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# A call to arms at the End of History: A discourse-historical analysis of George W. Bush's declaration of war on terror

## Abstract

In this paper we take a discourse-historical approach to illustrate the significance of George W. Bush's (2001) declaration of a "war on terror". We present four exemplary "call to arms" speeches by Pope Urban II (1095), Queen Elizabeth I (1588), Adolf Hitler (1938) and George W. Bush (2001) to exemplify the structure, function, and historical significance of such texts in western societies over the last millennium. We identify four generic features that have endured in such texts throughout this period: (1) an appeal to a legitimate power source that is external to the orator, and which is presented as inherently good; (2) an appeal to the historical importance of the culture in which the discourse is situated; (3) the construction of a thoroughly evil Other; and, (4) an appeal for unification behind the legitimating external power source. We argue further that such texts typically appear in historical contexts characterised by deep crises in political legitimacy.

**Keywords:** Critical discourse analysis • terrorism • social dynamics • political discourse • warfare

## Introduction

Why, of course, the *people* don't want war ... . Why would some poor slob on a farm want to risk his life in a war when the best that he can get out of it is to come back to his farm in one piece. Naturally, the common people don't want war; neither in Russia nor in England nor in America, nor for that matter in Germany. That is understood. But, after all, it is the leaders of the country who determine the policy and it is always a simple matter to drag the people along, whether it is a democracy or a fascist dictatorship or a Parliament or a Communist dictatorship ... voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same way in any country. – **Hermann Goering, 1938 (cited in Gilbert, 1947: 278-279).**

Throughout history, political leaders have convinced millions of people to sacrifice their lives and the lives of others in warfare for some greater good or other. They do so firstly by means of discourse, regardless of whether or not political and physical coercion follows. The purpose of this paper is to show how such discourses have been generically structured throughout relatively recent history to achieve the ultimate in hortatory functions: the act of convincing people, *en masse*, to kill and to die on behalf of some cause or other.

The primary analytical focus of our paper is the significance of Bush's (2001) 'war on terror' address. To locate Bush's speech historically within the "call to arms" genre, and to identify the generic features of "call to arms" texts more generally, we gathered a corpus of 120 such texts from the past millennium. We present four of those as exemplars for detailed analysis: the speech at Clermont by Pope Urban II (1095)<sup>1</sup> launching the first crusade; the speech at Tilbury by Queen Elizabeth I (1588)<sup>2</sup> launching a war against the Spanish; the speech at the Reichstag by Adolf Hitler (1938)<sup>3</sup> prior to Germany's annexation of Austria; and the speech at

the Whitehouse by George W. Bush (2001) declaring a ‘war on terror’. These texts are not only exemplary of “call to arms” texts in general, they also share great significance in terms of their epochal character for western societies. Each oration occurred at periods which are recognised as historical turning points, and each contributed to significant epochal change, by which we mean fundamental change in social, political, and economic conditions across large geographical spaces, and over long periods of time.

Urban II spoke as both populations and commercial activity in Western Europe boomed after what has been (somewhat fallaciously) called an extended ‘dark ages’ (cf. Bloch, 1962; Graham and Hearn, 2000). Simultaneously, the tradition of ‘dynastic privilege’—the practice of dividing lands and authority evenly among male heirs—had unwound in favour of primogeniture, the practice of designating a single heir, thus inciting would-be aristocrats, ‘cramped for room’ in Western Europe, to conquer new lands to the East (Bloch, 1962: 295, 385-388). Elizabeth I makes her speech during a period of religious, political, and economic upheaval in England. Apart from Luther having ‘hurled his inkpot at the devil’ less than 60 years prior to Elizabeth’s speech, her gender alone was enough to spark a legitimacy crisis (Fakre, 1994). Elizabeth’s father (Henry VIII) established a Protestant kingship a mere four years after Luther announced his protestant radicalism. Henry thus united sacred and secular authority in Western Europe under one institution for the first time since Charlemagne (Graham and Hearn, 2000). The enclosures movement was also gathering momentum in England, and people were being dispossessed of their traditional land *en masse*—England was in radical transition at all levels. Hitler spoke during one of the most massive breakdowns in social and political cohesion in recent history. Neoclassical Capital had over-extended itself, and the whole developed world was

suffering the effects of a massive depression. Further, following the most destructive war the world had known (WWI), communism was on the rise throughout the world, threatening the institutional bastions of global capital. Hitler responded with an extreme nationalism and massively organised, “perfectly rational” mass murder on an unprecedented scale (Bullock, 1991).

Bush’s speech follows the (previously) unthinkable attacks on New York and Arlington, Virginia (the Pentagon) which are the subject of this special issue. He also speaks at a time of radical social, economic, and political upheaval. Following the sudden collapse of Sovietism, “globalisation”, now a fast-fading shibboleth, dominated economic and political discourses throughout the nineteen nineties. It denoted the de-nationalisation of economic activity in favour of a “global economy” based on rabid speculation and “dotcom” hype, and had apparently failed following the “tech wreck” of 2001 and the subsequent corporate governance scandals (Enron, Worldcom, K-Mart, HIH, United Airlines, etc) both in the US and elsewhere. Depression loomed. Throughout the “developed” world (i.e. OECD countries), political parties had lost their traditional constituencies, and extremist political parties were emerging to challenge the increasingly undifferentiated two-party systems common to most OECD countries (cf. Wodak, 2000; McKenna, 2000). Political cynicism was the order of the day. George W. Bush, so it is widely claimed, stole the 2000 election and was widely perceived as an illegitimate President installed by a politicised, partisan judiciary (Miller, 2002). The micro-historical context of Bush’s pre-911 Presidency was rife with legitimacy crises.

To situate Bush’s (2001) declaration of war in its macro-historical context, we firstly identify the generic features of “call to arms” texts from throughout the last millennium. The

most perennial of these are: (1) an appeal to a legitimate power source that is external to the orator and which is presented as inherently good; (2) an appeal to the historical importance of the culture in which the discourse is situated; (3) the construction of a thoroughly evil Other; and, (4) an appeal for unification behind the legitimating external power source. As with all the texts we examined, each represents an attempt at an extreme hortatory goal—to get people to lay down their lives for a particular cause external to their personal aims and interests. We identify how the features listed above are produced in each text in generic and historically specific ways, and how they function to achieve this powerful hortatory aim. We argue that such texts, while often posing as “revolutionary”, ostensibly function as reactionary forces to preserve the *status quo* of a particular group; they simultaneously—almost invariably—function to ultimately undermine the order which the reactionary force seeks to preserve.

