

## Dehumanizing Metaphors used in the War on Terror Discourse



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**Abstract:** *This article attempts to explain how various speakers with a variety of religious and political viewpoints present and see the war on terror, in radically different ways. Van Dijk's (2004) approach, which was adapted from "Politics, Ideology, and Discourse," is used in this study to identify discursive structures that give rise to parochial, prejudiced, and antireligious remarks that are ideologically motivated. The CDA of the political speeches made after 9/11 has highlighted how discursive frameworks can be used to convey, carry out, perpetuate, and even embed ideological manipulations. Analysis has been done applying the macro methods of "positive self-representation" vs "negative other-representation." The 'Polarization' of in-group and out-group ideologies, or US-THEM, is intricately related to the macro techniques of "positive self-representation" and "negative other-representation," which have shown to be very perfect standards for evaluating beliefs and attitudes. It has been discovered that brutalization and derogation are frequently used in ideologically manipulated speeches that produce the predicted positive self-representation and negative other-representation. These rhetorical strategies are utilized to ameliorate, diminish, avoid, or exaggerate a situation.. They provide examples of the ideological purposes served by either positive self- or other-representation. The CDA used in this article to analyze sentiments regarding George W. Bush and Tony Blair's speeches on the war on terror reveals these in-group/out-group distinctions. The results of this study may help students develop their critical thinking skills in language production and comprehension, as well as revive the outdated concept of language competency.*

**Keywords:** Terror, Metaphor, War on Terror, Discourse

### Introduction

"An Orientalist discourse is constantly embellished to match the changing conditions. Even if the current scenarios may not have anything to do with Islam, the meanings and ideals that have been connected to it in the wake of the 9/11 attacks are being exploited to malign the adversary. The world order hasn't really

changed much as a result of my argument, but people are more aware of it now and have a better understanding of who the enemy is?, which is useful for rallying support of policies that maintain and even strengthen geopolitical hegemony.

In such situations, how could the present hegemony is questioned? Said revealed that

"We need to reconsider the labels and pull away from the fictitious lines that divide people from one another" (Observer, 16 September). The responsible values that Robin Cook, a former foreign secretary, previously championed are now gaining ground within the administration. Is this argument, as presented by Kampfne in the New Statesman on October 15th, only rhetorical, given that the current war's ostensible rationale depends on the achievement of its objectives? Similar to this, the interactions between the current administration and Muslim communities all over the world must go above appeasement. It must stop constructing a brand-new stereotype of a liberal Muslim who is domesticable and controllable and stop characterizing every Muslim who doesn't match this mould as extremist.

Muslims around the world have expressed worry over media portrayals of Islam, and academic attention in the last ten years has led to the development of a corpus of theoretical work that makes an effort to explain Islam's inaccurate portrayal in Western media. Modern political, economic, and social processes are thought to have increased the importance of Islam as a global issue. As a result of the shift in the global power structure brought about by the fall of communism, "the West" became concerned and made efforts to maintain its hegemony. Political Islam has made it possible for "the West" to construct Islam as the new enemy (a force operating on a global scale that poses an ideological and physical threat) based on a historically polarized relationship. The Iranian Revolution (1979) served as political Islam's first marker as it emerged from numerous colonial and oppressive experiences. Doing this was necessary for "the West" to recover control over a flourishing area and to uphold its ultimate Western identity. As a result, Islam is demonized by the media as a tool of public ideology, which portrays it as a threat to Western interests, reproducing, manufacturing, and perpetuating the ideology required to control Muslims both home and abroad. According to Halliday (1996), the depiction of extremist images within a context that advances a historical "myth of conflict" relieves "the West" of the need to

defend its antagonism. These arguments depend heavily on the idea of orientalism (Said 1978). Said defined Orientalism as the historical creation by the West of Eastern civilizations as foreign, the Other. Western writers' ideological presumptions that "them" and "us" are constructed as naturalized, binary oppositions have contributed to "the West's" dominance of Oriental cultures. Therefore, the discourse serves a purpose. Written before modern-day political Islam expressions, Said's (1978) theory has been "reworked and reinvested" in the current (Sardar 1999: 1). To handle these new phenomena, the Orientalist discourse has been strengthened. According to the idea, current portrayals of Islam are therefore reductive and largely negative, and they are dominated by an ethnocentric perspective. There are not many stereotypes presented.

