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## Discovery of President Bush's Professional Reputation in the Opinion-Editorial Section of *The New York Times*

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Chioma Ndukwe Marbrey entitled "Discovery of President Bush's Professional Reputation in the Opinion-Editorial Section of *The New York Times*." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Communication and Information.

John Haas, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Kelly K. Halone, Michelle Violanti

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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DISCOVERY OF PRESIDENT BUSH'S PROFESSIONAL REPUTATION IN THE  
OPINION-EDITORIAL SECTION OF *THE NEW YORK TIMES*

A Thesis  
Presented for the  
Master's of Science Degree  
University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Chioma Ndukwe Marbrey  
May 2007

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## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to my dear and loving mother, Beryl S. Marbrey, who instilled in me the strength, wisdom, and dedication necessary to realize my scholastic dreams. She has always had a deep and abiding faith in my ability to succeed, and I will forever cherish her loving soul.

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## Abstract

Neustadt transformed academia's fundamental conception of presidential leadership by arguing that extra-constitutional resources such as strategic persuasion, public prestige, and professional reputation are more critical to effective presidential governance than the simple application of the president's constitutional powers. Professional reputation, which refers to political elites' appraisals of the president as a leader, is a central yet scholastically understudied pillar of Neustadt's theory. Neustadt argued that the "echoes" of a president's professional reputation typically emerge from the newspaper columns of prominent political commentators (1990, p. 53-54). In essence, newspaper columns function as public forums where elites engage each other in interactive dialogue regarding their assessments of presidential leadership. The president's professional reputation literally emerges from the give and take of those public discussions, thus the president's reputation can be regarded as a socially constructed concept that emanates fundamentally from a communicative process (Denton & Hahn, 1986; Graber, 1981; Littlejohn, 2002). The purpose of this study is to explore through qualitative methods the opinion-editorial section of *The New York Times* in order to discover the thematic structure of President George W. Bush's professional reputation as it relates to his stewardship of Iraq policy in the fall of 2002. In accordance to the tenets of Neustadt's theory, this study identified "a dominant tone, a central tendency" in elite assessments of President Bush's leadership on Iraq policy within the specified population of elite writings (Neustadt, 1990, p. 53).



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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

On the one-year anniversary of the catastrophic terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001, President Bush wrote an opinion-editorial entitled *Securing Freedom's Triumph* for *The New York Times*. In this opinion-editorial, he commemorated the bravery exhibited by countless Americans in the face of unparalleled tragedy while simultaneously offering a vision of how America was going to win the war on terror (Bush, 2002c). This op-ed piece was politically significant, because it foreshadowed many of the major ideas of his much-anticipated address to the United Nations, which was delivered the next day. In his op-ed piece, he argued that the war on terror required the international community to coordinate its efforts to force rogue regimes to give up their weapons of mass destruction programs and to renounce their state sponsorship of terrorism.

In his UN address, he quickly made it clear that Iraq was the rogue regime that he had in mind when he wrote his op-ed piece. In the president's view, Iraq had violated its international commitments, reconstituted its weapons program, and assisted terrorist networks. The president reminded his audience that the core aspiration of the architects of the United Nations, which was founded in 1945 in the wake of humanity's most tragic and horrific war, was to create an institution where states could unite to solve transnational problems through cooperative diplomatic efforts rather than resort to divisive competition or catastrophic war. He argued that the United Nations had a historic opportunity to realize the promise of its founding mission by being the vessel through which the international community, as one legitimate and authoritative voice, could

demand that Iraq comply with its international commitments once and for all or face the righteous judgment of the international community (Bush, 2002d).

If the president's argument had stopped here, it probably would not have been considered historic given the fact that many nations had long supported a number of Security Council resolutions that called for the condemnation, disarmament, and containment of Iraq. However, the president's words provoked considerable consternation among some political elites in the U.S. and the international community, because it alluded to a national security doctrine that some regarded as ominous and potentially destabilizing for the international community. Earlier that summer in an address to the graduating cadets at West Point, the president had forewarned the world that the United States would, unilaterally if necessary, preempt certain threats to its security through military action even if multilateral institutions like the United Nations did not sanction such action (Bush, 2002b; Purdum, 2003). The less than subtle implication of the president's words was that the world's most powerful nation was publicly announcing to its international brethren that the United States would not be constrained even on matters of war and peace by multilateral institutions like the United Nations when it perceived that its vital interests were at stake. Despite words to the contrary by senior administration officials like Secretary of State Colin Powell, the president's willingness to move from a reactive and collaborative posture to a proactive and potentially unilateral posture represented a fundamental change of emphasis in national security policy that had potentially revolutionary implications for the international community (Powell, 2004). This fundamental change of emphasis in U.S.

national security policy became commonly known as the Bush doctrine of preemption (Purdum, 2003).

This study posits that in order for the president's strategy of preemption to gain legitimacy with the general public the president had to acquire a vote of confidence from other prominent political elites regarding the president's capacity to decipher the appropriate circumstances and threats that warranted the launching of a preemptive war. This judgment is based upon a central pillar of Richard Neustadt's groundbreaking theory regarding presidential power—professional reputation. Professional reputation argues that appraisals of the president's political and public policy expertise by political elites who are defined as a unique class of individuals who do business with or closely monitor the actions of the president significantly influence the president's capacity to exercise genuine leadership in a decentralized political system that forces the president to share power with a network of semi-autonomous political actors, because those appraisals influence the way the president's governing partners do business with him (Gleiber, Shull, & Waligora, 1998; Neustadt, 1990).

The idea that presidential success on major policy initiatives regarding foreign policy requires some degree of elite support or acquiescence has been under appreciated in part due to the influence, albeit waning, of Wildavsky's two presidencies thesis, which suggests that presidents have much more discretion in foreign policy than they do in domestic policy (Lewis, 1997; Lindsay & Steger, 1993; Wildavsky, 1966). In our constitutional system, a network of interdependent official and unofficial political actors must come together in order to formulate, justify, ratify, and implement public policy irrespective of its domestic or foreign domain. Nevertheless, the press and the general

public, particularly in areas of national security and national emergency, often grant substantial deference to the leadership of the president, when they discern that there is widespread consensus amongst elites over the president's policy and the president's management of his policy. Due to the public's limited interest, expertise, and independent sources of information regarding foreign policy issues, the public typically will look through the lens of the media for cues from elites regarding the wisdom of the president's policy. For the public, the salience of foreign issues and the potential pitfalls in the president's approach to those issues increases when the press begins to highlight conflict between elites over the wisdom of the president's policy. Squabbling between mainstream elites over a controversial presidential policy dramatically increases the likelihood that the president and his policy will receive unfavorable press, which could be a catalyst for public dissatisfaction with his policy, thus any president has a major incentive to garner the support of the governing class when he is pursuing a controversial policy on a major or salient issue (DeClerico, 2000; McCartney, 1994; Perloff, 1998).

As the president made the case for his policy towards Iraq during the fall of 2002, the general public gradually was roused to become more involved in the political process, but a number of political elites were already engaged and fully understood the gravity of the president's policy even its embryonic stages. Elites were the first to study and debate the intricacies of the president's policy as well as how shrewd the president was in the stewardship of his policy. Many of these elite assessments were articulated, disseminated, and debated through the opinion pages of the nation's leading newspapers such as *The New York Times*. Neustadt has argued that a president's professional

reputation can be discovered and measured in the opinion pages of top newspapers (Gleiber et al., 1998; Neustadt, 1990).

The formation of a president's professional reputation is an inherently communicative process emanating from the rhetorical tradition, because the president's reputation is a socially constructed entity formed in part through strategic dialogue among elites on the opinion pages of the nation's leading newspapers (Littlejohn, 2002; Neustadt, 1990). Gleiber et al. suggests that the president's "professional reputation or standing is an attitudinal characteristic of the attentive elite, not a characteristic of the president himself" (1998, p. 368). This reality makes the president's professional reputation a receiver-based phenomenon, because the president's professional reputation is the collective perceptions of the president's official and unofficial governing partners. The reality of those collective elite perceptions literally emerges, consolidates, evolves, erodes, and or sustains through the interactive and strategic dialogue found on the opinion pages of the nation's top newspapers (Littlejohn, 2002; Neustadt, 1990). Given the interpretive, social, contextual, fluid, and rhetorical nature of the professional reputation concept as expressed through editorial commentary, I propose to do a qualitative analysis of the themes that emerge from political columns, editorials, and opinion-editorials regarding the president's professional reputation in managing his policy regarding Iraq during the fall of 2002.

**Research Question**

What are the major thematic patterns that emerge from political columns, editorials, and opinion-editorials in *The New York Times* regarding President Bush's professional reputation as it related to the initial phase of his stewardship of U.S. policy regarding Iraq in the fall of 2002?

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review/Research Context

#### Theoretical Framework

Richard Neustadt in his seminal work on presidential leadership, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan*, introduced the idea that elite appraisals of presidential leadership establish the president's professional reputation, which is a core dimension of presidential power (1990). Gleiber, Shull, & Waligora say that "professional reputation is the assessment of the president by those upon whom he must depend for cooperation and compliance when he does not have full power to effect political and policy goals" (1998, p. 367).

The president's professional reputation is so critical to his effectiveness as a leader, because in our constitutional system, he must share power with other constitutional officers in order to govern (Neustadt, 1990). The president also must compete with a wide array of private special interest groups for leadership over public policy (Kernell, 1997). If the president is seen as weak or incompetent by a significant percentage of political elites, then the likelihood that various political elites will challenge or resist his leadership is dramatically increased (Kernell, 1997; Neustadt, 1990). A president whose leadership skills are held in low regard by his governing partners has little chance of successfully shepherding major policy initiatives, particularly if those initiatives are controversial.

In Neustadt's theory of presidential power, elites are defined as individuals who do business with the president or whose job or status requires them to closely monitor, report, anticipate, or react to the president's behavior (1990). These elites closely monitor



and try to decipher the meaning and implications of the president's communication and behavior, because unlike many common citizens, this unique class of individuals recognizes in a very tangible way that the president's leadership impacts their interests. These political elites are constantly assessing the meaning and significance of presidential choices not only for understanding of present circumstances but also to get a reading on how the president will act in the future. For example, if the governing elite detect a pattern of indecisiveness or inability to recognize political opportunities, then they might anticipate the manifestation of these weaknesses in future presidential action and decide that the president is ripe for challenge. The better the reading they have on the president the better they will be able to secure their interests and exercise influence (Kernell, 1997; Neustadt, 1990).

Elites closely monitor the president for many reasons. The behavior of various political figures is often heavily influenced by their vantage point in the political system. The president's elite contemporaries often, due to differences in their political station, have interests that diverge from the president's interests. Elites have an interest in understanding the nature, significance, and implications of those differing interests. Secondly, political agents operate in an environment where they must make decisions based upon incomplete information. Political agents try to get an advantage on their competition by securing more reliable information. Thirdly, leadership in fact is different from leadership in form. The constitution and supplemental statutory legislation dictates that political entities collaborate on many areas of public policy. These dictates outline a type of power or leadership in form. However, real political power is a phenomenon that actually decides the course of events or the resolution of a problem. The power that

flows from leadership in fact is a finite commodity that is not easily shared, because the advantages that one can accrue from power or leadership in fact by their very nature often breed competition rather than collaboration amongst their suitors (Neustadt, 1990).

The mastery of this tension between collaboration and competition over political power is an inexact science that requires an adroit awareness and sensitivity to the potential power of strategic communication. One must remember the “politics is largely a word game” (Graber, 1981, p.195). Communication is so central to the domain of politics that some scholars have argued that political consciousness itself is rooted in the manipulation of language, since language provides the means to creating a “symbolic interpretation of the sociopolitical experience” (Denton & Hahn, 1986, p.50). Thus in a democratic society, public discussion and debate serve as the distillation process by which a society or a subgroup within that society discovers how best to govern itself and how best to evaluate and relate to its leaders or members. It is through that public discussion that a political community determines its values and how its leaders relate to those values.

Elites have an incentive to acquire an accurate, comprehensive, and insightful appraisal of the president. However, the perspective of any one individual regarding the president is somewhat limited by his particular vantage point in the political system. Thus, an individual’s perspective of the president can be broadened, enlightened, and heavily influenced by reading or listening to the perspectives and impressions of other governing elites. Any class of individuals or forum that can enlarge the elite community’s “field of vision” on the president’s leadership capacity and performance will play a pivotal role in determining how a president is perceived by his governing partners and the

context in which a president exercises political power (Neustadt, 1990, p.53). Opinion writers in leading newspapers, according to Neustadt, serve this vital function by “collecting, synthesizing, and publicly reporting elite assessments” of presidential leadership, which in turn facilitates a larger and wider public discussion among elites regarding the president’s leadership capacities (Gleiber et al., 1998, p. 368). Richard Neustadt (1990) writes,

But those who watch a President because their work requires it do not see only what he chooses to disclose to them. They see some part of almost everything he does with almost anyone, and what they cannot see they try to hear. Everything reported in the press adds to their field of vision. . . . They ask each other questions. They tell each other stories. They read with care the news reports, and newsletters, and syndicated columns circulating “inside dope” drawn from men like themselves. Theirs is a most incestuous community. In consequence, their outlook on a President at any given moment will be affected by impressions of his will and skill then currently in vogue among observers like themselves. (p. 53)

Neustadt goes on to argue, “There usually is a dominant tone, a central tendency, in Washington appraisals of a President. If one wants echoes of that tone at any one time one reads Krock, Lippmann, Reston, Rovere, and half a dozen others” [these are examples of political columnists from leading newspapers like *The New York Times*] (1990, p. 53-54). In the final analysis, elite judgments regarding the success, failure, and reputation of presidents are largely dependent upon the perceptions of other elite Washingtonians. These perceptions are engineered in part by strategic communication from political columnists (Neustadt, 1990).

Neustadt's rich description concerning the formation of a president's reputation clearly indicates that this is a communicative process, because the reality of the president's standing within elite circles in Washington is dictated at least in part by the "collecting, synthesizing, and publicly reporting elite assessments" by top political columnists (Denton & Hahn, 1986; Graber, 1981; Gleiber et al., 1998, p. 368; Littlejohn, 2002). Neustadt creates the impression that the upper echelons of Washington constitute a kind of extremely competitive special club, where the members try simultaneously to assist each other and gain an advantage on one another by sharing their information, knowledge, and insights regarding the expertise and demeanor of the president with columnists who have the capacity to accentuate the importance of their comments by disseminating them on a grand scale. Neustadt refers to these club members as the "most incestuous community" that "ask each other questions and tell each other stories" thereby implying that communication is a central ingredient that integrates and defines their relationships with one another (1990, p. 53). As a result of the interdependent nature of their power relationships with each other and the president, one would suspect that positive and negative face concerns would factor into the strategies behind their communicative interactions with columnists (Brown & Levinson, 1987). This study argues that the combination of these factors clearly indicates that any analysis of the thematic structure of a president's professional reputation would benefit from a distinctly communicative perspective.

The role and potential power of political columnists is due to several factors. For one, the high stature of political columnists within the Washington community gives them unique access to the sentiments and the behind the scenes maneuverings of

Washington's powerbrokers. This insider access allows these columnists to establish a vast network of important contacts (Grossman & Kumar, 1981). Political insiders value the information that opinion writers obtain through their vast networks of important contacts. They often believe that the interpretations of president performance revealed in these opinion-editorials can assist them in protecting their own interests as they do business with the president (Neustadt, 1990). Some political powerbrokers, including the president, will go as far as to court columnists in an effort influence the content of their influential writings (Grossman & Kumar, 1981).

Subsequent scholars have built upon Neustadt's idea that the professional reputation of the president can be discovered and measured in the writings of influential political columnists by utilizing editorials as an indicator of elite assessments of presidential leadership. Gleiber et al. (1998) justify this extension of this particular operationalization of the professional reputation concept by arguing,

Editorials articulate the opinions of the newspaper but have the same function as nationally syndicated political columns. It is job of the editorialist to formulate and articulate opinions that reflect what columnists are writing at the time. The editorial page is meant to be evaluative. Thus, editorialists perform the information gathering and reporting functions identified by Neustadt. The editorial page is meant to balance political and ideological perspectives, but, unlike the reporting sections of the newspaper, no claim of journalistic objectivity is made. (p. 370)

Political insiders also see these opinion pages as public forums where political insiders can directly influence their colleagues' as well as the general public's

perceptions of the president by authoring their own opinion-editorials. With opinion-editorials, political elites can bypass journalistic gatekeepers like political columnists and editorial writers. The inclusion of opinion-editorials into the analysis of professional reputation makes the analysis of professional reputation less of an “echo” and more of a direct representation of elite appraisals of a president.

The great diversity in ideology, experience, loyalties, resources, and interests found in the opinion section of top newspapers often results in a wide spectrum of opinion regarding the status of the president’s professional reputation. For the majority of political insiders, the range of opinion regarding the president’s professional reputation is resolved by looking for overarching themes or a “dominant tone” in the aggregation of those individual assessments (Neustadt, 1990, p. 53). As a result of these factors, the president’s professional reputation can be operationalized as editorial commentary in elite newspapers (Gleiber et al., 1998; Neustadt, 1990).

