

At War with Words



# Language, Power and Social Process 10

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War is sweet to those who have not experienced it.

*Erasmus*



## **Preface: Language as forms of death**

*Michael Billig*

At the time of writing, it is commonplace to hear people say that the world has changed since September 11, 2001. After two hijacked planes destroyed the New York World Trade Center, with a loss of life that still has not been fully calculated, this thought has been expressed by pundits on the media and in countless ordinary conversations. It is not clear to speakers exactly how the world might have changed. The details are secondary to the conviction that something altered irreversibly as the world watched those pictures of the doomed planes, the collapsing buildings and the shocked faces on the streets of New York.

Clausewitz's famous maxim of war being just an extension of politics seemed inappropriate, for the horror of September 11, 2001 appeared to catch normal politics unaware. The regular words of party advantage had little significance in relation to those images of suffering and destruction. This was no time for spin-doctors and image consultants to be "playing politics", especially in the United States. Nor was party advantage to be sought when American planes, in response, were bombing Afghanistan from the skies and the elite troops were fighting on the ground. There was even a minor rhetorical miracle that illustrated the suspension of political routines. Previously when President Bush spoke, he would appear time and again helplessly lost in mid-sentence, having dispatched out his verbs before securing his end point. Suddenly this did not matter. The politician, elected by a minority of voters after some dodgy business in Florida, was transformed into a national leader, standing above differences of caucus and party.

There are, however, limits to miracles. The gift of fluency cannot be bestowed even to the leader of the "civilized" world. But now, when Bush's sentences hover at their mid-point, awaiting

grammatical rescue, his audiences can see this as a sign that their President is sharing their own emotions.

Could any event have so dramatically signalled the limitations of a trend in social scientific thinking in the past twenty years? So many academics have been asserting the primacy of discourse, as if everything could be contained within texts, whose deeper meaning demand expert decoding. The textual thesis seems at home in a world of sound-bites, slogans and nightly verbal spins. Politicians and academics know that words are their business: they are never at a loss to construct phrases. Yet, with the suspension of party politics and the silent horror of the televised images, it seemed as if the old contrast between words and things had been brutally re-established. Words had become once more “mere words”, incapable of expressing what was being felt. Reporters on the scene would say that words cannot do justice to the horror. Certainly words – “mere words” – could not right the destruction nor soothe the loss of the grieving. Something beyond words – the physicality of planes, velocity and bodies – had disrupted the familiar world. We can’t just talk, it was said. Something must be done.

However the papers, which Mirjana Dedaić and Daniel Nelson have so judiciously gathered together in this timely volume, point in an opposite direction. They argue that it is too simple to contrast words and war, as if the facts of war stand at a deeper level of reality than the superficiality of rhetoric. As Daniel Nelson states so expressively in the concluding chapter, human conflict begins and ends with talk and text. In the period after the attack in New York and before the bombing of Afghanistan, there were words and more words. Behind the scenes, Bush was consulting with his military, political and diplomatic advisors. He was regularly phoning other leaders. The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom was boarding plane after plane to meet politicians across the world to build an alliance. When hands had been shaken and the photographs had been taken of those shaken hands, what did Blair and the leaders do? Doors were closed and they talked. And talked. This was necessary for the deals to be done, before the bombers could be dispatched (by

more words – in this case the words of command and technical expertise). After the bombing started, then came the nightly rhetorical spinning: claims about civilian casualties had to be minimized, the evil of the enemy emphasised and the certainty of victory stressed. The public could not be trusted to interpret the images of the conflict unaided; they required rhetorical guidance. The grainy pictures of targets and bomb craters did not tell their own stories. The world had *not* completely changed.

To understand the relations between language and war, it is not sufficient merely to point to the use of words in warfare. As the contributors to this volume show so convincingly, there can be no war without communication. Warfare demands organization and mobilization, as well as the circulation of beliefs about the enemy and justifications for the need to kill and die. To explore these matters further, it is necessary to reformulate traditional psychological assumptions about human nature, particularly those relating to the links between language and emotion.

Historically, the contrast between war and language is a variant of an early psychological distinction between primitive instinct and higher thought. In late nineteenth and twentieth century psychologies such a distinction was commonplace. Reason was contrasted with emotion. It was generally thought that the human psyche was split between primitive, instinctual elements and higher conceptual ones. Warfare was seen as an expression of biological instinct while “civilization”, or social order, depended upon the higher non-instinctual realm. For example, William McDougall, who wrote the first textbook in social psychology, expressed such views in his book *The Group Mind* (1920). Under normal circumstances, the demands of social life curtail basic, or “primitive”, impulses. McDougall, who had definite ideas about a hierarchy of civilizations, believed that the most civilized nations demand the greatest control of impulses. However, under conditions of emotional intensity, the psychology of men (and McDougall was primarily writing about men) alters and the higher forces give way to the lower instincts. If the complexities of language belong to the higher rungs of civilization, then the chaos of

war sees an unleashing of the lower wordless, formless instinctual impulses.

Freud was greatly attracted to this aspect of McDougall's ideas, quoting them in his book *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1985a). Like McDougall, Freud emphasised a contrast between civilization and instinct. In times of war, the control over the primitive instinctual forces is loosened. Freud discussed such themes in his famous letter on war to Einstein. Freud argued that it was too simple to attribute wars to conflicts of interests. Psychological forces, especially "a lust for aggression and destruction", must be at work (Freud 1985b: 357). Again the image is that war is an expression of primeval urges, although Freud was too sophisticated a thinker to suggest that only a simple instinct for aggression was involved. The protection against war, argued Freud, was through knowledge of the unconscious instinctual forces that drive human behaviour. The relevant knowledge was to be gained through language. As Freud stressed, nothing happens in the psychoanalytic situation except that people talk. Only by the reasoned talk of the ego would it be possible to understand and control the dangerous forces of the instincts.

