



The language of American political discourse: Aristotle's rhetorical appeals as manifested in Bush's and Obama's speeches on the war on terror



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Article history:

Submitted: 18 April 2020

Accepted: 09 May 2020

Keywords:

Aristotle;
critical discourse analysis;
persuasion;
political discourse;
rhetoric;

Abstract

This article employs critical discourse analysis to analyze the representation of the “war on terror” in the political speeches of Presidents George Bush and Barack Obama in the decade following 9/11; it examines Aristotle's approach into the study of the language of persuasion through his three main rhetorical appeals: ethos, pathos, and logos, identifying several strands of the war on terror discourse and analyzing the way they influence the persuasiveness of the speeches and therefore the ability to generate public debate. The findings show substantial similarities in representation patterns among the two presidents' discourses and end up to the conclusion that the language of the war on terror is not simply a neutral or objective reflection of policy debates of terrorism and counterterrorism; rather, it is a carefully and deliberately constructed public discourse designed to make the war on terror look reasonable and morally justified.

International journal of linguistics, literature and culture © 2020.

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1 Introduction

Throughout history, the conflict has always been identified as a defining feature that shapes the relationship between western powers and subordinate nations. There has been growing scholarly attention to analyzing the conditions and outcomes of this unparalleled relation which has been framed by many scholars within the scope of the ‘Self’ and the ‘Other’; there has been a clear understanding that such a polarization which rests on the notion of power as a social construct should have latent ideologies embedded in a discourse of power sustained and allowed by historical and current political and cultural changes.

Though implemented as a reaction to the hijacking of four American commercial airliners and the subsequent attacks on United States soil on September 11th, 2001, the politics behind the “new” foreign policy agenda of the US government had been in place for decades. Responding to what was labeled ‘acts of war’, security became America’s top priority. Thus, the ‘war on terror’ was not initiated as a policy of self-defense, but rather as a vehicle by which to achieve specific political goals of the United States government under the petition of advocating change as an instrumental parameter for succeeding in this mission. For the leading proponents of counter-terrorism, the war on terror was a black and white matter; their decision was quite clear: “either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists^b”. To scrutinize the nature of the war on terror and its subsequent linguistic and political parameters, this study attempts to explain how the public language of the American Administration has been used to construct whole new world order. Through a carefully constructed public discourse, American officials have created a new social reality where terrorism threatens to destroy everything that ordinary people hold dear – their lives, their democracy, their freedom, their way of life, their civilization. This rhetorical construction of the ‘evil’ of terrorism versus the goodness and innocence of the American ‘Self’ produced a reality or what has been termed a discourse of counter-terrorism as a rational and justifiable response.

This having said, the present study is an attempt to uncover the construct underlying the American politicians’ discourse at a global level, i.e. the political goals of the leaders. It focuses on analyzing the role Aristotle’s rhetorical devices play in the discursive production of identities and in defining and identifying enemies. To achieve this goal, this research paper follows the lens of critical discourse analysis theory that examines how lexical tools may embody and reveal the ideology and images of the ‘Self’ and the ‘Other’ created by politicians in the ‘war on terror’.

2 Materials and Methods

This research paper draws upon a corpus of speeches running in the period between 2001 and 2014. This time is likely to encompass all important policy debates over the last several years, including the 9/11 attacks and the many atrocities that took place in the Arab world; they are of unparalleled pertinence to the end of this research for the simple reason that they all tackle a problem, the Iraqi-American or Afghan-American conflicts, that have confounded the expectations of the great powers trying to resolve them and created unintended consequences that have had a substantial impact on all regions of the globe.

The source for these texts is almost exclusively the official site of the American Presidency Project, where there is a record of all speeches, statements, press conferences and interviews of American past and present presidents in their entirety in audio and video recordings: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/>

The method applied to investigate the collected speeches is based on content analysis, which is a widely used research technique for studying the content conveyed in some given qualitative data. In political research, this technique usually results in a straightforward tabulation of the words and phrases used by political actors, evaluating both the content of the message and its style of presentation. That is to say, the technique starts with a political contextualization followed by an analytical description of the most significant figurative and linguistic devices used by the speaker. This description is in turn combined with a textual interpretation, aiming to reveal the hidden meanings of the utterances which are the subject of this study.

