

The Discursive Construction of National Security Threats from 2001-2018

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Abstract-Academic

This thesis seeks to explain the discursive construction of national security threats facing the United States from 2001-2018. The driving argument is that the nation's perception of threats and conceptualization of itself are vulnerable to Presidential rhetoric. Presidents convey threats through rhetorical frameworks, a simplified means to present a manipulated perception of reality to a wider audience, which intentionally provoke reactions from the nation to garner consensus towards executive decision-making. Presidents apply frames from prior administrations as well as new frames to define adverse states, organizations, groups of people, etc., and to justify disciplinary practices, military action, or policy implementation against threats. Primarily, they portray threats as the binary opposite of the American national identity to reinforce the country's legitimacy in national security decision-making. This discourse influences how the public internalizes major issues facing the nation and triggers emotions that can either unite or divide the national identity. This research maps variation among the rhetorical frameworks and strategies of President George W. Bush, President Barack Obama, and President Donald J. Trump to evaluate: how national security threats are constructed, how the nation interprets threats, and the resulting social and political effects.

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Abstract-Public

This thesis seeks to explain how presidential language contributes to the construction of national security threats facing the United States from 2001-2018. The driving argument is that the nation's perception of threats and conceptualization of itself are vulnerable to Presidential rhetoric. Presidents intentionally portray threats as the binary opposite of the American national identity to justify the country's retaliation. This language impacts how Americans conceptualize themselves and triggers emotions that can either unite or divide the national identity. This research maps how President George W. Bush, President Barack Obama, and President Donald J. Trump have used language to construct national security threats and the American national identity. Further, it evaluates the resulting social and political effects and the implications moving forward.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my mother and father, Tammy and Kurt, to my sister, Kate, and to my aunt and uncle, Susan and Kevin. I am forever grateful for the support and encouragement they have provided throughout my time at Virginia Tech. I would have never been a Hokie without them.

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Chapter I—Introduction

The Importance of Political Rhetoric

Political rhetoric is a mechanism used to exchange emotions in a social environment that can construct, sustain, and amplify identities (Ross 2014). This rhetoric contributes to the national character and is a reflection of the national security policies made by Presidential administrations that perpetuates current emotions circulating throughout the public. The American national identity is not a coherent, identity-based process of homogeneity therefore Presidents are extremely influential in the construction of security threats as well as the nation's perception of itself. Their language influences emotions and opinions towards political events and play a significant role in producing a response, especially when involving human suffering, moral controversy, and other concerns (Ross 2014). As a result, Presidential rhetoric constrains the parameters of political decision-making within administrations and forms consensus for policy and action.

The President transmits views and emotions from one individual to another and from one political context to another through speech. Presidential speech is transmitted nation-wide through communications technologies, influencing the majority of the population. Ross (2014) explains “communications technologies intensify the communication of affect across individuals, expand the reach of political speech to dispersed audiences, and heighten the sensitivity of elites to popular emotion” (5). For example, communications technologies clarify how local interactions and emotions on 9/11 expanded to and triggered reactions from the nation (Ross 2014). This demonstrates how the construction of “identities guide decisions about whom to trust and whom to fear, they permit injured groups to seek revenge upon those responsible for violence” (Ross 2014, 123). By tying emotions to cultural identity dictated by rhetoric,

Presidents become an essential aspect to the nation's stability at the social, economic, national, and international level.

Presidential discourse embraces a set of rhetorical strategies that aim to reinforce the authority of the state and legitimize its practices. Jackson (2005) explains the objective of Presidential rhetoric is "to establish what is considered knowledge, to set the limits of common sense, demarcate the terms of the debate, and to exclude alternative paradigms or trajectories" (178). Therefore, Presidential language is important because it reflects official assumptions, beliefs, and knowledge. Rhetorical strategies shape public knowledge in the attempt to institutionalize certain policies and to achieve certain goals (Jackson 2005; Hansen 2006).

Especially in historical moments of crisis, the public relies on the President to clarify shocking or confusing circumstances. As a result, the President possesses great power over the interpretation of events and the perception of identities involved. This thesis explores how Presidential speeches after the alarming events of 9/11 constructed national security threats. I hypothesize President Barack Obama and President Donald Trump have incorporated President George W. Bush's simplified, yet specific, construction of terrorists, as opposite the American identity, into their discursive depictions of security threats. This research focuses on mapping the rhetorical variations of national security threats among Presidents Bush, Obama, and Trump. I compare and examine the emerging frames in a selection of speeches by each President, evaluate the categories used to construct national security threats, and trace the similarities and differences among the rhetorical strategies used.

A core ambition of this thesis is to assess the rhetorical impact of Presidential speeches in the construction of the national identity and national security threats. This research assesses how these constructions contribute to achieving political goals and the social impact on the nation.

The results of this thesis are intended to (1) identify frames that Presidents use to create a national security threat, (2) analyze how these frames construct both the U.S. national identity and the identity of the threat, (3) assess if Bush's rhetoric served as a platform for a language regarding threats, (4) explain how identity constructions served Presidential strategies and goals, (5) and identify the resulting social and political effects.

I rely on discourse analysis to guide my assessment of Presidential rhetoric. I embrace post-structuralist views of language as relationally structured and ontologically productive when describing reality and portraying identities. According to Hansen (2006), "it is only through the construction of language that 'things' - objects, subjects, states, living beings, and material structures - are given meaning and endowed with a particular identity" (18). As a key mode of communication between the government and the citizenry Presidential speeches shape the nation's identity and, by contrast, the identity of threat. In this thesis, I adopt a post structural discourse analysis approach to identify the production and reproduction of certain identities and the exclusion of others (Hansen 2006).

Key Concepts

Political Rhetoric: Language used by elected officials to express core principles of the nation, government assumptions regarding nation-wide issues, and the authorization of policy (Jackson 2005).

Construction of Identity: A set of reductive categories—culture, religion, mind, history, society—that represent a society (Said 1979). Also, a process of reflexivity: "that meaning and identity are constructed through a series of signs that are linked to each other that constitute relations of sameness as well as through a differentiation to another series of juxtaposed signs" (Hansen 2006, 42).

Post-structural Discourse Analysis: Analysis founded on the significance of language as a social and political system that generates meaning through a simultaneous construction of identity and difference in relational terms (Hansen 2006).

Intertextuality: The connection between reiterated frames and categories in different political contexts that significantly reconstruct societal identities and conceptualizations (Hodges 2011).

Framing: A rhetorical strategy that identifies “central organizing ideas that provide coherence to a designated set of idea elements” (Ferree et al. 2002, 105).

Literature Review

Language theorists widely recognize rhetoric’s influence on the interpretation of events and the understanding of identities (Jackson 2005; Hansen 2006; Reyes 2012). Scholars have also explored the many functions of political rhetoric and the strategies used to shape knowledge (Jackson 2005; Hodges 2011). Below I will explore this body of literature to assess the impact of Presidential rhetorical strategies and the resulting political outcomes.

Post Structuralism

Many scholars identify a link between political discourse, identity construction and foreign policy (Hansen 2006; Hodges 2011). Hansen (2006) explains, post-structuralism research “is based on the assumption that policies are dependent upon representations of the threat, country, security problem, or crisis they seek to address” (5-6). For Hodges (2011), language “infuses events with meaning, establishes widespread social understandings, and constitutes social reality” (5). Scholars agree language is both social and political because, when used in

public settings, it assigns and constructs identities to subjects, states, beings, etc. (Hansen 2006; Hodges 2011; Holland 2013).

Scholars widely accept language as a tool used to assign meaning and organize actors in the international community (Collins and Glover 2002, Jackson 2005; Hansen 2006). However, power regulates the interpretation of actors and events in particular political settings (Hansen 2006; Hodges 2011; Holland 2013). Power determines who assigns meaning to political events (Jackson 2005). Ultimately, political power sets limits on what is possible to say, think, and do about certain situations (Holland 2013). In complex events, the public relies on political leadership to simplify situations and to determine how the country will react (Jackson 2005; Holland 2013). As the leader of the United States (U.S.), Presidents maintain influence over public perceptions of domestic and international situations and the identities of those involved. Presidents manipulate language to intentionally set boundaries for how the nation perceives adverse actors in crises, shaping future security policies and political outcomes (Jackson 2005; Hänggli and Kriesi 2010; Holland 2013).

Crisis Rhetoric

Security discourse is a virtuous power cycle, granting certain issues heightened priority while bestowing legitimacy on those handling the crisis in question (Hansen 2006). Scholars argue the urgency of security situations “allow governments to suspend normal rules and procedures they are normally bound by” (Buzan et al. 1998, 25). Accordingly, this allows leaders to use political power to shape threats and define actors involved in a security situation. Milford (2016) argues Presidents imbue situations with heightened urgency to create a political atmosphere demanding the suspension of social and political rules. However, Kuyper (1997) explained such rhetorical strategies are not necessary in the case of external attacks such as 9/11

because of the mass publicity and widespread shock across the nation. In this event, President Bush did not have to persuade the public towards thinking the country was in crisis. Instead, he had to produce a widely accepted interpretation of the unfolding events (Milford 2016).

Rhetorical Frameworks

Presidents guide the nation's conceptualization of adverse actors through rhetorical framing. Framing is a process of selective emphasis on certain aspects of reality to make them more "salient in the presentation of a specific problem, interpretation of events, moral evaluation or recommendation for retaliation" (Entman 1993; Hänggli and Kriesi 2010, 142). In other words, it is a simplified way to present a specific perception of reality to a wider audience. Presidents therefore strategically choose frames that intentionally provoke reactions from the nation to garner consensus towards executive decision-making.

For Jackson (2005), the framing process creates a "discursive straightjacket," limiting what other leaders can say on any given topic. When leaders apply an interpretation, vocabulary, and set of assumptions to a crisis they create a powerful framework for how that political situation is talked about and understood (Jackson 2005; Hansen 2006). The projected framework limits how the government and the public perceive events, create strategies to overcome, and discuss approaches to diminish its effects (Jackson 2005; Hansen 2006).

Although Presidential framing assigns meaning to events, such meaning is both unstable and impermanent (Jackson 2005; Hansen 2006; Holland 2013). Therefore, persistent reiteration of dominant frames is necessary to maintain the constructed interpretations and identities (Jackson 2005; Holland 2013). Presidents dictate rhetorical expressions of identity to promote their knowledge as the ultimate truth and to guide government decisions towards supporting their goals (Jackson 2005; Hansen 2006; Zagacki 2007). Scholars also explain Presidents must work

within the framework previously established when attempting to alter identities already acknowledged by the government and the public (Jackson 2005; Hansen 2006; Zagacki 2007). Therefore, if a President intends to alter the public perception of a crisis or threat, he must use the existing framework to assign different characteristics to the same or a transformed identity. For example, President Bush relied on his discursive representation of Iraqi people he established in 2002 when altering their portrayal in 2005. In 2002, he portrayed Saddam Hussein's regime as a 'grave danger' to 'free nations' and the Iraqi citizens as 'oppressed Iraqi people' longing for 'freedom' and 'liberty' (Hansen 2006, 28). Bush constructed democratic characteristics of Iraqi people by linking them to American values. Overtime, Bush altered his construction of identities to adjust for the changing political situation. Bush failed to perform any in depth analysis of the ethnic and sectarian violence that followed Operation Iraqi Freedom. Therefore in 2005, he further divided the Iraqi identity between those intrinsically similar to Americans and those who defied American values (Zagacki 2007). Bush categorized insurgents as 'remnants of Saddam Hussein's regime,' and 'Islamic militants' (Zagacki 2007). He connected the Iraqi opposition to Saddam's regime through this rhetorical framework and depicted a popular uprising against the American occupation as skirmishes left behind from fighting Saddam. Subsequently, Bush successfully defined an alternative security threat and rationalized continued intervention.

The use of rhetorical framing in attempt to control the nation's domestic and foreign policies by manipulating public discourse is not new and has been adopted by Presidents throughout the twentieth and twenty-first century (Rex 2011). For example, when Theodore Roosevelt was campaigning for the Hepburn Act, to strengthen federal regulation on railroads, and when Ronald Reagan was garnering support for tax reform, both Presidents took their cause to the public (Rex 2011). They did so to limit "Congress's ability to deliberate in a thoughtful

way” (Rex 2011, 106). This is similar to Bush’s strategy of influencing public emotion and legislative deliberation capabilities to sell the agenda for the Iraq War (Rex 2011).

Political goals dictate the audiences that Presidents address. They deliberately describe crises and threats to the public, military, Congress, and international community to define security situations and limit the number of solutions offered to overcome a threat (Rex 2011). Presidents rhetorically link themselves to the public to express national solidarity and to project certain views and emotions to wider audiences (Reyes, 2011). Bush specifically adopted this strategy to define a binary identity between the American public and the national enemy. He stated, “in America, we say everybody is precious; everybody counts...That’s not what the enemy thinks. They don’t value innocent life. They’re nothing but a bunch of cold-blooded killers, and that’s the way we’re going to treat them” (January 3rd, 2003). Bush presented a united “we” and an opposing “them” in this excerpt just by saying “in America” and “the enemy.” He included the American population to shape how the nation views the threat as directly contrasting American values and beliefs. Scholars agree political leaders engage the audience this way to inspire a sense of solidarity, to garner a following towards future decisions the administration will make (Jackson 2005; Reyes 2011).

Politicians also quote victims to legitimize their interpretation of reality. This tool sparks a collective memory in communities and endorses the President’s agenda (Reyes 2011). For example, Bush reported a statement by an Iraqi villager, followed by an indication of how the U.S. would react, stating, “A man in one Iraqi village said this to one of our soldiers: ‘I want my freedom. I don’t want food or water. I just want my freedom.’ America hears that man. We hear all Iraqis who yearn for liberty. And the people of Iraq have my pledge: Our fighting forces will press on until your entire country is free” (April 3rd, 2003). Bush used this victim as proof that

Iraqi people yearned for a free nation and to justify military action. Although anonymous, Bush's quote from an Iraqi citizen connected the audience to the people of Iraq, motivating citizens to fight for those who have similar values to individuals in the U.S.

Additionally, Presidential legitimacy is linked to the position and makes a President's account of events appear to be objective (Jackson 2005; Reyes 2011; Holland 2013). As a result, Presidents are able to present manipulated information and persuade audiences to agree with the political agenda they endorse. Presidential speeches depict a representation of reality, carefully shaped and expressed to the public to rationalize a specific response to complicated political situations (Jackson 2005; Reyes 2011). This indicates leaders are not simply responders to political contexts, but "a maker of context, defining situations and relationships" (Rickford and Eckertt 2001, 15).

Scholars understand Presidential speech as strategically planned language with motive to harness the power of words to explain a crisis or justify an act (Reyes 2011). Presidential language embeds identity, national symbols, and patriotism, as well as danger, fear, and threat into its political messages to disguise intentions and to motivate the public to act according to the President's agenda. Scholars recognize Bush's discursive presentation of the 'war on terror' and subsequent national security threats were not a neutral reflection of reality, but rather a deliberately composed set of words and assumptions designed to achieve a set of political goals (Jackson 2005; Hodges 2011; Milford 2016). Constructing the threat after 9/11 was not a naïve attempt to send American troops abroad or tame mass violence in foreign states (Hodges 2011; Holland 2013). Instead, it was a strategy to rationalize war against specific groups and achieve the goal of removing Saddam from power (Jackson 2005; Hodges 2011; Holland 2013).

Links to Previous Administrations

Scholars argue American Presidential administrations learn from one another and use comparable language to demonize an opponent while simultaneously garnering political support for action (Hodges 2011; Reyes 2011; Holland 2013). Although Presidential language builds off of past rhetoric, it also evolves and reinvents itself to adapt to current political contexts (Jackson 2005; Hodges 2011). As a result, Presidential language enables administrations to continually represent threats with different identities, perpetuating support for action or policy to further secure the U.S. (Jackson 2005).

For example, Bush legitimized his decision for the Iraq invasion by quoting historical figures whom aligned with his political goals, stating:

President Kennedy understood that dangers to freedom had to be confronted early and decisively. He said of the Cold War, "These are extraordinary times. We face an extraordinary challenge. Our strength, as well as our convictions have imposed upon this nation the role of the leader in freedom's cause." Today, at the dawn of a new century, America is still the leader in freedom's cause. (February 13th, 2003)

Recontextualizing Kennedy's words reaffirmed the U.S. as a leader and defender of freedom.

Bush strategically used Kennedy's language to intentionally validate his own positioning on a specific topic (Reyes 2011). This garnered support for war by linking the current situation to past crises the U.S has overcome.

Conclusion

Post-structuralists view language as a tool able to construct and assign meaning to subjects, states, beings, etc., and as a result is both social and political (Hansen 2006; Holland 2013). Language is subject to power forces. Therefore, Presidential rhetoric constrains how national identities, political events, and perceptions of threat are understood (Jackson 2005; Hansen 2006; Holland 2013). Political power and perceived legitimacy allow Presidents to manipulate reality and shape responses to the situations they present as national security crises.

As a result, Presidential language can guide a citizenry to blindly support political decisions. This rhetoric also constructs a discursive framework, which assigns meaning to the crisis and the identities involved. This meaning tends to remain stable across administrations, and subsequent leaders must work within the framework established by their predecessors.

This literature review explains how Presidential rhetoric impacts political outcomes. My research explores how President George W. Bush, President Barack Obama, and President Donald Trump embrace these elements of political strategy to promote their political goals. Specifically, I examine their discourses within the rhetorical framework that outlines the American national identity, the criminalization, simplification, and dehumanization of the national security threat(s), and the role of religion. I evaluate the continuity of frames to assess the robustness of crisis rhetoric, the influence of prior discursive constructions of threat on new portrayals of enemies, and the intentions of each leader. The elements of rhetorical strategy outlined in this review shape my analysis of the discursive construction of national security threats and the implications of the resulting social and political outcomes.

