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Abstract

WAR METAPHORS:

HOW PRESIDENT'S USE THE LANGUAGE OF WAR TO SELL POLICY

By Marc Bacharach

During the latter half of the 20th century, Presidents have often invoked the language of war to push through their policy initiatives. Despite the vast literature on presidential speeches, there has been little in the way of studying these rhetorical wars in any systematic fashion. This paper seeks to address that deficiency by studying several high-profile rhetorical wars that presidents have declared, from Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty to George W. Bush's war on terror. The purpose is to trace the evolution of metaphorical wars from rhetoric into public policy. In tracing this process, many other questions will be addressed, including: What message was the president hoping to send to the American people through rhetoric? What were the original goals of the president? What are some of the reasons the "wars" failed or succeeded? Finally, to what extent did future administrations adopt their predecessor's policy and to what extent did future presidents establish their own strategy for fighting the wars?

WAR METAPHORS:

HOW PRESIDENT'S USE THE LANGUAGE OF WAR TO SELL POLICY

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated first and foremost to my wife and best friend, Nicole, who left her family and friends for Oxford, Ohio. I would also like to thank Keith Noble, who provided advice, friendship, and encouragement throughout my graduate years. Finally, my education could not have been possible without the incredible faculty of the Political Science Department, of whom I am indebted to for their wisdom, character, and universal concern for all of their students. I am especially grateful to Dr. Ryan Barilleaux, my mentor and advisor, for years of great conversation, guidance, and most of all passion for the discipline. Wherever my career takes me, I will always hold a special place in my heart for Miami.

Chapter 1
Introduction

In war... the discretionary power of the Executive is extended; its influence in dealing out offices, honors, and emoluments is multiplied; and all the means of seducing the minds, are added to those of subduing the force of the people ... No nation could preserve its freedom in the midst of continual warfare.

-- James Madison

The president of the United States, wrote historian Henry Adams (1958), "resembles the commander of a ship at sea; He must have a helm to grasp, a course to steer, a port to seek" (p. 197).[1] The "helm" of the presidency has been laid out in the formal institutional powers allotted to him by the Constitution and over 200 years of tradition. The "port" that the president seeks, and the "course," however, is frequently what separate successful presidents from unsuccessful presidents. It is there, in what former President Bush famously called "the vision thing," that presidents determine what objectives to pursue and what strategies to employ to best steer the ship of state. Today, that ship is directed towards a global war against terrorism, whose objectives and parameters were set by the president.

In September 2001, following the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, President Bush spoke before a joint session of Congress in which he declared a war on terrorism, a war that would not end "until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated" (Statement by the President, 2001). The media immediately adopted the term 'war on terror,' as did the public and even foreign leaders. Long after the military conflict in Afghanistan had been completed, the phrase had become so internalized by the public that both political parties made it a feature and justification for their policy proposals. The president's decision to label the American response to the attacks as a war had profound implications on how Americans and the international community perceived the United States' actions over the next several years.

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[1] The president is discussed in the masculine throughout this study only because every American president has been male.

It was certainly not the first time that a president was able to rally the nation behind a series of policies behind the rhetoric of a war.

Although there has been little systematic study of presidential rhetorical wars, they have in fact constituted some of the most flagrant expressions of how presidents can use rhetoric to shape the way the public views an issue. As the military historian Michael Sherry has noted, “Americans in the twentieth century became inured to the circulation of wartime analogies intended to elicit public consent for all sorts of disparate ventures” (Noon, 2004, p. 340). President Eisenhower, for example, declared a war on disease in 1954 (Frankel, 1988) and Jimmy Carter used his 1981 State of the Union address to declare a war on hunger, which he said must be “a continuous urgent priority.” He even included in his speech his “goal of freeing the world from hunger by the year 2000” (Carter, 1981). Carter actually created a Commission on World Hunger which issued a report discussing the possibility of ending worldwide hunger on a world scale; however, the end of his presidency marked the end of that war. Carter is also widely remembered for the war he attempted to wage for energy conservation and independence. Perhaps it was because Carter’s war was directed against a negative (it was, in essence, a war on *not* conserving energy) or because of the ridicule he generated by using the phrase ‘moral equivalent of war’ (borrowed from a 1906 speech by William James) which had the unfortunately weak acronym “MEOW,” but the message never stuck. Years later, President Clinton used his 1997 State of the Union address to declare a “war on gangs,” having already engaged the United States in a war on AIDS, and President George W. Bush already had a metaphorical war under his belt before the terrorist attacks of September 11 with his little known 2001war on illiteracy. This war was declared at a Florida school on September 10, 2001. Whether the war on illiteracy was designed as a one-time comment, used for dramatic purposes only, or would have remained as part of a protracted campaign is unknown.

Especially significant however, are those rhetorical wars that have lasted far beyond a single speech and whose impacts are greater than mere flare added for effect. The rhetorical wars that are the focus of this study are those wars that, for a time, have so penetrated public consciousness that they are viewed inseparably from the policies aimed at addressing them. During their respective peaks, antipoverty programs were viewed as

part and parcel with the war on poverty, drug policies were tied inexorably to the war on drugs, and since 2001, virtually every foreign policy decision and most domestic one's as well played some role in the war on terror. How is it that this has become such a successful political strategy for presidents hoping to advance their agendas?

Ernest Bormann (1972), a rhetoric scholar and creator of the "Fantasy Theme Analysis," which studies the way in which people identify with rhetorical narratives, described the way in which metaphors are transmitted to the public. The "fantasies" public figures use in their choice of symbols, according to Bormann, "are worked into public speeches and into the mass media and, in turn, spread out across larger publics" (p. 398). Thus, presidential war metaphors are not automatically absorbed and welcomed by the public, but rather must go through a process in which the images and emotions invoked by the metaphor are repeated, accepted, and finally adopted to the point that the metaphor automatically conjures up specific images and emotions. This study attempts to look at some of those wars in American history, and to analyze how the war metaphor was used to both formulate and promote public policy. First, however, it is necessary to include a few words about the scope of this study.

Attempting to study the connection between presidential rhetoric and policy outcomes from a quantitative or strictly empirical perspective can be problematic. The purpose of using metaphors and analogies in rhetoric, after all, is to shape how people view public policy and measuring its impact with precision is extremely difficult, if not impossible. This is partly because people themselves may not consciously be aware that they are more supportive of a particular policy simply because it is presented as a "war." This phenominon is illustrated in Gaventa's (1980) study of power and powerless in an Appalachian area of eastern Tennessee in which he demonstrated how various socio-political factors can lead people to view policies in a certain way without them being aware of this. This "third dimension of power" forces researchers to rely on the counterfactual to a degree since it is impossible to compare how policies have been adopted or implemented compared with how they *would have been* implemented with different rhetoric.[2] Samuel Huntington (1981) calls this difficulty the power paradox,

[2] The term "third dimension of power" was actually conceptualized by Steven Lukes in 1974, who defined it "the ability to influence consciousness - to define core ideas, shape people's wants and tastes, frame issues, and define the standards of proof for evaluating claims to knowledge."

which reflects the reality that "effective power is unnoticed power; power observed is power devalued" (p. 75).

What further complicates studying the connection between war metaphors and policy adoption is that, as James Harold (2004) has pointed out, hearing politicians declare war on crime or on other social problems has become so routine that the metaphorical use of the term 'war' usually escapes attention. This sentiment is echoed by Jeffrey Record (2003), who noted that

> American political discourse over the past several decades has embraced "war" as a metaphor for dealing with all kinds of "enemies," domestic and foreign. One cannot, it seems, be serious about dealing with this or that problem short of making "war" on it. Political administrations accordingly have declared "war" on poverty, illiteracy, crime, drugs- and now terrorism… war is perhaps the most over-used metaphor in America (p. 8).

In other words, the more that war metaphors are used, the less impact they have on how people perceive the problem and the more difficult it is to measure their impact on policy. It is therefore not the goal of this study to measure the relationship between rhetoric and policy precisely. Rather, it is to explore the relationship between rhetoric and policy in a more systematically and analytically useful manner than has been done previously.

Paper Outline

Over the past several years, researchers have been paying increasing amounts of attention to measuring public reaction to presidential rhetoric (Canes-Wrone, 2001; Cohen, 1995; Edwards & Wood, 1999), as well as the reaction of implementing bureaucrats (Whitford & Yates, 2003). The results of such studies confirm that presidential rhetoric is important because of the weight such rhetoric is given, even independently from any legislation or policy that results from it. As John Kingdon (1995) pointed out, "the president can single-handedly set the agenda, not only of people in the executive branch, but also of people in Congress" (p. 23). And as Jeffery E. Cohen (1995) noted in his study on the effects of rhetoric on the public agenda that "merely

mentioning a problem to the public heightens public concern with the policy problem" even if the president does not offer any "substantive positions" on the issue (p. 102).

Despite the vast literature on presidential speeches and oratory devices however, there has been little in the way of studying rhetorical wars in any systematic method by Political Scientists. Rather, scholars have focused more on how presidents communicate their message to the American people or the role of the media and other political actors as the target of that rhetoric. Communications scholars and rhetorical scholars, meanwhile, have written on specific rhetorical devices of presidents, including war metaphors, but without exploring the political or historical contexts for such devices. However, just as legal scholars study the facts of specific cases in order to understand the exact meaning of the law and the anthropologists study poems and folk stories in an effort to understand how a society views the world, it is also important for Political Scientists studying the presidency to study specific rhetorical devices in order to better understand how presidents use the bully pulpit to advance their agendas. This paper seeks to address the deficiency in the literature by studying several high-profile rhetorical wars that presidents have declared in the latter part of the 20th century.

The wars addressed in this paper are different from those wars which are used in speeches and then quickly forgotten because those "minor" wars were never internalized by the American people. As will be demonstrated, the rhetorical wars that are of particular interest to this study are those that the president was able to transmit to the public so thoroughly that they became phrases completely adopted both by the media and often by the opposing political party.

On the surface, the various rhetorical wars discussed in this paper have little in common. Poverty, for example, is an unfortunate state of economics that has no immediate individual culprit to point to and arrest, while drugs, ultimately, are nothing more than plants and plant extracts often produced outside of the United States. Terrorism, like crime, is an illegal activity that bears the most resemblance to an actual "hot war" (or conventional military action against another sovereign state) in the sense that much of it is being waged militarily against an identifiable enemy nation. However, many metaphorical wars share several similarities that distinguished them from other

presidential rhetorical wars, many of which never lasted beyond the speech in which they were declared.

First, all of the wars discussed in this paper have witnessed an expansion of executive power. Also, each of them has led to the creation of some new executive department or the expansion of existing agencies. The war on poverty produced the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO); the war on drugs led to the creation of the Special Action Office for Drug Abuse Prevention (SAODAP), Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs (BNDD), Office of Drug Abuse Law Enforcement (ODALE) and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA); and most recently, a new Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has been set up to facilitate the war on terror. The importance of the rhetoric is that it was able to galvanize the nation behind an overall theme.

The purpose of this paper is to trace the evolution of metaphorical wars from rhetoric into policy. In tracing this process, many other questions will be addressed, including what were the original goals of the president? Did the subsequent legislation and implementation achieve those goals? What are some of the reasons the "wars" failed or succeeded? Finally, to what extent did future administrations adopt their predecessors policy and to what extent did future presidents establish their own strategy for fighting the wars?

Attention will also focus on the factors that made these wars different from other metaphorical wars, such as Roosevelt's war against the Depression, or Carter's war for energy independence. Why have these particular "wars" lasted as long as they have? Are those rhetorical wars that have lasted the longest, and prompted the most programs more likely to be maintained by presidents over long periods of time and across several administrations? The remainder of this paper is divided thematically into several sections, each of which will take the reader through every administration since the inception of a particular war, exploring the ways in which the rhetoric has intensified, died down, or remained the same, and what successive administrations did in order to advance their causes.

There are numerous interdisciplinary studies on metaphors and metaphorical language (see Davidson, 1979; Davies, 1984; Mooij, 1976). Before exploring the phenomenon of war metaphors however, it is first necessary to discuss how it is that

presidents are so reliant on such metaphors to sell their policies to the American people. Throughout the literature, this reliance is credited to the emergence of a new role for the president in the 20th century, not just as the chief executive, the commander-in-chief, or the nation's top diplomat in foreign affairs, but as the spokesperson and salesman of national policy, a role famously described as the rhetorical presidency. The rise of this "rhetorical" presidency" in general and a discussion over the specific use of war metaphors in presidential rhetoric will be discussed in the next two chapters.

Chapter 4 will discuss the war on poverty. Somewhat atypical in the sense that it originated almost entirely with the president rather than developing slowly through legislation and public consciousness, the war metaphor allowed President Johnson to push through the landmark Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. The war offers a clear example of "shaping context through the use of definitions" and "throws into sharp focus the relationship between public discourse and policy" (Zarefsky, 1986, p. 20).

Perhaps the most long-lasting rhetorical war, the war on drugs, will be the focus of chapter 5. Although it began as part of President Nixon's overall anti-crime policy, the drug war quickly became a permanent fixture on the national political landscape. The term has been adopted by every administration since Nixon, and expanded to include massive federal funds, school programs, new agencies, and an ongoing military campaign in parts of Latin America.

The most recent metaphorical war, and what is likely to be the most lasting, has been the war on terror. This has not only been used to justify conventional military operations, but has also been used precisely the same as other metaphorical wars, invoked to solicit support for a large swath of domestic policy initiatives from law enforcement to immigration reform. This war will be addressed in chapter 6.

Chapter 7 will focus on several additional rhetorical wars that have been initiated by presidents. These wars, such as the war on crime and President Ford's brief war on inflation, were aimed at generating the same emotions and the same imagery as other rhetorical wars, although with different success and duration. The final chapter will conclude by drawing some inferences about rhetorical wars, how and why they have developed and what their relationship has been to national policy.

Chapter 2
The Rise of the Rhetorical Presidency

Public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment, nothing can fail; without it nothing can succeed.

-- Abraham Lincoln

The President of the United States is the most recognized political figure in the country as well as the single most influential actor in the government. So important is the president to Americans perception of government, studies have suggested a strong correlation between an increase or decrease in support for the president with an increase or decrease of support for other government institutions, such as Congress and the Supreme Court (Dennis, 1976). Although heightened notoriety would unquestionably exist for any person who holds the office of president, the influence that person has in government is not automatic. The degree of influence that a president has is largely a matter of whether he can utilize the bully pulpit effectively and utilize the tools of persuasion that are available to him, most especially how he chooses to define his policies. Indeed, the ability to successfully use rhetoric, symbolism, and metaphor is often considered the hallmark of great presidents. A 2001 study by Emrich, Brower, Feldman, and Garland, for example, found that the use of image-based rhetoric in inaugural addresses and other significant speeches had a positive correlation to being rated as a great president by historians. "Presidents who used more image-based words when attempting to enact their visions," according to the study, "were judged more favorably in terms of both charisma and greatness" (p. 548).

Murray and Blessing (1994), observing that traits such as background and even personality seemed to have little correlation to "greatness" in presidents, discovered that what mattered most to the 846 American historians who rated the presidents was the ability to use symbols and metaphors in selling policy. In other words, "the presidents ability to set the national agenda and then point the public in that direction was often the first step along the road to ensuring himself a solid place in history" [although they added that such an agenda should also be "accompanied by solid achievements" in order to be successfully rated (p. 58-59)].

Ever since Richard E. Neustadt's (1960) classic study in which Neustadt observed that "the power to persuade" is the underlining feature behind presidential influence, numerous other scholars have explored the tremendous influence that presidents can exert through oratory (see Ellis, 1998; Kernell, 1986; Light, 1982). William Riker (1990), for example, went further than Neustadt by viewing presidential leadership as the ability to articulate political situations in such a way that opponents will have no choice but to submit (p. 175). Riker termed this strategy of manipulation for the purpose of winning "heresthetics." Unlike the conventional view of rhetoric, whose goal is persuasion based on intelligent dissemination of the facts, the goal of heresthetics, according to Riker, is to win, regardless of the particular stakes, a form of demagoguery that enables presidents to get what they want.

This ability to persuade, which involves utilizing both formal and informal powers of the office to make a case directly to the American people, has led to what Jeffery Tulis (1987) famously termed the rhetorical presidency. This presidency, Tulis argues, began with Theodore Roosevelt and came to fruition under Woodrow Wilson. Martin J. Medhurst (1996) distinguished this rhetorical presidency from mere presidential rhetoric in that the former referred only to going over the heads of Congress and other Washington decision-makers whereas the latter is a much broader term, referring to all aspects of the president's use of language, regardless of its nature or audience.

During the 19th century, Tulis (1987) argued, presidents rarely used rhetoric to advance their agendas, and even the exceptions prove the rule in the tremendous significance given to them (such as with Abraham Lincoln). President Wilson ushered in a new era when he engaged in policy speeches rather than written addresses and letters to Congress. These speeches were not just technical in nature, but visionary in style and idea. Indeed, Wilson himself made the case for a more rhetorical presidency when he argued that the president should be the one national voice who is able to articulate the national will, otherwise expressed in "the accidental and discordant notes that come from the voice of a mob" (Wilson, 1975, p. 42). In other words, according to Wilson (1908), the president's duty is to discover what it is that the public wants and then to express that will in a way that unifies the nation behind him. The president had "the ear of the nation, Wilson explained, "and a great person may use such an advantage greatly." Indeed,

between 1945 and 1975 public speeches by presidents have increased over 500% and the increase is likely far more today (Smith & Smith, 1994). As Roderick Hart (1984) noted, "presidential speech and action increasingly reflects the opinion that speaking *is* governing" (p. 2-5). Simply by virtue of their stature and command of attention do presidents influence policy to some degree any time they choose to open their mouths.

Wilson's view of the importance of presidential rhetoric is illustrated by historian Elting Morison's (1978) description of Theodore Roosevelt as an example of "noncrisis leadership," in that he was able to influence and persuade others even in the absence of a national crisis. Roosevelt, Morison said

> could get the attention of his fellow citizens and make them think. He knew how to put the hard questions a little before they became obvious to others; how to make the search for sensible answers exciting; how to startle the country beyond short-run self-interest towards some longer view of the general welfare.

It would, of course, be Franklin Roosevelt, the man credited with the emergence of what Arthur Schlesinger (2004) called the "imperial presidency" who would use radio to reach the more Americans than ever possible, expanding the number of "fellow citizens" who could directly hear their president.

Although presidential scholars generally agree that the president has played an enhanced public role in the 20th century, the precise nature and desirability of the rhetorical presidency has been widely studied from a variety of perspectives. *All the President's Words* by Carol Gelderman (1997), for example, explored what goes on behind the scenes as presidents prepare speeches, including a discussion of the rise in professional speechwriters and the increasing disconnect between the speeches prepared by writers and the actual policy action taken by the president. Mary Stuckey (1991) looked at the rhetorical presidency as it applies to television in *The President as Interpreter-In-Chief*, which highlighted the president's influence as the chief storyteller in the nation.

Regardless of the conceptual distinctions, the fundamental principle behind the rhetorical presidency remains the fact that the power of the president is not simply one of

institutional authority or his ability to enforce the laws of the legislature, but instead his power can be measured by his ability to use language and symbols to rally the nation behind him. This idea that a politician can exert power through speech is certainly not novel. It has been studied and documented in ancient Greek and Roman texts such as Cicero and Terence.[3] The father of classical rhetoric, Aristotle, believed that deliberative speech (one of three types of speeches he categorizes) originated in the political assembly, "where the deliberative orator seeks to persuade or dissuade his audience from taking action, like going to war" (Remer, 1999, p. 41). Often the orator would utilize metaphor to induce listeners to see things the way the speaker wants them to (Jordan, 1974, p. 244-246). Certainly, in a deliberative democracy, where decisions are reached through debate and compromise, the ability to influence others is a prized political asset.

Even in American presidential history, eloquent oration is not a 20th century phenomenon. Studying the disappearance of narratives in presidential speeches, Stephen J. McKenna (2000) traced the evolution of rhetoric throughout America history and concluded that the change away from the use of narratives correlates chronologically to the rise of the rhetorical presidency. Although McKenna noted that the causes of the recent de-emphasis on history as narrative in presidential rhetoric are complex, he did cite reasons that are consistent with the causes of the rhetorical presidency, including the rise in electronic media, the heavy use of "the speechwriting apparatus," and most important to him, "the development of the presidential office as a rhetorical platform for popular leadership" (p. 181). This is consistent with the contention that what has been unique to the 20th century in American history is the shifting of public attention from the Legislature, which had been the traditional place of governmental deliberation, to the Executive as the symbol of American government.

The president's influential role as the central figure in American government has been studied by numerous scholars who have found that at the very least, his rhetorical skills can increase the amount of attention the public pays to a particular issue (Canes-Wrone, 2001, p. 314; Schattschneider, 1960, p. 14). The normative evaluation some

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[3] John Adams, whose copy of Cicero was among his most prized possessions, once sent his son, also a future president a Latin and French copy of Terence, advising the future president, "his language has simplicity and an elegance that make him proper to be accurately studied as a model" (McCullough, 2001:259).

researchers offer this development tends to view the rhetorical presidency negatively, with many presidential scholars judging it to be an unfortunate reversal of the Founding Fathers ideal that the separation of powers would prevent executive demagoguery (Tulis, 1987, p. 30; Caesar, Thurow, Tulis, & Bessette, 1981; Miroff, 1998, p. 299; Tulis, 1987).[4] Furthermore, according to Tulis, the development of the rhetorical presidency has accompanied a "dumbing down" so to speak of political dialogue in this country, a trend facilitated by the mass media. As presidents are able to appeal to a far greater number of people than ever before through television and more recently the internet, their language is designed to appeal to the lowest common denominator, with simple slogans replacing some of the grander political debates in the past. Under such circumstances, rhetoric can also be a dangerous tool in the hands of some presidents who use it as a form of demagoguery, appealing to peoples prejudices rather than to their reason. As Medhurst (1996) lamented on the issue, throughout the literature on presidential rhetoric, there is an implication that presidents who command considerable speaking skills aim their rhetoric "primarily to emotional appeals to ignorant audiences (p. xiv).[5]

Bruce Miroff (1998) went even further, calling the modern presidency's public appeal a spectacle, and Keith E. Whittington (2000), commenting on Bill Clinton's 1992 appearance on a late-night celebrity talk show, noted that in modern times, "forums that had previously been shunned as below the dignity of a presidential campaign were now viewed as highly desirable for their large audiences and their mostly risk-free environment" (p. 214). Unlike Tulis (1987) however, who believed that both the problem as well as the potential solution lay with individual presidents, Miroff (1998) exonerated presidents for continuing the trend of "promoting gesture over accomplishment and appearance over fact" (p. 320).[6] Instead, Miroff said, the culprits are larger structural forces such as "the extreme personalization of the presidency, the excessive expectations of the president that most Americans possess, and the voluminous media coverage that

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[4] Tulis's 1996 article, "Revising the Rhetorical Presidency," qualified his prior negative appraisal, noting that popular appeals are not always bad and are sometimes "indispensable for periodic political needs" such as war (4).
[5] Woodrow Wilson, believing that the old Constitutional system was outdated, argued that if the president became the dominant force in the nation, it would not be the Constitution's fault, or Congress, merely because the president has the nation behind him and Congress does not (1908).
[6] Theodore Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan exemplify for Tulis the "right" kinds of rhetorical presidents in that they used their oratory with restraint, refraining from "bullying" Congress into premature action.

fixes on presidents and treats American politics largely as a report of their adventures" (1998, p. 320). Certainly, today's political climate makes it nearly inconceivable that a candidate would win the presidency without a strong ability to generate support through effective communication. Even after becoming president, charisma and personality play an important role in how people perceive performance, and recent years have seen an increasing amount of time presidents spend "going public" with an issue, or taking an issue directly to the American people rather than Congress (Kernell, 1986).

