DOING BATTLE WITH A NOUN

NOTES ON THE GRAMMAR OF 'TERROR'

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Studies from a range of disciplinary perspectives have highlighted how the public rhetoric of the Bush administration has shaped the representation of the conflict which has followed 9/11. However, the literature in this area raises but does not itself address the question of how the administration's use of 'terror', 'terrorism' and 'terrorist(s)' contributes to this representation. This paper addresses the question by providing a preliminary analysis of how these terms participate in the grammar of twelve of George W. Bush's speeches since 9/11. Drawing on Systemic Functional Grammar, the analysis suggests that 'terror' has become interchangeable with 'terrorism' and 'terrorist(s)', resulting in the personification of 'terror' as an abstract agent. The implications of this construction are explored in relation to the literature on the rhetoric associated with the 'war on terror'.

INTRODUCTION

This paper was in part prompted by George W. Bush, who said on March 19th 2004 that 'the war on terror is not a figure of speech. It is an inescapable calling of our generation' (Bush 2004b).

The paper focuses on how 'terror' operates within 'figures of speech': specifically, it investigates the grammatical behaviour of 'terror', its 'grammatical biography', as it were, within the language of George W. Bush. In doing so, the paper seeks 1) to identify how the representation of 'terror' in these speeches draws on the lexico-grammatical system in patterned ways; 2) to show how these patterns evidence the interchangeability of 'terror', 'terrorism', and 'terrorist(s)' in the grammar; and 3) to suggest that this conflation has served the Bush administration by transforming 'terror' from an experienced sensation into an abstract agent.

The value of investigating the linguistic behaviour of these terms is captured by the following quote from an article by Butt et al. (2004: 286) which appeared in a special issue of the journal *Discourse & Society* that focused on language associated with 9/11:

Those about to wage war typically make offerings to gods. Yet the first spirit invoked is not that of Ares or Apollo; rather, those prosecuting wars – in particular, wars with distant battlegrounds – need the intervention of Hypnos and Morpheus, the gods of sleep and dreams. The anxieties of your own community must be laid to rest. The chief instrument in this laying to rest is the deployment of grammatical choices. For it is by grammar that the activities and motivations for war can be reconstrued so as to anticipate the concerns and prejudices of different groups in the nation state.

The quote reflects how, as Giddens et al. (1994: 3) have expressed it, ‘the meaningful character of human action is given above all by its saturation with language; and language is not a property of the individual but of the social collectivity’. More specifically, in drawing attention to language as a means of managing people against their own interests, the quote echoes central themes in the work of social theorists such as Giddens (1991, 1994), Bourdieu (1991, 1998), Foucault (1979, 1980) and Habermas (1984, 1987). From different social-theoretical standpoints, they explain how social order is increasingly produced and reproduced through forms of control which operate reflexively through discourse itself, undermining individuals’ autonomy by operating through the very practices by which they reproduce their social lives. These discourse-based forms of control are effective precisely because they can operate through taken-for-granted practices – the implication being that those individuals who stand to lose most from these changes are complicit in bringing them about. The value of examining the language associated with ‘terror’, then, is that this highlights just one way in which particular representations of the ‘war’ are promoted and our *own* language on the conflict is shaped.

THE LITERATURE

The public rhetoric of the Bush administration since 9/11 has been a focus in the non-linguistic and linguistic literature. Recurrent themes are that the language associated with the ‘war on terror’ has enabled the administration to represent the nature of the conflict to its own advantage, to create binary divisions between those who are for and against terrorism, to accrue to itself the capacity to decide the membership of each group,

and to forestall disagreement by identifying counter-arguments with support for terrorists. However, while these themes evidence the importance of 'terror', 'terrorism' and 'terrorist' to the Bush administration's representation of the conflict, there has been no specific focus to date on how the administration has employed these terms in concert within its public rhetoric.

