The Rhetoric of Sissy-Slogans: How Denigrating the Feminine Perpetuates the Terror Wars

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I. INTRODUCTION: ON “LITTLE GIRLS” AND POLITICAL RHETORIC

Recently, I came across a car bearing a bumper sticker with the following text: “[T]ea parties are for little girls with imaginary friends.” The bumper sticker was of standard bumper-sticker size, with a black background and white, sans-serif lettering. Its appearance, then, was serious and plain, which seemed like an attempt to avoid—or ironically emphasize—the taunting, school-yard tone that the words of the sticker evoked.

I was struck by how, in order to insult right-wing Tea Party activists, the author of the bumper sticker resorted to insulting girls. This bumper sticker reveals some of the ways in which the rhetoric of gender, particularly the denigration of the feminine,plays an integral part in U.S. politics. Moreover, the sticker reveals that the denigration of the feminine is bipartisan, coming from both the right side of the political spectrum and, as the bumper sticker indicates, from the left.

The insult to the Tea Party this sticker bears relies upon the premise that members of the Tea Party would not want to be called “little girls,” just like they would not want to be called “sissies,” a similar insult. In fact, the sissy-slogan is a recurring rhetorical trope in U.S. political arguments (most

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often employed by the political right\(^3\). Sissy-slogans, like most insults, gain their effectiveness through hyperbole, a sub-category of tropes.\(^4\) After all, “sissy” is a shortened form of the word “sister”; calling a man a “sissy” is thus necessarily hyperbolic, as he is most likely not a female sibling.

Currently, variations of the “tea parties are for little girls” slogan can be found on many political websites,\(^5\) revealing its popularity among left-leaning political activists.\(^6\) This popularity reveals that the “little girls” slogan is hardly a fringe-group rallying cry. Rather, it is a mainstream slogan popular among even those who would profess support for feminism and women’s rights.\(^7\)

The purpose of this Article is to discover how the insults of the “little
years’ slogan and other sissy-slogans function rhetorically—that is, as arguments,8 particularly in the context of the current terror wars.9 One might ask: How, exactly, does the statement that “tea parties are for little girls” function in our political context? Why is it that even those who support women’s rights deploy a slogan that works by insulting girls? In our arguably hyper-militarized society that treasures gun ownership and regularly televises violence as entertainment, does calling a political opponent a “sissy” carry particular weight?

This Article examines the use of gendered rhetoric—particularly the denigration of the feminine—in the popular, political, and legal discourse on terrorism,10 which I have argued has been central in the arguments surrounding national security and terrorism since September 11, 2001.11 As

8. The author uses the term “argument” to refer to the rhetorical definition of a claim supported by reasons. Reasons must be accepted by a discourse community as authority or proof. See, e.g., 5 QUINTILIAN, INSTITUTES OF ORATORY, ch. 10, § 11 (“An argument is a process of reasoning affording a proof, by which one thing is gathered from another, and which establishes what is doubtful by reference to what is certain, there must assuredly be something in a cause that does not require proof ... ”); see also KATIE ROSE GUEST PRYAL, A SHORT GUIDE TO WRITING ABOUT LAW 1 (2010) [hereinafter PRYAL, SHORT GUIDE TO WRITING ABOUT LAW] (“Legal writing, then, can be thought of as the skill of making legal claims and supporting them with authority.”) (emphasis omitted).

9. The author uses the term “terror wars” to refer to the long-running wars taking place in the Middle East and led by the United States. President George W. Bush declared the War on Terror in 2001, but one could argue that the wars have a much longer lineage. The term “terror wars” encompasses, rhetorically, the current moment of military activity in the Middle East and elsewhere. For more on the trouble naming these conflicts, see Upendra D. Acharya, War on Terror or Terror Wars: The Problem in Defining Terrorism, 37 DENV. J. INT’L L. & POL’Y 653, 656 (2009) (“Generally, weak, less militarily equipped and marginalized people are identified as terrorists. Their quest for self-governance or self-determination is generally undermined by powerful actors either in the national or international arena. When their legitimate demands are unmet, they react—sometimes with and sometimes without violence. In this situation, each side labels the other a terrorist, each seeking to justify its own violence while condemning the other’s violence.”).

10. In analyzing the rhetoric of the terror wars, this study draws on the results of a LexisNexis search of newspaper articles and wires from September 11, 2001 to September 11, 2011. The author divided ten years of published material into three search periods: Time Period 1, “Early War on Terror,” articles published between September 11, 2001 and December 1, 2004, which includes the Kerry presidential loss in 2004; Time Period 2, “Late War on Terror,” articles published between December 1, 2004 and December 1, 2007, which includes the end of the Bush presidency; and Time Period 3, “The Obama Era,” articles published between December 1, 2007 and September 11, 2011. To ensure that the author examined a consistent body of rhetoric over time, the author conducted identical searches across each of the time periods. For instance, the author conducted a search of the terms “terrorism,” “security,” and “invasion” in each time period. In order to focus on articles that employ all three terms and to limit the body of rhetoric to a reasonable number of articles, the Boolean limiter AND was used to connect the terms in all searches. Additional search words that were used to develop the body of articles and wires were the following: “troops,” “president,” “Middle East,” “White House,” “leadership,” and “war.”

I wrote early in the terror wars, President George W. Bush’s declaration of War on Terror created the conditions under which “[t]he force of ideology alienates America’s allies through rampant national egotism and derogates the feminine with an insistence on a myth of masculine strength.” This derogation of the feminine that is an outgrowth of the terror wars is the focus of this Article.

This Article will consider, then, the following questions: In what ways does gendered argument enter into our political debate? How does gendered argument—and the attendant denigration of the feminine—enter into debates over national security and terrorism? How does the denigration of the feminine function rhetorically to shape our understanding of the terror wars? I argue that the use of sissy-slogans—ad hominem political arguments that rely upon the denigration of the feminine to obtain their power—have not only gained traction because of 9/11 and the ensuing terror wars, but have, in cyclical fashion, helped to perpetuate the terror wars by discursively shutting down potential for non-military action.

As a framework, I suggest that rhetorical theory is an apt toolset for studying the ways gendered arguments function in political discourse, including the function of sissy-slogans. On its most basic level, rhetoric is concerned with the “real and apparent means of persuasion” that are present in any given situation. A common misunderstanding of rhetoric equates rhetorical practice with deception. Opponents of rhetoric, dating

Administration’s War on Terror functioned, in Louis Althusser’s terms, as an “ideological state apparatus”). The arguments in that article were fundamentally rhetorical, in the sense that they examined how language tended to function in a particular context (the advent of the War on Terror to shape our responses to that situation). See id.

12. Id. at 368–69; see also Tawia Ansah, War: Rhetoric & Norm-Creation in Response to Terror, 43 VA. J. INT’L L. 797, 799 (2003) (“[T]he resort to the language of war [after 9/11], as ‘natural’ and ‘starkly simple’ as it is, nevertheless has a profound impact on how the law’s intervention is shaped, or how the laws governing the transnational use of force are interpreted to accommodate a ‘war’ on terrorism.”).


15. The Oxford English Dictionary demonstrates this misunderstanding with two of its definitions of the term rhetoric: 1(a) “The art of using language effectively as to persuade or influence others, esp[ecially] the exploitation of figures of speech and other compositional techniques” and 2(c) “Eloquent, elegant, or ornate language, esp[ecially] speech or writing expressed in terms calculated to persuade. Freq[uently] depreciative: language characterized by artificial, insincere, or ostentatious expression; inflated or empty verbiage.” Rhetoric, OXFORD ENG. DICTIONARY, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/165178?rskey=mhGObS&result=1&isAdvanced=false #eid (last visited May 22, 2012) (emphasis omitted). The second definition, although less
back to Plato, argue that “rhetoric is only useful for those who want to outwit their audience and conceal their real aims, since someone who just wants to communicate the truth could be straightforward and would not need rhetorical tools.” Aristotle pointed out that rhetoric is useful when the facts under discussion are uncertain:


17. Id.

18. Id. (emphasis added).

19. Id.

In order to be persuasive, then, skill in rhetoric is essential: “It is true that some people manage to be persuasive either at random or by habit, but it is rhetoric that gives us a method to discover all means of persuasion on any topic whatsoever.”

Rhettorical scrutiny can help explain why the terror wars have spawned sexist arguments and how these sexist arguments have encouraged the terror wars. This Article suggests a three-step process for this scrutiny. Part I suggests that we can take a closer look at the logical structure of sissy-slogans to figure out the ways in which these arguments transform the political landscape. Part II demonstrates that, if we want to know why sissy-slogans and other arguments that denigrate the feminine have gained traction during the terror wars, we must understand the situational demands made by our cultural moment upon our use of discourse. Part III shows that once we understand the logical structure of sissy-slogans, and once we understand the rhetorical situation of the terror wars, then we can assess the types of appeals—such as sissy-slogans—that are persuasive within that situation. In the early days of the terror wars, appeals driven by fear accurate, is nonetheless the more common understanding of the term. Politician and political commentator Sarah Palin used the term in a derogatory fashion in an interview with Fox News: “And we have to make sure the candidate that emerges from this GOP primary understands that we want passion, that we want fiery, not just rhetoric, but solutions that are proposed and experiences been expressed to make sure that we undo what Obama has done to this country.” Palin Warns GOP Candidates: Quit Attacking Each Other and Focus on Obama, FOX NEWS (Dec. 7, 2011), http://www.foxnews.com/on-air/hannity/2011/12/08/palin-warns-gop-candidates-quit-attacking-each-other-and-focus-obama (emphasis added).
and masculine authority (ethos) dominated; it appears that, ten years after 9/11, the types of arguments that are persuasive to the U.S. public may be changing.

II. ENTHYMEMES

In rhetorical terms, the enthymeme is “[t]he informal method of reasoning typical of rhetorical discourse.” According to Aristotle, enthymemes “are the substance of rhetorical persuasion.” Indeed, the enthymeme is, “in general, the most effective of the modes of persuasion” because, as Aristotle believed, audiences “are most easily persuaded when [they] think that something has been demonstrated.” Whether the

20. See, e.g., Sonya Ross, Bush Heads to Peru Despite Violence: Unswayed by ‘Two-Bit Terrorists,’ Bush Decrees Attacks at Start of Latin American Trip, TOPEKA CAP.-J., Mar. 22, 2002, http://cjonline.com/stories/032202/ter_perubush.shtml. President Bush appealed to U.S. fear of future terrorist attacks and placed the Lima bombings within a global narrative of increasing terrorist threats and the need to increase security in the United States when he commented on a bombing in Lima, Peru: “This is a dangerous world. . . . Too many people are losing their lives to murderers.” Id.; see also President George W. Bush, Address to the Nation (Sept. 20, 2001) [hereinafter Address to the Nation], available at http://www.presidentialrhetoric.com/speeches/09.20.01.html (providing a transcript of the speech). Bush evoked fear in his Address to the Nation following the attacks, saying: “Tonight we are a country awakened to danger and called to defend freedom.” Id. (emphasis added).

