ON HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND THEIR LEGITIMATION

THROUGH DEHUMANIZATION

A Case Study on the George W. Bush Administration

By

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Submitted to Central European University - Private University
Undergraduate Studies

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy, Politics and Economics

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Vienna, Austria
2023

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ABSTRACT

While waging 'war on terror', the George W. Bush Administration severely infringed the rights of suspected terrorists on the one hand, and invaded Afghanistan and Iraq, allegedly to safeguard human rights and lives on the other. This conflict of simultaneously abusing rights while acting as "savior" abroad is neither outdated nor uniquely American, but in fact is a major problem among many Western governments involved in international human rights protection. It is therefore imperative to understand what is part of the environment that these apparent saviors build to legitimize their own rights violations. Thus, scaffolded around the post-9/11 counter-terror measures, I argue that dehumanization of suspected terrorists as well as humanization of victims of terror were a crucial part of the environment that the Bush Administration built to morally legitimize human rights violations in the U.S. This reveals a conundrum wherein the victims of human rights violations are portrayed as *less human* in order to legitimize the violation of their *human* rights. I argue, therefore, that the Bush Administration has role-modeled an understanding of universal human rights wherein rights are not granted peremptorily based on a de facto humanness, but based on the perceived degree of their humanness, thus risking to undermine the entire concept of *universal* human rights.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS OR DEDICATIONS

I would like to thank Professor Cesario for her continuous insights, feedback, and patience, as well as her effort in helping me grow more confident in my academic work.

I am also very grateful to my parents and my sister, Janne, and my friends whose unyielding support made the process of writing this thesis much less stressful - at times even enjoyable.

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BA: Bush Administration
GDs: Guantánamo detainees
HN: human nature
HNCs: human nature characteristics
HRs: human rights
HRVs: human rights violations
IACHR: Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
ICCPR: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
STs: suspected terrorists
UH: uniquely human
UHCs: uniquely human characteristics
UDHR: Universal Declaration of Human Rights
VoT: victims of terror
WoT: war on terror

INTRODUCTION

"Just three days removed from these events, Americans do not yet have the distance of history. But our responsibility to history is already clear: to answer these attacks and rid the world of evil."

- President Bush's remarks at the National Day of Prayer and Remembrance, Washington D.C. September 14, 2001.
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"The pressure of the straps on my wounds was very painful. I vomited. The bed was then again lowered to horizontal position and the same torture carried out again with the black cloth over my face and water poured on from a bottle. On this occasion my head was in a more backward, downwards position and the water was poured on for a longer time. I struggled against the straps, trying to breathe, but it was helpless. I thought I was going to die."

- Abu Zubaydah, first Guantánamo detainee, leaked report of the *International Committee of the Red Cross.* April 9, 2009.

One pillar of waging 'war on terror' (WoT), launched by the George W. Bush Administration (BA) after September 11, 2001, was the U.S. detention facility at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. Guantánamo acted both as a stage for venting feelings of vengefulness, as well as a human laboratory to test moral and legal boundaries. To be able to "rid the world of evil", actionable intelligence was gathered from suspected terrorists (STs), in the wake of which a plethora of human rights (HRs) were severely, continuously, and repeatedly violated by the BA. Around the same time, Bush commanded the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, allegedly to save Afghani and Iraqi citizens specifically – and the world writ large – from terror; ultimately, a struggle for HRs and lives.

This tension of simultaneously violating and safeguarding HRs is neither uniquely American, nor outdated: Many Western governments who act as "savior" to uphold HRs standards abroad (Mutua 2022), face significant domestic HRs challenges (U.S. Department of State 2022). This contradiction not only puts into question the credibility of these self-proclaimed guardians of HRs, but creates severe risks of undermining their ability to bargain

for HRs obligations to be adhered to. Therefore, for the survival of universal HRs, it is imperative to understand the mechanisms that are part of, and ultimately contribute to legitimizing this tension. Put differently, what is part of the environment that these apparent saviors build to legitimize their own rights violations. Thus, scaffolded around post-9/11 counter-terror measures, I examine how dehumanization of STs was employed and propagated by the BA and argue that this rhetoric was a crucial part of the puzzle that made human rights violations (HRVs) morally legitimate.

First, I present in detail the tension at hand by contrasting the blatant HRVs authorized by the BA with the U.S.'s apparent role in Afghanistan and Iraq. Secondly, I lay out the theoretical framework of dehumanization (Giner-Sorolla, Leidner and Castano 2012; Haslam 2006; Kteily and Bruneau 2017), which will be applied in the third chapter to analyze Bush's speeches that discuss the WoT. This reveals that Bush legitimizes his own HRVs on two fronts: he not only dehumanizes STs, but simultaneously humanizes victims of terror (VoT), thereby creating a large moral gap between those deserving and those underserving of rights. The final chapter discusses the conundrum of utilizing *dehumanization* to legitimize HRVs and argues that the BA has role-modeled an interpretation of universal HRs according to which rights apply not peremptorily because one is de facto human, but depend on the perceived degree of humanness, thereby risking to undermine the very concept of *universal* human rights.

CHAPTER 1 - THE TENSION

At the beginning - and to establish common ground on which the remaining thesis is built - it is necessary to map-out the conflict that emerges when the BA simultaneously *authorized* HRVs on STs, and *condemned* rights abuses by the Taliban and al-Qaeda and invaded Afghanistan (October 2001) and Iraq (March 2003) officially to protect Afghani and Iraqi citizens' rights and lives. The following chapter presents each side in more detail.

1.1. United States – The Savage

Shortly after the 9/11 attack, in November 2001, Bush issued Executive Order No. 66, which set the course for policies pertaining to the treatment of STs and which deferred sole discretion as to who was a ST to Bush alone (IACHR 2015, 74). In January 2002, the first STs were transported to Guantánamo (27), which had been chosen intentionally because it is 100% under U.S. control, yet not sovereign to U.S. territory and hence outside the jurisdiction of U.S. federal courts (75). This uniquely extra-legal location enabled the BA to conduct a plethora of HRVs on STs held there.

