

"THE WORK OF GENERATIONS": TYRANNY AND DEMOCRACY IN THE 2006  
NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

BY

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## Chapter 1: Prospectus

### Introduction

Every year since 1986, the President of the United States has been required by law to submit an annual security strategy report to Congress: the National Security Strategy (NSS). This is a publicly available document that identifies salient threats and challenges to American power. Besides this purpose, the NSS also rhetorically advances an understanding of how the world works and the role of American power in that world. Within the history of statecraft and *realpolitik* that dates back centuries, the idea that a state (much less the world's most powerful one) would publicly detail its security strategy is entirely unheard of. Even within the last 20 years, scholars of all walks have tended to ignore the NSS. As a result, a crucial opportunity to better understand the relationship between rhetoric and policy formation in the sphere of national security is being lost.

I propose a rhetorical examination of the 2006 NSS that was released by the office of George W. Bush in March of 2006. This prospectus will advance four sections. First, I will discuss the theoretical and practical significance of the NSS as a general concept itself that warrants study. Next, a brief discussion of the general nature and generating process of the NSS will be offered in order to facilitate a clearer understanding of the proposed artifact. Next, I will argue for why the 2006 NSS in particular warrants study, both on its own terms as a strategy document and as a helpful addition to rhetorical scholarship on the Bush administration. The final section will advance a methodology for analyzing the text before concluding with a preview of the subsequent chapters of analysis.

## **Significance for Study**

The role and influence of the NSS has been largely overlooked and even derided by many scholars and policy-making advocates; the documents are often “regarded as a lightly edited statement of generalities” or a “compendium of every executive branch’s wish list” (Adams 2008). In addition to being dismissed as a harmless collection of platitudes, many complain that they provide little help in understanding *actual* policy outcomes. These criticisms often emanate from some of the leading figures in the discipline of International Relations (IR). For example, Stephen M. Walt, a professor of IR at (and former dean of) Harvard’s JFK School of government, cautions that one “shouldn’t assume these reports actually tell [us] what the administration is going to do. They are often drafted by committee, or by some hired pen, and the president may not play much (any?) role in the process. More importantly, foreign policy always involves adapting to actions or events...and no government can ever stick to its strategic vision with complete fidelity” (Walt 2009).

Walt’s position is troubling, largely because it seems to contain a substantial kernel of truth. If one uses a strict policy lens in evaluating these documents, such an analysis will leave the critic wanting because it seeks a level of specification that is simply not present. The response of the scholar should not be to dismiss these documents as irrelevant but to ask what purpose they might serve if not as a policy blueprint. Many characteristics of the NSS suggest that a rhetorical perspective is particularly helpful in understanding the role and influence of these public documents. The rhetorical perspective may also illuminate ways that argumentative strategies in the NSS constrain or influence concrete policy positions in the realm of foreign policy. One overarching

purpose of this study, then, is refuting the conventional wisdom within political science circles (characterized by Walt's perspective).

A rhetorical study of the NSS is warranted because it is a text that attempts to speak directly to several situated audiences. The NSS is a direct line between the executive and Congress and supplies arguments and justifications that members of the executive can draw upon to legitimize spending requests and defense appropriations. The document also helps draw out executive branch attitudes towards the Congress concerning foreign policy matters. As Peter D. Feaver, a professor of Political Science and former special consultant to the National Security Council (NSC) notes, "the NSS is one of the most important communications tools the president has and, perhaps surprisingly, one of the most important audiences for it is the rest of government. The NSS will tell the vast governmental establishment responsible for implementing the president's vision just exactly what the president's vision is" (Feaver 2010). Furthermore, the NSS speaks to the broader public. It is publicly available and disseminated through the media, shaping the public's conception of threats in the world and America's role in responding to them (Dale 2008, p. 2).

This audience isn't only domestic, either. The NSS is a unique channel where governments can engage in public argument or highlight their view of the world; enemies and allies alike can take different messages away from the NSS. While state strategy and foreign policy had been a secretive art sealed away from the public for centuries, recent decades have seen a proliferation of publicly available security strategies. Several other powerful states also publish an official strategy document including: the European Union, Russia, Canada, and Austria (DCAF 2005, p. 9). While beyond the reach of the present

study, a rhetorical examination of national security policy documents at the international level could prove very fruitful. A comparative history of the rise and use of publicly disclosed strategies may shed light on the argumentative nature of statecraft in the wake of mass democratization and globalization. Little comparative analysis has been done, even at the policy level, with some minor exceptions (Berenskoetter 2005).

I introduce the notion of audience primarily to highlight what I believe to be the NSS's essentially rhetorical nature. There are considerable epistemic challenges to ascertaining the effects of the NSS on these various audiences, however. Precisely because the NSS is not a public speech, it is nearly impossible to study it from the perspective of audience-effect because that data simply does not exist, other than the handful of reactions and criticisms the document provokes in scholarly and policy analysis circles. While it may be theoretically possible to root out the specific reactions from members of Congress or representatives of foreign governments, such an onerous task does not address the essential characteristics of the NSS itself. Feaver's perspective is illustrative here: "Because it is not a speech, it can cover terrain and develop the 'theory of the case' that no one would inflict upon a listening audience. Precisely because it is a public document, it must authentically reflect the administration's world-view; it is not a fortune cookie prediction of what the administration will do in any particular setting, but it is an authoritative statement of the principles that guide the president" (Feaver 2010). In other words, study of the NSS is valuable even if definitive answers to audience-effect cannot be sought because it is a clear example of symbolic action in the realm of security and international relations.

Even if the NSS is not an unerring policy blueprint, it is a rhetorical exercise that has both constitutive and ideological effects in legitimizing various understandings and responses to security challenges. Even Walt concedes that the NSS is “usually worth reading, if only to get an idea of an administration’s basic inclinations, or at least what it thinks it is trying to accomplish” (Walt 2009). This simple statement belies something more complex; the national interest depends as much upon the executive’s conceptualization of what constitutes the ‘national interest’ as it does upon the existence of objective events and threats in the world. The NSS can offer a possible window into any given administration’s terministic screen that helps order and explain the world they interact with. It constitutes a particular worldview that defines the nature of threats, the national interest and America’s role in the world. It advances arguments to construct, evoke and justify to achieve consubstantiation with the audience regarding this picture of threats and security challenges. An analysis of one particular document and its surrounding context/history can prove very revealing, whether it tells us something about that administration, or one specific term, or even one year within a larger political term. Future research could be broadened to studying NSSs longitudinally; such a study may reveal enduring frames, arguments or functions that are specific to the NSS itself. The present study will remain limited to the study of NSS 2006 (and some necessary comparisons with NSS 2002) given time and resource limitations.

The NSS belongs to a genus of public security strategy documents that are all required to be prepared and made publicly available by law; other core documents besides the NSS include the National Defense Strategy (NDS), the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), and the National Military Strategy (NMS) (Dale 2008, p. 3). Even

though all of these documents are called into existence by legislative mandate, they do not carry the force of law in and of themselves. Studying them as symbolic action that seeks identification with a particular world-view is important because it provides a corrective to the tendency by many political scholars to look at policies and their justifications strictly within a legal or legislative context. Such an approach presupposes that such policies are a-rhetorical, or derived *a priori* in some vacuum of rational-choice decision making. This understanding severely constrains our ability to study both rhetoric *and* policy because it limits scholars from exploring the creative boundaries between the two. A rhetorical analysis of the NSS may shed some light on this boundary, revealing the ways in which rhetorical descriptions of the world shape and influence policy making by defining salient issues and constructing particular understandings of foreign policy threats, state interests, and legitimate uses of power.

Finally, there is practical significance in studying the document. Despite the views of a critic such as Walt, the NSS does in fact have policy relevance. It serves as a larger umbrella that structures and attempts to lend coherence to a much broader array of foreign policy tools and organizations within the government. Former head of U.S. Central Command, General Anthony Zinni argues that the NSS is “the authority for our own government structure, all the way down because from the strategy cascades the actions and the organization and the allocation of resources to make that [strategy] happen” (Zinni 2009). It directly links to the other vital strategy documents responsible for defense and security policy, such as the NDS, QDR and NMS. A thorough analysis might pay dividends for those interested in improving the security strategy-making process. It may even simply explain why the United States and so many other

governments around the world engage in a process that confounds and frustrates many policy scholars who seek to gain a better understanding of the strategy-making process. A rhetorical viewpoint may be especially useful because it provides alternative explanations that are outside of the idealized rational-choice view of security policy that many have.

### **General Background & Process**

Prior to the existence of a formal NSS document, national security strategies existed in a different sense. Previous strategies were largely classified and often shifted in an ad hoc manner particular to each individual administration. The most notable example of a security strategy prior to a formal NSS is National Security Council Report 68, more commonly known as NSC-68. Evolving from—and eventually eclipsing—George Kennan’s theory of containment, NSC-68 laid out a zero-sum strategy of aggressive contestation and rollback of communism. Over the course of the next 20 years, the particulars of the strategy evolved with each new administration, but NSC-68 still operated as the overarching framework behind most foreign policy decisions.

The NSS has its origin in a 1986 legislative mandate: the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization act, which amended the 1947 National Security Act. Section 603 of Goldwater-Nichols required the president to submit a comprehensive report detailing the national security strategy of the United States to Congress every year. The National Security Act as amended now explicitly directs the executive branch to produce and release a strategy report annually; each report must “include a comprehensive description and discussion of the following”:

- (1) The worldwide interests, goals, and objectives of the United States that are vital to the national security of the United States.
- (2) The foreign policy, worldwide commitments, and national defense capabilities of the United States necessary to deter aggression and to implement the national security strategy of the United States.
- (3) The proposed short-term and long-term uses of the political, economic, military, and other elements of national power of the United States to protect or promote the interests and achieve the goals and objectives referred to in paragraph (1).
- (4) The adequacy of the capabilities of the United States to carry out the national security strategy of the United States, including an evaluation of the balance among the capabilities of all elements of national power of the United States to support the implementation of the national security strategy.
- (5) Such other measures as may be helpful to inform Congress on matters relating to the national security strategy of the United States (50 U.S.C. 402).

The impetus for this requirement was not that the United States lacked a strategy. Rather, many policymakers felt that presidencies had suffered from an overall dearth of focus or coherence in articulating a clear vision of values, interests and objectives, as well as the appropriate instruments of power to be called upon (Snider 1995, p. 2).

While the reason *why* executives produce an NSS is well known, it is less clear *how* they go about doing so (Doyle 2007, p. 625). The document is originated from

within the NSC and circulates through Policy Coordination Committees, interagency working groups that represent multiple federal government agencies. The final, authoritative review occurs when the document clears to the Principals Committee, whose membership includes the secretaries of state, defense and treasury; the head of the National Security Agency; the director of national intelligence; and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (p. 626). This process of generation by subordinate committees is simultaneously intriguing and discouraging. A view into the bargaining process *within* the executive intrigues because it could possibly reveal dominant characters and dramatic clash over how they view the world; it discourages because that is a level of information that may never be accessible to the critic. While this fact places a limit on the analysis, it is not a serious problem; “even if early drafts are developed by lower-ranking staff, the president and senior-most presidential aides will scrub it closely, more closely than any other governmental white paper” (Feaver 2010).

Relations between the executive and Congress also influence the strategy-making process. Oftentimes, the operating conditions are extremely tense and adversarial; tensions between the executive and Congress interfere with attempts to bargain and consolidate strategy (Snider 1995, p. 4-5). Interbranch dynamics influence strategy-making (in a broad sense, i.e. besides the NSS) in ways that reflect the political atmosphere between the two; “in fact, strategy formulation...between the executive branch and Congress is an intensely political process from which national strategy emerges after protracted bargaining and compromise. Key personalities do what they can agree to do” (Tilford 1995, p. iii). While Congress is not involved in the NSS process in any formal sense, the document is still (at one level, anyway) a series of justifications for

possible or existing security policies. As such, Presidents may try to use the NSS as an argumentative strategy to respond to criticisms by political opponents in Congress. In fact, direct comparisons within NSS 2006 to NSS 2002 suggest that the Bush administration at least has used the document not only to advance arguments, but to place the criticisms of opponents within a broader context.

Even though a NSS has been required every year for the last 23, only 14 have been produced. The Reagan administration released 2 documents (1987, 1988); George H.W. Bush produced 3 (1990, 1991, and 1993); and the Clinton administration produced one every year except its first (1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, and 2000). By far the worst offender was the second Bush administration, which produced only 2 documents in its 8 years (2002, 2006). Goldwater-Nichols also requires that a newly inaugurated president issue its first NSS within 5 months of assuming office; President Obama is well past this deadline. At the time of writing, there is no NSS that has been produced by the Obama administration.

It is difficult to say with much certainty whether there is any significance in the 60% success rate presidents have had in producing an NSS that meets the stipulated requirements of Congress. The reasons are likely peculiar to every administration. In the case of Obama, perhaps the failure to produce one on time reflects both the considerable challenges he faces or possible divisions within his national security apparatus. For the second Bush administration, it may reflect their expansive view of Presidential powers. It may reflect their particular conception of electoral politics. The manner in which Bush spoke of a “mandate” following his victory in 2004 seems to imply that victory alone implies complete acceptance of an agenda or world view. From this perspective, it is not

necessary to keep Congress apprised of changes on a year to year basis, but only at the beginning or the end of a term. Or perhaps President Bush felt that he was actually compelled to issue a new strategy only because the events of 9/11 had shifted the strategic terrain and required a new response by the government. At this stage of the study, this is all simply speculation; turning to the text of the NSS itself may clarify the problem of inconsistent NSS submission by different executives.

### **The 2006 NSS**

I have selected NSS 2006 as the object of study for several reasons. First, it has been almost entirely overlooked in scholarly research on the Bush administration, particularly by rhetorical scholars. It has only been discussed in a brief sentence or two comparing it with NSS 2002, which has dominated the attention of critics. NSS 2006 has not been looked at on its own terms other than through a handful of policy perspectives. Second, NSS 2006 is a curious document that has provoked a wide diversity of reactions from multiple audiences, suggesting an artifact of more nuance and interest than it is often given credit for. Finally, the study of NSS 2006 would be a valuable contribution to existing scholarship on the rhetorical qualities of the Bush administration. This section will outline each of these elements in detail.

NSSs received scant attention from rhetorical scholars until the release of the Bush administration's first document in 2002. As the official instantiation of the 'Bush Doctrine' of preemptive and preventive warfare, it has generated a firestorm of scholarship from many disciplines. Even then, there have been relatively few rhetorical analyses of the document. While it is often mentioned in passing in nearly every piece of Bush scholarship, there are only a few dedicated examples that seek to understand the

2002 NSS itself. Mitchell and Newman explore the historical roots of NSS 2002, finding considerable linkages between the NSS and the experience of the Cold War (2006). Even though NSS 2002 is billed as one for a “post-Cold War world”, three compelling links exist between it and NSC-68, the dominant strategy of the Cold War. First, both share a hyperbolic discourse that “blurs important distinctions, distorts priorities and complicates threat perception” (p. 72). Second, both strategies share similar institutional practices that were used to “install, legitimate, and implement each strategy” (ibid). Finally, the process involved in executing each blue print was also analogous. Dunmire provides a similar analysis, broadening her discussion of NSS 2002 to a discursive analysis of 9/11 in Bush’s rhetoric (2009). Goodnight examines the rhetorical strategies employed by the Bush administration in “selling” the ideas contained within the NSS to the broader public, both domestic and foreign (2006). He also finds that the argumentative strategy of the NSS reverses burdens of proof for the establishment of an imminent threat, potentially turning any country into a legitimate target for the exercise of military force (p. 107). Der Derian engages in a discursive analysis of the document, finding within it “a blueprint for a permanent war” which presents the world with two options: “peace on U.S. terms, or the perpetual peace of the grave” (2003, p. 24). Hartnett and Steingram similarly criticize NSS 2002 from a Marxist perspective (2006). They find a rhetorical blueprint for a “millennial military state” that seeks to usher in an age of “evangelic capitalism” under a guise of benevolent universalism (p. 176).

Nearly four years after NSS 2002, the Bush administration produced its second NSS and released it publicly on March 16, 2006. Critical reactions to the document have been incredibly varied. Some analysts have used the conventional division of American

politics as their point of departure and read NSS 2006 as an extension of partisan politics. The Heritage Foundation's Helle Dale argues that NSS 2006 represents an evolving vision for the future, setting a "course that Americans can believe in" (2006). While the document still reserves a right to exercise the preventive use of military force, Dale finds its prominence significantly reduced: "turning things on their head, the war on terrorism has now become one subsection of the entire document, though admittedly an important one" (ibid). Leftist reactions consisted of bitter invectives criticizing the document as a simple replication of the 2002 version. Noted liberal correspondent William Pfaff argues that "intellectual poverty is the most striking quality of [NSS 2006]"; it is nothing more than "a lumpy stew of discredited neo-conservative ideas with some neo-Kissingerian geopolitics now mixed in" (2006). Slate magazine likewise dismisses it as "the latest—and, in some ways, most unnerving—sign that our government is run by delusionary utopians..." (Kaplan, 2006). If one were to leave the analysis here, much is lost. This category of responses that aligns with the conventional split in political ideology (Dale on the right, Kaplan and Pfaff on the left) is not useful because they use a stock ideological narrative that presupposes certain assumptions about the motivations and desirability of the Bush administration (Bennett and Edelman 1985). The result is a group of reactions that simplify and polarize ambiguity and nuance; any ability to critically judge NSS 2006 is lost.

