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## Framing and the End of Operation Iraqi Freedom

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Framing and the End of Operation Iraqi Freedom

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this qualitative framing study is to analyze the dominant frames that were reflected in the news coverage of two separate Presidential speeches marking the proposed cessation of combat operations in Operation Iraqi Freedom. In order to determine which frames emerged in the coverage of each speech, a content analysis of 105 articles from 4 national newspapers was conducted. Analysis included the week preceding and the week following each speech in an effort to capture the immediate coverage surrounding each address. The findings suggest that the dominate frames utilized were the economic consequences frame, the responsibility frame and the human interest frame. The use of these three frames demonstrates that the press finds comfort in using previously identified frames in its coverage of key events. While there were specific incidents where press coverage veered from the narrative depicted by each presidential administration, these can be viewed as the exception rather than the norm. Beyond these 105 articles, the results of this study cannot be generalized, but they can be viewed as an exemplar of the media's view of these presidential addresses.

## Chapter One: Introduction

Military actions during Operation Iraqi Freedom have been broadly couched under the umbrella of the Global War on Terrorism. The Global War on Terrorism started with the attacks on multiple locations in the United States on September 11, 2001 up until the present. As a result of these attacks, more than 3000 citizens were killed. The United States military initially focused on offensive combat operations against the Taliban located in Afghanistan, with the mission termed Operation Enduring Freedom.

While simultaneously conducting combat operations in Afghanistan, President Bush determined that a terrorist threat also existed in Iraq. He ordered U.S. military forces to attack Iraq on March 19, 2003; with the objective of overthrowing Saddam Hussein and establishing a democratic state.

The ability of a presidential administration to frame the events surrounding military actions in the aftermath of a national crisis provides a ripe case analysis for the ongoing process of defining and controlling the narrative that is presented to the public. One scholar stated the following regarding this tension: “In their life and death implications, war frames are highly significant in the way they direct vital debates on national policies” (Reese, 2010, p. 23).

At this point, it is important to broadly define the concept of “war.” Reese (2010) in his essay *Finding Frames in a Web of Culture*, defined the concept as follows:

A war is outlined with one side arrayed the forces of civilization, rule of law, freedom, democratic values, prosperity, security, way of life, human dignity,

tolerance, and even open economies; on the other side is the enemy: terror, fear, violence, fascism, and the destroyers of civilization (p. 27).

In this definition, you have a series of absolutist positions. In the absence of a stated middle ground, the media in their coverage of key events can attempt to establish a middle ground. In reviewing coverage of these events, it is paramount to review not only the content of coverage surrounding presidential addresses, but also the context of the reporting (Kuypers, 2006).

The purpose of this study is to examine how major American newspapers framed the coverage of two separate presidential addresses on the cessation of combat operations during Operation Iraqi Freedom. The two speeches are President Bush's speech aboard the U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln on May 1, 2003 and President Obama's August 31, 2010 speech. I described the changes in media frames related to coverage of the Iraq War immediately preceding and following the two speeches. Additionally, I examined whether the primary frames that were used during the coverage of President Bush's speech provided reframing opportunities for the coverage of President Obama's speech based upon the similarity of purpose.

I write as a white middle-aged male who currently serves as an officer in the United States Army and has served two combat tours in Iraq. Below, I commence by providing both the practical and theoretical relevance of utilizing framing and frame theory within the context of wartime political coverage. Second, I provide a synopsis of the relevant literature that focuses on the interwoven nature of the negotiation of content between government and the press. This suggests that the negotiation of terms runs in cycles based upon the public's view of the significance of the corresponding importance of

combat operations to its daily life. Third, I outline my method consisting of a qualitative content analysis of four mainstream national newspapers. I chose this method based upon its potential to allow for the emergence of frames reflected on this topic. My study covers 105 reports published by mainstream national newspapers with national coverage and largest readership. Fourth, I describe and discuss my results that emerged from analysis of newspaper content focused on both the immediate pre- and post-speech content related to the cessation of combat operations in Iraq. Here I show that coverage in the four studied papers, *The New York Times*, *the Washington Post*, *The Los Angeles Times* and *USA Today* reflected the practical and ongoing negotiation of the narrative that is communicated to the American public. While the White House and its related communication staff goes to great lengths to present their respective narrative, this can be rejected or refuted by the mainstream press based upon a myriad of factors. The ongoing tussle for control of this narrative has great implications for the ability of the President to pursue perspective policy goals.

## **Chapter Two: Relevance of the Problem**

Political communication is often a struggle between the government in power at the time and the press that feels the responsibility to serve as a counter-balance. The framing techniques and devices used by each party to help form the narrative that is accepted by the majority of the public are ripe for analysis. This is never more relevant than when the question at hand involves the commitment of society's most important asset, its own citizens. In this paper, I will assess how national newspapers covered two speeches marking transitional points during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

### **Theoretical Relevance of the Problem**

Frame theory has been one of the key areas utilized to study political communications. According to Kuypers (2009, p. 182), framing serving as the “process whereby communicators, consciously or unconsciously, act to construct a point of view that encourages the facts of a given situation to be interpreted by others in a particular manner.” In her essay entitled “Researching Political News Framing,” Regina Lawrence (2010) states the following:

A key question in much of the literature on media framing of politics and public affairs is, How independently do the media frame issues and events, versus simply passing along to the public the frames that originated by powerful political actors (p. 265).

The news articles that I utilized for analysis reflect the thoughts by individual reporters of these “points of view” within the context of the news cycle.

Frames are built upon previous knowledge and existing cultural norms, so it is important to analyze whether the frames used within a speech are aligned with the beliefs and mood of the target audience on a key issue. This results in an interaction between the incoming message structure and the psychological characteristics of the receiver (Reese, 2010, p. 22). Snow, Rochford, Worden & Benford (1986, p. 477) argue that when individual frames become linked in congruency, this produces “frame resonance” that allows groups to transition from one frame to another. Three specific tasks have been identified by Snow et al. (1986, p. 477) that must be accomplished for participant mobilization: diagnostic framing, prognostic framing and motivational framing. Diagnostic framing is utilized for problem identification and blame assessment. Prognostic framing is utilized to suggest solutions, strategies and tactics for a problem/situation. Finally, motivational framing serves as a call to arms or rationale for action. No matter what framing device is utilized, the frame itself must be of relevance to a person in order to garner participation or acceptance of an idea or principle.

Another extension of frame resonance is the ability of the speaker/writer to use frame alignment, consisting of four main types: frame bridging, frame amplification, frame extensions and frame transformation (Snow et al., pp. 467-474). The concept of frame alignment provides insights on how the news media portray the incident to the American public and how this same public provides feedback on how they view these inputs. The purpose of the presidential speeches on Operation Iraqi Freedom were to mark a strategic transition in the United States involvement in Iraq, so analysis through

frame alignment provides insights on how the news media portrayed the speeches to the American public.

### **Practical Relevance of the Problem**

Numerous presidents have used the prime-time political address to speak directly to the American public about key issues and policy goals. These speeches allow the president to bypass the media and Congress and speak directly to the American people (Cornwell, 1965). Additionally, this allows the president to “operate in a setting where he is unhindered by rival decision makers or aggressive reporters” (Simon & Ostrom, 1989, p. 61).

Early recognition of the power of this type of address can be traced back to President Franklin Roosevelt’s use of fire-side chats to inform the American public of progress during World War II. Roosevelt specifically influenced coverage in print media by embracing the newer innovation of radio (Winfield, 1987, 1990). He successfully used the radio to speak directly to Americans, which forced the print media to provide coverage of his radio addresses (Kowalewski, 2009).

This tradition has been carried on through all presidents, as the United States transitioned from the format of radio to television and the prime-time address. No other format garners such a substantial amount of press coverage. National broadcasts serve as excellent platforms because they afford the greatest opportunity for presidents to promote and advance their policy goals (Lewis, 1997).

Presidents have not been shy about using the “bully pulpit,” believing it to be important to their success while in office and to their political and policy legacy (Edwards, 2003). The tone and tenor of the setting and topic of the speech often drives

the selection of the prime-time presidential address as the preferred venue to directly communicate with the American population. Lewis (1997) provided the following rationale for these addresses:

Presidents address the American people for a variety of purposes such as controlling damage in the face of a scandal, bolstering approval ratings, serving as the symbolic head of state in times of national tragedy, responding to an overseas crisis, or bidding farewell (p. 380).

Addresses accompanied by more pomp and circumstance, may on average, draw more media attention and hence have greater effects on the agenda, as some previous analysts have suggested (Cohen, 1995).

Analysis of the coverage of a major presidential address provides an opportunity to observe the dynamic interaction over the major frames that were outlined during the speech are transitioned and portrayed. While the president can present a speech that limits the interaction with the press, the press then has the freedom of commentary to dissect, analyze and provide commentary to the public. This tension and competition for control of how news is framed provides ripe grounds for analysis.

## **Chapter Three: Literature Review**

### **The Public Mood**

Attempts to frame issues by politicians and other leaders can fail based upon the timing and what has been identified by Teena Gabrielson (2005) as a misreading of the “public mood” (p. 77). Gabrielson defines the public mood as “a global measure of public opinion that indicates the ideological leanings of the American citizenry” (p. 77). This definition builds upon the work of Cobb and Elder (1976), who initially defined the concept as “prevailing public sentiment as to what constitutes appropriate matters for governmental attention” (p. 21).

Gabrielson (2005) also conceptualizes public mood as a macro or global measure of the ideological tendencies of the citizenry at a given point in time, with distinctive shifts of consequences. She further states that while the public mood normally hovers around a median, effective elected officials can pursue a highly partisan goal if they correctly gauge public mood and frame their respective issues in a manner that resonates with the public mood. Given these parameters, elected officials must correctly judge the ideological tenor of the attentive public in order to advance an issue frame that resonates in order to achieve the desired response from the audience. Gabrielson (2005) surmises that a frame that falls outside of this norm may have negative repercussions that adversely impact the primary goals of politicians. When national concerns are important to a large segment of the population, presidents should increasingly address those

concerns to a national audience. In contrast, when national concerns such as war wane in importance, the president should shift to emphasize these issues to narrow constituencies (Cook, 2008).

In order for framing efforts to work, individuals must both be aware of the message and be influenced by it (Zaller 1992, 1996). Gabrielson (2005) argues that political elites are more susceptible to the effects of framing because they are more likely to be monitoring the current discourse. Political elites are also pre-disposed to being more ideological and have access to a broader array of information which provides an inoculation effect against framing efforts. Framing is also gauged to be more effective to those members of the population that are less ideological but attentive voting members of the public (Gabrielson, 2005).

The president faces an increasingly fragmented audience, with competition between major networks, 24-hour news channels and mobile devices providing a cluttered media environment (Cohen, 2008). Soft news, such as entertainment and sports, has increased at the detriment of hard news coverage (Patterson, 2000). This serves as a limit to the president's ability to reach the public with his message.

The manner and mode in which the American public receives its information about politics is a constant balancing act between the government that sets policy and the press having the obligation to report on the government. Douglas Cater (1957) addressed the role of the reporter in his work entitled *The Fourth Branch of Government*, stating the following:

The reporter is the recorder of government but he is also a participant. He operates in a system in which power is divided. He as much as anyone...helps to

shape the course of government. He is the indispensable broker and middleman among the sub governments of Washington (p. 7).

This has led to the development within the political process of “government by publicity” (Cater, 1957). The president is also reliant upon staking a role out in this system, having to focus energy mobilizing segments of the public to support his policies (Cohen, 2008).

Through media coverage, a leader can signal to the public his or her preferences on policy, respond to ongoing events, and attempt to use public pressure to indirectly convince key political actors of the correctness of one’s agenda (Cook, 1998). The best situation for the president or any other political leader is that all news organizations agree about the definition of the news. This can allow a social consensus to develop that the news faithfully represents an important reality (Cohen, 2008).

### **Four Theories of the Press**

In a 1956 work, Fred Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm identified four primary theories of the press, developed through an analysis of the primary social systems in which differing versions of the press have morphed. They stated that:

To see the social systems in their true relationship to the press, one has to look at certain basic beliefs and assumptions which the society holds: the nature of man, the nature of society and the state, the relation of man to the state, and the nature of knowledge and truth (Siebert, Peterson & Schramm, 1956, p. 2).

Through their analysis, they identified the following four primary theories: the Authoritarian, the Libertarian, the Social Responsibility, and the Soviet-Totalitarian.

Even though the book was published in 1956, the four theories still offer a template through which we can examine the relationship between the presidency and the press.

**The Authoritarian Theory.** Of the four theories, the authoritarian theory is the oldest. The authoritarian concept traces its origin back to the governments that ruled Western Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries, coinciding with the development of the printing press. Siebert et al. (1956) describe the idea that “All human societies, it seems, possess an inherent capacity to develop systems of social control whereby the relations of individuals and of institutions are adjusted and common interests and desires are secured” (p. 10).

The Authoritarian theory postulates that the state is the highest expression of group organization and that an individual should be dependent on the state to achieve his logical means and ends (Seibert et al., 1956, p. 11). When applied to explaining press-state relations, the theory holds that the press should serve as the mechanism to “support and advance” governmental policies and ideals (Seibert et al., 1956, p. 18).

The major weakness in the Authoritarian model of press-state relations is the inability of the state to effectively establish and monitor restraints over privately operated media sources (Seibert et al., 1956, p. 19). Examples of these restraints have included granting special “governmental permits” to publish as well as the establishment of governmental censorship boards to oversee content publication (Seibert et al., 1956). Each of these restraining systems eventually was overcome by the explosion of press outlets and the growing need for individual citizens to use the press to express dissatisfaction with governmental control. Although few countries today can be labeled

truly authoritarian, some countries lean closer to this model than the other more evolved models.