Although the legislative effects that going public has on the enactment of policy has been researched, as Tulis (1987) noted, very few empirical studies have been able to conclusively demonstrate that president's appeals to the public translate into legislative influence (p. 45). Indeed, although there has been some progress over the past several years to demonstrate some empirical justification for appealing directly to Americans (Barrett, 2004), there has been significant evidence to suggest that any legislative success the president is able to generate by going public has been "overwhelmed by prominent legislative failures and by the argument that a public strategy may decrease presidential influence" (Canes-Wrone, 2001, p. 326). Despite this grim picture, there has been a preponderance of evidence showing an increasing tendency of presidents to go public on issues with which they want to increase national salience (see Edwards, 1983; Hager and Sullivan, 1994; Kernell, 1986). So despite the questionable success rates of going public, presidents continue to rely on it as a part of their political strategy, perhaps overestimating their ability to generate public action.

Aside from the central role the president plays as the symbol of the national government to many people, there are other reasons why the president has been able to command so much support through oration during the latter part of the 20th century, including the rise in mass media. Over the past several decades, the emergence of 24-hour cable news networks combined with the increasing reliance on television as the primary source of news have added to the necessity for presidents to fine tune their public speaking skills to an art form. Even President George W. Bush, whose rhetorical style has been unflatteringly described as "blunt and unelaborated" in recent years, has skillfully reinforced his political image of a plain-spoken leader. Clever presidents not

only become masters of what they say, but also masters of determining which parts of a speech will be picked up for media "sound bites" and which parts will not.[7]

A third potential contributor to the rise in the rhetorical presidency and closely related to the mass media, may be the decline of political parties, which would previously have been the conduit through which the president's message was delivered to the public. According to Martin P. Wattenberg (1998), since the early 1950's the importance of political parties has been in sharp decline with more and more people feeling ambivalent about them rather than loyal to them. The reason for this has more to do with changes in political communication than with any specific events and issues. "No matter what the parties do, getting the information to the public about their importance is likely to be one of the major obstacles to party revitalization in the twenty-first century" (Wattenberg 1998, p. 241).

Wattenberg's study did not address the ramifications that may have on the role of the president, but he did note the increasing individualization of political campaigns and elections. Presidential candidates, thus, must adopt a compelling rhetorical style if they hope to win the election since they can no longer count on their partisan loyalty alone to bring them success. A corollary to this phenomenon has been the rise in primary elections to select presidential candidates. This adds to the necessity of pleasing voters rather than party bosses, something that requires strong rhetorical skills. Though political parties at both at the national and the local levels continue to be a strong base of support, and since Wattenberg's study was last published, there is some evidence to indicate the resurgence of partisanship. Nevertheless, it would be difficult to imagine any president being elected without a strong rhetorical style that is able to generate support among as large a group of people possible. The question then is, does the rhetoric work in attracting support or do voters not really use that as a voting guide?

Political Scientists have long attempted to measure public reaction to presidential rhetoric (Canes-Wrone, 2001; Cohen, 1995; Edwards and Wood, 1999) as well as the reaction of implementing bureaucrats (Whitford & Yates, 2003). The results of such studies confirm that presidential rhetoric *is* important because of the weight such rhetoric

[7] Perhaps the most enduring example of this is the first televised presidential debate between Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy in 1960. Many presidency observers mark the debate as a turning point in the campaign because of Kennedy's skillful performance on stage and Nixon's visual awkwardness.

is given, even independently from any legislation or policy that results from it. As Jeffery E. Cohen (1995) noted in his study on the effects that rhetoric has on the public agenda, "merely mentioning a problem to the public heightens public concern with the policy problem" even if the president does not offer any substantive positions on the issue (p. 102).

Although the importance of effective speaking and rhetoric has been well documented, less attention has been paid to the specific tactics presidents employ in their speeches. Perhaps one of the most frequent tactics is the use of war metaphors. War is arguably the single greatest endeavor a government can undertake and commands the most resources and national unity compared to almost any other government action. It is understandable that presidents would attempt to use the language and the metaphor of war to gain support for their policies. Through case studies of various rhetorical wars that have been launched by presidents, it is hoped that Political Scientists will have a better understanding of exactly how presidents do this. In the next chapter, the nature and rationale for using metaphors of any kind, including war metaphors, will be explored in more detail.

Chapter 3

The Metaphorical Presidency

The greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learned from others; it is also a sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an eye for resemblance.

-- Aristotle, *De Poetica*, 322 BCE.

The epistemological origins of the word "metaphor" illustrate its value to political figures. Deriving from the Greek word, *metapherein*, meaning to carry from one place to another or to transfer, metaphors essentially "transfer" the conceptual elements and ideas that one word or phrase conveys to something else. To offer a simple illustration, when James Madison is said to be the father of the Constitution, the concept of father as a biological parent who raises a child is transferred to someone's relationship to a document. The metaphor makes no literal sense unless people are able to transfer their ideas about the word "father" to an entirely new referent. This logic has long been used in the political world, often describing nations as if they were people (such as when President George H.W. Bush justified war against Iraq in 1991 on the grounds that Iraq was trying to "swallow" or "rape" Kuwait). In the case of using war metaphors, there are many different ideas being transferred since war connotes so many different images. Metaphors are successful only because the public is able to transfer their connotations of war onto the completely different context of social maladies and government programs. So successful in its appeal and acceptability, war metaphors have become a common rhetorical technique for rallying a nation.

Of course, not all metaphors are deliberate, as is noted by Eugene F. Miller (1979). In his discussion of metaphors in political theory, Miller wrote that our language is filled with words whose original reference was entirely separate from political phenomenon. "We make use of these words regularly in our political speech, as, for example, when we speak of … the 'fall' of a government, or opinions on the 'left' or the 'right'" (p. 157). These "hidden metaphors" have become a part of our political discourse to a much greater degree than many of the metaphors presidents often invoke in their speeches. Nevertheless, continuous repetition, adoption by the media, and eventual

acceptance by the public can produce metaphors that become a part of the national dialogue. "Once accepted, a metaphorical view becomes the organizing conception into which the public thereafter arranges items of news that fit and in the light of which it interprets the news" (Edelman, 1971). Such has been the case, at least for a short time, with some of the war metaphors discussed in this study. But why are metaphors, particularly war metaphors, so popular among presidents? What is it about them that are so appealing to a presidents' rhetorical style?

One reason that war metaphors are popular in politics could be the simple fact that, as John J. Pitney Jr. (2000) notes in his book, *The Art of Political Warfare,* "Politics is like war, so people use military metaphors" (p. 4). War metaphors thus are used simply because war and politics are so compatible with one another that it makes the comparison easy to make. The connection between politics and warfare, according to Pitney, is evidenced in the rhetoric that is used over the entire course of political campaigns as well as during a president's entire term in office.[8] The implication is that metaphorical wars are nothing special or unique, but simply part of a much larger rhetorical trend in politics to use military analogies. For modern presidents with professional speech writers, national themes, and desire for spotlight, however, war metaphors have a deeper meaning and are deliberately used to advance an agenda. But why use a war metaphor over some other metaphor? There are no shortages of alternative points of comparison. Presidents could, for example, treat drugs, poverty, or terror as a disease rather than a war. Or, perhaps presidents could use the metaphor as a game being played between multiple players, or countless others possibilities. What is it about war that makes it an attractive metaphor in presidential rhetoric?

One reason that war metaphors may be popular with presidents is that they give them an opportunity to cast their presidency in a more meaningful light, particularly those presidents whose historical legacy lacks an actual military conflict to propel them into history. Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. (1997) used a 1996 ranking of presidents conducted by historians and other observers of presidential leadership to analyze the qualities that

[8] The word "campaign" itself has its roots in military language. The French word, *campagne*, meaning "open country" (from Latin *campus*, "level-ground"), once referred to an army's practice of moving from a fortress or town to open country in spring, but later evolved to refer to any series of military operations and is today most often used in connection with running for office.

correlate to success as president. He found that "of national crises war is the most fateful, and all the top ten save Jefferson were involved in war either before or during their presidencies" (p. 179). Given this reality, it is not surprising that military language and imagery is invoked by presidents who want to give their cause or policy the weight and importance of a war.

The fact that arguably great presidents tend to be associated with war is not the only reason for the utility of war metaphors. Even more important than trying to be associated with a war is the power that metaphors have in helping to persuade the public. This is because "to define an issue is to set up the boundaries within which all subsequent justified discussion of the issue should take place" (Vibbert 1987, p. 3). Thus, according to Vincent F. Sacco (2005), war metaphors "frame" an issue a certain way that make them popular for presidents. For example, Sacco (2005) says, declaring a war suggests a total commitment to dealing with the problem (p. 153). This demonstrates that a president is taking the issue with the utmost seriousness.

Another advantage war metaphors offer is that they can provide a common perspective through which the public can understand the issues, something scholars in the field of political communication term "interpretive dominance," or the adoption of one's own characterization of an issue over some other way of understanding that issue (Stuckley & Antczak, 1993, p. 117-134; Riker, 1986). Presidents are uniquely situated in American politics to achieve such interpretive dominance when it comes to national issues. Through his high profile and ability to command media attention, the president is "the chief inventor and broker of the symbols of American politics" and those symbols are used to advance particular policies. "Language is not a neutral instrument; to name an object or idea is to influence attitudes about it" (Zarefsky, 1986, p. 8). This is done through the use of symbols and the acceptance of those symbols by the public. Murray Edelman (1971), who studied the use of symbols in the Political Science literature, noted the complexity of empirical events and the ambiguity of causes and effects of political decisions. For most people, Edelman suggests in his study, the political world would be unintelligible without the order and meaning that metaphorical language provides (1971, p. 65-72).

Poverty, crime, and drugs are all complex issues with numerous explanations and causes. War, however, is far less complicated and relatively easy for people to conceptualize. And as Graham E. Fuller (2004) noted in reference to the war on terror, “those who posses the power to define the problem are well positioned to define the solution” (p. 16). A population at war is under direct threat from something and must defeat the enemy before the enemy defeats that population. Thus, metaphors act as a the lens through which people view reality and may even form the very basis for all human thought (Richards, 1965, p. 100). As Robert L. Ivie (2001) said in his study of war rhetoric, “polities cannot chose between rhetoric and reality but instead must opt for more or less adequate interpretations of their multifaceted worlds, interpretations which necessarily are constructed rhetorically” (p. 4). In other words, once presidents succeed in using war metaphors to frame an issue, it becomes difficult to conceive of the issue any other way. Referring to relations between the Soviet Union and the United States as a Cold War, for example, was “an inescapable part of our vocabulary,” even if it offered “a misleading impression of a single phenomenon” (Bell, 2001, p. 158). Similarly, following the attacks of September 11, many political leaders and those in the media adopted the rhetoric of the president that ultimately shaped the way people perceived policies related to counter-terrorism. As Steven Livingston (1994) noted

> The power to shape perceptions of violent events and their principle actors (both perpetrators and victims) usually rests not with the terrorists but with government officials. Who the terrorists are in the first place is a question largely determined by these officials. Those who have routine access to the mass media, those to whom reporters turn when the dust settles and the shooting stops, have the ability to shape coverage and perceptions (p. 178).

Precisely how metaphors define issues has been the object of some study within cognitive psychology and language studies. In his book, *Ethics and Language*, Charles L. Stevenson (1944) argued that a persuasive definition is one in which the positive meaning of a particular term is retained while the negative meaning is altered, or vice versa. Thus, when presidents refer to a policy program as a war, they are attempting to

transfer the positive connotations of war onto their policy, while the actual denotation of war (armed combat, collateral damage, and potential defeat) is minimized.

Another theory of definition that can be used to explain presidential war metaphors is the theory that as opposed to referential symbols, in which the symbol is clear and self-explanatory, condensation symbols do not represent any single meaning, but seek to reduce many different connotations into one symbol (Sapir, 1934). The bald eagle, for example, is a condensation symbol since it represents not simply an animal or a predator, but emotions such as nationalism, loyalty, pride, military power, etc. So it is with war metaphors that different people can take from the symbol different images and emotions, with one person focusing victory, while another focuses on the means used to fight the war, such as national unity, broad executive power, etc.

Other than providing perspective, war metaphors also persuade the public by helping to evoke strong emotional responses. By identifying a problem as a war, it evokes the feeling of urgency, that some problem is essentially "attacking" the public and must be repelled. Jeffery Tulis, in warning about the danger to a presidents credibility if the public perceives that the actual threat does not match the rhetoric, also noted that "People do respond to crisis- if you think there is one, you tend to support the leader" (as cited in VandeHei, 2005). Thus, policies that would otherwise be suspect or open to debate are often given names to invoke images of necessity. An example of this occurred in the 1950's, when the new interstate highway system was officially named the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways and a national education bill was called the National Defense Education Act. As commentator George Will (2006) has said of these proposals, use of the word "defense" in these bills "was partly a verbal tic of the time- a Cold War reflex to impart momentum to any proposal by presenting it as integral to national security" (para. 3). Will's examples also illustrate the useful ability of metaphors to be invoked indirectly rather than directly, or as Roland Paris (2002) says in his study of war metaphors regarding the conflict in Kosovo, "metaphors are powerful rhetorical tools because they can often be summoned subtly with trigger phrases or oblique references that evoke the metaphor without necessarily making it explicit" (p. 428). War metaphors can be made merely by using war language such as "battle,"

“front,” or “total victory,” to name just a few. This allows presidents to be indirect and yet still produce the emotional reaction that comes with war language.

The reason that war metaphors generate stronger emotional responses from the public than some other rhetorical device is because issues of national security conjure feelings of patriotism and support towards whatever policies are advanced. To do otherwise would signal a defeat or worse, identification with the enemy. After the attacks of September 11, for example, a study of CNN coverage showed that the cable news network “created a powerful, dominant frame- that a US, military-led international war would be the only meaningful solution to prevent more terrorist attacks” (Reynolds & Barnett, 2003, p. 91). Thus, by using the war metaphor, President Bush and others were able to discourage dissent by the implication that opposition to policy was aiding the terrorists. This strategy was also pursued during the Cold War when presidents were able to use rhetoric to “fashion the terms of elite debate and, accordingly, of media coverage” (Manicas, 1989, p. 380-390). Another reason that war metaphors are so popular is that declaring wars often lead to an increase in funding for those agencies responsible for dealing with the problem (Sacco, 2005). They therefore become very attractive to those who work in agencies that would benefit. These agencies, in turn, are only too happy to produce testimony and other evidence validating the president’s militant rhetoric. Finally, wars are popular with presidents because of the media attention often generated by wars, even rhetorical ones, compared to the coverage given to the announcement of normal policies. It is no great secret that the modern mass media are highly attractive to conflict and violence, and especially war. During all of the successful metaphorical wars discussed in this study, the media assisted with the metaphor by focusing on the dangers of the enemy and on how fearful Americans should be.

One final benefit for presidents of declaring war on non-military social or economic problems is the status afforded to those affected by the problem. In some wars, particularly the drug war and the war on poverty, those most afflicted by the problem (the poor and the addicted) are sometimes portrayed as “victims” of the war, rather than perpetrators. This enables a president to get little resistance by affected groups. Consider the following 2005 description of a methamphetamine addict who was eventually jailed for drug-related domestic violence:

> The policy debate doesn't mean much to Terry Silvers, who is one of the victims in this [drug] war. Silvers, 34, worked for 19 years at Shaw carpet mill in Dalton, Ga., dreaming of the day he could open his own body shop. He had a wife, three kids and a 401(k), and he'd never missed more than a few days of work his entire life. The only illegal drug he'd tried was pot, which he used twice. One day when he was drinking with his buddies they talked him into doing some meth to wake him up for the drive home (Jefferson, 2005, p. 2).

Silvers, in the context of the war on drugs, was a victim. Although it is unlikely to conjure up images of civilian victims of bombing raids, the war metaphor does allow Americans to view people suffering from (in this case) addiction to drugs as victims of a malevolent force outside of their control rather than a willing soldier for the enemy. This allows people to support the president's policies without feeling like they are being made the scapegoat.

The Great Depression: The War to Start All Wars

As mentioned previously, Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson are often credited with being among the first presidents to rely heavily on rhetoric and create the modern rhetorical presidency. However, when it comes to war metaphors, Roosevelt and Wilson didn't need to analogize; they each had their own conventional wars from which to draw inspiring rhetoric and calls to sacrifice. For Roosevelt, an admitted imperialist and former Assistant Secretary of the Navy, war was discussed in very conventional terms, such as the actual war between the United States and Spain. However, even Roosevelt understood the power of war metaphors for domestic concerns and sometimes used it in his speeches. In a classic 1906 speech, "The Man with the Muck Rake," for example, Roosevelt spoke of an "urgent necessity for the sternest war upon" the forces of evil in the United States (cited in Graham, 1970). In his 1907 State of the Union message, he called for "unflinching perseverance in the war against successful dishonesty," and when he condemned some of the practices of contemporary industrial factories, he noted that "the number of deaths in battle in all the foreign wars put

together, for the last century and a quarter, aggregate considerably less than one year's death record for our industries" (Roosevelt, 1907, para. 2). The next year's State of the Union message continued to use the metaphor of war.

> The war we wage must be waged against misconduct, against wrongdoing wherever it is found; and we must stand heartily for the rights of every decent man, whether he be a man of great wealth or a man who earns his livelihood as a wage-worker or a tiller of the soil…. Last year an amendment was incorporated in the measure providing for the Secret Service… It is not too much to say that this amendment has been of benefit only, and could be of benefit only, to the criminal classes. If deliberately introduced for the purpose of diminishing the effectiveness of war against crime it could not have been better devised to this end (Roosevelt, 1908, Corporations section, para. 4).

Despite these occasional and often unconnected usages, war metaphors at this time were not used for the same purpose and did not have the same effect as they later would under some presidents. This was because the war metaphor was being used solely for emotional effect and not as a way to conceptualize and organize a federal response to some pressing problem. Roosevelt may have believed that the government should wage a war on misconduct or wrongdoing, but neither he nor anyone else in government attempted to conduct national policy in a way that would have backed up the presidents words, and there is no indication that any metaphorical war was pursued beyond a single speech. What changed between Theodore Roosevelt's attempt to wage war on a domestic problem and Franklin Roosevelt was not the severity of the crisis itself, although the Great Depression was unquestionably more sever than any domestic crisis faced before, but the way in which Americans understood the notion of war. Americans living during the Great Depression had a different conception of war than they did during Theodore Roosevelt's presidency, a conception formed by the Great War in Europe.

Although the American Civil War has been called the first modern war, it was World War I that fundamentally changed the way Americans viewed the proper role of government. The war forced the federal government into the role of director of the

national economy. From the War Industries Board and the War Trade Board to the Railroad Administration and the Food and Drug Administration, the executive branch of the national government was given control over the economy that was unparalleled in American history. It is not surprising therefore that when the stock market crashed in 1929 and many Americans were looking to their government to do something, they harkened back to the resource mobilization and national planning of World War I. Economist William Trufant Foster (1932) spoke for many when he hoped that some day Americans would realize that if money were available for a blood-and-bullets war, it should also be available for a food-and-famine war.

Herbert Hoover was certainly familiar with the capabilities of the United States during wartime. Appointed head of the Food Administration by President Wilson during World War I, he later served as the head of the American Relief Administration, where he earned national fame by organizing shipments of food for millions of starving people throughout Europe. Nevertheless, Hoover was slow to adopt the war metaphor in describing the Great Depression, even as many Americans began making the connection themselves, as expressed in editorials and statements by other officials. The US Conference of Mayors, for example, began its annual meeting with the following statement: "The world and the nation are at war. The enemy is hunger… In the face of this threat against human welfare and human life measures must be employed as drastic as those of military authority in times of actual physical warfare" (Leuchtenburg, 1995, p. 46). If Hoover was unwilling to exploit this rhetoric as president, his Democratic challenger would make it a major campaign theme.

In April of 1932, New York Governor Franklin Roosevelt delivered his famous "Forgotten Man" speech during his campaign. Noting the "generalship" of WWI and the massive mobilization of resources needed to wage a global conflict, Roosevelt used his rhetorical flare and the imagery of war to discuss the Depression. "The Nation faces today a more grave emergency than in 1917," he said

> It is said that Napoleon lost the battle of Waterloo because he forgot his infantry--he staked too much upon the more spectacular but less substantial cavalry. The present administration in Washington provides a close parallel. It has either

> forgotten or it does not want to remember the infantry of our economic army… It is high time to get back to fundamentals. It is high time to admit with courage that we are in the midst of an emergency at least equal to that of war. Let us mobilize to meet it (1932, para. 3-4).

Throughout the campaign, Roosevelt continued to contrast the Hoover administration with the energy and government activism of Woodrow Wilson in WWI. If the nation had not already assumed a wartime footing by the time Roosevelt was inaugurated, his inauguration address made clear the severity with which he viewed the current economic situation. "If we are to go forward," the new president said, "we must move as a trained and loyal army" (para. 17). Although he expressed his hope that "the normal balance of executive and legislative authority may be wholly adequate to meet the unprecedented task before us" (para. 20), Roosevelt made clear that if Congress does not enact his remedial measures, he would "ask the Congress for the one remaining instrument to meet the crisis- broad Executive power to wage a war against the emergency, as great as the power that would be given to me if we were in fact invaded by a foreign foe" (1933, para. 22).

After becoming president, the metaphor of war continued to inform national policy. Of course, unlike future metaphorical wars, Roosevelt did not need to do much convincing. By that time, even traditional conservatives were calling for radical action and a return to the kind of executive leadership experienced in wartime. Republican Governor Alf Landon, who would run against Roosevelt in 1936, asked, "why not give the president the same powers in this bitter peacetime battle as we would give to him in time of war?" (cited in Thornton, 1936, p. 84).

From the time of his election to the start of World War II, Roosevelt was able to fully exploit the nation's acceptability to wartime appeals, while Congressmen and the press played along. The analogy served to unify the nation behind Roosevelt's policies and silence his critics. The case of the war against the Great Depression illustrates not only how the metaphor can garner public support for particular policies, but how it can actually guide those policies themselves. According to historian William Leuchtenburg (1995),

> World War I provided a precedent for the concentration of executive authority, for the responsibility of government for the state of the economy, and for the practice of shunting aside the regular line agencies and creating new organizations with dramatic alphabetical rubrics … not least in importance, the war experience was used to justify the New Deal's emergency legislation in the courts (p. 64).

In other words, the war metaphor not only helped Americans conceptualize the economic condition at that time, it also informed Roosevelt's decisions on tackling the problem. The war against the Great Depression may have been the first American war against a non-military enemy, but it would not be the last.

Conclusion

Aaron Wildovsky (1968) once described, in the context of race relations, the dilemma of the political liberal as the concern with purely symbolic issues. This is the case, he says, regardless of whether or not the issue wins or loses, because even if it wins, the liberal is still in a poor position since it will soon become apparent that the issue was only symbolic and nothing has really changed for people. Perhaps the greatest accusation made about war metaphors is that they are purely symbolic, just a rhetorical flare added to speeches to sound more dramatic. The reality of presidential politics however, is that rhetoric *is* action. "We often assume that logic, facts, and data rule the day. In fact, the winners in political dialogue- and thus in politics- are often those most skillful in crafting compelling stories and using metaphor creatively" (McDonough, 2000, p. 53).

