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## Table of Contents

<b>Mohammed Ismail K</b>	<b>‘Poetic Justice’? Reading Law And Literature</b>	-----	<b>7</b>
<b>Ebtihal Abdelsalam &amp; Asmaa Elshikh</b>	<b>An Anarchist Reading Of Ahmed Fouad Negm’s Poetry</b>	-----	<b>16</b>
<b>Arindam Saha</b>	<b>Contextualizing Kazi Nazrul Islam’s <i>Bartaman Visva Sahitya</i> In The ‘World’ Of World Literature</b>	-----	<b>35</b>
<b>Naime Benmerabet</b>	<b>The “Us Vs. Them” Dichotomy In President Bush’s West Point Speech (2002) And The Discursive Construction Of Iraqi Threat: Serious Implications For International Law</b>	-----	<b>44</b>
<b>Olayemi Jacob Ogunniyi</b>	<b>Appraising External Influences On Ijesa Culture In Southwestern Nigeria Before 1990</b>	-----	<b>62</b>
<b>Idris Tosho Ridwan &amp; Olawale Isaac Yemisi &amp; Abdulwaheed Shola Abdulbaki</b>	<b>Crime, Policing And Judicial Prosecution In Colonial Ilorin, North Central Nigeria</b>	-----	<b>75</b>
<b>Salwa Mahmoud Ahmed</b>	<b>Lo Subjativo Y Lo Objetivo En <i>Los Árabes Del Mar. Tras La Estela De Simbad: De Los Puertos De Arabia A La Isla De Zanzíbar</i>, (2006), De Jordi Esteve</b>	-----	<b>90</b>
<b>Maria G Calatayud</b>	<b>"Fabular y confabular: El uso de la fantasía como arma política para contestar la trampa romántica en las películas de María Novaro: <i>Lola y Danzón</i>"</b>	-----	<b>105</b>
<b>Doaa Salah Mohammad</b>	<b>Traducción del diminutivo español al árabe: retos y propuestas Estudio aplicado a la traducción árabe de <i>Los cachorros y La colmena</i></b>	-----	<b>118</b>
<b>Mohamed Elsayed Mohamed Deyab</b>	<b>El espacio y su función en <i>El Cairo, mi amor</i>, de Rafael Pardo Moreno Space and its function in <i>Cairo, my love</i>, by Rafael Pardo Moreno</b>	-----	<b>132</b>

## The “Us vs. Them” Dichotomy in President Bush’s West Point Speech (2002) and the Discursive Construction of Iraqi Threat: Serious Implications for International law

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### **Abstract:**

This article utilizes Norman Fairclough’s three-dimensional framework of Critical Discourse Analysis to unveil how President Bush in his West Point speech (June 2002) drew upon the “us vs. them” dichotomy to stigmatize, repudiate, securitize and ultimately distance and demonize Iraqi regime and its nuclear ambitions. By deploying these linguistic structures, infused with ideological messages, President Bush managed to portray the alleged threat posed by Iraqi regime as being the incarnation of absolute evil for the purpose of justifying and even naturalizing recourse to extreme and unorthodox measures to curb it. The results of the critical analysis of the linguistic structures of the speech point to how President Bush manipulated pronominal choices to advance his political and security undertakings against Iraqi regime in total defiance to hard evidence that contradicted his claims and in utter contravention of international legality. The core findings of this study center on the demonstration of how the pronominal choices operated by President Bush in the speech under scrutiny were instrumental in rationalizing, normalizing and even legitimizing unorthodox and unprecedented modi operandi in US political and security policies mainly towards states like Iraq.

**Keywords:** CDA; “us vs. them” dichotomy; G.W. Bush’s administration; Iraqi regime; international law.

### **1. Introduction**

The world’s global history and IR are to a large extent the offshoot of a type of Western thinking about all that is Eastern (or Oriental) which is deeply ingrained in a stereotypical and subjective perception that re-surfaced more energetically after September 11, 2001 attacks called Orientalism (Said, 1978). This breed of thought, argued Adib-Moghaddam (2011), is “the outburst and jingoistic vitriol against individuals and issues considered to be remotely ‘Islamic’ was the surface effect of a cultural constellation that runs deep in the subliminal consciousness of Western Europe and North America. In the long run, the historical anchoring of the so-called mutual repudiation of the two entities (i.e. West and East) generated a full-fledged system that “reproduced Islam as unique, deviant, violent and ultimately different to ‘us’” (p. xiii).

Within this continuum of long-running “self vs. Other” wedge under its different shades, presidential narrative, especially in the aftermath of September 11, 2001 attacks, played a pivotal role in illuminating people’s minds, shaping their behaviors and enlisting their support for governmental policies. Indeed, with the dust of the attacks hardly settled, President Bush started deploying his rhetoric to channel the US public opinion’s avalanche of awe and revenge and its blind trust in its government bequeathed by the attacks in ways that exclusively served his government’s political and security interests. This manifested itself particularly in President Bush’s utilisation of linguistic choices such as personal pronouns to

convey his perceptions and conceptions to US alleged threats after the 9/11 attacks under the veneer of taken-for-granted and commonsensical truths.

