Bush, Obama, and Terrorism: 
A New Framework for Analyzing Threat Response Rhetoric

by

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In cherished memory of my dad, Carl, and delighted honor of my mom, Nancy. Thank you for teaching me the joy of learning. Thank you for making my heart smile everyday.

xoxo

To the victims of terrorism and their loved ones.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Fifteen years after the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, America is still caught in the global War on Terror.¹² The question of presidential discourse on terrorism over this fifteen-year period is important because we expect variation in the presidential narratives in response to changes in context. This thesis uses President Bush and President Obama as a case study to examine presidential terrorism rhetoric post-9/11.³ I present a new framework, which can be used to analyze any political leader’s threat response rhetoric through his public portrayal of the enemy.

¹ War on Terror is the phrase I will use to refer to the US foreign policy agenda to eliminate terrorism around the world. President Bush coined the phrase the War on Terror in his September 20, 2001 speech, which addressed the 9/11 terrorist attacks. This term enabled the Bush administration to pursue a wide counterterrorism agenda, which justified the Iraq War. President Obama explicitly rejected this terminology in 2013. His reasoning was and remains that war must be fought against a determined target rather than an ideology, such as terrorism. In his May 23, 2013 speech, President Obama stated that, "We must define our effort not as a boundless 'Global War on Terror', but rather as a series of persistent, targeted efforts to dismantle specific networks of violent extremists that threaten America.” Despite President Obama’s efforts to move away from the language of the Bush administration, the media continues to label the US counterterrorism strategies as part of the War on Terror.

² I use Boaz Ganor’s definition of terrorism, which defines it as the intentional targeting of civilians and non-combatants—whether to injure, kill, or threaten to injure or kill—in order to further political objectives. Ganor adds that only non-state actors can commit terrorism. (Ganor 2002) There is a litany of terrorism definitions because of disagreement about when the use of violence is legitimate—meaning what type of tactics and by whom.

³ The 9/11 attacks symbolize a dramatic shift in US foreign policy objectives and US perception of security. As a result, America post-9/11 is an intriguing period to analyze how political leaders talk about the enemy.
I created this framework for analyzing presidential threat response rhetoric because I was intrigued by the expected tensions between President Bush and President Obama’s terrorism framing. This framework enables scholars to test their assumption that there is a substantive difference between how President Bush talked about the War on Terror and al-Qaeda after 9/11 and how President Obama talks about the War on Terror and Daesh today. If differences do exist, then this framework can express the ways in which President Bush and President Obama’s terrorism rhetoric differs and/or is similar. This framework can be used to analyze how any actor responds to a threat.

There are several crucial weaknesses and limitations in the analytical approach scholars have taken to examine terrorism response rhetoric. The first is that they do not use a repeatable framework. The existing literature defines President Bush and President Obama’s terrorism rhetoric based on particular moments. The existing literature would be stronger if the conclusions were instead based on rhetorical framings highlighted by particular moments. The themes stated above represent a qualitative analysis where scholars read the speeches and then pulled out interesting content. The analysis tells what a given rhetorical frames looks like, but fails to ask how these themes relate to one another.

A major gap in the existing literature is due to its methodology. The existing methodology prevents a comparison of how multiple actors talk about terrorism. In

4 The label Daesh refers to the radical Jihadist group in the Levant, which is internationally referred to as Daesh. I will call this group Daesh throughout this paper because it is the preferred term of local forces and disliked by the group’s members. This name helps to undermine the group’s grip by refusing to recognize it as an Islamic State. This choice is a demonstration of my solidarity with locals fighting against Daesh’s oppression.
other words, scholars’ analysis cannot be repeated outside of the very specific situation to which it was originally applied. There is no underlying framework with which President Bush’s terrorism rhetoric and President Obama’s terrorism rhetoric could be compared nor a framework with which each president’s rhetoric could be compared over the course of his presidency. The existing literature does not convey the rhetorical transformations and transitions that occur within each individual speech. Scholars view the rhetorical strategies as independent mechanisms rather than mechanisms that culminate in a particular threat response.5

An emerging contradiction in the existing literature is how it simultaneously acknowledges the differing context between the presidents and ignores the implications of varying context on analytical confidence. The presidents have different backgrounds, come from different party platforms, and address different jihadist terrorism groups. Most scholars assume that there are differences between President Bush and President Obama’s terrorism rhetoric because of the different contexts of their presidency. If scholars are aware of these different contexts and posit that they evoke differing presidential threat responses, then why would the scholars not establish an independent variable(s) or framework with which to measure the extent of rhetorical variation?

The existing literature of American politics does not approach President Bush and President Obama’s speeches from a unified perspective. Authors of each literature cannot engage in a dialogue about presidential terrorism rhetoric because

5 The only contradiction to this criticism that I came across in my research is the discussion of how President Bush changed his rhetoric about the 9/11 attacks from a crime framing to a war framing in order to justify going to war.
they do not use an analytical framework that permits comparison. The purpose of my research is to fill the holes in the existing literature’s analysis of how President Bush and President Obama talk about terrorism.

How do I propose to change the existing discourse? This thesis exposes which kinds of arguments about human behavior we see most explicitly in presidential speeches. There are five theories that explain how actors respond to threats. Is the enemy described as violating international law via legalist rhetoric? Does the president talk about the enemy in a way that induces public fear to prioritize his policy agenda? Does he⁶ talk about the enemy as being defeated by American ideals? Does he dehumanize the enemy? Does he present the enemy as needing Western intervention and civilization?

Each of these questions refers to a particular literature. In this thesis, I draw on five distinct literatures that each offer particular expectations and explanations for how different actors respond to threats: (1) Just War Theory, law; (2) Securitization Theory, politics and policy studies; (3) Rally around the flag effect, nationalism; (4) Social Psychology; and (5) Orientalism, sociology. I ask all of these questions about each presidential speech because I recognize that these tactics are not mutually exclusive. Presidential terrorism rhetoric is not completely just war theory or securitization theory or rally around the flag effect or social psychology or orientalism; it is a combination of some or all of these literatures.

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⁶ The subject ‘men’ refers to all peoples. This thesis explores presidential discourse and the United States has only had male presidents. Thus, this general ‘men’ and ‘he’ respectfully represent all individuals, and is consistently used as the general pronoun for consistency and accuracy’s sake. It is not reinforcing the notion of a gender binary. I will continue to use the masculine pronoun as a general pronoun.
The contribution of this framework is important because it is a transparent analysis of how presidents talk about terrorism and threats, which is one issue of foreign policy. My analysis makes global connections to US security and Middle Eastern policy. This thesis is one of the first studies to examine how these framings interact with each other. My contribution to the existing literature on terrorism and American foreign policy is drawing connections between these theories in order to address main questions: 1) What frames are most salient in the presidential speeches on terrorism since 9/11? and 2) How do President Bush and President Obama compare and contrast in terms of how they address terrorism? The purpose of my analysis is not to explain why a particular frame is used and when, but rather to see which frames are salient and deduce whether there is a pattern among and/or between President Bush and President Obama to better understand how presidents decide to react to threats and engage the American people.

This analysis assesses general patterns across these two presidencies, as well as highlights patterns and interesting moments within individual speeches. My analysis uses the parallel of domestic and abroad terrorist attacks across these two presidencies as an analytical framework through which I illuminate similarities, differences, and the role the US security context plays in driving a particular threat response. I conducted my own speech analysis using this framework and, by doing so, I actually discovered counterintuitive findings, such as President Obama’s minimal framing of threats from the legalist perspective.

What can the academic community take away from this? This framework establishes a comprehensive understanding of how actors publicly frame issues of
terror. By analyzing how individual actors, particularly presidents and political leaders, talk about the enemy with my proposed analytical model, we can better understand the meaning and consequences of that rhetoric. My framework for analyzing threat response rhetoric explores both the rhetorical content itself and the implications of that content on the speech audience.

What can the average person get from this? After reading this thesis, the average person will be able to distinguish whether the president is, for example, trying to dehumanize an enemy or build up a threat.

We can be active listeners, who hear lexical triggers of these frames and can then link them to an overarching threat response strategy. We, as audience members to presidential speeches filled with terrorism response rhetoric, must be aware of the reaction these buzzwords strive to evoke. We cannot listen idly, susceptible to presidents’ strategic framing. As British political scientist Henry Fairlie is quoted saying,

> It is we who drive the politician to use jargon, words that evade and obscure the truth…it is we who are afraid of the truth that politicians would tells us. We do not wish to be confronted. We do not wish to be challenged. We do not wish to be inspired. (Lim 2008, 105)

This “jargon” can be relabeled as lexical triggers and threat response buzzwords. Presidential terrorism response rhetoric relies on the audience’s emotional reactions to the framings to induce the desired threat response. After reading my comparison of President Bush and President Obama’s rhetoric—Chapters 3, 4, and 5—I hope that you can identify when each threat response literature is invoked, so that you may critically listen to the portrayal of the enemy.
Methodology

I used the software program MaxQDA to analyze each president’s State of the Union addresses; President Bush’s 9/11 speech and London al-Qaeda bombing speech; and President Obama’s San Bernardino speech as well as his Daesh Paris attacks speech.

The State of the Union Address speech set shows how presidents choose to talk about national issues to the American people. For President Bush and President Obama, these addresses express what the presidents wanted their audience to think about terrorism. They are also consistent: President Bush and President Obama each have eight because the occur in the beginning of every calendar year. Terrorism is not the only topic of the State of the Union Addresses because it is an annual speech not triggered by context.²

Speech Analysis Procedure

The lexical triggers⁸ that are used for coding were accumulated from existing literature. My coding of the five threat response literatures began with a lexical trigger search. I individually searched for the lexical triggers of the five theories in the terrorism sections of President Bush and President Obama’s speeches. Each lexical trigger was coded to a meta-narrative or theory framing, which marked that word or phrase with the meta-narrative’s designated color. This color-coding showed

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² The sample is very small for both jihadist attacks on the US and US allies post-9/11. The size could yield conclusion biases, but this is the clearest sample of terrorism threat responses to parallel.

⁸ Lexical triggers are words that invoke or “trigger” a certain frame. In this case, lexical trigger invocation is one quantitative method I use to determine whether and at what frequency each of the five potential threat frames are used.
up in the document portraits\(^9\) of each speech and articulated threat response patterns based on the president’s rhetoric. My empirical analysis presents the overall patterns of frames across speeches and within each speech.

**Limitations**

One limitation of methodology: my coding only picks up explicit demonstrations. My tables and graphs’ statistics only account for explicit demonstrations, lexical triggers, of the threat response literatures. My last three chapters—Chapters 3, 4 and 5—use the data I collected to ground the discussion. Although my analysis is rooted in a comparison of coded lexical triggers over time, I also highlight particularly interesting moments when implicit invocation of these frames is not observable. If theory is not invoked explicitly through lexical triggers, then it will not come up in coding. These moments do exist in speeches, but finding and interpretation of them is subjective.\(^{10}\) There are different layers of subtext that cannot be picked up by the lexical trigger string searches.

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\(^9\) See appendix for display of the twenty presidential speech document portraits. They are used to make conclusions about President Bush and President Obama’s terrorism response rhetoric in chapters 3, 4, and 5, but the visualizations themselves are not inserted into the text of these chapters.

\(^{10}\) For example, in the terrorism sections of President Bush’s 2002 State of the Union Address, he lists a series of values for which America proudly stands. His list begins with the “nonnegotiable demands of human dignity” and then continues with “the rule of law; limits on the power of the state; respect for women; private property; free speech; equal justice; and religious tolerance.” Women were mentioned in terms of American ideals, but this invocation—particularly because it is part of a list of black and white democratic qualities—could also imply a subtle orientalist theme. President Bush’s reference to women could mean that while Americans value women, there are others who do not respect women. This could trigger the assumption that those others also do not stand for the other democratic values, which would make them inferior. This excerpt could certainly be read as an appeal to nationalism through building up an in-group. Notably, the in-group and out-group binary is characterized regionally as West versus East instead of between particular groups.
Unpacking the Parallel: Differences between President Bush and President Obama

There are three major differences—or variables—between President Bush, President Obama, and the terrorist attacks to which their speeches respond. Because of these distinctions, we anticipate that President Bush and President Obama uniquely talk about terrorism, characterize the enemy, and promote a threat response(s). My fifth chapter compares President Bush’s 9/11 speech with President Obama’s San Bernardino speech in section one. Section two compares President Bush’s speech about London after the al-Qaeda bombings with President Obama’s speech after Daesh’s bombings in Paris. Chapter five, as you will read, demonstrates that one variable may trump another, such as context driving rhetoric because it is more salient than political ideology. There is a tradeoff that occurs between the three variables—political party, context of the attack, and the jihadist group responsible for the attack—that controls the president’s terrorism response rhetoric.

Political Party: Republican Versus Democrat

The most blatant distinction is the presidents’ political party affiliation. President Bush was a Republican president, whereas President Obama is a Democratic president; therefore, the average individual would expect significant differences in the way each president talks about terrorism if party affiliation plays an important role in determining rhetoric. My analysis presents consistent patterns of terrorism response rhetoric, patterns that cross partisan lines. Thus, one of the questions my thesis raises is the extent to which partisanship drives terrorism response rhetoric. Is political party or context a stronger determinant of how presidents respond? Are there patterns of invocation present in both President Bush
and President Obama’s speeches? Are there differences in rhetoric that may be attributed to partisan platforms?

*Context of the Attacks*

Context is also a major source of distinction between the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the San Bernardino shooting and the London and Paris bombings. They occurred during different moments of the US Global War on Terror. The American people were of unique mindsets during each of these attacks, ranging from fear of an existential threat to war fatigue. During President Obama’s presidency, the American domestic policy stage was dominated by gun violence and gun control, which undoubtedly colored President Obama’s response to the San Bernardino jihadist shooting. The timing of an attack, in terms of the War on Terror and in terms of domestic security issues, impacts a president’s terrorism response rhetoric.

*Jihadist Group Responsible for the Attack*

I offer a very concise background on al-Qaeda and Daesh. The topic of this thesis is presidential rhetoric, so my presentation of these two jihadist groups is meant to highlight another difference between President Bush and President Obama’s presidential context. We would, thus, expect unique presidential terrorism rhetoric from each president because of the contextual differences. Since the actual enemy jihadist group is dissimilar,—although both are viewed as antithetical to Americanism and Western ideals, more broadly—we expect each president to talk about the enemy in a different way. The US main enemy in the War on Terror was al-Qaeda under the Bush administration, and Daesh under the Obama administration.
Al-Qaeda is a militant Sunni Islamist group. It was established in 1988 in Afghanistan by Osama bin Laden for anti-Soviet jihad in the face of Soviet expansion, and then spread into Pakistan. This regional jihad was transformed into a global jihad that prioritized removing pro-Western regimes. Al-Qaeda’s objectives are anti-Western, but its anti-American sentiments and strategy to “specifically [target] the United States across the globe” distinguished the group from other jihadist groups (Ryan 2013, 9). Notably, both al-Qaeda and Daesh emphasize the “Sykes-Picot era” for recruitment because it embodies Western oppression and Islamic humiliation at the hands of the West (Ryan 2013, 18). While both al-Qaeda and Daesh want to remove Western, specifically American, influences from the Middle East, Daesh distinguishes itself from the previously dominant Sunni militant group because it wants to establish an Islamic caliphate.

After the toppling of Saddam Hussein, the US replaced the Iraqi electoral system because they wanted to make it more representative. Since Shia are the majority, Shia dominated politics. The resulting Sunni marginalization made the Sunni population susceptible to extremist interpretations of Islam like Saudi Arabia’s Wahhabism. In 2014, Daesh’s centralization in Syria, and its expansion into neighboring Iraq, allowed it to “[supersede] al-Qaeda as the most powerful and effective jihadi group in the world” (Cockburn 2015, 2). Daesh, too, is a militant Sunni group that espouses vehemently anti-Western rhetoric. Daesh has distinguished itself from al-Qaeda through its very public beheading videos of “‘apostates’ and ‘polytheists’…[and anyone] who were simply against its rule” (Cockburn 2015, x).
CHAPTER ONE

Presidential Terrorism Response Rhetoric:
What Has Been Said

This chapter presents how scholars have talked about President Bush and
President Obama’s terrorism rhetoric. The existing literature on President Bush’s
terrorism rhetoric focuses on five major themes: the Iraq War; a collective, national
memory; us versus them; call to arms; and anti-intellectualism. The existing literature
on President Obama’s terrorism rhetoric focuses on three themes: his campaign
platform, namely his distancing from President Bush’s policies; views on US
involvement abroad; and extreme language and credibility.

There are several crucial weaknesses in the analytical approach scholars have
taken to examine terrorism response rhetoric. The first is that they do not use a
repeatable framework. The existing literature defines President Bush and President
Obama’s terrorism rhetoric based on particular moments. The existing literature
would be stronger if the conclusions were instead based on rhetorical framings
highlighted by particular moments. The themes stated above represent a qualitative
analysis where scholars read the speeches and then pulled out interesting content. The
analysis tells what a given rhetorical frames looks like, but fails to ask how these
themes relate to one another.

For example, the existing literature on President Bush focuses much on his
use of us versus them framing through Manichean dualism. President Obama’s
ideological distancing from President Bush is thoroughly presented in the existing
literature, which may misread readers into thinking that President Obama does not frame threats as us versus them. Rooting analysis in particular moments reinforces this assumption because the scholars are not applying a consistent framework across presidents, but rather picking out distinctive frames, ignoring whether these different frames evoke the same overall threat response.

1.1 President George H. W. Bush

President Bush was president of the United States from January 20, 2001 to January 20, 2009. After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, President Bush is considered a neo-conservative. During his 2000 presidential campaign, George W. Bush echoed isolationist preferences when he stated that he is “not so sure the role of the United States is to go around the world and say, ‘This is the way it’s got to be’” (Widmaier 2015, 13). This period of exceptionalist isolationism mimicked that of the United States’ first century in that international involvement threatened Americanism because of the unyielding urge for power and the tendency for the allure of dominance to outshine morality. 9/11 served as a tool to bolster nationalism because Americans’ security was threatened. There was an explicit desire to interject American might and values internationally in order to seek retribution on the attackers and prevent a similar attack from occurring on US soil. Thus, neo-conservative President Bush and his hawkish cabinet leaped into a period of internationalism. The Freedom Agenda was born.

The cycle of isolationism and internationalism showed itself once the US could no longer hide its slipping footage in Iraq. After the 2005 US surge in Iraq,
President Obama, too, endured a push for American isolationism. After devastating losses abroad, it is natural for the American people to believe that “the US could best advance its mission by remaining out of foreign conflicts instead of serving as an example to others” (Widmaier 2015, 13). The 2005 surge in Iraq marks a moment in US foreign policy and intervention when the United States’ will simply was not enough to win.

**The Iraq War**

The existing literature on President Bush’s terrorism rhetoric focuses a great deal on his justification of intervention in Iraq and its devastation. Donna Starr-Deelen thinks that “most scholars accept that the president has the power to repel sudden attacks against the United States and its armed forces” because of his expertise and experience as the Commander in Chief (Starr-Deelen 2014, 124). This point of contention in terms of President Bush’s inherent power is his exclusion of Congress from the decision-making process. The Authorization of Military Force (AUMF) was ideal legislation for the Bush administration because it yielded executive unilateralism, “congressional acquiescence, and judicial tolerance” (Starr-Deelen 2014, 125).

President Bush’s idea of preemptive war in Iraq to prevent Saddam Hussein from using his weapons of mass destruction on the US. Just war theory allows for a defensive action if there is an imminent threat. “Imminent” demonstrates that the attack will occur and that waiting to respond until after the attack is irrational and suicidal. Interestingly, President Bush does not ever use the word “imminent” (Weeks
2010, 45). His National Security Strategy includes preemptive war, but without the condition of an imminent threat, as required by just war theory. The language instead is that preemptive war can occur “when deemed necessary—above all, on the authority of the president as commander in chief” (Weeks 2010, 57). President Bush’s preference is the deciding factor. President Bush says he refuses to wait like a sitting duck with his hands tied. He frames preemptive war as preventing, with certainty, a nuclear war with Hussein because President Bush declares Iraq’s possession of WMDs and emphasizes Hussein’s refusal to comply with UN nuclear weapons inspections.