In a 2006 Foreign Affairs article, James Dobbins of the RAND Corporation argued that the historical analogy with which the Bush administration viewed Iraq led directly to certain policy choices that fit with that analogy (Diamond, Dobbins, Kaufmann, Gelb, & Biddle, 2006). Just as a historical analogy is argued to have influenced public policy, so to is it with metaphors, which also lead to certain policy choices. Using war metaphors is rarely an end onto itself, but a means of advancing public policy. Over the past century, as the influence and the attention presidents demand has increased, they have become one of the most popular rhetorical devices presidents

have at their disposal. In the following chapters, exactly how presidents use this tool will be analyzed.

Chapter 4

The War on Poverty

This administration today, here and now, declares unconditional war on poverty in America. I urge this Congress and all Americans to join with me in that effort. It will not be a short or easy struggle, no single weapon or strategy will suffice, but we shall not rest until that war is won. The richest Nation on earth can afford to win it. We cannot afford to lose it.

-- President Lyndon Johnson, 1964 State of the Union Address

In May of 2001, while delivering the commencement address at Notre Dame University, President George W. Bush called for a new front on the war on poverty, a front he called the third stage of combating poverty in America. The first stage, Bush said, was President Johnson's initial decoration of war on poverty, with programs such as Medicare, Medicaid, and Head Start. According to Bush, this initial stage in the war on poverty produced several negative consequences. "The welfare entitlement became an enemy of personal effort and responsibility, turning many recipients into dependents," Bush said, turning "too many citizens into bystanders convinced that compassion had become the work of government alone" (Bush, 2001, para. 18). The second stage of the war on poverty was the 1996 welfare reform bill, which cut the nations welfare rolls from 14.2 million in 1994 (its highest number in its history) to 5.8 million by 2000 by offering time-limited benefits only in exchange for work.

The purpose of Bush's speech was not to recount a metaphorical war that many conservative critics have argued to be a failure. The purpose was to argue for his controversial faith-based initiative, which encourages religious or faith-based programs to seek government contracts to help the poor, homeless, and drug-addicted. This goal will be facilitated by the new White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. This policy, Bush claims, represents the third stage in the ongoing war on poverty. He ended his speech with a "return to Lyndon Johnson's charge" (para. 65) to support anti-poverty programs and acts of public service.

The invocation of Johnson's war on poverty from a conservative president representing a party that has long been suspicious of federal welfare programs is just one example of how powerful and long-lasting war metaphors can be, particularly when the

previous Republican President, George H.W. Bush, openly rejected the phraseology. In 1991, when the elder Bush was in office, Jack Kemp was chairman of a task force formed to create the President's antipoverty policy. When Kemp wanted to wage a "conservative war on poverty" in 1991, Bush told Kemp that he did not want him to use the well-known war metaphor (DeParle, 1993, p. 26). The reasons for this may have been a personal dislike for the rhetorical device, but it may also have stemmed from the reality that the war on poverty has never truly been a bipartisan effort, and has been widely condemned by conservatives who view the war as a "the crowning triumph of the liberal vision of society -- and of government programs as the solution to social problems" (Sowell, 2004). Despite such reservations, the war metaphor continues to be invoked long after its controversial beginnings and even long after many of the programs and agencies associated with it have disappeared.

Over 30 years has passed since the dismantling of the Office of Economic Opportunity, the cornerstone on the war on poverty. Since that time, many of the Great Society programs have been derided as doing "more harm than good," in the words of House Speaker Newt Gingrich in 1997, "an expensive failed tribute to the collective liberal imagination" (cited in Anderson, 1999, p. 211). Nevertheless, the war on poverty remains a powerful symbol of American social welfare policy to this day, and it is often mentioned even absent any specific policies or proposals. National papers ran stories covering its 40 year anniversary in 2004, and politicians around the country, as well as presidents, continue to use it when touting their own antipoverty plans.

The war's endurance on the national political landscape was not inevitable. Like other tools of political speeches, the use of a war metaphor could have been used to add weight to the poverty issue without permeating into American's understanding of social welfare. What made the war on poverty a staple of welfare policy was not only its repetition, but also the manner in which it was declared (during the presidents State of the Union Address), and the veracity with which it was initially waged. By the time the war's policies were open to serious scrutiny, it was too late: the rhetoric had become too internalized in the press and throughout the country.

This chapter will discuss the origins for the war on poverty, what Johnson's formal declaration in his 1964 State of the Union address did to the effort, and how

successive administrations gradually adopted the metaphor even while opposing specific poverty legislation. This chapter will also explore the progress in the war on poverty under several administrations, including President Clinton's poverty plan (such as his effort to "end welfare as we know it") and President Bush's new war on poverty which emphasizes faith-based measures over traditional, secular programs.

Background

Prior to the New Deal legislation during the Great Depression (which, like Kennedy's New Frontier, Johnson's Great Society, and Clinton's New Covenant, is also a metaphor), most people did not agree with, or even consider, the idea that poverty was a government problem, let alone a national government problem. Indeed, no one in government had even bothered to collect any adequate statistics on the poor or unemployed prior to the 1930's. During the end of the 19th century, three events occurred that together ended the era when local government alone could assume the responsibility of taking care of the poor. The industrial revolution and accompanying urbanization, large scale European immigration, and an end of the cheap land that came with the near-total conquest of frontier (Halloran, 1968, p. 207). Together, these events forced state governments to aid in the welfare of its citizens, an area previously reserved to private charities or local programs. When the stock market crashed in 1929, and a quarter of all Americans found themselves unemployed, even the state governments found themselves incapable of meeting the demand for aid.

The first real effort of the federal government to address poverty in the country was Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal programs. Facing the largest sustained decline in industrial production and productivity in history, Americans started viewing poverty, unemployment, and homelessness as national problems, and began to view the poor as victims of events outside of their control rather than self-inflicted consequences of laziness, drunkenness, or unintelligence. With this new perspective on poverty came new demands for government welfare. Such welfare was once viewed with hostility when European nations began experimenting with it in the early years of the 20th century. As one contemporary social worker noted, "during the 10 years between 1929-1939, more

progress was made in public welfare and relief than in the three hundred years after this country was first settled" (Brown, 1940, p. ix).

Most historians agree that for all of its lofty ambitions, it was not the New Deal, but World War II that brought about an end to the Great Depression. With the nation's industrial power directed towards the manufacture of weapons and war machinery and much of the male population needed for the front lines in Europe and the Pacific, virtually anyone who wanted a job could find one. Nevertheless, although the quantifiable observation of many New Deal programs was that they did not make a significant dent in poverty rates, the president did succeed in using his optimistic rhetoric and willingness to try new things to give people hope. Sir Ronald Lindsay, the British ambassador in Washington, commenting on Roosevelt's energy and resourcefulness, noted that the contrast to President Hoover was so drastic that the loyalties and repressed hero-worship of the country have found in him an outlet and a symbol.

Even conservative commentator George Will wrote of Roosevelt on the centennial of his birth that he radiated "an infectious zest, he did the most important thing a President can do: he gave the nation a hopeful, and hence creative, stance toward the future" (cited in Leuchtenburg, 1995). Roosevelt was able to generate such intense popularity, not only from a country drenched in poverty, but also from contemporary historians and political observers, through his use of oration and rhetoric. Just as Johnson was able to galvanize the nation around the rhetorical war on poverty, so too was Roosevelt able to capitalize on grand themes such as the first 100 days, and his stirring inaugural address in 1933 to generate intense support for his policies. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Roosevelt perfected the modern use of war metaphors in shaping the perception of the threat to the American people and in pushing through Congress his New Deal legislation, legislation that was unlikely to pass under normal circumstances. By describing the Great Depression as if it were a military opponent, Roosevelt was able to focus the nation's attention on defeating the event rather than view it as a series of terrible, though relatively isolated, cases of unemployment and poverty. This metaphor obviously subsided once the United States found itself in a very real war against the Axis powers in the 1940's.

There remained little interest in the subject of poverty throughout the prosperous 1950's, although there are exceptions.[9] By the end of the decade however, as Carl Brauer (1982) noted, the growing international threats exemplified by the Soviet launch of Sputnik prompted many politicians to critically examine America's internal problems more closely (this marked a sharp departure from the early 1950's, when such examination was seen as dangerous and playing into the hands of the Communists). One example of this national self-reflection was when, on November 25, 1960, Edward R. Murrow of CBS aired "Harvest of Shame," which documented the stark picture of American migratory workers who, living in makeshift squalor, sold their labor for an average of $900 a year. Over the next several years, numerous books, articles, and television programs were coming out to expose a culture of poverty in the United States.[10]

During the 1960 presidential campaign, John F. Kennedy was not afraid to highlight negative aspects of the American economy, occasionally singling out poverty and even referring to the Social Security Act as the "opening battle" in the struggle against poverty. However, even when discussing poverty as he did in his inaugural address it was treated more as an international problem than a purely domestic one. For the first two years of Kennedy's administration, American poverty was not identified as the focal point of his policies. Instead, Kennedy's programs had a wide variety of goals and targets and lacked any overall theme. At around the same time, the subject of American poverty was generating more attention in newspapers and books than at any other time since the 1930's. It was not until his tax cuts opened him up to the charge of neglecting the poor that the president asked Walter Heller, chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors (CEA), whether poverty was as widespread as some were claiming. A national study revealed that nearly 35 million Americans (20% of the country at that time) lived in poverty (Anderson, 1999, p. 48). In response, Kennedy met with Heller to develop a unifying theme that would give greater meaning to the various programs that

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[9] Senator Paul H. Douglas centered his 1954 re-election campaign around fighting the Depression within Southern Illinois, proposing more comprehensive poverty programs in the Senate, and numerous figures at the state level had started bringing the poverty issue to center stage.

[10] The phrase "culture of poverty" was popularized by a book by Oscar Lewis. Other examples of this wave of literature includes Harry M. Caudill's *Night Comes to the Cumberlands*, Leon Keyserling's Poverty *and Deprivation in the U.S.*, and Michael Harrington's influential *The Other America*.

he was proposing, or was planning to propose. Although his successor would later give this broad theme a name, the concept for the war on poverty came in the months following this meeting.

When a television documentary on poverty in America aired in February 1963, the president received over 100 letters, mostly from Democrats, pleading with him to show more sympathy to the poor (Braur, 1982, p. 103). Heller's conclusions about poverty, combined with the fear that a potential Republican opponent in the next election might offer his own anti-poverty program, prompted Heller to ask Robert J. Lampman, an expert on income distribution, for ideas on "a possible Kennedy offensive against poverty" (Braur, 1982, p. 104-105). Ideas over the next several months centered on what form the anti-poverty program would take and particularly on how it should be presented to the public.

In the fall of 1963, Kennedy's staff explored various ideas for a federal system of programs to alleviate poverty, to be announced in the 1964 State of the Union Address. Seizing upon community action as a major theme, Kennedy secured $500 million, which was allocated for poverty relief programs, and spent it all on community action programs (Sundquist, 1969, p. 42). Overall, Kennedy approached poverty similar to how other presidents approach most domestic problems: categorically, and slowly. During the 1960's, job training, for example, enrolled an average of only around 300,000 people a year nation wide (Patterson, 1994, p. 129). Criticisms of Kennedy's poverty programs came from liberals, who argued that it was simply a conservative measure that attacks the symptoms but not the causes of poverty, as well as from conservatives, who lamented government handouts as paternalistic and patronizing to the poor. Regardless of the merit of these concerns, what is important is that during this time, despite some occasional high-level rhetoric about the many who are poor, there was not yet any rhetorical theme that united the various anti-poverty programs, nothing that could be used to rally the nation together, or to provide some conceptual framework for how to view the effort. Whether, as some suggest, Kennedy intended on changing this will never be known, but what is clear is that his successor was about to start a metaphorical war that would become a permanent fixture on American welfare policies.

Lyndon Johnson: Launching The War on Poverty

When Lyndon Johnson became president upon the assassination of Kennedy, he was already fully aware of the poverty issues that his predecessor was working on. The day after the assassination, Heller spoke with Johnson about a poverty program he had been working on with Kennedy. Johnson's response, according to Heller, "was spontaneous and so immediate- and without knowing that we were sort of battling within the administration to get this kind of program adopted- that I thought that it was an instinctive and uncalculated response" (Gillette, 1996, p. 16). Rather than assigning the war on poverty to some existing agency, Johnson decided to create an independent agency within the White House to study poverty in America. Because of Johnson's efforts, expenditures for anti-poverty programs eventually grew from $6 billion in 1965 to $24 and a half in 1972 (Plotnick & Skidmore, 1975, p. 26).

Johnson instructed Heller to give poverty the highest priority (Anderson, 1999, p. 48). He then appointed R. Sargent Shriver, a brother-in-law of former President Kennedy, to direct his poverty task force, a group Johnson created that included 137 academics and experts who recommended what would later become known as the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. It was in that year, 1964, that America's policy towards poverty, which had been sporadic and disjointed, transformed into a coordinated war.

Johnson's decision to declare a war on poverty may have been motivated by personal memories of growing up in a relatively poverty-stricken region, or perhaps by his devotion to Roosevelt's New Deal programs that Johnson considered so inspiring to people. However, as a shrewd politician, Johnson must also have recognized the political benefits to his plan. Few people knew much about Johnson when he took office, and comparisons to his predecessor were not favorable to most Americans. Attacking poverty so aggressively would solidify his liberal credentials.

On January 8, 1964, President Johnson declared an unconditional war on poverty, aimed at coordinating the federal, state, and local governments to work together. One reason that Johnson's poverty program was labeled a war, according to Kermit Gordon, the budget director under Kennedy and member of the CEA under Johnson, was that no one involved in the formation of the program "could think of any euphemism which

didn't sound silly" (1996, p. 24). Following the State of the Union Address, Johnson made numerous speeches before every group that he could in order to convince the nation that this new war would not be a partisan effort. "It was a moral obligation and its success rested on every one of us" (Kearns, 1976, p. 188). Johnson also recruited influential business leaders to lobby on his behalf, as well as taking advantage of several new books and articles that explained the need for poverty relief to average Americans.

In a message to Congress in March of 1964, Johnson elaborated on the war on poverty, noting that "it cannot be driven from the land by a single attack on a single front" Johnson suggested that the war would not only help to eliminate poverty, but also will "give us the chance to test our weapons, to try our energy and ideas and imagination for the many battles yet to come. As conditions change, and as experience illuminates our difficulties, we will be prepared to modify our strategy" (Johnson, 1964, p. 380). The war would go on to be used to unify the multitude of legislative proposals Johnson sent to Congress, most of which were contained in the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. This landmark bill, which cost almost $950 million in the first year alone, created ten different programs to be head by the director of the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) in order to launch a coordinated attack on the causes of poverty.

Some of the provisions contained within the Economic Opportunity Act, as well as other legislation Congress quickly enacted included the Appalachian development Act, which called for over $1 Billion to allocated to the Appalachian region for highway development and other projects; youth employment through such programs as the Job Corps, Neighborhoods Youth Corps, and others; Expansion of the food stamp program; a national service corps called Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA); expansion of unemployment benefits; extension of minimum wage coverage; the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA); increased funding for hospital and library construction; Medicare; expansion of public housing; federal funding of mass transit for poor urban areas; Head Start, to provide pre-kindergarten to lower income children; and Upward Bound, which tried to identify intelligent yet underachieving high school students to prepare them for higher education. In 1965 alone, Johnson made 115 legislative recommendations to Congress, of which more than 90 became law. Although Congress did not pass every program and initiative that Johnson had wanted, it did pass

enough of them to create the largest expansion of federal power since the New Deal. The hope was that the war would start out highly concentrated on certain areas, and then lead to larger national programs.

Despite Johnson's hope that the war would be accepted by both Republicans and Democrats, support for his programs by the opposition in Congress never materialized. The war on poverty, despite its impressive legislative accomplishments, was never truly bipartisan. Many important Republicans in both the House and the Senate never got on board, and debate on the floor was highly partisan. Republicans called Johnson's war on poverty "an election year gimmick" which would create a massive new bureaucracy that simply duplicated existing programs. Furthermore, as Representative Frelinghuysen put it, the war on poverty would "inevitably create great expectations… without the substance to satisfy such hopes" (*CQ Almanac*, 1964, p. 224). Democrats, in the meantime, accused Republicans of instructing their members to vote against the bill without even reading it.

Republicans also tried to generate opposition from Southern Democrats by playing off fears that blacks would stand to gain from the program and that residential projects would lead to racial mixing. Leading Southern Democratic opposition, Congressman Howard Smith of Virginia echoes Republican accusations. "I want to say to any Southerners who plan to vote for this bill," Smith said, "you are implementing the civil rights bill that you opposed," emphasizing the fact that Job Corps camps were required to be integrated (*CQ Almanac*, 1964, p. 227). Arguing that Governors should have veto powers over OEO projects (which they did eventually receive through a Senate amendment), Republican defense of states rights was designed to woo Southern Democrats already skeptical of other Johnson initiatives. Johnson tried to thwart this tactic by having the legislation proposed by Democratic Representative Phil M. Landrum of Georgia, who called the bill "the most conservative I've ever seen" since it tried to help people get off the welfare rolls and become "taxpayers rather than taxeaters" (*CQ Almanac*, 1964, p. 227).

Despite the opposition among some Republicans, the Economic Opportunity Act passed the Senate (where it was introduced first due to the fact that Johnson perceived Senate Democrats as more reliable than House Democrats) by a vote of 61-34 (with 12

Democrats and 22 Republicans voting against it). After negotiation with reluctant Democrats, the act finally passed the House on August 20, 1964 by a vote of 226-185. The vote breakdown demonstrated significant partisan opposition, with only 10 Republicans supporting it (see table 4.1). Although only one Northern Democrat voted against the bill, half of all Southern Democrats voted against it. In the House, the vote was only slightly better, with 60 Southern Democrats supporting the bill and 40 opposing it. However, among House Republicans, only 22 supported the bill, with 145 voting against it (*CQ Almanac*, 1964, p. 208). Following the vote, President Johnson said that "all Americans can be proud of the action taken today by the House of Representatives in committing the strength and talents of our nation to war on poverty" (*CQ Almanac*, 1964, p. 226).

Another landmark bill Johnson proposed as part of his war on poverty was the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), which authorized the first general school aid in American history. The importance of the bill on Johnson's Great Society programs in general and his war on poverty in particular is evidenced by his unusually strong praise of Congressional action.

> This Congress did more to uplift education, more to attack disease in this country and around the world, and more to conquer poverty than any other session in all American history, and what more worthy achievements could any person want to have? ... Until we banish ignorance, until we drive disease from our midst, until we win the war on poverty, we cannot expect to continue to be the leaders not only of a great people but the leaders of all civilization (Johnson, 1965).

At a Democratic dinner honoring Congress, Johnson proclaimed that the Education Act was "the most important measure that I shall ever sign" (an extraordinary statement, given the range of legislation in the 1960's). The ESEA was designed to help low-income school districts by tying the level of aid with the number of low-income students. Like the Economic Opportunity Act, ESEA passed without bipartisan support in the House, with only 35 Republican Representatives voting for the bill and 96 voting against it. Senate Republicans were more supportive. Eighteen Republican Senators voted for

the bill and only 14 voted against it. Other legislative actions faced similar partisanship. Medicare, for example, was supported by a bare majority of Republicans in the House (70-68), but failed to gain a majority of Republican support in the Senate (13-17). Although Johnson's attempt to make permanent the food stamp program suffered no significant opposition in the Senate, only 13 Republicans voted for it in the House (compared to 163 Republicans voting against it). Upon signing it into law, Johnson said that the food stamp program was "one of our most valuable weapons for the war on poverty" (*CQ Almanac*, 1964, p. 115).

Table 4.1: War on poverty legislation

Bill Number	Date	Bill Name	Senate Vote	House Vote	Opposition Party Support in Senate	Opposition Party Support in House
PL 88-452; HR 8283; S 2642	1964	Economic Opportunity Act	61-34	226-185	10-32	22-145
PL 89-10; HR 2362	1965	Elementary and Secondary Education Act	73-18	263-153	18-14	35-96
PL 89-97; HR 6675	1964	Medicare	68-21	313-115	13-17	70-68
PL 88-525; HR 10222	1964	Food Stamp Program	Voice Vote	229-189	Voice Vote	13-163

Ultimately Johnson's efforts to frame poverty as an urgent national issue proved a success. As Doris Kearns later wrote, "what had been largely the concern of a small number of liberal intellectuals and government bureaucrats became within six months the national disgrace that shattered the complacency of a people who always considered their country a land of opportunity for all" (Kearns, 1976, p. 188). "I don't know if I'll pass a

single law or get a single dollar appropriated," Johnson is said to have remarked to a reporter, "but before I'm through, no community in America will be able to ignore the poverty in its midst" (Jordan & Rostow, 1986, p. 16). Invoking a war metaphor, as well as the various other conflict metaphors associated with a war, seems to have generated the publicity and attention that Johnson had intended. The year the war on poverty was declared, news coverage of poverty expanded dramatically, according to a study conducted by Martin Gilens (1999). Between 1965 and 1969, media coverage reached its height. This increase, according to Gilens (1999), was "without question" due to Johnson's declaration of war against poverty, and almost four-fifths of all poverty-related stories mentioned the war, as did the majority of poverty-related articles. Included in much of this coverage was descriptions of Johnson's anti-poverty programs as well as profiles of Johnson's "poverty warriors" (p. 115-116).

Aside from generating intense media attention, Johnson's rhetoric also helped to put critics of his poverty programs in a difficult position. If they rejected the president's proposals, they could be accused of opposing the noble objectives of the effort, or worse still, be viewed as underestimating the America's ability to obtain victory over an enemy. Since the focus of the program was so broadly defined, supporters of the presidents program had an easy time labeling critics as defeatists. Calling his anti-poverty program a war on poverty, one Republican Senator lamented, was a clever attempt "to make the bad seem good, the deceitful seem honest, and the fraudulent seem trustworthy" (Sen. Simpson, Congressional Record 110, 1964, p. 16777). Another Senator noted how the terminology was an attempt to force Congressmen to vote on a bill "because of the name it carries and the purpose it seeks to achieve rather than upon testimony that the measure is actually needed and soundly conceived" (Sen. Robertson, Congressional Record 110, 1964, p. 16616). In short, the rhetoric of war significantly effected how the public viewed the program, and this, in turn, effected how legislators responded.

Describing the war on poverty as unconditional war was clearly meant to invoke the feeling that the government intended on using any means available to combat poverty in America without limit, "for as long as it takes, using whatever means must be employed, until the goal is won," as the Secretary of Agriculture testified in a 1964 House Committee Hearing (Zarefsky, 1986, p. 30). During the Cold War, when

American forces were deployed throughout the world and the conflict in Vietnam was still popular among many Americans, this rhetoric fit in perfectly with the mood of the times, which saw many issues, from space exploration to high school education, as another front in the larger war against the Soviet Union. However, the war on poverty was not without its dissenters. Aside from Republican opposition, many Southern Democrats feared that the bill would be viewed as a veiled attempt at racial integration, as poverty was seen by many as a racial issue. For many of them, even the rhetoric of war would not be enough to convert them to Johnson's side. For Americans in general however, Johnson had succeeding in bringing the poverty issue into every home. Perhaps just as important however, was the effect the language had on how the administration itself dealt with poverty.