In the non-linguistic literature, Makdisi (2002) has written that 'terrorism has been used in a calculatedly undefined and indefinite, rather than specific, way. It names not a specific Other, but a general and omnipresent threat' (p. 266) and that the 'the newly declared war ... offers a potentially permanent and global system of governance that – precisely like the spectre that it promises to eliminate – recognises no outsides, no externalities: you're either with us or you're against us' (p. 267). Similarly, Cronick (2002), in a hermeneutic study of speeches by President Bush and Osama bin Laden, has emphasised the dichotomising constructions of 'us' and 'them' that each promotes. Record (2003), in a strategic analysis of the Bush administration's response to the 9/11, has written of the 'definitional mire that surrounds terrorism' (p. 8) and that the lack of a clear definition of the phrase 'war on terror' increasingly obfuscates the reality of the international situation. Getler (2003) has identified the challenge of reporting on terrorism in a language which does not precast the report as biased. Gearty (2003) has argued that the notion of 'terrorism' increasingly includes those whom the Bush administration deems subversive, and Norton (2003) has examined how the names used to describe combatants on each side have favoured western interpretations of the conflict. Abuaisha (2003), in an examination of the ideologies promoted in post 9/11 speeches on the 'war on terror' given by George W. Bush, Paul Wolfowitz and Ariel Sharon, has argued that these construct an 'ideological consensus' (p. 65) which links and promotes the global interests of the U.S. and the local interests of the Israeli administration by enabling the 'tactical re-definition of terrorism, which effectively transforms victim into aggressor' (p. 71). Through this process, Abuaishi argues, the Bush administration 'has given Sharon the right to torture, kill, deprive, exile and exterminate Palestinians', while gaining the capacity to delineate on a global scale between those who are for and against terrorism. More broadly, Eckert (2005) has focussed on the reconceptualisation of citizenship and rights engendered by the 'war on terror', identifying how terrorism as a vague but 'omnipresent' threat has raised "suspicion" to a new importance as grounds for action', thereby undermining 'the presumption of innocence' (p. 5) and creating a binary of the innocent and the guilty.

The linguistic literature has also underscored these themes, but again there has not been a specific focus on the association between 'terror', 'terrorism' and 'terrorist(s)'. For example, McArthur (2002), in discussing the significance of neologisms such as 'war

on terror' in the aftermath of 9/11, suggested that the meaning of *terror* might turn out to be 'bin-Laden specific' and 'only of the kind that Muslim activists engage in' (p. 4), and added the hope 'that no distinctive spin will be imposed on *terror*, *terrorism* and *terrorist*' (p. 5). More recently, Lakoff (2005) has argued that the 'war frame' evoked by 'war on terror' has been carefully chosen to justify administration policy, shut down alternative views and distract from other issues, while 'terror', as an abstract noun, 'names not a nation or even a people, but an emotion and the acts that create it' (p. 1). Similarly, Leuder et al. (2004) have observed that George W. Bush, Tony Blair and Osama bin Laden have all employed membership categorisation devices which construct divisions between 'us' and 'them', thereby tending to reinforce conflict and forestall disagreement; and Rudd (2004) found that Bush's use of definite noun phrases also worked to forestall disagreement by imposing presupposed referents as if they were shared with the audience. Saraceni (2003), in a comparison of interviews and speeches by George W. Bush and Tony Blair, found that, in contrast to Tony Blair, the language used by George W. Bush was characterised by high epistemic modality and other features which 'leave no space for counter-arguments' (p. 5). Adding to this theme, Edwards (2004), taking a 'psychological and a linguistic perspective' (p. 156) to the events following 9/11, has traced how the promotion of 'both terror and patriotism' (p. 158) has systematically created divisions and the ground for war; and Butt et al. (2004), quoted above, in a Systemic Functional analysis of a speech by George W. Bush and that of a British commander just prior to his troops' engagement with Iraqi forces, emphasise the crafted divisiveness of the former's speech, which 'creates a category of opponent which is demonic by historical, ideological or religious association' (p. 287).

Studies have also compared linguistic features of speeches made by George W. Bush with those of past leaders in times of conflict. For example, Lazar and Lazar (2004) have compared George W. Bush's speeches with those of George Bush senior and Bill Clinton; Graham et al. (2004) have taken a longer historical view, starting with Pope Urban II (1095); and Ching (2003) has focused on a comparison with President Roosevelt's speech following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. These comparative studies underscore with historical precedence how, through their concerted use of linguist resources, leaders with a view to war have consistently construed 'no other interpretation or possibility of the reality being described' (Ching 2003:11). Moreover, these studies reinforce the common theme that the language associated with 'terror' has been crucial in enabling the current conflict to be promoted as a matter of binary divisions. The value of this representation as a way of instilling consent for war is captured by Lazar and Lazar (2004: 239), who observe that 'binarism is a useful hegemonic device' because it 'estab-

lishes as a political fact the existence of clear and specific threats' [by] 'fudging between these different kinds and degrees of threat, to constitute a largely undifferentiated enemy – an easy slippage from "they are different from us" to "they are all the same"'.