**The Libertarian Theory.** The Libertarian theory is guided by the proposition that a society is not of greater importance than the individual citizen (Seibert, Peterson & Schramm, 1956). This serves as a polar opposite of the relationship between the individual and the state prescribed by the Authoritarian theory. “The fulfillment of the individual therefore becomes the ultimate goal -- the goal of man, of society and of the state” (Seibert et al., 1956, p. 40).

The Libertarian model of press-state relations began to take hold in the 18th century, with state monopolies in publishing being disbanded and numerous western governments, including the United States and Britain, codifying free speech protections. Newspaper printers and publishers were at the vanguard of pushing these changes, especially in the realm of defining seditious libel and the amount of access that the press should have in covering governments (Seibert, Peterson & Schramm, 1956). Nonetheless, arguments about the exact balance between these two key points are still up for debate in the 21st century.

To an advocate of the Libertarian theory, the press serves as an “extralegal check” on government, exposing corruption and free from excessive central governmental control (Seibert, Peterson & Schramm, 1956, p. 56). Additionally, the media served the role of educator, providing the general populace with information and discussion on matters of public interest (Seibert et al., 1956).

The Libertarian theory trusts in the ability of individual self-determination to provide the best possible course for society as a whole. Over time, the criticism of the theory failing to provide a “stable formula to distinguish between liberty and the abuse of liberty” (Siebert, Peterson & Schramm, 1956, p. 71) led to the development of the Social Responsibility theory.

**The Social Responsibility Theory.** The 20th century led to a transition away from the pure Libertarian theory and to the emergence of what has been termed as the “social responsibility theory of the press” (Seibert, Peterson & Schramm, 1956, p. 73).

Seibert et al. (1956) wrote:

The theory has this major premise: Freedom carries concomitant obligations; and the press, which enjoys a privileged position under our government, is obliged to be responsible to society for carrying out certain essential functions of mass communication in contemporary society (p. 74).

In this role, the press accepts the same checking function prescribed in the Libertarian theory. However, the Social Responsibility theory posits that the press has been “deficient in performing those tasks” (Seibert et al., p. 74). One of the key limitations that was identified in the formation of the Social Responsibility theory was the lack of an established “code of ethics” that should guide press-state relations (Seibert et al., p. 83). This reflects not only the right to exercise freedom of the press, but also the incumbent responsibilities of this right (Seibert et al.).

One of the primary manifestations of this responsibility has been the evolution of what is now known as “objective reporting” (Seibert, Peterson & Schramm, 1956, p. 88).

The idea behind this is that the press should present all sides of a story for its readers. This should allow the individual to formulate ideas and viewpoints based upon “analysis and conscience” (Seibert et al., 1956, p. 96). However, this is balanced by the viewpoint that most citizens are “lethargic” in upholding their civic responsibilities (Seibert et al., p. 100). The press must then serve the function of prompting citizens to act through the dissemination of key information, to “goad him into the exercise of reason” (Seibert et al., p. 100).

**The Communist Theory.** The final theory of the press is the Communist/Soviet theory of press relations, which was en vogue at the height of the power of the Soviet Union. The theoretical underpinning for this theory can be found in the writings of Karl Marx, who advocated that “productive forces would always change faster than productive relations, throwing society out of balance” (Seibert, Peterson & Schramm, 1956, p. 109). This led to Marx’s belief that the masses (proletariat) should own the means of production, thus leading toward a classless society (Seibert et al., 1956).

In this classless society, the working class should own the press and treat it as just a logical extension of the state (Seibert, Peterson & Schramm, 1956). Additionally, the press “... is to contribute to the advance of the working class and world Communism in the class struggle, and to maintain and advance the power of the Soviets” (Seibert et al., 1956, p.122). The logical underpinning is that the collective is more important than the individual, which is in line with the ideal of the Authoritarian theory of the press.

## **The Rhetorical Presidency**

Having explored how the press views its relationship with government in theory, the logical transition is to analyze how the president interacts with the media. Ceaser, Thurow, Tulis, & Bessette (1987) described the idea that in modern America the role of the President is a “Rhetorical Presidency.” The authors define three key attributes that have given rise to the “Rhetorical Presidency.” The first attribute is the modern doctrine of presidential leadership, with the American public expecting the president to set goals and provide solutions to national problems. The second attribute is the development of mass media, which has provided immediate access to the public and changed the mode of communication from written to verbal. The final attribute is the modern electoral campaign, with presidential campaigns requiring national travel, public performances, image creation and articulation of problems and solutions.

The “Rhetorical Presidency” is more than just speeches and appearances; it also addresses the communicative attributes of both the institution and its occupants (Denton & Woodward, 1998). Denton and Woodward (1985) provide further amplification, stating that “The presidency is an office, a role, a persona, constructing a position of power, myth, legend, and persuasion” (p. 185). The President of the United States is the focal point of the American political system, with every action having symbolism because he is not only an executive, but also a carrier of meaning (Cook, 1998).

The modern president also often begins his initiatives with a series of public appeals in an attempt to build an initial base of support (Cook, 1998). In the conduct of

these events, the White House seeks to control journalist access in an effort to present a uniform message to journalists thereby focusing their attention and keeping them from covering a different story (Cohen, 2008). Cohen also found that this is paramount in a media age where the mass public has splintered into special interest publics, with very narrow political interests.

However, the president has the unique ability to muster the public's attention in crisis and wartime situations, with the public likely turn to the president for leadership to alleviate the fears and insecurities that these crises induce (Cohen, 2008). The president is also dual-hatted as the commander-in-chief, thus becoming the central decision maker in regards to war policy (Cohen). The media and other elites often take framing cues from government officials and from the White House, especially during wartime situations.

An off-shoot of the "Rhetorical Presidency" is the belief that a president is always in campaign mode. In his 1980 work entitled *The Permanent Campaign*, Sydney Blumenthal argued that persuasion is a key tenet of successful government. Blumenthal (1980) further explained the concept of the permanent campaign, stating that:

The permanent campaign is a political ideology of our age. It combines image-making with strategic calculation. Under the permanent campaign governing is turned into a perpetual campaign. Moreover, it remakes government into an instrument designed to sustain an elected official's public popularity. It is the engineering of consent with a vengeance (p. 23).

While it can be argued that a president should set aside politics upon his election to office, the need for the president to utilize public sentiment to pursue his or her respective agenda is growing (Ingold & Windt, 1987).

In the end, the use of persuasion is essential to presidential power. As Elmer Cornwell Jr. (1965) remarked:

The president's prime weapon for influencing policy-making is his ability to command and influence a national audience. Since little is likely to be done constitutionally to strengthen the president's hand, his ability to lead and mold public opinion, for all its inherent limitations, remains his prime reliance (p. 303).

Through this rhetoric, the president attempts to set the agenda for debate on key issues. As previously stated, the words and actions of the president are not delivered directly to individuals. The media provides the forum for reporting and interpreting these presidential statements.

### **The Negotiation of Newsworthiness**

Very few individuals are personally in the room to watch the president present a key speech; instead we are reliant upon the media for their reporting and presentation of the event. Based upon the time and space constraints of modern news, we receive a filtered presentation of an event such as a presidential speech. As described by the journalist Walter Lippmann (1930) "The world that we have to deal with politically is out of reach, out of sight, out of mind. It has to be explored, reported and imagined" (p. 29). The news as it is presented to us is less a direct reflection of the day's events and more of an interpretation of what the events means (Denton & Woodward, 1998). Framing

techniques provide a mechanism for reporters to craft a version of the news that is consumable to an audience.

Coverage of presidential speeches provide a robust opportunity for journalists to cast an interpretive lens and provide commentary and meaning to events. There is an ongoing relationship between journalists and political leaders in defining the parameters of access and coverage. Both political leaders and journalists have the responsibility of communicating complex and highly emotional events and ideas to the public (Denton & Woodward, 1998). Even though there is a mutual reliance upon one another, presidents and journalists have divergent interests in how news is presented. The president has political reasons for wanting a version of the news that places the best possible light on covering the events of the day (Cook & Ragsdale, 2000). Reporters based upon their commitment to serving audiences in a balanced fashion and partly based upon their personal aspirations are not always willing accomplices to the White House (Cook & Ragsdale, 2000).

This has given rise to what Cook and Ragsdale (2000) describe as a “negotiation of newsworthiness” (p. 328). These authors outline that this process involves what events are covered, who gets interviewed and for how long the story will be covered. This negotiation has four aspects: process, content, valence and result.

The White House press corps and the White House press office negotiate first over the actual *process* of their interactions; discussing items such as will the president be the messenger or surrogate and whether the exchange will be on-the-record or off-the-record (Cook & Ragsdale, 2000, p. 329). This negotiation has become of increased importance to the Office of the President as individual presidents have taken a more

activist role in attempting to enact their respective agendas (Neustadt, 1960). The challenge for activist presidents is to leverage their powers in an effort to persuade others to do what the president wants done (Cook & Ragsdale, 2000).

In an increasingly complex policy environment that places limits of presidential power based upon the increased number of individual actors that a president has to bargain with, going directly to the public via mass media has been adopted by presidents as a strategy to influence others en masse (Cook & Ragsdale, 2000, p. 331). Cook and Ragsdale also found that the use of speeches and appearances that generate news coverage, presidents attempt to set the policy agenda, put their spin on particular issues, raise the stakes of opposition to the presidential program and to create the perception of a public mood beneficial to their causes. Pfiffner (1998) surmises that “The picture that emerges is that presidents are much more personally involved in selling their policies to the American public than were presidents at midcentury, and that the selling is more retail than wholesale” (p. 38).

For journalists, the president provides the perfect source for information and viewpoints for utilization in the production of news stories. In their essay *The President and the Press*, Cook and Ragsdale (2000) state the following:

The president’s monopoly of good information and ability to regulate access to key executive branch newsmakers means that news opportunities can be meted out on a basis decided by the newsmakers themselves- as long as those newsmakers are aware of the habits and routines of the news media (p. 335).

Just because the president can get into the news cycle on a fairly continuous cycle does not automatically guarantee that this will be beneficial. As Neustadt (1983) commented

in an afterthought regarding *Presidential Power*; the president's "duties now include providing White House visuals for the network news most days of the week. No law requires it but woe betide the President who seeks to be selective about that!" (p. 2).

In reference to the negotiation of content, presidents and journalists engage in more specific negotiations about the content of the actual stories that will appear within the news (Cook & Ragsdale, 2000). Cook and Ragsdale also found that news is supposed to be both important and interesting, with the president having the greatest control in ascertaining importance and the media having the most impact on designating interest. This interplay is illustrated in a plaque that used to sit on the desk of President Reagan's chief White House spokesperson, Larry Speakes: "You don't tell us how to stage the news, and we won't tell you how to cover it" (Speakes).

Presidents can designate the importance of an issue in three basic ways (Cook & Ragsdale, 2000). The first way is through the actual selection or ignoring of a specific issue. Through the selection of a specific issue, the president defines it as inherently important. The second manner in which a president can designate importance is to stage an event that draws attention to a particular issue or concern. Cook and Ragsdale (2000) use the example of President Bush using an appearance in front of the Iwo Jima memorial to highlight his displeasure with a 1989 Supreme Court decision to strike down a Texas law banning the burning of the American flag as an unconstitutional restriction on free speech. The visual impact of the imagery of the president surrounded by American flags at a war memorial forced the press to provide maximum coverage to the event.

The third way that presidents use to influence the negotiation of news stories is through the selection of venues and events for involvement with the media (Cook &

Ragsdale, 2000). As demonstrated in the aforementioned example, Cook and Ragsdale found that President Bush used a public memorial event as a way to generate media coverage, yet avoid most direct questioning from the media on other issues.

In counter-balance, the media have the advantage of designating what is interesting and will be utilized for presentation. In particular, journalists rely on two sets of considerations when determining the interest in a story. The first consideration is that the news must conform to what Herbert Gans (1979) calls production considerations. Cook and Ragsdale (2000) build upon this thought, stating that “Journalists for all media presume that the more timely, clear-cut, easily described, vivid, colorful and visualizable something is, the more newsworthy it is to the reader” (p. 339). The more in synch that the president is to these metrics, the more likely that the issue or item that they want to have presented by the media will be selected.

The second consideration in selection of content revolves around the cultural standards and norm of what reporters deem makes a “good story.” An example of this norm was identified by Gans (1979) as the use of “enduring values,” such as stories that feature rugged idealism, individual determination and the highlighting of altruistic leaders in American life (p. 41-52). These narratives nest within the concept of framing by providing cognitive shortcuts for reporters to use as they prepare stories.

The third aspect of the negotiation of newsworthiness is valence, where the press is attempting to ascertain the validity of the event and the coverage to be provided. In the development of stories, reporters always look to highlight some opposition and conflict for either dramatic tension or for balance (Cook & Ragsdale, 2000). Cook and Ragsdale

found that this dynamic is especially strong in the area of foreign policy, where the indexing of media criticism of presidential policy is directly tied to the degree of dissent amongst Washington elites.

This negotiation is supported by the fact that White House press officers and reporters come from similar backgrounds; with most presidential press secretaries either being a former or future journalist (Cook & Ragsdale, 2000). This builds a camaraderie and recognition of what each side needs in order to accomplish its respective jobs. However, the tension exists between the office of the presidency and the press about who bares the primary responsibility of communicating to the American public (Cook & Ragsdale).