The approach adopted in the data collection process is the conventional approach, which is based on deriving information directly from text data and identifying themes and patterns that may be manifest or latent in a particular text.

^b George Bush, “Address before a Joint Session of the 107th Congress”, September 20th, 2001.

Literature Review

In recent decades, numerous scholars have documented the rising connectedness between discourse and language as a form of social practice. Several studies have deconstructed the label of this relationship to see how it deeply resulted in the creation of a political discourse via the enactment of power in and through the rhetoric of politicians, uncovering their ideological and political slants in shaping beliefs and behaviors. Critical discourse analysis is an effective means for understanding the role of language in society and revealing the ideological loads of discourse; it focuses on those features contributing to the fabric of discourse in which dominant ideologies are adopted or challenged, and in which competing and contradictory ideologies coexist. Multidimensional as it may appear, Critical Discourse Analysis aims to provide a thorough description and critique of the textual strategies adopted by political leaders in specific contexts. Issues such as power, inequality, democracy, national security, and identity construction gave rise to a new analytical approach that analyses the relationship between discourse and society, between text and context, and between language and power. In particular, this new analytical approach considers overt and covert relations of struggle and conflict in all the subtle ideologies mentioned above, highlighting the strategies used in establishing, maintaining, and reproducing asymmetrical relations of power as enacted utilizing discourse^c. Thus, deconstructing the label of this theoretical approach involves tracing the beginning of this paradigm and its very existence and applicability as an established academic discipline by different discourse theoreticians, naming [Norman Fairclough](#), [Teun A. van Dijk](#), and [Ruth Wodak](#) to be the principal experts in this field of inquiry.

Critical discourse analysis is a critical turn in the study of language, in the way that it concerns itself with relations of power and inequality in language. It emerged as a whole network of research in the early 1990s when a group of researchers including [Teun van Dijk](#), [Norman Fairclough](#), [Gunther Kress](#), [Theo van Leeuwen](#), and [Ruth Wodak](#) met in a symposium in Amsterdam in January 1991. The outcome of this group formation has been the recognition of aspects of difference as well as sameness within a variety of discursive disciplines among discourse analysis, an umbrella term that encompasses several approaches and schools of thought analyzing discourse. This gave rise to the outbreak of Critical Discourse Analysis as a paradigm of thought characterized by a set of principles that allow analyzing discourse from different perspectives ranging from demystifying power and ideology to analyzing the systematic investigation of written, spoken, and visual data^d. Within this nexus, though variations or parallel paradigms are operating in the tradition, scholars have developed a plethora of methods and approaches to elucidate the discursive features of some theories and their management. Three main analytical traditions have been considered that broadly fit into three categories: the lingo/social/contextual category typified by Fairclough's ideas; the social/cognitive dimension typified by van Dijk's research enterprise, and the social/historical approach developed by Wodak. Though approaches to analysis differ in certain respects, all three traditions view language as a social resource, which stands in dialectic relation to society. That is to say, they study how linguistic items emerge, what they reflect about society, and what impact they have on it:

Many theoretical and methodological concepts used in the three approaches discussed above are equally valid for Critical Discourse Analysis, even if their contexts of emergence have led to different toolkits. These approaches are characterized by a common interest in demystifying ideologies and power through the systematic investigation of spoken or written data; they also draw on each other, thereby reproducing a common conceptual frame while each trend develops its distinct orientation:

- 1) Fairclough views discourse as a social practice and analyses it according to the social, cultural, and political context it emanates from, while he relies primarily on the linguistic analysis of the linguistic features it makes it up following Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics. So it combines a dual description both at the micro-level of text and the macro-level of its interpretation in context, prioritizing linguistic analysis over contextual explanation^e.
- 2) As for van Dijk's and Gee's approach, it also considers the interpretation of discourse in its social and political context, developing toolkits that are less oriented to analyzing the lexico-syntactic features of texts and more

^c Weiss, G., and R. Wodak "Introduction: Theory, Interdisciplinarity and Critical Discourse Analysis" in G. Weiss and R. Wodak (eds), *Critical Discourse Analysis: Theory and Interdisciplinarity*. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002) pp: 1-32.

