

The Rhetoric of War – Russian and American Discourse in the War on Terrorism

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Introduction

This paper is intended to give a brief insight and overview into the rhetoric involved in the current Russian and American war or wars on terrorism. It centres on the events taking place in Iraq and in the North Caucasus territories (with special reference to the republic of Chechnya) of the Russian Federation. It is taken from the point of view of the authorities and their communication to a domestic or wider audience. By authorities, it is intended to mean the entity that is the recognised government of a state. The audience is the public, at times a distinction is made between the domestic public and the international public; where domestic refers to the people of a given country and international being a more general audience that is not restricted to a single country.

The issue is a significant problem for the Bush and Putin administration, both in terms of a political construction as well as the reality of it. In 2003 there were some 560 terrorist acts carried out across the Russian federation, some 400 of those were carried out in Southern Russia.¹ The threat and fear of terrorism in Iraq is also a widely spread concern expressed by the Bush administration. Both areas are perceived by the respective governments as a threat to stability of a much wider area than just the territories of the Caucasus and Iraq.

An important way of framing and delivering the message to the people is via the mass media. It must be delivered in a way that is both comprehensible and believable by the people. In addition, the message must also have a measure of consistency too. The mass media, as are the state and people mobilised during times of war. So they too feel

¹ *400 Terrorist Attacks Occurred in Southern Russia in 2003*, Itar-Tass, <http://itar-tass.com>, 24 March 2004

pressure, initially at least, to support the state in a display of, if not patriotism then not something that could be regarded as being treason or supporting the enemy.

Certain rhetorical codes are used to not only describe the enemy and vilify them, but other measures are used, in order to support the war effort at home – by mobilising popular support for something that may otherwise prove to be unpopular. In doing so, the upcoming conflict is pictured in very black and white terms, employing cultural meaning and feelings towards one's duty, not only meaning a country but a wider duty to mankind (based upon humanitarian ideals – spread of democracy, relief from fear and oppression of a people).

The war needs to be justified in other words. In this paper I shall take a look at a number of justifications that are used by the Russian and American authorities for not only waging war, but continuing it too. How a war is framed by the political elite, in order for that conflict to proceed or continue. For it is important in the age of the politicisation and mediatisation of warfare to demonstrate progress to the audience. A consideration being that if progress cannot be demonstrated then it is difficult to prove that victory is in the process, and by default if 'we' are not winning then it is assumed that 'we' are losing the struggle on the battlefield and living rooms.

Rhetoric and Mass Media

Within the context of a crisis, which the current war on terrorism can be defined as being, the mass media are both an opportunity and a threat for the authorities. The definition of crisis according to Eric Stern, has three essential elements present; 1) a threat to basic values, 2) a sense of urgency and 3) uncertainty.² An opportunity as it potentially gives the authorities a means to get their message across to the public, and perhaps an even wider audience. And a threat as those defined as being terrorists or extremists by the authorities can possibly harness the mass media for the same purpose.

² Stern, E., *Crisis Decision Making: A Cognitive-Institutional Approach*, Crisis Management Europe Programme, Stockholm, 2003, p. 8

As stated above the mass media are used within the context of a medium to deliver a message or impression to an audience. In this respect the mass media can, intentionally or unintentionally play the role as a mirror of reality in the events that unfold. Under circumstances of uncertainty and danger, which are inherent in armed conflict, perceived reality is every bit as important, if not more so, than actual reality. Because, it is how people understand events that determines their actions and attitudes. In this sense, it is 'logical' to create or maintain what may be an illusion in order to influence a public and either gain or maintain their support through the use of rhetoric, for something that may otherwise be unpopular.

Rhetorical theory identifies three main means of persuasion available by the sender; *ethos*, *logos* and *pathos*. *Ethos* is concerned with use of emotion as the means of persuasion. It is tied to the impression given by and the credibility of the speaker. The use of *logos* relates to word, speech and reasoning. In rhetoric there are two primary types of intellectual persuasion – deduction and induction. *Pathos* concerns the use of emotions, especially those that exert an almost 'overpowering' influence on the receiver. This may range from; trust, respect to joy, anger and grief.³

The nation or group that is best able to define the world in which we live is more likely to be successful in determining the rules that operate in this world. From this point of view it is important to be the one who makes the definitions, in order to achieve this goal, and mass media content is one of the ways to bring this about. This notion has been put succinctly in an article by Devin Stone.

“Information is the key to understanding any political action. The main ideas expressed in our society tend to mimic the viewpoints of the leading gatekeepers. In the United States, most of our information comes from western news sources such as the New York Times, Washington Post or CNN and are primarily written by American

³ Gripsrud, J., *Understanding Media Culture* (London, Arnold, 2002), pp. 163-65.

journalists. The experts or sources that are normally quoted in the news are either government officials, academics in the US or work for a think tank that is most likely based in Washington DC.

In practise, the West functions as a gatekeeper for determining not only what is worthy of being reported, but in framing issues, choosing the corresponding language and vocabulary, and hence setting up the terms of the debate.”⁴

Therefore, in practise the authorities become the gatekeepers and definers of the world we live in and the events that happen in it. By establishing how the world is perceived, it follows that one can more easily justify and determine their actions in that world. Mass media are an essential element in being able to do this successfully. It creates the context and the needed action for political events, as they are portrayed.

This work shall focus on the aspect of fragments of speech and comments, by key political actors in Russia, as they were reported in the mass media. Aspects to be taken into account shall include; the event that triggered a particular rhetorical ‘campaign’, the choice and nature of the language used, who made the comments under analysis and possible political objectives. As such, mass media are not only seen as being an important medium that enables actors to send their message to the public, but they also serve as an actor in their own right by possessing the power to persuade or influence audiences. At an international conference, President Putin spoke on the role of the mass media in the war on terrorism. “I am convinced that in the conditions of the global terrorist threat, when people die, the media cannot be simple observers.”⁵

In practical terms this means that the mass media are subject to much scrutiny and debate in how they report on matters such as terrorism. If their reporting is not liked by the

⁴ Stone, D., *The Connection Between Journalism and Imperialism*, The Collegiate Times, www.thecollegiatetimes.com, 28 November 2006

⁵ *President Putin Tells Reporters to Fight Terror*, The Moscow Times, www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2004/09/27/001.html, EJC Media News Digest, 27 September 2004

authorities because of such accusations as; it breeches national security, stirs ethnic or religious strife, embarrasses the authorities or puts them in a bad light, the media can be accused of aiding and abetting terrorism. The issues of reporting the facts and events became entangled with issues such as nationalism and patriotism.

One of the means, used by the authorities to ensure 'balanced' reporting from the mass media is to impose certain restrictions or to threaten to do so. Such tension and conflict between the mass media and the authorities took place in 2004, and continues to do so periodically since. A basic lying assumption is that by covering acts of terrorism, the views of the rebels/terrorists especially, the terrorist cause is furthered. The former Chechen President, Alu Alkhanov. "Certain media in some countries give a voice to the cruellest terrorists, covering their claims, even threats, and thereby promoting their activity."⁶

The Russian mass media have been the subject of severe criticism from various authorities for the way in which they cover acts of terrorism. Speaker of the State Duma, Boris Gryzlov stated that he "believes that consequences of terrorist acts should be carefully presented by the media." As it has the potential to 'hurt' the audience.

