Bachelor Thesis

Iraq: a War of Words?

How the Bush administration made its case for the 2003 Iraq invasion

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Introduction

When the Bush administration in 2003 decided to go to war and pursue regime change in Iraq, the invasion was supported with bipartisan support and a high percentage of the population found the war justified as well (percentages shifted between 50-70% in 2002). Adding to that the action got support from a 'coalition of the willing' composed of 48 different nations. However, if we look back at the war in the present day we see one of the most disastrous foreign policy decisions of the 21st century. Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) were not found and there was no trace of any links between the Iraq regime and Al-Qaida operatives responsible for the 11 September attacks. After Bush gave his famous 'mission accomplished' speech on the tarmac of an aircraft carrier it was not foreseen that the United States had drawn itself in a conflict which would go on for years, cost billions of dollars and would cost thousands of lives. When the United States withdrew their troops in 2011, it left a war torn and lawless country, which had become a hotbed for insurgency and militant Islam.

How can it be that the United States, with its strong democratic and constitutional institutions that supposedly produce intensive checks and balances, went to war with overwhelming congressional and public support? This research tries to give an insight into how the Bush administration tried to legitimate the war and what factors were important in this process.

The central research question posed in this thesis is the following: *Looking at the legitimation of the 2003 Iraq invasion, what were the dominant factors of influence that made this legitimation possible?*

As theoretical angle of approach a specific interpretation of constructivism is used. This approach focuses on the use of rhetoric's in a legitimation strategy. This research follows this kind of analysis in order to make sense of the legitimation process of the Iraq war but also explorers further, and goes into particular events, specific individuals and other factors of influence. By giving a comprehensive insight into the legitimation effort by the Bush administration this research puts the posed theoretical framework to the test and concludes if this approach is able to give a conclusive explanation regarding the legitimation of the Iraq war.

Theoretical framework

The academic practice of International Relations (IR) offers a wide variety of approaches, theories and schools of thinking in order to make sense of a constantly becoming more complex world. There are the classical theories like realism, liberalism and their neo- variants. On the other side of the spectrum, we have the critical theories like Marxism and post-colonial interpretations of the world. Another theory that got a significant foot on the ground over the last decades and will be used in this research is the theory of constructivism. The approach and its core scholars like Alexander Wendt and Martha Finnemore regard the coming to be of social phenomena as the result of human interaction. People interpret the world around them based on their perception of the world, which is based on earlier interpretations and social-historical context. From this follows that constructivists reject the idea of objective entities inside a researched context, and argue that entities are given meaning through interpretation and interaction. If we research this interaction, we can successfully dissect the coming to be of specific social phenomena in the field of International relations (Berg-Schlosser & Badie, 2011, p.421).

In his article Relational Constructivism: A War of Words Jackson (2013) draws up a constructivist model, which he uses to interpret the legitimation process of the 2003 Iraq war. Whereas the most common forms of constructivism mainly focus on the construction of '*norms'* and '*rules'* in the researched social context, relational constructivism focuses on the mechanism of *legitimation* (Jackson, 2013, p.154*)*. Jackson argues that the focus on rhetorical strategies in the contest around legitimation of a particular policy idea is vital if we want to dissect the coming to be of this particular policy. Speech and rhetoric are thus the most important unit of analysis in this approach. Logically from this follows that relational constructivists focus on the actions of individuals within a specific actor in the context of international relations, for instance the 'United States', 'Iraq' or the 'United Nations'. The analytical approach does not believe in the acting of a state or international organization in the way realists and liberals for instance do. Relational constructivism takes a strong *agency* position in the well-known *agent-structure* debate, one of the central theoretical discussions in political and social theory. Relational constructivism believes that the actions of the state are the result of social attribution from individuals within the state (Jackson, 2013, p.155). When these individuals speak and act in the name of the state, they do this only as a bearer of the authority of the state and not as an individual person. This means the carrier of this authority constantly has to legitimate the actions taken to those who are affected by these actions. This constant process of legitimation

and the social attribution that follows from this process shape the parameters that set out to what extend the actor can act and to what extend his actions are deemed legitimate. The legitimation process of actions thus shapes the actor itself. This means that social actors are not just simply the takers of the actions in question, their authority and responsibility has to be continually negotiated and sustained in its practice and this effects the very nature of the actor (Jackson, 2013, pp.155-156). If we dissect this process of legitimation relational constructivists argue, we get a useful insight on the coming to be of specific policies and actions taken in the sphere of international relations.

So how is this process of legitimation successful? Jackson (2013) argues that if an actor wants to legitimate its actions successfully, it has to make use of specific *rhetorical commonplaces* present in society that are connected to the desired policy objective. Rhetorical commonplaces are concepts that are deeply embedded in the way of thinking of the relevant audience and are concepts they use to make sense of and organize the social context in which they live. Examples of those commonplaces are for instance concepts like *liberty* and *terrorism* (Jackson, 2013, p.156). While these concepts are certainly broad and open to diverse interpretation, they are undoubtedly incorporated in the way of thinking of Americans. The idea of Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness an idea that is nurtured throughout the American society and if this notion is used in a rhetorical argument, it is more likely that this argument finds fertile ground. The same goes for terrorism, while this commonplace is relatively new comparted to liberty, it is a concept that snuck deeply into the way we think about our present society, and cannot be overlooked when looking at the post 9/11 world. An argument becomes much stronger when it is connected to such a commonplace. For example: arguing for regime change in Iraq because Saddam is not complying with international treaties regarding WMDs is a much harder case to make compared to calling for his removal because he intends to use his WMD program to support terrorism, oppress his population and threatens the safety and liberty of people around the world.