Helen Thomas, a reporter for United Press International captures the tension from the perspective of a reporter in the following commentary:

It's the arrogance of power. "We're in charge. It's our White House. What the hell are you doing here?" Basically toward the Press. "How dare you question anything we do?" They don't understand that the presidential news conference is the only forum in our society where a president can be questioned. If he's not questioned, he can rule by edict; by government order. He can be a monarch. He can be a dictator, and who is to find out? No. He should be questioned and he should always be able to willingly reply and answer to all questions because these aren't our questions. They're the people's questions (Thomas).

The press feels that it is its role not to always defer to the president's choice of venues and issues for discussion. If the press feels that an administration is relying too heavily

upon news conferences and other pre-scripted events, they will look to shift the dynamic and insert questions into the pre-scripted event (Cook & Ragsdale, 2000). While these do not happen regularly, they serve as a reminder of the ability of the press to shape the narrative for political coverage.

The final step in the negotiation of newsworthiness is the final news story itself, what Cook and Ragsdale have deemed to be the results (2000). Cook and Ragsdale's analysis also found that coverage of the president and his policies have long lasting consequences, yet the president cannot always use the news media to magnify their power on all issues.

However, the news media relies on the media as the main protagonist for much of their daily news coverage, relying upon presidential perspectives for developing understanding and perspectives. Cook and Ragsdale (2000) highlight this tension, stating that "Journalists demand presidential reaction and action concerning virtually any breaking news- from blizzards to bomb blasts" (p. 354). By this act, the news media actually elevates the importance and prestige of the presidency over other institutions within government.

### **Reframing Opportunities**

Existing policy frames are constantly being revised in order to adapt to changes in the political and social environment (Schnell & Callaghan, 2004). It has been suggested that critical events can alter or reframe the parameters of a policy debate (Kingdon, 1984; Birkland, 1997; Cobb & Elder, 1983). Examples of these critical events are natural catastrophes, hijackings and assassinations. Political elites can use such events to

influence public policy and mobilize public opinion in support of their objectives (Schnell & Callaghan, 2004).

These events introduce a fundamental difference in frames which is inconsistent with or unrelated to previous frames and thus have the capacity to reshape public opinion on issues (Schnell & Callaghan, 2004). Through the highlighting of specific aspects of a current policy issue that can be tied back to the event, political leaders can advance their interests and goals. The news media in turn become “massive search engines” looking for dramatic ways to frame the issues for consumption (Wolsfeld, 2003, p. 229).

In dealing with issues within the foreign policy and national security context, mainstream media typically show less independence in framing events. Instead, the media tends to rely upon high government officials to frame the news (Lawrence, 2010). Reporters and editors may see it as irresponsible to introduce perspectives that lie outside of the norm, what Hallin (1986) has described as the “sphere of legitimate controversy” (p. 116-117). This trait manifests itself prominently in a reluctance to challenge high officials during wartime (e.g., Aday, 2005). This can also be traced to the idea that raising questions that challenge the official position on foreign affairs can call into question the patriotism of journalists (Lawrence, 2010).

Robert Entman (2004) challenges this interpretation, stating that “the media should provide enough information independent of the executive branch that citizens can construct their own counterframes of issues and events” (p. 17). This is balanced by reporters taking care to deflect charges of irresponsibility when reporting critical matters of national security by hewing to the official line (Lawrence, 2010). When the media

focus on the frames and interpretations of the elites and officials in power they “privilege some definitions at the expense of others” (Kinder & Sanders, 1966, p. 163).

## **Chapter Four: Research Questions**

The purpose of this study is to analyze how mainstream national news media covered and described two separate presidential addresses marking transitional points during Operation Iraqi Freedom. The significance of this study is to depict how the media utilized framing techniques to construct the narrative that was presented to the public in regards to presidential statements on national security.

I derived the three research questions below through a review of the relevant literature related to frame theory and relationships between the press and governmental actors. The questions will allow for a thorough vetting of how the narrative was molded and presented in regard to key national security policy addresses. The public's acceptance of a narrative can serve as a benchmark of either continued or eroding support for a governmental policy.

1. How did mainstream news media frame their coverage of President Bush's "Mission Accomplished" speech?
2. How did mainstream news media frame their coverage of President Obama's speech on Aug. 31, 2010 declaring the cessation of combat operations in Iraq?
3. Did the primary frames utilized in the coverage of President Bush's speech offer an opportunity for journalists to reframe the coverage of President Obama's speech?

## Chapter Five: Method

According to Tuchman (1978), mass media actively set the frames of reference that readers or viewers use to interpret and discuss public events. “We must be sensitive to the ways in which the media function as subjective gatekeepers selecting negative stories over positive ones, or engage in valence framing of events, as compared with the independent effects of events themselves” (Aday, 2005, p. 147).

This study employed a qualitative content analysis of four leading mainstream media sources as a sample. High circulation newspaper coverage was examined through the following exemplars: *USA Today*, *the New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, and *The Washington Post*. These four high circulation newspapers are ranked within the top ten for national circulation (“Audit bureau of circulation” 2010) and have the staff and resources to provide in-depth coverage of major events. Additionally, each of these newspapers is highly regarded for their political coverage.

I reviewed all related pre-speech articles published between August 24-31, 2010 on the aforementioned sites President Obama’s speech on 31 August, 2010; while post-speech coverage focused on articles published between September 1-7, 2010. For President Bush’s speech on 1 May, 2003; I reviewed content published between April 25-May 1, 2003 for pre-speech analysis. The post-speech analysis covered the timeframe of May 2-8, 2003. My analysis focused on the emergent frames are depicted within the media sources under study.

In an effort to be as comprehensive as possible, I accessed stories using three separate databases: Access World News, Lexis/Nexis and ProQuest. I utilized multiple keyword searches: “Iraq”, “President”, “Bush”, “Obama”, and “speech”. The choice of keywords was driven by the idea to focus my research on content most related to the specific speeches and their respective impacts on the events surrounding Operation Iraqi Freedom. The focus is on media coverage of the particular speeches themselves as a manner of showing the negotiation for control of the narrative.

In my content analysis, I reviewed baseline news copy coverage of the speech. The baseline coverage captures the basic tone and tenor of the speech with embedded commentary that provides some depth of analysis. After a detailed initial reading of the articles, I utilized Altheide’s (1996) qualitative content analysis format to develop the proposed research protocol. See Appendix A for proposed protocol template. The establishment of this protocol allowed for the emergence of the most relevant meanings and emphasis within each article based upon text, narrative and description (1996). Through multiple reviews of each article, I identified the primary frames that newspaper writers perceived to be utilized within the respective speeches. These frames are built upon the individual reporters’ utilization of key words, terms, quotes and concepts within their articles (Berg, 2001; Creswell, 2007). This demonstrates a specific saliency for certain information over others, with frames highlighting certain features of reality while minimizing or ignoring others (Entman, 1993).

Frame theory has been one of the key areas utilized to study political communications. According to Kuypers (2009, p. 182), framing serves as the “process whereby communicators, consciously or unconsciously, act to construct a point of view

that encourages the facts of a given situation to be interpreted by others in a particular manner.” The news articles that I analyzed reflect the exploration by individual reporters of these “points of view” within the context of the news cycle.

Kuypers (2009, p. 182) further expands the purpose of frames, stating that they operate in a manner to “define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments, and suggest remedies.” Within the context of the ongoing events surrounding both speeches, the analysis of frames reflected the primary themes that media sources identified in their coverage.

Frames are built upon previous knowledge and existing cultural norms, so it is important to analyze whether the frames utilized within a speech are aligned with the beliefs and mood of the target audience on a key issue. (Snow et al, 1986, p. 477) argue that when individual frames become linked this produces “frame resonance” that allows groups to transition from one frame to another.

Frame resonance is often achieved as frames become aligned to individual expectations. The purpose of both speeches were to mark a transitional event in the United States involvement in Iraq, so analysis through frame alignment provides insights on how the news media portrayed the speech to the American public.

In a previous qualitative pilot study of President Obama’s speech, I identified the following three frames that were utilized in the immediate coverage: the economic consequences frame, the responsibility frame and the compromise frame. The economic frame emerged based upon the emphasis on key economic information such as unemployment and economic underperformance being counter-balanced by the cost of combat operations. The responsibility frame emerged within multiple articles, with

reporters pinpointing the need for the Iraqi government to assume a leadership role in governance balanced against the belief that the Iraqi leadership cannot meet this mantle. The final frame that emerged in my previous analysis of President Obama's speech was a compromise frame which outlined a cost versus benefit analysis of the United States involvement in Iraq. The cost versus benefit analysis that most reporters described in their coverage was one of the American military power being stretched to a breaking point and of a need to lessen global responsibilities. I built upon these during my ongoing analysis in order to provide a richer understanding of how journalists utilized key frames to inform the American public.

**Table 1. Article listing by Newspaper Source per Speech**

	<b>New York Times</b>	<b>Los Angeles Times</b>	<b>Washington Post</b>	<b>USA Today</b>
<b>Bush Pre-Speech Articles</b>	Bumiller, E./ Bush Makes Tax Cut Pitch to Ohioans/ 25 April, 2003	Chen, E. & Hook, J./ The Nation: Bush Launches Tax Cut Offensive/ 25 April, 2003	DeYoung, K./ Powell Presses Chile, Mexico-Security Council Members Urged to Support U.S. in Iraq/ 29 April, 2003	Jones, D./ How's USA's first MBA president doing/ 25 April, 2003
	Rosenbaum, D./ Leaders of Congress Pledge Tax Cut, but how Big?/ 27 April, 2003	Chen, E./ Bush Tour to Swing West; the president is set to make campaign-style appearances in California after a stop in Michigan to visit with Arab Americans/ 26 April, 2003	Blustein, P./ Trade Accords Become a U.S. Foreign Policy Tool- Pact with War Supporter Singapore Gets Expedited, but deal with Opponent Chile is Delayed/ 29 April, 2003	Keen, J./ Bush says \$550B tax cut will boost economy/ 25 April, 2003
	Stevenson, R./ Aftereffects: The President- Bush, Visiting Michigan, Promises All Iraqis a Voice in a New Government/ 29 April, 2003	Chen, E./ Bush Delivers Message of Inclusion; President tells Michigan Arab Americans that all Iraqis will have a voice in the new government/ 29 April, 2003	Allen, M. & Weisman, J./ Bush Eager to Preserve Bulk of Tax Cut Package; President May Address Nation on Plan, Iraq War/ 24 April, 2003	

<p>Jehl, D. &amp; Perlez, J./ Aftereffects: Transition-Pentagon Sending a Team of Exiles to Help Run Iraq/ 26 April, 2003</p>	<p>Schrader, E./ Factory Workers Had Tank Crews' Backs Covered; President Bush praises employees of an Ohio plant who produced a new protective grille for the Abrams vehicles lightly armored rears/ 25 April, 2003</p>	<p>Kamen, A./ Gingrich Hits You-Turn at Foggy Bottom/ 25 April, 2003</p>	
<p>Weisman, S./ Aftereffects: Washington-Under Fire, Powell Receives Support from White House/ 24 April, 2003</p>	<p>Chen, E./ After the War; Bush: No Signs Yet of Illegal Weapons/ 25 April, 2003</p>	<p>Reel, M./ Another Senior Iraqi is Detained- Ambassador Held High Post in Intelligence/ 26 April, 2003</p>	
<p>Aftereffects- Bush May Declare Victory Thursday/ 26 April, 2003</p>		<p>Goldstein, A./ Bush Seeks Support of U.S. Arabs- Michigan Community Applauds Hussein's Ouster, U.S. Military Presence in Iraq/ 29 April, 2003</p>	
<p>Eaton, L./ Aftereffects: The Demonstrators- A Flashback to the 60's For an Antiwar Protestor/ 27 April, 2003</p>		<p>Kessler, G./ Powell Able to Return Attention to Mideast Plan/ 24 April, 2003</p>	

	Bumiller, E./ Aftereffects: White House Memo- Bush Shows Looser Side in an Interview		Segal, D./ Dixie Chicks Bare Their, Uh, Souls-Band Counters Critics of Antiwar Remarks/ 25 April, 2003	
			Milbank, D./ Bush: Iraq May Have Destroyed Weapons; President Says There's 'Some Evidence' that Saddam Hussein May Be Dead/ 25 April, 2003	
			Pincus, W./ U.S. Still Has Not Found Iraqi Arms- Search Goes On for Weapons Powell Cited/ 26 April, 2003	
			Pincus, W. & Priest, D./ U.S. Hopes Top Iraqi Captives Help Prove Bush's Prewar Case/ 26 April, 2003	
			Pincus, W./ Adviser Says He Saw Hussein on April 6/ 29 April, 2003	
<b>Bush Post Speech Articles</b>				
	<b>New York Times</b>	<b>Los Angeles Times</b>	<b>The Washington Post</b>	<b>USA Today</b>