By examining how 'terror', 'terrorism' and 'terrorist(s)' have been associated within the public rhetoric of George W. Bush, the present study seeks to explore how their use has contributed to the themes identified in the literature and thereby shaped current representations of the conflict.

METHOD

DATA

The data set for the analysis comprises 12 speeches made by President Bush in the three years following 9/11 (see Table 1).

The 12 speeches were downloaded from the White House website. The rationale for selecting these data was that they are representative of the public rhetoric of the Bush administration following 9/11 and have been promoted by the administration itself through their inclusion on its website. It is therefore reasonable to assume that they have been crafted to reflect and promote its preferred representations of 9/11 and the events of the subsequent three years.

ANALYSIS

The aims of the analysis are to identify which grammatical options are taken for the word 'terror', to compare these with the options taken for 'terrorism' and 'terrorist(s)', and to explore how the grammatical roles occupied by the three terms contribute to particular representations of the enemy. To achieve these aims, the analysis focuses on

- how 'terror' behaves as a grammatical participant;
- how it is associated with 'terrorism' and 'terrorist(s)'; and
- in what relations.

1	2001, Sept 16	to journalists on the south lawn of the White House following 9/11 (Bush 2001a)
2	2001, Sept 20	to a joint session of Congress (Bush 2001b)
3	2002, Mar 11	to a gathering of dignitaries on the south lawn of the White House six months after 9/11 (Bush 2002)
4	2003, Mar 6	to journalists at a press conference held to discuss the situation in Iraq (Bush 2003a)
5	2003, Mar 19	to the nation announcing the first attacks against Iraq (Bush 2003b)
6	2003, May 1	from the USS Abraham Lincoln, announcing that major combat operations in Iraq have ended (Bush 2003c)
7	2003, Sept 7	to the nation defining Iraq as the 'central front' in the global war on terrorism and asking Congress for an additional \$87 billion to fund U.S. military operations (Bush 2003d)
8	2003, Sept 23	to United Nations General Assembly explaining the situation in Iraq and seeking support (Bush 2003e)
9	2003, Dec 14	to the nation on the capture of Saddam Hussein (Bush 2003f)
10	2004, Jan 20	State of the Union Address, focusing mainly on the situation in Iraq (Bush 2004a)
11	2004, Mar 19	to dignitaries in the East Room of the White House after the Madrid bombings (Bush 2004b)
12	2004, May 24	At the United States Army War College, focusing on the situation in Iraq (Bush 2004c)

Table 1 Speeches included in data

The grammatical framework employed in this analysis is Systemic Functional Grammar (Halliday 1978, 1985; Halliday and Hasan 1985). In Halliday's (1978) interpretation, language can be experienced as meaningful 'only when functioning in some environment' (p. 28) in what he calls a 'social semiotic' (p. 1ff.). This envisages language not so much as a set of rules, but rather as a system of meaningful options, in which multiple functions are discharged simultaneously by any instance of language use. In this grammar, even the most delicate selection in the system entails functional relationships between the language selected, the co-text, and relevant aspects of the 'context of situation' (p. 28).

Within Systemic Functional Grammar, the analysis draws on the 'transitivity' system (Halliday 1985, pp. 101ff.). This is the aspect of grammar which, according to Halliday (p. 101), serves 'as a means of representing patterns of experience' and thereby enables 'human beings to build a ... picture of reality'. The value of the transitivity system for

this study is that it provides a focus for investigating how ‘terror’ participates in concert with ‘terrorist(s)’ and ‘terrorism’ in representations of the world developed and promoted by the Bush administration.