### **Empirical Research On Professional Reputation**

Empirical research using political commentary as a measure of a president’s professional reputation is quite sparse. A review of the literature revealed only two articles that have used opinion pieces from the media in their analysis of Neustadt’s professional reputation concept (Gleiber et al., 1998; Lockerbie & Borrelli, 1989).

Lockerbie and Borrelli wanted to examine how perceptions of presidential skill impacted presidential success in Congress (1989). To assess this phenomenon, these researchers created a formula that included three main components- professional reputation, congressional roll call votes on domestic policy, and a state of the economy index. They measured the presidential reputations of President Carter and President

Reagan by doing a “content analysis of political columns appearing in *Newsweek* by George Will and Meg Greenfield, whose commentaries also appear in the influential *Washington Post*” (1989, p. 99). The researchers selected columns that were “contemporaneous with the roll calls which will serve as our measures of presidential influence in Congress, so information regarding skill that was unavailable to Congressmen at the time of voting will not bias the measure” [authors noted that many assessments of presidential reputation are flawed indicators of presidential influence, because they are retrospective assessments] (Lockerbie & Borrelli, 1989, p. 99). These columns were used to identify evaluations of presidential skill rather than evaluations of the substance of presidential policies (Lockerbie & Borelli, 1989).

The coders were instructed to score the columns according to a Likert scale that rated assessments of presidential skill on a range from 1 (lowest score for skill) to 5 (highest score for skill). If a column did not comment on presidential skill, the column was given the neutral score of 3. The researchers argued that this choice for scoring was defensible. If the columnist did not bother to discuss the president, then “the columnist’s assessment of the president’s skill is not likely to be appreciably high or low during that time period” (Lockerbie & Borelli, 1989, p. 100). The researchers attempted to validate their ratings of columns by providing direct quotations from the sampled columns. The critical finding of the Lockerbie and Borrelli study was that contrary to conventional wisdom “extraordinary displays of skill can prevail over contextual factors” (1989, p. 106).

Gleiber, Shull, & Waligora (1998) explored professional reputation by reviewing 3,594 editorials and opinion-editorials in *The New York Times* from 1961 to 1992. These

researchers attempted to distinguish their research from the Lockerbie and Borrelli study by arguing that Lockerbie and Borelli wrongly conceptualized professional reputation as elite reactions to actual demonstrations of presidential skill. Gleiber et al. argued, “Reputation may be function of, but is not, skill as identified by Lockerbie and Borrelli. . . . What a president actually does is less important than how he is perceived by the Washington community” (1998, p. 367). Thus, “professional reputation is an attitudinal characteristic of the attentive elite, not a characteristic of the president himself” (Gleiber et al., 1998, p. 368).

One of the things that Gleiber et al. wanted to discover was how professional reputation interacted with popular prestige, which refers to the general public’s appraisals of the president (Neustadt, 1990). They discovered that elite opinion is not heavily influenced by mass opinion (Gleiber et al., 1998).



## Chapter 3

### Political Communication Perspective

Some might question the appropriateness of applying a communication perspective to Neustadt's theory of presidential power given the fact that Neustadt was a political scientist who believed that proper recognition of the interdependent yet divergent institutional interests, relationships, and prerogatives between the president and his governing partners was the key to understanding and predicting the bargaining maneuvers of presidents as they exercised power (Kernell, 1997). The meaning of those interdependent yet divergent institutional interests, relationships, and prerogatives that were the focus of Neustadt's attention, at any given time, is determined by the surrounding political context, which is typically defined in large part by the communications transmitted by the key political constituencies that make up and or dominate that political context (Denton & Hahn, 1986). In an article entitled *Political Communication Faces the 21st Century*, Doris Graber and James M. Smith say, "The field of political communication . . . encompasses the construction, sending, receiving, and processing of messages that potentially have a significant direct or indirect impact on politics" (2005, p. 479). Based upon an analysis of the explanation offered by Neustadt himself, one can reasonably contend that the communication process itself amongst a select group of political elites is the central and defining element in the formation of presidential reputation. The so-called "reality" of the president's professional reputation at any given time "arises from the shared perceptions created when people [in the case of presidential professional reputation, these people are predominately political elites who author or contribute to political commentary in the nation's top newspapers]

communicate with each other” (Graber & Smith, 2005, p. 490; Neustadt, 1990). Thus, a strong argument can be made that professional reputation can best be studied within the “interpretist or constructionist” domains of political communication (Graber & Smith, 2005, p. 490).

## Chapter 4

### Methodological Approach

Since it is appropriate to research the professional reputation concept within the “interpretist and constructionist” domains of political communication, one could justifiably argue for the application of a qualitative methodological approach (Graber & Smith, 2005, p. 490). The basic objective of qualitative research in the discipline of communication is to achieve a contextual understanding of a given communicative phenomenon from the perspective and interpretation of the phenomenon’s participants (Guba, 1990). Contextual understanding is a key element of the aforementioned definition. Context refers to “the conditional background or situation in which the event is embedded” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 106). Qualitative research emanates from a perspective that argues that the reality and meaning of any given communicative phenomenon is a social construction that is shaped in part by its contextual surroundings, and thus any analysis of the meaning of any given communicative phenomenon must incorporate the context in which the communicative phenomenon “is embedded” in order to have the potential of producing comprehensive understanding regarding the specified phenomenon (Guba, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Professional reputation being an aggregation of multiple, contextual, hermeneutical, and fluid elite interpretations of presidential expertise makes this concept ideally suited for qualitative research.

This author agrees with Gleiber et al. who argue that “professional reputation is an attitudinal characteristic of the attentive elite” (1998, p. 368). If we are truly interested in getting an accurate reading of how elites perceive the president, then we need to use research methods that allow those interpretations to emerge from the data

provided by the participants. We do not want the researcher to impose his or her interpretations on data. Qualitative research is designed to fulfill that purpose (Maxwell, 1996).

Our understanding of the nature of professional reputation and its impact upon presidential leadership is limited, because only a handful of scholars have attempted to explore and clarify the meaning of Neustadt's concept in their research (Gleiber et al., 1998; Lockerbie & Borrelli, 1989). One could argue that identifying the thematic structure of professional reputation in a case study example could enhance our understanding of this dimension of presidential power.

### **Elites Operationalized**

Neustadt argues that the professional reputation of a president encompasses the collective perceptions and appraisals of elites regarding a president's acumen in policymaking and political strategizing (1990). This study proposes to examine elite appraisals of President Bush's handling of Iraq policy by reviewing editorials, political columns, and opinion-editorials in *The New York Times* from September 11, 2002 to November 8, 2002. The appropriateness of using editorials, opinion-editorials, and political columns as measures of a president's professional reputation has been consistently defended since the founding of the professional concept and throughout its scholastic progeny (Gleiber et al., 1998; Lockerbie & Borrelli, 1989; Neustadt, 1990). Thus, for the purposes of this study, political elites are operationalized as individuals who author or contribute to editorials, opinion-editorials, or political columns in *The New York Times*.

**Data Source Selected**

*The New York Times* was selected, because this paper is widely “regarded as the national newspaper of record” and political elites from a wide range of ideological perspectives regularly read and contribute to the opinion section of this newspaper (Gleiber et al., 1998, p. 370; Grossman & Kumar, 1981). Furthermore, the political columnists cited by Neustadt in his original explication of his theory “regularly contributed to *The New York Times*” (Gleiber et al., 1998, p. 370).

**Political Columns, Editorials, & Opinion-editorials Operationalized**

Political columns are operationalized as opinion pieces that written by columnists who regularly contribute to the opinion section of *The Times*. The person who wrote the column is clearly specified. A column represents only the opinion of the individual columnist who wrote that particular column.

Editorials are operationalized as opinion pieces that are written by the editorial staff of the paper. No specific name is attached to the editorial as an author, but editorials are written with the clear understanding that they represent the subjective view of the editorial page board.

Opinion-editorials are operationalized as opinion pieces written by prominent citizens who have no official affiliation with *The Times*. These pieces are submitted to the editorial division of the paper, and this division selects which submissions make it into the paper. The author of the opinion-editorial is clearly specified, and the opinion in the opinion-editorial is attributed to the individual who submitted it.

### **Type Of Data Selected**

Editorials, opinion-editorials, and political columns that offered an evaluative assessment regarding the relative quality, nature, and significance of President Bush's stewardship of Iraq policy were selected. The goal is to select political columns, editorials, and opinion-editorials that critique the president's stewardship on his Iraq policy rather than opinion pieces that simply critique the substance of his Iraq policy. In this context, evaluative assessments can be positive, negative, or mixed characterizations of presidential leadership. The various expressions of these evaluative assessments can be conceptualized as existing along a thematic continuum that ranges from positive to negative.

Furthermore, the researcher endeavors to select pieces that are predominately focused on the president's stewardship of U. S. policy towards Iraq rather than pieces where the president's management of U. S. policy towards Iraq is just one of many concerns. The researcher also selected articles that evaluated the president's philosophy on national security, because a significant number of elite pieces referenced or alluded to concepts from the Bush Doctrine in their evaluations the president's stewardship of Iraq policy (Purdum, 2003). The inclusion of these philosophical pieces will give the researcher a greater contextual understanding of the themes articulated in this collection of elite writings.

### **Personal Review For Data Selection**

The process by which the researcher retrieved editorials, opinion-editorials, and political columns that meet the aforementioned criteria was as follows. The researcher personally reviewed microfilm reels of *The New York Times*' opinion pieces during the

specified period in order to determine the appropriateness of these opinion pieces for this study rather than simply relying upon a key word or headline database search that could miss good data due to limited or restricted access to *New York Times* content.

### **Screening Words & Phrases**

The microfilm search started by looking for the any of the following words or phrases (and their affiliates or euphemisms) in the body of the political columns, editorials, and opinion-editorials- President, Bush, administration, Iraq, Saddam Hussein, weapons of mass destruction, war on terror or terrorism, Al Qaeda, pre-emption, national security, United Nations, Security Council. This collection of words and phrases was chosen because they represent the key players and ideas in this crisis involving President Bush's policy towards Iraq.

Screens can add a degree of systematic rigor to a data search. Some might argue that the aforementioned screening words and phrases will not identify every appropriate political column, editorial or opinion-editorial that meets the criteria for this study. However, the true test for this sampling process is not whether these screening words and phrases identify every conceivable appropriate selection for this study. No practical sampling design could meet this standard. Moreover, the validity and appropriateness of any screening process rests primarily on its capacity to assemble an appropriate sample of writings in a "systematic, explicit, and reproducible" fashion (Fink, 1998, p. 15; Sumser, 2001). As long as the analytical judgments of the screening process emanate from a logical framework that identifies appropriate writings and allows duplication by subsequent researchers, the screening process is valid.

### **Contextual Approach To Data Selection Process**

This screening process is buttressed by the fact these words and phrases were reviewed manually with an appreciation for the textual context in which they were embedded. This contextual skimming is labor intensive, but once again it is important to point out that this contextual approach helps the researcher to identify good data that otherwise would be missed by a simple and narrow key word database search.

For an example of the benefits of this contextual data selection approach, consider how this approach can help a researcher to decipher the multiple connotative meanings associated with words like “America.” On the surface, America is simply the name of a country. However, America can also be euphemism for the President of the United States when it pertains to matters of foreign policy and national security. The President of the United States is the head of state, and as a result, he is the government official held most responsible by the general public, political elites, and the international community for managing the nation’s foreign affairs and national security policy. Thus, if an opinion-editorial writer has been discussing his or her critique of the president’s stewardship of foreign policy throughout his or her opinion piece and then he or she culminates the argument by saying something like “America must abandoned its imperialistic approach to international problems,” one might safely infer that the writer was euphemistically saying that the president must abandon his imperialistic approach to international problems. Sometimes a writer might use president and America interchangeably. Sometimes a writer will simply use the word America, but contextually the reader will understand that writer is actually discussing the president because he or she will be



discussing actions, policies, or pronouncements that require the initiation of or are the responsibility of the president.

Another possible code word or indirect reference to the president would be administration. Administration officials serve at the pleasure of the president and are considered spokespersons for the president's policies. One could argue that an integral part of presidential leadership involves the management of actions and statements from administration subordinates, because as the head of the administration, the president is ultimately accountable for people who work and speak in his name. In short, the behavior and rhetoric of administration personnel can be used by political elites as cues for deciphering the nature and meaning of the leadership of a particular president as it relates to interests of the Washington community. Since the actions and statements of administration officials and the president's direction or response to those behaviors can inform elite appraisals of presidential leadership, editorial commentary regarding these types of matters and personnel should be factored into this scholastic analysis of President Bush's professional reputation.

In sum, a contextual data selection process allows the researcher to recognize the direction and meaning of subtle and connotative inferences that are being drawn from seemingly innocuous words, phrases, and arguments. A contextual reading of the text as a part of the initial data selection process allows the researcher to garner valuable insights into appropriate data for this study and serves as the initial foray into the in-depth review process that characterizes this type of qualitative research.

### **Justification of Time Frame- Time Period Between Critical Events**

The time period for this study falls between two critical events-the one-year anniversary of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the passage of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1441 on November 8, 2002. The justification for the starting point of the time period starts with the fact that President Bush himself decided on the one-year anniversary of September 11th to outline his vision for winning the war on terror, to foreshadow his policy towards Iraq, which he unveiled in more detail the next day in his United Nations speech, and to subtly appraise the choices and actions of foreign leaders regarding the war on terrorism in the opinion page of *The New York Times* (Bush, September 11, 2002). September 11th, 2002 marks the day that the President launched his rhetorical campaign against Iraq. The fact that the President of the United States used the opinion-editorial page of *The New York Times* to get his message out knowing that other elites would scrutinize his words and respond to his political choices supports Neustadt's claim that the opinion pages of top papers are arenas where elites engage each other on ideas and appraise presidential performance (Albright, 2002; Rich, 2002; "Iraq Test", 2002).

A preliminary collection of opinion pieces from *The New York Times* regarding the President's stewardship of Iraq policy during this time period suggests that presidential action and comment regarding US policy towards Iraq played a major role in generating opinion pieces in *The New York Times*. For example, *The New York Times* political columnist, Nicholas Kristof, evaluates President Bush's skill in using rhetoric (Bush's UN speech on September 12, 2002) to gain international support for his Iraq

policy by comparing his actions to the maneuvering of President Kennedy at the United Nations during the Cuban Missile Crisis (2002).

November 8, 2002 is the day that the UN Security Council made a final ultimatum to Saddam Hussein to completely comply with an internationally sanctioned and supervised process, which was designed to provide a thorough and complete accounting of his weapon stockpiles, through the passage of UN Security Council Resolution 1441. Astute observers saw the passage of Resolution 1441 as an important turning point in the controversy (Purdum, 2003).

The time period between these critical events represented the initial phase in the debate over the President's stewardship of Iraq policy in the fall 2002. This initial phase represented the period where appraisals of the president's leadership of U.S. policy towards Iraq were being formulated and debated in a very public and sustained way by elites on the opinion pages of leading newspapers, and as a result, this time period represents an excellent opportunity to study Neustadt's professional reputations concept within a politically and socially significant context.

### **Paradigmatic Perspective On Methodological Approach**

The purpose of this study is to identify the major thematic patterns that emerge from elite appraisals of President Bush's stewardship of U.S. policy regarding Iraq as expressed through political columns, editorials, and opinion-editorials in *The New York Times* in hopes of improving our understanding of professional reputation and the meaning of President Bush's leadership during this controversy. Insight into what those thematic patterns actually are can be stifled, if the researcher imposes a preexisting analytical framework onto the text (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Taylor, 1994). The purpose

of the study indicates that this research falls within the domain of qualitative research, which is designed both paradigmatically and methodologically to elicit and remain true to the interpretations of the participants who are under investigation (Guba, 1990).

### **Open Coding Grounded In The Data In Order To Create Thematic Categories**

There often is considerable ingenuity, range, and flexibility in the coding schemes used in qualitative research, because the qualitative researcher as methodological instrument necessitates that some degree of subjectivity inevitably will impact the execution of the analysis (Guba, 1990). Nevertheless in order for this research to remain true to the mission of qualitative research, the coding scheme should be engineered inductively through interaction with and emersion in the text (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Maxwell, 1996). The mission of the qualitative researcher is to establish a coding scheme through empirical engagement with the text rather than through the application or imposition of a preexisting coding scheme, which may or may not be well suited for the particular contextual features of the universe of discourse under investigation (Maxwell, 1996; Patton, 1990; Taylor, 1994).

This methodological approach to data analysis is called open coding, and Strauss and Corbin define open coding as “the analytic process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in data” (1998, p. 101). Open coding is a multi-step process designed to reveal the defining features of a text within its particular contextual setting.

First, the analyst searches the text for defining objects (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In this study, themes constitute the objects to be discovered. It is imperative that these themes emerge from the data in order to remain true the mission of qualitative research.