<b>Bush Post-Speech Articles</b>	Nagourney, A./ The Nation: Guns, Butter and Hope-Listen Up, Democrats: Why 2004 Isn't 1992/ 4 May, 2003	Reynolds, M./ The Nation: Bush is Sounding Like a Candidate; In a Silicon Valley visit, the president hails the U.S. victory over Iraq and touts his tax cut plan as the cure for the area's economic woes/ 3 May, 2003	Balz, D. & Morin, R./ Like Father, Bush Gets Postwar Boost- But Poll Finds Concerns About Economy and Rebuilding of Iraq Cast a Shadow/ 2 May, 2003	Benedetto, R./ Rising unemployment highlights need for tax cuts, Bush says/ 3 May, 2003
	Jehl, D./ Aftereffects: Postwar Plans-Iraq's U.S. Overseer is Praised by Rumsfeld/ 3 May, 2003	Reynolds, M./ After the War; Finding Arms Called 'A Matter of Time'; Bush expresses confidence that U.S. forces will locate arsenals of mass destruction he says were hidden by Hussein/ 4 May, 2003	DeYoung, K. & Weisman, J./ Bush Urges Passage of Tax Plan- President Cites Rising Unemployment in Call for Action/ 3 May, 2003	Benedetto, R./ Bush asks citizens to press Congress for new tax cuts/ 5 May, 2003
	Gordon, M./ Aftereffects; The Military-Between War and Peace/ 2 May, 2003	Drogin, B./ After the War; Iraqi Scientists Cautiously Consider Surrender; Several Senior Weapons Experts Call Former U.N. Inspectors,	Allen, M./ Bush Names Iraq Administrator- Longtime Diplomat Bremer Becomes Presidential Envoy/ 7 May, 2003	Benedetto, R. & Drinkard, J./ Bush urges Congress to approve 'robust tax relief'/ 6 May, 2003

		Seeking Guidance on Whether to Give Themselves Up/ 5 May, 2003		
Shanker, T./ Aftereffects: Celebrations- pentagon Officials Want Cities to Take the 'Victory' Out of Their Victory Parades/ 4 May, 2003	Meyer, J./ After the War; U.S. Choice for Iraq Post Seen as Wise Pick; Veteran diplomat's strengths as a tough administrator will serve him well, his backers say/ 2 May, 2003	Morgan, D./ Deciding Who Rebuilds Iraq is Fraught With Infighting/ 4 May, 2003	Bush: 'Enemies of Freedom are not Idle and neither are we'/ 2 May, 2003	
Stevenson, R./ Aftereffects: The President- White House Clarifies Bush's Carrier Landing/ 7 May, 2003	Rotella, S./ After the War; Britain's Iraqi Exiles Eager to Return Home; Many in the Expatriate Community are hoping to take part in their native land's rebuilding/ 7 May, 2003	Layton, L./ The USS Lincoln is Homeward Bound-Crew Ecstatic as Carrier Heads Back to its Port After 10-Month Absence/ 2 May, 2003	Benedetto, R. & / McQuillan, L. Bush Hails Win, Looks Ahead/ 2 May, 2003	

<p>Sanger, D./ Aftereffects: The President- Bush Says It Will Take Time to Find Iraq's Banned Arms</p>	<p>Gorman, A. &amp; Reynolds, M./ After the War; Bush Hails Victory in Iraq; Aboard a Returning Carrier, The President Tells Cheering Crew that U.S. Forces Have Brought About a 'Turning of the Tide' Against Terrorism/ 2 May, 2003</p>	<p>Harden, B./ Together Again, but Worlds Apart-Joy is Mixed With Anxieties for Reunited Navy Families/ 7 May, 2003</p>	<p>Raasch, C./ Bush, Standing on a Symbol of American Might, Delivers Cautious Assessment of Iraq/ 2 May, 2003</p>
<p>Gordon, M. w/Schmidt, E./ Aftereffects: The New Strategy- U.S. Plans to Reduce Forces in Iraq, With Help of Allies/ 3 May, 2003</p>	<p>Rosenburg, H./ Television &amp; Radio; When No News is Big News/ 5 May, 2003</p>	<p>Allen, M./ Expert on Terrorism to Direct Rebuilding/ 2 May, 2003</p>	<p>Raasch, C./ Bush's Tax Challenge May Be Larger Than Persuading Nation to go to War/ 5 May, 2003</p>
<p>Bumiller, E./ Aftereffects: News Analysis- Cold Truth Behind the Pomp/ 2 May, 2003</p>		<p>Smietana, B./ Keeping Attention on Iraq's Recovery- Interfaith Summit Backs U.N. Role/ 3 May, 2003</p>	<p>S.C. Lawmakers Support Bush's Iraq Policy, U.S Troops/ 2 May, 2003</p>
<p>Sanger, D./ Aftereffects: The Scene- In Full Flight Regalia, the President Enjoys a 'Top Gun' Moment/ 2 May, 2003</p>		<p>DeYoung, K./ Bush Proclaims Victory in Iraq- Work on Terror is Ongoing, President Says/ 2 May, 2003</p>	<p>N.J. Lawmakers Say Rebuilding Iraq Will Take Time/ 2 May, 2003</p>

	Sanger, D./ Aftereffects: The President- Bush Declares 'One Victory in a War on Terror'/ 2 May, 2003		Allen, M./ Ship Carrying Bush Delayed Return-Carrier That Spent Night off San Diego Could Have Gone Straight to Home Port/ 8 May, 2003	N.C. Lawmakers Support Troops/ 2 May, 2003
			Milbank, D./ Explanation for Bush's Carrier Landing Altered/ 7 May, 2003	New York Lawmakers Discuss What's Next for Iraq/ 2 May, 2003
			Milbank, D./ The Military is the Message- Triumphant President Casts Strong Image for '04 Election/ 2 May, 2003	Florida Lawmakers React to Bush's Speech/ 2 May, 2003
			Milbank, D./ For Bush, the Military is the Message for '04/ 2 May, 2003	Bustos, S./ El Paso Lawmakers Warn Democracy in Iraq Will Take Years/ 2 May, 2003
			Shales, T./ Aboard the Lincoln, A White House Spectacular/ 2 May, 2003	Blain, G./ N.Y. Lawmakers Say Much Work Remains in Iraq/ 2 May, 2003

			Lei, R./ Birth Pangs- As a New Era Dawns in Baghdad, Life Goes On-- Sometimes, Just Barely/ 5 May, 2003	Despite U.S. Military Success, New War Policy Poses Risks/ 2 May, 2003
			Gitlin, T./ The War's Over, But the Fighting's Getting Worse/ 4 May, 2003	
<b>Obama Pre-Speech Articles</b>				
	<b>The New York Times</b>	<b>The Los Angeles Times</b>	<b>The Washington Post</b>	<b>USA Today</b>
<b>Obama Pre-Speech Articles</b>	Baker, P./ Winning, Losing and War/ 29 August, 2010		Kornblut, A./ Obama Speech on Iraq Carries Some Pitfalls/ 31 August, 2010	Hall, M. & Micheals, J./ Iraq Seven Years Later: Was the War Worth It?/ 26 August, 2010
	Shadid, A./ Commander Sees Delay for New Iraqi Government/ 30 August, 2010		Shear, M./ For Obama, A Chance to Regain Some Political Momentum- Stakes are High in Iraq Transition, Middle East Peace/ 24 August, 2010	Gaudio, N./ Biden's Diplomatic Skills Tested Anew as Iraq Struggles to Define Itself/ 26 August, 2010
	Cooper, H. & Gordon, M./ Obama to Speak of Kept Promises in Address on Ending Combat Mission in Iraq/ 31 August, 2010			Hall, M./ Obama's Address on Iraq One Task in Busy Week/ 30 August, 2010

	Calmes, J./ End of Combat: Obama to Speak on Iraq/ 26 August, 2010			
	Calmes, J./ Obama, Mindful of Elections and Weak Reports, Holds Economic Talks/ 26 August, 2010			
	Baker, P./ A Wartime Chief's Steep Learning Curve/ 29 August, 2010			
	Shadid, A./ Militants Show Might, Striking in 13 Iraq Cities/ 26 August, 2010			
<b>Obama Post-Speech Articles</b>				
	<b>The New York Times</b>	<b>The Los Angeles Times</b>	<b>The Washington Post</b>	<b>USA Today</b>
<b>Obama Post-Speech Articles</b>	Sanger, D./ Bucking History, Obama Tries to Make Progress on Several Fronts in Mideast/ 1 September, 2010	Parsons, C. & Richter, P./ Obama looks to home front; He declares combat over in Iraq and U.S. economy his 'central responsibility'/ 1 September, 2010	Fadel, L./ As Obama declares end of combat in Iraq, its citizens move forward with uncertainty/ 1 September, 2010	Hall, M./ 'It is time to turn the page'; President looks toward economy and Afghan war/ 1 September, 2010

	Gordon, M./ In Baghdad, U.S. Officials Take Note of Milestone/ 2 September, 2010	McManus, D./ Obama's bottom-line strategy; War policy and the defense budget will be analyzed for their economic impact/ 2 September, 2010	Stuever, H./ Obama's Oval Office address: Closure, without a real close/ 1 September, 2010	Page, S./ Obama: Time for the Iraqis to take reins; In a careful address, president refrains from saying Iraq was 'won'/ 1 September, 2010
	Stolberg, S./ Obama to Unveil Plans to Shore Up Economy/ 4 September, 2010		Londono, E./ An anxious exit for the Iraq war's last general/ 5 September, 2010	Michaels, J./ Military begins last phase in Iraq- Combat over, Odierno hands over command/ 2 September, 2010
	Bumiller, E./ Gates Offers Cautious Views on Afghan and Iraq Wars/ 4 September, 2010			Combat mission ends, but Iraq's fate remains uncertain/ 1 September, 2010
	Stolberg, S./ For President and Predecessor, A Chill Returns/ 2 September, 2010			Raasch, C./ Declarations aside, war is the new norm/ 2 September, 2010
	Cooper, H. & Stolberg, S./ Obama Declares an End to Iraq Combat Mission/ 1 September, 2010			

	Burns, J./ Witnessing the Arc Of a Costly Conflict/ 1 September, 2010			
	Shadid, A./ After Years of War in Iraq, Few See a Brighter Future/ 1 September, 2010			
	<b>The New York Times</b>	<b>The Los Angeles Times</b>	<b>The Washington Post</b>	<b>USA Today</b>
<b>Article Totals</b>	33	14	33	25

## Chapter Six: Results and Discussion

### President Bush Pre-Speech Frames

Twenty-seven articles were discovered that had content which fell within the search parameters described earlier related to President Bush's pre-speech coverage. During my analysis, I found that the following three frames began to emerge: Economic Consequences, Human Interest and War Progress. I describe each in detail, starting with the Economic Consequences frame.

**The Economic Consequences Frame.** One of the most frequently highlighted issues in pre-speech coverage was a discussion of the economy in comparison with the ongoing conflict in Iraq. The use of economic impacts to frame issues is a common practice. This corresponds with the economic consequences frame described in the book *Common knowledge: News and the construction of political meaning* (Neuman et al. 1992). Broadly defined, the economic consequences frame describes content in terms of economic costs and consequences. At the time of his speech, President Bush was receiving tepid support for his economic agenda, especially his efforts to pursue a large tax cut (Allen & Weisman, 2003, A.3; Chen & Hook, 2003, A.1; Keen, 2003, 10a; Rosenbaum, 2003, 39; Weisman, 2003, 20). Eight articles highlighted how the President attempted to utilize war successes and metaphors in an attempt to garner support for his economic policies.

This tactic was highlighted by comments made by Treasury Secretary John Snow, who stated that “We cannot afford to fail the American people, especially our troops overseas” during his discussion of the Bush tax cut plan before an Orlando, Florida Chamber of Commerce meeting (Rosenbaum, 2003, p. 39). The Bush tax cut plan proposal was for savings of \$550 billion over ten years, while the competing plan accounted for only \$350 billion over the same time period.

During a public appearance at a ball bearing factory in Ohio, President Bush directly challenged those who did not support his tax plan, stating that “Some in Congress say the plan is too big. Well, it seems like to me they might have some explaining to do” (Chen & Hook, 2003, p. A.1). By going directly to the American public, President Bush was trying to place additional pressure on Congress through the American voter. This was highlighted in an unattributed quote from a well-placed Bush official, who stated that the philosophy was “to mobilize the most important pressure group Congress has: all of America” (Allen & Wiseman, 2003, p. A.3).

Coverage also reflected tepid public support for these tax efforts. A USA Today/CNN/Gallup poll reported on April 25, 2003 that 56% of Americans believed that the economy was in a recession and more than half polled believing that President Bush was out of touch with everyday citizens’ concerns (Keen, 2003, p. 10A). The same poll highlighted how economic concerns can outweigh foreign policy concerns, with 53% of Americans stating that the economy will most sway their individual voting decisions (Keen, 2003). National security related concerns finished second in the same poll, with 36% claiming that these concerns will drive voting patterns.

One of the unique coincidences of the fact that President Bush served as the Commander-in-Chief during Operation Iraqi Freedom is the fact that his father, George Herbert Walker Bush served as president during the first Gulf War. Numerous articles focused on this unique niche of history, using this type of commentary to provide a human interest perspective to the nature of conflict. Each president pursued combat operations in Iraq during the first term of their presidency, with President George H.W. Bush losing the subsequent election because of economic concerns.

Elisabeth Bumiller (2003) in her article entitled *Bush Makes Tax Cut Pitch to Ohioans* highlighted that numerous senior Republican strategists viewed a lack of political action on the economy as political suicide, advising President Bush to capitalize on the success of combat operations to push his economic agenda. Bumiller noted in the same article that the “specter of the first President Bush, who lost the White House after his victory in the 1991 Persian Gulf War in large part because voters viewed him as weak on the economy” as one of the driving forces behind Republican leadership concerns at this junction (p.28).

**The Human Interest Frame.** A reoccurring aspect of several news stories was the use of individual human interest vignettes to demonstrate the impacts of Operation Iraqi Freedom at the macro-level. This frame can be correlated with the human interest frame described by Powers, Price, and Tewksbury in their 1997 article entitled *Switching Trains of Thought: the Impact of News Frames on Reader's Cognitive Responses*. As described in the article, reporters can use this frame to build interest in a concept or topic by relating it to the plight or trials of an individual (Powers et al., 1997). In the context of pre-speech coverage, this frame can be sub-divided broadly into stories that show the

negative impacts that surrounded any opposition to the war and the impacts of the war on those who have children, spouses or other relatives serving.