PROCESS OF ANALYSIS

‘Winmax’ software was used to manage the analysis. It includes tools for managing data and developing coding systems. The analysis involved (1) identifying all examples of ‘terror’, (2) coding these examples according to the grammatical roles taken by ‘terror’, and (3) comparing the roles taken by ‘terror’ with the roles taken by ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorist(s)’.

SOME THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

A theoretical point that should be made here is that Systemic Functional Grammar does not take as its *starting point* the perspective on language often adopted in critically-oriented discourse analysis, in which language is understood as a medium through which social phenomena are created, and social identities and relations maintained in ways which typically perpetuate the interests of dominant groups (Hammersely 2001). While not excluding this perspective, which, following Halliday (1998), could be said to focus on the ‘language of power’, the entry point for the present study is what Halliday (1998) has called the ‘power of language’ – that is, the *resources* for making meaning which are available within a language system. The analysis of the presidential speeches thus foregrounds how a particular resource (the transitivity system) is drawn on in texts associated with a particular social practice (the giving of speeches by the President of the United States). As such, the speeches are subject to different perceptions, situated within particular institutional settings, and their production and interpretation shape and are shaped by particular micro and macro social conditions (Candlin 1997). In focusing on the grammar of terror, the analysis is intended to be preliminary: to provide a starting point for understanding how the linguistic behaviour of ‘terror’, in concert with ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorist(s)’, contributes to the production and reproduction of this broader context, and in doing so to invite social-theoretically oriented perspectives, exemplified by the work of Bourdieu, Foucault, Habermas and Giddens cited above.

THE USES OF 'TERROR'

There are 81 instances of 'terror' distributed fairly evenly across the speeches. The first instance occurs in the second speech, on September 20th 2001. There are none in the first speech, delivered on the South lawn, where there was the only example of 'crusade', followed by the first instance of 'war on terrorism' as a synonym for 'crusade'. At this early stage in the evolution of the administration's rhetoric, 'terror' had yet to emerge as a grammatical participant, so 'terror' and 'crusade' never met. It is, however, significant that in this first speech grammatical substitution had already appeared as a way of managing meanings associated with the conflict. Through the remaining 11 speeches the uses of 'terror' and its interchangeability with 'terrorism' and 'terrorist(s)' became established. In these speeches, 'terror' participates in the grammar in three ways, as

- actor
- goal; and
- participant in nominal groups.

Broadly the '*actor*' is the 'doer' in a clause (Halliday 1985: 102), the participant that brings about or initiates a particular 'process', what in traditional grammar would be called a verb. The notion of 'actor' here differs from the idea of the '*subject*' in traditional grammar, because 'subject' refers to an item which stands in a relationship of *agreement* with a verb: if an active structure is changed to a passive, the subject of the verb changes but the actor remains the same. There are three examples of 'terror' as actor:

1. The **terror** that targeted New York and Washington could next strike any center of civilization (Bush 2002).
2. Everywhere that freedom takes hold, **terror** will retreat (Bush 2003d).
3. **Terror**, unanswered, can not only bring down buildings, it can threaten the stability of legitimate governments (Bush 2003e).

In the first and last examples, 'terror' is the actor in processes which have material effects. In Systemic Functional Grammar these are termed material process because they 'express the notion that some entity "does" something – which may be done "to" some other entity' (Halliday 1985: 103). In each case, as the actor in a material process, 'terror' is represented as alone and of itself capable of bringing about the consequences. In the last example 'terror', as long as it remains 'unanswered', can cause both material and civil damage. Here there is the possibility that 'terror' is akin to a physical cause, regrettable

but perhaps inevitable, such as a hurricane or earthquake. However, in the first example the use of the process ‘targeted’ implies that ‘terror’ is discriminating in its effects; in other words, that it is more akin to those living entities to which we ascribe intentionality. It is the coupling of the conditional ‘could’ with the material process ‘strike’ in the main clause which connects this capacity for intentionality to the potential for destruction. In the second example, however, ‘terror’ is cast as the actor of the behavioural process ‘retreat’. While ‘freedom’ could certainly be said to have greater agency than ‘terror’ here, it is significant that in order to ‘retreat’ as freedom ‘takes hold’, ‘terror’ must be represented as an agent that is *capable* of behaving in this way. However, this still leaves open the question of intentionality because both natural phenomena and people may retreat. Together, then, these examples equivocate between representing ‘terror’ as something like a natural cause and as an entity which possesses a human-like capacity to cause intentional material and civil damage. In neither case is ‘terror’ represented as a mental phenomenon which is experienced by humans.

