

# News and Media

## **Metaphor and War:**

### *The Metaphor System used to justify war in the Gulf*

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9<sup>h</sup> July 2014

# Metaphor & War

## Metaphorical Thought:

- ✓ Is a Neutral Construct on its own
- ✓ Is Commonplace and Inescapable e.g. POLITICS IS BUSINESS –  
*“Saddam is sitting on our economic lifeline”, “Al Qaeda has a stranglehold on our economy”, “The political gains in war are to be weighed against acceptable costs”.*

## This lecture aims to:

- ✓ **Examine the role played by metaphorical thought** in bringing the nation of the US to war against Iraq.
- ✓ **Highlight the dangers** of the metaphor system in **limiting what we see** and **highlighting what we notice**.
- *Note that pain, dismemberment, death, starvation and injury are not metaphorical.*

# You-Tube Video

- **President George W. Bush announcing Invasion of Iraq**
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dBCCml2Kc5c>

# Examples of Metaphors@Work

## Some excerpts from President Bush's Speeches:

- Saddam “*sits on our economic lifeline*”
- Saddam has a “*stranglehold on our economy*”
- The occupation of Kuwait by Iraq as a “*rape*”
- The US was in the gulf to “*protect freedom, protect our future and protect the innocent*” .
- The US sought to “*push Iraq out of Kuwait by delivering a knockout punch*”

# The Clausewitz Metaphor

- War is seen as merely a **political cost-benefit analysis**.
- *The political gains in war are to be weighed against acceptable costs. When the costs of the war exceeds the political gains, the war should cease.*
- “**Political Gains**” vs. “**Acceptable Losses**”
- Note that war is justified on **Pragmatic Grounds** and **NOT Moral Grounds**.

# The Metaphor Systems in Crisis Reasoning

## 1. The State-as-Person System/ Ruler for State Metonymy

- The State is conceptualised **as a person engaging in social relations with a world community** – and having **inherent dispositions** *e.g. Peaceful or Aggressive, Responsible or Reckless, Industrious or Lazy*.
- Iraq = Saddam Hussein *e.g. “We have to get Saddam out of Kuwait”* (Note that this system only applies to rulers perceived as illegitimate rulers).

# The Metaphor Systems in Crisis Reasoning

## 2. Strength for a State = Military Strength

- The **Well-being of a State** is defined in terms of its **Economic Health**
- *Maturity = Industrialisation*
- *Unindustrialised = Undeveloped, Backward, 3<sup>rd</sup> World.*

# The Metaphor Systems in Crisis Reasoning

## 3. Rationality is the Maximisation of Self-Interest

- The **Rational State** seeks to **maximise Wealth and Military Might**.
- **Violence** can further Self-Interest.
- **But** it can be stopped in 3 ways:

*1. Balance of Power*

*2. Use of Collective Persuasion*

*3. A Cop strong enough to deter violence and punish.*

# The Metaphor Systems in Crisis Reasoning

## 3. Rationality is the Maximisation of Self-Interest

- The **Causal Commerce System** is a way to **comprehend/justify** actions which have both positive and negative effects.
- Main Question Posed to the Masses- *Is it Worth It?*
- Actions are seen as **mere transactions**  
(Transits *from Qualitative to Quantitative*)

# The Metaphor Systems in Crisis Reasoning

## 4. The Fairytale of a Just War

### The **Cast of Characters:**

*1.A Villain*

*2.A Victim*

*3.A Hero*

### The Typical Scenario:

- *The villain commits a crime against an innocent victim. The Hero (either with allies or alone) engages the Villain (who is inherently evil) in battle in spite of the odds – restores moral balance and achieves glory.*
- *The Self-Defence Scenario vs. The Rescue Scenario*

# The US-Iraq Case Study

- International Politics as Business:
  - ✓ War is seen as a matter of **maximising political gains** and **minimising losses and costs** (**Pragmatic NOT Moral Grounds**).
  - ✓ Use of the **State-as-Person Metaphor** (The “**enemy as demon**” Metaphor – **note comparisons with Hitler**)
  - ✓ **Qualitative Costs** (**Psychological Trauma, Death, Loss, Disruption**) overlooked and quantified into economic gains/losses.

# The US-Iraq Case Study

- International Politics as Business:
  - ✓ US Plans for war seen as **rational calculation** rather than in terms of *murder, assault, arson*.
  - ✓ **War as Medicine** – Enemy Military Control as “*cancer*”, Military “*operations*” as “*surgical strikes*” to “*clean out the enemy*”.

# Problems with the Metaphor System:

## Hidden Facts:

- ✓ What is the **definition of “Victory”**?
- ✓ What are the **implications** inherent in this “Victory”? (*contending with general Arabian/international hostility*)
- ✓ What is **the Arab Viewpoint**? (*Arab Nationalism vs. Islamic Theocratic Fundamentalism – the notion of dignity vs. emasculating western domination and colonialism*)
- **“It is better to be a lion for a day than a cat for a year”**

# Problems with the Metaphor System:

## Hidden Facts:

- ✓ Is Kuwait truly a victim in reality?
- ✓ Note the **metaphorical concept of American National Interests** – *Blacks are represented in the military in disproportionately large numbers.*
- ✓ **Social Costs of the War** – *Trauma to families and communities, disruption of lives, psychological effects in veterans, opportunity cost of spending on a war rather than on social needs at home, the unquantifiable reality of pain and suffering of innocent bystanders, contradiction between the self-interest and the portrayal of selflessness.*

# In Conclusion

## Metaphors:

- ✓ **Limit** what we notice
- ✓ **Highlight** what we are supposed to see
- ✓ Provide a **vital part of our inferential structure**
- ✓ Are **totally unavoidable.**

# In Conclusion

Thus:

- ✓ It is vital that we comprehend and identify the presence of metaphors in foreign policy debates to identify what is hidden and discern the true implications of decisions made.
- ✓ Note: Metaphors backed up by bombs can kill.

# Quick Discussion

- After going through this lecture, in your opinion - what are the **implications of State Ownership of News Media?**
- What is the danger if **Press Freedom (In News and Media)** is totally **curtailed by the State?**