### The generic nature of deadly exhortations and sociopolitical change

The “call to arms” is an enduring means by which leaders in crisis have drawn on the power dynamics of their social contexts to exhort “the masses” to kill and to die, simultaneously strengthening a leader’s hold on power whilst weakening the longer term position of their institutions in ‘the field of power’ (cf. Bourdieu, 1998; Saul, 1992). To show the significance of Bush’s (2001) call to arms against terror, we take a discourse-historical approach consonant with that described by Fairclough and Wodak (1997) in so far as we attempt ‘to integrate systematically all available background information in the analysis and interpretation of the many layers of a spoken or written text’ (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997: 266; cf. also Wodak and Meyers, 2001; Reisigl and Wodak, 2001). Specifically, we show how the ultimate in exhortatory functions has been typically, which is to say *generically*, achieved over time; the particularities

of such texts that have changed; how such generic similarities and particular differences are expressed in Bush's (2001) declaration of a 'war on terror'; and the historical character of Bush's speech.

The "call to arms" texts we are investigating here are clearly generic in so far as they are comprised of 'a common structure of functional units ... that is repeated again and again from text to text' and have a similar 'constituency structure in which each constituent plays a functional role in the whole and has specific functional meaning relations to the other constituents on its own level' (Lemke, 1998). Our analysis shows that over the period of our study the generic structure of "call to arms" discourses has not altered in any significant way. Such texts contain four similar and similarly powerful constituents: a legitimating power source external to the orator; the history (mythologically, world-historically, or otherwise conceived) of the social system in which the text is located; an evil and aberrant Other; and a unifying construct (religious, racial, political, philosophical, or nationalistic) that links members of the social system to the externally legitimating power source invoked by the orator.

By focusing on the particularities of each of these constituents in the four texts we present here, and of their relationship to the broader social system in which they were uttered, we foreground changes in the 'orders or discourse' over time in "western" societies (Fairclough, 1992: 68-69). The prevailing order of discourse is clearly a resource which political leaders draw upon to achieve the dramatic and ostensibly unnatural exhortations we focus upon here—the exhortation to kill and die for a cause external, and, practically by definition, antithetical to that of the individuals being asked to kill and die.<sup>4</sup> By focusing on the changing particularities of generic constituents in "call to arms" texts over the last millennium we necessarily expose the

changing orders of discourse at macro-social and macro-historical levels, as well as identifying the implications of such changes which can be described in terms of what Fairclough (1992: 70) calls ‘investment’:

If we apply the concept of investment here, we can say that elements, local orders of discourse, and societal orders of discourse are potentially experienced as contradictorily structured, and thereby open to having their existing political and ideological investments become the focus of contention in struggles to deinvest/reinvest them. (1992: 70)

The sociohistorical consequences of investing legitimate political power in a source (an unerringly abstract entity) external to the actual locus of power is bound to present people with a contradiction between their lived experience and the orders of discourse in which they are embedded, especially when the societal order of discourse reveals itself to be merely a tool of policy—a primarily political tool—which is drawn upon to bring about, or even explain, death on a mass scale. The following example provided by John Ralston Saul (1992) provides an analogy for the current (2003) period:

The Lisbon earthquake struck in 1755 and shattered the moral legitimacy of established power. It did to the psychic inviolability of the Church and absolute monarchs what the Vietnam war later did to that of the United States. This catastrophe, which killed indiscriminately thousands of children, women and men, poor and rich, seemed somehow to require an immediate explanation. The people of Europe asked themselves a collective Why? The Church and the constituted authorities couldn’t stop themselves from replying that God was punishing sinners. [...] The claim of divine retribution was obviously so ridiculous that, abruptly, people felt liberated from any obligation to believe anything the authorities said. In particular the Church discredited its power to give or to withhold moral sanction on the way people led their lives. (1993: 54)

Similarly it seems that the post-September 11 milieu presents the global political order, and the political philosophy of “democracy” touted by pro-war forces in the US and elsewhere, with increased challenges to its moral authority. As we write, *habeas corpus* has been suspended for



the first time in the United States since the civil war; the most basic of human rights outlined in the US constitution have been set aside under the so-called Patriot Acts; and the authority of the United Nations Security Council has been ignored as a US-led “coalition of the willing” invades Iraq in a war that is by many accounts illegal under international law, and utterly unpredictable in terms of its future consequences (Russow, 2003).

### Analysis: Generic elements of “call to arms” discourses and their variations over the last millennium

Each of the extracts we present in our analysis contain the key generic features of call to arms texts that we specify above. It should be emphasised, though, that these features were distilled from a much larger corpus of “call to arms” texts from throughout the millennium separating Pope Urban’s crusade from President George W. Bush’s. However, far more interesting than the generic features themselves are the kinds of changes that become apparent when we focus on the particularities of those features throughout history. Doing so directs us towards seeing the nature of changes in the particularities of generic constituencies over time and, consequently, towards seeing how changes in social, political, and economic formations are expressed in and changed by the most extreme political exhortations. Changes in generic particularities express changes the ‘societal order of discourse’ (Fairclough, 1992). For example, differences in the externally legitimating force drawn upon by Urban (who calls on God) and Elizabeth (who calls on God and Country) indicate an emergent nationalism that Hitler later invokes to achieve his political goals. Because the generic features of “call to arms” texts have remained fairly stable during the period we analyse here, historical changes become most evident in the generic particularities of the texts we present here. And it is these particularities that provide us with most insight into the significant social changes that have occurred over the time

of our study, and of the usefulness of this sort of analysis for doing so. The texts we present here are exemplary for their epochal character. Each marks and prefigures a dramatic change in the social, economic, and political character of the context in which it is uttered. Pope Urban's speech marks the beginning of 'second age' feudalism (Bloch, 1962: 345-354). Elizabeth's speech marks the waning of feudalism and the emergence of national consciousness, a mercantilist world economy, the emergence of private property; and the strengthening of institutionalised Protestantism (cf. Mun, 1664; Questier, 1997). Hitler's speech marks the triumph of corporatism and nationalism in the West (Saul, 1992); and Bush's marks the emergence of changes that have yet to be either fully understood or described.