I will first describe the stories that highlighted some of the negative impacts of opposing the war. One of the most publicized anti-war protests was when Dixie Chicks singer Natalie Maines announced during a London show on March 10 that the group was “ashamed that the president of the United States is from Texas” (Segal, 2003, p. C.1). The resulting negative impact ranged from the group being called traitors to some radio stations banning their music (Segal, 2003). The Dixie Chicks were not the only individuals to have spoken out against the war, but the majority of coverage had focused on presenting positive war coverage.

Ground-level anti-war protests were highlighted in an article by Leslie Eaton (2003), who described the efforts of Brett Bursey to show his opposition to President Bush’s policies in Columbia, South Carolina. Bursey had been arrested for his efforts to protest during an October 24, 2002 visit by President Bush to Columbia, South Carolina. While the incident was not directly related to an anti-war effort, the selection of this topic by the reporter reflected a strategic decision to focus on a human dynamic. This offered the reporter the opportunity to describe how the Bush Administration had been utilizing techniques such as “increased arrests and interrogations of protesters and shunning of celebrities who have opposed the war in Iraq” (Eaton, 2003, p. 27). Numerous groups such as the American Civil Liberties Union had expressed concerns about these tactics as an effort to marginalize “free speech” (Eaton, 2003). These are prime examples of the previously highlighted idea of “objective reporting, where a reporter specifically selects a

frame that counters the established frames. By doing this, the reporter has presented both sides of the story to the public for their consideration.

The final human interest aspect that was highlighted in the lead up to President Bush's speech was the use of spouses, parents and relatives of American service-members serving in Iraq. One example surrounded President Bush's visit to a Lima, Ohio Army tank plant where modifications and parts for the M1 Abrams tank were built. One of the plant's welders, Mark Springer, had a son serving in Iraq as a M1 Abrams tank commander. President Bush is quoted as saying "The next time, Mark, you communicate with Josh (his son), you tell him the Commander-in-Chief came to Lima to say how proud I am of his service and the others' service to our country" (Schrader, 2003, p. A.10).

**The War Progress Frame.** This frame can be further delineated by a division between an analysis that re-examined the justifications used by the Bush Administration for combat operations in Iraq and a separate critique of progress in Iraq. I will first discuss the coverage of the justifications and rationale provided by the Bush Administration for commencing combat in Iraq.

One of the main purposes utilized by representatives of the Bush Administration was the presence of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) in the Iraqi government of Saddam Hussein. During the coverage of the lead up to President Bush's speech, news coverage began to focus on the fact that these types of weapons had not been found. Most of the commentary focused on the speech that Secretary of State Colin Powell had made to the United Nations General Assembly on February 5, 2003.

Walter Pincus wrote in an article published on April 26, 2003 that unnamed senior officials have yet to produce any of the weaponry or chemical or biological agents described in Secretary Powell's speech. Pincus (2003) continued on, noting that the rocket launchers and warheads containing biological warfare agents that Secretary Powell described in precise detail had yet to be discovered.

In an additional article published by Pincus and Priest on April 26, the use of information provided by Senior Iraqi government officials who had been detained was being vetted in an effort to prove pre-war claims. The article outlines an effort by officials to be "preparing the public for the possibility that they might fail to find bombs, missiles and artillery shells filled with chemical or biological agents, or to find records or other evidence further linking Iraq to the al Qaeda terrorist network" (Pincus & Priest, 2003, p. A.14). Later in the article, unnamed senior officials provide further clarification, stating that "... such weapons were destroyed before U.S.-led forces took control of the country, and that only high-level Iraqi officials can lead them to evidence that they once existed" (Pincus & Priest, 2003).

This same line of reasoning was echoed in an article by Dana Milbank published on April 25; outlining that President Bush described the same possibility during a speech at an appearance in Ohio. Milbank utilized the following quote from President Bush to highlight the weapons issue: "It's going to take time to find them. But we know he had them. And whether he destroyed them, moved them or hid them, we're going to find out the truth" (2003, p. A.10). Milbank notes in his article that this is the first time that a Bush Administration official has backtracked on the WMD claim.

The second tier of War Progress frame is caveated in the manner through which reporters attempted to analyze post-conflict reconstruction efforts in Iraq. Douglas Jehl and Jane Perlez (2003, p. 1) outlined a fractured structure headed by officials selected by the Department of Defense; specifically describing the initial efforts as “Two weeks after the end of the fighting, they seem as ill-equipped as the Iraqis they had come to help”.

The U.S. Government established a temporary American-led government that was to take up positions at 23 key Iraqi governmental ministries. This group was to answer to Jay Garner, a retired Lieutenant General who was appointed as the “day-to-day” administrator in Iraq. Jehl and Perlez (2003, p. 1) provide further amplification about the group’s efforts, stating that they had been “assembled two months ago and have been working from an office in Suburban Virginia.” At the time that this article was published, members of the group were just beginning to arrive in Baghdad.

In an article published on April 29, Richard Stevenson used the following comments from President Bush to highlight the reconstruction effort. “Every day, Iraqis are moving toward democracy and embracing the responsibilities of active citizenship. Every day, life in Iraq improves as coalition troops work to secure unsafe areas and bring food and medical care to those in need” (p. 19). This speech was presented to a gathering of Iraqi immigrants in the Dearborn, Michigan area which contains a very large Muslim-American community.

### **President Bush Post-Speech Frames**

Forty-nine articles were found that fell within the search parameters described earlier in this paper related to the post-speech coverage of President George W. Bush’s speech on May 1, 2003. During my content review, three dominant frames emerged: The

“Top Gun” frame, the “Permanent Campaign” frame and what I will broadly define as the “Human Cost” frame. I will describe each frame in detail, starting with the “Top Gun” frame.

**The Top Gun Frame.** Twelve articles focused on what can broadly be described as the military pageantry and showmanship that accompanied the speech by President Bush. President Bush declared victory in Iraq aboard the U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier, actually landing in an S-3B Viking submarine reconnaissance aircraft (Gorman & Reynolds, 2003, A.1; McQuillan & Benedetto, 2003, 1A; Raasch, 2003a; Sanger, 2003, 17). After President Bush landed with the aircraft, he “emerged for photographs that other politicians can only dream about” (Sanger, 2003, p. 17).

This scene was coined President Bush’s “Top Gun” moment (Sanger, 2003, p. 17) after the 1986 movie “Top Gun” that starred Tom Cruise in the leading role as a navy fighter pilot ("Imdb- top gun (1986)" ). The landing was a strategically staged event that served as a marker to bring closure to offensive combat operations in Iraq and symbolically declare victory (McQuillan & Benedetto, 2003, p. 1A). In fact, it was noted that the speech was the first by a president aboard a moving aircraft carrier (Gorman & Reynolds, 2003, A.1; Benedetto & McQuillan, 2003, 1A).

The meaning and imagery was dissected in some coverage, running the gamut from positive to negative. The positive coverage highlighted the aspects of President Bush as a wartime president fulfilling his role as Commander-in-Chief. Michael Deaver, who served as a speech writer for President Ronald Reagan, stated the following in regard to the speech: “It has a huge visual impact. This is a powerful, powerful visual, not only of Bush as commander-in-chief, but also his strength as a world leader” (Milbank,

2003, p. A24). Historian Douglas Brinkley was also quoted, declaring that this moment was a “trophy” for the victorious war president (Milbank, 2003, p. A24).

The negative coverage focused on certain aspects of the television coverage, with Howard Rosenberg (2003) providing the following commentary:

Amazing, isn't it? Watching CNN's patsies do giddy cartwheels on the deck of the aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln for a couple of hours prior to President Bush's arrival there Thursday evening affirmed how easy it remains for the White House--any White House, regardless of the party- to command attention and manipulate the major media (p. E.12)

This sentiment was echoed by Tom Shales (2003), who stated that “There were several eloquent turns of phrase in the address... they were overwhelmed by the visual impact...” (p. C1)

Shales (2003) continued his analysis of the visual imagery surrounding the speech, summarizing that:

As was painfully obvious before the president even opened his mouth, this was not just a speech but a patriotic spectacular, with the ship and its crew serving as crucial backdrops for Bush's remarks, something to cheer the viewing nation and to make Bush look dramatically commander-in-chiefly (p. C1)

The idea that the speech and scene were written and developed like a Hollywood production echoed in other coverage, being referred to as “presidential political theater” (Bumiller, 2003, p. 1).

The pageantry and showmanship of the speech naturally transitions to the idea that presidential politics never stops. The next election is always right around the corner,

so events and speeches provide the forums to talk through the press directly to the American voting public.

**The Permanent Campaign Frame.** As previously discussed, the new political cycle has forced politicians to continue to seek publicity and campaign constantly in an effort to achieve both their political policy goals and to prepare for the next election. Coverage of President Bush's speech also focused on this dynamic, describing the speech and visuals within the context of this cycle.

Robert Schmuhl, author of the book *Statecraft and Stagecraft*, stated that "This was the kind of day that was planned with tomorrow's news coverage and campaign spots in mind" (Benedetto & McQuillan, 2003, p. 1A). This imagery and the surrounding coverage echoes back to the description of the "Top Gun" frame, with President Bush cultivating a "aggressive, can-do image... that is sure to appear in future campaign ads" (DeYoung, 2003, p. A1).

Media critic Tom Shales continued this debate, commenting that "It was a White House Production and just as surely marked the president's re-election campaign as it did the end to, as Bush phrased it "major combat operations" in Iraq" (2003, p. C1). This type of coverage was presented in additional articles against the backdrop of a competing narrative presented by Congressional Democratic leaders such as Robert Byrd and Henry Waxman, both staunch critics of President Bush. Senator Byrd referred to the incident during a speech on the senate floor as "an affront to the Americans killed or injured in Iraq for the president to exploit the trappings of war for the momentary spectacle of a speech" (Milbank, 2003, p. A20). Another criticism leveled was the overall cost of the events surrounding the speech, with democratic leaders such as Representative Henry

Waxman asking the Congressional Budget Office for a “full accounting” (Milbank, 2003, p. A20).

The economic undercurrent was also present in the “permanent campaign” frame, with the backdrop of the ongoing debate about the size and scope of tax cuts that were proposed by President Bush. In the immediate aftermath of the speech, President Bush faced a sluggish economy with an unemployment rate of 6% (Reynolds, 2003, p. A.18) and a deficit of \$400 billion (Raasch, 2003, para. 15). President Bush utilized a series of speeches and appearances in the immediate aftermath of the speech on the U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln to define his economic policies within the context of national security concerns (Balz & Morin, 2003, A.26; Benedetto, 2003a, 2003b; Benedetto & Drinkard, 2003, 13A; Raasch, 2003b; Reynolds, 2003, A.18).

Coverage of these speeches provided concrete examples of this synthesis. President Bush utilized this line of reason during an appearance in Silicon Valley, California on May 2; noting that “We’ve come through some hard times. Remember, we’ve overcome a recession. We’ve overcome an attack on our soil. We have been in two major battles in the war against terror, one in Afghanistan, one in Iraq” (Reynolds, 2003, p. A.18). President Bush was proposing a \$726 billion tax cut in an effort to stimulate the economy, while both fellow Republicans and Democrats offered competing smaller plans. In a subsequent speech in Little Rock, Arkansas; President Bush continued to pursue the same line of reasoning, stating that “We need robust tax relief, we don’t need a small tax-relief package” (Benedetto & Drinkard, 2003, p. 13A).

The interesting dynamic that is woven throughout both the war success and economic impact narratives is the comparison of President George W. Bush’s handling of

the situation with the way that his father, George H.W. Bush handled the same type of circumstances in the election cycle that followed his stewardship of the First Gulf War.

One reporter summarized the situation as follows:

President Bush is using the tax debate in speeches laden with symbolism to try and avoid the mistakes of his father from 12 years ago. The senior Bush won the Persian Gulf War but lost re-election in 1992 when he appeared to be distant from the human fallout from the 1991 recession (Raasch, 2003, para. 4).

This commentary ties directly back to the permanent campaign frame, with the specter of falling prey to some of the same mistakes of a previous president confronted with a series of similar circumstances providing a backdrop to the actions of a sitting president. The human factor and individual costs of war cannot be captured simply in economic terms. The human scale and dynamics for both U.S. military personnel and Iraqi citizens provided fertile reporting in the aftermath of President Bush's speech.

**The Human Interest Frame.** As outlined in the section discussing pre-speech coverage, the human interest frame allows reporters the ability to build interest within readers on topics through the use of specific individual vignettes (Powers et al., 1997). In the days following President Bush's speech, the scope of ongoing military operations continued to be a focus area for press coverage. The official U.S. Military policy was summarized by Brigadier General Daniel Hahn, chief of staff for the U.S. Army's V Corps who stated that "We are moving into stability operations, and stability operations are characterized by momentary flare-ups of violence. It will look at times like we are still at war" (Gordon, 2003, p. 1). The planning and conduct of the stability operations

began to receive increased reporting, starting with the composition of the reconstruction team itself.

The initial reconstruction efforts were led by U.S. Army retired Lieutenant General Jay Garner under the umbrella of the Pentagon's Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA). ORHA efforts were under criticism almost immediately, highlighted by commentary that focused on a lack of post-war planning and bureaucratic infighting (Allen, 2003, A1).

