

Investigating the Discursively Constructed Nexus between Al Qaeda and Iraqi Regime in President G. W. Bush's "axis of evil" Speech

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Abstract

This article investigates the discursively constructed adequation between Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq, which is encoded in the speech of US President George W. Bushon "the axis of evil." It probes the choices and the enactment of transitivity processes utilized by the US President to concoct and stitch relations of moral equivalence, conspiratorial security ties and ideological concurrence between Al Qaeda and Iraqi regime in order to rationalize the ultimate invasion of Iraq. The study is conducted through the lens of Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

Keywords: President G. W. Bush, war on terror, "axis of evil" speech, fairclough's cda paradigm; al Qaeda organization, iraqi regime.

تَحْلِيلُ الْعَلَاَقَةِ بَيْنَ تَنْظِيمِ الْقَاعِدَةِ وَ النِّظَامِ الْعِرَاقِيِّ الْمَبْنِيَةِ عَلَى أَسَاسِ اخْتِيَارِ الْوُظَانِفِ اللَّغَوِيَةِ فِي خِطَابِ الرَّئِيسِ جُورْجِ دَبْلِيُو بُوْشِ حَوْلَ "مَحْوَرِ الشَّرِّ"

ملخص

يَعْنِي هَذَا الْمَقَالُ بَفَحْصِ الْعَلَاَقَةِ بَيْنَ تَنْظِيمِ الْقَاعِدَةِ بِرِئَاْسَةِ أُسَامَةَ بِنِ لَادِنٍ وَنِظَامِ صَدَامِ حُسَيْنٍ فِي الْعِرَاقِ، الْمَبْنِيَةِ عَلَى أَسَاسِ اخْتِيَارِ الصِّغِ اللَّغَوِيَةِ كَمَا هِيَ مُشْفَرَةٌ فِي خِطَابِ الرَّئِيسِ الْأَمْرِيكِيِّ جُورْجِ دَبْلِيُو بُوْشِ حَوْلَ "مَحْوَرِ الشَّرِّ". يَرْكُزُ الْمَقَالُ عَلَى تَحْلِيلِ الْوُظُفَةِ التَّجْرِيْبِيَّةِ لِلْغَةِ خَاصَّةً التَّعْدِيَةِ الَّتِي اعْتَمَدَهَا الرَّئِيسُ بُوْشِ لِاخْتِلَاقِ وَنَسْجِ عِلَاقَاتٍ تَكَافُؤٍ أَخْلَاقِيٍّ وَتَأْمُرٍ أَمْنِيٍّ وَتَوَافُقٍ أُيْدِيُولُوجِيٍّ بَيْنَ الْقَاعِدَةِ وَالنِّظَامِ الْعِرَاقِيِّ مِنْ أَجْلِ تَبْرِيرِ غَزْوِ الْعِرَاقِ. تَعْتَمِدُ الدِّرَاسَةُ عَلَى نَمُودَجٍ نُورْمَنٍ فَرُكْلُوفٍ الثَّلَاثِيٍّ الْأَبْعَادِ لِلتَّحْلِيلِ النَّقْدِيِّ لِلْخِطَابِ كَأَدَاةٍ أَسَاسِيَّةٍ لِلتَّحْلِيلِ.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الرئيس جورج دبليو بوش، حرب على الإرهاب، خطاب "محور الشر"، نموذج فركلوف للتحليل النقدي للخطاب، تنظيم القاعدة، نظام عراقي.

Analyse de la construction discursive du lien entre Al-Qaida et le régime irakien dans le discours du président G. W. Bush sur "l'axe du mal"

Résumé

Cet article examine la construction discursive du lien entre Al-Qaida d'Osama bin Laden et le régime de Saddam Hussein en Irak, qui ressort du discours du président George W. Bush sur "L'axe du mal." L'article passe en revue le discours en scrutant les choix des processus de transitivity auxquels recourut le président des États Unis pour concocter et tisser des liens d'équivalence morale, de conspiration sécuritaire et de connivence idéologique entre Al-Qaida et le régime irakien afin de justifier l'invasion de l'Irak. L'analyse se conduit à travers l'optique du cadre tridimensionnel d'analyse critique du discours de Norman Fairclough.

Mots-clés: Président G. W. Bush, guerre contre le terrorisme, discours sur "l'axe du mal", model de fairclough d'analyse critique du discours, organisation d'al-qaida, régime irakien.

Introduction:

The use of CDA techniques to analyze political discourse has come to draw great attention in the few last decades given its importance in terms of debunking and unlocking hidden ideological meanings. Political speeches delivered by high-ranking officials in the US, such as the president, who enjoys an indisputable persuasive power based on wielding language, have the pervasive effect of wrapping their personal, partisan and national perceptions, beliefs and values as universally accepted, non-negotiable and self-evident truths valid for all mankind. It is, thus, the core purpose of this article to examine George W. Bush's "axis of evil" speech (January 29, 2002) through the lens of Norman Fairclough's paradigm of CDA in order to unveil how he manipulated language to conflate Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda organization and Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq for the sake of rationalizing the ultimate invasion of the latter. The article focuses specifically on the scrutiny of transitivity processes that President Bush deployed to enact his experiential metafunction in the speech. This implies that the study places a special emphasis on decoding choices of verbs to express his meanings and role allocations granted to participants and their effects on objects within the clauses of the speech. In a nutshell, the article seeks to show that the dual-threat posed by the adequation of Al Qaeda and Iraq was above all a discursive production and a simple "narrative truth"⁽¹⁾ with the aura of objectivity and plausibility.