Rhetorical strategies as put above come in many forms but generally adopt the following order of rhetorical linkage: the characterization of the object of policy, in this case Iraq, a course of action (regime change) and the identity of the actor taking action towards the object. This identity can be connected to certain commonplaces but also to other actors and collectivities useful in the argument. Notions like these can include *humanity, the civilized world* and even celestial actors like *God.* A notorious example of such a linkage can be found in Bush's 2003 state of the Union. He states, "The liberty we prize is not America's gift to the world; it is God's

gift to humanity". In which he implicitly connects US promotion of liberty worldwide (in the context of bringing about democratic regimes) to the higher and sacred will of God (Jackson, 2013, p.156). When a legitimation strategy uses those rhetorical commonplaces and linkage strategies, the chance of success thus increases drastically.

According to Jackson (2013), the legitimation strategy used by the Bush administration relied on two pillars of commonplaces. He draws this conclusion mostly based on speech analysis of Bush's 2002 UN Security Council speech. He argues that this address shines a light on every facet of the legitimation campaign. The first narrative Jackson argues is based around the idea of US exceptionalism in the defense of liberty. Jackson calls this pillar "Re-Versioned US Exceptionalism". The second stream of discourse fuels from the events of 9/11 and the terrorism narrative. This second pillar is titled "Terrorism" as "Uncivilized". To understand these pillars better and in order to use them in our analysis both pillars need some further theoretical and historical elaboration.

The first pillar focuses on exceptionalism: the use of universal values as a justification for extraordinary state action in order to promote or defend those values. Historically US exceptionalism was centered on the idea that the United States had to keep itself clean from European balance of power politics and should keep away from dangerous "entangling alliances" as George Washington put it. This way of practicing foreign policy kept away from formal intergovernmental commitments and hoped that the world would form itself towards the US example (Jackson, 2003, p.161). This way of thinking about international relations would be dominant in US foreign policy until the start of the Second World War. It was then when the US started to take part in firm multilateral efforts. First in the alliance of "civilized'' powers that opposed the "barbarism" of Nazi Germany and after that as the leader of the "Western Civilization" in the bipolar context of the Cold War, opposing the "The East" and the threat of Communism (Jackson, 2003, pp.161-162). In the context of the Cold War, the notion of US exceptionalism lost its prominence in US foreign policy and was replaced by the "Cold War consensus". This consensus was based on the ideas that the US was part of a larger community that could contain Communism and that a bipolar world with balanced powers was better than all-out war in order to eradicate the Soviet Union (Jackson, 2013, p.162). However, there was a small but influential group of hawkish conservatives that were dissatisfied with the new foreign policy direction the US was going. The group, better known as *neoconservatives* would overtime successfully shift the policy paradigm back to US exceptionalism together with ideas like unilateral military action and pre-emptive intervention. Instrumental in this process would

be future Bush administration officials like Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz and Eliot Abrams. The ideas they preached were concepts that were already present in US strategic culture but had lost their prominence over time. The concepts where cleverly reinvigorated by the neoconservatives who had an extensive network of organizations, think thanks, magazines and policy entrepreneurs in influential places (Jackson, 2013, p.162). The above disquisition shows that the commonplace of US exceptionalism was not a new idea pushed by the Bush administration in order to justify the exceptional action towards the 'threat' of Saddam Hussein but was in fact cleverly reinvented and based on ideas that had always been present in US strategic culture.

The second pillar posed by Jackson (2013), "Terrorism" as "Uncivilized" can be seen as a merger between two commonplaces. First, we have the "Terrorism" discourse, which is inseparable from the 9/11 attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon. The terrorist attacks would change the US forever and are a deeply imbedded national trauma. The attacks would be the prelude for the invasion of Afghanistan, the war in Iraq and the broader 'War on Terrorism'. In the legitimation strategy of those policy initiatives 9/11 became one of the most important rhetorical tools for the Bush administration. With the occurrence of events with impact like these two things have to be separated: first, there are the material facts of the attacks like the fact that this attack was the first attack on the American homeland since Pearl Harbor and that almost 3000 people lost their lives that day. Secondly, there is the *meaning* that such an event has in terms of social and political context. Such a meaning has to be 'fixed' through the concurrence of strategic deployments of rhetorical commonplaces. If such a meaning is established, future reference to the event directly inserts those commonplaces into the argument. And if one tries to contest these commonplaces, one would be contesting the meaning of the event itself, which considering the emotional gravity around an event like 9/11 would be politically undesirable (Jackson, 2013, p.163). To put it simple: if the president, considering his authority on subjects like national security, connects Saddam to support for Islamic terrorism and someone opposes this view, it is not hard to argue that this person is 'soft' on terrorism and does not want to catch the perpetrators of 9/11. This argument may explain the virtual absence of a vigorous public and political debate about the threat Saddam actually posed and if it was appropriate to remove him with military force. Furthermore, the 9/11 attack and the newly established terrorism discourse were not only framed as a threat to the United States but as a peril against civilized humanity as a whole. As Bush put it: "[…] this is the world's fight. This is civilizations fight. This is the fight of all who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance

and freedom.'' (Bush, 2001) With such reasoning everybody that goes against the extraordinary measures the US wants to take in their actions against terrorism places themselves outside the bounds of human civilization because the US was acting on behalf of this community. Something that also becomes clear from the famous 'either with us or with the terrorists' statement Bush made (Jackson 2003, p.164).