What is more intriguing, however, is the reaction of notable moderates and experts in the field of international relations and policy analysis. Ivo H. Daalder, the senior foreign policy fellow at the highly respected and centrist Brookings Institute (and a noted critic of the Bush administration himself), declared that "with the publication of

[NSS 2006], the Bush Revolution is officially over” (2006). The NSS is a clear “reversal”, returning to “a foreign policy that is much more akin to the foreign policies pursued by the administration’s predecessors than by this administration in its first term”; it is anchored on pillars that have been central to American foreign policy “for decades” (ibid). John Mearsheimer, a leading IR thinker from the University of Chicago, responds similarly in an interview: “It’s not an especially hawkish document. It makes arguments about using force that most security experts- left or right- would agree with. It goes out of its way to say that using force would be a last resort...It could have been written by Woodrow Wilson or Bill Clinton...There is a subtle but important shift away from the emphasis on force” (Christian Science Monitor 2006). The reaction from the European Union Institute for Security Studies (a fully independent think-tank funded by the EU) also found evidence for this “reversal thesis”. Senior research fellow Marcin Zabrorowski argues that the “revised [NSS 2006]...moves America’s security thinking away from Mars and closer to Venus...The level of attention given to [promoting democracy] and the conceptual sophistication surrounding the topic in the strategy suggests that the promotion of democracy is not just propaganda but has become a core tenet of US foreign policy” (2006). The breadth of reactions to NSS 2006 from such moderate voices warrants a closer review of the rhetorical strategies and arguments of the document. Such reactions typically indicate a text possessing at least some degree of nuance or ambiguity that supplies manifold meanings to a variety of audiences.

Beyond critical reactions in the media, NSS 2006 has been woefully neglected by the vast majority of scholars. There have been no attempts by rhetorical scholars to study this document at any length. There is likewise a marked paucity from policy and legal

scholars; there have only been a handful of serious looks at this document. Legal analyses have cleaved exclusively to the question of preventive and preemptive force espoused in NSS 2006. Christine S. Gray, a professor of International Law at the University of Cambridge, argues that it “largely reaffirms the doctrines of the earlier 2002 strategy”, but shifts focus onto different rogue regimes as possible targets (such as Iran and Syria) (Gray 2006, p. 555). Her primary concern is the legal ramifications that such a doctrine may have; she looks extensively at how Israeli politicians and military leaders relied upon the document as a justification for their invasion of Lebanon directed against Hezbollah in 2006 (p. 572). Henderson also examines the justifications for the use of early force from a legal perspective, finding that the claim within NSS 2006 “is much the same as that made in 2002, albeit with a change in focus of the rogue states identified...the 2006 NSS appears to offer no more than its predecessor”; it fails to elaborate on a new theory of preventive violence in international law (2007, p. 27). For these legal scholars, the 2006 NSS is little more than a simple replication of the original Bush Doctrine.

Perspectives from policy scholars are a bit more varied, going beyond the question of preventive or preemptive warfare. Cossa notes that the true novelty of NSS 2006 lies in its focus on democracy promotion which rises to the status of “preoccupation at times”; “the promotion of democracy is viewed as the cure to all the world’s maladies” (2006, p. 1). Nye argues that NSS 2006 is not merely a reaffirmation but a “major alteration of U.S. grand strategy”; “the shift has been more than rhetorical: Bush’s diplomacy toward North Korea and Iran has recently been much more multilateral than it was during his first term” (2006, p. 140). Nye sees NSS 2006 largely as a response to the

failures and challenges of the Iraq invasion. Korb and Wadhams attempt a more sustained critique of NSS 2006 (2006). Much of what they have to say falls into the same vein as the attitudes cited at the outset of this study; “this latest iteration of the national security strategy again disappoints—it fails to offer a realistic plan with *achievable goals* to safeguard American interests” (p. 1, emphasis added). In terms of preventive war, they criticize NSS 2006 for “a continued failure to evaluate ‘lessons learned’ from attempts to militarily preempt uncertain threats and remove regimes without clear plans for putting a new government in place” (p. 2). They believe the shift of emphasis to democracy promotion is something historically unprecedented: “no previous president has made democracy promotion the preeminent goal of foreign policy. President Wilson wanted to make the world safe for democracy. He never envisioned forcing it on a reluctant population as we have tried...to do in Iraq” (p. 3). The greatest weakness of NSS 2006 is the amorphous definition of threats and “the failure once again to define the enemy, place it in the proper context, and offer a coherent, realistic strategy to defeat it” (ibid). Again, the majority of Korb and Wadhams’ analysis boils down to the same tired complaint that the NSS “glosses over the real issues” by not offering a dedicated policy discussion (p. 7).

Besides addressing the existing lacuna in rhetorical scholarship, an analysis of NSS 2006 should offer a useful addition to scholarship on the Bush Doctrine. George W. Bush and his administration have generated a tremendous body of scholarship as critics have attempted to come to grips with the nature of his presidency. Some have even claimed that the previous decade witnessed the death of presidential rhetoric (and possibly democracy itself); Bush did not operate within the traditional channels of

“eloquence, logic, pathos or narrative story telling, but by marshalling...disinformation and cascades of confusion-causing misdirection...to confuse public opinion, prevent citizen action, and frustrate citizen deliberation” (Hartnett & Merciec 2007, p. 600).

Rhetorical criticisms have focused almost exclusively on the speeches of the President in response to the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and those that built up the case for the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Other than those few pieces referenced at the outset of this section, the strategy documents of the Bush administration have been entirely ignored, other than in passing reference.

Extant rhetorical scholarship of the second Bush administration is ordered around a few clear themes. Some have looked at the operation of historical memory and myth in his speeches responding to 9/11. The cultural memory of World War II plays a profound role, according to these scholars. A strong American response is a sort of “covenant renewal” with the so-called “Greatest Generation” in affirming America’s role as a world leader (Bostdorff 2003). Noon finds substantial parallels between the rhetorical myths of WWII and the War on Terror (2004). The liberation and reconstruction of Iraq and Afghanistan are cast as parallels to the rebuilding of Britain, France and Germany; Bush constantly underscores the danger of “appeasement” and the necessity to prevail in the “Good War” in order to position himself historically as “an heir to the reputed greatest generation of American leaders” (p. 340).

Others focus on the rhetorical arguments surrounding the strategy of preventive and preemptive war; Keller and Mitchell edit a book-length treatment dedicated to this (2006). Winkler seeks to determine whether the preventive dimension concerning the use of force represents something novel, or whether it fits within the broader defined genre of

war rhetoric (2007). Through a comparative analysis of Bush with Reagan, she finds that preemptive war rhetoric generally fits the genre, but typically at a high cost for democracy. Arguments for preemptive and preventive conflict typically entail a higher degree of strategic misrepresentation; “the nation’s leaders used fabrication, exaggeration and reliance on questionable sources to sustain their claims about their enemies” (p. 325).

A third theme that scholarship has centered around is the manner in which Bush’s rhetoric taps into specific myths in order to ideologically legitimize what critics take to be his “radical right-wing agenda”. Many have argued that this is most predominantly at work in his 9/11 responses; Bush’s rhetoric controls and re-interprets the events of 9/11 by emptying them of their specific context so that they stand in for a bigger threat, allowing him to justify policies such as the invasion of Iraq (Murphy 2003, Smith 2005, Hariman 2003). Kellner likewise sees Bush’s rhetoric as one which is primarily ideological (2007). His war rhetoric especially is driven by an aggressive politics of fear that constitutes a certain “politics of lying”; these policies are in turn challenged and rolled back by events in reality, such as the escalation of violence in Iraq after the promise of a quick victory (p. 623). This politics of fear spreads beyond the foreign policy realm, according to Kellner, giving Bush ample cover to pursue a radical right-wing agenda, “including tax breaks for the rich, curtailment of social programs, military build-up,...draconian assaults on U.S. rights and freedoms..., and a highly controversial and divisive...war on Iraq” (p. 627). The primary rhetorical frame driving this “Bushspeak” is a Manichean dualism that sees the world only in terms of good or evil (ibid).

The most dominant theme that current research clusters around is this notion of dualism and the stark Manichean world-view often extant throughout much of Bush's rhetoric. Gunn believes that Bush's war rhetoric fits in with an increasingly dominant trend towards demonism in popular and political culture; Bush calls forth and constructs the rhetorical body in order to exorcise and purge the impure elements of evil from within it (2004). Other scholars see explicit religious overtones in his descriptions of good and evil; for them, the entire War on Terror is centered around distorted religious motives that are enacted through the construction of an international devil figure (Riswold 2004; Ivie 2004). Scholars have also looked beyond the 9/11 context and argued that the dualistic mode of relating to the world also animated the 2004 election and American attempts to reconstruct Iraq after the invasion (Spielvogel 2004; Zagacki 2007).

There is one segment of Bush research that is more directly applicable to this study, which I hope to build upon. Ivie's research on democracy and war rhetoric is a valuable contribution that seeks to locate Bush's attitudes towards democracy within a deeper cultural framework of American history (1996, 2005a, 2005b, 2007). War rhetorics are founded in projections of democracy's shadow onto external enemies. In this sense, Bush is not an aberration but a logical manifestation of American political culture; this projectionist phenomena carves out the substantive content of democracy by reproducing a culture of war that rallies around the empty signifier of democracy promotion (Ivie & Giner 2007). In other words, Bush's foreign policy rhetoric is able to root justifications for security policies within the symbolically powerful concept of democracy while those same policies undermine democracy (here and abroad) in truth.

While this research base is extensive and important, it is still somewhat limited in important ways. First, it ignores the unique characteristics of the NSS document as a form of symbolic action. So long as rhetorical scholars tend almost exclusively to speeches, they miss an important opportunity to explore the rhetorical dimension of public policy justifications that we find in documents such as the NSS. The perspective tends to focus on how presidential rhetoric obscures public understanding. This occurs at the cost of studying how such rhetoric helps *shape* understanding through (re)iterations of particular world-views. Second, dominant readings of Bush have a tendency to abstract the rhetoric of his administration from a deeper historical and cultural context; his administration is all too often coded as an aberration in American history or a unique threat to public deliberation. A close look at the foreign policy ideas alive in NSS 2006 has the potential to identify themes that are continuous with the history of American foreign policy as opposed to those which are more peculiar to Bush. While it is beyond the bounds of this study to establish any exhaustive conclusions about such possible historical relationships, isolating the important argumentative strategies present in NSS 2006 lays a necessary foundation for such comparisons in future research. Furthermore, contemporary scholarship on Bush has a tendency to be overly reductive; overwhelming focus on the rhetoric of evil in the responses immediately following 9/11 have overshadowed serious study of his second term. We lose a deeper understanding of the ways the administration altered its rhetoric, attitudes and beliefs as its tenure wore on. As a pivotal document released halfway through the second term, NSS 2006 is very promising indeed. Finally, NSS 2006 serves as a useful point of departure itself as a beginning approach in a broader research program that seeks to ascertain the rhetorical

nature and function of a publicly available security strategy in American politics and history.

### **Method of Analysis & Outline of Work**

For a method of analysis, a close but open-ended search of the NSS 2006 text seems most appropriate for the proposed thesis. Such a reading should hopefully allow the document to speak on its own terms, avoiding the limitations and frustrations so commonly experienced by others who have criticized these documents before. In order to fully grasp the character of NSS 2006, it is important to map the main topoi that the Bush administration believes are salient and ought to be prioritized over other choices. By placing these topoi and arguments into context with the events that helped to shape this particular document, a more robust understanding of the role the NSS plays in democracy and international affairs can hopefully be achieved. This study follows in the spirit of Burke's injunction that "the main ideal of criticism, as I conceive it, is to use all that there is to use" (Burke 1941/1973, p. 23). I thus shall attempt try to provide an answer for what the central arguments and themes of NSS 2006 are.

Any concerted study of NSS 2006 will necessarily require a substantial level of comparison with its 2002 predecessor. NSS 2006 explicitly references and interprets NSS 2002 throughout the entire document. Sufficient background and analysis of NSS 2002 will thus be required. While more clarity concerning the nature of NSS 2006 is the goal, there is potential it will enhance our understanding of both documents (and the role of the NSS in a general sense). Thus, I will seek to answer how the main topoi in NSS 2006 have evolved or stayed constant since NSS 2002. Because such documents overlap each other to a great extent, a method of analysis is required that can shift the critic's

attention onto the thematic level. To this end, the second chapter will attempt to adapt a narrative-oriented theory of rhetoric to highlight the central elements of action that implicitly structure both documents. Drawing upon both broad and narrow theories of narrative, I seek to evolve a theory of “implied narrative” that can help account for pieces of rhetoric such as NSS 2006 which do not explicitly take the form of a story, but nonetheless embody some narrative elements.

Finding answers to the above two questions will hopefully also provide illumination for two larger problems. It should be able to tell us what the particular world that governed Bush administration security policies looked like and how that terministic screen altered their understanding of desirable policies to meet particular security challenges. More broadly, this analysis will provide necessary foundational analysis for understanding the role the NSS (as a document itself) performs in rhetorically advancing a particular conception of American power and its role in the world. As a means of accessing the text at the level of symbolic action, the third chapter will turn to the theory of Burke and employ an analysis of “pivotal terms.” By tracing out the different equations and clusters of terms that associate themselves with the broad themes of NSS 2006, this method will hopefully provide critical access to the nexus of motives that undergird the Bush administration’s conception of foreign policy and America’s role in the world.

Lastly, this analysis seeks to address the normative dimensions of NSS 2006. The dramaturgic analysis provided by Burke’s notion of “pivotal terms” in the third chapter strongly suggests a third and final methodological route. By looking for evidence of “entelechy” or the perfection principle at work within the document, a rhetorical analysis

can access a realm of normative judgment unavailable to policy scholars seeking to judge the strategy by its empirical record. Analyzing the tendency for particular equations and screens within the text to carry themselves to the end of the line provides fertile ground on which to draw out judgments about particular foreign policy strategies and the symbolic action inherent in their rhetorical expression.

This method of analysis is eclectic but necessary; each step crosses a necessary and prior threshold that enables a particular conclusion to be drawn. Because the 2002 and 2006 Bush NSSs are so similar in structure and content at times, the narrative method is required to distance the critic from the explicit arguments present so that focus can be placed on the particular themes that give those policies salience and meaning. Narrative analysis alone cannot fully account for all of the rhetorical dimensions of the document, however. Having isolated the constitutive theme, we must next begin to understand how that theme reassembles the equations and terms of the specific policies that are offered. Finally, seeking out entelechy within the document is the only means of assessing whether the very terms of the strategy can be judged as desirable because it is only this method which can speak to how the world of symbolic action and rhetoric interacts with the world of policy implementation.

This rhetorical examination of NSS 2006 will thus unfold through four subsequent chapters. First, I will employ a narrative analysis to articulate the boundaries of narrative that NSS 2006 implicitly draws upon, as well as contrast these new narrative themes with the 2002 predecessor document. Second, I will seek to reassemble the policy content of NSS 2006 and seek to understand the relationship between the arguments and the underlying theme of agonistic struggle between democracy and tyranny. Third, I will

turn to consider evidence of Burke's perfection principle at work in the document by analyzing the specific policy content area of WMD proliferation, with a special focus on how the terms of the strategy influenced the administration's approach to Iran's nuclear program during the final years of the Bush administration. I will then close with a chapter that will synthesize the analysis and advance some implications of the study, as well as point towards future areas of research.

## **Chapter 2: Implied Narrative in the 2002 and 2006 National Security Strategy**

### **Introduction**

In order to better understand the 2006 National Security Strategy (NSS), it is necessary to first compare it to its 2002 predecessor. NSS 2002 and 2006 overlap considerably in terms of their formal content. The documents share identical chapter divisions, except for an additional chapter on “[Engaging] the opportunities and [confronting] the challenges of globalization” that has been added to the latter (NSS 2006, p. 47-48). To varying degrees, both NSSs contain the same doctrinal elements from “[championing] aspirations for human dignity,” to “igniting a new era of global economic growth” (NSS 2002, p. 1-2; NSS 2006, p. 1). Both directly appeal to democracy promotion and the preventive use of violence, two components of Bush’s foreign policy that have drawn the most fire from critics. These structural similarities cannot explain the widely divergent reactions to the two documents, however. While NSS 2002 has come under fire from many policy scholars (Jervis 2003), the reactions to NSS 2006 have not been nearly as univocal. Reactions of those like Daalder, Mearsheimer and Zaborowski that were cited previously indicate that the 2006 document is clearly functioning at a different level, at least as far as this particular audience is concerned. The question thus becomes: despite their structural and content overlap, why is NSS 2006 received so differently by many moderate and liberal critics when it contains essentially the same arguments as the controversial 2002 version of the document?

In order to answer this question, this chapter analyzes both documents at the level of narrative within each text. Both NSS 2002 and 2006 are structured around an implied

narrative that provides meaning for American foreign policy action in the world by creating a stage where history unfolds as the dramatic struggle between different agents or characters. While there is some overlap between the narratives structuring the two NSSs, there are important changes that alter the meaning and salience of the individual arguments and policy justifications that are advanced in each. These shifts can in turn be explained by looking at how events on the ground challenged the validity of the initial foreign policy narrative articulated by the Bush administration. I argue that NSS 2006 is a recasting of the narrative in NSS 2002 in order to confront the perceived failures of the Bush administration's foreign policy during the time between the publications of the two documents.

This chapter will advance five sections of analysis. First, I will layout a theory of 'implied narrative' in order to provide the theoretical boundaries for the analysis. Next, I will turn to NSS 2002 in order to describe the essential nature of the implied narrative within as well as sketch out the perceived failures that provide the impetus for the Bush administration to recast their narrative of security. The subsequent section then analyzes how NSS 2006 attempts to respond to these challenges by recasting the narrative. Finally, the chapter concludes with some discussion about the implications of this analysis.