*Appeals to legitimating power source(s) external to the orator*

In call to arms texts, the orator typically appeals to a source (or sources) of power external to them in order to legitimate their exhortations. The external power source, in every case, is the ultimate moral force within the societal order of discourse of the day. In a theologically determined moral universe, the word of God is also the ultimate political source of morality. Pope Urban II makes the following appeal in his speech to the Church's Council at Clermont-Ferrand:

[1] Most beloved brethren, today is manifest in you what the Lord says in the Gospel, 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them'; for unless God had been present in your spirits, all of you would not have uttered the same cry; since, although the cry issued from numerous mouths, yet the origin of the cry is one. Therefore I say to you that God, who implanted is in your breasts, has drawn it forth from you. Let that then be your war cry in combats, because it is given to you by God. When an armed attack is made upon the enemy, this one cry be raised by all the soldiers of God: 'It is the will of God! It is the will of God!' [*Deus vult! Deus vult!*] [...] Whoever, therefore, shall determine upon this holy pilgrimage, and shall make his vow to God to that effect, and shall offer himself to him for sacrifice, as a living victim,

holy and acceptable to God, shall wear the sign of the cross of the Lord on his forehead or on his breast. When, indeed, he shall return from his journey, having fulfilled his vow, let him place the cross on his back between his shoulders. Thus shall ye, indeed, by this twofold action, fulfil the precept of the Lord, as he commands in the Gospel, 'he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me'.

In text [1] Urban II quite clearly states—over and over—that the crusade he is calling for is not of his willing but is the will of God. Even the words which each crusader should cry out whilst killing his enemy are God's words, originating from God, given by God, implanted by God in the breast of each crusader and drawn forth by God. The crusader is a sacrifice, a living victim offering himself, as did Christ, in fulfilment of divine will and Biblical destiny, and in order to be considered worthy in respect of the ultimate moral voice of the day. It is worth noting here that there is an *individual* responsibility implied—based on the relationship between a person and their God—as the basis for taking up arms in the name of God.

Urban's speech was, functionally speaking, a resounding success. He successfully launched the Crusades which lasted, according to most historians, for almost 200 years (1291 is the usual end date for the crusades), but continued “unofficially” until at least the sixteenth century if not later (Braudel, 1987/1993: 309-312). Urban's righteous rhetoric, though, hid the political and economic problems underpinning his “call to arms”. The main aims of Urban's crusade were threefold: to consolidate his position as the diplomatic leader of the warring lay monarchies in Western Europe by uniting them behind a common and sacred purpose (the reclamation of the “Holy Land”); to open up avenues for Italian traders in the Eastern Mediterranean; and to recruit members to the Church through the promise of an adventurous and penitentiary pilgrimage (Bloch, 1962: 295-296). While the crusades themselves were disastrous in humanitarian terms, resulting in the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of people and

enduring religious schisms and antagonisms, they initiated fundamental changes in Christian and Islamic societies, the effects of which are still being expressed. These include the ultimate decline of formal feudalism, an end to political and intellectual isolation in Western Europe, the unification and strengthening of the European monarchies, the growth of maritime commerce, and intense religious intolerance (Braudel, 1987/1993: 309).

A little under 500 years after Urban's speech at Clermont, Elizabeth I was embroiled in multiple crises of authority and legitimacy based on issues of gender, religion, and economic upheaval (Manning, 1971; Marx, 1976: 880-882). Owing primarily to the actions of her father, the legitimacy of the Roman Church was significantly diminished in England (cf. Manning, 1971). Of course religion remained an important force to the people Elizabeth was trying to inspire. Her father's actions had increased the potential power of the monarchy in England by consolidating the power of Church and Commonwealth in a single person: the Monarch. From Charlemagne onwards, the concept of "divine right" monarchy became a force in Europe politics (Bernier, 1992: 106). By the twelfth century, the monarchy and the papacy stood in inverse, almost symmetrical, and mutually defining relationships with each other. While the Pope is the temporal representative of God on earth, the monarch is 'the "representative" of the Commonwealth. He is 'the minister of the common interest ... and bears the public person' (John of Salisbury, 1159/1909, in Dickinson, 1926: 309). In the formal and 'conscious feudalism' of the twelfth century, the monarch is the personification of a geographically defined community, while the Pope personifies God's spiritual reign over the whole of humanity (Dickinson, 1926: 308). By the sixteenth century, centuries of struggle between church and state resulted in Henry VIII's fusion of these historical powers in the midst of a rising wave of

Protestantism throughout Western European (Braudel, 1987/1993: 346-351). Protestantism is of course not and never has been a “unified church”. Its historical significance in respect of this paper is best described by Weber (1919/1991):

Luther relieved the individual of the ethical responsibility for war and transferred it to the authorities. To obey the authorities other than in matters other than those of faith could never constitute guilt. Calvinism in turn knew principled violence as a means of defending the faith; thus Calvinism knew the crusade, which was for Islam an element of life from the beginning. (Weber, 1919/1991: 124)

By combining the authority of a relatively “loose” Protestantism (which still bears a close resemblance to its Roman Catholic forebear) with that of the Monarchy, Elizabeth is able to fuse the nascent nationalism of the sixteenth century with waning feudal attitudes to religious affairs. Consequently Elizabeth appeals to numerous external sources of power in order to gain her desired result:

[2] I am come amongst you at this time, not as for my recreation or sport, but being resolved, in the midst and heat of the battle, to live or die amongst you all; to lay down, for my God, and for my kingdom, and for my people, my honour and my blood, even the dust. [...] we shall shortly have a famous victory over the enemies of my God, of my kingdom and of my people.

In text [2] we see clear evidence of hybridity in the external source of legitimacy: the omnibus fusion of my God, my kingdom, my people, my honour and my blood, and even the dust are the external sources of legitimacy for Elizabeth’s “call to arms”. As such, she fuses the moral values of a fading feudalism (honour and kingliness), a redefined Catholic (Protestant) theology (my God), with those of a fast-developing sense of race and place (blood and dust) (de Santillana and von Dechend, 1962/1999: 64-65) which would later become the bases of fully-blown nationalism.