"I attended a meeting with heads of the leading TV channels and major newspapers after the tragedy in Dubrovka. We talked about the media coverage which hampered the work of law-enforcers at the time, because TV reports basically informed terrorists about power structures' intentions regarding the settlement of the critical situation."⁷

Here Gryzlov specifically raises the issue of the mass media upon operational aspects of the security forces in the course of a specific mission. Within the Ministry of Culture and Press in the Russian Federation, the Federal Service for Surveillance of Federal Laws is responsible for ensuring compliance of the mass media industry to media laws. Deputy

⁶ *Media Partly to Blame for Dissemination of Terrorist Ideas*, RIA Novosti, <http://en.rian.ru>, 8 July 2005

⁷ *Duma Speaker Criticises Media Coverage of Terrorist Act Aftermaths*, RIA Novosti, <http://en.rian.ru>, 19 February 2004

Culture and Media Minister, Leonid Nadirov stated that some 18 official reprimands had been issued by the body, approximately a quarter of those were related to media coverage of terrorist acts. Should a media outlet receive more than two official reprimands associated with a violation of the Law on Mass Media, it raises a possibility that a law suit maybe filed against them in order to ban their activities.⁸

Events at the time the Dubrovka Theatre hostage taking drama hastened the debate on how mass media should cover acts of terrorism. On April 8th 2003 the Industrial Committee signed new guidelines in the voluntary *Anti-terrorism Convention on Mass Media*. A number of provisions potentially limited the work of journalists in covering terrorist acts; prohibited from “interviewing terrorists during the commission of a crime and at their own initiative,” from permitting terrorists “to go on the air live without advance consultations with operational staff,” banning journalists from acting as independent mediators or “insulting and humiliating terrorists who have hostages’ lives in their hands.” Another important point to the document was that it states the journalist’s right to gather information is “subordinate to the activities of the security services to protect people.”⁹ Such a convention ties the hands of the journalists completely and subordinates their activities to that of informational support for the security services. Any hint of independence is erased, thus rendering any potential watchdog capability ineffective.

The debate on controlling mass media during the commissioning of a terrorist act did not subside however. This raged alongside the attempts by the media industry to try and

⁸ 1) *Media Reprimanded for Wrong Coverage of Terrorist Acts*, ITAR-TASS, <http://itar-tass.com>, 6 October 2004

2) *Russia’s Press Ministry Issues Warnings to Media Over Terror Coverage*, Mosnews, www.mosnews.com/news/2004/10/06/mediawarnings.shtml, 6 October 2004

The licence to broadcast of a media outlet can be revoked under such circumstances, thus effectively shutting it down. Additionally the Prosecutor’s Office can shut down a media outlet pending a court decision, which is a more effective way of shutting down the media.

⁹ *Media Reps Sign ‘Anti-Terrorism Convention’*, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Volume 3, Number 14, Russia, 14 April 2003

The Industrial Committee is a grouping of state owned and controlled media outlets that drafted and signed the document on the media industry’s ‘behalf’. It explained that this was the best way to try and retain some influence was by giving up some freedoms voluntarily it prevented liberties being stripped away by the authorities.

curtail or at least reduce any moves to reduce media freedom. Chairman of the State Duma Information Policy Committee, Valery Komissarov, stated the desire to ban all TV reports that show victims of terrorist attacks. “In the interests of countering information terrorism and preventing psychological impacts on people, TV programmes will not show the bodies of people killed in attacks or parts of human bodies when informing the public of terrorist attacks.”¹⁰ Komissarov’s statement uses the notion of public good, which is defined and dictated by the state, as a means of enforcing conditions upon mass media coverage. Images are a very powerful tool and can express or induce a lot of emotion in a compact form.

The State Duma Information Policy Committee attempt was a move to try and restrict the free flow of visual material in order to try and ensure the public mood did not swing against the Russian war on terrorism. The newspaper *Izvestia* announced a shelved amendment to the media law. Under the suggested amendments “only security and law enforcement agencies would have the right to disseminate information about such incidents (acts of terrorism).” However it was said to be an unnecessary restriction on the freedom of the press by the Director of the Federal Press and Mass Communications Agency, Mikhail Seslavinski.¹¹

Valentin Sobolev, the Deputy Secretary of the Russian Defence Council stated the crux of the matter with regard to mass media and terrorism.

“First of all, terrorists demand media attention, cameras, not money. Their main goal is to have certain impact on society at large, to make people pose an ultimatum to their leaders in the end. Nord Ost is a

¹⁰ 1) *Duma to Debate Ban on Telecasts Showing Terror Attack Victims*, Interfax, www.interfax.ru, 17 February 2004

2) *Duma to Prohibit Public Broadcasting of Victims of Terrorism*, Pravda, <http://english.pravda.ru>, 19 February 2004

3) *Russia’s Duma Considers Several Media Acts*, Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty (RFERL), www.rferl.org/newsline/fulltext.asp, EJC Media News Digest, 20 February 2004

¹¹ *Duma Postpones Media Bill Consideration*, RFERL, www.rferl.org, EJC Media News Digest, 23 April 2004

typical example of this. Today, violence against peaceful, defenceless people on air appears to be the most effective method of terror.”¹²

Inside this comment is the reference of political pressure being brought to bear upon the political establishment of a country that is affected by acts of terrorism. Sobolev suggests that this is the ultimate aim of the modern terrorist, to create enough of a psychological impact upon society through committing acts of terrorism, that they ‘turn on’ their country’s political leaders. The bill was eventually defeated in parliament by a significant margin. It was stated that the bill violated Article 29 of the Russian Constitution, which states that it is every Russian citizen’s right to receive information.¹³

An International Federation of Journalism report in 2005 demonstrated that the erosion of media freedom in the context of the international war on terrorism was not only taking place in Russia. One of the conclusions made was that “mass media and independent journalism suffer in a pervasive atmosphere of paranoia which is leading to dangerous levels of self-censorship.”¹⁴ Pressure by the authorities, whether it is from Iraqi, American or Russian, places a great deal of strain in the mass media’s ability to report openly and freely on a conflict. And when the mass media’s reporting runs contrary to the expectations of the authorities, accusations and sanctions can soon follow.

One of the criticisms levelled against US media reporting on the Iraq conflict is that there is a focus on negative news, at the expense of stories concerning progress or of a generally more positive nature. That is, the media overstate the level of violence and ignore any positive developments. The media hit back at this accusation late in 2006 with the release of the Iraq Study Group Report. This report was damning of the way in which the US military reported acts of violence, which it stated were being significantly underreported. “The standard for reporting attacks acts as a filter to keep events out of

¹² 1) *No Cameras for Terrorists!*, Pravda, <http://english.pravda.ru>, 27 April 2004

2) *Security Council Urges Reporters to Stick to Rules in Covering Terrorist Acts*, RIA Novosti, <http://en.rian.ru>, 26 April 2004

¹³ *Russian Duma Rejects Media Bill*, RFERL, www.rferl.org, EJC Media News Digest, 21 May 2004

¹⁴ *Press Freedom in Danger Say Journalists as Civil Liberties Report Condemns War on Terrorism*, International Federation of Journalists, www.ifj.org, 3 May 2005

reports and databases.” One day in particular found that the underreporting of violent attacks was by more than 1000 per cent.¹⁵ Such a revelation reveals that there are usually two sides to a debate. While the authorities criticised the mass media for over stating the level of violence in Iraq, they were at the same time engaged in underreporting the level of violence there.

American media attention to the war in Iraq has dropped significantly in the second quarter of 2007 according to a study by the *Project for Excellence in Journalism*. Between April 1 and June 29 some 18010 stories appearing in 48 media outlets (including newspapers, radio, online, cable and TV networks) were examined. It showed that the US policy debate, events in Iraq and their impact upon the home front fell from 22 per cent in the first three months of the year to 15 per cent of total news coverage. A number of observations were made in regard to the nature of the coverage of the war: 55 per cent of news dealt with US combat and casualties, US troop activities and soldiers charged with crimes; news from inside Iraq became even more focused on the Americans than the Iraqis in the second quarter.¹⁶ This drop in the level of interest may be the result of the upcoming elections, which is fresh news, or perhaps symptomatic of a society that is starting to feel war fatigue.

