critics of the Bush administration when they cannot help but use a phrase in widespread circulation (for instance the 'war on terror') despite their non-acceptance of its validity (Hodges 2008). In these discussions, several critics of the Bush administration's policy put the 'war on terror' in verbal quote marks. One participant, for example, remarked for my audio-recorder that he was using (in his own words) "the little finger quotes thing" to qualify the phrase. These verbal scare quotes achieve the same effect as the marker 'so-called.' Critical voices within American media discourse, such as Anderson Cooper on CNN or Amy Goodman on the independent radio program Democracy Now, also use the 'so-called' marker to qualify the Bush administration's phrase and challenge the 'war on terror' designation. In contrast to these discursive contestations of what might be termed the dominant discourse, the website of Fox News – a media outlet that is generally supportive of the Bush administration's ideological position – represents the 'war on terror' in its reportage, orthographically, with capital letters, as the War on Terror. The turning of the 'war on terror' into a proper name through the stylistics of capitalization legitimizes the concept. Whereas this capitalization of the War on Terror on FoxNews.com represents one end of the ideological spectrum, the use of the phrase 'the so-called war on terror' by critical voices like Amy Goodman

represents the other end. As discourse is recontextualized in different milieux, it can be reshaped in ways such as these to challenge dominant understandings (Hodges 2008).

As Schulthies and Boum point out, the participants on *min washington* "use words that reflect the meanings of previous uses and contexts and yet each new use alters the meaning" (2007: 154). The concept of indexicality is useful for understanding this ongoing dialogic process of meaning-making. As developed by Charles Peirce (1932) and further refined by Silverstein (1976, 1985, *inter alia*), Ochs (1992, *inter alia*), and others, indexicality "is the semiotic operation of juxtaposition" (Bucholtz and Hall 2004: 378) whereby contiguity is established between a sign and its meaning. Bauman (2005: 145) reminds us that "Bakhtin's abiding concern was with dimensions and dynamics of speech indexicality – ways that the now-said reaches back to and somehow incorporates or resonates with the already-said and reaches ahead to, anticipates, and somehow incorporates the to-be-said." While the indexical associations between words and their contextual significance may draw on already established meanings – what Silverstein (2003) terms "presupposed indexicality" – new indexical links may also be created – what Silverstein calls "creative or entailed indexicality." In other words, the non-denotational social meanings associated with a text are both partly pre-established and partly recalibrated when that text is brought into a new setting. In this way, as words – for example the key phrase 'war on terror,' or the label 'terrorists' – are presented and re-presented across differing contexts, social actors draw upon the use of those words in prior contexts as well as on their refraction in the current context, to arrive at larger social meanings. As Schulthies and Boum (2007) illustrate, the struggle over the meaning of words used to discuss political issues is subject to this ongoing dialogic revision.

The negotiation of meaning sometimes takes place at a metadiscursive level. For example, Schulthies and Boum (2007) point to the discursive struggle over the definitions and meanings of *al-irhab* ('terrorism') and *al-jihad* ('jihad') on Al Jazeera. The designation '*ma yusama bil-irhab*, 'so-called terrorist,' discussed earlier, points to the problematic nature of characterizing the concept of terrorism and of establishing who constitutes a terrorist. In debating the distinction between 'terrorism,' 'martyrdom,' and 'resistance,' the guests on *min washington* call into question the manner of applying 'terrorism' in the global discourse dominated by the American 'war on terror.' In one exchange, reproduced below, the host (Al-Mirazi) and a guest (Musa) extend the notion of terrorism to actions conducted by state actors. That is, whereas the concept of terrorism has traditionally been used to refer to actions carried out by non-state organizations (for instance al Qaeda or Hamas), they agree to expand the term so as to make it include similarly destructive actions carried out by the governments of nation-states.

AL-MIRAZI: In other words, then, if a bombing of a bus occurs, whether a Palestinian or non-Palestinian blows it up, or civilians and innocents are killed in a residence, whether with an F16 plane or even a hand grenade, this is terrorism. Is there agreement on this?