Second, the analyst determines thematic designations on the basis of the object's properties and dimensions. Strauss and Corbin defined the difference between properties and dimensions by saying, "To further clarify, whereas properties are the general or specific characteristics or attributes of a category, dimensions represent the location of a property along a continuum or range" (1998, p. 117). The analyst also examines the defining properties and dimensions of discovered themes in order to conceptualize appropriate names or categories for those discovered themes. This labeling or conceptualizing process typically is rooted in the contextual features of the text.

In an effort to keep these thematic categories grounded in the sentiments, ideas, and ultimate appraisals of presidential leadership expressed in these political columns, editorials, and opinion-editorials, the researcher will make extensive use the words of the authors themselves to explain or justify coding or analytical judgments (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This approach will give this study a richness that will allow the reader to intimately appreciate the contextual interpretations that emerge from these opinion writings. This proposal posits that this type of inductively designed thematic approach will facilitate one's understanding of President Bush's professional reputation within a specific context and "aid the development" of the professional reputation concept on a theoretically level (Maxwell, 1996, p. 79).

### **Axial Coding Used To Construct Interpretive Scheme Of Data**

Open coding allows the analyst to deconstruct the data into its basic or essential elements, but in order for the analyst to get an analytic sense of the data's meaning, the analyst must be able "reconstruct" those elements into an "interpretive scheme" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 65). By analytic sense, I mean a conceptual understanding of the

data, which requires an analysis of the data that goes beyond simple description. Axial coding is the process whereby the analyst identifies links between categories “at the level of properties and dimensions” in order to create an interpretive scheme of the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 123). As this linking process between categories becomes more specific and refined “along the lines of their properties and dimensions,” the analyst might “construct” subcategories from the data in order “to form more precise and complete explanations about the phenomena” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 124). Strauss & Corbin (1998) explain:

*A subcategory* also is a category, as its name implies. However, rather than standing for the phenomenon itself, subcategories answer questions about the phenomenon such as when, where, why, who, how, and with what consequences, thus giving the concept greater explanatory power. (p. 125)

A subcategory has its own properties and dimensions, and due to the interlocking framework of data, a subcategory can simultaneously be regarded as a property of its own overarching theme (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Designating thematic categories on the basis of properties and dimensions allows the analyst to detect patterns and variations in the data. As the analyst proceeds with his or her analysis, he or she will compare the properties and dimensions of the new thematic discoveries with the previous ones in order to be sensitive to appropriate delineations and linkages between thematic categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Haley, 1996; Lindolf & Taylor, 2002; Potter, 1996; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Vidich & Lyman, 2003). This methodological approach requires that these thematic categories be “linked, either physically or by cross-referencing, to the data that give rise to them, in order not to lose

the original context from which they developed, a problem often called *context stripping*” (Maxwell, 1996, p. 79).

As a point of clarification, it should be noted that open and axial coding is quite “different from coding in quantitative research, which consists of applying a preestablished set of categories to the data according to explicit, unambiguous rules, with the primary goal being to generate frequency counts of items in each category” (Maxwell, 1996, p. 78). Once again, the goal for open and axial coding in this proposed study is to dissect and link the text into thematic “categories that facilitate the comparison of data within and between these categories and that aid in the development of theoretical concepts” (Maxwell, 1996, p. 79).

### **Selective Coding**

Selective coding is the process by which major thematic categories based upon the context in which they are embedded are synthesized and refined into a “constructed” narrative in order to facilitate theory building and coherent conceptual understanding (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 145).

The goal of this research is to discover the major thematic patterns that emerge from political columns, editorials, and opinion-editorials in *The New York Times* regarding President Bush’s professional reputation as it related to the initial phase of his stewardship of U.S. policy regarding Iraq in the fall of 2002. In the process, this research will provide some insight into whether Neustadt was correct, at least within the context investigated for this particular study, when he wrote, “There usually is a dominant tone, a central tendency, in Washington appraisals of a President” (1990, p. 53-54).

This study will follow an adapted version of Strauss and Corbin's (1998) criteria for determining a central category:

1. It must be central; that is, all other major categories can be related to it.
2. It must appear frequently in the data. This means that within all or almost all cases, there are indicators pointing to that concept.
3. The explanation that evolves by relating the categories is logical and consistent. There is no forcing of data.
4. The name or phrase used to describe the central category should be sufficiently abstract that it can be used to do research in other substantive areas, leading to the development of a more general theory.
5. As the concept is refined analytically through integration with other concepts, the theory grows in depth and explanatory power. (p. 147)

### **Open, Axial, & Selective Coding Are Forms Of Analytic Induction**

Open and axial coding essentially involves the process of analytic induction (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Haley, 1996; Lindolf & Taylor, 2002; Potter, 1996; Vidich & Lyman, 2003). As the researcher meticulously reads each element of the text, "the researcher asks [himself or fellow coders] if a logical connection exists between it and any other comment or note" within that text, for his "task is take specific instances...and demonstrate how they relate to broader concepts" (Taylor, 1994, p. 275). Analytic induction is as much an art as it is a science, because there is no objective standard for making these analytical judgments (Guba, 1990). Guba goes on to say that the execution of this analytical approach will vary to some degree from researcher to researcher. The credibility of analytical judgments derived from this methodological approach rests not



on whether a subsequent researcher would arrive at the exact same judgments given the same data but rather on the quality of the supporting rationale for those judgments.

### **Coding Memos**

The coding of each political column, editorial, and opinion-editorial will be recorded on a standardized coding memo. Each coding memo will record Type of Data (political column, editorial, or opinion-editorial), Citation, Thematic Categories, Properties, Dimensions, and Comments. This standardized approach will allow the researcher to systematically compare data items as well as recognize and analyze potential patterns or characteristics in the data from a multitude of angles and over time. These memos will also give other researchers access to the precise rationale for analytical judgments.

Each section of the coding memo is briefly described in the following section.

**Type of Data-** The type of data source is clearly identified. This section will allow to the analyst to systematically sort and compare the thematic features of political columns, editorials, and opinion-editorials. For example, Nicholas Kristof's *Guns of September* was labeled as a political column.

**Citation-** Each opinion piece will be cataloged and cited in APA style. As a result, the analyst will readily be able to sort the data by author, date, or title. The citation will also readily allow the analyst to perform a comparative analysis between recurring political columnists or op-ed contributors as well as analysis of thematic trends over time.

**Thematic Categories-** The identification and labeling of themes will be placed here. In an effort to remain grounded in the data, the analyst will often use the words of the investigated writers to come up with the names for the thematic categories. Words,

phrases, and entire passages from the text will be included in section in order to support and justify thematic judgments. For example, partisan policy argumentation is the thematic category for the words like case, call, and speech.

**Properties-** "... properties are the general or specific characteristics or attributes of a category" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 117). For example, evidence was regarded as a property of the partisan policy argumentation, which was a thematic category.

**Dimensions-** "...dimensions represent the location of a property along a continuum or range" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 117). For example, urgency was considered to be a dimension of evidence.

**Comments-** This section of these coding memos is designed to provide a forum where the analyst can reflectively consider the "range of potential meanings contained within" the text in order to determine the appropriateness of the proposed thematic categories as well as the exact nature of the supposed linkages between those thematic categories and the text (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 109). This section allows the contextual dimensions of the text to be recorded and fully examined. In this section, exhaustive comparison, sensitivity to contextual factors, rigorous questioning, brainstorming, and alternative explanations will be employed in an effort to achieve a more thorough analysis of the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

An example of the coding memo is located in the Appendix A.

### **Mode Of Analysis**

The mode of analysis for this study "is to peruse the entire document" in order to identify the overarching theme or themes as they pertain to President Bush's stewardship

of Iraq policy in individual political columns, opinion-editorials, and editorials and ultimately for the entire collection of writings (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 120).

### **Validity Safeguards**

#### **Comparative Analysis**

The process of constant comparison and evaluation associated with analytic induction gives the researcher the flexibility to recognize and remedy flaws in premature inferences and categorizations in coding schemes (Lindolf & Taylor, 2002; Taylor, 1994). The researcher for this study will constantly recheck his coding decisions in effort to achieve validity, precision, and consistency in his coding categories. Such a process will help ensure that the researcher detects the critical moment of redundancy, which indicates the point where a repeated item can be categorized as a major theme (Guba, 1990; Haley, 1996; Taylor, 1994).

#### **Alternative Explanations**

More broadly, the integrity of analysis in qualitative research can be strengthened by consideration of alternative explanations (Patton, 1990; Taylor, 1994). This means that the researcher seriously considers the possibility of better explanations that are more grounded in the data than his or her own explanation. Patton (1990) writes,

When considering rival organizing schemes and competing explanations the mind-set is not one of attempting to disprove the alternatives; rather, the analyst looks for data that support alternative explanations. Failure to find strong supporting evidence for alternative ways of presenting the data or contrary explanations helps increase confidence in the original, principal explanation generated by the analyst. (p. 462)

This process is analogous to how a college debater can improve his confidence in his own arguments, if after a genuine search, he unable to find adequate support for the perspective or rebuttals of his opponent.

## Chapter 5

### Results

The purpose of this study was to investigate the major thematic patterns that emerge from political columns, editorials, and opinion-editorials in *The New York Times* regarding President Bush's professional reputation as it related to the initial phase of his stewardship of U.S. policy regarding Iraq in the fall of 2002. The basis for this research objective is rooted in Richard Neustadt's seminal theory of presidential power, which not only claims that the "echoes" of the president's professional reputation can be heard in the opinion section of national newspapers like *The New York Times* but also that "there usually is a dominant tone, a central tendency, in Washington appraisals of a President" that emerges from the opinion section of national newspapers (1990, p. 53). If Neustadt's claim is true, one would suspect that an overarching theme or set of themes regarding the professional reputation of President Bush as it related to his stewardship of U.S. policy regarding Iraq between September 11, 2002 and November 8, 2002 would emerge from a collection of political columns, editorials, and opinion-editorials that appeared in *The New York Times* during the aforementioned specified time period.

Through multiple in-depth readings of the text, in which the analyst thoroughly crosschecked his thematic categories at the substantive and conceptual level in order to buttress the veracity of his analytical judgments, a definite mosaic of elite opinion regarding President Bush's stewardship of Iraq policy during the fall of 2002 emerged and crystallized around a well integrated set of themes. The broad contours of this thematic mosaic cut across a significant number of editorials, opinion-editorials, and political columns surveyed in this study to varying degrees of saliency. Even in cases

where the expression of themes identified as major or overarching sometimes seemed rather latent or opaque, one got the sense through sensitivity to the context in which the themes were embedded that these themes were fundamental to elite perceptions of the president's professional reputation. Thus, broadly speaking Neustadt's claim that typically "a dominant tone, a central tendency, in Washington appraisals of a President" will emerge from political commentary found in the opinion section of major newspapers was confirmed in this population of opinion writings (1990, p. 53).

The purpose of this inquiry was to document any emergence of "a dominant tone, a central tendency, in Washington appraisals of" President Bush's stewardship of Iraq policy, and in an effort to remain grounded in the data and in order to give the reader a sense of how the emergence of major themes took place, the results of this inquiry were reported by outlining the evolution of major themes from a single article to across several articles (Neustadt, 1990, p. 53). The actual contours of major themes regarding the president's professional reputation were delineated by highlighting their defining properties and dimensions.

### **Overarching Theme**

The overarching theme for this collection of elite writings was identified as the following: Substantively speaking, the president made a "forceful" case that Iraq was governed by a rogue regime that possessed illegal stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction in his speech to the United Nations on September 12, 2002 and in subsequent statements, but the president failed to make a strong evidentiary case that the Iraqi regime was an imminent threat that warranted the president's perceived policy preference of immediate preemptive military action.

The first half of the overarching theme signifies agreement with the president's characterization of the Iraqi regime as rogue given Iraq's supposed possession of illegal stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), its history of maltreatment of the Iraqi people, and its intransigence towards the international community (Kristof, 2002a; "The Iraq Test," 2002; "The Road Map for Iraq," 2002). The data suggested that there was widespread consensus within this elite community about the correctness of this specific aspect of the president's assessment of the Iraqi regime, because virtually no one within this collection of elite writings even bothered to challenge its veracity. However, the amount of credit that was afforded to the president by this collection of elites for this correct observation seemed to be somewhat limited by the widespread perception among the political establishment that the president was stating the obvious (Kristof, 2002a; Jundt, 2002).

However, the second half of the overarching theme indicates that many elites believed the president misinterpreted or exaggerated the meaning and implications of the Iraqi regime's rogue posture as it related to American and global security in order to rationalize a controversial policy prescription. Based upon the evidentiary case that the president proffered, the president was perceived to have assigned a degree of imminence to the Iraqi threat that was unwarranted, and as a result, the president's perceived policy preference of immediate preemptive military action was generally regarded as a premature and ill-advised overreaction. Furthermore, the president's perceived rush to adopt a risky and unnecessary prescription to the Iraqi threat even after his failure to empirically substantiate the imminence of the Iraqi threat engendered serious concern about the president's judgment and forbearance (Albright, 2002; Benjamin, 2002;

Danner, 2002; Viorst, 2002). Given its content, implications, and the generally negative tenor in which the aforementioned overarching theme was expressed, one got the sense that this theme's adherents had a generally negative opinion of the president's professional reputation.

### **Conceptual Category Of Overarching Theme**

The goal of this research was to provide a conceptual as well as a descriptive analysis of elites' overarching perceptions of the president's professional reputation as it related to the president's stewardship of Iraq policy, thus the overarching theme within this collection of elite writings was categorized "under more abstract explanatory terms" in order to facilitate deeper analytical analysis of the concepts that serve as this theme's infrastructure (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 114). This theme was broken-down into an overarching conceptual category, subcategories, properties, and dimensions (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The data suggested that this collection of elites demanded the president to make the case for his policy assessment and preferences based upon empirical evidence and sound logic, and their appraisals of the president's professional reputation seemed to emanate from their perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses in the president's rationale (Kristof, 2002a; "More Than One Option on Iraq," 2002; "The Politics of War," 2002; "The Healthy Politics of Iraq," 2002; "The Illusory Prague Connection," 2002). The content of the theme suggested that the president was perceived to have presented a "circumstantial" evidentiary case for his policy that failed to justify the president's diagnosis and prescription concerning the threat posed by Iraq ("A Measured Pace on Iraq," 2002; Albright, 2002; Byrd, 2002, p. A39; Rich, 2002a). Furthermore, a sensitive



reading of contextual auxiliary themes and the language that this overarching theme was couched in also suggested the president's case was perceived to be suspect due in part to the undue influence of a radical and inflexible ideological perspective (Dowd, 2002c, 2002d; Friedman, 2002b; Krugman, 2002b; Rich, 2002a).

The overarching thematic category was policy argumentation, because the overarching theme essentially amounted to the expression of the substantive content of an appraisal of the case, rationale or argument that the president put forward for his policy. One got sense that many elites perceived that the president interpreted the Iraqi threat in part through the prism of an ideology, so ideology was considered to be a defining property of the president's policy argumentation. This property was dimensionalized along a continuum of political ideologies. Ideological policy argumentation became the final label for the overarching conceptual thematic category.

The president's ideological policy argumentation was divided into two subcategories- diagnosis and prescription. Diagnosis pertains to elite perceptions of the president's assessment of the Iraqi threat. Prescription pertains to elite perceptions of the president's policy recommendations. Elite perceptions seemed predominately to turn on evaluations of the president's empirical evidence, so evidence was a defining property for both subcategories. The central purpose of the evidence was to shed light on the question of whether Iraq was an imminent threat or not, thus the property of evidence was dimensionalized along a continuum of urgency. Unintended consequences were a property of the president's perceived policy preference of immediate preemptive military action, and this property was dimensionalized along a continuum of probability regarding the likelihood that negative unintended consequences would result from the president's

perceived policy preference of immediate preemptive military action. A table of this thematic category and its defining properties can be found in Appendix B.

### **Discovery Of Fragments Of Overarching Thematic Category In Single Article**

The paradigmatic perspective for this study requires that analytical judgments be made inductively through immersion in the data and a commitment to accurately report the data from the perspective of the investigated subjects (Guba, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In an effort to illustrate the analyst's fidelity to rigorous analytic induction, the results are presented by demonstrating how major thematic categories were initially identified and confirmed in a single representative selection through open coding procedures, and then the analyst subsequently explicates the axial and selective coding process by which the emergence of major thematic patterns are identified within and across articles.

A September 13, 2002 column entitled *The Guns of September*, written by political columnist Nicholas Kristof as a response to the president's historic address to the United Nations on September 12, 2002, was selected as a starting point for discussing the process by which some of the concepts that make up the overarching theme were initially identified and confirmed in a single opinion piece, because this column provided clues as to how the overarching theme emerged and then consolidated within this population of elite writings. Given the fact that the American political system expects presidents to be a catalyst for the policymaking process by offering proposals that the political establishment can respond to, the fact that the one of the primary functions of the United Nations is to serve as a forum where nations can express their sentiments and proposals to their international colleagues, and the counterargument structure of Kristof's

column, Kristof seemed to have conceptualized the president's address as an important policy statement, argument, or case that should be scrutinized and debated (Kristof, 2002a; Neustadt, 1990). From the very beginning of his column, Kristof also seemed to have broken-down the president's address into two subcategories-- the president's diagnosis of the Iraqi threat and the president's prescription to resolve the Iraqi threat.