^d Ruth Wodak, "Critical Discourse Analysis" in *Qualitative Research Practice* by Clive Seale, etal. (Eds) (London: Sage Publications: 2004) pp: 185-186.

^e Norman Fairclough, "Critical Discourse Analysis: the Critical Study of Language" (London: Longman, 1995) pp: 132-133.

focused on social and cultural resources and contexts, highlighting socio-political constructions such as racism and inequality that blur modern societies^f.

- 3) Wodak's Discourse-historical approach, in turn, is distinctive both at the level of research interest and methodical orientation. It took as its bedrocks the notions of identity construction and unjustified discrimination, focusing on the historical dimension of discourse formation, prioritizing the extra-linguistic above the linguistic features of texts. It has been oriented toward the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, and in particular toward Habermas's language philosophy, which favors power strategies to be analyzed through the lens of 'communicative action' that allows different forms for the exercising of force in society^g.

In exploring the three tenets surrounding the approach of Critical Discourse Analysis, a methodological approach that prioritizes the study of discourse both at the micro and macro levels typified by the works of Fairclough and Wodak is beneficial for this research project. The linguistic-political dimension of Fairclough's approach reflects, through linguistic as well as social variables, how those in power deploy language to achieve their aims within a power struggle nexus.

As this study is not restricted to any one particular framework, incorporating the linguistic-oriented aspect of this approach, together with few aspects from the socio-cognitive and discourse-historical approaches, offers an innovative approach and helps curtail some of the problems associated with the study of CDA. This multi-level analysis allows the reader to triangulate interpretations, and offer valid conclusions.

3 Results and Discussions

To date, few studies have been conducted via the application of the three Aristotelian rhetorical strategies ethos; pathos; and logos to examine political discourse concerning public policy debates. Persuasion was a dominant theme in public policy tradition; it started to be carried out mostly as propaganda analysis and public opinion research, starting from the times of Ancient Greece when philosophers and communication theorists discovered the importance of speech preparation and public speaking up to the twentieth century where language started to be used to reveal ideological messages.

Persuasion is crucial and overwhelming within political discourse; its primary aim is to implant ideas in people's minds and influences them. The most efficient means to achieve persuasion is by using rhetoric, a technique used, as Dryzek (2010) observed, to "facilitate the making and hearing of representation claims spanning subjects and audiences ... democracy requires a deliberative system with multiple components whose linkage often needs rhetoric^h". Thus, rhetoric is a tool to discover the available aspects of persuasion, speaking, and writing, and deal with those characteristics of discourse that can make communication look more democratic.

In an attempt to explore the lens of communication persuasive devices, Ingela Anderssonⁱ, quoting Aristotle in her thesis entitled *American Political Rhetoric: A study of selected speeches by George W. Bush*, states that a speech consists of three different parts or means of convincing: *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*. The first part 'ethos' means 'to convince' and refers to the ethics, good intentions, and reliability of the speaker. Here, the speaker should make use of his personality in projecting an impression in the listener that he is a person worth listening to and that the communicative message is important for the whole public; the second part of a speech 'pathos' means 'sympathy' or 'feeling', the act of arousing a certain feeling in the public so that it sympathizes with the speaker or with a certain situation; 'Pathos' usually refers to emotional appeals; and the last of the three parts that constitute a speech is 'logos', meaning 'reason' and refers to the idea of making the receiver convinced that the speech makes sense, is

^f Teun A. Van Dijk, "Prejudice in Discourse: An Analysis of Ethnic Prejudice in Cognition and Conversation" (France: Jogn Benjamins Publishing Company, 1984) 163.

^g Ruth Wodak, Rudolf de Cillia, Martin Reisigl, and Karin Liebhart, "The Discursive Construction of National Identity" (Edinburgh UP: 2009) 7-8.

