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Principles of Rhetoric
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Analysis 2

On September 11, 2001, the Islamist terrorist group known as al-Qaeda launched a series of terrorist attacks on the United States of America, specifically in the New York City and Washington D.C areas. Nineteen al-Qaeda terrorists hijacked four planes with the intention of using them as suicide attacks that would crash those planes into designated buildings, or targets. Two of the four passenger jets were flown into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, both of which collapsed entirely within two hours of being hit. The third plane was crashed into the Pentagon, and the west side of the building, which is the Headquarters of the US Department of Defense, partially collapsed. The fourth hijacked plane was intended for the US Capitol Building in Washington D.C, but instead crashed into a field in Pennsylvania after the passengers of the plane interfered with the hijackers. The attack on September 11th was devastatingly fatal—almost 3,000 people died in the attacks, including all of the al-Qaeda hijackers and every passenger aboard the four planes.

On the evening of September 11, 2001, in the wake of these attacks, President George W. Bush issued an [address](#) to the nation. In his speech, Bush addresses the citizens of the United States, which is his target audience. However, due to the nature of the attacks, people from all over the world viewed Bush's address from their televisions, and people from both the United States and the rest of the world were able to access the speech later on the Internet. Bush's main purpose in his address is to issue a formal presidential response to the terrorist attack, but more importantly, it is to reassure the American people in a time where fear was prevalent, awaken their resolve for justice, and ignite their desire to protect the concept of freedom. Because of the

purpose of Bush's address, there is an exigency that is both very important and specific. Bush is responding to an attack that happened that same day, which gives his speech a sense of relevance and urgency, because as the leader of the country that was just attacked, he needs to ensure that the government programs and leaders remained intact, so that his people did not spiral into chaos and disarray. Also, because the World Trade Center was a center for global commerce, its destruction could have potentially caused damage to both the Manhattan and global economy. This provides its own exigency, because Bush needed to reassure the world of the stability of the economy in order to avoid further widespread panic.

Because of the purpose of his address, the discourse that Bush employs in his speech is epideictic. Epideictic discourse is concerned with praise and blame, and also attempts to form attitudes, which is what Bush does in his address to the nation. Bush is attempting to satiate the fears of the American people in his speech, and is also using his address to the nation's citizens as an opportunity to attempt to instill an attitude of strength and determination within them.

Bush consistently employs several rhetorical strategies in order to establish his credibility throughout his address. The primary way that Bush establishes this credibility is by using his speech to demonstrate that he, as president, has a handle on the crisis. One way that he does this is by remaining composed, calm, and collected throughout the entirety of his speech. Bush's demeanor is unperturbed throughout, and his voice never falters or wavers. This sends the implication to his viewers that he, the leader of the United States, is confident, and will respond to this disaster in a levelheaded way. A second way that Bush indicates that he is in control of the situation is by describing the post-crisis measures that were taken. For example, Bush indicates in his address that he immediately "implemented our government's emergency response plans...[and] the functions of our government will continue uninterrupted." He continues on in

his address to assure his viewers that the American financial institutions and economy remained strong, and also that the search is underway for who was responsible for the attack. He asserts that the American military is strong, and that relief efforts for the victims were already underway. By providing the American people with reassurance that the country's governmental and financial institutions were not shut down, that there was a plan in place to help the victims, and that the military was prepared, Bush is establishing his credibility as a competent leader. Throughout the address, Bush presents himself with a mix of composure, confidence, and solemnity that are appropriate for the difficult and precarious situation at hand, which further establish his credibility in the address.

In addition to establishing his credibility, Bush also appeals to his audience's emotions in order to strengthen his argument. The first way that he does this is by describing the victims of the attack as "secretaries, business men and women, military and federal workers, moms and dads, friends and neighbors." Bush describes the victims in the attack in a way that people can relate to, because every single person in America either falls under one of those categories, or knows somebody who does. This appeals to the audience's sense of sadness and fear, because these victims, who are now relatable, could have been a loved one or even themselves. Bush also appeals to his audience's emotions through charged language when he describes the scene of the falling towers: "The pictures of airplanes flying into buildings, fires burning, huge -- huge structures collapsing." By describing the scene, Bush is giving his viewers the sense that they were there, which again appeals to their sadness and fear. Bush appeals to these emotions of sadness and fear not to make them sad or afraid, but in order to ignite different emotions within the American people, which are those of anger, and the desire for justice. Another emotion that Bush appeals to in his address is patriotism. He does this through charged language, including

phrases like “a great nation,” “the steel of American resolve,” and “the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity.” All of these phrases, which include patriotically stimulating language, are used in order to arouse a sense of pride in being an American, and a desire to band together to fight the war on Terror.

The rhetorical figure that Bush utilizes the most in his speech is the metaphor. There are many examples of metaphor in Bush’s speech. One example is when he says, “they cannot dent the steel of American resolve.” This is a metaphor because Bush is offering the comparison of two seemingly unlike things, steel and American resolve, in order to highlight a quality that they share. In this case it is that American resolve is strong, like steel. Bush offers another example of metaphor when he says, “America was targeted for attack because we’re the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world.” Again, Bush is comparing two seemingly unlike things, this time America and a beacon. America is not literally a light, but is compared to one in order to explain that America is like a light that leads to freedom and opportunity. Bush uses metaphor in his address as a tool to better construct an emotionally charged speech. In addition to metaphor, Bush also uses a periphrasis when he says, “And I pray they will be comforted by a Power greater than any of us.” Here, Bush is substituting many words, when he says “a Power greater than any of us”, for one, referring to God. He uses periphrasis for rhetorical effect, in order to assert that God has great power.

The main stasis that Bush is arguing in his address is one of policy. There is clearly not a question of whether something happened, and whether the event was good or bad is not in question either, as Bush calls the attack “evil, despicable acts of terror.” Bush is asserting in his address that something needs to be done about the terrorist attack, and his main argument is that America needs to be defended.

Bush utilizes the formal topic of definition in his address, calling the events of the day “a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist attacks.” Bush classifies the disaster at the beginning of his speech in order to place it into the category of a terrorist attack, which then allows him to delve into why it happened. The way he does this is through the formal topic of concomitant, which he uses to convince his viewers that the attack on the United States was an attack on freedom. Bush claims that “America was targeted for attack because we’re the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world.” Bush is making a judgment about an event, in this case a terrorist attack on the United States, based on an accompanying circumstance, which is that America is the strongest example of freedom in the world. Bush uses these formal topics to ultimately make his argument that America needs to defend that tenet of freedom.

Bush’s argument that America needs to defend itself is established through an enthymeme in his address. His major claim, which is unstated, is that places that champion justice and freedom should be defended if they are attacked. His minor claim, which he states clearly, is that “America was targeted for attack because we’re the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world,” or put more simply, that America is a place of freedom, and was attacked. Bush solidifies America as a place for freedom in his speech through his charged language and use of metaphor. The conclusion, therefore, is that America, a beacon for freedom and opportunity, should be defended.

In addition to the obvious situated ethos of being the president, Bush establishes his credibility as a proactive, capable leader of the United States through his appropriately somber but poised delivery, as well as his assurance that the crisis is under his control. He appeals to his audience’s emotions of fear and sadness, but also of patriotism through charged language and by compelling his viewers to identify with the victims, in order to galvanize a sense of anger and

commitment to justice, which he is able to achieve this charged language through use of metaphor and periphrasis. By presenting his argument as one of policy and supporting this claim through the formal topics of definition and concomitant, Bush is able to ultimately use his address to argue that America should be defended, because defending America means defending the doctrine of freedom itself.

Works Cited

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