In an article entitled *Deciding who Rebuilds Iraq is Fraught with Infighting*, Dan Morgan (2003) portrays the Bush Administration cobbling together "a new, makeshift bureaucracy that has recruited retired generals and diplomats, government technocrats, oil executives and even a university president to usher in a new democratic Iraq" (p. A.31). A series of bureaucratic battles between the Department of Defense and Department of State senior leadership also hampered the effectiveness of organizations such as the ORHA in trying to organize activities in post-war Iraq (Morgan, 2003, A.31; Meyer, 2003, A.9; Allen, 2003, A1; Jehl, 2003, 8).

Journalist Richard Lei (2003) of the Washington Post depicted the life of a newly liberated Iraqi citizen in an article entitled *Birth Pangs- As a New Era Dawns in Baghdad, Life Goes On—Sometimes Just Barely*. In the article, he outlines families struggling to find power, drinking water and medical services. A father pacing a ward in a children's hospital in Baghdad states that "We hear about the humanitarian aid, but that is only for the TV and the pictures" (Lei, 2003, p. C1). Later in the same article, an Iraqi citizen comments to a reporter upon seeing a U.S. Soldier that "You should be our savior. No one provides for us." (2003, p. C1).

In addition to a lack services and order in Iraq, the human impact of war was explored within multiple articles. A couple of articles focused on individual stories related to crew members were serving on the U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln.

While President Bush's visit yesterday sent the senior officers into a frenzy of preparation, several enlisted men and women said they were more thrilled by the idea of returning to loved ones, long showers, real beds and home-cooked meals (Layton, 2003, p. A25).

The U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln and crew had been on mission for 10 months, marking the longest deployment by a Navy ship in 30 years (Harden, 2003, A21). The rebalancing of family actions was highlighted; with mentions made of fixing flat tires, celebrating anniversaries and birthdays alone and buying new houses alone (Harden, 2003, A21).

### **President Obama Pre-Speech Frames**

Twelve articles were found that fell within the search parameters described earlier in the paper related to coverage leading up to President Obama's speech on September 1, 2010. The following two major frames emerged during my review of the aforementioned articles: an apathy frame and a responsibility frame. The apathy frame reflects content and commentary that addressed an overall weariness of actions surrounding Operation Iraqi Freedom for both Americans and Iraqis alike. The readiness frame encapsulates content that focuses on the ability and willingness of senior leaders and governmental officials in Iraq to take responsibility for running their country. I will initially explore the apathy frame in more detail, followed by a discussion of the responsibility frame.

**The Apathy Frame.** The United States had been at war for almost 9 years by the time President Obama made his speech if you start your clock in the aftermath of

September 11, 2001. According to results of a USA Today poll published on August 26, 2010; 60% of those polled answered “No” when asked “Do you think the situation in Iraq was worth going to war over?” (Hall & Michael, 2010, para. 11). Similar majorities shared a sentiment that the Iraq War did not make the United States safer from terrorism or made no difference in this pursuit (Hall & Michael, 2010).

The seven years of fighting in Iraq had cost the lives of more than 4,400 U.S. military personnel and budget estimates ranged in excess of \$748 billion, making this the most expensive war apart from World War II in current dollars (Hall & Michael, 2010). Yet, numerous articles posed the question of whether this cost would be worth an outcome that might not be determined for decades. Notre Dame political scientist Mike Desch summarized the following when discussing how he felt President Obama would outline the end of combat operations in Iraq:

No serious person thinks that Iraq is won by any means. I think he’ll try to take the middle road where he’ll argue that we’ve done all we can, the Iraqis are as ready as we can make them, but their fate ultimately rests in their own hands (Hall, 2010, para. 12).

These comments reflect a viewpoint that the Iraq war was not a victory, but instead a compromise and process to end conflict.

Another article captured a quote by a U.S. Soldier finally exiting Iraq, stating that “We won! It’s over! America, we brought democracy to Iraq!” (Baker, 2010, p. 1). In a subsequent paragraph, President Obama is quoted as describing his goal in Iraq as “responsibly ending this war” (Baker, 2010). These types of vignettes were often followed by a comparison of the events surrounding President Obama’s speech with

President George Bush's previous speech. Helene Cooper (2010) encapsulated this sentiment by stating that President Obama will strike a "promises-kept theme" and will steer clear of any outright declaration of victory (p. 9). In two articles, Press Secretary Robert Gibbs is specifically quoted in reference to staying away from the "Mission Accomplished" mantra saying that "You won't hear those words coming from us" (Hall, 2010, para. 7 & Baker, 2010, p. 1).

**The Responsibility Frame.** In the lead-up to President Obama's speech, a series of articles explored both the capacity and willingness of senior Iraqi governmental officials to assume leadership roles as the departure of U.S. forces became prevalent. This type of coverage can be correlated to the responsibility frame, which is defined as laying responsibility on a specific individual, group, or community (Iyengar, 1992).

One of the highlighted areas was the fact that Vice-President Biden was dispatched to Iraq in an effort to "nudge" Sunni, Shia and Kurdish factions of the Iraqi government toward a power-sharing agreement (Guadiano, 2010, para. 2). This vacuum had been in place since the elections that had occurred in Iraq in the March timeframe and the ongoing tensions offered a concrete example of why United States military forces might have to remain in country.

In providing commentary after an insurgent attack against 13 Iraq cities on August, 25, 2010; Wael Abdel-Latif was quoted as saying:

The message that the insurgents want to deliver to the Iraqi people and politicians is that we exist, and we chose the time and place. They are carrying out such

attacks when the Americans are still here, so imagine what they can do after the Americans leave (Shadid, 2010, p. 1).

The question of whether Iraqi security forces, both army and police, were even capable of protecting their citizens was often called into question. In fact, it could be argued that security conditions for the average citizen in Iraq were in direct contrast to the rhetoric surrounding the withdrawal of U.S. troops.

U.S. military officials were quoted as saying that insurgent forces only numbered in the “hundreds”, usually accompanied by pronouncements that leaders and cadres within the insurgent ranks have been arrested or killed in American-Iraqi joint operations (Shadid, 2010, p. 1). Opposing viewpoints offered by average citizens often pointed to an expectation that conditions would not change no matter what the pronouncements outlined. Khalil Ahmed, an engineer, was quoted as follows in the aftermath of an August 25<sup>th</sup> bomb blast in Baghdad: “It’s always the same, it won’t change. Neither will it get better nor will it get worse” (Shadid, 2010, p. 1). Later in the same article, Shadid expresses the sentiment that most Iraqi citizens were bracing for further attacks and a continued lack of services and support.

In a second article published on August 30, 2010; Anthony Shadid revisits these same topics in his coverage of the change of U.S. military leadership within Iraq from General Ray Odierno and General Lloyd Austin. In the context of his article, Shadid describes how U.S. officials had pressured Iraqi leaders to set a government in place prior to President Obama’s speech on September 1, 2010. General Odierno highlighted the possible impacts of this stalemate, stating the following:

The longer that takes, the more frustrated they might get with the process itself. What I don't want is for them to lose faith in the system, the democratic system, and that's the long-term risk, do they lose faith in the process (Shadid, 2010, p. 8).

This sentiment reflects an embedded concern within the ranks of the U.S. military about the fragility of the gains established in Iraq. In leading up to the speech, the situation was summarized by Lawrence Kolb, a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress, who stated that "Regardless of who's in charge, it's really up to the Iraqis. The United States has pretty much done what it can" (Guadiano, 2010, para. 27).

### **President Obama Post-Speech Frames**

Utilizing a content analysis of the 18 articles that covered President Obama's speech marking the cessation of combat operations in Iraq, I analyzed the predominant frames utilized by each respective writer to provide the necessary context. The initial frames utilized by reporters were two common journalistic frames: economic consequences (Neuman et al. 1992) and responsibility (Iyengar, 1987, 1991).

**The Economic Consequences Frame.** Twelve articles contained at least passing mention of the current economic hardships facing the United States in discussing the reasons troop withdrawals. "While acknowledging President George W. Bush's commitment to U.S. security and support for American Troops, Obama sketched a damning picture of the conflicts effect on the economy" (Parsons and Richter, 2010, p. A1). At the time of President Obama's speech, the unemployment rate was sitting at 9.6%, with 14.8 million Americans out of work (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010). This, coupled with an estimated fiscal cost of over \$742 Billion dollars ("Cost of

war”, 2010), demonstrates the fiscal costs associated with Operation Iraqi Freedom. The combination of these two numbers reflected the numerical equation that President Obama faced at the time of his speech. “Obama said his ‘most urgent task’ now will be jump-starting the economy and getting millions of unemployed Americans back to work” (Hall, 2010, p. 1A).

The tone of economic stress was also reflected within article titles that were used in two stories. McManus (2010, p. A23) entitled his article *Obama’s bottom-line strategy; War policy and the defense budget will be analyzed for their economic impact*, while Parsons and Richter (2010) entitled their article *Obama looks to home front: He declares combat over in Iraq and the U.S. economy his ‘central responsibility.’* By stressing the economic costs of combat operations in conjunction with stressing the ongoing economic problems facing the overall United States economy, the reporting placed the reader in the context to view the economic consequences as a rationale for cessation of combat operations in Iraq.

**The Responsibility Frame.** The next frame featured within the context of speech coverage was the responsibility frame. The responsibility frame is defined as laying responsibility on a specific individual, group, or community (Iyengar, 1992). In the coverage of President Obama’s August 31<sup>st</sup> speech, the fact that the leadership of Iraq regained sovereignty for its own affairs was a re-occurring premise. This was best expressed in the Los Angeles Times article by Parsons and Richter where they quoted Steven Cook, who serves as a Mideast specialist at the Council of Foreign Relations. Cook noted that there was a broad U.S. consensus that it was time for Iraqis to handle their own affairs (Parsons & Richter, 2010, p. A1).

The idea that Iraqis should assume the mantle of leadership was counterbalanced by the fact that the Iraqi government had been battling internal divisions since elections in March, 2010. This was noted in a New York Times stating “The question is whether the American public is willing to see more money and lives spent there while Iraqi politicians argue (Sanger, 2010, p.11). This represents the idea that the American public was tiring of committing resources to a fight that pulled from their own daily struggles. “If Iraq fails to meet that responsibility, there are new and real limits to what the United States will do about it” (Page, 2010, p. 7A). This passage hints at the fact that the United States has domestic problems that needed to be addressed outweighed the necessity to remain in Iraq for an extended time period.

**Frame transformation and the Compromise Frame.** Frame transformation is defined as the “morphing of an existing frame based upon current conditions” (Snow et al, 1986, p. 473). Coverage of the speech mainly focused on the ongoing economic struggles that the United States was facing; offering this context to explain the rationale behind the United States ending its involvement in Iraq. This tenet was highlighted in a USA Today story that quoted President Obama saying that “his ‘most urgent task’ will be jump-starting the economy and getting millions of unemployed Americans back to work” (Hall, 2010, p. 1A). Four of the articles that I analyzed specifically referenced the fact that the word victory was not used within the speech, with one news story stating that “Still, Mr. Obama is loath to declare anything resembling victory” (Sanger, 2010, p. 11).

Compromise emerges as the most prevalent frame, with coverage highlighting the President’s usage of this idea. Parsons and Richter (2010) highlighted this paradigm through the use of the following quote from President Obama’s speech:

We have spent over a trillion dollars at war, often financed by borrowing from overseas. This in turn has shortchanged investments in our own people and contributed to record deficits. For too long, we have put off tough decisions on everything from our manufacturing base to our energy policy to education reform (p. A.1).

In the text of this quote, you can see the narrative emerging that the government and leaders of the United States must begin to make hard choices and prioritize where to invest and spend money.

McManus (2010) also provides commentary, describing the fact that “the occasion (speech) gave Obama a chance to talk about what may be his favorite and most important national security goal: reducing the costs of U.S. foreign and military strategy so they no longer drain the domestic economy” (p. A23). The compromise frame articulates the idea that the cost versus benefit equation in conducting the war had turned toward a lessening of United States involvement. “Obama is about fighting terrorism with one eye on the balance sheet, and another supporting democracy where it can be done at a low cost” (McManus, 2010, p. A23).

The idea of compromise was also demonstrated in the discussion of how the concepts of “victory” and “closure” were framed in coverage. Hank Stuever (2010) noted in his article entitled *Obama’s Oval Office address: Closure, without a real close* that “President Obama dealt out a therapeutic, paternal sense of closure” (p. C1). In drawing a comparison with President Bush’s earlier speech, Stuever comments that “When you stride across an aircraft carrier under ‘Mission Accomplished’ signage, you have the stuff of closure without real closure, as we painfully know” (p. C1).

The use of the word “victory” was also heavily debated within coverage of President Obama’s speech, particularly in contrast to how President Bush had used the term in his speech declaring combat operations completed in Iraq. The focus seemed to be on closing out a chapter of history quietly rather than any type of celebration. “Rather than winning, Mr. Obama describes his goal as ‘responsibly ending this war’” (Baker, 2010, p. 1).

In defining the terms of whether victory was achieved in Iraq, retired Army Lieutenant General James Dubik stated that “The bottom line is that it’s too soon to tell. Wars are not won by just the fighting” (Michael & Hall, 2010, para. 35 ). Dubik further amplified these thoughts by stating that it would probably take 20 years to play out, with a mix of diplomatic and economic efforts required. (Hall & Michaels, 2010). By highlighting the debate surrounding the concepts of “victory” and “closure” media coverage has framed the cessation of combat operations in Iraq as neither a win nor a loss. Instead, the frame is one of compromise, where the future outcome is uncertain and the current proposition is based upon an unwillingness to continue to commit.

## **Chapter Seven: Conclusion**

Political communication provides the mechanism for the leaders of the United States to conduct their dialogue with its citizens. This analysis identified the predominant frames that were utilized in the coverage of both President Bush's speech on May 1, 2003 and President Obama's August 31, 2010, speech both addressing the cessation of combat operations in Iraq.