^h John S. Dryzek "Rhetoric in Democracy: A Systemic Appreciation" in *Political Theory* 38(3) 2010 pp: 319-339

ⁱ Ingela Andersson has written her thesis entitled, *American Political Rhetoric: A study of selected speeches by George W. Bush*. The thesis deals with few of the speeches made by President Bush and explores the way they follow the tradition of American political rhetoric. She came to the conclusion that President Bush uses devices that follow the American political rhetoric. "American Political Rhetoric, a Study of Selected Speeches by George W. Bush" in *C Extended Essay*, (Lulea University of Technology/Dept of Languages & Culture: 2005) pp 46. 3 <http://epubl.ltu.se/1402-1773/2005/032/LTU-CUPP-05032-SE.pdf>

logical, and its supportive evidence is effective; ‘logos’ is sometimes called the argument’s logical appeal^j. Thus, Aristotle’s approach to the study of the language of persuasion rests on these three pillars or rhetorical appeals: controlling the human mind through appealing to people’s trust in the speaker’s character; appealing to their emotions, and their logic. These three appeals constitute the main strategies used to persuade an audience and help understand when constructing or deconstructing an argument.

A good public speaking should conform to the parts of a speech outlined above, to be able to hold the attention of live audiences and touch their emotions. As Max Atkinson in his book *Our Masters’ Voices*, writes: “Many of the techniques deployed by effective public speakers thus appear to be designed to attract, sustain or upgrade the attentiveness of audience members who might otherwise be inclined to go to sleep^k”. In addition to attracting the audience, good public speaking may also in some instances shape the destiny of many politicians; they may either secure their seats in an upcoming election by leaving good impressions in the minds of the audience or rather lose their nomination.

As has been mentioned so far, politics and persuasion have been closely related since the times of Ancient Greece, and the role of Aristotle’s ethos, pathos, and logos remains central to political discourse nowadays. A candidate in a political campaign could struggle and even win the elections just with the appropriate use of words. As Charteris-Black states: “within all types of the political system, from autocratic, through oligarchic to democratic; leaders have relied on the spoken word to convince others of the benefits that arise from their leadership^l”. In a democracy, the principal use of language in politics is for persuasion while two parties or States are involved in the debate, using words to form attitudes or to induce action in people. Thus, political rhetoric hinges on the ability of politicians to use the power of persuasion to explore and utilize the hopes, expectations, fears, beliefs, and anxieties of the electorate to evoke emotional responses in them, thereby motivating them to take their stand.

Knowledge of how to employ these techniques of persuasion is seen as one of the principal ways in which arguers indirectly express and reinforce their power over people at specific times. These thinking techniques are largely used in situations where hard evidence is insufficient to resolve a problem or make a decision and when there is no time to engage in a lengthier analytical process of thinking. Thus, the analysis points to the close relationship between rhetoric, argumentation strategies, and authority.

3.1 Aristotle’s Three Persuasion Devices in Bush’s and Obama’s Speeches: Data Analysis

This section deals with the persuasive strategies used in President Bush’s and President Obama’s selected speeches to uncover the overt persuasive strategies they invoke together with the covert ideologies they instill in their audience. Persuasion strategies or what was developed by Aristotle as ‘Pathos’, ‘Ethos’, and ‘Logos’ have in some cases been combined with the dominant human rights discourse and with inherent ideologies of conquering to show how human rights abuses and murderous ideologies build emotional solidarity with the civilian populations and thus further support for the war. Thus, how do American presidents try to convince the audience to appeal to Aristotle’s three parts of rhetorical persuasion?

3.1.1. Instances from George Bush’s oratories

George Bush, in his several speeches, made great use of Aristotle’s three parts of speech to reach out to his objectives. The rhetoric after 9/11 begins with an appeal to the pathos through the simple use of metaphors as “On September the 11th, enemies of freedom committed an act of war against our country^m”. In this excerpt, Bush can be estimated to increase the pathos by defining the enemy with a metaphor that can arouse emotions in his people; his use of the term ‘war’ was done on purpose, it set the stage for his future agenda by linking his cause with the term’s associated values. The same idea is seen when Bush further talked about the terrorist group Al Qaeda: “We have seen their kind before. They are the heirs of all the murderous ideologies of the 20th centuryⁿ”. This metaphor is contributing to the logos of the argument by drawing an indirect comparison between ‘the murderous ideologies of

^j Ibid.