*"Despite having politically unstable governments and movements, Muslims are stereotyped as being backward, irrational, inflexible, fundamentalist, misogynistic, menacing, and manipulative in how they use their faith for personal and political advantage."*

Globalization-induced postmodern conditions, on the other hand, are categorized by a fractured principle wherein destabilization and uncertainty have prompted defensive identity constructions, including Islamic movements and nationalist aspirations. The procedure under discussion is. Although scholars have been eager to point out the hybridity and diversity of Islamic groups, they have only really been examined within the context of an exclusively Western media with the help of selective, anecdotal accusations of prejudice. Due to worthwhile representations of these movements, their heterogeneity has been reduced to homogeneity. I object to this homogenization. Many countries' ideological institutions, including the media, reflect and recreate their political settings and agendas. The term "media" refers to a variety of communication modalities, each of which has its own set of genres, affiliations, priorities, and limitations. These will affect how people see "Islam," which means it cannot be portrayed as a single, global discourse. A more localized,

systematic strategy is currently being adopted in place of earlier global, theoretical approaches (Karim 2000; Männistö 1997; Richardson 2001). Despite the fact that patterns of representation are clear, Hafez (2000) emphasizes the importance of this strategy by citing a number of studies that demonstrate regionalism in overseas news reporting by domesticating the meaning of events. Foreign news is interpreted using national frameworks (about Islam). However, how are Muslims who grew up in "the West" viewed?

"I plan to address some of these difficulties in this research, going beyond prior publications in this field. All around the world, Muslims are called illogical, cruel, and skunks. I explore how Muslims are portrayed in the discourse surrounding the war on terrorism and how that portrayal contributes to the dehumanization of some segments of the US national press, contextualizing the accounting for the circumstances surrounding its production. When I started this project, I anticipated that there would be more diversity in news frameworks portraying Muslims in one specific area than there would be for their global counterparts given the need for political stability and the inclusion of minority communities. Close proximity makes it difficult to make representations that are only based on violent conflict.

"Audience interpretations have not been incorporated in the abundance of material on the representation of Muslims. This paper does not, however,