Defining the Conflicts

Conflicts are often defined or framed in a manner which is intended to be easily digested by the domestic public. In some respects these definitions can be simplifications of reality. The approaches chosen by the American and Russian authorities have on this occasion differed significantly. There are also a number of significant similarities in the two rhetorical approaches to defining the conflicts. A certain number of key points or issues shall be discussed in turn, thus giving the basic understanding of how these conflicts are defined and explained to national and international audiences.

¹⁵ E&P Staff, *Iraq Study Group Settles Debate Over ‘Negative’ War Coverage*, Editor and Publisher, <http://www.editorandpublisher.com>, 6 December 2006

¹⁶ Wolf, J., *US Media Curtail Iraq War Coverage, Study Finds*, Reuters, www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/N19230635.htm, 20 August 2007

Religious Extremism

The Russian authority's framing of the conflict in the Caucasus centres on the notion of the rise of religious extremism and criminality. That is that the problem is a certain element of a religion, in this case an extremist element of Islam and the rise of Wahabbism. It would be problematic to say the least if the definition was very broad and to imply that it was an Islamic 'problem' as there are some 30 million Muslims living in the territory of the Russian Federation. This move would most likely be very divisive and merely serve to accentuate existing social tensions.

One of the steps undertaken by the national political and religious leaders in Russia is to draw a clear distinction between the notion of terrorism/extremism and the mainstream Islamic community. It appears to be a politicisation of religion, in an attempt to counter the use of religion by terrorism as a means of legitimising their cause. In 2005 a new pan-Russian organisation was established, Russian Islamic Heritage, which has as one of its aims the call for unity through the rejection of violence. During the constituent assembly, Shamil Beno, president of the Democracy and Social Progress Support Fund stated the threat that was facing the Muslim community and Russia.

“Such threats as extremism should be countered through the public unity in rejection of violence and via close cooperation between the authorities and the public at all levels. We, representatives of the Russian Islamic Umma (community), realise our responsibility for the integrity of the Russian society. We have gathered here to pick up the challenge of the times. The challenge is the infiltration of alien religious and political concepts rocking the fledgling social unity.”¹⁷

Beno's comments seem to emphasise a certain duty to serve the interests of the state as being one of the founding principles of the new organisation. This concept is openly

¹⁷ *Russian Islamic Heritage Rejects Violence*, RIA Novosti, <http://en.rian.ru>, 22 March 2005

expressed by Mikhail Margelov, Chairman of the Committee on International Affairs, on the significance of the establishment of Russian Islamic Heritage (RIH).

“All-Russia non-governmental organisation Russian Islamic Heritage has been established at the right time. It will serve the unity of the nation at the spiritual level, which might be even more important than the commonality of legislation and other institutes of state. The matter is that the main modernisation mission facing Russia today is to build one Russian nation, which is impossible without a single spiritual space. [...] At the same time, Russian Islamic Heritage is going to contribute to the [Russian Moslem] community’s active contacts with the world Muslim community.”¹⁸

These comments suggest a state serving motive, not only on the national level, but extending into the international community as well. One of the founders of RIH, Umar Dzhabrailov, who is also the Federation Council (upper chamber of Russian parliament) member for Chechnya, said that one of its aims was to act as an intermediary between the Russian authorities and the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC). “We will do our best for Russia to take part in OIC’s activities, at least as an observer. We are going to be the main intermediary between OIC and our state.”¹⁹ These remarks leave no doubt regarding the proximity of the state to the RIH.

When establishing an organisation, such as this one, a certain level of political and religious community legitimacy is needed in order for it to be effective in its aims and goals. The Russian Council of Muftis became involved in vouching for the new organisation. Sheik Farid Asadullin, the Chairman of the Information and Analytical Centre at the Russian Council of Muftis stated that;

¹⁸ *Russian Islamic Heritage Rejects Violence*, RIA Novosti, <http://en.rian.ru>, 22 March 2005

¹⁹ *Russian Islamic Heritage – New Attempt to Consolidate Moslem Community*, RIA Novosti, <http://en.rian.ru>, 22 March 2005

“So many respectable people here, representing the regional Diaspora, Islamic intellectuals, Federation Council and State Duma is a proof of the organiser’s success in informing the public of their goals. The movement will have a future if the ideas voiced today and embodied in the charter are implemented.”²⁰

Asadullin not only mentions what are described as being remarkable people, but also adds that the aspirations and the goals of RIH are also very worthy in their own right. From the list of those who were stated as being present at the constituent assembly, the impression given is that it is a broad section of the Moslem community in the Russian Federation, uniting civil society and the state for a common purpose.

There has been an overall push for the greater use of religion in the North Caucasus as a means of solving the conflict there. But this is very much seen as a union between religion and state in order to solve the problem of extremism in society through the use of religion as a means of calling people to a cause (the call to Jihad for instance). Therefore, the logic seems to follow, that religion can be used to ‘intercept’ people that have taken the initial steps (but not more) and bring them back into mainstream society. The newly appointed Chief Mufti of Chechnya, Sultan Mirzayev, stated these thoughts in a call for the use of religion to solve the problems of Chechnya. He characterised the conflict as an;

“Ideological fight against Wahhabism and active promotion of traditional Islam. Imams and religious figures should explain the danger of the Wahhabite ideology, give balanced arguments and refer to the Koran. In addition to radical Islamic trends, Chechnya has many other problems, including drug addiction. Clergymen should use their

²⁰ *Russian Islamic Heritage – New Attempt to Consolidate Moslem Community*, RIA Novosti, <http://en.rian.ru>, 22 March 2005

RIH’s draft charter stipulates that the primary focus of the organisation is to 1) establish an intra-community dialogue, 2) consolidate Islamic cultural tradition, 3) stem infiltration of extremist religious and political concepts and 5) bring about social and economic development in the regions that are facing problems.

weapons to fight this evil. There are many drawbacks in the work of some muftis and imams caused by their passivity.”²¹

With regard to the active use of religion in combating the spread of extremism and terrorism in modern society, it is being treated almost as an ally, as the problem is common to both religion and the state. This is so, because people are gradually alienated from both the state and the long established traditional religious organisations and drawn elsewhere. In this context, it is the state and traditional religious organisations that have their power and influence usurped from them by the new and more active religious organisations that seek to recruit new members. The Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, expressed this sentiment at an international conference.

“We repudiate all attempts to identify Islam with terrorism. International terrorism is an enemy we all share. It was Russia and Muslim countries who came under terrorist attacks in recent years. Proceeding from that, Moscow regards Russia and the Muslim world as no mere partners but allies in combat against the evil that threatens both of us.”²²

So on the one hand, official Russian rhetoric (that of the state and of those allied to the state) stresses the importance of distinguishing between Islam and terrorism and not confusing the two. Sharp lines are drawn between Islam and those terrorists who claim to be acting in the name of Islamic principles. Rather, terrorists and terrorism are seen to be extremist elements that utilise and manipulate certain parts of the faith for political goals. A second important feature of the rhetoric is that Islam is portrayed as being an important ally of Russia in the fight against terrorism. When referring to Islam, there are distinct levels or distinctions made, the national and international components of the religious community.

²¹ *New Chechen Mufti to Fight Against Wahhabism*, RIA Novosti, <http://en.rian.ru>, 31 May 2005

²² *Moscow Sees Muslim World as its Anti-Terror Ally*, RIA Novosti, <http://en.rian.ru>, 26 May 2005

An Ideological/Civilisational Struggle

A more ideological and clash of civilisation approach has been taken by the American authorities. The Bush administration on the other hand, has chosen to frame the conflict in a very broad manner. A problem which stems from this is that it is very hard to actually picture the enemy as they could be almost anyone. The problem is compounded by the blurring and mixing of concepts and ideologies. An example of this is the mixing of fascist concepts and terminology with Islamic. The net result being that an element of society becomes marginalised and isolated from mainstream national and international life. Terrorism is very much portrayed as being an ideology, and to reinforce the idea of it being something very negative, the term *Ideology of Evil* is used. Bush once described the threat in ideological terms in a public statement; “we face an enemy that has an ideology. They believe things. The best way to describe their ideology is to relate to you the fact that they think the opposite of the way we think.”²³ The description given by Bush is very vague, just accentuating the differences between the American people (us) and the enemy (them).