Jackson argues that the strategical use the two rhetorical pillars explained above made the 2003 invasion of Iraq possible (Jackson, 2013, p.166). This research wants to put Jackson's conclusion under a more extensive review and therefore uses it as hypothesis: *The fundament of the strategy used by the Bush administration to legitimate the 2003 invasion of Iraq depended on the strategical use of the rhetorical commonplaces "Re-Versioned US Exceptionalism" and "Terrorism" as "Uncivilized".* In order to put this hypothesis to the test a thorough historical review of the events leading up to the war is composed. The analysis will feature speech analysis but will also go more in depth into specific events, actors and other factors that were instrumental in the legitimation process. In the end, we hope to give a clear insight into this process of legitimation, the use of the two rhetorical pillars in the legitimation and conclude if Jackson´s relational constructivist framework is able to give a conclusive explanation of the legitimation attempts in the run-up to the Iraq war.

Legitimizing the Iraq war

When President Bush assumed office in 2001, Iraq was something that almost immediately came on the agenda of the newly sworn in leadership of the United States. As soon as January 30, the issue was discussed during a meeting between Bush and his National Security Council. Logically of course, Bush had made several statements during his run for president that he would take a tougher stance on the issue of Iraq and specifically its leader: Saddam Hussein (Gauss, 2009, p.188). However, there is no clear indication that the idea of invasion was on the table at that moment. Moreover, Bush states in his memoirs that during the first eight months of his administration he believed that the Iraqi problem could be solved through the policy of containment (Bush, 2011, pp.228 - 229). However, the desire for regime change was an idea that was nurtured by a substantial group of people inside the administration. Since the end of the First Gulf war, there were numerous neoconservative intellectuals and think tanks calling for the removal of Saddam. The most notable is the Project for the New American Century. This collective published an open letter directed at President Clinton in 1998 and called for the removal of Saddam Hussein in a newspaper. Eighteen influential thinkers of which eleven would be future Bush administration officials signed the letter. Among them were Donald Rumsfeld (Secretary of Defense) and his Undersecretary Paul Wolfowitz, Eliot Abrams (National Security Council staff member covering the Middle East) and John Bolton who was Undersecretary of State (Flibbert, 2007, p.334).

While this group of neoconservative hardliners was influential, they were counterbalanced by a group of officials who were more preserved about foreign intervention and regime change in Iraq. This group was led by Secretary of State Colin Powell who was known for his 'Powell Doctrine', a set of rules that conditioned the use of American force abroad. In his vision, American military action should only be taken if a vital national security interest is at stake, with a clear military victory in sight and with decisive international, public and congressional support (Gauss, 2009, p.186). It was clear to see that at that moment intervention in Iraq did not fit that picture. On his side was Condoleezza Rice, Bush's National Security Advisor. In her view, states like Iraq lived on borrowed time and therefore there was no need to panic about them and give them too much attention (Gauss, 2009, p.187). From this division of ideas on the Iraqi question followed a bureaucratic battle between the leadership at the Pentagon and the State Department that would be go on for a few months and where Colin Powell would come out largely on top. The President himself favored the road of diplomacy and multilateral action, instead of the unilateral military intervention where the neoconservatives were pushing for.

However, no action was taken and there was no serious attempt in policymaking (Gauss, 2009, p.187).

This changed on 11 September 2001. It was then that Bush, among other cabinet members went from an inconclusive standpoint on Iraq towards a more hardline and arguably more neoconservative mindset. A few days later Bush was quoted during a National Security Council meeting: "I believe Iraq was involved, but I'm not going to strike them now. I do not have evidence at this point." The same day the President gave the order for the invasion of Afghanistan together with a directive that ordered the beginning of explorations of the military options in Iraq (Gauss, 2009, p.191). The events of 9/11 where painful for the administration as they did not have terrorism from groups like Al-Qaida high on their policy agenda before the attacks, but had been warned by CIA director George Tenet about the possibility of Islamist terrorism plots against the United States (Woodward, 2004, p.24). Either way, the 'War on Terror' had started, Special Forces started with the preparation for the invasion of Afghanistan and hardliners saw their chance.

While the desire of the removal of Saddam was already in place by a substantial part of Bush's cabinet, the rationale for this was mostly his alleged possession of weapons mass destruction (WMDs) and not the link between Islamic terrorism and the regime. However, it took not long for this link to be constructed. Important in the coming to be of this link was the anthrax scare, which started a week after 9/11 and would go on until mid-October 2001. During this time multiple media outlets and offices of U.S senators were targeted with envelops laced with anthrax, killing five people (Gauss, 2009, p.191). After the scare, Bush and his cabinet was briefed by director Tenet: the CIA believed that there was a *possibility* that Al-Qaida would be able to obtain WMDs and use them for an attack against the United States. Adding to that, the intelligence service believed that Iraq was the most apparent state that *could* assist Al-Qaida with this (Gauss, 2009, p.191).