21. See, e.g., Steve Neal, President Sets Policy While Proving He Can Be Tough, Firm, CHI. SUN TIMES, Sept. 13, 2001, available through LEXIS, News & Bus. Describing President George W. Bush’s on-camera appearance in a speech following the attacks of 9/11, the article states that President Bush has “passed his first test” by coming across as “tough and firm in his response to terrorist violence.” Id. The article suggests that in the wake of a national emergency, in order to “pass the test” of leadership, the President should command a kind of toughness, and appeal to the nation as a figure of masculine authority (ethos). See id.; see, e.g., Editorial, Bush’s Finest Hour America Must Carry the Burdens of War, L.A. DAILY NEWS, Sept. 21, 2001, available at 2001 WLNR 1498533. President Bush’s speech to a joint session of Congress and his demand that the Taliban “hand over the terrorists” is editorialized as “Bush’s finest hour, standing strong and resolute, offering an iron fist to America’s enemies.” Id. As President Bush made the first proclamations of terror wars, he projected an image of a strong, authoritative leader. See, e.g., Editorial, State of the Union: President Presents a Broader National Mission, DALL. MORNING NEWS, Jan. 30, 2002, at 16A, available at 2002 WLNR 13663782. During the State of the Union address, the President said, “We will win this war, we will protect our homeland, and we will revive our economy.” Id. The editorial then commented: “He was a man with a mission,” and it likened him to a preacher. Id. This vision of an almost holy source of masculine authority draws on ethos in its appeal.


23. Id. at 1354a.

24. Id. at 1355a.

demonstration is based upon credible evidence, however, sometimes requires close examination.

The “tea parties are for little girls” slogan is an example of an Aristotelian enthymeme: a deductive argument, or syllogism, whose speaker leaves off its major premise. Sometimes the premise “goes without saying” because there is a shared knowledge between the speaker and the audience; sometimes, the speaker believes the major premise is unsightly. Sometimes, both cases are true, as with the sissy-slogan, as I will demonstrate below. That sissy-slogans usually follow enthymemetic structure—that explanation of premises that denigrate the feminine “go without saying”—demonstrates not only how much our political discourse accepts the denigration of the feminine as normal, but also how sissy-slogans have become a common trope in U.S. political culture.

In this Part, the Article will delve more into the structure of enthymemes and how they take into account, in a unique fashion, the opinion of the public. Then this Part will examine sissy-slogans and other gendered arguments of the terror wars in order to determine what premises the public arguments about the terror wars rely upon and where the logical fallacies might lie.

A. Rhetorical Syllogism

An enthymeme is a type of syllogism, what Aristotle called a “rhetorical syllogism.” Although not a common belief at the time, Aristotle believed that rhetors should gain skill in logical reasoning: “[H]e who is best able to see how and from what elements a syllogism is produced will also be best skilled in the enthymeme, when he has further learnt what its subject-matter is and in what respects it differs from the syllogism of strict logic.” Aristotle would prefer that a rhetor avoid fallacies when

26. In general terms, a syllogism is the basic structure of a formal, logical argument. It has three parts: 1. a major premise, which is usually a generally agreed-upon claim; 2. a minor premise, which is an argument that pertains to the speaker’s particular context; and 3. a conclusion, which brings together the major and minor premises into the speaker’s new argument. A fallacy is an argument whose logic fails, or whose premises are weak or untrue.

Pryal, Short Guide to Writing About Law, supra note 8, at 17 (emphasis omitted).

27. Id.

28. Id. at 19.

29. 1 Aristotle, supra note 14, at 1356b.

30. Id. at 1355a.
trying to persuade, believing that such tricks belonged to the Sophists—
Aristotle’s competition in the rhetoric teaching world who were scorned
because, among other reasons, they accepted payment for their teaching—
not to true rhetors.\footnote{Aristotle referred to the Sophists as “the framers of the current treatises on rhetoric” and as teachers who “have constructed but a small portion of that art [of rhetoric].” Aristotle, supra note 14, at 1354a. His disparaging treatment of the Sophists was widely agreed upon, but most likely undeserved. See, e.g., Katie Rose Guest Pryal & Jordynn M. Jack, The Legal Writing Workshop: Better Writing, One Case at a Time 3–4 (2010) (“With the rise of democracy in [ancient] Athens, public speaking became an important skill, since citizens needed to use oral arguments to engage in political and public life. Yet many viewed the first teachers of rhetoric, often called the Sophists, with suspicion. First, the Sophists were willing to teach anyone to present effective arguments—anyone who could pay, that is. This challenged the usual educational system, which limited education to men of the aristocratic classes. Rhetoric teachers also aroused suspicion because of their seemingly magical abilities to twist and turn words and arguments and to create emotional effects through language.”).}

Although syllogisms might work best when discussants can apply
formal (or “strict”) logic, rhetorical syllogisms (i.e., enthymemes) can help
guide discussants toward approximate truths.\footnote{For more on the links between contemporary legal argumentation by analogy and the classical kind, see Fabrizio Macagno & Douglas Walton, Argument from Analogy in Law, the Classical Tradition, and Recent Theories, 42 PHIL. & RHETORIC 154, 168 (2009) ("The word ‘analogy,’ from Greek ana logon, according to ratio, originally meant rational correspondence. This kind of reasoning, mentioned in [Aristotle’s] Posterior Analytics, is a scheme of inference exemplified in [Aristotle’s] Rhetoric. Reasoning from analogy is introduced in the Analytics as a method for individuating a genus that has no traditional name. The genus, in particular, is ‘what is common to all the cases?’ (Topics, I, 18) which answers the question, ‘What is it?’ By observing the particular cases it is possible to identify the genus common to all the particulars.”).}

When there is no empirical
evidence to settle an issue, an approximate truth is all that we have. Skill in
enthymemes can help a rhetor in both situations, the settled and the
unsettled:

The true and the approximately true are apprehended by the same
faculty; it may also be noted that men have a sufficient natural
instinct for what is true, and usually do arrive at the truth. Hence
the man who makes a good guess at truth is likely to make a good
guess at probabilities.\footnote{1 Aristotle, supra note 14, at 1355a. Furthermore, Aristotle points out that people do not need rhetoric to negotiate matters that are settled: “The subjects of our deliberation are such as seem to present us with alternative possibilities: about things that could not have been, and cannot now or in the future be, other than they are, nobody who takes them to be of this nature wastes his time in deliberation.” Id. at 1357a.}

The structure of enthymemes differs from the traditional syllogism.
“The enthymeme is sometimes defined as a ‘truncated syllogism’ since
either the major or minor premise found in that more formal method of
reasoning is left implied”; 34 thus, “[t]he enthymeme typically occurs as a conclusion coupled with a reason,” 35 rather than with a set of reasons (typical of a syllogism). Speakers often group enthymemes together using a rhetorical technique called *sorites*, or “[c]oncatenated enthymemes,” which is essentially “a chain of claims and reasons which build upon one another.” 36 Concatenated enthymemes often result in logical fallacy, because the “rapidity of claims and reasons does not allow the unstated assumptions behind each claim to be examined.” 37

**B. Public Opinion as Proof**

Enthymemes differ from complete syllogisms in another significant way: they rely on a form of proof that would not be acceptable in formal logical reasoning. “[T]he enthymeme, the heart of Aristotle’s structure of argumentation, differs from the logical syllogism precisely in that it involves the rhetor in the building [of] an argument from the opinions of the audience.” 38 As opposed to the structure of syllogisms in formal logic that rely upon first principles or empirical proof, “the construction of enthymemes is primarily a matter of deducing from accepted opinions (*endoxa*).” 39 Enthymemes can also derive their proof from the reverence that the audience holds for the speaker—the speaker’s credibility, authority, or *ethos* (as Aristotle puts it); 40 furthermore, the speaker’s credibility also derives from the audience’s opinion. 41 Thus, public opinion, or common sense, is often given a place of stature in rhetorical argumentation.


35. *Id.*


37. *Id.*


40. See 1 ARISTOTLE, supra note 14, at 1356a (“Of the modes of persuasion furnished by the spoken word there are three kinds. The first kind depends on the personal character of the speaker.”).

41. Aristotle writes that a speaker’s “character may almost be called the most effective means of persuasion he possesses.” *Id.* Character, for Aristotle, is “personal goodness revealed by the speaker” to the audience, which persuades the audience to believe that the speaker has a virtuous character and acts in good will. *Id.*
However, Aristotle recognized that, in contrast to the audience of logicians in the ancient schools of rhetoric, “the audience of public speech is characterized by an intellectual insufficiency.”\footnote{Aristotle’s Rhetoric, supra note 16, § 6.3.} Taking into account the audience’s lack of familiarity with formal logic—and lack of patience for long-winded arguments—“it is a sign of a well-executed enthymeme that the content and the number of its premises are adjusted to the intellectual capacities of the public audience.”\footnote{Id.} Furthermore, “[a]rguments with several deductive steps are common in dialectical practice, but one cannot expect the audience of a public speech to follow such long arguments,”\footnote{Id. § 6.4.} hence the enthymeme’s form as truncated syllogism. Aristotle’s method worked; as he observed, enthymemes were more effective with audiences than full-blown syllogisms could ever be: “[T]hose [speeches] which rely on enthymemes excite the louder applause.”\footnote{1 ARISTOTLE, supra note 14, at 1356b.}

Enthymemes “excite louder applause” for yet another reason. The missing premises of enthymemes invite audiences to participate in a speech: “The enthymeme must consist of few propositions, fewer often than those which make up the normal syllogism. For if any of these propositions is a familiar fact, there is no need even to mention it; the hearer adds it himself.”\footnote{Id. at 1357a.} In other words, although the audience does not actually speak, by leaving out premises, the rhetor creates logical blanks for the audience to fill. When audience members fill these logical blanks, they often feel a sense of shared knowledge with a speaker.\footnote{See Douglas Walton, Enthymemes, Common Knowledge, and Plausible Inference, 34 PHILO & RHETORIC 93, 97 (2001) (“[R]ules of conversation allow participants to work together collaboratively, and therefore there is no need to fill in nonexplicit assumptions in enthymemes that are already known and accepted by both parties.” (citation omitted)); see also J. Scenters-Zapico, The Social Construct of Enthymematic Understanding, 24 RHETORIC SOC’Y Q. 71, 71 (1994) (“The enthymeme is a discursive structure that inscribes consensus, for the elided assumptions of an enthymeme are supplied by the intertextual network of experiences and associations shared by readers, writers, speakers and hearers. The deleted premise of an enthymeme must be supplied by the audience for its argument to achieve closure. In a very real way, the missing premise of an enthymeme must be occupied by the reader, and this makes the enthymeme intertextual by its very nature.”).} Furthermore, this strategy is “particularly effective if there are several obvious potential major premises; leaving them out allows each member of the audience to settle on the one that each finds most compelling.”\footnote{PRYAL, SHORT GUIDE TO WRITING ABOUT LAW, supra note 8, at 19; see also Walton,} Thus, in a variety of ways, the logical
reasoning used in rhetoric—the enthymeme—takes into account the shared knowledge and experiences of an audience when seeking proof for conclusions.