### **A Theory of Implied Narrative**

Narrative analysis is clearly most appropriate for understanding rhetorical texts that are explicitly stories. However, it would be a mistake to relegate such valuable tools to that sphere alone. How do we explain discourses that exhibit mixed modes of expression, which are partially descriptive/justificatory and partially narrated? What is

necessary is a theory of implied narrative that can make sense of a mixed text that implicitly structures arguments around a narrative in order to give those arguments a moral meaning. An implied narrative will strongly evoke awareness of both plot development and the characters within them. In political terms, this means the critic must look for the rhetor's explanation of an event's origin, its setting in the space and time of history, and the deserving and undeserving characters within the plot. Drawing attention to implied narratives in argumentation advances a theory of narrative that rests comfortably within even the most conservative definitions of narrative and sheds considerable light on the nature of presidential foreign policy rhetoric. After locating where this theory sits in the broader debate over narrative within rhetorical studies, I will flesh out the constitutive elements of an implied story and how it applies to political communication and its promise for understanding presidential rhetoric.

Critics have repeatedly underscored the need for studying narrative to truly understand the communication process. MacIntyre has gone so far as to characterize humans as an essentially "story-telling animal" (1981, p. 201). White describes narrative as a "metacode," or "human universal on the basis of which transcultural messages about the nature of a shared reality can be transmitted" (1980, p. 6). Within rhetorical scholarship, there has likewise been a push in this direction to characterize all discourse as narrative, led most notably by Fisher's "narrative paradigm" (1984). Fisher conceptualizes social and political life as "a set of stories which must be chosen among to live the good life in a process of continual recreation" (1984, p. 8). If all communication is essentially narrative, then the standards for decision-making also change; "rationality is determined by the nature of persons as narrative beings" through recourse to the tests of

*“narrative probability, what constitutes a coherent story, and ... narrative fidelity, whether the stories they experience ring true with the stories they know to be true in their lives...”* (ibid, italics in original). Fisher’s theory makes any demarcation between narrative and non-narrative discourse impossible because his theory subsumes everything, “even scientific (technical) discourse” (1985, p. 356). Every mode of discourse partakes as an episode “in the story of life” (p. 347). Fisher’s paradigm has been criticized by a number of rhetorical scholars (McGee & Nelson 1985; Warnick 1987; Gring-Premble 2001), although none as forcefully as Rowland (1987; 1988; 1989). Rowland’s central argument takes aim at whether narrative can truly lay claim to the mantle of paradigm (1989, p. 42). The narrative paradigm is deficient on its own terms because the twin tests of narrative probability and fidelity cannot speak to stories that break the traditional mold of plot coherence and realism (e.g. fantasy, science fiction, myth and allegory) (p. 51). Rather than substantively challenging the ‘rational world paradigm’, Fisher’s theory and examples prove the inevitability (and even the desirability) of rational tests of logic and fact (1987, p. 273). What is ultimately at stake between Fisher and Rowland is whether “it makes sense to treat narrative as a paradigm, rather than a mode of discourse” (p. 275).

I begin my discussion of implied narrative by recounting this debate because it maps the space on which the theory will operate. If a theory of implied narrative can exist within an understanding of narrative that is as narrow as Rowland’s, it stands to reason it can exist under nearly all interpretations of narrative. It is immediately clear that both Fisher and Rowland admit of the possibility of a theory of implicit narrative. Because Fisher argues for the narrativity of *all* discourse, implicit narrative exists by

definition because it narrates an episode within the larger conversation of life. While Rowland would like to limit the study of narrative to explicit stories, he admits that “a work lacking an explicit narrative structure can still be treated from a narrative perspective” if it “could be viewed as containing or drawing upon an implicit story” (1989, p. 42). Only rhetoric “that tells a story can fulfill the functions that Fisher and others identify as being served by narrative”, whether they are explicit or clearly implicit (1987, p. 273).

Rowland indicates that such an implicit narrative must exhibit two clear components: “the development of the plot and identification with characters” (ibid). In order for a story to exist, whether fictional or factual, there must be a “chronological account of an event or process” (Rowland 1987, p. 266). This chronological account is what sets the scene and characters into dynamic motion and allows the plot to advance and develop. Plot is the decisive concept for any narrative because it is what gives meaning to both character traits and action. Ricoeur explains:

...A story describes a sequence of actions and experiences of a certain number of characters...These characters are represented in situations which change or to the changes of which they react. These changes, in turn, reveal hidden aspects of the situation and the characters, giving rise to a new predicament which calls for thought or action or both...Accordingly, to follow a story is to understand the successive actions, thoughts and feelings as displaying a particular *directedness*. By this I mean that we are pushed along by the development and that we

respond to this thrust with expectations concerning the outcomes and culmination of the process (1981, p. 277, italics in original)

Thus, we can think of the dramatic interplay between plot and the characters set within as a unifying device that gives meaning to a situation as well as teleologically moving an audience towards a certain conclusion by raising and then settling expectations in accordance with the underlying, immanent qualities of those involved in the narrative. Through plot development, a narrative is able to do more than simply add one episode of action on to another. Instead, by associating the moral dimension of character qualities with the advance of the plot, narrative discourse is able to “construct meaningful totalities out of scattered events” (p. 278).

In political discourse, these elements of narrative often appear in a “stock political plot” that exhibits several characteristics that are all mutually constitutive and reinforcing of each other (Bennett & Edelman 1985). The narrative will seek to advance a story that explains an “event’s origin, its setting in space and in time, its consequences for actors and spectators, and the future effects of dealing with it in a particular way” (p. 159). How the story narrates the origin of political events and its location in history is decisive for establishing the meaning of not only the event, but a wide variety of policies that can shape political responses. When a political narrative sets in motion the dynamic interplay between “the who, what, where, why, how and when” of a story, it also defines the entire range of political choices available: “in choosing any such ultimate cause, we are also depicting a setting, an appropriate course of action, and sets of virtuous and evil characters, and doing so in a way that will appeal to some part of the public that sees its own sentiments or interests reflected in that choice of a social scene” (p. 159-160).

Through using narrative to fashion the facts of a political scene, the rhetor provides history with undeniable clarity “because the analytical perspective has made it so” (p. 162).

Another dominant feature of these stock political plots is their implied nature. Far from being explicitly recounted by the text, the implied narrative provides a variety of thematic keys that evokes a narrative “by a term or a reference” (Bennett & Edelman 1985, p. 164-165). These “pregnant references” provide a sequence of evocations that “make reference to a set of overlapping scenarios featuring settings, characters, and actions not included in the text” (p. 165). As such, the critic should not be on the lookout for a completed narrative, but rather the “seedbeds of stories” that cue an audience into the broader narrative theme that provides the policies advocated inside the text with meaning. Bennett and Edelman even argue that the implied nature of most political narratives serves an important political purpose; they provide a shield from criticism by reducing the chance that policy opponents will challenge the one who is casting the narrative because they often operate outside of the direct view of the audience (p. 165). While Bennett and Edelman’s criticisms of political communication in an era of mass media reporting are on point, their analysis warrants extending into the realm of presidential foreign policy rhetoric. They only treat of scenarios where political discourse is fit into a preexisting stock frame, not creatively fashioned by a rhetor. This begs the question of how these narratives are constituted in the first place.

This constitutive sphere of narrative creation can be more clearly illuminated by turning to the relationship between narrative and presidential rhetoric. Presidential foreign policy discourse offers the nation a degree of clarity by defining the United

States' role in the world (Rockman 1997). With the collapse of the bipolar division of the Cold War, the ability and need for presidents to craft a new foreign policy narrative to ground their policy rhetoric has grown more salient (Stuckey 1995). There has been some effort by critics to understand how the first Bush administration and President Clinton attempted to articulate an effective post-Cold War narrative (Edwards & Valenzano 2007; Ben-Porath 2007). Narrative-oriented understandings of the second Bush administration have thus far been deficient in explaining the precise nature of Bush's revolution in foreign policy. Present studies stay confined to the level of crisis-rhetoric, whether it is the president's response to 9/11 or Hurricane Katrina (Anker 2005; Holme & Summers 2007; West & Carey 2006). This body of scholarship demonstrates clearly the value of studying the underlying narratives that implicitly structure American foreign policy. However, while all of these critics demonstrate the rich potential of a narrative analysis, they have all overlooked the narrative dimensions within George W. Bush's foreign policy rhetoric. None speak to the level of strategy-formulation that the Bush administration engaged in after the 9/11 attacks. While the themes of melodramatic dualism (Anker) or frontier justice (West & Carey) may be useful in explaining the immediate response to 9/11, they run the risk of fixating upon modes of revenge or justice that cannot adequately explain the wide-ranging foreign policy program of the Bush administration's foreign policy.

### **NSS 2002 & Subsequent Challenges**

President Bush opens NSS 2002 by stepping onto a global stage at a crucial turning point in history. For him, the events of the world have moved along two different tracks that are just beginning to merge at a critical point. This junction is simultaneously

characterized by great potential as well as great danger. The first track in this story reaches further back in time than the second, transcending all cultural and temporal boundaries: the dramatic clash between the forces of freedom and the “militant visions of class, nation, and race” (NSS 2002, p. 1). These values of freedom are transcendent and attain the level of a human universal. They are also the impetus behind every conflict in history: “these values of freedom are right and true for every person, in every society—and the duty of protecting these values against their enemies is the common calling of freedom-loving people across the globe and across the ages” (p. iv). At the same time, events of the last few centuries have advanced along an alternative track that rose to prominence along with the nation-state and the clash between balances of power that has accompanied it. Even though it is much younger and not universal, it is this latter track of history that has been superimposed on to the deeper clash for freedom since the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the rise of the nation-state in the form of interstate rivalry, competition and war (p. 25).

While these two tracks of history serve as the “ultimate origin” and driver for conflict, the juncture the audience is presented with holds the key for understanding Bush’s strategy. The world has simultaneously arrived at the end of both tracks: “for most of the twentieth century, the world was divided by a great struggle over ideas: destructive totalitarian visions versus freedom and equality. That great struggle is over...America is now threatened less by conquering states than we are by failing ones” (p. 1). The “great struggles” have ended with a “decisive victory for the forces of freedom” while power competition between states has receded into the past: “today, the world’s great powers find ourselves on the same side” (p. iv-v). What stands before the

audience is the choice to “take advantage of an historic opportunity” to “build a world where great powers compete in peace instead of continually prepare for war” (p. v).

It is important to understand that the present stage in the story did not arrive inevitably. Rather, NSS 2002 posits that the world has arrived at the current stage because of the character qualities of the main hero, the United States of America. The American government and people have carried the world to this junction by virtue of its power in two senses: exceptional material power and exceptional moral superiority. First, in terms of material power, the United States possesses a surfeit of influence in every single realm: “today, the United States enjoys a position of unparalleled military strength and great economic and political influence” (p. iv). This strength is both unprecedented and unequalled (p. 1). Second, this unparalleled advantage in material strength and power is actually an effect of America’s real source of power. Our “strength and influence in the world” is “sustained by faith in the principles of liberty, and the value of a free society” (p. 1). In fact, it is the long development of America’s character over time that makes its current status possible: “our own history is a long struggle to live up to our ideals. But even in our worst moments, the principles enshrined in the Declaration of Independence were there to guide us. As a result, America is not just a stronger, but is a freer and more just society” (p. 3).

America’s great power also brings along with it great responsibility; NSS 2002 charges the United States with the unparalleled responsibility to consolidate the present historical opportunity into the ultimate end of history. The United States must do so by arresting the track of great power competition and allowing the track embodied by the advance of freedom to reach its final apex: “today, humanity holds in its hands the

opportunity to further freedom's triumph over all these foes. The United States welcomes our responsibility to lead in this great mission" (p. vi). The notion of power thus proves to be the decisive concept in NSS 2002's narrative; it is the key variable on which all other actions and outcomes turn. It is precisely by the virtue of its power that the United States is in a position to advance the plot to its final conclusion. In fact, it is the dimension of power that has advanced the plot to this point; American unipolarity makes the transcendence of freedom possible for Bush. In one sense then, the plot has *already* arrived at this apex; it is now a question of digging in and consolidating the opportunity by transforming the present "window of opportunity" into a permanent and enduring feature of the global security landscape.

Just as power is the defining characteristic of the hero, it also defines the enemy in Bush's narrative. In order to see the narrative to this promised conclusion, the United States must be able to overcome and defeat those who hold onto the last vestiges of history in the form of radicalism. Because American power has made state competition a relic of the past, the threat is now "shadowy networks of individuals [who] can bring great chaos and suffering to our shores for less than what it costs to purchase a single tank" and the tyrants who would provide them with assistance (p. iv). Bush takes pains to minimize the character qualities and power of these groups; "We are menaced less by fleets and armies than by catastrophic technologies in the hands of the embittered few" (p. 1). Paradoxically, the source of the enemy's strength is actually the fruits of democracy's industriousness: "terrorists are organized to penetrate open societies and turn the power of modern technologies against us" (p. iv). Without the accessibility of destructive *technologies*, there would be no major threat from a few unsavory individuals

because they lack any particular dimension of *power* in the realm of leadership, ideology or cultural appeal.

The NSS 2002 narrative is undergirded by this decisive concept of power. It defines the current place of the world in a long, historical plot sequence and the central dramatic struggle between the United States as hero against the last few hold-outs who would dare resist the inevitable march of history towards freedom's zenith. This implicit recounting of power struggles through history also guides the audience towards understanding what the appropriate foreign policy response should be within the logical parameters that are posited by the narrative.

Within the parameters posited by the narrative, the logical conclusion necessary for the United States to secure the present opportunity for freedom's triumph lies in the quick, surgical use of force to excise the threats presented by terrorists and tyrants from the global body politic. Bush's reliance on a sustained disease metaphor in his discussion of responding to global terrorism bears this conclusion out. Terrorism is not reducible to a "single political regime or person or religion or ideology" but is rather simply understood as "politically motivated violence perpetrated against innocents" (p. 5). Terrorism is a symptom that is "spawned" by "underlying conditions" (which are not specified) (p. 6). In order to control the symptom, it must be "localized" and then excised through "direct and continuous action" against "terrorist organizations of global reach and any terrorist or state sponsor of terrorism which attempts to gain or use weapons of mass destruction (WMD) or their precursors" (p. 6). Just as an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, Bush's narrative radically reorients the calculus concerning the use of force from one of defense to active prevention (p. 15).

It must be conceded that NSS 2002 presents a number of hedges and attempts to prime the audience against getting their hopes up for a quick victory. Bush does indeed note that “there will be no quick or easy end to this conflict” (9), and that “no nation can build a safer, better world alone” (vi). It is the narrative account of power and the United States’ position on the stage of history, however, that established meaning for the policies in the 2002 NSS. Thus, while arguments that are contrary to this narrative may exist in the document, the implied narrative that structures the logic of the document results in a host of foreign policy decisions that privilege the surgical use of force under the assumption that radical ideology and the threats of WMD are akin to cancerous cells that can be cleanly excised with no lasting damage to the surrounding tissue. The dominance of narrative can be clearly seen in the arguments issued by the administration during run-up to the 2003 invasion and its early months. Vice President Cheney famously predicted that “we will, in fact, be greeted as liberators” (Meet the Press 2003). The dominance of the power theme was further underscored by the president’s unfurling of “Mission Accomplished” across the deck of the Abraham Lincoln, declaring the end of the conflict (New York Times 2003). The perceived dominance of American power capabilities also functioned as the governing mode of proof in the arguments of many advocates of the war outside of the administration (Krauthammer 2002; Rosen 2003; Thayer 2003). As would soon become clear to Bush’s audience and the rest of the world, this story of American power and its purpose in the world would be sorely tested by events on the ground.

The creative force of the narrative of American power and the end of history soon met the immovable object of reality. The credibility and force of the narrative was

gradually worn down as the administration became bogged down in a war with no clear objectives, criterion for success or exit strategy. Unrealistic assumptions for success rooted in a belief that a quick invasion and toppling of the Hussein regime contributed overwhelmingly to near total absence of post-invasion planning or a strategy for occupation and eventual exit (O'Hanlon 2005; Benjamin and Simon 2005; Bensahel 2006). The Abu Gharib prison scandal devastated America's moral authority, as did surfacing allegations of torture and high-level court cases involving the legal status of so-called "enemy combatants" (Sundstrom 2006). On the ground, an increasingly violent insurgency ripped through the veneer of American military supremacy with improvised explosive devices, exposing weaknesses that the world's foremost military power had difficulty both assessing and adapting to (Knights 2005, p. 371). Mounting casualties on all sides threw the limitations of American power into stark relief. In recounting these events, it is not my point to conclude the incredibly intricate debate over the desirability of the War on Terror. After all, only the passage of time will bear out whether Bush's foreign policy and subsequent invasion of Iraq was ultimately necessary or desirable. However, the above events are all undeniable failures within the parameters posited by NSS 2002's narrative logic. All questions regarding the lasting effects of Bush's foreign policy aside, NSS 2002 certainly failed on its own terms. The United States was not greeted as liberators and there was not a rapid blossoming of democracy in the region as was promised to the American people by the NSS's account of power and the rhetoric of key administration leaders.

As this narrative unraveled, it created new "rhetorical dilemmas, not least tensions between the need to appear consistent and the need for flexibility, the need to appear

credible and the need to dissemble” (Simons 2007, p. 188). The Bush administration needed to recast the narrative of foreign policy in a manner that would be consistent with previous policy choices while simultaneously confronting a dramatic series of perceived failures in the eyes of the audience.