This section systematically examines said violations, scaffolded around the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The ICCPR is a suitable scaffold both because it is a legally binding document outlining international HRs standards, and because the U.S. – alongside other Western democracies - had shaped its ideological underpinnings and contributed to its ratification (Mutua 2022). Thus, it should be aware of and committed to the obligations that arise therefrom. While the WoT might reasonably be categorized as a "public emergency which threatens the life of the nation" (ICCPR Article 4.2) and hence warrants certain rights' limitations, Article 4.2 of the Covenant provides that this

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does not extend to (among others) Article 6 (the right to life), 7 (the ban of torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment), 16 (the right to be recognized as a person before law), and 18 (freedom of religion), and may not be discriminating based on color, religion, race, sex, language, or social origin. Because these four rights should *always* be adhered to, even during the WoT, I stress them as well as rights guaranteeing access to justice, including Article 9 (freedom from arbitrary arrest), and 14 (the right to a fair and speedy trial), as these are a prerequisite for the promotion and protection of all other rights.

Regarding Article 16, the BA has declared the 9/11 attack to be an act of war, rather than a "crime against humanity" (Hajjar 2022, 8). Because Al-Qaeda and the Taliban militia are non-state actors, however, Guantánamo detainees (GDs) have not been classified as prisoners of war which deemed the Geneva Convention inapplicable (IACHR 2015, 76). Instead, the BA classified the detainees as "enemy combatants", a status not recognized under international law (77) and therefore violating Article 16.

Regarding access to justice, 93% of STs were captured by Afghani and Iraqi citizens who sold them to the U.S. for monetary compensation (IACHR 2015, 138). This amounts to arbitrary arrest and violates Article 9.1. Furthermore, detainees were held secretly – the information of who was at Guantánamo was classified - and incommunicado (122) – without status review, in indefinite detention, for the main purpose of gathering intelligence on Al-Qaeda (96). In 2006, Congress established that detainees would be tried before military commissions, as federal courts had no jurisdiction over detainees held at Guantánamo (160). Military commissions bear little resemblance to regular courts of law as they neglect due process provisions and other procedural guarantees federal courts offer other prisoners in U.S. custody (224). Furthermore, military commissions are not held to be competent, independent, and impartial because 1) they forego federal courts' jurisdiction over cases they could and should try (220), and 2) they were established for the sole purpose of trying predominantly

Muslim GDs (229), which presents "the apparent targeting of individuals in relation to nationality, ethnicity and religion" (224). Therefore, Article 14.1, the right to equality before law and a fair and public trial by a "competent, independent and impartial tribunal established by law", was also violated.

Moreover, most detainees were not charged (IACHR 2015, 134); faced logistical (242) and communication (241) related issues when it came to defense preparation, and lacked attorney-client confidentiality (250); had no speedy trial (213) but endured excessive and unreasonable delays (316); were not allowed to be present at their trial (192); and their attorneys were not allowed to cross-examine witnesses of the prosecution (208). With that, several of the provisions guaranteeing a fair trial in Article 9.2, 9.3 and 14.3 are violated.[1]

Besides restricted access to judicial remedies and due process laws which placed prisoners in a defenseless situation (IACHR 2015, 189), there were severe violations of Article 7, which in turn created severe risks for Article 6 and was intrinsically linked to other HRVs. The 2002 "Torture Memos", drafted by government-lawyer John Yoo, authorized and legalized enhanced interrogation techniques (102), including "sensory deprivation, severe beatings, electric shocks and induced hypothermia" (103), waterboarding and wall standing (103). They further included stress positions where prisoners were, for example, chained naked to a wall with their arms above their head, "walling" where a detainee wore a collar and was beaten and banged against a wall, forced nudity over months, solitary confinement in a small, dark space, and sleep deprivation (107).

Detainees were also subjected to inhuman treatment - which "deliberately causes severe mental or psychological suffering" (IACHR 2015, 131) – including inadequate health care and

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[1] As of 2015, the U.S. has failed to compensate victims of extraordinary rendition and torture – who suffered from "hallucinations, paranoia, insomnia and attempts at self-harm and self-mutilation" (IACHR 2015, 119); nor have U.S. courts accepted Bivens claims brought against federal officials by a Guantánamo detainee; nor were those employing torture held to account (118). This is in violation of Article 9.5 and 14.6, the enforceable right to compensation.

a perverted doctor-patient relationship (106, 127); restrictions on freedom of religion (122, 130); and infringements on the right to privacy (123). Moreover, the uncertainty of their situation, including unawareness whether they would be tried, released, or whether they would see their families again (134), caused "suffering, fear and anguish" and several (attempted) suicides (120). All these conditions also violate Article 10.1, which states that "[a]ll persons deprived of their liberty shall be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person" (ICCPR Article 10.1).

1.2. United States – The Savior

Around the same time the BA authorized this treatment of STs, Bush asked the American people to uphold the values of America, stressing that "[n]o one should be singled out for unfair treatment or unkind words because of their ethnic background or religious faith" (09/20/01). Yet, under the BA, apparent American principles pledged to the flag such as indivisibility and "liberty and justice for all" were instrumentalized, politicized, and excised. Instead of acknowledging HRVs of STs, Bush condemned Al-Qaeda's and Taliban's rape, torture, forcibly obtained confessions, burning with hot irons, mutilation, dripping of acid on the skin, and electric shocks (01/28/03) – many of these practices bear unsettling resemblance to what Bush had authorized CIA and military officers to do to STs. Nevertheless, Bush claimed that it was America's responsibility to history and to the world "to rid the world of evil" (09/14/01). "America is leading the civilized world in a titanic struggle against terror" (06/06 & 07/08/02) and the U.S. "will not allow any terrorist or tyrant to threaten civilization" (09/11/02), giving an impression of the U.S. as the three-headed Cerberus unilaterally guarding the innocent.

Having adopted the role of the lead "savior", Bush was not shy about taking credit for saving Afghanistan from starvation (03/16/02) and tyrants (09/11/02), and ultimately liberating

it (01/28/03), and Iraq (09/07/03). Five years after the attack on New York, America is "the nation that saved liberty in Europe [...], helped raise up democracies, and faced down an evil empire" (01/31/06). America has, "[o]nce again [accepted] the call of history to deliver the oppressed and move this world toward peace" (01/31/06). Overall, between 2001 and 2009, the U.S. spent $303 billion on foreign assistance (USAID 2022), showcasing the U.S.'s lead role as defender and protector of the civilized world, propelled by Bush.

