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ABSTRACT The role of metaphor in political discourse has received significant attention in recent years. Expanding on the cognitive theory of metaphor developed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), scholars in the fields of sociolinguistics and discourse analysis have examined politicians' use of metaphorical concepts to justify policies and define events. The metaphors examined in these studies frequently have attained the status of idioms; they consequently pass unnoticed while retaining their ability to frame perspectives. However, political discourse does not limit itself to such lexicalized metaphors, but makes use of new metaphors (or new uses of existing metaphors) as well. Such uses are specifically designed to attract attention, which may become problematic if the metaphor is rejected, resulting in a classic 'failure to launch'. This article examines such a case. Through an analysis of the metaphors used to describe President Bush's military plan to increase US forces in Iraq, I explore the mechanisms by which the meanings of novel metaphors are negotiated in the political arena, and demonstrate that, although their vivid imagery can generate persuasive force in political language, this effect may backfire when they encounter resistance.

KEY WORDS: *idiom, Iraq War, metaphor, neologism, political discourse*

The role of metaphor in political discourse has received significant attention in recent years. Expanding on the cognitive theory of metaphor developed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and specifically applied by Lakoff (1991, 1996, 2004) to political speech, scholars in the fields of sociolinguistics and discourse analysis have examined politicians' use of metaphorical concepts embedded in everyday language to justify policies and define events, in order to align public opinion with the proponent's viewpoint (see e.g. Billig and Macmillan, 2005; Chilton and Ilyin, 1993; Chilton and Lakoff, 1995; Kennedy, 2000; Musolff, 2004). The metaphors examined in such studies are primarily based on analogies from the physical to the

abstract and frequently have attained the status of idioms; they consequently pass unnoticed while retaining their persuasive force. However, political discourse does not limit itself to such lexicalized metaphors, but makes use of new metaphors, or new uses of existing metaphors, as well. Such metaphors invite attention while encapsulating a particular perspective; they thus provide an attractive vehicle for shaping public policy. Yet the vividness of their imagery does not guarantee acceptance, and may become problematic if the metaphor is challenged.

This article examines such a case. Through an analysis of the metaphors used to describe President Bush's military plan to increase US forces in Iraq, I explore the mechanisms by which the meanings of novel metaphors are negotiated in the political arena. I argue that the failure of the Bush administration's 'surge' metaphor, despite its immediate adoption by a number of administration officials and commentators, resulting in its widespread appearance in media reports of the expected troop increase, is attributable to the strength of the blow-back generated by the Democratic party, which actively rejected the use of the term and aggressively reframed the issue by substituting its own term, 'escalation'. I thus demonstrate that, although new metaphors can be used strategically in political discourse, such strategies may backfire when they encounter resistance, thus framing the rejected metaphor as a political blunder.

Political metaphors

Metaphors are ubiquitous in political speech (Zinken et al., 2003), where their use has often been described but seldom praised. Hobbes counted metaphors – along with inaccuracy, prevarication and invective – among the four abuses of speech (1651/1985), and warned that their use in reasoning must lead to error and absurdity, while George Orwell, in his essay 'Politics and the English Language', included them in his list of 'bad habits' rendering political language cloudy and imprecise, and thus serving to cloak the gaps between the real and declared aims of political actors (1946/1961). In the contemporary context, scholarly interest in political metaphors has been fueled by the appearance, in 1980, of *Metaphors We Live By*, in which George Lakoff and Mark Johnson described what has come to be known as the cognitive theory of metaphor. According to Lakoff and Johnson, 'most of our normal conceptual system is metaphorically structured; that is, most concepts are partially understood in terms of other concepts' (1980: 56). They identify three categories of conceptual metaphors which are pervasive in everyday language: 'structural metaphors', in which one concept is structured in terms of another (1980: 5), such as *time is money*; 'orientational metaphors' which have their basis in physical and/or cultural experience (1980: 14), such as *high* and *low status*; and 'ontological metaphors' based on experience with physical objects (1980: 25), including 'entity metaphors' such as *inflation*. These metaphors structure a variety of standard idioms which are not themselves perceived to be metaphorical: *waste of time*; *time well spent*; *upward mobility*; *lower class*; *cultural elites*; in so doing, they also structure our understanding of the concepts that such idioms describe.

The key insight that grounds this theory is that metaphors which have been conventionalized as apparently neutral descriptors continue to resonate with meanings that covertly shape the understandings of recipients. Thus Lakoff, who argues that American political thought is structured around the metaphor 'the nation as a family', demonstrates persuasively in *Moral Politics* (1996) how the ideological positions of political liberals and conservatives may be traced to rival concepts of the government's 'parental' role as 'nurturant parent' or 'strict father', which are continuously reproduced in the policy preferences of the Democratic and Republican Parties. As Lakoff explains it, 'strict father' morality values self-control, respect for authority, and the pursuit of self-interest in order to achieve self-reliance, while 'nurturant parent' morality values empathy for others and providing help for those in need; as a result,

it is natural for liberals to see it as the function of the government to help people in need and hence to support social programs, while it is equally natural for conservatives to see the function of the government as requiring citizens to be self-disciplined and self-reliant and, therefore, to help themselves. (1996: 35–6)

Lakoff's work has played an important role in advancing our understanding of the unconscious processes by which metaphors affect political awareness. However, his focus on metaphors that have been naturalized in language leaves novel metaphors unaddressed. Such metaphors are devised to attract attention, and are often used in politics to steer strategies and set agendas (see Billig and Macmillan, 2005; Van der Valk, 2003). An example is President George W. Bush's collective labeling of North Korea, Iran and Iraq as the 'Axis of Evil' in his 29 January 2002 State of the Union Address. Used in connection with the charge that the nations were 'regimes that sponsor terror' which must be prevented from 'threatening America and our friends and allies with weapons of mass destruction' (Bush, 2002), the term acted to demonize the nations while accessing both meanings of the word 'axis' – the word's literal definition and its use during the Second World War to denote Nazi Germany and its allies – to suggest a menacing alignment demanding immediate defensive action. Zinken calls such metaphors 'intertextual metaphors', because their images originate in culturally mediated 'texts', including literature, the media, education and cultural history (Zinken, 2003: 509; Zinken et al., 2003: 9). These metaphors are often used strategically in political debate, where they function as a form of argumentative reasoning that enhances the persuasiveness of the speaker's claims (Musolf, 2004).

The core activity of politics is discourse (Van der Valk, 2003); thus the rhetorical strategies of political actors are consequential for political reality. Novel metaphors that propose new meanings can be used to challenge or displace existing orthodoxies (see Billig and Macmillan, 2005; Chilton and Ilyin, 1993; Santa Ana, 1999), or to introduce new conceptual models, by providing a 'scenario structure' that is mapped onto the target concept (Musolf, 2004: 38). For example, the use of the term 'housing bubble' to describe rapid, speculative increases in the price of residential real estate incorporates the judgment that

such increases are not sustainable (i.e. the 'bubble' will 'burst'). Thus, Chilton and Ilyin state that:

Once a significant new metaphor . . . has, through whatever media mechanisms, captured public attention, politicians begin to seek to control and interpret it. Skilful manipulation of the metaphor can lead to manipulation of an emerging political discourse, providing new conceptual premises for the development and justification of policies. (1993: 10)

This article examines the use of metaphors in the emerging political debate in the United States about the Bush administration's handling of the war in Iraq, focusing on the period of December 2006 to January 2007, and drawing on the methodology of Critical Discourse Analysis, as articulated by scholars including Fairclough (1989, 1995), Van Dijk (1993), Wodak (2001, 1995) and others. Through a fine-grained analysis of the metaphors used by the Bush administration, congressional Democrats and the media to describe the president's planned troop increase, I explore the manipulation of metaphors in the political arena. In so doing, I expose the complex interplay of factors that mediate the relationship between discourse and power.

