# Winning Words: Political Discourse from Shaping to Framing

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## *Abstract*

Successful performers of political discourse whether they are politicians or journalists are often able to redefine issues and events when existing definitions are no longer advancing their cause. This process of framing is based on the utilization of appropriate language to appeal to values, norms, and identities in an attempt to alter the way in which an issue is perceived and visualized. Frames can effectively promote particular definitions of a problem or moral worldviews of an issue and hence serve to organize everyday's language, realities and experiences. This paper discusses the potential of political discourse to go beyond message shaping to frame and reframe events and situations in light of contextual factors, local values, and the interests of the communicator. It highlights the power of framing, particularly in regard to the strategic use of metaphors and catchwords that strike the right chord and conform to the value system. The paper also attempts to analyze the framing effects of the news media referring to the role that engaged citizens and active audiences should play in responding to framing.

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# النصر بالكلمات:
# الخطاب السياسي من الصياغة إلى التأطير

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## الملخص

عادة ما يمتلك المتصدون لإنتاج الخطاب السياسي، سواء كانوا سياسيين أو صحافيين، القدرة على إعادة تعريف القضايا والأحداث والظواهر إذا ثبت لهم أن تعريفاتها المتداولة لم تعد تحقق أهدافهم. هذه العملية التي تسمى «التأطير» تتم من خلال استخدام اللغة؛ لاستمالة المشاعر واستثارة الولاء للقيم السائدة، بغية إحداث تغيير في الصور المرتسمة في الأذهان عن القضايا التي تشغل الرأي العام. تعزز الإطارات توصيفات بعينها، أو رؤى أخلاقية محددة، ومن ثم فهي تسهم بصورة فاعلة في تشكيل الحقائق ونشر نسق من المفردات بشأن قضية أو حدث ما. لا يقتصر دور الخطاب السياسي، كما تشير هذه الورقة، على مجرد صياغة المشهد الحالي، بل يقوم أيضًا بوضعه في «إطار» أو «تعريف» مستقى من المؤثرات السياقية، والقيم المحلية، ومصالح النخبة التي تقوم بالتأطير. تسلط الورقة الضوء على قوة التأطير وطريقة تأثيره بوصفه سلاحًا اتصاليًا، لا سيما ما يتعلق بالاستخدام الاستراتيجي للاستعارات والكنايات والاختصارات والشعارات في خطابات السياسيين ووسائل الإعلام. أخيرًا، تحاول الورقة تحليل آثار تأطير أخبار وسائل الإعلام، مشيرة إلى دور المواطن الفاعل والجمهور النشط في الاستجابة لها من خلال «إعادة التأطير»، أو إنتاج رؤى ومفردات بديلة نابعة من الجذور ومقاومة لمنظومة الأُطُر السائدة.

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**Introduction**

It is obvious that controlling public opinion as well as political images in the news is a crucial objective of politics. The core of the strategic political rhetoric involves developing and communicating a message that fulfills the goals of the politician by employing the appropriate symbols and appeals. According to Bennett (2005), there are four basic stages of the message construction: message shaping, message salience, message credibility, and message framing.

Message shaping is the first stage of the construction of political message. It involves composing a simple theme which normally starts with a key notion or phrase that enables the audience to think conveniently about a specific issue or event. Powerful words and phrases motivate people to derive their own meanings and make their own interpretations of political matters. In fact, our shared political knowledge and evolving beliefs are determined largely by how we actively interpret the images we find in the rhetoric of political leaders and in the news media. For example, the U.S Republican Party released a document entitled "Contract with America" during the 1994 Congressional election campaign. The document detailed in a simple and accessible way the actions the Republicans promised to take if they became the majority party in the U.S House of Representative for the first time in 40 years. The Republicans gained a majority of seats in the 104th Congress and the contract was seen as a triumph for party leaders as well as for the American conservative movement.