Chapter II—Methodology

This research draws from Presidential discourse and focuses on how Presidents use rhetorical strategies to construct national security threats. The main evidence and conclusions of this research include three case studies of President George W. Bush, President Barack Obama, and President Donald Trump. Tables 1, 2, and 3 on pages 18-22 represent the main findings from this research. The tables identify the main identity constructions and categories each president used to characterize the American National Identity and the identity of the National Security Threat(s).

To conduct this research, I first use scholarly literature to identify Bush's rhetorical framework and categorizations used to differentiate the American national identity from the terrorist threat, including: The American national identity, criminalization of the terrorist threat, simplification of the terrorist threat, dehumanization of the terrorist threat, and the role of religion. I explore scholars' analyses to evaluate Bush's rhetorical strategy to achieve his intended goals. I also explain their insights on the social and political environments that resulted from Bush's framing.

Second, I use post-structural discourse analysis to determine the presence of intertextual links within and between Bush's depiction and Obama and Trump's portrayals of threat and their rhetorical strategies. Bush constructed rhetorical frames using categorizations. He intentionally assigned negative categories to terrorists and exemplary attributes to Americans to establish a widespread social understanding of crises and shape the nation's retaliation against the threat. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Presidents reiterate past Presidential rhetoric to prompt specific public emotions towards threat, recontextualize a threat, and/or validate decision-making. A link is established if Obama or Trump also portrayed the American national identity or national threats

using the same frames, categorizations, or similar descriptions. In summary, intertextual links are noted when descriptive frames or categories are taken from speeches made by Bush (decontextualized) and used in speeches made by Obama and Trump to describe national security threats in different political settings (recontextualization).

Additionally, Presidents adopt past rhetorical frameworks to transform threats. They also rely on crisis rhetoric to bestow heightened urgency on their interpretation of threats to shape the nation's approach to overcome them. For these reasons, intertextual links are identified in various ways. A link is denoted if either Obama or Trump mimicked one of Bush's frames or categories to serve a similar discursive strategy. For example, both Bush and Trump have dehumanized national threats by relating enemies to animals to prompt similar emotions towards an enemy. Intertextuality is also supported if Obama or Trump applied one of Bush's frames or categorizations to shift the nation's perception of threat. For example, both Bush and Obama dehumanized the threat, however, Obama reduced terrorists to a disease rather than an animal to alter the threat's interpretation. Additionally, an intertextual link is established if Obama or Trump introduced a new frame or category to reinforce Bush's interpretation of the American national identity or a threat. Finally, no intertextuality is found if new frames or categories are introduced to achieve alternative goals that were unrelated to Bush. Drawing intertextual links demonstrates the robustness of Bush's rhetorical framing of the terrorist threat and the perception of terrorists that he introduced. Overall, this process signals variation among discursive constructions of identity and exposes Presidents' strategies pursued to achieve their political goals.

Mentioned in Chapter 1, post-structuralist research assumes policy formation is an outcome of representations of the threat or crises leaders seek to address (Hansen 2006). I

contextualize Obama and Trump's speeches to determine the purpose of identity constructions and explain the policies they supported. Additionally, I contextualize sections of each speech because Presidents often use descriptive frames simultaneously. For example, Bush criminalized and simplified the threat within the same sentence or few sentences. Therefore, this method identifies the subject, its main discursive portrayal, and the reinforcing frames that reveal the president's overarching rhetorical strategy. Drawing links between Bush, Obama, and Trump, using post-structural discourse analysis, allows me to trace the persistence of Bush's rhetorical framework and demonstrate if and how trajectories of threat change.

Third, I use process tracing to illustrate how discursive constructions of identity conditions policy and influences reality. Process tracing "examines the process whereby initial case conditions are translated into case outcomes" (Van Evera 1997, 54). It focuses on major events overtime, the reaction to such events, and their effects (Collier 2011). This method contributes to within case analysis and decisively describes social and political phenomena (Collier 2011). I embrace process tracing by situating each administration temporally to explain why certain national threats were constructed and how those constructions led to security policies and certain sociopolitical environments.

Process tracing is helpful because it analyzes trajectories of change and its causation (Collier 2011). This process demonstrates how certain constructions of threat signals Presidential rhetorical strategies and intentions in specific political environments. For example, Trump's concern with the economy and his discursive framing of immigrants allows me to assess that his rhetorical strategy has intended to remove certain groups from America's national identity and has resulted in reformed immigration law and constructing a barrier between Mexico and the U.S. Process tracing illustrates how Presidents manipulate interpretations of political situations at

different points in time and attach identities to actors in order to mobilize war, alter policy, and change the social and political nature of the nation.

The primary sources I use in this research include Presidential speeches and addresses. Presidential addresses are the most official and widespread form of communication reflecting the administration's goals, views, and interpretations of threat. All data include language each President has expressed during their Presidential administration. I chose speeches based on their purpose. For example, the State of the Union and the Address to the United Nations General Assembly inform the American nation and the international community of the most pressing concerns that face the country and world. Other speeches are selected based on themes including the reaction to an attack and/or a national strategy to approach emerging security concerns.

My analysis begins in Chapter 3 by exploring President Bush's discourse. This chapter illustrates that the emotions of hate and fear after 9/11 were reactions constructed through political speeches that sparked specific emotional expressions throughout the nation. It maps the construction of the terrorist enemy through different binary frames to elucidate racial profiling and cultural stereotypes during the Bush administration. Bush's rhetoric has been examined and scrutinized by a number of academics, therefore I rely upon these sources to identify the major frames and categories Bush used to define the terrorist threat (Said 1989; Mann 2003; Graham, Keenan, and Dowd 2004; Jackson 2005; Hansen 2006; Kellner 2007; Hodges 2011; Ross 2014; Cartledge, Bowman-Grieve, and Palasinski 2015). His simplified identity constructions framed terrorists and states that harbored them as immoral, criminal, and inhumane. The main categories he used to construct that national security threat include: killers, murderers, thugs, assassins, uncivilized, evil, mad, savages, combatants, faceless, mindless, cowardly, and unfaithful. In return, this framing boosted America's sense of exceptionalism. This frame has been reinforced

by categories such as: morality, good, freedom, and united. This chapter discusses Bush's rhetorical strategies mobilized through this framework and the resulting executive decision-making and political effects.

Chapter 4 studies President Obama's rhetorical framework and his construction of the national security threat. This chapter examines his attempt to reverse the political effects initiated during the Bush administration through new rhetorical frames and strategies. The primary documents used to determine his framework include: "Remarks by the President on National Security, 5-21-09," "The President's Address to the Nation to announce that the United States has killed Osama Bin Laden, the Leader of al Qaeda," "Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Syria," "Statement by the President on ISIL," "Remarks by President Obama in Address to the United Nations General Assembly," "Address to the Nation by the President," and "Remarks by the President on the Administration's Approach to Counterterrorism." The analysis of these speeches will assess the variation between Bush and Obama's rhetorical frameworks and strategies to map the intentional shift in the security threat.

Chapter 5 evaluates President Trump's construction of multiple national security threats and the reintegration of past frames to spark similar emotional responses and promote similar decision-making as in the Bush administration. The data examined include: "Remarks by President Trump in Joint Address to Congress," "Remarks by President Trump to Law Enforcement Officials on MS-13," "Remarks by President Trump on the Strategy in Afghanistan and South Asia," "Remarks by President Trump to the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly," "Remarks by President Trump on Iran Strategy," "Remarks by President Trump to the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea | Seoul, Republic of Korea," "Remarks by President Trump on the Administration's National Security Strategy," and

“President Donald J. Trump’s State of the Union Address.” This chapter explores how even unconventional political leaders use past rhetorical frameworks to authorize their interpretations of threat to achieve political goals.

Classification Tables

Tables 1-3 classify the language Bush, Obama, and Trump used to construct the American National Identity and the National Security Threat. The tables represent the main constructions of the opposing identities and the specific categories used to develop their characterization. The visualization of presidential language summarizes the rhetoric presidents used to bolster the American identity and vilify threats. These tables also demonstrate the intertextual links within and across each administration, illustrating how presidents overlapped themes and categories to present an overwhelming and simplified threat.

The title of each chart indicates the presidential administration being examined and the title of each individual section specifies the discursive construction of either the American National Identity or the National Security Threat. The bolded box on the left hand-side of each section of the table indicates the identity construction being examined and the bolded words on the right hand-side reflect the categories the president used to develop the specified construct. The words in black and not bolded identify categories the president used simultaneously with the black and bolded categories and applied to more than one identity construct. The words in grey under the American National Identity indicate categories that presidents explicitly contrasted to the American character. Additionally, the words in grey under The Terrorist Threat, Extremism, and National Security Threats sections specify categories that presidents did not apply to the examined identity construct.

Table 1. President Bush's Construction of the American National Identity and The Terrorist Threat

American National Identity		The Terrorist Threat	
<p>American Exceptionalism</p>	<p>Courage Compassion Strength Resolve Great Country Respect Dignity Human Worth Strong Kindness Good Freedom Justice Defenders Unity Commitment Love Compassion Resolve Civilized Victims Evil Brutal Lawless Coward Uncivilized Hate</p>	<p>Criminalization</p> <p>Simplification</p> <p>Dehumanization</p> <p>Religion</p>	<p>Killers Attackers Murderers Thugs Assassins Crazed Brutal Lawless Uncivilized Hate Foreign Evil Mad Savages No Conscience Faceless Enemy Coward Hides Burrows Preys Runs Pervert Traitor Hijacked Religion</p>

Table 1. President Bush's Construction of the American National Identity and The Terrorist Threat

The Terrorist Threat		The Terrorist Threat	
Criminalization	Killers	Criminalization	Killers
Simplification	Attackers	Simplification	Attackers
	Murderers		Murderers
	Thugs		Thugs
	Assassins		Assassins
Dehumanization	Crazed	Dehumanization	Crazed
	Brutal		Brutal
	Lawless		Lawless
	Uncivilized		Uncivilized
Religion	Hate	Religion	Hate
	Foreign		Foreign
	Evil		Evil
	Mad		Mad
	Savages		Savages
	No Conscience		No Conscience
	Faceless Enemy		Faceless Enemy
	Coward		Coward
	Hides		Hides
	Burrows		Burrows
	Preys		Preys
	Runs		Runs
	Pervert		Pervert
Traitor	Traitor		
Hijacked Religion	Hijacked Religion		

Table 1. President Bush's Construction of the American National Identity and The Terrorist Threat

The Terrorist Threat	
Criminalization	Killers
	Attackers
	Murderers
Simplification	Thugs
	Assassins
	Crazed
	Brutal
Dehumanization	Lawless
	Uncivilized
	Hate
	Foreign
Religion	Evil
	Mad
	Savages
	No Conscience
	Faceless Enemy
	Coward
	Hides
	Burrows
	Preys
	Runs
	Pervert
	Traitor
	Hijacked
	Religion

Table 2. President Obama’s Construction of the American National Identity and The National Security Threat

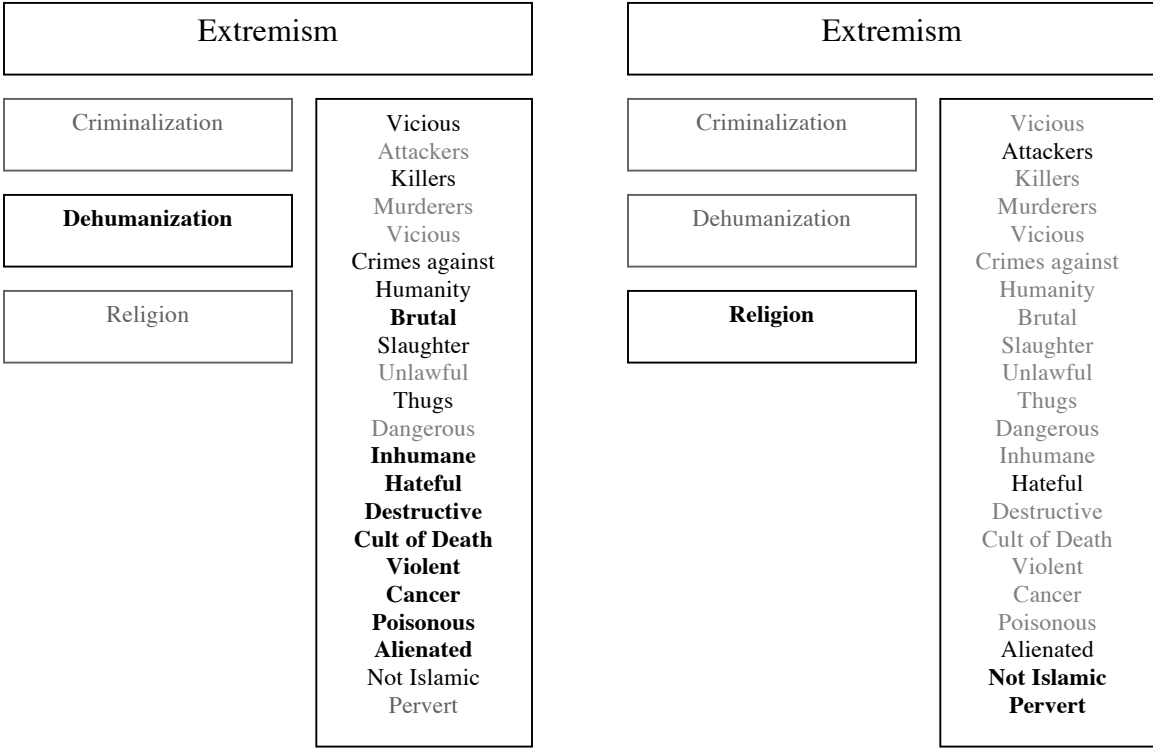
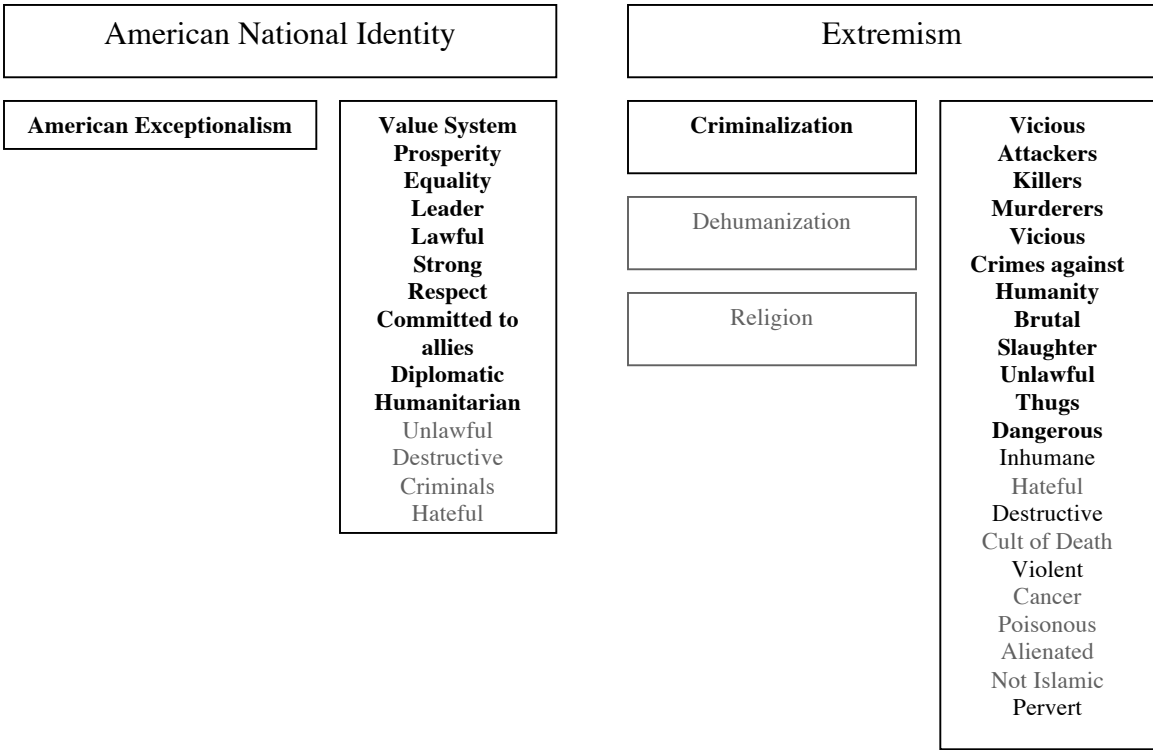


Table 3. President Trump’s Construction of the American National Identity and National Security Threats

American National Identity		National Security Threats	
<p>American Exceptionalism</p>	<p>Great Proud Strong Confident Faith Heroic Unity Independent Loyalty Patriotic Common Purpose Courage Freedom Compassionate Law enforcers Economic and Military Power Criminals Gang Members Violent Lawless Brutal</p>	<p>Criminalization</p> <p>Dehumanization</p> <p>Religion</p>	<p>Violent Thugs Gang Members Cartel “Bad ones” Illegal Criminals Prey Foreign Murderers Killers Brutal Animals Unlawful Enemy Combatants Slaughter Predators Losers Thieves Vile Fleeing Evil Lawless Savages Irrational Sinister Depraved Victims Islam is peaceful</p>

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Dehumanization		Dehumanization	
Religion		Religion	

Chapter III—The Bush Administration

The attacks on September 11th, 2001 and the bewildered public response gave President George W. Bush an opportunity to shape the nature of the resulting crisis. The horrific images contributed to Bush's credence that only a "truly inhuman and demonic creature could have contemplated, much less enacted such horror" (Jackson 2005, 76). Bush's main rhetorical strategy revolved around creating an intrinsically evil identity for the attackers that opposed American exceptionalism, an "ensemble of traditional myths" that reinforces "attitudes of national autonomy and superiority" (Ivie and Giner 2009). This binary construction of identity "formed a discursive foundation for constructing the enemy terrorist" (Jackson 2005, 76). Throughout his administration Bush's language shaped the public understanding of the national security threat and the interpretation of 9/11 as an "act of war."