The war metaphor not only directed the aim of Johnson's anti-poverty programs, but the tactics as well. As HEW Secretary Anthony Celebrezze said, "if you are going to declare a war, you have to have one general of the army" (Sherry, 2001, p. 260). The programs included in the Economic Opportunity Act formed only one "front" in the war on poverty, which was designed to be coordinated by the OEO, and then delegated to by community action agencies across the country. The director of the OEO was given broad authority and flexibility in distributing funds as well as developing guidelines and criteria for the various programs.

The Johnson administration now faced the problem of an expectations gap that existed between what the war on poverty promised and what it could actually deliver. The same war rhetoric that proved so disarming to opponents of the program now served to hold the program to its own unrealistically high standards. As a result, policy analysts in the OEO were forced to exaggerate its successes and minimize its failures as much as possible. This was done, at least in part, by highlighting specific instances of success and then using those examples as evidence for the programs effectiveness. Towards the end of the 1960's, the disparity between rhetoric and reality was beginning to become apparent. "When one cuts away the camouflage and when one removes the emotional rhetoric," California Senator Goerge Murhy said in a 1967 Committee Hearing, echoing the sentiments of an increasing number of Congressmen "the cold record reveals not only confusing information but also frequently conflicting statements" (1967, p. 10).

The OEO testimony, reports, and statistics started to be viewed by many in Congress as so full of antidotes, misleading terminology, and ambiguous results, the agency had lost much of its credibility. Many were beginning to ask how many people the war on poverty was actually helping. Indeed, House Majority Leader Gerald Ford and others even suggested that the expectations gap generated from the lofty rhetoric may actually have contributed to the race riots that had occurred in cities such as Los Angeles between 1965-1966 (*NY Times*, 1966, p. 9). To compound the agency's troubles, there was a great deal of bureaucratic in-fighting between OEO officials and their local community counter-parts over where the money was going and to whom. These practical and administrative concerns about the war on poverty also served to reinforce the ideological objection to social welfare policies in general, objections rooted in the belief that poverty was not the cause of social structures or fundamental unfairness, but simply, as Berry Goldwater expressed, "low intelligence or low ambition" (Patterson, 1994, p. 144-145). Many Americans began agreeing with this sentiment, according to public opinion polls, although no public figure was yet willing to declare defeat on what had become an important national campaign.

Richard Nixon: Winding Down the Rhetoric

By the late 1960's, Johnson no longer had the zeal in defending OEO policies that he had in the beginning of his term. The war on poverty had started losing interest from Johnson, who became far more absorbed in the war in Vietnam, and the 1966 mid-term elections saw the removal of some of the war on poverty's staunchest supporters from Congress and the influx of some of its harshest critics. As his dedication to the war on poverty began to waver, so did the rhetoric. No longer would the objective implicitly be defined as the total elimination of poverty. The new objective in the war on poverty was the preservation of the OEO as a symbol of the nation's commitment to the poor. Numerous prominent Democrats, including Robert Kennedy, began talking about the war on poverty more as a symbolic message to the nations poor that they were not going to be ignored, rather than the very real battle the nation was prepared to fight on their behalf.

By now, pundits and politicians no longer debated the war on poverty itself, directing its defenses or attacks towards the symbol of that war, the OEO. When Johnson

famously announced his intention neither to seek nor to accept the Democratic nomination for president, keeping the OEO alive was the only realistic goal supporters of the war on poverty could hope for. Without the energy and determination of a strong executive to maintain the momentum through his persuasive ability, the war on poverty could not sustain itself, even if the OEO could be salvaged for symbolic reasons. By the time Nixon was elected president in 1968, Congress was already beginning to dismantle OEO by giving other agencies control over programs. Although he privately expressed dislike for many of the antipoverty programs associated with the war on poverty, public opinion compelled him to keep them active, even expanding some of them like the food stamp program, indexing social security to inflation, and the creation of the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for the disabled. In 1969, Nixon even called for a Family Assistance Plan (FAP) that would replace numerous federal programs with direct cash payments to those in need (Moynihan, 1973). Unlike Johnson however, who used the rhetoric of the war on poverty to provide a framework for justifying his programs, Nixon's rhetoric was framed in the context of a welfare system he judged had been a colossal failure and a monster. The war metaphor that Nixon was exposing was not unconditional war, but something else that would have sounded particularly heartfelt given the conflict in Vietnam: a "welfare quagmire" (Nixon, 1969, p. 57A).

For the head of the OEO, Nixon nominated Congressman Donald Rumsfeld of Illinois, who consciously tried to refrain from using the war metaphor in speeches and interviews. When Rumsfeld left his post in 1970, the OEO went through several more directors before Nixon, upon reelection, finally appointed Howard Phillips to direct the dismantling of the OEO (Zarefsky, 1986, p. 190). Many of the programs the OEO once administrated devolved to other agencies: Head Start to HEW; Job Corps to the Department of Labor; and community action, the cornerstone of the war on poverty, was now the purview of the newly created Community Services Administration (CSA). By 1974, the OEO was effectively no longer relevant, and the war on poverty existed now only as a series of policies dispersed throughout the federal bureaucracy.

By 1974, there were over 14.4 million Americans on public assistance, up from 11.1 million in 1969 and 7.8 million in 1965. Many Americans were beginning to believe that the nation was facing a welfare crisis. The Nixon administration approached

this concern with his New Federalism, which gave state and local governments' greater control over social welfare programs. This trend continued throughout the Ford and Carter administrations, which were unable to generate enough support to radically reform the welfare system, despite Carter's pledge in his inaugural address that the nation would "fight our wars against poverty, ignorance, and injustice—for those are the enemies against which our forces can be honorably marshaled" (Carter, 1977). When President Carter proposed his own welfare program, it got bogged down in Congress, whose primary concern was on rising inflation. Beginning with Carter, and continuing with President Reagan, social welfare spending was reduced in the face of rising inflation and budget deficits.

Ronald Reagan: America Loses the War

Although the war on poverty atrophied under Presidents Nixon, Ford, and Carter through disuse and the dismantling of the major organizations that fought it, it was Ronald Reagan who officially proclaimed the end of the war on poverty. The administration replaced the CSA with a Community Services Block Grant system, redesigned job training, and cut back the Food Stamp program. However, accused of being unsympathetic, if not openly hostile, to the poor, Reagan did propose an enterprise zone program that would cost $310 million a year in tax write-offs in an effort to revitalize poor areas by, as the president said, creating "a productive, free-market environment in economically depressed areas by reducing taxes, regulations and other Government burdens on economic activity." Comparing himself to Franklin Roosevelt, Reagan believed that his domestic policies actually helped the poor by reducing unnecessary spending (cited in Rhoden, 1982, para. 1)). In his first State of the Union Address, Reagan balked at the "wild charges" that the administration has turned its back on the poor, insisting that funding for "social insurance programs will be more than double the amount spent only six years ago," and that all he hoped to do was make these programs "more efficient and economical" and less corrupt and abused (Reagan, 1982, para. 33).

Reagan's appeal to Americans lay in lofty rhetoric about individualism, a strong work ethic, and other American values that did not conform to many of the philosophical

principles of the war on poverty, despite his argument that the freedom he sought to spread "is the world's only hope, to conquer poverty and preserve peace. Every blow we inflict against poverty will be a blow against its dark allies of oppression and war" (Reagan, 1985, para. 37).

Just as Kennedy and Johnson were contending with a nation introduced to poverty through books, articles, and documentaries, the 1980's trend towards conservatism was also aided by new studies that attempted to demonstrate the futility and waste committed in the war on poverty programs and the alarming rise of what were increasingly being referred to as called the underclass. This underclass was described by Senator Edward Kennedy 1978 as "the great unmentioned problem in America today… perhaps more dangerous, more bereft of hope, more difficult to confront, than any for which our history has prepared us" (Auletta, 1982, p. 30). The hostility to welfare would continue throughout the 1980's and 1990's, even with the administration of a moderate Democrat who was likened to John Kennedy.

Bill Clinton: Ending Welfare As We Know It

Liberals who spent the 1970's and 1980's eagerly awaiting a return to the more active days of the war on poverty would find no salvation in President Clinton, who reflected the popular perceptions of the war n poverty during the 1990's far more than the popular opinion of the 1960's. On the campaign trail, he promised to end welfare as we known it, and pledged to scrap the current welfare system and make welfare a second chance, not a way of life. Every one of Clinton's State of the Union Addresses delivered while in office mentioned welfare only in the context of its failure to help people out of poverty, its addictive quality, and its destructive capacity to those who rely on it.

For the first few years in office, Clinton tried to raise public awareness of homeless and increased funding for many war on poverty programs like Head Start and public housing, but these initiatives clearly emphasized help for the *working* poor, rather than the less popular non-working poor. To the extent that Clinton discussed welfare, it was to say simply that, as he did during the 1994 State of the Union Address, "It doesn't work; it defies our values as a nation. If we value work, we can't justify a system that makes welfare more attractive than work if people are worried about losing their health

care" (Welfare section, para. 1). Clinton continued to devolve more and more authority to the state to deal with, and in 1996, he signed Welfare Reform (a.k.a. Welfare-to-Work), requiring welfare recipients to work towards full employment, capping cash assistance to 5 years or less, required the head of a family to work at least 30 house a week after 2 years. The bill would include a combination of tax incentives for businesses who hire people off welfare, and job training, transportation, and child care to assist welfare recipients through the transition. Perhaps the most important part of the legislation was that the law gave state governments the authority to manage programs, and funded states through a Temporary Aid for Needy Families block grant (TANF).

During this time, Clinton avoided invoking the war on poverty for the same reason many speculated that he supported welfare reform in the first place, which was to distance himself and the Democratic Party from the perceived welfare excesses of the 1960's. The first Democratic president to serve two full terms in office since Franklin Roosevelt thus largely abandoned the war on poverty in favor of devolving much of welfare to the states.

Although the war on poverty has found its greatest critics among conservatives, the rhetoric of the war actually appeared to increase in the administration of Republican President George W. Bush, even as the actual programs were being cut. As part of his new war on poverty, Bush proposed deep cuts in many federal anti-poverty programs such as housing subsidies, food stamps, energy assistance, community development, social services and community services block grants, while at the same time increasing funding for religion-based groups. The result has been that many small church- and community-based social service programs are slowly assuming the lead role in the war on poverty once held by long-established community development organizations (Fletcher, 2005). With the onset of the war on terror and low poll numbers at the time of this writing, it is unlikely that the war on poverty will make much of reappearance.

Conclusion

David Zarefsky said the decision to use the war metaphor with regards to combating poverty "had profoundly effected the public discourse, influencing the way officials talked about the objective, the enemy, and the weapons and tactics" (1986:160).

By invoking a war metaphor in dealing with poverty in America, Johnson was able to get much of his Great Society program past relatively swiftly. The metaphor "prized federal action and presidential leadership, since war was a supremely national enterprise… it isolated the opposition and made opponents seem almost treasonous" (Sherry, 1995, p. 261). However, as William N. Elwood (1994) notes, "the programs became a victim of the perspective Johnson provided for the public to understand them. To declare war on poverty is to promise ultimate victory and elimination of that social problem" (p. 23). As Sargent Shriver went on to say, "we were a generation of people who had been in World War II. So when a war against poverty was launched, it was typical of all of us at that time to think of this war, the war against poverty, in terms just like the war against Hitler" (cited in Sherry, 1995, p. 261).

The year 2004 marked the 40 year anniversary of the war on poverty, and the results have been, as one magazine put it "early gains and a long stalemate" (Grier, *The Christian Science Monitor*). Regardless of the accomplishments Johnson achieved with the war on poverty, public approval for anti-poverty initiatives was severely diminished as people judged it, not in relation to economic conditions before the start of the war, but in relation to the total victory over poverty in America (Elwood, 1994, p. 24). This sense of defeat has been credited in bringing about the Reagan Revolution in 1980 (Green: 1986, p. 159). Perhaps more than failing to meet expectations, the increasing conservatism of the 1980's and 1990's tended to view war language with regards to poverty as class warfare and indicative of a welfare state gone berserk. Part of President Clinton's appeal as a "new Democrat" was his abandonment of heavy language emphasizing class differences and social welfare policies in favor of more optimistic language that downplayed, rather than highlighted poverty and almost never invoked the war metaphor. This strategy culminated in Clinton's endorsement of ending welfare as we know it with Welfare Reform. When President Bush invoked the war in 2001, it was not to reignite massive government investment and resource mobilization to combat poverty in America, but to give his faith-based initiative more credibility among liberals. Although the war on poverty failed to obtain bipartisan support and is often derided by conservatives for its ineffectiveness, its legacy remains in the continued existence of many of its programs such as Head Start and the Job Corps.

It should be noted that the demise of the war on poverty does not mean that the United States has abandoned trying to help the poor. Various new poverty-relief programs are constantly on the platform of candidates for office at all levels of government. In 2006, for example, a federal-led initiative in cooperation with over 200 cities and other jurisdictions to end chronic homelessness by providing stable housing has shown remarkable success (Eckholm, 2006). The 10-year plan, known as "housing first" is one of many new programs designed to combat poverty in America. The difference between these efforts and the war on poverty campaign of the 1960's is not just the fact that the war on poverty provided a central theme from which to defend and promote public policy, but the fact that the war on poverty programs were administered with all of the centralization and coordination of a military campaign, including a central headquarters (the OEO) and even a supreme commander (the director of the OEO).

Chapter 5

The War on Drugs

As I look over the problems of this country, I see one that stands out in particular: the problem of narcotics.

-- President Richard M. Nixon, 1968 Disneyland Speech

It has been said that no other public policy issue has been more hotly debated, more fraught with political extremism, or more difficult to manage organizationally and functionally than drug control (Van Wert, 1992, p. 22). In 1994, Kenneth J. Meier published *The Politics of Sin: Drugs, Alcohol, and Public Policy*, in which he utilized descriptive historical studies, quantitative historical studies, and cross-sectional quantitative studies in order to asses US policy towards drug use. Although Meier's book does not discuss presidential rhetoric in the war on drugs exclusively or in any systematic way, his research does demonstrate the important connection between the president and national drug policy. Although Meier treats the president as only one of the three political forces (the other two, of course, being the legislature and the courts) his book does bridge the studies of presidential agenda setting and public policy with the war on drugs.

According to William N. Elwood (1994) in his book, *Rhetoric in the War on Drugs*, the drug war is little more than "a public relations campaign designed to enhance the images of specific political figures and to absolve the federal government of responsibility for resolving the problems involved with drug addictions and trade" (p. 3). Presidents use the language of war to present themselves as strong commanders-in-chief. However, it is not just rhetoric that a president has in his arsenal, but also institutional tools that can be used to solidify the impression that the nation is at war. As with other metaphorical wars, presidents can effect the direction of the war on drugs through their appointment of drug control administrators, their ability to emphasize certain drug policies over others (as every president since Nixon has done to some extant), and by providing for organizational status through executive reorganizations (Meier 1994, p. 12). For example, prior to 1968, drug control efforts were located in the Treasury department

rather than the Justice Department, were President Johnson organized it. Since the Justice Department was far more disposed to law enforcement, this change had an effect on drug policy both substantively and symbolically. In 1973, President Nixon used his reorganization authority to consolidate all drug enforcement units into a new agency, the Drug Enforcement Administration.

The war on drugs is similar to the war on poverty in many ways. Like the war on poverty, there was no national emergency or catalyst that led to calls for federal intervention, but rather a national perception of a drug problem based as much on political rhetoric as it was on objective facts. Also like the war on poverty, the war metaphor has been adopted by both political parties and the media, even if opinion on its effectiveness tends to be divided along partisan lines, much the same as the war on poverty. However, there are significant differences between the two. Unlike the war on poverty, whose policies were generally confined to domestic programs, the war on drugs since its inception took on an international component that very much resembled conventional warfare, complete with foreign military operations.

Although there is a great deal of literature on the war on drugs, it tends to focus on its international character, its racial component (Helmer, 1975; Meier, 1994), its effects on Civil Liberties (Wisotsky, 1990), and the various ways in which it has failed to achieve its objectives (Gray, 2001). However, in recent years, there has been an increasing attention to how the rhetoric that the president uses impacts national policy and national opinion on the drug war and this attention. This focus exists throughout various disciplines, from Political Science, to law, to public policy. Beginning with President Richard Nixon, but really emerging as a consistent national issue under President Reagan, the drug war has been shaped more by the rhetoric of the president than any other single factor. Following Reagan, President George H.W. Bush's rhetoric in the war on drugs was even more militaristic. Although it was President Reagan who initiated much of the policy Bush would adopt, it was Bush that truly bridged the gap between war rhetoric and war policy. When he was defeated in 1992 by Bill Clinton, many liberals hoped and many conservatives feared that drug policy would be relaxed. During his two terms as president, both groups would be disappointed. Clinton's rhetoric on the drug war would change dramatically near the end of his first term, and he would

end his presidency paying little attention to drugs, changing the emphasis while retaining most of the policies of his predecessors.

The war on drugs is one of the most successful metaphorical war a president has ever declared, save perhaps for the Cold War and the war on terror, in that it has lasted over three decades with almost continual bipartisan support, and ever increasing funding and legislation to fight the war. President Richard Nixon was the first president to officially declare a war on drugs, partly in response to the fact that the 1960's witnessed such a profound increase in the drug use. In 1965, 18,000 people were arrested for possession of marijuana. By 1970, that number had risen to 188,000.[11] The number of heroin users has been estimated to jump from 50,000 in 1960 to almost a half a million by 1970 (Musto 1987, p. 254). Nixon won the 1968 election on a platform of restoring law and order to a nation that was perceived to be out of control. Although he was the first president to declare an actual war on drugs, attempts to control drugs in the United States began long before him.

Background

Prior to the 20th century, there had never been a federal law against drugs of any kind. During the Progressive era however, numerous organizations that had been formed promoting prohibition began to gain popularity. These organizations compelled many states to begin outlawing items such as alcohol. Then, in 1914, the national government passed the Harrison Narcotics Act, which regulated the production, importation, distribution, and use of certain narcotics (specifically opium, heroin, and cocaine). At the time, the Harrison Act went largely unnoticed, despite the fact that it added a Narcotics division within the Department of Treasury. Much of the nation was too preoccupied with amending to Constitution to prohibit alcohol. Locally however, drug-laws enjoyed widespread support, particularly in the West and South of the nation. Widely seen as being associated with foreigners, crime, and even insanity, opposition to narcotics was often fueled by racial prejudices, a stigma that it carries to this day. "Cocaine" was said to raise "the specter of the wild Negro, opium the devious Chinese," and "morphine the

[11] National Commission on marijuana and Drug Abuse, Marijuana: A Signal of Misunderstanding (GPO, 1972), 106.

tramps in the slums" (Musto 1987, p. 65). Even after the ratification of the 18th Amendment in 1917, and with the exception of a ban on the manufacturing of heroin in 1924 and a federal tax on marijuana in 1937, drug-control remained largely a state issue, albeit with sporadic federal restrictions. It would be another three decades, with the arrival of Lyndon Johnson and his Great Society programs before the federal government once against took on drug-control.

Along with his efforts to wage a war on poverty, President Johnson also began federalizing drug-control, creating the Drug Abuse Control Amendments in 1965, which established the Bureau of Drug Abuse Control. This measure was designed to move drugs away from the authority of law enforcers and under the purview of health professionals (Musto 1987, p. 239). When President Nixon came into office in 1968, drug-control became one of his top domestic priorities. A year after Nixon became president, the Federal Bureau of Narcotics (FBN) and the drug enforcement agency in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) were merged into the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs (BNDD). Up until the Nixon administration, drug policy was a series of laws and executive reorganization measures with no central theme. That changed when Nixon declared a war on drugs.

Launching the War on Drugs

When Richard Nixon ran for president in 1968, the country was in turmoil over civil rights and the conflict being waged in Vietnam. Drugs were a major concern among many Americans who lamented the recreational drug-use among young people throughout the 1960's. Earlier that same year, President Johnson had consolidated the various drug agencies into the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs (BNDD), located inside the Justice Department. While the Democrats struggled through a grueling primary campaign between Eugene McCarthy, Vice-President Humphrey, and Robert Kennedy, Nixon was the front-runner for the Republican nomination entering the convention. Speaking to many Americans who were weary of a decade of violent riots and perceived liberal radicalism, Nixon ran his campaign promising to restore "law and order," saying in his acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention,

> When the strongest nation in the world can be tied down for four years in a war in Vietnam with no end in sight, when the richest nation in the world cannot manage its economy, when the nation with the greatest tradition of the rule of law is plagued by unprecedented racial violence, when the President of the United States cannot travel abroad, or to any major city at home, then it's time for new leadership for the United States.

Shortly after being inaugurated, Nixon publicly declared a war drugs, referring to drugs during a press conference as public enemy number one, and urging a "total offensive, worldwide, nationwide, government-wide, and" he added, "media-wide" (Epstein, 1990, p. 178). In 1969, he sought to persuade the nation that the situation demanded immediate action in an address to Congress. Within the last decade, the president said, "the abuse of drugs has grown from essentially a local problem into a serious national threat to the personal health and safety of millions of Americans" (Nixon, 1969, p. 57A). In 1970, all prior drug laws which had been created sporadically in the decades prior were repealed and replaced with the Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act (see table 5.1). Title II of this law, known as the Controlled Substances Act established 5 schedules of substances, with schedule one prohibiting substances even from medical use (such as Marijuana), and schedule five pertaining to the least dangerous drugs. The CSA provided for federal law enforcement to act even on an intrastate level and was approved by Congress with overwhelming bipartisan support. Not a single Democrat in the Senate voted against the bill and only 6 Democratic Representatives did so in the House. A few years later, in 1971, Nixon issued an executive order to create the Special Action Office for Drug Abuse Prevention (SAODAP). In the same year, the president again addressed Congress in an effort to persuade them that the drug problem "has assumed the dimensions of a national emergency" (Nixon, President's Message on Drug Control Programs, 1971). Later in his first term, to reinforce his rhetoric with policy, he reorganized the various federal drug law enforcement agencies into the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA).

Other anti-drug measures during Nixon's time in office were conducted in ways similar to conventional wars. A series of high profile drug operations were staged, and

much of the president's actions were related to foreign policy, such as paying Turkey to destroy its opium crops (Bellis 1981, p. 71), and getting Congress to allow the president to suspend US aid to countries involved in drug trafficking (Quinn 1974, p. 51).

During this time, Nixon's public statements and actions continued to emphasize the extent of the drug problem in American, often exaggerating or distorting the data to frighten the nation into believing that there was a national threat, and continuing to remind Americans that "narcotics addition is a major contributor to crime" (Epstein, 1990, p. 173-182). This exaggeration and continuing reference to external threats is consistent with Nixon's rhetorical campaign in other areas as well. According to a study that analyzed several of President Nixon's speeches, Nixon often misrepresented the seriousness of situations in order to generate public support, often imploring the public to think of the United States as being threatened. Without public support, Nixon implied, his actions would fail (Blair and Houck, 1994, p. 107).

The war rhetoric was consistent with this analysis, as was the exaggerated seriousness of the drug issue. One study cited by the administration, for example, led to three different estimates on the number of people addicted to heroin, with the highest estimates being used to convince Americans the extent of the problem. Another study found the number of heroin addicts had increased from 69,000 in 1969, to 560,000 in 1971. Such numbers were used by President Nixon to justify his claim that drug abuse was the most important problem in the country even if much of the information the administration was providing was wrong. For example, one report at the time revealed that "the number of thefts the White House associated with drugs in New York City was 10 times the total number of thefts that actually occurred" (Meier 1994, p. 45). Numerous other inaccuracies about drugs have also been documented (see Buchanan and Wallack, 1998 for examples). Nevertheless, the rhetoric did succeed in framing the war on drugs just like any other war the United States has fought, requiring equal vigilance. The war rhetoric also connotes to people that the only alternative to victory is defeat. Drugs, Nixon assured Americans, were not just a public health issue, but were connected to morality as well as to numerous crimes.

