

## **MA thesis project**

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# **PREDICATE ANALYSIS AND ANALYSIS OF METAPHORS USED IN MESSAGES ATTRIBUTED TO OSAMA BIN LADEN REGARDING THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND THEIR EUROPEAN ALLIES FOLLOWING THE 2003 INVASION OF IRAQ**

## **INTRODUCTION – War on terror = war on Islam? (analysis of fundamentalist logic and stream of thought)**

For this Master thesis project, I chose to analyze the terrorist discourse of Osama bin Laden, the leader of the global Jihadist network, al-Qaeda, particularly his messages regarding the United States of America and its European allies following the 2003 invasion of Iraq, as they were gathered in various relevant sources of record up to the near present.<sup>1</sup> I chose this topic due to my long-term interest in the Middle East, particularly the relationship and links between religious ideology and politics in the region. The methodology chosen for this work is closely related to media image analysis which I became familiar with during my previous studies and which I applied in my Bachelor's thesis. In the world today, I believe it has become increasingly important to reflect, observe and closely examine the roots and foundations of fundamentalist argumentation and logic, which in this case serve as the key motors of the global Jihadist movement. Following the 9-11-01 terrorist attacks and the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, various works dedicated to the matter have been published, aiming to gather, summarize and document the existing messages of al-Qaeda, analyzing the key concepts and terms that the network operates with in its discourse, as well as focusing on particular key figures and ideologists of the organization, such as Osama Bin Laden or Ayman az-Zawahiri. For the purposes of this work, I have chosen to refer to two of such compilations in particular (Lawrence: 2005; Ibrahim: 2007), which will serve as primary sources for my research. The relevant texts comprised in these publications represent exact and eloquent translations of the original Arabic messages, often accompanied by scholarly comments and remarks on terrorism or Islamic thought. I expect that through a close up and detailed analysis of such messages, addressed to – as labeled by both Bin Laden and Zawahiri - “the land of infidels” and “the Great Satan” (Ibrahim: 2007, pg. 2), one is able to better and more fully grasp and understand the concepts, images and motives the Jihadist ideologists use in their interpretation of the current affairs and history and which then can – and often do – result in positive feedback from – however small – extremist segment of Muslim populations in the world. The findings can then provide a means to help further clarify the manifestations and consequences of fundamentalist logic chains, resulting in the imperative perception of war on terror as a de facto war on Islam; as well as to better understand which definitions, attributes or descriptions of “Western” actors imply the need for jihad in fundamentalist minds, entering the vicious circle of anticipated and escalating violence.

In the following paragraphs, I will firstly determine key approaches through which I will examine the relevant texts and outline the key concepts derived from these theories which will be crucial for my research. I will continue with posing the central questions this work aims to answer, which will be followed by a description of the chosen data, as well as the method of its collection and classification. Lastly, I will state possible limits to the research and provide explanation on how I aim to confront those shortcomings and eventual critical remarks or comments, as well as provide feasible inspiration for future research on the subject.

## **THEORY, CONCEPTS, METHODOLOGY - Predicate and metaphor analysis attributed to the United States and European allies in Bin Laden's discourse following the war in Iraq**

As stated previously, the main aim of this research is to closely examine and define concepts, attributes and images associated with various "Western" actors in the messages of Osama bin Laden

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<sup>1</sup> I limited my research to the messages imminently preceding and later following the 2003 invasion of Iraq until the establishment of the first Iraqi government since I assumed that these two dates provided feasible landmarks for the purposes of this work and its estimated length. Opting for an analysis of discourse regarding the aftermath of 9-11 would in my opinion represent an excessive amount of data.

following the war in Iraq. In order to archive this goal, it seemed best to choose a discourse analysis method, defined in the broadest sense as a "study of language in social context", which examines "how people construct and constitute meanings and attribute significance to objects and activities in the social environment" (Benes, In Drulák: 2008, p. 92, 93). **Predicate analysis** then seemed most appropriate in this case, due to its emphasis on perception of the actors. The term, as defined by **Jennifer Milliken**, provides "a detailed method of revealing the way to construct actors through their description", in a process of "so-called predication – the matching of nouns (categories) with verbs, adverbs and adjectives that define the quality of such a noun". (Milliken: 1999, pg. 232, In Benes: In Drulák: 2008, pg. 109).

The concept of predicate analysis is closely related to another method, **metaphor analysis**, through which one is able to "unite various fields of social reality and hence deepen or veil our understanding of the world." (Drulák: 2008, s. 125). If we accept the premise which stipulates that "if we distinguish the metaphors in which various actors base their streams of thought and conduct, we are hence able to determine the boundaries in which these actors will be taking their actions"(Ibidem), applying a metaphor analysis method seems an appropriate complementary theoretical outcome for this particular research topic, as it leads the researcher to "conclusions either regarding the expectations of the respective actors concerning a subject, or regarding the commonly shared and acknowledged traits of such a subject through which it is being discursively constructed." (Ibid., p. 126).