The major frames addressed in the coverage surrounding both speeches reflect the power and immediacy that the President can have when attempting to control the debate surrounding a foreign policy issue. This study uncovers multiple frames that were utilized in an effort to present nuanced perspectives on these speeches.

Particularly in the post-speech coverage of President Bush's speech, we saw a vivid example of the ongoing battle to frame events occurs between the press and the office of the President on how the content should be presented to the public. By choosing to conduct a landing and address on an aircraft carrier, the imagery and practicality of addressing controversial topics was stymied by the Bush administration. In this instance, the Bush administration was able to frame the event in a manner that was conducive to the type of coverage and framing that it desired. In a less direct manner, it can be argued that President Obama also utilized this concept by choosing the formal setting of the Oval Office to limit access. In the aftermath of each speech, the media then went through the

process of analyzing the respective speeches through the presentation counter-arguments and other related facts. This falls directly in-line with the concept of the “negotiation of newsworthiness” where the location and dynamics surrounding the speech limited the access and ability of the press to directly question. The interaction is a series of negotiations over who controlled the agenda, what could be asked, where and how and what was a suitable response (Cook, 1998).

In most instances, this negotiation is never truly balanced. For example, in the early parts of military action press access can be limited due to security concerns, the press often forced to rely upon the government’s narrative. This allows a certain set of frames that tend to be more favorable to the government to be utilized. However, as time passed and access often increased, mainstream press sources now have a wider purview to challenge the government’s frames and develop their own frames that can often serve as a counter-balance. Thus, while politicians may dictate the conditions and rules for access for certain key issues and events, it is the reporter’s responsibility to determine whether an event warrants coverage and development of the coherent story (Cook, 1998).

What was also demonstrated by each President in each speech was an effort to use the respective moment to attempt to garner support for policies that were considered unpopular at the time, in both cases these were in reference to economic policies. This corresponds to the previously discussed theory of the “Rhetorical Presidency” where the president chooses specific topics to focus the public’s attention on the issues to be discussed and analyzed (Denton & Woodward, 1998). Large scale national addresses such as a prime-time presidential address provide the president with unrivaled access to propagate the series of frames and ideas that support their objectives and goals. Through

this technique, the president can attempt to set the “national agenda” in an effort to garner support for a key issue (1998, p. 47). While there was a marked difference in how each president addressed economic policies, with President Obama directly referencing economic issues within his address and President Bush using post-speech events to discuss his initiatives, some of the mainstream media coverage directly focused on this issue.

Each speech can be further examined within the context of the “public mood” at the time, with the United States celebrating victory with President Bush and seeking closure with President Obama. Each speech reflected the correct tone and tenor for their respective time periods, showing that both leaders had the pulse of the public within the United States. President Bush presented a speech at a time of great excitement, where the speed of initial offensive combat operations had excited the American Public that desperately wanted success. Yet, when President Obama addressed the same topic some seven years later, he found a country that now questioned the premise and outcome of combat operations in Iraq.

The ability of the presidents to use the “public mood” to his respective advantage in pursuing policy objectives was also demonstrated in the coverage of the speeches. The reoccurring frame of coverage of combat operations through the lens of the economic consequences frame provides a useful technique to analyze how this concept can influence policy decisions. In the coverage of both speeches, numerous articles discuss how both presidents and their respective administrations wanted to change the parameters of discussion to economic factors to appease the U.S. public or how reporters themselves wanted to highlight the economic costs of combat operations. Coverage of President

Bush's speech did not hesitate to accentuate the fact that he was a "war-time" president, using the bully pulpit to pursue other policy objectives such as aggressive tax cuts. In facing a lukewarm Congress, he sought to mobilize the public by linking these policies to the war effort. The coverage of President Obama's speech showed that he faced a much different public mood. The public was weary of war, so instead of using the war as a positive centerpiece to pursue other policies, he used the cessation of operations to make the case for making investments in other venues. In each instance, the linkage of specific policy objectives to the current situation in Iraq allowed each president an opportunity to pursue ideas based upon the corresponding circumstances.

In each of the cases above, mainstream media coverage was able to recognize that each president was attempting to frame respective policy objectives within the context of the situation in Iraq. Mainstream media coverage did not always agree with the respective frames that each president was trying to present to the public, often choosing to highlight conflicting positions from other sources to counter the positions and ideas that the president outlined. This clearly corresponds with the Social Responsibility theory of the press, with mainstream press sources utilizing the tenets of "objective reporting" to present differing viewpoints (Seibert, Peterson & Schramm, 1956, p. 88). Through the technique of "objective reporting", the press can serve as what has been deemed as a "checking value" (Blasi, 1977) against leaders. This theory posits that premised upon the vision that citizens should view public officials as potential oppressors rather than agents acting for the common good (Blasi, 1977).

While I am in agreement that the press should serve as an aggressive watchdog against the possible excesses of those in power, often times the frames that are presented

in mainstream media coverage tend to trend to the opposite extreme. In this instance, the press will overuse the tenets of diagnostic framing, where the press only looks to cast blame and present only a counter-view point to the established governmental frame. It often seems that the average citizen is not presented with a nuanced position from which to form an opinion or belief, but is instead confronted with an either/or proposition. An absolutist proposition does not provide any real call to action, instead just pointing to issues without presenting remedies of solutions.

The use of the human interest framing technique can serve as a mechanism to humanize conflict and war, which can often seem like an abstract concept to many. These frames offered the reader snapshots of how people deal with the stresses and strains, which is particularly useful during a time when less than 10% of the U.S. population either are currently serving in the military or are veterans of service ("Usa quickfacts from," 2011). I am personally concerned about the frames that both the press and government officials promulgate in relation to service members as a military officer. The framing of the role and actions of the U.S. Military by both the press and government can have a direct impact on public sentiment and accountability. It is incredibly important that the U.S. military is always accountable to the public, so it is my hope that in the development of framing devices that we are not just presented as a convenient prop or foil to the public.

The press coverage of these two speeches attempts to catalogue a specific moment in time marking the proposed end of combat hostilities in Iraq. The fact that two president's had to make a speech marking this point during Operation Iraqi Freedom underscores the complexity and cost of war. Maybe the best way to capture the

ambivalence that most Americans feel about Operation Iraqi Freedom is included in the following quote from Marine Colonel (Retired) Alan Baldwin, who stated that “We opened Pandora’s box. Lots of bad things were flying out of there. But good things are there now too. It’s amazing that we had the patience to be where we are today” (Baker, 2010, p. 1).

As captured in this study, the press performs a vital role in presenting an interpretation of the events of the day. Through analysis utilizing Frame Theory, I was able to cull the dominant frames that played a vital role in constant balancing act between government and the press. These frames serve as a key component in how the public views the context of a conflict and whether they will actively support or reject this context. As we just passed the ten-year anniversary of the attacks of September 11, 2001, the role of how Operation Iraqi Freedom is tied to that seminal event is still actively being debated. By the end of 2011, all United States combat forces are expected to be out of Iraq. Only time will tell the impacts on both the United States and Iraq.

The limitations of this research are that the findings themselves cannot be generalized due to use of a qualitative methodology as well as the limited sample size of newspapers utilized. Future research can build upon these findings by possibly expanding the sample size through either the additional of additional media sources or through the extension of the date range surrounding each speech. Additionally, further research can more directly focus upon how the “public mood” places a pivotal role in providing boundaries for both the media and government to use frames.

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## **Appendix A. Proposed Qualitative Research Analysis Protocol Template (Altheide, 1996)**

1. Medium (Newspaper, web page)
2. Date of article
3. Location of article (page or webpage section)
4. Length (Word Count)
5. Title or emphasis, focus or main topic
6. Source(s)
7. Theme
8. Frame
9. Brief summary of the article

## **Appendix B. President Bush announces major combat operations in Iraq have ended: Remarks by the President from the U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln at sea off the coast of San Diego**

Thank you all very much. Admiral Kelly, Captain Card, officers and sailors of the USS Abraham Lincoln, my fellow Americans: Major combat operations in Iraq have ended. In the battle of Iraq, the United States and our allies have prevailed. And now our coalition is engaged in securing and reconstructing that country.

In this battle, we have fought for the cause of liberty, and for the peace of the world. Our nation and our coalition are proud of this accomplishment -- yet, it is you, the members of the United States military, who achieved it. Your courage, your willingness to face danger for your country and for each other, made this day possible. Because of you, our nation is more secure. Because of you, the tyrant has fallen, and Iraq is free.

Operation Iraqi Freedom was carried out with a combination of precision and speed and boldness the enemy did not expect, and the world had not seen before. From distant bases or ships at sea, we sent planes and missiles that could destroy an enemy division, or strike a single bunker. Marines and soldiers charged to Baghdad across 350 miles of hostile ground, in one of the swiftest advances of heavy arms in history. You have shown the world the skill and the might of the American Armed Forces.

This nation thanks all the members of our coalition who joined in a noble cause. We thank the Armed Forces of the United Kingdom, Australia, and Poland, who shared in the hardships of war. We thank all the citizens of Iraq who welcomed our troops and

joined in the liberation of their own country. And tonight, I have a special word for Secretary Rumsfeld, for General Franks, and for all the men and women who wear the uniform of the United States: America is grateful for a job well done.

The character of our military through history -- the daring of Normandy, the fierce courage of Iwo Jima, the decency and idealism that turned enemies into allies -- is fully present in this generation. When Iraqi civilians looked into the faces of our servicemen and women, they saw strength and kindness and goodwill. When I look at the members of the United States military, I see the best of our country, and I'm honored to be your Commander-in-Chief.

In the images of falling statues, we have witnessed the arrival of a new era. For a hundred of years of war, culminating in the nuclear age, military technology was designed and deployed to inflict casualties on an ever-growing scale. In defeating Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan, Allied forces destroyed entire cities, while enemy leaders who started the conflict were safe until the final days. Military power was used to end a regime by breaking a nation.

Today, we have the greater power to free a nation by breaking a dangerous and aggressive regime. With new tactics and precision weapons, we can achieve military objectives without directing violence against civilians. No device of man can remove the tragedy from war; yet it is a great moral advance when the guilty have far more to fear from war than the innocent.

In the images of celebrating Iraqis, we have also seen the ageless appeal of human freedom. Decades of lies and intimidation could not make the Iraqi people love their oppressors or desire their own enslavement. Men and women in every culture need liberty like they need food and water and air. Everywhere that freedom arrives, humanity rejoices; and everywhere that freedom stirs, let tyrants fear.

We have difficult work to do in Iraq. We're bringing order to parts of that country that remain dangerous. We're pursuing and finding leaders of the old regime, who will be held to account for their crimes. We've begun the search for hidden chemical and biological weapons and already know of hundreds of sites that will be investigated. We're helping to rebuild Iraq, where the dictator built palaces for himself, instead of hospitals and schools. And we will stand with the new leaders of Iraq as they establish a government of, by, and for the Iraqi people.

The transition from dictatorship to democracy will take time, but it is worth every effort. Our coalition will stay until our work is done. Then we will leave, and we will leave behind a free Iraq.

The battle of Iraq is one victory in a war on terror that began on September the 11, 2001 -- and still goes on. That terrible morning, 19 evil men -- the shock troops of a hateful ideology -- gave America and the civilized world a glimpse of their ambitions. They imagined, in the words of one terrorist, that September the 11th would be the "beginning of the end of America." By seeking to turn our cities into killing fields, terrorists and their allies believed that they could destroy this nation's resolve, and force our retreat from the world. They have failed.

In the battle of Afghanistan, we destroyed the Taliban, many terrorists, and the camps where they trained. We continue to help the Afghan people lay roads, restore hospitals, and educate all of their children. Yet we also have dangerous work to complete. As I speak, a Special Operations task force, led by the 82nd Airborne, is on the trail of the terrorists and those who seek to undermine the free government of Afghanistan. America and our coalition will finish what we have begun.

From Pakistan to the Philippines to the Horn of Africa, we are hunting down al Qaeda killers. Nineteen months ago, I pledged that the terrorists would not escape the patient justice of the United States. And as of tonight, nearly one-half of al Qaeda's senior operatives have been captured or killed.

The liberation of Iraq is a crucial advance in the campaign against terror. We've removed an ally of al Qaeda, and cut off a source of terrorist funding. And this much is certain: No terrorist network will gain weapons of mass destruction from the Iraqi regime, because the regime is no more.

In these 19 months that changed the world, our actions have been focused and deliberate and proportionate to the offense. We have not forgotten the victims of September the 11th -- the last phone calls, the cold murder of children, the searches in the rubble. With those attacks, the terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States. And war is what they got.

Our war against terror is proceeding according to principles that I have made clear to all: Any person involved in committing or planning terrorist attacks against the American people becomes an enemy of this country, and a target of American justice.

Any person, organization, or government that supports, protects, or harbors terrorists is complicit in the murder of the innocent, and equally guilty of terrorist crimes.

Any outlaw regime that has ties to terrorist groups and seeks or possesses weapons of mass destruction is a grave danger to the civilized world -- and will be confronted.

And anyone in the world, including the Arab world, who works and sacrifices for freedom has a loyal friend in the United States of America.

Our commitment to liberty is America's tradition -- declared at our founding; affirmed in Franklin Roosevelt's Four Freedoms; asserted in the Truman Doctrine and in Ronald Reagan's challenge to an evil empire. We are committed to freedom in Afghanistan, in Iraq, and in a peaceful Palestine. The advance of freedom is the surest strategy to undermine the appeal of terror in the world. Where freedom takes hold, hatred gives way to hope. When freedom takes hold, men and women turn to the peaceful pursuit of a better life. American values and American interests lead in the same direction: We stand for human liberty.