1-Methodology and Contextual Information:

People act, think, speak, behave and hold as true only what their minds tell them about. It is, on the other hand, beyond their cognizance and away from their reach to think as people of other societies and cultures exactly do. Discourse, as Bakhtin emphasizes, "cannot fail to be oriented toward the 'already uttered,' the 'already known,' the 'common opinion' and so on and so forth."⁽²⁾ Therefore, peoples of different societies, cultures and civilizations think differently and hold distinct "regimes of truth"⁽³⁾ and hence cannot be induced to perceive and conceive of world phenomena in an identical manner and often cannot construe the wisdom in the actions of others. The explanation for this lies, at least in part, with the inherent confinement and exclusiveness of cultures, which generate "a grid of intelligibility"⁽⁴⁾ through which meanings are mediated and filtered. That is to say, people, living within different cultural contexts, are imbued with thoughts, values and beliefs are "habituated"⁽⁵⁾ to subscribe smoothly and unconditionally to the morality, truthfulness and realness of what is narrated in their culture especially when it emanates from outstanding figures in the society, whose ideational capitals end by becoming taken-for-granted and commonsensical knowledge. Upon being externalized by pre-eminent members of society, who are endowed with an unrivalled "enunciative status,"⁽⁶⁾ "truth-telling" and "worldmaking power,"⁽⁷⁾ this body of knowledge is elevated into sacrosanct tenets that determine what is true, normative, legitimate, moral, good, etc. However, ideas, beliefs and actions that spill out of the ambit of a people's "habitualized" thought, action and perception are automatically decried and disowned as being wrong, non-normative, illegitimate, immoral and probably evil. It follows from this line of reasoning that peoples' views, beliefs and words are highly subjective, situated and relative⁽⁸⁾.

This study, therefore, seeks to problematize the assumptions of President Bush about the putative existence of a collaborative alliance between Al Qaeda and Iraq on the backdrop of the Global War on Terror (henceforth GWOT). It more specifically analyzes the transitivity processes (i.e. clauses of the speech which encode the president's perceptions to actions, thoughts, material and mental states, relations, behaviors and announcements) through the lens of Faircloughian three-layered framework of CDA. By so doing, the study aims to reveal that President Bush's accounts about the threat posed by this presumable nexus was simply engineered by dint of linguistic devices and that it is liable to refutation by other accounts that can be anchored on a different "habitus".

In the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks (9/11 henceforth), President Bush went to great lengths in establishing discursively the "murderous" and "evil" nature of the enemies of the US and their acts, which were elevated to "acts of war." In order to "securitize,"⁽⁹⁾

“psychologize”⁽¹⁰⁾ and “sentimentalize”⁽¹¹⁾ the alleged threat posed by the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks, President Bush stitched an array of circumstantial evidence, politicized interpretations and cherry-picked intelligence evidence into a narrative that culminated in the depiction of the threat as jeopardy to mankind in general. After having anchored in the collective imagination of the US people the discursively constructed image of Osama bin Laden and his acolytes in Al Qaeda organization as the masterminds of the attacks, President Bush proceeded to his major and more decisive step, by establishing a linkage between Al Qaeda and Iraqi regime as he indicted this last of having participated in the attacks and of harbouring and promoting bellicose intentions towards the US, its allies and friends and all peace-loving countries in the world.

President Bush’s *State of the Union Address on January 29, 2002 (Known as the "axis of evil" Speech)* constituted a milestone in the construction of this linkage between Al Qaeda and Iraq. Indeed, after having reinvigorated the image of Al Qaeda as being the chief perpetrator of the attacks, President Bush shifted his focus to drawing a parallel between Al Qaeda and Iraq by infusing his speech with descriptions of actions, attributes, cognitions, perceptions and affections that were evocative and suggestive of this linkage. Capitalizing on the *imprimatur* of legitimacy and the “transmutative *terra firma* of signification”⁽¹²⁾ emanating from President Bush’s Hobbesian outlook to the post-9/11 world, the “axis of evil” speech was loaded with the president’s idiosyncratic, situated and contingent views about the alleged Iraqi responsibility for the 9/11 attacks, its ties to Al Qaeda and its ostensibly clandestine military nuclear programme. Consequently, President Bush gained ample room for manoeuvre to persuade his audience of the allegedly lethal and existential threat posed by the collusion between Al Qaeda and Iraqi regime. Drawing on his status as a “truthteller,”⁽¹³⁾ President Bush wrapped his subjectively concocted moral values under the garb of universal principles and yoked his war decisions on divine purposes to sell his vision to his audience as being the most relevant outlook to world affairs⁽¹⁴⁾.

The analysis of the speech will be conducted following the three steps (i.e. layers) of Fairclough’s model of CDA: description, interpretation and explanation. In the two first stages (i.e. description and interpretation), the linguistic choices of the texts will be examined by using analytical devices laid out by Halliday’s Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG). The description stage is concerned with the scrutiny of the linguistic features or the formal properties of a text⁽¹⁵⁾, such as lexical, grammatical and pronominal choices. The interpretation stage in Fairclough’s framework, however, is geared towards the debunking of the relationship between the discourse and its production, distribution and consumption.⁽¹⁶⁾ At this stage, the text is conceived of as a “permutation” of texts since as Julia Kristeva posited, “in the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one other.”⁽¹⁷⁾ Explained through Mikhail Bakhtin’s dialogical perspective to this aspect, “a text gains its meaning in relation to other texts.”⁽¹⁸⁾ Analyzing intertextuality equally serves for providing an interface between text and the cultural atmosphere within which it is produced. Finally, in the explanation stage, discourse is conceived of as a social practice or a social-cultural practice⁽¹⁹⁾. At this stage, a special focus is placed on the construal of the relationship and the interaction between the social-cultural context, the social determination of the process of production and interpretation, and their social effects to ultimately uncover and demystify embedded and hidden information about the nexus between language, power and ideology. According to Fairclough, this can be achieved by going beyond the “whatness” of the text description to the “how” and “whyness” of the text interpretation and explanation⁽²⁰⁾.