One mechanism through which President Bush justified preemptive war in Iraq was moral absolutism (Widmaier 2015, 105). Hussein’s evasion of the UN inspection is wrong regardless of the context, so whether or not he possesses WMDs is moot. President Bush manipulated reality in order to align it with moral absolutism’s binary. Vice President Dick Cheney’s glorious 1% Doctrine of threat response rationale rings loud and clear with President Bush’s erroneous preemptive war justification. Just war theory does not allow for Cheney’s One-Percent Doctrine’s megalomania to initiate war. Threats can be seen anywhere, and the salience of a threat depends on the particular actor in charge as well as the global context. According to the Bush administration, if there were a 1% chance that Saddam Hussein would use WMDs against the US or an ally, then the US would be just in

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1 The One-Percent Doctrine aggrandizes a threat that may only have 1% likelihood of occurring into a threat that will 100% happen. It stems from the notion that the President must plan and act as if any threat will happen in order to ensure American security. The glaring flaw of this mindset is its grounding in implausibility. This approach yields inefficient policy because it demands the President is prepared for any imaginable threat.
preemptively waging war against Saddam Hussein in order to prevent said attack. Thus, President Bush’s terrorism rhetoric evolved into an emphasis of Iraq’s violation of international law in order to legitimize the US invasion in Iraq.

Wesley Widmaier’s research highlights the importance of the United Nations for President Bush’s use of just war theory as justification for US intervention in Iraq. The existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq would be an explicit violation of international treaty because the UN prohibited Iraq from possessing and/or developing nuclear weapons. In Widmaier’s *Presidential rhetoric from Wilson to Obama: constructing crises, fast and slow*, Brent Scowcroft of the Bush Administration is quoted to have argued that the return of UN weapons inspectors to Iraq upon the assumption that Saddam Hussein would not comply with the UN’s tests “would provide ‘the casus belli we really don’t have right now’” (Widmaier 2015, 108). The United States cannot declare war in order to gain interests, but rather to defend oneself or another from aggression. The US cause for going to war is constructed as just through President Bush’s invocation of the UN with Iraq’s non-compliance with international treaty.

In 2003, President Bush declared that, “We [the US] have no ambition in Iraq except to remove a threat and restore control of that country to its own people” (Hodges 2013, 58). The rhetoric strategy lies in President Bush’s emphasis of threat removal as the intention of the US invasion in Iraq. The public is more likely to condone intervention and military force when the intention is “restraining the foreign policy action of a hostile country” as opposed to encouraging “internal change in a foreign nation” (Lantis 2013, 211).
Casualty tolerance depends on two beliefs: “beliefs about the ‘rightness’ or ‘wrongness’ of the war, [and] beliefs about the likelihood of success of the war” (Lantis 2013, 211). President Bush avoided public disapproval by emphasizing the righteousness and necessity of the US actions. Moral absolutism, not proportionality, undermined this potential audience cost from 2001 until 2007, when the American people’s rhetoric induced stupefaction was overwhelmed by the reality of US losses abroad.

Albert Loren Weeks references Kant in his criticism of President Bush’s war-reflex. Kant admonishes the “moralizing politicians” because they “invent the pretext of war” (Weeks 2010, 13). Weeks pushes back against moralizing politicians because they create the necessity for war. President Bush threatens the credibility of his will through the invention of threat. Democracies want to spread democracy. Weeks’ analysis stresses how important it is for democracies, namely the US, to resist war as a mechanism for peace as war is not a moral choice because its outcome is uncertain and because a victory does not assuage the war-waging nation’s fatigue.

President Bush’s famous phrase “the axis of evil” from his 2002 State of the Union Address highlights the US continued deviation from conventional warfare. This phrase imparted a psychological mechanism through which the extension of “war” from Iraq to Iran and North Korea would seem just, regardless of whether the action in Iraq is amenable to just war theory in the first place. Albert Loren Weeks explores the implications of President Bush’s rhetorical framing on just war theory. He believes that the phrase “axis of evil”

Raised a number of nagging questions in terms of just versus unjust war: Is preventive or preemptive war, as waged by the United States, including
whatever allies it may acquire, the wave of the future? Are we headed for a period of one-war-to-end-all-future-wars after the other? If so, are such possible wars confined to the other pair states of the ‘axis’ or might other states be targeted? (Weeks 2010, 122)

The Bush administration framed their response to terrorism, specifically meaning the response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks, as a legitimate war. The War on Terror was intended to be just that: a broad, expansive war that allowed the US to do what is necessary in order to seek retribution against the 9/11 plotters as well as prevent a similar attack from occurring. The most troubling element of this war intention is its immeasurability. The Bush administration “argues that the ‘war on terror’ is not merely a metaphorical war but a real war waged on many fronts” (Hodges 2011, 23). Additionally, the administration’s response to terrorism is framed as war instead of an “investigation into terrorist crimes” because they frame the 9/11 attacks as an act of war, not a crime (Hodges 2011, 23).

President Bush’s terrorism response rhetoric projects his administration’s reinterpretation of the events as the reality. Iraq had been on the minds of Vice President Dick Cheney and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld for years. The 9/11 terrorist attacks, they knew, could be framed as the missing piece to invoking just war theory as the justification for invasion in Afghanistan on September 26, 2001—and for the invasion in Iraq four years later. The Bush administration successfully and wondrously cloaked its expansionist and anti-just war theory response to terrorism “within the framework of war” (Hodges 2011, 23).
Crime Frame Versus War Frame

President Bush’s terrorism response rhetoric experiences a major shift from a narrative that views the 9/11 attacks as a crime to a narrative that presents the attacks as an act of war. President Bush initially uses a crime frame to describe the 9/11 terrorists as well as the type of response that the US would initiate. Adam Hodges notes that in President Bush’s September 14 speech, “no longer do we hear of ‘victims’ but rather of ‘casualties’ as would be heard in news reports from a war zone” (Hodges 2011, 26). President Bush emphasizes the casualties—a lexical trigger for just war theory—and furthers his legalist reference through the mention of US military uniforms—a symbol of just war’s military targeting. Hodges points out that “the nation as a whole is further invoked as the recipient of a foreign invader’s actions: ‘war has been waged against us’” (Hodges 2011, 17). President Bush uses his interpretation of the 9/11 attacks as an act of waging war to invoke just war theory as opposed to the 9/11 attackers themselves. The Security Council is one example of an international body that “characterized the 9/11 tragedy as ‘armed attacks,’ even though the acts were attributed to a non-state network called al Qaeda” (Starr-Deelen 2014, 210–211). Just war theory and international law does not consider conflict between a state actor and a non-state actor as war.

The US declaration of war against a non-state actor may lack legal implications in terms of legitimacy or protection under the umbrella of just war theory, but that does not prevent constructivist implications. Starr-Deelen reveals that, Very few Americans realized it in 1996, but al Qaeda considered itself at war with the world’s superpower and the reciprocal declaration of war by the Bush II administration after 9/11 must have been satisfying for bin Laden; at last the “far enemy” (the United States) he had been plotting against understood al
Qaeda’s potential for inflicting damage and was treating the terrorist group as combatants.” (Starr-Deelen 2014, 129)

In other words, al-Qaeda was actually legitimized because of the US declaration of war against them, a non-state actor. Although just war theory would not officially or conventionally apply because the requirements for war conflict—state actor versus state actor—were not satisfied, the reverberating social and political implications of the label war bolstered al-Qaeda’s positioning.

A Collective National Memory

One of President Bush’s framing devices is the invocation of a collective national memory. The existing literature demonstrates President Bush’s framing of a collective memory to garner public support for presidential policies through historical indexing. The WWII attacks on Pearl Harbor are mentioned to heighten the American peoples’ fear and feeling of domestic vulnerability (Hodges 2011, 30). President Bush’s use of the Pearl Harbor attacks also facilitates the borrowing of a legitimate wartime narrative. Pearl Harbor was orchestrated by the Japanese military, a state actor, and was consequently viewed as an act of war. A non-state actor, however, orchestrated the 9/11 terrorist attacks (Weeks 2010, 129). President Bush’s mission relies on his ability to frame the 9/11 attacks as an act of war. His dominant method for doing so is through fear, particularly referential fear. The axis of evil—Iraq, Iran, and North Korea—is another attempt by President Bush to “evoke the ‘Axis Powers’ in World War II, that is, Germany, Italy, and Japan (Sanger, 2009:42)” (Starr-Deelen 2014, 111). The collective memory strategy is meant to link an unconventional state versus non-state war to a conventional state versus state war.
Indexing causes President Bush’s audience to indiscriminately and simultaneously feel the fear and the justification of a war response to Pearl Harbor, but for the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The Bush administration strived to “maintain a ’state of war’ mentality…[because] threat inflation resulted in fewer public calls for democratic accountability regarding the conduct of the war on terror” (Starr-Deelen 2014, 214). The perception of being at war increases an individual’s feeling of vulnerability. 9/11 offered a window of opportunity for an imperial presidency (Daalder and Lindsay 2005). President Bush justified unilateralism because he sermonized the importance of preemptive action and denigrated deterrence and containment as ineffective methods for eliminating this revolutionary threat—not revolutionary because terrorism was a new strategy, but because of the target of the terrorist attacks: the United States (Starr-Deelen 2014, 109).

Us Versus Them

The existing literature discusses four different mechanisms that President Bush utilizes to invoke an us versus them framing of the enemy: Manichean dualism, anti-patriotism, identity, and external responsibility.

Manichean Dualism

President Bush makes the “distinction between the democratic nature of Us and the autocratic nature of Them…through references to the enemy’s leaders as ‘dictator’ or ‘tyrant’” (Hodges 2013, 61). These lexical triggers simultaneously degrade the Other while strengthening our collective identity because it is anti-Them.
President Bush’s most famous use of Manichean dualism is his proclamation that the War on Terror had two sides only, no neutrality. He stated that,

Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime. (President George W. Bush, September 20, 2001)

Manichean dualism allows for an expansion of the enemy because it defines non-in-group members as dichotomously the out-group. Unlike the existing literature, my analysis connects President Bush’s use of Manichean dualism framing with the one of the five, different potential threat responses. Manichean dualism reinforces in-group and out-group identification by dehumanizing the other. It stresses the inherent incompatibility of two groups to justify violence in order to protect the in-group’s security.

*Anti-Patriotism*

Patriotism becomes an unparalleled source of security and unification during a crisis. After 9/11, Americans rallied around the flag, which led to unprecedented levels of patriotism—the levels drop as time since the crisis increases.2 This surge in nationalism during a time of national crisis “upset” the constitutional balance “in favor of presidential power and at the expense of presidential accountability” (Starr-Deelen 2014, 106). Conflict also conflates the president with the nation. Furthering Jong Lee’s observation of the president “becom[ing] the focus of national attention in times of crisis,” Lantis illuminates how “patriotism becomes associated with supporting presidential actions” (Lantis 2013, 215). Americans after the 9/11 attacks

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2 In a post-9/11 survey, ninety-seven percent of Americans believed that that they “would rather be a citizen of America than any other country in the world.”
went along with President Bush’s policy out of a need for unification and out of fear of being labeled anti-patriotic. Contestation is interpreted as too great of a risk. Americans’ desperate need for national unity made them susceptible to unquestioning support of the president and his policies because President Bush emerged from 9/11 as the strong, shining leader who would carry the US out of peril into safety. Anti-patriotism relies on the conflation of state, president, and his policies through fear of association with the denigrated out-group.

*Identity*

A major theme in President Bush’s terrorism rhetoric is a unified, national identity that overpowers domestic differences that were salient before the 9/11 crises. The use of “our” reinforces a collective identity because it directs and incites action from all of us. The power of presidential rhetoric in times of crisis partially comes from the “discursive projection of unity” where even “dissenting voices opposed to war…are backgrounded while the common element of shared citizenship is foregrounded” (Hodges 2013, 64). This is similar to the anti-patriotism in that both silence dissent, but the theme of identity heightens in-group and out-group awareness in order to achieve this national unity because the American people needed to feel supported by one another. Anti-patriotism uses the fear of being associated with the out-group to eliminate contestation.

President Bush’s “our” language amplifies 9/11 as a rallying moment. The theme of identity is most apparent in President Bush’s unification of “an aggrieved collective against its perceived aggressor(s)” (Hodges 2013, 69). There is a substantial feature of fear appeal in this strategy because the collective must feel
aggrieved and vulnerable in order to incentivize the subduing of previously salient domestic differences. President Bush exaggerated the crisis, the danger to his civilians, and the anticipated success of his policy in eradicating al-Qaeda and terrorist sympathizers who pose a threat to the United States. The resulting national state of fear followed by President Bush’s rhetorically induced sense of safety in his hands allows for the more “situationally relevant” qualities of the American people to trump grievances and disparities (Hodges 2013, 64). The theme of Us versus Them begins as a call for unification and the prioritization of US security.

External Responsibility

President Bush’s response to terrorism portrays US involvement abroad as a benefit to the region and the world. This perception is reminiscent of the way the UK’s Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour spoke about the Egyptians and the continent of Europe benefiting from British governance. President Bush dehumanizes the enemy through a frame called civilization v. barbarism. Widmaier traces this frame back to isolationism’s “evangelical aversion to external impurities…[flipping] into an evangelical desire to cleanse the world’s imperfections” (Widmaier 2015, 14). The East, more specifically al-Qaeda, is described as parasites, brutes, and savages. President Bush’s dehumanizing terrorism rhetoric successfully distances the American people from the enemy. As Podvonaia explains, this moral distancing provides the mechanism for the West’s “dissociat[ion] [of the East] from…human species” (Hodges 2013, 80). The dehumanized enemy becomes the equivalent of territory and needs to be directed and controlled by the West. Thus, US intervention is
portrayed as not only necessary, but also essential. President Bush needs to lead US forces into the East in order to save the dehumanized enemy from himself.

Another speech strategy to promote intervention abroad is victimization rhetoric. Victimization rhetoric uses the passive voice to make the conflict seem as though it were “thrust” upon the United States (Hodges 2013, 57). It makes the US a victim of the conflict and, thus, diminishes the possibility of the US being viewed as an aggressor. Even though President Bush took action, those actions of the US are “erased” or repurposed as responsive (Hodges 2013, 57). This rhetorical device intensifies moral distancing by distancing the US from responsibility for the conflict and from the depiction of initiator. It is important to note, however, that victimization rhetoric does not make—in this case—the United States feel like a victim. The goal is to portray the crisis as happening to Americans and the invocation of an external responsibility “transforms [the president’s] in-group…to a self-designated savior of mankind” (Hodges 2013, 74). The 9/11 response is portrayed as a benefit to the world at large, which entices national and trans-national participation in the fight. An interesting characteristic of this global appeal to fight terrorism is its “strengthening [of] the perception of anonymity among ingroup members…[and how it] relieves individual audience members of personal accountability” (Hodges 2013, 72–3). The American people, in particular, are able to facelessly blend into the national unit, which protects them psychologically because they are not individually held accountable. Thus, President Bush’s goal was not necessarily legitimate unity, but rather the appearance of unity.
Call to Arms

There exists substantial literature on President Bush’s employment of call to arms rhetoric because it is the way in which the president makes the public pro-war. 9/11 is an interesting case study in terms of public opinion because the majority of Americans wanted to go to war; the public did not pull the Bush administration into action, but the Bush administration did enjoy domestic-bureaucratic alignment regarding seeking retribution against those responsible for the attacks. President Bush’s audience, however, was not limited to that of American citizens, of which he was most certainly aware. President Bush was addressing the American people, governmental officials worldwide, and civilians of other nations. Call to arms is a crucial rhetorical strategy because it “direct[s] the audience to consume the rhetoric in a way that incites the individual to pick up arms for a cause external to his or her personal interest” (Hodges 2013, 71). President Bush used the theme of call to arms to connect people around the world to his cause: combating global terrorism. 9/11 was a pivotal moment for call to arms because it provided a legitimate reason for Americans and non-Americans to commit themselves to the fight.

In addition to reprioritizing causes for individuals, call to arms framing also “justifies a reconsideration of the principled foundations of state interests” (Widmaier 2015, 9). Some scholars attribute more aggressive foreign policy strategies to call to arms framing because it garners war support. President Bush stated that,

The greater the threat, the greater is the risk of inaction—and the more compelling the case for taking anticipatory action to defend ourselves, even if uncertainty remains as to the time and place of the enemy’s attack. To forestall or prevent such hostile acts by our adversaries, the United States will, if necessary, act preemptively. (The National Security Strategy of the United States of America (Washington, DC: The White House, 2002))
President Bush had tremendous war support during his early calls for preemptive action in 2002. In actuality, two of the Bush Doctrine’s four points promoted this approach. With the success of call to arms framing, President Bush was no longer preoccupied by the need to prevent war. President Bush gave the Taliban government several ultimatums before invasion, but Hodges posits that the “issuance of a final ultimatum does more to manufacture consent with a domestic audience than to act as a serious diplomatic gesture” (Hodges 2013, 55). President Bush needed to perpetuate civilian support for the war, so the ultimatums were merely a formality because his intention was to indeed go to war, especially with domestic, and international, audiences’ war alignment.

My analysis tells us that if America, the strongest nation in the world, could be targeted and successfully attacked, then no one is safe and we must all rise up together to fight for the universal cause of security. The once external cause quickly becomes intertwined with an individual’s most personal interest. After this connection was achieved, President Bush possessed the “mechanisms…to enable the act of aggression.” Violence goes against human morality, but call to arms encourages the linkage of the threat of terrorism—which targeted Americans—with people around the world. This linkage is rooted in the perception of an existential threat. Existential threats, as social psychology tells us, enable any human being to violate his morals, including acts of aggression.
American Exceptionalism and Crusading Liberalism

The words ‘America’ and ‘hegemony’ are intricately woven together because of the international community’s perception of the US and US global involvement. American exceptionalism captures the idea of the United States as an unparalleled, exceptional nation whose duty it is to lead the democratic crusade around the world because we have figured it all out. The War on Terror had a two-fold objective: retribution against individuals and nation-states responsible for the 9/11 terrorist attacks; and elimination of similar threats against the US through crusading liberalism. The Bush administration’s “construction of a liberal crusade” that would benefit all peoples everywhere provided the justification for “embarking…on a ‘preemptive’ war” (Widmaier 2015, 127). President Bush’s external focus and hyperbolic rallying around the idea of America as exceptional fostered over-confidence. His instinctual crusading liberalism after the 9/11 crisis was followed by this over-confidence, which ultimately “engender[ed] tensions which then spurr[ed] renewed crisis” (Widmaier 2015, 2). Widmaier critiques President Bush’s invocation of crusading liberalism because it led to an over-commitment to the Middle East, fueled by realist power hunger, and exacerbated the tensions underlying the original crisis.

Anti-intellectualism

The existing literature of President Bush’s terrorism rhetoric explores his speech tactic of anti-intellectualism. Scholars begin their analysis on anti-intellectualism with a distinction between intellect and intelligence. According to Richard Hofstadter, “intelligence will seize immediate meaning in a situation and
evaluate it. Intellect evaluated evaluations...[it is] a unique manifestation of human dignity” (Hofstadter 1963, 25). Anti-intellectualism is a rhetorical strategy that prevents the need for the speech’s audience to evaluate the president’s evaluations of the world and its resultant policy. Elvin Lim harshly criticizes the increasing invocation of anti-intellectualism over time, and “reject[s] the premise...that citizens cannot digest anything more than platitudes and simplistic slogans” (Lim 2008, xii).