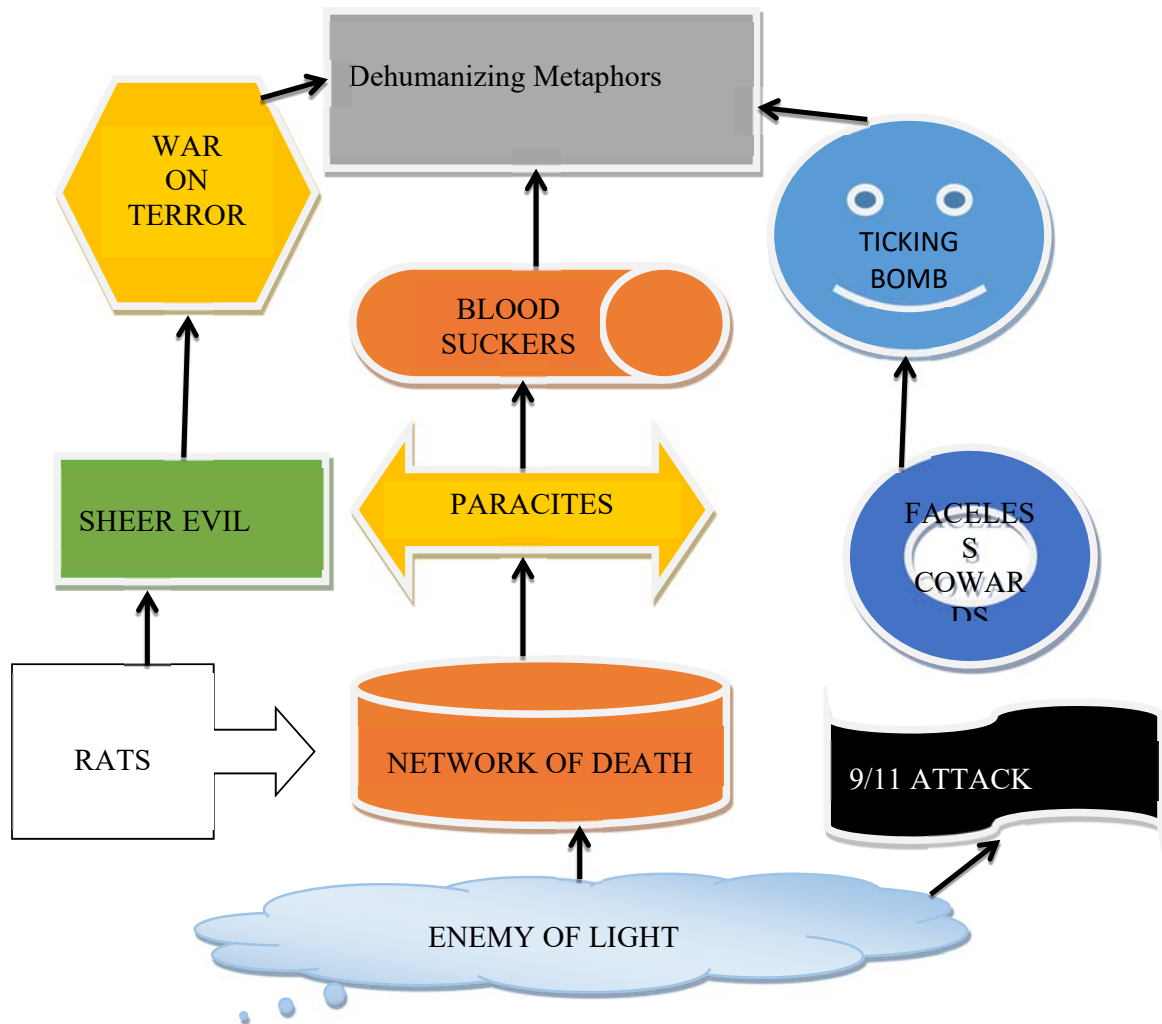
**Barbaric, Lazy, Irrational, Reserved, Miscellaneous Extracts**

seek to evaluate portrayals without considering how the audience reacts."

### *Method of Analysis*

Different variations of van Dijk's ideological square (1998) were found across the data. Only one half of the ideological square was actually employed in several passages, with the other half being inferred. It's possible that only a portion of the ideological square is fulfilled in a given text or situation; the in-group occasionally only cares about highlighting its own favourable traits, and other times, it wants to highlight how awful the Others are. Additionally, the in-group may occasionally only be interested in highlighting the bad traits of others while downplaying its own favourable traits. In some locations, the entire square is contained in a single sentence.

The reading was thorough at the micro level. The many sub-discourses that the author had attempted to generate were identified by repeatedly reading the data obtained by executing van Dijk's approach. Due to the fact that this activity included looking for patterns rather than imposing them, it was time-consuming and hard. The researcher appears to have more flexibility and objectivity with a pattern seeking approach to data analysis than with a pattern imposing technique, which forces the researcher to work within a rigid and constrained framework. Without using any criteria, the data was examined, and with each reading, patterns started to emerge. After efforts, the nature of the data produced various classifications. The classifications we categorized as the following:"



## Analysis of Metaphors

### 1. Metaphors of Fire

Depending on which feature the author chooses to emphasise, the source domain of fire might be rated favourably or negatively. Bush's speeches contain the conceptual metaphors TERRORISM IS FIRE and TIME TICKING BOMB, both of which have received poor evaluations.

The metaphor's above conceptualization emphasizes the fire's and the flames' destructive characteristics and connects them to terrorism's destructive characteristics. The enemy and the cause are being depicted as harsh. Terrorist ideology is portrayed as the spark that ignites strife and separation.

*"The developed world is uniting behind*

*America. They are aware that if this terror is not stopped, their own cities and people could be the next victims. Unchecked terrorism not only has the power to destroy structures, but it also poses a risk to the stability of legitimate governments. And we won't let it happen, you know that."* (Bush 57)

The TERRORISM IS FIRE rating was favourable. The ability of fire to raise the quality through its heat is a mental metaphor. In other words, as heat is linked to a method for scientifically purifying metals by the application of heat, it is a benefit of fire (Charters-Black, 2004). In the example below, Bush characterises the otherwise disparaging "flames of war" as a positive development that made American militaries even superior than before.