The rhetorical strategy to construct the terrorist enemy was founded on an ideological struggle between terrorism and U.S. political ideology. Bush publicized that "The murderous ideology of the Islamic radicals is the great challenge of our new century" (October 6th, 2005). Bush framed terrorist ideology as the primary issue facing the world as the means to establish an overarching 'war on terror.' However, Bush's political goals were not to eradicate terrorism. Rather, he intended to overthrow al Qaeda, Saddam Hussein, and remove all suspected terrorists associated with this organization and state from society. He identified al Qaeda as an enemy when he stated, "Slowly, but surely, we're smoking al Qaeda out of their caves so we can bring them to justice... This particular battlefield will last as long as it takes to bring al Qaeda to justice" (October 11th, 2001). Additionally, he specified his intention to remove Saddam's regime when stating, "we must recognize Iraq as the central front in our war on terror" (October 6th, 2005).

Bush's rhetorical strategies to define the terrorist threat and the American identity have been studied extensively. Scholars have noted Bush criminalized, simplified, and dehumanized terrorists to reshape the American national identity and achieve the political goals previously stated. Importantly, scholars conclude Bush deliberately infused his official discourse with overlapping characteristics of criminality, brutality, and inhumanity to draw upon preexisting cultural constructions of threat. Thus, these frames were not mutually exclusive and were used to promote an oversimplified understanding of terrorists. As a result, Bush was able to criminalize and demonize terrorist organizations and suspected terrorists to achieve his three national security goals mentioned above.

This chapter draws upon other scholars' analyses of the president's language to identify the major themes and categories Bush applied to construct national security threats and the American identity from 2001 to 2008 and assess the resulting political effects. The following literature will describe Bush's construction of the 'war on terror' and outline a discursive framework that will be compared to the language of President Obama and President Trump.

Binary Construction

The binary construction of terrorism and the American national identity is a major feature in Bush's discursive strategy to vilify the enemy and garner public support for military action against terrorists, suspected terrorists, and states who harbor them (Graham et al. 2004; Jackson 2005; John et al. 2007; Kellner 2007; Cartledge, Bowman-Grieve, and Palasinski 2015). A central element of differentiation between the American and the enemy's identity is morality, which he projects through the frames mentioned above. This chapter will map this construction and explain how Bush used these identities to achieve his political goals.

The American National Identity

The identity crisis resulting after the 9/11 attacks prompted Bush to reaffirm America's moral exceptionalism and the sense of cultural superiority throughout the nation (Milford 2016). He stressed positive American attributes to console the public and to shape their post-9/11 identity (Jackson 2005; Milford 2016). For example, Bush praised the American people for having responded to the 9/11 attacks "with courage and compassion, strength and resolve" (January 29th, 2002). Bush used America's traditional values to instill confidence and pride throughout the nation. He also promoted American moral superiority when he stated, "this is a great country. It's a great country because we share the same values of respect and dignity and human worth" (September 17th, 2001). This language affirmed the moral decency of Americans and encouraged the advancement of citizen virtue over all others (Mottet 2010). Bush's construction of strong Americans instilled a belief that the U.S. was resilient and could overcome any challenge. Overall, this portrayal of Americans reshaped the nation's perception of itself and promoted the national identity as superior to all others.

Bush bolstered the sense of American exceptionalism after 9/11 to reassure the nation of its strength and reestablish itself as a world leader. He framed the country as a power others should admire by explaining how it would overcome terrorists through its values. For example, he stated, "one of the truest weapons that we have against terrorism is to show the world the true strength of character and kindness of the American people" (October 11th, 2001). Bush suggested that the nation's capability to defeat terrorism originated from its values and goodwill for others. Additionally, he portrayed Americans as heroes who are servicing the international community by going to war with terrorism. He intentionally used this strategy to protect the country from criticism when fighting terrorists. Bush endorsed the country's exceptionalism when he said it

would lead the international community to success. For example, he stated, “Good will overcome evil with the leadership of the United States” (June 19th, 2002). He used this strategy to portray Americans as the saviors from terrorism who would ensure success. Bush’s intention behind the language of resolve was two-fold; to restore the wounded national identity and to emphasize a narrative that suggested a need to overcome the evil other (Jackson 2005; Milford 2016). He prompted Americans to support war when stating, “We’re a nation that can’t be cowed by evil-doers” (September 16th, 2001). Bush consistently framed the country’s goodwill as superior to the enemy’s evilness in order to create a citizenry who felt like they had to prove their resolve to the world after the attacks.

Additionally, freedom was a crucial frame in Bush’s construction of the American as well as the terrorist threat. For example, freedom exposed an inherent conflict between the nation’s belief system and the threat’s identity (Holland 2013). Bush expressed this concept immediately after the 9/11 attacks, stating, “Freedom and fear, justice and cruelty, have always been at war, and we know that God is not neutral between them” (September 20, 2001). He explicitly juxtaposed American values and al Qaeda’s identity to rationalize war as the only option to defeat the enemy. Bush reinforced this logic when stating, “Freedom itself was attacked this morning by a faceless coward, and freedom will be defended” (September 11th, 2001). He interpreted freedom as a reflection of the country and its people, and used it to depict an attack not only on the U.S. but on all values linked to the nation. As a result, Bush portrayed a political attack on U.S. government as an attack on all of U.S. society in order to demand a national response. Additionally, he framed the attackers as repressive actors by conveying that their goal was to eradicate freedom. This inspired hatred towards the attackers because Bush framed them as attempting to destroy an essential aspect of the American identity. He also dehumanized the

threat by calling the attackers “a faceless coward,” allowing Bush to call for military action against an object rather than a group of people. As a result, the war against al Qaeda was conceptualized as military action removing a faceless subject from the world rather than human beings who had human rights and civil liberties.

Bush promoted military action by explaining freedom as the key to successfully wipe out terrorists. He described freedom as the foundation of American strength that would lead to triumph in the ‘war on terror.’ For example, he stated, “The terrorists are fighting freedom with all their cunning and cruelty because freedom is their greatest fear—and they should be afraid, because freedom is on the march” (September 2nd, 2004). For Bush, freedom accentuated the threat’s weakness while providing Americans with the tools for victory. In this vein, freedom served an essential role in defining identities and mobilizing the Afghan war and Iraq invasion.

Bush reinforced the value of freedom when he discursively constructed Americans as defenders of their values and activated a confident citizenry who was committed to protecting themselves. For example, when garnering support for military retaliation against al Qaeda in response to the 9/11 attacks he stated, “The advance of human freedom—the great achievement of our time, and the great hope of every time—now depends on us” (September 20th, 2001). Bush placed the responsibility to preserve the most important feature of humanity on American citizens, increasing the urgency for the country to respond to the attacks. He also used the notion of Americans as defenders to protect foreign populations who were subject to repression. Bush affirmed this when declaring that the U.S. would remove Saddam’s regime from power and “help others to find freedom of their own” (October 7, 2002). He clarified whom the “others” were when stating, “the first and greatest benefit will come to Iraqi men, women, and children. The oppression of Kurds, Assyrians, Turkomans, Shiites, Sunnis, and others will be lifted. The

long captivity of Iraq will end” (October 7th, 2002). Bush not only reaffirmed American exceptionalism to rebuild the national stature but to also protect populations comparable to the national identity from unpopular and cruel actors (Reyes 2011; Holland 2013). He prompted American support for this by declaring, “it is both our [U.S.] responsibility and our privilege to fight freedom’s fight” (January 29, 2002). In sum, Bush endorsed freedom as a strategy to reinstitute Americans as policemen of the world whose purpose was to defend its values wherever they existed.

Bush’s construction of American superiority was buttressed by his emphasis on a “united” American citizenry (Graham et al. 2004; Jackson 2005; Kellner 2007). He conveyed the nation’s unity when stating, “In these acts [9/11 attacks], and in many others, Americans showed a deep commitment to one another, and an abiding love for our country. Today, we feel what Franklin Roosevelt called the warm courage of national unity” (September 14th, 2001). Bush intentionally stressed the notion of unity to influence America’s self-perception as a devout population and to garner support for future decisions that would best defend the country (Kellner 2007). Additionally, he defined the nation’s unity through their resolve. For example, Bush reassured the public that, although terrorists were a threat, they were incapable of cracking the nation’s unity by stating, “Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America. These acts shatter steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve” (September 11th, 2001). He attributed America’s resolve to the nation’s unity, reinforcing its resiliency and presenting an ineffective threat. He also depicted the nation’s robust identity by demonstrating the loyalty of citizens, explaining, “We see our national character in rescuers working past exhaustion, in long lines of blood donors, in thousands of citizens who have asked to work and serve in any way possible” (September 14th,

2001). Bush projected a sense of collective identity by describing the actions of ordinary citizens through the inclusive words of “we,” “thousands,” “our,” and “national character” (Jackson 2005, 77). The links between “we,” “national character,” and “sacrifice” were prominent tools presuming a national identity based on a commitment to faith in one another (Graham et al. 2004). In the aftermath of 9/11, Bush intentionally emphasized unity to portray Americans as having homogenous values and interpretations of the national character (Milford 2016). This allowed Bush to present an official and legitimate narrative of 9/11 and the actors involved to orient consensus towards supporting political decisions in responding to a crisis.

Criminalization of the Terrorist Threat

Immediately after the 9/11 attacks, the criminal frame dominated Bush’s rhetorical strategy (Hodges 2011). He portrayed al Qaeda as murderers and killers and Americans as victims who deserved to be brought to justice. In response to the attacks, Bush stated:

Today, our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist attacks...the victims were in airplanes or in their offices: secretaries, businessmen and women, military and federal workers, moms and dads, friends and neighbors...these acts of mass murder were intended to frighten our nation into chaos and retreat. (September 11th, 2001)

Bush’s emphasis on “deadly terrorist attacks” and “mass murder,” was intended to shape the initial portrayal of terrorists and develop their identity as killers who only caused suffering. Additionally, he differentiated the threat from the American identity by expressing that al Qaeda’s goal was to destroy the American way-of-life. He reinforced the threat’s criminality by stating, “I’ve directed the full resources of our intelligence and law-enforcement communities to find those responsible and bring them to justice” (September 11th, 2001). Bush explained the threat’s criminality by declaring that the 9/11 attacks had defied American law and that U.S. law-enforcement was justified in their actions to reprimand them. However, Bush also suggested the need for military to punish the threat by declaring war, stating, “America and our friends and

allies join with all those who want peace and security in the world, and we stand together to win the war against terrorism” (September 11th, 2001). This strategy intended to garner both national and international support for war in Afghanistan. Bush’s rhetorical strategy quickly escalated an illegal act to an act of war to demonize the threat and to increase his executive authority as commander-in-chief in wartime.

Bush also framed Saddam Hussein and his regime as murderers to link America’s negative connotation of criminal to this actor. Bush defined Saddam as a fanatic tyrant to stress the danger his regime posed. For example, Bush stated, “Saddam Hussein is a homicidal dictator who is addicted to weapons of mass destruction” (September 14th, 2002). Bush reduced Saddam to a crazed killer motivated by violence rather than peace. This strategy dehumanized Saddam to disengage the public from questioning the country’s true intent behind framing this leader as a threat. Bush incorporated the Iraqi government into the criminal frame by declaring:

Any person, organization or government that supports, protects or harbors terrorists is complicit in the murder of the innocent and equally guilty of terrorist crimes. Any outlaw regime that has ties to terrorist groups and seeks or possesses weapons of mass destruction is a grave danger to the civilized world and will be confronted. (May 1st, 2003)

Through this language, Bush conveyed that by providing a safe haven for al Qaeda, Iraq was just as criminal as this terrorist organization. Additionally, Bush removed Saddam and terrorists associated to his regime from civilization, reducing them to an inferior being that deserved punishment. This allowed Bush to emphasize America’s superiority over the threat and mobilize action, stating, “The United States of American will never be intimidated by thugs and assassins. The killers will fail, and the Iraqi people will live in freedom” (January 20th, 2004).

Characterizing Americans as defenders of U.S. values, Bush reinforced his discursively constructed conflict between good and evil actors. Ultimately, his discursive portrayal of a

simplified battle between a hero and a villain dramatized the true contention between these actors and suggested that a fight to defeat was inevitable.

Bush further simplified the conflict between the U.S. and the threat by linking terrorists to past enemies of the state. This strategy was to prompt a similar emotional response the public had towards the Soviet Union by stating, “This nation, in world war and in Cold War, has never permitted the brutal and lawless to set history’s course. Now, as before, we will secure our nation, protect our freedom, and help others to find freedom of their own” (October 7, 2002).

Bush exposed the similarities between communists and terrorists to endorse a similar interpretation of threat and simplify the political motivation behind the Iraq invasion. He linked historical acts of crime and brutality to current situations, grounding the idea that terrorism is equally threatening to past sources of threat. He recontextualized sociopolitical reality and public emotion to remove the need to intricately define terrorists. As a result, he was able to connect past enemies to current ones and easily garner consensus for the Iraq invasion (Hodges 2011).

Simplification of the Terrorist Threat

Bush’s discursive construction of a criminal villain allowed him to highlight the threat’s unethical actions and simplify terrorists to uncivilized beings (Jackson 2005; Ross 2014). For example, when he addressed the United Nations General Assembly, UNGA, he explained, “Civilization, itself, the civilization we share is threatened” (November 10th, 2001). Ross (2014) concluded *civilization* was used as a reflective category of moral achievement and presupposed the possibility “to distinguish between the enemies of civilization and its moral guardians” (78). This simplification reflected Bush’s interpretation of civilization as a western achievement. Civilization has been defined as a set of cultural, religious, and political elements that allow a group of people to differentiate themselves in contrast to others (Said 1978; Mazlish 2004; Bowden

2009). In this regard, Edward Said (1987) explained, due to western dominance, “civilization” is a loaded concept, that reflects a hierarchical power structure of understanding where national identity is found through stereotypical portraits of other groups, cultures, and religions. Said (1987) argued that the West acts upon its power to reinforce its superiority over other states. Therefore, defining the terrorist threat as an ‘attack on civilization,’ Bush illustrated an example of what Said theorized. Additionally, Bush declared, “By their hatred, they have divorced themselves from the values that define civilization itself” (October 20th, 2001). Identifying the U.S. as civilized and the terrorist as uncivilized, Bush prompted emotional queues of superiority over an inferior population that required intervention for survival.

To reinforce the civilizational distance among Americans, al Qaeda, and Saddam’s regime, Bush depicted the threat originating from foreign states and cultures (Graham et al. 2004). He framed the threat as belonging to an outside realm—external from the homeland and positioned where rights could be ignored (Jackson 2005). This was part of Bush’s representational project to maintain a sense of American pureness as well as an implicit mean to dehumanize terrorists. He positioned both al Qaeda and Saddam’s regime as directionally opposed to the U.S. by stating, “[Saddam Hussein is] a threat because he is dealing with al-Qaeda...I reminded the American people, a true threat facing our country is that an al-Qaeda-type network trained and armed by Saddam could attack America” (November 7th, 2002). He conveyed terrorists as being both physically and morally removed of the U.S. to construct the threat as originating from unethical backgrounds (John et al. 2007). Bush also vilified external actors by revealing the goals of specific regimes, stating, “States like these [Iraq], and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world... these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. They could provide these arms to terrorists, giving

them the means to match their hatred” (January 29, 2002). Bush denoted a group of politically and culturally foreign actors attempting to transform world order and directly offending America as world leader. He distinguished between states that threatened civilization and those that promoted peace. As a result, this frame disengaged U.S. citizens from caring about the enemy’s fate (Jackson 2005; John et al. 2007). In sum, the foreign category reinforced the “idea of two groups of people in the world: American citizens and foreigners” (Jackson 2005, 72).

Dehumanization of the Terrorist Threat

As indicated above, simplifying the enemy reflected a crucial feature of Bush’s rhetorical strategy to remove the threat from all traces of humanity. He used this frame to support the view that diplomacy with uncivilized terrorists would be impossible and that measures to diminish this threat would be justified without regarding America’s morality (Ross 2014). Bush depicted an unethical threat to endorse the notion that terrorists must be restrained. For example, he stated, “They hate our freedoms - our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other” (September 20th, 2001). Bush framed the enemy against U.S.’s foundational values to portray a dangerous threat overcome with hatred.

Additionally, he used *madness* as a reinforcing category of *hate* to accentuate the danger terrorists posed (Jackson 2005). In the speeches following 9/11, Bush used *madness* as a central category of the attackers’ emotional motivation for their inhumane actions. For example, Bush stated, “the depth of their hatred is equaled by the madness of the destruction they design” (January 29th, 2002). Bush’s extensive portrayal of the terrorist as a delusional enemy, willing to attack Americans based on emotional prompts was a rhetorical strategy to justify detainment and torture (Jackson 2005). As a result, this depiction mobilized Bush’s policy of detaining terrorist

suspects in Guantanamo Bay and Baghram Airbase and treating them in an inconceivable manner.