Anti-intellectualism differs from accidentally sounding unintellectual. Anti-intellectualism is when “simplification is deliberately and immoderately pursued” (Lim 2008, 41). Its invocation could stem from a fear of coming off too highbrow—as was common in the 19th and early 20th century. If a president were to distance himself from his constituents because they could not identify with him, then approval ratings would plummet. Anti-intellectualism, when achieved as it is with President Bush, is “detectable in the conspicuous valorization of the common citizens and the mimicry of his or her simple locution” (Lim 2008, 22–23). Its purpose is to sound and so appear like the average Joe. President Bush was highly criticized for emphasizing how he can relate to the average person via simple locution3 because this often made his speeches impermeable to evaluations of concrete policy choices made by President Bush.

3 My analysis does not focus on anti-intellectual qualitative analysis of non-terrorism sections of speeches, but it is worth highlighting that President Obama uses anecdotes as opposed to anti-intellectualism to relate to the people. He uses his empathy for people who are actually going through certain experiences as a means to connect with the American people. He does not adopt simple locution, as does President Bush.
Implications

Woodrow Wilson said in his 1912 campaign that he was in “fear” of a government that wielded its power and credibility from the perception of it possessing unparalleled expertise (Lim 2008, 28). Anti-intellectualism is sometimes advocated for because it yields straightforward explanations, which the American people can grasp. Peggy Noonan states that simplicity gives speeches their power, because they are “said straight and plain and direct.” Lim, however, warns that,

Simplicity does not guarantee the truth, only the semblance of sincerity. Paradoxically, in heeding Noonan’s advice, presidents have to be untruthful or duplicitous—altering their innate speech patterns—in order to appear truthful. (Lim 2008, 47)

Additionally, simplification—which is an unavoidable quality of anti-intellectual framing—“robs the message of nuance and changes its meaning” (Lim 2008, 53). Although President Bush may offer a simplistic explanation for the US invasion in Iraq, anti-intellectualism prevents the audience from evaluating his evaluation because there is not enough substance present to consider alternatives or pinpoint weakness in its justification.

Anti-intellectualism’s simplification certainly is successful in its manipulation of fear. The straightforwardness of anti-intellectualism’s discussion of a threat makes the audience too hesitant to question its certainty. The risk of being wrong is too great, so they accept President Bush’s explanation of the current situation. Lim provides an eloquent example and follow-up analysis of an invocation of anti-intellectualism in context of a threat:

‘We choose to meet that threat now, where it arises, before it can appear suddenly in our skies and cities’ is just the sort of sentence that could raise the stubborn hairs on the back of even the most cynical rhetorical scholar, but
many Americans have lived to regret their susceptibility to such chest thumping. We were susceptible because we were not invited to think, but to feel and to agree. (Lim 2008, 58–9)

The American people relinquished their inherent power to question the president’s statements. Anti-intellectualism distills argumentation until it becomes simplistic facts whose credibility cannot be easily challenged. The people are forced to agree because the conflict is simplified into a dichotomy from which they must choose—and there is tremendous incentive to side with the nation and the president than challenge the establishment, particularly in times of crisis. Anti-intellectualism constructs the world in black and white, and inhibits the people from seeing themselves—their principles, their preferences—in the president’s declared plan of action, despite the fact that the president’s ability to do so stems from his adoption of the people’s simple locution. Through the forced, deliberate presentation of himself as one of the people, the president robs the American people of their identity, of seeing themselves in him and his policies. They blindly accept; they do not evaluate and the policies do not resonate.

Elvin Lim also states the “presidential rhetoric today is short on logos, disingenuous on ethos, and long on pathos.” Logos, ethos, and pathos—in order—are the appeal to reason; the speaker’s credibility; and emotion. The discussion of President Bush’s use of anti-intellectualism successfully conveys the rhetorical strategy’s popularity over time as well as its implications on the speaker and the audience. The analysis’ weakness is in its inability to contribute the particular balance of logos, ethos, and pathos to a grander strategy.
1.2 President Barack Obama

There is not much existing literature on President Obama’s terrorism response rhetoric. His presidency began on January 20, 2009 and does not end until January 20, 2017. Additionally, two major terrorism events—ISIS’ Paris attacks and the San Bernardino, California shooting—occurred in the fall of 2015. The existing literature focuses on President Obama’s campaign platform and compares that with his response to terrorist threats during his first presidential term.

Campaign Platform

President Obama’s campaign priority was distancing himself from President Bush and his policies. President Obama outwardly rejected President Bush’s term the ‘axis of evil.’ He “emphasized his early opposition” to the Iraq War and condemned the US’ steady overextension in the Middle East. President Obama ran on the promise of reform. He was the pragmatic, slow thinker—characteristics that were emboldened after President Bush’s period of crusading liberalism (Widmaier 2015, 2–3). President Obama’s pragmatism shined through when, during his 2007 campaign, he announced that he would not “leave troops in Iraq even to stop genocide” (McCormick 2012, 432). President Obama continues by highlighting the hypocrisy of US involvement in Iraq. President Bush’s selective intervention undermines his approach of crusading liberalism. As President Obama points out, if humanitarianism justified intervention and was a major reason behind the Iraq invasion, then the US would be in Congo due to its decades long, devastating genocide (McCormick 2012, 432). President Obama’s
opinion that US troop involvement necessitates a high threshold directly opposes President Bush’s belief that the US responsibility is global policing.

Widmaier describes President Obama’s grand strategy as a reaction to both the international context and the previous administrations. President Obama declared his stance of anti-crusading liberalism, which became another window of opportunity to publicly admonish the Iraq War. In response to the “promotion of democracy in recent years,” President Obama firmly stated that, “No system of government can or should be imposed by one nation on any other.” (Obama 2009) The rhetoric of President Obama’s campaign and the rhetoric early in his first term demonstrate his resolve to deviate from President Bush’s strategies.

**Views on US Involvement Abroad**

President Obama makes a strong distinction between force and war. Many of President Obama’s views are interpreted as being temporally dynamic, in the sense that his positions are deeply informed by those taken by President Bush. President Obama’s outlook on US intervention abroad was very much responsive to the Bush administration’s policies. President Obama believed that the US needed to “extricate itself from the Middle East and Afghanistan” (McCormick 2012, 433). President Obama, too, was concerned with audience costs, but the American public was suffering from extreme war fatigue. Thus, the previously pro-war American public was transformed by the US losses in Iraq and Afghanistan and now lobbied for a return to selective engagement. President Obama prioritized “resisting pressures to a revived crusading liberalism” while maintaining a realist awareness of the balance of
power (Widmaier 2015, 105). The intention behind US intervention abroad comes across in President Obama’s speeches when he explicitly rejects the previous administration’s justifications for intervention.

Response to Modern Conflict

One major distinction between President Obama and President Bush is President Obama’s embracing of modern conflict. President Obama calls for US security strategy to “adapt to the changing circumstances of the twenty-first century in which nation-states ‘no longer have a monopoly on mass violence’” (Starr-Deelen 2014, 167). Donna Starr-Deelen’s analysis portrays President Obama’s sensitivity and responsiveness to contemporary changes in threats and weaponry.

The existing literature focuses on specific moments when President Obama diverged from President Bush. President Obama did not say that intervention abroad should not be made for humanitarian reasons. What he did say is that this form of intervention should be the responsibility of the international community, not America alone. This sentiment, along with President Obama’s pursuit of “Security Council approval,” sheltered his administration from fears of “potential Bush-styled unilateralism” (Widmaier 2015, 121). President Obama’s rhetoric demonstrates that he is not afraid to act; it conveys a series of efforts to move away from the American unilateralism and imperial presidency of the past. His upholding of procedure with seeking Security Council approval confirms his concern with intervention’s requirement of approval from legitimate authority.

Starr-Deelen emphasizes President Obama’s tactical changes in order to dynamically respond to modern threats of terrorism. President Obama does not think
that negotiations will “hinder” terrorist organizations, so he rules negotiations out as an ineffective approach to undermining and eliminating the threats of terrorist organizations (Starr-Deelen 2014, 168). His willingness to adapt to new information allows him to specifically respond to a particular threat.

The analysis does not really explore the implications of this non-negotiation approach with terrorist organizations on the severity of intervention. President Obama does not view a war of attrition with slow escalation and room for negotiation as applicable to modern terrorism conflicts. The trouble lies in whether he values lower level, peaceful alternatives to bombing. The existing literature talks about President Obama’s drone usage, but does not dive into President Obama’s terrorism rhetoric, however, to see if there are examples of him preferring lower level, peaceful alternatives to bombing in his speeches. There is no comparison of whether this stance of non-negotiation with terrorist organizations is reflective of a greater rhetorical pattern. It is presented as definitive without much speech rhetoric as evidence.

President Obama vehemently promised to withdraw troops from Iraq and Afghanistan, but does his rhetoric and action differ from that 2009 proclamation throughout the rest of his presidency? In addition to troop withdrawal, President Obama promised “that he was ‘moving toward a more targeted approach’ that ‘dismantles terrorist networks without deploying large American armies’” (McCormick 2012, 433). The context of his 2009 stance was one of low domestic, and international, approval ratings regarding the US presence in Iraq and Afghanistan. My analysis is valuable because it looks at the progression of President
Obama’s rhetoric and provides plausible explanations for the changes and/or continuity. The existing literature’s analysis would have been bolstered by an acknowledgement of the American peoples’ war fatigue and President Obama’s first-year concern of minimizing audience costs. He did not want to rock the boat early on in his presidency because it could isolate and gridlock him from making any progress during the rest of his term. This domestic appeal, however, is linked to President Obama’s platform of distancing his presidency from that of the Bush administration. My thesis provides a detailed quantitative and qualitative analysis of the detectible similarities and differences between President Obama and President Bush’s terrorism response rhetoric. My analysis does not claim one stance based on a singular moment or small string of moments, but rather has a frame of reference that spans both of the presidencies.4

*Extreme Language and Credibility*

President Obama is critiqued for hard positioning as a national security strategy. Hard positioning increases the risk of involvement because reneging detrimentally impacts the international community’s perception of American credibility and resolve. His red lining in Syria on August 20, 2012 is a major source of criticism. His inaction, after a firm promise of action, “left Obama vulnerable to charges lacking sufficient policy assertiveness” (Widmaier 2015, 124). He attempts to make others—external actors—afraid, but his inaction cancels out the potential

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4 An obvious limitation with my research here is that President Obama is still in office. My thesis is finished on April 12th, which leaves roughly eight months of President Obama’s presidency unanalyzed. He will not, however, be giving any more State of the Union addresses and he will hopefully not be giving any post-attack speeches before January. Therefore, my data set does provide a comparable time period and set of speeches to analyze.
effectiveness of hard positioning, while eliminating hard positioning’s credibility in the future. Scholars have focused on the peculiar balance of President Obama’s “terribly imperative and categorical” rhetoric with his ambiguous foreign policy stances: he threatened action, but responded with inaction (McCormick 2012, 445). Brzesinski states that President Obama “doesn’t strategize. He sermonizes” (McCormick 2012, 445). Examples of this sermonizing include “You must do this,” and “He must do that,” and “This is unacceptable” (McCormick 2012, 445). President Obama, frustratingly, tears down the perception of American resolve that he built up when his foreign policy strategies do not align with his terrorism response rhetoric.

The existing literature cannot posit rhetorical patterns because these scholars’ analyses do not dynamically look at President Obama’s rhetorical patterns across his presidency. These analyses portray specific moments as accurate representations of his threat response strategy. The themes, such as extreme language, presented in the existing literature about President Obama are incredibly broad. Scholars do not distinguish between the many types of extreme language, assembling an ambiguous interpretation of President Obama’s rhetoric. The existing literature does not contextualize the invocation of extreme language, which misleads readers into thinking that his rhetoric is does not change during his presidency.

**Critique of Existing Literature:**

*What is missing? Why is its absence significant?*

The existing literature does not have follow-up analysis as to why call to arms framing, for example, successfully connects individuals to an external cause. This oversight is due to the existing literature’s blindness to the relation of President
Bush’s salient rhetorical content to broader threat response meta-narratives. Call to arms, as the next chapter explains, is a rhetorical strategy rooted in social psychology that extends the in-group identification in order to justify violence. My thesis is important for moments such as this. Yes, the existing literature highlights salient themes in President Bush and President Obama’s terrorism rhetoric, but it does not contribute an explanation for how the presidents achieve the objective related to each of these themes.

The existing literature really only analyzes President Obama’s views on intervention in relation to those of President Bush. The existing literature attempts to work with the temporal limitations—the reality that President Obama’s presidency is still going on—by highlighting inter-presidency differences. This, however, is an unavoidable shortcoming of an analysis that only examines a presidency early on and then attempts to make conclusions based on that minimal data. My analysis seeks to overcome this oversight by holding President Obama accountable to his own words by looking at his rhetorical patterns over time.

For both my analysis of President Bush and President Obama, the presidents stay the same while the context of their presidency changes. My project demonstrates how context drives rhetoric, particularly international events’ power to drive terrorism response rhetoric. The pattern of invocation of the five disciplinary literatures on threat responses and the justification of violence over the course of each president’s presidency as well as the invocation formula within each speech expose which threat response strategy is most salient, thus expressing the contextual circumstance the president finds himself at that moment.
The detrimental technicality present in much of the existing literature is the presentation of snapshot analysis, which explains what is happening at a given moment, and then lumps similar happenings together. This ignores, though, the background of the moments or the big picture to which a rhetorical framing device is linked. This type of analysis does not consider why something may be happening; this is what actually distinguishes one rhetorical frame that per se justifies violence from another rhetorical frame that also justifies violence. The value of each of these frames is in the mode through which they achieve their outcome, which could truly be the same for both frames. My thesis conceptualizes the existing literature’s themes as well as other rhetorical frames as rungs on a ladder. Looking just at the rung itself does not provide much insight into what is actually going on. My analysis steps back to see the big picture. It connects these rhetorical frames or content—rungs—to the invoked threat response meta-narrative—the sides of the ladder. My analysis also demonstrates how each of these meta-narratives as well as their content are related to one another. All of these parts, the rhetorical frames and the science behind their persuasion, come together to achieve the threat response literature’s objective, allowing you to see the ladder.
CHAPTER TWO

The Five Potential Threat Responses and Their Associated Theories

In this thesis, I argue that presidents can take different approaches to talking about terrorism.\textsuperscript{1} A president can: (1) discuss terrorism within the framework of international law; (2) try to rally support for his foreign policy through (a) fear, or (b) nationalism; or (3) give in to the temptation of reinforcing in-group and out-group mentality through (a) dehumanizing the enemy, or (b) exoticizing the enemy.\textsuperscript{2}

To elaborate on these different potential responses, I draw on five theoretical literatures that illuminate the framing mechanisms and motivations behind a president’s invocation of each of the five potential responses. It links frames, such as Manichean dualism, with the theoretical literature of social psychology. This analytical approach exposes the plethora of frames that can be used to invoke us versus them, keeping with the example, in response to a threat. The absence of a particular frame or theme does not necessary mean that the evoked, associated threat response—one of the five potential threat responses—is absent. The existing literature, however, does not convey this.

\textsuperscript{1} This thesis analyzes how US presidents talk about the threat of terrorism after 9/11, but this identical analytical framework can be applied to any actor responding to any threat. I will henceforth define this actor as the president and define the threat to which he is responding as terrorism.

\textsuperscript{2} Because two of the three potential threat responses can be further differentiated by the emotional mechanism that achieves rallying or dichotomizing, I state that there are actually five potential ways a president can respond to a terrorist threat.
I created a framework for analyzing how actors publicly frame issues of terror. My analysis of presidential terrorism rhetoric takes an inter-disciplinary approach. In this chapter, I discuss the five different theories that provide an explanation for and the implications of the five potential threat responses: (1) just war theory; (2) the securitization theory; (3) rally around the flag effect; (4) social psychology; (5) and orientalism. This set of literature may seem irrelevant, but I use it to fill in the gaps of the exiting literature. These theories form the foundation of a framework that analyzes threat response rhetoric and actually allows for easy comparison of threat response rhetoric between actors.

First, I explain these theories to show how we expect a president to respond to a terrorist threat. Then, I outline lexical triggers and five potential frames that we can expect to see when analyzing how President Bush and President Obama talk about terrorism.

We expect different responses and, more specifically, different framings of terrorist threats, from different political leaders. This framework will change the discourse on terrorism rhetoric because it can be applied to analyze any actor’s rhetorical response to any threat, not just presidential terrorism response rhetoric. This is possible because the framework analyzes each actor’s rhetoric against the lexical triggers found in the theoretical literatures of each of the five potential ways to talk about a threat. Social Psychology, for example, explains how any actor will respond whereas just war theory and rally around the flag effect explain the actions and justifications of political actors.
If a president were to use either securitization theory or rally around the flag to frame a terrorism threat, then he would be attempting to unite the nation through the crisis. I look at social psychology because it explains in-group and out-group dynamics, which is a salient framing mechanism for dehumanizing the enemy. According to social psychology, values emerge out of initial reactions, which are shaped by unconscious associations and intellectual predispositions. This literature explains the psychological malleability of the American people in times of crisis. Orientalism explains America’s perceived superiority over the Middle East and justifies US intervention abroad. Just war theory is not the same as the justification of war. If a president uses just war theory to frame a threat response, then he is appealing to international law or norms to guide the nation’s conduct. The existing literature devotes a lot of discussion to President Bush’s justification of war, but war justification and just war theory are different.

As expressed above, these five literatures are not all clearly linked to threat response like securitization theory and rally around the flag effect. While social psychology is rooted in conflict behavior and self-preservation in the face of the threat, orientalism and just war theory are not fundamentally theories about threat response. By looking at just war theory, social psychology, and orientalism, we can learn about how actors talk about the enemy.

2.1 Just War Theory, the Legalist Perspective

This segment is about international law and just war theory’s justification of war. I look at just war theory because presidents talk about war in terms of
international law and violations of treaties, laws, and/or agreements to justify their actions. Additionally, President Obama involved international law during his campaign, so it is expected for him to use a legalist response to an attack, an intentional distancing technique from President Bush’s perspective. This section briefly summarizes the main tenets of just war theory, so that I can later identify what words would best capture the legalist framing in presidential rhetoric. Just war theory strives to answer the following questions: “is war ever justified? If so, for what purposes [is it justified]? Who has the authority to decide to wage war? What is acceptable war conduct?” (Regan Richard J 1996, vii). These questions guide the tenets of just war theory, so that there would be a consensus under international law.

The Criteria of a Just War

Augustine, Cicero, and Aristotle certainly influenced just war theory, but the six institutionalized requirements of a just war slightly differ from those these philosophers proposed. The six criteria are (1) the decision to wage war was decided by a legitimate, constitutional authority; (2) the war is waged for a just cause; (3) the war waging nation has the right intention for waging war; (4) the loss of life is proportional to the injustice prevented; (5) all peaceful strategies have been acknowledged and attempted before going to war; and (6) there is a reasonable hope for success of the war (Mosley 2009; Orend 2005)” (Hodges 2013, 51).

The legalist argument of war focuses on two concepts of just war theory: *jus ad bellum*—the justification of the decision to wage war—and *jus in bello*—the justness of conduct in war, which imposes limitations on behavior. These two
concepts are interrelated. The “justness of war” depends on the way the war is waged, *jus in bello*, and the justness of conduct in war likewise depends on the justness of the decision to wage the war, *jus ad bellum*. Because of this, “if the very launching of war and its rationalization are flawed” in terms of just war theory criteria, “then the combat subsequently unleashed by the attacker must also be viewed as unjust no matter what form it assumes” (Weeks 2010, 107). A legalist frame stresses the adherence to just war theory’s decision to wage war because the absence of this justification renders every subsequent act fruit of the poisonous tree in terms of legality.

According to just war theory, the decision to wage war must be determined by a legitimate, constitutional authority. This actor, typically the leader of the nation’s government, must regulate the force used during the war. Building off of just war theory, the UN Charter states that a UN nation cannot intervene internationally on an issue that falls within the nation’s government’s jurisdiction. The UN Charter takes this concept one step further by explicitly condemning the use of force or the threat of force against “the territorial integrity and political independence of any state” (Regan Richard J 1996, 34).