C. Sissy-Slogans

What, then, is the proof for the conclusion that “tea parties are for little girls”? This sissy-slogan is an example of an enthymeme with a major premise that is hidden because it is unsightly. Enthymemic examinations of sissy-slogans as a genre reveal that the slogans rely upon unsightly premises that insult women, girls, and feminine qualities. Furthermore, given that enthymemes often rely upon endoxa for proof, it appears that the denigration of the feminine is firmly lodged in U.S. public opinion. The “little girls” slogan is both catchy and persuasive—so much so, that people who are ordinarily not sexist employ the sexist slogan.

Using formal logic, one can deduce that the “tea parties are for little girls” slogan claims that members of the Tea Party are sissies. The hidden premise behind this slogan is that only little girls participate in tea parties. Once the hidden premise is revealed, the fallacy is easy to identify; the fallacy is one of a deliberate slippage of meaning, or “equivocation” in rhetorical terms. Equivocation is a logical fallacy (not a factual one) in

supra note 47, at 94 (“The problem with enthymemes is that, if given carte blanche to fill in any proposition needed to make the inference structurally correct, we may insert assumptions into the text of discourse that the speaker or audience didn’t realize were there, doesn’t accept, or didn’t even mean to be part of the argument.” (citations omitted)).


51. See Arnulf Deppermann, Semantic Shifts in Argumentative Processes: A Step Beyond the ‘Fallacy of Equivocation,’ 14 ARGUMENTATION 17, 17 (2000) (“We can say that a fallacy of equivocation occurs, if the same expression is used or presupposed in different senses in one single argument, and if the argument is invalid because of this multiplicity of senses. Moreover, in order to be a fallacy, the argument must appear to be valid at a first glance, or, at least, it has to be presented as a valid argument by a party in a critical discussion.”); Christopher Kirwan, Aristotle and the So-Called Fallacy of Equivocation, 29 Phil. Q. 35, 35 (1979) (“I shall say that a man equivocates in a context when he uses some word or phrase with one meaning and repeats it with another meaning in that context; or when he uses a word or phrase once only, but means two different things by it at the same time.”).
which the speaker uses the same term in different ways within one syllogism. In the case of the “little girls” slogan, the term “tea party” has three different meanings, all of which are invoked within one syllogism. The phrase “tea party” can refer to a party at which tea is served. Another referent is cultural—the miniature tea parties that little girls might hold to practice being hostesses as adults. And yet another referent is historical—the Boston Tea Party at the eve of the American Revolution.

The “little girls” slogan is an example of an enthymeme motivated by an unpleasant major premise that the speaker wishes to hide (or even ignore) because it is sexist, and it is capable of hiding because the audience can fill in the meaning for the speaker. It is helpful to examine the full syllogism of the “little girls” slogan. Written out with the hidden major premise present, the syllogism looks like this:

Major Premise: Little girls are people who attend tea parties.
Minor Premise: Tea Party activists are people who attend tea parties.
Conclusion: Tea Party activists are little girls.

Substituting letters for the concepts of this formal syllogism, the syllogism looks like this:

Major Premise: A \[Little Girls\] = B \[People Who Attend Tea Parties\]
Minor Premise: C \[Tea Party Activists\] = B \[People Who Attend Tea Parties\]
Conclusion: C \[Tea Party Activists\] = A \[Little Girls\]

The fallacy, as explained above, is located within both A and B. In using this fallacy, the speaker ignores that little girls are not the only people who attend tea parties and that “tea party” can refer to more than just a party where tea is served.

In order to further reveal the insult of the “little girls” slogan, not only must a reader imagine a missing premise, but also a missing enthymeme entirely, one that would follow the syllogism above—this would implicate a concatenated enthymeme, or sorite in Greek. The enthymeme that implicitly follows the one above looks like this:

Major Premise: Little girls = sissies, dingbats, immature weaklings, or any other number of unpleasant things that any person—man or woman—would not want to be.
Minor Premise: Tea Party activists = little girls. [This premise relies upon the prior enthymeme.]

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52. See Deppermann, supra note 51.
Conclusion: Tea Party activists = sissies, dingbats, immature weaklings, or any other number of unpleasant things, etc.

I would argue that the unsightly premise of the “little girls” slogan—that girls are sissies, dingbats, immature weaklings, or any other number of unpleasant things—is unsightly enough that the leftist activists who embrace the slogan must keep the premise hidden in order to use the slogan at all. Leftist activists must keep the premise hidden because, when examined closely, the “little girls” slogan certainly does not align with traditional leftist political positions, such as feminism. However, since 9/11, the denigration of the feminine in political debate is often outwardly embraced by political speakers as a means to assert strength in the form of masculinity. As I will demonstrate in the next Part, this assertion of masculinity dates back to the days just after 9/11 and the 2004 presidential campaign that followed. Denigration of the feminine—and glorification of the masculine—has been a rhetorical reaction to the trauma of 9/11 for over a decade.

III. RHETORICAL SITUATION OF TERROR

Although sissy-slogans have been common in U.S. popular and political discourse historically, they have gained traction in the era of the terror wars because of the glorification of masculine qualities that erupted after 9/11. The era of the terror wars is a rhetorical situation in the technical sense. A rhetorical situation, in rhetoric theorist Lloyd Bitzer’s famous formulation, comprises “a natural context of persons, events, objects, relations, and an exigence which strongly invites utterance . . .” In other words, the speaker, the audience, and the exigence—the need to communicate—combine to “invite[]” communication.

Bitzer provides a three-part method for analyzing a rhetorical situation:

Prior to the creation and presentation of discourse, there are three constituents of any rhetorical situation: the first is the exigence; the second and third are elements of the complex, namely the

53. See Gwen Sharp, Sexism Among Political Pundits, SOC’Y PAGES (May 28, 2008, 2:59 AM), http://thesocietypages.org/socimages/2008/05/28/sexism-among-political-pundits (featuring a montage of video clips entitled Sexism Sells—But We’re Not Buying It that was compiled from the U.S. media coverage of the 2008 election showing many prominent, right-leaning speakers disparaging the feminine appearances and remarks of women commentators and political figures).

54. This Article will examine this post-9/11 glorification of the masculine more closely in Part IV.A and IV.B.


56. Id.
audience to be constrained in decision and action, and the
cantraints which influence the rhetor and can be brought to bear
upon the audience.\textsuperscript{57} Thus, a rhetorical situation is composed of particular (1) exigences, (2)
audiences, and (3) constraints.\textsuperscript{58}

But to think of a rhetorical situation as a static invitation to
communicate is an oversimplification: “[T]his invited utterance participates
naturally in the situation, is in many instances necessary to the completion
of situational activity, and by means of its participation with situation
obtains its meaning and its rhetorical character.”\textsuperscript{59} Thus, a communication
“participates” in its situation, changes the situation through this
participation, and helps create meaning. Most dramatically, according to
Bitzer, the language we use alters the discursive lenses through which we
view the world: “In short, rhetoric is a mode of altering reality, not by the
direct application of energy to objects, but by the creation of discourse
which changes reality through the mediation of thought and action.”\textsuperscript{60}
Indeed, for Bitzer, this alteration of reality is part of what makes language
rhetorical in the first place: “[A] situation is rhetorical insofar as it needs
and invites discourse capable of participating with situation and thereby
altering its reality . . . .”\textsuperscript{61} One could argue that Bitzer’s definition of a
rhetorical situation is so expansive as to cover all situations that might arise,
given that humans tend to interact with discourse (whether spoken or visual,
or even physical). Many authors (some using alternative language) have
suggested that attempting to draw a line between rhetorical and non-
rhetorical situations is fruitless.\textsuperscript{62}

\textsuperscript{57} Id. at 6.

\textsuperscript{58} See id.

\textsuperscript{59} Id. at 5; see also Carolyn R. Miller, \textit{Genre as Social Action}, 70 Q.J. SPEECH 151, 152
(1984). Miller argued that situations tend to repeat and thereby provide the groundwork for
rhetorical conventions and genres. Id. “Thus, inaugurals, eulogies, courtroom speeches, and the like
have conventional forms because they arise in situations with similar structures and elements and
because rhetors respond in similar ways, having learned from precedent what is appropriate and
what effects their actions are likely to have on other people.” Id.

\textsuperscript{60} Bitzer, supra note 55, at 4; see also \textsc{Kenneth Burke, Language as Symbolic Action:
Essays on Life, Literature, and Method} 45 (1966). Burke argues that language choice helps
shape perceptions of reality: “Even if any given terminology is a \textit{reflection} of reality, by its very
nature as a terminology it must be a \textit{selection} of reality; and to this extent it must function also as a
\textit{deflection} of reality.” Id. Burke called this process of linguistic reflection, selection, and deflection a
“terministic screen.” Id.

\textsuperscript{61} Bitzer, supra note 55, at 6.

\textsuperscript{62} See, e.g., \textsc{Judith Butler, Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative} 14
(1997) (suggesting that a “speech act” is not distinguishable from simple speech, but rather all
Bitzer’s formulation, which is over three decades old, has garnered some critique; however, most critiques are modifications of his formulation, rather than outright rejections. Notably, rhetoric scholar Carolyn R. Miller argues that “Bitzer’s use of demand-response language has made it possible to conceive of exigence as an external cause of discourse and situation as deterministic . . .”63 This deterministic language is a problem for those who see human culture and language as constantly in flux, as most rhetoricians do.64 Miller suggests that Bitzer’s theory be modified because “situations are social constructs” resulting from definition rather than perception and because “human action is based on and guided by meaning not material causes.”65 Thus, the speaker who is invited to speak by the situation also helps determine what that situation is in the first place.