During a defence policy speech to the Council on Foreign Relations, Senator John Edwards (Democrats) referred to the Global War on Terror as a ‘Bumper Sticker’ (ideological doctrine) that has been used as an excuse for a multitude of abuses. He went on further to say; “By framing this as a war, we have walked right into the trap the terrorists have set – that we are engaged in some kind of clash of civilisations and a war on Islam.”²⁴ Certainly President Bush’s reference to a “Crusade against Terrorism” fits this characterisation of a war against Islam very well. Although by framing the issue as a war, there are domestic considerations too, such as the mobilisation of the public behind their troops, which is more difficult when a conflict is described as being a “police action.”

²³ Kornblut, A. E., *Bush Shifting Public Focus to Terrorism and Iraq War*, The New York Times, www.nytimes.com, 31 August 2006

²⁴ 1) Fouhy, B., *Edwards: ‘War on Terror’ Ideological Doctrine*, The News Observer, www.newsobserver.com, 23 May 2007

2) Edwards, J., *Statement on Fighting Terrorism*, Press Release, Scoop Independent News, www.scoop.co.nz, 10 June 2007

In response to the US' increasingly tarnished image as the result of stories of abuse, such as Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay, the State Department formed the Counterterrorism Communications Centre. It is staffed largely by military personnel and intelligence officers, with the task of quickly responding to propaganda from the US' adversaries. The functions were described as follows:

“It would develop messages ‘to undermine and marginalise extremist ideology and propaganda’ and ‘aggressively rebut and efficiently respond to actions and statements by terrorists groups and leaders across the world.’²⁵

Setting up such an agency, with the assigned tasks as was stated shows that there is a great emphasis on the value of the word. Perhaps this is even to the extent where the word becomes more important than one's deeds. Although, the necessity for creating such an organisation is the result of events that have taken place in the American war on terrorism. This places the organisation at an immediate disadvantage and is readily seen as some form of propaganda operation.

Picturing the Opposing Forces

One of the basic foundations of waging a war is to lay and create ‘just’ or ‘righteous’ elements for initiating or engaging in the upcoming conflict. This is achieved through a number of rhetorical mechanisms that are designed to justify the use of force in the minds of the audience(s). A harsh language is often employed to describe the opposing forces, as well as the rhetoric on how to deal with the named enemy.

Them And Us

²⁵ Strobel, W., *New Bush Diplomacy Plan Targets Terrorist Propaganda*, Sacramento Bee, www.sacbee.com, 13 June 2007

An initial step in the process to the justification of the application of force is to create a differentiation or distinction between what are defined as *them* and *us*. By doing this, the intention is to reduce the capacity of those defined as *us* in sympathising or relating to the enemy, those defined as *them*. By creating this ‘distance’ between the groups it becomes easier to rally the *us* against the *them* who can be defined as an alien threat to the values and way of life of the *us*.

Russian rhetoric often focuses on the illegal aspects of the terrorist formations, thus the terms such as bandits, militants, and criminals are often found in comments and statements made by officials. This is meant to highlight their lack of social status in terms of recognition and legitimacy. Additional traits are also assigned, such as a lack of courage. In 2003 President Putin addressing a meeting in the Kremlin urged that bandits in Chechnya must be “rooted out of the cellars and caves where they are hiding and eliminated.”²⁶

In discussing a possible withdrawal from Iraq, retired Army General William Pagonis, who supervised the pullout after the 1991 Gulf War, gave what seems to be a common perceived picture of the enemy.

“If the terrorists were smart, they wouldn’t touch us. They would just let us get out. But they don’t have a strong chain of command. Down in the lowest ranks are fanatics.”²⁷

In an increasing sign of frustration over the use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) in Iraq, one American officer labelled those using such devices and tactics as being cowards.

²⁶ Vladimir Putin: *Chechen Bandits Must be Rooted out and Eliminated*, Rosbalt, Russia in Global Affairs, <http://eng.globalisation.ru/live/news.asp?id=3679>, 7 July 2003

²⁷ Fireman, K., *Pentagon May Find Bombs, Heat, Vietnam Lessons Extend Iraq Exit*, Bloomberg, <http://news.yahoo.com>, 27 July 2007

Good Versus Evil

After making the distinction between *us* and *them*, the next step is to demonise the *them*. This is done through assigning a number of negative character traits and at the same time assigning benevolent traits to the *us* group. This measure is used to try and assign legitimacy in the minds of the public of the nation that intends to go to war. It does this by trying to lay the impression of a good and worthy cause – to defeat the forces of evil. Illinois Senator Barack Obama spoke of the problem of mixing the idea of good versus evil in the context of war. “The danger of using good versus evil in the context of war is it may lead us to be not as critical as we should be about our own actions.”²⁸

The spectre of Nazism is used frequently within the context of the contemporary Global War on Terrorism. It is used both as an ultimate symbol of evil, a historical context and a rallying call by both the Russian and American administrations. It is also important from the point of view that the war against Nazi Germany was seen as a just and fair war, and there seem to be attempts to transfer some elements of legitimacy to the current context that seems to suffer from the lack of such legitimacy. Remarks by a Russian Foreign Ministry official, Alexander Yakovenko, published in the State Duma owned newspaper *Rossiskaya Gazeta* under the rubric Our Common Victory: Memories, Lessons, Debts, provide an example of the above.

“The history of the Second World War and the world history of diplomacy prove best of all that states of different ideologies and political systems can come together to conquer a global threat. [...] Today this lesson is more than relevant. The scourge of the 20th century – Nazism – has been replaced by the scourge of the 21st century – terrorism. It has already claimed lives of thousands of absolutely innocent people of different nationalities and faiths in Russia, the US, Spain, and Israel. This threat can be dealt with, as 60 years ago, only by a means of an anti-terrorist coalition based on solidarity and mutual

²⁸ Krattenmaker, T., *Faith Shouldn't be Red, White and Blue*, USA Today, www.usatoday.com, 1 July 2007

confidence. ‘Double standards’ in relation to terrorists may boomerang as the ‘debt’ which has to be paid in the ultimate analysis by participants of the 1938 Munich collusion. Affording terrorists a public forum for setting forth their man hating views is as immoral and unnatural for present-day united Europe as marches by former SS men in countries that profess allegiance to democratic values.”²⁹

In this instance, such selective use of history renders the author vulnerable, as the reference to the Munich Treaty can be countered simply by referring to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Treaty, which saw the division of Eastern Europe by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. All the same, powerful images involving the Nazi past are invoked as a means of provoking and persuading the audience of the justness of the Russian cause in the fight against terrorism. The emphasis on the hypocrisy of some Western nations fight against terrorism is most evident, hence to need to rectify this problem. Overall the message being the need to unite, although seemingly there is little room for discussion of the terms on how exactly the united stance against terrorism should take form.

At times a distinction is made between the leaders of an ‘enemy’ nation and the common people. This may be to make the war more acceptable for the domestic/international audience, but also can be considered as an attempt to try and isolate the people and leadership of the enemy. This was shown in a speech of Bush that was broadcast on the subject of the war that was coming on 17 March 2003.