In the first three paragraphs of his column, Kristof (2002a) roughly outlined with a few exceptions the basic concepts that served as the cornerstones of the theme that gave expression to the dominate elite perceptions regarding the president's professional reputation:

President Bush yesterday offered an eloquent, forceful and overdue call for the U.N. to hold Saddam Hussein accountable.

Just one problem: He cited no evidence of any immediate threat, no reason that invading Iraq is any more urgent today than it was in, say, 2000, when Mr. Bush as a candidate huffed and puffed about Saddam but never shared with voters any plans for an invasion.

For months there had been hints about intelligence that the administration supposedly has gathered about an imminent threat and about links to terrorism. So it was deflating to hear again that Saddam is a monster whose regime tortures children in front of parents. All true- as it was a decade ago. (p. A27)

In these opening paragraphs, Kristof suggested that the Iraqi regime had a record of brutality towards its own people that extended back a decade, thus he indicated agreement with the president's condemnation of the Iraqi dictator as "a monster" (2002a, p. A27). He signaled support for the president's "eloquent, forceful and overdue call for

the U.N. to hold Saddam Hussein accountable” seemingly at least in part due to the Iraqi regime’s record of criminality, however the data also suggested that he parted company with the president with regards to the form that accountability ought take due to a difference of opinion as to what the record of Iraqi brutality meant to global security (Kristof, 2002a, p. A27). For Kristof, evidence of cruelty and oppression by the Iraqi tyrant against his own domestic population did not constitute an “imminent Iraqi threat” to American or world security, thus accountability for the Iraqi regime need not come in the form of a military invasion (2002a, p. A27).

Kristof’s suggested that his deflated response to the president’s address was due in part to the president’s failure to use his address as the forum to unveil the “intelligence that the administration supposedly has gathered about an imminent Iraqi threat and about links to terrorism” (2002a, p. A27). The fact that Kristof’s opinion of the president’s address seemed to rise or fall on basis of his perceptions regarding the quality of the presented evidence and the degree of congruence between what the evidence meant and what the president recommended in light of that evidence suggested that Kristof conceptualized evidence to be the infrastructure of the president’s policy statement. In a more detailed conceptual sense, one might say that empirical evidence was a defining property of the president’s policy argumentation.

Close examination of the data seems to suggest that Kristof’s appraisals of the president’s evidence regarding the Iraqi threat and ultimately his appraisal of the president’s policy prescription of military invasion turns on the level of urgency Kristof attributes to the Iraqi threat. Kristof provides some clarification of what he regards as strong evidence of an urgent threat, when he compared and contrasted President Bush’s

evidence against Iraq to the Kennedy administration's dramatic presentation of photographic evidence of "Russian missile sites in Cuba" at the United Nations during the Cuban Missile Crisis (2002a, p. A27). In Kristof's mind, President Kennedy, unlike President Bush, was able to extinguish any potential skepticism about the veracity or imminence of the threat posed by the Soviet missiles by presenting strong empirical evidence of their existence, and he was also able to establish credibility for his stewardship by proposing a thoughtful response that was commensurate to the level of danger that the evidence indicated:

Contrast Mr. Bush's appearance with a legendary moment at the United Nations. On Oct. 25, 1962, during the Cuban missile crisis, Ambassador Adlai Stevenson denounced the new Russian missile sites in Cuba.

The Russians and Cuban scoffed that it was all a lie, so Stevenson brought in an easel and blown-up photos of the Cuban sites.

Where is the comparable evidence of urgency today?

It's the Bush Administration that raised the parallel to the missile crisis, noting that Kennedy had considered pre-emptive strikes. Fair enough.

Yet it is the differences that are most telling. To begin with, Kennedy used the U.N. spotlight to offer specific, incontrovertible evidence of an urgent new threat – and then opted not for an invasion of Cuba but for an internationally supported naval quarantine.

"Yes, Kennedy did consider a lot of alternatives, including military strikes," recalled Theodore Sorensen, a key aide to Kennedy during the crisis.

"But after considering the innocent civilians who would be killed, considering the

international law that would be broken, Kennedy rejected that possibility.”

(Kristof, 2002a, p. A27)

In this comparison, Kristof seemed to suggest that President Kennedy had proffered evidence of an imminent threat that was stronger than any evidence President Bush had proffered regarding Iraq, yet President Kennedy seemed more reluctant than President Bush to propose preemptive war. Why? The answer seemed due to Kennedy’s concerns over unintended consequences. Kristof perceived Kennedy’s reluctance to be an admirable sign of humble forbearance regarding the unintended consequences of war, which he regrettably found to be lacking in President Bush’s stewardship of Iraq policy.

Kristof refers to the notion of urgency or imminence six times in this column as a benchmark for assessing evidence regarding threats to national security and the appropriateness of suggested policy prescriptions for those threats, particularly when those policy prescriptions involve the potential of military action. His column suggested that he differentiated evidence regarding the meaning of threats along a continuum of urgency. Thus, urgency was a dimension of the evidence regarding the Iraqi threat.

Based upon Kristof’s analysis of the evidence presented by the president in his address to the U.N., Iraq did not warrant the characterization of imminent or urgent threat, because Iraq did not rise to a certain level of urgency. Kristof highlighted the fact that “every president until now has chosen to deter and contain Saddam” (2002a, p. A27). As a result, he appeared to be skeptical of abandoning the longstanding policies of deterrence and containment in favor of the president’s suggestion of preemptive military action. Throughout his column, Kristof (2002a) seems to be looking for the president to present new and compelling evidence that not only undermines the logical and factual

basis of the United States' longstanding policy towards Iraq but also justifies the president's risky policy prescription of preemptive military action:

Before launching a war, Mr. Bush still needs to show two things: first, that the threat is so urgent that letting Iraq fester is even riskier than invading it and occupying it for years to come; second, that deterrence will no longer be successful in containing Saddam. (p. A27)

The above passage reveals that Kristof's aversion to the president's policy recommendation of war was rooted not only in the belief that the president failed to demonstrate that Iraq was an imminent or urgent threat but also in the belief that the president failed to appreciate the potential risks associated with war. As one scrutinized the contextual meaning of the language that Kristof's critique of the president's policy prescription was embedded in, one got the sense that risk in the form of unintended consequences was what Kristof feared the most about the president's prescription of war. History books, leadership seminars, and policy white papers are filled with lessons learned regarding examples of statesman who were undone by their failure to guard against the unintended consequences of war. The fact that Kristof, as the centerpiece of his column, made a point to compare President Bush's strategy in Iraq to President Kennedy's leadership during the Cuban Missile Crisis spoke to the depth of his concern regarding the possibility of negative unintended consequences resulting from an armed invasion of Iraq. President Kennedy's acute sensitivity to the potential dangers of miscalculations during the Cuban Missile Crisis largely contributed to his historically lauded professional reputation as a shrewd crisis manager (Freedman, 2000; Neustadt, 1990). In Kristof estimation, President Bush, regrettably, does not fare well in his

comparison to President Kennedy, because the president's articulation of his policy prescription demonstrated a lack of awareness for the potentially calamitous consequences of miscalculation.

President Kennedy was deeply conscious that wars can slip out of control, and during the crisis he read Barbara Tuchman's "Guns of August."

Mr. Sorensen [senior aide to J.F.K.] recalls Kennedy telling aides that he didn't want future generations asking how the missile crisis had spiraled into war and nobody having a good answer.

In his speech yesterday, President Bush displayed Kennedy's toughness, resolve, and even eloquence. But he did not display the other qualities of leadership: humility about the risks of miscalculation, a passion to avoid war. (Kristof, 2002a, p. A27)

Kristof's column suggested that the high uncertainty associated with military action and the possible unleashing of catastrophic unintended consequences should temper the president's predilection for war. In fact given the high uncertainty associated with war, Kristof seemed to believe that a president who can successfully manage national security threats without resorting to war should be applauded, and this type of presidential leadership should be imitated when possible. Once again, Kristof (2002a) cites Kennedy's humility, restraint, and vigilance against miscalculation in the face of great uncertainty during the Cuban Missile Crisis as a stark contrast to President Bush's approach towards Iraq in the fall of 2002:

Graham Allison, a professor at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government who has written a book about the missile crisis, noted that Kennedy had stipulated that



the missiles absolutely had to be removed from Cuba. But Kennedy turned first to diplomacy and a blockade. He offered the Russians a graceful exit and thus saved lives and avoided a dangerous spin into the unknown.

Today as well, why shouldn't war be a last resort instead of the first tool that President Bush grabs off the shelf? (p. A27)

In light of Kennedy's appreciation for the risks associated with war, Kristof (2002a) speculated about how Kennedy would have responded to the Iraq controversy:

How would J.F.K. have handled Iraq?

"As a believer in the U.N., he would have done everything he could, with U.S. muscle, to get U.N. inspectors in there," Mr. Sorensen believes. Such a Kennedyesque approach, built around robust international inspections backed by the threat of force as a last resort, would also reduce the political fallout of a war if it eventually erupted. (p. A27)

The totality of this line reasoning suggested that Kristof believed that negative unintended consequences are a likely property of the president's policy prescription of war. However, the president was not helpless, because he could have developed his sensitivity to unintended consequences through prioritization and strategic planning. President Bush's professional reputation suffered, because the president's seemingly demonstrated no sensitivity or forbearance regarding potential unintended consequences.

To Kristof's disappointment, rather than emulating Kennedy's resolute yet responsibly restrained approach President Bush seemed determined to leap into the abyss of war without sufficient justification. Kristof (2002a) seemed to hint at the possibility that the president intended to implement his policy preference of immediate preemptive

war regardless of whether he made a case deemed compelling by the political establishment or not:

Unfortunately, what we still have not heard from Mr. Bush is a compelling case for the one course of action on which he seems fixated- immediate war. (p. A27)

So what is the major theme that emerged from this column? Before this question is answered it is important note a few central features of the following explanation regarding the results. In keeping with the mission of qualitative research, the coding procedures and analysis of this study were designed to present the data from the perspective of the participants, and as a result, the following integrated thematic categories and thematic streams of thought are presented in the same synthesized configuration as the participants presented it.

Taken altogether Kristof's column suggested a mixed indictment of the president's ideological policy argumentation: The president made a "forceful" case that Iraq was governed by a rogue Iraqi regime in his speech to the United Nations on September 12, 2002, but the president failed to make a strong evidentiary case that the Iraqi regime was an imminent threat that warranted the president's perceived policy preference of immediate preemptive military action.

Based upon the evidence and reasoning showcased in the president's U.N. speech (ideological policy argumentation), the president mischaracterized the evidence regarding the Iraqi threat by attributing a high level of urgency to it that was unwarranted. In Kristof's estimation, the president failed to recognize or acknowledge the unintended consequences that might be unleashed by a premature move to war. The fact that the president "seems fixated" on preemptive war may explain his dubious and potentially

ideological interpretation of Iraqi threat (Kristof, 2002a, p. A27). In light of these deficiencies, the president's recommendation or policy prescription of war against Iraq was unjustified.

One might reasonably infer from Kristof's column that he believed that the president's recommendation of war was not only premature but also dangerously reckless and irresponsible. From Kristof's perspective, President Bush seemingly lacked the insight, judgment and forbearance necessary to address the policy dilemmas presented by Saddam's Iraq. The content and the overall tone of the column suggested that Kristof had deep and seemingly negative misgivings about President Bush's professional reputation.

#### **Identification Of A Thematic Pattern Across Articles**

Broadly speaking, the contours of the thematic mosaic identified in Kristof's column emerged rather evenly across the majority of editorials, opinion-editorials, and political columns surveyed in this study. The pervasiveness of the aforementioned thematic sentiment constitutes a general consensus of opinion regarding the president's stewardship of U.S. policy towards Iraq in the fall of 2002 and a confirmation, within this particular context, of Neustadt's claim that typically "a dominant tone" regarding the president's professional reputation emerges amongst political elites (1990, p. 53).

The grouping of selections under the same overarching thematic heading was determined by identifying general correspondence between thematic categories and their defining properties and dimensions (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). When the analyst detected redundancy in the data, the analyst declared the establishment of a thematic pattern (Taylor, 1994).

Certainly the reader will detect some thematic variation from Kristof's articulation in the following selections. For example, the overarching theme's characterization of the Iraqi regime evolves to include the consensus view that the Iraqi regime possessed illegal stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction (Albright, 2002; "A Measured Pace on Iraq," 2002; "The Iraq Test," 2002). In Kristof's specified column, he alluded to the uncertainties, miscalculations, and negative ramifications that often emerge from war without providing much clarification (2002a). In this population of opinion pieces, a degree of clarity about potential unintended consequences begins to emerge with a significant number of elites citing the possibility that a war with Iraq could divert America and the world from the global war on terrorism (Albright, 2002; Dowd, 2002b; "The Iraqi Chessboard," 2002). Close examination of the data also revealed that the expression of concern over uncertainties, miscalculations, and ramifications associated with war was slightly more muted in the editorials than it was in the opinion-editorials and political columns. In another instance, the inferiority of president's ideological policy argumentation in comparison to his presidential predecessors was not consistently stressed across this collection of elite writings.

Nevertheless, the presence of the other core elements of the theme specified within Kristof's September 13th column was certainly documented in a significant number of these writings, and this fact should become readily apparent to the reader upon further review. Furthermore, this type of analysis operates on the following premise:

. . . when an analyst groups data into patterns according to certain defined characteristics, it should be understood that not every object, event, happening, or

person fits a pattern completely . . . . This is okay within limits. (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 118)

The following excerpts from this population of writings are offered to substantiate the pervasiveness of the following theme amongst this population of opinion writers between September 11, 2002 and November 8, 2002: The president made a “forceful” case that Iraq was governed by a rogue regime that possessed illegal stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction in his speech to the United Nations on September 12, 2002 and in subsequent statements, but the president failed to make a strong evidentiary case that the Iraqi regime was an imminent threat that warranted the president’s perceived policy preference of immediate preemptive military action.

Based upon the evidence and reasoning showcased in the president’s public statements (ideological policy argumentation), the president misdiagnosed the Iraqi threat. He also mischaracterized the evidence regarding the Iraqi threat by attributing a level of urgency to it that was unwarranted. The president seemingly failed to recognize the possible unintended consequences that might be unleashed by a premature move to war. In light of these deficiencies, the president’s policy prescription of immediate military action against Iraq was unjustified. The president’s prescription was not only premature but also dangerously reckless and irresponsible.

### **Iraq Not Imminent Threat**

The initial reaction to the president’s historic address was considerable skepticism regarding the president’s claim that Iraq was an imminent threat to America or the international community that must be remedied through preemptive military action. *The*

*New York Times*' editorial board in a September 14, 2002 editorial entitled *A Measured Pace on Iraq* remarked:

The president made a compelling case in his U.N. speech on Thursday for eliminating Iraq's unconventional weapons and insisting that Baghdad comply with the Security Council longstanding disarmament orders. . . . Mr. Bush, however, did not show that immediate action [preemptive military action] was warranted. . . . (p. A14)

Jessica T. Mathews, president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and Charles G. Boyd, a retired general of the Air Force, a fellow of the Council of Foreign Relations (a respected and well-connected think tank on foreign policy issues), and the president of Business Executives for National Security, in a September 19th opinion-editorial entitled *Arming the Arms Inspectors* challenged the president's characterization of the Iraqi regime and his policy recommendation by offering an alternative to both:

Iraq's weapons of mass destruction pose a pressing threat but not an immediate one. There is time to do the right thing and no reason to choose war as a first resort. If the goal is Iraqi disarmament, there is a peaceful means to achieve it. (2002, p. A35)

*The New York Times*' syndicated columnist Tom Friedman expressed his skepticism towards the president's characterization of the Iraqi threat and the president's policy prescription for the Iraqi threat by contrasting them with the threat from Al Qaeda, the terrorist group responsible for the catastrophic terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and U.S.'s longstanding policy of deterrence towards Iraq:

First, Americans understand that the war against Al Qaeda in Afghanistan was a war of “no choice”- and millions of Americans would have volunteered to fight there. Iraq, however, is widely perceived as a war of “choice.” Yes, Saddam is dangerous, but he poses no immediate threat to us and has proved to be deterrable. (2002a, p. 13)

### **Skepticism Regarding Evidentiary Analysis & Trepidation Regarding Presidential Anticipation Of Unintended Consequences**

A bit of context is needed in order have an appropriate appreciation of the dynamic that was taking place between the president and this collection of political elites. Al Qaeda, under the leadership of Osama bin Laden, was the terrorist organization responsible for the catastrophic terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. In the wake of this traumatic event, President Bush pledged to wage an unwavering war against terrorist groups like Al Qaeda and their state sponsors (Purdum, 2003). In the buildup to confrontation with Iraq, Purdum goes on to report that the president routinely framed his policy towards Iraq as part of his strategy to win the larger war against terrorism. President Bush charged that Saddam’s Iraq was a part of the infamous “axis of evil”, because Iraq had weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and ties to terrorist organizations like Al Qaeda (Bush, 2002a, para. 20). Despite the forcefulness of the president’s pronouncements, many elites remained skeptical of the evidentiary basis of the president’s policy argumentation and unconvinced by administration suggestions that a military campaign against Iraq was part of the larger war on terrorism.