Using Bitzer’s formulation, along with its more recent modifications, we can see that the terror wars can (and should) be thought of as a rhetorical situation inviting the rhetorical participation of all who speak publicly about the wars: politicians, pundits, journalists, bloggers, and others. Furthermore, the qualities of this situation tend to invite sissy-slogans and other discursive denigration of the feminine. After all, if you make your “enemy” nothing more than a “little girl,” then you are no longer dealing with an actual threat (either politically or militarily).

A. The Exigences of Terror Rhetoric

The terrorist acts of 9/11 created unique rhetorical exigences. For Bitzer, a situational exigence “is an imperfection marked by urgency”;66 this urgent imperfection presents as “a defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done, a thing which is other than it should be.”67 Although a situation may present many exigences, “not all are rhetorical exigences.”68 What makes an exigence a rhetorical exigence? According to Bitzer, “[a]n

speech (in particular, offensive speech) is “a ritual chain of resignifications whose origin and end remain unfixed and unfixable”); CATHARINE A. MACKINNON, ONLY WORDS 139 (1997) (“Once we realize that what we have to study is not the sentence but the issuing of an utterance in a speech situation, there can hardly be any longer a possibility of not seeing that stating is performing an act.”).

63. Miller, supra note 59, at 155–56.
64. Id.
65. Id. at 156.
67. Id.
68. Id.
exigence which cannot be modified is not rhetorical." In other words, questions that have been answered to the satisfaction of a discourse community—those issues which are not up for debate—cannot create rhetorical exigences. As Aristotle stated in his *Nichomachean Ethics*, "[N]o man deliberates respecting things which cannot be otherwise than they are . . ." Thus, a rhetorical situation presents an issue that requires debate to be resolved.

Bitzer advises, "In any rhetorical situation there will be at least one *controlling exigence* which functions as the organizing principle: it specifies the audience to be addressed and the change to be effected." This Article suggests that, for much of the public debate since 9/11, the terror wars have functioned as a controlling exigence. The exigences of the terror wars arose because the 9/11 attacks created a gaping hole in the U.S. *doxa* that politicians and pundits scrambled to fill. In other words, the U.S. populace did not know how to think about the attacks; we had no common

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69. *Id.*
70. *Id.*
71. 4 *ARISTOTLE, NICHOMACHEAN ETHICS* 1140a (D.P. Chase trans., 1911); *see also* 5 *QUINTILIAN, supra* note 8, at ch. 10, § 12–13 ("We may regard as certainties, first, those things which we perceive by the senses, things for instance that we hear or see, such as signs or indications; secondly, those things about which there is general agreement, such as the existence of the gods or the duty of loving one’s parents; thirdly, those things which are established by law or have passed into current usage, if not throughout the whole world, at any rate in the nation or state where the case is being pleaded . . .").
73. Professor Ruth Amossy explained:

Inherited from ancient Greece, the notion of *doxa* as common knowledge and shared opinions haunts all contemporary disciplines that put communication and social interaction at the center of their concerns . . . . Broadly speaking, however, all that is considered true, or at least probable, by a majority of people endowed with reason, or by a specific social group, can be called doxic.

74. *See* Address to the Nation, *supra* note 20. In the days immediately after the attacks, the President crafted a solution to the gap in U.S. *doxa*, saying: "Americans are asking, why do they hate us? They hate what we see right here in this chamber—a democratically elected government. Their leaders are self-appointed. They hate our freedoms—our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other." *Id.; see also* David Remnick, *The Trap*, *NEW YORKER*, Oct. 1, 2001, http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2001/10/01/011001ta_talk_comment. The article described the need to understand the new U.S. landscape in the wake of the terrorist attacks and argued that the 9/11 attacks were meant to incite a "war of civilizations" but that Americans can choose another way. *Id.* ("And all of us, in government and elsewhere, grope to make sense of it. Beyond the grief for what has been lost there is the need to know what to think and how to act. Part of the struggle is to put a name to this immense and indecent event.").
knowledge, or common sense, to draw from in order to prepare our responses to the attacks, so public speakers of all sorts sought to craft that common sense for us. Apart from the types of exigences common to all national-level tragic events, 9/11 produced many particular rhetorical exigences, two of which I will examine here: (1) figuring out how to protect the home front and (2) figuring out how to retaliate against our attackers. Both of these exigences align with Bitzer’s definition of an “imperfection”—a gap in knowledge—that is “urgent[1].”

The 9/11 attacks created fear among many that the U.S. home front might be attacked again. This fear of further attacks created a rhetorical exigence—a need—to figure out how to protect the home front, because many individuals in the United States, rightly or wrongly, suddenly felt that the home front was no longer safe. Uncertainty arose, however, when public speakers debated the best ways to implement these new protections.

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75. As Bitzer points out in his analysis of the situation after President Kennedy’s assassination, national tragedies create an “urgent need for information,” an explanation of the events, a eulogy for the dead, and a reassurance to the public that the nation will be taken care of. Bitzer, supra note 55, at 9.

76. Id.

77. “Home front” is a gendered term, as U.S. society tends to associate the “home” with women and children. Thus, the perceived need to protect the home front was fraught with gendered implications. See, e.g., Maryam Khalid, Gender, Orientalism and Representations of the “Other” in the War on Terror, 23 GLOBAL CHANGE, PEACE & SECURITY 15, 19 (2011) (citing J. ANN TICKNER, GENDERING WORLD POLITICS: ISSUES AND APPROACHES IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA 57 (2001)) (“[G]endered narratives in which men must save women and children have often been used to justify military intervention.”).

78. See, e.g., Ken Guggenheim, America Unprepared for Attack, N.Y. SUN, Oct. 25, 2002, available through LEXIS, News & Bus. (“The next terrorist strike against America could be more deadly and disruptive than the September 11 attacks, former top government officials, academics, and business leaders warn in a new report . . . . The report comes a week after the director of the CIA, George Tenet, warned that Osama bin Laden’s Al Qaeda network is likely to strike against America sometime soon and that the current situation is similar to what existed before the September 11 attacks.”).

79. Pryal, The Ideology of Terror, supra note 11, at 369 (arguing that the Bush Administration gained power from this perception of fear on the part of ordinary U.S. citizens).

The current administration would have the U.S. populace believe that national fear is necessary for national safety. Take, for example, the linguistic function of the color-coded terror alert system. With the system, the Bush administration deploys the language of terror against its own people. The system arguably does nothing to help America prevent terrorist attacks. It merely spreads panic.

Id.

Debates arose over whether we should try to centralize intelligence in a new Department of Homeland Security.\(^8^1\) Debates arose (and persist) over the creation of, and the new passenger-screening measures implemented by, the Transportation Security Administration.\(^8^2\) Each one of these issues created (and continues to create) new rhetorical exigences for which Americans must deliberate proper courses of action.

The desire to protect the home front also spawned a renewed interest in masculine virtues. For example, just a month after the 9/11 attacks, conservative columnist Peggy Noonan drew on the mythos of John Wayne to argue that “[a] certain style of manliness is once again being honored and celebrated in our country since Sept. 11.”\(^8^3\) She glorified the masculinity that, in her perception, the workers at Ground Zero demonstrated:

> You might say it suddenly emerged from the rubble of the past quarter century, and emerged when a certain kind of man came forth to get our great country out of the fix it was in.
>
> I am speaking of masculine men, men who push things and pull things and haul things and build things, men who charge up the stairs in a hundred pounds of gear and tell everyone else where to go to be safe.\(^8^4\)

Rhetorically, Noonan turned toward the masculine as a response to the 9/11 attacks in order to create a feeling of safety.\(^8^5\) Masculinity, according to this

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\(^8^1\) See Amy Lorentzen, Officials Say More Efforts Needed To End Terrorism, \(\text{ASSOCIATED PRESS}\), July 22, 2002 (on file with author). Thomas Ragland, Director at the time of operations for Homeland Security, addressed the press, appealing to support for the formation of a centralized Homeland Security agency. \(\text{Id}\). The article reports: “The House Select Committee on Homeland Security approved the measure 5-4 Friday night, fracturing the veneer of bipartisanship that had surrounded the issue. The Democrats on the committee unanimously opposed the vote.” \(\text{Id}\).

\(^8^2\) See Editorial, Bureaucratic Turbulence: New Federal Agency Is Doing A Poor Job of Making Flying Safer, \(\text{PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE}\), Oct. 27, 2002, at F7, available at 2002 WLNR 4171052 (“Most Americans probably haven’t heard much about the newest federal alphabet agency—the Transportation Security Administration. That’s good. Knowing about the TSA would just make them angry.”).


\(^8^4\) \(\text{Id. See generally Hilary Charlesworth & Christine Chinkin, Sex, Gender, and September 11, 96 AM. J. INT’L L.} 600 (2002) (noting that the presence of female rescue workers at Ground Zero has been all but ignored in the glorification of the masculine rescue workers that took place after 9/11)."

\(^8^5\) Noonan, \(\text{supra note 83}\).
line of reasoning, will “fix” the United States; indeed, masculinity will help the United States become “safe.” These masculine men will tell us “where to go” in order to find that safety. Implicit in Noonan’s words is a desire to have a man boss the nation around, a masculine virtue borne by the “Decider,” to use George W. Bush’s term.86

However, protecting the homeland was not the only exigence the terror wars created. After the 9/11 attacks, most public speakers debated the best way to respond: some pushed for criminal-type sanctions; most pushed for a military intervention.87 The Bush Administration and its supporters declared an immediate need to retaliate against our enemies in a military fashion. Debates then raged over just who our enemies might be: whom should we attack? Although most Americans tended to agree that Osama bin Laden was a “bad guy,”88 the Bush Administration pushed for “retaliation” against the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein as well, using the exigence of the terror wars to motivate an invasion of Iraq.89 Most memorably, on February 5, 2003, General Colin Powell addressed the U.N. Security Council to gain support for the proposed U.S. invasion of Iraq.90 He noted:

86. Bush: ‘I’m the Decider’ on Rumsfeld, CNN (Apr. 18, 2006), http://articles.cnn.com/2006-04-18/politics/rumsfeld_1_secretary-rumsfeld-military-personnel-fine-job?_s=PM.POLITICS (“I hear the voices, and I read the front page, and I know the speculation. But I’m the decider, and I decide what is best. And what’s best is for Don Rumsfeld to remain as the secretary of defense.” (quoting President George W. Bush)).