Message salience is the second phase in the process of constructing an effective political theme. The message has to capture the popular attention, and that goal can only be attained when communication channels are saturated with that message. Business companies recognize the importance of message salience and therefore devote significant portion of their budget to advertising. When the democratic candidate, Gary Hart was involved in an extramarital affair with the model-actress Donna Rice during the 1988 U.S elections, he exerted maximum efforts to avoid questions regarding the scandal and go ahead with the issues of his campaign. However, his picture with Rice sitting on his lap and appearing in the front pages of the major newspapers across the country, coupled with the efforts of his opponents feeding talk shows and opinion columns a steady message of "adultery" and "sin" all led the candidate to halt his campaign and withdraw from the race.

Moreover, the message needs to be credible in order to successfully reach the targeted audience. That is why credibility is the third aspect of the message making process. Messages are more likely to be supported when they are validated by some logical reasoning or authoritative endorsements.

Important announcements or decisions acquire higher credibility when they are delivered through a staged dramatic setting such as the house or the office of the political leader or when he or she does a physical exercise. Some messages require that the leader behaves formally while others require him to be causal and act in a spontaneous fashion. Further, politicians may take advantage of shocking events or terrible tragedies to advance their agendas, like when the attacks of September 11, 2001 accelerated the steps to launch the already planned invasion of Iraq.

Finally, any message is open to different interpretations, and successful communication strategy should select important segments of that message (sound bites) and emphasize them in such a way as to reinforce a particular definition or opinion regarding the issue at hand. This is called "message framing" and it refers to the practice by which people make a particular conceptualization of a situation or reorient their thinking about a situation. Both the news media and political elites are responsible for creating these frames by providing descriptions of situations and events. Frames can serve to enhance or consolidate an existing political order or they can question or even challenge the status quo. This paper focuses on that particular aspect of message making attempting, at least in a limited way, to answer these questions: (1) what is framing and how does it work in the political and news media discourses, particularly in light of Lakoff's analysis of framing? (2) How do we understand the process of news media framing and its affects? (3) How should we respond to framing?

### What is framing?

The major tenet of framing theory is that an issue can be viewed from a variety of angels and be interpreted as having implications for multiple considerations. Framing is a process of selective control over the individual's perception of media messages or politicians, statements and announcements. It defines how an element of rhetoric is packaged so as to allow specific meanings and rule out others. It also involves personalities, characters, scripts, conflicts, dramas, emotions, symbols, and expressive activities consisting of both "real" and "pseudo-events" (Polletta & Kai Ho, 2006; Boorstin, 1971/1992).Frames are "central organizing ideas to understand and organize reality" (Gamson & Modigliani).

The concept is generally attributed to the work of Erving Goffman, especially his book, Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience. Goffman (1974) described frames as "schemata of interpretations" that enable individuals to find, comprehend, identify, and label events in daily life. He discussed how frames are acquired and applied. In his view, frames are

implicit and form the basis for all types of social activity. To understand and take part in social activities, one should learn the frames that establish them. Senses are managed and guided by frames so that individuals see, hear, taste, smell certain "preferred" aspects of life and not others. Later, Goffman (1978) extended his theory to the content of mass media speculating for instance about the social consequences of the way that women were often portrayed in magazine advertisements. He claimed that ads could effectively reinforce how women are framed in everyday life. His findings showed that women in most ads appeared subordinate to men – less serious, weaker, smaller or lower in size relative to men, and more regardful.

Following the works of Goffman, framing theory began to gain more momentum and acceptance in the academic and popular literatures. One of the pioneers who developed framing theory was mass communication scholar Robert Entman whose study of US news coverage of two plane crashes (1991) and later his work on media framing (1993) oriented attention towards the contextualization of news as opposed to agenda-setting role of mass media (agenda setting deals with the salience of issues whereas framing is concerned with the presentation of issues). To frame, said Entman, is to choose some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communication text in such a way as to enhance a certain image of an issue, causal explanation, moral assessment, and/ or treatment recommendation for the issue addressed. Frames "define problems- determine what a causal agent is doing with what costs and benefits, usually measured in common cultural values; diagnose causes-identify the forces creating the problem; make moral judgement-evaluate casual agents and their effects; and suggest remedies-offer and justify treatments for the problems and predict their likely effects". Entman remarked that although most events are covered globally; the way in which they are covered and presented can lead to the development of a dominant perception in the audience mind.