In an important critique, the social psychologist Henri Tajfel referred to instinctual theories of warfare as "blood-and-guts theories" (Tajfel 1981; see Billig [in press] for an appreciation of Tajfel's critique of instinctual theories). At the time of writing during the 1960s, Tajfel was drawing attention to the popularity of quasi-biological, post-Freudian ideas in best-selling books such as those by the Nobel prize-winner biologist Konrad Lorenz, as well as those by popularising Freudians. As Tajfel so devastatingly argued, such biological theories suggest that humans have a constant need to aggress, and, as such, the instinctual theories cannot show why warfare waxes and wanes – why the so-called innate instinct sometimes expresses itself in war and sometimes does not. The seeming profundity of theories that cite inborn needs and impulses is helpless when confronted with the messy details of human history.

Tajfel, in criticising the blood-and-guts approaches, formulated a decisive shift in psychological thinking. However, his contribution to

psychological thinking has been undeservedly neglected by social scientists beyond the particular specialism of social psychology. Tajfel argued that the seeming irrationality of phenomena such as prejudice and war have key cognitive, rather than emotional, roots. Warfare depends upon beliefs about one's own group and about the enemy. There must be a categorization of the world into "us" and "them". However, such categorization reflects wider processes of thought. As Tajfel argued, human knowledge generally depends on categorization, for categories provide meaning. Because humans are driven, above all, by the desire to understand their world, they cannot but use categories to impart sense. The very act of categorization, however, implies distinction and exaggeration. We tend to assume that instances of categories are more similar than they actually are and more different than instances of other categories. Tajfel suggested that social categories are no different from physical categories in this regard. Without social categories there could be no sense of social identity and the categories of "our" identity only make sense because there are categories that denote "others". Thus, social categories imply distinctions between social groups and the exaggerations of categorization provide the basis for stereotyping others. As the categories of ingroups and outgroups become salient and meaningful, so the distinctiveness between "us" and "them" is psychologically exaggerated.

If the role of categorization is recognized, argued Tajfel, it is unnecessary to postulate instinctual, blood-and-guts forces in order to understand the basis of prejudice and the psychological origins of warfare. Tajfel's insight leads to a psychological paradox. The apparent irrationality of war is not the product of irrational psychological drives, but is the outcome of the seemingly rational human propensity to make sense of the social world. Clausewitz is implicitly reinstated. When Bush and the majority of the American people advocated the bombing of Afghanistan after September 11 2001, they were not responding to a release of innate, instinctual urges. Their collective response was based upon understandings of the social world, which involved a heightened sense of "us" and

“them”. As Bush said a number of times in the days and weeks following the destruction of the World Trade Center, “if you’re not with us in the war against terrorism, you’re against us”.

Perhaps one reason why Tajfel’s approach has been comparatively neglected outside of social psychology is because of the way that he and many subsequent social psychological theorists understood the notion of categorization. All too often a perceptual model of categorization, rather than a rhetorical model, has been adopted (Billig 1985, 1996; Potter and Wetherell 1987). As Edwards has argued, categories are for talking: they are part of language (Edwards 1991). If factors such as social identity and stereotyping are based on categorization and if categorization is itself part of language-use, then the psychological factors underlying prejudice will themselves be rooted in language. After all, when Bush was declaring that “if you’re not with us in the war against terrorism, you’re against us” he was using language.

Recently, a number of social psychologists have been developing a discursive approach, that points to the key importance of language in human affairs (see, for instance, Antaki 1994; Billig 1996; Edwards 1997; Edwards and Potter 1992; Harré and Gillett 1994; Parker 1992; Potter 1996; Potter and Wetherell 1987). Discursive psychology claims that many of the phenomena that social psychologists have studied are constituted within language. For instance, social identities, prejudice, stereotyping depend upon utterances. That being so, psychological insight will not be gained by postulating internal cognitive or emotional processes that cannot be directly observed. Instead psychologists should be studying the rhetorical details and complexities of utterances that form the basis of social psychological phenomena. One of the key implications of this approach has been to question the conventional distinction between thought and emotion or between cognitive and affective processes. Emotions have their discursive basis: without talk we would be unable to display and recognize emotions such as jealousy, indignation, and embarrassment (Billig 1999; Edwards 1997; Harré and Parrott 1996; Lutz 1990). The talk is not an epiphenomenon, as if

the emotions really exist wordlessly within the individual's body. Our emotions are part of our relations with others, our sense of morality and our understandings of how the social world should be. This is even true of unconscious repressed feelings (Billig 1999).

Recasting the psychology of emotions in terms of language has direct implications for understanding the intense emotions that accompany, and indeed lead to, warfare. An inner state, that remains locked within individuals, cannot be the impetus to war. But a discourse of indignation, threat and suffering, shared and communicated within a group, can become the basis for mobilization against an identified enemy. The horror and anger that followed the destruction of the World Trade Center was not worldless. From the outset, the anger was located within discourses that sought understanding and these discourses contained familiar themes of morality and nationhood.

The carnage of September 11 was unforeseen. In terms of scale the attack on New York was beyond comparison with previous terrorist actions. The effect – the killing of thousands of citizens – was disproportionate to the means. This was the sort of destruction that one would have associated with a heavy poundage of bombs and sophisticated technology. It seemed incredible that a small group of men equipped with household knives and a precise knowledge of airline timetables, could cause such devastation. How could the centre of capitalism be so vulnerable? There are no ready-made frames of reference for unexpected events of such magnitude. Yet, the reactions could not be left to wordless feeling nor wait for the construction of new vocabularies. Things had to be said straightaway.