Background

In March 2006, pursuant to a bipartisan congressional initiative led by Rep. Frank Wolf (R-Va.), the Iraq Study Group (ISG) was created to perform an independent assessment of the situation in Iraq. The United States Institute of Peace (USIP), an independent, non-partisan institution established and funded by Congress, was asked to be the facilitating agency for the study, and a budget of \$1 million was approved to support its work (US Institute of Peace, 2007). The group's two co-chairs, former United States Secretary of State James A. Baker III and former Chairman of the House International Relations Committee Lee Hamilton, were appointed by the congressional organizers in consultation with the USIP and the other supporting organizations.¹ Baker and Hamilton then selected the remaining eight members, who included former United States Supreme Court Associate Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, and former United States Secretary of Defense William J. Perry. The group was expected to conduct an extensive review of the situation and to issue policy recommendations and advice (US Institute of Peace, 2007).

The Bush administration provided access to documents and personnel, including many high-ranking current and former United States and Iraqi government officials, and President Bush met personally with the group on 14 June 2006 and 13 November 2006, and held additional meetings with the two co-chairs (US Institute of Peace, 2007). However, the administration, which was not involved in the creation of the Iraq Study Group, was conducting its own internal evaluation of the war effort at the time that the ISG was convening. Accordingly, 30 days after the ISG issued its 5 December 2006 report (Baker et al., 2006), recommending increased diplomatic efforts in Iraq and the region, coupled with a gradual withdrawal of US troops, the Bush administration

released ‘the updated and final version of phase one of “Choosing Victory: A Plan for Success in Iraq”’, noting that ‘[t]he study calls for a large and sustained surge of US forces to secure and protect critical areas of Baghdad’ (American Enterprise Institute, 2007). The troop increase was formally announced by President Bush in an address to the nation on 10 January 2007.

The troop ‘surge’

PREVIEWING THE USE OF THE TERM

During the period immediately preceding the issuance of the Iraq Study Group’s report, the term ‘surge’ began to make its appearance in a series of articles authored by Frederick W. Kagan, and published in British and American newspapers and news magazines. Kagan, a military historian specializing in defense issues and the United States military, had been a professor of military history at West Point Military Academy for 10 years prior to becoming a Resident Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), a conservative think tank, in 2005. Kagan had been commissioned by the Bush Administration to submit his recommendations for a new strategy in Iraq; however, this fact was not disclosed in the articles.

In the first of these articles, entitled ‘We Can Put More Forces in Iraq . . . And They Would Make A Difference’, which was posted on AEI’s website on 27 November 2006 and published shortly thereafter in the 4 December 2006 edition of the British news magazine *The Weekly Standard*, Kagan criticized the *Washington Post* for stating in an editorial that it would take ‘at least 500,000 and perhaps more than 1 million troops’ to stabilize Iraq. Arguing that ‘[r]elevant historical examples’ demonstrate that ‘force ratios’ of between 40 and 125 to one (i.e. one soldier for every 40 [or for every 125] inhabitants) would be sufficient to ensure a successful operation, he proffered his own estimates:

Applying the high-end [40-to-one] ratio used in Tal Afar over the entire metropolitan Baghdad area would generate a requirement of 250,000 troops – both US and Iraqi . . . There are almost 150,000 American troops in Iraq now, including perhaps 70,000 combat troops. Conducting Tal Afar-type operations across the entire capital region all at once would require concentrating all available forces in the area and a ‘surge’ of about 80,000 US soldiers – a large number, to be sure, but very far from the ‘hundreds of thousands’ or even ‘millions’ generated by the use of specious historical examples.

But the situation is not even this dire. Not all areas of the capital region require such an intensive deployment . . .

There is every reason to believe that a reformulated operation . . . would be much more successful. It is impossible to estimate precisely how many more US troops would be needed in the capital area, or in Iraq, without proposing a detailed military plan. But since the high end estimates for doing the whole area at once produced the requirement for a surge of 80,000 or so, it is very likely that a surge of 50,000 American troops would be sufficient to stabilize the capital. (Kagan, 2006a, emphasis added)

Altogether, the word 'surge' appears 12 times in this article. Some of these uses merely serve to repeat Kagan's troop-strength projections; however, others provide additional clues to the term's meaning. Anticipating arguments that implementing the proposed increase would require extending terms of service and expediting redeployments, Kagan proposes two solutions, but phrases them in a way that implies that only the second is viable:

Send forces that are not as well trained as one would like, or *conduct the surge itself in phases*, accelerating the deployment of the troops preparing to go in the spring and sending a follow-on wave behind them. (Kagan, 2006a, emphasis added)

He also notes that '[t]he problem of *sustaining the surge deployment* is real' (emphasis added), but suggests that this can be remedied by stepped-up recruitment efforts. He ends the article with a forceful recapitulation of his arguments in which the term 'surge' is repeated four times:

This brief examination shows two things. First, that *a surge on the order of 50,000 soldiers* into Iraq is highly likely to be meaningful if it supports a changed strategy. Second, that *such a surge* is doable with the force currently available . . . *Any surge*, moreover, should be accompanied with a massive effort at reconstruction, political undertakings, possibly even regional negotiations . . . The point is that *a surge of forces* accompanying a change in strategy is possible and offers the promise of being very helpful. The ultimate decision must be taken on the basis of that reality. (Kagan, 2006a, emphasis added)

Two days later, on 6 December 2006, the Iraq Study Group issued its report recommending increased diplomatic efforts and a phased withdrawal from Iraq; on 8 December, the *Washington Post* reported that the president 'vowed yesterday to come up with "a new strategy" in Iraq but expressed little enthusiasm' for the ISG's recommendations (Baker and Wright, 2006). After summarizing the group's recommendations and the reactions to the report in other sectors, the article continued: 'The emerging debate over the report sets a baseline for the administration's own internal review of Iraq policy, which officials hope to complete in time for Bush to give a speech to the nation before Christmas'.

'SURGE' OR 'DOUBLE DOWN'?

In fact, the president's speech was delayed until 10 January 2007; however, in the interim, the Bush administration continued to preview the policy that it would subsequently announce. Thus on 13 December, an article that appeared in the *Los Angeles Times* under the headline 'Pentagon's Plan: More US troops in Iraq' provided an outline of the administration's position that highlighted Kagan's recommendations.² The article begins by citing an extended series of gambling metaphors used by officials to describe the administration's planned troop increase:

As President Bush weighs new policy options for Iraq, strong support has coalesced in the Pentagon behind a military plan to '*double down*' in the country with a substantial buildup in American troops, an increase in industrial aid and a major

combat offensive against Muqtada Sadr, the radical Shiite leader impeding further development of the Iraqi government.

Such an option would appear to satisfy Bush's demand for a strategy focused on victory rather than disengagement. It would disregard key recommendations and warnings of the Iraq Study Group, however . . .

'I think it is worth trying,' a defense official said. 'But you can't have the rhetoric without the resources. This is a *double down*' – the gambling term for upping a bet. Such a proposal, military officials and experts caution, would be a *gamble* . . .