The president was perceived by many elites to be too cavalier in his promotion of his perceived policy preference of preemptive war, and this widespread perception led

many to believe that the president was irresponsibly underestimating the dangers of war. One opinion-editorial writer went so far as to suggest, “. . . the president is clearly choosing not to consider the worst-case scenario at all” (Viorst, 2002, p. A27). For example in the eyes of many elites, the president seemingly failed to adequately consider the possibility of negative unintended consequences resulting from his perceived policy preference of preemptive war. Unintended consequences are the unexpected artifacts of policy. A significant number of elites directly contradicted the president by suggesting that one potential unintended consequence of the president’s perceived policy preference was that a preemptive war with Iraq constituted a distraction rather than a component of the war against terrorism. This appraisal was negative towards the president’s professional reputation, because the commentators were deriding the president for not anticipating a foreseeable unintended consequence.

Madeleine K. Albright, who was Secretary of State during the Clinton Administration, wrote an opinion-editorial entitled *Where Iraq Fits In The War On Terror*, in which she acknowledged the rogue nature of the Iraqi regime but nevertheless refuted the president’s contention that Iraq was an imminent threat that warranted immediate preemptive military action:

The core of President Bush’s forcefully delivered message on Iraq at the United Nations yesterday was irrefutable. Saddam Hussein is a serial liar, a bully and a threat to peace. He has used chemical weapons, and he yearns to impress an Arab world that despises him by building a deliverable nuclear weapon.

The president made a strong case for international action that results in either Iraqi compliance with its obligations or the establishment of a new and,



ultimately, democratic government in Baghdad. . . .

I hope, however, that the president will not be pushed by his hard-line advisers into an unwise timetable for military action. . . . (2002, p. A27)

Albright (2002) goes on to note some of the evidentiary deficiencies in the president's case and a possible negative consequence of going to war with Saddam-distracting America and the world from the war against Al Qaeda:

It [Iraq] is striving to acquire or develop nuclear weapons, but there is no evidence it has succeeded. . . .

Although the president's speech yesterday was persuasive in many respects, he was neither specific nor compelling in his effort to link Saddam Hussein to other, more urgent threats. . . .

. . . But it makes little sense now to focus the world's attention and our own military, intelligence, diplomatic and financial resources on a plan to invade Iraq instead of on Al Qaeda's ongoing plans to murder innocent people. We cannot fight a second monumental struggle without distracting from the first one. (p. A27)

In an opinion-editorial entitled *Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda Are Not Allies*, Daniel Benjamin (2002) who was a member of President Clinton's National Security Council from 1994 to 1999 argued:

Undoubtedly, Saddam Hussein is eager to procure weapons of mass destruction. . . . These facts provide the basis for strong arguments in favor of removing him from power. But such arguments need to be considered in their own right, and

with the clear understanding that attacking Iraq would not be a continuation of the war against terror but a deviation from it.

Iraq and Al Qaeda are not obvious allies. In fact, they are natural enemies. (p. A25)

Tony Jundt, who is the director of the Remarque Institute at New York University, wrote a highly critical opinion-editorial entitled *The Wrong War at the Wrong Time*, which argued that even if you believe in the existence of Iraq's WMD the president's irresponsible comments regarding ties between Saddam and Al Qaeda could get America entangled into a disastrous military adventure that not only diverts America's attention from the war on terror but actually undermines America's capacity to respond to terrorist groups like Al Qaeda:

There is no clear link between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda. . . ; so advocates of a war with Iraq have taken to claiming that such a link can't be excluded, and therefore it should be "pre-empted." Few would deny that Saddam Hussein is evil. And he surely has evil means at his disposal. . . . But this is the wrong war at the wrong time. . . .

The worst thing about Mr. Bush's pre-announced war with Iraq is that it is not just a substitute for a war against terrorism; it actively impedes it.

(2002, p. 11)

The criticism regarding the veracity of the president's contention that a war with Iraq was a positive continuation of the overarching war against terror was not confined to opinion-editorials. *The Times'* colorful columnist, Maureen Dowd, in a column entitled *W.'s Conflicts of Interest*, lamented, much like Kristof did in his column entitled *The*

*Guns of September*, the lack of “compelling new evidence” and the possibility of undesirable consequences for the war on terror resulting from a war with Iraq:

Mr. Bush gave a splendid speech at the U.N. He is right that Saddam is a scum with Scuds.

But there was no compelling new evidence [of an imminent threat]. Mr. Bush offered only an usually comprehensive version of the usual laundry list. Saddam is violating the sanctions, he tried to assassinate Poppy, he’s late on his mortgage payments, he tips 10 percent, he has unjustifiable fondness for “My Way,” he gassed his own people, he doesn’t turn down the front brim of his hat. . . .

The Bush principle of pre-emption is already being adored and exploited by other world leaders who have their own devious uses for it. . . .

(2002b, p. 15)

In this same column, Dowd (2002b) went on to note the worries of Senator Daschle concerning the possible ramifications of the president’s recommendation of preemptive war on world stability and the war on terror:

Yet the senator worried that Mr. Bush’s preference for pre-emption could wreak havoc on global stability , and he wondered whether attacking Iraq would damage relationships with Indonesia, Pakistan, and the Middle East allies necessary to root out terrorists. “Is this now more important than the war on terror?” he asked.

Does America have conflicts of interests? Are we fighting one war in two places, or are the two wars tripping each other up? (p. 15)

From the very beginning of controversy, the editorial staff of *The Times* was extremely skeptical of even the insinuation by administration officials that Iraq had significant links to Al Qaeda. *The Times* editorial staff framed the issue by suggesting in a September 17th editorial entitled *The Iraqi Chessboard* that a war with Iraq was not part of the war on terror but rather like opening a second front against an entirely new enemy:

If President Bush ends up waging a two-front war against America's enemies, he must be certain that the distractions of fighting Iraq do not divert the nation's attention from its original goal.

There might well be benefits to weakening or removing Mr. Hussein, if the brewing conflict comes to that, but they would not include the dismantlement of Al Qaeda. . . . there is little evidence to suggest that he [Saddam ] and Al Qaeda are allies.

The war against terrorism has many pieces, some of which could be easily undermined by a war with Iraq. (2002, p. A28)

Columnist Frank Rich reported that more and more members of the president's own party were concerned that the president's recommendation of preemptive war against Iraq will have the unintended consequence of distracting the America from the war on terrorism.

The campaign against Iraq, wrote Brent Scowcroft [former national security adviser to President George H. W. Bush] in an op-ed that launched a thousand others, "is certain to divert us for some indefinite period from our war on terrorism." (Rich, 2002a, p. A15)

On September 28, 2002, *The Times* ran an editorial that also noted the president's inability to convince individuals like his father's national security adviser regarding ties between Iraq and Al Qaeda:

The administration has also lately taken to saying that there are extensive ties between Iraq and Al Qaeda, a connection that Mr. Bush and other officials did not emphasize before. If the administration wants to make this case, it will have to produce better evidence than the imprecise assertions made in recent days by top officials like Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. Brent Scowcroft, who was national security adviser to Mr. Bush's father and presently heads a White House advisory board on intelligence matters, said in a Wall Street Journal article last month that there was 'scant' evidence of a connection. (p. A16).

The initial skepticism by *The Times* editorial board regarding administration assertions of links between Iraq and Al Qaeda quickly consolidated and held throughout the two-month period of this study. In an October 23, 2002 editorial, *The Times* bluntly rebuked the Bush administration for, in its estimation, unsubstantiated and unscrupulous assertions concerning links between Iraq and Al Qaeda:

In its campaign for military action against Iraq, the Bush administration frequently asserts that it has proof of extensive ties between Iraq and Al Qaeda. What it has disclosed, however, is unconvincing. This is no way to justify a war... (p. A22)

With regards to the administration's dubious use of evidence in an effort to link Saddam to Al Qaeda and September 11th as a means of justifying war with Iraq, Maureen Dowd (2002b) offered a column entitled *Culture War With B-2's* that literally dripped

with scathing sarcasm and open contempt for the administration's handling of evidence. Her comments are directed technically at Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, but a complete reading of her column indicates that Rumsfeld is basically a proxy for criticism directed at the president:

Mr. Rumsfeld offered sophistry instead of a smoking gun: "I suggest that any who insist on perfect evidence are back in the 20th century and still thinking in pre-9/11 terms."

Ah, Rummy. Evidence, civil liberties, debating before we go to war . . . it's sooo 20th century. (p. 13)

The preceding passages seem to indicate a growing resentment, exasperation, and distrust of the president and his surrogates for their lack of candor amongst this population of elites.

Bob Herbert, in an October 12th column entitled *Dancing In The Dark*, provided one of the most comprehensive expressions of the growing suspicion, trepidation, and condemnation towards the president amongst this community of political elites. He begins his column by poignantly quoting the warnings of Churchill regarding the unpredictability of war:

"Never, never, never believe any war will be smooth and easy, or that anyone who embarks on the strange voyage can measure the tides and hurricanes he will encounter. The statesman who yields to war fever must realize that once the signal is given, he is no longer the master of policy but the slave of unforeseeable and uncontrollable events." (2002a, p. A19)

In accordance with Churchill's sage advice, Herbert argues that the American people should be made aware of the potential consequences of an Iraqi invasion. He writes, ". . . the American people should at least have a clear sense of the potentially very heavy consequences that may ensue"(Herbert, 2002, p. A19). However, instead of providing this service to the American people, Herbert contends that the president irresponsibly tried to create the public perception that war with Iraq would be controllable and easy:

The Bush administration, with its muscular rhetoric and trumpeting of a new generation of weapons even smarter than those used in the gulf war, would be happy to have the public think of the war as little more than a walk in the park. . . .

It can sound so easy. But the truth is that the people of the United States . . . are dancing in the dark on this issue. No one really knows where a U.S.-led military invasion of Iraq will lead. Saddam's regime can be destroyed, no doubt.

But what then? (2002, p. A19)

In regards to how an Iraqi war would impact the war on terrorism, Herbert asks, "How is it possible that a war in Iraq and its aftermath will not divert attention and precious resources from the crucial fight against more immediate terrorist threats" (2002, p. A19)?

The conclusion of Herbert's column seems to suggest that the president's lack of forthrightness and foresightedness regarding the many dilemmas associated with an invasion of Iraq had created a leadership vacuum that had left the public uninformed, and consequently the nation was vulnerable and ill prepared to meet the challenges it faced.

In a world as dangerous as ours has become, questions about the profound

implications of a U.S.-led invasion of Iraq deserve much more in the way of answers than we have now. Seldom has the U.S. had greater need for wise and candid and prudent leadership. This is not a good time to be dancing in the dark. (Herbert, 2002, p. A19)

### **Ideological Perspective**

The data suggested that many elites perceived that the president interpreted the Iraqi threat through the prism of ideology instead of through a rigorous fact-based analysis. More specifically, the data suggested that some elites believed that the September 11th attacks fundamentally altered and perhaps even distorted the president's perspective on Iraq. In the president's eyes, Iraq went from a "pathetic dictatorship" before 9/11 to an "imminent threat" that warranted immediate preemptive military action after 9/11, however, some elites believed that nothing had substantively changed about the Iraqi threat except the president's "own sensibilities after the 9/11" (Kristof, 2002b, p. A33).

In the aftermath of the catastrophic terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, a significant number of elites insinuate that the president's lack of sagacity concerning the Iraqi threat was due to the rising influence of "administration hawks" (Dowd, 2002a; Herbert, 2002). Administration hawks was a euphemism for advisers such as Vice President Dick Cheney, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, and Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz who trumpeted the virtues of a controversial ideological perspective known as neoconservatism. Neoconservatism argued that the aggressive, preemptive if necessary, use of American power and prestige in the toppling of illegitimate regimes like Baathist Iraq ought to be central to America's strategy in the war



on terrorism (Herrmann & Reese, 2004). Some elites seemed to suggest that the president's increasing fidelity to the ideological perspective of his hawkish advisers was reflected in the president's calculated exploitation of America's hypersensitivity to potential threats following the September 11th terrorist attacks in order to rationalize his audacious policy posture towards Iraq (Dowd, 2002c; Kristof, 2002b; Rich, 2002a). Some elites argued that long before his speech to the United Nations in September of 2002 the president "began presenting the proposed Iraq campaign as a keystone of his war on terror, an essential battle in a carefully constructed ideological crusade" (Danner, 2002, p. A27).

Many elites were disturbed by the president's perceived policy preference of preemptive war, because they believed that preemptive war was part of a new doctrine that marked a stark and destructive deviation from the historical practices and principles that America had built its security upon for over a half a century (Ackerman, 2002; Danner, 2002; "The Bush Doctrine," 2002; Wright, 2002). The data suggested that the president's doctrine of preemption was viewed as evidence that the president had drawn the wrong lessons from the September 11th attacks, and as a result, the president's rush to implement the neoconservative policy prescriptions of his advisers was making America and the world less rather than more secure. Ideology seemed to be pressing the president to adopt a more reckless approach, thus causing the president to misread or embellish some dangers and blinding the president to other dangers that he would ordinarily see. In an opinion-editorial entitled *The Wisdom of Imagining The Worst-Case Scenario*, Milton Viorst chastised the president for abandoning time-tested principles and practices that had safeguarded the nation against nightmarish scenarios in order to proclaim "a new doctrine

for America, the right of preemptive attack, to keep Saddam Hussein from using his weapons”:

But on Sept. 11 we all learned that even disasters can be of an unexpected magnitude. Fortrightness now demands that we gird not for some tepid end to our conflicts but catastrophes hitherto unimaginable.

In preparing for a war against Iraq, President Bush urges us to overlook that lesson. Categorizing Saddam Hussein as “evil,” he warns that the Iraqis have nuclear, chemical and biological weapons with which to attack us. Mr. Bush’s concern is justified, though some responsible statesmen at home and abroad believe he overstates the danger. But in suggesting that our forces will dispose of Saddam Hussein in a war that is quick and painless . . . the president clearly is choosing not to consider the worst-case scenario at all. . . .

All our presidents, Republican and Democratic alike, accepted the principle of avoiding a war that might wreck the planet. Mr. Bush is the first to question this principle, and his resolve is bolstered by Vice President Dick Cheney and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, both of whom close their eyes to the potential ramifications of a war with Iraq. . . .

Is not Sept. 11 a compelling reminder that the steadfast vigilance exercised by our leaders for half-century of cold war is wiser than rushing toward a worst-case outcome? (2002, p. A27)

Policymakers often must make subjective judgment calls in the analysis of incomplete information or complex policy dilemmas, but even with this caveat seemingly taken into account, the data suggests a prevailing albeit often subtle perception among

this collection of elites that the president's interpretation of intelligence regarding the Iraqi threat, the president's response to Iraqi diplomatic maneuvers, and the president's policy proposals inordinately and suspiciously reflected the maxims and hard line remedies proscribed by the president's perceived ideological perspective (Dowd, 2002d; Friedman, 2002b; Krugman, 2002b; Rich, 2002a ). Instead of making his case based upon a rigorous and pragmatic analysis of the facts, the president was increasingly perceived to be pushing an agenda. The implicit perception that an ideological and audacious assertion of presidential prerogative trumped facts, historical precedent, and real concern over the possible negative ramifications to American interests and prestige caused considerable trepidation and even some indignation about the president's stewardship of policy (Ackerman, 2002; Danner, 2002; Kristof, 2002c; Rich, 2002a; Viorst, 2002).

Nevertheless, to the dismay of some elites, the president seemingly held on to certain perceptions of Iraq irrespective of any countervailing facts, because those perceptions corresponded to certain ideological truths, aims, preferences, and perspectives that the president forged in the aftermath of the September 11th terrorist attacks. If certain facts were incongruent with the president's ideological perspective or policy agenda, some elites insinuated that the president's interpretation of the Iraqi threat would either ignore or change those discrepancies. For example, Paul Krugman, a columnist for *The New York Times*, reported in an October 25 column entitled *Dead Parrot Society* of Washingtonians' growing suspicions about the veracity of statements coming from the White House regarding the nature of the Iraqi threat and the prospects of war with Iraq:

A few days ago The Washington Post's Dana Milbank wrote an article explaining that for George W. Bush, "facts are malleable." Documenting "dubious, if not wrong" statements on a variety of subjects, from Iraq's military capability to the federal budget, the White House correspondent declared that Mr. Bush's "rhetoric has taken some flights of fancy."

Also in the last few days, The Wall Street Journal reported that "senior officials have referred repeatedly to intelligence . . . that remains largely unverified." The C.I.A.'s former head of counterterrorism was blunter: "Basically, cooked information is working its way into high-level pronouncements." USA Today reports that "pressure has been building on the intelligence agencies to deliberately slant estimates to fit a political agenda."