Within hours of the destruction, television stations were interviewing American citizens, asking them about their feelings. A frequent response was given that the event was like Pearl Harbour. Here was an illustration of what the social psychologist Serge Moscovici has described as the anchoring of unfamiliar events in familiar social representations (Moscovici 1984). To understand something dangerously unfamiliar and seemingly incomprehensible, familiar categories of meaning have to be applied. Of course, in

crucial respects Pearl Harbour differed from the destruction of the World Trade Center. The Japanese attack had been aimed at a military target and was carried out by the armed forces of a nation state which had formally been at war for some time. However, analogies are revealing. In describing the attack as resembling the attack on Pearl Harbour, the responses of television interviewees, and that of many other Americans, were equating the action with the event that brought the United States into warfare. In this way, the discursive understanding was a means of preparing for reaction. A similar understanding and preparation was shown as Bush was declaring "a war against terrorism".

Thus, the familiar discourse of "war" was being employed. This discourse contains a number of assumptions. In the contemporary age, warfare primarily involves nation-states. A national response, like the response to Pearl Harbour, was being expected. The flags, that were draped at the scene of the attack and that were being worn so generally by the citizenry of the United States, were a visible sign that the attack was being interpreted primarily as something national, rather than local or even international: New York or capitalism were not the prime victims, but America was. For this to occur so spontaneously in response to the extraordinary event, the assumptions and symbols of everyday nationalism have to be firmly established (Billig 1995). The national response together with the discourse of warfare suggested that there would be – indeed there would have to be – a military response. No amount of collectively shared feelings of anger, experienced purely wordlessly and individually, would produce a military response. The anger had to be formed within a series of understandings, uttered out aloud.

When a particular set of understandings is discursively uttered, then other possible understandings remain unsaid. In the days after the World Trade Center attack, it was rarely said, either by ordinary Americans on television or by their political leaders, that what had happened was primarily a criminal act which called for the mobilization of criminal justice systems nationally and internationally. The words of criminality were subsumed by those of war.

The language of war was implicitly suggesting that this was not an event to be decided slowly and evenly by judges in courts of law: guns must be fired and bombs dropped rather than counsels for prosecution and defence appointed. The words of war, in this respect, are words of impatience.

The events of September 11, 2001 underlined factors that are stressed in this volume, whose contributions were prepared prior to that day. Those events provide yet another confirmation of the main theme of this volume: the words of war are central to the activity of war. Indeed one can ask whether there can be war without the very word “war”.

Saying all this, does not, of course, mean that war is merely words. That would underestimate the nature and importance of words. As Wittgenstein wrote, “words are deeds” (1980: 46). Wittgenstein was making the important point that even words are not “mere” words. There is always more to words for they are not merely the verbal representation of a deeper reality but they are integrally part of our human reality. Words belong, as Wittgenstein stressed in *Philosophical Investigations*, to forms of life: “to imagine a language is to imagine a form of life” (1963: 8).

So, too, it is with the language of war. Such language belongs to particular forms of life. In our age these forms of life are primarily national forms. In a crucial respect, Wittgenstein’s famous insight omits a crucial factor. These national forms of life are also forms of death.

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# Introduction: A peace of word

*Mirjana N. Dedaić*

## 1. Language and war

Discourse and organized armed conflict are unique to humans. Despite the untold wealth and innumerable lives lost to mass or state organized violence, the genesis and prevention of armed conflict are poorly understood. Discourse, we believe, should be the first door opened as we try to explain and prevent state-or-group-organized killing of the other.

Political power cannot be divorced from the power of words. Apart from the technical difficulties of defining the linguistic concept of word, we understand that “words are loaded pistols,” as Jean-Paul Sartre avowed. The power of words, indeed, lies in their ability to express the extremes of human feelings and intentions and to direct the spear towards “the other”. The linguistic profile of political power reveals the message and the messenger, as well as the reception and response.

Indeed, every dispute starts with “othering”. The phenomenon of making the distinction between Us and Them has received much attention from social psychology to critical linguistics. To explain why humans have a need to feel part of their group, and are quickly ready to fight with members of any other group, research has probed pre-conflict discourse.

Two protagonists start a war when they fail to negotiate interests, norms or identities. In such a case, any means is justified – all, of course, is fair in love and war. In an attempt to justify sending young people to death, the leadership will hide the truth of the event in a “deluge of dramatizations” (Ball 1991) creating social reality that calls for immediate retaliation. “*Otherization*” usually precedes justification, but these two paradigms might intersect and infuse each other from the initial stage of the conflict until its end.

Discriminating the society into Us and Others serves both *justification* for action and *propagation* of values and attitudes that call for protection of “conditions of liberty” (Gellner 1994). This task of pro-war discourse glorifies the legitimized (state) order and obliges us to fortify and defend.

Implicit to ingroup-outgroup differentiation is the language of stereotyping (Tajfel 1981). Such forms of violence are made tangible as states, organizations of states and principal interests deny resources and rights to minorities and “others”. Pervasive insecurity and threatening discourse, when combined, evoke symbolic violence – an unmistakable message that maintains dominance, argues Antonio Gramsci (1957), even more effectively than brute force.

Foucault places significant emphasis upon a power struggle over the determination of discursive practices: “Discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle; discourse is the power which is to be seized” (1984: 110). Thus, political scientists recognize the importance of dissemination of information, building up of nationalist images and images of animosity, nationalist propaganda, nationalist mythmaking, mobilization against alleged threats, but they fail to understand that all these actions are undertaken through language, essentially by the manipulation of the public discourse.<sup>1</sup> Within an expanding literature of discourse studies, however, only sporadic attention has been given to war discourse. Linguistic journals seem to offer such attention in the aftermath of particularly intense or intriguing conflicts such as those in the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, or Chechnya. But, such articles are only sea-shells left by high tide, deprived of their origin and progeny.

Political linguistics has not treated the discourse related to the armed conflict liberally. Only in the late Eighties, with intensified emphasis on nuclear weapons, did linguists engage in structured analysis of the *discourse of the nuclear arms debate* (Chilton 1985; Connor-Linton 1988; Urban 1988; Wertsch 1987). Simultaneously, the longstanding question of *political power*, its origins and manifestations, has been tackled by linguists such as Fairclough (1989), Fowler (1985), Kedar (1987), van Dijk (1989), and Wodak (1989) among others.