^k Max Atkinson, “Our Masters’ Voices: the Language and Body Language of Politics” (London and New York: Routledge, 1984) 11.

^l Jonathan Charteris-Black, “Politicians and Rhetoric: The Persuasive Power of Metaphor” (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) 1.

^m Bush, “Address to a Joint Session of the 107th Congress”, September 20th, 2001.

ⁿ Ibid.

the 20th century' and past events and ideologies such as the Second World War and Nazism, which were associated with fear and the ideology of conquering and so are estimated to increase the fear of the audience and therefore their pathos.

Waging war on terrorist networks and ensuring regime change in Afghanistan have also been advanced through the constant portrayal of cases of dignity suppression and misery by the Bush administration, establishing a link between suspicions of brewing terrorist networks and the treatment of women in that region, this is what [Laura Bush](#) revealed in one of her speeches:

The brutal oppression of women is a central goal of the terrorists. Long before the current war began, the Taliban and its terrorist allies were making the lives of children and women in Afghanistan miserable (...). Life under the Taliban is so hard and repressive, even small displays of joy are outlawed – children aren't allowed to fly kites; their mothers face beatings for laughing out loud. Women cannot work outside the home, or even leave their homes by themselves^o.

In speeches defending intervention in Afghanistan, there seems to be no analytical separation between the human rights record of the Taliban regime and their role as a haven for Osama Bin Laden. These arguments have a strong emotional appeal, and so make it apparent to everyone how America did a good job in launching the war on Afghanistan in order, on the one hand, to free Afghan women from their suffering and at the same time make sure terrorists are under control. Human rights in this connection have been politicized and actively used in rhetorical speeches by Bush to justify his acts of aggression in the war on terror.

Much of the political rhetoric raised by Bush is directed towards moving people's emotions by appealing to their pathos; arousing fear in the audience by presenting the enemy as evil can be found in a whole host of pronouncements made by Bush and his administration:

In this conflict, America faces an enemy who has no regard for conventions of war or rules of morality. Saddam Hussein has placed Iraqi troops and equipment in civilian areas, attempting to use innocent men, women, and children as shields for his military; a final atrocity against his peoplep.

As is emphasized by Bush, focus in this passage has been put on a person as an outlaw in whom evil is personified. The idea of satanizing Saddam Hussein is intended to link him to international terrorism and so justify any measures that might be exerted against him.

President Bush mentions the utterance 'war on terror' in an attempt to unify the world against terrorists, thus appealing to pathos to reinforce his argument and convince the US Congress and the American people that the surge should continue to increase the support for war and achieve freedom:

Great harm has been done to us. We have suffered a great loss. And in our grief and anger, we have found our mission and our moment. Freedom and fear are at war. The advance of human freedom – the great achievement of our time, and the great hope of every time – now depends on us. Our nation – this generation – will lift a dark threat of violence from our people and our future. We will rally the world to this cause by our efforts, by our courage. We will not tire, we will not falter, and we will not failq.

American citizens have to choose between supporting terrorists or their own fellow Americans, between the very notion of freedom and the fear aroused by the enemy. Thus, the appeal of being 'at war' supplies a feeling of imminent danger to the audience. Bush's use of ancient rhetoric justifies the use of war as being necessary for peace to exist.

In the same realm, Bush's rhetoric is a good application of Aristotle's model of persuasion 'ethos'. While appealing to the ethos, he swiftly moved from being a leader who shares the grief of the American people to a strength gathering builder by raising an analogy between America and a building, contrasting literal and metaphorical senses: "A great people has been moved to defend a great nation. Terrorist attacks can shake the foundation of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America. These acts shattered steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve^r". By glorifying the people and nation of American soil, Bush assures his people that the very belief of America will persist although its very freedom was under attack.

^o Laura Bush, "Radio Address by Mrs. Bush", November 17th, 2001.

^p Bush, "Bush Declares War against Iraq", March 19th, 2003.