While the CIA briefing by Tenet was instrumental in creating the new terrorism-WMD nexus it was not enough for the neoconservatives in favor of regime change in Iraq. They knew that the events of 9/11 were a window of opportunity for there long desired removal of Saddam Hussein. Now was the time to make their case. In their dissatisfaction with the CIA, which was not giving them the conclusive and definitive evidence that they needed to make a compelling case for intervention, the hawks went on their own search for the 'truth' (Lucas, 2011, p.212). Instrumental in this quest was Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and fierce intervention advocate Douglas Feith. Under him an office called the Counter Terrorism Evaluation Group

(CTEG) was established. The purpose for this office was to connect terrorist groups with countries that did or could harbor them. Following up on the president's promise that stated that any state that harbored or supported terrorism would be treated as a hostile regime. The group used software to review data and find possible links between terrorist and states, however the 'connections' the CTEG found would be deemed phony in any other qualitative intelligence analysis but were nevertheless used by Wolfowitz and his peers (Lucas, 2011, p.213).

With the development of the terrorist-WMD narrative, the planning for the invasion started to get more serious, even though military operations in Afghanistan were still on the way and the Taliban regime was not yet defeated. (Gauss, 2009, p.193). With those developments, it was also time to start pushing a broad narrative that would justify the intervention. While different high-ranking administration officials were already pushing this narrative through interviews and op-eds in newspapers and magazines, the first big event where Bush himself starts to lay the outline for possible regime change in Iraq was during his state of the union address in January 2002. In this speech, the 'Axis of Evil' narrative is put forward for the first time. Notable is that Iran and North Korea only got one sentence of speech while Iraq gets a whole paragraph.

> Iraq continues to flaunt its hostility toward America and to support terror. The Iraqi regime has plotted to develop anthrax, and nerve gas, and nuclear weapons for over a decade. This is a regime that has already used poison gas to murder thousands of its own citizens -- leaving the bodies of mothers huddled over their dead children. This is a regime that agreed to international inspections -- then kicked out the inspectors. This is a regime that has something to hide from the civilized world. States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. They could provide these arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred. They could attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States. In any of these cases, the price of indifference would be catastrophic. (Bush, 2002)

> And all nations should know: America will do what is necessary to ensure our nation's security. We will be deliberate, yet time is not on our side. I will not wait on events, while dangers gather. I will not stand by, as peril draws closer and closer. The United States of America will not permit the world's most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world's most destructive weapons. Our war on terror is well begun, but it is only begun. This campaign may not be finished on our watch -- yet it must be and it will be waged on our watch. [..] History has called America and our allies to action, and it is both our responsibility and our privilege to fight freedom's fight. (Bush, 2002)

With this speech, strong words are spoken and it is clear that Iraq is a high priority of the administration. With the 'axis of evil' notion, Bush skillfully implies a connection between the Iraqi regime and terrorism without giving any evidence. The absence of this evidence was a problem; at this moment in time, the intelligence community still did not have compelling evidence that would justify an invasion. The opposite to be exactly: the January 2002 CIA proliferation briefing did not mention a threat of a serious Iraqi nuclear program. The intention that Iraq was getting serious about such a program was also nonexistent the State Department

Intelligence desk concluded. In addition, the CIA found no evidence for terrorist cooperation with the regime let alone the intention to provide such networks with WMDs (Lucas, 2011, p.215). Luckily, hawks Wolfowitz and Feith at the pentagon were quick to come to aid and open an office for 'sincere' evaluation of intelligence concerning Iraq, the Office for Special Plans (OSP). The unit used raw intelligence and often out of context intelligence to help hardliners like Wolfowitz, Rumsfeld and Cheney in their pro-war lobby (Kaufman, 2004, p.39). According to Conway (2012) the office adapted a 'hypothesis-first' methodology to produce misleading, alarmist and misleading intelligence which was used by neoconservatives to counter regular intelligence assessments and bolster support for their belligerent policy objectives (Conway, 2012, pp.490-491). While it is evident that the misuse and manipulation of intelligence is widespread trough the tale of the legitimation process of the war, there are two reports that are clear examples of the corruption of intelligence assessments. There is the 'uranium from Niger' report and the 'aluminum tubes' story.

The first story, which was widely echoed by administration officials and gained substantive public attention, was the report that Iraq was seeking 'substantive quantities' yellowcake uranium in Niger. The validity of this story was at that time already heavily questioned by the CIA (Gauss, 2009, p.205). However, Cheney wanted further clarification; as a result, former ambassador Joe Wilson was sent on a fact-finding mission to Niger to investigate. After a 10-day stay, Wilson reported to the CIA and the State Department that it 'highly doubtful' that Niger transferred yellowcake to Iraq (Wilson, 2003). Later the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) would conclude that the documents on which the claim was based were quite lousy forgeries. One of the documents for instance, was signed by a minister that had been out of office for more than eleven years (Kaufman, 2004, p.26). A salient detail in this affair is that Wilson would later publicly criticize the administration decision to go to war on based on the Niger intelligence in a New York Times op-ed. The administration reacted with a news article stating that Wilson's wife, Valerie Plame, who was an undercover asset on nuclear proliferation for the CIA at the time, was the one who proposed Wilson as the man for fact-finding mission to Niger. With his report, Plame was exposed as an undercover asset, which is a criminal offense under federal law. A special prosecutor investigated and later indicted Vice President Cheney's chief of staff, Lewis 'Scooter' Libby, who was tried and convicted for the making of false statements in the case (Gauss, 2009, p.206).