The second criterion for a just war is that the war is waged for a just cause. Just war theory strives to limit leaders’ ability to reach into their back pocket and pull out any excuse for war. The pursuit and punishment of an aggressor like a nation-state that just attacked justifies war as retaliatory because it is in self-defense (Hodges 2013, 53). Humanitarian reasons are not considered a just cause unless the government of the nation in crisis invited the intervention. Despite our moral duty to
prevent human suffering, nations must resist intervening in nations’ internal affairs and “resist the Messianic temptation to right every wrong without regard to short- and long-term consequences” that war would bring (Regan Richard J 1996, 72). The intention of war should be restoring the status quo, so that all actors involved will be secure and autonomous. For this to happen, the war-waging nation cannot have selfish interests in the region, which includes territorial expansion, ideological expansion, or regime change.

The devastation of a just war must not be “violence for the sake of violence” and the loss of life it causes must be proportional to the injustice it prevents (Weeks 2010, 25; 50). Proportionality requires target discrimination: a differentiation between enemy guilty civilians and enemy innocent civilians. Just warriors can target enemy nationals who are “participating in the enemy nation’s wrongdoing” but cannot target other nationals (Regan Richard J 1996, 87). *Jus in bello* prohibits the targeting of noncombatant civilians (Weeks 2010, 102). A major consideration for military operations is whether the attack will kill enemy innocent civilians and, if so, how many? If a major target is also surrounded by noncombatants, then the value of the major target could outweigh the loss of those civilian lives (Regan Richard J 1996, 93).

Although enemy innocent civilians may be killed intentionally as in the aforementioned example, there is a distinction between military necessity and discrimination. If a civilian is killed out of military necessity, then the civilian was indeed targeted, but his death was unavoidable as collateral damage to a major war strategy. If a civilian is killed due to discrimination, then the civilian was targeted.
The number of lives lost factors into a war’s feasibility criterion, a measurement of success in the sixth requirement for a just war. Success requires a risk assessment for personnel on both sides. High risks means that war needs to be avoided at all costs, so a non-military strategy as the solution. Soldiers must also not be put “deliberately…in harm’s war” (Weeks 2010, 78). The success criterion echoes the just intention criterion because both are rooted in fighting and violence as a means to a feasible, measurable end.

**Just War on Behalf of Values?**

In her book *Just war against terror: the burden of American power in a violent world*, Jean Elshtain poses the question of whether it is moral to “employ force in the protection and preservation of values” (Elshtain 1992, 55). She argues that peace is the foundational, gateway value. Without peace, other values cannot exist. Michael Walzer, however, reverses Elshtain’s argument by saying that the justification of war “lies in the recognition of evil and revulsion against it” (Elshtain 1992, 64). The need to fight only exists when one group perceives another group’s values as incompatible with their own. The urge to wage war in defense of values, thus, hinges on the discovery of a threat to the war wager’s values (Elshtain 1992, 65). The limitation on this military defense in the name of the preservation of values is proportionality and intention criteria of *jus in bello* (Elshtain 1992, 69). Abiding by the principles of proportionality and intention distinguishes an act of war from terrorism. This axis between terrorism and international law lays along this requirement.
Historically, the limit on war conduct was set by weapon capabilities. Weaponry development in the 21st century has rendered this type of constraint moot. Today, the limitation of force is human choice. Elshtain addresses the issue of human choice determining military restraint and the psychological dissonance of protecting values via a strategy that violates those values. She proclaims that,

If the use of force is justified in response to threats against value, but the only means of force available are such that they contravene important values themselves, then the preferred moral alternative is the development of different means of force (Elshtain 1992, 70).

Her recommendation nullifies the idea of supreme emergency: the justification of fighting in a way that violates the values for which you are fighting because if you did not fight, then you and your values would die. Supreme emergency interprets waging war on behalf of values similarly to the framing of war imperialism as a means to prevent the unfit from threatening their own as well as others’ security.

**Just War Theory and Presidential Rhetoric: Observable Implications**

Building off of this exploration of just war theory and international law, the following rhetorical strategies are the frames we would expect to see in presidential speeches if the president is primarily concerned with international law and just war principles. Just war theory, in part, serves as a mode of inspiring popular support for war. If a war satisfies just war theory conditions, then it is viewed internationally as legitimate. In the case of an invasion or eminent threat when there is no apparent just war theory justification, Hodges states that “consent” is still “granted on the part of
the citizenry as a whole” out of fear (Hodges 2013, 47). To understand this consent, we must unpack the frames presidents employ to convince the world’s actors that the proposed war indeed is legitimate. It is problematic to think that presidents only rely on international law to undermine other domestic and international political actors’ criticism of the US response to a threat and minimize blowback for self-interest. The legalist frame can also be used to explain why intervention is not an option through conforming to prevalent international norms.

Just war theory conditions retaliatory war—war fought in self-defense after an attack or invasion that seeks to either pursue or punish the attacker—as just. When this circumstance does not exist, then the president must frame “the precipitating event as an ‘act of aggression’” to satisfy the just cause of *jus ad bellum* (Hodges 2013, 53). The term ‘act of aggression’ is used to construct an attack when in reality, none occurred. Thus, Just war theory can reflect either genuine concern for international norms or it can be used to justify policy and manipulate politics.

Simply describing the devastation of a conflict will not satisfy the just war requirements. The words murder and victim undoubtedly convey loss, but they frame the event as a crime. Lexical triggers for just war theory ‘war’ framing include “war,” “act of war,” “under attack,” “proportionality,” “aggression,” “act of aggression,” “retaliatory,” “casualties,” “civilian,” “discriminate attack,” “indiscriminate attack,” “international law,” “Geneva Conventions,” “violate,” “violation,” “without warning,” “necessary,” “United Nations,” “just,” and “moral”. These words are subconsciously associated with traditional warfare, international law, international norms and agreements, and, for that reason, promote a legalist response.
Another expected strategy using just war theory is for the president to explicitly state that the United States does not have any desire to take over the country with which it wants to wage war nor does it desire to change said country’s regime. The president will, however, remind the people of the differences in regime—and explicitly and intentionally, the ideological differences between the enemy and us.

2.2 Securitization Theory, Fear Induced Nationalism

Securitization theory facilitates states’ prioritization of specific issues by securitizing them, or calling them matters of national security. This categorical strategy often goes unchallenged because of faith in the system and because no one wants to appear unpatriotic. The common phrase “issue of national security” triggers secrecy of the elite and fearful trust from the people. If securitization theory is prevalent in presidential speeches post-9/11, then its purpose is to simultaneously mobilize the people around fighting for our national security and render them obediently whole-hearted. Its framing enables the president to convince the people of the security threat’s importance. Securitization rallies the people around a strategy because it is for a national interest. An important, unique quality of securitization theory is that it bolsters nationalism by preying on peoples’ fear. As you will see in the rally around the flag section that follows, a securitization response to threat is not motivational. It utilizes and exacerbates the American peoples’ natural insecurity and hysteria after the 9/11 attacks. Securitization centers around fear mongering, whereas rally around the flag evokes a nationally unified war mindset by positively inspiring
people to protect our wonderful nation. Securitization focuses instead on negative framing that builds off of the peoples’ post-threat vulnerability.

Securitization theory is rooted in subjectivity. It requires the deliberate framing of an event as a politically salient threat to national safety. The state, not one individual, has an unparalleled power in that it can “define security,” although an individual’s agenda can successfully permeate the state and attain its goal with other political elites’ alignment (Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde 1998, 31). Securitization can be described as an oratory strategy. This “speech act” is a “combination of language and society...[that] construct[s] a plot that includes existential threat, point of no return” and utilizes the credibility of the securitizing actor’s—the president—“position of authority” to legitimize the sometimes abstract threat (Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde 1998, 33). An interesting quality of securitization theory is that its existential threat may not actually exist. It solely needs to be presented as real.

Buzan describes the threat-legitimizing factors as facilitating conditions, which aid in “conjur[ing] a security threat” because they are socially accepted as threatening, such as “tanks, hostile sentiments or polluted waters” (Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde 1998, 33). The magnitude of devastation of a threat does not determine whether or not the state will securitize it. This is where the sociological element of securitization theory comes into play. For example, obesity, heart disease, car accidents, and the flu kill more Americans a year than the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks (Balzacq 2011, 116). Despite this reality, the state is not able to present them as a security threat because society, and American culture, is aware of
their threat; they are anticipated existential threats, so do not fall outside of the Americans’ category of everyday, accepted threat.

Unlike just war theory, securitization theory does not rely on international law or presidential powers to make an issue significant (Williams 2011, 459). There is a spectrum of public issues and their salience: politicized, non-politicized, and securitized. According to Buzan, securitization occurs when

An issue is presented as an existential threat, requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure…[it is] the move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue either as a special kind of politics or as above politics. (Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde 1998, 23)

Conversely, Balzacq, a member of the Copenhagen School of thought, argues that securitization does not require the state to make new powers in response to this existential threat. Balzacq argues that emergency powers do not need to be created to respond to securitization’s existential threat. The only demand of securitization theory is that “the existential threat has to be argued and gain enough resonance for a platform to be made from which it is possible to legitimize emergency measures (Balzacq 2011, 121). Thus, the outcome, or policy response, to the threat will be different than in times of peace, but the means with which this outcome is achieved are not expanded from peacetime powers.

Securitization Theory and Presidential Speeches: Observable Implications

If securitization theory is used to configure a response to the 9/11 attacks and continued threat, then we expect to see language that highlights “national security” and “national interest.” The speeches would express the attack’s effect on US security
and Americans’ personal security. Language that is also expected—which is unique to securitization theory—emphasizes the destabilization of America. Thus, “threat” is a focus on security requires a state of insecurity otherwise the citizenry will lack the intense sentiment that enables a shift in national interests. Some specific text strings include “threat,” “national security,” “national interest,” “security,” “insecurity,” “enemy,” “terror,” “terrorist,” “terrorism,” “War on Terror,” “safe,” “afraid,” “attack,” “track,” “suffering,” “fear(ful),” “loss,” “preemptive,” “monitor,” “danger,” “casualties,” “destruction,” “devastation,” and “death”. The lexical triggers of securitization theory declare that America needs to attack before it is attacked again. Therefore, words like “track,” “monitor,” and “surveillance” will be present in the presidential speeches because they are methods of security defense. Building off of crusading liberalism, the US upholds the global justice, freedom, liberty, and peace. Therefore, the US fighting preemptively is in the best interest of the American people, America, and American ideals.

2.3 Rally around the Flag Effect, Positivist Nationalism

The rally around the flag effect is a popular explanation for the emboldening of nationalism after a national security crisis. In peacetime, the unit of identification shrinks down to the individual level. In times of crisis, Mueller observed that the “public is more likely to rally in support of particular foreign policy causes and approve of the way the president is handling it” (Lantis 2013, 214). The crisis instills a sense of national unification, while it yields trust in the president and his decision-making. Mueller goes on to define three prerequisites of an event for the rally around the flag effect to occur. The event must (1) be international; (2) “involve the United
States, and particularly the president, directly;” (3) and it “must be ‘specific, dramatic, and sharply focused’” (Lantis 2013, 214–5). The public’s rally effect is the same for both positive and negative events. A nuclear attack crisis with Russia and the opening up of North Korea to the United States would both result in an increase in popular approval of the president, his policies, and his strategies.

**Crusading Liberalism**

Rally around the flag effect unifies a nation around its ideals during a time of crisis. In terms of 9/11, this crisis was a successful terrorist attack. 9/11, however, took the phenomenon that is rally around the flag effect to the next level by not only bolstering American ideals, but also promoting their spread around the world. Nationalism post-9/11 transformed into American exceptionalism. The concept of crusading liberalism stems from the belief that your set of values is right and all others are wrong. These inferior values and moral standards threaten not only your own nation and identity’s security, but also that of the world at large. Additionally, crusading liberalism views these inferior value systems as threatening the security of their believers, which then justifies the intervention of the moral superior to instate the right values. As Hermann Goering said in 1938,

> Why, of course, the people don’t want war…the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same way in any country. (Goering 1938)

This process can be seen in the America-9/11 case study. President Bush certainly rallied the American people around the flag in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, but a strong desire for US intervention abroad organically arose and made
President Bush’s crusading liberalism agenda possible. The American people wanted to go to war (Foyle 2004). Yes, Americans’ personal security was extremely threatened, but the rallying force at play is the desire to cast out American ideals as widely as possible around the globe. The mindset that existed at that time was that America needed to go on the offensive, but to disrupt the unjust, immoral systems that exist and liberate the poor victims in the Middle East—and then the world—from these oppressive values to destroy terrorism for good! After the 9/11 nationalism wave, America’s agenda was of crusading liberalism: to “remake the Middle East by spreading democracy” (Starr-Deelen 2014, 145).

The US foreign policy strategy was US hegemony, but the rise in nationalism post-9/11 led to the adoption of a second mission. The US would continue to be the superpower, while its values too would rise and dominate the international sphere. America’s “goals—because of their global reach—seem to take on universal validity. It becomes harder, at least in our eyes, to differentiate between our national interests and the interests of the globe” (Fuller 2006, 40). Americans’ belief that US values are “universally applicable” reinforces this conflation of domestic and international interests (Lantis 2013, 215). Because the US is perceived as the global peacekeeper, what is good for the United States must also be advantageous to the world as a whole because it perpetuates the US’ ability to intervene in global events. The US gladly acts as defender of “universal values—peace, freedom, and democracy” Hodges 2013, 61).

These values are aligned with both US national security and the good of all humanity so that by fighting to defend itself the United States in turn defends the universal interests of the world. (Hodges 2013, 61–2) The US privileges itself with the ability to define these “universal values” in terms of
its own personal interests. So, the US interpretation of these values becomes synonymous with these values unadulterated ideal: peace, freedom, democracy, and justice. A foreign policy mindset of crusading liberalism must be accompanied by nationalism. The rally around the flag effect that occurred after the 9/11 terrorist attacks was partnered with a national desire to expand American ideals abroad. The shift to internationalism was predictable because the 9/11 attacks drastically threatened the security of America, its peoples, and—as the people believed—American ideals. Thus, it was in the best interest of the nation and each American individual to go to war to protect these values from the non-American or inferior, amoral 9/11 planners and attackers.

**Rally around the Flag and Presidential Speeches: Observable Implications**

There are several rhetorical mechanisms that express rally around the flag effect by sermonizing a unified nation. They highlight the surge in nationalism after a threat, but justify crusading liberalism and the intervention it promotes differently.

*American Exceptionalism*

American exceptionalism focuses on the preservation of American ideals and conflates these ideals with universal values. It promotes the idea that a threat to America is a threat to global stability. If American exceptionalism is expressed in President Bush and President Obama’s presidential speeches, then there should be phrases about America’s righteousness and role as protector of democracy and other universal values. Themes include emphasizing nationalism, unity, as well as positively shifting the focus from the actual attack to the US response. The US would
be referred to as “good,” a “beacon of hope,” “light,” and other exaggeratedly wholesome and pure descriptions. The narrative will be in the first-person plural with the use of “us” and “we” to perpetuate the feeling of a national identity. Americanism must endure the “evil,” “suffering,” “loss,” and “tragedy” of the attacks.

Call to Arms

Call to arms framing emphasizes the virtue of Americanism. This Americanism differs from the national sentiment of American exceptionalism in that it actually intends to spark action, not just present the nation and its peoples as unparalleled and special. Call to arms takes that mentality of uniqueness one step further by declaring that because we are special, we must act. We are the only ones with the potential for success. Call to arms’ Americanism strengthens nationalist sentiment by defining the aggressor as non-American or evil and threatening the security of universal-American ideas.

Call to arms framing comes in four steps. The first is “an appeal to a legitimate power source that is external to the orator and which is presented as inherently good” (Graham, Keenan, and Dowd 2004, 211). The president is not an example of this because he is the orator, but also because rally around the flag effect blurs the president into the nation itself. Crisis seems to be the great equalizer and rally around the flag effect explains this amorphous unity where America becomes us and we become America. The second is “an appeal to the historical importance of the culture in which the discourse is situated,” so the value of American culture and values permeating and ameliorating the world. The third is the “construction of a
thoroughly evil Other\(^3\) who must be wiped from the face of the Earth.” The last is “an appeal for unification behind the legitimating external power source,” the United States of America and its essence (Graham, Keenan, and Dowd 2004, 211). Call to arms framing serves to combat individuals’ aversion towards committing violence by justifying it with the fight for American ideals and, thus, global solidarity. This vital courage to defend universal ideals exterminates the Other, but it was deliberately violating humanity by practicing and promoting acts that are inconsistent with Americanism.

*Epideictic Rhetoric*

Epideictic oratory refers to ceremonies discourse used to convey either praise or blame. This type of rhetoric is used to “unify the community and amplify its virtues” (Murphy 2003, 609). Similar to the American exceptionalism and call to arms frames’ ability to build off of nationalism to achieve another response, epideictic rhetoric speaks of war and conflict as practical. The perspective is not of violence as nonchalant, but rather of its necessity, which carries an element of honor. Therefore, the people who willingly engage in the honorable tragedy that is war are draped with courage and integrity. In terms of observable implications of this frame in presidential speeches, there would be tremendous emphasis on the glory and righteousness of going to war and fighting the good fight against the 9/11 terrorist attack plotters. Epideictic rhetoric complements American exceptionalism’s shift of attention from the atrocity, itself, to the good, hopeful—any other positive, dichotomous adjective)—response of the US. Both types of text empower the

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\(^3\) When I capitalize “Other,” I am referencing the dehumanized out-group.
victim(s) of the attack, in this case the US, and nicely set up the call to arms masking of dehumanization and the obligation to use force against the Other as crusading liberalism’s selfless protection of the *right* ideals. Epideictic rhetoric positions the president as “the voice of the people” (Murphy 2003, 610). This frame’s appeal comes from the hyperbolic unification of people, leaders, and state to the point where they are all one.

*Religion*

Religion, too, strives to justify violence by “announcing a national crusade against a new kind of evil” that God vehemently condemns (Graham, Keenan, and Dowd 2004, 209). Similar to epideictic rhetoric’s fusion of the president and the people to sustain nationalism, religion “aligns God with the nation-state” and draws on the support and authority of God to justify this crusade, or war (Graham, Keenan, and Dowd 2004, 209). Another manifestation of rally around the flag effect’s nationalism is religion. After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, religion flipped the perception of the American people as unlucky, unsafe victims into God’s chosen people to endure these tragedies in order to triumph because He knows that America is strong enough to do so. Thus far, we have explored nationalism as American exceptionalism, as a call to arms against an amoral Other who threatens global stability. We have also seen nationalism as epideictic rhetoric, which sensationalizes war as honorable to garner support and refocus the war discourse on America’s exceptional courage. All of these frames further invigorate nationalist sentiment.
Religion’s teleological explanation of the 9/11 terrorist attacks states that the tragedy was chosen for the American people because of our greatness. On this point, religion and American exceptionalism differ because the latter focuses on the American peoples’ response as hopeful whereas the former explains the attack as challenging the US hopefulness. It makes sense that religion “discourages complex distinctions and shadings in favor of generalities and absolute dichotomies” (Graham, Keenan, and Dowd 2004, 56). Religion expresses the attack as a test of American ideals’ resilience and purity. This framing of the attacks as a “biblical test of a chosen people made them comprehensible” and less devastating (Murphy 2003, 611). A religious response to the attack intensifies nationalism and justifies crusading liberalism, as Americans were the chosen people and their ideology survived the attacks—and with grace, according to American exceptionalism.