^q Bush, "Address to a Joint Session of the 107th Congress", September 20th, 2001.

^r Bush, "Address to the Nation on the September 11 Attacks", September 11th, 2001.

3.1.2. Instances from Barack Obama's oratories:

During his term as president, **Barack Obama** managed to convince the American people that he is the right person to lead them against the terrorist threat. This was done by appealing to people's ethos, building trust in his character, and the decisions he makes. The following example illustrates this: "I stand here today humbled by the task before us, grateful for the trust you have bestowed, mindful of the sacrifices borne by our ancestors". Through this excerpt from Obama's inaugural address, Obama is appealing to the audience's sense of ethos, trying to show his goodwill toward his country and his people and express his sense of a moral obligation to solve the crisis and finish the tasks ahead of him.

In his speech on Afghanistan and Pakistan, Obama assures his people and the people of Afghanistan and Pakistan that he will do something to stop terrorists before they could carry out any more brutal killings:

As President, my greatest responsibility is to protect the American people. We are not in Afghanistan to control that country or to dictate its future. We are in Afghanistan to confront a common enemy that threatens the United States, our friends and our allies, and the people of Afghanistan and Pakistan who have suffered the most at the hands of violent extremists^s.

Obama tries to show that he is knowledgeable about the events happening in the Afghanistan and Pakistan region, presenting a detailed projection of his counter-terrorism strategy. Much of Obama's political discourse is directed toward appealing to people's pathos by moving emotions of anger, fear, and pity in his people, putting them in a defensive frame of mind to persuade them to take his stand. In his speech on the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Obama addressed the audience by saying:

The situation is increasingly perilous. It's been more than seven years since the Taliban was removed from power, yet war rages on, and insurgents control parts of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Attacks against our troops, our NATO allies, and the Afghan government have risen steadily. And most painfully, 2008 was the deadliest year of the war for American forces^t.

Obama knows that if his people are shocked and angered at this moment they will be more likely to accept his new strategy in Afghanistan and Pakistan, this is why he triggered in them a sense of fear by raising the phantom of war in the forefront.

Similarly, Obama tends to stir his people's emotions, stimulate their anger, and put them in a defensive state by recalling the 9/11 attacks several times in different parts of his speech. The following quote is an example:

So let me be clear: Al Qaeda and its allies -- the terrorists who planned and supported the 9/11 attacks -- are in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Multiple Intelligence estimates have warned that al Qaeda is actively planning attacks on the United States homeland from its haven in Pakistan. And if the Afghan government falls to the Taliban -- or allows al Qaeda to go unchallenged -- that country will again be a base for terrorists who want to kill as many of our people as they possibly can^u.

In the same context, Obama invokes in his audience a sense of pity towards Afghan people, especially women and girls, when he said: "For the Afghan people, the return to Taliban rule would condemn their country to brutal governance, international isolation, a paralyzed economy, and the denial of basic human rights to the Afghan people -- especially women and girls^v". Obama mentions Al Qaeda's terrorist actions and their consequences on the Afghanistan community in an attempt to arouse sympathy among American people and so legitimate any military intervention that may take place.

Obama also resorted to invoking the audience's perception of soldiers and coalition forces acting as heroes in the war to liberate Afghanistan, stating:

That is true, above all, for the coalition that has fought together in Afghanistan, side by side with Afghans. The sacrifices have been enormous. Nearly 700 Americans have lost their lives. Troops from over 20 countries have also paid the ultimate price. All Americans honor the service and cherish the friendship of those who have fought, and worked, and

^s Obama, "Obama's Inaugural Address", January 20th, 2009.

^t Obama, "A New Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan", March 27th, 2009

^u Ibid.

^v Ibid.

^w Ibid.

bled by our side. And all Americans are awed by the service of our own men and women in uniform, who've borne a burden as great as any other generation's. They and their families embody the example of selfless sacrificex.

Through this assertion, Obama manipulates his audience's emotions to put them in the right frame of mind. Pathos here is applied by making a hero picture of armed forces and praising them.