By the 20th century, especially after the breakup of the Austro-Hungarian empire into newly-defined nations following WWI, the nation-state became the supreme source of legitimate power (Potter, 1962). Hitler and the Nazis elevated the propagation of nationalist sentiment based on race and place to an art form, and nearly all of Nazi propaganda appeals to a race-based nationalism of the German people to justify the political and social reality of the Third Reich. Note in the following text [3] the relations Hitler creates between the German nation, the German Reich, and the German people:

[3] The German people is no warlike nation. It is a soldierly one which means it does not want a war but does not fear it. It loves peace, but it also loves its honour and freedom.

The new Reich shall belong to no class, no profession, but to the German people. It shall help the people find an easier road in this world. It shall help them in making their lot a happier one. Party, state, armed forces, economics are institutions and functions which can only be estimated as a means toward an end. They will be judged by history according to the services they render toward this goal. Their purpose, however, is to serve the people.

I now pray to God that he will bless in the years to come our work, our deeds, our foresight, our resolve; that the almighty may protect us from both arrogance and cowardly servility, that he may help us find the right way which he has laid down for the German people and that he may always give us courage to do the right thing and never to falter or weaken before any power or any danger.

Long live Germany and the German people!

In text [3] we see the totality of German institutions subsumed under a conception of nationalist socialism. Party, state, armed forces, economics are means to an end, namely the future happiness of the German people. We also see the continuation of hybridity in external sources of power. God has clearly taken a second place to nationalism—while Hitler's almighty God rates a mention, this God is not of the main legitimating force for aggression. That place is clearly

occupied by the German nation, which in text [3] is presented as being identical to the German people. Hitler achieves this through a grammatical “sleight of hand”, so to speak, by nominalising the German people as a singular entity and deploying a ‘Carrier^Attribute’ construction (Halliday, 1994: 120-122): The German people <Carrier> [is] *no warlike nation* <Attribute>. By presenting the German people as a singular entity and negatively assigning “it” the Attributes of a warlike nation, and by ambiguous use of the pronoun “it” in the following sentences, an implicit (if not grammatical) identity is drawn between the German people and the German nation. This helps Hitler present the nation as a Carrier with anthropomorphic Attributes: It <Carrier> [is] *a soldierly one* <Attribute>. The nation is further anthropomorphised and begins having desires, feelings, inclinations, and self-knowledge: *it does not want a war; but does not fear it. It loves peace, but it also loves its honour and freedom*. Hitler’s externally legitimating force is a race-based conception of the German people and also, through the relationships he creates between German people, the German nation, and the Reich, the basis of his political “vision”.<sup>5</sup>

Now it should be understood that by the twentieth century, especially after WWI, Hitler’s legitimacy crisis is not primarily one which has its basis *in* national issues, although these provide him with much political ammunition. Rather, with the emergence of the League of Nations following WWI, political legitimacy becomes an *international* issue:

[3a] All those colonial empires [French, British, Dutch, Belgian] have not come into being through plebiscites. They are today naturally integral parts of the states in question and form, as such, part of that world order which always has been designated to us, especially by democratic policies, as the "world order of right." That right the League of Nations now has been ordered to protect. I cannot understand why a nation which itself has been robbed by force should join such illustrious company, and I cannot permit the conclusion to be drawn that we should not be prepared to fight for the principles of justice just because we are not in the League of Nations. On

the contrary, we do not belong to the League of Nations, because we believe that it is not an institution of justice but an institution for defending the interests of Versailles.

Hitler is clearly addressing two audiences in order to justify claims for German expansion and defend against the perceived illegitimacy of his proposed Reich: world opinion, especially that within the League of Nations, and German public opinion. He addresses his international legitimacy crisis by decrying the League of Nation's legitimacy, which he claims has its *raison d'être* in the ongoing oppression of German people. He addresses his national audience by providing a powerful, unifying image of the future in which the German people are the primary beneficiaries of every organ (state, commercial, military, etc) comprising German society.

The speech given by George W. Bush five days after the September 11 terrorist attacks, demonstrates the continued dominance of the nation-state as the primary source of legitimate political power at the turn of the twenty first century. Prior to the September 11 attacks, Bush, like Urban II, Elizabeth I, and Hitler, suffered from a crisis of legitimacy. In his case, the source of controversy was the questionable outcome of the 2000 Presidential election in the US, a failing economy, corporate scandals and embarrassing evidence of related political corruption, and the strong taint of primogeniture which clung to him as the result of him ruling in the shadow of his father's former regime (Miller, 2002). Bush's speech, aimed at encouraging American citizens to support his impending "war on terror", clearly appeals to nationalistic sentiments:

[4] We're a great nation. We're a nation of resolve. We're a nation that can't be cowed by evil-doers. I've got great faith in the American people. If the American people had seen what I had seen in New York City, you'd have great faith, too. You'd have faith in the hard work of the rescuers; you'd have great faith because of the desire for people to do what's right for America; you'd have great faith because of the compassion and love that our fellow Americans are showing each other in times of need.



Here, the identity of people and nation is presumed, and the national anthropomorph emerges immediately: We <Carrier> [are] *a great nation* <Attribute>. We <Carrier> [are] *a nation of resolve* <Attribute>, *a nation that can't be cowed by evil-doers* <Attribute>. Faith becomes a matter of believing in the nation itself—‘one nation under God’, as the pledge of allegiance has it.

### Hybridity of legitimate power sources over time

The specific nature of external legitimate power in the West has clearly changed over the period of our study. At end of the 11th century, the dominant source of external legitimate power in Western European society was a Christian God, as represented on earth by the Church and embodied by the Pope (Bernier, 1992). By the sixteenth century, both the Church and the Nation-State were seen equally as legitimate power sources (Dickinson, 1926: 308). By the twentieth century, the post-Enlightenment, democratic Nation-State had arisen as the primary source of legitimate power, following the alleged “death of God” in the late nineteenth century (Nietzsche, 1974). Despite well-evidenced claims that in the twenty first century global corporations have usurped the power of the Nation-State, Bush’s appeal to American nationalism would seem to suggest that the Nation-State is still the most important legitimating source of external power.