Bateson (1972) and Clair (1993) used the term "picture example" to describe framing. When a photographer takes a picture he or she must make conscious choices of what part to focus on and include in that picture. In the end, only a small part of the episode reflecting the photographer's own vision of reality is selected. People who see the final outcome may not be aware of the photographer's choice and the parts he excluded and hence attach their own interpretation to the finished product.

### Winning by framing: Lakoff's theory

In his book Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think, Lakoff (2002) argued that our political choices are not rational, but filtered through

unconscious metaphors that influence our thinking about everything from how children should be raised to how government should be run. In his subsequent famous work Don't Think of an Elephant: Know Your Values and Frame the Debate, Lakoff (2004) addressed the concept of framing as applied to politics. Lakoff, who is a linguist and cognitive scientist, theorized that if political candidates want to be persuasive, they must incorporate their everyday rhetoric and stands on issues into an overall outlook of governance. Political elites, he presumed, are the real framers of political discourse. Framing is unavoidable - it is central not just to political discourse but to all cognition, both conscious and unconscious. Terms which frame debate attempt to limit the possibilities of discourse by setting the words and metaphors by which a topic can be discussed. The frames, Lakoff wrote, "are in the synapses of our brains, physically present in the form of neural circuitry" (p. 173). He referred to mental models as frames adding, "Reframing is social change. . .Reframing is changing the way the public sees the world...because language activates frames, new language is required for new frames...Thinking differently requires speaking differently" (p. xv). Commenting on the success of conservatives in the U.S Congress and the victory of George W. Bush over his opponent John Kerry in the 2004 presidential elections, Lakoff argued that conservatives view the world through a "strict father" model, in which a moral authority rules the family through discipline and punishment and Americans generally respond to that notion and idealize it metaphorically without knowing it. Hence, Americans use some concepts that go along with "nation-family" metaphor such as "founding fathers", or "our sons and daughters" in the war zone. Ultimately, conceptualizing the nation as a family maps the values from the strict father and nurturing parent models onto the political scene, creating conservative and liberal wings.

The "strict father" metaphor views the world as a dangerous and difficult place. This is why the nation needs a strong father who protects and supports his family in times of distress, and teaches his children right from wrong by punishment. Those who vote conservatives, he said, are proponents of that model which emphasizes self-interest, greed, and competiveness. The "strict parent" model is associated with a narrow view of the appropriate range of government. Notwithstanding the government's responsibility to maintain law and order and defend the country against outside threats, the "strict father" model stresses the responsibility of the citizen to handle most domestic problems. If some people are poor or homeless, it is because they lack initiative; if they are unemployed, they have to work harder to find a job, if the society is threatened by criminal gangs or terrorist groups then all measures must be taken to protect the safety and integrity of the nation. In light of this

philosophy, social welfare or public benefit programs cannot be deemed appropriate or effective as they encourage helplessness and discourage self-reliance. Advocates of the "strict father" worldview say this atmosphere leads to self-sufficient and prosperous citizens who develop their communities through the pursuit of their self-interests.

Lakoff proceeded to discuss the other model, the "nurturing parent". The "liberal" groups in The United States including Democrats see the world through a nurturing parent model, in which the individuals raise their offspring to take care for others and value collective wellbeing. Advocates of this model say it creates a responsible community who believes in empathy, cooperation, and interconnectedness, and who willingly contributes a portion of its common wealth to support public services such as health and education. Conservatives and liberals are not so much quibbling over facts, said Lakoff, but fighting a battle of word play; of competing worldviews rooted in this differing outlook of ideal role of the parent.