Table 5.1: War on drugs legislation

Bill Number	Date	Bill Name	Senate Vote	House Vote	Opposition Party Support in Senate	Opposition Party Support in House
PL 91-513; HR 18583	1970	Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act	54-0	341-6	27-0	187-6

Throughout his administration, President Nixon was able to drum up support for his war on drugs by rhetorically treating drugs as if it were a foreign enemy conducting war against the United States. By making this connection he was able to use the full force of his office to push through measures that would seem unprecedented during "normal" times, such as allowing federal agents to seek no-knock warrants from judges, or establishing an enormous new anti-drug bureaucracy within the executive department.

Perhaps most significant about Nixon's use of a war metaphor to describe his anti-drug policies is how quickly he was able to remove the drug issue from the public agenda by changing his tone. In 1973, having soundly won a second term in office and choosing to focus on other priorities, Nixon's public statements signaled a change in national drug policy. "We have turned the corner on drug addiction in the United States," he told the nation (Goldberg, 1980, p. 42). No longer was he delivering stirring anti-drug speeches, and invoking war language to rally the nation. With the election over, he began using his authority to reorganize the executive department by moving anti-drug programs from the White House to the bureaucracy and by devolving many anti-drug programs to the states as part of his New Federalism campaign. Although the war on drugs was still officially being waged (as most of the agencies created to fight it would remain in continuous operation), without the rallying cry of the president calling the nation to war, an aggressive anti-drug policy was simply not going to have the same urgency.

After Nixon's resignation, presidential activity in directing the war on drugs was limited, with President Ford offering no new legislation, too tied up as he was with inflation and a looming energy crisis. Indeed, the little Ford did address drug abuse was actually a departure from Nixon's war rhetoric. A paper issued by the Domestic Council to President Ford even urged the administration "to be realistic about what can be

achieved and what the appropriate Federal role is in the war against drugs." The paper went on to imply that the war rhetoric embraced by Nixon but largely abandoned by Ford raised "unrealistic expectations of total elimination of drug abuse from our society" (1975, p. 5).

President Carter, for his part, attempted to liberalize drug laws and even decriminalize marijuana. However, hampered by a single term, a series of foreign policy crises, and a drug-related political scandal, he was unable to generate much support. Furthermore, everything that makes war metaphors so attractive in persuading the public to rally behind their president is necessarily absent in any rhetoric that attempts to scale back even part of the federal anti-drug program. The war on drugs would not be forgotten as quickly as Johnson's war on poverty however. After Carter's defeat in 1980, the nation got a new president that would reinvigorate the war and wage it even more aggressively than Nixon.

Ronald Reagan: Re-Declaring the Drug War

The administrations of Ronald Reagan and George Bush represented a watershed in the war on drugs and are often discussed together as one continuously expanding policy. Between 1981 and 1993, the budget for the war on drugs went from $855 million to $7.8 billion (Bertram, Blachman, Sharpe, & Andreas, 1996, p. 110)! Focusing much of his attention on presidents Reagan and Bush in his study of rhetoric in the war on drugs, William Elwood (1994) proposes that while President Reagan utilized both war metaphors as well as illness metaphors in his narratives, President Bush spoke of the war on drugs as if it were a literal war, and expanding it to whole new groups of Americans. Bush even became the first president to promise the Americans people ultimate victory. The Reagan and Bush administrations marked a sharp departure from previous drug control strategies, in that it paid significant attention to reducing drugs on the demand side, as well as the supply side. The greatest change in the war on drugs however, particularly from the Ford and Carter administrations, was the rhetoric.

Known as the Great Communicator, few presidents understood the importance of televised communication in shaping pubic opinion more than Ronald Reagan. Reagan used the bully pulpit just as Nixon had to drum up support for his anti-drug policies

through use of a war metaphor. Unlike Nixon however, Reagan entered office with public opinion already favoring more action on the war on drugs, due in part to what was perceived as a growing cocaine epidemic, and later the rise in crack. According to James A. Inciardi (2002), this increase in drug use and crime, combined with the climate of increasing conservatism during the 1980's facilitated the new war that Reagan was about to declare, a war which would drastically expand the price as well as the scope of the nations anti-drug policies.

In the first few years of the Reagan administration, the administration's drug efforts were almost entirely rhetorical. The early focus was primarily around Nancy Reagan's "Just Say No" campaign, which relied on voluntary activities in lieu of federal funds. This campaign had the benefit of being widely attractive in the media yet cost a budget-conscious president little in terms of actual outlays. Within a few years however, it was clear that Reagan had in mind a vastly different war on drugs than the hesitancy displayed by Presidents Carter, Ford, and even the final years of Nixon. In the early 1980's, Reagan used his executive authority to draft the entire federal intelligence community into the war on drugs, and opened the door for military intervention of drug control through amending the *Posse Comitatus Act* (the law which made it illegal for the military to conduct civilian law enforcement) and through equipping the Coast Guard with state-of-the-art military technology for drug interdiction. Even NASA was recruited in the war on drugs to use its satellites to spy on international drug operations (Inciardi 2002, p. 249-51).

In 1982, Reagan addressed the head of 18 different federal agencies, as well as military officials and others to outline his anti-drug strategy. "We're rejecting the helpless attitude that drug use is so rampant that we're defenseless to do anything about it," Reagan told them. "We're taking down the surrender flag that has flown over so many drug efforts. We're running up the battle flag. We can fight the drug problem, and we can win" (cited in Trebach, 1987, p. 152). "Brilliantly employing the power of the executive bully pulpit to galvanize public attention, the president used speeches, radio addresses, and special events to bring his declaration of war to the halls of Congress and directly into American homes," wrote Bertram, Blachman, Sharpe, and Andreas in 1996 (p. 113). In his 1983 State of the Union Address, Reagan officially declared "an all-out

war on big-time organized crime and the drug racketeers who are poisoning out young people." (*CQ Almanac*, 1984). His tough rhetoric would last beyond his 1984 reelection, and succeeded in putting Democrats on the defensive when it came to drug use. By 1986, both parties were following the president's rhetorical lead and competed for credit in fighting a renewed war on drugs. Less than three weeks before the 1986 midterm elections, House Speaker Tip O'Neil announced a major, bipartisan anti-drug initiative.

In response to Congressional action, Reagan addressed the nation in a speech whose "publicity and its additional militaristic language clearly speak to its position as a drug war declaration" (Elwood, 1994, p. 28). According to Elwood (1994), who has written on the use of rhetoric in the war on drugs, although the word "war" appears only once in Reagan's address, he discusses extensively the danger drugs poses to "our values," "our children" (Reagan 1986, p. 1184), and even "our national security" (1986, p. 1186). Throughout his address, Elwood identified a fusion of war metaphors and illness metaphors. "Drugs are an epidemic, a social disorder that acts aggressively and warrants Americans' defensive actions" according to the president as well as his wife, who also speaks widely about drug use. Reagan proposes no timetable for the end of the war, only the promise that the war will be won sometime in the future (Elwood 1994, p. 29-31). What he does do is make a comparison between the renewed war on drugs that he is proposing and World War II, and suggests that Americans should support and sacrifice for the war on drugs no differently than Americans did in World War II.

> My generation will remember how Americans swung into action when we were attacked in World War II. The War was not just fought by the fellows flying the planes or driving the tanks. It was fought at home by a mobilized nation- men and women alike- building planes and ships, clothing sailors and soldiers, feeding marines and airmen; and it was fought by children planting victory gardens and collecting cans… Well, now we're in another war for our freedom, and it's time for all of us to 'just say no' to drugs (Administration, 1986, p. 1186).

Reagan also used his address to define the enemy in the war on drugs in stark and uncompromising terms. "When we all come together," he says, "united, striving for this

cause, then those who are killing America and terrorizing it with slow but sure chemical destruction will see that they are up against the mightiest force for good that we know (Administration, 1986, p. 1186-1187). The President closed his speech by again alluding to WWII, reminding the nation that "we Americans have never been morally neutral against any form of tyranny. Tonight, we're asking no more than that we honor what we have been and what we are by standing together (Administration, 1986, p. 1187).

During this time, the major networks picked up on the theme of a reinvigorated drug war and started running a series of news and documentary programs highlighting the threat drugs posed to the nation. These programs helped to reinforce the president's message that the nation was in danger and required massive executive control and enhanced executive power to protect it. The media also, according to Elwood, helped to portray urban minorities as the human examples of drug war enemies. "Absent in the portrayal of drug war enemies and war zones," Elwood (1994) notes, "are white-collar, college-educated, white men and the suburban neighborhoods in which they reside" (p. 131).

Although there was tremendous emotional debate over the anti-drug bill (specifically when it came to the death penalty, which was eventually dropped after a Senate filibuster), it passed the House overwhelmingly (see table 5.2). Only 16 Representatives voted against it, all but one of which were liberal Democrats who accused the House of trampling on civil liberties in the name of political expediency and the overwhelming fear of looking soft on drugs (*CQ Almanac*, 1986, p. 95). Clearly, few Congressmen wanted to be painted as opposing the war on drugs, and were willing to pass amendment after amendment onto the bill that added stiffer penalties against drug dealers, or more money towards anti-drug programs. Shortly after the bill was passed, Reagan sent other anti-drug legislation to Congress that included funding to carry out an executive order he had issued requiring drug testing for certain civilian government employees. During this time, the president continued beating the war drums against illegal drug use, continuing to paint drug users in ever more nefarious terms throughout the remainder of his term. The stereotype of the enemy in the war on drugs would change little in the administration of Reagan's successor, George Bush.

Table 5.2: War on drugs legislation						
Bill Number	Date	Bill Name	Senate Vote	House Vote	Opposition Party Support in Senate	Opposition Party Support in House
PL 99-570; HR 5484	1986	Anti-drug Abuse Act	Voice Vote	392-16	Voice Vote	222-15
PL 100-690; HR 5210	1988	Anti-Drug Abuse Act	87-3	375-30	Voice Vote	196-30

George Bush: Metaphor Becomes Reality

George Bush came to office with little of the charm or charisma of his predecessor. Nevertheless, Bush clearly shared the anti-drug sentiments of his former boss, going much farther than Reagan did in pushing anti-drug legislation. In his political biography of George Bush, John Robert Greene (2000) noted that President Bush's policies on drugs "represented a significant break from Reagan-era drug policy, becoming much more militarized" (p. 72). What did not change with administrations was the belief that the drug was one of the highest domestic priorities of the president.

In his first televised address to the nation after taking the oath of office, Bush set the tone for a continuation of Reagan's anti-drug policies. "This is the first time since taking the oath of office that I felt an issue was so important, so threatening, that it warranted talking directly with you, the American people." Abandoning illness metaphors, Bush directed the drug war, not against the substance of drugs, which Americans can unite against, as Reagan had mentioned, but against certain American citizens, "everyone who uses drugs, everyone who sells drugs, and everyone who looks the other way" (Bush 1989, p. 1136-1137). Bush's rhetoric also extended to other nations as well, and included massive military use in fighting the war on drugs. "I mean to mobilize all our resources, wage this war on all fronts," Bush said. He added, "we're going to combat drug abuse with education, treatment, enforcement, and, yes, interdiction, and yes, with out nation's armed services" (Greene 2000, p. 73-74).

To wage the war on drugs, the president called for a $1.5 billion increase in domestic law-enforcement, $3.5 billion for interdiction and foreign supply-reduction, and like his predecessors, took advantage of executive orders and reorganization authority to

expand the scope of the war on drugs. "To a degree unmatched by previous presidents, he used his power as commander in chief to draft the U.S. military into the drug war, elevating what had been a sporadic and relatively minor role in assisting in civilian enforcement into a major national-security mission for the armed forces" (Bertram, Blachman, Sharpe, & Andreas, 1996, p. 114). He even had Attorney General Richard Thornburgh publicly suggest sending troops to Columbia to stop drug trafficking to test the public reaction (Greene 2000, p. 74). Half-way through his first term, in January of 1990, Bush asked for a 50% increase in military funds related to drug control and approved the use of the National Guard to help state and local law enforcement officials to fight the drug trade.

As presidential rhetoric on the war on drugs increased, so did the demand for more war-like coordination. Throughout the 1980's, Senator Joseph Biden, a Democrat from Delaware, proposed bills to create a new Cabinet-level position to coordinate the eleven Cabinet departments, thirty-two federal agencies, and at least five independent agencies that were related to the war on drugs. Reagan consistently rejected the idea (Inciardi 2002, p. 254) and it was subsequently dropped from the 1986 legislation. With each party trying to outdo the other in both word and deed, President Bush relented on the issue and in 1988 the Omnibus Drug Act was signed into law, creating a Cabinet position for the first time in American history to combat drug-abuse. Bush's change of heart came primarily because of the 1988 presidential election. During his campaign for the Democratic nomination, the Rev. Jesse Jackson made drug-abuse one of his top issues, and repeatedly accused Reagan of failing to mount an all-out, well-coordinated attack on the drug problem (*CQ Almanac*, 1988, p. 86). During this time, thanks in large measure to Reagan's anti-drug campaign, public opinion polls showed drugs to be the top concern among Americans. Bush, the Republican nominee, fought back, arguing that it was the Democrats who were less tough on drugs. "I challenge the Democrats to stand up on this point," he said. "You say this is a war- than treat it as such. Don't let these killers back on the streets" (*CQ Almanac*, 1988, p. 86). Like almost all other drug laws that came before it, the 1988 bill passed with overwhelming bipartisan support. Although many Democrats complained that the bill included provisions of dubious constitutionality

and violated Americans civil liberties, only 30 House Democrats could bring themselves to vote against it (see table 5.2).

The next year, the president created the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) to be the official arm of the war on drugs within the executive to carry out his drug war policies, appointing William Bennett to act as its director. The media soon dubbed him "drug czar," a metaphor that highlighting the central role he Bennett played in enforcing drug laws. According to the *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, "Bennett showed no hesitance in using the office as a bully pulpit for pressuring Congress, state and local governments and the private sector for stronger action against use of illegal drugs." The ONDCP soon had a staff of over a hundred people, with a budget of $16.5 million and full-fledged media campaign to advance Bush's drug war ("Martinez to follow Bennett as Drug Czar," 1990). With the new agency and new drug czar came new laws as well calling for harsher penalties for drug crimes. Unlike in the past, in which small amounts of drugs produced only minor legal penalties, the new laws Bush pushed through Congress increased the amount of fines, allowed for the forfeiture of cars, boats, and planes transporting drugs, and withheld all federal benefits for a year after the first offense (Levinson, 2002, p. 28).

The message being sent from all areas of the government was that the nation was on a war-time footing. Through presidential addresses and public speeches, Bush helped to convince Americans the seriousness of the drug war, at one point holding up a bag of crack in a prime-time address to demonstrate the need for vigilance. The network news media also took up the call running an average of three drug stories a night for two and a half weeks before a scheduled presidential speech on the drug war, and an additional four stories a night following Bush's address. This media coverage that Bush's speeches generated "drove the issue way up in the public consciousness," according to Robert Lichter of the Center for Media and Public Affairs, and it paid off. By 1989, more than one in five Americans considered drugs to be the most important problem facing the nation. Following the presidents war declaration four months later, that number grew to 64% (Oreskes, 1990). Furthermore, according to a *New York Times* article titled, "The Wartime Spirit," 62% of Americans were willing to give up "a few of the freedoms we have in this country" in the war on drugs; 52% said they would approve of homes being

searched; 55% would support mandatory drug testing for *all* Americans; 67% would approve of warrant-less car searches; and the vast majority, 82% supported military involvement (Wicker, 1989). This tremendous public interest in the issue was not related to any objective analysis of drug use in America, but to the attention Presidents Reagan and Bush paid to the issue. As the poll numbers illustrate, rhetoric matters.

By the time President Bush's presidency was finished, the rhetoric over the preceding 12 years had so convinced Americans of the necessity of the war on drugs, any consideration of liberalizing drugs laws, to say nothing of decriminalization, was strictly taboo. Reagan and Bush were able to stifle such sentiments by producing a moral panic in Americans about the effects of drugs that made an all-out war seem like the only available solution. James E. Hawdon (2001) studied the effects of "proactive and punitive statements" by the Reagan and Bush administrations in order to gain support for his war on drugs. So significant was presidential rhetoric on this issue that during a period when drug use was actually on the *decline*, Americans feared a drug epidemic sweeping the nation. The concept of a moral panic has been described by Erich Goode (1989) as "the widespread feeling on the part of the public that something is terribly wrong in their society because of the moral failings of a specific group of individuals" (p. 26). The resulting panic need not be irrational or deceptive, but it was encouraged and in many ways instigated by both Reagan and Bush's public statements, statements that went beyond the available evidence (Beckett 1994, p. 442). As a result, public concern over drug abuse became unrelated to the actual severity of the problem. So it was that Americans rated drugs as their number one concern, despite the fact that the objective harm caused by drug use was far from being the leading crisis in America.

Hawdon (2001) noted that while widespread fear almost always predates the moral panic, those fears must be articulated and defined by someone that can "help create a vision of reality that breeds widespread concern about an issue, hostility towards a group, and disproportionality" (2001, p. 422). This was certainly the argument advanced by Bush's 1992 Democratic challenger, Bill Clinton, who claimed that Bush's anti-drug policy "isn't sound policy" (Kramer, 1993). Later in the campaign, when he was being accused of being weak on the war on drugs, Clinton changed his tone, emphasizing his tough policy as Governor of Arkansas and making his commitment to the war clear.

Bush, Clinton said at the 1992 Democratic National Convention, "hasn't fought a real war on crime and drugs; I will" (Bertram, Blachman, Sharpe, & Andreas, 1996, p. 118). In November, Americans were about to find out whether this was true or not.

Bill Clinton: A Cautious Toning Down

In 1992, Bill Clinton replaced George Bush as president. Clinton was the first president to come of age during the 1960's when drug laws were more liberal. He also came from a background that suggested more sympathy with drug users than some of his predecessors, including an infamous *New York Times* interview in which he confessed to experimenting with marijuana while in England (but famously didn't inhale). Once in office, it was clear that the Reagan and Bush emphasis on war rhetoric was giving way to a much more moderate policy. From the beginning of his first term, the president made it clear that he wanted to place more emphasis on changing people's behavior and away from law enforcement and interdiction programs that had "questionable results" (Thomas, 1994). Clearly, much of the war-footing Reagan and Bush had established would not be pursued with the same intensity under Clinton.

Clinton's rhetoric marked a sharp departure from that of his Republican predecessors. Although he would continue to evoke the war metaphor in dealing with drugs, Clinton's rhetoric focused neither on strong war-like symbolism nor on Reagan's illness rhetoric, but on the addiction side of drugs that must be overcome one person at a time. In 1994, Clinton spoke at Prince George's County Prison, and proposed a drug plan that reduced funding for interdiction of foreign drugs by $95 million (over 7%), and also cut money for drug-operation intelligence (Thomas 1994).

Early on in his administration, he proposed cutting the budget of the White House drug office from $17.3 million to $5.8 million, and reducing the staff size from 146 to 25. Part of the rationale for these cuts was for Clinton to follow through with a campaign pledge to reduce overall staff in the White House by 25%. However, critics of the policy saw the cuts as evidence that the new president simply does not have the vigor to fight the war on drugs as aggressively as his predecessors (Isikoff, 1993). Perhaps to counter these concerns, in April of 1993, he appointed Lee P. Brown as the new director of his national drug control policy and have him Cabinet-level status. Brown made the

administration's feelings clear on how the debate would be framed in a striking admission: "You won't hear us using the metaphor of war. We should help those who need help and arrest those who are trafficking in drugs. But I don't think we should declare war against our own people" (Wilkinson, 1994). Brown's emphasis on treatment rather than incarceration did not go unnoticed by conservative opponents, who were soon accusing the Clinton administration of being soft on drugs.

Clinton's retreat from the harsher war rhetoric of the Reagan and Bush years would be reversed after the Republican takeover of Congress in 1994. During this time, the string of hearings and investigations initiated to weaken the president included several related to his lack of enthusiasm in the drug war, prompting Clinton to recast himself as a tougher drug warrior. When Attorney General Janet Reno criticized the war on drugs in a report, the administration tried unsuccessfully to withhold its release. In time, both Clinton and members of his administration were beginning to tone down their concerns over the war on drugs and take a tougher stance, both rhetorically and substantively. When suggestions were made to consider legalization of certain drugs by Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders, Clinton was forced to distance himself from her, eventually dismissing Elders from the position (though her statement on drugs was only part of the reason).

In March of 1995, former drug czar William Bennett testified before a subcommittee of the House Committee on Government Reform and Oversight, lamenting the presidents "invisibility" on the issue. Even former first Lady Nancy Reagan was called to testify, asking "Why is it we no longer hear the drumbeat of condemnation against drugs coming from our leaders and our culture? Is it any wonder drug use has started to climb again, and dramatically so" (Hedges, 1995)? Criticism reached its peak however, during the 1996 presidential election. During the campaign, Republican challenger Bob Dole said that if elected, "We will treat drugs for what they are, the moral equivalent of terrorism. The terrorism of drugs destroys our young people and hijacks America's future, and we are going to stop it. The message is the status quo has got to go, Bill. We are going to win the war on drugs." According to Dole, Clinton's failure to use the bully pulpit to rally the nation behind the war marked a sharp departure from the Reagan and Bush years. According to a Republican study of 112 presidential interviews

in 1995, Clinton only made a reference to drugs twice, in sharp contrast to the constant drumbeat of some of his predecessors. "We were winning," Dole told a crowd in August of 1996, "but then the Clinton administration surrendered." Continuing on with the war metaphor, Dole said "they raised the white flag in the war on drugs. This administration replaced the unambiguous message of its predecessors – 'Just say no' - with 'Just say nothing.'" According to Dole, it was now time to consider using the military to stop the smuggling of drugs into the United States, something he considered a "threat . . . from abroad." Within two months of assuming office, Mr. Dole said he would unleash some of the nation's vast military and intelligence resources to interdict drug smugglers (Myers, 1996).

Clinton fought against the accusation of "surrendering" in the war on drugs by adopting stronger more militant rhetoric and action on the drug war. Although national drug policy never regained the rhetorical intensity it had during the Reagan and Bush administrations, from 1996 until the end of his administration, Clinton did his best to emphasize his commitment to fighting a war on drugs. Although treatment for hard-core users would remain official policy and receive mention in speeches and comments on drug abuse, the proportion of spending for such programs eventually fell to the same levels it has been in the final budget of the Bush administration (Bertram, Blachman, Sharpe, & Andreas, 1996, p. 124).

In his 1996 State of the Union address, Clinton announced General Barry R. McCaffrey as his nominee for the position of director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy. The appointment of one of the nation's most decorated military commanders who had been deeply involved with interdiction efforts in Latin America as the new drug czar was not the only indication that Clinton was changing course in the drug war. McCaffrey was given additional staff positions that had been previously cut during Clinton's first term. The day after his State of the Union address, Clinton unveiled his National Drug Control Strategy which, which included government-subsidized drug treatment, and a new emphasis on law enforcement. Like other presidents, Clinton also called Americans to support his policy in the same terms presidents would to rally the nation to war. "Make no mistake about it," he said, "this has got to be a bipartisan, American, non-political effort." In 1997, the administration waged an unprecedented

$350 million media campaign targeting teenage drug abuse, exceeding even some of the largest commercial advertising ads (Suro, 1997).