Bush's torturous strategy for containing suspected terrorists was approved because of his discursive construction of a barbaric, evil, and inhumane threat. For example, he compared the exceptional American to the evil enemy when stating, "We are in a conflict between good and evil, and America will call evil by its name" (June 1st, 2002). This explicitly established a stark differentiation between the two identities and allowed Bush to frame any action by the U.S. as morally respectable and any action by the enemy as profoundly malevolent. To stress *evil* as a defining characteristic of the attackers' identity, he said, "Today our nation saw evil, the very worst of human nature" (September 11th, 2001). To further illustrate this interpretation, Bush declared, "Thousands of lives were suddenly ended by evil, despicable acts of terror...the search is under way for those who were behind these evil acts" (September 11th, 2001). Bush emphasized the enemy's evilness to justify the mobilization of U.S. resources to defend its national identity (Kellner 2007). He accentuated the threat's capability of destruction to frighten citizens and justify why the terrorists deserved to "be wiped from the face the Earth" (Graham et al. 2004, 211). As a result, Bush expressed a fundamental need to control this dangerous behavior and suggested terrorists be removed from the world just as cruelly as they had removed Americans. This justified Bush's military strategy of punishment and torture in terrorist detainment centers.

Bush portrayed terrorists as essentially different from humans by using metaphorical associations to animals to reinforce the idea of an inhuman threat. Bush eliminated al Qaeda's human features when constructing "terrorists as 'savages' who choose to live on the 'hunted margin of mankind' (Bush, 20 October, 2001)" (Jackson 2005, 73). This language mobilized the

perception of a ‘terrorist other’ and ‘unlawful combatants’ that did not qualify for protection under the Geneva Conventions (Jackson 2005). Bush also dehumanized the threat when he suggested terrorists lacked a consciousness, stating, “Just last week they [the terrorists] massacred Iraqi children and their parents at a toy giveaway... This is an enemy without conscience” (November 30th, 2005). Bush’s rhetoric not only removed the threat’s humanity but also their integrity. As a result, he was able to convey that treating them in an equally cruel manner would be rational. Constructing the identity of the terrorist was relatively easy because of the Western interpretation of evil, savage, and uncivilized. As a result, Bush’s depiction of terrorists was a cultural projection of the tabooed ‘wild man’ figure of the Western imagination (Jackson 2005). Significantly, this discursive construction emotionally, physically, and figuratively reduced terrorists to faceless others. Bush’s strategy of designating terrorists as "the faceless enemies of human dignity" (May 21st, 2003) was a demonological move. He reduced terrorists to beastly animals that were not even entitled to the minimal status of war prisoners (Jackson 2005). In this vein, removing their face only reinforced the military policies at detention centers of hooding detainees, consequently bringing the faceless terrorist into reality. Thus, Bush’s rhetorical strategies made it easier for the public and military to incarcerate prisoners and suspects “under inhumane conditions in Guantanamo Bay, Bahgram Airbase, Iraq, and other detention centers” (Jackson 2005, 73). In sum, this rhetorical strategy was designed for specific political purposes: to evade national and international law and mistreat prisoners without feeling moral remorse.

Bush also illustrated the “cowardly acts” of terrorists to reinforce the idea of an animalistic threat. For example, he insisted al Qaeda, “hide[s] in caves” and would just “burrow deeper,” too weak to fight the U.S. (Holland 2013). This language framed terrorists as mindless

and disorganized beings who had to retreat back into the wild for protection. Additionally, Bush contrasted terrorists to other actors the U.S. had fought to further reduce their humanity He stated:

The American people need to know that we're facing a different enemy than we have ever faced. This enemy hides in shadows, and has no regard for human life. This is an enemy who preys on innocent and unsuspecting people, runs for cover...This enemy attacked not just our people, but all freedom-loving people everywhere in the world. (September 12th, 2001)

The “cowardly” and “preying” characterizations of terrorists represented one of the initial discursive constructions of al Qaeda, post-9/11 (Hodges 2011). The political effect of this language naturalized violence against the enemy because instead of killing humans, Americans were seen hunting prey for survival (Holland 2013). Bush portrayed the attackers as closer to beasts than to human beings and stripped away the possibility of any “genuine and justifiable grievances” from their cause in order to rationalize the use of violence against them (Jackson 2005, 60). He intentionally disengaged any emotional connection from the enemy by portraying his adversaries as “mindless” and “cowardly yet dangerous.” This strategy was effective because “dehumanizing the *other*, by stripping them of all their human qualities and in some cases bestowing upon them negative and bestial ones, makes it easier to disengage moral agency in subsequent interactions with this out-group” (Cartledge, Bowman-Grieve, and Palasinski 2015, 1908-1912). As a result, Bush was able to “treat them [al Qaeda] in an unconscionable manner and without any regard for their human rights” (Jackson 2005, 75).

The Role of Religion

In this discourse, the evil terrorist was frequently linked to having no religion or having a perverted interpretation of faith. This strategy suggested that the threat did not belong to a moral community or a national identity. This construction of terrorism as “a fringe movement that perverts the peaceful teachings of Islam...[and] traitors to their own faith” (September 20th,

2001) was a prudently designed method to distinguish Muslims from terrorists and avoid a global religious war (Jackson 2005). Bush also differentiated terrorists from Americans who practiced Islam when stating, “our war is against evil, not against Islam. There are thousands of Muslims who proudly call themselves Americans, and they know what I know-that the Muslim faith is based upon peace and love and compassion” (September 28th, 2001). Bush intentionally linked Islam to the American identity in order to prevent framing all Muslims as potential threats. He reinforced this notion when stating, “Millions of our fellow citizens are Muslim. We respect the faith. We honor its traditions. Our enemy does not. Our enemy doesn’t follow the great traditions of Islam. They’ve hijacked a great religion” (October 11th, 2002). This language reflected an oblique reference to the notion that terrorists exist on the peripheral or outside of a religious community. It is also related to the Western stereotype of a “wild eyed, turbaned, and bearded fanatic whose innate irrationality precludes taking him seriously but makes him a serious danger” (Lincoln 2002, 20). Removing the threat from both political and cultural communities reinforced Bush’s depiction of terrorist beasts that lived on the fringe of humanity. Overall, Bush defined terrorists as betrayers of Islam rather than a reflection of it.

Conclusions

American culture and sense of exceptionalism was shattered on 9/11, and resulted in a context of public fear and confusion. Thus, the public turned to Bush’s language for an official interpretation of the events and as a result, his rhetoric shaped the prevailing perceptions of Americans and the terrorist threat (Baxter 2003; Hodges 2011). Bush recognized the initial emotional reactions of fear and anger from 9/11 and rhetorically applied them to the public’s interpretation of the terrorist enemy to compose, project, and amplify his understanding of the threat to rationalize war and immoral treatment towards suspected terrorists. Additionally, his

oversimplification of the ‘war on terror’ and his characterization of America’s response to terrorism enabled him to connect the identities of two disparate actors, al Qaeda and Saddam, and mobilize war in Afghanistan and Iraq. This also allowed him to associate suspected terrorists with the central terrorist threat and continue treating prisoners in detainee centers inhumanly. In other words, Bush constructed an unambiguous terrorist identity, which he applied to specific actors to achieve his political goals. This has exemplified presidential ability to create a culture of fear amidst a political crisis: as society experiences fear, the presidential administration takes steps to eliminate threats, “even if those efforts temporarily violate prevailing normative and legal standards” (Ross 2014, 85).

Bush’s discursive strategy to induce sustained and pervasive political violence reflected a distinct process of: the creation of victim-hood, the dehumanization of the enemy, the construction of a catastrophic threat, which demanded immediate action, and the legitimization of pre-emptive violence (Jackson 2005). Bush’s repetitious iteration of these messages saturated public conversation and public spaces. His manipulated portrayal of an artificial identity for a body of people, who existed outside of normal codes of humanity, initiated inhumane treatment and action against terrorists. Bush destabilized the public’s moral code for humanity. As a result, he effected how major parts of the public reacted to pictures of abused and humiliated prisoners at terrorist camps or expressed their reservations about dead Afghan civilians that were defined as ‘collateral damage’ (Jackson 2005). Bush exemplified Western “othering” where a society built on the belief in human dignity, human rights, and democratic participation could be particularistic and exclusive. As a result, the nation’s belief in universal human rights and social inclusion was threatened in the name of national security (Jackson 2005). This forced

communities coming to the U.S. to prove their loyalty, patriotism, and conformity to American values and exemplify their morality to a suspicious national culture.

Bush fundamentally changed America's moral community and increased the public's sensitivity towards diversity. Bush's discourse mobilized a series of racial profiling and targeting tactics that publicly questioned the danger of Arab and Muslim communities. For example, the Patriot Act primarily targeted Arabs and Muslims for extreme treatment in public spaces such as airports and roadsides (Akram 2002). Although understood as a counterproductive method, the reintegration of this policy had substantial effects. Not only did citizens become more aware of cultural difference among the population, law enforcement heightened the sensitivity towards minority groups as a whole. For example, unofficial discriminations and prejudices circulated the public sphere through "detentions, government eavesdropping, seizures of property, airline removals, FBI visits, mandatory special registration, and other security measures were experienced as technologies of social control by Arab Americans" (Ross 2014, 79). As a result, "by 2004, at least 100,000 Arabs and Muslims in the U.S. had been subject to one or more of these measures" (Ross 2014, 79). These interactions have sparked cultural stereotypes and fragmented the nation along physical and cultural lines. Ross (2014) denoted that "The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), Human Rights Watch, and other groups reported a massive increase in hate-based violent crimes in the three months after the terrorist attacks" (80). Hate-based crimes and civil rights legal cases throughout the U.S. also steadily increased throughout Bush's administration (Ross 2014). Bush's rhetoric has exemplified the consequences of questioning the immorality of political and social groups. Citizens have not only become aware of differences between each other but have used Bush's discursive framework to measure individual threats to oneself and as a result reified

other Americans. Bush's construction of the 'war on terror' has shaped how the public interprets national security threats as well as individualized threats, impacting how future leaders frame threats and institutionalize alternative solutions to overcome them.

Chapter IV – The Obama Administration

Upon entering office, President Barack Obama attempted to shift from Bush's security focus on terrorist organizations to U.S. domestic problems. He expressed that the economy and health care would remain the primary focus of the administration by stating, "The state of our economy calls for action, bold and swift. And we will act not only to create new jobs, but to lay a new foundation for growth...we will restore science to its rightful place, and wield technology's wonders to raise health care's quality and lower its costs" (January 21st, 2009). Throughout his administration, Obama was focused on domestic stability rather than foreign dominance. Thus, he attempted to change the national security strategy to achieve two political goals: to reduce U.S. military presence abroad and improve internal economic and social stability.

Although Obama stressed the nation's economic instability as the main threat to national security, he also emphasized extremist ideology as the primary national security threat. Obama expanded Bush's discourse of 'war on terror' to encompass a war on extremism and achieve his goals of decreasing U.S. military presence abroad, increase humanitarian aid to populations fighting extremism, ending torture at Guantanamo Bay, and rebuilding the nation's moral community. He indicated that the main source of national insecurity stemmed from the spreading terrorist ideology of violent extremism. For example he declared his presidential responsibility to protect the nation was, "only magnified in an era when an extremist ideology threatens our people, and technology gives a handful of terrorists the potential to do us great harm" (May 21st, 2009). Additionally, he defined the war against this ideology as a conflict to be fought beyond U.S. borders when he stated, "And we [the UN] have not confronted forcefully enough the intolerance, sectarianism, and hopelessness that feeds violent extremism in too many parts of the globe" (September 24th, 2014). This strategy indicated that Obama intended to present an

international issue rather than a purely national threat. In defining extremist ideology, Obama adopted a rhetorical framework similar to the one used by Bush to vilify terrorists. For example, Obama framed such ideology as criminal, hateful, inhuman, and unfaithful. He amplified the danger of “the broader threat of terrorism” (December 6th, 2015) by explaining how the attributes listed above were linked and mobilized by different forms of extremism. Obama shifted Bush’s terrorist enemy to an ideological threat by illustrating its three main mobilizations: brutal states, terrorist organizations, and radicalized individuals.

Obama recognized the entrenched and expanding cycle of violence and counter-violence, and he sought to change perceptions of terrorists and strategies to overcome them. He had inherited a ‘discursive straightjacket’ for talking about national security threats, therefore he applied different rhetorical strategies to achieve his political goals. He understood that Bush’s demonization of terrorists dignified the threat’s struggle, rewarded its persistence, and encouraged it to continue actions against a superpower (Jackson 2005) and intended to reestablish the terrorists’ humanity and shift the war on terror to a war on ideology. Additionally, he attempted to restore the nation’s political and cultural tolerance, respect for religious differences, and national unity.

Obama initiated the shift from a terrorist to an ideological threat by distinguishing between the War in Iraq and the War in Afghanistan (Hodges 2011). Instead of referencing these wars as the ‘war on terrorism’, he stated, “We are now carefully reviewing our policies in both wars, and I will soon announce a way forward in Iraq that leaves Iraq to its people...And with our friends and allies, we will forge a new and comprehensive strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan to defeat al Qaeda and combat extremism” (February 24th, 2009). He removed the idea of a war on terror, and replaced it with an unfinished fight against the terrorist organization al

Qaeda. Thus, Obama promoted an enduring struggle against terrorism and extremism to express that the country was engaged in a resolute and global issue (Hodges 2011). Obama's discursive shift from the 'war on terror' reduced Bush's primary security threats to military opponents and framed the wars against Afghanistan and Iraq as contingent rather than necessary (Hodges 2011). This allowed Obama to fundamentally transform America's conceptualization of terrorism into a threatening ideology mobilized by adverse actors rather than national security threats.

Binary Construction

Obama's rhetorical framework of differentiating between the American national identity and extremism reflects elements of continuity and difference from Bush. For example, he re-emphasized America's superiority and terrorists' criminality, inhumanity and unfaithfulness. However, Obama's rhetorical strategy was vastly different in order to achieve his political goals. He replaced categories that Bush used to define the American and simplify terrorists to alter the public's moral view of the threat. For example, Obama stressed the importance of law as a mechanism to overcome threat and protect the U.S., and he emphasized a cancerous enemy to reduce the need for military action. In sum, Obama's rhetorical strategy substituted a tangible enemy with an overwhelming ideological threat in order to produce a political movement towards eradicating such ideology in all its forms. This chapter will explore the similarities and differences between Bush and Obama's rhetorical construction of the terrorist threat and the resulting political effects.

The American National Identity

Obama reiterated Bush's construction of America's moral superiority by linking its national security to the U.S. value system. For example, he stated, "Time and again, our values

have been our best national security asset” (May 21st, 2009). Obama stressed the importance for the nation to act through its moral guidelines to suggest that any other action would put the nation at risk. Additionally, when commenting on the murder of Osama bin Laden, Obama explained the nation’s values led them to success, stating, “Tonight, we are once again reminded that America can do whatever we set our mind to. That is the story of our history, whether it’s the pursuit of prosperity for our people, or the struggle for equality for all our citizens; our commitment to stand up for our values abroad, and our sacrifices to make the world a safer place” (May 2nd, 2011). Similar to the rhetorical framework Bush used to bolster American confidence, Obama emphasized that the source of American strength was linked to the nation’s moral values. However, these presidential strategies differed because Bush used American exceptionalism to garner support for war, while Obama exemplified that national security stemmed from prosperity and equality for all people. Although this exemplified that Obama was willing to kill terrorists who murdered Americans, he maintained major reservations in risking the lives of citizens in conflicts that did not involve the U.S. For example, when informing the public of Bashar al-Assad’s chemical attack on Syrian citizens, he stated, “I will not put American boots on the ground in Syria” and “I will not pursue a prolonged air campaign” (September 10th, 2013). This decision exemplified his position on U.S. involvement in foreign conflict and suggested that isolated acts of terror were no longer a primary national security concern.

Obama reinforced his strategy to frame terrorist ideology as a global threat by explaining that the U.S. would eradicate extremism with support from its allies. For example, he declared that the fight against ISIL, “is not our fight alone” (September 10th, 2014). He explained, “America will lead a broad coalition to roll back this terrorist threat” (September 10th, 2014) with

Iraqi security forces and Syrian opposition. He also ensured the public that “Already, allies are flying planes with us over Iraq; sending arms and assistance to Iraqi security forces and the Syrian opposition; sharing intelligence; and providing billions of dollars in humanitarian aid” (September 10th, 2014). Obama’s national security strategy involved other actors, indicating the fight against terrorism was not between ISIL and the U.S. rather a global effort to constrain and diminish its spreading ideology throughout the Middle East and the world. His focus on sharing intelligence and providing supportive training to extremist opposition forces served his goal to reduce the need for active U.S. military troops in the region.

Obama adopted Bush’s rhetorical strategy to position the U.S. as an ideal world leader however he introduced a new category to achieve this. He portrayed Americans as humanitarians to reaffirm that their actions were respectful to all people and in line with international norms. For example, his decision to reject an air campaign against Assad was because “America has worked with allies to provide humanitarian support, to help the moderate opposition, and to shape a political settlement. But I have resisted calls for military action, because we cannot resolve someone else’s civil war through force” (September 10th, 2013). Obama reiterated Bush’s portrayal of Americans as defenders of their values however he differed from Bush’s intention when he rejected the decision to send military force into the area. Instead, his framing supported the increase in civil and military aid to the Syrian opposition. His language also stressed the nation’s humanity and respect for political dissident by condemning Assad’s attempt to kill citizens who did not agree with his interpretation of the Syrian national identity. Obama also revealed his commitment to humanitarian aid as the primary foreign policy to fight extremism, shifting away from U.S.’s previous identity as protecting its national interests with military

forces. Obama portrayed Americans as humanitarians by explaining their diplomatic character, stating:

We [the U.S.] believe that right makes might—that bigger nations should not be able to bully smaller ones, and that people should be able to choose their own future...America and our allies will support the people of Ukraine as they develop their democracy and economy. We will reinforce our NATO allies, and uphold our commitment to collective defense. (September 24th, 2014)

To reestablish America as a stabilizing actor in the international system, Obama characterized the U.S as respectful and committed to their allies. He advised other nations to choose “the path of diplomacy and peace, and the ideals this institution [the UN] is designed to uphold” (September 24th, 2014), thus framing U.S. character as conducive to peace and the ideal representation of international norms and law. As a result, Obama’s construction of the humanitarian nation reinforced American morality and superiority over actors fomenting conflict. It also characterized Americans as protectors of humanity rather than contributors to war. In sum, Obama presented the U.S. as the righteous world leader in attempt to persuade other states to follow America’s pacific decision-making.