The West Point speech, which President Bush delivered less than a year after the 9/11 attacks and a few months after the US war on Afghanistan, came to signal a clear break from the US Cold War foreign and security policies. The speech spelled out the core tenets of the “Bush Doctrine,” a document that made the requiem of deterrence and containment, underscored the obsolescence of nonproliferation and enshrined the merits of counter-proliferation especially to curb threats that were conceptualized as being the incarnation of the intersection of radicalism and technology. Indeed, the perception that the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks were “undeterable” and “unpredictable fanatics” largely laid the ground for the embrace of one of the most controversial aspects of the Bush administration’s grand strategy which is the doctrine of pre-emption that was spelled out in the President’s West Point speech and in the National Security Strategy of the United States of America (NSS) of September 2002 (Fukuyama, 2006). In fact, the most conspicuous aspect of Bush Doctrine, as it was emphasized in the West Point Speech, was the clear-cut relinquishment of conventions of international law and the legalist paradigm, specifically those pertaining to *Jus ad bellum* (i.e. justifications for resorting to aggression against another state (Walzer, 2004, p. 75).

In this venue, the George W. Bush administration operated a decisive break from the Cold War and post-Cold War discourse on nonproliferation as it relinquished multilateral, treaty-based nuclear arms control as the official foreign policy of the US. In addition, it relegated the nuclear disarmament commitments of the Nuclear Weapon States (NWS) to the back burner in favour of what Miriam Rajkumar labeled “arms control *à la carte*” (Rajkumar, 2005).

On the backdrop of these evolutions, the examination of political language through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), mainly by operationalizing analytical tools laid out by M.A.K. Halliday’s Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) brought about novel ways in the construal and the interpretation of political narrative, and hence the problematization of the allegedly taken-for-granted and commonsensical truths encoded by political speakers in their speeches. From the perspective of CDA, the analysis of the narrative of politicians centers on unpacking and disclosing the ways in which the speaker enacted different metafunctions that language can perform (i.e. experiential, interpersonal and textual) to enlist support for his ideological leanings. However, for the purposes of this study, analyses will be confined to the scrutiny of the interpersonal metafunction and more specifically the ways in which President Bush, who capitalized on his “social-capital-credibility” or “symbolic power,” deployed the “us vs. them” structure in his West Point speech to uphold and foster the feeling of belonging and in-grouping within the US all in distancing the latter from the out-grouped other (i.e. Iraqi regime) (Hughes, 2007; Bourdieu, 1991).

The analysis of the “us vs. them” structure in President Bush’s speech will be chiefly geared towards displaying how the speaker foregrounded and accentuated social, cultural, moral and political disparities which culminate in the objectification, the dehumanization and the evilification of the repudiated “other.” President Bush’s manipulation of personal pronouns in tandem with the emphasis of “self vs. other binary” had deep and far-reaching repercussions mainly in terms advancing, justifying and rationalizing the Bush administration’s global war on terror in general and its military build-up against Iraqi regime in particular. The association of the self with (i.e. “we” and “us”) with positive attributes and characterizations and the other (i.e. “they” and “them”) with negative ones constituted a pivotal linguistic tool and a discursive strategy for President Bush to sell the idea of Iraq,

with its nuclear program, as being a lethal and existential threat that justified and even required resort to extraordinary solutions. This implied, among others, the justification, the rationalization and the conventionalisation of US relinquishment of Cold War and post-Cold War security doctrines and its embrace of revolutionary *modus operandi* in its political and security policies which involved the institutionalization of preventive wars, a twisted version of *Jus ad bellum* and selective nonproliferation and multilateralism (Patrick, 2015).

This study, thus, purports to examine President George W. Bush's manipulation of pronominal choices in his West Point speech to establish an unbridgeable gap between the alleged goodness of the identity, attributes and actions of the self (i.e. the US and its allies) and ostensible evilness of the identity, attributes and actions of the other (i.e. Iraq and like-minded states). To this end, the study utilizes Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional framework of critical discourse analysis to uncover how President Bush deployed pronominal choices to encode his interpersonal perceptions in West Point speech about US confrontation with Iraq. The central purpose of the study at hand is, thus, to display how President Bush manipulated the binaries "we vs. they" and "us vs. them" to convey his perceptions and characterizations to the identities, intentions and actions of self (i.e. the US and its allies) and other (i.e. US enemies like Iraq) in ways that would naturalize, rationalize and legitimize US military build-up against Iraq.

In more specific terms, the study seeks to answer the central question of how President George W. Bush, who fell short of adducing any hard and conclusive evidence to indict, criminalize and attack Iraq, simply appealed to linguistic choices, such as personal pronouns to construct a self vs. Other dichotomy and to pitch the allegedly good self against the ostensibly bad other. The study equally aims at demonstrating how, in the absence of solid proofs and in defiance to a host of reports emanating from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) and United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), President Bush built his case against Iraq on basis of a compilation of guesses, conjectures and unfounded claims and characterizations. The study, thus, seeks to provide tentative answers to following questions:

- What do the personal pronouns "we" and "us" refer to? The US? The Bush administration? US people? US allies and friends? The West? Western civilization?
- What does the US President refer to with the pronouns "they" and "them"? "Terrorists"? Islam? "Rogue States"? European opponents to the war on terror? All the rest?
- How did President Bush capitalize of we/us vs. they/them polarization to make up for the absence of hard evidence and to concoct a semblance of legitimacy for US military undertakings?
- What important political and security implications did President Bush's pronominal choices have on his handling of the war on terror and its military build-up against Iraq?

The existing literature on the role of personal pronouns in political discourse include, among others, studies of varying lengths extending from the analysis of separate speeches to entire corpora that have been conducted under the paradigm of critical discourse analysis. Focus in most of these studies was almost exclusively placed on demonstrating how press, TV channels and politicians utilized personal pronouns to define identity and to shape attitudes and opinions. Ali et al. (2017) has conducted an in-depth analysis of personal

pronouns in newspaper discourse. Examined through a critical lens, the exploration of pronominal choices clearly reflected the ideologically tinted political feelings of skepticism in newspaper editorials regarding Iraqi government.