The second report was centered around an intercepted shipment of 60,000 high strength aluminum tubes in 2001. Iraq was banned from importing this kind of tubes because of their

possible application to build centrifuges to enrich uranium that could be used to build a nuclear weapon (Kaufman, 2004, p.25). After the interception of the order the CIA's Center for Weapons Intelligence, Non-Proliferation and Arms Control (WINPAC) concluded in a quick assessment that the tubes where probably intended for the enrichment of uranium. The neoconservatives were quite pleased with the fact that they finally had evidence for what they had been saying all along: Iraq was reviving its nuclear program (Conway, 2012, pp.493). However, a more extensive assessment by the Department of Energy (DOE) shortly after ruined their little celebration. The DOE found it highly unlikely that the tubes were indeed intended for enriching uranium because they were to narrow and, more importantly, because there was a conventional use for the tubes. The specifications were an exact match to the body of the Nasser 81 rocket. Adapting this reasoning, WINPAC also swayed towards this conclusion (Conway, 2012, pp.492 – 495). Case closed one would think, not really. In a strange turn of events one particular WINPAC analyst became responsible for the further assessment of the tubes. This analyst, later identified as Joe Turner clearly adopted a worst-case and hypothesis-first methodology of analysis. Instead of looking at the exact specification of the tubes and investigate what their use could be, he assumed that the tubes were intended for the enrichment of uranium and started to look for a centrifuge design which would fit the tubes the best (Conway, 2012, p.495). Turner found a design that 'closely' fitted the specifications of the tubes, although they were still to tick and too long. More importantly, the design dated back from the 1950. The centrifuges that Iraq used before were much more modern and used other stronger materials. Following these facts, the DOE and the IAEA deemed the analysis phony and made clear that they would stay with their previous assessments (Conway, 2012, p.495). Nevertheless, and like earlier reports, Turners assessment was send directly to top level officials inside the Pentagon and White House and used as ammunition in the legitimation campaign.

The narratives around the aluminum tubes and the uranium from Niger would pose as 'exhibit a & b', the most important pieces of evidence that the administration used in their legitimation campaign upon Powell's speech at the UN where new 'evidence' was posed. Administration officials would appear on TV-shows, give public speeches in numerous forums and make the case for war in op-eds in numerous national newspapers. The threat was constantly blow out of proportion and the worst-case assumptions were always leading in the debate. One can argue that the word 'debate' in this context is not the concept one would use to describe the discourse around the question of Iraq at that moment. The role of the media as auditor of those in power was completely lost, causing the narratives posed by the administration being almost

unquestioned. The deployment of the commonplaces together with the alarming ‘evidence’ led to a situation where nobody wanted to be labeled as ‘soft on terror’.

Clear is that from this point on war was looming. As from the spring of 2002, substantial specialized forces and intelligence resources were diverted from Afghanistan to Iraq, together with a comprehensive covert CIA operation that had the authority to use lethal force in order to topple Saddam’s regime (Gauss, 2009, p.194). The next important public appearance in the process of the legitimation of the war is the speech President Bush gave at the military academy West Point in the beginning of June 2002. In the speech, Bush lays the outline for his later called ‘Bush Doctrine’, which has four elements: most notably the idea of preemptive use of force, the concept that the domestic regime type of a state defines its foreign policy, the notion that great threats can only be fought with new and brisk policies. Finally, it stresses the willingness of the United States to act unilateral if necessary (Jervis, 2016, p.285). This new doctrine was a clear drift away from his policies around the use of force prior to 9/11. The doctrine is clearly identifiable from parts of his speech:

> For much of the last century America's defense relied on the cold war doctrines of deterrence and containment. In some cases, those strategies still apply. But new threats also require new thinking (Bush, 2002).
>
> Deterrence, the promise of massive retaliation against nations, means nothing against shadowy terrorist networks with no nation or citizens to defend. Containment is not possible when unbalanced dictators with weapons of mass destruction can deliver those weapons on missiles or secretly provide them to terrorist allies (Bush, 2002).
>
> We cannot defend America and our friends by hoping for the best. We cannot put our faith in the word of tyrants who solemnly sign nonproliferation treaties and then systematically break them. If we wait for threats to fully materialize, we will have waited too long (Bush, 2002).
>
> 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 (Bush, 2002).

Even though Bush does not name Iraq, it is clear that this new doctrine is an instrument in the legitimization campaign for the war in Iraq. Which in the eyes of many had become inevitable, a view that was shared with British intelligence at the time (Gauss, 2009, p.195). This claim gets support from the facts on the ground at that time: in the same month as the speech at West Point, the American Air force started operation Southern Focus. This extensive air campaign was justified to the public as a reaction on Iraqi violations of the no fly zone imposed in southern Iraq, but was in fact aimed at critical Iraqi military infrastructure in order to make way for a land assault (Gordon, 2003).