The United States upholds these principles of security and freedom in many ways -- with all the tools of diplomacy, law enforcement, intelligence, and finance. We're working with a broad coalition of nations that understand the threat and our shared

responsibility to meet it. The use of force has been -- and remains -- our last resort. Yet all can know, friend and foe alike, that our nation has a mission: We will answer threats to our security, and we will defend the peace.

Our mission continues. Al Qaeda is wounded, not destroyed. The scattered cells of the terrorist network still operate in many nations, and we know from daily intelligence that they continue to plot against free people. The proliferation of deadly weapons remains a serious danger. The enemies of freedom are not idle, and neither are we. Our government has taken unprecedented measures to defend the homeland. And we will continue to hunt down the enemy before he can strike.

The war on terror is not over; yet it is not endless. We do not know the day of final victory, but we have seen the turning of the tide. No act of the terrorists will change our purpose, or weaken our resolve, or alter their fate. Their cause is lost. Free nations will press on to victory.

Other nations in history have fought in foreign lands and remained to occupy and exploit. Americans, following a battle, want nothing more than to return home. And that is your direction tonight. After service in the Afghan -- and Iraqi theaters of war -- after 100,000 miles, on the longest carrier deployment in recent history, you are homeward bound. Some of you will see new family members for the first time -- 150 babies were born while their fathers were on the Lincoln. Your families are proud of you, and your nation will welcome you.

We are mindful, as well, that some good men and women are not making the journey home. One of those who fell, Corporal Jason Mileo, spoke to his parents five days before his death. Jason's father said, "He called us from the center of Baghdad, not to brag, but to tell us he loved us. Our son was a soldier."

Every name, every life is a loss to our military, to our nation, and to the loved ones who grieve. There's no homecoming for these families. Yet we pray, in God's time, their reunion will come.

Those we lost were last seen on duty. Their final act on this Earth was to fight a great evil and bring liberty to others. All of you -- all in this generation of our military -- have taken up the highest calling of history. You're defending your country, and protecting the innocent from harm. And wherever you go, you carry a message of hope -- a message that is ancient and ever new. In the words of the prophet Isaiah, "To the captives, 'come out,' -- and to those in darkness, 'be free.'"

Thank you for serving our country and our cause. May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless America.

## **Appendix C. Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the end of combat operations in Iraq**

Good evening. Tonight, I'd like to talk to you about the end of our combat mission in Iraq, the ongoing security challenges we face, and the need to rebuild our nation here at home.

I know this historic moment comes at a time of great uncertainty for many Americans. We've now been through nearly a decade of war. We've endured a long and painful recession. And sometimes in the midst of these storms, the future that we're trying to build for our nation -- a future of lasting peace and long-term prosperity -- may seem beyond our reach.

But this milestone should serve as a reminder to all Americans that the future is ours to shape if we move forward with confidence and commitment. It should also serve as a message to the world that the United States of America intends to sustain and strengthen our leadership in this young century.

From this desk, seven and a half years ago, President Bush announced the beginning of military operations in Iraq. Much has changed since that night. A war to disarm a state became a fight against an insurgency. Terrorism and sectarian warfare threatened to tear Iraq apart. Thousands of Americans gave their lives; tens of thousands have been wounded. Our relations abroad were strained. Our unity at home was tested.

These are the rough waters encountered during the course of one of America's longest wars. Yet there has been one constant amidst these shifting tides. At every turn, America's men and women in uniform have served with courage and resolve. As

Commander-in-Chief, I am incredibly proud of their service. And like all Americans, I'm awed by their sacrifice, and by the sacrifices of their families.

The Americans who have served in Iraq completed every mission they were given. They defeated a regime that had terrorized its people. Together with Iraqis and coalition partners who made huge sacrifices of their own, our troops fought block by block to help Iraq seize the chance for a better future. They shifted tactics to protect the Iraqi people, trained Iraqi Security Forces, and took out terrorist leaders. Because of our troops and civilians -- and because of the resilience of the Iraqi people -- Iraq has the opportunity to embrace a new destiny, even though many challenges remain.

So tonight, I am announcing that the American combat mission in Iraq has ended. Operation Iraqi Freedom is over, and the Iraqi people now have lead responsibility for the security of their country.

This was my pledge to the American people as a candidate for this office. Last February, I announced a plan that would bring our combat brigades out of Iraq, while redoubling our efforts to strengthen Iraq's Security Forces and support its government and people.

That's what we've done. We've removed nearly 100,000 U.S. troops from Iraq. We've closed or transferred to the Iraqis hundreds of bases. And we have moved millions of pieces of equipment out of Iraq.

This completes a transition to Iraqi responsibility for their own security. U.S. troops pulled out of Iraq's cities last summer, and Iraqi forces have moved into the lead

with considerable skill and commitment to their fellow citizens. Even as Iraq continues to suffer terrorist attacks, security incidents have been near the lowest on record since the war began. And Iraqi forces have taken the fight to al Qaeda, removing much of its leadership in Iraqi-led operations.

This year also saw Iraq hold credible elections that drew a strong turnout. A caretaker administration is in place as Iraqis form a government based on the results of that election. Tonight, I encourage Iraq's leaders to move forward with a sense of urgency to form an inclusive government that is just, representative, and accountable to the Iraqi people. And when that government is in place, there should be no doubt: The Iraqi people will have a strong partner in the United States. Our combat mission is ending, but our commitment to Iraq's future is not.

Going forward, a transitional force of U.S. troops will remain in Iraq with a different mission: advising and assisting Iraq's Security Forces, supporting Iraqi troops in targeted counterterrorism missions, and protecting our civilians. Consistent with our agreement with the Iraqi government, all U.S. troops will leave by the end of next year. As our military draws down, our dedicated civilians -- diplomats, aid workers, and advisors -- are moving into the lead to support Iraq as it strengthens its government, resolves political disputes, resettles those displaced by war, and builds ties with the region and the world. That's a message that Vice President Biden is delivering to the Iraqi people through his visit there today.

This new approach reflects our long-term partnership with Iraq -- one based upon mutual interest and mutual respect. Of course, violence will not end with our

combat mission. Extremists will continue to set off bombs, attack Iraqi civilians and try to spark sectarian strife. But ultimately, these terrorists will fail to achieve their goals. Iraqis are a proud people. They have rejected sectarian war, and they have no interest in endless destruction. They understand that, in the end, only Iraqis can resolve their differences and police their streets. Only Iraqis can build a democracy within their borders. What America can do, and will do, is provide support for the Iraqi people as both a friend and a partner.

Ending this war is not only in Iraq's interest -- it's in our own. The United States has paid a huge price to put the future of Iraq in the hands of its people. We have sent our young men and women to make enormous sacrifices in Iraq, and spent vast resources abroad at a time of tight budgets at home. We've persevered because of a belief we share with the Iraqi people -- a belief that out of the ashes of war, a new beginning could be born in this cradle of civilization. Through this remarkable chapter in the history of the United States and Iraq, we have met our responsibility. Now, it's time to turn the page.

As we do, I'm mindful that the Iraq war has been a contentious issue at home. Here, too, it's time to turn the page. This afternoon, I spoke to former President George W. Bush. It's well known that he and I disagreed about the war from its outset. Yet no one can doubt President Bush's support for our troops, or his love of country and commitment to our security. As I've said, there were patriots who supported this war, and patriots who opposed it. And all of us are united in appreciation for our servicemen and women, and our hopes for Iraqis' future.

The greatness of our democracy is grounded in our ability to move beyond our differences, and to learn from our experience as we confront the many challenges ahead. And no challenge is more essential to our security than our fight against al Qaeda.

Americans across the political spectrum supported the use of force against those who attacked us on 9/11. Now, as we approach our 10th year of combat in Afghanistan, there are those who are understandably asking tough questions about our mission there. But we must never lose sight of what's at stake. As we speak, al Qaeda continues to plot against us, and its leadership remains anchored in the border regions of Afghanistan and Pakistan. We will disrupt, dismantle and defeat al Qaeda, while preventing Afghanistan from again serving as a base for terrorists. And because of our drawdown in Iraq, we are now able to apply the resources necessary to go on offense. In fact, over the last 19 months, nearly a dozen al Qaeda leaders -- and hundreds of al Qaeda's extremist allies -- have been killed or captured around the world.

Within Afghanistan, I've ordered the deployment of additional troops who -- under the command of General David Petraeus -- are fighting to break the Taliban's momentum.

As with the surge in Iraq, these forces will be in place for a limited time to provide space for the Afghans to build their capacity and secure their own future. But, as was the case in Iraq, we can't do for Afghans what they must ultimately do for themselves. That's why we're training Afghan Security Forces and supporting a political resolution to Afghanistan's problems. And next August, we will begin a transition to Afghan responsibility. The pace of our troop reductions will be determined by conditions

on the ground, and our support for Afghanistan will endure. But make no mistake: This transition will begin -- because open-ended war serves neither our interests nor the Afghan people's.

Indeed, one of the lessons of our effort in Iraq is that American influence around the world is not a function of military force alone. We must use all elements of our power -- including our diplomacy, our economic strength, and the power of America's example -- to secure our interests and stand by our allies. And we must project a vision of the future that's based not just on our fears, but also on our hopes -- a vision that recognizes the real dangers that exist around the world, but also the limitless possibilities of our time.

Today, old adversaries are at peace, and emerging democracies are potential partners. New markets for our goods stretch from Asia to the Americas. A new push for peace in the Middle East will begin here tomorrow. Billions of young people want to move beyond the shackles of poverty and conflict. As the leader of the free world, America will do more than just defeat on the battlefield those who offer hatred and destruction -- we will also lead among those who are willing to work together to expand freedom and opportunity for all people.

Now, that effort must begin within our own borders. Throughout our history, America has been willing to bear the burden of promoting liberty and human dignity overseas, understanding its links to our own liberty and security. But we have also understood that our nation's strength and influence abroad must be firmly anchored in

our prosperity at home. And the bedrock of that prosperity must be a growing middle class.

Unfortunately, over the last decade, we've not done what's necessary to shore up the foundations of our own prosperity. We spent a trillion dollars at war, often financed by borrowing from overseas. This, in turn, has short-changed investments in our own people, and contributed to record deficits. For too long, we have put off tough decisions on everything from our manufacturing base to our energy policy to education reform. As a result, too many middle-class families find themselves working harder for less, while our nation's long-term competitiveness is put at risk.

And so at this moment, as we wind down the war in Iraq, we must tackle those challenges at home with as much energy, and grit, and sense of common purpose as our men and women in uniform who have served abroad. They have met every test that they faced. Now, it's our turn. Now, it's our responsibility to honor them by coming together, all of us, and working to secure the dream that so many generations have fought for -- the dream that a better life awaits anyone who is willing to work for it and reach for it.

Our most urgent task is to restore our economy, and put the millions of Americans who have lost their jobs back to work. To strengthen our middle class, we must give all our children the education they deserve, and all our workers the skills that they need to compete in a global economy. We must jumpstart industries that create jobs, and end our dependence on foreign oil. We must unleash the innovation that allows new products to roll off our assembly lines, and nurture the ideas that spring from our

entrepreneurs. This will be difficult. But in the days to come, it must be our central mission as a people, and my central responsibility as President.

Part of that responsibility is making sure that we honor our commitments to those who have served our country with such valor. As long as I am President, we will maintain the finest fighting force that the world has ever known, and we will do whatever it takes to serve our veterans as well as they have served us. This is a sacred trust. That's why we've already made one of the largest increases in funding for veterans in decades. We're treating the signature wounds of today's wars -- post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury -- while providing the health care and benefits that all of our veterans have earned. And we're funding a Post-9/11 GI Bill that helps our veterans and their families pursue the dream of a college education. Just as the GI Bill helped those who fought World War II -- including my grandfather -- become the backbone of our middle class, so today's servicemen and women must have the chance to apply their gifts to expand the American economy. Because part of ending a war responsibly is standing by those who have fought it.

Two weeks ago, America's final combat brigade in Iraq -- the Army's Fourth Stryker Brigade -- journeyed home in the pre-dawn darkness. Thousands of soldiers and hundreds of vehicles made the trip from Baghdad, the last of them passing into Kuwait in the early morning hours. Over seven years before, American troops and coalition partners had fought their way across similar highways, but this time no shots were fired. It was just a convoy of brave Americans, making their way home.

Of course, the soldiers left much behind. Some were teenagers when the war began. Many have served multiple tours of duty, far from families who bore a heroic burden of their own, enduring the absence of a husband's embrace or a mother's kiss. Most painfully, since the war began, 55 members of the Fourth Stryker Brigade made the ultimate sacrifice -- part of over 4,400 Americans who have given their lives in Iraq. As one staff sergeant said, "I know that to my brothers in arms who fought and died, this day would probably mean a lot."

Those Americans gave their lives for the values that have lived in the hearts of our people for over two centuries. Along with nearly 1.5 million Americans who have served in Iraq, they fought in a faraway place for people they never knew. They stared into the darkest of human creations -- war -- and helped the Iraqi people seek the light of peace.

In an age without surrender ceremonies, we must earn victory through the success of our partners and the strength of our own nation. Every American who serves joins an unbroken line of heroes that stretches from Lexington to Gettysburg; from Iwo Jima to Inchon; from Khe Sanh to Kandahar -- Americans who have fought to see that the lives of our children are better than our own. Our troops are the steel in our ship of state. And though our nation may be travelling through rough waters, they give us confidence that our course is true, and that beyond the pre-dawn darkness, better days lie ahead.

Thank you. May God bless you. And may God bless the United States of America, and all who serve her.