1.3. The Puzzle

Evidently, there is a tension between the U.S. violating HRs of STs, while simultaneously claiming to be the lead-savior of HRs in Afghanistan and Iraq particularly, and the world more generally. This contradiction, besides calling into questions the U.S.'s credibility as self-proclaimed guardian of HRs, is neither uniquely American, nor outdated: According to the U.S. Department of State (2022), Austria, Belgium, Croatia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, Spain, and Sweden faced significant HRVs in 2022 alone. These are all members of the European Union, which according to Article 3.5 of the Treaty on the European Union is devoted to the "protection of human rights" in the world. This tension of struggling with domestic HRVs while condemning HRVs in other states creates severe risks of impairing the credibility and bargaining power of these self-declared saviors to uphold HRs standards globally. It is thus imperative to understand the mechanisms that give legitimacy to this tension. One such facilitator that is used to justify one's own HRVs in relation to others' HRVs, in addition to state security narratives, is the propagating of dehumanizing rhetoric.

CHAPTER 2 - THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

History provides too many instances where HRVs have been legitimized through dehumanizing rhetoric or imagery (Opotow 1990, 173). This remained a global phenomenon even after the United Nations had been founded in 1945 and the ratification of both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948 and the legally binding ICCPR in 1966 with 192 and 173 member states respectively. Put differently, even once the "inherent dignity" and the "equal and inalienable rights of *all* members of the human family" [emphasis added] (UDHR 1948, Preamble) had been widely recognized, not only have HRVs continued, but dehumanization remained a vital contributor to legitimizing these abuses.

Predominant targets of dehumanization may include women (Guloine and Check 1989; LeMoncheck 1985; MacKinnon 1987), the disabled (Capozza et al. 2016), asylum seekers and immigrants (Greenhalgh and Watt 2015; Prati et al. 2015), psychiatric patients (Gonzales and Martinez 2014), the homeless (Ferris et al. 2016), homosexuals (Fasoli, Maass and Carnaghi 2015), foreigners (Hodson and Costello 2007), ethnic minorities (Kteily et al. 2015; Vasiljevic and Viki 2014), and (suspected) criminals (Kelman 1973; Singer 1981; Vasiljevic and Viki 2014). Given the focus on 9/11, dehumanization and its implications of the last three groups are of primary interest here.

Foreigners are frequently seen as less human, as studies conducted by Hodson and Costello (2007) reveal. Indeed, people often have negative attitudes towards foreigners due to interpersonal-disgust, which is significantly related to dehumanizing perceptions (Hodson and Costello 2007). Another target of dehumanization are ethnic minorities, particularly Arabs and Muslims (Kteily et al. 2015; Vasiljevic and Viki 2014). Research shows that Arabs and Muslims are also more strongly associated with criminal behavior than other minorities (Clear 2007; Eberhardt et al. 2004; Mann 1989). Suspected criminals have also been a prominent target

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of dehumanization (Vasiljevic and Viki 2014). Criminals act counter to what is considered civil and the social and legal norm (Kelman 1973) and have thereby become undeserving of "public compassion" (Vasiljevic and Viki 2014, 129) and exclude themselves from the moral consideration by other humans.

Dehumanization highlights the caveat between the unambiguous biological rationale of what it means to be a member of the species homo sapiens, and the basic legal and moral rights which *should* arise therefrom and *should* be enjoyed equally by *all* members of this species. Dehumanization, thus, is the subtraction of certain human qualities to make someone not or less human (Oxford Dictionary 2023), and therefore less deserving of these rights.[2]

Relevant for this thesis and the subsequent analysis of President Bush's speeches are subtle and nuanced, yet overt forms of dehumanization including 1) animalistic and 2) mechanistic dehumanization, 3) demonization, and 4) metadehumanization. All four means of dehumanization are compatible with each other, cross-cut each other, especially the first three, and reinforce each other, particularly metadehumanization, which ensues from the first three forms of dehumanization.

2.1   Animalistic and Mechanistic Dehumanization

Haslam (2006) distinguishes between "animalistic" dehumanization, the denial of uniquely human characteristics (UHCs), and "mechanistic" dehumanization, the denial of human nature characteristics (HNCs). UHCs primarily pertain to culture and socialization; they are acquired and vary across cultures (Haslam 2006). UHCs include "civility, refinement, moral sensibility, rationality and logic, [and] maturity" (257). Thus, an animalistically dehumanized

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[2] For an overview of dehumanization research see *Humanness and Dehumanization* edited by Paul G. Bain, Jeroen Vaes, and Jacques-Philippe Leyens (2014), and "Resent Research on Dehumanization" by Nick Haslam and Michelle Stratemeyer (2016).

person lacks culture, is coarse, amoral and lacks self-restraint, is irrational and guided by instinct, and childlike (257). Animalistically dehumanized groups act on instincts and appetites, and are viewed as "prone to violate the moral code or lacking it altogether" (258). Rozin, Haidt, and McCauley (2000) found that when humans behave animal-like, kill, for example, they are more likely to be denied UHCs. Haslam (2006) holds that denying UHCs is a "vertical" dehumanization, perceiving the outgroup as subhuman.

HNCs, Haslam (2006) argues, are inherently human and refer to the "core" of humanness and therefore do not vary across cultures. HNCs distinguish us from machines but not necessarily from other "animals" (Haslam 2006). They include "emotional responsiveness, interpersonal warmth, cognitive openness, agency, individuality, [and] depth" (257). Lacking HN means exhibiting "inertness, coldness, rigidity, passivity and fungibility, [and] superficiality" (257). The lack of individual agency portrays the dehumanized group as interchangeable (fungible) and passive, their actions "caused rather than propelled by personal will" (258). The denial of HNCs "horizontally" dehumanizes the outgroup based on an apparent dissimilarity and makes them "nonhuman", in which case Haslam (2006) argues they are viewed as "distant, alien, or foreign: displaced away rather than downward" (259), creating an "other".

2.2 Demonization

Whereas the HN/UH dichotomy showcases a subtle, everyday form of dehumanization, demonization is more aggressive. Demonized people are regarded as evil and "malefactors, deserving punishment and death" (Giner-Sorolla, Leidner and Castano 2012, 9). Demonization associates destructive characteristics to a group (Alon and Omer 2006) and regards them as enemies who threaten the ingroup and who warrant aggressive treatment (Giner-Sorolla, Leidner and Castano 2012). Conversely, associating someone with protective, creative, and

productive characteristics and perceiving them as friendly and as an asset to the group, should have a humanizing effect.