Obama introduced America’s lawful decision-making to reinforce the nation’s sense of exceptionalism and decency for humanity. He defined lawfulness as fundamental to the nation’s identity when he subjected himself to it, stating, “I’ve studied the Constitution as a student, I’ve taught it as a teacher, I’ve been bound by it as a lawyer and a legislator. I took an oath to preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution as Commander-in-Chief, and as a citizen” (May 21st, 2009). Obama depicted himself as an ordinary citizen bound by and committed to American law as all moral people in the nation would. He reinforced the nation’s superiority when he attributed it to the nation’s values and justice system, stating, “upholding our [American] values and adhering to the rule of law is not a weakness; in the long term, it is our greatest strength. The whole objective of these terrorists is to scare us into changing the nature of who we are and our

democracy” (December 6th, 2016). Obama promoted a lawful nation to show how Americans intended to bring peace to all people and to stress that the actions of citizens should continue to endorse only harmony among all. Obama used law to differentiate Americans from the threat, suggesting that terrorists intentionally prompted America to act unlawfully for self-serving purposes. Thus, he portrayed any breach of the law as a threat to national security. Overall, Obama conveyed that the nation’s identity and security depended on upholding law rather than bringing justice to its enemies.

Obama highlighted the importance of upholding law to restore the humanity of terrorists. Obama condemned American actions at terrorist detainee sites and aimed to remove torture from U.S. national security policy. To ensure that the nation would remain safe without subjecting prisoners to this cruelty, he stated, “I can stand here today, as President of the United States, and say without exception or equivocation that we do not torture, and that we will vigorously protect our people while forging a strong and durable framework that allows us to fight terrorism while abiding by the rule of law” (May 21st, 2009). His intention to end torture reshaped how the public understood the national threat. Obama reinstated terrorists’ humanity, removing their associations from savages and animals. As a result, terrorists were solely understood as lawbreakers. This decision reflected his belief that torture served as a propaganda tool for terrorists and more importantly his view of America as “the nation that has shut down torture chambers” (May 21st, 2009), not opened them. Obama conveyed that his strategy was to capture terrorists and give them proper due process by stating, “The United States is a nation of laws and so we must abide by these rulings” (May, 21st, 2009). He portrayed America’s moral character as trustworthy of others until there was evidence to suspect wrong-doing. This discursive construction deemphasized terrorists as a primary threat and removed the need for Americans to

hunt animals living on the fringe of humanity. Instead, the nation was focused on restoring justice and mutual respect for citizens within the country. This rhetorical strategy distinguished threat from the American national identity and promoted domestic and foreign equality to reduce the recruiting of terrorists.

Criminalization of the National Security Threat

Obama defined terrorist ideology, and those who embraced it, as criminals to differentiate the threat from lawful Americans. Similar to Bush, Obama depicted a threat committing illegal actions including: killing, murdering, and committing crimes against humanity. Obama also illustrated the brutality of different crimes to emphasize the threat's lethality, exemplify its spreading influence, and demonstrating the social costs. Obama called the primary threat a "vicious ideology" (December 6th, 2015) to characterize its illegal and cruel attributes. Additionally, his portrayal of a vicious enemy distinguished the ideology from America's peaceful values. Obama also linked mobilizations of extremism to criminals to reinforce the difference between the threat and the American. He explained that extremist ideology motivated the San Bernardino shooters, stating, "it is clear that the two of them had gone down the dark path of radicalization, embracing a perverted interpretation of Islam that calls for war against America and the West...So this was an act of terrorism, designed to kill innocent people" (December 6th, 2015). In commenting on the San Bernardino shooters, Obama characterized the shooter and his wife both as criminals and as brutal killers. He indicated that when this degenerate form of Islam overcomes Americans, they, too, remove themselves from the nation's identity. Thus, the threat is neither understood as a part of Islam nor America. Obama initially explained there was no evidence that the shooters were directed "by a terrorist organization overseas, or that they were part of a broader conspiracy here at home" (December 6th, 2015),

reinforcing an intangible security threat, and, a broader social and political problem the nation must resolve.

Obama also explained that extremism was mobilized by different terrorist organizations to reinforce it as the primary threat facing the global community. For example, when presenting at the UN, he stated that terrorists have “Terrorized all who they come across...Mothers, sisters, and daughters have been subjected to rape...innocent children have been gunned down...In the most horrific crimes imaginable, innocent human beings have been beheaded, with videos of the atrocity distributed to shock the conscience of the world” (September 24th, 2014). Obama indicated that terrorists intended to publicize their merciless crimes, thus attaching an inhuman attribute to their character. He also shifted extremism to the forefront of global security concerns by expressing the lethality of these unconscionable acts. He reinforced this brutal characterization when stating, “The brutality of terrorists in Syria and Iraq forces us to look into the heart of darkness” (September 24th, 2014). Obama exemplified the rising spread of terrorist ideology to illustrate the criminals’ growing power and increase the urgency to act against this force. This served his goals of expanding the international effort in fighting against this threat and increasing civil and military aid to states plagued by extremism.

Obama adopted Bush’s criminal framing of al Qaeda to accentuate the suffering extremism inflicted on others. He criminalized al Qaeda when informing the public about Osama bin Laden’s death, stating that the organization was “headed by Osama bin Laden, which had openly declared war on the United States and was committed to killing innocents in our country” (May 1st, 2011). He adopted Bush’s categorization of this organization to promote his decision of the troop surge in Afghanistan between 2010 and 2011 in attempt to end the state’s role as Al Qaeda’s safe haven. He affirmed this by stating, “Yet his death does not mark the end of our

effort. There's no doubt that al Qaeda will continue to pursue attacks against us" (May 1st, 2011). Obama used bin Laden's murder to underline that removing a single actor would not eradicate the larger problem, but rather diminishing the influence of the group's ability to spread their beliefs would. After the troop surge, Obama intended to shift policy in Afghanistan towards humanitarian aid and civil and military assistance (NSS 2010). He stressed the success of this strategy stating:

War has been a part of life in Afghanistan for over 30 years, and the United States cannot eliminate the Taliban or end violence in that country. But what we can do is deny al Qaeda a safe haven, and what we can do is support Afghans who want a better future, which is why we have worked not only with their military, but we've backed a unity government in Kabul. We've helped Afghan girls go to school. We've supported investments in health care and electricity and education. You have made a difference in Afghanistan, and America is safer for it. (December 6th, 2016)

Obama illustrated the ineffective strategy of killing a single terrorist and the benefits of supportive assistance to communities plagued by terrorism to bolster the success of his security strategy. His intention to promote social inclusion is clear, demonstrating how commitment to multiculturalism weakened al Qaeda's influence in the state.

Obama also identified ISIL as a criminal threat to endorse his strategy of airstrikes against terrorist targets. He illustrated their brutal killing methods, stating, "These terrorists are unique in their brutality. They execute captured prisoners. They kill children. They enslave, rape, and force women into marriage" (September 10th, 2014). The brutality Obama illustrated revealed the threat's murderous strategy to gain power. He highlighted this when stating, "[ISIL has] no vision other than the slaughter of all who stand in its way" (September 10th, 2014). Obama mimicked Bush's strategy when he defined the terrorists' mindsets as brutal to present an adverse threat that was attempting to fundamentally "divide the world into adherents and infidels" (September 24th, 2014). This characterization indicates that Obama planned to actively resist this organization stating:

First, our military will continue to hunt down terrorist plotters in any country where it is necessary. In Iraq

and Syria, airstrikes are taking out ISIL leaders, heavy weapons, oil tankers, infrastructure....we will continue to provide training and equipment to tens of thousands of Iraqi and Syrian forces fighting ISIL on the ground so that we take away their safe havens. In both countries, we're deploying Special Operations Forces who can accelerate that offensive. (December 6th, 2015)

Obama embraced Bush's rhetorical framing and strategy to achieve a similar goal of committing military to the fight against terrorism. Obama's national security strategy is distinct from Bush because rather than active combat, troops trained and prepared "Iraqi and Syrian forces to fight ISIL" and authorized airstrikes to diminish their capabilities. Although this suggests that the country did not abandoned its wartime footing, it significantly removed military activity from the public's view and conceptualization of the nature of threats.

Obama also criminalized Assad's regime to demonstrate the rising influence of extremism. Obama defined Assad's attack on Syrian citizens as, "a crime against humanity, and a violation of the laws of war" (September 10th, 2013). He depicted Assad challenging the UN and U.S.'s humanitarian and legal identities to frame this unlawful threat. Importantly, he did not dehumanize this actor, indicating that Obama intended to retaliate against the state using international law to prescribe the punishment. This differed from Bush's discursive construction of a crazed criminal to underline the notion that all actors deserved to be treated within the confines of the law.

Again, Obama depicted the regime's brutality to expose the major humanitarian cost if this extremist ideology were to spread. He stated, "The images from this massacre are sickening: Men, women, children lying in rows, killed by poison gas. Others foaming at the mouth, gasping for breath. A father clutching his dead children, imploring them to get up and walk" (September 10th, 2013). Obama intentionally detailed the suffering from this attack to denote the violence that extremism prompts. Additionally, this depiction is comparable to his description of ISIL's brutality, reinforcing the notion of many distinct and adverse actors contribute to the overarching

security threat. He urged the need to restrain this threat when explaining, “If we fail to act, the Assad regime will see no reason to stop using chemical weapons...and it could be easier for terrorist organizations to obtain these weapons, and to use them to attack civilians” (September 10th, 2013). This language demonstrated that one act of extremism could inspire other terrorists to act similarly, only contributing to the never-ending cycle of violence. In attempt to decrease this violence, Obama has continually supported U.S. humanitarian assistance in this region. Ultimately, Obama connected terrorists’ identities to demonstrate the risk of allowing this ideology to spread.

Obama’s rhetoric shifted Bush’s “criminal frame.” Bush created this frame to explain it was not enough to defeat the enemy through the justice system and military action would be the only way to defend the nation. Instead, Obama declared, “we will pursue a new legal regime to detain terrorists” (May 21st, 2009). He developed a defensive strategy that would better protect Americans by imprisoning terrorists through proper and legal means. For example, he stated, “The terrorist threat is real and it is dangerous. But these terrorists want to cast themselves as the vanguard of a new world order. They are not. They are thugs and they are murderers, and they should be treated that way” (December 6th, 2016). Obama stripped the threat from having legal rights, however restored their civil and human rights. This is distinct from Bush because Obama’s rhetoric signaled a shift in the national security threat and strategy. Instead of criminalizing terrorists to promote military action, Obama framed them in such a way as to endorse a lawful policy that would prevent the spread of extremist ideology. Obama altered the terrorists’ interpretation from deranged felons to manageable convicts to stress a war between ideas rather than actors. Thus, he was able to justify the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan and increase supportive aid to groups fighting against terrorists in the Middle East.

Obama restored terrorists' humanity by expressing that they deserved to be treated equally to other illegal actors. For example, he stated:

When we do capture terrorists, despite all the political rhetoric about the need to strip terrorists of their rights, our interrogation teams have obtained valuable information from terrorists without resorting to torture, without operating outside the law. Our Article III courts have delivered justice faster than military trials. And our prisons have proven more than capable of holding the most dangerous terrorists. (December 6th, 2016)

Obama advocated respect for the law by demonstrating how giving terrorists due process kept the nation safer than torture. This greatly differed from Bush's rhetorical strategy of eliminating terrorists' humanity and torturing them as a national security policy. Overall, Obama differentiated terrorists from lawful Americans, however, he reinstated their humanity by observing their individual rights.

Obama's background, as a lawyer and legislator, led him to interpret thugs and murderers as criminals and portrayed terrorists as such to promote the belief that they should be "captured, lawfully interrogated, and prosecuted in civilian courts" (December 6th, 2016). Obama also removed terrorists from their role as the nation's primary security threat when he defined their danger as equal to U.S. criminals. For example, he stated, "The politics of fear has led Congress to prevent any detainees from being transferred to prisons in the United States – even though, as we speak, we imprison dangerous terrorists in our prisons, and we have even more dangerous criminals in all of our prisons across the country" (December 6th, 2016). Obama attempted to decrease the nation's sensitivity towards terrorists by comparing them to criminals that the U.S. imprisons. As a result, he reinforced the notion that terrorists were just one actor in the broader fight against the spread of extremism. Additionally, he explained that by restoring their humanity and respecting their human rights the threat's power would decrease. For example, Obama believed "we have to fight terrorists in a way that does not create more terrorists" (December 6th, 2016). He understood that torturing terrorists was ineffective and often publicized by terrorist

organizations as a recruitment method, reinforcing his decision to ban torture. Ultimately, Obama used Bush's rhetorical framework to demonstrate how respect for human rights and cultural difference was a more effective national security strategy than suspicion and torture.

Dehumanization of the National Security Threat

Similar to Bush's rhetorical framework, Obama attached hate to the threat's identity to differentiate it from the American identity. However, Obama's rhetorical strategy differed from Bush because Obama used hate to replace the national security threat with ideology by explaining how the threat prompted terrorists to commit criminal acts. For example, Obama stated, "terrorists offer only the injustice of disorder and destruction, America must demonstrate that our values and our institutions are more resilient than a hateful ideology" (May 21st, 2009). His language demonstrated how the ideology promoted hatred and triggered disorder and destruction. He also explained the principal strategy to defeat this threat was to promote America's values and laws and prevent others from falling subject to the threat. Whereas Bush depicted a subhuman threat that must be defeated through war, Obama portrayed the threat targeting vulnerable communities and attempting to encourage disenfranchised groups to mobilize suffering. Obama used this strategy to reduce the ideology's value for humanity. For example, he stated, "our own safety, our own security, depends upon our willingness to do what it takes to defend this nation and uphold the values that we stand for—timeless ideals that will endure long after those who offer only hate and destruction have been vanquished from the Earth" (September 10th, 2014). Similar to Bush's strategy, Obama compared the threat with the American identity to dehumanize it. Both presidents portrayed the threat absent of moral reflection and overcome by hatred. However, Obama expressed that hate was an unsustainable way of life that would fail in the face of American values rather than brutal discipline. He

dehumanized the ideology by demonstrating that it destroyed humanity rather than embraced it. This reinforced Obama's goal to increase humanitarian assistance throughout the Middle East and exemplify the strength of investing in humans rather than eliminating them.

Obama also used hate to stress the possibility of a divided world if this ideology's presence were to increase. For example, when speaking about the San Bernardino shooting, he stated, "the fact is that our intelligence and law enforcement agencies cannot identify every would-be mass shooter, whether that individual is motivated by ISIL or some other hateful ideology" (December 6th, 2015). Similar to Bush, Obama exemplified how extremism acted upon emotional prompts that were both unpredictable and immoral. He also demonstrated the threat's encroachment on the humanized world by revealing terrorists existing within the U.S. He differentiated mass-shooters from Americans to explain that once those individuals embraced extremism, they represented an object attached to "the broader threat of terrorism" (December 6th, 2015). This simplification suggested that many immoral actors embodied extremism, emphasizing the potential for a hostile international community, separated along the lines of hateful ideology and lawful and liberal belief systems.

Obama also incorporated terrorist organizations into the broader threat by categorizing them as immoral. He reiterated Bush's portrayal of a morally isolated enemy by stating, "They [ISIL] are thugs and killers, part of a cult of death, and they account for a tiny fraction of more than a billion Muslims around the world—including millions of patriotic Muslim Americans who reject their hateful ideology" (December 6th 2015). This language reflected Obama's interpretation of the threat as a mobilized form of terrorism that commits criminal acts and exists outside of any moral or religious community. Obama's use of Bush's frame dehumanized this ideology by explaining it existed on the fringe of humanity and was rejected by the majority of

the world. However, Obama's strategy was different from Bush's because Obama intended to defeat the threat by resisting its legitimacy, rather than kill and torture it. Instead, he established that a robust and accepting national culture could combat the threat by stating:

Muslim leaders here [in the U.S.] and around the globe have to continue working with us to decisively and unequivocally reject the hateful ideology that groups like ISIL and al Qaeda promote; to speak out against not just acts of violence, but also those interpretations of Islam that are incompatible with the values of religious tolerance, mutual respect, and human dignity. (December 6th, 2015)

Obama removed the threat from American and international norms to declare that unity among states, religions, and cultures could overcome it. Altogether, Obama dehumanized the advancing threat to expose its weakness and promote a peaceful solution.