### **NSS 2006: Recasting the Narrative**

The 2006 NSS attempts to weave between these rhetorical challenges of remaining consistent while accounting for failures. It does so by recasting the implicit narrative that existed within its predecessor document. While both texts contain innumerable similarities, the narrative theme that provides meaning to the arguments within changes in subtle but very important ways. Instead of the narrative theme of power, Bush shifts emphasis onto the first deep track of history and reactivates motion along this track in order to explain away the perceived failures of his first NSS while arguing for maintaining the same policies that failed to produce the predicted results (most notably in Iraq). In other words, the world has not arrived at the apex of the plot (the possible end of history), but instead stands at the threshold of a very long and enduring struggle.

NSS 2006 sets this new narrative into motion with the very first words of the document: “America is at war. This is a wartime national security strategy required by the grave challenge we face—the rise of terrorism fueled by an aggressive ideology of hatred and murder...” (NSS 2006, p. i). However, the location on the plotline of history has changed dramatically in the new document. The unique window of opportunity that lies before the audience in NSS 2002 has disappeared. No longer is the United States in a position of unparalleled power to shape the world and consolidate the end of history.

Instead, the audience now finds themselves set in the middle of a long, enduring struggle to ultimately root out all evil in the world:

It is the policy of the United States to seek and support democratic movements and institutions...with the *ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world*...Achieving this goal is the *work of generations*. The United States is in the early years of a long struggle similar to what our country faced in the early years of the Cold War. The 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the triumph of freedom over threats of fascism and communism. Yet a new totalitarian ideology now threatens... (p. 1, emphasis added)

The NSS 2006 narrative recodes the current conflict, constituting the entire War on Terror as the product of the universal clash between the forces of freedom and those of tyranny. The plot has not led us to a single point where the US inherits and preserves global peace. Instead, the narrative of history is actually the story of the struggle between the forces of human freedom against the forces of evil. The heroic figure of the United States doesn't stand at the end of history, but at an interval between long episodes of conflict, episodes which span several decades, if not centuries. Meanwhile, the dimension of great power rivalry that was characterized as the second track of history in NSS 2002 has not entirely disappeared from view like it had in the previous document. Trouble with other poles of power, while temporarily held in abeyance, threatens to reemerge, a fact the United States must be prepared to deal with. Strategy must therefore "hedge appropriately in case states choose unwisely" (36).

What is most notable in NSS 2006's treatment of state competition is the manner in which the new narrative theme recodes the meaning of great power relations. Rather

than the historical convergence in great power interests and values that occurs at the end of history in the previous document (NSS 2002, p. 28), relations amongst nation-states are measured by where each state stands in position to the universal struggle for democracy. Such relations “must be supported by appropriate institutions” and the United States “cannot pretend that our interests are unaffected by states’ treatment of their own citizens” (NSS 2006, p. 36). Democracy becomes the ultimate acid test that determines how the balance of power in the world will behave: “In the world today, the *fundamental character* of regimes matters as much as the distribution of power among them” (p. 1, emphasis added).

This recoding is illustrated in the discussions about secondary world powers that the United States must be concerned with: Russia and China. NSS 2002’s theme of power allowed Bush to claim that the “United States and Russia are no longer strategic adversaries” (NSS 2002, p. 26). While differences may still have existed, the primary character of the relationship had been transformed. Four years later, Bush laments “recent trends” which “regrettably point toward a diminishing commitment to democratic freedoms and institutions” within Russia (NSS 2006, p. 39). Likewise, China’s path towards democracy will determine whether the United States cooperates or clashes with them: “only by allowing the Chinese people to enjoy these basic freedoms and universal rights can China honor its own constitution and international commitments and reach its full potential. Our strategy seeks to encourage China to make the right strategic choices for its people, while we hedge against other possibilities” (p. 42).

The new narrative theme also transforms the audience’s understanding of the villains in this plot. Terrorism is something more significant than a few networks of

radical individuals who have access to destructive technology. Instead, terrorism is an effect of tyranny. It results from “political alienation”, lack of justice and closed societies that do not permit the free circulation of ideas and information (p. 10). While quick military strikes may be necessary in the short-run, defeating terrorism cannot be dissociated from the larger narrative theme of advancing democracy’s triumph: “defeating terrorism in the long run requires that each of these factors be addressed. The genius of democracy is that it provides a counter to each” (ibid). As a result, security from terrorism will only occur when the United States achieves the world-historical mission of eradicating tyranny from the world..

Finally, the transformative power of the shift in narrative theme dramatically alters the understanding of power and how the United States must interact with others in the world. The nature of the Manichean struggle exceeds even the grasp of the world’s most powerful state. The United States ceases to be the unipolar hero who can shape the world in its image and instead becomes a leader at the head of a “growing community of democracies” (p. ii). Rather than going it alone, the United States must expand its national strength and cultivate “effective multinational efforts” that are “essential to solve these problems” of WMD proliferation, terrorism and disease (ibid). In this new narrative, American power is still exceptional, although the deeper backdrop of the universal struggle for democracy is what provides it with meaning: “the United States has long championed freedom because doing so reflects our values and advances our interests...because we believe the desire for freedom lives in every human heart and the imperative of human dignity transcends all nations and cultures...To protect our nation and honor our values, the United States seeks to extend freedom across the globe by

leading an international effort to end tyranny and to promote effective democracy” (p. 3). Thus, while exceptional moral qualities and relative power advantage assign the United States the responsibility to lead, it must be a multilateral effort. This logic even extends to the unilateral exercise of power. While NSS 2006 still preserves what Bush believes to be an inherent right of sovereignty, the transformed narrative dramatically qualifies its potential for use: “...we must be prepared to act alone if necessary, while recognizing there is little of lasting consequence we can accomplish in the world without the sustained cooperation of our allies and partners” (p. 37).

### **Conclusion**

The governing theme of NSS 2002 was a narrative of unsurpassed American power acting on a world that had reached the ultimate end of history. Consequently, the logically required response consisted of the unilateral exercise of American military force in order to smash and remove the vestigial remains of the old order in order to consolidate this end of history. By positing the characters and plot at a particular stage in dramatic action, the threshold for success could be seen as remarkably low; decisive military victories in Iraq and Afghanistan would be enough. Worries about insurgencies, transition problems, the strength of political institutions and cultural divisions are not relevant when one believes that there exists a global transcultural and transhistorical consensus about the desirability of freedom. After pushing over a few tin-pot dictators and excising some malignant terrorist cells, the problems of power that had plagued the world for millennia would finally come to an end. The theme of power in NSS 2002 promises a new age, a distinctively free and American age.

This worldview unraveled as the War on Terror developed and Bush needed a new way to defend his foreign policy against attacks and criticism. His administration did so by recasting the narrative that structured the way their strategy could be understood by audiences at all levels. Even though Bush retains a doctrine of preventive warfare and a controversial method of eradicating global terrorism and rogue regimes in his second NSS, by shifting the implicit narrative within the document he was able to creatively respond to criticisms of his foreign policy failures by key intellectual figures in foreign policy discussions. By reconfiguring the nature of the characters and recasting the world's temporal location in the plot of history, NSS 2006 subtly changes the strategy by fitting the narrative into a frame that is a familiar one for American foreign policy. Bush drew upon a path “that is consistent with the great tradition of American foreign policy...like the policies of Harry Truman and Ronald Reagan” (NSS 2006, p. ii) in order to alter the relative salience and meaning of his own foreign policy.

This chapter's method of narrative analysis provided several unique insights about the relationship between presidential foreign policy rhetoric and the implicit narrative that gives such policies grounding and salience. First, it helps to explain how the Bush administration used the NSS process as a rhetorical strategy to address challenges faced by their particular foreign policy. In particular, it helps rhetorical scholars to better understand the peculiar reactions of one particular audience who had previously been critical of many of the same policies. The dramatic reversal in opinion among several key foreign policy thinkers regarding the Bush administrations national security strategy can only be explained by shifting our critical focus to the level of narrative that implicitly structures Bush's foreign policy rhetoric. Even though Bush retains a doctrine of

preventive warfare and a controversial method of eradicating global terrorism and rogue regimes in his second NSS, by recasting the implicit narrative within the document he was able to creatively respond to criticisms of his foreign policy failures by key intellectual figures.

Here, Rowland's insight about narrative fidelity and probability is very useful (1989). Even though these two tests might be insufficient to choose amongst competing stories, they are incredibly useful in understanding how NSS 2006 functioned for this particular audience: "when a work either explicitly tells a story or draws upon a story, narrative probability and fidelity are useful standards not so much for testing the argument in the work as for testing its potential credibility for a particular audience" (p. 52). In the context of NSS 2006, the recasting of the narrative into the frame of democracy promotion and the necessity of multilateral action fit Bush's foreign policy into a very familiar narrative of American foreign policy.

Second, it advances the understanding of narrative's function in public argument. Narrative can have extensive influence in giving meaning to policy choices and argumentation. As a result, foreign policy critics must not only challenge administrations at the level of argument, but also at the level of narrative and critically press presidential accounts of the world stage and the characters within it.

It also contributes to the evolving theory concerning the relationship between rhetoric and narrative. This analysis shows that one must be careful that in attempting to define a workable interpretation of narrative discourse so that the role that implied narrative plays in mixed modes of discourse is not neglected. When analyzing policy rhetoric, scholars should remain vigilant about the powerful effects that narrative logic

can have in ideological policy justifications. By paying attention to the descriptions and motion ascribed to plot and characters, one can better understand how policy messages are received by different audiences. This means looking for the cues and implicit evocations within a document that taps into an underlying narrative that provides meaning for the particular exigence at hand.

Lastly, the narrative analysis plays a crucial function in the study of NSS 2006 and the realm of symbolic action within. It establishes a baseline for comparison so that the critic can better understand how the symbolic action within NSS 2006 operates; establishing what the story was in 2002 allows us to see how it changed four years later. By tracking such shifts and following how the Bush administration arrived where it did in the 2006 document opens up space for a criticism of NSS 2006 on its own terms. Despite these insights, there are limitations that require this study to leave the narrative method behind (though it has served me well). Thus far, I have identified the key theme that pervades NSS 2006: democracy and its underlying equations of freedom and multilateralism. While the notions of democracy and multilateralism are not new to American foreign policy (indeed it was their familiarity that Bush seems to have profited from the most), they are nevertheless poorly understood within the context of NSS 2006 and the Bush administration. In other words, the study must now trace out the relationship between this underlying constitutive theme and the actual policy arguments that are espoused within NSS 2006. Towards this end, the subsequent chapters will begin to map this relationship through recourse to two theoretical methods provided by Burke: an analysis of “pivotal terms” and “entelechy.”

### Chapter 3: Democracy Promotion in NSS 2006

#### Introduction

The theme of democracy and freedom clearly plays an enormous role in the 2006 National Security strategy (NSS). Even a cursory glance through the text reveals countless references to democracy as a core component of the Bush administration's security strategy; "the terms democracy...and freedom appear in the 2006 NSS over 200 times (a roughly three-fold increase over 2002)" (Cossa 2006, p. 1). The document even explicitly lists the promoting of "freedom, justice, and human dignity" as the first pillar of the entire security strategy (NSS 2006, p. ii). Democracy promotion has long been a tenet of American foreign policy, from the time of Wilson (Drake 1991), through the end of the Cold War (Cox, Ikenberry, and Inoguchi 2000; CArothers 1999; Carothers 2004). Democracy promotion has even played a major role in the security strategies of previous administrations since the end of the Cold War; the first Bush and the Clinton administrations both list it as a key strategic goal (Bush 1991; Clinton 1994). It is thus a misnomer to label NSS 2006 as a 'reversal' of the Bush Doctrine or a return to the 'normal' state of affairs because democracy promotion never *left* the foreign policy horizon of the Bush administration; "the [Bush doctrine's] privileging of liberalism and democracy falls squarely within the mainstream of American diplomatic traditions" (Monten 2005, p. 113). As the previous chapter has argued however, it is not the *presence* of a concept like democracy promotion in a strategy that should concern scholars, but rather the concept's rhetorical expression. Thus, if it is clear that democracy promotion is a key theme in NSS 2006, what is less clear is the specific character that the concept assumes through the arguments deployed. Nor can one appreciate the

consequences this articulation might have for public argument or the nation's security without further analysis. Answering these questions is the task of the present chapter.

A closer examination of what NSS 2006 has to say about democracy promotion proves to be very useful towards understanding the broader impact of the document. Unpacking the 'strategic pillar' of "freedom, justice, and human dignity" reveals a foreign policy that reinforces the dangerous model of American power that characterized the initial Bush 2002 NSS. NSS 2006 draws upon two distinct courses of action under the broader strategic pillar: the elimination of tyranny and the promotion of democracy. In making this distinction, NSS 2006 engages in an argumentative strategy that draws upon familiar touchstones of democracy promotion while simultaneously advancing a world-view that polarizes problems of democracy and good governance in the world. The result is a strategy that significantly undermines global security and leaves America less safe. It also assumes a rhetorical form that makes open public deliberation more difficult.

In order to arrive at this conclusion, this chapter will advance three sections of analysis. First, having established the notion of an implied narrative as a key principle in understanding the NSS in the previous chapter, I will seek to unpack a method for judging the merits of this narrative through a Burkean analysis of "pivotal terms." Second, I will flesh out the content of NSS 2006 as it pertains to democracy with specific attention paid to the emphasis placed on the elimination of tyranny over traditional goals of democracy promotion. It is in this section that we can begin to see what distances the Bush administration's concept of democracy promotion from the historical tradition that had operated since the end of the Cold War. It is also seen that the larger agon of

democracy/tyranny subsumes the document's discussion of multilateralism in foreign policy. A concluding section will advance some implications that this approach to democracy promotion portends for public argument.

### **Burke and Pivotal Terms**

The previous chapter has argued that NSS 2006 cannot be understood apart from the implicit narrative that operates throughout the document, constructing a particular scenic environment that posits the nature of threats and therefore determines what counts as an appropriate policy response. In fact, the narrativized nature of the document is what accounts for the positive reception NSS 2006 enjoyed compared to the previous document. As Rowland notes, the twin tests of narrative probability and narrative fidelity “are useful standards...for testing [a work's] potential credibility for a particular audience” (1989, p. 52). As argued above, NSS 2006 exhibited both of these qualities insofar as it appeared to draw upon a more familiar account of foreign policy that comported with how policy moderates and experts traditionally conceive of American foreign policy. This only addresses half of the problem, however. First, a narrative analysis has only isolated a large theme running throughout the document, not explored the particular content of this theme. It remains to be seen how policy arguments in NSS 2006 are influenced by the broader story. Second, the normative dimension remains; the fidelity and probability of a narrative typically cannot speak to whether a particular story is a *desirable* one (Warnick 1987). Considering that the NSS literally speaks directly to issues of life and death in the realm of ‘high politics’ and international security, it only seems fair to judge whether the arguments within NSS 2006 make the United States more or less safe.

Finding the answer to this normative dimension requires asking two different questions, however. First, do the key themes of NSS 2006 change the nature of the policy arguments that are advanced in the document? Second, does this argumentative strategy make the United States and/or the world more or less safe? The present chapter will seek to address the first of these two questions, while hopefully laying the necessary groundwork for the successful answering of the second.

Burke's notion of "pivotal terms" suggests a useful method of analysis (1937/1984, p. 216-338), but first some necessary groundwork must be laid concerning his larger theory of language. According to Burke, language and its attendant symbol systems is the essential mode of action for human existence. Far from simply naming or defining things in the world, language *is* symbolic action, or the expression of attitudes towards a situation (Burke 1941/1973, p. 8-9). In fact, Burke believes that all of human action is typified by the dramatic element, with every aspect of action radiating outwards as a spoke from a central hub of "ritual drama" (p. 103). If one directs their attention onto dramatic themes within language, the moral dimension of language begins to emerge; "the scientific approach builds the edifice of language with primary stress upon a proposition such as 'it *is*, or it *is not*.' The dramatic approach puts the primary stress upon such hortatory expressions as 'thou *shalt*, or thou *shalt not*' (Burke 1966, p. 44, italics in original). Because the realm of symbolic action is concerned with human action (as opposed to sheer motion), the world of language is *a priori* the realm of ethics: "Action involves character, which involves *choice*...action implies the ethical, the human personality..." (p. 11, italics in original). In the moral dimension of language, any positive idea necessarily implies its negative; such "polar terms...are to be distinguished

from sheerly positive terms. The word ‘table’ ...involves no thought of counter-table...We can settle for the indubitable fact that all *moral* terms are of this polar sort...such positives and negatives imply each other” (p. 11-12, italics in original). Thus, the figure of God (good) by its very existence requires its opposite in the Devil (evil). Symbolic action in turn is the dialectical struggle between the two set into motion.

Burke’s spoke and hub metaphor can prove useful for understanding why some discourses assume a more dramatic form than others. It can also help to link the concept of dramatism to the present topic of foreign policy and democracy promotion. As Burke notes, discourse that does not readily assume the form of ritual drama can be understood as an instantiation of one or more of the different elements of drama; “an essayist treatise of scientific cast, for instance, would be viewed as a kind of Hamletic soliloquy, its rhythm slowed down to a snail’s pace...and the dramatic situation of which it is a part usually being left unmentioned” (1941/1973, p. 108). In other words, the intensity of drama within a discourse will be a function of its proximity to the hub’s “Ur-form” of ritualistic drama (ibid). Thus, the closer a discourse resembles the moral dimension of language and speaks directly to the ethical realm, the more likely it is that dramatic action will characterize the text.