We would expect to see the following words and phrasing if rally around the flag effect is used to express how the US should respond to the terrorism threat. Words like “mission,” “call(ing),” “role,” “responsibility,” and “duty” express intervention as a duty. The US is the defender of “freedom,” the “beacon” of hope, and the global “peacekeeper.” Rally around the flag uses lexical triggers like “strong,” “confident,” and “future” to create national optimism and confidence in the president, and government more generally. The dichotomous language of the religious framing declares the US as “pure,” “righteous,” “chosen,” and “exceptional”

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4 I must insert a disqualifier here. The rally around the flag section’s discussion of religion is talking about President Bush’ evangelical Christianity—roughly 26.8% of America declares itself evangelical Christian, according to Pew Forum in 2011. The effect of this frame may not have been as strong or even existed for other religious populations in the US after 9/11.
through “God,” while the rhetoric of call to arms references the US as “indispensable” and “superior.” The US is also promoted as “united,” “together,” and working as “one”—like “our men and women in uniform”—to defend “American” “values” and “ideals”. Both religion and calls to arms motivate fighting through bolstering Americanism as unrivalled because it is the only legitimate set of values and standard of morality.

2.4 Social Psychology, In-group and Out-group Dichotomies

Social psychology offers explanations as to why individuals act the way they do in groups, but its research’s findings are not limited to a foreign policy, conflict, or terrorism application. Social psychology is used for this paper only in terms of how an actor talks about the enemy in times of crisis.

The study of war connects the incentives behind groups’ interactions with their geopolitical implications. The social psychological analysis of group dynamics helps explain the recurring patterns of intergroup violence in war and exposes the effects of these interactions on the individual, his identity, and his response.

Following the language of leading social psychology researchers, social psychology utilizes the terms in-group and out-group. An in-group is based on a particular set of moral values that all members share. Members of the out-group, therefore, have a different set of moral values and, in turn, a different group identity. Morality must then be perceived as dynamic because it is culturally idiosyncratic. Despite this theory, social psychology explains that an individual in crisis only sees one legitimate morality: his own.
Although various psychological studies focus on different component of in-group and out-group dynamics (Bandura 1999) (Castano and Giner-Sorolla 2006) (Halperin et al. 2011) (Haslam 2006), an overlapping and comparative exploration of their findings demonstrates that in-group solidarity primarily functions as a source of attitudinal conformity. In times of perceived threat, however, in-group solidarity is easily transformed into a tool for cyclical dehumanization of others and self-righteousness. Social psychology would predict that a president—as individuals prone to the same psychological mechanisms as other human beings—would resort to this in-group and out-group way of thinking and implicitly reference this literature’s rhetoric.

**In-Group and Out-Group Dynamics**

Largely dependent on the perception of others’ upholding of accepted norms of behavior, group dynamics are vulnerable to attacks justified as a survival tactics. Differentiation in moral standards magnifies in-group solidarity because the incongruous standard is viewed as a threat to your moral conduct. Individuals respond to this cognitive dissonance with anger. The out-group’s behavior is perceived as wrongdoing that demands the in-group’s immediate, irate rejection. According to appraisal theory, individuals “will appraise the out-group’s behavior as unjust and, if the in-group’s relative power is high, these angry individuals will develop a similar emotional goal—they will wish to correct the behavior of the out-group” (Halperin et al. 2011, 276). There is a latent power structure at play here based on the in-group’s repeated belief that its moral standards are superior to those of the other group—each
party acts as the in-group for particular individuals in its own mind. As the psychological research legitimizes, the in-group’s anger is triggered by these self-imposed ideological dichotomy that, in turn, threatens the in-group’s stability. Thus, the deviation from the in-group’s norms is viewed, not simply as justification, but rather an obligation for retaliation.

Although anger towards an out-group can manifest itself as a negative, defensive response, it can also yield constructive effects. Anger, as an isolated emotion, demonstrates a personal stake in the outcome. The “destructive or constructive response tendencies” of anger are determined by the “magnitude of the long-term hatred felt toward the anger-evoking group” (Halperin et al. 2011, 277). As expected, the magnitude of long-term hatred is inversely related to the likelihood of constructivist peace negotiations (Halperin et al. 2011, 278). Hatred is a plausible sentiment between groups if each views the other as unjust, amoral, and challenging self-worth. In socialization theory, only the group with the relative power will try to harm the out-group. In-group solidarity increases with a destructive response, intensifying the groups’ polarization.

Dehumanization

Thus far, the existing psychological literature has explained in-groups’ anxiety towards different sets of values through an exploration of anger’s behavioral predispositions. The following section applies our understanding of in-group and out-group competition and moral dissociation of an external threat, so to describe how individuals respond to learning his in-group harmed others.
An individual’s discovery of his in-group’s commission of violence against an out-group initiates a process of infrahumanization in order to protect his self-worth, inextricably rooted in that in-group’s moral code. Castano and Giner-Sorolla’s research asserts that, “people are ready to deny humanity in others to maintain their own psychological equanimity” (Castano and Giner-Sorolla 2006, 817).

Infrahumanization is defined as “rendering the target less than human, if not wholly non-human.” (Castano and Giner-Sorolla 2006, 805) Its psychological purpose is to deny the victims—the out-group—equal human rights. If the victims are not as human as the perpetrators, then the latter’s barbarism is diminished. Once an individual becomes aware of violence, of any degree, perpetrated by his in-group against an out-group, the individual initiates infrahumanization of the victims as a “strategy…to reestablish psychological equanimity” (Castano and Giner-Sorolla 2006, 804). The individual, and the in-group more generally, could not declare themselves as unjust or amoral. Infrahumanization, therefore, is a psychological technique that creates a subjective reality in which the in-group does not face any consequences and retains its self-worth. According to Castano and Giner-Sorolla, in infrahumanization can only occur, “the out-group must be relevant to the in-group in some way” (Castano and Giner-Sorolla 2006, 806). They do not specify whether different types of competition—resource versus security, for example—affects the way that or the extent to which the in-group denies the out-group humanity.

**Manichean Dualism: Self-Preservation Violence**

Manichean dualism interprets situations as a conflict between light and dark. Light becomes associated with goodness while dark refers to evil. If you believe in a
Manichean dualism interpretation, then you see things as having two opposing sides that are inherently incompatible. As a result, the individuals on either side of the conflict are conflated with the ideologies, themselves, so that the people as well as the ideology must be wiped out. Manichean dualism blurs the line between enemy guilty civilians and enemy innocent civilians. Anyone on the dark-evil side of the conflict loses his own identity and becomes swallowed by this dichotomy. This frame achieves the total dehumanization of “an ‘enemy’ deemed so evil that even innocent members of the group in question deserve to be exterminated” (Kellner 2007, 629).

At a fundamental level, the intentional killing of human beings is seen as wrong. In fact, there is the argument that we have a “prima facie moral obligation not to kill other human beings” (Regan Richard J 1996, 4). Our instinct is for peace. Humans then require a justification of intentionally killing another human being in order to protect their psychological and moral equanimity. This exception to the rule is that, in times of war, “what we conventionally call inhumanity is simply humanity under pressure” (Walzer 1977, 4). With this reasoning, the justification is that what we do in a time of war is not a collapse of our—the civilized, moral, just actor’s—humanity. It is actually evidence of our innate human instinct to survive. War puts pressure on our stability, so we must fight and do whatever it takes to push back our aggressor’s inhumanity, but what we do remains moral because its driving force is civilization’s drive to survive.

Manichean dualism is one tactic for justifying violence, including deadly violence. Similar to the frame of civilization versus barbarism, the construction of an “‘evil other’” would allow presidents to emphasize the humanity of the light side, or
the United States, and contrast that with the uncontrollable brutality of the evil side, the enemy of the United States, “using completely binary discourse” (Walzer 1977, 4). All associated with the Manichean dark side must be destroyed because their essence threatens the stability of the light side.

Us Versus Them

One method of infrahumanization is reserving the experience of secondary emotions to only one’s in-group, rendering the out-group incapable of complex human experience. Secondary emotions alongside intelligence and language comprise the “human essence” (Castano and Giner-Sorolla 2006, 805). An individual who lacks secondary emotions also lacks a distinction between animals and human beings, for both share primary emotions. Haslam states that secondary emotions are the condition of human essence (Haslam 2006, 255). Infrahumanization via the deprivation of secondary emotions in out-groups frames those individuals as animalistic because they are not cognitively superior to animals.

Similar to the exclusivity of secondary emotions, but extending beyond emotionality, in-groups refuse out-groups uniquely human (UH) characteristics for the infrahumanization process. In Haslam’s research, uniquely human characteristics include “language, higher order cognition, refined emotion [and are] low in prevalence and universality…[and] appear late in development” (Haslam 2006, 256). These traits are considered more complex and imply culture. Comparatively, human nature (HN) characteristics “link humans to the natural world, and their inborn biological dispositions.” (Haslam 2006, 256) They are high in prevalence and universality; HN characteristics develop in an early stage. Just as with depriving out-
groups of secondary emotions, infrahumanization by depriving out-groups of UH characteristics, too, frames them as amoral or even “backward” in relation to the in-group’s morality (Haslam 2006, 258). The purpose of this abusive, dehumanizing process is to preserve the in-group’s psychological equanimity. Castano and Giner-Sorolla state that when one’s self or in-group harmed another being, the empathy and distress must be reduced, so to prevent them from triggering self-restraints—a psychological acknowledgement of unjust behavior (Castano and Giner-Sorolla 2006, 816). If this first step is accomplished, however, then psychological dissonance is prevented (Castano and Giner-Sorolla 2006, 805). In other words, we may have killed them, but if they are “like animals,” then surely we should not feel so bad about our actions. This psychological mechanism is described in political science as just-world theory. Interestingly, Haslam posits that this animalistic debasement of the out-group stems from the in-group’s need to dissociate from its own animalism (Haslam 2006, 258.) Disgust helps mask HN characteristics’ prevalence in the in-group by presenting them as beneath the self or in-group.

After infrahumanization has occurred, Bandura predicts that in-group aggressors will justify their violence towards out-group members as necessary or provoked to, again, protect their psychological equanimity, but also to aggrandize their cause. Echoing the explanation of socialization theory of morality, people justify behavior as a means of survival. Survival is considered a natural instinct. When in-groups’ identity feels threatened by competing groups, the in-group’s destructive response is not condemned. On the contrary, its “punitive conduct is seen as a justifiable defensive reaction to belligerent provocations (emphasis added)” (Bandura
Those who utilize infrahumanization frame themselves as “faultless victims…fighting ruthless oppressors, [and] protecting their cherished values” (Bandura 1999, 11). The in-group absolves themselves of any blame.

In response to the gradual moral disengagement of infrahumanization, in-group members have completely reduced the out-group members to objects. Euphemistic language is one mechanism for projecting responsibility onto the victim. Its sanitizing effect hides “inhumanities…in moral wrappings” while the “level of ruthlessness increases…acts originally regarded as abhorrent can be performed with little personal anguish or self-censure” (Bandura 1999, 3; 12). Dehumanization enables aggressors to more easily commit atrocities because the repetition of amoral-moral justification becomes ordinary. Haslam’s research describes a horrifying stage of in-group out-group dynamics where the out-group is regarded as having “no emotions or rights because they have no minds…free to be used instrumentally” (Haslam 2006, 261). At this point of infrahumanization, the in-group solidarity and superiority complex have reached their pinnacle.

Social Psychology Frames and Presidential Speeches: Observable Implications

The evaporation of blame for violence occurs because “nonviolent [responses] are judged to be ineffective to achieve desired changes…[so] one’s injurious actions will prevent more human suffering than they cause” (Bandura 1999, 5). During the infrahumanization process, in-groups must compromise their morality and then haphazardly justify behavior so its morality can be compellingly argued. The in-group’s identity and morality, however, have been challenged and undercut so many
times that they, too, no longer contain a self-defining value. In-group identity is entirely dependent on a comparison with out-group identity and loses all definition when not held beside a declared dichotomous value.

Words that express a social psychological response to a threat emphasize the dichotomous relationship between “us” and “them”. Lexical triggers include “evil, murderous, hateful, anti-democracy, anti-liberty, anti-freedom,” light, dark, immoral, moral, civilized, uncivilized, barbaric, and animalistic (Regan Richard J 1996, 4). Other triggers include “brutal,” “barbaric,” “enemy,” “violent,” “violence,” “preservation,” “preemption,” and “prevention.” “Existential threat” can also be considered an infrahumanization lexical trigger because it frames the out-group as threatening the actual existence or survivability of the in-group. We can expect to see this rhetoric to dehumanize the enemy and also justify violence against him.

2.5 Orientalism, the West’s Historic Othering of the East

The orientalist perspective presents the Middle East and its peoples as an exotic other. Orientalist theory explores the history of Western othering of the East. Edward Said concentrates his orientalist analysis on the Middle East. This framework fits nicely with social psychology because they hinge on a historically reinforced worldview of in-group as superior in all ways to out-group(s). Orientalism and social psychology are similar in their objectification of those dissimilar to oneself. Social psychology’s dehumanization rests in its eradication of an existential threat to one’s in-group. Infrahumanization turns these dissimilar peoples into less-than-humans, so to assuage moral anxiety over extermination. It is a tool to justify violence and defend the violence’s morality, which sustains a distinction between “us” and “them”.
Orientalism, however, views Middle Eastern people and culture as inferior because they are not civilized, as defined by the West. Orientalism “fairly stands for the pattern of relative strength between East and West, and the discourse about the Orient that it enabled” (Said 1979, 6). The West dominates the East not only because it is the instinct of great powers to control, but also as a favor to the East who benefits from the West’s caretaking. As a result of this dominance, the West controlled the conversation about the East, so its perceptions were viewed as fact.

The roots of orientalism are centuries long, extending from Europe’s first interaction with the East via trade routes in the first century to Western intervention in the Middle East. Western-Middle Eastern relations began in the early 20th century, when Britain and France were combating the Ottoman Empire. It is important to understand the context of orientalism’s rise because it provides an explanation for orientalism’s role and what it looks like in the modern age.

**Orientalism and Social Psychology**

The main distinction between orientalism and social psychologies comes down to the benefactor of the dominating-submissive relationship. The motivating factor behind an actor’s infrahumanization, if described by social psychology, is personal survival whereas orientalism would describe an actor’s dehumanization as altruistic for it serves to better the less-than other. Social psychology points out that actors dehumanize to justify the worsening of the out-group’s position, but orientalism dehumanizes in an attempt, so it argues, to ameliorate the out-group’s position. Orientalism explores the interplay between the West’s exoticizing of the
East and its continued dominance over the region. The language used by each differs
based on tone because both express an unequal relationship. From the perspective of
social psychology, an actor strives to linguistically demean the out-group, using
aggressive words to beat them down to be non-human. Words that express a social
psychological response to a threat emphasize the dichotomous relationship between
“us” and “them”. Lexical triggers include “evil, murderous, hateful, anti-democracy,
anti-liberty, anti-freedom,” light, dark, immoral, moral, civilized, uncivilized
barbaric, and animalistic (Regan Richard J 1996, 4). We can expect to see this
rhetoric to dehumanize the enemy and also justify violence against him.

**Exoticism**

The Orient, as a distant land with non-European looking peoples, was seen as
exotic. The initial East-West interaction was through trade routes. As a result, the
“Orient was revealed to Europe in the materiality of its texts, language, and
civilizations” (Said 1979, 77). It is not surprising that Europeans viewed peoples of
the Orient as objects because their interaction was one of European observation. This
dynamic “places things Oriental in class, court, prison, or manual for scrutiny, study,
judgment, discipline, or governing” (Said 1979, 41). The scope of orientalism is
reflective of Western societies’ imperialism. For Lord Cromer of Britain, as Said
describes, “Orientals…were always and only the human material he governed in
British colonies” (Said 1979, 39). The language alone conveys a consumerist
relationship between the users—Lord Cromer—and the used—the “Orientals.” The
phrase “human material” voids these humans of their humanity. Their existence is linked to usefulness for the Westerners, so they are reduced to objects.

Orientals were rarely seen or looked at; they were seen through, analyzed not as citizens, or even people, but as problems to be solved or confined or—as the colonial powers openly coveted their territory—taken over.” (Said 1979, 269)

The exoticism of the Orient rendered Eastern peoples as un-relatable, so different became less than. This dehumanization evolution for the West, which positions the East as non-human, may be an attempt to sustain psychological equanimity and justify colonization. The directional relationship between Oriental dehumanization and colonization is like the conundrum of the chicken and egg: both undoubtedly reinforced the other and are mutually dependent.

**Dominance and Consent?**

Existing ideas on oriental civilization naturally evolved into Western dominance because the uncivilized, primitive East needed to be dominated. Orientalism was not used to justify colonization because that practice was long-since institutionalized. Instead, Oriental-European relations were impacted by two prevalent philosophies: (1) the reinforcement of the “colonial encounter” of the civilized confronting the uncivilized, exotic; and (2) the binary relationship between the West and the East as “one between a strong and a weak partner” respectively, an effect of long-term domination and Europe’s growing political, economic, and military strength (Said 1979, 39–40). Western powers combined their primacy with their desire to accumulate exotic, weak peoples and cultures through colonization. European strength is exposed with orientalism rather than “a veridical discourse about
the Orient” because the Orient identity was constructed, without the consent of the peoples, to align with European perceptions (Said 1979, 6). The Orient lost all right to self-determination. Said pontificates that,

The Orient was Orientalized not only because it was discovered to be ‘Oriental’ in all those ways considered commonplace by an average nineteenth-century European, but also because it could be--that is, submitted to being--made Oriental. There is very little consent to be found, for example, in the fact that Flaubert’s encounter with an Egyptian courtesan produced a widely influential model of the Oriental woman; she never spoke of herself, she never represented her emotions, presence, or history. He spoke for and represented her. (Said 1979, 5–6)

The West became the spokesperson for the East, which reinforced the roles of dominator and dominated, respectively. The West was not concerned with the truthfulness of their perceptions because the East’s value and, thus, identity came from how it could contribute to the European powers.

European powers argued that their usurpation of the Orient was a blessing for Orientals because with European governance came a better way of life for the governed. The West believed the East was intrinsically incapable of creating a ‘good’ life because ‘good’ was, for the West, synonymous with Western. Different signified inferiority or backwardness in development, so that the East was framed as incapable and easy to subjugate. Western records exclude accounts of Orientals’ positive response to foreign intervention. The West assumes their thankfulness. The West actively denies the people whom they occupy the ability to speak for themselves. This demonstrates the West concern with only their view of the East, rather than the reality of the region. Oriental becomes an instrumental label used to convey Western
dominance instead of a label representative of peoples; furthermore, the peoples of
the entire region are grouped together to have one perspective.

   Another benefit of dominating the East was overlooking Islam. Although
Europe declared and exhibited its dominance over the Middle East, the East was
considered an existential threat to Western civilization. Islam utilizes prophets from
the Old and New Testaments to build its own narrative. The Quran Jesus, Abraham,
Mary and Moses, are recognized as important, chosen people in the Judeo-Hellenic
religious traditions (Said 1979, 74). The Dome of the Rock is built on the Temple
Mount. In Judaism, this land is location of the binding of Isaac in the Talmud—when
God asks Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac, but God intervenes and spares the boy.
In Islam, the rock around which the Dome of the Rock was erected is where
Muhammad ascended into heaven to speak to Allah at the end of the Mi’raj or the
Night Journey, a major story in the Quran. Islamic lands and sites are located
“adjacent to and even on top of the Biblical lands” physically demonstrating the
pressure and threat Islam placed on Christianity (Said 1979, 74).
Islamic-Christian relations are an example of Westerners actively domineering
the East. In all ways besides religion, the Orient was associated with
“backwardness, degeneracy, and inequality” (Said 1979, 206). Oriental
primitivism was concentrated in culture, while its religion rivaled the
geopolitical power of Christianity in the West. This unanticipated rivalry
spurned Western dominance in the region because sustaining a foothold there
would secure the East’s development under the guidance of the West.
This concept of moral pioneering to protect the innocent is at odds with our individualistic society. Intervening to protect values conflicts with our domestic ethics, which promotes “‘not getting involved’” to warn against putting oneself in danger for another (Elshtain 1992, 57). In times of war, the unit of identification shifts from the local level to the national level, and peoples’ self-interests align with those of the nation. Elshtain warns that “national hubris, if unrestrained, could use defense of others as an unwarranted excuse for a new round of imperialistic conquests,” the threat of which is particularly likely in the Middle East because of this Western-historic savior complex (Elshtain 1992, 57). The justification of war and the use of violence to protect a set of values present a foreboding future of every example in which protecting the innocent is used to justify military intervention.