87. For some, this debate centered on the definition of “terrorism” itself. Some drew sharp distinctions between terrorists (who commit acts of war) and criminals (who commit crimes): “Terrorists are motivated by political objectives, and while criminals employ violence (often similar to that of terrorists like kidnapping, murder, arson) to achieve their ends, their motivation is quite different from that of terrorists, because criminals commonly act solely to secure a material gain.” Cyndi Banks, Criminal Justice Ethics: Theory and Practice 259, 260 (2d ed. 2009).

88. Christopher Hayes, After Osama bin Laden’s Death, an End to ‘Bad Guys,’ Nation, May 4, 2011, http://www.thenation.com/article/160405/end-bad-guys (arguing that “[i]n the wake of 9/11, the phrase ‘bad guys’ infiltrated our national conversation,” but now that the U.S. has killed Osama bin Laden, we should set aside the phrase and “resist the tug of ‘bad-guyism’”).


    American and coalition forces have begun a concerted campaign against the regime of Saddam Hussein. In this war, our coalition is broad, more than 40 countries from across the globe. Our cause is just, the security of the nations we serve and the peace of the world. And our mission is clear, to disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction, to end Saddam Hussein’s support for terrorism, and to free the Iraqi people.

Id. (emphasis added).

I cannot tell you everything that we know. But what I can share with you, when combined with what all of us have learned over the years, is deeply troubling. What you will see is an accumulation of facts and disturbing patterns of behavior. The facts on Iraq’s behavior demonstrate that Saddam Hussein and his regime have made no effort—no effort—to disarm as required by the international community.91

The target of our retaliation was thus uncertain: al Qaeda? The Taliban? Afghanistan? Iraq? The method of our retaliation was uncertain as well: invasion, air strikes, tactical special-forces strikes—all of these options were debated after 9/11.92 And, those who opposed the military action were often cast as feminine and weak.93

B. The Audiences of Terror Rhetoric

Many specific audiences were the targets of these public debates over the exigences of the terror wars. Bitzer explains the importance of understanding audience when examining a rhetorical situation: “Since rhetorical discourse produces change by influencing the decision and action of persons who function as mediators of change, it follows that rhetoric always requires an audience.”94 Furthermore, “a rhetorical audience” only

Hussein’s regime had ties to al Qaeda:

But what I want to bring to your attention today is the potentially much more sinister nexus between Iraq and the al Qaeda terrorist network, a nexus that combines classic terrorist organizations and modern methods of murder. Iraq today harbors a deadly terrorist network headed by Abu Musab Zarqawi, an associate and collaborator of Osama bin Laden and his al Qaeda lieutenants.

Id.


92. See infra Part IV.A–B.

93. See infra Part IV.A–B.

The Rhetoric of Sissy-Slogans 523

consists of listeners who are able to be convinced to change or act upon change.95 Using Bitzer’s formulation above, one can deduce that most political and news-media rhetoric of the terror wars was aimed at a very specific audience: the voting American public. Like a trial jury, American voters are both “capable of being influenced by discourse” and “capable . . . of being mediators of change.”96 Secondary audiences included foreign heads of state (whose support the Bush Administration hoped to gain before invading Iraq and Afghanistan) and fellow American politicians and pundits (whose support one might seek in order to build a coalition).97

Shortly after 9/11, the primary audience of terror wars rhetoric tended to be motivated by fear, seeking leaders who would help them feel less fearful,98 most often in the shape of masculine protectors such as generals (e.g., Colin Powell), administrative chiefs (e.g., Tom Ridge, head of the Department of Homeland Security), and the President.99 As the years have passed since 9/11, and after the discovery that Iraq did not possess weapons of mass destruction, the U.S. audience has become less fearful of terrorism100 and more skeptical of government actions taken in the name of the terror wars.101

95. Id. at 8.

96. Id.

97. See President George W. Bush, Address to the United Nations General Assembly (Nov. 10, 2001) [hereinafter Address to the United Nations], available at http://www.pbs.org/newshour/terrorism/international/bush_11-10.html (providing a transcript of the speech). The address urged international leaders to recognize their “stake in this cause [anti-terrorism].” Id.; see also Powell, supra note 90.

98. See infra Part IV.A for further discussion of the rhetorical persuasiveness of fear.


100. Mackenzie Weinger, Poll: Fears of Terror Attack Near 10-Year Low, POLITICO (Sept. 2, 2011, 6:49 AM), http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0911/62538.html (“Just 38 percent of Americans believe terrorist attacks are very or somewhat likely to occur over the next several weeks, according to the USA Today/Gallup poll. It marks a substantial drop from the May 2 poll—taken just one day after Osama bin Laden was killed while hiding in Pakistan—in which 62 percent of Americans believed acts of terrorism likely to occur in the U.S.”).

C. The Constraints of Terror Rhetoric

In addition to exigences and audiences, Bitzer explains, “every rhetorical situation contains a set of constraints made up of persons, events, objects, and relations which are parts of the situation because they have the power to constrain decision and action needed to modify the exigence.” According to Bitzer, then, a speaker such as a politician does not have the power to speak freely. A politician must worry about constraints, such as what needs to be done for reelection or coalition-building. Constraints can be “beliefs, attitudes, documents, facts, traditions,” and other pre-existing conditions that shape the audience and the speaker. Some constraints are not external, but rather created by the speaker: “[W]hen the orator enters the situation, his discourse not only harnesses constraints given by situation but provides additional important constraints—for example his personal character, his logical proofs, and his style.”

The constraints of the terror wars include long-held American cultural beliefs and myths, such as beliefs about sex, gender, and the proper roles of women and men. September 11th created a sense that our home front was no longer safe, implying that it had been safe before. While it is true that the United States has experienced very little terrorism perpetrated on our soil, in reality, individuals in the United States are no strangers to daily, deadly violence. For example, the degree of violence caused by the prevalence of firearms (both lawfully and unlawfully owned) perhaps renders this perception of U.S. safety false. According to the latest data on deaths from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, firearms caused 1.2 out of every 100 deaths in the United States in 2009.

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103. Id.
104. Id.
105. Id.
106. See, e.g., Life Goes On, but It Isn’t Quite the Same, BISMARCK TRIB., Sept. 12, 2002, available through LEXIS, News & Bus. (profiling how 9/11 has affected citizens of the city, including a mother who feels afraid for her family). “With her three sons and a daughter scattered around town in day cares and schools, she said she would rather be home with them Wednesday [Sept. 11, 2002], just in case history repeats itself.” Id.
108. Id.
Tied up in this fear for the home front were many gendered arguments. Some argued that men needed to be strong (read: masculine) in order to protect the women at home. The prevalence of images of male rescue workers at Ground Zero and the absence of similar images of female workers reinforced the notion that men can and should save our home front, a home front populated by nigh-helpless women. Legal scholars Hilary Charlesworth and Christine Chinkin observe that in the days and weeks after the 9/11 attacks,

The portraits of heroism in the United States after the hijackings have... been largely of men: Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, the firemen, the police officers, the rescue workers who raised the United States flag in the wreckage. The role of women police and firefighters in the emergency work after the various crashes has been given strikingly little exposure.

These gendered cultural myths created a situation that continues to call forth arguments that denigrate the feminine and idealize the masculine, in part by focusing on the acts of masculine men and eliding the heroics of women.

Rachel Lorna Johnstone makes a similar observation in her 2009 article, Unlikely Bedfellows: Feminist Theory and the War on Terror. Johnstone addresses the constraints the terror wars placed on public rhetoric and the constraints that evoke arguments that denigrated the feminine. She observes that “the discourse of the ‘War on Terror’ itself revealed a perceived need for the state to define its masculinity in the aftermath of

109. See Noonan, supra note 83.


I was perplexed—[by calling me, the journalist] had hardly reached an authority on terrorism. As it turns out, that wasn’t his concern. After a couple of vague questions about what this tragedy would “mean to our social fabric,” he answered his own question with, given the morning’s events, a bizarrely gleeful tone: “Well, this sure pushes feminism off the map!”

Id.; see also Cathy Young, Feminism’s Slide Since Sept. 11, BOS. GLOBE, Sept. 16, 2002, available at http://www.cathyyoung.net/bgcolumns/2002/sept11.html (“[I]t is true that the feminist movement, already at low ebb, has slid further into irrelevancy.”).

111. Charlesworth & Chinkin, supra note 84, at 600.

112. Id.


114. Id.
attack. This required painting men as heroes and women as victims.”\textsuperscript{115} She notes that this painting of women as victims extended to Muslim women as well: “Women in Afghanistan are depicted as victims of a brutal Taliban, requiring rescue by heroic (Western) men—though not political participation.”\textsuperscript{116} This highly gendered discourse leaves little discursive room for women and men who break out of gender expectations—and men are usually the losers. As we will see in Part IV, men who fail to live up to this John-Wayne-style masculinity lose popular and political credibility. However, women can—albeit carefully—claim some of the John-Wayne-style masculinity and use it for political advancement, so long as they also, paradoxically, present themselves as feminine.

IV. TERROR’S GENERATIVE RHETORICAL APPEALS

The sissy-slogans and gendered arguments that grew out of the 9/11 attacks were arguably driven by fear. The fear U.S. society felt after 9/11 solidified into a fear of another attack on the homeland\textsuperscript{117} furthermore, “homeland” implied families, women, and children (feminine aspects of U.S. culture).\textsuperscript{118} This fear solidified into a fear of victimization of the

\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{115} Id. (citing Charlesworth & Chinkin, supra note 84).
\item\textsuperscript{116} Id. at 45. The rhetorical victimization of Afghan women is accompanied by actual victimization by the Western military forces fighting the terror wars: “The suffering women endure under the airpower of those same Western forces and the hardship encountered as essential services are put beyond their use are unfortunate ‘collateral damage’—a sacrifice for their greater long-term good.” Id.

The lesson of 9/11 for civilians and first responders can be stated simply: in the new age of terror, they—we—are the primary targets. The losses America suffered that day demonstrated both the gravity of the terrorist threat and the commensurate need to prepare ourselves to meet it. The first responders of today live in a world transformed by the attacks on 9/11. Because no one believes that every conceivable form of attack can be prevented, civilians and first responders will again find themselves on the front lines.