A similar pattern is evident in the four examples where ‘terror’ is the ‘goal’. The goal – in more standard terminology ‘patient’ – in the transitivity system is the ‘done to’ (Halliday 1985: 103); in other words, the participant in the clause that is directly affected by the process. In Systemic Functional Grammar, goals are particularly associated with material processes. In the four examples, ‘terror’ is represented as the goal of the material processes ‘track down’, ‘sponsor’, ‘defeat’ and ‘fight’:

1. We will come together to give law enforcement the additional tools it needs to **track down terror** here at home (Bush 2001b)
2. Here is what we already know: some states that **sponsor terror** are seeking or already possess weapons of mass destruction (Bush 2002).
3. And we must work together to **defeat terror** (Bush 2003a).
4. And all nations that **fight terror**, as if the lives of their own people depend on it, will earn the favorable judgment of history (Bush 2003e).

The point here is that ‘terror’ is cast as the goal in material processes – as something which can be sponsored, fought, and defeated. The implication is again that ‘terror’ is not a mental phenomenon but an agent against which there is an imperative to take action.

Finally, a ‘*nominal group*’ consists of a ‘*head*’ and ‘*modifier*’, a group of words preceding and/or following the head, whose meaning they may modify in a range of ways (Halliday 1985: 170). Nominal groups are particularly interesting because they allow only a restricted range of grammatical options within them, and exclude particularly the

grammar associated with processes and modality. There are 25 uses of ‘terror’ within nominal groups which include head nouns (underlined) and modifiers (in italics) that play a key role in the representation of the conflict. The number of times each occurs is included in brackets:

1. age of *terror* [2]
2. ally of *terror* [2]
3. appeal of *terror* [1]
4. fight between *civilization* and *terror* [1]
5. *global* terror [1]
6. *terror* network [7]
7. ideologies of *terror* [1]
8. margin for *terror* [1] [this may be a ‘mispeak’]
9. weapons of *mass murder* and *terror* [1]
10. weapons of *mass terror* [1]
11. weapons of *terror* [4]
12. terror armed with biological chemical or nuclear weapons [1]
13. offensive against *terror* [1]
14. support for *terror* [1]
15. *terror* camps [1]
16. camps of *terror* [2]
17. threat of *terror* [3]
18. ties to *terror* [1]
19. *type* of terror [1]
20. victims of *terror* [1]
21. war against *terror* [6]
22. war on *terror* [27]
23. campaign against *terror* [1]
24. coalition against *terror* [1]
25. exporter of *terror* [1]

As in the examples of actor and goal, as a participant in nominal groups the meaning of ‘terror’ is revised through a manipulation of its role in the grammar. The examples illustrate how the representation of the world through nominal groups can exclude the participants and processes by which events are actually brought about. As Norman Fairclough (1992: 179) has commented, this ‘has the effect of backgrounding the process

itself – its tense and modality are not indicated – and usually not specifying its participants, so that who is doing what to whom is left implicit’. This opacity is evident in the examples here which, with ‘terror’ operating primarily as a an element in the ‘modifier’ within the nominal group, consistently leave unsaid any human participants who might experience ‘terror’, the participants that might cause their ‘terror’, the consequences of which they might be terrified, and any questions of modality. This exclusion of the conditions under which ‘terror’ is experienced as a sensation enables ‘terror’ to be cast as an abstract entity whose existence does not depend on having anyone to experience it. It is in this guise that ‘terror’ operates within nominal groups that are central to the representation of the conflict.