While our analysis so far shows that appeals to a legitimating source of power external to a political figure is a perennial and generic feature of discourses that successfully achieve the function of getting people to kill and die *en masse*, the particularities of those power sources have undoubtedly changed over time. Further, despite ambitious claims regarding the “Death of God” (Nietzsche, 1974) and the “End of History” (Fukuyama, 1993), it is clear that the external

power sources—from appeals to God to Monarchy to Nation-State to ultra-nationalist sentiment to the assumed moral superiority of two-party democracies—have not simply supplanted one another throughout history; they have been successively layered, one upon the other, to produce the discourse that Bush instantiates:

[4a] Today, millions of Americans mourned and prayed, and tomorrow we go back to work. Today, people from all walks of life gave thanks for the heroes; they mourn the dead; they ask for God's good graces on the families who mourn, and tomorrow the good people of America go back to their shops, their fields, American factories, and go back to work. [...] This is a new kind of – a new kind of evil. And we understand. And the American people are beginning to understand. This crusade, this war on terrorism is going to take a while.

With the words in text [4a], Bush conflates a millennium of external sources of legitimacy: by drawing on discourses of nationalism, heroism, and a national work ethic; by drawing on the authority and support of God; by aligning God with the nation-state; and, finally, by announcing a national crusade against a new kind of evil, Bush demonstrates that a successful contemporary response to a crisis in political legitimacy—exacerbated by an unprecedented attack upon his nation—draws upon the totality of a thousand years of history. Hence, Bush is, at the same time, making ultra-nationalist appeals and exercising royal prerogative while being hailed as ‘God’s President’ by the Christian Right (Conason, 2002).

### *Appeals to History*

Each text we present here draws connections between the exhortations being voiced and the popular historical consciousness of the audience. This would appear to be an essential element of extreme hortatory discourses. For an audience to understand what the orator is persuading them to do, it must be linked to popular perceptions of what has previously occurred within their social system (Halliday, 1993).

To achieve the link between the situation in 1095 and the historical context of the Franks, Urban II called on the revered figures and events in Frankish history:

[1b] Let the deeds of your ancestors encourage you and incite your minds to manly achievements: the greatness of King Charlemagne, and of his son Louis, and of your other monarchs, who have destroyed the kingdoms of the Turks and have extended the sway of Church over lands previously possessed by the pagan.

In text [1b] Urban calls upon 300 years of Frankish history and Carolingian mythology to exhort the population to attack the Middle-East. Charlemagne was crowned on Christmas Day, 800 AD, and his rule was considered somewhat of a renaissance for Frankish culture (Bloch, 1962: 182). Christendom and French aristocracy were united under a single personage, and Western Europe was united and at peace, however briefly.

Elizabeth also makes a connection to historical mythology to aid in the hortatory objectives of her call to arms. Apart from the general legitimacy crisis brought about by the frictions between church and state, she was a female monarch, which was almost unprecedented in the social system in which she was located (Waddington, 1993). It was therefore essential for the success of her oration at Tilbury that she link herself with the “kingly” past to which Britons were unquestionably accustomed:

[2a] I know I have but the body of a weak and feeble woman; but I have the heart of a king, and of a king of England, too; and think foul scorn that Parma or Spain, or any prince of Europe, should dare to invade the borders of my realms: to which, rather than any dishonour should grow by me, I myself will take up arms; I myself will be your general, judge, and rewarder of every one of your virtues in the field.

The ideational content of Elizabeth’s text [2a] is clearly feudal in its historical underpinnings.

She deploys a rhetorical feint by representing her physical appearance as that of a weak and feeble woman, making an apparent weakness the basis of a powerful intertextual realignment of

her “unseen” self, her heart, with the male hierarchy of Britain’s feudal elite. She becomes, through her kingly spirit, and through history, king, judge, general, and the personal patron who will dispense the spoils of war.

The historical mythology of Germanic, or more specifically Teutonic, nationalism was essential to the success of Hitler and the Nazis. It enabled their rise to power, and formed the basis of the ethnic folk mythology that gave spiritual force to their political and social programs (Bullock, 1991: 343-344). In text [3b] Hitler uses Germanic mythology to legitimate the annexation program he was about to begin:

[3b] There are more than ten million Germans in states adjoining Germany which before 1866 were joined to the bulk of the German nation by a national link. Until 1918 they fought in the Great War shoulder to shoulder but were prevented by peace treaties from uniting with the Reich.

[...]

Poland respects the national conditions in the free city of Danzig and Germany respects Polish rights. Now I turn to Austria. It is not only the same people but above all a long communal history and culture which bind together the Reich and Austria.

Hitler builds solidarity based on shared history and culture, and upon the folk-heroics of past military glories. Here, being German is not a matter of nationality. It is, rather, a matter of race, culture, and language. The communal character of Germanic history is an intertextual appeal to a very deep, pre-feudal, tribal mythology, which Hitler and Goebbels exercised to produce the ‘exhilaration’ felt by those who took part in the public spectacles organised by the Nazis, ‘submerging their personal identities in the reborn *Volksgemeinschaft*, the all embracing “togetherness” of the ethnic community personified in the myth figure of Adolph Hitler’ (Bullock, 1991: 343).

Bush's appeal to US historical mythology is somewhat more shallow, perhaps because of the shorter social life of the US as a nation in comparison to European nations, perhaps because of the media-based aspects of its historical mythology (Postman, 1985). Bush appeals to his audience's historical understanding of the nature of modern warfare, foregrounding "Hollywood" imagery of US involvement in WWII, and other pop culture ideals:

[4b] The American people are used to a conflict where there was a beachhead or a desert to cross or known military targets. That may occur. [...]

I also have faith in our military. And we have got a job to do – just like the farmers and ranchers and business owners and factory workers have a job to do. My administration has a job to do, and we're going to do it. [...]

We'll still be the best farmers and ranchers in the world. We're still the most innovative entrepreneurs in the world.

It is worth noting that the jungles of Vietnam have been removed from this US pantheon of popular mythology. From the Iwo Jima beachhead and the desert of El Alemein, to the "Wild West" of farmers, ranchers (and, implicitly, sheriffs and outlaws), to entrepreneurial business owners and their (now predominantly foreign-based) factory workers, to the US administration, Bush presents the US as a nation of workers who get the job done and do it better than anybody else. Representations of historical mythologies—pop histories—are clearly as much a reflection of the societies in which they are presented as they are a resource for successfully producing exhortations to war. They reflect the orders of discourse within a society whilst changing them. The appropriation of popular mythology for the purposes of promoting warfare and the production of mass culture have been closely linked in the US since 1917 (Graham and Luke, in press).