Id. at 323 (emphasis added).
\item\textsuperscript{118} See Address to the Nation, supra note 20 (“History will record our response and judge or justify every nation in this hall. The civilized world is now responding. We act to defend ourselves and deliver our children from a future of fear.” (emphasis added)); Alex Cukan, Saudi $10M in Question, UPI NEWSINT’L (Oct. 11, 2001), http://www.upi.com/Top_News/2001/10/11/Saudi-10-M-in-question/UPI-79421002825669/ (“Let those who say that we must understand the reasons for terrorism come with me to the thousands of funerals we are having in New York City and explain those insane, maniacal reasons to the children who will grow up without fathers and
The Rhetoric of Sissy-Slogans

United States as a nation and the attendant emasculation that arises from such victimization. This fear for the feminine home and fear of emasculation yielded a masculinized rhetoric of “homeland security” and a rhetoric of outward attack. In this way, the denigration of the feminine (as weak and helpless) and the glorification of the masculine (as heroic and all-powerful) helped create support for the terror wars. This Part takes a closer look at this rhetorical process by examining which arguments were most persuasive after 9/11, and why.

This Article has already examined the structure of sissy-slogans: they are enthymemes, that is, rhetorical syllogisms that can be broken down into premises and conclusions whose major premise is often unsightly (that is, sexist). It has also examined the rhetorical situation in which sissy-slogans arise, including the exigences, audiences, and constraints that call for them. It is in the rhetorical situation, in the realm of arguments-in-action, that we can see how sissy-slogans both draw rhetorical power from the terror wars and, in turn, generate power for the terror wars.

Once again, one can turn to Aristotle for guidance. The “available means of persuasion,” the foundation of Aristotle’s definition of rhetoric, refers to all of the linguistic, visual, and other communicative tools that a speaker (politician, pundit, or columnist) might use to share ideas with and to persuade an audience. The available means are contingent on the rhetorical situation in which a speaker is located. For Aristotle, the study of these available means is paramount to a rhetor’s work: “[R]hetorical study, in its strict sense, is concerned with the modes of persuasion.”

The tools for communicating with an audience in a rhetorical situation—the modes of persuasion—are the rhetorical appeals.

119. See, e.g., Shelley Wright, The Horizon of Becoming: Culture, Gender and History After September 11, 71 NORDIC J. INT’L L. 215, 245 (2002) (“A feminist analysis of September 11 might see the American reaction to the terrorist attacks as the expression of hysterical fear of rape or even castration.”).

120. See Address to the United Nations, supra note 97. President Bush began by discussing the pain at home and ended with a call for violence and war abroad: “After tragedy, there is a time for sympathy and condolence. And my country has been very grateful for both. The memorials and vigils around the world will not be forgotten, but the time for sympathy has now passed. The time for action has now arrived.” Id.

121. See supra Part II.

122. See supra Part III.

123. Id. at 1355a.

124. Id. at 1355a.
Aristotle outlined the three basic rhetorical appeals, often referred to today as the “rhetorical triangle”: the appeal to *pathos*, which persuades by appealing to an audience’s sympathies or emotions; the appeal to *ethos*, which invites an audience to put faith in the persona of the speaker; and the appeal to *logos*, which appeals to an audience’s logical sense. The appeals can help one understand how sissy-slogans work upon the primary audience of the rhetorical situation of the terror wars—the U.S. voting public—by capitalizing on their fear of further attacks and of emasculation as a nation.

**A. Pathos, Fear, and Gender**

Aristotle observed that “fear is felt by those who believe something to be likely to happen to them, at the hands of particular persons, in a particular form, and at a particular time,” that is, during times of crisis. Furthermore, a fearful audience is far more open to manipulation by simple emotional pronouncements (*pathos*) from an authoritative speaker (*ethos*) than it is to hearing complex arguments based on evidence and research (*logos*). Aristotle writes of *pathos*: “[P]ersuasion may come through the hearers, when the speech stirs their emotions. Our judgments when we are pleased and friendly are not the same as when we are pained and hostile”; basically, when we are afraid, our logical judgment suffers, and we often act in an unreasonable fashion. For example, after the tsunami and resulting nuclear disaster in Japan in 2011, residents of California driven by fear of radiation poisoning purchased all of the potassium iodide tablets that the leading producer had in stock, hoping that the compound would protect them from the “bogeyman” of radiation.

In similar fashion to the Japanese tsunami crisis, during the era of the terror wars post-9/11, Americans were receptive to nearly any argument that

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125. *Id.* at 1356a.


127. Social science researchers performed a rigorous study of the effects of fear-driven persuasion in public health campaigns and found that “the stronger the fear appeal, the greater the attitude, intention, and behavior changes” of the target group. Kim Witte & Mike Allen, *A Meta-Analysis of Fear Appeals: Implications for Public Health Campaigns*, 27 *HEALTH EDUC. & BEHAV.* 591, 598 (2000). Furthermore, “the stronger the severity and susceptibility in the message, the more attitude, intention, and behavior changes.” *Id.*

128. 1 *ARISTOTLE, supra* note 14, at 1356a.

would assuage their fears of terrorist attacks. For example, rhetoric scholar Steve Westbrook discusses how duct tape, “an ordinary adhesive . . . took on a new, unexpected meaning after February 11, 2003,” when “Tom Ridge, then Secretary of Homeland Security, advised Americans to prepare themselves for potential attacks of biological terrorism by purchasing duct tape, which Ridge instructed should be used to seal off windows and doorways.”

The public announcement of the advisory came from U.S. Fire Administrator David Paulison who issued “a list of useful items” to aid families who seek “to prepare for terror attacks.”

The consequences of the advice were immediate, and the public wiped out the national supply of duct tape. “Motivated by fear, Americans put their trust in the advice offered by a government official and, in doing so, convinced themselves that a silver-lined adhesive might save them from unpredictable acts of terror.”

Thus, the fearful audience was open to using the idea of duct tape as a salve for their fear, especially when a respected official recommended this salve. Interestingly, one major manufacturer of duct tape turned out to be connected to a significant Republican campaign contributor: “Shortly after Ridge’s announcement, the Washington Post revealed financial links between the White House and Jack Kahl, contributor of over $100,000 to the Republican Party’s 2000 presidential campaign and founder of Henkel Consumer Adhesives, a company that manufactured 46 percent of all duct tape sold in U.S. markets . . .”

During the duct tape hysteria, logical arguments were less persuasive than the ones driven by pathos and ethos. Westbrook points out that even duct tape manufacturers did not recommend such a use for their product: “[w]ary of potential lawsuits, other duct tape manufacturers offered public disclaimers about their product’s inability to withstand exposure to certain

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130. Steve Westbrook, Visual Rhetoric in a Culture of Fear: Impediments to Multimedia Production, 68 C. ENG. 457, 457 (2006); see Lloyd de Vries, Ridge: Make Your Plans Now, CBS NEWS (Feb. 6, 2003), http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/02/06/attack/main539626.shtml (“‘Stash away the duct tape — don’t use it!’” (quoting Tom Ridge)).


132. Westbrook, supra note 130, at 458.

133. Id.

134. Id. at 457–58 (citations omitted).
chemical agents.”¹³⁵ Even Ridge himself backpedaled somewhat from the duct tape recommendation after the mass hysteria the advice engendered.¹³⁶ The fact that the manufacturers of the product did not endorse Ridge’s recommended use was irrelevant to the early audience of the terror wars, as arguments grounded in logos (or logical reasoning) failed to persuade this fearful group.

This sort of fear-driven behavior, and receptivity to fear-based arguments, has a gendered element. Post-9/11 emotional appeals used the instantiation of masculinity and male heroism to create a sense of comfort and safety; the emphasis on male heroism played into the nuclear family model with a strong father figure, a model to which most Americans have attachments (imagined, if not real).¹³⁷ In the case of duct tape, Americans were more willing to listen to Tom Ridge’s male and masculine advice about safety from terrorism, than to the advice of the duct tape manufacturers who disclaimed the effectiveness of their product.¹³⁸

Ridge’s duct tape comment was the sort of advice that Noonan pled for in her October 2001 column when she asked for masculine men to show

¹³⁵ Id. at 458.

¹³⁶ PBS Newshour with Jim Lehrer (PBS television broadcast Feb. 19, 2003), available at http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/terrorism/jan-june03/ridge_2-19.html (providing a transcript of the show). When Lehrer asked Ridge whether his home emergency kit contained duct tape, Ridge responded: “You know, that is not something that ever was issued or even uttered by the Department of Homeland Security, and people have taken it, and I think humor is a very effective tool for delivering a message. I’m a little worried about the preoccupation with duct tape.” Id. Lehrer pressed him further: “Would you agree with those who say that one of the problems with the duct tape idea was that you all didn’t really put that information out in a very straightforward way, didn’t tell people what they were supposed to do with the duct tape, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, would you take some of the blame for that?” Id. Ridge responded: “Sure.” Id.

¹³⁷ See Vern L. Bengston, Beyond the Nuclear Family: The Increasing Importance of Multigenerational Bonds, 63 J. MARRIAGE & FAM. 1 (2001). Bengston tracks the “emergence of the ‘modern’ nuclear family form following the Industrial Revolution.” Id. at 1 (citations omitted). Bengston also points to the debate over the “decline of the family” in U.S. society that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s. Id. at 3 (citations omitted). Bengston notes that the “family decline” hypothesis is limited, and to some critics flawed, by its preoccupation with the family as a coresident household and the nuclear family as its primary representation,” because in reality, U.S. family structures take a variety of effective forms, often “multigenerational.” Id. at 4; see also Azubike Felix Uzoka, The Myth of the Nuclear Family: Historical Background and Clinical Implications, 34 AM. PSYCHOLOGIST 1095, 1095 (1979) (“This article emphasizes that the family structure propounded in earlier sociological theorizing as the prevalent structure in western societies (the so-called nuclear system) is essentially a myth. This article will also demonstrate that the general perspectives on the family emanating from this nuclear mythology are inadequate and sometimes dangerous and cannot be relied on to provide an effective framework for the understanding of the dynamics of family functioning or, more importantly, for effective therapeutic intervention.”).