2.3   Metadehumanization

In addition to ingroups dehumanizing outgroups in the above-mentioned ways, outgroups can dehumanize ingroups analogously. When outgroups dehumanize ingroups, for example, by threatening their way of life or killing them, ingroups might reciprocally dehumanize outgroups, simply because they dehumanized the ingroup first. This phenomenon, termed metadehumanization (Kteily and Bruneau 2017, 490), captures effectively part of the dehumanization of terrorists because "[t]he terrorist denies the recognition of the victim as a human being: in a society that has to face mass terror, all citizens are potentially denied minimal respect by the terrorists" (Sajo 2006, 2294). Put differently, terrorists, by their mission, deny their victims humanness and rights, that is, dehumanize them. Research found that this dehumanization of victims by the terrorists is reciprocated, that is, the terrorist is, ensuing his own actions, viewed as less human (Kteily et al. 2016). Conversely, those who recognize others as humans, their rights and privileges, should be viewed as more human. All four forms of dehumanization are present in President Bush's speeches where terror is a topic.

CHAPTER 3 - CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

In the following, I analyze speeches delivered by President Bush between September 11, 2001 and January 15, 2009. His speeches have not been subjected to information bias or have otherwise been distorted by media subjectivity. It is also specifically *Bush's* speeches that are most informative because in the permanency of emergency during the WoT, additional power and authority had been deferred to him as president-in-chief (Hajjar 2022). His speeches most reliably represent the official stance of his administration, and how Bush communicates to, and wants to be perceived by, his citizens, to whom he was ultimately accountable to and over whom he had great persuasive power.

Bush has given hundreds of remarks, addresses, statements, and proclamations relating to the 9/11 attack, I examine the seven *State of the Union* Addresses (one each year except 2001 and 2009) to Congress and the 44 *Addresses to the Nation* that he gave during his time as president and which relate (directly or indirectly) to the WoT. The *Addresses to the Nation* are allocated across the years as follows: 2001 (September to December): 13; 2002: 19; 2003: 4; 2004: 3; 2005: 1; 2006: 1; 2007: 2; 2009: 1. All speeches are available at the U.S. National Archives.

I examine each form of dehumanization present in Bush's speeches, scaffolded around Haslam's (2006) animalistic and mechanistic dehumanization, Alon and Omer's (2006) and Giner-Sorolla, Leidner and Castano's (2012) demonization, and Kteily and Bruneau's (2017) metadehumanization. It is evident that Bush uses dehumanization on two fronts, he dehumanizes STs and humanizes VoT, the latter of which is not a problem per se, but becomes problematic when used to create a moral gap between those deserving and undeserving of HRs. Results can be found in Tables 1, 2, and 3 in the appendix. The very left (human) column maps-out characteristics associated with VoT, that is, the U.S. and its allies whereas the right column

(subhuman/nonhuman/demon) encompasses the characteristics used to refer to STs. The characteristics listed in the tables represent the exact word or phrase used by Bush himself.

3.1. Animalistic Dehumanization

The first moral gap Bush establishes between VoT and STs runs along uniquely human characteristics (UHCs). In the context of animalistic dehumanization, Bush differentiates between the civilized and cultured VoT, using words such as "civilized" and "civilization" to refer to them, stressing that the WoT is "civilization's fight", a "struggle for civilization", and that the "civilized world is rallying to America's side" (09/20/01). In contrast, he calls the uncivilized and uncultured STs and those harboring them, "killer", "murderer", or "sectarian". Moreover, he states that "[i]f any government sponsors the outlaws and killers of innocents, they have become outlaws and murderers, themselves" (10/07/01), or talks about the "tragic escalation of sectarian rage and reprisal" (01/23/07). Even more explicitly, Bush calls STs the "enemies of the civilized world" (10/07/01).

This inter-group gap is furthered by drawing lines along morality, specifically, between the U.S. which God built "of moral design" (09/14/01) and their enemy who "has no regard for conventions of war or rules of morality" (3/19/03). This animalistic dehumanization boils down to the portrayal of STs as subhuman, who, analogous to animals "burrow deeper into caves" (10/07/01), are "captured or killed" (09/07/03) or "hunted" down (01/20/04), because they otherwise "overrun" the Middle East (09/11/06).

3.2. Mechanistic Dehumanization

In addition to animalistic dehumanization along UHCs, Bush also mechanistically dehumanizes STs along human nature characteristics (HNCs), such as emotional

responsiveness, interpersonal warmth, cognitive openness, agency, and individuality. First, Bush emphasizes the emotional responsiveness of post-9/11 VoT, emphasizing "hope", "pride", and "suffering". For example, he talks about "hopeful moments" (04/06/02), a "hopeful day" (12/14/03), a "hopeful society" (01/31/06), referring to both, the newly liberated Iraq and the U.S., and a "more hopeful world" (09/11/06). Additionally, Bush talks about America's "pride" in the achievements of the U.S. military (e.g. 09/07/03; 01/28/06), and in their proud battle for freedom (01/31/06). He further stresses that "[s]o many have suffered so great a loss" and talks about "prayers of private suffering" (09/14/01), and the suffering of other VoT, such as the "suffering [of] men and women and children of Afghanistan" (10/07/01). Moreover, while these terms are used most frequently throughout all his speeches, Bush occasionally attributes "compassion", "gratefulness", "bravery", "dignity", "sorrow", "mourn", "anger", "grief", and "sadness" to VoT, conglomerated in speeches on or shortly after 9/11 and its one- and five-year anniversary, where he places emphasis on the impact terror has had on the U.S. and the world. While emphasizing the emotional responsiveness of VoT, Bush does not grant STs any emotions, portraying them as inert robots or machines.

Second, Bush stresses the interpersonal warmth of VoT, using terms such as "protect", "love", and "pray", and the coldness of STs, using words including "attack", "hate", and "torture". For example, he claims that America's first priority is to "protect our citizens at home and around the world" (09/11/01), to "protect Americans" (e.g. 09/20/01; 02/02/05), and to "protect our country" (e.g. 09/07/02). He stresses Americans' love for their "families" (12/25/01), their "nation" (06/01/02), and "freedom" (01/31/06). He asks people to pray for "all those who grieve, for the children whose worlds have been shattered, for all whose sense of safety and security has been threatened" (09/11/01) and shows gratitude for "prayers of sympathy" (09/20/01). Writ large, he emphasizes interpersonal warmth between 9/11-victims (e.g. 09/20/01; 09/11/06), 9/11-survivors and -rescuers (e.g. 09/14/01; 09/20/01; 09/11/06), and

interpersonal warmth that came from other nations (09/20/01), using words such as "blessing", "commitment", "sacrifice", "save", "help", "caring", and "sympathy". These cues are less frequent, but nevertheless prevalent especially in speeches on and shortly after 9/11, and on the one- and five-year anniversary. Conversely, STs "hate and have attacked" America (09/15/01) and have "attacked a symbol of American prosperity" (09/20/01). Furthermore, though less frequently used, they "torture" dissenters and children (09/28,/02) with electric shocks, acid, hot irons, mutilation, and rape (01/28/03), "destroy" and "disrupt", hence creating another gap between VoT who observe interpersonal warmth and cold STs.