It is worth noting that in the nineties, most analysis of war-related discourse found its home in the school that became known as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Paul Chilton is among the leading figures; his methodology takes into account cognitive features such as metaphor and metonymy and, basing his linguistic investigation on philosophy and sociology, he focuses primarily on politician-generated discourse (speeches and written documents). His work is partly activism as well, in line with other CDA scholars who see a discourse analyst as an engaged and non-objective person – a scholar who is guilty of having opinions, and free to express them through fair and exhaustive scholarship.

In Vienna, Austria, another CDA scholar, Ruth Wodak, has developed a unique stream within this discipline. The so-called Discourse-Historical Approach has proven appropriate and fruitful for the study of texts that carry remembrance of the past wars and for dissection of guilt and empathy. As Wodak and others from the Vienna School of discourse analysis look into discursive reflections of the past to learn the future, linguists oriented towards language planning have for a long time studied the effects of nationalism and war on national language policies. The most respected among them, Joshua Fishman, discusses the national “othering” under the slogan “Language equals nationality and nationality equals language...” (1972: 48). He points out that “[m]odern societies have an endless need to define themselves as eternally unique and language is one of the few remaining mass symbols that answers this need without automatically implying one or another short-lived and non-distinctive institutional base” (1972: 50).

Language is often understood as property of the powerful, a symbolic entity that provides a tool for order, subjugation and demise. Symbolic violence starts with naming – a speech act imposed upon us by others. A name is given to us and it belongs to us as a sign after which others know and address us. Absent overt intimidation, the domination over the weak can be, and is, implemented through the most mundane of tasks – “official naming”, says Bourdieu (1999: 239), whereby the holder of the monopoly of legitimate symbolic violence imposes, explicitly and publicly, a vision of the social world, exhibiting power over instituted taxonomies. Non-

intimidating dominance, at once silent and insidious, constitutes to Bourdieu a kind of “secret code” (1999: 51) of the powerful seducing those who sometimes participate in their own domination.

The purpose of this book is to look into such epistemic, societal, discursive and political aspects of armed conflicts as they fall into two categories – war-language and language-war. War-language, in its varied discursive manifestations, is the focus of the first part of this volume; language wars around the globe are reflected in case studies that make up the second part.

## **2. Structure of the book**

That language plays an important role in and after an armed conflict, and that national idioms are affected by wars are two underlying assumptions that unite this collection. Contributions in the first part of the book illustrate the essential and omnipresent tie between violence and its representation, between physical harm and symbolic injury. Discourse is seen as a conduit of power and as coveted goods for the powerful. Chapters in second part exemplify the fight over language as a symbol of national identity and power. In such studies, we see language itself as a victim of physical violence, suffering “purification” and “re-nationalization” while becoming capital over which groups, nations and states struggle. These perspectives provide bases for the structure of this volume – the first part examines power of discourse as it plays a critical part in war itself, and the second observes the manipulations of national language as a symbol of new, or retained, power. Although the contributions may in fact sway across or even away from their allotted domains, such a division soundly centers on the actual prevailing perspectives chosen by the authors themselves.

Our contributors crystallize three major roles of discourse related to armed conflict: mobilization, justification, and resolution. Further, three are positions a language undergoes vis-à-vis armed conflict: occupation, isolation, and control. Papers in this volume, then, provide a cultural context and temporal scope by joining the perspectives of discourse analysts with those of scholars interested in

language policy. The analyses offer many angles from which to assess war and peace. As is appropriate for an emerging field, our contributors evoke no methodological orthodoxy and mine their data from a variety of sources (interviews, political documents, newspapers). Longitudinal and cross-cultural breadth incorporated into this collection through case studies span both time and space.

*At War with Words* begins by exploring ties between symbolic qua linguistic violence and the physical violence of large-scale conflict. To exemplify this, various social, political and linguistic contexts have been brought into focus, and multiple sources of data examined. The first section, War discourse, features seven contributions; war related discourse produced by media and politicians in America, China, Ghana and Austria is examined, providing a window to the broad spectrum of issues and methodologies to describe and explain behavior of a human warrior.

The theoretical question addressed by the first paper is: Is the physical violence associated with or precipitated by widespread symbolic violence in language and culture? Kathryn Ruud in "*Liberal parasites and other creepers: Rush Limbaugh, Ken Hamblin, and the discursive construction of group identities*" introduces the problem of discursive creation of polarized identities. The power of media in our era has been the subject of great interest for linguists and other scholars. Ruud goes one step further to exemplify how this power might be translated into physical violence. Ruud's study of the American right-wing talk radio language lends credence to Clausewitz's nineteenth century claim that war is omnipotent in Western civilization (1943), as she identifies the names and metaphors by which radio talk-show hosts denote liberals, disturbingly similar to the language of Hitler's genocidal machine. One has to distinguish between the *genocidal* state of mind of the Nazis and "*politicidal*" state of mind of the American extreme right which objects to liberals based on features far different than skull measurement or eye-color. Still, Ruud suggests that group differentiation – in the most extreme, creating warring political identities – uses linguistic means that are perilously similar to those used by heinous regimes. Ruud's auscultation of the language of American right-wing radio talk shows leads to dissection of the

substrategies of polarization used by Rush Limbaugh (who sometimes refers to himself as “a talent on loan from God”) and Ken Hamblin. Ruud warns that such a “misuse of language contains a terrible potential.” This potential no doubt contributes to the “superempowered angry man” (Friedman 1999), who is single-handedly able to inflict massive destruction, such as bombing the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City in April 1995. Whether a society in which political extremes are at “liberty” to engage in symbolic violence against others and create a vision of “enemies among us” can be truly at peace might be questioned.

Feeding animism is best done through hate speech. But to make the seed of hate speech grow, the land has to be ready for seeding. The vision, to be effective, must penetrate and be absorbed by bodies and minds of the faithful, who believe in nation and whose physical being and thoughts the nation considers its property. Once humans become government property, the state’s power is extended. Whereas weapons once defined the state’s reservoir of power to coerce and kill others, discourse offers another basis of power by which to seduce, manipulate, and silence.