THE INTERCHANGEABILITY OF ‘TERROR’, ‘TERRORISM’ AND ‘TERRORIST(S)’

In considering the significance of these patterns in the use of ‘terror’, it is important to remember that these are the *only* uses of ‘terror’ within the speeches. There is no ‘feeling of terror’, no ‘terror of’ anything, nothing which ‘terrifies’, and no-one who is ‘terrified’: there is only ‘terror’ as a participant in material processes, and in the nominal groups cited above, both of which abstract ‘terror’ from the world of mental phenomena. The striking grammatical consequence of these uses of ‘terror’ is the extent to which ‘terror’ becomes interchangeable with ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorist(s)’ in the grammar. This is not a trivial matter. It is characteristic of the language used in these speeches that ‘terror’ can occupy the same grammatical roles as ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorist(s)’: as an actor and goal of material processes and in nominal groups the grammatical behaviour of ‘terror’ mimics that of ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorist(s)’. The result is that ‘terror’ is not merely dissociated from those who might experience it: it is personified as an abstract agent which combines with ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorist(s)’ the capacity to bring down buildings, threaten freedom, be fought against, be defeated, supported and sponsored. There are numerous examples of parallel uses of the three terms across the speeches, including:

These **terrorists** **kill** not merely to end lives, but to disrupt and end a way of life (Bush 2001b).

By **attacking** coalition forces – by **targeting** innocent Iraqis and foreign civilians for murder – the terrorists are trying to weaken our will (Bush 2004b).

As the actor of the material processes ‘kill’, ‘attacking’ and ‘targeting’, the use of ‘terrorists’ here parallels the use of ‘terror’ as the actor of the material processes cited in the analysis above, including the use of the same process ‘target’. Further examples include:

We will call together freedom loving people to **fight terrorism** (Bush 2001a).

From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or **support terrorism** will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime (Bush 2001b).

The use of ‘terrorism’ as the goal of ‘fight’ echoes the same use of ‘terror’ cited above, as does the use of ‘terrorism’ as the goal of ‘support’. And later in the same speech, George W. Bush again uses ‘support’ in relation to ‘terrorists’, as well as using ‘terrorists’ in the nominal group ‘network of terrorists’, paralleling the nominal group ‘terror network’:

Our enemy is a radical **network of terrorists**, and every government that supports them (Bush 2001b).

And in the following example, the use of ‘terrorism’ as an element in the modifier within the nominal group replicates that of ‘terror’ in the nominal group ‘threat of terror’:

We are the nations that have recognized the **threat of terrorism**, and we are the nations that will defeat that threat (Bush 2004b).

The capacity of ‘terror’ to mimic the grammatical behaviour of ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorist(s)’ raises the question of how this use of ‘terror’ contributes to the representation of the enemy in the ‘war on terror’. I suggest that two points are salient to this question.

First, through their capacity to stand in for each other in the grammar, ‘terror’, ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorist(s)’ operate in concert to construe an enemy which can be represented in the guise of ‘terror’, ‘terrorism’ or ‘terrorist(s)’.

Second, through the manipulation of this potential, the enemy and its supporters can be identified not only with ‘terrorists’ and those who employ ‘terrorism’ as a strategy, but with those whom the Bush administration associates with ‘terror’, not as an experienced sensation, but as an abstract agent constructed by the Bush administration through the grammar of its own public rhetoric. This leaves the identification of the enemy and

its supporters as matters for the administration to decide, based not on antecedent criteria but on its own construction of ‘terror’.

The following four examples are typical of this use of ‘terror’ in the speeches. The first example is taken from a speech by George W. Bush to journalists on the situation in Iraq:

Iraq is a part of the **war on terror**. Iraq is a country that has got **terrorist ties**, it’s a country with wealth, it’s a country that **trains terrorists**, a country that could **arm terrorists**. And our fellow Americans must understand, in this **new war against terror**, that we not only must chase down **al Qaeda terrorists**, we must deal with weapons of mass destruction as well (Bush 2003a).

Here ‘terror’ occurs as an element in the modifier within the nominal groups ‘part of the war on terror’ and ‘new war on terror’, positions in which ‘terrorism’ or ‘terrorist(s)’ might also have occurred. However, the use of ‘war on terror’ rather than ‘war on terrorists’ here enables ‘the new war on terror’ to include not only a war against terrorists and their supporters, but also against those nations, such as Iraq, which are claimed to have ‘weapons of mass destruction’. Thus, through the identification of Iraq as ‘part of the war on terror’, Iraq and ‘al Qaeda terrorists’ are identified as exponents of ‘terror’. The binary division established by this grouping includes Iraq and al Qaeda on one side and, on the other, ‘our fellow Americans’ and ‘we’, who, engaged in the ‘new war against terror’, must not only ‘chase down al Qaeda terrorists’ but also ‘deal with weapons of mass destruction’ in Iraq.