Modern Implications

Orientalism builds on stereotypes and the West’s belief that different means inferior and need of Western management. The “standardization and cultural stereotyping” of orientalism is intensified by “second-order Darwinism, which seemed to accentuate the ‘scientific’ validity of the division of races into advanced and backward, or European-Aryan and Oriental-African” and promoted a binary interpretation of the world (Said 1979, 26; 269). A binary evaluation of peoples and cultures continues today as a reaction to the politicization of Arabs and Islam in the West, especially in the United States. The history of anti-Arab sentiment, the Arab-Israeli conflict, Israel as a profound Western ally, and the power of the Israeli
lobbying group in the United States make Western and Arab ideology dichotomous. The politicization of Arabs and Islam is also due to the Middle East’s inextricable position in “Great Power politics, oil economies, and the simple-minded dichotomy of freedom-loving, democratic Israel and evil, totalitarian, and terroristic Arabs” (Said 1979, 26–7). As seen historically with orientalism, the Middle East is defined in contrast to the definers, and the West continues to control the conversation.

Said also discusses dominance in terms of Eastern women and girls needing saving. These vulnerable people need a strong, Western savior to protect them from the East’s perversion and exotic simplicity. Said expresses their women and girls, or in today’s context—Muslim women and girls specifically—needing Western—or American—protection. This characteristic of orientalist theory draws on rally around the flag effect’s detail of a “calling” and “mission” of the US. Americans become pulled into the Middle East with their intervention justified as humanitarian—to save these poor, helpless Muslim women and girls from their inferior region. Once again, the narrative is taken from the Muslim women and girls, themselves. The aggressors declare these civilians as needing saving, but there is absolutely no consent—not even coercion, just domination. The West believes it understands these Middle Eastern women better than they know themselves because they are uncivilized and simple-minded, and because the West is best.
Orientalism and Presidential Speeches: Observable Implications

With an orientalist response, the “West,” similar to in-group references, is portrayed as a good, moral protector. Orientalism departs from social psychology in that these negative qualities of the Middle East, the out-group, enable the West’s “dominance” over them. The out-group, here, poses no threat to the West, only to itself, and the West has come to “save,” “free,” or “liberate” the “East” from its oppression. Therefore, although the words may be similar, the tone and the threat assessment of the out-group differ in social psychology than in orientalism.

If the orientalist perspective were expressed as a response to a threat, then we would expect to see lexical triggers that present the West as “powerful” and “civilized” and the Middle East as “weak” and “uncivilized.” Lexical triggers include “other,” “exotic,” and “The discourse will also characterize the Middle East as an object, or its people as commodities. Arab deaths will be dehumanized. Islam will be condemned as seen as a “threat” and dramatically distanced from other religions of the Book, like Christianity and Judaism. Other lexical triggers include “West,” “savior,” “Muslim,” “Arab,” “Islam,” “perverted,” and ‘backwards.” The narrative will also speak on behalf of the Arab people. America and the West are capable of interpreting Middle Eastern values, agendas, and opinions because the West is superior. The narrative will also seem to be slightly omniscient for this reason because these sentiments will be declared on behalf of the “others,” but without their consent, confirmation, or dissent.
2.6 Lexical Triggers and Expected Themes

Figure 2.1 below clearly outlines the lexical triggers of these five potential threat responses. These lexical triggers were collected through drawing on theories that illuminate the five different ways an actor can talk about a threat—the following empirical chapters apply this framework to analyze how President Bush and President Obama talk about terrorism. The use of a lexical trigger invokes its associated threat response because it produces a specific way of talking about the enemy. Some string words appear in more than one literature. Thus, the context within which the word is used determines which literature it represents. These words will only reference just war theory, securitization theory, rally around the flag effect, social psychology, and orientalism’s framing of a threat if it is used in portions of a presidential speech that is about terrorism because these words have multiple implications and definitions depending on the usage.

Figure 2.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Just War Theory</th>
<th>Securitization Theory</th>
<th>Rally around the Flag Effect</th>
<th>Social Psychology</th>
<th>Orientalism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>War</td>
<td>Threat</td>
<td>Us</td>
<td>Existential Threat</td>
<td>West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act of War</td>
<td>National security</td>
<td>We</td>
<td>Violent</td>
<td>Dominance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under attack</td>
<td>National interest</td>
<td>Mission</td>
<td>Enemy/Enemies</td>
<td>Savior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportional</td>
<td>Security</td>
<td>Call</td>
<td>Evil</td>
<td>Saving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportionality</td>
<td>Insecurity</td>
<td>Calling</td>
<td>Violence</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggression</td>
<td>Enemy/Enemies</td>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Preservation</td>
<td>Arab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act of Aggression</td>
<td>Terror</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Murderous</td>
<td>Islam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>Terrorist</td>
<td>Duty</td>
<td>Hateful</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retaliatory</td>
<td>Terrorism</td>
<td>Unity</td>
<td>Barbaric</td>
<td>Uncivilized</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is crucial to understand how these theories relate to one another in order to better analyze presidential rhetoric about terrorism (See Figure 2.2). There are no overlapping themes between just war theory and orientalism. Orientalism and rally around the flag effect both justify a response to a terrorist attack with the idea of America saving Muslim women and girls from their oppressive regimes and lifestyles. Rally around the flag effect and social psychology, however, frame a response in terms of American togetherness and use the dichotomy of light versus
dark to incentivize and simplify a particular course of action. Social psychology and securitization theory both use the idea of an existential threat to evoke a threat response, while securitization and just war theory use an attack framing, which differs in its retaliatory instead of preemptive nature.
CHAPTER THREE

President Bush’s Terrorism Response Rhetoric

The following chapter looks closely at President Bush’s State of the Union Addresses after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. There are five sections within this chapter that break down layer-by-layer President Bush’s rhetoric about how the nation and the American people should respond to threats of terrorism. I distinguish between President Bush’s rhetoric on terrorism in the State of the Union and the speeches given in response to specific attacks because we would expect a rhetorical difference. State of the Union Addresses occur consistently once a year and address the American people. President Bush’s speeches in response to the 9/11 and London terrorist attacks, however, were prompted by unanticipated events. Furthermore, the rhetoric that is used in the terrorist attack response speeches can be characterized as crisis rhetoric as opposed to peacetime or non-crisis aftermath rhetoric—which we see here.

1 President Bush’s 2001 State of the Union Address is included in this chapter’s first two sections in order to illuminate the drastic rhetorical shifts that occurred in his speeches after the 9/11 attacks. The 2001 State of the Union Address provides a frame of reference with which we can analyze the threat response literatures’ invocations across his other seven State of the Union Addresses. Without including the quantitative analysis of President Bush’s 2001 address, the quantitative analysis of the other speeches would be decontextualized.
3.1 Competing Frames in the State of the Union Addresses

My analysis first looks at the big picture: President Bush’s State of the Union Addresses over time. Are all five framings invoked at some point from the 2002 to the 2008 State of the Union Addresses? This section determines whether there is an overall pattern of invocation of the framings that we see in the theoretical literature. Figure 3.1 illustrates the total number of times each literature was invoked across President Bush’s 2002-2008 State of the Union Addresses.

The lexical trigger coding that I conducted proves the presence of all five frames in at least one of President Bush’s 2002-2008 State of the Union Addresses. The frame that is most invoked is the securitization narrative. The second most frequent frame is rally around the flag, then just war theory, social psychology, and orientalism. The existing literature on President Bush suggests that dehumanizing the “other” would have been the most prevalent frame, emphasizing in-group and out-group rhetoric. The existing literature focuses on President Bush’s phrase ‘Axis of Evil’ and examples that convey an East versus West divide in post-9/11 America because they sound the most compelling. Interestingly, dehumanization and “othering” are not the most prevalent frames of the enemy. In fact, they are invoked with the second to least and least frequency, respectively, across President Bush’s State of the Union Addresses.

In terms of President Bush and President Obama’s terrorism response rhetoric, there is a stark contrast between what the existing literature makes us expect and my findings. All five frames create an “us versus them” narrative, but through unique mechanisms. The way in which ‘us versus them’ is invoked in President Bush’s State
of the Union Addresses is not through a predominantly infrahumanization or orientalist strategy. Instead, ‘us versus them’ is evoked through building up a threat and the enemy—securitization theory—and through highlighting “Us” with nationalism and the portrayal of America(ns) as exceptional—rally around the flag effect. Thus, the existing literature does not accurate represent President Bush’s terrorism narrative.

![Figure 3.1](image)

**3.2 Shifts in the Use of Frames over Time**

The document portraits of President Bush’s 2002-2008 State of the Union Addresses show that there is a general framing pattern. Utilizing MaxQDA’s
The document portraits function, I was able to see a visualization of these literatures’ appearance. The pattern is to start a speech by building up a threat, and to end it by rallying around the flag. Of course, other frames may be present, but in small quantities. The dispersal of other threat response rhetoric does not nullify the pattern that the document portrait exposes through color-coding. This pattern makes sense because a leader would build up a threat and focus on the enemy’s potential for inflicting harm to convincingly convey this issue as one of exigency and national security. After the American people are fearful, President Bush’s rhetoric transforms into rally around the flag framing because he needs to unite the nation and make his audience believe that the proposed strategy to destroy the enemy will work. President Bush wants, and needs for popularity’s sake, to end his speech on a positive note. In its simplest form, the beginning of the speech focuses on the enemy and its effect on America, whereas the end focuses on America and America’s effect on the enemy.

In addition to expressing an overall framing pattern, my analysis also shows the frequency of each frame in each State of the Union, so that I can compare the frequencies over time. The frequency of the various frames remains pretty consistent from 2002-2008. There are several important spikes and moments, namely 2002-2004 and 2003 specifically.

The document portraits that I created after my lexical trigger coding are at the end of this chapter. Note the following threat response literature color-coding: red is securitization theory; blue is rally around the flag effect; purple is just war theory; green is social psychology; and gold is orientalism.
As figure 3.2 shows, securitization not only dominates President Bush’s overall threat response rhetoric, but it also dominates each State of the Union Address’ threat response rhetoric. It is used the most and remains within the range of 34 and 64 lexical triggers coded. The spreadsheet breaks down the frames numerically. The greatest number of securitization lexical triggers occurs in 2002, four months after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The frequency diminishes over the next five years, but then experiences another spike from 34 triggers in 2006 to 47 in 2007 and then rises to 51 in 2008. A possible explanation for the spike in securitization language could be al-Qaeda’s continued presence in the international arena with its 2005 London bombings. Another explanation could be the US’s diminishing advantage abroad. The American people were experiencing the first wave of War on Terror war fatigue. President Bush needed to realign the people with his foreign
policy agenda, so his rhetoric took on a more fear mongering tone.

![A Comparison of Total Times Each Threat Response Frame was Invoked across President Bush’s State of the Union Addresses](image)

**Figure 3.3**

While the number of rally around the flag lexical triggers coded in President Bush’s State of the Union Addresses remains fairly consistent from 2002-2008, the frequency of dehumanization framing, of just war framing, and of orientalist framing varies over time, which highlights how powerfully context drives terrorism response rhetoric (See Figure 3.3). Social psychology lexical triggers appear the most in 2002 with 13 invocations whereas the lexical trigger count in the other six addresses is 7 or less. Contextually, we would expect the most dehumanization rhetoric to occur after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The tragedy and fear in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 echoed across America. President Bush’s dehumanization of the enemy—al-Qaeda—
intensified in-group and out-group identification, more starkly contrasting their monstrosity with our humanity. The need to associate al-Qaeda with barbarism diminished as the War on Terror continued because the initial association from President Bush’s 2002 State of the Union Address remained. Still, it is important to note that dehumanization is still present in all of the State of the Union Addresses. Although the in-group and out-groups were set, President Bush’s rhetoric continues to reinforce the dehumanization of the enemy.

The pattern of just war theory invocation alludes to a grander rhetorical moment across President Bush’s State of the Union Addresses. The time frame of 2002-2004 marks an important moment in the Bush administration’s foreign policy agenda. Beginning in 2002, the administration needed to frame the US response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks as a war, the War on Terror, which would ultimately provide the path to a war in Iraq. In order to create this war track, President Bush’s 2002-2004 State of the Union Addresses have more just war theory lexical triggers than those of social psychology and orientalism combined. The focus is on framing the 9/11 attacks as acts of war, so that the US can get Congress’ war approval despite the conflict not satisfying just war theory’s requirements of war.

Orientalism is not very present in President Bush’s State of the Union Addresses. This is surprising because the remarks of President Bush that the media highlights are his East versus West framing of the War on Terrorism and the Eastern ‘Axis of Evil.’ Orientalist rhetoric is most visible in 2003, which coincides with the US invasion in Iraq. The following sections break down what the various frames
actually look like in the speeches by presenting which lexical triggers are present in each speech.

**Important Moments**

While there are important spikes and moments, it is valuable to notice that the relative proportion of the five threat response frames within each State of the Union is incredibly similar, with the exception of just war theory’s invocation because it was so heavily relied upon from 2002-2004 due to the domestic debate around Iraq. While the frequency differences are not negligible, my speech analysis suggests that President Bush’s terrorism response rhetoric can be broken up into two phases: 2002-2004, and 2005-2008. Each phase frames the enemy in a particular way. From 2002-2004, President Bush’s State of the Union Addresses use securitization theory triggers to build up al-Qaeda’s threat and make the American people afraid. The large spike in just war theory lexical triggers aligns with President Bush’s transition from framing the 9/11 attacks as a crime to framing them as acts of war; his administration’s desire to embark on a crusading war against terrorism; and their justification of going to war with Iraq.

### 3.3 Shifts in Frames within Each State of the Union Address

How do the threat response framings sound in the speeches? Which lexical triggers does President Bush say that invoke a given frame? Analyzing President Bush’s terrorism response rhetoric on the most fundamental level—word choice—sets up a comparative lexical trigger analysis with President Obama about language
choices. I begin by looking at the invoked lexical triggers of each literature’s framing of a threat and of the enemy (See Figure 3.4).

This section offers a qualitative description of how each of the threat response literatures shows up in President Bush’s State of the Union Addresses. I give examples of how the frames are invoked and compare the prevalence of particular lexical triggers over time. I offer contextual explanations for the shifts in framing in order to set up a comparison between President Bush and President Obama’s terrorism response rhetoric as well as a comparison of each president’s rhetoric over time.

**Just War Theory**

President Bush invokes a just war theory threat response of appealing to international law and intra-national organizations predominately in his 2002 and 2003 State of the Union Addresses. These speeches mark the beginning of the War on Terror. In 2002, President Bush’s goal was to frame the 9/11 attacks as acts of war that justified a war response and its associated violence. He said “under attack” one time; “just” twice in 2002 and 2003; “law” twice in 2002 and 2003; and “necessary” once in both 2002 and 2003. President Bush said “war” nine times in 2002 as well as in 2003.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Just War Theory</th>
<th>Securitization Theory</th>
<th>Rally around the Flag Effect</th>
<th>Social Psychology</th>
<th>Orientalism</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>War (36)</td>
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<td>Authority (1)</td>
<td>Destruction (15)</td>
<td>Future (6)</td>
<td>Enemy (2)</td>
<td>Saved (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


There is a rhetorical difference between the 2003 and 2003 speeches because 2002 constructs a national sense of being at war. 2002 is when President Bush emphasizes the danger and fear of being under attack, whereas 2003 takes this state of war and redirects the focus into retaliatory, defensive war-action. A clear indicator of this shift is his use of “United Nations” six times in 2003, four times in 2004, and once in 2007. The presence of the UN lexical trigger corresponds to the Iraq debate that was going on in America. 2007 is significant because of President Bush’s Iraqi surge. Interestingly, only President Bush uses this lexical trigger. In the 2003 State of the Union Address, he used the words “aggressive,” “casualty,” and without “warning” in order to really imbue just war theory’s just cause.
Securitization Theory

Many of the lexical triggers that signal a securitization threat response are used in each of President Bush’s 2002-2008 State of the Union Addresses. For example, “attack”³, “danger”⁴, “enemies”⁵, “enemy”⁶, “terror,” and “terrorism” all are present in these speeches and construct the audience’s sense of fear. Notably, the frequency of “enemies” increases over time, starting with one invocation in 2002 and ending with five invocations in 2008. Perhaps this increasing frequency is due to the enemy or enemies seeming more ambiguous to the American people the more distant the 9/11 attacks are. The enemy was expectedly clear in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, but US intervention abroad and tactical failures clouded the once opaque binary of us and the enemy. President Bush socially constructs Iraq as a threat with this type of language. When an individual or group is labeled as the enemy, then the people in danger think and act more frantically because they perceive themselves in danger. The images that President Bush’s securitization threat response rhetoric invokes are of fear.

I must highlight that “enemy” is listed as a lexical trigger for both securitization theory and social psychology (See Figure 3.5). How can this be a lexical trigger of two literatures? In the below diagram, you can see that securitization theory and social psychology overlap in their theme of an existential threat. I chose to

³ President Bush uses “attack” four times in 2002; four times in 2003; two times in 2005; four times in 2006; four time sin 2007; and three times in 2008.
⁴ “Danger” is used five times in 2002; five times in 2003; four times in 2004; three times in 2005; two times in 2006; five times in 2007; and four times in 2008.
⁵ “Enemies” is stated once in 2002; twice in 2004; twice in 2005; twice in 2006; three times in 2007; and five times in 2008.
⁶ “Enemy” shows up twice in 2002; three times in 2003; once in 2005; three times in 2006; nine times in 2007; and seven times with 2008.
make this distinction between the types of invocation because it more aptly conveys the word choice’s implications. All five of the literatures have the theme of us versus them and the justification of violence. The way in which us versus them is invoked specifically with the lexical trigger “enemy” differs between the threat response narratives. Securitization theory discusses the enemy in terms of war, tactics, and strategy. When coded for the social psychology narrative, however, enemy is used when discussing one’s character and values.

The word “threat” shows up at least once in each of President Bush’s State of the Union Addresses, except for his 2006 speech. “Terror” is used ten times in 2002; four times in 2003; three times in 2004; ten times in 2005; six times in 2006; once in 2007; and four times in 2008. “Terrois” encompasses “terrorist(s)” and “terrorism.” Any of these variations shows up twenty times in 2002; thirteen times in 2003; thirteen times in 2004; twelve times in 2005; eleven times in 2006; fourteen times in 2007; and seventeen times in 2008. The frequency of these lexical triggers in President Bush’s State of the Union Addresses is substantially greater than that of the other lexical triggers. Additionally, while President Obama does not once use this phrase in his speeches, President Bush says the “War on Terror” three times in 2002; twice in 2003; twice in 2004 three times in 2005; four times in 2007; and once in 2008.

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7 President Bush says “threat” six times in 2002; 11 times in 2003; three times in 2004; twice in 2005; three times in 2007; and twice in 2008.
8 Henceforth in this section, when I say President Bush’s State of the Union Addresses, I am referring to his 2002-2008 speeches. The 2001 State of the Union Address is excluded because it occurred before 9/11 and this thesis analyzes the terrorism response rhetoric of presidents post-9/11.
President Bush also heavily uses the lexical trigger “destruction”. It shows up five times in 2002; four times in 2003; three times in 2004; once in 2005; and twice in 2006.

President Obama never uses this lexical trigger—neither in his State of the Union Addresses nor his speeches in response to jihadist attacks. The unprecedented level of destruction of the 9/11 attacks might explain this rhetorical distinction because President Bush’s reminder to the American people of their unforgettable destruction sparked domestic encouragement of the War on Terror. “Destruction” is a lexical trigger that sustains 9/11’s salience.