Third, Bush occasionally mentions the cognitive openness of VoT, who believe in "pluralism [and] tolerance" (09/20/01), and the rigidity of STs who are "extremists who are driven by a perverted vision of Islam – a totalitarian ideology that hates freedom, rejects tolerance, and despises all dissent" (09/11/06) and who are "violent radicals" (01/23/07), and "fanatics who demand total obedience" (01/15/09). This establishes a third moral gap between VoT and STs in the context of mechanistic dehumanization.

Bush creates a fourth significant gap based on the attribution of agency to VoT and passivity to STs. For example, he states that "[the US] will define our times, not be defined by them" (09/20/01), or that since 9/11, 1.6 million Americans have "stepped forward to put on our nation's uniform" and that the "men and women of our military are making great sacrifices to keep us safe" (09/11/06). This illustrates Americans' deliberate choices to help and self-sacrifice. In contrast, when Bush refers to how STs operate, he often puts them in the passive form. For example, he states that STs are "command[ed]" by their directives to kill all Americans, Jews, and Christians (09/20/01), or that STs are "recruited" and "brought to" camps, where "they are trained" in tactics of terror (09/11/06). Then, "[t]hey are sent back" to their homes or "sent to hide" in countries around the world to plan their attacks (09/11/06). All of

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this makes STs appear as lacking agency, that they are "being led to do" something instead of being an autonomous agent.

In a final vein in the context of mechanistic dehumanization, Bush portrays VoT as individuals by sharing their names, roles, professions, and stories, while portraying STs as fungible. For example, Bush praises Todd Beamer who was aboard flight 93, and George Howard, "who died at the World Trade Center trying to save others", and Arlene, George's mother, who lost her son (09/20/01). He mentions RoseEllen Dowdell who lost her husband, Kevin Dowdell, and Patrick and James Dowdell, who lost their father and who have joined the military and the New York Fire Department to serve their country (09/11/06). Victims "began their day at a desk or in an airport, or "wore the uniform of the United States, and died at their posts" (09/14/01). Victims, "in their last moments called home to say, be brave, and I love you" (09/14/01). Victims were firefighters (09/11/06) and rescuers "whom death found running up the stairs and into the fires to help others" (09/14/01). Victims were husbands and wives, mothers and fathers, and children who "still long for their daddies who will never cradle them in their arms" (09/11/06).

Besides humanizing immediate 9/11-victims, Bush also humanizes the U.S. as a *nation* when he says that "our wounds as a people are recent and unhealed" (09/14/01) and as a *state* when he talks about the "wound to our country" (09/20/01). Bush stresses that VoT are not only Americans, they are starving Afghanis, fleeing from the Taliban, women, not allowed to go to school, men being jailed for too short a beard or owning a TV (09/20/01). Victims come from around the world, including El Salvador, Great Britain, Japan, India, Iran, Israel, Mexico, Pakistan (09/20/01), Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Spain (01/28/08). Bush gives victims faces, stories, roles, describes their challenges and emotions, all of which portrays their human nature and is relatable and creates an emotional bond among VoT.

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In contrast, when Bush talks about STs, he never individualizes them but only talks about them in the most general, abstract terms. For example, he mostly calls them "terrorists" (e.g. 09/11/01; 09/20/01; 09/29/01; 10/06/01; 01/29/02), who operate in terrorist "cells" (01/29/02), split into "ruthless elements" (04/13/04) and who are "al Qaeda fighters" (01/23/07). Bush avoids talking about them as if they were individual persons, thereby creating a divide between the complex individuals fighting in the WoT and a fungible mass of STs.

Overall, mechanistic dehumanization and hence the denial of HNCs makes the dehumanized group appear nonhuman, rather than subhuman, portraying them as aliens, foreigners, or per se "others". Indeed, Bush frequently refers to "*the* terrorists" [emphasis added] (e.g 09/11/01; 10/06/01; 01/28/03; 06/05/04), "*the* Taliban" [emphasis added] (09/20/01; 10/13/01), or "*these* terrorists" [emphasis added] (09/20/01; 12/18/05), which makes them an explicitly distinct group, more so than merely saying "terrorists". Even more explicitly, he claims that "others" have started this conflict (09/14/01) and that STs are a "different kind" (09/15/01), a kind in and of themselves (09/20/01). Thus, Bush overtly allocates STs to a different "kind" than the kind VoT belong to.

Conversely, Bush stresses the unity and community of VoT with phrases including "our citizens" (e.g. 09/11/01; 01/28/03), "our friends" (e.g. 09/11/01; 11/10/01), "our responsibility" (09/14/01; 01/29/02), or "fellow citizens" (e.g. 09/11/01; 09/21/02). This demonstrates that VoT belong to the political and social community that is deserving of protection whereas STs are explicitly outsiders to that community.

3.3. Demonization

In addition to animalistic and mechanistic dehumanization, Bush goes a step further and demonizes STs, referring to them with words including "threat", "enemy", "dangerous", "violent", and "evil". For example, Bush claims that the Taliban "is threatening people

everywhere" (09/20/01), that America's "enemy is a radical network of terrorists" (09/20/01), that terrorists are "dangerous killers, schooled in the methods of murder" (01/29/02), "violently opposed to democracy" (02/02/05), and who are "the face of evil" (09/11/06). Additionally, though used less frequently, they are "brutal", "horrible", "cruel", "deadly", "ruthless", stealthy and deceitful, despotic, "devious", and "malignant". They strive for "terror" (e.g. 09/11/01; 09/20/01; 09/29/01), (brutal) "oppression", and "embrace tyranny" (01/29/02).

Whereas animalistic and mechanistic dehumanization make action against the dehumanized group morally acceptable, demonization *requires* aggressive action against the demonized group. As Bush says, America will need to "rid the world of evil" (09/14/01). Linking STs to intangible demons, he states that the violence terrorists spread needs to be "contained" (01/28/08). Similar to actually fighting demons, "the only way to defeat terrorism [...] is to stop it, eliminate it, and destroy it where it grows" (09/20/01). Indeed, Bush's hope is that "all nations will [...] eliminate the terrorist parasites" (01/29/02).