'You are dealing with an inherently difficult undertaking,' said Stephen Biddle, a military analyst called to the White House this week to advise Bush. 'That doesn't mean we should withdraw. But no one should go into this thinking if we double the size of the military, the result will be victory. Maybe, but maybe not. You are *buying the opportunity to enter a lottery*.'

The wild card in the Pentagon planning is Robert M. Gates, due to be sworn in Monday as Defense secretary . . . (Barnes, 2006, emphasis added)

The article then introduces the term 'surge', which it links to Kagan's proposal by quoting his use of the term, before reprising the gambling metaphor by quoting an Iraq Study Group advisor:

The size of the troop increase the Pentagon will recommend is unclear. One officer suggested an increase of about 40,000 forces would be required, but other officials said such a number was unrealistic. There are about 140,000 troops in Iraq.

The problem with *any sort of surge* is that it would require an eventual dropoff in 2008, unless the president was willing to take the politically unpopular move of remobilizing the National Guard and sending reserve combat units back to Iraq.

But military officials are taking a close look at a proposal advanced by Frederick W. Kagan, a former West Point Military Academy historian, to combine a *surge* with a quick buildup of the Marines and Army . . .

'It is essential for the president to couple any recommendation of a *significant surge in Iraq* with the announcement that he will increase permanently the size of the Army and the Marines,' Kagan said.

Outside the Pentagon, in other corners of government, officials are skeptical that an increase in military power will end sectarian violence. James Dobbins, a former US diplomat and advisor to the Iraq Study Group, said many Iraqis believed that US forces put them in danger, rather than improving security.

'The American troop presence is wildly unpopular in Iraq,' Dobbins said. 'Any effort to *double our bet* will lead to more catastrophic results.' (Barnes, 2006, emphasis added)

The gambling metaphors that appear in these passages ('double down', 'gamble', 'enter a lottery', 'wild card', 'double our bet') may be classified under the broader metaphor 'war is a game'. This metaphor is able to support both positive and negative elaborations (see Hellsten, 2000). On the positive side, it presents the decision to go to war as a calculated risk to achieve a perceived gain; on the negative side, the depiction of such a serious undertaking as a 'game' implies an insensitivity to the moral dimensions of war (Kennedy, 2000). Nevertheless, such metaphors have been used for centuries. Carl von Clausewitz (1780–1831), a Prussian general whose posthumously published treatise *On War* is considered to be a classic exposition of the subject, stated:

We see, therefore, how, from the commencement, the absolute, the mathematical as it is called nowhere finds any sure basis in the calculations in the Art of War; and that from the outset there is a play of possibilities, probabilities, good and bad luck, which spreads about with all the coarse and fine threads of its web, and makes War of all branches of human activity the most like a gambling game. (1832/1962, Vol. I: 20)

The uncertain-action-is-gambling metaphor was used more recently by President George H.W. Bush, the current president's father, during the Gulf War, when he justified withholding information from the media by characterizing the situation as a poker game in which he could not be expected to 'show his hand' (see Chilton and Lakoff, 1995: 47). This metaphor has been activated by the current president as well. Metaphors that equate politics or war with a game reduce citizens to spectators whose role is limited to cheering the team to victory (see Kennedy, 2000), as reflected in the exhortation to 'support the troops'. Thus the use of gambling metaphors by the quoted officials and the journalist's decision to include the quotations in his article index longstanding associations.

Musolff states that:

the whole ensemble of text produced in public by politicians and media commentators can be assumed to form a coherent whole as long as its participants agree that they are discussing within a shared discursive context and refer to each others' statements in order to advance their arguments. (2004: 5)

However, unwelcome negative associations can defeat the purpose of a metaphor, effectively ruling out its use (Kennedy, 2000). In this particular case, the article prompted a letter to the editor which was published on the following day:

Hey, Americans, we might 'double down' some more human lives. I guess our government thinks it's at the casino and that it's playing with the house's money, which is the blood and bones of our sons and daughters. Yeah, what the hell, let's double down, roll the dice, pull the slot and smoke them out. Flip more chips on the table, it's only limbs and skulls, tears and souls. What a disgusting, repulsive statement. (Schubert, 2006)

This response shows how the use of a familiar metaphor can backfire when it communicates its meaning too clearly. The use of a term closely associated with casino gambling, the meaning of which is to double one's bet, irresistibly evokes the image of brigades being pushed forward like so many stacks of poker

chips, while the resonances from the common saying ‘you can bet your life’ (and its vulgar variant) present the government’s plan as ‘upping the bet’ of American lives. The ease with which the reader is able to elaborate the metaphor to construct a stinging critique of the government’s strategy demonstrates that the use of such standard metaphors is not without risks.

THE ADVANTAGES OF THE ‘SURGE’ METAPHOR

Kagan avoids this problem by using the novel metaphor ‘surge’ in describing his proposal for a troop increase. The term offers the twofold advantage of being less directly associated with numbers, and more directly associated with power, than is the word (‘increase’) for which it is being substituted. Its association with tidal phenomena triggers images of ocean swells while simultaneously suggesting successive incursions (see ‘waves of aerial attacks’). It also indexes a condition that is temporary (e.g. ‘power surge’), thus forestalling objections to the increase on the basis that it would lead to a prolongation of the war. Moreover, it may serve to evoke metaphors of battle which have entered popular culture in other contexts, for example, in advertisements for various types of cleaning and personal care products. This is perhaps best exemplified by a long-running television commercial for Ajax Laundry Detergent® from the 1960s, in which a knight in white armor magically cleaned the clothes of children playing in the dirt by pointing his lance at them, dramatizing the product’s slogan ‘Stronger Than Dirt’ (TVparty.com, 2007);³ however, similar examples of detergents that ‘fight dirt’, toothpastes that ‘fight cavities’ and shampoos that ‘fight dandruff’ abound.

Yet while harboring these connotations, the word retains the advantages of its novelty. As an unfamiliar use of a familiar word, its meaning must be inferred from context or defined by experts. Moreover, it is formulated as belonging to the technical vocabulary of a group (the military), and this gives it immediate legitimacy. Its recognition as a technical military term then acts to exempt it from lay interpretations that differ from its ‘official’ meaning and, in fact, construct it as arcane jargon that is indecipherable without translation. Such terms are useful because their inherent vagueness and ambiguity afford their proponents great license in defining them, or in failing to do so.

(RE)DEFINING THE ‘SURGE’

Kagan followed his 27 November 2006 *Weekly Standard* article with three additional articles published in the closing days of the year. On 21 December, an article entitled ‘US Cannot Accept Defeat: New Strategy to Win Would Show President’s Wisdom, Not Stubbornness’ was posted on the AEI website and published in *USA Today*. The article presents a brief, forceful argument in support of the proposed troop increase, which Kagan describes as follows:

Securing the critical areas of Baghdad would require a *surge of at least 35,000 more US combat troops* into Iraq . . . *This surge* would come from extending the tours of soldiers already in Iraq and accelerating the deployment of a few brigades. *It would require two years to succeed*, accompanied by economic reconstruction and political efforts to strengthen the Iraqi government. (Kagan, 2006b; emphasis added)

Kagan thus provides a definition of the proposed 'surge' as something which 'would require two years to succeed'. Kagan's redefinition of the word 'surge' continues to be developed in the articles that follow.