The second example is from a speech to the United Nations General Assembly in which George W. Bush was explaining the situation in Iraq and seeking support:

Between these alternatives there is no neutral ground. All governments that **support terror** are complicit in a war against civilization. No government should ignore the **threat of terror**, because to look the other way gives **terrorists** the chance to regroup and recruit and prepare. And all nations that **fight terror**, as if the lives of their own people depend on it, will earn the favorable judgment of history (Bush 2003e).

Again, ‘terror’ appears in grammatical roles in which ‘terrorism’ or ‘terrorist(s)’ might also have occurred, as the goal of ‘supported’ and ‘fight’ and as an element within the modifier of ‘threat’ in a nominal group. However, ‘terrorists’ appears only as the benefi-

ciary of those governments who ‘ignore the threat of terror’. As in the first example, the use of ‘terror’ as an abstract agent enables not only ‘terrorists’ to be identified as the enemy, but also others to be identified as exponents of ‘terror’, including here ‘governments that ignore its threat’. Thus ‘governments that support terror’ and those that ignore its threat are aligned with ‘terrorists’ in a division in which there is ‘no neutral ground’ between them and ‘nations that fight terror’.

The final example is taken from George W. Bush’s speech following the Madrid bombings:

We believe in the values that uphold the dignity of life, tolerance, and freedom, and the right of conscience. And we know that this way of life is worth defending. There is no neutral ground – no neutral ground – in the **fight between civilization and terror**, because there is no neutral ground between good and evil, freedom and slavery, and life and death (Bush 2004b).

In this example, the distinction between ‘civilization and terror’ is central to the claim that there is ‘no neutral ground’ in the ‘fight’ between those identified with ‘this way of life’ and the abstract agent ‘terror’, its abstraction reinforced by its association with ‘evil’, ‘slavery’ and ‘death’.

In relation to the themes identified in the literature, these examples support the argument that the construction of ‘terror’ as an abstract agent provides the administration with a valuable resource with which to represent the conflict as a matter of binary divisions between those who are for and against the enemy, to decide the membership of each group, and thereby to identify dissenters with supporters of the enemy.

Specifically, the examples evidence how the Bush administration has used ‘terror’ to create an ‘omnipresent’ threat which enables divisions that ‘recognise no outsides, no externalities’ (Makdisi 2002: 266), dichotomises the relationship between ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Cronick 2002), and creates a binary division between the innocent and the guilty (Eckert 2005: 5). Moreover, the examples illustrate how the use of ‘terror’ facilitates what Lazar and Lazar (2004: 239), quoted above, have identified as the hegemonic role of binarism in instilling consent for war. In particular, the grammatical interchangeability of ‘terror’, ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorist(s)’ provides linguistic support for what Lazar and Lazar identify as ‘fudging between ... different kinds and degrees of threat’, and the resulting ‘undifferentiated enemy’ which, they argue, enables a binary division to be created between ‘us’ and ‘them’ aligns closely with the way in which ‘terror’ as an abstract agent

facilitates the Bush administration's identification of those who support and oppose the enemy.

CONCLUSION

In addressing the question of how the grammar of 'terror' operates in the public rhetoric of the Bush administration, I have argued that through its use of 'terror' as the actor and goal of material processes, and in nominal groups, the Bush administration has dissociated 'terror' from those who experience it. This transformation has been achieved through a process in which 'terror' has become interchangeable with 'terrorism' and 'terrorist(s)' in the grammar, resulting in the personification of 'terror' as an abstract agent. This use of 'terror' has served the Bush administration by constructing an omnipresent enemy which may be identified with anyone deemed by the administration to be an exponent of 'terror', a construction which has facilitated the creation of binary divisions between those who are for and against the enemy. In thus advancing the interests of the Bush administration through the grammatical manipulation of 'terror', this rhetoric provides an exemplification of the discourse-based forms of control observed by Giddens, Bourdieu, Foucault and Habermas. For its part, 'terror', personified as an abstract agent, exemplifies the 'demonic ... category of opponent' which Butt et al. (2004: 287) identify in the crafted divisiveness of the rhetoric of the Bush administration.

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