American VoT, on the other hand, "want peace and security in the world" (09/11/01), defend freedom and lives "with such skill, *honor* and success" [emphasis added] (11/24/01), feel the "warm *courage* of national unity" [emphasis added] (09/14/01), have untarnished "resolve" (09/11/01), and have well-placed trust in the American Armed Forces (03/19/03). Less frequently, Bush calls VoT "innocent", "decent", "generous", "dedicated", "graceful", "resilient", and "humble". They strive for "freedom and security" for the American people (01/28/03) and the world (01/31/06), and unite for "justice" (09/11/01), "progress", and "liberty" (09/20/01). The allocation of these positive, life-promoting attributes to VoT and negative, life-taking attributes to STs, is a third method through which Bush creates a moral gap between these two groups and between those who are and are not deserving protection.

3.4. Metadehumanization

In addition to dehumanizing STs *directly* via these three means, *indirect* metadehumanization is a likely consequence. That is, by portraying STs as a group that has no respect for HRs or lives, for example, because they "do harm against the civilized world" 04/13/04), "kill without mercy" (09/11/06), and "despise freedom, despise America, and aim to subject millions to their violent rule", and they "oppose every principle of humanity and decency that we hold dear" (01/28/08) - they will consequently be viewed as less human. Put differently, Bush not only overtly dehumanizes them by denying them UH or HNCs or attributing to them negative, life-taking attributes, but as a result of portraying STs as disrespecting others' rights and lives, they are reciprocally dehumanized without Bush needing to do so explicitly.

Overall, therefore, Bush uses dehumanization on two fronts: he dehumanizes STs while humanizing VoT. Doing so, he creates a large moral gap between these two groups (see Fig 1), most importantly, he establishes who belongs to the ingroup and deserves protection and moral consideration and who belongs to the outgroup and deserves harsh retaliation. Thus, undeniably, dehumanization was a crucial part of the environment that the BA built around the counter-terror measures and which contributed to the legitimacy of the severe HRVs on STs.

CHAPTER 4 - DISCUSSION

The preceding analysis has revealed a double-standard wherein the concept of 'humanness' is used to justify both *granting* HRs to some and *violating* HRs of others. Put differently, propagating *dehumanizing* rhetoric is used to contribute to the legitimacy of *human rights* abuses on STs. In this chapter, therefore, I argue that the BA has role-modeled an interpretation of universal HRs according to which rights apply not peremptorily because one is de facto human, but depend on the perceived degree of humanness. In order to comprehend the weight this implication carries; it is important to go one step back and understand the likely implications of dehumanization on American civil society's toleration of HRVs.

When the "leader of the free world" dehumanizes STs in his *Addresses to the Nation* and *State of the Union* Addresses it is reasonable to assume that besides the status of the speaker himself, the dehumanizing rhetoric played an integral part in influencing the addressees' attitude on the acceptability of HRVs. Indeed, research on the consequences of dehumanization suggests that dehumanization is often accompanied by hostility towards the dehumanized group (Castano and Giner-Sorolla 2006; Tam et al. 2007; Vaes et al. 2003). Haslam (2006) furthermore argues that dehumanization offers "relief from moral emotions, [...] enabling or post hoc justification for violence, [...] provision of a sense of superiority, [and] enforcement of social dominance" (255), which is often a precursor of violent or aggressive actions towards the dehumanized group. Especially demonization, that is, "painting the enemy as malignant and incapable of reform justifies a crusade against them, even at great expense" (Giner-Sorolla, Leidner and Castano 2012, 10). In this vein, demonization not only legitimizes exorbitant efforts to destroy the demonized group, but morally mandates it, often ensuing a disproportional retribution (Giner-Sorolla, Leidner and Castano 2012, 12).

More specifically, dehumanizing ethnic minorities, such as Muslims and Arabs, is often related to increased intergroup hostility, support for vengeance and militaristic counter-terrorism, including torture, waterboarding, or other enhanced interrogation techniques (Kteily et al. 2015). Likewise, the dehumanization of criminals ensues their exclusion from society (Viki et al. 2012) and harsher punishments (Kteily et al. 2015; Kury and Ferdinand 1999; Osokfyky, Bandura, and Zimbardo 2005). Relevant for Islamic terrorism is the synergetic relationship of dehumanized criminals who happen to be ethnic minorities, leading to even more punitive treatment (Bastian et al. 2011; Vasiljevic and Viki 2014).

In addition to dehumanizing the perpetrator which warrants endorsement for harsher punishment, endorsement also increases when the "victim" is humanized. Myers and Greene (2004) found that while a jury was more likely to recommend the death penalty if the victim used dehumanizing language to describe the offender, the jury was also more likely to do so when the victim was humanized, that is, shared their personal characteristics and values and the impact of the crime on them and their family.

By humanizing VoT and dehumanizing STs, Bush put forward a moral imperative to "other". Membership of the ingroup versus the outgroup in turn determined who is and is not privileged to enjoy consideration for their basic HRs and who deserves - or who mandates – harsh treatment. While the precise approval rate for torturous methods in Guantánamo is difficult to determine, let alone the establishment of a causal relationship tracing back to dehumanization, the facts are that violations occurred, that dehumanization was one aspect that contributed to their legitimacy, and that there was, besides some outspoken HRs campaigns, most notably the American Civil Liberties Union, the Center for Constitutional Rights, Human Rights First, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, UK NGO's such as Reprieve and REDRESS, and international organizations including Amnesty International and Human

Rights Watch (Lohne 2021), no significant and nation-wide public opposition against the HRVs.

Though it could be argued that in the early phases, people were unaware of what was happening in U.S. detention facilities, at least after the Defense Department published the infamous photo of 20 GDs shackled to the ground in early 2002, the pictures of torture in the Abu Ghraib Prison in January 2004, the leaked Torture Memo in June 2004, and Rasul v. Bush also in June 2004, the American civil society had at least a vague insight into what was happening. Yet, the environment was one of acceptance, or at least indifference: even after Americans found out about the torture and inhuman treatment, they did not overthrow Bush - far from it. In November 2004, Bush won the popular vote in the 55th presidential election and was reelected for another four years.