“Many Iraqis can hear me tonight in a translated radio broadcast, and I have a message for them: If we must begin a military campaign, it will be directed against the lawless men who rule your country and not against you.”³⁰

²⁹ *Terrorism as Nazism can be Suppressed Only by Combined Efforts – Russian Foreign Ministry*, RIA Novosti, <http://en.rian.ru>, 4 May 2005

³⁰ Solomon, N., *A Bloody Mirror for the Media*, Tom Paine, www.tompaine.com, 6 July 2007

The speech fragment clearly makes a distinction between Iraq's leadership (of Saddam Hussein) and the ordinary people of Iraq. A perception gap between targeting the regime and not targeting the people was vigorously accentuated in the beginning of the Iraq War. There was a great deal of stress in the apparent efforts of the American-led forces in keeping civilian casualties to an absolute minimum in Iraq. One journalist in particular, Christopher Hitchens made a number of comments on the theme.

“The Defence Department has evolved highly selective and accurate munitions that can sharply reduce the need to take or receive casualties. The predictions of widespread mayhem turned out to be false last time – when the weapons [in the Gulf War] were nothing like so accurate. [...] it can now be proposed in a practical manner that one is able to fight a regime and not a people or nation.”³¹

Law and Order Versus Anarchy

In it, the term and concept of law and order carries certain legitimacy through associated traits of stability, permanence, culture and equality. Anarchy, on the other hand, implies chaos, transience, lack of culture and suffering. Going on from these assumptions, therefore the holder of law and order is bestowed with a sense of legitimacy.

Both the US and Russian official rhetoric is aimed at the issue of law and order. It is achieved by labelling those who oppose the authorities as being either criminals or as terrorists. These labels become somewhat generic, with little regard to the actual complexity and situation on the ground, which often has a multitude of often competing actors. It is meant to convey a notion of not only some opposing force based upon anarchy, but also implies that they are illegal formations. The use of the word terrorist was raised by one writer.

³¹ Solomon, N., *A Bloody Mirror for the Media*, Tom Paine, www.tompaine.com, 6 July 2007

“The easy invocation of ‘terrorism’ – whether by journalists or political leaders – is not merely sloppy use of language. It is precisely targeted phrasing and intended to terrorise dissent. Especially in the binary, Manichaeian mindset of the United States and Likudnik Israel, once a group has been labelled ‘terrorist’ it becomes the epitome of evil; to suggest that any of their arguments have any validity makes one a terrorist supporter. Using these words seems to shut down the higher cerebral functions of many of the listeners.”³²

Thus, not only does the word terrorist have the function of legitimising a government’s actions against those labelled as being terrorist, but there are other considerations too. It is a very easy rhetorical term to apply, and many people think they have a clear understanding of what a terrorist and terrorism is, without explanation. And as the author points out, it can be used, if not to utilise a feeling of patriotism, then to act as a stigma which is born by the dissenter. The end result being a gradual spiral of silence is enforced upon the debate.

During a combined US and Iraqi military sweep in the Bagdad area in February 2007, an Iraqi military spokesman, Brigadier General Qassim Moussawi, issued a brief statement to the mass media. In his statement were the elements of what has just been discussed. “God willing, the plan will continue to uproot terrorists and outlaws across Bagdad and other areas.” He added that 42 *terrorists* had been killed.³³

Internationalisation and Branding of the Opposing Forces

On top of the basic characteristics attributed to terrorist and terrorism, are a number of other rhetorical ploys intended to provide the audience with the proof of the danger of those who have been given the label terrorists. Local terrorists, on the one hand, may be considered to be less dangerous than those with alleged national or international

³² Williams, I., *The Semantics of Terror*, The Nation, Yahoo News, <http://news.yahoo.com>, 12 August 2006

³³ Murphy, B., *Iraq Insurgents Again Use ‘Dirty’ Attack*, Associated Press, Yahoo News, <http://news.yahoo.com>, 22 February 2007

connections. This can present a problem for authorities dealing with them as it could be seen as being a less legitimate fight. Terrorists with national and international connections on the other hand, are perceived as being more dangerous due to greater reach and influence.

Al-Qaeda has become the contemporary brand image that encompasses all that is dangerous and evil in the modern war on terrorism. In effect it has come to act as a certain brand or mark, which is used by many governments to excuse extraordinary measures being taken in the name of national security. It also adds the foreigner fear factor in the equation.

A short article that appeared in the Russian media outlet, *Ros Business Consulting*, gives weight to some of the above mentioned aspects. Although it is very short in length, a number of issues are raised as well as mentioning some possible courses of action for the future in order to combat the terrorist threat.

“About 10 Al-Qaeda fighters are currently in the North Caucasus, head of the Russian Federal Security Service Nikolay Patrushev announced addressing questions of Russian lawmakers. He stressed that Russian law enforcement authorities were working on this problem. He emphasized that the hostage-taking in Beslan had been an international terrorist attack and this act of terrorism was financed from abroad. Some of the abductors were also foreigners, he added.”³⁴

Other links with Al-Qaeda have been made over the years including a theory that linked the 9/11 attackers with Chechnya. The brief article finished with; “several terrorism experts have linked the al-Qaeda terror network to Islamists fighting for independence in Chechnya. Numerous Saudi mercenaries are said to be fighting in Chechnya.”³⁵ Other links have been made with regard to foreign funding of the conflict. Foreign fighters

³⁴ *About 10 Al-Qaeda Fighters Come to North Caucasus*, RBC News, www.rbcnews.com/free/20041029131251.shtml, 29 October 2004

³⁵ *9/11 Conspirators Reveal Links with Chechen Fighters*, Mosnews, www.mosnews.com, 10 August 2004

operating in Chechnya has been highlighted often, especially when these fighters are killed or taken prisoner. This ties in with the theme that foreign people, money and supplies are keeping the Chechen conflict alive.

When statistics are given, those captured or killed are often labelled as being militants, insurgents or Al-Qaeda. There is some media scepticism recently on the value of the information given by the military sources. “US and Iraqi officials frequently say that they have killed or captured leading Al-Qaeda figures, and the precise roll that a particular individual may have played in the shadowy militant group is often difficult to assess.”³⁶ One of the claims made by the Bush administration is that the Al-Qaeda forces that are being engaged in Iraq are an extension of the group that was responsible for launching the 9/11 attacks against the US.³⁷ This is an effort to try and bolster support for the war by trying to make a more explicit threat link, to the security of ordinary Americans, which emphasises the need for American forces to remain in Iraq. Bush stated in a speech that “the safety of America depends on the outcome of the battle in the streets of Iraq.”³⁸ By drawing such a link Bush has forced himself in a corner, if conditions worsen in Iraq, potentially Americans who believe the rhetoric will be feeling very insecure at home. This situation then contradicts the American reason for invading Iraq, to increase the security of American citizens.

Both Russia and the US official statements also contain the implication that the insurgencies in the North Caucasus and in Iraq continue as the result of foreign help. The suggestion being, without the foreign element being present there would be no or at least a lesser level of violence. A short description of Al-Qaeda in the *New York Times* gives a hint. “Al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia, a largely Sunni Iraqi group thought to have foreign leadership [...]”³⁹ Various estimates have been offered by officials to try and support the

³⁶ Graff, P. & Karouny, M., *US Claims Victories Against Al-Qaeda in Iraq*, Reuters, <http://news.yahoo.com>, 5 August 2007

³⁷ Dagher, S. & Murphy, D., *US Draws New Al-Qaeda Link*, The Christian Science Monitor, Yahoo News, <http://news.yahoo.com>, 19 July 2007

³⁸ *Bush to bin Laden: 'America will Find You'*, Reuters, Fairfax NZ Ltd, www.stuff.co.nz, 12 September 2006

³⁹ Shanker, T. & Gordon, M. R., *GI's in Iraq Open Big Offensive Against Al-Qaeda*, The New York Times, www.nytimes.com, 17 June 2007

image of the element of the foreign threat within Al-Qaeda Iraq. “American military officials have said that 60-80 foreign fighters come to Iraq each month to fight for the group, and that 80-90 percent of suicide attacks in Iraq have been conducted by foreign-born operatives of Al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia.”⁴⁰ This implies that Al-Qaeda in Iraq is essentially still going as a result of foreign interference, and what are seemingly regarded as the most serious of the ‘crimes’ (suicide bombings) are attributed to the foreign element. Bush characterised the leadership of Al-Qaeda in response to growing criticism.