Three days later, on 24 December, a much longer article, entitled 'Send More Troops to Baghdad and We'll Have a Fighting Chance', in which Kagan recapitulated his arguments in greater detail, appeared in the *Sunday Times* (London); the article was posted on the AEI's website two days later on 26 December. In this article, Kagan provides additional details about the timetable for the proposed 'surge':

The increase in US troops cannot be short-term. Clearing and holding the critical areas of Baghdad will require all of 2007. Expanding the secured areas into Anbar, up to Diyala River valley, north to Mosul and beyond will take part of 2008. It is unlikely that the Iraqi army and police will be able to assume full responsibility for security for at least 18 to 24 months after the beginning of this operation. (Kagan, 2006c, emphasis added)

Finally, on 27 December, an article entitled 'The Right Type of "Surge": Any Troop Increase Must Be Large and Lasting' was posted on the AEI's website and simultaneously published in the *Washington Post*. The article lists Jack Keane, 'a retired Army general', as Kagan's co-author. Keane, a former acting Army chief of staff, provided consultation to Kagan in connection with Kagan's report of his recommendations to the president (American Enterprise Institute, 2007).

The article begins by calling for a clear definition of the term 'surge', which the authors then provide in the form of a vigorous defense of their plan that predicts disaster if it is rejected:

Reports on the Bush administration's efforts to craft a new strategy in Iraq often use the term 'surge' but rarely define it. Estimates of the number of troops to be added in Baghdad range from fewer than 10,000 to more than 30,000. Some 'surges' would last a few months, others a few years.

We need to cut through the confusion. Bringing security to Baghdad – the essential precondition for political compromise, national reconciliation and economic development – is possible only with a surge of at least 30,000 combat troops lasting 18 months or so. Any other option is likely to fail. (Kagan and Keane, 2006, emphasis added)

They then proceed to argue against a short-term troop increase and in favor of one lasting at least 18 months, using the word 'surge' as their operational term. The argument presupposes that the term does not, in and of itself, connote any particular duration:

Of all the 'surge' options out there, short ones are the most dangerous. Increasing troop levels in Baghdad for three or six months would virtually ensure defeat. It takes that long for newly arrived soldiers to begin to understand the areas where they operate. Short surges would redeploy them just as they began to be effective.

In addition, a short surge would play into the enemy's hands . . . (Kagan and Keane, 2006, emphasis added)

The authors then provide a detailed explanation of the number of troops needed and where they should be deployed, and end the article by deploring the administration's previous strategy and warning that their counsel should not be ignored:

The United States faces a dire situation in Iraq because of a history of half-measures. We have always sent 'just enough' force to succeed if everything went according to plan. So far nothing has, and there's no reason to believe that it will. Sound military planning doesn't work this way. *The only 'surge' option that makes sense is both long and large.* (Kagan and Keane, 2006, emphasis added)

The paragraph reads like an open challenge; in fact, however, it reports a *fait accompli*. Yet although the Bush administration soon all but acknowledged the adoption of Kagan's recommendation for a troop increase, administration officials were more cautious in revealing their timetable. Thus a 2 January 2007 *Wall Street Journal* article headed, 'Calibrating a Troop "Surge": If More Soldiers Go to Iraq, How Long Should They Stay?' continued to present possible scenarios for, and thus possible definitions of, the proposed 'surge':

White House officials say a *troop 'surge'* almost certainly will be the centerpiece of Mr Bush's new strategy for Iraq to be unveiled midmonth. But while administration officials have gone to great lengths to emphasize that the extra troops will be in Iraq only temporarily, there is no clear definition of how long that might be.

Several Democratic and Republican lawmakers who endorsed the increase say they want the extra troops in Iraq for just three to six months . . . Gen. Peter Schoomaker, the Army's chief of staff, has told associates that 12 months is needed to ensure a substantive effect.

Echoing Gen. Schoomaker's concerns that Iraq's militia would simply wait out a *three- or six-month surge* and then resume their violence, a report by military historian Frederick Kagan argues that the troops should be in Iraq for at least 18 months. (Dreazen and Jaffe, 2007, emphasis added)

The article cites concerns that shortages of personnel and equipment could hinder the implementation of the proposed troop increase:

'The Army says *it can surge for somewhere on the order of a year,*' says Daniel Goure, a defense analyst at the Lexington Institute who has been briefed by senior Army officials on the service's strains. 'But if that happens a year from now it won't be able to sustain even the current troop levels of 140,000.'

If violence worsens over the next year, military commanders could face the task of stabilizing a chaotic country with far fewer troops than they have had during the past 3½ years of the conflict. To mitigate this risk, Gen. Schoomaker has insisted that with a *surge* the Army must be given more latitude to call up reservists for duty in Iraq. (Dreazen and Jaffe, 2007, emphasis added)

The article includes uses of the term 'surge' by the *Journal* reporters who wrote it, and in direct quotations from defense analyst Goure, National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley (quoted as saying, 'There might be a need for an Iraqi surge alongside an American one') and from Kagan himself, indicating the extent

to which it has gained currency. Three days later, at a forum held at the AEI's conference center in Washington, DC, at which Senators John McCain and Joseph Lieberman presented the results of their recent fact-finding mission in Iraq, Kagan and Keane presented the final version of 'Choosing Victory: A Plan for Success in Iraq', which recommended '[a] surge of seven Army brigades and Marine regiments to support clear-and-hold operations that begin in the spring of 2007' (Kagan, 2006d: 1, emphasis added). The report projects that these operations will be completed by the summer 2007 but that 'hold-and-build' operations will then be necessary, and that the troops will likely not begin to return home until late 2008 (Kagan, 2006d: 32).

Relabeling the 'surge' as an 'escalation'

The forum was reported on the front page of the *Los Angeles Times* on the following day under the headline 'Troop Surge Can't Be Brief, Backers Insist: They Want 18 Months at Minimum. Democrats, and Some Republicans, Resist a Hard Line' (Spiegel and Reynolds, 2007). After opening with the statement that the 'leading advocates' of a troop increase, including Senator John McCain and General Jack Keane, had 'warned' the president that 'any buildup lasting less than 18 months was doomed to fail' (Spiegel and Reynolds, 2007), the article contrasted this position with 'growing unease about an extended buildup among some congressional Republicans' who reportedly fear political fallout in the 2008 elections, resulting in only limited support of the initiative:

'For any kind of surge, they would have to show that *the surge itself was limited*,' said one senior Republican leadership aide, speaking on condition of anonymity. 'It would have to be six months or a year, tops.' (Spiegel and Reynolds, 2007, emphasis added)

This view was immediately contrasted with that expressed by McCain:

'The worst of all worlds would be a *short, small surge of US forces*,' McCain said at a forum on the final version of the plan, developed by Keane and Frederick Kagan, a military analyst at the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative Washington think tank. '*This troop surge [must be] significant and sustained*; otherwise, don't do it.' (Spiegel and Reynolds, 2007, emphasis added; bracketed words in original)

The article also quotes Kagan using his signature term to explain the strategy outlined in his report:

'The enemy always expects us to *surge* and leave,' said Kagan, a former faculty member at the US Military Academy. 'If we *surge for three or four months* and then pull our forces back, the enemy will be right there waiting.' (Spiegel and Reynolds, 2007, emphasis added)

However, although it shows both proponents and opponents of the plan using the term 'surge', the article also signals the introduction of alternate terms, noting:

Some Republicans fear that the buildup *will be seen as an escalation* of the current policy.