In an extensive investigation of the use of personal pronouns in a corpus of 32 interviews of Australian politicians from 1995 through 1996, Bramley (2001) pointed out that the usage of personal pronouns in local and federal TV channels was instrumental in defining identities and accentuating their distinctive attributes. In a similar vein, Maia Alavidze (2017) examined in very general terms how the pronouns “I” “we” “you” and “they” are mobilized by politicians to construct their image as they are crucial to construe the communicant’s attitude, social status, motivation ...etc.

Along the same lines, Victoria Worth-Koliba (2016) produced a seminal study about clusivity encoded in the use of the pronouns “us” and “them” in a speech delivered by the former leader of the British National Party, Nick Griffin. For Worth-Koliba, the choice in the use of these pronouns was incumbent upon the subjective, contingent and culture-bound perspectives of the speaker. By the same token, Paulina Gochecho (2012) fielded a study on the pervasive impact of pronominal choices in a corpus consisting of 60 political campaign advertisements on television for a national senatorial race wherein politicians manipulate personal pronouns in ways that serve their well-sought objectives involving, among others, enlisting support, enhancing confidence and allegiance, excluding difference or distancing and even demonizing dissidents.

These studies show that there is a dearth of significant research which explores entire corpora of authoritative documents like presidential speeches to construe and uncover how the US president, being a pivotal truth maker and the storyteller-in-chief in US public arena, manipulated pronominal choices to define the identities, intentions and actions of self and other in ways that clearly favoured the Bush administration's political and security interests. The distinctive contribution of the study at hand lies in chaining up pronominal choices operated in the presidential speech to demonstrate that in the absence of hard and conclusive evidence to indict, criminalize and attack Iraq, President Bush capitalized on the use of the use of the pronouns we/us vs. they/them to reinvent the identities, intentions and actions of self (US) and other (Iraq) in ways that would justify, rationalize and legitimize US military build-up against Iraq.

## 5. Materials and Method

Since the dim past, the study of political texts has drawn much of the attention of political analysts who have been concerned about understanding the sources, the motivations and the plans of salient political figures. This interest gained further traction with the introduction discourse analysis as a new theory and method of analysis that generated results which traditional political theories such as Realism, Liberalism...etc could not achieve. Given the importance of presidential discourse for the advancement and the promotion of the political and security designs of the governing elite, it stands out a crucial site of study to decipher, decode and construe hidden motives and sources undergirding and fostering the speaker's political and security leanings.

Since the 1970s, CDA has drawn from linguistic and social theory in an attempt to reveal the power structures that imbue all language (Fairclough, 1995). CDA is especially concerned with the questioning and the problematization of the truths proffered by speakers and the alleged veracity associated with world phenomena. The importance of this form of knowledge is justified by Vivien Burr (1995) who pointed out that the familiarity, the

righteousness and even the morality of certain views and actions at the expense of others within a particular community is largely tributary to specificities and particularities pertaining to the social construction of knowledge and truth which entail a more or less stable and dominant ways of perceiving world phenomena (p. 5).

From the perspective of CDA, a precept expounded by social constructivism, the world is conceptualized as being the by-product of human beings, who make and remake it in a manner that befits their ambitions and interests. This, however, should not be understood to imply that human beings are acting in a *vacuum*, because they can be themselves subjected to some social factors and to political, economic and intellectual forces. It is, therefore, only by being critical, inquisitive and even evaluative that we can get access to an encompassing perception to world phenomena.

The deciphering and the unveiling of these tacit influences is the task of Critical Discourse Analysis. This implies that “listeners and readers, having different background knowledge and different stances, may be expected to have different interpretations of the same communicative event.” As a result, “interpretations can be more or less plausible or adequate, but they cannot be true” (Reisigl, 2008, p. 243). From this viewpoint, truth becomes changing, relative and culture-based. Social constructionism considers truth as being the way culture or society “...constructs our own versions of reality between us” (Burr, 1995, p. 5). Concurring with this line of reasoning, Phillips and Jorgensen (2002) aptly argued that language could never reflect reality as it is out there, but it simply contributes in the co-construction of a possible version of it (p. 8).

This distinctive attribute of CDA was brought to the fore by Norman Fairclough (1992) who argued that this type of discourse analysis is an approach that targets the systematic investigation of:

[o]ften opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts and (b) broader social and cultural structures, relations and processes [...] how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power [...] how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony. (p. 135)

It is crucial for the discussion of the effect of the choice of personal pronouns emphasizing the idea that politicians wield these deictic tools to articulate and re-invent identities of themselves and those of their adversaries. Language manipulation is equally instrumental in erecting and bolstering boundaries of in-grouping versus out-grouping and in managing aspects of positive self-identification in contradistinction from negative other-representation. At the core of this process of representation and identification stands out the US way of perceiving issues as the “deictic center” of this system of representation and framing (Wirth-Koliba, 2016, p. 26). Arguing in an almost similar line, Chilton emphasized that by arrogating for itself the right to occupy the “deictic center,” and to banish the “other” to a peripheral or marginal status, the wielding of the pronouns “we/us vs. they/them” serves for a host of other objectives ranging from coercion, legitimization, delegitimization, representation, misrepresentation, securitization...etc (Chilton, 2004, p. 56; De Fina, 2003, p. 52).

Like the “the politics of naming” which is never “value-neutral,” the use of the pronouns “they/them,” is loaded with social and ideological meanings as they especially serve for creating the image(s) of others and to establish a distance between oneself and others (Bhabha and Mitchell, 2005; Zulaika, 2009, 2012). They can also be a means to

demarcate one's identity, attitudes and policies. For Maia Alavidze (2016), the use of "they/them" also implies by far more than the mere reference to who is other than the self in that, in addition to their deictic role, these pronouns have high categorizing, distancing and exclusive tinges (p. 354).