2-Purpose of the Study:

Discourse is a social product in that it is produced by members of a society and also because it captures, perpetuates and disseminates ideas, concepts and values that end up by defining or redefining the very identity of the same society. By reaching the stage of socially shared representations of how groups are, think, feel and behave, the ideational capital of

elites becomes, as L.T. Sargent posited, the pivotal foundation of the belief system that a group subscribes to as a canon, a self-evident truth and an axiomatic fact. The compilation of these values, beliefs, ways of conduct, modes of perception furnish group members with “a picture of the world both as it is and as it should be,”⁽²¹⁾ but infused with ideological leanings.

In other words, discourses are constituted by societies and discourses constitute societies into what Benedict Anderson called “imagined political communities”⁽²²⁾ by determining who they are and specifying their very *raison d'être*. An important implication for this line of reasoning is that realities and truths are highly relative, situated, contingent and socially and culturally bound. This leads to the inference that any claim about the way an individual, a state, a culture or a civilization perceives and construes world phenomena is of universal validity is a self-defeating argument.

On the backdrop of this relativity, situated-ness and contingency that enshroud any discourse, this article probes the discursive construction of President Bush's GWOT, with a special emphasis placed on the build-up of the US-led war on Iraq. The central premise of the study hinges on the assumption that security concerns are, in their essence, discursive constructs. That is to say, what the security of a state means, who are its enemies and who are its friends and allies are largely a matter of language manipulation. Encapsulating the gist of this contention, Alexander Wendt posited that “anarchy is what states make of it.”⁽²³⁾

Being one of the most salient conduits of political communication, a political speech is conceptualized as being “an argument of some kind: an attempt to provide others with reasons for thinking, feeling or acting in some particular way [...] [and] to get them to see situations in a certain light [...]”⁽²⁴⁾ In line with this assumption, the main objective of this study is, thus, to reveal how President Bush responded discursively to the 9/11 attacks and how he launched and mounted his military build-up against Iraq. The study aims specifically at exploring how President Bush encoded his political and ideological stance about the alleged Al Qaeda-Iraqi nexus through the choice of transitivity processes as an important device for the realization of the ideational metafunction of his discourse. The study will be restricted to the analysis and the construal of the use of the three most frequent processes (i.e. material, mental and relational), by dissecting the significance of their choice and the political and ideological implications and repercussions that they entail.

It is not, however, within the purview of this study to refute the US claims and presumptions about political and security phenomena nor to search for arguments to strengthen the posture of those who are undergoing the consequences of US projection of its power in the world. The present study rather seeks to problematize President Bush's assumptions about the GWOT, especially those pertaining to the purported Al Qaeda-Iraqi operational collaboration that allegedly jeopardized US national security in order to break them open for further interpretations and discussion.

3-Methodology:

Since the examination and the construal of how language could be deployed to acquire and maintain power is the center piece of CDA, this study utilizes Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional framework of CDA to unveil connections between language, power and ideology which President Bush embedded in his speech to construct the purported Al Qaeda-Iraqi operational collaboration on the backdrop of the GWOT. As part of his discursive build-up of the US war against Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq, which started immediately after the 9/11 attacks, President Bush harnessed his speech to invent a conspiratorial cooperation between Osama Bin Laden's Al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq. Drawing the maximum of dividend from his status as the chief architect of his society's “regime of truth,”⁽²⁵⁾ which is vital for creating or re-creating new paradigms and dismissing other possible ways of interpreting differently world phenomena⁽²⁶⁾, President Bush invested his presidential narrative in contriving the image of a collaborative association between Al Qaeda and Iraq. This unfettered wielding of language, warranted the US President, *ex silentio*, to construct a moral equivalence, an ideological “adequation”⁽²⁷⁾ and a conspiratorial security

nexus between the two entities by drawing almost exclusively upon narrative explanations. Encapsulating the gist of this assertion, Jerome Bruner emphasized that President Bush simply appealed to notions of “coherence by contemporaneity,” “the imposition of bogus historical-causal entailment” and “*post hoc ergo propter hoc fallacy*”⁽²⁸⁾ to elevate discursively established narratives into taken-for-granted and objective truths. Indeed, in order to pre-empt the possibility of a different interpretation, President Bush stitched up seamlessly together, within a common storyline, events, such as 9/11 attacks, war on Afghanistan, Al Qaeda and Iraq just because they happened within the same historical conjuncture.

One of the central devices presented by M.A.K. Halliday to unveil the enactment of the interpersonal metafunction that language wielders draw upon to encode their meanings in discourse is transitivity. According to Halliday, the transitivity system conceives of reality as being a series of “goings-on” of “doing,” “happening,” feeling” and “being.” For him, these processes are “sorted out in the semantic system of the language, and expressed through the grammar of the clause.”⁽²⁹⁾ Meanings within these clauses are centered on the use of verbs that represent reality by means of a set of processes (material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioral and existential)⁽³⁰⁾ along with their participants and the circumstances in which they unfold. Therefore, the study of the patterns of transitivity implies examining which meanings – for example, experiential, relational or expressive – are emphasized more than others and what social, political and ideological significance and implications that such prevalence enhances.