In his speech at Cairo University in Egypt about Islam and terrorism, Obama tried to influence the audience by exploiting his character and truthfulness, identifying with them as much as he can. As an example of ethos, he uttered the sentence "like the one that brought my father to Americay", identifying with the audience by telling them that he is originally not from America exactly like them, thus inserting a sense of belonging to an out-group and his integration into the in-group.

Obama also resorted to using the technique of ethos through narratives and real storytelling, exchanging and sharing with the audience his life experiences to lessen the gap between them and himself, contending: "I spent several years in Indonesia...", "I worked in Chicago", "I am a Christian but my father came from a Kenyan family...z". He also made appeals to the sense of ethos by presenting America's military operations as a moral obligation to preserve peace and stability inside the nation: "America, our endless blessings bestow an enduring burden. But as Americans, we welcome our responsibility to leadaa". The excerpt calls out for American values and ideals that can instill in people a sense of solidarity to overcome past events and embrace new opportunities for reconstruction, hope, and victory originally embedded in the leadership of the American President throughout history.

After Obama establishes the premise of war is necessary, he then moves on to justify the actions the US undertakes. To this end, Obama starts with the positive things the US has helped to create in the past, recalling:

Throughout the first year of this campaign, against all predictions to the contrary, we saw how hungry the American people were for this message of unity. Despite the temptation to view my candidacy through a purely racial lens, we won commanding victories in states with some of the whitest populations in the country. In South Carolina, where the Confederate Flag still flies, we built a powerful coalition of African Americans and white Americansbb.

This excerpt appeals to the logos and thus the history of the US which always looked for prosperity, peace, and security, overlooking the racial ethnicities that exist in America and putting its sovereignty and development on the primary track.

Additionally, by comparing the destructive network of extremists 'Al Qaeda' to America, the beacon for freedom and human rights, Obama is trying to convince Afghan and Pakistani people that intervention is to their benefit: "Now a campaign against extremism will not succeed with bullets or bombs alone. Al Qaeda offers the people of Pakistan nothing but destruction. We stand for something differentcc". This quotation is contributing to creating an opposition between evil (the terrorists) and goodness (America). This semantic contrast between two oppositions is a prime means for achieving ethos, thus increasing the ethos of the good part of the opposition.

In his speech about the ISIL crisis which knew the beheading of American and European journalists in the Middle East, many appeals to the senses of pathos, logos, and ethos have been made by Obama following a systematic order:

In a region that has known so much bloodshed, these terrorists are unique in their brutality. They execute captured prisoners. They kill children. They enslave, rape, and force women into marriage. They threatened a religious minority with genocide. In acts of barbarism, they took the lives of two American journalists — Jim Foley and Steven Sotloffdd.

Mentioning the behavior of the terrorist group in beheading the American journalists and humiliating their people appeals to the pathos of the listeners and triggers their emotions and so their support for military action.

^x Ibid.

^y Obama, "A New Beginning", June 4th, 2009.

^z Ibid.

^{aa} Obama, "On United States Strategy to Combat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant Terrorist Organization (ISIL)", September 10th, 2014.

^{bb} Obama, "Obama's Speech on Race", March 18th, 2008.

^{cc} Obama, "Obama Announces New Afghanistan, Pakistan Strategies", March 27th, 2009

^{dd} Obama, "On United States Strategy to Combat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant Terrorist Organization (ISIL)", September 10th, 2014.

Obama further appeals to the audience's sense of logos in the same speech by presenting his strategy to 'degrade and ultimately destroy the terrorist group known as ISILee' and outlining the four steps of his counter-terrorism response and his reasons for US re-entry in the war that began with airstrikes against ISIL targets in Northern Iraq, which is a logical and automatic response of the brutal acts of terror.

Obama further invokes his audience's logos by presenting his reasoning for a new strategy for Pakistan, asserting:

The future of Afghanistan is inextricably linked to the future of its neighbor, Pakistan. In nearly eight years since 9/11, al Qaeda and its extremist allies have moved across the border to the remote areas of the Pakistani frontier. They have used this mountainous terrain as a haven to hide, to train terrorists, to communicate with followers, to plot attacks, and to send fighters to support the insurgency in Afghanistan. For the American people, this border region has become the most dangerous place in the world.