Norman Fairclough's three-layered model of CDA, which stands out as being an eclectic, pragmatic, interdisciplinary and problem oriented, is equipped with a multiplicity of tools to dig formal linguistic choices made by the speaker/writer to decipher and demystify concealed connections of ideologies and power issues in discourse. The main thrust of Fairclough's model of CDA, thus, consists in tying up a micro-level of analysis that places a premium on textual analysis of the formal properties (i.e. description in Faircloughian lexicon) to a broader level of analysis called macro-level that centers on the investigation of the socio-cultural tenor encoded in the text (i.e. explanation in Faircloughian lexicon). This process passes by a medium level called meso-level that digs into the processes of production, interpretation, distribution and consumption of texts by people which implies the necessity to account for Members Resources (i.e. interpretation in Faircloughian lexicon) (Fairclough, 1992, p. 73). Therefore, the gist of Fairclough's initiative is to concoct an analytical-interpretative framework that weds textual analysis to the broader social and cultural community context mainly for the sake of tracing back and explicating how language users evolve into ideology and values bearers (Fairclough, 1998, p. 131-132).

Given its being a text-oriented approach to language/discourse study, Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA grants a special importance to the detailed textual analysis of language which falls squarely within the field of linguistics whence Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG). For Fairclough, the investigation of the formal linguistic features is a crucial means to gain insight into *how discursive processes operate linguistically in specific texts*. The core premise of Hallidayan approach, which underscores the functionality of language, is that *language analysis within a social context* where "a particular lexicogrammatical choice is constructed under the influence of the social and cultural context" (Hartayan, 2011, p. 260). The major implication of these claims is that the linguistic choices of a speaker/writer flow from the surrounding social circumstances and their inevitable and irresistible influence on the speaker/writer's perceptions. On this basis, linguistic choices should be brought to the fore at the discourse level

As the central premise of Halliday's SFG is the emphasis of the functionality of language and its being a resource to provide language wielder with lexico-grammatical choices that satisfy his needs to construe and communicate his experiences of the world and to make meanings by organizing language in ways that enable the speaker/writer to construct and convey those meanings which include, *inter alia*, social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge and meaning. These last were officially categorized by Halliday under the three metafunctions of language/discourse: ideational (experiential), interpersonal (relational) and textual. These metafunctions were reprised by Fairclough in his three-tier framework of analysis to suggest that the analysis of formal linguistic features of language used by a speaker/writer constitute a basic and an inevitable stage to uncover encoded meanings/functions language wielder infused in his discourse to impart his multifarious perceptions and experiences about the world and the different phenomena under discussion. The epistemology and philosophy underlying Halliday's SFG could also be felt in terms of Fairclough's parcelling out of the process of analysis into three different but tightly interwoven layers: text as a series of linguistic features, text as a discursive practice and text as a social practice. In the first stratum of analysis, a premium is placed on the construal of

lexico-grammatical choices (i.e. lexis, transitivity, personal pronouns, modality...etc). In the second level, the gravity center of focus is shifted to the meticulous examination of the processes of the production, distribution, consumption and interpretation of the text. In the third layer, however, attention is geared towards the wider socio-cultural network to which the text belongs.

The core contribution of Hallidayan SFG to Fairclough's analytical critical framework lies in enhancing the critical investigation and the disclosing of embedded and hidden messages of domination, bias, demonization and bellicosity, which, according to Fairclough, could not be adequately construed unless the lexical, grammatical and syntactic choices operated in text production are disentangled and decoded. To this end, Fairclough appealed to techniques and tools pertaining to M.A.K. Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). According to this last, meaning embedded by speakers/writers in their discourse can be categorized into three metafunctions: ideational (experiential), interpersonal and textual. However, for the purposes of this study, focus will exclusively be placed on the interpersonal metafunction to unveil how President Bush utilized pronominal choices (we vs. they/us vs. them) in his West Point speech to identify participants and to characterize their attributes, intentions and actions in ways that served the US political and security interests. Indeed, since the overarching principle underpinning the SFL approach to language study underscores the idea that language is "functional" and is a "resource" that fuels communication, it is pertinent to claim, as Jurgen Habermas (1987) argued, that "language [and hence personal pronouns] is also a medium of domination and social force [and hence of estrangement, demonization and bellicosity]" (p. 259).

## 6. Results

This study seeks to examine the interpersonal metafunction encoded by President Bush in his West Point speech of June 1, 2002. It specifically looks into the ways in which President Bush utilized personal pronouns referring to both self (using "we" and "us") and other (using "they" and "them") in representing the identity of the speaker and other participants, conceptualizing relations between "interactants" and expressing the judgments and opinions of the speaker on what is being said (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014, p. 20; Thompson, 2002, p. 41).

In fact, even the ratio of use of pronouns referring to self (i.e. "we" and "us") by far outweighed that of pronouns referring to other (i.e. "they" and "them"). As it is shown in the table below, reference to self got the lion's share with a percentage of 74, 24 % against 25, 75 % for the other.

**Table 1. Usage and Frequency of Pronominal forms in the speech**

Pronominals	Number	Percentage	Total	Percentage	Total
We	46	69,69%	49	74,24%	66
Us	03	04,54%			
They	14	21,21%	17	25,75%	
Them	03	04,54%			

President Bush utilized the pronoun "we" to speak on behalf of his party (i.e. the Republican Party), government, the US Congress and the US army. President Bush' resort to

the use of the pronoun “we” to refer to any or all of the above mentioned institutions was meant to impress the US people by the emphasizing the unrelenting and the unwavering mobilization and commitment of the US official institutions for the purpose of countering terrorism. The idea of wrapping individual perceptions and decisions pertaining to the President’s idiosyncratic reasoning under the garb of shared and common feelings and decisions leaves almost no doubt in the mind of US public opinion and even international public opinion about the possible fallibility or lack of wisdom in the characterizations and decisions made by the President. The fact of attributing the President’s individual perceptions and decisions to such “embedded membership” (Liddicoat et al., 1999) also serves for mitigating the responsibility of the President by deflecting attention from him and shedding more light on the entire official institutions of the US.