Although dehumanization was a prominent theme in both Bush and Obama's discursive construction of national security threats, their rhetorical strategies largely differed. For example, Bush reduced the threat to animals to eliminate their human features while Obama linked this international threat to disease. He stated that the world must "focus on two defining questions at the root of many of our [the UN] challenges—whether the nations here today will be able to renew the purpose of the UN's founding; and whether we will come together to reject the cancer of violent extremism" (September 24th, 2014). Obama objectified the ideology and demanded the UN to return to its founding values of humanity to reestablish terrorists as humans and eliminate the ideology. This contributed to his strategy of framing war against an intangible object as irrational. Instead, he demanded that the UN reject the threat from entering the minds of their citizens. Obama constructed this frame to reflect a plague upon the international community that was affecting various populations. For example, he stated, "one issue risks a cycle of conflict that could derail such progress [of improving the human condition], and that is the cancer of violent extremism that has ravaged so many parts of the Muslim world" (September 24th, 2014).

Obama's language defined this ideology as an imminent issue that could prevent the

international community from achieving its humanitarian goals. Ultimately, he accentuated the suffering caused by the threat to stress the need for nations to enforce their humanitarian values in order to purify and cleanse the world from disease.

Obama referred to extremism as a disease that progressively spread throughout the body to emphasize that the elimination of specific regimes, organizations, or individuals would be ineffective in a battle against a cancerous threat. Obama did not simplify the threat to mindless beings; he linked the threat to a medical condition, curable only by rejecting its values of fear and destruction. When talking about the San Bernardino shooters, Obama explained, “[violent extremism] is cancer that has no immediate cure” because “as the Internet erases the distance between countries, we see growing efforts by terrorists to poison the minds of people like the Boston Marathon bombers and the San Bernardino killers” (December 6th, 2015). Obama transformed this “particular type of political violence perpetuated by certain disenfranchised individuals into an abstract form” (Jackson 2005, 73). He used cancer to represent the Internet as the driving force of extremism manipulating the minds of marginalized individuals. Obama also used this strategy to explain that the Internet could exacerbate social isolation by sending poisonous messages to susceptible people and that the country must demonstrate its social inclusion both online and in reality. Obama’s rhetorical strategy preserved the humanity of terrorists because he believed the best strategy to fight the threat was through social integration. He expressed that hostility between communities only strengthened this disease when stating, “we do have to be careful to make sure that when we take actions, we’re not alienating local populations, because that will serve as recruitment for new terrorists” (December 6th, 2016). Obama stressed the costs of discrimination to promote his national strategy of respecting the civil

liberties and cultural differences between communities to increase social acceptance and reduce the risk of people “falling prey to extremism” (December 6th, 2016).

The Role of Religion

Obama recognized that social fractionalization was rising throughout the U.S. He attempted to reverse this movement by differentiating terrorism from Islam. Similar to Bush, he depicted terrorists as betrayers of religion when stating, “in this century, we have faced a more lethal and ideological brand of terrorists who have perverted one of the world’s greatest religions” (September 24th, 2014). He understood there was an association between Islam and terrorism due to the framing of 9/11 and the policies that followed, therefore he differentiated Islam from terrorism by framing it as admirable. His strategy was to endorse a positive and peaceful interpretation of this religion throughout the U.S. in order to prevent social isolation of communities. To dissociate Islam from terrorism Obama also stated, “ISIL is not ‘Islamic.’ No religion condones the killing of innocents” (September 10th, 2014). He separated terrorism from Islam and religion from violence to reinforce the threat’s identity as secular and ideologically isolated from all moral communities. This also contributed to his national message “that no matter who you are, or where you come from, or what you look like, or what religion you practice, you are equal in the eyes of God and equal in the eyes of the law” (December 6th, 2015). Obama’s goal of social integration and stabilization was endorsed throughout his national security rhetoric to reverse the cultural fragmentation Bush initiated after 9/11.

Obama demonstrated the strength of social unity by bolstering the link between Muslims and the American national identity. For example, he illustrated the similarities between these communities when stating, “it is America that is helping Muslim communities around the world not just in the fight against terrorism, but in the fight for opportunity, and tolerance, and a more

hopeful future” (September 10th, 2014). Obama noted that both populations expressed hope for the same future, defining Muslims as united with Americans. He affirmed this link when stating, “Muslim leaders here [in the U.S.] and around the globe have to continue working with us to decisively and unequivocally reject the hateful ideology that groups like ISIL and al Qaeda promote” (December 6th, 2015). Obama illustrated the weakness of terrorists when communities embrace their social differences to reject extremism. He reinforced this notion when stating, “If we’re to succeed in defeating terrorism we must enlist Muslim communities as some of our strongest allies, rather than push them away through suspicion and hate” (December 6th, 2015). Obama’s rhetoric framed Muslims as an essential tool in the fight against extremism and contributed to his strategy of deemphasizing the nation’s sensitivity towards diversity. This greatly differed from Bush’s strategy of inserting suspicion and hate into policies that amplified the country’s identity crisis.

Obama ultimately integrated Muslims into the national identity to legitimize their distinct character from the threat. For example, Obama affirmed, “when it comes to America and Islam, there is no us and them, there is only us, because millions of Muslim Americans are part of the fabric of our country” (September 24th, 2014). Obama defined Muslims as a foundational feature of the national identity to comment on the importance of social equality and its role in national security. Obama stressed that the nation relied on cultural integration for security because alienation promoted radicalization and terrorism. As he explained:

If we stigmatize good, patriotic Muslims, that just feeds the terrorists’ narrative. It fuels the same false grievances that they use to motivate people to kill. If we act like this is a war between the United States and Islam, we’re not just going to lose more Americans to terrorist attacks, but we’ll also lose sight of the very principles we claim to defend. (December 6th, 2016)

This language reiterated Obama’s frame of Muslims as essential in defending the nation from terrorists, but also warned that social fractionalization could also destroy the very foundation that

the country had sacrificed so much to defend. Additionally, Obama referenced Americans who practiced Islam as “Muslim Americans” and “patriotic Muslims” to stress diversity as an intrinsic part of being an American, the same as people could be Catholic American or Jewish American. Obama’s primary message was that respecting human rights, civil liberties, and political restraint only strengthened the country’s social stability and capability to defeat extremist ideology.

Conclusions

Obama’s discursive construction of the national security threat reflected an indirect link to Bush’s rhetorical depiction of al Qaeda and Saddam’s regime. However, he strategically re-applied criminal, inhuman, and unfaithful frames to the threat’s identity in order to fulfill different rhetorical strategies. Obama developed a link between the influence of extremist ideology and terrorists to alter the conceptualization of danger. As a result, he shifted the security threat from crazed and animalistic terrorists to extremist ideology that mobilized terrorism through socially dislocated people. Additionally, Obama exemplified how easily political leaders rhetorically manipulate interpretations of threat to achieve political goals. For example, he stressed the dangers of extremism by amplifying their costs through different mobilizations and as a result, presented a coherent and pervasive security threat. Ultimately, Obama recognized that torture, government motivated racial profiling, and U.S. military forces abroad contributed to the mobilization of extremism, therefore he used Bush’s rhetorical framework to change the perception of threat and national security policy to defeat extremism.

Obama’s discursive strategy to reduce the spread of violent extremism and rising social fractionalization throughout the U.S. focused on restoring terrorists’ humanity and advocating for religious, cultural, and political integration. He reformed Bush’s frame of American

exceptionalism to prevent rising rates of terrorist recruitment when stating, “we do not torture, and that we will vigorously protect our people while forging a strong and durable framework that allows us to fight terrorism while abiding by the rule of law” (May 21st, 2009). Obama attempted to emotionally reengage the public’s moral code by banning torture and reinstating law as a foundational feature of the national identity. He repeatedly expressed the importance of equality, civil liberties, and human dignity as defining factors of the national identity because extremists wanted to divide the U.S. and international community along the lines of human rights and cultural discrimination.

Obama replaced Bush’s terrorist threat with extremism to achieve his national security and domestic goals of reducing active military troops abroad, increasing humanitarian and supportive military aid to groups opposing extremists, and ending discrimination abuses. He conveyed that extremist ideology threatened Americans when saying, “But just as it is the responsibility of Muslims around the world to root out misguided ideas that lead to radicalization, it is the responsibility of all Americans —of every faith—to reject discrimination” (December 6th, 2015). Obama reduced the necessity for military action abroad by explaining that the best strategy to protect the nation was through citizen acceptance of diversity and social solidarity. As a result, Obama was able to significantly reduce the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan and increase supportive and humanitarian aid to states in the Middle East.

Obama attempted to reverse the social effects of Bush’s administration by insisting the nation’s identity “has been defined by hope, and not fear” (December 6th, 2016). He promoted that the U.S. is “a country where you're judged by the content of your character rather than what you look like, or how you worship, or what your last name is, or where your family came from —that's what separates us from tyrants and terrorists” (December 6th, 2106). He endorsed this

rhetoric to reduce the public's sensitivity towards diversity and limit the number of disenfranchised people from society because he believed that marginalization was the onset to extremism. In an attempt to prevent social disintegration, Obama expanded a hate crimes law by making it a federal offense to assault someone because of sexual orientation. He also increased the number of refugees that the nation would accept to encourage national diversity. Although Obama successfully altered the national security threat, he was unable to reduce the nation's fragmentation. For example, "data released last year from several sources, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation, indicated anti-Muslim hate incidents surged in 2015" (Pitter 2017). The FBI data reported, "257 assaults, attacks, on mosques, and other hate crimes against Muslims for 2015, a rise of about 67 percent over 2014" (Pitter 2017). Additionally, the Southern Poverty Law Center's Rise of Hate Groups research revealed that between 2008 and 2011 the number of hate groups increased from 926 to 1018. However, this number had dropped to 917 by 2016. There are many explanations to this decrease and one could be the election of President Donald Trump. Nevertheless, Obama stressed the empowerment of minorities and marginalized communities, unintentionally initiating a movement that celebrated difference rather than uniting it. This inadvertent consequence only perpetuated Bush's influence over citizen's self-perception and further divided the nation along extreme lines of social, religious, cultural, and political difference.

In summary, the comparison between Bush and Obama's construction of the terrorist threat exemplified how presidents adopt different discursive strategies to legitimize their own interpretation of the security threat and the American national identity. Obama linked new characteristics to past frames to define extremism and demonstrated how presidents can transform the construction of security threats facing the nation. Obama also demonstrated how

presidents may amplify certain attributes to intentionally spark specific emotions throughout the public that would support presidential national security strategies. He revealed how presidents redeploy certain political discourses to alter the national security threat, create more than one mobilization of threat, manipulate the public's emotional engagement to threat, and influence how Americans perceive themselves.

Chapter V—The Trump Administration

President Donald Trump is an unconventional president in U.S history. Unlike many other presidents prior to their election, he had no political office or active military experience. Additionally, he has consistently relied on social media to publicize his national security views, goals, and strategies. While presidential rhetoric during this administration has been erratic, Trump has maintained presidential traditions of presenting a State of the Union Speech, a UN Speech, a National Security Strategy, and other imminent addresses to the public. Thus, this chapter maintains its method and focuses solely on official presidential remarks.

Upon assuming office, Trump presented a “joint address to congress” and expressed his primary national security concerns. His strategy has been to shift the country’s focus towards the economy declaring, “For too long, we’ve watched our middle class shrink as we’ve exported our jobs and wealth to foreign countries. We’ve financed and built one global project after another but ignored the fates of our children in the inner cities...and so many other places throughout our land” (February 28th, 2017). His immediate attention to the economy expressed that its stability would be the administration’s priority and that executive decision-making would be economically based. Although similar to Obama’s initial public expression of insecurity, Trump has continued to highlight the nation’s economic stability as a source of security. He affirmed this when stating, “For the first time, American strategy recognizes that economic security is national security” (December 18th, 2017). Trump has diverged from Bush’s and Obama’s rhetorical strategies when using the economy to support national security decisions, indicating a difference among the presidents’ perception of threat.

Trump’s prioritization of the nation’s economic stability and independence has led him to base interpretations of threat on economically unstable actors. This strategy has supported his

political goals including stricter immigration laws, constructing a wall between Mexico and the U.S., expanding U.S. military and its perception of power abroad, and remaining tough on terrorism. As result, he has targeted unskilled, poor, and illegal immigrants as a source of insecurity by stating, “I am going to bring back millions of jobs. Protecting our workers also means reforming our system of legal immigration...our current immigration system costs American taxpayers many billions of dollars a year” (February 28th, 2017). His initial judgment of immigrants was purely based on the cost to the citizen, rather than a threat to the nation. However, Trump soon identified immigrants as national threats by stating, “reforming our system of legal immigration” (February 28th, 2017) was “necessary, not just for our economy, but for our security, and our future” (January 30th. 2018). His strategy has been to frame immigrants as the cause of social fragmentation and radicalization, therefore he has attempted to construct an aggressive physical and political policy to block their access into America. In sum, within his first few months in office, Trump introduced a brand new type of security threat: that of illegal immigrants.

Trump’s perception of national security threats has also included specific nationalities whose rogue states are in economic peril. He has amplified the nation’s concern for terrorism and extremism to vilify these actors. For example, he has identified ISIS, also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, IS, or ISIL, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran as threats, as well as the immigrants who originate from this region. He expressed this view when referring to this region, stating, “Terrorists and extremists have gathered strength and spread to every region of the planet. Rogue regimes represented in this body not only support terrorists but threaten other nations and their own people with the most destructive weapons known to humanity” (September 19th, 2017). Trump has intentionally associated certain states with terrorism and extremism to

link their identities and demonize all of them even when referring to just one. Ultimately, Trump has returned to Bush's rhetorical strategy of dehumanizing specific actors to politically isolate them through unjustifiable policy.

Trump has adopted aspects of Bush's rhetorical framework to identify North Korea as a major national security threat. For example, he expressed it was crucial for U.S. national security to focus on North Korea's denuclearization by stating, "Our campaign of maximum pressure on the North Korean regime has resulted in the toughest-ever sanctions...America and its allies will take all necessary steps to achieve a denuclearization and ensure that this regime cannot threaten the world" (December 18th, 2017). Trump has reflected Bush's rhetorical framing by portraying threats as uncivilized and inhuman to stress that a single regime could threaten the world. Trump has perceived North Korea as a threat due to its growing nuclear capability therefore has defined the regime as inhumane to vilify and alienate it from other states.

Instead of identifying a primary national security threat, Trump has identified two main sources of insecurity: immigrants and rogue states. He has applied different aspects of Bush and Obama's rhetorical frameworks to enhance or add security threats that the nation faces. For example, he has criminalized North Korea by describing its brutal discipline tactics and has accentuated this threat by constantly demonizing the regime. Trump has also framed Afghanistan and Pakistan as criminal due to their harboring of terrorists. And finally, he has identified immigrants, from the south, regions where ISIS is active, and Iran as security threats through similar frames. This chapter exemplifies how even untraditional presidents depend on discursive frameworks to amplify, alter, and expand national security threats.

Binary Construction

As did past presidents, Trump has differentiated the American national identity from threats facing the country. Additionally, he has recontextualized America's exceptionalism, the threats' criminality, brutality, and inhumanity. While Trump has adopted features of Bush and Obama's rhetorical frameworks, his strategy has altered the discursive construction of the American identity and the perception of threat. He has removed the American identity from acting through its values to secure the nation towards having pride for them in order to differentiate between great Americans and inferior immigrants. Additionally, he has returned to Bush's discursive construction of an evil and morally isolated threat by attempting to intimidate and alter policy towards "rogue states." Overall, Trump's rhetorical framework has represented a conglomerate of new and past depictions of threat to attach specific connotations to enemies or to prompt emotions towards them. This chapter will explore the variations among Bush, Obama, and Trump's rhetorical construction of threat, their strategies, and the subsequent social and political effects.

The American National Identity

Trump has promoted the great, proud, and strong American to express the nation's exceptionalism and independence from other countries. He believes that by "putting America first" (December 18th, 2017) the country's strength and security could only grow. For example, he has demanded that citizens, "celebrate American greatness as a shining example to the world...[and] As long as we are proud — and very proud — of who we are, how we got here, and what we are fighting to preserve, we will not fail" (December 18th, 2017). Trump has adopted Bush's rhetorical strategy to convey that as long as citizens are patriotic, the nation would achieve its goals and preserve its values. However, Trump has diverged from Bush's discursive construction when introducing a new sense of exceptionalism. He has explained that

America's greatness stems from the population's pride and confidence for its values, rather than from the value system supporting the nation's capability. He has reinforced this sense of patriotism, stating, "As long as we are proud of who we are, and what we are fighting for, there is nothing we cannot achieve. As long as we have confidence in our values, faith in our citizens, and trust in our God, we will not fail" (January 30th, 2018). Similar to Bush and Obama, he has promoted the idea that as long as citizens confide in each other and are proud of their values; the nation would be able to overcome any challenge. However, he has never explained how American values guide rational decision-making and lead to a secure nation. Trump has intentionally bolstered America's greatness because of what the country represents rather than how it acts.

Trump has reverted to Bush's discursive construction of a united national identity to highlight how patriotism and loyalty strengthens the nation's security. He has explained this feature by describing the character of military servicemen, stating:

By following the heroic example of those who fought to preserve our republic, we can find the inspiration our country needs to unify...they transcend every line of race, ethnicity, creed, and color to serve in absolutely perfect cohesion...they're all part of the same family; it's called the American family...they are bound together by common purpose, mutual trust, and selfless devotion to our nation and to each other. (August 21st, 2017)

Trump has depicted a unified "American family" defined by a "common purpose, mutual trust, and selfless devotion," to suggest that America's preservation depends upon loyalty. This unity has also promoted the notion of blind faith in government and military decision-making. This has aligned Trump with the citizenry, allowing him to assert how the public perceives threats and reacts to them. This is similar to Bush's strategy because both presidents have used unity to link the public to the government and the military in order to justify future national security decisions.