'Some are calling this "staying the course super-sized,"' said a senior staffer for a skeptical Republican moderate. (Speigel and Reynolds, 2007, emphasis added)

The word 'escalation' had already begun to be used by opponents of the proposed troop increase in late December, as reported by the *Washington Times* in a 1 January 2007 article headlined 'Obama Joins '08 Hopefuls in Call against Troop Surge; Wants Course Change', describing an initiative launched by Democratic Senator Barack Obama:

Sen. Barack Obama on Dec. 28 joined a chorus of potential Democratic presidential candidates criticizing US policy in Iraq, telling supporters he opposes sending more troops and urging them to send letters to persuade President Bush to change the course of the war.

* * *

In an email titled '*Escalation is not the answer.*' Mr Obama on Dec. 28 asked voters to tell Mr Bush 'our soldiers are not numbers to add just because someone couldn't think of a better idea.'

The Illinois Democrat's message includes a link to the White House's 'contact' page.

* * *

He repeated his call to begin a phased troop withdrawal and send a signal 'that ours is not an open-ended commitment.' (Bellantoni, 2007, emphasis added)

Because the ability to control the manner in which issues and policies are represented is a significant factor in determining their acceptance and, accordingly, their implementation, political discourse is inherently competitive (Musolff, 2004). Thus, in the volatile environment of contemporary party politics, the ability to seize the discourse initiative is critical to political success. However, Lakoff (2004) has observed that American conservatives appear to be more adept at manipulating metaphors than American liberals and, prior to the 2004 elections, famously challenged the latter to 'take back public discourse' by developing a coherent discursive framework that would reflect liberal views. At that time, the Democratic Party, effectively eclipsed by four years of Republican control of both the White House and Congress, was in no position to seize the public podium. But following the November 2006 midterm elections, which resulted in Democratic majorities in both houses of Congress, the situation had changed. Widely viewed as a referendum on the Bush administration's Iraq policy (see e.g. McManus and Reynolds, 2007), the election results appeared to validate positions which had been dismissed by the administration as unpatriotic and defeatist but could now be asserted as embodying legitimate public concerns.

Chilton and Ilyin (1993) outline the strategies by which political actors can consciously manipulate metaphors in political debate: the speaker can reject the candidate metaphor as inappropriate for the current topic, and either substitute another metaphor or choose to avoid metaphor altogether; reframe the metaphor in a way that proposes an alternative perspective; or, conversely, embrace the metaphor and its message by further developing the imagery that it evokes. The use of the term 'escalation' by those opposing the proposed 'surge' is an example of the first of these strategies: in rejecting the administration's

metaphor and replacing it with a carefully selected alternative, they propose an alternative – and highly critical – interpretation of the administration’s plan.

THE ORIGINS OF THE TERM ‘ESCALATION’

The word ‘escalation’ was reportedly coined by Herman Kahn, a systems theorist and military strategist who applied game theory to the problem of nuclear warfare, and who, in his book *On Escalation: Metaphors and Scenarios* (1965), described a ‘ladder of escalation’ leading to a nation’s use of nuclear weapons. A technical term whose use was limited to Cold War theorists, the word ‘escalation’ was largely unfamiliar to the lay public, as indicated by the headline of a 15 May 1964 *New York Times* article, ‘War Game Opens in Mojave Desert: “Escalation” Theory Being Studied in Maneuvers’ (Baldwin, 1964). The article is a report on large-scale Defense Department simulations that were being held in the Mojave Desert ‘to see what might happen if conventional forces clashed and then one side started to use small tactical nuclear weapons’ (Baldwin, 1964). In this example of the original use of the word ‘escalation’, its presumed unfamiliarity is acknowledged by its placement between inverted commas. Shortly thereafter, however, the term was being used to describe the intensifying conflict in Vietnam, as witnessed by the appearance of a 15 July 1964 *New York Times* editorial headed ‘Escalation in Vietnam’, which carried this warning:

The war in South Vietnam appears to be entering a new and more dangerous phase.

Disturbing news from Saigon indicates that the support of Hanoi and, apparently, of Peking for the Communist Vietcong in South Vietnam is being steadily increased . . .

* * *

The political and military implications of all this are ominous. At the very least, they suggest willingness on the part of the Communists to ‘escalate the war.’ (Editor, 1964, emphasis added)

Six months later, following the retaliatory air strikes on North Vietnam ordered by President Lyndon Johnson in the wake of the Vietcong’s attack on US military installations at Pleiku (Wicker, 1965), and the subsequent institution of the ground war and continued aerial bombing, the word definitively entered the public mind, so much so that a review of *On Escalation*, which was published during that period, began with the following observation:

This collection of essays on strategic alternatives to nuclear oblivion in this anxious age might have undergone a substantial revision had the author waited another year to publish it. *Escalation* is no longer a \$64 word, uttered to stump the audience. Since US Air Force bombers first struck at North Vietnam, we have lived with the word and speculated on what comes next. (Marshall, 1965, emphasis added)⁴

‘ESCALATION’ AS A HISTORICAL METAPHOR

Inextricably linked to what was arguably the most unpopular war in United States history, the term ‘escalation’ has a strongly negative association for many who recall that period. As used to characterize the president’s planned troop increase, the term functions as a historical metaphor which serves to ‘attach

historical events and tales to a new situation' (Hellsten, 1997: 124). In doing so, the metaphor creates meaning, not only by attaching its imagery to the new situation, but by suggesting a similarity between the new situation and the historical setting that it serves to evoke (Kennedy, 2000). In this case, the term 'escalation' acts as a warrant for the argument that is implicit in its use: that the war in Iraq is 'another Vietnam' (see Musolff, 2004: 38). Moreover, because of the close association between the term 'escalation' and the Vietnam War, even those who do not agree with one or more of the assumptions that the metaphor incorporates (that US policy in Vietnam was disastrous; that the Bush administration's Iraq policy resembles it) can be expected to recognize that they are being indexed by the use of the term (Musolff, 2004). The term thus taps hearers' background knowledge (see Fairclough, 1995) to make the identification that it invokes.

Competing metaphors

The contest between the two metaphors is aptly illustrated in a 7 January 2007 *Los Angeles Times* article headlined 'Bush Aides Lay Groundwork for Iraq Surge' (emphasis added), which begins:

Two months ago, the nation's voters handed both houses of Congress to the Democrats in an election that reflected deep discontent with the war in Iraq.

This week, President Bush is responding to voters' message – by preparing to escalate the US military commitment in Iraq with a 'surge' that would add thousands of troops. (McManus and Reynolds, 2007, emphasis added)

The headline of the article uses the word 'surge' without quotation marks, while the second paragraph of the article uses the word 'escalate' to describe the 'surge', which is now bracketed by quotation marks. It thus appears that the writers of the article are using the word 'escalate' to define (or possibly to decode) the word 'surge'.