**Table 2. Usage of the pronoun “we” in the speech**

Number	Excerpts
1.	Wherever <b>we</b> carry it, the American flag will stand not only for our power, but for freedom.
2.	<b>We</b> fight, as <b>we</b> always fight, for a just peace — a peace that favors human liberty
3.	<b>We</b> will defend the peace against threats from terrorists and tyrants.
4.	<b>We</b> wish for others only what <b>we</b> wish for ourselves — safety from violence, the rewards of liberty, and the hope for a better life.
5.	<b>We</b> will not leave the safety of America and the peace of the planet at the mercy of a few mad terrorists and tyrants.
6	<b>We</b> will lift this dark threat from our country and from the world.
7.	<b>We</b> are in a conflict between good and evil, and America will call evil by its name.
8.	And <b>we</b> will lead the world in opposing it [evil].
9.	<b>We</b> can support and reward governments that make the right choices for their own people.
10.	<b>We</b> will work for a just and peaceful world beyond the war on terror.

Using the inclusive pronoun “we” in reference to the US government, Congress, the US army and US public opinion, and to which he tied positive characterizations and attributes such as the promotion of freedom (excerpt 1), human liberty (excerpt 2), peace (excerpt 3), generosity and magnanimity (excerpt 4), world safety (excerpt 5 and 6) and the combat of evil (excerpt 7, 8 and 9 ) and terror (excerpt 10), President Bush sought to instil in the minds of public opinion the nonnegotiable goodness and virtuosity of the US. More importantly, President Bush’s appeal to the inclusive pronoun “we” especially in excerpts 2, 3, 5, 7, 8 and 10 to arrogate for himself and for his country the right to speak in the name of an entire civilization by arguing that the US post-9/11 foreign policy and its purportedly counter-terrorism campaign reflected and represented a universally valid and righteous outlook to

world politics. This type of claims would eventually furnish the Bush administration with a *carte blanche* to inflict any type and any degree of punishment on US enemies.

In addition to reinvigorating and bolstering unity and silencing opposition inside and outside the US, these characterizations were also destined to enlist the maximum of support from international community and international organizations such as the United Nations (UN) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) for his diplomatic and military build-up against Iraqi regime. The representation of the US and its allies as being unconditionally committed to the defence and the promotion of the above-mentioned ideals was a means to inculcate into the minds of public opinion inside the US and beyond that the US and its allies were definitely in the camp of good and that those who were not were to be thought of and dealt with as being necessarily antagonizing the universally cherished values of freedom, peace and democracy.

President Bush's mobilization of the "us vs. them" structure undergirded the "either with us or against us" mindset and elevated it into a new moral benchmark and a political touchstone to distinguish peace-loving states from hostile and bellicose ones. Despite its being a more self-defeating than self-serving argument, because it is unfeasible as Alexander Solzhenitsyn asserted, to isolate "good" people from "evil" ones as the "line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being (Solzhenitsyn, 1974). President Bush's iron-clad categorizing dichotomy was more dangerous than erroneous. Indeed, by classifying people, races, states and even entire civilizations into monolithic entities and according to a logic that runs in a collision course with human nature, President Bush jeopardized the same world security that he ceaselessly presumed to defend. The indiscriminate bundling of states that do not subscribe to the US contingent, subjective and culture-bound conceptions and perception to world phenomena under the rubric of "evil," "axis of evil," "rogue states," "terrorists" or "barbarians" granted the "othered," "out-grouped" and distanced peoples and states more solid reasons and arguments to acquire deterrents to ward off the hegemonic and hubristic behaviour of a hyper-power blinded by its absolute over-confidence in its more infallibility and the righteousness of its presumable mission to concretize God's will on earth (Judis, 2004, p. 186). By so doing, the Bush administration's new security strategy simply rendered the world an insecure place for life. Indeed, as it was enshrined in a miscellany of authoritative documents and political and security blueprints such as the 2002 NSS and the Bush Doctrine, with their emphasis on the "us vs. them" polarization, concocted a picture of world affairs through the prism of the US idiosyncratic and self-serving beliefs and perceptions. Capturing the gist of the far-reaching implications of this conception world affairs, Louis Menand (2001) claimed, in a review of books published about September 11, that "[t]he world is never clear, and to reduce it to binaries—good and evil, right and wrong, with us or against us . . .—is to promote blind faith over understanding" (p. 98).

**Table 3. Usage of the pronoun "we" in the speech (follow-up)**

Number	Excerpts
11.	<b>We</b> will preserve the peace by building good relations among the great powers.
12.	In defending the peace, <b>we</b> face a threat with no precedent.
13.	<b>We</b> cannot defend America and our friends by hoping for the best.
14.	<b>We</b> cannot put our faith in the word of tyrants, who solemnly sign non-proliferation treaties, and then systematically break

	them.
15.	<b>We</b> must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans, and confront the worst threats before they emerge
16.	In the world <b>we</b> have entered, the only path to safety is the path of action. And this nation will act.
17	The choices <b>we</b> will face are complex.
18.	<b>We</b> must uncover terror cells in 60 or more countries, using every tool of finance, intelligence and law enforcement. Along with our friends and allies,
19.	<b>We</b> must oppose proliferation and confront regimes that sponsor terror, as each case requires.