Metaphor analysis is therefore frequently applied by various researchers when they are seeking to prove for instance "ways in which particular ideological or political group is trapped in a certain metaphors of foreign policy" (Ibid., p. 127). This will also be the goal of my thesis project when analyzing the messages of Osama bin Laden regarding the United States and its European allies. As my primary source, I refer to the works of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (**Lakoff and Johnson**: 1980/2002), using their distinction between **metaphorical concepts** (such as the metaphor that **states are the people**) and **metaphorical expressions**, i. e. the allegation "Uncle Sam was committing these reckless transgressions and terrible oppression" (Ibid., p. 208, metaphor cited from Lawrence: 2005, p. 194). In addition, I plan to incorporate some concepts of **security metaphors** as explored in the work of **Paul Chilton** (Chilton: 1996), which examined these expressions in the Cold War context of international relations. Chilton focuses on **metaphors of person**, such as the USSR can be identified with its dictator of the time, Stalin, or a wider circle of such key rulers in the Kremlin, as well as **metaphors of road**, which operate with various often contradictory labels of the USSR and to where the country is heading: oscillating from referred to as a "backward superpower on the road to progress" on one hand and a "force pushing outward aiming further expansion" on the other. (Drulák: 2008, p. 134). Similarly, through applying this method, I would be able to suggest that Bin Laden in fact uses the metaphor of a person when he substitutes the term United States of America for terms such as "Bush and his gang" or "the most corrupt liars" (Ibrahim: 2007, p. 210), or when he describes the American and European concern about the Middle East and their presence in the region as a road leading to a "surrender process", a play on words used instead of a "peace process" (Ibrahim: 2007, p. 236).

In my opinion, both predicate analysis and metaphor analysis could therefore serve as efficient methods in seeking the two central questions of this thesis:

- 1. How are the United States of America and its European allies referred to and portrayed in various relevant messages attributed to Osama bin Laden following the invasion of Iraq?**
- 2. What do these characteristics, assumptions and descriptions and discourse construction of the latter actors through multiple predicates (adjectives, verbs, adverbs) and metaphors testify or reveal about their author(s) and disseminator(s)?**

The basic data which I aim to analyze for this project are **six relevant messages** attributed to Osama bin Laden regarding the United States of America and its European allies throughout the years 2003-2006. Specifically, I will be dealing with the following texts: "To the Iraqi people" (February 2003); "Among A Band of Knights" (February 2003) – to the Ummah; "Quagmires of the Tigris and Euphrates (October 2003) – to the Iraqis; "Israel, Oil and Iraq" (October 2003) – to the

Americans; “Resist The New Rome“ (January 2004) – to the Ummah; “Osama bin Laden's Peace Treaty to the Europeans” (April 2004); “The Towers of Lebanon“ (October 2004) – to the Americans; “Depose The Tyrants“ (December 2004) – to the Ummah; “Bin Laden's Truce Offer to the Americans“ (January 2006).

All of these messages can be found in the two key sources (Lawrence: 2005, Ibrahim: 2007). Their authorship and authenticity can of course be subject to dispute. Nevertheless, I believe that it is still a relevant subject for research, as I see it as equally important to examine what the organization wants the public opinion to perceive about itself, regardless of possible allegations of Bin Laden's death. By labeling the United States and European allies as the subjects of my study, I will try to collect all the relevant predicates attributed to them as well as metaphors in which they figure in the respective texts. Through a subsequent application of the procedures described by Jennifer Milliken (Milliken: 1996, 1999), and George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (Lakoff and Johnson: 1980/2002) and Paul Chilton (Chilton: 1996), I will search for predicates and metaphors, exploring how research subjects are "associated with capacities and traits characteristic for certain types of meetings and interactions" (Milliken: 1999, p. 232, In Benes: In Drulák: 2008, p. 109), as well as how these capabilities can be classified in metaphorical structures (i. e., the previously mentioned concept of "states are people" or various security metaphors, such as the metaphors of people, roads or power). I will then try to classify all the rich and diverse predicate and metaphoric expressions used in the texts into broader categories.

Terms such as “The White house gang”, “Bush and his gang” or “the butcher in the White house” will all be regarded as predicates describing the United States of America, aiming to enhance and prove the “destructive” face of the country. The term “Uncle Sam”, also describing the United States, will represent the other side of the same coin, aiming to ironically condemn of the ostensible “kindness” of the state, following the both the concept of “states are people” and metaphors of person. Following the classification, I will subsequently try to provide a thorough analysis of what these broader categories of metaphors and predicates can reveal about its supposed author, the ideological leader of al-Qaeda as well as the nature and terrorist strategy of the organization.

## **CONCLUSION, LIMITS OF RESEARCH – Further research on Muslim countries?**

I am of course aware of the fact that my findings and conclusions presented at the end of my research can result in being narrow and rigid portraits, due partly to the fairly small amount of data I aim to examine and partly to the fact that I will naturally be reflecting my subjective views in the matter. Both concerns present potential and acknowledgeable limits to my research and its relevance, credibility and validity. Nevertheless, I hope it can still serve as a relevant attempt to document how an iconic leader of a radical political group used and formulated predicate analysis and metaphors addressing his foes in pursue of achieving his vision and strategy. Since both predicate analysis and metaphor analysis operate with subjective interpretation by nature, I have to bear in mind that the possible results of my work will be more a contribution to an ongoing debate rather than a precise presentation of exact evidence or proof.