While preparations for the invasion were fully underway, there was still friction within the administration about the absence of international cover and UN approval. Especially Secretary Powell had significant problems with this and was supported by influential (former) republican

foreign policy officials like Henry Kissinger and Brent Scowcroft. After the criticism, the administration altered the policy concerning in August 2002 into not only war planning but also intensifying the effort in the UN in order to resolve the issue with a diplomatic solution with for instance weapon inspectors from the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the IAEA (Gauss, 2009, p.196). This move towards the UN is interpretable in two ways, as an effort to look for a sincere effort to avert war or as a campaign to bolster support and legitimacy for the invasion. However, it is clear that hardliners where not going by this effort, as a few days later after this policy was implemented Dick Cheney called the effectiveness of those UN weapon inspectors into question and made the argument for war in a speech during a veteran's event in late august. It showed that hardliners as Rumsfeld and Cheney did not care for international cover and would when necessary act unilateral, something that was incorporated in their neoconservative mindset (Gauss, 2009, p.196). Nevertheless, Bush's speech to the United Nation one day after the first 9/11 memorial showed that the US was indeed working towards a more diplomatic effort. In his speech he called for action from the UN and reminded that failure to act would result in tragedy. This indicates that Powell had at least won this battle over unilateralism vs. multilateralism and UN cover (Zarefsky, 2007, p.277).

Needless to say, a diplomatic initiative started to go its way. While it took some time, eight weeks to be precisely, it was on November 8 2002 that the United Nation agreed to the final text of Security Council resolution 1441, which was adopted unanimously. The resolution gave Iraq a last opportunity to comply with earlier resolution regarding WMDs, ballistic missiles and the support of terrorism. It also called for the unconditional and unrestricted access for UNMOVIC and IAEA personnel in order to conduct inspections. Furthermore, Iraq was obliged to give a conclusive declaration of its WMD capabilities within 30 days (United Nations, 2002). This declaration was put forward by Cheney and was designed as trap for Saddam. If the regime would claim it did not have WMDs, the US would argue that they were lying again and would make the case for war. If the regime would declare that they still had WMDs this would mean that Saddam had been lying for 12 years, the US was right about him and that regime change would again be on the table (Woodward, 2004, p.222).

The resolution, in its aim to reach unanimity, did not give clear consequences for material breach of the resolution. It stated there would be 'serious consequences' but did not give the 'all means necessary', the UN jargon for use of force. Most important in this was France, which was a sheer advocate against the use of force in Iraq (Zarefsky, 2007, p.278). Bush used the

time it took to agree on the resolution cleverly, because he still needed congressional approval for the use of military force in Iraq. In the weeks before the adaptation of the resolution he went to congress and argued that the US needed to show its seriousness about enforcement of the resolution. He argued that the resolution would only be taken serious if it was backed by American authorization to use force. Bush argumentation worked and on October 10, Congress approved the use of force with strong bipartisan support. Later on, he would use Iraq's 'noncompliance' as authorization for the invasion, regardless of what the UN did (Zarefsky, 2007, p.278). The coming to be of the resolution, while it would be used to instigate war later, was still a win for Powell, it showed that diplomacy was not in a deadlock. However, hardliners feared that inspectors would be deceived by Saddam. And feared that a conclusive negative report on the possession of WMDs would make their case for war a lot more difficult (Woodward, 2004, pp.224 – 227).

With the resolution in effect, Iraq complied with the declaration agreement on the last day of the 30-day deadline by providing an 11,000-page document, which stated that it did not have WMD. While the document was big, it was also obsolete and incomplete and was not a clear effort to get on with the resolution. Head of the UNMOVIC mission Hans Blix, characterized the report as an 'opportunity missed'. Cheney argued that the quality of the document was a clear example of material breach and proposed action. While the declaration confirmed the common belief that Saddam would not disarm voluntarily, Rumsfeld and Rice argued that the declaration alone was not enough for the dismissal of inspections and war. Bush agreed to this. (Woodward, 2004, p.253). Inspections continued and war planning was in full affect. Slowly but steadily Rumsfeld was working with US central command to set the parameters for war. Aircraft carriers were sent to the region, command and control centers where set up in neighboring countries and reservist where mobilized (Woodward, 2004, p.237).

It was in late January when more reports came in about noncompliance from Iraq regarding the UNMOVIC and IAIA. As Hans Blix put it: "Iraq appears not to have come to a genuine acceptance – not even today – of the disarmament which was demanded of it and which it needs to carry out the confidence of the world to live in peace,'' he said (Blix, 2003). With this statement, the material breach was evident and the common understanding was that the diplomatic effort had failed. While it is hard to say that if the president made his decision to go to war at this moment or sometime before this statement, it is clear that after this moment, things started to accelerate and the decision to go to war was final. The administration agreed on the idea that a second resolution in the Security Council would not be necessary, a rare thing where

Powell and Cheney agreed on (Woodward, 2004, p.296). However, a public case needed to be made, in which there would be made a last effort to win extra international support for the invasion, which would happen with our without international support. In his State of the Union address a day after the Blix remarks Bush again sticks to the rhetorical commonplaces that where present in his earlier speeches and goes on to seek legitimation for a possible intervention in Iraq.