“Here’s the bottom line: Al-Qaeda in Iraq is run by foreign leaders loyal to Osama bin Laden. Like bin Laden, they are cold-blooded killers who murder the innocent to achieve Al-Qaeda’s political objectives. Yet despite all the evidence, some will tell you that Al-Qaeda in Iraq is not really Al-Qaeda – and not really a threat to America. Well, that’s like watching a man walk into a bank with a mask and a gun, and saying he is probably just there to cash a cheque.”⁴¹

The characteristics of cruelty in the foreign element are emphasised greatly, as well as the threat to the American people. Criticism by the non-mainstream media, for example bloggers, is very critical of not only the political framing of the Al-Qaeda issue, but also the fact that there are those in the mainstream media (leading newspapers ... etc) has ‘bought into’ using the term Al-Qaeda. This is where a lot of whoever is an enemy is prefixed with the tag Al-Qaeda, for example Al-Qaeda operative, Al-Qaeda threat, Al-Qaeda stronghold.

“It’s a curious thing that, over the past 10-12 days, the news from Iraq refers to the combatants there as ‘Al-Qaeda’ fighters. When did that happen?

⁴⁰ Gordon, M. R. & Rutenberg, J., *Bush Links Al-Qaeda in Iraq to 9/11; Critics Reject Connection*, International Herald Tribune, www.iht.com, 13 July 2007

⁴¹ Peter, T. A., *In ‘Surge of facts,’ Bush Emphasises Al Qaeda Link*, The Christian Science Monitor, Yahoo News, <http://news.yahoo.com>, 26 July 2007

Until a few days ago, the combatants in Iraq were ‘insurgents’ or they were referred to as ‘Sunni’ or ‘Shia’a’ fighters in the Iraq Civil War. Suddenly, without evidence, without proof, without any semblance of fact, the US military command is referring to these combatants as ‘Al-Qaeda.’”⁴²

There would appear to be some differing reasons between the American and Russian use of the international aspects of the Global War on Terrorism. The American use of this particular rhetorical line would appear to be a call to arms and join the US, aimed at both the domestic and international audience. An instance that clearly demonstrates this call occurred when Donald Rumsfeld told a meeting of the world’s top security officials that “a war has been declared on all of our nations and on our people.”⁴³ In this fragment of speech, Rumsfeld is trying to give the impression that everyone is facing the same threat and must act in accordance with the American lead. The Russian motivation for having an international aspect to their rhetoric appears to have started from the need to alter the perception of Russia’s counterinsurgency operations in the North Caucasus. By framing it as a problem for Russia to solve, but a part of a larger picture it was intended to negate or reduce world criticism of Russian actions (in the sphere of human rights and prosecution of operations in Chechnya). It was also an important step in the ability to criticise other nations who, for instance granted political asylum to those with a Chechen connection, as it could then be deemed as being a double standard. This was due to the conflict now becoming a part of the Global War on Terror and not a local war, rhetorically at least.

Demonstrating Signs of Progress

A number of key terms or measures have emerged in the anti-terrorist campaigns in Iraq and the Caucasus, which are used by the authorities as a demonstrable measure of progress being made in their struggle against the terrorists/insurgents. These in some

⁴² Greenwald, G., *Everyone we Fight in Iraq is Now ‘Al-Qaeda’*, Salon, www.salon.com, 23 June 2007

⁴³ *Rumsfeld: War on Terrorism Needs a Cold War Like Solidarity*, Pravda, <http://english.pravda.ru>, 5 February 2006

cases are common to both the American and Russian rhetorical campaigns aimed at keeping or boosting support for their cause.

One of the problems associated with counterinsurgency warfare is the need to give the impression of winning, which is at times a difficult task due to the nature of this type of warfare. An analyst at a military policy institute in Virginia, Lexington Institute's Loren Thompson described this dilemma.

“The basic theory of counterinsurgency warfare is that the defenders must demonstrate momentum towards victory or success. If you can't prove you are making progress then by definition you are losing.”⁴⁴

The Body Count

One of the yardsticks used in the rhetorical war is the use of the body count as a means of measuring or seeming to measure success against a foe in combat. An implied element in this measure is the gradual degradation of the named enemy's capacity to continue the fight. However, this can be a somewhat hazardous approach to take as history has shown. The Americans employed this tool in the Vietnam War, in spite of sustaining vastly greater numerical losses the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong triumphed in the end.

A major problem with this measure is that it is focusing on the wrong aspect of the problem. Terrorism is the weapon of the weak against the strong. Additionally, terrorism is being treated as a root of the problem, therefore the logic follows that if terrorists are eliminated then victory will follow. However, terrorism is merely a physical manifestation of greater problems at play in society due to such problems as entrenched social, economic and political inequalities. And these conditions will continue to provide future recruits for those terrorists that are killed or captured.

⁴⁴ Rutenberg, J., *A New Phase Enters Washington's War of Words Over Iraq*, The New York Times, www.nytimes.com, 21 December 2006

In Russian media reports on the killing of armed resisters, they often site the use of police forces, fanatical rebels and the capture of arms and equipment. For instance, this segment of a RIA Novosti report is typical. “During their search operation, the police detected two militants in a forest near the village of Stary Achkhoi in the Archkhoi-Martan district in Western Chechnya. The militants refused to surrender and put up armed resistance, throwing a grenade at the police [...] The police seized two Kalashnikov assault rifles and ammunition at the site of the armed clash.”⁴⁵

These stories are supplanted with other stories of success in the campaign, such as the material destruction of the remaining rebel forces, capture of weapons, defusing of mines, prevention of terrorist acts and the capture (or surrender) or deaths of key figures as well as rank and file. Special attention is paid to the death or capture of key figures, such as Shamil Basayev, Aslan Maskhadov and Ruslan Gelayev. After the death of Gelayev, acting Minister of Chechen Affairs Stanislav Ilyasov stated: “The positions of fighters will be weakened after the death of one of their inspirers and leaders. This is a good result. It will bring calm to the republic.”⁴⁶

The American forces also rely on extensive reports on how many ‘militants’ have been killed and captured, especially high ranking members of the insurgency, and the amount of arms and munitions captured and/or destroyed in an operation. An instance of this type of reporting occurred in December 2006 during a security sweep.

“Coalition forces killed 20 people they identified as insurgents, destroyed weapons caches and arrested seven suspected terrorists in two security sweeps in Iraq on Friday, the US military said. [...] Insurgents in a building exchanged gunfire with troops during the search. Two insurgents were killed. Coalition forces then called in an airstrike, killing 18 more, the military said. Afterward, the troops searched the

⁴⁵ *Two Militants Killed in Western Chechnya*, RIA Novosti, <http://en.rian.ru>, 5 August 2007

⁴⁶ *Separatists weakened by Gelayev’s Death, Says Ilyasov*, RIA Novosti, <http://en.rian.ru>, 3 March 2004

building and found caches of AK-47s, machine guns, rocket-propelled grenades, mines, explosives, blasting caps and suicide vests.”⁴⁷

However, everything is not as it may first seem. Iraqi officials disputed the American claim that 20 militants had been killed. Police officials stated that some 17 civilians (six women and five children included) were found in the rubble of the homes. The Mayor went even further in an interview with Reuters; “The Americans have done this before (killed Iraqi civilians) but they always deny it. I want the world to know what is happening here.”⁴⁸ It appears as though the US military conveniently labelled those killed as being militants, not only to boost the numbers to improve the appearance of success, but to hide their blunder as well.