Much of the success of the Republicans, according to Lakoff, could be ascribed to their ability to control the language of important issues and position themselves in favorable terms to voters. Republicans consistently employ value-laden catchwords and metaphors (such as "tax relief", "pro life", "strong defense", or "We do not need a permission slip to defend America") to conjure up the "strict father" image. Even if Democrats have sound arguments, they are destined to lose when they and the news media accept such conservative terminology as "tax relief", or "family values" since it is imprudent to stand against these clearly positive nomenclatures.

Lakoff advised Democrats and the "liberal" movement in the U.S on how to effectively present issues to the public or "reframe" them in an appealing fashion. When, for example, conservatives invoke "strong defense," liberals must recast the phrase by referring to "stronger America". Instead of "free markets", liberals should speak of "broad prosperity." Similarly, "family values" must be framed as "mutual responsibility", "smaller government" has to be reframed as "effective government", and "gay marriage,, should be framed as "freedom to marry", or "the right to marry" or "same sex marriage". And, when conservatives promote "death tax" (a substitute for estate taxes implying that all taxpayers would die whereas in fact few will have a taxable estate under the U.S law), or "tax relief," (which implies a notion that taxes put burden on the citizen) liberals should respond not by the standard slogan "give away to the rich" but by defending taxes as "membership fees", "citizenship dues", or "patriotic act", so as to encourage more people to be willing taxpayers.

Examples of framing abound such as phrases exchanged in relation to the abortion debate within U.S society (e.g., "pro-Life" which implies its

opponents are "anti-life" or "pro-death" and "pro-choice" which implies its opponents are "anti-choice" or "pro-coercion"). One abortion frame promoted by conservatives was the term "partial birth abortion". The purpose of that frame was to make people visualize what happens during a late-term abortion. It evokes a grim picture: A fetus moving down the birth canal, only to have its life brutally terminated by a health practitioner (Berry; Baumgartner; Hojnacki; Kimball, 2007).

Further, the use of the word "progressive" to describe left-wing politics implies a development, or a step forward and hence indicates that right-wing politics are a regression or a movement backward. Framing also takes place when candidates refer to their environment plans as "safe", "clean", or "healthy" and when they address women audience and make frequent reference to compassion or love.  Lakoff (2003) found a telling example of framing in the acceptance speech of California's governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. Schwarzenegger stated: "When the people win, politics as usual loses" effectively framing himself along with his fellow Republicans as the people, while Democratic politicians are nothing more than "politics as usual". The Democratic legislators won't know that they were automatically framed as enemies of the people. Above all, Lakoff argued, strategic political communication is vital to the success of election campaign. The party wins when he effectively integrates issues with values striking the right chord and evoking the provocative metaphor that fits the moral worldviews of the target audience.

Even though Lakoff's theory gained momentum and enjoyed wide popularity, particularly among democrats, it generally does not recognize other vital elements that influence political communication and may dictate the outcome of the campaign. One important factor is the role that news media anchors and pundits often play in mediating the rhetoric of the candidates and framing issues and events. News coverage usually focuses on reading and investigating political discourses rather than presenting them as they occur. Moreover, as some critics noted, election results might partially be determined by the context in which they operate. If, for example, the record of the incumbent president in economy is poor, he will have hard time persuading voters to reelect him and think tanks specialized in framing may do very little to assist him. Iyengar (2005) pointed out that during the recession of 1992, the campaign of the U.S President Bill Clinton focused on the state of economy as its core message, and in 2004, President George W. Bush ran for re-election on the basis that he had made the country more secure from outside attacks. Therefore, the context matters as it leads candidates and think tanks advising them to effectively integrate their views into the current situation and the needs

of the voters.

In addition, some critics maintain that framing is nothing more than old fashioned spin playing minimal role in campaigns, and that candidates need to produce new ideas rather than old ones disguised in fancy words or decorated metaphors. But the voters will not be able to discover the beauty and quality of ideas if these ideas were not presented to them in an appealing and attractive form. Thus, Lakoff's theory is a fine contribution to political communication, particularly to the image making process, since politics after all is a word play and framing is always at the heart of political game creating impressions and shaping worldviews.