For the sake of taking Iraqi threat beyond the bounds of normal politics, in excerpts 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19 President Bush utilized the pronoun “we” to refer to the US as a force of good that took it upon itself to confront and curb the urgent, the unique and the lethal threat posed by the intersection of terror and weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The portrayal of the US as a *deus ex machina* was instrumental for President Bush to win the good will of his audience within and outside the US, and hence arrogate for himself the right to conceptualize the adequate means to react to post-9/11 threats in general and to Iraqi regime in particular. In excerpts 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19, President Bush assumed the responsibility of elaborating and concocting security plans and strategies, which he deemed them to be effective for vanquishing this new breed of threats posed by “tyrants,” “terrorists” and “WMD proliferators.” According to President Bush, the post-9/11 security threats as they were incarnated by the so-called “rogue states” were dominated by the intertwinement of “terrorism” and WMD, a threat that spilled out of the confines of normal politics and that justified the overriding of constraining rule and even required resort to extraordinary measures and reactions (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 27; Barthawal-Datta, 2012, p. 8; Hughes, 2007, p. 86).

**Table 3. Usage of the pronoun “they” in the speech**

Number	Excerpts
20.	<b>They</b> [our enemies] want the capability to blackmail us, or to harm us, or to harm our friends.
21.	<b>They</b> [our enemies] seek to impose a joyless conformity, to control every life and all of life.

Discourses create and reflect identities in that they define and characterize “who we are” and “who they are” and “what we stand for” and “what they stand for” (Croft, 2006). Acting along these lines and as it is demonstrated in excerpts 20 and 21, President Bush utilized the pronoun “they” as an anaphora to refer back to the enemies of the US (i.e. “rogue states” like Iraq), which were re-lexicalized in other venues within the speech as “evil” and “terrorists” and depicted with a negatively-loaded lexis that was evocative of the untrustworthy and unpredictable nature of the US enemies who were characterized as being bent on “blackmailing” “harming” innocents and imposing a totalitarian regime. President Bush’s appraisements to the US enemies were centered on identifying them by dint of their functions (i.e. functionalization). This implies that President Bush’s mischaracterizations of Iraqi regime and its like-minded states and stateless organization (often indiscriminately bundled

together under the banner of "rogue states") were drawn upon as a hallmark for the identification and the ascertainment of Iraqi regime as being evil, an epithet that was enough to rationalize and justify the US hard-line stance against it (Caldas-Coulthard and Coulthard, 1996, p. 54). According to the Director of the Preventive Diplomacy program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, Joseph Montville, "evil" can never be partner in negotiations. "You can't make a deal with evil," he observed. You can only kill it" (quoted in Jarratt, 2006, p. 89).

**Table 4. Usage of the pronoun “us” in the speech**

Number	Excerpts
22.	This fine institution [West Point Academy] gave <u>us</u> the man they say invented baseball, and other young men over the years who perfected the game of football.
23.	- They [our enemies] want the capability to blackmail us, or to harm us, or to harm our friends — and we will oppose them with all our power.

In the same breath, the use of the object pronoun “us” in excerpts 22 and 23 was highly consequential for President Bush to imprint a tinge of ill-fated victimhood, innocence and gullibility on US perceptions to world affairs in juxtaposition with an acute evil-doing temptation of its enemies. This type of portrayals constitutes another frequent and long-lasting meta-narrative in US strategic culture that President Bush reinvigorated in his speech (excerpt 23) to let it be inferred that the 9/11 assailants and the so-called “rogue states” cultivated an unprovoked and unjustified bellicosity towards the US. In other words, by associating the pronoun “us,” which referred to the US government, US people and US allies, with feelings of gratuitous hatred and inherent malevolence was a means for President Bush to further enhance claims he had made in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks about the fact that “terrorists” were jealous of US prosperity, democracy, freedom and equality. By dwelling on the presumably wanton and uncalled-for aggressiveness of the enemies of the US, President Bush sought to undercut attempts by a host of security experts to construe terrorism and the possible attempts of states like Iraq to go nuclear through the lens of “blowback” thesis that points out to the idea that the surge of terrorism and the defying stance of third world countries were mere “rebounds” and counter-actions to US hegemonic and neo-imperialist enterprises (Chossudovsky, 2005, p. 39).

**Table 6. Usage of the pronoun “them” in the speech**

Number	Excerpts
24.	- They [our enemies] want the capability to blackmail us, or to harm us, or to harm our friends — and we will oppose <u>them</u> with all our power.
25.	- Containment is not possible when unbalanced dictators with weapons of mass destruction can deliver those weapons on missiles or secretly provide <u>them</u> to terrorist allies.

**26.**

- We cannot put our faith in the word of tyrants, who solemnly sign non-proliferation treaties, and then systemically break **them**.

In a similar vein, the deployment of the object pronoun “them” in excerpts 24, 25 and 26 was paramount in encoding President Bush’s disdain and despise regarding Iraqi regime and his suspicion and skepticism towards its allegedly secret and malicious plans to go nuclear and to entertain dangerous liaisons with international terrorism. Indeed, the use of pronoun “them” in reference to “our enemies,” “weapons of mass destruction” and “non-proliferation treaties” echoed President Bush’s staunch belief that evil nature of Iraqi regime and the unpredictable and the untrustworthy nature of its military plans were foregone conclusions.