Other salient features related to the study of transitivity and that often have an ideological bearing on the meanings enacted by speakers are the presence or absence of “agency,” the choice of transitive or intransitive sentences as well as the choice of active and passive sentences⁽³¹⁾. Indeed, determining whether the participant in a clause is an “agent” (i.e. a participant who brings about undertakings or who acts upon mediums in transitive sentences) or a “medium” (i.e. a participant who acts or who is acted upon in transitive sentences) can conspicuously impact the meaning expressed by the speaker. In addition, the fact of giving precedence to intransitive sentences over transitive ones can be understood to suggest the intention of deleting the agent to whom responsibility for actions should be ascribed. Besides, the prevalence of passive sentences over active ones is also held to mark the intention of the speaker to mitigate and play down the responsibility attributed to the agent by making the action simply look like being imputed to the agent instead of emphasizing his/her direct responsibility for the actions as is the case in active sentences. Summing up the gist of the aforementioned assumption, George Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen pointed out that every sign is motivated and that “[...] representation is always “engaged.” It is never neutral. That which is represented in sign or sign complexes realizes the interests, perspectives, values and positions of those who make the sign.”⁽³²⁾

For the purposes of this study and due to the vastness of the CDA field, it is not within the ambit of this study to examine all the possibilities of grammatical choices. Therefore, the focus of this study is confined to analyzing “patterns of transitivity” to demonstrate how President Bush in his “axis of evil” speech conflated Al-Qaeda and Iraqi regime and how he discursively concocted their security and ideological nexus. President Bush’s discursive adequation of Al Qaeda, which had been declared, in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, as being the chief perpetrator of the attacks, and Iraqi regime, was intended to be ‘an important stage in the Bush administration’s military build-up against Iraq and its ultimate invasion. Indeed, by associating Al Qaeda “terrorists” with “mafia,” “treason” “hatred” and “murder,” and depicted as the incarnation of “evil,”⁽³³⁾ the name of Al Qaeda became a sufficiently negative trope that can tarnish the image of any entity with which it is suspected to have ties. Therefore, to underscore the “evilness” of Saddam Hussein’s regime in Iraq, the Bush administration contented itself with the elaboration of a discursive adequation between Al Qaeda and Iraq, which suggested a moral equivalence and a political, security and ideological nexus between the two.

In the speech under study, the idea of bundling together a number of states and a set of non-state organizations under the rubric of “axis of evil”⁽³⁴⁾ was in itself fraught with innuendoes and overladen with “hostile stereotypes” and “cynical Machiavellianism.”⁽³⁵⁾ The essence of this categorization was especially to sanctify and prioritize the ruthless pursuit of US interests even to the detriment of the oft-proclaimed defence of democracy and freedom. The other major inference to be drawn from the use of the trope “axis of evil” was the implication, without actually stating, that the responsibility for the attacks on US soil was diffuse and collective and that the type of enemy that the US was facing after 9/11 was different in that no negotiation or accommodation could be envisaged with it. The US is in a war against “evil,” argued President Bush. Although President Bush used formulations such as “we can overcome evil with greater good” and “the price of indifference would be catastrophic” which left it open for his audience to surmise on the way the US might react to the attacks, the use of the concept “war” was reminiscent of the US “exceptionalist” tradition⁽³⁶⁾, through which US officials visualize wars waged by the US as acts of good. In another occasion, he stated bluntly that the US was bogged down in a war against “terrorism” and “rogue states” and that it had one single option: “We will win this war,” said President Bush in his speech. From the perspective of the US political and military elites, the fact of being in a war against these two types of threats, which slip out of the control of international legality, it becomes incumbent upon the US to act as it saw fit to rid the world of this danger.

The initial formulation of the phrase was “axis of hatred” by David Frum, before being changed to “axis of evil” by Michael Gerson to encompass the purported nexus between Iraq and terrorism. It was under proposals made by Condoleezza Rice, President Bush’s national security advisor and Stephen Hadley, Deputy national security advisor that Iran and North Korea were incorporated into the “axis of evil.”⁽³⁷⁾ From a broader perspective, the choice of such a formulation was destined to triggering a watershed that would facilitate the restructuring of US understanding of the war on terror whose center of gravity was made to shift from Osama bin Laden’s Al Qaeda to a series of states whose responsibility for the attacks was hard, and probably impossible, to prove. However, the choice of the words “axis” and “evil” was well thought-out in that the first was intended to conjure up the US two major sources of threat in World War II, which were “Nazism” and “Fascism.” The word “evil,” however, was selected to imply the gratuitousness of the malfeasance caused by “evil.” With such a choice, the Bush administration made it clear that it was not ready to negotiate, because discussing with “evil” was vain and that “evil” should simply be destroyed.

4-Research Data and Analysis:

In recent history, with evolutions in Linguistics, Applied Linguistics, Critical Linguistics, Discourse Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis in particular, which brought into dialogue an amalgam of social and linguistic theories, a special light was shed on the subjectivity and the idiosyncrasy that enshroud the manipulative use of language. Drawing upon devices pertaining to CDA, this study seeks to detect and unpack the biased and ideologically-driven uses of language. To this end, the study examines the three major transitivity processes (i.e. material, relational and mental) to reveal how President Bush embarked on the construction of a relationship of equalness and sameness between Al Qaeda and Iraqi regime.