Quotation marks, when not used to indicate the direct quotation of another's speech or writing, serve a variety of functions (see e.g. Baker, 2002; Predelli, 2003). Single quotation marks are conventionally used to denote a word that is referred to as such (*the word 'surge'*), to disclaim agreement (*his references to the 'lower classes'*), to indicate irony or sarcasm (*the 'sculpture' consisted of a tangled mass of iron clothes hangers*), or to flag a colloquial expression appearing in formal writing (*the head of the department called a 'jam session' to explore new ideas*). Double quotation marks are used to indicate neologisms (*the latest entry in her 'blog'*) and inaccurate or deceptive uses, in which case they function as the equivalent of the modifiers 'supposed' or 'so-called' (*the 'emergency' that prevented her attendance; he was accompanied by his 'wife'*). Here the purpose of the quotation marks appears to be to designate the term 'surge' as new, and thus presumably unfamiliar. This interpretation is supported by the fact that it is accompanied by a definition, and also by the fact that, once defined, the word is subsequently used without quotation marks. A similar pattern appears in articles published in the same newspaper on 9 and 10 January.

Serrano Cabezas and Sanz Moreno (1997) observe that the effort expended in drawing the reader's attention to the novelty of a term should be proportional to its weight or importance to the text at issue, and that a number of discursive strategies, including quotation marks or italics, more or less explicit references to its recent coinage, and the inclusion of a definition, can be used. In this series of articles, the use of quotation marks serves as an initial cue that the word that they enclose is being used as a new term (i.e. in a context-specific sense), one that has no generally established meaning. Accordingly, in the first article, the term 'surge' is preceded by a definition: 'to *escalate* the US military commitment in Iraq with a "*surge*" that would add thousands of troops' (McManus and Reynolds, 2007, emphasis added). However, while ostensibly defining the term 'surge', this formulation in fact problematizes it: it adopts the characterization of opponents of the troop increase, while evoking historical associations with the collapse of public support for the Vietnam War.

This negative elaboration is further developed in the second of these articles, which states:

Critics deride the 'surge', as it is known in Washington, as an escalation that will lead to more American deaths. (Reynolds, 2007, emphasis added)

This sentence, which reports the view of administration critics, incorporates additional criticism of its own. The qualification 'as it is known in Washington' functions as the equivalent of 'so-called', framing the term as the arcane jargon of political infighting, and thus presenting the issue as one of politics and not of policy. Moreover, by offering as definitional the assessment of the plan's opponents ('an escalation that will lead to more American deaths'), an assessment that the administration has sought to avoid, the writer implicitly takes sides.

The third article is the most explicit in advancing a redefinition of the term:

Detractors say a 'surge' in troops is just another term for 'escalation'. (Reynolds and Levey, 2007, emphasis added)

The authors of the article preserve their 'neutrality' by attributing the definition that they advance to 'detractors', and by failing to overtly comment upon it. However, the negative implication of the statement is clear: If 'escalation' is the correct definition of the plan adopted, then the use of the term 'surge' is deceptive, an attempt to conceal the government's true objectives. This evokes further invidious comparisons between the current troop-increase plan and the US policy in Vietnam following the Gulf of Tonkin incident, which resulted in a massive increase in combat troop deployment accompanied by the assurances of President Johnson and his advisors that 'we seek no wider war' (Wicker, 1965; see also Editor, 1967).

'The new way forward in Iraq'

The president delivered his address to the nation at 9:00 p.m. (EST) on 10 January 2007. The word 'surge' was not used in the 20-minute speech. Instead, the president introduced the plan as the 'new strategy . . . [that] will change

America's course in Iraq' (Bush, 2007), outlining the steps to be taken to 'help Iraqis clear and secure neighborhoods, to help them protect the local population, and to help ensure that the Iraqi forces left behind are capable of providing the security that Baghdad needs', in order to quell the sectarian violence that, 'in 2006 . . . overwhelmed the political gains the Iraqis had made' (Bush, 2007). The speech contained almost no direct references to the troop increase itself; rather, the president – reiterating the theme announced in the title of the 'fact sheet' provided to members of the media, 'The New Way Forward in Iraq' – referred to the plan as a new 'strategy' or 'approach'. These references are scattered at intervals throughout the speech.⁵

- (1) The *new strategy* outlined tonight will *change America's course* in Iraq [0:11].
- (2) It is clear that we need to *change our strategy* in Iraq [1:50].
- (3) So America will *change our strategy* . . . This will require *increasing American force levels*. So I've committed *more than 20,000 additional American troops* to Iraq. The vast majority of them – *five brigades* – will be deployed to Baghdad [5:04].
- (4) This *new strategy* will not yield an immediate end to suicide bombings, assassinations, or IED attacks [7:18].
- (5) A *successful strategy* for Iraq goes beyond military operations [8:09].
- (6) America will *change our approach* to help the Iraqi government as it works to meet these benchmarks [9:18].
- (7) As we make *these changes*, we will continue to pursue al Qaeda and foreign fighters [10:21].
- (8) The *changes* I have outlined tonight are aimed at ensuring the survival of a young democracy that is fighting for its life in a part of the world of enormous importance to American security [15:09].
- (9) The question is whether *our new strategy* will bring us closer to success. I believe that it will [15:43].
- (10) This *new approach* comes after consultations with Congress about the different courses we could take in Iraq [16:31].
- (11) In the days ahead, my national security team will fully brief Congress on *our new strategy* [17:34]. (Bush, 2007, emphasis added)

These excerpts contain only one direct reference to the troop increase (Excerpt 3), in which the president indicates that he has 'committed more than 20,000 additional troops to Iraq' (Bush, 2007). One additional reference to the increase occurred 11 minutes into the speech; there the president stated that he has 'given orders to increase American forces in Anbar province by 4000 troops' (Bush, 2007). Considering the fact that it is the central component of the administration's plan, the omission of all but the briefest mentions of the increase, coupled with the thematic repetition of the markedly non-specific words 'strategy' and 'approach' recalls Orwell's observation that 'political language has to consist largely of euphemism, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness',

as '[s]uch phraseology is needed if one wants to name things without calling up mental pictures of them' (1946/1961: 348). However, the use of such language creates a conceptual void that others can attempt to fill by substituting their preferred mental imagery, and here an alternative interpretation had already been proposed. Thus the unintended result of the president's speech was to fuel the effort to re-label the troop increase with the stigmatizing term 'escalation'.

Congressional opponents of the plan responded that evening with the release of a joint statement by Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer and Senate Assistant Democratic Leader Richard Durbin entitled 'Escalating Our Military Involvement in Iraq Sends Precisely the Wrong Message', which began:

Last November, the American people delivered a strong message of no confidence in the President's Iraq policy and clearly expressed their desire for a new direction. The President had an opportunity tonight to demonstrate that he understood the depth of the concern in the country, make a long overdue course correction, and articulate a clear mission to our engagement in Iraq. Instead, he chose to *escalate* our involvement in Iraq's civil war by proposing a substantial increase in the number of our forces there. (Pelosi et al., 2007, emphasis added)

'A major kind of escalation of expression of opposition'

On the following day, the *Los Angeles Times* reported the plan in a front-page article under the banner headline 'Bush Commits 21,500 More Troops'; the article noted that:

Democrats were nearly unanimous Wednesday in their condemnation of Bush's plan, comparing it to a *Vietnam-type escalation of the war* and vowing to oppose it. (Reynolds et al., 2007, emphasis added)

In other articles, a number of congressional opponents of the plan were quoted using the term; for example:

'There are no timelines, no real goals . . . I am very disappointed,' California Sen. Dianne Feinstein said on CNN. 'It is an *escalation*. And I'm hard pressed to see how we come out of that kind of *escalation* as victors.' (Levey and Gaouette, 2007, emphasis added; ellipsis in original)

And similarly:

Presumed frontrunner [for the Democratic presidential nomination] Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-N.Y.) has been more moderate about the war and cautious about commenting on the president's plan.