In *“Threat or business as usual? A multimodal, intertextual analysis of a political statement”* Suzanne Wong Scollon examines political discourse as it is selected, interpreted, and reinterpreted through media. The words reported by media are commonly warped according to the ideology of the media owner. Fairclough and Wodak (1997: 272) note the unresolved power imbalance between the media and politics, whether “mediatized political discourse is the domination of the media over politicians, or the exploitation of the media by politicians”. During a news conference held by Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen on the eve of the 1996 Taiwanese elections, Scollon sees three simultaneous media “frames” – contemporary Chinese reformist media, the liberal western media, and the Taiwanese Nationalist Party media – all of which evince quite distinct discourse. She dissects these respective ideologies as they each report on and mold one leader’s comments at a single news conference. From Scollon’s multimodal, intertextual analysis it becomes clear that the interactions of media and governmental officials produce varying messages from the same utterance, with threats and

words of war emerging in some reports and not others. The fragility of peace and the precipice of war seem to hang, as it were, on words and how we say and hear them.

The paper by Paul Chilton "*Deixis and distance: President Clinton's justification of intervention in Kosovo*" is concerned with the discourse of justification to send members of the military to a war far away. His analysis of presidential rhetoric shows how crucial in political behavior it is to ensure that the populace shares "perceptions and misperceptions about political threats and issues" (Edelman 1971: 1). Belonging to a nation, understood as an "imagined community" (Renan 1882; Anderson 1983; Billig 1995), is itself an imagined membership. Consequently, its entailments, such as threats to national existence or well-being, are also imagined. Neighbors are, however, real, and so are territorial claims. Consequently, territorial contiguity is a potent variable predicting the onset of war.

But, what can be done when a nation conducts war far away from home? The territory in which the war is to be conducted must be made more contiguous and less distant, at least symbolically. This discursive construct helps people in imaging the threat and national importance. Discourse analysis untangles linguistic threads woven skillfully into speech text aimed at the reification of (imagined?) national feelings, love for a country, and remaining "the best in the world". These feelings are fueled most easily at the time of incipient war (Hobsbawm 1990).

By claiming that "justification of war is a form of political action that takes place most massively through language", Chilton applies cognitive discourse analysis to unravel the discursive complexities of Clinton's political oratory. Chilton finds vagueness and discursive manipulations as means to justify sending U.S. troops to participate in the Kosovo Force (KFOR) after Serb withdrawal in spring 1999.

Human nature – and human language – are both troubled by the unspeakability of extremes. Ultimate peace is suspected as merely a temporary pause (Clausewitz 1943), while the ultimate destruction is presented in biblical metaphors. Armageddon, Apocalypse, Dooms Day are still modern names for disasters humans inflict on other humans, while nuclear potentials are not yet matched by linguistic potentials. Robert E. Tucker and Theodore O. Prosise, in their paper

entitled “*The language of atomic science and atomic conflict: Exploring the limits of symbolic representation*”, discuss that inability of language to match the destructive power of weaponry. Is nuclear power a weapon or not?

Tucker and Prosis analyze Second World War nuclear discourse employed to “domesticate” the nuclear experience. The ways in which atomic planners, scientists, civilian and military leaders named sub-atomic phenomena and atomic weaponry are significant for two key reasons. First, these names and naming strategies continue to play an active role in contemporary policymaking more than half a century later, concealing nuclear annihilation and making war less objectionable. The language of the first generation of atomic weaponeers molded and continues to shape our understanding of nuclear weapons and the role they should play in geopolitics. Second, by considering communication about nuclear weapons we can begin to understand the obstacles that exist between us and safer world.

Moving to African political discourse, Kweku Osam brings us a study of ideology’s central role in the struggle for political dominance in Ghana. In his paper “*The politics of discontent: A discourse analysis of texts of the Reform Movement in Ghana*”, Osam claims that language is the key resource in gaining political supremacy. But, his study differs from others by highlighting the text and talk that *resist*, rather than create, dominance. Osam finds that, in the highly unstable political atmosphere of this West African country, the ideological constant is to challenge the status quo. He points out that words indicate when, after suppressing action, people stand up and act to improve their future in the metaphorical battlefield of Ghanaian politics in the late 1990s.

Having started this section with political discourse transmitted through media, we end the section with two papers that deal with Austrian media as they portray the guilt and contrition for past wars. Alexander Pollak in his paper “*When guilt becomes a foreign country: Guilt and responsibility in Austrian postwar media-representation of the Second World War*”, dissects 53 years (1945–1998) of Austrian print media as it concerns guilt covered by myths. In 1945, Austria proclaimed the “*Stunde Null*” – a new start from

zero, tailored to rid Austria of the burden of the country's Nazi past. Thereafter it was possible to construct, via mass media, an image of the Second World War in which Austrian soldiers, who carried out the war of extermination and played an active part in the execution of the "Final Solution", were not perceived as perpetrators but rather as an ignorant and innocent collective. How could such images of history and "normal" soldiers be created without denying the existence of atrocities and heinous crimes sanctioned and implemented by the Nazi regime and carried out by its more or less willing executioners? To answer these questions, Pollak examines metaphors that serve as building blocks for establishing a historical image that allowed a positive Austrian self-construction.

The guilt and responsibility question is also the main thrust of the study *"Remembering and forgetting: The discursive construction of generational memories"* by Gertraud Benke and Ruth Wodak. They discern the linguistic expression of guilt and responsibility for the Nazi crimes committed by Austrian Wehrmacht soldiers through the prism of videotaped interviews with visitors to an exhibition of World War II documents. This exhibition, entitled "War of Annihilation", received exceptional coverage in the Austrian press characterized by vehement praise and criticism alike. Benke and Wodak distinguish three generations among visitors – direct war participants, their sons and grandsons. Analyzing the interviews, they detect elements of more distant or less distant guilt, and the level of the discursive actuation of the present versus the past.