## *Constructing the Evil Other*

Another perennial feature of calls to arms texts is, not surprisingly, the construction of an evil Other who must be wiped from the face of the Earth. How this is done in historically specific ways also reflects the ‘societal order of discourse’ of the day (Fairclough, 1992). The evil Other is tied closely to the externally legitimating source of power mentioned above. For Urban, Othering is a matter of appeal to religious attitudes:

[1c] From the confines of Jerusalem and from the city of Constantinople a grievous report has gone forth and has repeatedly been brought to our ears; namely, that a race from the kingdom of the Persians, an accursed race, a race wholly alienated from God, a generation that set not their heart aright and whose spirit was not steadfast with God, violently invaded the lands of those Christians and has depopulated them by pillage and fire. They have led away a part of the captives into their own country, and a part they have killed by cruel tortures. They have either destroyed the churches of God or appropriated them for the rites of their own religion.

Here we see perennial generic features mixed with specifics organised according to the societal order of discourse: an accursed race has invaded the Holy land and removed people by pillage and fire, killed them by cruel tortures, destroyed churches or defiled them by conducting the rites of an alien religion within their sacred confines. The evil Other is primarily evil because it is hostile to followers of the One True God.

Elizabeth produces an omnibus evil, drawing on the emergent, if not largely established, consciousness of private property in England, and of the emergent Protestant religion which she embodies. Her enemies are therefore ‘the enemies of my God, of my kingdom, and of my people’. An emergent national consciousness, as well as a proprietorial attitude towards land, is

also evident when Elizabeth thinks ‘foul scorn that Parma or Spain, or any prince of Europe, should dare to invade the borders of my realms’.

While Hitler’s construction of numerous evil Others is well documented and needs little elaboration here, it is worth noting the following passage:

[3c] ... if we had acted during these five years like the democratic world citizens of Soviet Russia, that is, like those of the Jewish race, we would not have succeeded in making out of a Germany which was in the deepest material collapse a country of material order. For this very reason we claim the right to surround our work with that protection which renders it impossible for criminal elements or for the insane to disturb it.

Whoever disturbs this mission is the enemy of the people, whether he pursues his aim as a Bolshevik democrat, a revolutionary terrorist, or a reactionary dreamer. In such a time of necessity those who act in the name of God are not those who, citing Bible quotations, wander idly about the country and spend the day partly doing nothing and partly criticizing the work of others; but those whose prayers take the highest form of uniting man with his God, that is, the form of work.

Jews, communists, lunatics, criminals, terrorists, reactionaries, critical scholars, aberrant theological types—all are opposed to the highest form of prayer, of uniting man with his God: work. In many senses, by constructing a negative form of aberrance to define evil, that is, by identifying the evil Others as those who are either *not* German (Aryan) or *not* supportive of the Reich, Hitler’s program of demonisation is all the more powerful because it creates an evil Other category that potentially includes everybody, any person and, indeed, any ideas that can be defined as dissent.

Bush’s evil Other strategy is somewhat similar to Hitler’s in its potential scope. The following excerpts in [4c] comprise the description of Bush’s evil Other and its collective counterpart a few days after September 11:

[4c] We're a nation that can't be cowed by evil-doers.

We will rid the world of the evil-doers. We will call together freedom loving people to fight terrorism [...]

...we're facing a new kind of enemy, somebody so barbaric that they would fly airplanes into buildings full of innocent people. [...]

The governors and mayors are alert that evil folks still lurk out there. [...]

No one could have conceivably imagined suicide bombers *burrowing* into our society and then emerging all in the same day to fly their aircraft - fly U.S. aircraft into buildings full of innocent people ... This is a ... a new kind of evil. And we understand. And the American people are beginning to understand. This crusade, this war on terrorism is going to take awhile. [...]

... the prime suspect's organization is in a lot of countries - it's a widespread organization based upon one thing: terrorizing. They *can't stand* freedom; they *hate* what America stands for. [...]

That's why I say to the American people we've never seen this kind of evil before. But the evil-doers have never seen the American people in action before, either - and they're about to find out.

Bush's is a very elastic definition of an evil Other: evil-doers, terrorists, suicide bombers; barbaric, evil people who burrow their way into society and lurk in order to kill innocent people. They do so because they can't stand freedom and hate what America stands for. They are not anti-Christ; they are anti-American, and that is their ultimately defining feature. They live in many countries and have no uniting feature other than their terrorizing objectives. But Bush pledges to rid the world of evil-doers. Of course, his crusade, his war on terror by freedom loving people will take a while, as well it may.

The elasticity of Bush's evil Other definition lies primarily in the pejoratives evil and terrorism, and in the negative relationship that the evil Other has in respect of what America



stands for. Bush expands the number of these plastic abstractions and fills them with specificities later in the post-September 11 political milieu, eventually turning September 11 into a world-historical *opportunity* to reshape the entirety of human affairs. At the West Point graduation ceremony of June 2002, he notes concerns about his political approach and, more particularly, about the language he uses to express his enthusiasm for this new opportunity:

Some worry that it is somehow undiplomatic or impolite to speak the language of right and wrong. I disagree. Different circumstances require different methods, but not different moralities. Moral truth is the same in every culture, in every time, and in every place. Targeting innocent civilians for murder is always and everywhere wrong. Brutality against women is always and everywhere wrong. There can be no neutrality between justice and cruelty, between the innocent and the guilty. We are in a conflict between good and evil, and America will call evil by its name. By confronting evil and lawless regimes, we do not create a problem, we reveal a problem. And we will lead the world in opposing it.