> Now, in this century, the ideology of power and domination has appeared again, and seeks to gain the ultimate weapons of terror. Once again, this nation and all our friends are all that stand between a world at peace, and a world of chaos and constant alarm. Once again, we are called to defend the safety of our people, and the hopes of all mankind. And we accept this responsibility (Bush, 2003).
>
> Some have said we must not act until the threat is imminent. Since when have terrorists and tyrants announced their intentions, politely putting us on notice before they strike? If this threat is permitted to fully and suddenly emerge, all actions, all words, and all recriminations would come too late. Trusting in the sanity and restraint of Saddam Hussein is not a strategy, and it is not an option (Bush, 2003).
>
> "We will consult. But let there be no misunderstanding. If Saddam Hussein does not fully disarm, for the safety of our people and for the peace of the world, we will lead a coalition to disarm him'' (Bush, 2003).
>
> "The British government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa. Our intelligence sources tell us that he has attempted to purchase high-strength aluminum tubes suitable for nuclear weapons production. Saddam Hussein has not credibly explained these activities. He clearly has much to hide" (Bush, 2003).

Bush argues that the United States is taking action in the name of the peace of the world and the in protection of the safety off all of mankind. He also, again, pushes the legitimation of striking Saddam preemptively. However, what make this speech significant four our analysis is Bush's mention of the Niger uranium story, the story that was widely debunked by the American intelligence community and even the IAEA. The same goes for the aluminum tubes story. CIA director Tenet later admitted that the notion of the Niger uranium should have never been included in to the text, because the CIA agreed on the fact that the claim was erroneous (CNN, 2003). How it ended up in the speech either way is open for interpretation.

The (mis)use and cherry picking of intelligence to help in the process of the legitimation of the war is something that can be observed from 9/11 till the invasion in March 2003. Colin Powell was aware of this tactic and had seen his hardliner colleagues use this method more than once. Privately he even called the OSP 'Feith's little Gestapo office' (Woodward, 2004, p.292). However, the decision for the Iraq invasion had been made and he would be the one that needed to deliver the final blow in terms of legitimation. Powell had been an open advocate against the use of force in Iraq and this enhanced his credibility. However, Powell did not want to fall in to the same trap as his neoconservative colleagues. He wanted his speech to be based on hard evidence and did not want to bend and cherry-pick the intelligence used. When Lewis Libby

presented him the overview of intelligence, he was handed a 60-page dossier that reportedly looked like a Chinese menu where he could pick and choose from (Woodward, 2004, p.299). The dossier contained some 50 percent more information than the initial CIA report, with a large part of the information coming from the OSP and CTEG. At some point Powell is quoted saying "I am not reading this. This is bullshit," (The Guardian, 2003). The result was that Powell would spend the next four days with specialist from the CIA and other agencies in an effort to separate truth from fiction. However, hardliners kept pushing, Cheney was eager to include an extensive account on the Iraq - Al-Qaida and 9/11 connection, on which was still no closing intelligence available. In the end was decided that the first 75 percent of the speech would cover WMDs and Saddam's non-compliance with UN sanctions and the last part would cover the "potentially much more sinister nexus,'' as Powell would put it in his speech. The evidence for the terrorism argument would be centered on Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, an Al-Qaida operative believed to be based in southern Iraq (Woodward, 2004, p.299).

In the end, the 76-minute speech would contain tapped voice memos obtained by the NSA, human intelligence accounts from defectors, aerial and satellite imagery showing terrorist camps and WMD storages. It also featured the mobile biological weapons facilities mounted on trucks and train wagons. Powell even took a little glass tube containing 'anthrax' with him. He also ordered CIA director George Tenet to sit behind him, as this showed that his claims where backed up by the Agency. The speech was a success although it did not secure extra international support. The American case was made in a clear way and was welcomed positively by the American public and media (Woodward, 2004, p.312). While it is true that this speech was the closing argument in the effort of legitimizing the war, it is also clear that Powell tried making a case that was as near to the truth as possible while staying in his role as Secretary of State of a nation that already decided to go to war. Interesting is that the rhetorical commonplaces that were presented throughout the legitimation strategy are not used in this speech. Powel presents evidence in a formal mater and does not play the game of rhetoric. However, the fact remains that the speech was instrumental in the legitimation of the war, which would erupt five weeks later as Saddam declined to comply with Bush's 48-hour deadline to leave the country.

Reflection and Conclusion

So what does the above interpretation on the events that led to the coming to be of the invasion of Iraq mean for the Jackson hypothesis that was put up in the beginning of this research? Where it in fact the commonplaces of *"Re-Versioned US Exceptionalism" and "Terrorism" as "Uncivilized"* that where leading in the speeches that we found influential in the process legitimization? To start with the January 2002 State of the Union speech. With his notion of the Axis of Evil Bush places countries of Iran, Iraq and North-Korea in the same lane as the terrorists that perpetrated the 9/11 attacks which at moment had happened less than four months ago and thus carried enormous amounts of rhetorical weight. By making this argument, he puts those countries outside the spectrum of the 'civilized world'. He goes on and makes clear that the US will not wait to act against threats like these and will attack preemptively when necessary in order to protect the freedom of the US and its worldwide allies. In short: Bush is calling for extraordinary measures taken by the US in order to protect the civilized world from the threat that is called terrorism, a clear adaptation of Jackson's pillars. The linkage between 'evil terrorism' and the Iraqi regime was vital in the legitimation campaign and would become one of the central arguments for the invasion. There was no compelling evidence to create this link but that was not a problem, neoconservative administration officials would take care of this, a practice that is clear in the legitimation strategy from beginning to end.