## 7. Discussion

The introduction of critical discourse analysis and Fairclough’s model in particular in the field of politics and IR has conspicuously revolutionized the ways in which political discourse is construed and analyzed. It has especially helped in dispensing with one-dimensional verities that members of the security and political elites arrogate to themselves the right to depict, disseminate and inculcate into the minds of vulnerable public opinion. It can, thus, be argued in this venue that the deployment of tools pertaining to Fairclough’s model served in emancipating politics from the discursive and rhetorical hegemony of “bully pulpit” with its unchallenged “symbolic power” to make claims about public issues that habituate the society to the rationality and the legitimacy of the outlook of the elite and that stifle and discard any other competing account.

The examination of presidential rhetoric through the lens of Fairclough’s three-layered framework of CDA has above all the merit of unlocking and unveiling concealed power ideological aspects infused within discourse. Differently from Teun van Dijk’s cognitivist approach, which is deemed too close to Foucauldian understanding of power as a productive force, Faircloughian approach to discourse also stands out as being the one that conceives of discourse as both constitutive and constituted. For Fairclough, being a form of social practice, discourse reproduces and reframes “knowledge, identities and social relations, including power relations (qtd. in Phillips and Jørgensen, 2002, p. 65).

One such way common to political discourse is that of the “polarization defining in-group and out-group” or “*us* vs. *them*” (van Dijk, 2006, pp. 248-9). In this venue, the leveraging of pronominal choices by political speakers stands out as one of the most ubiquitous discursive tactics whereby the speaker encodes and sustains his perceptions to the identity of the group with which he identifies and the identity from which he seeks to single out and distance his people’s identity. Briefly put, the wielding of pronominal choices stands out as a central tool for the delineation of the speaker’s categorizing vision to subjects and objects of his speech. For Norman Fairclough, pronominal choices, for instance, greatly influence the discursive construction of both social relations and knowledge and meaning systems, because it is by dint of the manipulation pronouns that a speaker encodes different aspects of his communicative intentions (De Fina, 1995). For instance, it is on basis of the choice in the use of “we” and “they” that a speaker can include or exclude his audience, involve or distance himself from others.

These claims find their resonance in varying degrees in the writings of Niccolo Machiavelli, Frederich Nietzsche, Carl Schmitt and others. For Machiavelli, who extolled the

merits of tying up deceit and the judicious use of force for the “prince” to rule inside as he emphasized the inevitability of war between states, because security can only be achieved by removing the undodgeable threat posed by others. Along similar lines, Schmitt stressed that the friend-enemy tension, which is a sine qua non condition for the “politicality” in the existence of a state, could be achieved and fueled through manipulative language to instill in the minds of public opinion the existence of an extreme peril for the existence of the state (Schmitt, 1985, p. 6). “An important implication of this claim was captured by Ashcroft et al. (1989) who opined that language becomes the medium through which a hierarchical structure of power is perpetuated, and the medium through which conceptions of ‘truth’, ‘order’, and ‘reality’ become established (p. 7).

In a similar vein, Nietzsche through his theory of “phenomenalism” and “perspectivism” as he decried what he considered as the “relativistic” foundations of Western philosophy that contends and defends the existence of universal principles underpinning and undergirding claims to truth, which are in actual fact mere culture-bound conditions, customs, “habitus” that render people’s subscription and allegiance to the infallibility of this truth an unconscious and non-negotiable practice. The major implication of this line of reasoning is that a speaker’s truth claims are almost exclusively a matter of couching his/her interests and subjective perceptions and personal experiences in terms of universal/universalisable, commonsensical and taken-for-granted truths (Nietzsche, 1974, p. 354).

From a somehow different vantage point, Foucault underscored the symbiotic relationship between knowledge/language and power. He brought to the fore the role of the state as being the unchallenged custodian of knowledge constituting “truth” in that it arrogates to itself the absolute authority to condone or restrain practitioners to practice and proclaim it (Brass, 2008, p. 56). To this end, the state appeals to its power to construct and fashion truth in ways that culminate in aggrandizing and maximizing its power. In such a way, “truth” becomes largely a discursive practice and hence truthfulness and falsehood differ from one regime of knowledge (and thus of any of regime of truth) to another. To put it differently, the determination of what is true and false is tributary to rules and conventions that govern the way of thinking of a society that gained, by virtue of their being embraced by the ruling elite, the power to interpellate society members and hence ensure the conformity of their thoughts and behaviours with the regime of truth established and defended by the ruling elite

The “us vs. them” structure, which hinges on the use of the pronouns “we” and “us” to refer to self and “they” and “them” to characterize or construct an “other,” stands out as a pivotal discursive technique that speakers in the field of politics utilize to prioritize their outlook to issues to the detriment of others’. Political speakers often appeal to this legitimization technique to bolster their positions and to enlist support for their policies and decisions by painting the self and its attributes in a good light all in painting the other and its attributes in a bad light (Van Dijk, 2006). This contrast entails the rationalization and the legitimization of the self’s intentions and actions which implies the de-politicization and the demonization of all that is the other (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 42; Thompson, 2004, p. 75).

In the case of President Bush’s West Point address, the “us vs. them” narrative was instrumental for the US president to bolster the rationale undergirding the military build-up of the US-led war on Iraq mainly by stitching up a stern dichotomy between a “good” self and an “evil” other which culminated in the intensification of danger, and hence the absolute necessity to act offensively. The “us vs. them” narrative is encompassing and evocative of the US long-lasting meta-narratives of “Good vs. evil,” “barbarism vs. civilization and “neo-Orientalism” that the West in general and the US in particular often invoked to confer

legitimacy and a sense of moral infallibility upon their political and security undertakings (Bhabha, 2002, pp. 3-4).