Clinton was not the only one using war rhetoric to make a point however. His political opponents too, utilized the rhetoric of war to denounce Clinton's newfound call to arms as merely an election-year tactic. Republican Senator Orrin Hatch, for example, accused Clinton of being "AWOL- absent without leadership- in this war against drugs" (Purdum, 1996). House Speaker Newt Gingrich argued that "the United States should fight [the war on drugs] more like World War II and less like the Vietnam war." And Coast Guard Admiral Norman Saunders made news when he declared that "a lack of resources and 'national will' to fight drugs has harmed the drug fight." According to Saunders, "We're not fighting a war on drugs. This is a skirmish. We have not declared war at all" (Lipman & Eckstrom, 1997).

Fred I. Greenstein (1993) of Princeton University wrote an early appraisal of Bill Clinton's leadership style in which he accused Clinton of diminishing his political resources "not only because he departed from previously held positions, but also because his departures often seemed effortless" (Greenstein 1993, p. 598). When Lee Brown was asked about the criticism that Clinton was simply not emphasizing the war on drugs the war other presidents had, Brown dismissed it, arguing that the problem was the attention of the media, not the president. "I'm out there using the bully pulpit every day," he said. "The media isn't covering it the same way they did" (Hedges, 1997). Ultimately however, the war on drugs was simply never a high priority for President Clinton, and certainly never gained the status it had under his Republican predecessors. Although he took early steps to redirect the direction a d focus of the war on drugs, both rhetorically and substantively, he was never able to fundamentally challenge the central paradigm of American drug policy as anything other than a war, if indeed such a paradigm so deeply held could be challenged. What Clinton did succeed in doing however, was to move the drug issue off the agenda, or at least, off the front page. While George Bush dedicated his first televised address to drugs, Clinton had so moved the issue out of the national spotlight that it was barely an issue at all during the election of 2000. Although the war on drugs remains important in some corners, its final deathblow as a national issue occurred when President George W. Bush proclaimed a new metaphorical war, the war

on terror, which would completely absorb the drug issue. While the United States remains at war with drugs, it is primarily in relation to how those drugs effect international terrorism.

Conclusion

On February 7, 2001, Attorney General John Ashcroft appeared on Larry King Live, indicating his desire to escalate, renew, refresh, and re-launch the war on drugs, adding how important presidential rhetoric is for the enterprise. Responding to the question of whether or not former President Clinton's famous comment that he had smoked marijuana affects people, Ashcroft emphatically responded in the affirmative. What Ashcroft was acknowledging was that words matter, and when they come from the President of the United States, they can have tremendous influence on how the public views an issue and how policy is enacted.

There were many reasons why the war on drugs resonated with the American people. Partly, it had to do with the reaction to the 1960's climate of free love and drug abuse; partly, once in operation, the massive bureaucratic apparatus that had been created simply had too many influential clients to die quietly; another part was the implicit racism that the war on drugs seemed to play into, and that historians believe was the underlying origins of the first anti-drug laws in the country.

The most important element in creating and sustaining the war on drugs, it is argued here however, is presidential rhetoric that discussed the national drug policy in war-like ways, backed up with executive action that seemed to conform to the rhetoric. Each policy area was a battle, each statistical improvement a victory and each angle of attack another front in the war. This rhetoric heightened the publics concern about an issue and enabled presidents to get policy passed and government expanded in a way that would have been extremely difficult under normal circumstances. With the creation of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, the Special Action Office for Drug Abuse Prevention, and particularly the Drug Enforcement Agency, the government was demonstrating both in words and deeds the seriousness with which it took drug-use. These actions led to media attention that fuels special reports and documentaries on drug-

use in America, which reinforced people's concern about drugs and further led credibility to the presidents' attempt to wage war on it.

In future years however, it is likely that the war on drugs will meet the same fate as Nixon's war on crime, discussed in chapter 7, which is to simply be incorporated into a new metaphorical war, one that has proven to be more pervasive and more bipartisan than the war on drugs was. In 2002, during the Super-bowl, the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign, created by the Office of National Drug Control Policy, launched a new media strategy connecting drug use to the new war on terror. One commercial titled "I Helped," features (mostly minority) teenagers making statements such as "I helped murder families in Colombia," and, "I helped kidnap people's dads." The commercial ends with the slogan, "Drug money supports terror. If you buy drugs, you might too." A second commercial features a man buying various items (such as a box cutter) similar to those used by the men who hijacked the planes on September 11. "Where do terrorists get their money," the commercial asks. "If you buy drugs, some of it might come from you."

The war on drugs, despite its success in framing the drug debate in this country, seems destined to be abandoned as a conflict in and of itself but more and more connected to the effects drug use and drug trafficking has on terrorism. The metaphorical war is also not aided by the fact that in recent years, Americans are growing increasingly more tolerant of certain types of drug use. In 1996, for example, Californians voted for Proposition 215, which legalized growing and using marijuana for medical purpose. Although the Supreme Court ruled that this cannot protect Californians from federal prosecution, evolving attitudes towards marijuana would have a major effect on the war on drugs, since marijuana constitutes almost half of all drug arrests. Despite these developments however, the war on drugs remains a useful rhetorical tool for any politician seeking to sound tough on drugs.

Chapter 6

The War on Terror

On September the 11th, enemies of freedom committed an act of war against our country. Americans have known wars -- but for the past 136 years, they have been wars on foreign soil, except for one Sunday in 1941. Americans have known the casualties of war -- but not at the center of a great city on a peaceful morning. Americans have known surprise attacks -- but never before on thousands of civilians. All of this was brought upon us in a single day -- and night fell on a different world, a world where freedom itself is under attack.

-- President George W. Bush, September 20, 2001

The Global War on Terror: GWOT

Perhaps at no time since the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor was a single date so closely associated with a particular event as the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, immortalized by the media and by political leaders simply as 9/11. That morning, hijacked airliners crashed into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and a Pennsylvania field. Immediately, television programs covering the event ran banners across the screen reading “America Under Attack.” The crashing of passenger airlines into both towers of the World Trade Center, and their subsequent collapse, as well as the chaos and carnage on the ground were captured live and broadcast throughout the world. For most Americans, unaccustomed to seeing terrorism on such a large scale and so close to home, 9/11 was, at the very least, an act of war and judging from the various witnesses and pundits interviewed in the aftermath of the attacks, people wanted revenge. It was in this context that war was waged, but not against a specific enemy. This was not a war against al-Qaeda, the terrorist organization that conducted the attack (although the war would forever remain linked to the organization), nor was it a war against the country of Afghanistan, who harbored and protected al-Qaeda. The war was against terror itself, and its ambiguous objectives, wide-ranging policy implications, and manner with which it was discussed makes it far closer to the other metaphorical wars discussed in this paper than it does the various conventional military operations that has been so often invoked.

Since its inception, there has been tremendous scholarly and journalistic attention on the rhetoric surrounding the war on terror, including such studies as *War of Words:*

Language, Politics and 9/11 by Sandra Silberstein (2002) and *Writing the War on Terrorism: Language, Politics and Counter-Terrorism* by Richard Jackson (2005). What few (but by no means all) observers appreciate however, is that the war on terror as a rhetorical theme, or national dialogue, is not unique to President Bush or to terrorism itself, but has been advanced and operationalized in the past with other menacing, but largely symbolic, entities. In other words, as this study has demonstrated, using war rhetoric to shape public perception and advance policy is not unique is directly parallel the other rhetorical wars discussed here.

Just as the previous metaphorical wars were conceptualized before they were named, the war on terror did not technically begin with the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center, but grew out of previous legislation and events. According to former counter-terrorism official Richard Clarke, the Clinton administration declared "a war on terror" in 1996, "before the term became fashionable." This unofficial declaration followed a series of attacks by al-Qaeda that included the first World Trade Center attack, the assassination attempt on former President Bush (widely believed to have been orchestrated by Saddam Hussein), the Khobar Towers attack, and the Oklahoma City bombing (Clark, 2004, p. 129). However, the phrase was also used publicly by President Reagan who, in his 1986 speech to the UN General Assembly, said that "the United States believes that the understandings reached by the seven industrial democracies at the Tokyo summit last May made a good start toward international accord in the war on terrorism."

In short, just as terrorism itself did not begin in 2001, so do did the idea that war should be waged on it not originate with 9/11. The difference between pre-9/11 wars on terror and the post-9/11 war on terror is that those made before 2001 had no other function that to add weight to a speech or a directive, not unlike numerous "wars" president will cite from time to time. It was not reflective of a larger theme that was backed up with continuous reference, executive decisions, and other actions that would transform the war on terror into a nation-wide effort. Following the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center, and the murder of almost three thousand American lives, the war on terror became a universally accepted term to describe American policy.

It should be noted that Bush's first remarks to the nation after the attacks did not include any war metaphors. In his brief statement made 45 minutes after the first plane hit the World Trade Center, Bush described the event as "a difficult moment for America," "an apparent terrorist attack," and "a national tragedy." Later in the day, when the president again addressed the nation, there was still no indication that America was on a war-footing. "Make no mistake," the president said, "the United States will hunt down and punish those responsible for these cowardly acts." Although his speech mentions protecting America and being in contact with other governments, there is still no mention of an overall war on terror. Indeed, the president's statements during this time seem to suggest the possibility that the American response to the attack would simply to be to retaliate against al-Qaeda, perhaps militarily, and little else. By the next day however, the frame with which Americans would view counter-terrorism policy was clear. In a speech to the nation on September 12, Bush said that "America and our friends and allies join with all those who want peace and security in the world and we stand together to win the war against terrorism" (Statement by the President, 2001).

The change in rhetoric from specific denunciations of "those responsible for these cowardly acts" to the war metaphor to describe how the nation was to view the terrorist threat was not lost on the media. In a press briefing by Press Secretary Ari Fleischer, reporters wondered what "elevated [the president's] language" from talking about the terrorist attacks as crimes for which we will "hunt down and punish those responsible" into talking about the attacks as an act of war. "Why not use the word 'war' last night in his televised address to the nation?," Fleischer was asked. "What changed overnight to ratchet up that rhetoric?" The Press Secretary's response was predictably vague, assuring them that "the President will share his thoughts… as his thoughts develop as a result of the conversations he has with the security team, and as he thinks this matter through in his mind" (Press Briefing by Ari Fleischer, 2001). The real reason, it is argued here, is that Bush surely knew that his first major address would set the tone for all future discussion. The phraseology was in no way inevitable. In a 1998 address to the nation, President Bill Clinton referred to America's response to terrorism as a "battle," rather than a war, when he said the following: "My fellow Americans, our *battle against*

terrorism did not begin with the bombing of our embassies in Africa; nor will it end with today's strike. It will require strength, courage and endurance" (italics authors).

According to Bob Woodward, there had been discussion within Bush's inner circle of whether or not to actually include a declaration of war against terrorism that first night's speech. Although some recommended leaving such a declaration out of the speech, Bush rejected any last-minute changes and proceeded to announce what would be the central focus of American foreign *and* domestic policy (2002, p. 31).

The speech is a significant moment in the development of the war on terror because although Americans understood the severity of the attack, and many Americans already believed that nothing short of war was an appropriate response to the attacks, the president had not yet put the nation on official "war-footing," so to speak, until the next day, September 12. It was at this point that Bush could have framed the issue however he liked. For example, it would not be difficult to imagine the president portraying the terrorist organization al-Qaeda as a mere criminal organization equivalent to the mafia and then, after waging a conventional war against Afghanistan, described the efforts to control terrorism as an international police action, not unlike how pirating or modern-day slavery are conceptualized. Terrorism could also have been viewed as a crime against humanity, like how the international community thinks of genocide. Indeed, the administration could equally have declared a war on the mastermind behind the attacks, Osama bin Laden, something consciously rejected by the administration after the attacks (Woodward, 2002, p. 81). Instead, Bush chose to declare a "global war on terrorism," sometimes referred to simply as GWOT. Immediately, the public, the media, and the Congress adopted the term. Even the international community was soon recasting their own rhetoric to reflect the new terrorism paradigm. Three months after the WTC went down, for example, Israeli Prime Minister Arial Sharon declared his own "war on terror" against the Palestinians (Gee, 2001). Since then, the term has been seized by President Putin of Russia as well as leaders from Italy to Pakistan.

The reaction of the war from legislators was almost universal acceptance, although a vocal minority did raise objections to a metaphorical war. Two days after Bush's declaration of war against terrorism, several conservative House members wanted to make the rhetorical war official by calling for a Congressional declaration of war

against “international terrorism” (rather than a mere resolution). Other lawmakers argued however, that declaring war on an “unspecified enemy” violated international law. “Just to declare war against something as amorphous as international terrorism,” Senator Bob Graham said, “I don't know if that's what James Madison meant when he put that provision in the Constitution.” Other Congressmen argued that the old standards of war were obsolete. “This is a declaration of war against international terrorism,” Congressman Nathan Deal said. “Are we so inflexible,” Deal asked, “that war has rules by which we must abide? If so, we will be as hampered in our efforts as were the British redcoats when they encountered what they considered to be 'ungentlemanly warfare' because our forefathers didn't simply line up with a uniform on and march into combat.” One public opinion survey taken during this time (of only 500 people, it should be noted) showed that 81% of adult Americans agreed with a declaration of war (Boyer, 2001). The declaration never materialized. Instead, leaning heavily on war rhetoric, Congress passed a resolution authorizing the president to

> use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, or harbored such organizations or persons, in order to prevent any future acts of international terrorism against the United States by such nations, organizations or persons.

On September 20, nine days after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, President Bush addressed both houses of Congress, reaffirming the war on terrorism and trying to explain exactly what that will mean. “Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda,” Bush said, “but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated.” He went on to note that this will not be like other military wars, with a “decisive” victory and a “swift conclusion.” The speech was seen by an estimated 80 million people, and even interrupted national sporting events (Woodward, 2002, p. 108). For anyone who still had doubts on how to view terrorism in the 21st century, the president’s address and its reaction by the nation should have laid them to rest. The war on terror by this time had

become an accepted rhetorical term in the media and by policymakers. No longer was September 11 attacks referred to as "acts of terror," but rather as "acts of war." Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld reinforced this image when he declared that all military personnel killed in the attacks would receive war medals just as if they had died in battle. "They were acts of war, military strikes against the United States of America," Rumsfeld made clear. "As such, those Department of Defense employees who were injured or killed were not just the victims of terror. They were combat casualties" (Rumsfeld, 2001). During the next two years, the US Department of State website shows over 6,000 speeches, interviews, and press releases by senior administration officials related to the war on terror.

Like the war on poverty and the war on drugs, the war on terror gave the president the excuse to reorganize the executive department and expand federal power. In November of 2001, President Bush signed an executive order authorizing the use of military tribunals against foreign terrorist suspects. He then asked for and received broad executive authority under the "Uniting and Strengthening of America to Provide Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism" (USA PATRIOT) Act of 2001. This Act, which covered 350 subject areas related to over 40 different federal agencies, greatly expanded executive power by authorizing new surveillance for law enforcement officials, national (rather than local) search warrants, unilateral authority of the Secretary of State to designate any group as a terrorist organization, and many others. What made the Act unusual was the speed at which it was passed and the absence of any real dissent. It was introduced on October 23, 2001 and passed the very next day by a vote of 357-66 in the House and a remarkable 98-1 in the Senate.

Even the lone dissenting Senator, Russ Feingold, did not object on the grounds that he was opposed to fighting the war on terror, but merely that the provisions in the Patriot Act "contains some very significant changes in criminal procedure that will apply to every federal criminal investigation in this country, not just those involving terrorism." His criticisms of the bill, although representing an extreme minority of the country, echo those same criticisms leveled by Congressmen during debates on the seminal pieces of legislation regarding the war on poverty and the war on drugs. Then, as with the war on terror, the concern was that the metaphorical war was being used to push through a bill

that authorizes expansive government power in a way that would likely have generated immense controversy in almost any other conceivable context. Said Feingold:

> Under this provision, the government can apparently go on a fishing expedition and collect information on virtually anyone. All it has to allege in order to get an order for these records from the court is that the information is sought for an investigation of international terrorism or clandestine intelligence gathering. That's it. On that minimal showing in an *ex parte* application to a secret court, with no showing even that the information is *relevant* to the investigation, the government can lawfully compel a doctor or hospital to release medical records, or a library to release circulation records. This is a truly breathtaking expansion of police power. (Feingold, 2001).

Some others expressed similar reservations about the Patriot Act both inside and outside government, but just as the concern over war on drugs legislation failed to translate into actual votes against the provisions, so too did few Congressmen want to appear looking weak on terrorism by voting against the bill.

Also like the war on drugs, the war on terror was overwhelmingly bipartisan and remained so up until the time of this writing, as both parties compete to see who can be more aggressive on combating terrorism, with partisan divisions being primarily about how best to "win" the war rather than on whether or not the war itself is a misdirected strategy. Although the near-unanimous Senate support for the Patriot Act in 2001 might be attributed to the heightened atmosphere of fear in the nation following the 9/11 attacks, reauthorization of the act in 2005, four years after the attacks and following a bitter national election, produced an 89-10 majority vote in the Senate. Support in the House, 357-66 in 2001, had narrowed to 257-174 for the reauthorization, still an impressive majority (see table 6.1). Perhaps an even greater example of bi-partisan unity on the war on terror was the fact that it was a Democrat who pushed for the creation of a new executive department for the specific purpose of protecting the nation from terrorist attacks.

Table 6.1: War on terror legislation						
Bill Number	Date	Bill Name	Senate Vote	House Vote	Opposition Party Support in Senate	Opposition Party Support in House
PL 107-56; H.R. 3162; S. 1510	2001	USA PATRIOT ACT	98-1	357–66	49-1	145-62
H.R. 3199; S. 2167	2005	USA PATRIOT and Terrorism Prevention Reauthorization Act	89-10	257-174	35-9	43 (201)

Just as the creation of the OEO sent a powerful message to the nation about Johnson's war on poverty and Nixon's DEA marked a new era in drug enforcement, the war on terror too ultimately led to the creation of a new executive department, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which was established by the Homeland Security Act of 2002 and represented the largest government reorganization in over 50 years. Initially opposed to such a new agency, President Bush ultimately supported the creation of an organization that would centralize and organize counterterrorism and (it was argued) eliminate overlapping duties within various other agencies. Former Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge was named as its first Secretary, and DHS is currently the third largest cabinet department in the country (behind only the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs). The creation of the DHS reinforced the impression that the war on terror would not be a passing, or short-term conflict, but would, in effect, transform the entire thrust of national policy. Its creation accompanied the Patriot Act in expanding executive authority, but they were not the only examples of how the rhetoric, and impression, of war led to new government power.

Under the auspices of the war on terror, the Bush administration began an unprecedented and sweeping initiative in early 2002 with the creation of the Information Awareness Office, designed to collect, index, and consolidate all available information on everyone in a central repository for perusal by the United States government. Also in 2002, Bush issued an executive order authorizing the National Security Agency (NSA) to conduct wiretaps of suspected terrorists without a warrant in apparent violation of the

Federal Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978. When news of this leaked out four years later, in 2006, the administration used the rhetoric of the war on terror to justify its actions. According to the administration, the resolution passed by Congress shortly after September 11 gave the president statutory authority to issue the executive order. Furthermore, the administration claimed that since America was currently at war, President Bush was empowered by his Constitutional function as Commander-in-Chief to issue executive orders related to national security. Speaking at Kansas State University in 2006, President Bush explained his interpretation of the Congressional resolution:

> Congress gave me the authority to use necessary force to protect the American people, but it didn't prescribe the tactics. It's an -- you've got the power to protect us, but we're not going to tell you how. And one of the ways to protect the American people is to understand the intentions of the enemy. I told you it's a different kind of war with a different kind of enemy. If they're making phone calls into the United States, we need to know why -- to protect you ("President Discusses Global War on Terror," 2006).

Vice-President Cheney later echoed the same theme: "Either we are serious about fighting this war on terror or we are not. And the enemies of America need to know: We are serious, and this administration will not let down our guard" ("Vice President's Remarks," 2006). The decision to defend the wiretapping, and virtually any other policy, as being so vital that without it, we may very well lose the war on terror was an overwhelming success, and other politicians were quick to get the message.

Congressmen hoping to capitalize on the public's appetite for strong language ratcheted up their rhetoric. Journalist Cynthia Kopkowski (2002) observed that after Bush began referring to terrorists as "evildoers," for example, Congressional Republicans began using new adjectives like "shadowy," "agile" and "faceless" to get their points across (Democrats tended to continue calling them simply "terrorists"). Rather than focusing on any one individual, such as Osama bin Laden, Kopkowski (2002) noted, the rhetoric of the war on terror emphasizes "invisible" enemies that are "nimble," "agile," and "aggressive." This continuous ratcheting up of the language of the war on terror may

appear popular with officials and with the president, but it has not gone entirely without criticism.

Criticisms of the war on terror

Like other metaphorical wars, the "war on terror" has been criticized among some circles as being an inappropriate metaphor. Some experts on international law and foreign policy, for example, object to calling it a "war," both on the legal grounds that a state cannot declare war on a non-state entity and claim the rights of war, as well as the semantic grounds that point out that terrorism is a tactic, not an identifiable entity. As former UN ambassador Richard Holbrooke said, "We're not in a war on terror, in the literal sense… the war on terror is like saying 'the war on poverty.' It's just a metaphor. What we're really talking about is winning the ideological struggle so that people stop turning themselves into suicide bombers" (Bai, 2004). This sentiment is echoed by former deputy chief of the Counterterrorist Center of the CIA Paul Pillar (2001), who argued that "Counterterrorism, even though it shares some attributes of warfare is not accurately represented by the metaphor of a war." Offering a more fitting analogy, Pillar argues that a public health campaign is a more fitting and accurate description of what the US's objectives are (p. 221-29).

The phraseology has also been criticized on the grounds that just as its connotations frame the debate in a way that helps the president win support for his policies, it also aids the terrorists themselves by placing on them the role of "organizations against which a recognized legitimate government declares and wages war" (Schroeder, 2004). Using a war metaphor, in other words, helps the terrorists by crediting the perpetrators of the attacks "with the sort of influence in the Muslim world both they and the Bush administration seemed to accord them" (Anderson, 2004:28). Rather than being viewed as a fringe organization composed of criminals and fanatics, this argument goes, declaring war on them gives them a sense of legitimacy worthy of waging a war with the sole remaining superpower. As the New Yorker put it succinctly, "The metaphor of war… ascribes to the perpetrators a dignity they do not merit, a status they cannot claim, and a strength they do not possess" (Hendrik, 2001). Nevertheless, the

metaphor, and accompanying language, has endured and remains fundamental to how the United States views present and future foreign policy.

According to Richard Jackson (2005), had it not been for the adoption of war language by influential policy-makers and the mass media, “it seems likely that the ‘war on terrorism’ would have remained a marginal foreign policy discourse largely ignored by the wider public” (p. 154). Jackson (2005) deconstructs the language or discourse as he terms it, of the war on terror and identifies several features. The first characteristic is what he terms “hybridity and intertextuality,” referring to the fact that the war on terrorism combines numerous other rhetorical, political, and conceptual narratives into its overall discourse. These narratives include other metaphorical wars discussed throughout this study, existing foreign policy narratives about the chaotic nature of the international community and threats to global security, the just-war narrative emerging from WWII and the Cold War, among many others. In short, the war on terror “powerfully combines the distils so many different American myths and stories into a new supernarrative.” Jackson’s study of over 300 pages of speeches over the course of two years supports the idea that the central narrative of the war on terror remains constant throughout numerous public officials (p. 154).