MUSA: Everything that harms civilians and targets civilians is terrorism, [whether] it is undertaken by a state or an organization, this ... (*min washington* episode aired on July 22, 2004, cited in Schulthies and Boum 2007: 155)

As Schulthies and Boum point out, exchanges such as this one illustrate the collaborative nature of meaning construction. The show's participants jointly endeavor to "move away from unequivocal designations" and bring more nuanced understandings to the meaning of terrorism (2007: 155). As participants on these Al Jazeera programs dialogically respond to the discourse about terrorism emanating from Washington, they revise the meanings found in the Bush administration's representation of the issue. In short, they reshape the discourse to give it meaning within their own cultural context.

Construction of the Terrorist 'Enemy' through Their Own Words

As Leudar and colleagues (2004: 245) note in their discussion of dialogical networks, "even the talk of enemies is intricately networked." Notably, the words of an 'enemy' can be integral to the construction of the binary relation between 'us' and 'them' in times of war. In this way, the global circulation of discourse plays into the tactic of distinction involved in the construction of identities (Bucholtz and Hall 2004). In the 'war on terror' discourse, Bush builds a narrative that details the terrorist threat embodied in the personage of Osama bin Laden and in his al Qaeda network. In the narrative, Bush often draws upon the words of bin Laden himself to construct a representation of the 'enemy.' The numerous tapes released by bin Laden, which are broadcast on Al Jazeera and translated into English for global consumption, provide not only a dialogic retort to Bush's discourse, but also fodder for Bush's representation of bin Laden. Therefore the dialogic connections between Bush and bin Laden through the global media produce what Stocchetti (2007) refers to as mutually constitutive identities. That is, "each of the antagonists depends on the other for the legitimacy of its [*sic*] own actions" (Stocchetti 2007: 237). Bush depends upon bin Laden and bin Laden depends upon Bush as they weave their narratives about the 'war on terror.'

As Buttny (1997) and Buttny and Williams (2000) point out, reporting the words of others is often done in order to construct representations of those who are quoted. In his speeches, Bush makes good use of quotations to build a picture of the terrorists against which the United States is fighting in the 'war on terror.' The examples that follow are taken from a speech delivered by Bush on September 5, 2006. In the speech, he focuses on, as he describes, "the terrorists' own words, what they believe, what they hope to accomplish, and how they intend to accomplish it" (Bush 2006). Through the use of reported speech frames, he contextualizes and metapragmatically evaluates the prior discourse attributed to the 'enemy,' to remind Americans: "Five years after our nation was attacked, the terrorist

danger remains. We're a nation at war" (ibid.). Bush's discursive construction of this "terrorist danger" squares firmly with his administration's aims in the 'war on terror' and provides justification for his administration's militarized foreign policy.

A great deal of discursive work in Bush's speech is dedicated to building a case for the seriousness of the terrorist threat and to backing up that case with strong evidence. Knowledge must be distinguished from mere belief or opinion in presenting this case. Bush therefore works to present 'facts' to back up the truth claims he forwards. As seen in the extracts that follow, he emphasizes the source of this evidence, which validates what "we know."

We know what the terrorists intend to do because they've told us, and we need to take their words seriously. (Bush 2006)

We know this because al Qaeda has told us. (Ibid.)

Reported speech works toward providing evidence and corroborating accounts (Hill and Irvine 1993). The belief in the objectivity of quoted words lends much of the corroborative power of reported speech. In his analysis of courtroom discourse, for example, Matoesian (2000) shows how the referential function of language (on which see Silverstein 1976 and 1979) is privileged. As a result, reported speech is treated as the transparent conveyor of the meaning of prior words (see also Blommaert 2005: 185ff. on the "ideology of a fixed text," and Álvarez-Cáccamo 1996: 55 on the verisimilitude of reported speech). By repeatedly emphasizing that the information he lays out is known "because al Qaeda has told us," Bush sets up an authoritative source, to offer outside corroboration for his depiction of the 'enemy.' In the courtroom, the words of a defendant can be the most damning evidence against him. Likewise, one need not merely believe Bush, the implied reasoning goes, but "hear the words of Osama bin Laden," as Bush emphasizes in the extracts that follow.

They reject the possibility of peaceful coexistence with the free world. Again, *hear the words of Osama bin Laden* earlier this year, "Death is better than living on this Earth with the unbelievers among us." (Bush 2006)

Despite these strategic setbacks, the enemy will continue to fight freedom's advance in Iraq, because they understand the stakes in this war. Again, *hear the words of bin Laden*, in a message to the American people earlier this year. He says, "The war is for you or for us to win. If we win it, it means your defeat and disgrace forever." (Ibid.)