Table No.1: Number of processes, their types and the percentage of their recurrence in the “axis of evil” speech

Process Type	Material	Mental	Relational	Behavioral	Verbal	Existential	Total
Frequency Of Processes	94	49	47	18	13	03	224
Percentage (%)	41,96%	21,87%	20,98%	08,03%	05,80%	01,33%	100%

As it is demonstrated in the above table, the scrutiny of transitivity patterns in Bush’s “axis of evil” speech, shows the preponderance of material processes (41, 96%), followed by

mental processes (21, 87%) and relational process (20, 98%). The three remaining processes (i.e. behavioral, verbal and existential), which are represented respectively with frequency percentages of (08, 03%, 05, 80% and 01, 33%) have a minimal occurrence in the speech and are, thus, excluded from the focus of this study.

The analysis of the three major processes encoded in President Bush's speech (i.e. material, relational and mental) will be conducted for the purpose of unveiling how the wielding of these processes was instrumental in constructing and emboldening the adequation between Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq through the simple manipulation language. The study specifically focuses on unpacking the clauses of the speech to reveal how the descriptions and identifications of actions, states, thoughts, feelings and perceptions as well as role allocations subtly encode the "hidden agenda" of the speaker, because the assumptions made by the speaker within this "discursive event" can never be regarded as value-free and innocent, but they are rather "ideologically driven and motivated."⁽³⁸⁾ One of the most salient implications of this line of reasoning is that language is produced in "discourse" contexts" that are constructed with the ideology of social systems and institutions, which makes language use replete with meanings related to power relations, ideological penchants, identitary conceptualizations and values pertaining to systems of knowledge and beliefs⁽³⁹⁾.

In this venue, the role of CDA is to unlock and to disclose these latent meanings related to the afore-mentioned issues by dwelling on the significance of the degree of occurrence of each of the three major transitivity processes and the ways in which they expressed and enhanced the ideological intents of the speaker. The process commences by describing the linguistic and formal properties of the text, before placing a premium on the interpretative-explanatory dimensions of Fairclough's model of CDA. At a subsequent stage, the exploration transcends the textual layer to focus on the interpretation of the relationship between the discourse and its production and consumption (especially by examining examples of "intertextuality and "interdiscursivity"), before proceeding, in a last stage, to the explanative layer wherein the social, historical and cultural contexts are brought to get a more encompassing understanding of world phenomena.

5-Results and Discussion:

5-1-Material Processes and the Construction of Conspiratorial Security Ties between Al Qaeda and Iraq:

President Bush's discourse in the "axis of evil" speech was distinguishably characterized by the prevalence of material processes (41, 32%), which he deployed to emphasize that the threat posed by terrorism could not be easily curbed and contained, because, according to him, it was unique, lethal and existential and that the US people had never known the like of it. By underscoring the lethality and the uniqueness of this allegedly new breed of threats, President Bush envisaged to lay the ground for the broadening of the circle of US targets on the backdrop of the GWOT. This perception to security and foreign threats largely reflected the US idiosyncratic conceptualization to terrorism, because, as Schmid and Jongman posited, "the definition of terrorism in the political discourse is greatly influenced by the interests of the states," which, according to them, bequeathed a situation in which a consensual definition to "terrorism" becomes inconceivable because "the very process of definition is in itself part of a wider contestation over ideologies or political objectives."⁽⁴⁰⁾

Material processes are processes of "doing." They are enacted through three main participants (i.e. Actor, Material Process and Goal). This type of process does not only represent concrete and physical events, but also abstract doings and happenings. It specifically expresses the notion that some entity does something which may be done to some other entity.⁽⁴¹⁾ The realization of process types and participants' roles among "Actor" and "Goal" helps in construing who and what is performing the process or influenced by. In this venue, it reveals President Bush's perception and conceptualization to issues related to US security policy and security threats and the most ideal means to react to them.

Being the most frequent process type in the speech, Material processes enacted through the use of verbs such as “occupy,” “sacrifice,” “hijacked,” “operates,” “flaunt,” “has plotted,” “threaten,” “kicked out,” “pose” and “attack” were used by President Bush to describe the bellicose, hostile and aggressive initiatives undertaken by Al Qaeda organization and Iraqi regime to jeopardize the security of the US, its friends and allies and the world in general. For the verb “occupy,” however, it was used in a material clause where “terrorists” were the “Actor” and “cells at Guantanamo bay” as “Goal” to indicate that terrorism had one single and inevitable fate: defeat and demise. Another important implication of the meaning encoded in this clause was that the US ultimate triumph was a foregone conclusion and a taken-for-granted truth that did not require proofs or discussion because, as President argued, the well-sought objective of the US was lofty and of universal validity. “We seek a just and peaceful world beyond the war on terror,” said President Bush⁽⁴²⁾.

By way of establishing an ideological convergence between Al Qaeda and Iraq that may further “essentialize” and “orientalize”⁽⁴³⁾ the enemies of the US, President Bush harnessed material clauses that depicted the negative undertakings with “Actors” being always “terrorist leaders,” “most of the 19 men [i.e. “terrorists”],” “a terrorist underworld,” “Iraqi regime” and “these regimes”⁽⁴⁴⁾ to make the two entities sound as having similar identities and common a *modus operandi* in the conduct of their security policies. This deprecatingly indiscriminate delineation of the two major actors culminated in their bundling together under an “axis of evil”⁽⁴⁵⁾ which comprised, in addition to Iraq, Iran and North Korea.