The case must now be made that NSS 2006 exhibits these characteristics. As chapter two has shown, a polarizing agonistic theme runs throughout the text centered on a universal struggle of good versus the tyrants of evil. Even in a generic sense, foreign policy rhetoric has a strong tendency to speak in the agonistic register. Such discourse takes place as an activity of symbolic action that is woven from a broader “nexus of motives” which serve as the “rationalizing basis for conduct” (Burke 1942, p. 404). As

the “principle shaping the logic of the nation’s efforts,” these nexuses are not static but shift according to time and situation. This change does not imply the abolition of the preexisting nexus, but rather a reprioritization where “one does not abolish the other”, but takes on heightened salience as the locus for foreign policy action (ibid). These motives are in turn reflected in the documents produced by a government, which always bear the indelible mark of history; “every document bequeathed us by history must be *treated as a strategy for encompassing a situation*” (Burke 1941/1973, p. 109, italics in original).

Returning to the notion of “pivotal terms”, it can be seen that if language is symbolic action, then words provide the necessary touchstones to access the nexus of motives at work within a piece of rhetoric. The close study of a text can offer us a method of disclosing the particular world of a rhetor because any given terminology (or screen for viewing the world) is not only a “reflection of reality”, but also a “*selection of reality*; and to this extent it must function also as a *deflection of reality*” (Burke 1966, p. 45, italics in original). Over the course of a text, this pattern of selectivity ultimately reveals a sort of “type-casting” wherein the critic can begin to derive a pattern and track the ways in which the “selection of role is a symbolic act”:

...the work of every writer contains a set of implicit equations. He uses ‘associational clusters.’ And you may, by examining his work, find ‘what goes with what’ in these clusters—what kinds of acts and images and personalities and situations go with his notions of heroism, villainy, consolation, despair, etc....By inspecting his work ‘statistically’, we or he may disclose by objective citation *the structure of motivation operating*

*here*. There is no need to ‘supply’ motives. The interrelationships themselves *are* his motives (Burke 1941/1973, p. 20, emphasis added).

One must investigate a text “inductively, obediently” with a view towards spotting the “dramatic alignment,” looking for the “equations that reinforce each of the opposing principles” (p. 69). Far from accepting a term on face, we seek out its connotations and associations; “the ‘symbolism’ of a word consists in the fact that no one quite uses the word in its mere dictionary sense...the overtones of a usage are revealed ‘by the company it keeps’” (p. 35).

Goodnight has demonstrated how such an analysis can reveal the complex relationship between a “pivotal term” and the NSS (2006). Through an analysis of NSS 2002, he documents how the pivotal terms of “preemption” and “imminence” “paradoxically jettisoned the policies of deterrence and containment...while spinning the ‘war on terror’ into a new Cold War” (p. 97). In the context of NSS 2006, however, the pivotal terms have changed. Preemption and imminence have not gone away (NSS 2006, p. 23), but have been almost entirely overshadowed by democracy promotion. By shifting the analysis of NSS 2006 from the narrative level to the argumentative one, one can hopefully trace out the relationship between the pivotal terms “democracy” and its devil figure of “tyranny” and policy arguments that are advanced within the text. This analysis will hopefully in turn provide a more concrete picture of the symbolic action at work within the rhetoric of the Bush administration, at least insofar as NSS 2006 is concerned.

## **Promoting Democracy or “Eliminating Tyranny?”**

Before critically evaluating the normative dimensions of the concept of democracy within NSS 2006, it is first necessary to lay it out in greater detail. Because this analysis seeks to grasp the differences that might exist between democracy promotion as a foreign policy strategy since the end of the Cold War and the particular form embodied by the Bush administration, it is necessary to first establish the latter. Furthermore, when such descriptive work is undertaken, it becomes clearer which features of democracy and freedom act as more powerful motives within the broader strategy. This section shows that the strategic pillar of “promoting freedom, justice, and human dignity” is actually split into two distinct components: the promotion of democracy and the elimination of tyranny. It is further revealed that the overall strategy of NSS 2006 emphasizes the dimensions of “tyranny elimination” far over and above the practice of “democracy promotion.”

While NSS 2002 and 2006 both share a chapter titled “Champion Aspirations for Human dignity” (NSS 2002, p. 3-4; NSS 2006, p. 2-7), NSS 2006 elaborates considerably on the nature of this strategic goal (perhaps more so than anywhere else between the two documents). The Bush administration even offers an explicit section of analysis that is dedicated to “explaining the goal” in the newer document (p. 3-4). Immediately, a clear and explicit distinction is made, separating the strategy of “championing human dignity” into two distinct elements: “to protect our Nation and honor our values, the United States seeks to extend freedom across the globe by leading an international effort to *end tyranny* and to *promote effective democracy*” (p. 3, emphasis added). Bush goes on to explain each of these goals separately, dedicating a subset of analysis first to “ending tyranny” (p.

3-4) and then to “promoting effective democracies” (p. 4-5). Because I believe that it is the first strategy that is most influential and separates Bush from earlier presidencies, I will address these two components out of turn.

The goal of “promoting effective democracies” is relatively straight forward. It defines an “effective” democracy as one which upholds basic rights “including freedom of religion, conscience, speech, assembly, association, and press,” is responsive to its citizens, exercises “effective sovereignty and [maintains] order” within its borders, and limits the reach of government through constitutional protections for civil society (4). While elections are the most visible sign of an effective democracy, they are not the ultimate acid test; “...elections alone are not enough—they must be reinforced by other values, rights and institutions to bring about lasting freedom” (5). In order to achieve these goals, the Bush administration argues that it should call upon tools that are primarily diplomatic and economic in nature, such as conditioning foreign assistance, offering military assistance, utilizing sanctions and “speaking out against abuses of human rights” (p. 6).

The democracy promotion strategy in NSS 2006 is remarkably continuous with a broader American tradition. Since the end of World War II and the reconstruction of Europe and Japan up through the Cold War, the United States has long tried to use different sticks and carrots to elicit positive support for democratic reforms (Haass & O’Sullivan 2000). As previously noted such policies were even more popular in the wake of the Cold War and figured heavily into the rhetoric and strategies of both the first Bush administration and Clinton (Ivie 2000). Furthermore, the distinction between “democracy” and “effective democracy” reflects a current consensus within political

science circles about the limitations of any method of democracy promotion that is premised solely on the holding of elections (Kumar 1998). After the backsliding and violence that occurred during the 90s in many young democracies, experts now stress the need for the very same institutional safeguards that NSS 2006 calls for (Zakaria 1997; Zakaria 2004). Bush also recognizes that spreading democracy runs certain dangers especially for nascent democracies which have yet to consolidate their institutions, a point underscored by two very prominent researchers in the democracy promotion field (Mansfield and Snyder 2005).

While the concept of democracy promotion in NSS 2006 reflects a pragmatic and relatively nuanced argument for strengthening institutions and liberal protections, the first goal of “eliminating tyranny” reflects a polarized and totalizing world-view, what Wander characterizes as “prophetic dualism” (1984, p. 342). The broader character of this theme has already been established; it envisions the United States and its allies in the midst of a world-historical struggle to eradicate tyranny entirely. While American war rhetoric has a long tradition of characterizing the enemy in totalizing terms (Wander 1984; Ivie 1980; Cherwitz 1978), the espoused “ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world” is entirely novel and represents a major break with America’s foreign policy tradition (NSS 2006, p. 1). The NSSs of the first Bush administration and Clinton speak only of promoting democracy gradually and where appropriate, not a categorical elimination of tyranny (Bush 1991; Clinton 1994).

Despite the coupling of this radical eliminationist goal with a traditionally sound and moderate goal of promoting democracy, there are two strong indicators woven throughout the text of NSS 2006 that suggests the former is the more dominant nexus of

motives that drives the strategy of the Bush administration. First, while the document takes great care to define the qualities of an “effective democracy” with a high degree of precision and nuance, the notion of tyranny is simultaneously vague and incredibly totalizing. The document defines tyranny not as any existing political system, but rather a plurality of *effects*: “tyranny is the combination of brutality, poverty, instability, corruption, and suffering forged under the rule of despots and despotic systems” (p. 3). At the same time, the persistence of tyranny is a fact that cannot be allowed to go on: “...tyranny must not be tolerated—it is a crime of man, not a fact of nature” (p. 4). Any nuance embodied with the definition of “effective democracy” disappears into a question of simple aggregates: “the 20<sup>th</sup> century has been called the ‘Democracy Century,’ as tyrannies fell one by one and democracies rose in their stead. At mid-century about two dozen of the world’s governments were democratic; 50 years later the number was over 120” (p. 4). NSS 2006 thus advances an argument that allows for great flexibility in the substantive definition of tyranny (it can be instability or even the existence of poverty) coupled to a powerful moral motive that does not admit of ethical ambiguity in requiring action on behalf of the United States.

Second, there is a clear sequencing between the promotion of “effective democracies” and the elimination of tyranny, the latter of which is a clear prerequisite. Tyrannies must first “give way” before the United States helps “newly free nations build effective democracies” (p. 4). Here, the building of democracies occurs subsequent to the “freeing” of these countries. Furthermore, the benefits of democracy will only be achieved over a very long duration; “the advance of freedom and human dignity through democracy is the long-term solution to the transnational terrorism of today” (11). The

need to eliminate tyranny as a first short-order step is articulated via a new metaphor.

While the previous narrative theme of power exhibited itself in a surgical metaphor, NSS 2006 deploys one that is more fitting to the struggle, an agricultural metaphor: “To create the space and time for that long-term solution to *take root*, there are four steps we will take in the short term” which includes the prevention of terrorist attacks, denying acquisition of WMD by “rogue states”, and denying terrorist groups “support and sanctuary” within “rogue states” (p. 12, emphasis added). These ‘interim measures’ are advanced as policy perquisites that prepare the ground so that tree of democracy can take root and bear its long-term fruits.

Third, the elimination of tyranny is posited as the ultimate solution to all warfare and violence: “...governments that brutalize their people also threaten the peace and stability of other nations...[Promoting] democracy is the most effective long-term measure for strengthening international instability...and extending peace and prosperity” (p. 3). While it must be conceded that Bush notes “an end to tyranny will not mark an end to all global ills” (p. 4), the majority of arguments offered in NSS 2006 clearly outweigh this caveat. “Disputes, disease, disorder, poverty, and injustice” (ibid) will still persist, but these simply cannot compare to the magnitude of evils that do disappear from the list of threats, namely transnational terrorism, WMD proliferation and international warfare. Thus, Bush offers his audience a panacea to world’s most pressing security problems while formally qualifying his argument in a way that provides cover from charges of false promises should this miracle cure-all fail to procure a lasting age of peace.

These three dimensions inherent within NSS 2006's strategic pillar of promoting human dignity and freedom dissolves any moral complexity regarding the quality of democratic governance (i.e. whether it is "effective") into a polarized "Us/them" dichotomy which aligns the forces of democracy against the forces of tyranny. While Bush explicitly argues that the actualization of democratic practices is critically important, the sequencing used and emphasis that is placed on eradicating tyranny in NSS 2006 constantly pushes these questions beyond the direct horizon of concern. They become a future concern that can be dealt with only after the United States saves democracy by eliminating its devil figure of tyranny. This constant suspension of democracy from a question of its "actualization" (the quality and content of its practices) to its "futuraity" (the ultimate purpose for an action) "fits well with the logic of the military motive, which requires great modifications of democracy as an actuality but can retain democracy 'substantially' by making these modifications in the name of democracy as a purpose" (Burke 1942, p. 405). When all policy action is subsumed under the uncompromising goal of securing democracy, any manner of practices can be carried out in the name of democracy, even if such practices are inimical to the substance of a democracy in its actual function. In Burke's example, the "disfranchised, such as the natives of India or the Negroes of the South can logically be asked to defend democracy as a purpose even when they could not be asked to defend it as an actuality" (ibid).

This suspension of democratic actualization under the aegis of protecting democracy as a purpose is a strong theme within NSS 2006. The Bush administration is able to appeal to the *purpose* of securing democracy even when it cannot always *actualize* it: "Though our principles are consistent, our tactics will vary...As we consider

which approaches to take, we will be guided by what will most effectively advance freedom's cause while we balance other interests that are also vital..." (NSS 2006, p. 6). It seems that the appropriate strategy for dealing with a country depends upon their alignment with (or usefulness to) the United States and the larger agon separating the forces of democracy from those of tyranny, rather than the character or quality of democratic practices in that particular state. Alignment with the United States is what determines whether the policy should be one of reform or regime change: "in the wider region, we will continue to support efforts for reform and freedom in traditional allies such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Tyrannical regimes such as Iran and Syria that oppress at home and sponsor terrorism abroad know that we will continue to stand with their people against their misrule" (p. 38). The disconnect between "Bush the realist" and "Bush the neo-Reaganite" results in a strategy that explicitly refuses any toleration of undemocratic practices yet aligns with several states that are authoritarian (Carothers 2003, p. 85). NSS 2006 dissolves this tension by transforming the litmus test for determining whether a particular government is "good" or "evil" from the actualization of democracy to one of identification with the United States.

The agonistic struggle also transforms the meaning of multilateralism and the role it plays in NSS 2006. Multilateralism, or coordinated action among sovereign states through international institutions, is contrasted with unilateralism, or the exercising of American power by its own accord and dictates. Unilateralism was a defining theme of Bush's foreign policy early in his presidency as he withdrew from the Kyoto, International Criminal Court, and Anti-Ballistic Missile treaties, meeting with massive opposition both within the United States and overseas in Europe (Dumbrell 2002). NSS

2002 paid brief lip service to the ideal of multilateralism, claiming that “no nation can build a safer, better world alone” (NSS 2002, p. vi). Despite this small hedge, the document had a strong preference for unilateral action in many spheres of action, noting that “...we will respect the values, judgment and interests of our friends...Still, we will be prepared to act apart when our interests and unique responsibilities require” (p. 31). The presumption for unilateralism culminated in the invasion of Iraq in 2003, with some commentators even going so far as to pronounce the death of all transatlantic cooperation and international institutions (Layne 2003; Menon 2003). While such an extreme outcome did not come about, the events of the Iraq war touched off an intense scholarly debate concerning the relationship between unilateralism, multilateralism and the exercise of American power in the world (Art 2005; Brooks & Wohlforth 2005; Lieber & Alexander 2005; Paul 2005; Pape 2005).

At first glance, it appears that NSS 2006 has internalized many of the products of this debate into the strategy; many touchstones within the document appear to overlap with an emerging consensus in policy-making literature about the need for incorporating multilateralism into America’s foreign policy (Kupchan 2002; Nye 2002; Brzezinski 2004). NSS 2006 concedes that there will be many problems that will require multilateral action to address, from “the threat of pandemic disease, to proliferation of [WMD], to terrorism, to human trafficking, to natural disasters” (NSS 2006, p. ii). It also calls for a “strengthening [of] our public diplomacy, so that we advocate the policies and values of the United States in a clear, accurate, and persuasive way to a watching and listening world” (p. 45). In fact, the 2006 NSS dedicates an entirely new distinct section to address the “national security implications of globalization” as a way of recognizing

the need for concerted action between the United States and other countries, a section that was entirely absent in NSS 2002 (p. 47-48).

The central agonistic logic filters into NSS 2006's espoused need for multilateralism, just as the project of tyranny-elimination took over the policy of democracy promotion. Much of what NSS 2006 has to say of international institutions is coded through a screen of "responsibility." Bush makes it clear that the prime virtue of democracy is the fact that it imbues a nation with responsible conduct: "government's that honor their citizen's dignity and desire for freedom tend to uphold *responsible* conduct toward other nations...because democracies are the *most responsible members* of the international system..." (NSS 2006, p. 3, emphasis added). If a democracy is only an "effective democracy" when it is responsible (e.g. accountable to its people and responsible in exercising sovereignty), the same can be said of Bush's attitudes toward multilateralism; he seeks to "[enshrine] the principle that membership and participation privileges are earned by *responsible* behavior and by reasonable burden-sharing of security and stability challenges" (p. 45, emphasis added).

This raises the question of what state is *responsible enough* to lead. While NSS 2006 is not nearly as explicit on this point as the previous document (NSS 2002, p. vi), it stands to reason that Bush implies that it is the United States which has the capacity to make this judgment by virtue of its exceptional nature and strength of democratic institutions (NSS 2006, p. 3). He also explicitly underscores the need for America to guide the way because "history has shown that only when we do our part will others do theirs" (p. ii). Thus, the document is rife with exceptions carved into Bush's conviction for multilateral action. In the case of WMD proliferation, he concedes that it "requires

effective international action,” but that “the international community is most engaged in such action when the United States leads” (p. 22). Again, the exception is found conjoined with the rule in the discussion over coordinating with other centers of power: “we must be prepared to act alone if necessary, while recognizing that there is little of lasting consequence that we can accomplish in the world without the sustained cooperation of our allies...” (p. 37).

The true disdain for international institutions becomes clearer when one turns to the agenda for reforming the United Nations (U.N.). Bush begins by contrasting his reforms with those that others have advocated; it is only his which are “meaningful” (p. 45). He seeks to create structures that ensure both “accountability” and “efficiency” (ibid), two hallmarks of an “effective democracy.” One program plank is particularly telling: “Ensuring that the U.N. reflects today’s geopolitical *realities* and is *not shackled* by obsolete structures” (p. 46). Despite the professed conviction regarding the necessity of multilateral action, Bush betrays his real attitudes towards the idea; there would of course be no need for these deep reforms if the U.N. were not unaccountable, inefficient, irresponsible, cumbersome, obsolete or in need of “reinvigorating” its commitment to “the promotion of democracy and human rights” (ibid). Naturally, it is the United States who “must lead the effort to reform existing institutions and create new ones...” (48). Current international institutions may “have a role to play, but in many cases *coalitions of the willing* may be able to respond more quickly and creatively...” (ibid, emphasis added). While many proponents of multilateralism see working through international institutions as a historically novel method of problem-solving between states (Ikenberry 2000; Ikenberry, Mastanduno & Wohlforth 2009), any appeal within NSS 2006 occurs

solely in terms of whether it is in the United States' interest at any particular moment in time.