A second feature Jackson (2005) associated with the war on terror is its “genealogy,” which refers to the fact that the war on terror can be viewed as a continuation of the war on terror launched by Presidents Reagan and Clinton as well as other wars that tend to “militarize foreign policy responses” (p. 156). Of course, it is a central premise of this study that the militarization of policy is not limited to foreign policy but domestic policy as well and that the war on terror follows a long American tradition of presidents using war language to advance his agenda. Nevertheless, Jackson is able to identify the connection between the war on terror and past metaphorical wars.

The discourse on the war on terror is also reflexive, says Jackson (2005), in that it has to “continuously reconstruct and reinvent earlier discursive formations in order to maintain coherence in the face of internal and external contradictions and challenges” (p. 156). What Jackson means by this is that the metaphor of war must be adjusted in such a way as to maximize its political value. It is not enough, for example, to refer to the policy of counterterrorism as a war. In his declarative speech, Bush also noted that it was

a "different kind of war with a different kind of enemy," thus adopting the metaphor to suit his policies. Calling terrorists "soldiers" may be a logical extension of the metaphor, but offers them a legitimacy and legal protection that the administration wished to avoid, so the term "enemy combatant" or simply 'terrorist' was often used instead. In this war, the metaphor is useful in that it is flexible and can respond to changing demands.

Jackson (2005) also characterizes the discourse in the war on terror as "opaque," a term he uses to describe the fact that "many of the key terms and phrases are never properly defined or explained, which results in their meanings having to be assumed or inferred through the context in which they occur" (p. 157). Perhaps one of the most vivid examples of this has been the amorphous identity of who the "enemy" truly is in the war on terror. Although clearly Bin Laden and the al-Qaeda terrorist network were targets of the war, the conflict with Iraq raised the question of whether a nation that had nothing to do with the attacks of September 11, 2001 and only nominal ties to al-Qaeda could still be considered part of the war on terror. This debate became crucial in the lead-up to the invasion of Iraq as people struggled with whether Iraq was or was not connected to the global war on terror.

The War on Terror and Iraq

It has become an open secret in Washington that many members of the Bush administration had wanted to depose Saddam Hussein ever since the first Gulf War in 1991 left him in power. This desire has been well documented in such books as *Plan of Attack* (2004) by Bob Woodward, *Against All Enemies* by Richard Clarke (2002), and *The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq* by George Packer (2005) among many others. Since the invasion, a great deal of attention has been made as to the validity of pre-war claims, including the question of whether or not intelligence was manipulated or disported regarding Iraq's supposed Weapons of Mass Destruction program. While these are undoubtedly important issues that merit considerable attention, they are not the issues of concern to this study. The question raised here is to what extent did the president's war rhetoric influence how people thought about the invasion of Iraq? The answer, it is posited, is that the decision to wage a rhetorical war against terrorism played a critical

role in convincing many Americans to support the invasion of a country now widely acknowledged to have played no discernable role in the attacks of September 11.

Although much of the justification of the conflict with Iraq was based on the threat of weapons of mass destruction and the violation of United Nations resolutions, President Bush repeatedly insisted that the invasion of Iraq was "central" to the war on terror, constantly connecting it with "the threat the American public feared most, thereby capitalizing on the country's militant post-9/11 mood," as former National Intelligence Officer for the CIA Paul Pillar (2006) recently wrote. For example, in a major 2002 address he delivered in Cincinnati, Ohio to help boost support for an invasion of Iraq, Bush attempted to connect Iraq with the war on terror, in part, by tying the decision to the attacks of September 11, 2001. "On September the 11th, 2001," Bush told the crowd, "America felt its vulnerability- even to threats that gather on the other side of the earth. We resolved then, and we are resolved today, to confront every threat, from any source, that could bring sudden terror and suffering to America." He later made the connection between Iraq and the war on terror even more direct:

> Some have argued that confronting the threat from Iraq could detract from the war against terror. To the contrary; confronting the threat posed by Iraq is crucial to winning the war on terror. When I spoke to Congress more than a year ago, I said that those who harbor terrorists are as guilty as the terrorists themselves. Saddam Hussein is harboring terrorists and the instruments of terror, the instruments of mass death and destruction. And he cannot be trusted. The risk is simply too great that he will use them, or provide them to a terror network (Bush, 2002).

Examples of Bush's attempt to link Iraq with the war on terror are numerous, particularly during the post-war reconstruction when public opinion began turning against the war. In May of 2004, for example, he noted that "other terrorists know that Iraq is now the central front in the war on terror, and we must understand that as well" (Bush, 2004). Then, in 2005, Bush again pointed out that "the terrorists have made it clear that Iraq is the central front in their war against humanity, and so we must recognize Iraq as the central front in the war on terror" (Bush, 2005).

Just as Bush based one of his primary justifications for the Iraq war on the fact that it was part of the war on terror, critics of the war based their objection on similar themes, not challenging the assertion that Iraq possess weapons of mass destruction, but challenging the assertion that it was connected with the war on terror. For example, in the first presidential debate of 2004, Bush's challenger, Senator John Kerry explained that:

> Smart means not diverting your attention from the real war on terror in Afghanistan against Osama bin Laden and taking if off to Iraq where the 9/11 Commission confirms there was no connection to 9/11 itself and Saddam Hussein, and where the reason for going to war was weapons of mass destruction, not the removal of Saddam Hussein.

Kerry later added that "Iraq is not even the center of the focus of the war on terror," but in fact was evidence of Bush taking his "eye off the ball." This debate about what is included in the "real" war on terror illustrates Jackson' point about the opacity of the rhetoric.

Perhaps most telling in Kerry's criticism of the Bush administration was that he adopted the same war language and rhetoric of the president, continuing to talk about a war on terror, but merely disagreeing on exactly to do it. In a speech in Philadelphia, for example, Kerry called the war on terror "the monumental struggle of our time. It is as monumental a struggle as the Cold War. Its outcome will determine whether we and our children live in freedom or in fear" (Kerry, 2004). Even when expressing concern over using the language of war to describe America's counterterrorism policy ("There's a danger in it") he remained committed to the metaphor, telling one interviewer that the war is "real."

> You know, when your buildings are bombed and 3,000 people get killed, and airplanes are hijacked, and a nation is terrorized the way we were, and people continue to plot to do you injury, that's an act of war, and it's serious business. But it's a different kind of war. You have to understand that this is not the sands of

> Iwo Jima. This is a completely new, different kind of war from any we've fought previously (Bai, 2004).

Later, when President Bush commented in an interview that he did not believe that the war on terror was winnable, Kerry jumped on the remark. "I absolutely disagree with what he said in that interview in a moment of candor," Kerry said. "With the right policies, this is a war we can win, this is a war we must win, and this is a war we will win" (Halbfinger, 2004).

Kerry's philosophy and outlook on the war on terror was drastically different from Bush's during the campaign in 2004, and he often spoke of the war on terror in more legal, and less militant, terms that Bush. Given his background as a former prosecutor, Kerry could still have found a way to what one reporter termed "some bold and cohesive construct for the next half-century- a Kerry Doctrine, perhaps, or a campaign against chaos, rather than a war on terror- that people will understand and relate to" (Bai, 2004). But attempting to reconstruct America's counter-terrorism strategy with a new paradigm is an exceedingly difficult task, if not impossible and Bush's re-election victory in the 2004 election was, in part, a reaffirmation in how the war on terror was framed. Clearly, as both candidates reaffirmed, Americans remain committed to fighting a war against terrorism and are more than willing to punish any office-seeker at the polls for failing to demonstrate sufficient militarism towards that end.

Conclusion

In 2005, the New York Times reported that high level military and civilian officials have starting referring to the current conflict as "a global struggle against violent extremism" rather than "the global war on terror." The reasons for the change, according to the administration, was that the "phrase may have outlived its usefulness, because it focused attention solely, and incorrectly, on the military campaign" (Schmitt and Dhanker, 2005). Later, in 2006, military officials began referring to the "Long War," which has the benefit of bearing semantic resemblance to the Cold War, with which the military wished to compare the war on terror. As Nixon learned of the war on poverty and Clinton learned about the war on drugs however, changing a rhetorical war is far

more difficult than declaring one. The war metaphor "has raised the profile of the terrorism issue to unprecedented heights, so that it now dominates most aspects of the Bush administration's foreign policy agenda" (Fuller, 2004, p. 16).

In the years after September 11, President Bush, members of Congress, and other policy-makers all continued to use the war metaphor and other war language when discussing America's reaction to the attacks. They were aided by the media, and other public personalities that not only referred to terrorism as a war, but chastised those who did not view it as such. The increasing unpopularity of the conflict in Iraq as well as with President Bush's job approval has called into question much of Bush's foreign policy, including the doctrine of preemption and the reliability of American intelligence. The essence of the war on terror however, including its war-imagery, and militaristic tone, remain unchallenged.

There are several reasons why the war on terror has so successfully resonated with Americans. First, and most obvious, it was precipitated by a series of large-scale attacks on the United States orchestrated by foreign agents hoping to change American foreign policy. In other words, unlike so many other metaphorical wars, it had all of the appearances of a conventional war. Indeed, the attacks of 9/11 have often been called this generation's Pearl Harbor, and numerous references to World War II continue to be used, such as the condemnation of "appeasement," the comparison between Nazi ideology and that of Al-Qaeda's, and comparisons between the countries of Afghanistan and Iraq to the successful reconstruction of Germany and Japan. Thus when the president informed the nation that the United States was at war, Americans were disposed to accept this as the natural, even unarguable, conclusion.

A second reason the war on terrorism has been so successful is its ability to attract so much media attention, which in turn, generates fear among Americans, which prompts continues support for programs or policies that are framed as an anti-terrorism policy. During the peak of the war on poverty, the war on drugs, and other national "crises," the media played their role by airing features, documentaries, and special reports on just how bad the problem is. Simply by calling attention to the issues raised their visibility and played into the hands of presidents who wanted their policies enacted. Terrorism has been particularly prone to media attention because, unlike the poor or drug users,

terrorists actively seek media attention and have mastered the art of exposure. Terrorist attacks in Iraq are often videotaped by the perpetrators for maximum coverage and the proliferation of the internet insures that even footage that appears too heinous to air on television will find its way into American homes.

Finally, the war on terror is successful because it contains something many other wars were sorely lacking: a central villain to give the war a more dramatic narrative. Videos of Osama bin Laden and his henchmen give a face and identity to terrorism that it would otherwise lack and footage of masked men training with automatic weapons in elaborate obstacle-courses give credence to the impression that there is an opposing military with which the nation is at war.

The war on terror is ongoing and, like the war on drugs, seems unlikely to ever officially end. In a 2004 interview with Matt Lauer, President Bush acknowledged that he did not believe the war on terror could ever truly be won. "I don't think you can win it," Bush said.

> But I think you can create conditions so that those who use terror as a tool are less acceptable in parts of the world — let's put it that way. I have a two-pronged strategy. On the one hand is to find them before they hurt us, and that's necessary. I'm telling you it's necessary. The country must never yield, must never show weakness and must continue to lead. To find Al-Qaeda affiliates who are hiding around the world and want to harm us and bring 'em to justice — we're doing a good job of it. I mean we are dismantling the Al Qaeda as we knew it. The long-term strategy is to spread freedom and liberty, and that's really kind of an interesting debate.

As other wars have shown however, just because it is neither won nor lost does not mean that Americans will continue to support it with the same zeal as always. In the wake of the Iraq invasion and various disclosures about executive actions, public opinion of the war on terror may be starting to wane. According to constitutional law professor, David Cole, only 7% of Americans believed that the war on terror was costing them important civil liberties. A similar poll two years later showed that number jumping to 52%

(Hentoff, 2004). Similarly, while only 11% of Americans believe that President Bush had gone too far in restricting civil liberties in order the fight terrorism in 2002, that number was 41% by 2006. Of course, these polls often collect information only on the tactics of the war on terror and not the overall strategic choice of viewing terrorism as a war. Nevertheless, as Americans increasingly turn their attention to domestic concerns and as foreign policy continues to be consumed by the rebuilding of Iraq and potential conflicts with North Korea and Iran, it is likely that the war on terror will be increasingly waged primarily by rhetoric.

Chapter 7
Other Rhetorical Wars

Thus far, this study has attempted to look at the major rhetorical wars that have been waged in the United States against non-military targets. The wars on poverty, drugs, and terror are well known by most observers of American policy and their legacies have or will reverberate in the political world long after the presidents who initially declared them leave office. There are however, other metaphorical wars that did not achieve the massive notoriety that some others did, despite a genuine effort on the part of the president to foster a war mentality on the public and on Congress. The first of these wars discussed here, the war on crime, was actually waged with the same rhetorical and legislative tools as the most successful wars, and likely could have continued had it been rigorously pursued. The second war mentioned in this chapter, the war on inflation, is a war likely forgotten or never heard of by most Americans, and even scholars who have studied presidential rhetoric tend to ignore it completely. However, it is important because it does represent a failed attempt to launch a metaphorical war. For various reasons that will be explored here, President Ford could not generate the same interest and urgency with his war on inflation that proved so successful with some of his predecessors. Finally, having discussed a war that was largely successful yet abandoned, and then a war that was not successful at all, a brief digression will be made to look into a domestic policy area in which war was never attempted and that is healthcare reform, specifically President Clinton's healthcare reform proposal. This issue is not brought up here to attempt to simulate a controlled experiment, in which a policy lacking war language fails *because* it lacked such language. As mentioned in the introduction, such an experiment is neither possible nor practical in presidential studies. Its purpose rather is to explore a policy area that most Americans would seem, on the surface, to support yet overwhelmingly reject due to, it is argued, the lack of clarity on the issue.

The War on Crime

We have heard a great deal of overblown rhetoric during the sixties in which the word "war" has perhaps too often been used--the war on poverty, the war on misery, the war on disease, the war on hunger. But if there is one area where the word "war" is appropriate it is in the fight against crime. We must declare and win the war against the criminal elements which increasingly threaten our cities, our homes, and our lives.

-- Richard Nixon, January 22, 1970

While Lyndon Johnson is sometimes credited with starting the war on crime, it was his 1964 Republican opponent, Barry Goldwater, who made it possible. Although crime was not a major national issue prior to the 1960's, public uneasiness regarding the liberal atmosphere stressing criminal-rights, civil rights, and radicalization of many college students around the country, combined with a series of Supreme Court decisions made crime an increasingly important issue. Landmark cases such as *Gideon v. Wainwright* (1963), *Escobedo v. Illinois* (1964), and others propelled the issue of crime to the forefront of the 1964 presidential election. During the campaign, Republican candidate Barry Goldwater had made defeating crime one of his top issues, saying in his acceptance speech that "security from domestic violence, no less than from foreign aggression, is the most elementary and fundamental purpose of any government" (Cronin, Cronin, & Milakomich, 1981, p. 18).

Despite this emphasis, public opinion polls taken during the campaign showed that crime was simply not considered a major problem for the nation, and was mentioned nowhere in polls about important issues facing the nation (Chambliss, 2001, p. 15-16). What Goldwater's rhetoric did do, as well as the continuous allegations and Congressional hearings from Republicans in Congress, was put Johnson on the defensive about the issue of crime. "A vote for Johnson's Congress," former Vice-President Richard Nixon said in 1966, "is a vote for continuing the president's policy of no action against a crime rate which in the last half decade has grown six times as rapidly as the population" (*NY Times*, 1966).

In 1965, to demonstrate his concern about crime in America, President Johnson appointed a Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice. The commission, chaired by Attorney General Nicholas De B. Katzenbach, recommended expanding the role of the federal government in fighting crime as well as attacking the social conditions that encouraged it. In response, Johnson proposed what would

eventually become the landmark Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968. It was a fitting time to pass a crime bill. In 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Senator Robert Kennedy were assassinated and the nation was consumed with some of the worst riots in recent history. It was perhaps not surprising then that in August of 1968, for the first time in decades, crime had risen to the top of the list of important issues facing the country. Only the conflict in Vietnam was rated higher in priority (Gallup, 1998, p. 2107).

Although the victory of Richard Nixon in the 1968 election can be attributed to many variables, including the split in the Democratic Party over the Vietnam War, certainly Nixon's campaign theme of law and order resonated with many Americans. In any event, Nixon's capture of the White House would precipitate a new metaphorical war against crime at around the same time he was focusing on waging a war against drugs.

In many ways, the development of the war on crime was similar to the development of the war on poverty. When Nixon came to office in 1968, he adopted virtually all of the Johnson administration's policies on crime (DiIulio, 1992). In January of 1969, just a few days after taking office, Nixon met with his advisors on possible law-and-order initiatives. Just as Johnson had made clear to his advisors to give poverty the highest priority after taking office, Nixon began his meeting by defining law and order as his principle domestic issue, despite the contention by his staff that most of the crimes Nixon wanted to combat fell under state rather than federal jurisdiction (Epstein, 1990). According to Donald Santarelli, who wrote many of Nixon's anti-crime speeches during the 1968 campaign and was present during Nixon's initial strategy meeting, because the federal government lacked the authority and the manpower to combat local crime, "the only thing we could do was to exercise vigorous symbolic leadership … With the president and attorney general as spokesmen, we could elevate the issue of crime to the level of the president" (Epstein, 1990). John Ehrlichman, another Nixon advisor who understood the persuasive power of the president, agreed, suggesting that the administration "stimulate action at the state and local level simply by making the issue" verbally (Epstein, 1990). In his address to Congress on April 23, 1969, Nixon focused his attention on organized crime, telling the country

> It is vitally important that Americans see this alien organization for what it really is- a totalitarian and closed society operating within an open and democratic one. It has succeeded so far because an apathetic public is not aware of the threat it poses to American life. This public apathy has permitted most organized criminals to escape prosecution by corrupting officials, by intimidating witnesses, and by terrorizing victims into silence (Nixon, Presidential Addresses to the Nation, 1969).

In delivering this address, Nixon achieved several objectives. First, he identified an enemy that could at least be identified (an alien organization) that is threatening the nation but is not truly a part of it. Nixon even includes a political dimension to the enemy, describing it as totalitarian and a closed society, as if he were referring to Nazi Germany or Stalinist Russia. Finally, he makes it known to Americans that the threat is far graver than they realize. Speeches such as this, as well as those delivered during other metaphorical wars, attempt to generate wartime-like feelings on an issue that might otherwise be ignored or viewed as a local matter unrelated to the President of the United States. In short, as Edward Jay Epstein (1990) says, Nixon and his strategists decided early on that "though they could not directly reduce street crime in America, they could gain enormous publicity for their crime offensive by calling attention to their repressive-sounding plans and ideas for law enforcement, and thereby create a *bete noire* for the liberal press to focus on."

Aside from threatening rhetoric, Nixon also needed to take action that would buttress his public statements. Even if the administration couldn't directly put more police officers on the streets, it could still wage a symbolic, or metaphorical, war on crime. Strategies to accomplish this, Ehrlichman's deputy Egil Krogh later recalled, included the proposition of harsh-sounding legislation, repressive-sounding phrases from administration officials such as "preventative detention," and attacks on Congressmen, media personalities, and judges for being soft on crime in order to make the administration seem tougher in contrast. Nixon also instructed his Attorney General to authorize widespread wiretapping of suspected crime figures, and to establish 20 federal

racketeering field offices. Legislatively, Nixon pushed Congress to pass several landmark crime bills in 1970.

The first bill was the District of Columbia Court Reorganization and Criminal Procedure Act (or the model anticrime package, as it was often referred to) for the District of Columbia. During the 1968 campaign, Nixon lamented the spiraling crime rate of the Federal city and in 1970 he proposed a bill to Congress that, according to Attorney General John N. Mitchell, would be a model to be emulated across the nation. Described as a blueprint for a police state by some Democratic critics, provisions of the package included lowing the age at which a juvenile can be tried as an adult to 15, authorized life sentences to people convicted to a felony three times, and authorized pretrial detention of up to 60 days for more dangerous defendants.

Another bill passed by Congress and spurred by Nixon's "war on crime" declaration was the Organized Crime Control Act (OCCA) of 1970, which would give the Attorney General "new weapons and tools" to "strike" at organized crime. The law was the most comprehensive Federal law ever directed against organized crime. Nixon's tough rhetoric certainly aided in getting Congressional support for many of the revolutionary criminal law changes within the OCCA. The bill passed the Senate by a vote of 73-1, despite the failure of some Democratic Senators to remove the move constitutionally questionable provisions (see table 7.1). In the House, the OCCA passed 341-26 with bipartisan support (Chambliss, 2001, p. 23). The genuine bipartisanship of the bill is evidenced by the fact that unlike the model anticrime package, and the OCCA was not an administration bill, but was sponsored by conservative Democrats, Senators McClellan and Ervin of Arkansas and North Carolina respectively. Upon signing the OCCA, President Nixon expressed pride that the FBI and Justice Department now had the tools he believed it needed.

> I think that we can say that they shall now be able to launch a total war against organized crime. And we will win this war. It can be done. And the billions of dollars that organized crime has taken out of American society, what it has done to society in other ways, its, for example, support of the drug traffic in this country, in many of these areas where we have seen organized crime doing so

much harm to America, we are going to find now that those who are fighting against crime will have the tools that they need to do the job and they will do the job (Nixon, 1970)

The year 1970 was not only marked the passage of the OCCA but also the year that the war on crime got downplayed rhetorically in favor of a new war, which in many ways would come to completely encompass the war on crime, and that was the war on drugs. As mentioned in the chapter relating to the war on drugs, the Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act was passed in 1970.

Table 7.1: War on crime legislation						
Bill Number	Date	Bill Name	Senate Vote	House Vote	Opposition Party Support in Senate	Opposition Party Support in House
PL 91-452; S. 30	1970	Organized Crime Control Act	73-1	341-26	45-1	181-26
PL 91-644; HR 17825	1970	Omnibus Crime Control Act	59-0	342-2	33-0	201-2

By 1976, the FBI had concluded that crime rates had risen far beyond what they had been in 1968. A political and intellectual consensus soon emerged that the war on crime had been a failure, with liberals arguing that it has never really been sufficiently funded, and conservatives lamenting the waste in taxpayers money to social programs (DiIulio, 1992, p. 8). In his 1976 State of the Union address, President Ford invoked the war on crime, but only to offer credibility for his plan to reduce direct federal involvement in crime-control. “It is unrealistic and misleading” Ford said “to hold out the hope that the Federal Government can move into every neighborhood and clean up crime. Under the Constitution, the greatest responsibility for curbing crime lies with State and local authorities. They are the frontline fighters in the war against crime” (Ford, 1976).

The election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 marked the ascendance of conservative thinking and affirmed the long held conservative position that, as he noted in his first inaugural address, government is not the solution to the problem, government is the problem. While the first phase of the war on crime targeted its perceived causes, inadequate housing, unemployment, etc., this second phase of the war targeted criminals. The time has come, Reagan said in his 1983 State of the Union Address,

> for major reform of our criminal justice statutes and acceleration of the drive against organized crime and drug trafficking. It's high time that we make our cities safe again. This administration hereby declares an all-out war on big-time organized crime and the drug racketeers who are poisoning our young people Reagan, 1983).

In 1984, Congress passed the Comprehensive Crime Control Act, the most important anti-crime package since the Johnson administration. The bill allowed dangerous defendants to be detained before his or her trial, established new sentencing guidelines for judges, limited the ability to utilize an insanity defense, and set harsh new penalties for drug offenses (DiIulio, 1992, p. 8).