The work will focus primarily on “Western” actors, United States of America and its European allies. Such an analysis can of course be prone to rigid interpretations of Bin Laden's discourse (f. e. in labeling the United States constantly as a criminal and its European allies as tools used in order to exercise American power policies). It would of course be just as interesting, if not more, to extend the analysis onto subjects outside the “Western civilization”, i.e., key regional powers in the Middle East with majority Muslim populations. It would then be possible for instance to examine Bin Laden's discourse concerning Iraq, Saudi Arabia or the then newly established, emerging Afghan government. Despite their potential shortcomings and foreign policy preferences often contradictory to al-Qaeda ideology, these countries form part of the concepts of dar al-Islam and Muslim Ummah and therefore, I assume the results could rather more diverse and ambiguous, possibly leading to further interesting research on this topic in the future.

## DRAFT TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Introduction: War on Terrorism = War on Islam?

- why I chose to analyze a stream of Islamic fundamentalist thought
- why I think it is important to do so
- what are the objectives of my work – what am I looking for, what my contribution is to be

### Chapter 1: Arabic rhetoric and Jihadist discourse: A Conceptual Note

- Arabic Rhetoric as a discipline – its use of Metaphors, Metonymy and other figures of speech, and other things
- Jihadist Discourse – specificity, rooting from Arabic tradition, overview and interpretation of terms Bin Laden operates with in the texts (i. e.. ideological concepts - Jihadism/Islamism, Wahabism, Salafism/Jihadism; geopolitical concepts – Dar al-Islam, Dar al-Kufr; religious terms - Jihad, Fitna) not an analysis, rather a reference section explaining the origin and evolution of the term, why it is used, what connotations it has
- a note on the style and tone of Bin Laden's writings – many say he is a skilled writer and is fond of poetry and the literary tone shows in his writings – I want to summarize some of these arguments and present them, labeling the patterns he uses, elaborating on the nature of Arabic speech and Jihadist Rhetoric – provides a nice link to next chapter

### Chapter 2: Osama bin Laden and his thoughts

- a biography – from childhood up to present – presenting the events and people that might have influenced him, a portrait
- with emphasis on his earlier views on the United States and its European allies – references to earlier messages (addressed from Sudan, Khorasan, prior 9-11...) in order to see evolution of thought shift and/or consistence of opinion(s) expressed
- supposed/disputed death will not be discussed, I don't see it as significantly important with regard to this thesis, as it focuses more on the thoughts of Bin Laden than his life and fate

### Chapter 3: Predicate Analysis and Metaphor Analysis: A Theoretical Note

theoretical foundations of the methods – Jennifer Milliken, George Lakoff, Paul Chilton, Mark Johnson and their work, their explanations and definitions of predicate analysis and metaphor analysis, why I think it may be a useful tool for me in this work

- description of methods and their different approaches – how does a researcher proceed when he aims to use predicate analysis or metaphor analysis: how will I proceed when I analyze
- advantages, disadvantages, limits of predicate analysis and metaphor analysis – definition of what my findings cannot reveal, what are the drawbacks I face when I choose this method and what could be done about it – realizing and articulating the limits of my research based on the chosen methods

Chapter 4: Predicate Analysis and Metaphor Analysis of texts attributed to Osama bin Laden regarding United States of America and its European allies following the 2003 invasion of Iraq  
The research will look for categories and patterns. Therefore, it will not examine the texts subsequently, but aim for a complex picture derived from all the texts and then categorized into labels/terms that I as the researcher will flexibly define as I examine the texts. The process will be completed when all the relevant terms in the text will fit a category I define.

The texts.

- “To the Iraqi people“ (February 2003)
- „Among A Band of Knights“ (February 2003) – to the Ummah
- „Quagmires of the Tigris and Euphrates (October 2003) – to the Iraqis
- „Israel, Oil and Iraq“ (October 2003) – to the Americans
- „Resist The New Rome“ (January 2004) – to the Ummah
- „Osama bin Laden's Peace Treaty to the Europeans“ (April 2004)
- „The Towers of Lebanon“ (October 2004) – to the Americans
- „Depose The Tyrants“ (December 2004) – to the Ummah
- „Bin Laden's Truce Offer to the Americans“ (January 2006)

5. Summary

6. Appendices

(aimed length – 60 standardized pages)

## **LIST OF SOURCES, PUBLICATIONS AND OTHER MATERIALS**

### **Theoretical Approaches**

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## Publications

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- SAID, Edward (1978): *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books
- TORRES, Manuel R., JORDÁN, Javier; HORSBURGH, Nicola (2006): 'Analysis and Evolution of the Global Jihadist Movement Propaganda'. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 18:3, 399 — 421.
- VENKATRAMAN, Amritha (2007): 'Religious Basis for Islamic Terrorism: The Quran and Its Interpretations'. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 30:3, 229 — 248
- ZWIKAEEL, Ofer (2007): 'Al Qaeda's Operations: Project Management Analysis'. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 30:3, 267— 280