¹³⁸ Westbrook, supra note 130, at 458.
U.S. public how to be “safe.” Indeed, journalists have described Ridge as masculine and physically imposing. Journalists have also described Ridge’s work as head of the Department of Homeland Security in physical and sports-related terms, descriptions which evoke masculinity. For example, Time magazine tapped Ridge as “Person of the Week” in November of 2002. In the short article accompanying the accolade, the magazine noted, using a mixed-sports metaphor, “There’s a whole infield of hurdles waiting to be jumped, not the least of which is the enormity of the task at hand.” A 2002 Vanity Fair article dubbed Tom Ridge “The Protector” and described him in this fashion:

At six feet three, with a prominent Buzz Lightyear jaw, he certainly has the right appearance for a director of homeland security . . . . Each day he has to grapple with a volatile mix of border cops, shaky airline executives, jittery postal workers, angry mayors, and closemouthed officers from the F.B.I. and C.I.A. who have never been taught to play nice with one another. All the while he’s supposed to be a Reassuring Presence. “We want to brand Tom Ridge,” a White House official said. “When people see him, we want them to think, ‘My babies are safe.’”

The Vanity Fair article thus reiterates the theme of the feminized, terrorized U.S. populace (“babies,” and by implication, their mothers) rescued by the tall, square-jawed masculine hero (Ridge). These arguments are an effective blend of fear-driven pathos and masculinity-driven ethos.

B. U.S. Response: The John Wayne Ethos

Scholars have noted how U.S. popular discourse responded to 9/11 by casting President Bush as heroic and our enemies as feminine. In this

139. Noonan, supra note 83.
140. See Leibovitz & Buckley, supra note 99, at 83.
142. Id.
143. Id.
144. Leibovitz & Buckley, supra note 99, at 83.
145. Yasmin Jiwani, ‘War Talk’ Engendering Terror: Race, Gender and Representation in Canadian Print Media, 1 INT’L J. MEDIA & CULTURAL POL. 15, 17 (2005) (noting that after 9/11 President Bush was “portrayed as the masculine hero of the New World Order” while “Osama bin Laden was often feminized”). But see Khalid, supra note 77, at 16 ("[W]omen’s rights discourses have been co-opted into a broader discourse of gendered orientalism that marks ‘Other’ women as
environment, sissy-slogans also find favor. Driven by fear, the post-9/11 U.S. voting public looked toward masculine heroes for protection, even when those heroes, such as the characters portrayed by John Wayne,146 were merely mythic.147 The fearful populace found the ethos of a masculine hero irresistible.

Ethos, according to Aristotle, consists of

[p]ersuasion [that] is achieved by the speaker’s personal character when the speech is so spoken as to make us think him credible. We believe good men more fully and more readily than others: this is true generally whatever the question is, and absolutely true where exact certainty is impossible and opinions are divided.148

After 9/11, U.S. opinion was often divided about how to act, and the U.S. populace felt great uncertainty in the form of fear. In such an environment, according to Aristotle, the credibility of the speaker is of utmost importance.149 As noted above, the most credible speakers were those who showed masculine strength, the John Wayne ethos.

Even female politicians have invoked the John Wayne ethos. Most notably, Sarah Palin has employed the rhetorical tactic of the “Mama Grizzlies.”150 Rather than countering sissy-slogans, these women of the political Right reinvigorated them:

In May, when Palin coined the term, she defined them as “common-sense conservative women, banding together and rising up” to form “an emerging, conservative, feminist identity.” Yet while these candidates may have a catchy new name, the Mama Grizzly moniker and campaign is, at the surface, built around the most traditional of female roles: mother.151

In savvy fashion, Palin and her cohorts crafted identities built upon masculine strength but wrapped in a package of motherhood and physical

voiceless victims of a barbaric (male) ‘Other’ enemy, and positions the USA as enlightened, civilised, and justified in its military interventions.”)

146. See Noonan, supra note 83.
147. See FALUDI, supra note 110.
148. 1 ARISTOTLE, supra note 14, at 1356a.
149. Id.
151. Id.
The Rhetoric of Sissy-Slogans

beauty.  

Sissy-slogans gained traction after 9/11 to consolidate the power of leaders, most notably President George W. Bush, who were interested in pursuing military action against nation-states suspected of providing “havens” for terrorists. Along with these slogans came all of the trappings of 1950s and 1960s sexism, as noted by journalist and feminist Susan Faludi. In *The Terror Dream: Fear and Fantasy in Post-9/11 America*, Faludi argued that after 9/11, “the cultural troika of media, entertainment, and advertising declared the post-9/11 age an era of neofifties nuclear family ‘togetherness,’ redomesticated femininity, and reconstituted Cold Warrior manhood.” Faludi suggests that the rhetoric of terror after 9/11 relied on a denigration of feminism in particular, not just upon a denigration of the feminine. When she describes “the suspicion that the nation and its men had gone ‘soft,’” she identifies a castigation of men who display qualities that might be described as feminine. Faludi also argues that part of the deliberate misunderstanding of 9/11 that contributed to the denigration of feminism was that the United States “perceive[d] an assault on the urban workplace as a threat to the domestic circle.” These responses to 9/11, in Faludi’s view, are “predicated as much on the desire to reinstate a social fiction as on the need to respond to actual threats”;

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153. Address to the United Nations, supra note 97 (“Terrorist groups like al-Qaeda depend upon the aid or indifference of governments. They need the support of a financial infrastructure and safe havens to train and plan and hide.”).

154. Faludi, supra note 110.

155. Id. at 3–4.

156. Id. at 20–24 (“In the ensuing days [after 9/11], I would receive more calls from journalists on the 9/11 ‘social fabric’ beat, bearing more proclamations of gender restructuring—among them a *New York Times* reporter researching an article on ‘the return of the manly man’ and a *New York Observer* writer seeking comment on ‘the trend’ of women ‘becoming more feminine after 9/11.’ By which, as she made clear, she meant less feminist. Women were going to regret their ‘independence,’ she said, and devote themselves to ‘baking cookies’ and finding husbands ‘to take care of them.’”). For more on the interrelationship—and conflicts—between the feminine and the feminist, see Toril Moi, *Feminist, Female, Feminine*, in *The Feminist Reader: Essays in Gender and the Politics of Literary Criticism* 104 (Catherine Belsey & Jane Moore eds., 1989).

157. Faludi, supra note 110, at 280.

158. Id. at 7.

159. Id. at 12–13.
responses, then, represent the “symbolic war at home”¹⁶⁰ that pairs with the actual war abroad, a symbolic “war to repair and restore a national myth” of safety and domesticity.¹⁶¹

President George W. Bush’s War on Terror helped normalize political actions that would ordinarily draw strong criticism: rendition, detainment at Guantánamo, de facto censorship, and the invasion of Iraq, to name a few.¹⁶² It also normalized the use of sissy-slogans to damage the ethos of Democratic politicians. For example, the perceived exigencies of the terror wars helped normalize offensive and even violent rhetorical practices in the political sphere, such as the labeling of then-presidential candidate John Kerry and his supporters as terrorists,¹⁶³ or as “feminine/female, weak, un-American, French, [and] unpatriotic.”¹⁶⁴ During the 2004 presidential campaign, I observed that “[t]error defined what was presidential: toughness, masculinity, machismo.”¹⁶⁵ In particular, “[o]ne of the most politically effective [rhetorical tactics] during the 2004 presidential campaign was the application of the phrase ‘girlie-man’ to [candidate John] Kerry.”¹⁶⁶ The insult “girlie-man” gained traction when “Arnold Schwarzenegger, macho-man par excellence, governor of California and former Terminator, introduced girlie-man into the language of the campaign.”¹⁶⁷ Afterwards, “[t]he name stuck because the terrorized American populace believed that toughness and manliness would protect

¹⁶⁰.  Id. at 13.

¹⁶¹.  Id.

¹⁶².  See generally Leila Nadya Sadat, Extraordinary Rendition, Torture, and Other Nightmares from the War on Terror, 75 GEO. WASH. L. REV. 1200 (2006) (discussing the policies that are justified by the terror wars).

¹⁶³.  Then-Vice President Dick Cheney said, in a campaign speech:

It’s absolutely essential that eight weeks from today, on Nov. 2, we make the right choice . . . because if we make the wrong choice then the danger is that we’ll get hit again and we’ll be hit in a way that will be devastating from the standpoint of the United States.

David E. Sanger & David M. Halbfinger, Cheney Warns of Terror Risk if Kerry Wins, N.Y. TIMES, Sept. 8, 2004, http://www.nytimes.com/2004/09/08/politics/campaign/08bush.html. Cheney’s words indicate that a vote for John Kerry on November 2nd was not only the “wrong choice” from a political standpoint, but also from a national-security standpoint.  Id. Voting for Kerry, in Cheney’s words, would be “devastating” for the United States.  Id.

¹⁶⁴.  Pryal, The Ideology of Terror, supra note 11, at 369.

¹⁶⁵.  Id.

¹⁶⁶.  Id. at 373.

¹⁶⁷.  Id.
them from further terrorist attacks.’ 168 The “girlie-man” insult, a form of the sissy-slogan, relied on denigration of the feminine to function, in that it equated wimpiness with being female; it also gave the Republican Party a popular rallying cry during the 2004 campaign. 169

During the 2008 presidential campaign, sissy-slogans were once again flung at the Democratic candidates. Conservative spokesperson Ann Coulter called John Edwards a “faggot” during a public speech at a conservative conference in Washington, D.C. 170 Her defense of her homophobic words is as telling as the original attack: “[The word ‘faggot’ is] a schoolyard taunt meaning ‘wuss,’ and unless you’re telling me that John Edwards is gay, it was not applied to a gay person.” 171 She thus argued, on the primetime news show Hannity and Colmes, that calling a presidential candidate a “wuss”—another term for “sissy”—is indeed socially acceptable. 172

Barack Obama was similarly attacked as a chablis-drinking, arugula-eating wimp, 173 in contrast to the “Joe six pack,” every-man hero of the

168. Id.


172. Coulter Reference to Edwards as “Faggot” Gives Rise to Questions for Media, MEDIA MATTERS FOR AM. (Mar. 2, 2007), http://mediamatters.org/research/200703030002. With these words, she also argued that the term “faggot” means “wuss” without showing any understanding of the underpinnings of the relationship between the term “faggot” and the idea that a homosexual man might be perceived as “wuss-y.” Id.