As a matter of fact, after having depicted many of the initiatives undertaken by both Al Qaeda “terrorists” and Iraqi regime to allegedly destabilize the region and world peace, through material clauses, President Bush embarked on establishing a relationship of adequation between the two entities, especially when he used the verb “constitute” to stitch up what he regarded as collaborative alliance between Al Qaeda and Iraqi regime. “States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an ‘axis of evil,’ arming to threaten the peace of the world,” said President Bush⁽⁴⁶⁾. The fact of having mingled the two entities under the rubric of an “axis of evil” was a mere discursive construction because, in the speech, the president did not adduce any substantial charges or conclusive evidence to back up his claims about the presumable linkage between Al Qaeda and Iraqi regime which put to question the legitimacy of targeting Iraq. All that the US president could gather was a litany of purported transgressions and violations that the US president attributed to Iraqi regime, but that fell short of proving the existence of an operational nexus between the two entities.

In the clauses where the US, its president, its army, its people, its official institutions or the exclusive pronoun “we” were used as “Actors,” the Material processes that President Bush deployed were always suggestive and evocative of the attempts or reactions by the US to curb or counter the allegedly threatening and the dehumanizing enterprises of “terrorists” and Iraqi regime. The use of process types with materiality verbs such as “shut down,” “prevent,” “put out,” “is patrolling,” “develop,” “deploy,” “do,” “will not permit,” “improve,” “prevail,” “defeat,” “have responded,” “will take” “seek” “will demonstrate” “choose” “have shown”⁽⁴⁷⁾ were almost always deployed to convey the idea that the US was committed to the cause of international peace and “and the “non-negotiable demands of human dignity” by “preventing terrorists” and “rogue regimes,” who were often the “Goals” in the material clauses contained in the “axis of evil” speech, from accessing lethal weapons to “match their hatred” as President Bush claimed⁽⁴⁸⁾. Moreover, the material process choices were also instrumental in emphasizing the fact that the US power in the world was destined to abort terrorist plans in the world all in trying to instill in the minds of those who stood on the other side of US idiosyncratic outlook to world affairs that the US was pre-destined to triumph by the end, because it allegedly pleaded for a just cause and whose justice is universal. “America will lead by defending liberty and justice because they are right and true and unchanging for all people everywhere,” said President Bush. “We’ll prevail in the war,” added Bush⁽⁴⁹⁾.

In the past two material clauses, President Bush, who boasted of being a born-again Christian and whose religiosity was a non-negotiable matter, used “America” and the exclusive pronoun “we” as “Actors” to describe the lofty mission with which the US was ostensibly entrusted by God. According to him, values like “liberty” and “justice” are of universal validity and they carry similar significance for all peoples regardless of their nationality or culture, and, hence no one on earth is expected to oppose them, not just because they are right and universally valid, but more importantly, because they represent God’s wish on earth. Therefore, by having made the US look like being the custodian of these values and as the “representative” of God’s will on earth, President Bush intended to deprive his enemies of any good reason to oppose the US and to denude their cause of any rationality, morality or legitimacy. A major consequence of this line of reasoning was to have transformed a political conflict into a basic “Manichean” struggle of “good vs. evil.”⁽⁵⁰⁾ Another important implication for President Bush’s arguments was that by tying up the US foreign and security policies to God’s will, the demonization and the securitization⁽⁵¹⁾ of the so-called twin threat posed by Al Qaeda and Iraq became a foregone conclusion and the depiction of the US war on terror in general and the military build-up against Iraq in particular smoothly fitted within the framework of “just war” theory⁽⁵²⁾.

5-2-Mental Processes and the Concoction of Moral Equivalence between Al Qaeda and Iraq:

Mental processes, which encode the cognitive, perceptive and affective reactions of the speaker, are the second most used processes in the speech. These processes of sensing are enacted through two main participants: a Senser and a Phenomenon. In his “axis of evil” speech, President Bush drew the maximum of dividend from the choice of mental processes to encode his idiosyncratic, neo-conservative and conspicuously religious stance towards foreign threats after 9/11 and the alleged jeopardy posed by the linkage between Al Qaeda and Iraq. Even the choice of verbs to depict the psychological actions of the enemies of the US starkly differed from those used to convey the cognitions and the desiderations of the US, its political elite, its army and its official institutions. To distort the picture of what the enemies of the US perceived and vilify and delegitimize their ensuing actions, President Bush used the verb “view” to describe how the enemies of the US (i.e. Al Qaeda and Iraqi regime) envisioned world affairs. “These enemies [“terrorists” and “outlaw regimes”] *view* the entire world as a battlefield,” said Bush⁽⁵³⁾. The choice of “view” instead of “see,” which President Bush used in many venues in the speech to express the perceptions of the US, implied that Bush considered the perceptions of the enemies of the US as imprecise and as mere figments of imagination that did not necessarily correspond with the genuine reality.