In the absence of international fora to hold powerful states to account, because violations are embedded in a "hyper-legalized" (Ghezelbash and Tan 2020, 485) elastic band which is stretched until near braking point, civil society is the last instance which can hold their governments accountable. Indeed, as Karl Lowenstein (1937) already pointed out in the context of Fascist Europe in the 20th century, it is the peoples' job to be vocal and keep the government in check. Americans' toleration of their leaders' infringement on HRs gives validation and legitimacy to this abuse and the abusers. This civil society support, or at least apathy, enables the U.S. government to act as a self-declared role-model in the first place. Without Americans' support, the BA would have stood on flimsy grounds when internationally defending their counter-terror policies. With civil society backing, however, America's position as steadfast self-proclaimed savior of international HRs standards gains authority and legitimacy.

By using dehumanization as a means to legitimize HRVs, the U.S. has fabricated a conundrum wherein the breadth of universal HRs has become a question of perceived degree of humanness: if one is perceived to be enough human, they enjoy rights. If they are perceived

less human, HRVs are legitimate. Thereby, HRs principles have turned into a matter of rhetoric which in turn undermines the very concept of *universal* HRs, universal understood in terms of inclusion: it matters if the victim of HRVs is human, not *what kind* of person they happen to be. After all, it is "human" rights, not "virtuous human" rights. Indeed, according to the UDHR (1948), HRs are inherent to "*all* members of the human family" [emphasis added] (Preamble) and regardless of "race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status" (Article 2). Importantly, HRs extend to *everyone*, including "persons convicted of crime and persons who have engaged in terrorist activity" (ICCPR 2014, General Comment No. 35).

Once a jus cogens, the legal prohibition of torture has been reconceptualized by the BA to consider who is being tortured, what they have done, what they intend to do, and what they could have done. Put differently, torture might be legitimate depending on who is being tortured. The BA argued that if they are able to prevent loss of life and the rights of the political community, they should be able to use these unusual means, as those they torture "[are] not really thought of as a member of the community at all" (Waldron 2017, 13) and thus fall outside their moral consideration. Role-modeling this distribution of rights based on the degree of humanness is an affront to the entire concept of universal HRs. Moreover, by reconceptualizing the applicability of universal HRs, the U.S. has set a precedent that could invite other actors to also try to legitimize their own violations by simply dehumanizing their victims.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have discussed the tension that the U.S. under the Bush Administration has led both the 'war on terror' - ultimately, a war for human lives and rights - and severe human rights violations on suspected terrorists. I argued that part of the environment that legitimized this conflict was the dehumanization of suspected terrorists and the humanization of victims of terror. The use of dehumanization leads to a double-standard wherein 'humanness' is the legitimation for both: granting rights for some and violating rights of others. This conundrum defeats the very concept of universal human rights that should be applicable to *any* human being. The U.S. has role-modeled an interpretation and distribution of universal human rights based on the perceived degree of humanness, taking into consideration *what kind of person* the victim of rights violations is. In a further step, it would be interesting to examine whether as in the U.S dehumanization as being part of the environment that made human rights violations morally legitimate has played as a significant role in other apparent saviors of human rights as well.

Ultimately, this thesis has shown how vulnerable the concept of universal human rights is to public opinion and persuasive rhetoric. While ideally there should not be a savior at all, it is imperative that those acting as such do not role-model an understanding of universal human rights according to which its breadth is open to individual actors' discretion.

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APPENDIX 1 - FIGURES AND TABLES

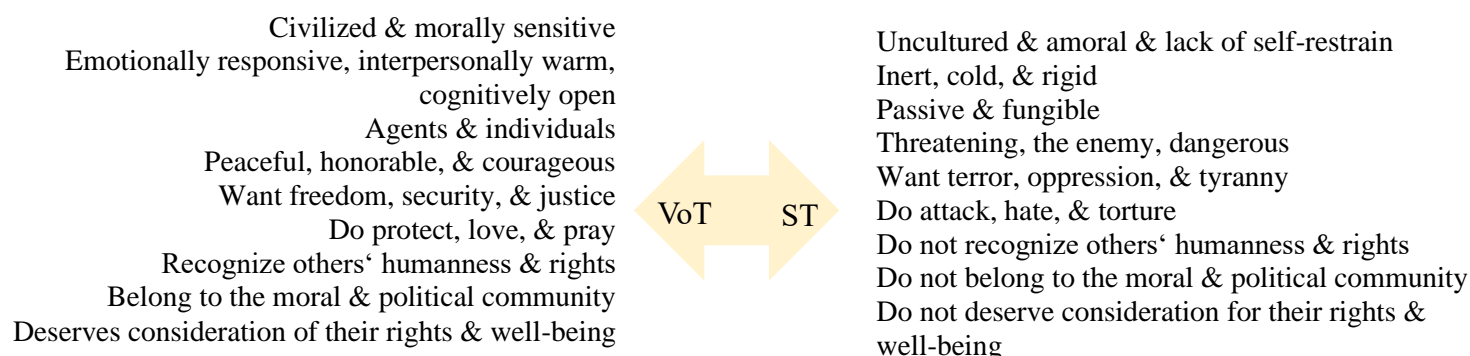**Figure 1: The Moral Gap Between Victims of Terror and Suspected Terrorists**

Civilized & morally sensitive
Emotionally responsive, interpersonally warm, cognitively open
Agents & individuals
Peaceful, honorable, & courageous
Want freedom, security, & justice
Do protect, love, & pray
Recognize others' humanness & rights
Belong to the moral & political community
Deserves consideration of their rights & well-being

VoT ⟷ ST

Uncultured & amoral & lack of self-restrain
Inert, cold, & rigid
Passive & fungible
Threatening, the enemy, dangerous
Want terror, oppression, & tyranny
Do attack, hate, & torture
Do not recognize others' humanness & rights
Do not belong to the moral & political community
Do not deserve consideration for their rights & well-being

Table 1: Animalistic Dehumanization – Denial of Uniquely Human Characteristics

Human	Characteristic	#[3]	Subhuman	Characteristic	#
Civility	Citizen(s)	122	Lack of Culture	Kill(ers/ed)	78
	Civil(ized/ian/ians/ization)	55		(mass) murder(ers/ous)	48
				Sectarian	18
				Outlaw(s)	9
				Tyrants	5
				Barbar(ic/ity)	2
				Parasite	1
Moral Sensibility	Moral(e)	10	Amorality, lack of self-restrain[4]		2

Table 2: Mechanistic Dehumanization – Denial of Human Nature Characteristics

Human	Characteristic	#	Nonhuman	Characteristic	#
Emotional Responsiveness	Hope(ed/ful)	107	Inertness		
	Proud/pride	38			
	Suffer(ed/ing)	32			
	Compassion	30			
	Grateful	25			
	Brave(ry/ly)	23			

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[3] Number of times the attribute in question occurs in the speeches.