Trump has also underlined the role of loyalty as a feature of American identity in attempt

to differentiate citizens from threats within the nation. He mimicked Bush's rhetorical strategy when he compared the American to the threat, stating, "Loyalty to our nation demands loyalty to one another. Love for America requires love for all of its people. When we open our hearts to patriotism, there is no room for prejudice, no place for bigotry, and no tolerance for hate" (August 21st, 2017). Trump has used loyalty to depict Americans at peace with one another and has framed any discriminatory or hostile action between Americans as a threat. He has noted that this type of threat exists within the country when stating, "We cannot remain a force for peace in the world if we are not at peace with each other...let us find the courage to heal our divisions within" (August, 21st, 2017). The President has adopted Bush's rhetorical strategy to stress that national unity is fundamental to the nation's stability and superpower status. In doing so, he has reiterated the national issue of rising social cleavages that Obama addressed. As a result, Trump has differentiated the national identity from individuals who have been publically drawing attention to the social and political divisions throughout the country.

Trump has recontextualized Obama's use of *law* as a crucial factor in securing the nation, however, he has not attached lawful to the American identity. Instead, he has expressed the weakness of current laws and how policy reform is needed to secure the country. He admitted that law was a foundational aspect of the country when stating:

We are celebrating the 230th anniversary of our beloved Constitution...this timeless document has been the foundation of peace, prosperity, and freedom for the Americans and for countless millions around the globe whose own countries have found inspiration in its respect for human nature, human dignity, and the rule of law. (September 19th, 2017)

Although Trump has indicated that the country was founded upon law, he has never framed himself or the nation as lawful. Rather, he has explained the importance of policy reform and the use of law enforcement to keep the nation safe. For example, he stated, "We want all Americans to succeed, but that can't happen in an environment of lawless chaos. We must restore integrity

and the rule of law at our borders” (February 28th, 2017). Different from Obama, Trump has exemplified how the use of law would prevent threats from entering the country. For example, he asserted that the previous administration’s “Failure to enforce our immigration laws had predictable results: drugs, gangs and violence” (July 18th, 2017). Following Bush’s strategy Trump has used the law to define what the nation must protect itself from, however, he has intentionally avoided attaching this attribute to the American identity. This has been to justify legal reform as a means to reinstate torturous military practices as an acceptable security policy. In sum, Trump has manipulated Bush and Obama’s use of law and has used it to rationalize actions against threats.

Additionally, Trump has attributed America’s superiority to the nation’s economic and military prowess. For example, he stated, “to accomplish our goals at home and abroad, we must restart the engine of the American economy” (February 28th, 2017). Trump has indicated that economic independence and stability would lead to the nation’s security because it would reinforce citizens’ dignity and resilience. This has served his national strategy of distancing immigrants and countries from the U.S. in order to become less economically interdependent. He has also expressed American greatness when talking about increasing the military budget, stating, “As we rebuild America’s strength and confidence at home, we are also restoring our strength and standing abroad” (January 30th, 2018). Trump has expressed that the American people and its military “has been among the greatest forces for peace and justice in the history of the world” (December 18th, 2017). He has defined American exceptionalism as patriotism, rather than by the nation acting in line with its traditional values. His testament to an increased conventional presence both at home and abroad has reflected his goal to defend the nation wherever its security is in question. As a result, Trump has portrayed a static citizen who is

proud of, however, not necessarily defined by, the American belief system. This has allowed him to validate the nation's role as world leader. He explained:

Each American generation passes the torch of truth, liberty and justice in an unbroken chain all the way down to the present...a new chapter of American Greatness is now beginning. A new national pride is sweeping across our nation...what we are witnessing today is the renewal of the American spirit. Our allies will find that America is once again ready to lead. All the nations of the world — friend or foe — will find that America is strong, America is proud, and America is free. (February 28th, 2017)

Here, Trump introduced what he believed to be the defining characteristics of the national identity and used them to reveal a new chapter of the American spirit. He has diverged from Bush and Obama's portrayal of the American because he has expressed a pride for these values, rather than reinforcing a moral or lawful obligation to them.

Trump has reiterated Bush and Obama's construction of a humane world leader to justify military presence abroad. He has reinforced Obama's portrayal of the American philanthropist to perpetuate the notion that American actions purely intend to benefit the international community. Trump expressed this by stating, "The United States is a compassionate nation. We are proud that we do more than any other country to help the needy, the struggling, and the underprivileged all over the world" (January 30th, 2018). Trump has linked the nation's humanity to its superiority and has promoted its capability to support vulnerable communities. This has allowed him to differentiate America from two enemies, Iran and North Korea. For example, he stated, "When the people of Iran rose up against the crimes of their corrupt dictatorship, I did not stay silent. America stands with the people of Iran in their courageous struggle for freedom" (January 30th, 2018). Trump accentuated the nation's humanitarianism by expressing its commitment to people longing for freedom, while defining Iran and other corrupt dictatorships as threats. He identified North Korea as a threat when he expressed that the U.S. was aligned with the North's closest adversary, South Korea. He linked their identities when stating:

This [South] Korea stands strong and tall among the great community of independent, confident, and peace-loving nations. We are nations that respect our citizens, cherish our liberty, treasure our sovereignty,

and control our own destiny...and we are always prepared to defend the vital interests of our people against the cruel ambition of tyrants. (November 7th, 2017)

Here, Trump's strategy related to Bush and Obama's because he explained that the U.S. would aid countries that reflected its own values and actively oppose those who did not. This has served his security actions that have increased military presence in the pacific region. In sum, Trump has used the nation's humane attribute to identify different threats and accentuate their depravity.

Criminalization of National Security Threats

Trump has recontextualized Bush and Obama's criminal frame to depict various threats challenging America's greatness. He has framed the actions of certain threats as criminal to expose their risk to the nation and the international community to advance his national security strategy of keeping immigrants out the country and isolating rogue states. For example, Trump has been fixated on protecting the U.S. from immigrants entering the country, and therefore has portrayed their migration into the U.S. as criminal. This frame has removed immigrants from the American identity by constructing a violent stereotype. For example, he stated, "International criminal networks traffic drugs, weapons, people; force dislocation and mass migration; threaten our borders; and new forms of aggression exploit technology to menace our citizens" (September 19th, 2017). Trump understands that the U.S. had been admitting immigrants from the south as well as the Middle East. Therefore, he has targeted these two immigrant groups by drawing upon cultural queues and language such as "borders" and "technology to menace our citizens" to clarify the threat. He has also linked the connotation of criminal to these groups. He affirmed their criminality when he claimed that they only increased domestic insecurity and that:

By finally enforcing our immigration laws, we will raise wages, help the unemployed, save billions and billions of dollars, and make our communities safer for everyone...For that reason, we will soon begin the construction of a great, great wall along our southern border. As we speak tonight, we are removing gang members, drug dealers, and criminals that threaten our communities and prey on our very innocent citizens. Bad ones are going out as I speak. (February 28th, 2017)

Trump has simplified immigrants to gang members, drug dealers, and criminals to amplify the negative features associated with this body of people and to demonstrate how they threaten U.S. citizens. This has reflected Bush's construction of terrorists preying on innocents, perpetuating a violent frame of threat. Additionally, Trump has reduced immigrants to "bad ones" to project their inferiority to true American citizens. This has also reinforced Bush's dehumanized frame, suggesting that immigrants belong outside of America's national identity. Overall, Trump has intentionally criminalized immigrants to create a stereotype and disclose his belief that diversity drives fragmentation and violence within the U.S. rather than social exclusion.

Trump has accentuated the criminality of immigrants by linking them to MS-13, a violent cartel in the U.S whose members have been primarily from Central America. He linked immigrants to MS-13 when stating, "The previous administration enacted an open-door policy to illegal immigrants from Central America...As a result, MS-13 surged into the country and scoured, and just absolutely destroyed, so much in front of it. New arrivals came in and they were all made recruits of each other" (July 28th, 2017). Trump has not only implied the illegality of recent Central American immigrants, but has also illustrated the cost of ignoring immigration laws. This has been to promote his negative interpretation of this group of people. Instead of sympathizing with immigrants and suggesting how they could contribute to society, he has focused on the destruction and suffering that they have caused. For example, he expressed the need "to rid our nation of cartels and criminals who are preying on our citizens" (July 28th, 2017). Trump has simplified immigrants' identity to gangs that have caused suffering throughout the U.S. This has allowed him to attach a negative stereotype to this population and serve his national strategy of reforming immigration law to remove and prevent certain cultural groups from entering the nation. He has strengthened the notion that immigrants are dangerous by

mimicking Obama's rhetorical strategy of illustrating the brutality of a threat's crimes, stating:

MS-13 gang members have brutally murdered 17 beautiful, young lives in this area on Long Island alone. They butcher those little girls. They kidnap, they extort, they rape and they rob. They prey on children. They shouldn't be here. They stomp on their victims. They beat them with clubs. They slash them with machetes, and they stab them with knives. They have transformed peaceful parks and beautiful, quiet neighborhoods into bloodstained killing fields. They're animals. (July 28th, 2017)

Trump has used Obama's framework to emphasize the threat's lethality and social cost. This has reinforced the notion that immigrants increase violence rather than strengthen the nation's ability to deflect extremist ideologies. Additionally, applying an animalistic feature to this group has prompted emotions felt towards al Qaeda and Saddam. Trump has intertwined criminal, brutal, and dehumanized frames into the identity of immigrants to reinforce their adverse identity. Thus, Trump has been able to remove certain nationalities and groups from the definition of the American national identity and create policies that ignore their civil liberties.

Trump has also incorporated immigrants from the Middle East into Bush's criminal frame to dissociate certain nationalities from the American national identity. For example, he exemplified how immigrants have committed terrorist crimes in the U.S. when stating:

We are also taking strong measures to protect our nation from radical Islamic terrorism. According to data provided by the Department of Justice, the vast majority of individuals convicted of terrorism and terrorism-related offenses since 9/11 came here from outside of our country. We have seen the attacks at home — from Boston to San Bernardino to the Pentagon, and, yes, even the World Trade Center. (February 28th, 2017)

Trump has criminalized immigrants by explaining that the majority of convicted terrorists in the U.S. have originated from outside the country. Trump's strategy has been to portray threat as emanating from foreign places and that the only way to protect the nation would be to prevent their entry. He has affirmed this by establishing new vetting procedures "to keep terrorists out of the United States" (December 18th, 2017). This language is similar to Bush because both presidents have used the notion of a foreign threat to disengage the public's moral opinion towards a group of people. Additionally, Trump has used religion to reinforce the foreign threat.

Although he has differentiated Islam from radical Islam, he has also suggested that majority-Muslim regions and nationalities are vulnerable to terrorism. This strategy has differed from Bush's and Obama's because Trump has failed to establish terrorists as betrayers of their faith. Rather he has used religion as a tool to identify regions where Islam could be radicalized and to say immigrants from that region could be dangerous.

Trump has manipulated Obama's construction of extremism and terrorism to criminalize regions and countries in the Middle East where terrorism is prevalent. For example, by framing Afghanistan and Pakistan as actors promoting terrorism, Trump has shifted the national security threat back to tangible enemies. He has also used Bush's rhetoric to legitimize his interpretation of the terrorist threat, stating, "terror groups will stop at nothing to commit the mass murder of innocent men, women and children" (August 21st, 2017). He has reiterated Bush's framing of 9/11 by describing "mass murder," to achieve the same social upheaval against this threat. He has also framed terrorists as soldiers to reveal his strategy to maintain military presence abroad by stating, "Terrorists are not merely criminals. They are unlawful enemy combatants" (January 30th 2018). He has adopted both Bush's rhetoric and national security strategy to explain:

That's why will also expand authority for American armed forces to target the terrorist and criminal networks that sow violence and chaos throughout Afghanistan. These killers need to know they have nowhere to hide; that no place is beyond the reach of American might and Americans arms. (August 21st, 2017)

Trump has incorporated Afghanistan into this frame to expose his view that harboring and providing aid to terrorists support their misconducts. His strategy has been focused on weeding out terrorists in states that harbor them. Therefore, criminalizing Afghanistan has served the nation's foreign policy shift from nation building in this state to covert operations that will destroy terrorist networks.

Trump has also modified Obama's notion that extremism mobilizes terrorists to explain

that weak states promote this ideology. In addition to Afghanistan, Trump has depicted Pakistan as a criminal threat in order to achieve his political goal of reducing aid to this country. He marginalized the state when he stated the U.S. “can no longer be silent about Pakistan’s safe havens for terrorist organizations, the Taliban, and other groups that pose a threat to the region and beyond” (August 21st, 2017). Diverging from Obama’s notion that ideology was the threat, Trump has demonstrated that states have been endorsing extremism and providing support to mobilize it. As a result, he has shifted national threats back to specific actors. Although Pakistan is a U.S. ally, Trump has remained steadfast in his strategy to stay tough on terrorism. He has demonstrated why U.S. troops must remain active in this region by explaining that Afghanistan and Pakistan harbor “Terrorists who slaughter innocent people will find no glory in this life or the next. They are nothing but thugs, and criminals, and predators, and — that’s right — losers” (August 21st, 2017). He has illustrated the brutality these states sponsor to portray them as inferior and outside any moral community. Trump has criminalized these states to portray them as weak and unstable compared to the U.S., drawing upon America’s greatness to promote retaliation. His strategy has been similar to Bush’s because they both intended to influence the actions of their adversary. Ultimately, Trump cut aid to Pakistan and has threatened to further alienate them in order to induce political change in the state. Trump has re-introduced tangible threats to prompt hostile interpretations of the Middle East and alter policy towards specific states.

Similar to Bush, Trump has interpreted politically weak and adverse states as threats in order to prevent them from gaining nuclear capabilities. Thus, he has reintroduced Bush’s ‘axis of evil’ by criminalizing both Iran and North Korea for their proliferation activities, stating, “No nation on earth has an interest in seeing this band of criminals arm itself with nuclear weapons

and missiles” (September 19th, 2017). Trump has portrayed Iran as a national threat due to its “destabilizing activities while building dangerous missiles” (September 19th, 2017). His approach towards a reformed nuclear deal has reflected Bush’s interpretation of American exceptionalism where the nation must impose change on others to ensure U.S. primacy. Although his goal has been policy reform, he has also criminalized the state by linking it to similar offenses as Afghanistan and Pakistan. For example, he stated, “Rather than use its resources to improve Iranian lives, its oil profits go to fund Hezbollah and other terrorists that kill innocent Muslims and attack their peaceful Arab and Israeli neighbors” (September 19th, 2017). Trump has framed Iran as untrustworthy thieves to reinforce the notion of its instability. Additionally, he has applied Bush and Obama’s rhetorical strategies by removing Muslims and Arabs from the identity of terrorists and rogue states by framing them as the victims. Trump has interpreted this suffering as an opportunity to justify policy change, therefore he has aligned the U.S. with Iranians by stating, “we stand in total solidarity with the Iranian regime’s longest-suffering victims: its own people. The citizens of Iran have paid a heavy price for the violence and extremism of their leaders” (October 13th, 2017). Trump has demonstrated the brutality and irresponsibility of Iran’s government to rationalize “a new strategy to address the full range of Iran’s destructive actions” (October 13th, 2017). In summary, Trump has re-introduced Iran’s criminality to spark similar public perceptions of the state Bush had created and promote American exceptionalism as defenders of the nation’s status as world leader.

Trump’s goals in Iran have been similar to his goals in North Korea. He has demonstrated the state’s criminality by projecting the government’s repression. He has introduced the need for policy reform and sanctions towards this rogue state by criticizing past administrations for neglecting a “nuclear menace” (December 18th, 2017) and ignoring their

defection on most non-proliferation treaties. Trump has depicted the regime's brutality to characterize its irrationality and instability and clarify why they cannot be trusted with nuclear weapons. He affirmed this by describing the regime's cruelty towards its own people, stating:

No one has shown more contempt for other nations and for the wellbeing of their own people than the depraved regime in North Korea. It is responsible for the starvation deaths of millions of North Koreans, and for the imprisonment, torture, killing, and oppression of countless more. We were all witness to the regime's deadly abuse. (September 19th, 2017)

Trump has imitated Obama's strategy by portraying a merciless actor who commits criminal acts to remain in power. However, he has also intended to present this regime as comparable to Bush's construction of Saddam Hussein to prompt fear for a potential attack on the U.S. Trump has echoed Bush's rhetorical strategy by commenting that "America stands with every person living under a brutal regime" (September 19th, 2017). He has linked the American character to suffering civilians in North Korea to express that the U.S. will be the nation's savior from the state's deadly regime. Trump has reintroduced a simplified conflict between good and evil actors to demand that "All responsible nations [in the UN] must join forces to isolate the brutal regime of North Korea" (November 7th, 2017). This portrayal has reduced North Korea from a sovereign state with allies to an enemy on a mission to intentionally threaten the world through nuclear proliferation. As a result, Trump has amplified suspicion towards this state and has provoked fear for the state throughout the U.S. Trump's simplification has led to aggressive UN sanctions on North Korea, promoting the notion that rogue states must be cut-off and alienated from the world. This rhetorical strategy has demonstrated his national security goals of progressing the political divide among great and weak nations.