To describe the cognitions, affections and perceptions of the US and its military and political elites, President Bush opted for verbs such as “see,” “think” and “know” which suggested a sense of meticulousness, certainty and non-negotiable truthfulness, which implied President Bush’s intention to bestow legitimacy and rationality on the resulting actions of the Bush administration. Stressing the vital relationship between the “belief system,” perceptions and decision-making, Ole R. Holsti contended that “[a] decision-maker acts upon his “image” of the situation rather than upon “objective” reality⁽⁵⁴⁾. It follows from this that President Bush used for the description of the enemies of the US verbs and manipulated Participants and Phenomena in a manner that discredited and impugned the cognitions and the perceptions of the enemy, while using verbs suggestive of positive thoughts, affections and perceptions when it comes to describe the US, its political and military elite and its people. “We have seen the depth of our enemies’ hatred in videos, where they laugh about the loss of innocent life, said Bush. This mental perceptive process, which was enacted with the verb “see” and the pronoun “we” as Senser and “the depth of our enemies hatred” as Phenomenon, was instrumental for President Bush to underscore that the Americans or at least the US political elite was aware of the true nature of its enemies, their designs, that the evilness of the enemies of the US was to be taken for granted and that no room for negotiation was left. However,

examined through the lens of Nietzschean “perspectivism” and Freudian “psychic determinism,”⁽⁵⁵⁾ speakers cannot behave otherwise and that their choice of words and ways of expressing their standpoints, which are highly subjective and idiosyncratic, are their natural ways of being and that this feature is culture-bound. Encapsulating the gist of this argument, Friedrich Nietzsche claimed that “[O]ur thoughts, values, every “yes,” “no,” “if” and “but” grow from us with the same inevitability as fruits borne on the tree – related and each with an affinity to each, and evidence of one will, one health, one soil, one sun.”⁽⁵⁶⁾

Besides, in an attempt to embolden and grant further truthfulness to US cognitions about its enemies, President Bush employed the mental verb “know” more than once to depict the US stance with respect to stakes involved in the GWOT and the antagonism with “terrorists” and Iraqi regime. “But we know their [regimes that sponsor terror] true nature,” said Bush.⁽⁵⁷⁾ “We’ve come to know truths that we will never question: evil is real, and it must be opposed,” he added⁽⁵⁸⁾. In the past two mental clauses, President Bush utilized the verb “to know” followed respectively by “true” and “truths,” which implied that the US cognitions were absolutely veracious, commonsensical and non-negotiable. The bottom line of this reasoning is that President Bush wielded language to inculcate into the minds of Americans, the enemies of the US and international public opinion in general that President Bush’s ways of thinking and feeling, which were exclusively reflective and subservient to the US interests, were the only possible descriptions to the unfolding political and security issues. As such, language *per se* is not powerful, but it can function as a decisive means to generate and maintain power when used by powerful people. Concurring with this line of reasoning, Sandra Silberstein pointed out that “language has consequences—that through the use of language, we create and recreate particular worlds of understanding⁽⁵⁹⁾. The ways in which President Bush exploited language to wrap his idiosyncratic and subjective views in the garb of commonsensical and non-negotiable truths is reminiscent of the ways through the West since centuries constructed the Orient and dealt with it on that basis. The thrust of the otherization effect of this kind of culture-bound discourses was captured by Edward Said, who contended that

The issue of representation is crucial to understanding discourses within which knowledge is constructed, because it is questionable, says Said, whether a true representation is ever possible. If all representations are embedded in the language, culture and institutions of the representer, ‘then we must be prepared to accept the fact that a representation is *eo ipso* implicated, intertwined, embedded, inter-woven with a great many other things besides the ‘truth’ which is itself a representation⁽⁶⁰⁾’.

By way of establishing a distinction between an “innocent US” and a “malicious” enemy, President Bush drew on the use of verbs such as “realized,” “have discovered,” “needs,” “want,” “hope” and “wish” to suggest that the US had no malignant intentions towards others and that the US counted a lot on God’s support just because the US defended a just cause. This long-lasting US appeal to “exceptionalism” as a ubiquitous meta-narrative and a source of national inspiration that ceaselessly fueled and energized US politics was redeployed by President Bush in his “axis of evil” speech through the use of the verbs such as “realized” and “have discovered” to express the cognitive experience that the US lived in the wake of 9/11 attacks and the mission of countering “evil” that the US took upon itself. When President Bush applied the mental desiderative verbs “needs,” “want,” “hope” and “wish,” he intended to confer upon the character of the US people and the nature of its actions a sense of innocence and peace-loving, which would result in accentuating the “malevolence” of the enemies of the US. This type of reasoning owed a lot to the intellectual capital laid out by the Christian Right which had a deep and far-reaching impact on the re-conceptualization of the US post-9/11 political and security policies. For the Christian Right, which has affinities and a host of common and shared tenets with the Neoconservatives and the “Likudniks”⁽⁶¹⁾, the US identity and values had to be wed to its foreign and security policies as it pleaded for the unprecedented projection of the US military might cloaked in a moral garb to maintain the *status quo* in world affairs on the backdrop of a unipolar world dominated by the US as the

sole remaining hyper-power. The US, thus, sought to impose a “uniform and continuous global state of affairs” that was subservient to its interests, politics, culture, security through the “militarization of its polity”⁽⁶²⁾.

In this respect, the 9/11 attacks constituted a watershed or a disjuncture in US history in that they ushered in an “epochal change” or a semblance of a “revolution”⁽⁶³⁾ in US foreign and security policies and naturalized “war legitimization discourse.”⁽⁶⁴⁾ In line with this, President Bush’s “axis of evil” speech was primordial importance in re-articulating the US social identity and reconfiguring the US political and security *modus operandi*. From this perspective, the attempt to impose the US idiosyncratic and subjective cognitions, perceptions and affections as normative, rational and non-negotiable truths was deemed necessary by the US political and military elites in general and the US President in particular to lay the ground for the naturalization, the rationalization and the legitimization of the abandonment of the Cold War and post-Cold War doctrines and policies, the neglect of the International Organizations, such as the United Nations (UN) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and the circumvention of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). These objectives in themselves were an indispensable stage in President Bush's post-9/11 plans to operate an important shift from Nonproliferation to Counter-proliferation, from pre-emption to prevention and from multilateralism to unilateralism.