McCain-Palin campaign.\textsuperscript{174} New York Times columnist Maureen Dowd—hardly a conservative commentator—thus critiqued Obama’s campaign:

What turns off voters [from Obama] is the detached egghead quality that they tend to equate with a wimpiness, wordiness and a lack of action . . . . The new attack line for Obama rivals is that he’s gone from J.F.K. to Dukakis. (Just as Dukakis chatted about Belgian endive, Obama chatted about Whole Foods arugula in Iowa.)\textsuperscript{175}

Thus, for Dowd and others like her—those turned off by Obama’s professorial and professional tone—Obama’s intellectualism (“egghead quality”) made him seem wimpy or sissy. In this particular line of popular rhetorical reasoning, tough leaders are not highly educated, nor do they have refined tastes for fancy vegetables. But as journalist Helene Cooper has pointed out, sissy-slogan attacks on liberals are hardly anything new; rather, they arose after World War II, when “Republicans mostly stopped attacking the Democrats as the party that had gotten America into two world wars, and began calling it soft on Communism.”\textsuperscript{176} Cooper’s historical account of democratic sissiness reveals that the use of sissy-slogans is cyclical and dependent upon cultural moment.\textsuperscript{177} As the United States has shifted in the decade since 9/11 from a culture of revenge to a culture sick of foreign wars,\textsuperscript{178} fear- and masculinity-driven arguments about the terror wars have arguably lost traction. Recently, logos-driven arguments, arguments founded upon logical reasoning, have been able to take hold.

\textbf{C. Logos: The Discarding of Terror Rhetoric}

Although the denigration of the feminine remains an influential

\\textsuperscript{174} Palin Says She Represents ‘Joe Six-Pack,’ FOX NEWS (Oct. 1, 2008), http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,431161,00.html (“Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin portrayed herself Tuesday as a champion of everyday people while noting her family’s stock portfolio took a $20,000 hit last week. ‘It’s time that normal Joe Six-pack American is finally represented in the position of vice presidency,’ the Republican vice presidential candidate told radio talk show host Hugh Hewitt.”).


\textsuperscript{177} See id.

\textsuperscript{178} Mars in the Descendant, ECONOMIST, June 23, 2011, http://www.economist.com/node/18867562 (“None of America’s several wars is popular. According to a Pew Research poll this week, a majority of Americans (56%) now believe that their troops should come home from Afghanistan as soon as possible. Only 39% favour waiting for the situation there to stabilise, even though most still think that the original decision to go to war was right.”).
rhetorical practice during the current moment of the terror wars (as the tea party bumper sticker reveals), arguments driven by *logos* seem to be making a reemergence, especially in foreign policy. For Aristotle, arguments driven by *logos* were superior to those driven by *pathos*. In *logos*-based arguments, “persuasion is effected through the speech itself when we have proved a truth or an apparent truth by means of the persuasive arguments suitable to the case in question.” Although *pathos* - and *ethos*-driven sissy-slogans are still common, under the Obama Administration it appears that change is in the air. Cultural cues from the Administration, such as those discussed below, reveal a tendency away from simplistic, gender-based arguments towards more reasoned arguments, at least when it comes to gender and sexuality.

Overt sexist and homophobic insults appear to be less acceptable today than they were a decade ago, and public commentators who used to trade in such insults, such as Fox News Channel’s Glenn Beck, seem to have lost popularity.

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179. The rhetorical tactics employed by President Bush shortly after 9/11 included simplistic threats of invasion and “with us or against us” language of a near-religious quality. See Mike Duncan, *Polemical Ambiguity and the Composite Audience: Bush’s 20 September 2001 Speech to Congress and the Epistle of 1 John, 41 RHETORIC SOC’Y Q. 435, 457 (2011)” (“And we will pursue nations that provide aid or safe haven to terrorism. Every nation in every region now has a decision to make: Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists. From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime.” (quoting President George W. Bush)). Recently, there have been calls to lay such language to rest. See Hayes, *supra* note 88 (writing, “I remember vividly the pull of that emotion in those autumn days ten years ago [after 9/11], the desire to feel something uncomplicated: pure rage or simple thirst for justice,” but suggesting that, especially after Osama bin Laden’s death, “we [the U.S.] return to the world as our adult eyes see it, shot through with suffering and complexity”).

180. Aristotle writes, regarding appeals to emotions, “The arousing of prejudice, pity, anger, and similar emotions has nothing to do with the essential facts, but is merely a personal appeal to the man who is judging the case.” 1 ARISTOTLE, *supra* note 14, at 1354a.

181. Id. at 1356a.

182. See, e.g., IT GETS BETTER PROJECT, http://www.itgetsbetter.org/ (last visited May 22, 2012). It Gets Better Project is a popular organization aimed at helping gay young people through their high school years. See id. Their tagline reads: “Many LGBT youth can’t picture what their lives might be like as openly gay adults. They can’t imagine a future for themselves. So let’s show them what our lives are like, let’s show them what the future may hold in store for them.” Id. The site encourages successful adult gay people to record videos speaking to the gay youth of the United States and around the world. Id.

183. Beck’s insults on his now-defunct television show often took a sexist or homophobic turn. For example, he called Senator Mary Landrieu from Louisiana a prostitute. *Glenn Beck* (Fox News television broadcast Nov. 23, 2009), available through LEXIS, News & Bus (providing a transcript of the broadcast). Beck said the following:

Senator Mary Landrieu from Louisiana, she was on the fence with this health care bill, but then she ended up voting for it. What changed her mind? Some amazing cost-cutting maneuver, something that she was reading the bill and went, “Oh, my gosh, that’s going to make sure that everybody gets Band-Aids who has boo-boos.” No, no,
Early in his administration, Obama redubbed the War on Terror as an “Overseas Contingency Operation,” discarding the language of war for political jargon. Although the jargon might not provide a clearer picture of the activities the U.S. military is engaging in overseas, President Obama does not trade in war jingoism in the fashion of the Bush Administration, and he deliberately discarded the rhetoric of terror/fear for a more reasoned language. Others have noted President Obama’s tendency towards reasoned language, especially when contrasted with the language of his predecessor:

Obama, then, found himself [early in his presidency] in a place where he seems most comfortable, splitting the difference on a tough issue [terrorism] and presenting it as the course of reasoned judgment rather than of dogmatic ideology. Where Bush saw black and white, Obama sees gray. Where Bush favored swagger, Obama is searching for a more supple blend of force and intellect.

It was reported on Friday that her vote was sold for $100 million. Yes, $100 million, right there in the health care bill—a bill about health and care and covering people on health-related issues. Senator Landrieu was assured that her state, Louisiana, in the bill, would get $100 million in aid. . . . Well, I'm sorry. So we know you're hooking, but you're just not cheap. It's $300 million.

*Id.* (emphasis added). He also used the word “rape” to refer to how the new health care bill would be funded:

Really, I was just so busy reading the health care bill. It’s so exciting. Here’s President Obama and his little band-aid cape—here to save the day! President Obama has his massive $1.5 trillion health care plan. It’s hogging up the news cycle. And the Republicans, and—you know, a lot of people are starting to say, ain’t this socialist here? I mean, this is pretty crazy. The answer to me on that one is really easy. Yes. It’s good old socialism—you know, pretty much raping the pocketbooks of the rich to give to the poor. I think that’s socialism.

*Glenn Beck* (Fox News television broadcast July 21, 2009), available through LEXIS, News & Bus. (providing a transcript of the broadcast).

184. See, e.g., Howard Kurtz, *The Beck Factor at Fox: Staffers Say Comments Taint Their Work*, WASH. POST, Mar. 14, 2010, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/03/14/AR2010031402312_2.html?sid=ST2010031503503. Glenn Beck’s departure from the Fox News Channel was arguably due to loss of advertising revenue from his show because of his unnecessarily provocative remarks. See id. (“More than 200 companies have joined a boycott of Beck’s program, making it difficult for Fox to sell ads. The time has instead been sold to smaller firms offering such products as Kaopectate, Carbonite, 1-800-PetMeds and Goldline International. A handful of advertisers, such as Apple, have abandoned Fox altogether. Network executives say they believe they could charge higher rates if the host were more widely acceptable to advertisers.”).


Where Bush saw Islamic extremism as an existential threat equivalent to Nazism or Communism, Obama contends that that view warps the situation out of proportion and plays into terrorists’ hands by elevating their stature and allowing them — even without attacking again — to alter the nature of American society.\(^{187}\)

The material effects of such a rhetorical shift include, for example, the willingness of the military to accept gays and lesbians into its ranks, with the ending of the Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell policy in September of 2011.\(^{188}\) The Department of Homeland Security set aside the color-coded terror alert system, which arguably only served to create fear and panic rather than to facilitate constructive responses to real threats.\(^{189}\) In addition, women have gained acceptance in more prominent White House positions that were previously reserved as purely male realms, including positions in the situation room during the Navy SEALs strike on Osama bin Laden’s compound in Pakistan.\(^{190}\)

Journalist John Blake calls the now-famous photograph of the situation room during the bin Laden raid “historic” in a “subtle way,” because “[i]t’s a snapshot of how much this nation’s attitudes about race, women and presidential swagger are changing.”\(^{191}\) Blake points to the trend observed here, that the notion that women must be protected from terrorists is changing; as women participate in military actions, they become the protectors. Furthermore, masculine swagger—from men or women—no longer seems necessary to achieve military (or political) effectiveness.

V. CONCLUSION

As much as times may be changing as the terror wars wane, the “little girls” bumper sticker reveals that sissy-slogans are imbedded deeply in our political discourse. Despite their insulting and destructive nature—or perhaps due to it—sissy-slogans remain an effective means of discrediting a

\(^{187}\) Id. (emphasis added).

\(^{188}\) *Obama Certifies End of Military’s Gay Ban*, MSNBC (July 22, 2011), http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/43859711/ns/us_news-life/#.TsV2J_FZ_Gc (“‘Our military will no longer be deprived of the talents and skills of patriotic Americans just because they happen to be gay or lesbian,’ Obama said in a statement released by the White House.”).


\(^{191}\) Id.
political opponent. The rhetorical tools this Article provides can help combat sissy-slogans: the hidden premises of enthymemes; the elements of the rhetorical situation (exigence, audience, and constraints); and the generative nature of the rhetorical appeals (ethos, logos, and pathos). Rhetorical tools can reveal how public arguments shape public life, how discourse is driven by politics and in turn drives politics. When human lives are at stake, such as during wartime, public arguments take on increased importance. The terror wars provide an ideal field upon which to study the use of gendered rhetoric and the ways that arguments that denigrate the feminine ("girlie-man," "faggot," etc.) manage to be persuasive.

Human lives are always at stake in public discourse, whether the discussion centers around health care reform, the death penalty, or immigration. For this reason, arguments that insult one group (in the case of sissy-slogans, women) in order to set aside rational discourse about a political agenda (in this Article, the agenda of the terror wars) deserve special scrutiny and critique. Studies such as this one aim to ensure that political decisions are made in a careful and reasoned fashion, rather than in a fashion driven by fear, or fear of insult.