A symbol of success for both the Americans and Russians is the killing or capture of key personnel in the enemy ranks. It is held up as a significant success that is likely to bring about some tangible results, insofar as lowering the level of violence. The American experience in Iraq, the capture of Saddam Hussein and the killing of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, have shown this to not always be true.⁴⁹ The effect of the loss of leadership seems to be recovered from fairly quickly, demonstrating resilient organisations that are not entirely dependent upon key figures in the organisation to remain operational.

In an effort to demonstrate progress in Iraq, the American commander, General Petraeus, detailed Coalition ‘successes’ in discovering arms caches. He stated that that during 2007 (up to August) some 3698 arms caches had been discovered, an increase from 2726 caches discovered in 2006.⁵⁰ This result may have been to better surveillance, however it could also be the result of a greater quantity of arms entering Iraq.

⁴⁷ *Coalition: 20 Insurgents Killed in Battle, Airstrike*, CNN world news, <http://www.cnn.com>, 8 December 2006

⁴⁸ *Iraqis and US Dispute Deadly Raid*, Fairfax NZ Ltd, www.stuff.co.nz, 9 December 2006

⁴⁹ Linzer, D. & Pincus, W., *Intelligence Chiefs Pessimistic in Assessing World Wide Threats*, Washington Post, www.washingtonpost.com, 12 January 2007

⁵⁰ Michaels, J., *Confiscated Weapons Pile up in Iraq*, USA Today, www.usatoday.com, 30 July 2007

Level of Fighting

The level of fighting occurring also can be used or implied as a measure of success or otherwise in an anti-terrorist campaign. If, after some time the level of fighting eventually subsides then some claims to success in the struggle can be made. However, if combat continues intensely over a protracted period then failure in the campaign is implied. In this case, a drop in the level and intensity of fighting shall be regarded and highlighted as being a success. Whereas an increase in the level of fighting will be ignored and instead focus will shift to another measure where 'success' can be implied.

In the aftermath of the attack on the Moscow-St. Petersburg train in August 2007, the Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov commented on the terrorism situation within the republic.

“It was a favourite tactic of the Raduyevs, Basayevs, Udugovs and others to claim responsibility for everything that was happening in the world. The tactic is well-known and contains nothing new. In the way the Basayevs, Udugovs and Raduyevs tried to write off the means they received in big quantities.

Though these terrorist leaders were eliminated long ago, there are still militants who try to distract the attention of the investigation from the perpetrators of terrorist acts posing as some Riyad Salikhins or the army of Dzekokhar Dudayev.

Chechnya is like any part of the country or any country in the world may have criminals, but there is no terrorist underground and even less so organisations with such striking names as Riaydakh Salikhin or the like.”⁵¹

⁵¹ *Militants in Chechnya Incapable of Large-Scale Terrorist Acts-Kadyrov*, Interfax, www.interfax.ru, 15 August 2007

Kadyrov paints a picture of a terrorist fantasy, many acts seemingly being claimed by someone else, who creates a myth around themselves. He also gives the impression that this myth is now dead, along with the names of the dead rebel leaders that he listed. The legitimacy of these people are called into question by using historical leading figures in the Chechen secessionist movement. A fact that should not be lost is that once, the Kadyrov family was in the ranks of those opposing Moscow's rule in Chechnya, before coming to the leadership of the Moscow-friendly administration. The overall message of Kadyrov is that the resistance movement, which was based upon rhetoric rather than substance, and false associations (in an attempt to gain legitimacy) now cease to exist. Thus what are left are nothing more than some criminals, thus stripping them of any perceived legitimacy or of anything noble, just as other regions and countries are currently facing. The last reference is an attempt to take away any impression that Chechnya is somehow a different or exceptional case. It is designed to 'normalise' the situation as it is meant to be in the contemporary context.

One of the news themes that appear in the Chechen context is the issue of the number of active rebels left on the territory. As early as 2004 Colonel General Valery Baranov, Commander of the Joint Army Group in the North Caucasus stated no large illegal armed groups under a single command were left in Chechnya. Instead, "they are operating in small groups, which tend to be dispersed, and are avoiding open armed clashes."⁵² Colonel Ilya Shabalkin, spokesman for the Regional Headquarters of the Anti-Terrorist Operation in the North Caucasus went even further saying that the rebels "are in fact completely disorganised," that the groups had no single command or contact between themselves and there was little control over the groups.⁵³ Ramzan Kadyrov, then head of the Chechen President's Security Service predicted that in two-three years there would be no terrorists (rebels) in Chechnya at all.⁵⁴ These assessments all give an impression that the level of the conflict is at a low level and that some measure of security and stability has been achieved by the security forces.

⁵² *No Large Illegal Armed Groups Left in Chechnya*, Itar-Tass, <http://itar-tass.com>, 14 January 2004

⁵³ *Remaining Rebels in Chechnya Scattered, Uncontrollable*, Interfax, www.interfax.ru, 28 May 2004

⁵⁴ *No Militants Will remain in Chechnya in 3 Years?*, RIA Novosti, <http://en.rian.ru>, 22 April 2004

One of the greater challenges, especially for the Bush Administration, is to keep public support for an increasingly unpopular war. One of the contemporary public expectations in the modern context is that wars are of a limited duration. That is, they have a clearly defined beginning and a foreseeable end. This is a problem well recognised in Iraq, with no perceivable end to the fighting. Rhetoric and statement from military and political officials seemed to be engaged in trying to alter this public perception by gradually introducing the scenario more and more in to the public arena, that this will be a long and protracted war, but one that has to be fought nonetheless. For instance the US commander in Iraq, General Petraeus, states on occasion that successful counterinsurgency campaigns can take as long as 8-10 years.⁵⁵

A number of catchwords are being invented to try and lower public expectations of a quick result in Iraq and accept the possibility of a protracted conflict. One such example is the phrase “we’re not winning, we’re not losing”⁵⁶ used to describe the situation in Iraq. Bush uses the term “victory in Iraq is achievable”⁵⁷ on a number of occasions to try and instil a sense of hope remains in the ‘total victory’ in Iraq concept. However, the phrase “stay on course” with regard to adhering to a strict policy has been abandoned for a more seemingly flexible approach that implies the goals are fixed, but the means of achieving those goals are flexible.⁵⁸ Such a change implying greater flexibility can be considered a counter to a number of criticisms. Firstly the criticism that the Bush administration blindly adheres to a policy regardless of the realities, and secondly it could be a means of answering the critique that there is no firm policy which is why Bush is trying to explain new tactics regularly. When trying to constantly explain the use of new tactics, it appears as though there is no sound and coherent policy.

⁵⁵ Mazzetti, M., *Iraq Snapshots Give 2 Views*, News Analysis, The New York Times, www.nytimes.com, 2 August 2007

⁵⁶ *For the First Time, Bush Says US not Winning War in Iraq*, AP, USA Today, www.usatoday.com, 20 December 2006

⁵⁷ Stolberg, S. G., *Bush Asserts that Victory in Iraq is Still ‘Achievable’*, The New York Times, www.nytimes.com, 21 December 2006

⁵⁸ Keil, R. & Runnigen, R., *Bush Says Iraq Goal the Same Even as Tactics Change*, Bloomberg, Yahoo News, <http://news.yahoo.com>, 27 October 2006

The ideals of patriotism and ‘getting the job done’ also feature heavily in the Bush administration rhetoric. In one speech designed to try and bolster sagging support for the war, Bush said “our nation has endured trials – and we face a difficult road ahead. Winning this war will require the determined efforts of a unified country. So we must put aside our differences, and work together to meet the test that history has given us.”⁵⁹ This statement implies that an unquestioning loyalty must be pledged by the people of the US to their government in order to meet some form of test that has been laid at the United States collectively.