. . . the Bush administration lies a lot. (2002b, p. A35)

*The Times* columnist, Frank Rich, also noted a growing concern among elites regarding the veracity of administration statements regarding Iraqi's weapons of mass destruction program and its ties to terrorism:

What we have been getting instead is the one thing worse than no data- false data. For months, administration officials have been trying to implicate Iraq in 9/11 with the story of an alleged April 2001 meeting in Prague between Mohamed Atta and a Saddam spy. But the C.I.A. can find no evidence of this, and the 21-page fact sheet the U.S. released with the president's speech mentions no Saddam-9/11 link at all. As for nuclear arms, last weekend in his appearance with Tony Blair the president referred to a 1998 International Energy Agency report that said Iraq was "six months away" from developing a nuclear weapon,

adding “I don’t know what more evidence we need.” Plenty more, as it happens, because an agency spokesman says no such report exists. This is why those who most want to believe Mr. Bush, from a conservative G.O.P. Senate Leader like Don Nickles to our allies, keep saying (in Mr. Nickles’s words), “You’re not giving us enough.” . . .

. . . . there is a widening credibility gap between the White House’s marketing of the war and the known facts. (2002a, p. 15)

Phrases such as “facts are malleable,” “cooked information is working its way into high-level pronouncements,” “pressure has been building on the intelligence agencies to deliberately slant estimates to fit a political agenda,” and “there is a widening credibility gap between the White House’s marketing of the war and the known facts” indicate a perception of a president pushing an partisan agenda or cherry picking evidence to support a preconceived ideological perspective (Krugman, 2002a, p. A35; Rich, 2002a, p. 15).

After all, if a policymaker believed he was preaching the “gospel” regarding the Iraqi threat, then you might not expect him to lose faith because of a few incongruent facts. However, Kristof (2002b) cautioned against adopting the military option on such a dubious ideological perspective:

Before we prepare to go to war, we need to take a deep breath and make sure we are doing so to overcome a threat that is real and enduring, not one that we are conjuring up in part out of our trauma of 9/11. (p. A33)

Some elites tried to sharpen their remarks by highlighting the fact that Mr. Bush’s presentation at the U.N. had failed to convince even some of his staunchest

supporters that there was evidence that Iraq was imminent threat that warranted preemptive action by the United States, thus, indicating that even some of the president's traditional supporters desired "more facts than sermons" from the president (Rich, 2002a, p. 15). Furthermore, the fact that some of the criticisms being directed at the president came from his own political base suggests that these criticisms had some reach within this community and could not be dismissed as simply partisan attacks. Frank Rich, in a political column entitled *Never Forget What?*, reported:

Peggy Noonan, as faithful a George W. Bush partisan as there is, sharpened the question most pointedly on the Wall Street Journal editorial page on Wednesday, when she implored the president to give us facts instead of sermons in making his case. " 'Saddam is evil' is not enough," she wrote. "A number of people are evil, and some are even our friends. 'Saddam has weapons of mass destruction' is not enough. A number of countries do. What the people need now is hard data that demonstrate conclusively that Saddam has weapons of mass destruction which he is readying to use on the people of the U.S. or people of the West."

(2002a, p. A15)

Given ideology's presence in the expression of the president's policy argumentation, ideology was considered a property of the president's policy argumentation. Given its importance to the conceptual understanding of the policy argumentation theme, the word ideological was added to policy argumentation. Generally, the expression of this apprehension concerning the president's seemingly ideological stewardship of policy towards Iraq was more latent than the above examples, nevertheless this subterranean sentiment was detectable to an analyst who was

sufficiently sensitive to the contextual conditions in which it was embedded. Therefore, this property would be dimensionalized as low to moderate on a scale of saliency

### **Second Thematic Pattern**

The idea that the president made a “forceful” case regarding the rogue nature of the Iraqi regime in his speech to the United Nations on September 12, 2002 and subsequent statements but he failed to demonstrate that Iraq was an imminent threat that warranted immediate preemptive military action was certainly the most salient theme within this body of elite literature. However, there was another subordinate theme set that emerged from the data, and this second theme set was also critical to understanding these elite appraisals of President Bush’s leadership. This theme set was designated as slightly subordinate in relation to the aforementioned overarching theme, because its presence in the data was more irregular and subtle. The expression of this theme set tended to be more heavily concentrated and explicit in the editorials and political columns and somewhat more muted and sporadic in the opinion-editorials. As this analyst attempted to make sense of these documents through a contextually sensitive mindset, he got the sense that the subtle expression of this theme set was due to the fact its basic elements were so deeply ingrained in the collective psyche of this community that it had almost obtained the status of an a priori assumption, and therefore, this theme set was seemingly regarded by a significant segment of elites as a virtual given that did not need to be explained or defended. If one takes this view, one could certainly argue that this theme was on par with the first integrated theme explicated in this study.

On the surface, the president, as commander-in-chief, may appear to have considerable autonomy from Congress and other political constituencies in the area of

diplomatic and national security affairs. After all, the president has tremendous advantages such as direct supervision of the armed forces, access to secret information, and the bully pulpit of the presidency over potential political rivals (DeClerico, 2000). Nevertheless, Neustadt argues that the political system offers the president's rivals several constitutional and extraconstitutional mechanisms to undermine or thwart the president's leadership in diplomatic and national security affairs, and this ability to thwart presidential influence over policy even includes initiatives that involve the president's command powers (i.e. powers that by law and by the Constitution must be respected and followed) (1990).

Due to the diffusion of power within our interdependent political system, Neustadt contends that the essence of presidential power is "the power to persuade"(1990, p. 11). Key to the president's capacity to persuade is his professional reputation amongst political elites. Since professional reputation is predominately a receiver-based phenomenon, the president's capacity to shape his own reputation is somewhat constrained by the fact that presidential action is interpreted through the lens of others' experiences and interests (Gleiber et al., 1998; Neustadt, 1990). At times, a president's professional reputation can be countervailing force to his own influence. If significant number of elites believes that the president's actions are inimical to their interests or policy preferences, they can punish and even in the most extreme cases delegitimize him in the eyes of some by tarnishing his reputation as a leader (Neustadt, 1990).

The conceptual name of the second thematic category was elite skepticism of presidential commitment to collegiality and diplomacy. There was considerable elite



skepticism about the authenticity of the president's commitment to pursue a peaceful resolution to the Iraqi threat through collegial consultations with Congress and the United Nations Security Council before resorting to armed conflict. In fact, a significant segment of elites gradually seemed to have coalesced around the suspicion that the president's ulterior motivation for collegial enterprises with Congress and the Security Council was to obtain politically expedient legitimacy for a virtually preordained armed invasion against Iraq (Kristof, 2002b). The defining properties of this thematic category were presidential duplicity, presidential coercive impatience, presidential partisan demagoguery, and presidential contempt (see Appendix B).

### **Evidence For The Second Thematic Category**

On September 13, 2002, the day following the president's address to the United Nations, *The New York Times* in an editorial entitled *The Iraq Test* approvingly noted that the president in a "welcomed and important" departure from previous "discordant and belligerent rumblings about Iraq from various members of the administration" seemed to articulate in a coherent fashion "a preference for working in concert with other nations and seemed willing to employ measures short of war before turning to the use of force" (2002, p. A26). The editorial (2002) also surmised:

Along with Mr. Bush's commitment last week to seek Congressional assent for any American military action in Iraq, his address yesterday offers the prospect of a graduated response to threats presented by Saddam Hussein rather than the pell-mell rush to armed conflict that Vice President Cheney and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld have been floating. (p. A26)

The president's collaborative approach gave the United States the moral and political high ground in the debate over Iraq by focusing "the world attention's on the dangers of the Baghdad regime instead of the high-handedness of the United States", and furthermore, the multilateral approach forces the president's critics to "face up to their own rhetoric" by offering practical international solutions rather than just negative criticism ("The Iraq Test," 2002, p. A26). In short, this editorial characterized the president's diagnosis and prescription for the Iraqi threat as "well put" ("The Iraq Test," 2002, p. A26).

Up to this point, this editorial seems to be a rather strong endorsement of the president's United Nations speech and approach to Congress as it related to Iraq policy. However, closer inspection of the entire text suggests that the author(s) had serious misgivings about the hawkish tenor of president's prior leadership on this issue. There were disapproving references or allusions to past administration behavior such as "a summer of discordant and belligerent rumblings about Iraq from various administration officials". . . . "the pell-mell rush to armed conflict that Vice President Cheney and Secretary of Defense have been floating . . . . "the high-handedness of the United States" ("The Iraq Test," 2002, p. A26). One must remember that Neustadt argued that political elites attempt to discern "the appearance of a pattern" in presidential behavior, and "lacking a better base, they tend to rest their forecasts of the future on such patterns as they find"(1990, p. 52-53). The content of *The Iraq Test* editorial suggests that its author(s) was assessing the president's pretensions to collegiality through the prism of previous and in this case contradictory demonstrations (at least contrary perceptions) of presidential behavior, and this incongruence, in accordance with the tenets of Neustadt's

theory regarding professional reputation, was undermining the president's capacity to convince the sponsor(s) of this editorial of the veracity or authenticity of the president's collegial approach. In short, these prior misgivings served as a countervailing backdrop to the president's reported rhetoric that colored current perceptions regarding the president's collegial credentials. Given the president's baggage from elite perceptions of prior demonstrations of leadership, *The Iraq Test* editorial opined:

This will also be a test of Mr. Bush and the depth of his new-found collegiality. . . . Now he must demonstrate sincerity about working closely with the U.N. [and Congress] on Iraq, and developing a thoughtful and resourceful plan. He must not treat yesterday's speech as a symbolic gesture that can be quickly set aside to make way for an American attack. (2002, p. A26)

Given the context in which it was embedded, the above excerpt constitutes the overarching theme of this editorial as it pertains to the president's professional reputation, because this excerpt most completely reveals the intertwining sentiments that serve as the centerpiece of this editorialist(s)'s perceptions of the president's leadership.

When this editorial is deconstructed into interpretive abstractions in order to identify thematic categories and discern conceptual significance, one detects favorable allusions to diplomacy's capacity to resolve this controversy peacefully and the need to exhaust diplomatic initiatives before resorting to war. The data suggests that the president's leadership style will be critical to the success of diplomatic efforts, and in the case of this controversy, the degree of collegiality in the president's approach will indicate the president's level of commitment to the diplomatic process.

This editorial suggests that the authenticity of the president's pretensions to collegial leadership will be measured by the president's willingness to honor an ambiguously (at least at this stage) defined ethos that underlies collegial leadership. According to this editorial, the only explicit criterion for collegial leadership within the context of the Iraqi issue is "sincerity about working closely with U.N. [and Congress]", however, the last sentence of the above excerpt suggests through implicit contrast with the military alternative that patience is also a criterion of collegial leadership ("The Iraq Test," 2002, p. A26). Perhaps more importantly, the fact this editorial suggested that the president might quickly resort to the military option implies that there is a suspicion that the president, even at this early stage, is not firmly committed to the diplomatic process. Furthermore, if the president quickly resorts to armed conflict then this editorial suggests that one might reasonably infer that the president's machinations about his aspirations for a collegial solution were a politically expedient pretext for military action. Furthermore, by designating the potential military option as American, one might infer that this writer(s) has imbued his critique of the president's pretensions to international collegiality with notions inimical to collegiality like nationalistic unilateralism.

Thus, in this single editorial, one can begin to trace the preliminary contours or fragmentary basis of the following theme: There was considerable elite skepticism about the authenticity of the president's commitment to facilitate a peaceful resolution to the Iraqi threat through collegial consultations with Congress and the United Nations Security Council before resorting to armed conflict. In fact, sentiment among a significant segment of elites gradually seemed to have coalesced around the suspicion that the president's ulterior motive for consultations with Congress and the Security

Council was to gain politically expedient legitimacy for a virtually preordained armed invasion of Iraq.

### **Contours Of Second Thematic Category Across Articles**

The central excerpt from *The Iraq Test* suggests skepticism concerning the president's public commitment to engage in a genuine collegial dialogue with Congress and the United Nations about Iraq. The author(s) seems to be considering the possibility that the president's engagement of Congress and advocacy of multilateral diplomacy was a duplicitous "symbolic gesture" designed to provide political cover for a preordained American military attack against Iraq, although at this preliminary stage, its hard to determine the exact nature or configuration of the expressed sentiment without further explication of the sentiment's defining properties and dimensions ("The Iraq Test," 2002, p. A26). However, the contours of the theme emerged and came into clearer focus as one identified and defined its appropriate properties and dimensions across the entire range of applicable writings.

The contours of this second thematic category emerged from the data at different degrees of salience and meaning. Skepticism of the authenticity of the president's commitment to pursue a peaceful resolution to the Iraqi threat through collegial consultations with Congress and the United Nations Security Council before resorting to armed conflict was the most salient and pejorative among *The Times'* political columnists, as a result, the most negative perceptions of the president's professional reputation tended to be found in political columns. Skepticism of the president's leadership style and policy motivations was also quite salient among *The Times'* editorials, however the skepticism tended to be not as pejorative as the political columns.

Skepticism of the president's leadership style and policy motivations tended to be more sporadic, subtle, and balanced in the opinion-editorials.

### **Presidential Duplicity**

This body of elite literature on the professional reputation of President Bush reveals widespread skepticism about the president's "willingness to exhaust peaceful approaches before advocating war" through collegial enterprises with Congress and the Security Council, because the president's ideological framing of the September 11th experience, record, and rhetoric created a widespread perception that the president "was just going through the multilateral motions" in order to get political cover for a preordained armed invasion with Iraq (Dowd, 2002b, p. 15; Kristof, 2002b; "The Bush Doctrine," 2002; "Testing Iraq on Arms Inspectors," 2002, p. A30). The fact that an opinion-editorial by Vice President Cheney and Defense Secretary Rumsfeld "advocating a pre-emptive strike against Iraq was recently pulled from The Washington Post at the last minute because of fear at the White House that it might undermine the claim that Mr. Bush had not decided the issue", the growing perception that the president was using the war on terrorism "as rhetorical cover" for a confrontational posture against Iraq, and the failure of the administration to reveal its "bulletproof" evidence of links between Al Qaeda and Baghdad" were just some of the incidents cited by critics to buttress their suspicion that the president was being "resolutely coy about a decision to go to war that seems to have been made" already (Danner, 2002, p. A27; Jundt, 2002, p. WK11; "The Illusory Prague Connection," 2002, p. A22; Weisman, 2002, p. WK14). Even *Times'* columnist Thomas L. Friedman, who was cautiously supportive of the strategic underpinnings of the president's policy towards Iraq, reported that the president's

leadership was being undermined by the growing suspicion that the president's aggressive stance and diplomatic stipulations towards Iraq were designed to make it virtually impossible for Saddam Hussein to say yes to a diplomatic solution in a face saving manner, thus the president through duplicitous means was perceived to be creating a pretext for military action (2002b). In sum, there seemed to be a general sense within this literature that the president's policy towards Iraq bifurcated along a public tract that emphasized collegiality, diplomacy, and dubious assertions regarding Iraq's place in the war on terrorism and a private tract that emphasized belligerency, unilateralism, and militaristic proclivities, and the prevailing suspicion seemed to be that president's public efforts were primarily a means to put a more attractive face on a controversial yet controlling private policy (Dowd, 2002c, 2002d; Kristof, 2002c).

Some elites believed that the president was antagonistic to collegial enterprises, because he was more inclined to dictate or direct policy than debate or negotiate policy. For instance, *The Times'* columnist, Maureen Dowd, scoffed at the president's pretensions to collegial leadership, because she claimed that the president suffered from an "alpha girl" mentality that caused the president to delude himself into believing that "leadership was all about him" (2002d, p. A21). She believed that the president deep down did not like "a lot meddling from know-nothings in Congress" on the Iraq issue (2002b, p. 15). The president only "feigned interest in negotiation" in order to placate members of Congress who expressed trepidation about military action against Iraq (Dowd, 2002e, p. 13). In reality, Dowd (2002d) claimed that a duplicitous strategy designed to undermine any potential diplomatic solution to the Iraqi threat was in the works:

Mr. Bush said he needed Congressional support to win at the U.N., but he wants to fail at the U.N. so he can install his own MacArthur as viceroy of Iraq. (p. 13)

Dowd (2002c) went so far as to brazenly liken the president's attitude towards consultations with Congress and the Security Council to untoward chicanery by some teens on prom night when she wrote:

As my girlfriend Dana said: "Bush is like the guy who reserves a hotel room and then asks you to the prom." (p. 13)

In other words, the debate about the proper course of action was academic, because the president had already made up his mind. Dowd believed that there could be no doubt that the president and the hawks within his administration were using diplomacy to create a politically expedient pretext for the military invasion once the president began to move sizeable numbers of troops to the Gulf region:

As the Pentagon moves troops, carriers, covert agents and B-2 bombers into the Persian Gulf, the president, Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld continue their pantomime of consultation. (2002c, p. 13)

The warriors gave a raspberry to the U.N., making it obvious that Mr. Bush was just going through the multilateral motions by revealing that Gen. Tommy Franks is moving the U.S. Central Command from Tampa to Qatar to get ready for a war against Iraq. (2002b, p. 15)

Dowd was a part of a fairly large contingent of elites who expressed the view that the president was manipulating the diplomatic process in order to manufacture "an excuse to go war" that the American public, Congress, and the international community would



regard as legitimate (“A Delicate Balance at the U.N., 2002, p. 12). Columnist Frank Rich saw the president’s strategy towards consultations with Congress and the Security Council as a replay of a previous duplicitous game plan where the president “would do pretty much what he always intended after a few weeks of ostentatious ‘listening’”(2002a, p. A15). Columnist Bill Keller claimed the “consensus” view among Russians was that “the Bush overtures to the U.N. are laughably insincere, a belated effort to dress up an attack that is foreordained” (2002, p. A19). Jessica T. Mathews, president of the Carnegie Endowment of Peace, and retired Air Force general Charles G. Boyd predicted, “Soon the United States will declare the whole exercise [diplomatic negotiations at the United Nations Security Council] a failure and invade Iraq” (2002, p. A35).