As we defend the peace, we also have an historic opportunity to preserve the peace. We have our best chance since the rise of the nation state in the 17th century to build a world where the great powers compete in peace instead of prepare for war. (Bush, 2002)

The worst of acts has suddenly become the best of chances! Yet the already-enacted “Homeland Security” and “Patriot” Acts allow unprecedented powers to detain, interrogate, conduct surveillance upon, and search people suspected of terrorism; vest responsibility in the Secretary of State and US Attorney General to continually redefine what constitutes an act of terrorism; suspends *habeas corpus*; and potentially includes protests and other acts of public dissidence as falling under the definition of terrorism (Congress of the United States of America, 2001). The currently proposed “Patriot Act II” goes further, creating 15 new death penalties for acts that intentionally or unintentionally cause death, and declaring martial law (Congress of the United States of America, 2003). Bush’s devil, like his definition of evil, as it has been said before, is in the detail.

*Uniting behind the greater good*

The final generic feature of call to arms texts that we identify here is an appeal for unified action under the external legitimating force. Again, a focus on the historical particularities of this generic feature reveals the changing orders of discourse since Urban. Urban deploys a retribution strategy in his attempt to unite the Franks under Christ to fight the Crusades. He does so in such a way as to offer the Franks an ultimatum. Urban identifies the penalties that will be incurred for those who make excuses for not joining the crusade:

[1d] Let none of your possessions retain you, nor solicitude for your family affairs. For this land which you inhabit, shut in on all sides by the seas and surrounded by the mountain peaks, is too narrow for your large population; nor does it abound in wealth; and it furnishes scarcely food enough for its cultivators. Hence it is that you murder and devour one another, that you wage war, and that very many among you perish in intestine strife.

Elizabeth again deploys a hybrid appeal to feudal and mercantile rewards, a “booty” based redistribution strategy, albeit without the promise of heaven. She promises her soldiers earthly rewards for their participation in the war against Spain:

[2c] I know already, by your forwardness, that you have deserved rewards and crowns; and we do assure you, on the word of a prince, they shall be duly paid you.

Hitler adopts a more contemporary political utopian strategy, explaining how the Nazi’s policies will create a unified, utopian nation-state, one that reflects the widespread socialist hopes of the day and the “Socialist” part of the Nazi Party’s name (National Socialist Party):

[3d] The new Reich shall belong to no class, no profession, but to the German people. It shall help the people find an easier road in this world. It shall help them in making their lot a happier one. Party, state, armed forces, economics are institutions and functions which can only be estimated as a means toward an end. They will be judged by history according to the services they render toward this goal. Their purpose, however, is to serve.

Bush uses an omnibus, though clearly individualistic, self-centred appeal that fuses faith in God, State, and people with his utopian vision of future peace and promises for retribution:

[4d] On this day of faith, I've never had more faith in America than I have right now. And the American people must be patient. I'm going to be patient. But I can assure the American people I am determined, I'm not going to be distracted, I will keep my focus to make sure that not only are these brought to justice, but anybody who's been associated will be brought to justice. Those who harbor terrorists will be brought to justice. It is time for us to win the first war of the 21st century decisively, so that our children and our grandchildren can live peacefully into the 21st century.

As with particular external sources of legitimate power, the method of appealing for unity behind a particular source has changed and compounded over the period of our study. This reflects a change in the societal order of discourse, as well as indicating the increasing speed at which such orders are changing and being reinvested with new meaning.

### Neither conclusive nor final: On the role of discourse and discourse analysts in an age of globalised “terror”

At the functional-theoretical level, we can clearly see that the generic features of call to arms texts have changed little over the last millennium. Seen at the level of discourse, or more specifically, Fairclough's (1992) conception of 'the societal order of discourse', the particularities of such texts have changed to both reflect and significantly affect the changing orders of discourse at macro-social, -economic, and -political levels. By drawing on the authority of God, Urban's successful call to arms helped significantly to bring about the political decline of western theological institutions—but not without greatly extending their power in the first instance, and for many centuries to come. Elizabeth is an epochal figure in English history; the triumphs of her era are legendary, and they sowed the seeds of what was to become the British

Empire. Yet a mere 50 years passed before Parliament, their influence severely deteriorated by Elizabeth, ordered the execution of her Great nephew, Charles I. Shortly thereafter, Cromwell's Commonwealth was announced. Hitler's reign was brief and brutal. It ultimately destroyed the last vestiges of Empire associated with the various *ancien regimes* of Europe. The oppressive institutions and symbols of the Third Reich, if not fascism *tout court*, disappeared with him—at least for a time (cf. Saul, 1997). George W. Bush, whilst asserting the unequalled military power of the US in an explicit bid to reshape the world in the mythological image of the US, is clearly endangering the institutions upon which US mythology is based.

Of course it is one thing to identify and critically analyse the features and importance of the genre we present here, to situate Bush's "call to arms" within a genre that extends into history for far more than a single millennium, and to identify the epoch-making and epoch-marking potential of such texts. It is entirely another matter to intervene in any positive way or with any great effect. However, in the context of a world that is unravelling into an ever more violent, oppressive, and chaotic "global village" of misery and murder; in which weapons and wars proliferate while the institutions of mass media provide a smooth, homogeneous sheen to proceedings, however gruesome and murderous; in which "democracy", "peace", and "freedom" are trumpeted as rationales for mass murder carried out against the will of citizenries, and without the legal sanction of "the international community"; in which language, images, and media are a significant part of the weaponry of mass destruction—the question for discourse analysts, applied linguists, and the like is this: what do we do? Halliday (1993: 63) has long since drawn the connection between 'discourse, dollars, and death', yet we find ourselves confronted once again involved in a campaign of organised killings, backed and instigated by discourse and

dollars. We would like to think, though, that knowledge of how successful exhortations for people to kill and die have been structured over the last millennium might translate at some level into knowledge of how to successfully exhort people to live, understand, and progress socially in increasingly humane ways.