### Framing in news media

As already indicated, mass media play a vital role in framing the news. Entman (1991) identified five modes for framing news stories; conflict, human interest/ personalization, consequence, morality, and responsibility. Conflict deals with disagreement between parties, states, or individuals. For instance, the famous dispute between the two main Palestinian factions, Fatah and Hamas might be framed as a competition over power or as a consequence of the foreign intervention in their affairs or as a natural product of their differing ideologies with regard to the best approach to deal with the continuing occupation of Palestine. Some media outlets might capitalize upon small differences in opinions within an organization to create a story of possible disengagement or separation turning that organization apart.

Another instance of conflict framing can be observed in the media treatment of the arrest warrant issued by International Criminal Court against President Omar al-Bashir of Sudan. Some media outlets framed the decision as an opportunity to bring justice to the people of Darfur while other media channels viewed the matter as a continuation of the Western hegemony and an attempt to change the regime in Sudan under the pretext of human rights.

Furthermore, the former U.S President George W. Bush reacted instantly to the attacks of September 11, 2001 by saying, "We are at war" and he almost maintained this metaphor during his time in office. According to Zarefsky (2004) the attacks had some attributes of the war such as the launching of an attack and the killing of many lives, but that attack was not military; it was not done by a nation state; no nation declared war on the United States, nor did the U.S on any other country. In spite of all these considerations, the "war" metaphor paid off: wide national solidarity, strong reaction to the attacks without real questioning or deliberation, open support for the president and massive public display of patriotism. Similarly, the U.S led invasion of Iraq in 2003 was framed by Bush as necessary and legitimate to dismantle Iraq>s weapons of

mass destruction that had posed a threat to America and the world. When no weapons were found he provided ex post facto justification of the war inviting nations of the world to reflect on the advantages of overthrowing a dictator and rescuing an entire country from the scourge of tyranny. Bush employed what Riker (1986) would call "frame shifting" introducing, in different time periods, more than one version of the causes of conflict. In fact, presidential definitions of situations and occurrences could transform a regional issue into a global crisis. A country may invade another country triggering a little response from the super powers or the United Nations, while in another similar case the picture may differ completely with the international community describing the invasion as a "naked aggression" that must be confronted without negotiations or "appeasement" to the aggressors. The 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was immediately labelled as a crisis and consequently it was reversed by stubborn international consensus. In contrast, the four year genocide in Bosnia- Herzegovina during the 1990>s was downplayed and never framed as genocide or aggression in the Western public discourse. Rather, it was labelled as a civil war with "no clean hands" in it as the then UK foreign secretary Douglas Hurd put it. Manufacturing crisis is usually ideological more than descriptive, a political preference chosen by leaders who have the ability to control the language and define the issues in light of their values and what they perceive as their interests. As Smith and Smith (1990) illustrated:

It is especially important to note that the crisis occurs when a president labels an event as a "crisis". Minor incidents can be elevated to crisis status and exploited by clever presidents...President Reagan exploited the KAL tragedy to win public support for his defense budget.. And America's intervention in Iran-Iraq War resulted in confusing array of crises and noncrises: It was not a crisis when an Iraqi missile damaged neutral American ship; it was a crisis whenever a Kuwaiti tanker flying our flag hit an Iranian mine in a war zone; and it was not a crisis when an American missile destroyed an Iranian passenger plane killing hundreds of civilians. Crises occur in the eye of the beholder, and the beholder lives on Pennsylvania Avenue (p.240).

This ability to define situations within the higher level of government resembles what Riker (1986) calls heresthetic or "the art of structuring the world so you can win" (p. ix). By using their definition powers, presidents could shape the context in which events or issues are viewed by the mass media and the public. The news media accept and reproduce the official frames supplied by the people at the top and hence become part of the general discourse.

The second way of framing news stories is human interest. This focuses on personalizing the story and putting human touches on the events and issues covered. It is argued that reporting stories of personal suffering during

wartime or natural disasters can arouse emotions and draw a humane picture of the story so as to make it touching and comprehendible. During the Israeli aggression on Gaza strip (December 27, 2008 -January 18, 2009) Aljazeera Arab TV Satellite network aired numerous live stories showing graphic scenes of death and destruction caused by the Israeli bombardments. Effectively personalizing and documenting human suffering,

The network ran interviews with children who lost their parents and women who lost their loved ones, drawing greater attention to the plight of Gazans and generating more sympathy with them.