Language in both cases serves as an indicator of the generational stances towards the crimes. It is also a matter of the philosophical reconciliation between the grandchildren of the offenders and the grandchildren of the offended, a process that South Africa hopes to have sped up via the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.<sup>2</sup>

The six contributions in Part II, Language wars, present anthropological studies of language issues in Croatia, Okinawa, Palau, Cyprus, Northern Ireland, and the United States. All focus on armed conflict as a consequence of an ideological clash in which language acts either as an attribute of ideology or as a conduit for ideological persuasion or dissemination. The Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser identified processes that help the powerful maintain power

and reproduce existing power structure. The instruments in such processes are “ideological state apparatuses” such as the law, education, religion (church), but most of all so-called “repressive state apparatuses” consisting of armed forces and police. These apparatuses legitimize the existence and behavior of the ruling authorities by “bathing society in official discourse: laws, reports, parliamentary debates, sermons, text-books, lectures” (Fowler 1985: 68). In such official discourse the contributors to the second section of the book locate their data.

Coming full circle, the same official discourse subsequently reinforces the government, as Tocqueville (1945: 177) observes, especially at the times of “long and serious warfare”. The vicious circle is hard to break, as seizing power means seizing discourse. Public discourse under the government control is then manipulated to mobilize masses to attack the “others”. The saliency of identity is an existential requirement for growth of nationalism. Shotter (1993: 200–201) notes that nationalism is a way for people to argue about who and what they really are, or might be. War is seen by nationalists as “a test of collective fitness” (Hutchinson and Smith 1994: 9), and “a necessary dialectics in the evolution of nations” (Howard 1994: 254). And, so too is language.

Based on the research presented in this section, the impetus given by the work of Joshua Fishman and other scholars examining language planning has been invaluable for investigating influences world wars left on *sociolects* and *natiolects*. Fishman (1972, 1973) recapitulates numerous cases around the globe in which language is decidedly the key nationalist ideological underpinning and builds up the notion of language being “worthier than territory” (1972: 49). Work done on national language planning channels thinking into streams that lead towards two major causes for a nation’s need for its “own” standard language: as a corollary to national freedom, and as contrastive self-identification:

“The frequency with which vernaculars have become part and parcel of the authenticity message of nationalism (both directly and, again, indirectly, though their oral and written products) is certainly, in no small measure, due to the ease with which elites and masses alike could extrapolate from linguistic *differentiation* and literary *uniqueness* to sociocultural and political independence.” Fishman (1972: 52)

Linguistics has a lot to say about territorial and linguistic congruencies. The old continent’s linguistics was in its early stages deeply and widely concerned with studies of dialects – dividing neighbors and giving them identities; thus, linguistic *nationism* was born. As an upshot, many neighboring languages rushed apart in order to avoid assimilation with others. Having dissected descriptions and definitions throughout the language planning literature, Christian (1988) reveals the six key revolving features: intervention, explicitness, goal-orientation, systemacity, selection among alternatives, and institutionalization. Using these features, she defines language planning as “an explicit and systematic effort to resolve language problems and achieve related goals through institutionally organized intervention in the use and usage of languages” (p. 197). Noticeable is the military-metaphor-denoted feature – intervention. The war of words easily translates into a language war insofar as the powerful can intervene and change the normal course of events to influence future language use.

Both linguists and non-linguists understand the old adage that “language is a dialect with a navy and an army” to mean that a language is linked irrevocably to the formation of a nation-state. Borders of language are not only borders of identity, but also borders of power (see Hannan 1996). Nation-states often protect themselves by declaring a state language or eradicating regional variants; lately, Europe is far from being the only region of the world that sees an ethnic and linguistic revival (Wright 2000: 186), with accompanying lingopolitical turmoil.

The first paper in this part, Keith Langston’s and Anita Peti-Stantić’s “*Attitudes towards linguistic purism in Croatia: Evaluating efforts at language reform*” looks into the language purification efforts by the victorious nationalist party in Croatia after the 1991–1995 war. The corpus planning was undertaken to achieve two nationally

important goals: to emphasize newly achieved national freedom, and to differentiate Croatians from the Serbs, with whom an official language was previously shared.<sup>3</sup> Croatian President Franjo Tudjman insisted on cleansing Croatian territories and the Croatian language of Serbian influence with the ambition of fortifying Croatian identity. To do so, he focused upon formal institutions (schools, government, religion) as means by which to impose the reproduction of linguistic authority. The epuration of language of what was perceived “Serbian” in origin or usage brought confusion among the speakers of Croatian. Even some linguists confessed to difficulties in speaking and writing. Despite official language policies, however, the “old” language has retained its authority through informal face-to-face relations. Langston and Peti-Stantić conducted a survey demonstrating that presenting oneself as speaking the “pure Croatian” may work in national institutions as a marker of national purity, but is seen and felt as strange and “too official” in everyday conversation. “Speaking properly” requires training so intense that it necessitates a passionate motivation. If such intensity is absent, the training is futile, and the survival rate of the previously imposed linguistic items is uncertain.

In Rumiko Shinzato’s paper *“Wars, politics, and language: A case study of the Okinawan language”*, “a sudden tip” of Okinawan language is investigated in the light of domestic and international wars and accompanying changes in hegemony. After a series of conflicts and wars – within Japan and then the Sino-Japanese War and World War II – the indigenous language of the southern-most province of Japan was on a path towards extinction. When Okinawa was incorporated into the Japanese polity, Okinawan lost its status as a national language while Japanese spread, causing the language shift. Looking into the ways “language attitude translates into language policies”, Shinzato shows how the stigmatization of Okinawan – an effect not unknown in other parts of the world – worked towards its extinction. But, she believes that Okinawan may have already seen the worst because the social mobilization patterns in Okinawa moved from “negative ethnicity” (i.e., the denial of Okinawan identity) to “positive ethnicity”, and is stirring towards an “ethnic movement”. In

that, pragmatic issues are not negligible: in some business interactions, speaking Okinawan wins more trust, which translates into more business.