But after Bush's speech, she said, 'I cannot support his proposed *escalation* of the war in Iraq.' She reiterated her backing for a 'phased redeployment of US troops.' (Hook, 2007, emphasis added)

Others dispensed with the term 'escalation' to make even more explicit comparisons, as illustrated by this negative comment made to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice during her appearance at a congressional hearing to answer questions about the plan:

'I think the speech given last night by this president represents *the most dangerous policy blunder in this country since Vietnam, if it's carried out,*' Sen. Chuck Hagel (R-Neb.) told Rice. (Richter and Barnes, 2007, emphasis added)

As a result of this rhetorical offensive, two weeks later, while the Senate was preparing to consider a resolution to oppose the troop increase, Senator Edward Kennedy was quoted as stating:

'If you look at what has happened to this debate in the last 10 days . . . not only from Democrats, but Republicans, this has been *a major kind of escalation of expression of opposition.* (Levey, 2007, emphasis added)

On 16 February 2007, the US House of Representatives, by a vote of 246 to 182, passed a symbolic, non-binding resolution stating that 'Congress disapproves of the decision of President George W. Bush . . . to deploy more than 20,000 additional United States combat troops to Iraq' (Zeleny and Luo, 2007).

Discussion

This article has examined a particular type of political metaphor in which the metaphor is used to label a policy or event.⁶ Such labels create new categories that provide 'a cognitive frame for text comprehension' (Zinken, 2003: 516) by cueing a particular perspective that acts to cast the issue in a positive or negative light. They thus function ideologically by characterizing the practices that they describe. As Rayner explains:

In our talk about politics we do not so much attribute value to actions or procedures, as attribute character. Making these characterizations stick, and clarifying the consequences of producing them, is the concern of ideological argument. (1980: 94–5)

The term 'surge' was initially introduced by Frederick Kagan, the lead author of the report outlining the administration's plan, in a series of articles published in British and American newspapers and news magazines in November and December 2006, prior to the release of the report in January 2007, shortly before the president's address to the nation formally announcing the troop increase. The term was presented in the articles as epitomizing Kagan's conceptualization of the proposed increase, yet received little emphasis in his actual report (see Kagan, 2006d). It thus appears that the term was being used strategically, to shape perceptions of the plan in advance of its announcement (see Thomas, 2004).

Novel metaphors perform a number of related functions in political language: they serve as *neologisms* in a context where an actual new word might seem too Orwellian; they function as the *technical vocabulary* of in-group *jargon*, which indexes membership, familiarity and expertise; they act as *slogans* that signal affiliation, approval and concurrence; and they are a means of invoking *background knowledge* to say indirectly what might be resisted if stated directly.

The use of the term 'surge' to describe the troop increase acts to signal the infusion of fresh ideas, while its nominal familiarity as a real word promotes

acceptance of the concept that it describes. However, the new usage creates a degree of referential vagueness which permits its proponents to dictate its application and/or meaning – or to preserve its vagueness by leaving it undefined. Thus Kagan, who introduced the term, could disingenuously note that '[r]eports on the Bush administration's efforts to craft a new strategy in Iraq often use the term "surge" but rarely define it' (Kagan and Keane, 2006), and then – having provided himself with this opening – proceed to supply his own definition. In addition, the fact that the term appears to belong to Orwell's category of 'meaningless words' (1946/1961: 342–3) allows Kagan to state with impunity that the 'surge' should last '18 months or so', despite the ordinary connotation of the word, because the vagueness of the term as used licenses such reinterpretations. Thus while to call for a 'decrease in the number of troops in Iraq', and then be exposed as having pressed for an increase, would amount to being caught in a flat contradiction, to call for a long-term increase in the number of troops while describing it as a 'surge' creates no such impression.

The context in which the word is used suggests that it is a military term; however, it is not included in the Department of Defense's Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms,⁷ and thus appears to be a nonce word. Nevertheless, in the absence of public knowledge of this fact, the term retains its perceived status as military jargon. This at once proclaims Kagan's expertise and confers legitimacy upon his plan by presenting it as the implementation of a recognized military strategy.

Once launched, the term functioned as a verbal cue, similar to those used to announce product introductions (*New! Improved!*), designed to attract the attention of its intended audience. Here the intended audience was primarily the media itself, who collectively play a major role in determining the words that enter into the popular lexicon, and who have been instrumental in promoting the acceptance of terms as varied as 'civil union', 'e-mail', 'politically correct' and (the now all-but-forgotten) 'Y2K'. Moreover, the eagerness with which journalists typically embrace such 'buzz words' (see e.g. Kian, 2007; see also Thomas, 2004) makes them an ideal vehicle for advancing political agendas, a fact that was well illustrated by the wholesale adoption by the media of the administration's post-9/11 terminology: 'Ground Zero', 'homeland security', 'Islamic fundamentalism', 'war on terror', 'weapons of mass destruction' – not to mention the term 'post-9/11' itself.

In this case, Kagan's previewing of the term cemented its association with the administration's plan, thus identifying it as a political slogan and thereby increasing the possibility that its use by administration supporters would be cited in direct quotations. This in turn led to the media's own use of the term, not only in articles but most notably in headlines. In this way, the term was placed repeatedly before a public who, with no prior knowledge of its 'technical' application, could be expected to interpret it according to its ordinary meaning, that is, as connoting a short-term increase. In this respect, the use of the term 'surge'

to describe a troop increase, the projected duration of which is 18 to 24 months, is misleading, if not intentionally deceptive.

Nevertheless, opposition to a policy on the basis of deceptive labeling threatens to be self-defeating, since it merely attacks without offering an alternative interpretation. Moreover, by challenging the language that is used to frame a policy, rather than the policy itself, opponents run the risk that they will be perceived as engaging in polemics rather than in substantive evaluation. Yet evaluation in the form of analysis may be wholly ineffective to combat successful efforts to frame an issue from a particular perspective, as Lakoff (2004) has vigorously argued. Thus, proposing a counter-term, particularly in the form of a metaphor, can provide a more powerful rebuttal than direct argument.

Here the word 'escalation' evokes a whole complex of negative historical associations: the Johnson administration's expansion of the Vietnam War in the face of growing public opposition; the repeated assurances that the administration sought 'no wider war', made while the expansion was occurring, resulting in a 'Credibility Gap' (see e.g. Krock, 1967; Wicker, 1968); the 'Vietnamization' (see e.g. Mohr, 1969; Semple, 1969; UPI, 1969) and American withdrawal; and the ultimate defeat of the South Vietnamese in the fall of Saigon. These associations provide 'argumentative warrants' (Musolff, 2004: 33) that ground opposition to the troop increase in 'seemingly self-evident analogies' (Musolff, 2004: 38) between the administration plan and a Vietnam policy that is framed as ultimately disastrous. Moreover, the cultural salience of this particular framing is such that its meaning is evident even to those who contest it (Musolff, 2004). The term thus acts to turn the tables on the administration and steal its thunder by drawing a contextually explicit parallel between the administration's plan and the Vietnam War, a war that was both highly unpopular and widely viewed as a policy failure. Introduction of the term was thus a significant factor in stalling the momentum of the administration's strategy to build support for its plan by promoting the use of a term ('surge') that was calculated to limit the perspective from which it is viewed (see Kennedy, 2000).