Perhaps the final day will come when tyranny has been vanquished and there will be complete alignment of interests between the world's democracies. But until that day, or at least in the world within NSS 2006, "America must lead by deed as well as by example. This is how we plan to lead, and this is the legacy we will leave to those who follow" (p. 49). By placing all of these questions concerning multilateralism and global governance against the backdrop of the dramatic struggle between democracy and tyranny, Bush is able to simultaneously appeal to such notions while advancing policy arguments that allow him to entirely disregard concerted action in favor of unilateralism in American foreign policy.

### **Conclusion**

By shifting the unit of analysis from the narrative level and engaging with NSS 2006 through an analysis of its pivotal terms, the motives of the Bush administration and the interaction between the text and key audience becomes clearer. Bush is able to explicitly appeal to the need for familiar policy tools like democracy promotion and multilateralism while also reinforcing elements of the old Bush Doctrine that had been strongly criticized as radical breaks from America's foreign policy tradition when they were announced in the administration's first NSS. This level of analysis provides us with better understanding on two fronts.

First, it reveals another dimension that helps to explain the reactions of the audience. Narrative analysis showed how Bush helped this audience of skeptical policy experts (such as Daalder, Nye and Mearsheimer) enter a different dramatic scene that was

more familiar to the traditional American view of international relations and the limitations that inherently accompany the exercise of power in the world. By tracing out the associations and clusters that characterize the “pivotal terms”, however, we see that Bush strategically associates traditional foreign policy tools with his overall strategy, even while simultaneously advancing a much more radical approach to foreign policy. Seeding the text with references to “effective democracies”, “democracy promotion” and “multilateralism” provided Bush the means to argue that his foreign policy had effectively adapted itself to the lessons many of these scholars had been advocating for years. These value-laden terms hold a very specific meaning for these policy experts. By strategically deploying them throughout the text of NSS 2006, Bush provided them with familiar touchstones that evoked a particular strategy approach that was far removed from that of the Bush administration.

It is possible that the strategic deployment of these value-laden symbols worked so effectively on this audience because they operated as “ideographs” (McGee 1980; McGee 2001). While proving this claim with any certitude is beyond the boundaries of this analysis, there seems to be sufficient evidence to warrant the conclusion. Ideographs are terms or phrases which lack any concrete political content yet are richly evocative of different cultural and political views. Their abstract and vague nature allows for great flexibility on the part of the rhetor; he or she can deploy such terms in a variety of contradictory manners while still advancing a message that resonates powerfully with the audience; “they possess a certain ‘givenness’ that is also highly variable” (Stuckey and Ritter 2007, p. 648). While ideographs typically resemble terms more deeply rooted in the political consciousness and history of a public (such as “rule of law” or “equality”), it

is possible that terms such as “democracy promotion” and “multilateralism” have begun to assume this function—at least for this specific audience—despite their relatively young history and limited sphere of circulation (relative to the broader public). Perhaps as the time dividing our present moment from the bi-polar division of the Cold War grows longer, such terms may become increasingly salient for a wider public; these two specific terms in NSS 2006 could best be understood as nascent ideographs.

Whatever shape their more enduring status becomes, the concept of “ideograph” is still useful for understanding *how* “democracy promotion” and “multilateralism” functioned in NSS 2006 for several moderate policy scholars who were once vocal opponents of the Bush Doctrine. By providing familiar foreign policy touchstones to this audience, the Bush administration was successfully able to extend controversial policies under different auspices, dramatically diffusing high-profile criticism of its policies. As Goodnight notes, these ideographs, “when couched in public argument, are powerful motivators of opinion that can be difficult to dislodge” (Goodnight 2006, p. 96).

Second, a Burkean focus on “pivotal terms” is especially useful in understanding how the dramatic action between good and evil overtakes the presence of traditional elements of American foreign policy, funneling American actions towards the more radical elements of Bush’s foreign policy. If one approaches a problem from the dramatic frame, the action within their policy response will begin to align itself along the dividing axis separating forces of good from those of evil. In the context of NSS 2006, this has resulted in the Bush administration emphasizing the need to prioritize the “elimination of tyranny” over incremental reforms and piecemeal democracy promotion.

It has also lead the Bush administration to simultaneously herald the necessity for multilateralism while disparaging it as a method of action.

An analysis of “pivotal terms” connects the deeper theme that informs the strategy with the particular policy equations espoused within it. Bush is able to break-down traditional terms and meanings and redraw the equations through new associations and attitudes. In the instance of democracy promotion, the strategy at one level reflects the cutting edge of policy nuance and the most moderate elements of American foreign policy. By positioning this element into a broader equation for the “advance of freedom” however, the Bush administration is able to subordinate this element to the more extreme policies of “eliminating tyranny.” The document achieves a similar result with the theme of multilateralism. By equating legitimate multilateral action with “responsibility”, Bush successfully appeals to the need for multilateralism by recoding it as an act of unilateral American leadership.

The last dimension of analysis is still somewhat incomplete, however. While it is clear that Bush’s 2006 NSS tends to prioritize or prefer foreign policy methods that are more direct and unilateral in their attempts to “eliminate tyranny” over “promoting democracy”, the normative implications of this strategy remain to be seen. To accomplish this goal, the next chapter will turn to Burke once more and his principle of “entelechy.” It is seen that the dramatic organizing principle that undergirds NSS 2006 does more than deflect some foreign policy approaches in favor of other ones. Such a dramatic screen also seeks out its own implications, making the United States and the world substantially less safe.

## Chapter 4: Entelechy & NSS 2006

### Introduction

While the positive reception that the 2006 National Security Strategy (NSS) received by an audience that had previously been skeptical of many of the same policies is hopefully somewhat more clear, what remains to be seen is whether the particular nexus of motives that is bound up within the thought of NSS 2006 is a *desirable* strategy capable of enhancing the security of the United States. Addressing the normative dimension of the topic seems both necessary and fair. It is necessary because the articulation of strategy through rhetoric can literally speak to questions of life and death for both the American public and people around the world; “the statement informs American publics of the costs and sacrifices that they should be prepared to bear...[setting] in place the overall guidelines or thinking of an administration” (Goodnight 2006, p. 95). It is fair because, if the goal of the entire NSS process is to enhance Congressional oversight and deliberation concerning security affairs (Dale 2008, p. 1-2), then it seems reasonable to ask whether a particular NSS engages in a method of argument that is conducive to those aims. Insofar as NSS 2006 can be found to either make the American public less secure or to foreclose honest deliberation by making certain strategy choices more likely, then it should be strongly criticized as a strategy that fails to fulfill either of its purported goals.

At first blush, answering this question may seem to fall squarely within the domain of an empirical policy analysis. Such an analysis may prove very useful indeed, and it is not my intent to foreclose upon the desirability of this perspective. However, a rhetorical view may be of further service beyond explaining how the text of NSS 2006

interacted with situated audiences or the broader public at the time of its publication. Carrying the dramatic analysis initiated in the previous chapter further enables us to answer the normative question at the heart of the strategy by tracing out how the constitutive agon between democracy and tyranny plays itself out in the policy arguments that are advanced. In the final analysis, the promises of democracy and multilateralism in NSS 2006 are seen to be “entelechially rotten,” ultimately subsuming all policy arguments within the total war between the forces of freedom and the forces of tyranny. The cumulative result of Burke’s perfection principle in action is a world where the United States’ options are greatly constrained and the risks of war and conflict, while far from guaranteed or inevitable, are enhanced to an unacceptable degree.

This chapter will advance four sections of analysis. First, it is necessary to establish what is meant by the term “entelechially rotten.” This section will establish and explain Burke’s principle of perfection, or “entelechy”, as both a conceptual feature of symbolic action and as a method for assessing the normative dimensions of NSS 2006. The subsequent section will analyze one particular policy area within the strategy where the principle of entelechy is most clearly manifest: the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). It is seen that the terministic logic posited by the NSS’s constitutive agon severely limits American freedom of action and incentivizes an aggressive foreign policy that may make conflict more likely. The third section seeks to trace how this logic carries forth from within the strategy itself to the actual exercise of American power and foreign policy. To this end, this section will analyze the Bush administration’s approach to Iran and their pursuit of nuclear fuel enrichment capabilities. Finally, I will conclude

with some remarks about the need for a rhetorical analysis in fully judging the normative impact of NSS 2006.

### **Entelechy and the Perfection Principle**

Making normative judgments about the efficacy and desirability of a policy is oftentimes much easier when one operates with the benefit of hindsight. The empirical success or failure of a policy becomes tempting for scholars seeking to place history's stamp of approval or disfavor on different Presidencies and the strategies they pursued. While this serves a valuable epistemic exercise for technical policy formulation, it also tends to reinforce a dichotomy between the realm of rational policy choice and the rhetoric that is used to sell these choices to the public and the rest of the government. The problematic nature of this dichotomy was hinted at the outset of this study in chapter one. If the case made in the previous two chapters is compelling however, such a clean division cannot help us explain how the rhetorical motives behind strategy formulation can sometimes transform the very policies within a document. Extending the dramatic interrogation of "pivotal terms" even further can offer a counter to the temptations to judge policies by hindsight because it provides a method for understanding the policy choices that become available as a result of the *rhetorical choices* of the rhetor. In other words, we must analyze how the constitutive agon—that is, the universal struggle between the forces of democracy (good) and tyranny (evil)—closes off certain policy responses while directing policymakers towards certain other ones. The ultimate object of analysis is an understanding of what policy choices become logically *necessary* within the rhetorical parameters of NSS 2006.

Once again, Burke offers a useful theory for understanding the normative dimensions of language. Not only does the text as symbolic action embody a particular nexus of motives, it also creates a particular “terministic screen” or lens of understanding that selects, interprets and deflects different understandings of the world (Burke 1966, p. 45). From this perspective, it is clear that language is not merely a tool used by humans; it in turn uses us by directing the mind’s attention to particular possibilities and outcomes (p. 6). This occurs because any given symbol system’s terministic values necessarily imply some conclusions and outcomes over others because they are posited as necessary within the logical coordinates of that system. Once the initial term is posited, “many implications ‘necessarily’ follow” (p. 46). Burke illustrates this notion through the Christian injunction of “Believe, that you may understand”:

The ‘logological,’ or ‘terministic’ counterpart of ‘Believe’ in the formula would be: *Pick some particular nomenclature, some one terministic screen.* And for ‘That you may understand,’ the counterpart would be: *‘That you may proceed to track down the kinds of observations implicit in the terminology you have chosen, whether your choice of terms was deliberate or spontaneous’* (p. 47, emphasis in original).

If language is symbolic action and the cumulative form of all action is drama, then *drama* will become the governing principle of discourse. The use of dramatic symbols will thus come to resemble more and more the perfect form of drama: the battle for good over the forces of evil.

This tendency for symbolic action to seek out its own implications or carry itself to the end of the line is best known as Burke’s “entelechy” or perfection principle. He

regards the tendency towards “perfection” as an intrinsic or central element in all symbol systems (Burke 1966, p. 16-17). Because a given terminology or terministic screen contains various logical implications by virtue of its constitutive principle, “there is a corresponding ‘perfectionist tendency’ for men to attempt carrying out those implications” (p. 19). It goes without saying that Burke does not intend the term “perfect” to be used in any sort of honorary sense (p. 18), but rather as an adaptation of Aristotle’s notion of “entelechy.” Any terministic logic will aim at the “perfection natural to its kind,” or fulfill its teleological purpose by making the logical conclusion of such a screen manifest in whatever manner it is deployed (p. 17).

Symbolic action that is primarily centered on moral grounds is particularly “rotten” with this perfection principle. As explained in the previous chapter, moral terminologies are especially given over to dramatic conflict because their primary principle of difference is not one of otherness but opposites or contraries (“polar terms”) (p. 11-12). Because such “god” and “devil” figures necessarily imply the other’s existence (in fact, they need the other in order to exist!), they will seek each other out so that they may achieve perfection in the unfolding of drama. Thus, in seeking to preserve good, the symbolic choices inherent in such a screen will direct us to seek out and *eliminate* evil. As Burke notes, no where else is this ironic dimension clearer than in the construction of “a perfect enemy” (p. 18).

Given how foundational the agonistic conflict between the historical forces of democracy and tyranny are to the logic of NSS 2006, extending the dramatisic analysis began by the previous chapter seems appropriate. A close analysis of specific policy content may reveal this perfection principle at work. If our investigation reveals that the

agonistic foundation of the Bush administration's logic eschews some policy options in favor of those which would more closely resemble the dramatic culmination of democracy over the forces of tyranny's evils, then it might be concluded that the rhetorical choices of the Bush administration ultimately make the American public (and the world) less safe.

There is one policy area in particular within NSS 2006 where the logic of entelechy is especially dominant: the discussions of WMD proliferation by so-called "rogue states." The next section of analysis will set to tracing out how the constitutive agon carries itself to the end of the line in this policy area. The focus will remain on the text of NSS 2006 in order to better understand the possibilities suggested within the terms of the strategy itself.

### **WMD Proliferation and Regime Change**

NSS 2006 continues many of the same controversial policies for addressing WMD proliferation that were present in the original Bush Doctrine. Proliferation can be understood of as both the spread of WMD capability from one state to another state or organization, or the indigenous acquisition of such capabilities by such groups. WMD in turn are often defined as either nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons capabilities. Even though NSS 2006 espouses many of the same solutions as its 2002 predecessor (including the preventive or preemptive use of military force), it adds a frightening dimension to American strategy by constructing a set of risk assessment coordinates that leaves the goal of regime change as the only *effective* solution to the potential danger posed by WMD proliferation. The symbolic terms of NSS 2006 results in this end because it presents the spread of WMD as an intolerable risk that will exist in the world

so long as tyranny is present. By establishing the problem of “certainty” as the ultimate acid test for assessing the danger posed by WMD, the strategy guarantees that regime change will remain as the only tolerable solution. This section will follow the text of the document across each of these threshold steps.

First, NSS 2006 establishes that the proliferation of WMD represents the largest magnitude security threat facing the world today. It is the only “immediate threat” posed by tyrannies presently (NSS 2006, p. 3) and there are “few greater threats than a terrorist attack with WMD” (p. 18). The document derives the warrant for this claim through a strategic conflation between the dangers posed by different types of WMD, a conflation which served as a central proof in the previous 2002 NSS (Keller and Mitchell 2006, p. 9-10). The subsection of the document dedicated to “the world’s most dangerous weapons” explicitly pulls apart the umbrella term WMD into a sub-pointed discussion of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. While the latter two of these weapon categories are noted as “a grave WMD threat” or “a serious proliferation concern,” nuclear weapons stand alone by virtue of their sheer destructive power: “the proliferation of nuclear weapons poses the greatest threat to our national security. Nuclear weapons are unique in their capacity to inflict instant loss of life on a massive scale” (NSS 2006, p. 19). Having set out the dangers unique to each class of weapons, Bush quickly collapses them back into the unified signifier of WMD. At the same time however, the document condenses the various security threats posed by *all* of these weapons into the unique danger of nuclear weapons. This conflation allows the Bush administration to associate the dangers of chemical weapons with the catastrophic impact of a nuclear blast: “When the *consequences of an attack with WMD are potentially so devastating*, we cannot afford to

stand idly by as grave dangers materialize” (p. 23, emphasis added). The specter of the mushroom cloud becomes attached to anything that can be construed as acquiring possible WMD capabilities, no matter the actual nature of the risk; the magnitude of the nuclear threat subsumes everything.

The strategic ambiguity afforded by this threat conflation is largely a carryover from NSS 2002; the most dramatic and troubling change for NSS 2006’s approach to proliferation occurs when the agonistic dimension of democracy and tyranny enters the equation. This becomes startlingly clear when close attention is paid to the concept of “certainty” and how it intersects and relates with a risk calculus premised so heavily upon the magnitude of an outcome. The nature of this new dimension is most clearly expressed in NSS 2006’s justification for the Iraq war and the original public auspices for that invasion: Saddam Hussein’s alleged WMD programs. It is worth noting that NSS 2006 does not list the destruction of Hussein’s regime as a “success” of the administration’s first term, at least not under those successes explicitly claimed as validation for their anti-proliferation strategy (p. 18-19). Instead, the Bush administration appended a small sub-section to the end of chapter five entitled “Iraq and Weapons of Mass Destruction” in which they address the charge that the failure to find evidence of WMD constituted a failure of the Bush Doctrine (p. 23-24). It is here that the divide separating “certainty” and democracy on one side and “uncertainty” and tyranny on the other is laid bare.

The small, embedded subsection first begins by claiming that the original auspices for regime change were much broader than the suspicion of WMD programs. The fundamental threat was the Hussein regime’s irresponsible behavior: “Saddam Hussein’s

continued defiance of 16 UNSC resolutions, combined with his record of invading neighboring countries, supporting terrorists, tyrannizing his own people and using chemical weapons, presented a threat we could no longer ignore” (p. 23). Second, the failure to find WMD is attributed to faulty intelligence, not the nature of the threat: “We must learn from this experience if we are to counter successfully the *very real threat* of proliferation...our intelligence must improve” (ibid, emphasis added). While the need for this reform in American capabilities is argued for, the strategy implies the diminishing returns of any attempt to improve intelligence capabilities.