In 1988, George Bush supporters ran television ads indicating that his Democratic opponent, Michael Dukakis, was soft on crime (including the Willie Horton ad). Although there is no evidence to suggest that the Willie Horton ad had any effect on the final outcome of the election, it made Democrats, according to the Congressional Quarterly, "determined to adopt a tough-on-crime stance." In 1992, Bush declared, "it is time for a major renewed investment in fighting violent street crime" (Bush, 1992). By then however, many people were questioning the success of the "get-tough" strategy of the 1980's.

Ultimately, the war on crime was a tremendous success for the short period of time in which it was seriously waged. Every piece of major legislation proposed received tremendous bipartisan support. The problem with the war on crime, in the sense that it ceased being widely used, was not that it failed to resonate with the American people, nor

was it ignored by the media or political pundits. It was simply overshadowed or incorporated into other metaphorical wars, such as the war on drugs or the war on terror.

The War on Inflation

> With your help, each new day will bring more good news than bad news for our economy. Yes, there will be some setbacks. We will not be out of the economic trenches by Christmas, but I remind you, if I might, of just one fact: Every battle in history has been won by the side that held on for just five minutes longer. Our enemy in this battle has been called inflation. But perhaps Pogo was wiser when he said, 'I have met the enemy and he is us.'
>
> -- President Gerald Ford, October 15, 1974

On August 28, 1974, Gerald Ford held his first press conference to the nation after assuming the presidency on the resignation of Richard Nixon. Of all of the issues facing the country at that time, Ford identified inflation as public enemy number one, and said that American had to win the battle against it. It is worth noting that this is the exact same phraseology Nixon had used when he declared drugs to be public enemy number one only 6 years earlier. For five months after his press conference, Ford used the metaphor of war to express to the nation the severity of inflation. On September 6, 1974, Ford spoke in Philadelphia in honor of the bicentennial of the first Continental Congress. In his speech, he compared the battle against inflation to the Revolutionary War, noting that like contemporary Americans, "the colonial delegates" to the Constitutional Convention "wrestled with their common problems of skyrocketing prices, shrinking purchasing power, shortages, hoarding, and financial speculation." Although prices and purchasing power are not necessarily the first things that come to mind when most people think of Washington, Jefferson, Franklin, Ford attempted to draw the current war on inflation back to them. The "men and women of 1774," he proclaimed, "were inflation fighters before they took up arms against the British redcoats." He went on to make the war metaphor clear, declaring that "the first priority for us as a nation, domestically, is an all-out war against inflation" and set his goal for "licking it" at July 4, 1976. "I hope no one will underestimate the generalship or fighting ability of all Americans today the same

way they did in 1774" (Gore, 2005). In October, he addressed a joint session of Congress to discuss the economy, and attempted to stir up support for his new war.

> Only two of my predecessors have come in person to call upon Congress for a declaration of war, and I shall not do that. But I say to you with all sincerity that our inflation, our public enemy number one, will, unless whipped, destroy our country, our homes, our liberties, our property, and finally our national pride, as surely as any well-armed wartime enemy. I concede there will be no sudden Pearl Harbor to shock us into unity and to sacrifice, but I think we have had enough early warnings (Ford, 1974).

Ford also used his address to explain how he intends to fight the war on inflation, rejecting a big Federal bureaucracy and instead relying on volunteerism from the media and other Americans. The new symbol for this war in inflation was a pin worn on Ford's lapel during his speech inscribed with the word, WIN (later explained to stand for "whip inflation now"). In the next several months, WIN became Ford's central message, urging Americans to plant WIN gardens, promising WIN flags to local communities who did a good job in saving money, and he even looked into issuing WIN bonds (Stelzner, 1977:291). Unfortunately for Ford, the media did not help Americans internalize the war metaphor. Unlike the case of poverty of drugs, whose dangers were given considerable attention after Johnson and Nixon's declarations respectively, after Ford's speeches, there was no unified position on what exactly was the problem. Poverty, recession, unemployment, and dependence on foreign oil were all given the same attention as inflation on the covers of major newspapers and magazines, with U.S. News and World Report (1974) even issuing a major essay entitled: "Ford's War on Inflation: A Losing Battle." This marks a sharp contract to more successful metaphorical wars, which were presented to Americans as issues which the nation was more or less united behind.

Ford was also criticized by those few individuals who actually did adopt his war metaphor as being too weak on the war. If inflation was really so dangerous to America, some were asking, then why are the policies being proposed so timid and unimaginative? From the beginning, the president flatly rejected wage and price controls for labor or

industry and he didn't seem to be doing much to curb government spending. Even the WIN buttons were becoming the target of ridicule. What was needed, some suggested, was a WWII-type mobilization, including the creation of a Cabinet-level "Secretary of Communications" in change of informing Americans about the need for action (Dougherty, 1974). In other words, although Ford spoke of inflation as if it were a war, he failed to accompany his alarmist rhetoric with alarmist policies or back it up. From the beginning, his anti-inflation policy relied heavily on volunteerism (such as his suggestion to "drive less, heat less").

In fairness to Ford however, it should be noted that he was probably too weak politically to act on the war metaphor with much action even if he wanted to. Facing a Democratic Congress, Ford's decision to pardon former President Nixon was controversial and severely hampered his ability to act on other issues. Nevertheless, the criticism remained, some of the loudest from within the Republican Party itself. In 1976, California Governor Ronald Reagan challenged Ford for the Republican nomination. In a famous speech he made entitled "To Restore America," Reagan mocked Ford's war, reminding Americans of how "we all donned those WIN buttons to 'Whip Inflation Now.' Unfortunately," Reagan added, "the war if it ever really started was soon over (Reagan, 1976)."

Despite his attempt to recreate the success of other metaphorical wars, Ford failed to generate the same attention, media coverage, or war paradigm that made some other metaphorical wars so long-lasting and successful. Hermann G. Stelzner (1977), one of the few scholars ever to study Ford's war on inflation from a rhetorical perspective, argues that the metaphor of war failed for Ford for three reasons. The first reason was timing. The year 1974 was one of the last years of the Vietnam conflict (when Saigon fell in April of 1975, Ford officially declared that Vietnam is a war that is finished as far as America is concerned). The public having already been bombarded with war language for so long, using a war metaphor to describe yet another domestic problem simply did not resonate with the American public as a valid basis to conceptualize inflation, particularly since the issue itself was complex and difficult to visualize (unlike, say, drugs or poverty, which more people can identify with and understand).

A second reason the metaphor failed to resonate, according to Stelzner (1977), was that the media, as well as analysts and economists, often used their own metaphor and imagery that undercut Ford's war metaphor. Not only did the media fail to present inflation as the major nation problem Ford identified it as, private companies were actively undermining the very intent of Ford's requests by encouraging Americans to fight inflation by (paradoxically) buying more of their products.[12] Finally, a major reason the metaphor failed was not Ford's lack of commitment to the metaphor or the inflation issue, but Ford's failure to "work" the issue.

> Though inflation was the clearly designated enemy, Ford could not portray the severity of the crisis and did not propose short term, precise, realistic incentives for engaging the enemy. Within the framework of the war metaphor, Ford stressed volunteerism as the basic approach to inflation, the enemy, but without enforcement the approach lacked certainty and strength (Stelzner, 1977, p. 285).

Ultimately, Ford simply asked Americans for too much, placing the major burdens of fighting inflation on them. Americans were simply not willing to cut down on their own spending adjust their own standards of living not only runs into the problem of free riders inherent in collective action, it is also hypocritical at a time when the government itself seemed unable to control spending. His failure to mobilize the nation with his war metaphor became painfully evidence and a mere five months after his war was launched, it was abandoned.

In January of 1975, Ford used his State of the Union address, not to advance or strengthen his war on inflation, but to summarily end it after a five-year campaign. "The moment has come to move in a new direction," Ford said. "The emphasis on our economic efforts must now shift from inflation to jobs." And so, the "public enemy number one" was no longer the central priority of the Ford administration and the war was unceremoniously ended. The issue that Ford tried to mobilize the nation around was abandoned.

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[12] Stelzner offers numerous examples of advertising campaigns by companies such as Coca-Cola, who offered "WIN" coupons for its soft-drinks and advertising itself as "a refreshing way to fight inflation."

Although Ford discontinued using the war metaphor in his public statements, it made enough of an impact to reappear from time to time by his successor, Jimmy Carter. In 1978, Carter widened the war on inflation by freezing executive salaries in the government and attempting to limit the general pay raise for other workers as well. Arguing that "inflation cannot be solved by placing the burden of fighting it only on a few," he appointed Robert S. Strauss as a "special counsel on inflation," called on Congress to enact airline fare deregulation and hospital cost containment, and called on Governors and mayors to hold down pay raises for their employees and perhaps even lower sales taxes (Walsh, 1978). In 1979, Carter defended his choice of Paul Volcker to head the Federal Reserve by saying that Volcker shared his "determination to vigorously pursue the battle against inflation at home and to ensure the strength and stability of the dollar abroad." Two years later, while running for re-election, First Lady Rosalynn Carter delivered a speech in Virginia in which she told audiences that her husband needs four more years to win the war on inflation and turn hard times into happy ones (Collins, 1980).

Despite their lack of unity or enthusiasm for the war, the media too continued using the term long after it has been forgotten by presidents. As recently as 2000, a story in the Washington Post was headlined, "Casualties of the war on inflation," and even referred to the Fed's "war on growth" in the article (Murdock, 2000), although the focus was not on executive action.

Ford's war on inflation illustrates the reality that simply declaring a metaphorical war is not enough to rally the nation behind a set of programs or even enough to get the country to view the so-called crisis as a war. While many presidents will declare war on something simply for rhetorical effect, Ford appeared to be trying to genuinely provoke the kind of lasting conceptual framework with his war in inflation as previous presidents have done with the war on poverty or the war on drugs. His failure to do so is instructive as a limitation of the war metaphor and what conditions encourage or discourage its adoption by the public.

A Word on Healthcare reform: Would War Have Helped?

Aside from war metaphors that failed to resonate, another situation relevant here are issues that are pushed by presidents but lack any overriding conceptual framework like a war metaphor. In the introduction, I mentioned how it is impossible to compare how policies have been adopted or implemented using the war rhetoric with how they would have been implemented with different rhetoric. Similarly, it is equally impossible to compare how policies that did not utilize a war metaphor would have fared had one been used. Nevertheless, it is worth taking a moment to discuss an issue that failed, at least in part, because of the president's inability to adequately explain the necessity (or desirability) of it and that is President Clinton's healthcare reform. Healthcare reform is an attractive issue to look at for several reasons.

First, it is an issue that, at least superficially, the American public was predisposed to approve of, according to public opinion polls. Second, it is one that an incoming president strongly endorsed and spoke about at length during the campaign. Finally, healthcare reform is worth discussing because its failure to resonate with the public, and indeed the disdain it eventually attracted was due, at least in part, with the confusion people had about the specifics of the reform proposals, confusion that past presidents have sometimes been able to neutralize with war metaphors and other framing tools. It is important to note that no argument is being advanced here that claims that a war metaphor would have aided President Clinton, since, to reiterate, such a counterfactual analysis is simply not possible. A brief discussion of healthcare reform is useful, it is argued, simply because it provides an example of a failed issue that was poorly communicated to the public and widely misunderstood.

By 1992, healthcare reform was gaining more and more attention nationally, with public opinion polls showing that a large majority of Americans identified healthcare reform as among the most urgent problem facing the nation, and up to 90% agreed that the nation's healthcare system needs "fundamental change" or a "complete rebuilding" (Kemper, 1991). Across the nation, politicians were winning elections on healthcare reform. It was in this political environment that President Clinton made healthcare reform the centerpiece of his 1992 campaign. Once elected, he moved quickly in assembling a task force of expert to construct a healthcare plan to submit to Congress. He even took the controversial and unprecedented step of naming his wife Hillary to head

the taskforce. The product of this taskforce was a complex plan over 1,000 pages long that promised healthcare to all Americans and the creation of new organizations called heath care alliances. Its presentation to Congress was widely heralded as a terrific success and Mrs. Clinton's testimony before various committees was commended. In the words of TV analyst William Schneider: "The reviews are in and the box office is terrific." A year later, healthcare reform was, according to Senate Leader George Mitchell, dead. What happened?

The healthcare debate of 1993-1994 provides an instructive example of how even a popular plan can fail due to poor framing. The topic was debated endlessly by newspapers, television, and radio programs. Over $100 million is said to have been spent by various interest groups representing one side or another, including flyers, television commercials, and direct mailings. But unlike the war on poverty and other successful metaphorical wars, the debate on healthcare was not framed as a war, or anything remotely equal in urgency. As a result, it was confused by the large number of different plans that had been proposed by various members of Congress. By the end of the debate, over 27 different legislative proposals were offered by Congress, which were identified by the media by over 110 different names (Bok, 1998). According to Derek Bok (1998) in his article, "The Great Health Care Debate of 1993-94,"

> To carry through a legislative campaign of this magnitude, effective Presidential leadership was clearly essential. Because the issue touched every American and involved such vital interests, public opinion was bound to be important, and the President would have to use his "bully pulpit" to maximum advantage. His power to command attention and attract an attentive audience would clearly be vital to overcoming the doubts and confusions spread by powerful adversaries (1998).

In 1994, the Wall Street Journal reported that when describing a healthcare plan containing all of the features of President Clinton's plan but without revealing it as his, over three-quarters of Americans saw "some" or "a great deal" of appeal (Stout, 1994). This was the same time period that a majority of Americans reportedly opposed the Clinton healthcare plan when asked directly.

It is possible that a war-metaphor would not have been appropriate in this instance. It is also possible that at a time of tremendous budget deficits Clinton's healthcare plan was doomed from the start. Perhaps he tried to do too much too fast, having just won a national election with only 43% of the vote. Certainly, it appears in retrospect to have been a major political blunder putting his wife in charge of a taskforce that operated largely in secret. Nevertheless, this episode, as well as so many others, does illustrate the importance of presidential rhetoric and framing and what the lack of any such conceptual framework can do to a proposal.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

The importance of language in shaping people's perspectives has been well studied and tested in numerous fields for decades. Psychological studies reveal that how a story is told determines what emotions people feel, and Political Scientists have long known that public opinion polling will yield different results depending on how a question is framed. Studies like these confirm that people make decisions, not necessarily based on a rational evaluation of the facts, but by perception framed in large measure on language. Were the rhetorical wars discussed in this study successfully able to frame Americans' decisions? To answer that question, each war will be considered.

War on Poverty

The war on poverty was one of, and perhaps the most significant component of President Johnson's Great Society programs and its major legislative components passed with significant majorities in both Houses of Congress. However, when taking conventional party politics into account, the war failed in attracting bipartisan support. The four major pieces of legislation all passed with minimal support from Republicans in Congress. Neither the Economic Opportunity Act (1964), the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965), or the food stamp program (1964) passed with the support of a majority of Republicans in the House. With the exception of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965) none received a majority of Republican support in the Senate. Medicare (1964) was an exception in receiving a 70-68 majority of Republican House support (it fell short of a Republican majority in the Senate), but the unique circumstances of its passage is an exception that proved the rule since it had been proposed and debated long before the war on poverty began.

Measuring uncritical usage at a deeper, societal level is problematic. With the proliferation of newspapers, news magazines, television and radio media, as well as internet sources such as on-line journals and even personal blogs, mere mention of a metaphorical war or an expression of support is difficult to translate into broader public support. However, it is possible look at contemporary usage of a metaphorical war by

observing whether or not it was mentioned in the most important and widely viewed presidential speeches, such as inaugural addresses or state of the union addresses, for successive presidents. Even if the successive president is of the same party as the president who launched the war, his usage indicates that the war has lasted beyond a single administration and is still relevant enough to mention in important addresses By that standard, the war on poverty can be considered to have survived the test of time, since it was mentioned during President Carter's inaugural address, albeit briefly. Thus the war on poverty could be called a partial success in that it passed Congress with only token support from the opposition party but succeeded in creating a framework for viewing the problem of poverty beyond the president who initiated it.

One final measurement of the success of a metaphorical war was whether or not it produced an entirely new executive department or agency designed to conduct it. As stated in chapter 3, war metaphors are important to study not only because of how it informs public opinion, but also how it informs how policy is to be implemented. The war on poverty was not just a simple slogan, but was centralized and coordinated just as a military war would be. The OEO acted as the central executing authority for many of the war on poverty programs with its director playing the role of Supreme Commander in the war. The importance of this act in maintaining the perception of fighting poverty like war is illustrated by the fact that when President Nixon disbanded the office, many of the programs remained in effect, merely being transferred to other agencies. In other words, although many of the war on poverty programs remained on the books, it was the *symbolic* rejection of the war on poverty through its decentralization and abandonment of the war rhetoric rather than a substantive backtracking on policies that marked the end of the war on poverty.

War on Drugs

The war on drugs was an unequivocal success on all counts. When President Nixon proposed the Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act in 1970, it received unanimous support from Senate Democrats and near-unanimous support from House Democrats (with only 6 House Democrats voting against it). So to did it succeed in lasting beyond the Nixon administration and was in fact revitalized and expanded with

successive president, particularly presidents Reagan and Bush. When the Anti-Drug Abuse Act went before congress in 1986, only 15 House Democrats voted against it, and only 11 voted against a follow-up bill two years later.

War on Crime

In contrast to the war on poverty, which survived President Johnson but failed to generate bipartisan support, the war on crime had the opposite record, achieving bipartisan support but failing to last as a dominating narrative. In the two major pieces of legislation connected to the war on crime, the Organized Crime and Control Act (1970) and the Omnibus Crime Control Act (1970) support among Senate Democrats was near-unanimous, while House Democrats voted overwhelmingly in favor of them. However, it failed to get mention again by future presidents in their inaugural address or any of their state of the union addresses. Part of the reason for this is was that, in an unusual turn of events, Nixon himself discontinued pursuing the successful metaphor in favor of concentrating his influence on the war on drugs.

War on Terror

It is difficult to truly judge the success or failure of the war on terror since it has only been around since the past half-dozen years. However, there are signs that indicate that it will be considered a successful war metaphor. The USA PATRIOT Act, which has become a centerpiece in the war on terror, passed with overwhelming bipartisan support, as did its reauthorization, passed four years after the terrorist attacks of 2001. While President Bush did much to advance the metaphor, even his political opponents made good use out of it, such as calling for the creation of a Department of Homeland Security to coordinate the war.

War on Inflation

The war on inflation was included in this study primarily to offer an example of a metaphorical war that simply failed to resonate among most Americans. Although Ford was willing to offer tough rhetoric about the severity of inflation, he was unwilling to take any drastic action legislatively. The metaphor thus failed to resonate with most

Americans and was subsequently forgotten soon after and abandoned even by Ford himself.

War	Year Initiated	President	Bi-Partisan Support *	Contemporary Use**	Major Legislative Response	Creation of Executive Agency
Poverty	1964	Johnson	No	Yes	Economic Opportunity Act	Office of Economic Opportunity
Drugs	1971	Nixon	Yes	Yes	Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act	Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, Special Action Office for Drug Abuse Prevention, Drug Enforcement Agency
Crime		Johnson	Yes	No	Organized Crime Control Act	None
Inflation	1974	Ford	N/A	No	N/A	None
Terror	2001	Bush	Yes	N/A	USA PATRIOT ACT	Department of Homeland Security

* Bi-Partisan Support: Majority support from opposition party in major legislative response

** Contemporary Use: Mentioned in State of the Union Address or inaugural address of a succeeding president

Perhaps the most often cited observation in the presidency literature is Neustadt's statement that presidential power is the power to persuade. This study has attempted to analyze just one strategy whereby presidents do this, and that is the use of war metaphors in describing their policies. War language is powerful, attractive to presidents because of the severity with which it imbues particular issues, as well as the public reaction it can evoke in people.

This study has also demonstrated that while necessary, war language alone is not sufficient in creating a lasting conceptual framework within which the public may view issues or within which administrations formulate policies. Also important are executive and legislative actions that back up the war language with equally drastic action.

Despite the vast literature focusing on the various tools presidents uses to persuade the public, there are still many areas open for future research. In his analysis of the war on terror, Richard Jackson (2005) suggests that the success of presidential rhetoric can be measured

by the extant to which allows the authorities to enact their policies with significant support (or at least without significant opposition), and the extent to which alternative narratives and approaches are marginalized and silenced in the public arena. At a deeper level, a discourse can be considered successful when its words, language, assumptions and viewpoints are adopted uncritically in political discourse by opposition politicians, the media, social institutions (like churches, schools, universities, associations, pressure groups) and ordinary citizens (p. 159).

It is beyond the scope of this study to investigate in detail whether or not the war rhetoric used by presidents were adopted in social institutions and ordinary citizens, although an attempt has been made to describe how the media and opposition politicians used the phrase. Certainly, future research could provide a more complete picture by studying the metaphors use more extensively. For example, analysis of polling data over the past several decades might create a better picture of how influential presidential metaphors and other rhetorical devices have been. Although polls have been used sporadically throughout this study to highlight relevant changes in attitudes, a more thorough study could have relied on polls that dealt specifically with each metaphorical war in an attempt to better measure public reaction to presidential rhetoric. The difficulty with this is that since polling organizations rarely ask the type of questions that are directly related to war metaphors, much will have to be inferred from the data rather than directly observed.

Another area of research related to this study is looking at devices or tactics in rhetoric other than metaphors. Although there has been a great deal of study as to how and why presidents communicate to the American people, including their manipulation of the mass media, their relationship with Congress, their ability to act unilaterally through executive orders, and even signing statements, not as much attention has been paid to what the actual communication conveys, or the content. Framing an issue as a war to be fought is simply one rhetorical device that some presidents have chosen to use, and even they are no guarantee of success.

There is no figure in the United States who commands the attention of the president. Many Americans have grown cynical in recent decades about the motives of presidents and often temper their reactions to major public addresses. Despite this

cynicism, Americans continue to get many of their political cues from the president. In part, this is because there is no real alternative, no one with the stature and media attention to compete with the president in framing an issue. In part, it is because the president is the only official who is elected nationally rather than just locally. For these and other reasons, when presidents speak, the country listens and how he interprets an issue is likely how the rest of the nation will as well. The war on terror will not be the last war to be waged on an amorphous enemy with almost unlimited scope. Presidents will continue to use the language of war, in part, because that is what many Americans want; a unifying theme that compels acquiescence, discourages dissent, and promises victory.

Presidents who do wish to frame an issue as a war ought to recognize two lessons from this study. First, launching a successful metaphorical war is not an easy task. Truly framing an issue as a war not only demands consistency from speech to speech, but also the willingness to highlight the issue over all others in order to emphasis the severity of the cause. It is also necessary to back up the rhetoric with action that is commensurate to the language. Doing so will not only offer credibility to the dire statements, but perhaps more importantly, it helps to generate increased media coverage of the issue until it is ultimately internalized by the political community and the American people.

A second lesson from this study is that once fully waged, metaphorical wars never truly disappear. They can be downplayed and their policies dismantled, like the war on poverty, or declared anew by some future administration like the war on crime. Successful metaphorical wars rarely if ever actually disappear however, and even Reagan's attempt to purge the war on poverty from public consciousness was unsuccessful in preventing numerous public officials, media outlets, and even regular Americans from bringing it up and thinking about poverty as a national crisis requiring extensive government intervention. To paraphrase General MacArthur, old wars never die, they just fade away.

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