But they've made clear that the most important front in their struggle against America is Iraq, the nation bin Laden has declared the "capital of the Caliphate." *Hear the words of bin Laden*, "I now address the whole Islamic nation. Listen and understand. The most serious issue today for the whole world is this Third World War that is raging in Iraq." He calls it "a war of destiny between infidelity and Islam." He says, "The whole world is watching this war," and that it will end in "victory and glory, or misery and humiliation." For al Qaeda, Iraq is not a distraction from their war on

America. It is the central battlefield where the outcome of this struggle will be decided. (Ibid.)

In these extracts, the reported speech attributed to bin Laden does more to convey Bush's perspective on the world than anything else. The "words of bin Laden" effectively forward several key tenets of Bush's own narrative about the 'war on terror.' Namely, Bush reinforces the notion that Iraq is "the central battlefield" of the 'war on terror.' In other speeches, Bush makes ubiquitous reference to Iraq as the "central front in the war on terror" (Hodges 2008). The conflation of the war in Iraq with the struggle against al Qaeda has perhaps become one of the most contested elements of Bush's 'war on terror' narrative. Under dialogic pressure from administration critics and from the American public, Bush attempts here to solidify the notion that the war in Iraq is part and parcel of the 'war on terror.' Rather than mere belief or opinion, Bush discursively positions his claims about the connection between Iraq and al Qaeda as an objectively verifiable 'truth.' The direct quotations of bin Laden's words provide evidence to back up Bush's assertion. Bin Laden's words therefore work to authenticate Bush's perspective from a position seemingly untainted by his own ideological bias.

As Sacks (1992) points out, the reported speech frame works to convey to listeners "how to read what they're being told" (p. 274). Through metapragmatic comments that accompany the direct quotations from bin Laden, Bush works to "assimilate, rework, and re-accentuate" those words (Bakhtin 1986: 89). In short, he reshapes the words through his own interpretive lens. In introducing the enemy's words, Bush notes that "they've made clear that the most important front in their struggle against America is Iraq." After he cites several direct quotations from bin Laden, Bush concludes with another evaluation of the quoted words, "For al Qaeda, Iraq is not a distraction from their war on America. It is the central battlefield where the outcome of this struggle will be decided." Not surprisingly, the evaluations that frame the reported speech mirror directly Bush's own claims. Where Bush recognizes Iraq as the "central front in the war on terror," we are told that bin Laden affirms this vision of reality. This view, however, is not presented as Bush's personal belief, but as a view that holds "for al Qaeda." Through the words of bin Laden, Bush therefore provides his own dialogical retort to administration critics who see the war in Iraq as a 'distraction' from the struggle against al Qaeda.

Bush reinforces the notion of objectivity in his depiction of the 'enemy' in the extract that follows.

Now, I know some of our country hear the terrorists' words, and hope that they will not, or cannot, do what they say. History teaches that underestimating the words of evil and ambitious men is a terrible mistake. In the early 1900s, an exiled lawyer in Europe published a pamphlet called "What Is To Be Done?" in which he laid out his plan to launch a communist revolution in Russia. The world did not heed Lenin's words, and paid a terrible price. The Soviet Empire he established killed tens of millions, and brought the world to the brink of thermonuclear war. In the 1920s, a failed Austrian painter published a book in which he explained his intention to build an

Aryan super-state in Germany and take revenge on Europe and eradicate the Jews. The world ignored Hitler's words, and paid a terrible price. His Nazi regime killed millions in the gas chambers, and set the world aflame in war, before it was finally defeated at a terrible cost in lives. Bin Laden and his terrorist allies have made their intentions as clear as Lenin and Hitler before them. The question is will we listen? Will we pay attention to what these evil men say? (Bush 2006)

The comparisons in this extract are represented not as interpretations provided by the narrator but as lessons that "history teaches," and as events that were foretold in the "words" of the protagonists named in those lessons (Lenin, Hitler, and bin Laden). In his examination of the discursive construction of reality, Potter discusses how the personification of facts in descriptions obscures "the work of interpretation and construction done by the description's producer" (Potter 1996: 158). Here the personification of history gives history an agency its own, to "teach" us lessons. Rather than Bush discursively positioning himself as the teacher, "history teaches," and the historical facts that follow "do their own showing" (ibid.). The expression "history teaches" works to remove the narrator's own subject position as a historical interpreter. Bush, as a politician, could be accused of drawing biased interpretations; but the lessons that "history teaches" provide an air of objectivity.