Conclusion

Lakoff (2004) argues that Republicans succeed on the strength of their strategy of framing their issues in terms of accepted beliefs, and that Democrats fail because they do not respond with their own repertoire of reliable tropes. Yet here Democrats (and their Republican allies) did respond with a reliable trope – and this was, in fact, predictable, given the availability of a readily accessible historical analogy. However, the power of words is derivative, and is a function of the ability of the group or individual to be heard as a legitimate contributor to the discourse that is at issue (see Blommaert, 2005; Hobbs, in press). Thus the fact that the balance of power had begun to shift at the time that the Republicans launched their verbal initiative left it open to challenge in a way that would not

have existed had they retained their congressional majority. Nevertheless, it is not my intention to imply that Lakoff is wrong for, in a real sense, political control is mediated by control of discourse, not only in dystopian novels, but in contemporary reality as well. As Campbell notes:

[I]f we think in terms of a discursive economy – whereby discourse (the representation and constitution of the ‘real’) is a managed space in which some statements and descriptions come to have greater value than others – the idea of ‘external reality’ has a particular currency that is *internal* to discourse. (1992: 6, italics in original)

Of course, reality that is internal to discourse is subject to discursive manipulation. The mechanisms by which this manipulation occurs are complex, and are only beginning to be studied (see e.g. De Saussure and Schultz, 2005; Van Dijk, 2006). Van Dijk notes that, although it is doubtful that there are discourse structures that are manipulative per se, some strategies may be preferred, thus functioning as ‘manipulative prototypes’ in specific situations (2006: 375; see also De Saussure, 2005: 118). In the political arena, metaphor would appear to fit this description, as amply illustrated by the studies cited here (e.g. Billig and Macmillan, 2005; Chilton and Ilyin, 1993; Kennedy, 2000; Musolff, 2004). However, while these studies have examined metaphors that have succeeded, this article focuses on an example of one that failed, thus offering the possibility of discovering the mechanisms that are responsible for this failure and whether it is possible to systematically combat such rhetorical initiatives.

The choice between novel and historical metaphors is a choice between new and old, familiar and unfamiliar, and novel and established meanings, and acts to oppose the vividness of novelty to the resonance of history. A novel metaphor can transform thinking on a subject, and may even come to define it, because the perspective proposed by the metaphor excludes other formulations (see Hellston, 2000; Kennedy, 2000). Indeed, the acceptance of a metaphor as a literal expression is the ultimate ideological victory, a fact that does much to explain the prevalence of metaphor in political discourse. But what happens when novel political metaphors are challenged by ‘dissident voices’ (see Van Dijk, 2006: 376)? The value of a novel metaphor is its ability to attract attention as an unfamiliar usage, while allowing its proponents to exploit the resulting vagueness to manipulate its meaning. Yet these ‘desirable’ qualities can become problematic where a novel metaphor is challenged by a historical metaphor that provides an accessible conceptual framework, linking the current topic to another political event, and invites recipients to equate the two. In such cases, the general impressions engendered by the novel metaphor may be wholly inadequate to refute the very specific indictment that the historical metaphor encapsulates.

Here the use of the term ‘escalation’ represents a conscious and deliberate attempt to suggest a similarity between the administration’s plan and the (failed) strategy of the Vietnam War, thus proposing a highly damaging comparison. Moreover, the word itself is richly evocative: having entered the popular lexicon in connection with Vietnam, it was effectively retired at the war’s conclusion, and is uniquely associated with the specific policy that it labeled. As a result, its

use in connection with the Iraq War conveys a number of unfavorable implications: it likens it to the Vietnam War without stating the comparison in so many words; it brands the 'surge' as an ill-conceived strategy and accuses the Bush administration of misleading the nation; and it predicts an ignominious withdrawal followed by the ultimate defeat of the American-backed forces and the fall of the Iraqi government (see Chilton, 1988). In addition, as a Vietnam-era neologism resurrected from the vault of history, it evokes a cluster of related terms ('Agent Orange', 'napalm', 'body counts', 'kill ratios' and 'Hanoi Hilton') that construct what many view to be a legacy of shame.

Musolff regards political metaphors as 'integral aspects of argumentative reasoning, i.e. reasoning which typically aims to prove a *contested* issue and thus also *legitimate* a certain course of action' (2004: 32, italics in original). The manner in which this occurs is that 'the presupposed knowledge about the source domain that is mapped onto the target domain can lead to inferences with a particular political slant or bias' (Musolff, 2004: 33). That is, the metaphor suggests an analogy that is putatively valid and that functions to provide support for the speaker's position.

It is this analogical function that lends persuasive force to historical metaphors. By encoding prevailing public opinions about historical events, and proposing comparisons that are implicit and unstated, historical metaphors act as stimuli for 'spontaneously generated', 'intuitive' understandings of the connections that they create (see McElhaney, 2005 on the use of analogy in lawyers' closing arguments⁸). Moreover, the perceived aptness of the comparison is not dependent upon agreement with the characterization that results, but only upon the appropriateness of the metaphorical cross-mapping: thus where the Vietnam and Iraq Wars are both foreign wars, the (ostensible) purpose of which is to protect American interests, and where 'escalation' is a term used in the Vietnam War to label an increase in American troop strength, the analogy is apt and the negative evaluation of the Vietnam War (whether or not endorsed by the recipient) is transferred to the Iraq War (whether or not this transfer is endorsed by the recipient). As a result, the term stands as an indictment of the administration's policy, an evaluation that is not refuted by the term 'surge'. It thus appears that the elaborate scenario structure of a historical metaphor can simply overpower a novel metaphor, whose vague imagery is structurally inadequate to generate a specific response.

This article has examined the competing metaphors by which the Bush administration and its political opponents attempted to manipulate the public discussion of the administration's plan to increase the number of American troops in Iraq, and demonstrates how the choice of a novel metaphor, which initially served to promote the plan by attracting media attention while controlling the manner in which it was presented, ultimately exposed the administration to hostile attack when opponents countered with a historical metaphor conjuring vivid negative imagery. It thus demonstrates that novel political metaphors, like other trial balloons, may stray dangerously off course when loosened from their moorings.

NOTES

1. These included the Center for the Study of the Presidency, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy at Rice University in Texas.
2. An 'interim version' of Kagan's report was released the following day, 14 December 2006 (American Enterprise Institute, 2007).
3. The original Ajax was, of course, a Greek hero of the Trojan War.
4. The phrase 'a \$64 word' refers to the television game show *The \$64,000 Question*, in which contestants attempted to qualify for monetary prizes by answering a series of questions on a subject that they selected.
5. The duration of the speech was 20:19 minutes. Bracketed numbers following each excerpt indicate the time of each reference, for example, Excerpt 1 occurred 11 seconds into the speech. The videotape of the speech was accessed via the White House website: www.whitehouse.gov
6. Additional examples include 'affirmative action', 'capital punishment', 'culture wars', 'Desert Storm', 'draft lottery', 'energy crisis', 'Head Start', 'Social Security', and 'war on drugs'.
7. Posted at: <http://www.dtic/.il/doctrine/jel/doddict>
8. McElhaney, a nationally recognized expert on trial advocacy, recommends the use of analogy in closing arguments, stating that analogy is 'perhaps the most powerful form of argument that we know', because it challenges the recipients to test the aptness of its comparison, which 'lead[s] juries to draw their own conclusions, which they believe more fervently than if they had merely been told what conclusion to reach' (2005: 680–1).

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