The Return to Normality

By the term normality it is meant that conditions within the geographical area affected by conflict begin or seem to begin to conform to basic norms and conditions within the rest of a defined society, be this in a certain country or even a ‘world’ community. This is often measured by tangible demonstrations of progress such as; the construction of schools, hospitals, places of worship, establishment of constitutions and elections. In other words the basic foundations of a functioning society are established.

One of the important aspects in returning a situation to normality begins with the word that is used to describe the situation. War is not considered to be a normal state of being for many in the West. As such, to have this word used to describe a situation implies the situation is not normal. This was seen during a ‘drive’ to raise finance from European financiers, the Presidential Envoy Plenipotentiary to the Southern Federal District, Victor Kazantsev, told delegates from the *European Bank of Reconstruction and Development* not to be afraid of Chechnya. He reassured them that “the Chechen war is as good as over – it is rather virtual than actual.”⁶⁰ If the term War is used, it is often mixed with another word to minimise its rhetorical effect. Colonel-General Vladimir Boldyrev, Commander of the North Caucasus Military District used the term war. He stated that “a big war in

⁵⁹ *Bush to bin Laden: ‘America will Find You’*, Reuters, Fairfax NZ Ltd, www.stuff.co.nz, 12 September 2006

⁶⁰ Brykanova, S., *Chechen War Recedes Into Past: Putin’s Envoy*, RIA Novosti, 23 June, 2003. JRL #7236, 24 June, 2003.

Chechnya is over” and a ‘small’ war in the republic continues.⁶¹ This was concluded on the basis of the amount of damage that had been physically inflicted upon the rebel forces. Others have characterised the conflict in Chechnya differently. The then Acting Chechen President, Anatoly Popov stated that “there is no war but simply a high level of crime.”⁶²

The implication from this gradual change is that the road towards peace is to be permanent and that conditions are undergoing a transformation for the better. At a forum President Putin expressed this thought. “Armed resistance and conflicts are becoming history. The peaceful process is getting irreversible in the most complex area, the Chechen Republic.”⁶³ A number of measures have been used to reinforce the perception of the road to recovery. There have been a number of stories in the media featuring the development and reconstruction of civilian infrastructure help in this regard; such as the reopening of civilian air travel to the Republic, reduction in the number of military checkpoints, building and repairing of road and rail links, financial compensation for the loss of housing to Chechen residents.⁶⁴

Establishment of Democracy

The term democracy is a currency over used and abused term. What is meant by its use is to bestow a certain level of legitimacy and consent to the one who acts in its name. It is supposed to imply a measure of equality and the ability of all members of society to be actively engaged in society. In determining the stated goals of their campaigns against terrorism, both the US and Russia have implied or said that the establishment of

⁶¹ *Big War in Chechnya is Over*, RBC News, <http://top.rbc.ru>, 14 November 2003

⁶² *Acting Chechen President: There is a High Level of Crime in Chechnya But no War*, Rosbalt, Russia in Global Affairs, <http://eng.globalisation.ru/live/news.asp?id=3957>, 15 August 2003

⁶³ *Peace Process in Chechnya is Irreversible*, RIA Novosti, <http://en.rian.ru>, 26 March 2004

⁶⁴ 1) *Number of Checkpoints in Chechnya to be Reduced*, Interfax, www.interfax.ru, 6 May 2004

2) *Chechen Residents Receive 450 Mln Rbls for Lost Housing in 2003*, Itar-Tass, www.itar-tass.com, 7 January 2004

3) *Grozny-Moscow Passenger Route to be Restored*, RIA Novosti, <http://en.rian.ru>, 30 May 2004

4) *Federal Commission Takes Stock of Jobs Done as Chechnya Rises from the Ruins*, RIA Novosti, <http://en.rian.ru>, 13 August 2004

democracy is important. A fundamental belief that is needed to make such statements is that the established political systems in the US and Russia are superior to that of the country that is in the process of attempted reconstruction.

Before the violence spiralled too much out of control, a lofty stated goal of the US was to establish democracy in Iraq, which would then act as a 'regional beacon' to other Arab nations.⁶⁵ The shift of the focus has come to rest more on trying to halt the spread of sectarian violence. But, this goal seems to demonstrate that by transplanting a political system, from a nation that 'functions' that many problems will somehow be automatically be resolved without taking into account various regional and cultural differences.

The Continued Threat of Terrorism

One aspect of the conflicts that is also in common is the image that terrorism is a continued and persistent threat to society. This is used in order to pass a number of laws, which may not otherwise be passed under 'normal' conditions as they would be seen as an infringement upon basic rights. It also is used to be a means of societal cohesion as the state is acting in the capacity as protector of the public and its interests. This is done under slogans such as vigilance and collective security, which are designed to try and limit or reduce the breadth and amount of debate that runs contra to the officially given account of events.

Talking about the August 2007 attack on the St Petersburg-Moscow President Putin gives a summation of the terrorist problem that is being faced.

⁶⁵ LaFranchi, H., *As US Focuses on Iraq Turmoil, Will it Miss the Bigger Picture?*, The Christian Science Monitor, Yahoo News, <http://news.yahoo.com>, 13 February 2007

“[...] confirmed once again that everything has not been done yet to fend off [the terrorism] threat. So we will continue this work both within the country and in the international arena. Unfortunately, many countries of the world, including Russia, still come up against the threat of terrorism.”⁶⁶

Conclusion

Mass media are an essential element in the ability of the modern state to make and continue to wage war in contemporary society. It is not only important as a means of getting the message across to the public, but it is framed and packaged in such a way as to make an appeal through trying to create a sense of legitimacy in the state to perform these actions in the name of the people they represent and the wider international audience. The rhetoric employed is designed to bring this sense into practice. From the way in which this ‘news’ and these events are covered it is apparent that the sense of reality (as perceived by the intended audience) is actually more important than the actual reality. It is because the audience will be acting on the perceived facts and reality, which for all intents and purposes are real for them.

Rhetoric, regardless of the state of origin has a number of general objectives, within the frame of this paper. One of these objectives is to frame a war or an upcoming war in such terms that are not only understandable, but acceptable to the domestic public (and perhaps the international public too). It is a lot ‘easier’ to wage a war if the public feels threatened by and alien to the designated enemy. Hence there is the framing of a war, especially against something as ill-defined as the war on terrorism.

Once a war begins, the rhetoric then switches to the goal of sustaining the war through trying to maintain public support. This is done through a number of means that are meant to show the public that progress is being made in the war on terrorism; the building of public infrastructure (schools and hospitals for example), the holding of elections and

⁶⁶ *Putin: Train Derailment Means Terrorism Remains a Threat*, Interfax, www.interfax.ru, 17 August 2007

establishment of a constitution (implying the establishment of democracy), the level of fighting and the material destruction (manpower and weapons) of the enemy.

This is all framed within the existing belief and value structure of a society. Various elements play a part that gives it meaning within a national context, hence some slight deviations between the various nations involved in the global war on terror. These elements can be historical, cultural and political values that dominate at the time. A major problem for the authorities being is that these values can change over time, thus rendering their rhetoric obsolete and possibly even counter-productive (if it is not changed to meet the changing conditions).

One of the problems during time of war is that it is a time when one perceives that unity is paramount over all other objectives. It has the problem of stifling debate and contradictory information, which make alter perceptions and conditions of the conduct of the war. As a result there seems to be an increasing tendency to ignore or dismiss contradictory information. This has certainly been highlighted on occasion. In December 2006 with the release of the Baker report. It levelled significant criticism at the way the Bush administration dealt with the collection of information for the purpose of forming policy. “Good policy is difficult to make when information is systematically collected in a way that minimises its discrepancy with policy goals.”⁶⁷

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⁶⁷ Todorov, T., *When Truth is Sacrificed*, International Herald Tribune, www.iht.com, 18 December 2006