Even on the doorstep of achieving a widely perceived diplomatic triumph at the Security Council in the form of a tough new resolution (i.e. United Nations Resolution 1441) that demanded immediate Iraqi compliance with previous United Nations’ disarmament orders, a significant contingent elites shared the fear that the president’s lack of faith in diplomacy as an ultimate solution would eventually “tempt” the president, despite the potential consequences, to sabotage or prematurely jettison the diplomatic process. In a column entitled *Be Careful What You Ask For*, Nicholas D. Kristof (2002b) gave voice to this elite unease with the president’s belligerent proclivities and forewarned his contemporaries of the national suffering that could potentially ensue from the president’s shortsighted leadership when he wrote:

Mr. Bush’s problem is that he has launched a diplomatic process in which he has little faith. The reality is that he went to the U.N. to get international legitimacy,

not weapons inspection. So he may soon be tempted to short-circuit the diplomatic process.

The resolution, as it is presently drafted, requires Saddam Hussein to make a full declaration of his secret programs within 30 days. It's a good bet that there'll be a lot of doubt that his declaration is completely truthful, and so hawks will encourage Mr. Bush to launch a war at that time. . . .

If that happens, we could be at war by year's end. We may be paying for such hubris for years to come. (p. A31)

### **Dimension- Speculation Versus Empirical Documentation**

The duplicity property attempts to capture the degree of disagreement or dissonance that elites perceive between the president's publicly articulated policy towards Iraq and what was perceived to be his private or actual policy towards Iraq. The property was dimensionalized along the basis of speculation versus empirical documentation. This rating scale was based upon the assumption that an evaluating elite commentator probably would have a higher degree of certainty about the president's duplicity, if he or she was willing cite or document specific demonstrations of presidential duplicity. This rating scale was also based upon the assumption that this community of elites would assign higher degrees of confidence and weight to observations by their colleagues that could be empirically documented versus observations by their colleagues that amounted to mere speculation, thus making perceptions based upon empirical documentation more influential in the determination of the president's professional reputation than perceptions based primarily upon speculation.

Given the inherently speculative nature of elite appraisals, one could argue that the speculation/empirical documentation dichotomy is not a good way to dimensionalize this property. However, this analyst would argue that the presence or absence of empirical documentation fundamentally altered the nature of the appraisal, because empirical documentation in comparison to undocumented speculation introduces more stringent notions regarding the verification or falsification of data. Furthermore, the empirical documentation designation includes appraisals that speculate at least to a significant degree on the basis of empirical documentation, while the speculation designation is reserved for appraisals that are totally or primarily based upon undocumented speculation. Thus, judgments regarding appropriate designations for appraisals were determined by the presence or absence of empirical documentation and by the context in which the appraisal was embedded. With these caveats, this analyst reasoned that the speculation/empirical dichotomy was a good way to differentiate or dimensionalize this property along a substantive continuum.

If an elite commentator documented dissonance within the president's policy with specific references to evidence then this opinion was generally designated as empirical documentation on the duplicity scale. Thus, when *The Times'* columnist Maureen Dowd referenced troop movements to the Gulf as evidence of the president's insincere "pantomime of consultation," this excerpt was given a score of empirical documentation on the duplicity scale (2002b, p. A21). If an elite commentator simply referenced perceived dissonance in the president's thinking or strategy about his policy, then this opinion was generally rated as speculative on the duplicity scale. Thus, when *The Times'* columnist Nicholas Kristof couched his speculation that the president "has launched a

diplomatic process in which he has little faith” in language that is matter-of-fact but no specific documentation is offered to buttress his speculation, the analyst for this study believed that this example warranted a designation of speculation (2002b, p. A31).

### **Presidential Coercive Impatience**

In the editorial entitled *A Measured Pace on Iraq*, which appeared in *The Times* the day after the aforementioned *The Iraq Test* editorial, one detects a noticeable increase in the skepticism directed at the president’s supposedly collegial approach to the Iraqi threat based upon the perception of presidential impatience with the deliberations of his interlocutors at the United Nations Security Council and Congress.

Mr. Bush was already sounding impatient yesterday, just a day after his address to the U.N. Unless the president has evidence indicating that Iraq is on the brink of fabricating nuclear weapons, he would be well advised to give the Security Council and Congress ample time to deliberate. He will only undermine support for his policy if he tries to stampede everyone into action.

(“A Measured Pace,” 2002, p. A14)

In the above excerpt, the president was warned about the potential negative ramifications for his policy and leadership if his impatience persists, and in the closing paragraph of this editorial, the warning was reiterated in distinctly more blunt language that also introduced a veiled allusion to presidential coercion.

If he [the president] expects to gain domestic and foreign backing for dealing with Iraq, he will need to treat Congress and the U.N. Security Council as partners and not as mere compliant bodies that can be bludgeoned into acting.

(“A Measured Pace,” 2002, p. A14)

In an editorial entitled *The Road Map for Iraq* for September 18, 2002 edition of *The Times*, the president was characterized as “pressing the U.N. toward a showdown with the Hussein regime” (2002, p. A30). The editorial also noted the president’s skepticism of the deliberations at the Security Council regarding a new resolution against Iraq, which in turn highlighted elite skepticism about the president’s commitment to a collegial leadership on this controversial issue. The editorial also chastised the president for his impatience with diplomacy and his coercive proclivities.

The Bush administration fears that sequential votes could lead to a stalemate, but if Washington is serious about working with other nations to restrain Iraq, it can’t expect to dictate every move to the U.N. (“The Road Map for Iraq,” 2002, p. A30)

In an October 10, 2002 opinion-editorial entitled *Congress Must Resist the Rush to War*, Democratic Senator from West Virginia, Robert C. Byrd, seemingly in a fit of exasperation condemned the Congress for abdicating its constitutional prerogatives and responsibilities in the face of “absurd” presidential impatience and pressure, and thus, by implication he seemingly was condemning the president for adopting an impatient and antagonistic approach to Congress that was inimical to facilitating the “due deliberation” regarding “the president’s use-of-force resolution” that the constitution required and American people deserved:

How have we gotten to this low point in the history of Congress? Are we too feeble to resist the demands of a president who is determined to bend the collective will of Congress to his will . . . . And why are we allowing the executive to rush our decision-making right before an election? Congress, under

pressure from the executive branch, should not hand away its Constitutional powers. (p. A39)

### **Dimension**

The property of presidential coercive impatience achieved a high degree of salience within collection of elite opinion writings. This property predominately was couched in emphatic language that suggested a high degree of presidential coercive impatience, and as result, the overall dimensional characterization for this collection of elite writing was high presidential coercive impatience.

### **Partisan Demagoguery**

The next property centers upon the concept of partisan demagoguery. Partisan demagoguery was defined as the fervent advancement of mores, objectives, and ideals associated with president's agenda, ideology or party through strategies designed to consolidate the president's political position and "to foment political divisions" or marginalization among the president's rivals (Davidson & Oleszek, 2004, p. 187).

The editorial board of *The Times* made perhaps its most explicit rebuke of the president's leadership when it charged that the president was unabashedly contributing to a corrosive atmosphere surrounding Congress's deliberations regarding Iraq. In the estimation of *The Times*, the president greatly undermined the legislature's capacity to honor its "solemn obligation in our constitutional system to weigh issues of war and peace . . . as free from partisanship as possible" by calling the patriotism of dissenters into question ("The Politics of War," 2002, p. A26; "The Healthy Politics of Iraq," 2002). In a seemingly selfish effort to gain "political advantage", the president's partisan demagoguery not only negatively impinged upon the prerogatives of Congress but

threaten to “severely damage the body politic” by taking a divide nation to war (“A Nation Wary of War,” 2002, p. A30).

In an editorial entitled *The Healthy Politics of Iraq*, *The Times*’ editorial board articulated a rather nuanced argument regarding presidential partisanship. Partisanship itself was not necessarily corrosive to the debate, but presidential partisanship that devolved into partisan demagoguery that sanctioned attacks against the patriotism or integrity of skeptics who raise questions about the president’s stewardship of diplomatic efforts or policy prescriptions represented a dereliction of presidential duty.

President Bush and the Democrats in Congress are suddenly in meltdown mode over the issue of who is playing politics on the eve of a possible war with Iraq. Mr. Bush has begun using the campaign against terrorism in his stump speeches, declaring that Democrats are “not interested in the security of the American people”. . . . None of this is unhealthy. We just wish all of this intensity was being directed at the issue of Iraq instead of people’s political motives. . . .

. . . . The Bush administration has to recognize the legitimate concerns of lawmakers who do not want to give the president a blank check to wage war wherever he wants in a region and without any initial steps being taken to try to avoid a conflict. Casting slurs on the patriotism of anyone who raises a question is unfair and borders on un-American. (“The Healthy Politics of Iraq,” 2002, p. A28)

The perception that the president irresponsibly questioned the patriotism of dissenters was not confined to *The Times*’ editorial board. Columnist Frank Rich wrote, “To question the president on Iraq is an invitation to have one’s patriotism

besmirched”(2002a, p. A15). In an opinion-editorial entitled *Defend the Country, Not the Party*, Democratic House minority leader Richard Gephardt expanded the critique by arguing that presidential besmirchment of the patriotism of dissenters was part a calculated and cynical campaign to market the war “to the G.O.P.’s advantage in the 2002 elections” (2002, p. A31). Essentially by rebuking the president for making support or disagreement with the president’s Iraqi policy a referendum on a person’s fitness for elective office and patriotism, Gephardt (2002) argued that the president’s partisan demagoguery was not only distasteful but also potentially tragically shortsighted, because the president’s partisan actions and divisive rhetoric were unnecessarily undermining the bipartisan support essential to any long term resolution of the Iraqi crisis:

President Bush himself has decided to play politics with the safety and security of the American people. . . . he went so far as to say that the Democrat-led Senate is “not interested in the security of the American people.”. . .

This is not how a great nation should debate issues of war and peace. To question people’s patriotism for simply raising questions about how a war is to be fought and won—to say that anybody who doesn’t support the president’s particular policy on national security is against national security—is not only insulting, it’s immoral. . . .

But the statements by the president and the vice president only serve to . . . undermine trust and thwart cooperation. If Mr. Bush and his party continue to use the war as a political weapon, our efforts to address the threat posed by Iraq will fail (p. A31)



Conceptually speaking, Gephardt and other elites who shared his views seemingly insinuated that the president's partisan demagoguery was not only distasteful and shortsighted but also constituted a dereliction of presidential duty. The president's partisan demagoguery constituted an abdication of his responsibility to be a sober constitutional officer who facilitates deliberative policymaking between the various branches of government particularly regarding "issues of war and peace" (Gephardt, 2002, p. A31; Tulis, 1987).

### **Dimension**

Within this population of writings, the president was repeatedly suspected or accused of partisan antagonism towards political dissenters ("Germany Speaks," 2002; Krugman, 2002b; Rich, 2002b). Even when the president was seemingly pursuing policy internally through institutional channels in Congress and the United Nations, his actions were perceived to be marred by external tactics that seemed to be designed to pressure, discredit or circumvent institutions like Congress and the United Nations by a significant number of elites (Byrd, 2002; Gephardt, 2002). As a result, the overall characterization for this body of writings was scored as high on partisan demagoguery property.

### **Presidential Contempt Toward The Integrity & Prerogatives Of Congress & U.N. Security Council**

When this data was "constructed" into a narrative of interpretive abstraction in order to deduce the conceptual meaning and significance of the properties of the second major thematic pattern, a significant subcategory emerged (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The subcategory that emerged was the notion of presidential contempt for the integrity and prerogatives of Congress and the Security Council as it related to deliberations over Iraq

policy, and this subcategory and in turn its parent overarching theme are defined by properties such as presidential duplicity, presidential coercive impatience, and presidential partisan demagoguery.

One of the strongest and most persuasive sentiments in this collection of elite writings was the need for sober, patient, and thoughtful deliberation regarding the Iraqi threat between the president, Congress, the U.N. Security Council, and the American populace, and the quality of the president's leadership would be judged on whether his leadership facilitated or undermined sober, patient, and thoughtful deliberations among these groups. When one abstracts from the data in order to discern conceptual meaning and significance, one gets the sense that this community of elites had constructed their understanding of the Iraqi controversy within the confines of a bargaining society where reciprocity, tolerance, and deliberation were the governing norms (Kernell, 1997; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In other words, if genuine and inclusive deliberation was to take place among parties that have longstanding relationships with each other then each party had to respect the integrity, prerogatives, sentiments, and interests of the other bargaining partners. In the estimation of a significant number of elites within this population, the president, despite prior presidential statements to the contrary, had established a consistent record of enmity towards the norms of humility, tolerance, reciprocity, shared responsibility, and deliberation across a wide range of domestic and foreign issues.

According to this expressed elite perspective, if the president was serious about adopting a collegial approach to the Iraqi threat, he might have regarded "United Nations as more than a distraction" given the fact that "for a lot of countries it [United Nations] is the closest thing to feeling enfranchised in world affairs" (Keller, 2002, p. A19). Instead,

the president was “treating it [United Nations] with undisguised petulance” (Keller, 2002, p. A19). Thus, no one should be surprised that the international community perceives “a certain degree of imperial contempt for the rest of the world . . . oozing” from President Bush’s deliberations at the United Nations (Friedman, 2002a, p. A27). In a column entitled *The Jack Welch War Plan*, Columnist Frank Rich (2002b) argued that the president’s longstanding record of contempt for the independent prerogatives of Congress was analogous to the contempt some business chief executives demonstrated towards the independent responsibilities and prerogatives of their respective corporate boards and this presidential contempt was bound to be reflected in the president’s congressional relations regarding Iraq:

. . . this presidency is all of one consistent piece, whether it is managing our money or managing a war. Now, as pre-9/11, it reflects the C.E.O. ethos of the 1990’s bubble . . . . Two weeks before his inauguration, Mr. Bush invited Jack Welch, Ken Lay and a bevy of C.E.O.’s down to Texas, and he has always run the White House by the cardinal rules in their playbook. A chief executive can do no wrong. The directors (for which read Republicans in Congress) and outside directors (that would be the Democrats) are expected to give him a blank check and question nothing. . . (p. A17)

Based upon this perceived pattern of past presidential disposition and behavior, Rich (2002b) anticipated to his chagrin that the president will continue to exemplify a contemptuous disposition towards Congress even though this model of leadership had been “discredited”:

Now that we know that this model was a sham . . . you would think the Bush Administration might revisit it. But instead it is following a discredited modus operandi more slavishly than ever, even as it prepares to fight a new war.

(p. A17)

Thus, once again the data seemingly confirm Neustadt's (1990) contention that a president's professional reputation is largely based upon retrospective perceptions of perceived patterns in past presidential disposition and behavior. In this case, the above quotations give voice to an emerging sentiment among elites that given the president's track record it is reasonable to suspect that the president felt contempt towards the prerogatives of Congress and the United Nations, and as result of this contempt, there was considerable suspicion about the sincerity of the president's commitment to collegial diplomacy as a means to "exhaust peaceful approaches before advocating war" ("Testing Iraq on Arms Inspectors," 2002, p. A30).

In sum, the prevailing sentiment of these elites put forth the notion that the president's leadership style or approach was critical to determining the ultimate policy outcome. A clear majority believed that all diplomatic measures should be exhausted before resorting to war. The prevailing belief among these elites was that collegiality by the president was essential to facilitating the type of deliberation, consensus, and collaboration necessary for diplomatic success. Demonstrations of presidential leadership that were perceived to be inimical to diplomatic success were ridiculed and engendered skepticism about the president's commitment and capacity to resolve the Iraqi threat peacefully. The president's professional reputation suffered as a result.

## Chapter 6

### Discussion

#### Conceptual Significance Of Overarching Theme

The overarching thematic pattern that emerged from this population of opinion writings in *The New York Times* was following: The president made a “forceful” case that Iraq was governed by a rogue regime that possessed illegal stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction in his speech to the United Nations on September 12, 2002 and in subsequent statements, but the president failed to make a strong evidentiary case that the Iraqi regime was an imminent threat that warranted the president’s perceived policy preference of immediate preemptive military action.