As Bush builds an image of the terrorists as "evil men," he juxtaposes the "terrorists' words" with those of the nation's historical enemies – namely Lenin and Hitler. Bush sets up an historical analogy, so that the current threat posed by bin Laden's al Qaeda appears to be analogous to the threat posed by Lenin's Communist Russia and Hitler's Nazi Germany. In what Bucholtz and Hall (2004) would term the "adequation" of these disparate figures from the canon of American history, "potentially salient differences are set aside in favor of perceived or asserted similarities that are taken to be more situationally relevant" (383). Bush constructs a rogues gallery of personages who are linked together through their embodiment of "evil." Importantly, Bush does not merely present this depiction as his own interpretation; he constructs it rather through "what these evil men say" – through their own words. In a rhetorical question posed to the American people, Bush implores, "Will we pay attention to what these evil men say?"

As Bakhtin (1986) notes, others' "utterances can be repeated with varying degrees of reinterpretation" (p. 91). In constructing the 'Other' in the 'war on terror,' Bush draws on bin Laden's words, but replaces the accounts and motives behind those words with his own interpretations. The recontextualization of bin Laden's words within the framework of Bush's speech allows Bush to supply his own preferred reading of those words and to reshape them so as to help justify his administration's 'war on terror' and war in Iraq.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented three case studies that illustrate the dialogic connections involved in the global interchange of ideas about terrorism and about

the 'war on terror.' An underlying premise of much of the chapter has been the prominent position of the Bush administration's representation of terrorism in the global media's dialogical network. In a sense, the Bush administration's voice from Washington establishes a dominant, hegemonic discourse in global talk about war and terror. Yet, as Williams (1977: 133) notes, "[t]he reality of any hegemony, in the extended political and cultural sense, is that, while by definition it is always dominant, it is never either total or exclusive." The examination of the 'war on terror' discourse in this chapter has therefore focused on the fluidity and malleability of this discourse as it enters into a web of dialogic interconnections. Rather than being a matter of cultural hegemony and imposition in a world of global discourse flows, the 'war on terror' discourse is subject to what Appadurai (1990) terms "indigenization," as it enters into different cultural milieux, where it is adapted according to local experiences and aims. While the power of the Bush administration's voice in world affairs may be to establish an agenda and to provide a macro-level discourse for talking about war and terror, how that discourse is taken up and rearticulated can only be understood by examining the way it enters local contexts of interaction.

As Bakhtin (1981) notes, "in real life people talk most of all about what others talk about – they transmit, recall, weigh and pass judgment on other people's words, opinions, assertions, information; people are upset by others' words, or agree with them, contest them, refer to them and so forth" (p. 338). In global talk of war and terror, it is difficult even for critics and opponents of the Bush administration's foreign policy to avoid the language of the 'war on terror.' As seen in the case study of Al Jazeera, resistance to the terms and actions associated with the American 'war on terror' begins by reanimating its language. As Al Jazeera commentators respond to the discourse from Washington, they reshape it. As seen in the case study from Serbia, more sympathetic voices can also be seen reworking an influential discourse in line with their own aims. Insofar as the young Serbs interviewed by Volcic and Erjavec side with the Bush administration's vision of the world, they still rework the language of the 'war on terror' in line with their own nationalistic aims. And, as seen in the analysis of Bush's own speech, even the 'dominant' perspective is itself stitched together from the words of other actors involved in the global interchange about war and terror. The dialogic connections in the global interchange about war and terror provide a common framework that allows social actors to discuss and debate the topic. Even as social actors resist the discourse or put it to different aims, they must appropriate its language if they are to be listened to and understood. It is through this agentive act of speaking that social actors make a discourse "vulnerable to unpredictable futures" and open to "the possibility of resignification" (Inoue 2006: 21). As they speak within the 'war on terror' discourse, the possibilities for reshaping it are not always foreseen or consciously pursued. Nevertheless, the possibilities are there.

As was posed in the introduction: to what extent do the dialogic connections involved in global interchange about war and terror impact the way war is justified and understood around the world? This chapter has suggested that the answer lies in the close examination of global discourse flows as they are taken

up and reshaped in local contexts, since it is in these contexts that meanings are ultimately worked out.

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