The results obtained from the application of Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA largely point to the fact that President Bush's pronominal choices were highly instrumental in re-inventing the identities of self and other, reimagining re-imagining their relations and re-casting their intentions, actions and plans in ways that clearly served US security and political designs. Given the fact that securitization is basically an "intersubjective" process in that it is the result of a hectic "negotiation" between the speaker (as a securitizing actor) and his audience, much of the rhetoric of the US president was geared towards garnering the unconditional support of public opinion for the US-led war on terror (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, p. 4). This involved, *inter alia*, the targeting of a number of states that the Bush administration classified under the denigrating rubrics of "rogue states," "axis of evil" and "failed states" (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 31; McDonald, 2008, p. 566). As part of his government's military build-up against Iraqi regime, which the Bush administration indicted of being involved in the 9/11 attacks, of being enmeshed with Al Qaeda, of working clandestinely on WMD and of violating human rights, President Bush drew heavily on the formulation of his speeches to justify the targeting of Iraq.

The trumpeting of the infallible goodness of the US and its allies coupled with the distanciation of Iraqi regime were enacted and accentuated with negatively-charged lexis, epithets and characterizations for the purpose of anchoring the unquestionable goodness of the self and the non-negotiable evilness of the other in the collective imagination of the US people and international community. With the fulfilment of this central objective, a military attack against Iraq and its like-minded states (i.e. "rogue states") and stateless organizations will become more of a moral obligation than a mere right to self-defense. The resulting irredeemable evilness of the other will also eclipse any radical change the Bush administration would usher in at the political and the security levels, which involved the relinquishment of the Cold War doctrines of deterrence and containment, the *de facto* reshuffling of the clauses of the nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) and the just war norms, the sly conflation of pre-emption and prevention and above all the unprecedented recalibration of the US nuclear strategy by prioritizing counter-proliferation and the relegation of nonproliferation to a back burner.

A deep examination of excerpts 11 through 19 equally points to the fact that President Bush mobilized "we-ness" to provide his appraisement of the US identity and mission in the world by focalizing on the delineation of what he considered them to be the functions of the US as an exceptional nation endowed with the unique mission of spreading democracy and freedom and safeguarding world peace. This implied that the US believed to be endowed with the apanage and the imprimatur to conceptualize and devise the appropriate means that it saw fit to accomplish this presumably lofty and universal goal. Concurring with the truth-relativizing reasoning of what is true for you' need not be 'true for me,' Friedrich Nietzsche posited that "what we call truth is no more than today's 'convenient fiction' (Campbell, 2011, p. 4).

The "us vs. them" polarization, which President Bush enacted in his West Point speech and through which he managed to recast the identity of the US in contradistinction from that of its enemies, was of capital importance in delineating the US war on "rogue states" such as Iraq according to a "Manichean" logic, as being a new phase in an eternal and everlasting antagonism between good and evil (Grant, 2006, pp. 94-95; Tardieu, 1981). The inculcation of this way of reasoning in the minds of public opinion inside and outside the US

deemed to be, especially from the perspective of the Bush administration's political and security planners, as an important stage in a broader strategy envisaging to naturalize and legalize radical and unprecedented transformations in the conduct of its political and security policies. These last were, in turn, exploited for the purpose of rationalizing and legitimizing the upcoming war on Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq. Therefore, President Bush capitalized on the use of the pronoun "we" in excerpts 1 through 19 to give the impression that the US political elite in all official institutions, from the White House to Capitol Hill to other political actors such as opposition parties automatically lined behind President Bush to buttress his views and decisions about the threat and the most congruent means to curb it. As such, the "we" from this venue, was used, as N. R. Bramley (2001) posited,

to represent different facets of the politicians' collective 'selves' and relationships to different 'others'. These 'selves' include: 'self' who has taken on an "institutional identity" and is a representative of an active united political party; 'self' as part of a political party in opposition to another party; 'self' as affiliated with people; 'self' as a person who needs to deflect individual responsibility by leaning on a collective identity; and, 'self' who presents issues to the people as collective issues, and not as an individual 'self'. (p. 60)

## 7. Conclusion

Scrutinized through the lens of Fairclough's three-dimensional framework of CDA, President Bush's appeal to the "us vs. them" structure has been found to be paramount in re-articulating and reinventing the identity of the US and its attributes in juxtaposition with those of the US enemies. The study has, therefore, come to establish that by deploying the use of the pronouns "we" and "us" to refer to self and tie them up to all that is positive and good all in disowning Iraqi regime as the US other through the use the pronouns "they" and "them" which were almost always yoked to all that is negative and evil. This process of dichotomizing positive self-identification from negative other-representation was found to be highly instrumental in laying the ground for the re-calibration of the fundamental documents, law and conventions that govern and regulate International Relations (IR), mainly in terms of threat assessment and declaration of war. President Bush's manipulation of the "us vs. them" dichotomy as a device of othering had the deep and far-reaching effect of underscoring the uniqueness of the post-9/11 security atmosphere. This self vs. other polarization, with which Bush's rhetoric was imbued, has also pinpointed the undeterrable nature of the new breed of threats incarnated by the intersection of radicalism and technology as are the cases of Iraq, Iran and North Korea (often bundled together in the US official political lexicon as "rogue states"). Moreover, this categorization of identities ushered in a subtle shift in focus of US security paradigm from nonproliferation to counter-proliferation as the central component of US nuclear strategy, together with a blunt disdain to just war norms through the conflation of pre-emptive wars and preventive aggressions. It is worthy of mentioning in this venue that this "revolution" in the US political and security *modus operandi* continued to shape, or least to tincture, the policies of the subsequent US governments (i.e. the Obama and the Trump administrations), making of the US look more like a rogue state endangering world security and the states that it claimed to be protecting the world from their ostensible evil.

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