Another lexical trigger with this same effect is “suffer.” It only was used once in President Bush’s 2002 State of the Union Address, but it captures the pain of the American people after the 9/11 attacks and makes them fearful of another attack. The lexical trigger “fear” is only used once in 2002, as well. Fear is fundamental to securitization threat response, but as a sentiment. Fear does not come up as the lexical trigger. It is instead evoked as the emotional takeaway through securitization theory’s
other lexical triggers. While President Bush’s rhetoric does emphasize the tragedy and devastation of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, he also uses the lexical triggers “safe” and “security” to convey the US transformation. Despite his proximity to the attacks, President Bush actually says these two lexical triggers more often than President Obama in their State of the Union Addresses.

**Rally around the Flag Effect**

Securitization theory and rally around the flag effect are the most prevalent threat responses in President Bush’s State of the Union Addresses. My coding of lexical trigger invocation evidences this. In these speeches, rally around the flag looks like American exceptionalism and national unity. President Bush uses the lexical trigger “freedom” a total of fifty-nine times in his State of the Union Addresses, compared to President Obama’s four mentions. The break down of usage is as follows: ten times in 2002; four times in 2003; eight times in 2004; sixteen times in 2005; twelve times in 2006; once in 2007; and eight times in 2008. Although “freedom” is not equal between the presidents, their use of “America” is. President Bush says “America” thirty-three times and President Obama says it thirty across their State of the Union Addressess.

American exceptionalism is a major mechanism of rally around the flag effect in President Bush’s State of the Union Addresses. With the exception of using “called” in 2009, President Obama does not appeal as strongly to a call to action. President Bush, however, invokes the idea of the US needing to act for the sake of others as well as our own. He uses “call” eight times and “calling” once to express
intervention as a bestowed duty on the US. The lexical trigger “responsibility” is only used by President Bush and shows up twice in 2002; once in 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006. Interestingly, President Obama is the one who actually describes the US as “exceptional”—used once in his 2015 State of the Union Address.

Religion is another way President Bush rallies the American people around action and distinguishes himself from President Obama’s terrorism response rhetoric. President Bush says “God” once in 2002; twice in 2003; and once in 2004 and 2007. Mentioning “God” assuages some of the confusion and fear Americans felt after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, which makes them feel more confident in the US and capable of intervention. Rally around the flag effect transforms desperate, defensive action into strategic action that will lead the international system into a more secure state.

Social Psychology

Infrahumanization rhetoric is more prevalent in President Bush’s speeches than in President Obama’s. The lexical triggers that are used Only President Bush calls the enemy “brutal” and does so once in 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006. He uses “civilized” to dehumanize the enemy twice in 2002 and once in 2003. For social psychology, “civilized” and “uncivilized” are used to highlight incompatibility of groups and make the civilized people feel threatened by the uncivilized. President Bush also uses the word “civilized” to invoke an orientalist threat response of the East as inferior.

Other dehumanization lexical triggers are more vitriolic and are burned into President Bush’s audience’s ears. He utilizes emotional words that carry their own
strong, negative connotations, so that the listener is driven to autonomously widen the divide between his in-group and the out-group. Lexical triggers such as “evil,” “hatred,” and “parasites” feed on and exacerbate American resentment and sense of existential-insecurity, particularly in 2002. “Evil” only shows up in President Bush’s State of the Union Addresses: four times in 2002 and 2003; once in 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, and 2008. President Bush’s 2002 State of the Union Address contains the most infrahumanization lexical triggers. This makes sense because the in-group and out-group solidarity of social psychology was at its zenith in the months after the 9/11 attacks. “Violent” and “violence” continue to categorize the enemy as dangerous and different from us, but in a more subdued way. President Bush uses these lexical triggers once in 2002 and 2003; twice in 2004; once in 2005, 2006, 2007, and 2008. Clearly, President Bush wanted to sustain the in-group and out-group identities he powerfully constructed with his earlier terrorism response rhetoric, but was unable to use as extreme of language as more time since the 9/11 attacks elapsed.

**Orientalism**

Although social psychology’s infrahumanization rhetoric is present in President Bush’s State of the Union Addresses, the way orientalism dehumanizes the enemy is absent. This observation would be missed if you were simply looking for the dehumanization effect in these speeches. The mechanisms for dehumanization differ depending on which literature’s frame it is invoking. It is important to link the dehumanization mechanism with the larger narrative—social psychology or orientalism—because the mechanism illuminates the way in which dehumanization
happens. Did it happen through in-group and out-group appeal or East versus West or the Western-savior paradigm?

Of all the lexical triggers for an orientalist threat response, President Bush uses “liberate” and “liberation” the most. “Liberate” comes up once in 2003, while “liberation” is said once in 2003, 2004, and 2005. The other major lexical trigger is “oppressed” and “oppression.” These two lexical triggers show up in all State of the Union Addresses besides 2007. Clearly, this portrayal of the East as struggling and needed help justifies Western intervention.

Another interesting characteristic of President Bush’s threat response rhetoric is how orientalism comes up, mildly, but as an invocation and rejection at the same time. One example of this is President Bush’s 2006 State of the Union Address. In 2007, President Bush simultaneously rejects and promotes Orientalism through his subtle reference to the East. President Bush alludes to an East versus West dichotomy, but also denies that religion, Islam, is at fault for the distinction between these groups, specifically the negative attributes of the East.
CHAPTER FOUR

President Obama’s Terrorism Response Rhetoric

Just as my last chapter examines President Bush’s rhetoric, this chapter presents rhetorical patterns in President Obama’s State of the Union Addresses. I begin with an exploration of if, when, and how President Obama’s invoked the five literatures in these speeches. The analysis first presents the overall findings across all eight State of the Union Addresses. It then looks at the invocation patterns in individual addresses.

4.1 Competing Frames in State of the Union Addresses

Are all five frames invoked at some point across President Obama’s State of the Union Addresses? (See Figures 4.1 and 4.2) Yes, each is invoked at least one time. Rally around the flag effect and securitization theory are essentially tied for the most prevalent literatures, comprising 40% and 39%, respectively, of all the lexical trigger invocations. President Obama’s response to terrorism manifests in an appeal to national pride and a build up of the threat so that he can push through his policy agenda. Each of the five literatures use its particular framing of the enemy to achieve domestic support and justification of violence. Just war theory slightly differs because its invocations are directed at the international community and intra-national organizations as well as the domestic audience. After rally around the flag and securitization theory, just war theory is invoked the next most in President Obama’s
State of the Union Addresses. It is not surprising that he invokes the legalist portrayal of the enemy because of his scholastic background. Likewise, the minimal invocation of social psychology and orientalism in President Obama’s addresses is anticipated because of the political context of his presidency. Islamophobia has become a major problem both domestically and internationally, so President Obama would respond to these ethnic tensions with a conscientious rejection of an East versus West dilemma and dehumanization on the basis of being different, more specifically non-western.

![Total Number of Times Each Threat Response Literature Is Invoked across President Bush's 2002-2008 State of the Union Addresses](image)

Interestingly, the invocation percentages of just war theory, social psychology, and orientalism are essentially the same. Just war theory comprises 10%, social psychology 7%, and orientalism 2% of the total number of times each threat response narrative was invoked in President Bush’s speeches. For President Obama, the percentages only slight differ with just war theory at 14%, social psychology 6%, and
First, I examine the contextual reasons why this nearly equal proportionality between presidents is unexpected. As I mentioned above, the Islamophobic context of President Obama’s presidency would incentivize a rejection of dehumanizing and orientalist framing of the enemy. Additionally, war fatigue eliminates the appeal for the president to create in-group, out-group dynamics because people focus internally. Interestingly, President Obama does not need to invoke just war theory as often because President Bush’s Authorization of Military Force (AUMF) has carried over to President Obama’s presidency and justifies relatively unilateral action in response to acts of terrorism around the world. Why then are these invocations proportionally the same for President Bush and President Obama if the context is different? This thesis is not able to answer this question, so poses it as a topic for other scholars and future analyses using this framework.

Interestingly, President Obama does not have a general rhetorical pattern across his State of the Union Addresses (See Figure 4.3). He does not use one frame in particular to open each address. President Obama tends to close with rally around the flag effect with the exception of his 2014 address. There is very little social
psychology invocation in President Obama’s State of the Union Addresses. Even less frequent, as has been stated, is his orientalist framing. As we can see from the document portraits of his State of the Union Addresses, President Obama tends to alternative between securitization theory, rally around the flag, and just war theory framing. We can posit that President Obama’s “peacetime” terrorism rhetoric, meaning he is not responding to an attack, focuses on policies and the political state of our union.

A Comparison of Total Times Each Threat Response Frame was Invoked across President Obama’s State of the Union Addresses

![Figure 4.3](image_url)
4.2 Shifts in the Use of Frames over Time

The most salient distinction between the presidents’ threat response rhetoric is the lack of “big moments” or major spikes in invocation during President Obama. President Bush’s invocation values were much more drastic year to year. As a result with President Obama, the invocation values for the five literatures stays consistent from 2009-2016. President Obama’s rhetoric can be broken into two phases: 2009-2011 and 2012-2016. Between 2009-2011, there is very little invocation of any frames. 2012 marks a spike in rally around the flag framing. This could be in response to President Obama’s pulling US troops out of Iraq and the resulting chaotic downturn in Iraq. President Obama may have been trying to realign the nation with him and restore American confidence in his policies and presidency, more generally.

The beginning of the Obama administration was focused on the recession. The portions of State of the Union Addresses that are about terrorism are much shorter in phase one because terrorism threats became temporarily second to economic threats. President Obama’s 2009 State of the Union Address is only five paragraphs long with roughly three sentences per paragraph. His 2010 State of the Union contains nine paragraphs about terrorism with four to five sentences in each. The 2011 address has seven paragraphs with about three sentences per paragraph. There is a clear reorientation of topics in 2012 with terrorism’s emergence as the major theme once again. Each of the addresses between 2012 and 2016 contain at least sixteen paragraphs with three to four sentences in each.

There are few invocations of the five frames’ lexical triggers in President Obama’s 2009, 2010, and 2011 State of the Union Addresses. Across this set of
addresses, there are eight just wary theory lexical triggers; thirteen for securitization
theory; thirteen for rally around the flag effect; one for social psychology; and none
for orientalism.

**Important Moments**

A pivotal moment for terrorism framing occurred in President Obama’s 2016
State of the Union Address. The American people, generally, saw Daesh as a threat to
the American way of life. There was a chilling perception of Daesh being able to
destroy more than American land. During his address, however, President Obama, as
explicitly as possible, rejected social psychology’s framing of the enemy as an
existential threat. President Obama declares that, Daesh,

> Pose[s] an enormous danger to civilians; they have to be stopped. But they do not threaten our national existence…we don’t need to build them up to show that we’re serious. (Obama 2016)

These statements are significant because he is fundamentally rejecting social
psychology. President Obama does not want the US to give into extreme dichotomies.
He is saying that the US can appear strong without having to exaggerate the enemy’s
potential for destructiveness because our values and strength exist independent of the
threat. Therefore, the US does not need to resort to constructivist rhetoric.

### 4.3 Shifts in Frames within Each State of the Union Address

As in Chapter 3 with President Bush’s terrorism rhetoric, this section presents
President Obama’s specific word choices. I present the invoked lexical triggers of
each theoretical literature’s framing of a terrorist threat and the enemy. This section
contextualizes President Obama’s State of the Union Address rhetoric in order to provide some explanation for the lexical trigger invocation (See Figure 4.4).

**Just War Theory**

President Obama does not appeal as heavily to intra-organizations when he invokes just war theory. This is most likely because there is no Iraq debate during Obama’s presidency. He does not say “United Nations” and only invokes “violation” once in 2010, but in the context of North Korea and nuclear weapons development. President Obama references “civilians” more frequently than President Bush, but the comparison is essentially negligible, with two invocations for President Obama and one for President Bush. The most interesting just war theory lexical trigger that comes up in President Obama’s State of the Union Addresses is the word “necessary.” President Obama uses it a total of six times, which is nearly one fifth of all the just war theory invocations across his addresses. “Necessary” comes up three times in 2013, twice in 2014, and once in 2016. Shockingly, President Obama uses “war” seventeen times in the terrorism sections of his State of the Union Addresses. This is surprising because President Obama wanted to minimize the US military presence abroad and refused to use President Obama’s term ‘War on Terror.’

**Securitization Theory**

The lexical triggers that are most indicative of securitization theory are “attack,” “enemy,” and “terroris” or “terror.” Interestingly, these lexical triggers rarely, if at all, come up in President Obama’s State of the Union Addresses.
President Obama never uses the words “attack” or “enemy.” “Enemies” comes up once in 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2016 and “terror” comes up once in 2014 and 2015. President Obama does say “terroris” more frequently: three times in 2009, twice in 2010, three times in 2013, six times in 2014, eight times in 2015, and six times again in 2016. Fascinatingly, President Obama says “national security” three times while President Bush does not use that lexical trigger once. It comes up once in 2013, 2014, and 2016. We would expect President Bush to rely on the phrase “national security” to gain domestic and legislative support for legislation like the AUMF or to reduce any anticipated audience costs of committing troops to combat zones in the Middle East. President Obama, though, is the leader who uses “national security,” but the implication is not what we would expect. President Obama says in his 2014 State of the Union Address that, “For the sake of our national security,” we must give diplomacy a chance to succeed” (Obama 2014). National security tends to be used to trigger an imperial presidency or at least enable more unilateral action by proclaiming the executive’s unparalleled expertise. This is a strong example of the benefits of this new analytical framework because it picked up President Obama’s use of the term “national security,” which sparked a closer reading of the context of its invocation.

**Rally around the Flag Effect**

One theme of rally around the flag lexical triggers evokes a sense of national unity. President Bush and President Obama equally use the trigger “strong” to magnify American confidence in the nation. A sense of national security and pride is crucial after an attack because it restores nationalism and encourages a return to
internationalism from isolationism. President Bush’s use of “together,” “united,” and “unity” convey oneness. A unified America is the necessary before proposing extension abroad. President Bush also achieves this by saying “we” and “us” to link the nation, the president, and the American people. President Obama, however, only uses the “united” three times twice in 2010, once in 2013, and twice in 2015. He does frequently evoke national unity through the lexical trigger “together.” President Obama said “together” twice in 2012, once in 2013, once in 2015, and twice in 2016.

The major distinction between President Bush and President Obama’s rally around the flag framing is in President Obama’s appeal to US values. President Obama says “values” more frequently than President Bush. President Obama uses this lexical trigger twice in 2009, once in 2010, once in 2012, once in 2013, and twice in 2015, whereas President Bush uses it twice in 2002, once in 2005, and once more in 2006. President Obama’s appeal to ideals may his rhetorical acknowledgement of how American freedoms and ideals have become strained by fear over the course of the War on Terror.

**Social Psychology**

President Obama’s terrorism rhetoric really distinguishes itself from that of President Bush through the lack of invocation of social psychology lexical triggers. President Obama’s State of the Union Addresses only use the word “enemies” twice, “violence” twice, and “violent” once. His in-group and out-group appeal is really quite hollow. Perhaps this lack of dehumanization is because the 9/11 attacks occurred in 2001, but President Obama’s terrorism rhetoric is analyzing a drastically
different global landscape. In-group and out-group appeal may not seem like a relevant tactic for talking about the enemy because there is no recent horror off of which President Obama could index the identities. Additionally, the American people were suffering from great war fatigue. I am not convinced that a rhetorical strategy of pinning us against them would have been effective. Americans were beginning to live with a renewed sense of security, at least until the series of 2015 attacks. President Obama definitely defined the enemy as violence and explicitly labeled them an enemy, but the vitriol is absent.

**Orientalism**

President Obama’s terrorism rhetoric does indeed include moments where he dehumanizes and infantilizes the enemy. His orientalism invocations were, as with President Bush, focused on the US need to save and free Middle Eastern women and children from oppression. His dehumanization rhetoric sought to expand in-group and out-group distancing. President Obama uses the word “fear” and “free” each one time in 2014. “Fear,” in this case, is not representing terror, but rather modifying the helpless, wanting peoples in the Middle East.
Table 4.4:

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<thead>
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CHAPTER FIVE

Presidential Terrorism Response Rhetoric:
Jihadist Attacks on American Soil and on US International Allies

This last empirical chapter is broken up into two parts. The first part analyzes presidential speeches given in response to domestic jihadist attacks: 9/11 and the San Bernardino attacks. The second part looks at presidential speeches that address jihadist attacks on international allies: the London and Paris attacks. President Bush and President Obama each address a domestic jihadist attack and a jihadist attack on an international ally. It is analytically important to make the distinction between these two types of speeches because we expect the rhetoric to differ. While the presidents across these four speeches are consistent, the context varies greatly. The anticipated rhetorical differences stem from the unique implications of an attack on American soil that targeted Americans versus those of an attack abroad that targeted Westerners. Therefore, we can expect differences in President Bush’s terrorism response rhetoric with the 9/11 speech and the London speech. The same obviously can be said about President Obama’s San Bernardino speech and Paris speech. Context drives the way a president portrays the enemy to the speech audience. In order to have a credible analysis, I group the attack response speeches based on the location of the terrorist attack because these groupings will have comparable rhetoric.
5.1 Presidential Speeches after the 9/11 and San Bernardino Attacks

The 9/11 attacks and the 2016 San Bernardino shooting differ in several capacities. The first difference is the jihadist group that perpetrated each of the attacks. The second differentiating factor is the type of terrorist attack and the last factor is when the attack occurred during the War on Terror. The extent of devastation, too, is a distinguishing factor.

The 9/11 terrorist attacks marked a new kind of attack for the US. While terrorism—and al-Qaeda more generally—was considered a threat to American ideals for over two decades, the US enjoyment of sixty years 9/11 attacks were unimaginable and unprecedented. The tremendous shift in perception of American security was rooted in the attacks occurring on US territory. The US had not been a part of the battlefield since Pearl Harbor. The casualty count from the initial 9/11 attacks—excluding deaths of first responders and environmentally related deaths—total 2,977 civilians (CNN 2015). The 9/11 attacks sparked the beginning of the War on Terror. The San Bernardino shooting was also a jihadist domestic attack. It occurred more than fourteen years the 9/11 attacks. Fourteen people were killed and seventeen others injured in the San Bernardino shooting (Al Jazeera America News 2015).

This information is why we expect a different type of terrorism response to a domestic jihadist attack from President Bush and President Obama. We expect President Bush’s response to the 9/11 attacks to be more aggressive than President Obama’s response to the San Bernardino attack. In actuality, we see similarities between the presidents’ responses, so that is why this analysis is interesting. Before
presenting my findings, I need to disclaim that the lengths of the speeches are not the same. President Obama’s San Bernardino speech is twice as long as President Bush’s 9/11 speech. The San Bernardino speech has 24 paragraphs each with 4-5 sentences. The 9/11 speech, however, is 21 paragraphs long with only 1-2 sentences per paragraph. In order for the presidents’ terrorism response rhetoric to be the same, the breakdown of threat response literature invocation for President Obama’s San Bernardino speech would need to double the literature invocation breakdown for President Bush’s 9/11 speech. This is not what we see.

**Competing Frames**

Are all five of the threat response literatures present in this sample of American presidential speeches in response to domestic jihadist attacks? All five of the literatures’ frames are present in President Obama’s San Bernardino speech, but all do not come up in President Bush’s 9/11 speech—Orientalism is not invoked\(^1\). (See Figures 5.1 and 5.2) Securitization theory is invoked in the San Bernardino speech more than twice as many times as it is invoked in the 9/11 speech. The same rings true for rally around the flag effect as well. In the San Bernardino speech, President Obama prompts nationalism through rally around the flag lexical triggers more than twice as frequently as in President Bush’s speech. This is significant because the San Bernardino speech is roughly twice as long as the 9/11 speech, so these values for securitization theory and rally around the flag invocation cannot be explained by a difference in length alone. The invocation frequency of particularly

\(^1\) Meaning that none of Orientalism’s lexical triggers are used in this speech; thus, an orientalism threat response does not explicitly show up.
rally around the flag effect is shocking because 9/11 is regarded as being more psychologically shattering and physically destructive than the San Bernardino attacks. Infrahumanization of the enemy comes up in both presidential speeches—three times in the 9/11 speech and four times in the San Bernardino speech. The frequency of invocation is essentially equivalent, which means that there is either a significant amount of social psychology invocation in the shorter 9/11 speech or minimal invocation in the longer San Bernardino speech. I think that infrahumanization invocation should be observed as occurring in both ways. It is salient that there is more infrahumanization invocation than just war theory invocation in President Bush’s speech, but this makes sense. The president is concerned with establishing in-group and out-groups to catalyze the American peoples’ support of crusading liberalism against the “evil” other. He is not as focused on using just war theory’s international law appeal as means for justifying this intervention because that is secondary to popular and congressional support.