Resistance to symbolic violence is often quiet and persistent. The Pacific island of Palau, for example, has seen nearly a century of coercive institutional domination by colonizers who instilled English and Japanese into Palauan high culture. Kazuko Matsumoto and David Britain, in their *“Language choice and cultural hegemony: Linguistic symbols of domination and resistance in Palau”* investigate the fate of the Palauan, language only about 10 thousand speakers strong. They report on its historical ups and downs in terms of social importance and political power, characterizing colonial influences on Palauan as “mild violence” or *“violence douce”*. Cultural hegemony and symbolic domination have constituted and shaped language use in this trilingual nation-state that went through the political and linguistic hardship of seeking and achieving independence. And, while some other nation-states fight for their national monolingualism, Palauans have long had to choose which two of three languages to speak: Palauan, Japanese, or English. The authors demonstrate how this permanent diglossic choice facilitates hegemony – the colonial power can govern with the high variant, and the people comply because they can continue to live their daily routines in their native, low variant language. Paradoxically, both sides can then be portrayed as hegemonically satisfied. “Diglossia replaced diglossia”, summarize Matsumoto and Britain regarding the long history of changing linguistic loyalties on Palau.

Some of the wars considered in this book are “spontaneous wars” of the past, while some are “wars in making”. Most of today’s armed conflicts, however, are of the kind that Billig (1995) calls “official wars” which are ended by “official peace”, precisely dated for the history books. In her *“Advertising for peace as political communication”*, Renée Dickason explores one effort to generate peace amid the prolonged turmoil of Northern Ireland. She analyzes the experimental program of the British Conservative government (1988–1997) to mitigate violence through television advertisements, assessing such a campaign in terms of its form, purpose, and efficacy. Dickason finds

that advertising for peace potentially offered new solutions to the problem of political communication.

Dickason's multimodal analysis of the "peace commercials" leads her to conclude that the government tried to persuade the public of the chance for a better life and a peaceful way. She identifies six themes: friendship, solidarity, humor, heritage, childhood innocence and sport, all features that encompass a simultaneous appeal to rational and emotional sympathies. Language was, therefore, integral to the attempt to create a sense of identity and a mood of complicity. This was, concludes Dickason, a "highly ambitious and perhaps excessively hopeful project" that lasted long enough to attain all the results it could have realized. An optimistic verdict would regard it as a stage in the gradual process of attitudinal transformation within Northern Ireland, which had a number of short-term and long-term benefits and may have contributed to ceasefires. After the advertising for peace campaign ended, Dickason is not sure that the war ended as well. But, when *does* war end?

Marilena Karyolemou's paper "*Keep your language and I'll keep mine*': *Politics, language, and the construction of identities in Cyprus*" discusses efforts to defuse the volatility of symbolic violence via language policy. Cyprus, divided by force since the mid 1970s, has experienced many kinds of polarization. The languages-of-instruction question at the University of Cyprus has been seen in many places as a central issue closely related to political climate, beyond the character of the University itself.

Through the language of education, the Greek Cypriot schools taught loyalty to the Hellenic world and Orthodoxy, while Turkish Cypriot schools conveyed loyalty to Turkey, the Turkish language, and Islam. These loyalties, perceived not only as distinct but also as completely incompatible, created and widened the gap between members of the two communities, leading to the formation of a strong ethno-nationalistic feeling. So, in 1986, ideologically opposite political parties – the communist left and the extreme right – united in a position that favored using *both* languages at the University of Cyprus. The main common arguments used to justify this option were the respect of the Constitutional provisions for the equal official status to both ethnic languages, and the respect of both communities'

right to be instructed in their respective mother tongue. Some Cypriots hoped (and other feared) that peaceful coexistence and social prosperity would weaken ethnic barriers and divest ethnic languages of their identity values. According to Karyolemou, the alternative of a third language (English) for higher education institution has also been on the table, but thus far rejected.

Invisible borders of identity may have precluded Esperanto (or any other orphan language) to take root and to grow into a global *lingua franca*, if not a unifying force. The spread of English since World War II may have beaten the odds; courtesy of American military and economic power, every corner of the globe has become at least familiar with English for business and cultural exchange. This is especially true with the development of the Internet, which carries more and more information on human activities and is written predominantly (more than 80 percent [Fisher 1998/1999]) in English. However, English is welcome only as long as it does not represent a threat to national identity, and as long as speakers can choose which linguistic elements (words, phrases, syntax) they take from English and which they do not.<sup>4</sup> The symbolic feeling of linguistic identity is thus retained and English, although creeping into all languages through many different means, is not always greeted with an open door.

While the world learns English to enable more-than-mass communication, Americans seem to fear losing it. That question, and the question of linguistic vs. political identities, are focus of the last contribution in this volume – Mark Allen Peterson’s “*American warriors speaking American: The metapragmatics of performance in the nation state*”. When a topic of war is joined with the English-only controversy in Congressional debate, like the one that took place in 1996 between several Democratic and Republican Congressmen, far more attention is attracted. Peterson seeks to resolve the enigma: “What are ‘Americans’ to think of people who speak no English yet are willing to risk their lives in wars the state says are necessary for the nation’s survival?” The powerful American mythology of veterans’ sacrifice is evoked as a criterion for credibility on the issue of a U.S. “national” language. Veterans are constructed in American popular mythology as persons who, at great personal

cost, have “answered their country’s call.” From Congressional debate to the newsstand, this notion takes on wider meaning and is presented to a public audience. In return, this topic becomes multi-voiced and is used to prove several initially unintended notions, most saliently the notion of “Americaness”. Are those who speak English well more American than those who do not?

The “official English” bill, which generated the exchange analyzed by Peterson, passed in the House but never came to a vote in the Senate. This battle for control over the symbolic definition of an “American” was lost, but the war over who may or may not claim such an identity goes on.