*“where we were and what we were doing, Some will carry memories of a face and a voice gone forever.” (Bush 58)*

When hardship of some form must be suffered for the sake of a larger benefit, this is comparable to the metaphors of construction or travel. However, George W. Bush's War on Terror rhetoric does not frequently use this favourable assessment of the fire. He used it to destroy the civilised world and completely eradicate wickedness. The usage of a ticking time bomb will burn everyone affected worldwide.

*“But stopping, eliminating, and destroying terrorism where it thrives is the only way to defeat it as a danger to our way of life”. (Bush 59)*

## 2. Metaphors from Nature

The natural world is an excellent source domain for this use because one of the goals of utilizing metaphors in speech is to “heighten the emotional intensity of abstract conceptions with reference to the familiar tangible entities”. (Charteris-Black, 2004, p. 103) The first conceptual metaphor, TERRORISM IS A WEED, conceptualizes the terrorist ideology in two different ways: as an undesirable weed and the terrorists as its growers. Bush compares the terrorists who sow the seeds of hatred and violence to “producers” of peace and justice in the first instance; in the second, he views extremist ideas as weeds that can and will take root, i.e. prosper:

*“We are not deceived by their pretenses to piety...They are the descendants of every homicidal ideology that emerged in the 20th century. They emulate fascism, Nazism, and totalitarianism by sacrificing human life to further their radical ideologies and by renunciation all other values except the drive to power. And they will continue down that road until it leads to history's unmarked tomb of discredited lies.” (Bush 60)*

Bush further adds that there are numerous factors contributing to the formation of the

terrorist ideology and that these factors must be addressed first before this ideology can be permanently destroyed. Bush once more used the conceptual metaphor TERRORISM IS A WEED to explain this fairly ethereal idea. In this instance, the fertile soil, which is being nurtured by the unresolved grievances that the terrorists exploit, is essential to this weed's flourishing.

*“The war has made it easy for terrorists to attract new members, who will inevitably spread this brutality. But in order to eradicate the environment from which they sprang, to ensure that everyone has a better future and a permanent sense of security, we must communicate to all of our children—including that little girl in fifth grade—that you have a place.”. (Bush 61))*

The idea of “TERRORISM IS A WEED” views terrorism as an unwelcomed weed rather than a carefully manicured plant. Because of this, it is imperative to permanently destroy the source of the problem in order to stop the spread of terrorism and its ideology:

*“But stopping, eliminating, and destroying terrorism where it thrives is the only way to defeat it as a danger to our way of life” (Bush 62)*

*“We do know one thing, though: whatever terrible purpose propelled these men to commit such heinous acts will not — cannot — succeed.” (Bush 63)*

Bush also likens the terrorists to predatory animals that go for and kill their prey. However, they simply exploit other people and nations for their own financial benefit; they do not do it to survive.

“All of the aforementioned associations with terrorist organizations that are used to justify counterterrorism action are then used. In the example that follows, Obama once more uses the analogy that “terrorists are wild animals,” which justifies hunting down and killing those who pose a threat to the US:”

*“Furthermore, I have stated unequivocally that we will track down*

*terrorists who pose a threat to our nation, no matter where they are”*

### **3. Human Beings Metaphors**

In Bush's War on Terror speech, metaphors with humans as the source domain are particularly prevalent. This widespread use is caused by the higher emotional response that results from associating a phenomenon with a specific individual. Once more, Bush makes a compelling case against these particular analogies. The two greatest important theoretical metaphors of this kind are **“COUNTRY as A PERSON, IDEAS as PEOPLE, FREEDOM ITSELF IS UNDERATTACK.”**

The President most frequently uses the conceptual metaphor COUNTRY AS A PERSON when speaking about the US. He links the nation to its residents, i.e., America is the people of America. This kind of metaphor is frequently used for two main reasons. First of all, it provides for a stronger emotional response when the populace perceives itself as America, which is battling terrorism, safeguarding the innocent, etc. Since people identify their own safety with the protection of the entire nation and view terrorist strikes against the US as personal attacks against them, a higher level of personal engagement thus enables the justification of stronger counterterrorism measures.