The West-Point speech is in many ways different from the State of the Union speech, which had the purpose of constructing the idea of the 'Axis of Evil'. The purpose of the speech was to make it know to the country as well as the world that the United States had adopted a new strategic (Bush) doctrine. The choosing of a military academy as forum for the speech is therefore logical. Bush makes clear that deterrence and containment are not relevant in fighting 'shadowy terrorism networks' and regimes that possess WMDs. He therefore calls for preemptive action against tyrants and their terrorist allies. In this effort off good against evil, the United States will lead the way. While the terrorism commonplace is identifiable it is clear that this speech mainly depends on the commonplace of exceptionalism, because the main purpose of the speech is to introduce the Bush doctrine, a doctrine that is heavily based on the ideas of United States exceptionalism.

The 2003 State of the Union speech, less than two months before the invasion of Iraq is again soaked with the commonplaces that Jackson identified. It is the US and its allies that stand between 'a world at peace and a world of chaos' and it is them that are called upon to 'defend the hopes of all mankind'. Bush again makes clear that he will not wait and will act unilateral

if necessary. The real new thing in this speech is that Bush introduces ‘evidence’ of which he could and should have known that it was not credible. However, it is clear that the commonplaces as put by Jackson (2013) are easily identifiable in all the speeches reviewed in this work except for the Powell speech. The commonplaces were effectively incorporated into the narrative of the administration and were incredibly successful in creating a nationwide discourse that put their opponents out of bounds.

However, a closer look at the specific actors, events and context that are relevant in the coming to be of the war a different picture emerges. A story of neoconservatives, dubious intelligence and a deliberate effort to exaggerate the threat from Iraq. It can be argued that Bush did not assume office in 2001 with the idea to start a war in Iraq. However, he surrounded himself with people who did. The result of this would be constant bureaucratic battle over legitimacy over the topic between neoconservatives like Cheney and Rumsfeld and ‘doves’ like Powell. In this argument, the neoconservatives would come out on top and lead the US to war. However, this was not a rhetorical battle of words over moral righteousness but about the threat Iraq actually posed to the United States. The neoconservatives would win the legitimacy through a practice that Kauffman (2004) describes as *threat inflation*. A phenomenon that can be described as a consistent pattern of worst-case assumptions by connecting factual issues that are normally not or only weakly connected. In order to create evidence for those assumptions information available is analyzed with double standards or using circular logic so that it favors those worst-case scenarios (Kaufman, 2004, p.9). The practices of the OSP together with the CTEG are clear examples on how the neoconservatives would constitute their own sub-institutions that would make up their own inflated analysis, which they then could use to make their case for war. The Niger uranium case as well as the story on the aluminum tubes show this extensively; The Wilson report together with the IAEA report debunked the Niger story strongly and the DOE and IAEA would classify the tubes as to be used for conventional rockets. However analysis that did not fit the neoconservative narrative would be continually be ignored and even continuality be contested by the OSP and CTEG. Administration officials like Cheney and Wolfowitz successfully inflated the threat of Iraq to gigantic proportions and used the events of 9/11 to inspire fear and legitimate their policies.

From our take on the events that unfolded in the run up to the 2003 Iraq war the following becomes clear. First of all, it can be concluded that Jacksons hypothesis that identified the strategical use of the rhetorical commonplaces *“Re-Versioned US Exceptionalism” and “Terrorism” as “Uncivilized”* as the backbone of the legitimation campaign is in fact accurate.

The speeches that were analyzed is this work show clear use of those commonplaces. Rhetorical craftsmanship like the 'Axis of Evil' were instrumental in the campaign to bolster support for the war. It was the claim on American values that were deeply nested in the way of thinking of the audience that needed to be convinced that made the legitimation strategy so successful. It was hard for counterbalancing institutions like press and opposition to come up with a successful counter-narrative because one does not want the be labeled as someone that does not want to bring the 9/11 perpetrators to justice and does not want to fight the threat of international terrorism. However, what also becomes clear from the insight in the decision-making process inside the White House and Pentagon is that the legitimacy of the Iraq war was also largely based on dubious and even fabricated evidence. This evidence was used to instate fear and harvest legitimacy. The successful legitimation of the war cannot be interpreted without the acknowledgement of the continuous efforts by administration officials to inflate the threat that the Iraqi regime actually posed to the US and the rest of the world.

If one wants to effectively use rhetorical commonplaces one needs evidence, or at least the perception of evidence. To argue that something essential as the well-being and freedom of the civilized world is threatened, one needs evidence that instigates the fear. What this means is that the findings in this research complement each other in answering in the question about what factors made the legitimation possible. First of all, the case for war could not have been made effectively if the administration did not base its legitimation strategy on deeply embedded commonplaces inside the American society. The use of those commonplaces was incredibility effective and dominated the debate. However this was only possible because the administration based its arguments on fabricated intelligence that instigated fear. The Iraqi case could not have been made without the connection between Saddam and the perpetrators of 9/11, his broader connection to Islamic terrorism and his alleged WMD program. In the end we cannot only put the coming to be of the successful legitimation campaign into the use of rhetoric's, we need to address what happened inside the administration to fully understand the wat happened. The 2003 Iraq war was not only legitimized by words, it was triggered through the constant infusion of deceptive and fabricated fear.

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