[4] Expressions of amorality, inertness, agency, passivity, and individuality are not quantifiable and have been discussed in the main text.

	Dignity	17			
	Sorrow	12			
	Mourn(ed/ing)	10			
	Ang(ry/er)	9			
	Grief	8			
	Sad(der/ly/ness	5			
Interpersonal Warmth	Protect(s/ion)	127	Coldness	Attack(s/ed)	141
	Love(d)	46		Hate(s/ed/ful)	12
	Pray(er/ers/ed)	41		Torture	7
	Bless(ed/ing/ings)	40		Destroy	5
	Commitment	39		Disrupt (a way of life)	2
	Sacrifice(s)	39			
	Save(d)	16			
	(we/the United States/America has) Helped	10			
	Caring	5			
	Sympathy	4			
Cognitive openness	Toleran(t/ce)	8	Rigidity	Extrem(ism/ist)	45
	Pluralism	1		Radical(s/ism) (visions/beliefs/Islam/networks/dictators)	23
				Fanati(c/cs/al)	4
				Hostil(e/ity)	4
Agency			Passivity		
Individuality			Fungibility/ replacibility	terrorists	198
				(terrorist/sleeper) cells	8
				(Taliban/Al-Qaeda/ militia) Fighters	5
				(Radical Shia) Elements	3
Inclusion	Our (citizens/ friends/responsibility)	>1.000	Exclusion/ othering	*the* terrorist(s)	100
	Fellow citizens	38		*the* Taliban (regime)	28
				Different kind of (enemy)	5
				these terrorists	5

Table 3: Demonization

	Human attribute	#	Demon attribute	#
They have/ are (a):	Peace(ful)	132	Threat(en/ening)	129
	Honor(ed/able)	53	Enemy	79
	Courage(ous)	48	Danger(ous) (enemy/regime/ country)	78
	Resolve	42	Violen(ce/t /tly)	67
	Trust	30	Evil	37
	Innocent	26	Brutal(ity)	12
	Decen(cy/t)	15	Horr(or/ible/ific)	11
	Generosity	7	Cruel(ty)	5
	Dedicated	7	Deadly	5
	Grace(ful)	6	Ruthless	3
	Resilien(ce/t)	5	Stealth & deceit	1
	Humbled	3	Despotism	1
			Devious	1
			Malignant	1
They strive for/to:	Freedom	191	Terror	71
	Security	185	Oppress(ion/ing/ed[5]/ive)	25
	Justice	44	Tyranny	17
	Progress	34	Repress(ion/ing/ive/es)	6
	Liberate(d)	6	Havoc	2

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[5] Not the terrorists are oppressed, but people are oppressed by them.

Appendix 2 - Cited speeches by President Bush

between 2001 and 2009

1. *Statement by the President in His Address to the Nation.* September 11, 2001.
2. *President's Remarks at National Day of Prayer and Remembrance.* September 14, 2001.
3. *Radio Address of the President to the Nation.* September 15, 2001.
4. *Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People.* September 20, 2001.
5. *Radio Address of the President to the Nation.* September 29, 2001.
6. *Radio Address of the President to the Nation.* October 6, 2001.
7. *Presidential Address to the Nation.* October 7, 2001.
8. *Radio Address of the President to the Nation.* October 13, 2001.
9. *Radio Address of the President to the Nation.* October 27, 2001.
10. *Radio Address by the President to the Nation.* November 3, 2001.
11. *Radio Address by the President to the Nation.* November 10, 2001.
12. *Radio Address by the President to the Nation.* November 24, 2001.
13. *Christmas Radio Message by the President to the Nation.* December 25, 2001.
14. *President Delivers State of the Union Address.* January 29, 2002.
15. *Radio Address by the President to the Nation.* March 16, 2002.
16. *Radio Address by the President to the Nation.* March 23, 2002.
17. *Radio Address by the President to the Nation.* April 6, 2002.
18. *Radio Address by the President to the Nation.* April 20, 2002.
19. *Radio Address by the President to the Nation.* May 4, 2002.
20. *Radio Address by the President to the Nation.* May 25, 2002.
21. *Radio Address by the President to the Nation.* June 1, 2002.
22. *Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation.* June 6, 2002.
23. *Radio Address by the President to the Nation.* June 8, 2002.
24. *Radio Address by the President to the Nation.* July 13, 2002.
25. *Radio Address of the President to the Nation.* July 20, 2002.
26. *Radio Address of the President to the Nation.* July 27, 2002.
27. *Radio Address by the President to the Nation.* August 3, 2002.
28. *Radio Address by the President to the Nation.* August 17, 2002.
29. *Radio Address by the President to the Nation.* September 7, 2002.
30. *President's Remarks to the Nation.* September 11, 2002.
31. *Radio Address by the President to the Nation.* September 21, 2002.
32. *Radio Address by the President to the Nation.* September 28, 2002.
33. *Radio Address by the President to the Nation.* December 7, 2002.
34. *President Delivers "State of the Union".* January 28, 2003.
35. *Radio Address of the President to the Nation.* February 1, 2003.
36. *President Bush Addresses the Nation.* March 19, 2003.
37. *President Addresses the Nation.* September 7, 2003.
38. *President Bush Addresses the Nation on the Capture of Saddam Hussein.* December 14, 2003.
39. *State of the Union Address.* January 20, 2004.
40. *President Addresses the Nation in Prime Time Press Conference.* April 13, 2004.
41. *Radio Address by the President to the Nation. June 5, 2004.*
42. *President's Radio Address.* September 11, 2004.

43. State of the Union Address. February 2, 2005.

44. President's Address to the Nation. December 18, 2005.

45. President Bush Delivers State of the Union Address. January 31, 2006.

46. President's Address to the Nation. September 11, 2006.

47. President's Address to the Nation. January 10, 2007.

48. President Bush Delivers State of the Union Address. January 23, 2007.

49. Address by the President to the Nation on the Way Forward in Iraq. September 13, 2007.

50. President Bush Delivers State of the Union Address. January 28, 2008.

51. President Bush Delivers Farewell Address to the Nation. January 15, 2009.

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