Based upon the evidence and reasoning showcased in the president’s threat assessment, the president misdiagnosed the Iraqi threat. He also mischaracterized the nature of the Iraqi threat by attributing a level of urgency to it that was unwarranted. The president seemingly failed to recognize or acknowledge the possible unintended consequences that might be unleashed by a premature move to war. In light of these deficiencies, the president’s recommendation or policy prescription of war against Iraq was unjustified. The president’s recommendation of war is not only premature but also dangerously reckless and irresponsible. Taken altogether, this population of political elites seemingly had negative orientation towards the president’s professional reputation as it related to his stewardship of Iraq policy in the fall of 2002.

The analytical or conceptual significance of this pervasive sentiment towards the president’s professional reputation regarding his stewardship of U.S. policy towards Iraq in fall of 2002 is three-fold.

First, a close examination of the data seems to reveal implicit suggestions of presidential incompetence as it related to the threat posed by Iraq. The idea being that the president demonstrated a serious lack of understanding of the multifaceted nature of the Iraqi issue. For example, there were serious and widespread misgivings about how the president analyzed and characterized the threat from Iraq. There seemed to be a consensus view among elites that the evidentiary premises of the president's ideological policy analysis were dubious at best, and presidential reasoning that was derived from those questionable premises was seriously and dangerously flawed. Why was the president erroneously suggesting that the threats from Saddam and Al Qaeda were actually one and the same (Benjamin, 2002)? Why did the president seemingly lack an appreciation for the potential pitfalls, ramifications, and uncertainties of war (Herbert, 2002; Kristof, 2002)? There was considerable unease about the possibility that Iraq was distracting the president from more pressing threats like Al Qaeda (Albright, 2002; "Iraqi Chessboard," 2002; Jundt, 2002).

Second, the data suggests that this community of political elites believed or was beginning to believe that the president's policy argumentation was not simply flawed, misguided, or disingenuous but rather constituted a dereliction of presidential duty that unnecessarily imperiled the nation's international prestige, security, and future prospects. Mark Danner, a contributor to *The New Yorker* magazine and a faculty member at the University of California at Berkeley, wrote an opinion-editorial entitled *The Struggles of Democracy & Empire* (2002) where he blamed the president's duplicitous policy argumentation for facilitating a false and ill-formed national debate regarding Iraq:

In promoting the Iraq expedition as a necessary response to an immediate terrorist threat, however, they [the Bush Administration] have failed to prepare the American public for what looks to be a long and costly engagement in the Middle East. Much of the confusion surrounding the Iraq debate thus far is owed to the justifications proffered and the more elaborate geopolitical enterprise motivating many in the Bush administration. (p. A27)

Danner's remarks touched on a seemingly growing suspicion, even at this early stage of the controversy, that the president was irresponsibly manipulating the data and the national debate in order to surreptitiously advance an ulterior political agenda (Dowd, 2002a; Krugman, 2002a, 2002b). Even though it was only in its embryonic phases, the mere insinuation that the president of the United States was peddling "false data" involving national security and regarded "facts as malleable" in order to support his shifting rationales on Iraq policy, is a serious condemnation of presidential character, particularly in the post-9/11 era, and a early warning sign of the fragile state of the president's standing within the political establishment (Krugman, 2002b, p. A35; Rich, 2002a, p. A15). The fact that these types of insidious insinuations emerged rather early in the time frame of this study suggests that contextual factors prior and surrounding the scope of this study were having an impact the president's professional reputation regarding Iraq.

Danner (2002) indicted the president's leadership for the clouds of suspicion hovering over his policy and for irresponsibly embarking an ill-prepared and divided nation on an audacious and treacherous adventure in Iraq:

Thus far, he [President Bush] has abdicated his responsibility to build the political support he will need to shape Iraq, and the Middle East, that will follow Saddam Hussein.

For America, the great risk of this new crusade is that the political will might be lacking to carry it out – that the public, unprepared for the imperial ambitions about to play out in the Middle East, will quickly lose heart if the project comes to grief; that after the inevitable setbacks and perhaps after further attacks at home, the occupation will grow unpopular and that even those in the administration whose vision is not so ambitious will want to cut and run, leaving ruin once more in America's wake. (p. A27)

John Dower (2002) who won a Pulitzer Prize for a book that documented America's occupation of Japan after the Second World War noted in an opinion-editorial entitled *Lessons From Japan About War's Aftermath* that the president's attempts to analogize his policy towards Iraq with America's successful defeat and occupation of Japan revealed not only a lack of understanding of history and a failure to fully appreciate the complexity and range of potential consequences associated with a military conquest and occupation of Iraq but also a kind of hubris that would cause the president to imperil the nation's security through overreach.

Third, the widespread unease and skepticism towards the president's stewardship of Iraq policy within this population of elite opinion writings was an early indication that many elites were inclined to challenge rather than support the president in the event that he went forward with his policy of preemptive war and experienced difficulties. One would think that the pervasiveness of this skepticism regarding his leadership would have



ignited presidential concern as he embarked upon his controversial policy and created major incentives for presidential rapprochement with the political establishment given the fact that squabbling amongst mainstream elites over a controversial and salient presidential policy dramatically increases the likelihood that the president and his policy will receive unfavorable press, which could serve as a catalyst for public dissatisfaction with his policy (DeClerico, 2000; McCartney, 1994; Perloff, 1998). In a future study, one might investigate whether the administration actually had these concerns, and if so, what were their strategies to address them.

### **Second Major Theme**

The conceptual name of the second thematic category was elite skepticism of presidential commitment. This category signified the considerable amount of elite skepticism regarding the authenticity of the president's commitment to pursue a peaceful resolution to the Iraqi threat through collegial consultations with Congress and the United Nations Security Council before resorting to armed conflict. In fact, a significant segment of elites gradually seemed to have coalesced around the suspicion that the president's ulterior motivation for collegial enterprises with Congress and the Security Council was to obtain politically expedient legitimacy for a virtually preordained armed invasion against Iraq (Kristof, 2002b). The defining properties of this thematic category were presidential duplicity, presidential coercive impatience, presidential partisan demagoguery, and presidential contempt.

The conceptual significance of this discovery is that it seemingly lends credence to the contention that many contemporary dilemmas in presidential leadership are the result of the contradictory fault lines in the political development of the presidency

(Tulis, 1998). The modern president is expected despite inherent contradictions to seamlessly oscillate between the roles of an energetic proponent of presidential prerogative and power through the formulation, promotion, and implementation of a partisan policy agenda and a sober and mostly unpartisan facilitator of deliberative policymaking amongst various constitutionally recognized policymakers (Tulis, 1984, 1987, 1996).

In the case of the Iraqi controversy, President Bush's previous conduct as an energetic and partisan advocate for presidential prerogative and power in routine domestic and international affairs seemingly undercut some elites' capacity to accept him as a sober and trustworthy vanguard of the national interest in the Iraqi crisis. The lack of trust in the president's publicly stated commitment to collegial leadership was fueled in part by perceived hints of militaristic ulterior motives and a perceived presidential proclivity to use the Iraqi controversy for electoral advantage ("A Delicate Balance at the U.N.," 2002; Rich, 2002b; "The Healthy Politics of Iraq," 2002). The data also suggests that some elites possibly feared that the president would irresponsibly use their support of his leadership on the Iraqi controversy as a means to consolidate the president's dominance in other more routine policy matters (Krugman, 2002a). Professional reputation may be a fruitful window into exploring the consequences of the presidency's competing leadership orientations.

### **Reputation Influenced By Perceptions Of Previous Presidential Performance**

Neustadt argued that constitutional structure and the contextual features of the political environment in which the president operates typically compel the president to collaborate with multiple institutions and constituencies in order to formulate, enact, and

implement policy, and he also observed that presidents must be aware of the potential costs of unilateral action to presidential power and reputation even in policy domains where the president seemingly has considerable constitutional authority to pursue his own policy preferences without external constraint (1990).

On top of that, Neustadt claimed that the president must always be cognizant of the fact that elites who monitor or do business with the president constantly look for patterns in presidential behavior in an effort to accurately forecast future presidential performance, and these retrospective appraisals of presidential temperament and skill help elites make appropriate moves to secure their interests and policy preferences vis-à-vis the president (1990).

A close reading of these opinion pieces suggests that elite perceptions of President Bush's stewardship of Iraq policy were made in part through the prism of past presidential performance. To their chagrin, some elites thought they saw signs of duplicity, coercive impatience, partisan demagoguery, and contempt in the president's current overtures to the Security Council and Congress regarding Iraq that were similar to previous or related action by the president. Even at risk of attracting the ire of the president and his associates, some of these elites deemed that it was in their interest to disseminate their suspicions of the president to a wider community. The fact that President Bush's professional reputation seemingly was negatively impacted to a significant degree by elite suspicions regarding the president's overtures to the Security Council and Congress gives preliminary credence to the existence of a retrospective dimension in Neustadt's professional reputation concept.

### **Elite Orientation To President Bush's Policy Argumentation**

In a work entitled *All the President's Words: The Bully Pulpit and the Creation of the Virtual Presidency*, Carol Gelderman observed that to a significant degree presidential "policy is made by words . . . and words shape thought" (1997, p. 37). The content within this collection of elite opinion writings regarding the president's stewardship of Iraq policy during this initial phase of this public controversy indicated that the collective thought of these elites was as much a reaction to the president's policy argumentation as it was to the president's actions. In fact given the privileged status that this collection of elites seemingly attributed to the president's rhetoric, which was in accordance with many contemporary scholastic perspectives regarding the nature and management of the presidency, one's analysis of elite perceptions regarding this president's acumen over Iraq policy might benefit from the understanding that these elites seemed to conceptualize the president's policy argumentation as "commensurate with action" (Hart, 1984, 1987; Waterman, Wright & St. Clair, 1999, p. 66). This conceptual insight as a means of achieving a deeper understanding of elite opinion regarding the professional reputation of President Bush seems all the more compelling when one considers that the dominant theme that emerged from this collection writings was related directly to the president's speechmaking. This elite emphasis on the president's management of discourse as a critical criterion in their assessment of the president's professional reputation suggests that theories related to the intersection of presidential discourse, leadership, and constituency feedback might provide fruitful insight into the meaning and significance of the thematic patterns that emerged from the collection of elite writings investigated for this study.

The thematic sentiments expressed within this collection of elite opinion writings suggest that the dilapidated state of President Bush's professional reputation as it related to his stewardship of Iraq policy could partly be the function of the polity's convoluted, layered, and often contradictory orientations towards presidential leadership particularly as it pertains to presidential crisis discourse (Tulis, 1987). According to the rhetorical presidency theory articulated by Jeffrey Tulis, the occupant of the modern presidency is expected, if he or she is to be regarded as a strong and vigorous leader, "to inspire the nation" through the virtually constant use of popular (i.e. rhetoric meant for public consumption rather than simply rhetoric that has mass appeal) rhetoric particularly regarding public controversies of great national concern (Tulis, 1984, p. 100). In a piece entitled *The Decay of Presidential Rhetoric*, Tulis noted,

Since the presidencies of Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson popular or mass rhetoric has become a principal tool of presidential governance and the doctrine that a president ought to be a popular leader has become an unquestioned premise of our political culture. Indeed, far from questioning popular leadership, intellectuals and columnists have embraced the concept and appear to be constantly calling for more or better presidential leadership of popular opinion (1984, p. 99).

Yet, the modern presidency is also expected to honor one of the lasting yet often unacknowledged legacies of the Founding Fathers, which socialized succeeding generations of Americans through constitutional construction, institutional practice, and political tradition into adopting the perception of the president as a constitutional officer who is averse to popular opinion leadership and judiciously uses discourse to facilitate

deliberative and responsible policymaking between the executive and legislative branches of government (Tulis, 1984, 1987).

In an elaboration of the tenets of rhetorical presidency theory, a significant segment of elites in their opinion writings regarding the president's stewardship of Iraq policy seemingly recommended that President Bush adopt a model of leadership that somehow stirred, informed and managed public opinion and simultaneously insulated governmental leaders from public pressure that might undermine deliberation and responsible policymaking. This sentiment seemingly failed to fully recognize or appreciate the difficulties in reconciling these seemingly contradictory aspirations, orientations, and modalities into a newly transcendent and principled form of presidential rhetorical leadership particularly given the rise of individual pluralism, political polarization, and mass media proliferation in the surrounding political environment (Tulis, 1996; Kernell, 1997). Furthermore, if one accepts the existence and pervasiveness of this conflicted orientation towards presidential policy argumentation and the contextual developments that seemingly exacerbate internal tensions within that conflicted orientation, as suggested by rhetorical presidency theory, one might hypothesize that generally speaking the professional reputation of presidents regarding controversial issues like Iraq policy is likely to be held in low regard, which in turn could have significant and long lasting effects on the prestige and operation of presidential leadership.

## Chapter 7

### Future Study

Neustadt argued that the “echoes” of the president’s professional reputation could be heard in the columns of men like Krock and Reston who happened to write for *The New York Times*, and so based upon the criteria established by the author of the professional reputation concept, this study decided to use opinion pieces from *The New York Times* as its measure (1990, p. 53). However, in an effort to alleviate concerns of ideological and geographical bias, a future researcher who is interested in investigating professional reputation might want to draw his sample of writings from a cross section of national newspapers.

The general goal of this study was to determine elite perceptions of President Bush’s stewardship of Iraq policy in the fall of 2002 through qualitative thematic analysis. However, since this study was based entirely upon analysis of documents, analytical judgments regarding those elite perceptions can only be inferred from the data without the benefit crosschecking the veracity of those analytical judgments through interviews with the participants. A future study based, at least in part, upon in-depth interviews with the opinion writers could potentially give us much greater insight into their appraisals of the president.

Neustadt contends, “Reputation, of itself, does not persuade, but it makes persuasion easier, or harder, or impossible” (1990, p. 53). This study seems to indicate that elites had a negative view of President Bush’s professional reputation as it related to initial phase of his stewardship of Iraq policy in the fall of 2002, yet the president was able to successfully move forward with the enactment of his policy preferences. An

potentially interesting research question for a future study would be why was the president, with a weak or negative professional reputation, able to secure at the conclusion of the initial phase (as specified by the time period this study) of Iraq controversy a congressional resolution that essentially authorized him to use force against Iraq at his own discretion and the controversial and internationally resisted U.N. Security Council Resolution 1441, which was an ultimatum from the Security Council of the United Nations to Saddam to disclose his WMD program and disarm or “face the severest consequences”(Bush, 2002e, para. 1; Purdum, 2003)? Furthermore, in order to get a deeper understanding of professional reputation and its importance, we need to design future studies that attempt to precisely measure professional reputation’s impact upon policy. More studies should build upon the work of Lockerbie and Borrelli who attempted to measure how perceptions of presidential skill impacted congressional roll call votes (1989).

Additional study is needed to more definitively determine whether or not elite perceptions of professional reputation are routinely and significantly impacted by a pervasive and conflicted orientation towards presidential policy argumentation, as suggested by rhetorical presidency theory.

The perceptions regarding President Bush’s professional reputation seemed to be rooted in large part in the idea that the president was derelict in the performance of his presidential duties. One might consider the president’s “dereliction of duty” to be a prime consequence of the tension created by the “layered” political development of the presidency whereby the contemporary political environment superimposes expectations of vigorous presidential stewardship of a partisan policy agenda onto the presidency’s



institutional structure and founding mores, which traditionally instructs the president to emphasize his or her role as a deliberative and relatively unpartisan facilitator of policy (Tulis, 1996, 1998). If one accepts Tulis' argument, then perhaps the perceived shortcomings of President Bush's professional reputation were more the result of structural contradictions within the political environment and the institutional presidency than the result of personal deficiencies in leadership capacity on the part of the president. If a future researcher would like to study the professional reputation concept qualitatively through the case study format similar to the one utilized for the current study, the significance and meaning of the findings could be greatly enhanced by a more refined and disciplined explication of the surrounding contextual variables and dimensions, which would increase the likelihood of a more precise determination regarding the salience and impact of structural or environmental variables to elite perceptions of presidential reputation. A richer explication of the surrounding context in which the investigated controversy is embedded may give the analyst greater insight into how much weight elites assign to personal qualities versus contextual factors in their evaluations of a president's professional reputation.

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**Appendix**

**Appendix A****Coding Memos****Type of Data (political column, editorial, or opinion-editorial)****Citation****Thematic Categories****Properties****Dimensions****Comments**

## Appendix B

**Table 1: Major Thematic Categories**

<b>Thematic Category</b>	<b>Property</b>	<b>Property</b>	<b>Property</b>
policy argumentation	Ideology	Evidence	unintended consequences
elite skepticism of presidential commitment to collegiality & diplomacy	Presidential duplicity	presidential coercive impatience	partisan demagoguery

## **Vita**

Chioma Ndukwe Marbrey was born in Charleston, SC on December 22, 1971. He was raised in Lubbock, TX; Encinitas, CA; and Murfreesboro, TN. He graduated from Oakland High School in Murfreesboro, TN in 1990. He graduated magna cum laude from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville with a B.A. in Political Science in 1996.

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