Walzer’s discussion of fighting an evil Other offers insight into the psychological and tactical implications of President Bush’s dehumanization invocation by using the lexical trigger ‘evil.’ When fighting the abstract idea of evil, the only option is to win because it is a matter of your survival. In this discussion, evil represents an enemy that is wholly and inherently incompatible and threatening to the actor’s way of life. As a result, war is “a steady thrust toward moral extremity” where each side “forces the hand of the other,” escalating to attrition (Walzer 1977, 23). The nature of necessity justifies doing whatever is necessary in order to win the war and minimize the loss of life—the minimization of your side’s loss, primarily. Who is
killed matters because it is a reflection on the killer. The American people were able to sustain psychological equanimity about intervening and killing Afghans, Iraqis, and Americans because of this moral extremity that partially stems from dehumanization rhetoric.

Why would President Obama appeal to nationalism and a unified American people more than President Bush is the wake of domestic jihadist attacks? Why does President Obama intensify the threat more frequently than President Bush? If looking for an explanation in context, then the difference in invocation may be due to the “threat” in San Bernardino being both Islamic radicalization and gun violence. These threats have been terrorizing the nation longer than Islamic radicalization had been before the 9/11 attacks. The rise in threat rhetoric from January September 20, 2002 to December 7, 2015 reflects presidential frustration with and vulnerability to such enduring threats.

The general pattern of President Bush’s threat response rhetoric in his 9/11 speech begins with a combination of rally around the flag and securitization theory. Securitization’s threat buildup dominates the body of the speech, but infrahumanization and nationalism are invoked as well. President Obama’s threat response pattern in the San Bernardino speech differs from that of President Bush because there is a section of rejection of orientalism towards the end of the speech. As with President Bush and President Obama’s State of the Union Addresses, their speeches in response to domestic jihadist attacks end with rally around the flag.
Comparison of the Use of Frames

Just war theory is invoked three times as often, securitization theory invocation is more than doubled, and rally around the flag effect is tripled in the San Bernardino speech than in the 9/11 speech. Social psychology’s invocation is essentially equal.
Just War Theory

Just war theory is not really invoked in President Bush’s 9/11 speech. The threat response is focused more on building up the threat. There are only two just war theory lexical triggers in the 9/11 speech and five in the San Bernardino speech. President Bush says “under attack” and “war” both of which convey the necessity of attack and that attack’s defensiveness. President Obama, however, only uses one lexical trigger—“war”—and mentions it five times.

Securitization Theory

President Bush and President Obama each use “attack” four times in their speeches. 9/11 and San Bernardino were attacks on American soils. “Danger” is used one by President Obama, but not by President Bush. Lexical triggers about the relative security of the US come up in both speeches. “Safe” is used once in the 9/11 speech and three times in the San Bernardino speech. “Security” comes up once more in the 9/11 speech than in San Bernardino. There is a major disparity between the invocation frequency of “terror” and “terroris” in these responses to domestic jihadist attacks. President Bush says “terror” once and some variation of “terroris” four times while President Obama uses “terroris” twenty times. President Obama also uses “threat” six times compared to President Bush’s single use. President Obama’s overwhelmingly greater invocation of these lexical triggers again illuminates the value of context.

Rally around the Flag Effect

More rally around the flag lexical triggers are present in the San Bernardino speech, I posit, because of President Obama’s desperate plea to the American people
to implement gun control legislation. President Obama uses “American” eight times, “exceptional” once, and “freedom” once. President Bush, too, says “American,” but only once. The style of President Bush’s rallying is of national unity. He uses “together,” “unite,” and “united” once. He also uses “strong” in order to reaffirm Americans’ confidence in the nation. President Obama’s rallying objective is unity, but his rhetoric demonstrates a focus on Americanism. President Obama is the only one to use the lexical triggers “ideals” and “values,” which he uses once and twice respectively.

President Obama’s rhetoric in the San Bernardino speech exposes his cognizance of American war fatigue. He is reminding the American people of our American essence: our values and freedoms. President Obama in his 2016 State of the Union Address continues with this discourse because he wants to prevent American over-extension and megalomania, which manifest in a foreign policy of the threats determining our objectives.

Social Psychology

A social psychology threat response is manifest in the infrahumanization of the enemy and emphasis of in-group and out-group solidarity. President Bush uses the word evil three times to describe al-Qaeda and their actions. President Obama, on the other hand, uses the word hateful three times to describe Daesh and their actions. The fourth invocation of social psychology in the San Bernardino speech is the lexical trigger violence. Although evil sounds more aggressive than hate, that characterization is rooted in the relative prevalence of the evil-good dichotomy versus the hate-love dichotomy. The latter is not seen as concrete or extreme as the former
dichotomy, hence evil’s powerful emotionality. Evil conveys fear, a feeling of being inherently incompatible with one’s in-group. Evil works within the context of 9/11 because President Bush and the American people were very afraid. President Obama’s hate response is indicative of the political context. The 9/11 attacks were new and scary. And while the San Bernardino terrorist attack was scary and devastating, the American people felt extreme war fatigue after being in the War on Terror for fifteen years with no end in sight. Additionally, President Obama was presupposed to a hate response over an evil response to this domestic jihadist attack because of his frustration with Congress in passing gun control legislation. The San Bernardino attack was a shooting, which infuriated President Obama because gun control could have minimized the likelihood of such an attack.

Orientalism

President Bush does not once invoke orientalism in his 9/11 speech, but President Obama does use an orientalism lexical trigger in his San Bernardino speech. In describing the two San Bernardino shooters, President Obama states that, “the two of them had gone down the dark path of radicalization, embracing a perverted interpretation of Islam that calls for war against American and the West.” The orientalism lexical trigger, here, is “West” because it is used to establish a divide between the East and West in which the former is dark and perverted. As we saw in some of President Bush’s State of the Union Addresses, President Obama is simultaneously invoking and rejecting orientalism in the way he is responding to this terrorist attack. President Obama is acknowledging a war between the East and the West, specifically America, but he is also saying that Islam is not responsible for such
deliberate violence. President Obama is faulting the individuals who constructed a perverted, illegitimate form of Islam.

Orientalism shows up in President Bush’s 2002 State of the Union Address, but it does not in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. Why does he not create a stark East versus West frame right after the attacks? (See Figure 5.3) Why does President Bush’s rhetoric in the 9/11 speech talk about the enemy only in terms of securitization theory and rally around the flag effect? I think that the answer to these questions is context.

My thesis offers a closer analysis of how social psychology is invoked by President Bush and President Obama during domestic jihadist attack speeches. The social psychology lexical triggers that are used in each speech are presented in the following chart. My data demonstrates that there is a critical difference in the way each president infrahumanizes the enemy—for President Bush the enemy is al-Qaeda; for President Obama the enemy is Daesh.

President Obama’s speech is a direct address of the San Bernardino terrorist attack, but it is also indexing of this attack with the many attacks from the last few years. He addresses more than just the two terrorists who orchestrated the San Bernardino shooting. President Obama’s speech appears to take on a more admonishing tone than President Bush’s, but the rhetorical differences through lexical trigger invocations can be attributed to the speech’s time during the War on Terror. President Bush’s 9/11 speech needed to just respond to the 9/11 attacks. President Obama’s San Bernardino speech, however, needed to respond to more than the most recent travesty because it had to contextualize the shooting. San Bernardino was not
the first domestic jihadist attack; it was not the first terrorist attack on the West; but it did signal that America’s efforts in countering terrorism had not prevented the loss of more innocent lives.

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Figure 5.3

5.2 Presidential Speeches after London and Paris Attacks

Similar to my previous analysis of the 9/11-response speech and the San Bernardino response speech, there are obvious distinctions between the London and Paris jihadist attacks that would make us expect different presidential terrorism response rhetoric. The London bombings took place on July 7, 2005. Three al-Qaeda operatives detonated bombs while on London Underground trains and one operative set off a bomb on a double-decker bus. The casualties numbered fifty-six with over
seven hundred people injured. The motivation behind the bombing was getting the US to remove its forces from Afghanistan and Iraq.

The Paris attacks consisted of three suicide bombings and a series of other suicide bombings, shootings, and hostage taking in a major social center of the city. Daesh orchestrated the attacks, killing 130 civilians and injuring 368 civilians. When Daesh took responsibility for the terrorist attacks, it declared that they were in response to France’s airstrikes against Daesh in Syria and Iraq.

Although the terrorist organization and location differs between these two attacks, they are similar in that England and France are major American allies and that the attacks were, allegedly, conducted in response to Western intervention in the Middle East. As a result, we would expect some consistencies between President Bush and President Obama’s terrorism response rhetoric because the dominating variable is the attacked nation—an American ally and Western nation—as opposed to which jihadist organization carried out the attacks. Both attacks occurred during the US president’s second term. Both attacks were devastating. Both attacks utilized new tactics: suicide bombing in transit systems, and suicide bombings and shootings at restaurants and music spaces.

**Competing Frames**

President Bush’s speech after the London attacks and President Obama’s speech after the Paris attacks offer an interesting opportunity for comparison (See Figures 5.4 and 5.5). Is there less rally around the flag rhetoric in speeches about jihadist attacks on an ally than in speeches responding to domestic jihadist attacks?
Yes, this is something that we expect to see because American victims damages Americans’ perceived in-group security. *That American victim could have been me.*

While the shock and horror of terrorist attacks on allies remains for abroad witnesses, it is more difficult to unify a people based on something external. A president firmly grasps his domestic audience with a call to action after an attack on his own soil.

Not all of the threat response framings are present in the London and Paris speeches. Only securitization theory and social psychology are invoked in the London speech. The Paris speech contains lexical triggers for just war theory, securitization theory, and rally around the flag. The general pattern of threat response rhetoric in the London speech beings with us versus them, then emphasizes allies, and magnifies threats. Social psychology and securitization are consolidated into one section and used alternatingly. The rhetorical pattern of the Paris attacks is much different because it uses two frames, which are absent in the London speech. President Obama’s lexical triggers are also concentrated in one portion of the speech. This time the presidential invocation of frames occurs in the beginning of the speech with one, lone securitization lexical trigger in the last paragraph. The gaps in threat response invocation in both the London and Paris speeches could be due to the other portions describing the attacks. Securitization theory and rally around the flag invocation are balanced in the Paris speech, but generally follow the pattern of securitization, then rally and then ending with securitization.
Comparison of the Use of Frames

There are much fewer lexical triggers in the presidential speeches responding to an attack on international allies than there are in the presidential speeches responding to domestic attacks. Just war theory is not invoked in the London speech.
and only comes up once in the Paris speech with President Obama’s use of “civilian.” An interesting securitization lexical trigger that comes up in the London speech is the “War on Terror.” The War on Terror is not mentioned in the Paris speech, but previous terrorist attacks are referenced. President Obama used “terrorist” four times in the Paris speech. He also builds up the threat with the lexical trigger “danger” and “attack,” which was used three times. “Attack” was not once used in the London speech, which is unexpected because it is consistently invoked across speeches. The tone of President Bush’s London speech, however, is one of logos. He appeals to the logic and humanity of men, while declaring his pursuit and bringing to justice of terrorists—he does not specifically name the terrorists responsible for the London attacks. Instead he insinuates terrorists—in a nebulous way—in the War on Terror as the targets.

Nationalist lexical triggers are only present in the Paris speech. President Obama uses “American” once; “together” once; and “values” five times. In terms of the rally around the flag mechanism, President Obama’s terrorism response rhetoric in the Paris speech is similar to that in his San Bernardino speech. The speeches should be analyzed in the reverse order that I present them because the Paris attacks occurred a month before the San Bernardino attacks. I began with the domestic jihadist attack section, though, because 9/11 is the attack that starts the War on Terror. Keeping chronology in mind, the terrorism response rhetoric in the Paris speech set the foundation for President Obama’s terrorism response rhetoric in the San Bernardino speech. His appeal to Americanism thus began when he addressed the world in the aftermath of the Paris terrorist attacks. President Obama’s rhetoric highly
references American values because he faces a world that has become increasingly xenophobic—truly Islamophobic—and megalomaniac, which is a dangerous combination. President Obama is appealing to humanity, urging the American people and citizens of the world to remember their values and freedoms in the face of an enduring terrorist threat.
This thesis concludes with a summary of the findings made possible with this new framework for analyzing presidential terrorism threat response and the presidents’ portrayal of the enemy. I present the findings that are the most surprising and the findings that are most expected. Lastly, I reiterate the most prevalent framings within President Bush and President Obama’s speeches and explore the political implications of the rhetorical pattern. My conclusion ends with a presentation of future research topics, which would be best analyzed using this threat response framework.

President Bush promoted American exceptionalism through his rally around the flag invocations. My analysis exposed through picking out the literatures’ lexical triggers that President Bush does not use the word “values.” His appeal to Americanism, then, is less about American values and beliefs and more about America’s strength and call to arms, then it is about America being a beacon of hope of diplomat. President Obama does appeal to American values and beliefs by referencing them as the distinction between America and other nations. Because both President Bush and President Obama use orientalism to frame US intervention as humanitarian, we would expect for President Bush to emphasize American values when we portrays America as the greatest. In fact, his reliance on call to arms is actually quite alarming when it is juxtaposed with his orientalism framing of intervening in the Middle East.

This framework allows the comparison of different frames and that is a significant analytical opportunity because this example of surprising rhetoric illuminates the tension
between President Bush’s rallying mechanisms and his orientalism mechanisms. Analyzing on the level of specific word choice exposes the contradiction between intervening to non-oppressively protect Middle Eastern peoples’ basic human right to the freedoms Americans enjoy, and his rallying of the American people via a call to action.

Another surprising finding is how infrequently orientalism is invoked. This general framing insight suggests that maybe we have moved away from an inferiority and fetishizing in-group and out-group strategy. We traditionally think of orientalism as the West’s exoticization of the East and I think that some of that othering remains because of the glorification of helping the women and children. My analysis, however, suggests that there has been a transition in how we talk about the enemy. President Bush and President Obama use an orientalism approach that does see Middle Easterners as people, not territory. They are deserving of freedoms and are not framed disparagingly in terms of their own being. If the presidents talked down to them is was in terms of an oppressive regime, not the peoples’ inherent uncivilized, barbarism.

The last surprising discovery that I will explore is President Obama’s declaration of being at war with “ISIL” or Daesh during his San Bernardino speech. The context of President Bush and President Obama’s presidency certainly changed, but did the rhetoric in terms of being at war?

The context of President Bush’s declaration of the War on Terror was certainly different from the context of President Obama’s reiteration of the US being at war with a terrorist group—but not terrorism, more broadly. President Obama’s terrorism rhetoric definitely referenced war across his speech set. This declaration of war is unexpected because of President Obama’s legalist background. We would not expect him to declare a
war against a non-state actor, particularly because he rejected President Bush’s war reflex and actively labeled disputes with non-state actors as conflicts. President Obama refused to use the phrase the War on Terror. Additionally, one of his major campaign platforms was pulling back from the War on Terror. It is not surprising why President Obama was unable to completely sever America from this globally proclaimed War on Terror. As president, there are grave consequences in departing from previous policies. It weakens the American peoples’ confidence in the system because it portrays the previous course of action as wrong or uninformed. The rise of Daesh came when President Obama was making grand strides to destroy al-Qaeda operatives and terrorist cells. President Obama was, thus, forced to depart from his campaign promise of ending the US War on Terror in order to respond to a domestic jihadist attack. I think that this tradeoff is interesting because it shows how the president is confined by previous administrations’ policies.

Many of my analytical conclusions may seem obvious. An important element of research is proving things that we suspect. For example, President Bush’s invocation of just war theory is anticipated because of the Iraq debate. President Bush needed to appeal to international law in order to frame the enemy, Saddam Hussein, as violating agreements. Another expected finding that was confirmed through my framework’s analysis of lexical triggers is the differing emotional tone of President Bush and President Obama’s speeches in response to domestic jihadist attacks. It makes sense that President Bush’s speech evokes fear. Likewise, it makes sense that President Obama’s speech evokes anger. Regardless of our assumptions, we needed to conduct analysis in order to empirically prove a distinction instead of just going off of how their rhetoric sounds.
Lastly, I want to highlight the overall rhetorical pattern that was invoked by both President Bush and President Obama. Both presidents predominately invoke securitization theory and rally around the flag. As I outline in my introduction chapter, there are three main ways an actor can respond to a threat. The president can (1) rally the people around particular policy using either fear or nationalism; (2) frame the enemy in terms of international law; (3) or appeal to in-group and out-groups through either dehumanization or exoticization. My data shows that President Bush and President Obama are responding to terrorist threats with the first potential response. This means that both presidents’ overall rhetorical impact is rallying the people behind their policies.

This thesis lays down a strong foundation for future analysis. My analysis opens up avenues for future scholars. There are several questions that arise from my preliminary analysis that can be addressed by future scholars. We see some surprising similarities across the presidents—such as the presidents’ tendency to shy away from orientalist framing of the enemy and the coupling of fear-induced and pride-induced nationalism—which raises some questions. Why do we see these similarities? Are they because of State of the Union patterns? Does the type of threat, in this case terrorism, explain these similarities? An idea for another quantitative analysis is looking for correlations between public rhetoric about the enemy and presidential terrorism rhetoric during the same period. It would be interesting to have empirical data that either proved or disproved the reverberating effects of presidential framing on public perceptions. If a correlation does exist, then this analytical framework can also provide the tools for quantifying the similarities and differences between the actors’ responses.
Because I was able to analyze President Bush and President Obama’s terrorism rhetoric through a parallel structure, it is clear that the types of threats and attacks that existed a decade ago still exist today. While President Bush was president, there was a jihadist attack on American soil and a jihadist attack on an international ally—and in the case of President Obama, two attacks on allies with the second attack occurring in Brussels on March 22, 2016. Terrorism clearly continues to be a threat to American security. When we are given a new way to think about an issue, we can set aside preconceived notions and think creatively. We become more effective problem solvers. This new framework for analyzing presidential terrorism rhetoric enables us to break from our paradigmatic understanding of terrorism. Analyzing terrorism response rhetoric through a more comprehensive model allows us to learn more about how we talk about the enemy and, in turn, learn more about human behavior.
APPENDIX

Total Number of Times Each Threat Response Frame was Invoked in 2001 State of the Union Address

Total Number of Times Each Threat Response Frame was Invoked in 2002 State of the Union Address
Total Number of Times Each Threat Response Frame was Invoked in 2003 State of the Union Address

Total Number of Times Each Threat Response Frame was Invoked in 2004 State of the Union Address
Total Number of Times Each Threat Response Frame was Invoked 2005
State of the Union Address

Total Number of Times Each Threat Response Frame was Invoked in 2006
State of the Union Address
Total Number of Times Each Threat Response Frame was Invoked in 2007 State of the Union Address

Total Number of Times Each Threat Response Frame was Invoked in 2008 State of the Union Address
**Total Number of Times Each Threat Response Frame was Invoked in 2011 State of the Union Address**

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**Total Number of Times Each Threat Response Frame was Invoked in 2012 State of the Union Address**

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Total Number of Times Each Threat Response Frame was Invoked in 2015 State of the Union Address

Total Number of Times Each Threat Response Frame was Invoked in 2016 State of the Union Address
Document portrait: 2005 State of the Union Address.
Document portrait: San Bernardino response speech.
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