Human interest framing also takes place when the media covers the private lives of politicians and concentrate on their family matters, fashion style, or sexual orientations. Some critics argue that such coverage turn politicians into celebrities and distract the public attention from real issues. Others insist that politicians need to be humanized and that people need to know them closely and familiarize with their habits and preferences.

The third way of framing is consequences which can be wide ranging. Pursuing a policy may be unwise or inappropriate in relation to the unity across the political spectrum within a country or to its status and image abroad. The idea of negotiations with Taliban, for example, would be unthinkable few years ago, but it is now a genuine option that the U.S and Western policy makers are discussing in public. Others may disagree warning against the repercussions of such a course of action. The option of talks with Taliban was ruled out earlier as "the free world cannot negotiate with terrorists" who may misinterpret the move as a sign of weakness, but later things have changed and the idea of negotiations emerged with a new frame suggesting that there are "moderate" elements within Taliban who can be approached and communicated with.

Morality is another way of framing the news. Media discourse might moralize issues or question the morality of certain policies. The genocide that took place in Bosnia Herzegovina in the 1990's caused a heated moral debate among the policy makers and in the news organizations within Westerns countries. The siege of Gaza strip and depriving its population from basic human essentials such as water, electric, and fuel supplies under the pretext of self defense represent another example of the moral framing of events.

Finally, Entman mentioned the frame of responsibility, which lay the blame, and ascribe accountability, either for a cause or a solution. In the wake of the international financial crisis one frame was "global responsibility" for finding solutions as well as blaming the U.S financial system which triggered the "earthquake". The rise of religious militancy in some Muslim countries can be attributed to poverty and marginalization, while other frame would be the U.S policies towards Arab-Israeli conflict and its unlimited support for Israeli

occupation.

Entman theorized that frames are found in four places in the communication process: the communicator, the text, the receiver, and the culture. Communicators make judgements regarding the choice of words, guided by frames that fit into their culture and value system. The text contains frames that are demonstrated by the presence or absence of certain terms, catchwords, images, and sources of information that provide thematically enhancing bunch of facts or opinions. The frames that guide the receiver's final judgement may or may not conform to the frames in the text designed originally by the communicator. The culture is full of countless common frames expressed in the discourse and thinking of most people in a social entity. Of these four locations, it appears that the first two, the communicator and the text are the most influential in the meaning-making activity which is what framing is all about.

In the realm of news media, framing of issues shapes the way the public understands the causes of and the solutions to main political problems. In his book "Is Anyone Responsible?" Iyengar (1991) explained that viewers are sensitive to contextual cues when they think of domestic issues and that they derive their interpretations of issues like crime or poverty from the specific reference points furnished in media coverage. According to Iyengar, framing in media research centers mainly on alternative forms of presentation, falling into two basic categories, thematic and episodic news frames. The thematic frame draws a more comprehensive picture of an event usually taking the form of an in-depth report that contextualizes the event. An example of thematic framing would be a story about the Israeli war and blockade against Gaza that addresses the historical roots of the problem and the causes that led to the current situation. A report on Gaza may indicate that most people in the strip are in fact refugees driven out from their homes in what is now known as Israel and that they have been living in Gaza for decades in mesribale conditions.

Episodic framing, on the other hand, portrays events and issues with respect to individual cases or specific details- a scene showing the aftermath of an incident involving a Palestinian youth who blew himself up in a group of Israeli soldiers. Episodic coverage usually depicts the dramatic footage on the surface without digging beneath the ground or examining what lies behind the scene. Unfortunately, news coverage tends to follow the path of episodic framing, which seems simple and easy task with little attention to the context. This mode of presentation, as Iyengar argued, has serious political implications, since it discourages viewers from attributing responsibility to the official policies, directing their blame instead to individuals or groups who might be the victims of such policies. Through episodic framing, the news

media deflects responsibility from governments and ultimately consolidates the status quo.