Dehumanization of National Security Threats

Trump has continued to simplify the relationships between the U.S. and its national threats by dehumanizing populations outside of the American national identity. He has

recontextualized Bush's animalistic threat to reduce the humanity of actors and encourage suspicion towards immigrants and rogue states. For example, Trump has removed immigrants' humanity to expose a weakness within America that has been impeding on its economic and national preponderance. He has portrayed immigrants as animals that must be caged to endorse his plan to build a wall between the U.S. and Mexico. He exemplified their inferiority by stating, "The vile criminal cartel, MS-13...is particularly violent. They don't like shooting people because it's too quick it's too fast. I was reading — one of these animals was caught — in explaining, they like to knife them and cut them, and let them die slowly because that way it's more painful" (July 28th, 2017). Trump has adopted Obama's brutal framing by describing the gang's cruel thought process. He has depicted an inhuman killer who intentionally uses brutal methods of murder to cause suffering. However, his rhetorical strategy has reflected Bush's demonization to remove all human qualities from immigrants' identity and their right to reside in America. Trump's portrayal of an inferior being within the U.S. has stripped illegal immigrants of their legal rights and has disengaged the nation from viewing this group as equal to American citizens. A result of his language has mobilized discriminatory immigration law and has initiated a policy to build a wall between Central America and the U.S.

Trump has also reduced the humanity of terrorists in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran to portray people from these regions as inferior and dangerous. He has depicted their inhumanity stemming from the government's harboring of terrorists, and declared that "America and our partners are committed to...exposing the false allure of their [terrorists in Afghanistan and Pakistan] evil ideology...they [these regimes] are nothing but thugs, and criminals, and predators, and losers" (August 21st, 2017). He has adopted Bush's frame of presenting regimes as predatory to reinforce the notion that threats exist outside the homeland where rights can be

ignored and discrimination can flourish. Trump has also explained that since terrorists are protected in these states, the U.S. must defend itself from them. For example, he declared, “We’re [the U.S. is] now chasing them [terrorists] wherever they flee, and we will not let them into the United States” (December 18th, 2017). Trump has portrayed terrorists as “fleeing” in order to recontextualize Bush’s animalistic threat that “hides in the shadows” and “then runs for cover” (Bush, September 12th, 2001). This strategy has conveyed that terrorists residing in Afghanistan and Pakistan are attempting to enter the U.S, supporting Trump’s “strict new vetting procedures to keep terrorists out of the United States” (December 18th, 2017). Similar to Bush, Trump has depicted the threat originating from outside America’s national identity as well as its homeland. This has allowed him to establish policies that only amplify negative connotations towards immigrants from the Middle East and endorse the notion that the nation’s insecurity stems from these migrants entering the country.

Trump has conveyed Iran’s barbaric tendencies as even more inhumane than Afghanistan and Pakistan’s to strip away all migratory rights from their citizens. He reduced the state’s humanity by stating, “The Iranian government masks a corrupt dictatorship behind the false guise of a democracy. It has turned a wealthy country with a rich history and culture into an economically depleted rogue state whose chief exports are violence, bloodshed, and chaos” (September 19th, 2017). Trump has illustrated how the government has recklessly deteriorated a peaceful country into one of terror. He has used Bush’s rhetorical strategy of a delusional threat to position Iran and its people at a subordinate level of humanity compared to democratic nations. Dehumanizing the values that the Iranian government promotes, Trump has disengaged Americans from Obama’s messages to embrace diversity and social inclusion. Rather it has injected suspicion towards certain states and immigrants. As a result, Trump has been able to

establish Executive Order 13769 which blocks immigrants from Iran, and six other countries where terrorism is widespread, from entering the U.S.

Similar to Bush, Trump has depicted terrorists as immoral beasts to differentiate the American from this threat and reintroduce torture as a justifiable security strategy. To discursively construct this division, Trump illustrated the brutality of terrorism, stating, “Terrorists who do things like place bombs in civilian hospitals are evil. When possible, we annihilate them. When necessary, we must be able to detain and question them. But we must be clear: Terrorists are not merely criminals” (January 30th, 2018). Trump has denoted the evilness of extremist ideology, recontextualizing Bush’s portrayal of a fanatic enemy that must be detained or wiped out for the country’s safety. Additionally, he has simplified the conflict between the great American and evil combatants to reestablish Bush’s portrayal of terrorists as “the very worst of human nature” (Bush, September 11th, 2001). Trump has imitated Bush’s rhetorical strategy to accentuate the terrorists’ destructive behavior against humanity and to legitimately reauthorize torture in detention centers without moral questioning. Trump reinforced the inhumanity of terrorists when he directed the Department of Defense to develop a plan that would “destroy ISIS — a network of lawless savages that have slaughtered Muslims and Christians, and men, and women, and children of all faiths and all beliefs. We will work with our allies, including our friends and allies in the Muslim world, to extinguish this vile enemy from our planet” (February 28th, 2017). He has recontextualized Bush’s notion of “savages who choose to live on the ‘hunted margin of mankind’” (September 23rd, 2001) to reinforce their identity as fundamentally different from humanity. He has also compared Muslims to the American identity to perpetuate Bush and Obama’s notion of Islam as peaceful and further isolate terrorists from any moral community. He has explained that most Muslims are peaceful

and terrorists who claim to be Muslim remain outside of this religion's moral code. He has reintroduced the Western cultural interpretation of terrorists as insensible barbarians who have neither humanity nor integrity. He has intensified this interpretation by framing the enemy as vile, or something to be disgusted by, only amplifying hatred towards these "savages." By using past presidential rhetorical strategies to garner support towards an outlawed torture strategy, Trump has exemplified how presidents recontextualize discursive frames to legitimize their national security strategies.

Trump's dehumanization of North Korea has conveyed his national security goals to separate relations between adverse states and to punish fanatical regimes. He has explicitly dehumanized North Korea by attaching negative attributes to the regime's character and by portraying an irrational enemy. For example, he has referenced the state as, "the prison state of North Korea," "The sinister regime of North Korea" (November 7th, 2017), "the depraved character of the North Korean regime" (January 30th, 2018), and he has declared "North Korea is a country ruled as a cult" (November 7th, 2017). Trump's consistent emphasis on North Korea's evil character has injected an inherent link between this state and inhumanity. This language has mimicked Bush's discursive construction of the evil terrorists, prompting a national culture of hatred towards North Korea. This has allowed Trump to threaten the regime's existence, stating, "The United States has great strength and patience, but if it is forced to defend itself or its allies, we will have no choice but to totally destroy North Korea. Rocket Man is on a suicide mission for himself and for his regime" (September 19th, 2017). Although Trump's declarations have been politically aggressive, the rhetoric has resonated with the public and international community, prompting UN sanctions on the regime. This depiction of North Korea has

simplified the state to an unethical and merciless leader and has allowed Trump to justifiably punish a country and reinforce the divide between politically adverse states.

Conclusions

President Trump's rhetorical framework and strategy has strongly reflected Bush's discursive construction of al Qaeda and Saddam's regime. Trump has recontextualized the criminal and dehumanized frame to reintroduce similar interpretations of threat and prompt similar disciplinary actions against it. Thus, Trump has exemplified how political leaders draw upon past discursive constructions of threat to fundamentally change and add new national security threats. Trump has also demonstrated how rhetorical frameworks function the construction of threats unrelated to past administrations. For example, Trump has applied Bush's rhetorical framework to detach national security threats from ideology as well as terrorists by criminalizing and dehumanizing immigrants and rogue states. This has indicated that, although leaders are constrained by certain rhetorical frameworks, they are capable of creating new national threats by linking certain attributes to different actors. Additionally, Trump has simplified the American national identity by deemphasizing its commitment to its values. Instead, he has promoted a loyal and proud citizenry committed to protecting the nation's greatness rather than its belief system. As a result, Trump has been able to identify threats that weaken the nation's political, economic, and national security capabilities. This has allowed him to present multiple critical and coherent national security threats, while neglecting to identify a primary security threat.

Trump's rhetorical strategy has removed immigrants from the national identity, reduced terrorists to animalistic beings, and politically isolated Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, and North Korea. Additionally, it has allowed him to achieve multiple political goals that have revealed his

ideology of political and social division and national homogeneity. First, Trump's consistent negative portrayal of North Korea has promoted an ominous interpretation of the state and has led to further alienation from the international community. Second, he has reduced aid to Pakistan, threatening the volatile relationship between these allies. Third, he has dehumanized terrorists in attempt to reintroduce torture as a rational security tactic. Finally, his Executive Order 13769 has blocked Iranians and six other nationalities from entering the U.S. and has classified certain populations as inferior to America's national identity. Trump has effectively applied Bush's rhetorical strategy to shift the nation's perception of danger back to tangible and politically adverse states that are attempting to nuclearize. Trump's consistent demonization has indicated his intention to divide the international community along unambiguous lines rather than reshape it into an inclusive and diplomatic world.

Trump's simplified definition of the American national identity has led him to portray an unchallenged and superior American country. He has promoted pride and loyalty as crucial attributes of the nation's identity in order to amplify social and cultural differences between immigrants and U.S. citizens. He has constructed a violent stereotype of immigrants to convey their disloyalty towards U.S. citizens and pride for their country of origin. Although there are other populations within the U.S. that fit this stereotype, Trump has dehumanized immigrants to reform immigration law and construct a physical border between Mexico and the U.S. He has divided the American national identity along the lines of cultural diversity, decreasing the nation's moral respect for equality, civil liberties, and human dignity that Obama had struggled to reinstate.

Trump's rhetorical strategy has endorsed simplified interpretations of the national identity and threat that has been constructed through an individual or group's nationality,

economic stability, or patriotism. He has portrayed certain nationalities living within the U.S. as threats, perpetuating the nation's heightened sensitivity towards Middle Eastern and Central American immigrants. This interpretation of the national identity has infiltrated the U.S. population, encouraging the movement that promotes suspicion towards culturally different communities. As a result, Trump has perpetuated the polarization of citizens throughout the U.S.

The above discussion has exemplified that past emotions of fear and hate can be adapted and connected to sentiments in the present (Ross 2014). Trump has recontextualized objects of fear and the emergent cultural stereotypes from the Bush administration by re-applying them to past and current threats. Additionally, he has intensified certain attributes of threat to deliberately prompt past emotions that support immoral security strategies. His construction of multiple national security threats reflects how presidents can manipulate the public's perception of threat and their emotional engagement to it, encouraging domestic movements based on hate. Trump has demonstrated the robustness of Bush's discursive framing of 9/11 and the 'war on terror' by recontextualizing his rhetorical frames and interpretations of threat in order to reignite a nation willing to ignore human rights and civil liberties to "make America great again."

Chapter VI—Conclusion

The purpose of this discourse analysis was to map the various dimensions of presidential rhetorical frameworks and strategies to understand the discursive construction of national security threats and the resulting political effects. Presidents exert a form of power over how the public understands current political environments and the identities of those involved. The American national identity is not a coherent, identity-based process of national purity therefore it is subject to presidential framing of in- and out-group dynamics. This analysis has focused on President Bush's construction of the terrorist threat after 9/11 and how his rhetorical framework and strategy has been adopted or transformed by subsequent leaders. This research has found a static nature of political framing used by Presidents to reinforce the nation's identity and change national threats. This framework has been reflected by the central categorizations including: the nation's exceptionalism and the threat's criminality, simplification, and inhumanity.

Additionally, due to communications technologies, Presidents maintain effective methods to transmit countrywide interpretations of the nation's identity and its adverse character. This thesis has demonstrated how Presidents prompt conceptualizations of threat through their public addresses that play an instrumental role in regulating the nation's emotional response to political situations and the government's decision-making. By tracing the interpretive transformation of national security threats, it has also assessed how presidential rhetoric has influenced the nation's tolerance for discriminatory legal protections and military actions against its enemies.

The events of September 11th, 2001 sparked a frenzy of emotional reaction to the fall of the twin towers, the pain of 9/11 victims, the heroism of the rescuers, and bewilderment of a terrorist attack on the homeland (Ross 2014). One result was Bush's authority to manipulate public images and conceptualizations of terrorism (Ross 2014). Bush strategically shaped these

emotions to justify fear as a rational response, resulting in a policy of retribution and war. In the rhetorical construction of the terrorist enemy, fear and hatred were altered from prior prejudices to reinforce new social and political practices that served to protect the nation. His binary construction of the terrorist enemy was a simplified attempt to amplify the nation's fear for terrorism and rogue states. Additionally, his criminalization and dehumanization of threats was a strategic plan to disengage the nation from considering the human rights of terrorists and regimes that harbored them. As a result, he was able to achieve his goals of war in Afghanistan, overthrowing Saddam's regime, and evading the law when torturing suspected terrorists.

In the wake of 9/11, Bush highlighted the emerging emotions of the nation to endorse discriminatory foreign and public policy. Ross (2014) denoted, "practices of racial profiling invoked new ways of interacting that had created Arab-Americans as a feared and implicitly radicalized constituency within the United States" (69). Bush was able to mobilize this because Americans knew little about the perpetrators of terrorism, therefore his rhetorical categorizations began to marginalize populations within the U.S. by "cultural and phenotypic markers of identity" (Ross 2014, 69). Public interventions instilled fear in targeted individuals but also socialized ordinary citizens to engage with their community on the basis of racial identity (Ross 2014). As racialized interactions spread throughout the public, negative stereotypes of Middle Easterners, Muslims, and Arabs generated a culture of suspicion between communities throughout the U.S.

As racialized security practices proliferated, the emotions produced heightened sensitivity towards Arab and Muslim Americans. "Across the country, people were 'feeling uncomfortable' about vaguely defined would-be terrorists" (Ross 2014, 81). In an attempt to reverse these political effects, Obama applied a new rhetorical strategy to Bush's discursive framework to shift

the conceptualization of threat from individuals to ideology. He framed terrorists, terrorist organizations, and states as mobilizations of extremist ideology, which was defined as the national and international security threat during his administration. To achieve his goals of reducing U.S. military presence abroad, increasing humanitarian aid to populations fighting extremism, ending torture at Guantanamo Bay, and rebuilding the nation's moral community he emphasized the criminality, brutality, and inhumanity extremism prompts. His strategy was to frame ideology as the primary threat to explain the irrationality of an active military fight against terrorism. He endorsed rhetoric inspiring hope, not fear, to reduce the public's fragmentation because it contributed to extremist tendencies. Unfortunately, the habit of racial recognition, established in the Bush administration, cultural discrimination had become robust in the U.S. Although Obama called "for tolerance, equal treatment of minorities, and a "conscious attitudes shift in favor of cultural pluralism," racial judgment has effectively sustained distinctly negative associations to certain communities (Ross 2014, 82).

Trump has reconceptualized aspects of Bush and Obama's rhetorical frameworks to amplify certain emotions towards new security threats. As a result, he has perpetuated Americans' urgency to discriminate against new visible markers of difference in the current political environment. His rhetorical framing of immigrants, terrorists, and rogue states has demonstrated how the re-integration of emotions, such as fear and hatred are "capable of absorbing other sentiments, combining them, and infusing them with new energy" (Ross 2014, 92). Trump has explicitly constructed simplified stereotypes for immigrants from Central America and the Middle East, as well as destroyed North Korea's political legitimacy in the eyes of the public. This strategy has supported his political goals including stricter immigration laws, constructing a wall between Mexico and the U.S., expanding U.S. military and its perception of power abroad,

and remaining tough on terrorism. Overall, he has reduced the importance of civil liberties and legal rights by producing discriminatory national security policies that have perpetuated prejudice throughout the nation.

Implications and Future Research

A central aim of this research has been to demonstrate the Presidents' influence on the public's conceptualization of threat and the political outcomes that follow. Official discourse influences how the public internalizes major issues facing the nation and triggers emotions that can either unite or divide the national identity. The discursive construction of identities is strategic and intended to garner a national consensus towards presidential decision-making. However, rhetorical frameworks since 9/11 have sparked major social tension and violent political movements within the U.S. The national regression towards conservatism and cultural isolationism reflects a dangerous ideology present throughout the country, promoting a homogenous national identity founded upon the values that the U.S. have fought wars against. This social and political trend is actively rejecting cultural integration and fueling a national culture of suspicion. Therefore, it is possible that the American national identity could shift towards the criminal, brutal, and inhumane threat Bush, Obama, and Trump have portrayed as the ultimate enemy. In conclusion, to limit and reduce domestic violence and social conservatism, U.S. political rhetoric and policy must highlight the benefits of inclusion and respect towards threat rather than its demonization.

Discursive constructions and national security decisions also indicate the President's authority to perpetuate or set new agendas. Presidents intentionally apply past or introduce new characterizations of threat to shape agendas. Therefore, evaluating rhetoric reveals Presidents' intentions and hints at the national security decisions they will make. This indicates that

examining and comparing current presidential rhetoric to past presidents could gauge the current leader's intentions and security strategies. Understanding this can empower individuals, organizations, and other states to resist the current Presidential rhetoric in attempt to contest the leader's influence over the nation's interpretation of threats and the state's international behavior. This opens an avenue for future research to look at how technology and other actors such as media, foreign leaders, and organizations have challenged Presidential rhetorical framing and measure its effect on the nation's understanding of threat and executive decision-making.

The national identity constantly changes whenever Presidents trigger the emotions of hope, fear, or anger in a population (Ross 2014). Therefore, scholars and political leaders must also consider the actors whose emotions do and do not matter in the construction of the national identity because subordinated groups also maintain collective emotions that reinforce in- and out-group dynamics (Ross 2014). Future research should focus on how out-groups within the U.S. and the international community have internalized their framing, revealing new approaches to decrease social fractionalization and negative conceptualizations of immigrants. A limitation in this thesis could stem from its focus on Presidential speeches during the elected official's administration(s). There are many other modes of communication including news, social media platforms, radio programs, blogs, etc., that could also transmit Presidential messages to the public. In order to keep this research feasible, constraints are set with the aim of effectively mapping the fluidity of Presidential rhetorical frameworks with which past and current shared emotions integrate into political phenomena. Another avenue for further research could assess the growing influence of social media as a means of presidential rhetoric and its effects on the public's conceptualization of security threats. This study could have wider implications for how

citizens interact with U.S. politics and the construction of themselves as a part of the national identity.

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