*“The evil people who committed this atrocity assaulted not just America but also the concept of America...”*

The next reason this metaphor is frequently used is that it reinforces the us vs. them (Americans vs. terrorists) division that upholds American ideals and, at the same time, prevents the propagation of terrorist doctrines within the US. The following passage from the examined speech serves as an example of how American values are elevated above foreign extremist beliefs.

*“And finally, just as America can never tolerate violence by extremists, we must never compromise on or lose sight of our values. Our country offered people who support Al Qaeda plenty of chances to*

*accede to justifiable demands. Our demands were reasonable and just. We just commanded: “Turn over al Qaeda.” Expel the terrorists from your country. Release the hostages you are holding in Afghanistan, including the innocent Americans and other foreign nationals, and demolish the terrorist training and support facilities for Al Qaeda. We also gave them plenty of time to respond. And they made the incorrect decision. They will now pay a price for making the wrong decision, and then.” (Bush 71)*

“This is a country that is determined to triumph. We must succeed, not just for you but also for future generations. President Bush’s use of a metaphor that has humanity as its foundation can be perceived negatively, as was already said.

In this case, a conceptual metaphor is present IDEA ARE PEOPLE. Ideas can live or struggle, be loving or nasty, care for others, and so on, just like individuals do. When referring to the ideology of the US and its allies, George Bush uses this metaphor and uses the words "life," "prosperity," and "love," all of which are highly regarded. An illustration of this type of metaphor is found in the passage that follows: Chris Steven's ideals will endure and flourish long after his passing since the optimistic outlook is eternal.

*“The lives Chris Stevens impacted and the tens of thousands of people who participated in the street protest against violence will ensure that Chris Stevens' legacy endures long after the murderers are brought to justice. From June 2012 through September 12, 2012, American lawyer John Christopher Stevens represented the United States as ambassador to Libya. Stevens was killed when Islamic terrorists stormed the American consulate in Benghazi, Libya, on September 11 and 12, 2012.”*

As opposed to that,, the terrorism ideology is frequently linked to notions of human life that are adversely regarded, such as death, disease, or

hatred. In the first instance, George Bush uses Osama bin Laden's demise and burial as evidence of the violent ideology's demise. The concepts of terrorism are not unalterable in comparison to the highly regarded US principles. In the second illustration, Bush argues that if the terrorist ideology encounters the Western positive philosophy, it will eventually lose its vigor and perish. Finishing along Obama's lines:

*"Osama bin Laden is gone,... he has laid to rest the notion that the only way for change to occur is through violence. (Obama) "*

*"If the ideology of ISIL, al Qaeda, or Boko Haram is consistently exposed, faced, and debunked in the light of day, it will wilt and die.." (Obama)*

It was still delivered in the same way and at the same times, but it didn't change. Their only beliefs are that there are two distinct blocks in this situation: civilized and uncivilized. If you don't support us, that means you oppose us.

### **Conclusion**

The killing and eradication of the opponent other in the War on Terror is seen to have become not only acceptable but also the ethical obligation of the people due to the constant use of dehumanizing metaphors like monster, insect, virus, evil, and cancer. According to their respective source domains, their War on Terror metaphors that were discovered in the evolved discourse throughout their individual tenure were grouped together. These metaphors' source domains, which are strongly tied to real-world experience, include conflict, morality, travel, buildings, light and dark, fire, nature, illness, violence, and people for the source domain of dehumanization. The author's attempt to forge a bond with the intended audience, in this case the American public, is indicated by the use of such universal themes. The utilization of the common source domains is also more likely to elicit an emotional response, which is crucial when discussing sensitive subjects like terrorism because any prospective actions under the War on Terror strategy need public support. The source domains in each of their metaphors are

also conceptually related to one another. One illustration of this is the fact that different conceptual metaphors can be grouped in accordance with the same aspect(s) of the source domain they stress. Typical examples from speeches by Bush and Blair include the metaphors from the morality, travel, building, and fire groups, which emphasize the worth of struggle and sacrifice in the process of attaining the goals. Another illustration is the conceptual link between metaphors from the groups of sickness, violence, conflict, fire, and nature, which emphasizes the destructive elements of the source domains used.

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