### How to Respond to Framing

In many cases, framing can be biased, presenting stories or reporting facts yet formulated in a way that gives a misleading impression or a skewed picture of an issue. In fact, framing can be pure propaganda that requires caution and resistance. In the politics of the Arab-Israeli conflict, there is a famous frame propagated for decades called, "peace process". The phrase has no presence on the ground and it is constantly reproduced and sold to give the impression that there are really genuine efforts to achieve peace and bring the conflict to a halt. When Some Arab officials find the Israeli practices unbearable they may announce that the "peace process" is dead, and then a proper frame would be "reviving the peace process". Even the phrase "just and comprehensive peace" seems nothing more than a wishful thinking or a long distance dream. A proper reframing of the term "peace process" would be "settlement efforts". Similarly, the phrase "international community" is a frame implying that the whole world is unified for a specific cause, while in fact only a handful of nations represent the will of the "international community". Perhaps the term should be reframed as "super powers" or "Western nations" given the circumstances. Other slogans and catchwords need also to be seriously questioned. For example, the use of the word "evil" to describe the former Soviet Union, and later al-Qaeda and Taliban is a mere propaganda frame. Similar characterization was applied to Iran, Syria, and North Korea whose President Bush accused of forming an "axis of evil". Such frames are designed to inspire fear and mobilize the audiences for endless military actions that do not have limits across space and time. Fighting evil, after all, must be perpetual since nobody can negotiate with evil, let alone defeating it (Iran's characterization of the U.S as the Great Satan falls into this category). Another important term used by the former U.S secretary of state Condoleezza Rice when she spoke of the importance of spreading "creative chaos" in the Arab world that would eventually bring about democratization and prosperity to the Arabs. Obviously such fancy terms are neither spontaneous nor innocent. As Nafaa (2005) pointed out:

This is not the first time US academics and policy makers come up with fancy terms. Coining political terms is becoming an art form in America, a matter of extraordinary expertise. Terms do not spring to life spontaneously. They are honed with precision, spun with care, delivered with a dose of subterfuge. Instability, ambiguity and chaos are things commonly thought of as negative, but when instability becomes "controlled", ambiguity "constructive", and chaos

"creative", they become suddenly more palatable. Spinning is a craft, and when the spin doctors are good, listeners won't even notice their input.

The utilization of absolutist and binary rhetoric like good and evil, terror and freedom, or civilization and barbarism transforms the language into mere meaningless abstracts that impedes the people's ability to recognize reality. Snow (2003) charged President George W. Bush of being a powerful commander-in-chief of propaganda as he was able "to frame the war on terrorism in vivid and simplistic" terms. His success was reinforced by several propaganda techniques such as "card stacking" and "bandwagon effect" that make the problem appear as an assault on freedom and present an easily understood case that "terrorist parasites" want to destroy American freedom and democracy. In fact, the names attached to the two wars on Iraq and Afghanistan contained the word "freedom", ("Iraq Freedom", "Enduring Freedom"). In his recent book, "Whose Freedom? The Battle over America's Most Important Idea", Lakoff (2007) laid out progressive and conservative definitions of freedom rooted in the categories he first discussed in Moral Politics and Don't Think of an Elephant! Freedom from the "progressive" perspective means the extension of liberties and opportunities, whereas conservatives guided by the strict father's sense of obligation believe that freedom cannot flourish in an immoral or disordered environment. Lakoff commented on the emphasis on freedom appeals in President Bush discourse calling for democrats to search between the lines and see the ideology behind the words. His aim was to show that the conservatives hijacked the "freedom" and to encourage democrats and liberals to reclaim it. Lakoff (2009) hailed what he saw as the success of President Barrack Obama in articulating American values, which are essentially "progressive values". He then went on to say:

In his second inaugural, George W. Bush used "freedom," "free," and "liberty" over and over--first, with its common meaning, then shifting to its conservative meaning: defending "freedom" as including domestic spying, torture and rendition..invading a country that posed no threat to us, a "free market" based on greed and short-term profits for the wealthy, denying sex education and access to women's health facilities, denying health care to the poor, and leading to the killing and maiming of innocent civilians in Iraq by the hundreds of thousands, all in the name of "freedom." It was anything but a progressive's view of freedom--and anything but the view intended in the Declaration of Independence or the Constitution.. Freedom" will no longer mean what George W. Bush meant by it. Guantanamo will be closed, torture outlawed, the market regulated. Obama's inaugural address was filled with framings of patriotic concepts to fit those ideals. Not just the concept of freedom, but also equality, prosperity, unity, security, interests, challenges, courage, purpose,

loyalty, patriotism, virtue, character, and grace. Look at these words in his inaugural address and you will see how Obama has situated their meaning within his view of fundamental American values: empathy, social and well as personal responsibility, improving yourself and your country. We can expect further reclaiming of patriotic language throughout his administration.

The realm of political discourse and media discourse is rife with competing frames that are essentially acts of ideological expressions and worldviews whereby politicians and journalists craft their ideas in the most meaningful and appealing way. Again, the concept of framing provides a useful tool to understand and analyze the political discourses found in any source of communication and its impact on the public conception of reality. The question is who are the key framers of political discourse, the news organizations or the political elites? Lakoff (2004) referred to the political candidates as the real framers attributing the success of Republican Party in 2004 to its investment in language and choice of words. Others like Iyengar (2005) said news media are the real framers since voters encounter the candidates mainly through media coverage which reconstructs and interprets the world to the consumers of the news. However, I say it is difficult to speak of one party as the sole manufacturer and supplier of frames since framing is usually a joint process involving the collaboration of both political discourse and news media discourse. Many U.S elite newspapers and magazines expressed strong support and enthusiasm to the invasion of Iraq in 2003, reproducing the same frames of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction supplied by the top administration officials. Later, some news organizations such as the left-leaning weekly the New Republic admitted that it was wrong to have supported the war based on the administration's allegations. The New York Times ran an editor's note indicating that its aggressive coverage of WMDs was "not as rigorous as it should have been", and that its information about the weapons "was insufficiently qualified or allowed to stand unchallenged", adding: "Editors at several levels who should have been challenging reporters and pressing for more skepticism were perhaps too intent on rushing scoops into the paper." Other papers and other commentators offered their apology (Kurtz 2004). In most foreign policy issues, the mainstream media abandons its investigative role and embraces the official version based on such considerations as national security. As Boylan (1991) wrote, "information, the raw material of news, usually turns out to be the peculiar property of those in power and their attendant experts and publicists."  Thus, "political reporting, like other reporting, is defined largely by its sources." Paletz and Entman (1981) argued that "by granting elites substantial control over the content, emphases, and flow of public opinion, media practices diminish the public's power." Therefore,

"the mass media are often the unwitting handmaidens of the powerful." In the run up to war on Iraq and as the first bombs started falling on Baghdad, both the government and the mainstream media were almost reiterating the same frames.

In conclusion, this paper attempted to illustrate the concept of framing, the way it is being utilized in political and news media discourses, how we fully grasp its process and effects, and what we can do in response. Frames are natural part of the human communication. They, in the words of Kinder and Nelson (2005) "live inside the mind", and "help citizens make sense of politics. . . Frames provide order and meaning, making the world beyond direct experience seem natural." Framing reveals the potential of political rhetoric and news media to structure the world and make sense of events. But one event can be framed in many ways, with a great impact on its meaning. In light of this conclusion, citizens should keep their eyes and ears wide open and pay more attention to the process of framing. One useful option is what Lakoff called for, to reframe and project a counter image. But reframing requires identification with social values, awareness of the setting, and the command over language. The ability of the citizen to comprehend, interpret, invoke, and read between the lines is essential for healthy democracy and meaningful participation in public life. Words always matter and democracy demands vigilance.

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