Intelligence capabilities may be improved with time, but they can never overcome the *necessary uncertainty* that accompanies *any* non-democratic regime: “...there will always be some uncertainty about the status of hidden programs since proliferators are often brutal regimes that go to great lengths to conceal their activities” (p. 24). Thus, because of the absence of democracy, there is always the possibility—if not *inevitability*—of WMD proliferation. For proof, NSS 2006 reproduces a section of the Iraq Survey Group report (the final report on Hussein’s WMD related activity in the aftermath of the invasion):

Saddam continued to see the utility of WMD. He explained that he purposely gave an *ambiguous impression* about possession as a deterrent to Iran. He gave explicit direction to maintain the *intellectual capabilities*. As U.N. sanctions eroded there was a concomitant expansion of activities that could support full WMD reactivation. He directed that ballistic missile work continue that would support long-range missile development. Virtually no senior Iraqi believed that Saddam *had forsaken WMD*

*forever*. Evidence suggests that, as resources became available and the constraints of sanctions decayed, there was a direct expansion of activity that would have the effect of *supporting future WMD reconstitution*. (NSS 2006, p. 23, emphasis added)

The persistence of this potentiality was thus inexcusable; there could be no guarantee that Hussein would permanently and irrevocably forsake any WMD-related capability for the entire lifespan of his regime. The terms of NSS 2006, by linking the character motives of tyranny together with even the possibility of “intellectual capabilities” for WMD, posits that the threat of WMD proliferation is inevitable so long as tyranny exists *anywhere*. NSS 2006 argues that the failure of American intelligence was indeed Hussein’s own fault: “Saddam’s strategy of bluff, denial and deception is a dangerous game that dictators play at their own peril...It was Saddam’s reckless behavior that demanded the world’s attention, and it was his refusal to remove the ambiguity that he created that forced the United States and its allies to act” (p. 24). Of course, because Hussein is identified along the axis of tyranny, the removal of ambiguity was a demand his government could *never* meet strictly because they were not an “effective democracy.”

With unmistakable finality, NSS 2006 declares that the invasion of 2003 created unequivocal and irreversible certainty about the danger of Iraq’s WMD programs: “With the elimination of Saddam’s regime, this threat has been addressed *once and for all*” (p. 23, emphasis added). What enables the Bush administration to achieve this level of finality? After all, it seems curious to brand the invasion of Iraq as a successful case of preemptive warfare when there was no WMD threat to preempt. One must look under what terms Iraq *is* explicitly declared a victory: as a paradigm case for the elimination of

tyranny and the establishment of democracy. The Bush administration sees this method of forcible regime change as proof of the “extraordinary progress in the expansion of freedom, democracy, and human dignity” that “the world has seen [since 2002]”:

In Iraq, a tyrant has been toppled; over 8 million Iraqis voted in the nation’s first free and fair election; a freely negotiated constitution was passed by a referendum in which almost 10 million Iraqis participated; and, for the first time in their history, nearly 12 million Iraqis have elected a permanent government under a popularly determined constitution (p. 2).

The elimination of tyranny provides the final guarantee of certainty on questions of WMD acquisition because of the uncompromising and universal terms that accompany the identification of democracy as the ultimate force of good in the world. Because all people across history and culture desire freedom and peace (p. 2), and because democracies are responsive to the people and submit to their will (p. 4), and because democracies behave responsibly and settle their differences peacefully (p. 15), then it is logically necessary that a democracy could never pursue WMD for aggressive uses against other states or its own people.

The agonistic terminologies that run throughout NSS 2006 thus dramatically constrain the options available to the United States for dealing with threats of WMD proliferation or acquisition by other states or organizations. Even though Bush argues that “taking action need not involve military force” (p. 23), and that the United States will employ “the full array of political, economic, diplomatic, and other tools at our disposal” (p. 6), the full logic of the strategy already forecloses upon the possibility that any of these alternatives to force could succeed. Because the essential character of a “tyrannical

regime” precludes trust, predictability or certainty, and because the magnitude of a successful WMD (read: nuclear) attack is unacceptable, then the preferred tool for dealing with this danger is the elimination of the regime. Thus, the terms of NSS 2006 dictate the preference for a policy strategy that eschews compromise or negotiation in favor of one which more closely resembles the ultimate showdown between democracy and tyranny, between good and evil.

### **Strategy in Action over Iran**

Thus far, the analysis has suggested that the very equations embedded within NSS 2006 favor some solutions over others, despite professing the need to draw upon the full panoply of foreign policy tools available. A question that must now be answered is whether the strategy for dealing with WMD proliferation is “entellechially rotten” in logical form alone. In other words, did the terministic screen advanced in NSS 2006 affect the actual implementation of foreign policy against states suspected of pursuing WMD capabilities? This section will explore this dimension as it applies to the state of Iran and their nuclear program. Bush’s strategy for dealing with a nuclear Iran is an ideal test case for exploring the intersection between the symbolic action of strategy and policy execution for two reasons. First, NSS 2006 explicitly names Iran as the single largest proliferation concern and dedicates a considerable amount of time to discussing the threat. Second, the Bush administration and the government of Iran nearly came to the brink of war in the waning years of Bush’s last term. This analysis suggests that the terministic goals of the strategy played a dominant role in pushing the world closer and closer to conflict.

NSS 2006 dedicates a considerable amount of resources within the document to addressing Iran as a unique threat that must be addressed in particular. Iran is clearly singled out as an extreme threat; in fact “we may face no greater challenge from a single country” (p. 20). Even though the government of Iran had long denied that it was pursuing uranium enrichment capabilities for the purpose of building weapons, their denials cannot be trusted: “for almost 20 years, the Iranian regime hid many of its key nuclear efforts from the international community. Yet the regime continues to claim that it does not seek to develop nuclear weapons” (ibid). Just as the case was with Iraq, the imputed character of Iran’s rulers precludes any possibility for trust or good faith. Instead, their “true intentions are clearly revealed by the regime’s refusal to negotiate in good faith...” (ibid).

Within the logic of the strategy, the problem with Iran is not destructive technology, it is the regime itself: “as important as are these nuclear issues, the United States has broader concerns regarding Iran. The Iranian regime sponsors terrorism; threatens Israel; seeks to thwart Middle East peace; disrupts democracy in Iraq; and denies the aspirations of its people for freedom” (ibid). Ultimately, Iran is an enemy of freedom, with which there can be no compromise: “the United States...[makes] no distinction between those who commit acts of terror and those who support and harbor them...Any government that chooses to be an ally of terror, such as...Iran, has chosen to be an *enemy of freedom, justice and peace*. The world must hold those regimes to account” (p. 12, emphasis added). Thus, peace and the end of terrorism will only occur if the regime itself is changed: “the nuclear issue and our other concerns can ultimately be resolved only if the Iranian regime makes the strategic decision to change these policies,

open up its political system, and afford freedom to its people. This is the ultimate goal of U.S. policy” (ibid). Bush thus shifts the calculus for regime change from whether a state pursues dangerous technology into a question of the regime’s democratic content.

Both the rhetoric and internal policies of the Bush administration unfolded along the totalizing trajectory established by the strategy. In an address on September 5, 2006, Bush laid out the scope of the threat, linking the behavior of the Iranian regime to the extremism of Sunni terrorists like Al Qaeda. This study has thus far sought to engage with the NSS 2006 solely at the level of its own textual terms. Turning to this September 5 address is now necessary because it represents an instance where the Bush administration is carrying the terms of NSS 2006 beyond the boundaries of the document. In other words, it should offer evidence for how the terms of NSS 2006 influenced the actual pursuit of policy.

Bush begins the speech by laying out in exacting detail the nature of the Sunni extremist threat: “The terrorists who attacked us on September the 11th, 2001, are men without conscience –but they're not madmen. These al Qaeda terrorists and those who share their ideology are violent Sunni extremists...They hope to establish a violent political utopia across the Middle East...” (Bush 2006, par. 10). This utopia, or “caliphate”, “would be a totalitarian Islamic empire encompassing all current and former Muslim lands...” (par. 11). The extremist Sunni threat is described perfectly within the moral register of good versus evil. These “radicals have declared their uncompromising hostility to freedom” (par. 14), and the United States is all that stands in the way of them realizing their vision (par. 17). Given their extreme nature and violent utopian goals, “it is foolish to think that you can negotiate with them” (par. 14). It is not the purpose or

intent to explore the accuracy of Bush's threat description, but to understand the terms of its content. It is clear that the particular terrorist threat represented by Al Qaeda is a dire threat because of their proven capacity for destruction and stated unwillingness to compromise at any level. They are truly a force of evil, according to Bush.

This brief digression from the subject of Iran is necessary to appreciate what occurs next in the address. Judging the accuracy or value of Bush's description of Al Qaeda is not my intention; it very well could be accurate and sound. What is relevant for my purposes is to understand the category of threat that Bush uses Al Qaeda to establish: unbridled evil that cannot be negotiated with (only eliminated). This characterization is important to keep squarely in mind as he proceeds in the speech to identify the Iranian regime with the threat of Al Qaeda.

Bush lays out a second threat of Islamic extremism, this one from Shia Muslims: "As we continue to fight Al Qaeda and these Sunni extremists...we also face the threat posed by Shia extremists, who are learning from Al Qaeda..." (par. 30). In a single sentence, Bush condenses the entire history behind the 1979 Iranian revolution into a solitary act wherein a group of radicals seized control of a previously proud democracy: "in 1979, [the Shia extremists] took control of a major power, the nation of Iran, subjugating its proud people to a regime of tyranny, and using that nation's resources to fund the spread of terror and pursue their radical agenda" (ibid). It is this same regime that is now "pursuing nuclear weapons", the consequences of which are unthinkable. Bush argues that an Iran "armed with nuclear weapons...would blackmail the free world, and spread their ideologies of hate, and raise a *mortal threat* to the American people" (Bush 2006, par. 37, emphasis added).

How is it that Bush can credibly claim that a nuclear-armed Iran constitutes a *mortal* threat that cannot be tolerated? His central method of proof throughout the entire speech centers upon taking an enemy's words at face value: "history teaches that underestimating the words of evil and ambitious men is a terrible mistake...Bin Laden and his terrorist allies have made their intentions as clear as Lenin and Hitler before them" (par. 26-27). Thus, Bush dedicates considerable time in the address detailing the words of Al Qaeda leaders and the content of captured charters and plans for the terrorist organization. His proof is decidedly weaker when it comes to linking Iran's nuclear program to an ideology that would justify aggressive nuclear use against the United States or its allies. Bush argues that "the Iranian regime and its terrorist proxies have demonstrated their willingness to kill Americans—and now the Iranian regime is pursuing nuclear weapons" (par. 35). The inference he makes seeks to link the nuclear program to activities which kill Americans, yet the evidence offered cannot justify this inference. Bush cites Iranian assistance to the terrorist organization Hezbollah and claims they are "directly responsible for the murder of hundreds of Americans abroad" (par. 31). He also lists numerous statements by Iran's president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, none of which contain clear willingness to either develop or use nuclear weapons in any way (par. 33). Bush appears to be conflating the group of Shia clerics who seized power in 1979 with the recently elected populist president, who is a relatively marginal figure and holds no decision-making authority in Iran's foreign policy or military affairs (Posen 2006; Bahgat 2007; Hagerty 2008).

The crucial move that enables Bush to claim that Iran's nuclear program poses a mortal threat occurs when he links the two threats together. He notes that they have

parallel aims; “like Al Qaeda and the Sunni extremists, the Iranian regime has clear aims” (par. 31). Not only are the threats posed similar, but the magnitude of the consequences is comparable: “This Shia strain of Islamic radicalism is *just as* dangerous, and *just as* hostile to America, and *just as* determined to establish its brand of hegemony across the broader Middle East” (par. 30, emphasis added). In fact, while they represent two very different Islamic traditions that date back centuries, they are the very same threat in the logic of Bush: “The Shia and Sunni extremists represent different faces of the same threat. They draw inspiration from different sources, but both seek to impose a dark vision of violent Islamic radicalism across the Middle East. They oppose the advance of freedom, and they want to gain control of weapons of mass destruction” (par. 36). Thus, Bush is able to conjoin two very different and distinct threats and substitute terms in his equation as he sees fit. Sunni/Al Qaeda extremism is more deadly because there is an enormous body of evidence that such terrorists will stop at nothing but total destruction and do not fear their own death. At the same time however, Shia/Iran extremism is more deadly because they wield the power of a large, resource-rich state with a large population. When the equation is ultimately condensed, Bush has posited an enemy that cannot be negotiated with, has considerable power, and seeks nuclear weapons as a tool to carry out its deadly utopian goal of establishing a global caliphate. Yet this enemy only exists in the rhetorical synthesis created by Bush. By most estimates, Iran’s pursuit of nuclear weapons (if it is engaged in such a pursuit) was based upon rational fears of regime change; any such arsenal would be small, well protected, and defensive in nature (Sadr 2005; Posen 2006; Starobin 2006; Colby 2007; Waltz, Sagan & Betts 2007).

When the terms of one's analysis constructs such an enemy, there can be no negotiating, however. The ruling logic of democracy will brook no compromise with evil; it must be eliminated. The Bush administration's insistence on ratcheting up pressure against Iran's government, levying sanctions and requiring that conditions be met before negotiations could take place locked both sides into an escalating cycle of brinkmanship that ultimately consolidated hard-line elements within the Iranian regime over the next few years (Slavin 2007). The irony was that this escalation offered proof of Iran's intransigence while the strategy of NSS 2006 helped to ensure this very response. Bush expressed the equation between magnitude and certainty in a press conference in October of 2007, stating that "if you're interested in avoiding World War III, it seems like you ought to be interested in preventing [Iran] from having the knowledge necessary to make a nuclear weapon" (Stolberg 2007, p. 6). Again, Bush links a high magnitude outcome (the outbreak of global war), to the persistence of uncertainty; the mere possession of *knowledge* is sufficient to constitute a mortal threat.

Of course, there was no forcible regime change or military action carried out against Iran during the second term of the Bush administration. As Burke notes however, the principle perfection (thankfully) does not guarantee the actual fulfillment of the final battle between good and evil. Speaking in context of the "perfect" standoff of the Cold War, he notes that "there is the chance that the problem...also contains enough elements of self-cancellation to keep things from coming to a perfect fulfillment in a perfect Apocalyptic holocaust" (Burke 1966, p. 21). In other words, enough "political patchwork here and there", as well as some luck and chance, can interfere so that "there's not enough 'symmetrical perfection' among the contestants to set up the 'right' alignment

and touch it off” (p. 20). In the instance of Iran, one such event occurred in late 2007 that helped to dramatically deflate the administration’s building case for military action: the declassification and release of a “National Intelligence Estimate” (NIE) on Iran’s capabilities and intentions with their nuclear program. Released on December 3, the NIE “[judges] with high confidence that in fall 2003, Tehran halted its nuclear weapons program” (NIE 2007, p. 5). The NIE jarred the administration, throwing up massive hurdles to any plans for military action and undercutting support for other hard-line political measures like sanctions (Meyers 2007). Even with such a blow to their public case, the Bush administration attempted to adapt to the report. Bush himself publicly distanced himself from the publication (Harris 2007) and continued to speak harshly of Iran, claiming they were a “threat to peace” (Weisman 2008).

The absence of war breaking out between the United States and Iran during the last half of the Bush administration’s final term seems largely to have occurred *in spite* of the strategy espoused in NSS 2006, not *because* of it. Ample evidence suggests that the world came frighteningly close to such an outcome between 2006 and 2008. Flynt Leverett, a member of the National Security Council during Bush’s first term remarked in an interview that “If you get all those elements coming together, say in the first half of '08, what is this president going to do? I think there is a serious risk he would decide to order an attack on the Iranian nuclear installations and probably a wider target zone” (quoted in Richardson 2007). In subsequent years, Cheney has disclosed that he lead a contingent within the administration in favor of exercising a military strike against Iran in the waning days of the President’s term (Phillips 2009). By shrinking the range of available options and tilting the risk calculus so heavily in the favor of forcible regime

change, the logical parameters of NSS 2006 nearly achieved perfection in the outbreak of a potentially catastrophic war between the United States and Iran.

## **Conclusion**

The symbolic terms of the Bush administration's foreign policy, as set forth in NSS 2006, substantially undercuts the nation's security for three reasons. First, the central dramatic tension in the document identifies all friends, enemies or threats with either side of a central agon. One is either on the side of freedom or entirely against it. Second, this primary level of identification overwhelmingly determines what constitutes a tolerable threat as well as what counts as an effective response by the United States. As a result, piecemeal solutions or gradual attempts at threat mitigation are pushed to the margins in favor of drastic regime change policies bent on eliminating tyranny from the world entirely. Third, these preceding factors all but guarantee that such a strategy will produce the ends that it seeks to avoid. As the case study of Iran has shown, the terministic goals of the Bush administration established a set of assumptions that posited some outcomes as necessary or inevitable. Because Bush's particular screen coded every motive or act against a deeper agon of democracy/tyranny, any alternative explanations for Iran's behavior were dismissed. The notion that Iran's nuclear program was designed for defensive reasons or energy production was deemed implausible because it did not comport with the motives that were attributed to Iran by the terms of the strategy. The dispersion of Iranian nuclear sites couldn't have been a possible precaution against a surgical air strike akin to what Israel accomplished in 1981 against Iraq's Osiraq reactor; it could only be explained as an attempt to hide from the world the nefarious intentions of the Iranian regime. In the end, the regime could meet no burden of proof other than

collective suicide or total surrender of their power. As such, the Bush administration knew well in advance that any negotiations would break down and they prepared themselves for another war in the Middle East. Both the United States and the world was exceptionally lucky that war did not result, but it was frighteningly close to becoming a reality.