5-3- Relational Processes and the Manufacturing of the Identity Conflation of Al Qaeda and Iraq:

Relational process, which is the third most used process, exists in three different types: Attributive (enacted through the use of Carrier, Relational-Attributing Process and Attribute), Identifying (enacted through the use of an Identified, Relational-Identifying Process and Identifier) and Possessive (enacted through the use of a Possessor, Relational-Possessive Process and Possessed). The relational process is a process of “being” in the world of abstract relations. President Bush drew heavily on the use of Relational (Attributive and Possessive) processes mainly to construct and depict the identity of the enemies of the US and to delineate their ostensibly malevolent attributes and insidious designs. At first, the US president emphasized the bottomless jeopardy posed by the “terrorist” threat, by asserting that “tens of thousands of trained terrorists are still at large” and that “[s]o long as training camps operate, so long as nations harbour terrorists, freedom is at risk.”⁽⁶⁵⁾ In the past two Relational attributive clauses, President Bush used the Attributes “still at large” and “at risk” to bring to the fore the lethality of the consequences that could be engendered by sluggishness or delay in countering the threat posed by “terrorism.” By accentuating the possible fallouts of foot-dragging or indifference in addressing the threat, President Bush sought to induce the US public opinion and international public opinion to embrace blindly and unconditionally the US government’s stance towards “terrorist” threat. Another important implication of these claims is that vanquishing terrorism was still a remote objective and that the world’s most cherished values, such as freedom remain under threat as long as the world led by the US did not deploy the required efforts to disrupt it and dry out its sources. In such a way, the President deployed his linguistic ammunitions to concoct and naturalize new knowledge about Al Qaeda and “terrorism” with a substance that reflects his idiosyncratic and highly subjective standpoint and that dovetails with US vital interests as a commonsensical truth.

After having gone to great lengths in stressing the allegedly lethal jeopardy posed by “terrorism,” President Bush proceeded, at a second stage, to the discursive concoction of an operational, collaborative and collusive alliance between the so-called Al Qaeda “terrorists” and Iraqi regime. To this end, President Bush harnessed Attributes such as “to prevent regimes that sponsor terror from threatening America or our friends and allies with weapons of mass destruction,” “a regime [Iraqi regime] that has already used poison gas to murder thousands of its own citizens...,” “regime [Iraqi regime] that agreed to international inspections — then kicked out the inspectors,” “a regime that has something to hide from the civilized world”⁽⁶⁶⁾ to mischaracterize and demonize Saddam’s regime. Indeed, as the above

Attributes suggest, without having adduced any substantial and conclusive evidence that unequivocally point to the existence of such a linkage, the US President abruptly inserted the formulation “regimes that sponsor terror” in a thinly-veiled reference to Iraq and the other members of the so-called “axis of evil.”

The conflation of the two and claims about the existence of a nexus were rather achieved through discursive devices and strategies, especially by invoking attributes and using lexical descriptors that could induce the reader to infer by himself the equals (or at least the *quid pro quo*) of the two entities and the verisimilitude of operational collusion between them. After having emphasized the discursively mounted linkage between the two entities, in the remainder of the speech, President Bush started to use short-hands such as “enemies” (sometimes preceded by the possessive adjective “our”), the personal pronoun “they” or “evil,” which were instrumental in stressing the trope of “terrorist threat” as a “metaphysical phenomenon,” “aspatial,” “omnipresent,” “abstract” and “invisible,”⁽⁶⁷⁾ to refer to the enemies of the US. President Bush infused this process of distancing, disowning and denigration with thinly veiled insinuations that his audience was expected to look eye to eye with him regarding who were the enemies of the US.

Conclusion:

The “axis of evil” speech stands out as an epitome of a discursive event that involved the subtle shift in focus from Al Qaeda organization and non-state “terrorism” in general to the discursive fusion and conflation of the former and Saddam Hussein’s regime in Iraq. By placing a special focus on the analysis of transitivity processes encoding the doings, beings, cognitions, perceptions and affections of President Bush, the article unpacked and deconstructed the speech to unlock the hidden ideological beliefs and views that the president entertained *vis-à-vis* Al Qaeda and Iraq. As the analysis of the transitivity processes through the lens of Fairclough’s CDA paradigm has revealed, despite the absence of any solid and substantial evidence to bolster the argument about the existence of an operational relationship between Al Qaeda and Iraq, President Bush drew the maximum of dividend from the constitutive power of language to stitch up discursively an operational nexus between the two entities. The article has, therefore, harnessed devices provided by CDA to pierce President Bush’s account about the presumed linkage between Al Qaeda and Iraq by problematizing claims to reality, truth, legitimacy, rationality, normativity, morality that President Bush appealed to in order to make the conflation of Al Qaeda and Iraqi regime sound like a non-negotiable and commonsensical truth. By presenting his imposed adequation of Al Qaeda and Iraqi regime under the mantra of warped versions of the above-mentioned values and concepts, President Bush sought especially to establish a relation of moral equivalence, security complicity and ideological connivance between the two entities. Moreover, the article has disclosed that President Bush drew heavily on the atmosphere of trauma triggered by the 9/11 attacks and on his status as an indisputable “truth teller,” “claim maker” and securitizer to stitch up discursively a relations of sameness and equalness between the two, otherwise different, if not antithetical, entities.

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