By presenting the danger that Pakistan constitutes to the American peace and stability as the home for terrorist networks' assemblage, Obama makes several appeals to the logos of his audience, convincing them that the threat of Pakistan is as important as that of Afghanistan, reminding them once again of 9/11 to arouse their emotions and awaken their sad memories of fear and loss. Here, Obama predicts the terrorists' possible future attacks on the US homeland from its haven in Pakistan and supplies many other reasons to the rectitude of war in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region.

4 Conclusion

As has been emphasized in the introduction, this research paper has attempted to bring instances of how political discourse in the US has often crossed over into other criteria to justify the State's reactions to the war on terror. Presidents Bush and Obama made use of Aristotle's three parts of speech to convince the audience to accept their points of view. Throughout the analysis, appeals to Ethos, Pathos, and Logos have been made to elicit emotions in the audience, emphasize the speaker's credibility, and appeal to the logic behind a certain issue or action.

In addition to the individual discourses identified above, as well as the common overarching elements present in the two presidents' discourses, this research paper analyzed the language of political discourse and the persuasive strategies and linguistic features the two presidents incorporated in their oratories to examine how persuasion strategies were adopted by Presidents Bush and Obama at ostensibly different historical moments, trying to answer how and why the War on Terror narrative developed and resonated across the two administrations.

In both Bush's and Obama's speeches, persuasion in light of Aristotle's three parts of speech: ethos, pathos, and logos, has proved how the three persuasion devices were interwoven in most of the cases. Both presidents referred to biblical quotations and to historical characters such as the Founding Fathers to foster their people's emotions; appeal to emotions such as fear was a device associated with President Bush to generate sovereign authority for military action. Obama also maintained a backdrop of fear but mediated it through the promise of security offered by the sovereign. Moreover, both presidents appealed to the speaker's character and truthfulness and to the logic behind an utterance to take place by asserting its evidence and likelihood.

From the analysis, the overarching thematic formations of 'Us' and 'Them' were in large part derived from a moral evaluation of each parties' qualities and actions, representing 'them' as the responsible actor and their actions as irrational and so illegitimate, while representing 'us', either implicitly or explicitly, as the protectors of humankind from all the brutalities that may cause mass murder and conflict. The discourse also shows that both strategic interests and humanitarian reasons pushed US Presidents to order military action in some third world regions.

Based on the evidence of how linguistic and rhetorical devices have been used in the discourse of Bush and Obama, it is apparent that Obama knows how to use stylistic devices for persuasive purposes more than his predecessor; he has been proved to be more skilled, direct, personally involved, persuasive, and more diplomatic vis-à-vis his people, his allies and the entire world.

Thus, the war on terror is a vast and highly complex political and social issue. In this respect, this research paper can only provide a survey of some of the primary means by which the official language of the war on terrorism seeks to normalize and institutionalize the Bush and Obama's administrations' construction of the terrorist threat. While the invocation of Aristotle's parts of speech attempts to overwhelm citizens with an array of different emotions, the

^{ee} Ibid.

^{ff} Obama, "A New Strategy in Afghanistan and Pakistan", March 27th, 2009.

real aim behind such appeals was to determine the future of American foreign policy and thus the realization of a prosperous shared future.

However, the analysis presented in this research paper is far from exhaustive. I have attempted to cover quite a long time of speeches on a relatively small corpus, so many points could be expanded upon. Moreover, the work is only a qualitative analysis of the selected corpus, so analysis from a quantitative point of view should be the next area that has yet to be touched upon.

Conflict of interest statement

The author declared that she has no competing interests.

Statement of authorship

The author has a responsibility for the conception and design of the study. The author has approved the final article.

Acknowledgments

This work is a result of my participation in LASTE 2019, “the 2nd International Conference on Language Studies, Translation, and Education” held in Izmir – Turkey in September 2019. Special thanks go to the conference organizers for taking the time of compiling all participating scholars’ papers and publishing them.

I am also indebted to the reading committee for their guidance and for taking on the task of reading my work. Without their passionate participation and input, this research could not have been successfully conducted and published.

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