Burke's perfection principle is very helpful in explaining how the terms and equations bound up in the symbolic logic of NSS 2006 carried themselves to the end of the line and replicated that logic in the actual policy execution of the Bush administration. Examining the document with an eye for how these terministic assumptions cluster and guide disclose a certain perspective to the critic. Simply taking the different arguments present at face value might be misleading, or at least incomplete. Such a perspective can place too much value on author intention. If the administration says they are pursuing a moderate, multilateral foreign policy, then that is where such an analysis ends. Alternatively, even if such policies are advocated for by genuine conviction, analyzing their rhetorical expression enables a better understanding for how symbol usage can influence policy arguments. By looking for evidence of entelechy or symbolic perfection on the other hand, the rhetorical critic is able to normatively judge a specific strategy as well as highlight the interactions between the terms of the symbolic action at work and the realm of policymaking. In the case of NSS 2006, the central dramatic theme, or constitutive agon, between democracy and tyranny almost entirely took over and inhabited the strategy contained within the document. In the instance of the administration's approach to Iran and their nuclear program, this entelechial principle

guided the administration towards the ultimate policy of forcible regime change while setting up more moderate strategies for failure.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

### Introduction

At the outset of this study, I identified three major goals that a rhetorical analysis of the 2006 National Security Strategy (NSS) might hopefully accomplish. The primary goal was to achieve a better understanding of the function that NSSs serve as public statements of American foreign policy. Second, I hoped to establish an understanding of NSS 2006 in particular because it had been mostly ignored by scholars from a variety of disciplines. I especially hoped to clarify its relationship to the first 2002 NSS of the Bush administration. Lastly, I sought to explore the dynamic boundary between policy formation and rhetoric. The present chapter's purpose is to articulate the lessons learned from this study by measuring the findings against these three initial goals.

These questions will each be addressed through three sections of analysis. First, I will attempt to synthesize the specific findings of this study and advance some implications. Specifically, I argue that NSS 2006 and, in turn, the foreign policy of George W. Bush's second term, shared similar characteristics in policy content but differed significantly in its rhetorical expression compared to the strategy of the first term (via NSS 2002). This rhetorical expression is particularly dangerous because it is both broader-reaching and impinges upon open public argument and deliberation. The second section attempts to reflect upon the selected methodology for the analysis, assessing both the strengths and limitations of narrative and Burkean modes of rhetorical criticism for the study of foreign policy documents. Finally, I will conclude by highlighting some future areas of study that should be addressed in light of the findings of the analysis of NSS 2006.

## **Synthesis and Implications**

A close analysis of NSS 2006 brings three key features into focus. First, it is a rhetorical adaptation by the Bush administration to address several failures of their original 2002 strategy. NSS 2002 operated from a motive of power. The Bush administration argued that the world had arrived at a crucial moment that enabled the United States to quickly and surgically eliminate the last few vestiges of evil from the world and thus consolidate the “window of opportunity” into an enduring era of democratic peace. As the credibility of this narrative evaporated in the deserts of Iraq over the next several years, the Bush administration was faced with a twin exigence: adapt the strategy to account for the failures while still defending the policies that characterized the original Bush Doctrine. Thus, the administration recast the underlying narrative that gave their foreign policy credibility and coherence. Bush did so by replacing the original motive of power with the motive of democracy. This new narrative theme altered the stage of the plot of history and reconstructed the characters within. Instead of standing at the cusp of a new era of peace, the heroic figure of the United States finds itself at the beginning of a new episode in a much longer saga: the battle between the democratic forces of good against the forces of tyranny and evil. This new dramatic theme enabled the Bush administration to provide a narrative that struck a balance between the two competing exigencies. The new narrative centered around a dramatic agon credibly accounted for the limitations of American power that were exposed during the first Bush term while carving out space for the same policies to be exercised.

Second, the constitutive agon that provides narrative coherence to the assortment of specific policies argued for in NSS 2006 functions as a strong nexus of motives that works to break down the policies and rearrange them in ways that prioritize some outcomes over others. The document advances two broad strategic goals: eliminating tyranny and promoting democracy. While the articulation of the latter reflects a long American foreign policy tradition, as well as much of the nuance and key hedges that are advanced in political science circles, the rhetorical expression of the former subordinates the goals of democracy promotion and multilateralism to the much more extreme goal of eradicating all tyranny from the world. An analysis of the pivotal terms in the document and their associated clusters reveals a set of equations that orders all actors, actions, policies and motives along a dividing axis between the god figure of democracy and the devil figure of tyranny. Thus, even though NSS 2006 dedicates considerable time advancing explicit arguments in favor of democracy promotion and multilateralism—two familiar and powerful touchstones among moderate and liberal foreign policy authorities—the underlying dramatic agon prioritizes a set of policies that are inimical to the actualization of either.

Third, the strategy espoused by NSS 2006 made the United States and the world less safe, largely because of its rhetorical expression. NSS 2006 posits a set of terministic parameters that ultimately produce the very outcomes the strategy seeks to prevent. Because threats are coded almost exclusively according to their identification along the axis of freedom and tyranny, policies that emphasize pragmatic negotiations or diplomacy are either disregarded entirely or rigged for failure. Furthermore, the magnitude of threat is linked to the existence of tyranny in a manner that makes

compromise or even muddling through impossible. The terms thus exhibit a strong tendency to seek out their own implications. This is especially true when one considers how the Bush administration approached the problem of WMD proliferation and Iran's nuclear program during the last three years of the second term.

At first glance, these findings may seem to largely confirm or repeat what rhetorical scholarship has already told us about the Bush administration and NSS 2002. After all, I had contended in the first chapter that the extant corpus of scholarship had tended to focus on the Manichean dualism that inhabits much of Bush's rhetoric while neglecting an examination of how the administration transformed or adapted itself during its second term. If NSS 2006 is also dangerous and dualistic, what value can be taken away from the study of it? On this question, I think there are two clear and important dimensions that the present study addresses which are necessary to fully understand the arc of the Bush administration's foreign policy rhetoric over all eight years of its tenure.

Even if the dualistic and controversial elements are largely continuous with the Bush administration's first term and strategy, the rhetorical expression of these elements has clearly changed for some very important audiences. Harsh critics of the original Bush doctrine and esteemed professors of International Relations thought NSS 2006 accomplished an almost complete reversal in the strategic thinking of the Bush administration, abandoning a strategy that emphasized the unilateral exercise of power and military force in favor of one which relied upon concerted international action and the pragmatic promotion of democracy. Clear evidence for this view exists within the text of NSS 2006. Yet one can also find every element that these same critics found

controversial or dangerous embedded in the newer document. The problematic elements of NSS 2006 were clearly not salient issues in the minds of this audience.

There are two large consequences for how we understand the link between strategy and public argument. When policies are rhetorically associated with familiar themes and touchstones for an audience, these same touchstones will in turn guide the audience towards a conclusion that they find acceptable. I have suggested earlier that the arguments appealing to democracy promotion and multilateralism in NSS 2006 functioned as ideographs for moderate policy audiences. These “floating signifiers” functioned as value-laden touchstones that this audience keyed into, filling in the particular content of Bush’s policies with meanings that appealed to their specific values. The use of these ideographs were powerful shapers of public opinion, influencing their final judgments on NSS 2006 in a manner that overlooked controversial content that they had previously been opposed to. This function can best be described as ideological. By couching policy arguments within a familiar narrative theme and explicitly establishing a preference for more moderate policies of democracy promotion and multilateralism, the Bush administration was able to effectively disarm public opposition to its original policies. Thus, if a dualistic worldview and controversial policies were carried over from the 2002 NSS, the 2006 document rhetorically deploys itself in a way that is more immune to criticism and scrutiny.

The second way that NSS 2006 affected deliberation for the worse is revealed through the analysis of entelechy. Policy choices within the terms of the strategy were entelechially guided to privilege some outcomes over others. By establishing the entire strategy around a polarizing agon, the Bush administration effectively tied its own hands.

It is certainly possible that the Bush administration advanced arguments in favor of democracy promotion and multilateralism out of a sincere conviction regarding their necessity and utility. However, the terministic parameters of NSS 2006 were cast in such dramatic terms that policy choices were entelechially rotten. The foundational agon between democracy and tyranny, between good and evil, shifted the ground on which any open policy deliberation could take place by foreclosing upon some alternatives entirely and emphasizing policies of regime change under the rubric of eliminating all tyranny from the world.

Finally, the dualistic split in Bush's rhetoric occurs at a further-reaching level that subsumes all elements in the foreign policy universe. The difference in the central themes between NSS 2002 and NSS 2006 best illustrates this point. While NSS 2002 clearly draws upon dualistic binaries separating "us" and "them", the "them" is largely identified with the specific threat represented by transnational terrorist networks (primarily Al Qaeda). NSS 2006 detaches the threat from the specific injustice of 9/11 and instead condenses the 9/11 attacks into just another episode in the timeless narrative of the dialectic between the forces of good and the forces of evil. This new equation subsumes all foreign policy choices, not simply the specific tactics for handling proliferation and terrorism. Whether or not an actor or state is identified with the United States becomes the ultimate acid test for whether that same actor or state is morally legitimate. Thus, even if NSS 2006 contains a panoply of foreign policy tools that fall well short of the use of military force, they are *all* couched in terms of achieving regime change. This in turn reinforces cycles of interaction that escalate closer to the level of

military force because *only* replacement of a regime or enemy government entirely will suffice to fulfill the ultimate goals of the strategy.

### **Strengths and Limitations of Study**

This study has proven very valuable for understanding the function of NSSs and the relationship between rhetoric and foreign policy. In terms of strengths, the examination of NSS 2006 has helped to meaningfully clarify the nature of a public strategy document like the NSS. Even though it will never function as an ideal blueprint, critical attention should be paid to the NSS; it engages in a method of policy argument that is primarily rhetorical. By constituting and disseminating a particular worldview, the NSS offers a vehicle for an administration to construct particular understandings to justify its policies and achieve the identification of specific audiences with those policies. Furthermore, the text of an NSS is a rich resource that offers an access point into the specific nexus of motives that characterizes a particular presidency. Understanding the NSS as a method of symbolic action allows the critic to grasp what moves the president to defend some policy over others, as well as their attitudes towards the public, their political opponents, or the world writ large. Finally, the rhetorical study of these documents provides a normative avenue for judging strategy. While traditional policy analysis provides a diverse and proven panoply of tools for engaging in this as well, the study of the document's rhetorical expression provides a unique insight into how an NSS engages with an audience and enables (or disables) the prospects for better deliberation and policy choices.

This study is not without its limitations, however. First, the claims of the immediately preceding paragraph must be tempered somewhat. The direct examination

of NSS 2006 was clearly called for considering the lack of critical attention it had received, but the examination of only one document within one single administration qualifies the force of generalizations that can be applied to the entire category of NSSs. While the conclusions are judged to be valid for understanding the 2006 document and the Bush administration itself, a larger focus is needed to extend these conclusions much further. Second, there are intrinsic limitations to the study of any NSS. The document is generated by drafting committees and goes through several rounds of revisions before finally reaching the President and his highest circle of advisors. Fully capturing the spirit and purpose of particular arguments or changes requires a level of epistemic disclosure that is simply not available to the critic. While more archival information may become available as time passes, the private context surrounding the generation of the NSS will remain out of sight. This is a limitation that is likely to persist for some time.

The specific methods of rhetorical analysis that were employed were likewise helpful but also challenging. Analyzing the document at the level of narrative was extremely useful as a first cut. Separating the content peculiar to NSS 2006 from that which was shared between it and NSS 2002 required a method that could isolate the underlying theme that gave overall coherence to the assorted lot of policy tools and tactics that were oftentimes identical or very similar in each document. The notions of narrative fidelity and probability also helpfully explain why NSS 2006 reverberated so positively among foreign policy experts who were previously critical of many of the same policies in NSS 2002. The narrative theme of the 2006 document aligned with dominant perceptions of the failures of the first Bush administration and articulated a view of American power and policy that was more familiar with the audience. While this

method of analysis achieved necessary and useful insights, it exhausted itself. The narrative categories of probability and fidelity were not helpful in understanding the specific content of the policies within the document or how they related to the theme. It also lacked a mechanism for normatively assessing the terms of the strategy.

For these latter two questions, a Burkean analysis proved itself useful. The dramatic theory of language is especially well suited to the examination of foreign policy rhetoric because questions of security, war and peace are intrinsically moral categories that often assume a dualist expression in American war rhetoric. Analyzing the pivotal terms and their associated clusters enabled me to understand how the Bush administration was able to advance policies that often contradicted or competed with each other. The theory of entelechy was also helpful in understanding why the actual rhetoric of Bush still strongly resembled the Manichean dualism of his first term, even though he was espousing policy arguments that were traditionally moderate and pragmatic. Mapping the terms and logical positions of NSS 2006 helps to explain the extreme and uncompromising approach that the Bush administration undertook towards Iran's nuclear program.

Just as Burke sees both opportunity and danger in language however, there were certain dangers associated with such a far-reaching theory of language as symbolic action. Recourse to Burke's theoretical account of dramatism and symbol-usage calls into question the traditionally privileged position of the critic. Just as Bush tends to hunt out the implications of his terministic screen in NSS 2006, it is possible that a dramatic analysis may similarly hunt down the posited implications of the theory, finding evidence of entelechy and dramatism where there may be none. While this danger is ever present,

close fidelity to the explicit terms within NSS 2006 with recourse to public speeches and disclosed statements of the administration has hopefully avoided this risk. At least as it regards Iran, I judge confidently that there is ample evidence linking the terms of NSS 2006 and the public rhetoric of the Bush administration to suggest that entelechy was a governing principle in their approach to WMD proliferation. The danger that Burke may ultimately end up “using” my own analysis may never entirely disappear, but the analytic payout justifies the use of the methodology in this instance.

### **Directions for Future Research**

While the findings for this study are valuable, there are several questions that still persist regarding the relationship between a document like the NSS and rhetoric. As I stated previously, limitations in focus greatly constrain our ability to make generalizations about the concept of the NSS itself or foreign policy rhetoric. This study of NSS 2006 was extremely enlightening for understanding the Bush administration, especially during the second term of the presidency. What remains to be seen, however, is how much of the rhetorical force of NSS 2006 is attributable to the unique circumstances surrounding that document, or that presidency as opposed to those associated with more general functions of strategy making or the rhetorical nature of the presidency. There is thus ample room for future research. This section will briefly advance a few questions that future work in this area should explore.

First, is the dramatic expression of NSS 2006 a feature that is peculiar to the Bush administration, or are there alternative methods for constituting a national security worldview? In other words, is there an NSS that exists that is not so clearly given over to agonistic divisions between friends and enemies? Of immediate interest is the possible

direction that the first NSS of President Barack Obama might go. At the time of writing, the administration has yet to release their first NSS. It is well behind schedule but rumored to be near completion (Witte 2010). There is some tentative evidence to suggest that Obama's foreign policy may offer an alternative to Bush's totalizing impulse towards dramatic conflict and dualist binaries of good and evil. Ivie and Giner argue that in the 2008 election, Obama alone offered a national security rhetoric grounded in practical concerns for social justice and collective problem solving while all other candidates' speeches that dealt with foreign policy and security exhibited the same shades of Manichaeism that characterized Bush (Ivie and Giner 2009). Whether that conclusion bears itself out within the text of Obama's actual NSS will have to be addressed when it is made publicly available.

Second, how did other clear agonistic divisions in the world influence the rhetorical expression of other NSSs in the past? The second half of the twentieth century was marked by the bipolar division of the Cold War; the agonistic arrangement between the forces of democracy and capitalism against the Soviet and Communist threat served as the organizing principle for nearly all foreign policies and their attendant rhetoric. Tracing the relationship between this agon and the NSSs of Reagan and the first Bush administration may tell us more about dramatic rhetoric and foreign policy rhetoric. The Reagan and Bush NSSs span the pivotal years of 1987 through 1992 and the administrations share many of the same key players. A rhetorical analysis of this period's strategic documents may shed some light on the particular functions of dramatism in foreign policy rhetoric by enabling comparisons between the agon of the Cold War and the agon of the War on Terrorism. As the Cold War gave way, Bush and

Clinton may have sought to craft a new foreign policy narrative through their own NSSs. A longitudinal analysis of these NSSs may prove very fruitful in the future.

Third, what is the relationship between the NSS and other similar policy and strategy documents? The NSS sits at the head of a large group of similar documents, such as the National Defense Strategy, the Quadrennial Defense Review, and the National Military Strategy. This group of documents also may exhibit some of the same rhetorical attributes that characterizes the NSS. As one moves away from the NSS and towards these subsidiary documents, more and more policy detail and specificity occurs. A close study of the linkages between the group of security documents may illuminate the dynamic boundary between policy-making and rhetoric.

### **Conclusion**

Ample ground exists for expanding the present study of NSS 2006 outward to encompass a broader understanding of foreign policy rhetoric and the rhetoric of strategy making. While these final questions are beyond reach presently, the prospects for future research are encouraging. Despite the inherent limitations of such a short examination, many of the lessons learned from NSS 2006 have immediate relevance for those interested in the relationship between foreign policy and presidential rhetoric. It can sometimes be insufficient to evaluate an administration's foreign policy strategy at the level of explicit argumentation. On face, NSS 2006 does indeed closely resemble many of the same moderate appeals that characterized any of the Clinton NSSs; there seems to be a genuine response to many of the fierce critics of the original Bush Doctrine. A rhetorical analysis reveals much more at work within the document, insights that come clearly into focus when one attends to the narrative level of the document and begins to

think of the NSS not as a policy blueprint, but as a work of symbolic action. Adopting such a critical attitude towards strategy documents allows one to fully appreciate the force that rhetoric contains. Not only can the rhetoric and symbolic terms used by a president justify or cloak a particular policy, it can also shape and condition the meaning and salience of particular policy approaches.

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