Martin and Rose (2003) suggest that the challenge for discourse analysis is to show how emancipation, as well as domination, is achieved through discourse; that an analytical focus on ‘hegemony’ must be balanced with a focus on discourses of empowerment—discourses designed to ‘make peace, not war’, that successfully ‘redistribute power without necessarily struggling against it’ (2003: 264; cf Martin, 1999); and that analysis needs to move away from ‘demonology’ and ‘deconstruction’ towards the design of ‘constructive’ discourse (Martin, in press). These are certainly important considerations for the theory and practice of discourse analysis. At least as important to our mind are clear understandings of macro-social, -cultural, and -economic changes, all of which can be seen quite clearly from a discourse-historical perspective—in a process of historical *reconstruction*—to grasp human history as a seamless, unbroken whole. It has become clear that in what is called “a global knowledge economy”, meanings and their mediations perform increasingly important and overt political-economic functions (cf. Graham, 2002; Fairclough and Graham, 2002). The sole social function of academics is, and always has been, ‘to influence discourse’ (David Rooney, personal correspondence)—that is all we can do as academics, whether through teaching, writing, or through the manifold arts of activism. Feudalism was tied to land and militarism; mercantilism was tied to gold and mercenary armies; capitalism was tied to ownership of productive apparatus and imperialism; corporatism is tied to the ownership of legal fictions—money, corporations,

and intellectual property—and ‘information warfare’, all of which are products of discourse (Graham, 2002). Each of these developments—each stage in the ‘phylogenesis’ of western economic systems (Martin, 2003: 266)—has tended towards an increasing reliance on abstract-discursive rather than brute-physical coercion in the maintenance of inequalities.

The current political economic system, as transitional as it may be, is undoubtedly the most discourse- and media-reliant system in history, precisely because of its size and the high levels of abstraction that both support it and constitute the bulk of its commodities (Graham, 2000). Understanding this means understanding the importance and potential of discursive interventions. The Pentagon’s ‘Total Information Awareness’ program fully recognises this (DARPA, 2003). Similarly, whichever group perpetrated the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon also fully recognised it: the attacks were directed at symbolic centres of a globally hegemonic system and were designed specifically for their mass media impact. Merely exposing facts and breaking silences (as per Chomsky and Pilger) is not enough either; the current malaise is primarily axiological (values-based). Discursive interventions at the axiological level are necessary in the policy field, in the multiple fields of mass media, and in every local field. Ours is a discourse-based global society, a discourse-based global economy, and a discourse-based global culture. Consequently, humanity has never been so close to realising our ‘species-being’ (Marx, 1844/1975: ch 4)—our universal humanity—whilst simultaneously being so close to achieving self-annihilation. Discursive interventions will necessarily be decisive in the outcome between these two paths.

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A call to arms at the End of History: A discourse historical analysis  
of George W. Bush's declaration of "war on terror"

Revised Manuscript for *Discourse & Society*  
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<sup>1</sup> We are using the ‘Robert the Monk’ version of Urban’s speech. It was written in Latin by Robert, somewhere between 6 and 25 years after the event (Munro, 1906: 231). Dana Munro (1895) provides the English translation which is most widely used. Munro points out that ‘there are several versions of [Urban’s] speech, but it cannot be proved that any one of them was written until ... years after the Council’ (1906: 231). Munro concludes that while it is ‘impossible to determine what the pope actually said’, there is ‘a remarkable agreement’ among the various reporters of the speech and that, consequently, ‘it is possible to ascertain the subjects which the pope discussed’ (1906: 231-232). One aspect of Robert’s account that makes it most widely accepted in contemporary historiography is that, of the five authors whose reports of Urban’s speech are considered most important, Robert is the only person who was definitely at the event (Munro, 1906: 232). All five major reports of the speech are available from the Mediaeval Sourcebook (Hallsall, Ed) at: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/urban2-5vers.html>

<sup>2</sup> The text of this speech is of less contentious origin and accuracy than that of Urban’s, with the four most authoritative reports of it displaying relatively minor variations (Green, 1997: 443-444). The spelling has been translated into modern English, and the content of the version we present here is attributed to Dr Leonel Sharpe (1664, in Green, 1997). Sharpe’s version is the most widely accepted today. A copy can be found on the BBC Radio website at [http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/history/elizabethan\\_echoes/quotes.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/history/elizabethan_echoes/quotes.shtml).

<sup>3</sup> The text of Hitler’s speech we present here is from an ‘authorized English translation’ published by the Nazi government at that time (Baynes, 1969: 1376 footnote 2). Baynes is not terribly impressed with the quality of the translation in parts, saying that it sometimes ‘renders the German text so oddly as to be virtually a falsification of the original’ (1969: 1376). One of the key mistakes in translation that Baynes identifies in the several passages he has ‘slightly modified’ is the oscillation between ‘the people’ (*das völkische*), the ‘German nation’ (*Volk*), ‘national character’ (*deutschen germanischen Charakter*), and the ‘State-form’ of all these (which Baynes appears to take as

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Hitler's meaning of *Reich*). The significance of this oscillation is something that emerged in our analysis in any case (see p. 14). We have chosen to use the authorised translation here precisely because it was authorised by Hitler's government.

<sup>4</sup> It is a most tragic and mistaken consciousness that assumes warfare is “natural”, which is to say *essential*, to the human condition, despite its enduring presence in recorded history. Nor should warfare be confused with random acts of violence, such as domestic violence. The total absence of rationally organised violence in allegedly “backward” societies, of mechanised violence that we understand and recognise as modern “warfare”, is well documented by anthropologists such as Malinowski (1941).

<sup>5</sup> Baynes (1969: 1377) points out that Hitler's examination of German history led him to see ‘the rise of a new ideal—that of the people as such’. This quote is from Baynes' translation of the speech by Hitler and is part of the material he considers to be botched in the authorised translation (1969: 1376-7). Interestingly, Baynes's (1969) translation of this extract more closely resembles post 9-11 discourses by Bush, including the text presented for analysis here. Here is Baynes's translation of text extract [3]:

The German people in its whole character is not warlike, but rather soldierly, that is, while they do not want war, they are not frightened by the thoughts of it. They love peace, but they love honour and their freedom just as much' (Baynes, 1969: 1409).

This new Reich shall belong to no class, it shall belong to no one group of men, for it shall belong to the whole German people. This Reich will endeavour to make it easier for the German people to find a path of life on this earth; it will seek to fashion for it a fairer existence. What I have called into life in these years is cannot claim to be an end in itself – all can and will be transient. For us the permanent element is that substance of flesh and blood which we call the German people. Party, state, army, economic organization – these are but institutions and functions which have only the value of a means to an end. They will be weighed in the balance by the judgement of history according to the measure in which they have served that end, and that end is again and always the people (1969: 429)

Baynes separates the speech into sections according to topic, and the 1000 pages that separates these two sections of the same speech are, respectively, under the heads “foreign policy” and “constitution”. See also note 3 for a discussion of the translation.