### 3. Conclusion

The relationship between the violence of discourse and acts of war metamorphoses as war approaches, occurs and ebbs. Several contributors in this book are concerned by the initiation of large-scale human violence. This concern is not new. Cultural anthropologists have offered materialist, cultural and biological explanations (Haas 1990; Ferguson 1999). But, those who delve into classic literature find different inspiration. Kagan (1995), for example, argues that Thucydides’ analysis of why wars begin (honor, fear, and interest) tells us the whole story of contemporary war and peace. Some authors think that humans are biologically aggressive and prone to fighting (Hebb and Thompson 1968; James 1968; McDougall 1968; see also Mead 1968 for an opposing account). No one regards language as the sole reason for violence, but everyone takes for granted that honor, fear, interest, and other possible *casus belli* are launched, justified, and spread via language (see, for example, Stoessinger 1993).

Scholars of nations and nationalism list the attributes of the nation-state as principal reasons for contemporary warfare. Billig (1995: 28) laconically summarizes this idea in the phrase “a nation state is itself a means of violence.” The veracity of this statement is tested in cases where nations have no defined territory, such as the case with the Inuit and Roma, who do not wage wars. Individuals

from such groups may fight amongst each other and engage in vendettas while some other groups may have prolonged feuds. Yet, the notion of widespread, costly, and long-term conflict namely “war” has been reserved for *states* until September 11, 2001, which involved a non-state *movement* as *actor*.

Identification of *state* as *actor* to start, maintain, and conclude war has been an important element in any approach to a state-generated discourse. Such attribution guides the analyst towards the examination of a collective as actor, rather than individuals whose intentions, means and ways have psychological grounding. Collective actors have collective dynamics, often erratic and rarely predictable. Most important, a collective actor uses language to communicate, inter-collectively as well as intra-collectively. Comparison between the two simultaneous planes of communication often yields interesting dichotomies that emphasize linguistic control over memberships and identities.

The power of discursively created warring identities is often shown as political, not ethnic, divides. Several studies in this collection lend credence to Clausewitz’s nineteenth century claim that war is omnipotent in Western civilization (1943). Clausewitz regarded peace as but a pause between, or delay of, war.<sup>5</sup> In that respect, any public discourse can be taken as being within the domain of state’s politics that might result in a war.

The authors included in this volume engage in what we call “linguistic war study” in contrast to existing lore about war that is usually described as “peace research” (see Schäffner and Wendon 1995). *Nomen est omen*, perhaps, and names can change the named. From this evolve questions such as: What is peace and what is war? Where is the delineation between the two?<sup>6</sup> That the American government’s department housed in the Pentagon was renamed in 1947 from the Department of War to the Department of Defense<sup>7</sup>, is one example that suggests the interlocked nature of these concepts. A year later, George Orwell informed us prudently that sometimes “peace is war, and war is peace”.<sup>8</sup>

Today, war is where war rhetoric is. Analyzing the language of politics and the politics of language can bring important understanding of the role communication plays in establishing,

maintaining, or destroying political relations. It follows that political scientists should not shy away from borrowing analytical tools from linguistics, while linguists can support their findings by understanding political relations. Global peace and prosperity will best be served if students of linguistics and politics pool their knowledge and methods to minimize conflict and maximize cooperative communications.

### *Notes*

1. See, for instance, excellent papers on these topics in Brown et al. (1997).
2. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission suspended its work in mid 2001, when “all the amnesty hearings have been concluded and the final TRC Report has been released”, as stated on the TRC web page [www.truth.org.za](http://www.truth.org.za).
3. The spoken variants of the official language in Serbia and Croatia differed in several features and the different variants were readily recognizable by the native speakers.
4. Some nations are trying to defy the spread of English by official means. Besides the well-known case of France, there have been anti-English movements in Spain, Germany, Mexico, Burma, India and several other countries (Wright 2000 *passim*).
5. The 17<sup>th</sup> century Dutch philosopher Baruch de Spinoza held a different view: “Peace is not constituted by the absence of war. Peace is a virtue, an attitude of mind, an inclination toward benevolence, trust and justice”.
6. The delineation between peace and war, particularly in the contemporary world, is discussed in Nelson (1999).
7. Moreover, *secretaries of war* are around the world customarily titled *secretaries of defense*. A few states – Guatemala for instance – have a *secretary of peace*.
8. That this is not just a writer’s construction has been well demonstrated in numerous clever analyses by Bugarski (1997, 2001) and others.

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# **I. War discourse**



# **Liberal parasites and other creepers: Rush Limbaugh, Ken Hamblin, and the discursive construction of group identities**

*Kathryn Ruud*

## **1. Introduction**

The April 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City was an unprecedented act of domestic terrorism that killed 168 people. President Clinton's criticism of "loud and angry" voices, reported widely in the media, implied that the speech of American political talk show hosts contributed to a climate that encouraged this terrorist act.

President Clinton's comment unleashed a public debate over the influence of political talk radio, and Rush Limbaugh and other conservative talk show hosts felt unjustly criticized. Limbaugh retorted on-air that "Talk radio didn't buy the fertilizer and fuel oil [used in the bombing]." <sup>1</sup>

A report on political talk radio was issued four months later by the University of Pennsylvania Annenberg Public Policy Center. The Annenberg Report found that many journalists had labeled conservative talk radio as "a discordant perhaps dangerous discourse that is intolerant and histrionic, unmindful of evidence, [and] classically propagandistic," and that it was "spreading the kind of hate and divisiveness that led to the bombing of the Federal Building in Oklahoma City" (Cappella et al 1996: 40, 42). A content analysis of several political talk radio programs (Conservative, Moderate and Liberal) led Annenberg researchers to conclude that the press had tended to exaggerate the effect of talk radio and inaccurately characterized such programs as "at best, routinely uncivil, and at worst downright dangerous" (Cappella et al 1996: 49).