



Fear Appeals in Political Rhetoric about Terrorism: An Analysis of Speeches by Australian Prime Minister Howard

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This paper explores fear-arousing content in Australian former Prime Minister John Howard's political rhetoric about terrorism. We coded 27 speeches delivered between September 2001 and November 2007 for the presence of statements promoting fear-consistent appraisals (Smith & Lazarus, 1993). Fear-arousing content was present in 24 of these speeches, but the amount of fear-arousing content varied markedly. In particular, rhetoric that raised doubts about the capacity of Australia and its allies to cope with terrorism was most strongly present in the lead-up to the invasion of Iraq and at times of declining support for government policies. Textual analysis of three key speeches confirmed a marked difference between Howard's speech given immediately after the attacks on September 11, 2001, and the second and third speeches presented prior to and after the 2003 invasion of Iraq. These findings indicate that Howard has not consistently employed fear-inducing rhetoric in his speeches about terrorism, but that particular speeches appear to take this form, raising the possibility that fear-arousing rhetoric may have been selectively deployed to support his political purposes at those times.

KEY WORDS: Fear, Terrorism, Emotion, Rhetoric, Appraisal theory, Speeches

In the proclaimed "new age" of terrorism-related dangers and concerns, political leaders have increasingly been criticized for manipulating public fears of terrorism to achieve specific political objectives (Altheide, 2003; Furedi,

1997; Robin, 2004). Glassner argues that “in a culture of fear, politicians and advocacy groups use and abuse collective anxieties for narrow political gains. Having helped to instil fears, they capitalize upon them to win elections, to solicit campaign contributions, and to push through pet programs that tend to increase the coercive powers of the state” (2004, p. 819). Others argue that propagating fear of terrorism works to distract the public from more complex social issues (Mueller, 2004; Prewitt et al., 2004); to rationalize, legitimize, and normalize the practices of counter terrorism (Flyghed, 2005; Sunstein, 2004); to promote support for risk-reduction strategies that infringe on personal freedoms and human rights (Sunstein, 2004); to mute criticism and dissent (Furedi, 1997); and to construct and maintain collective identity which promotes national cohesion and the avoidance of internal conflict (Jackson, 2005). Rothe and Muzzatti go so far as to suggest “while the events of September 11, 2001 were indeed tragic, the construction of a moral panic by the media and politicians to support their interests is a greater social tragedy” (2004, p. 327). Altheide refers to “the politics of fear,” which he defines as: “decision-makers’ promotion and use of audience beliefs and assumptions about danger, risk and fear in order to achieve certain goals” (2003, p. 39). He argues that, like propaganda, promoting fear of terrorism relies on repetitious arguments that concentrate on all-powerful but invisible “outside” threats and “evil” others.

It is worth taking stock of this remarkable charge levelled at Western democratic political leaders in the twenty-first century. The suggestion is that these leaders have sought to garner support for a War on Terror by making their own citizens frightened. At first glance this seems to be an odd way to fight a war, especially against people who are described as terrorists (and are putatively seeking to frighten the populations under attack). The use of rhetoric that induces fear is hardly the sort of political strategy that is associated with classic attempts to mobilize war-fighting efforts such as Churchill’s famous speeches to the British people in the 1940s. The allegations of a fear campaign continue despite explicit disavowals of the politics of fear by the political leaders accused of this tactic (Bush, 2001, September 20; Morris, 2002, December 28), and the existence of official policies in countries such as Australia that promote the idea that citizens should be “Alert but not Alarmed” (see Tilley, 2004).

Despite widespread criticism of political “fear mongering,” there has been very little research that has systematically documented the presence of fear-arousing content in political rhetoric. Research in this area largely consists of political commentaries, debates, and historical analyses of leadership styles and behaviors (see Furedi, 1997; Glassner, 1999; Heldring, 2004; Hooks & Mosher, 2005; Jackson, 2005; Maser, 2004; Padgett & Allen, 2003; Spence, 2005; Stern, 2000; but a recent quantitative exception is provided by the work of Marmor-Lavie & Weimann, 2005, who explored multiple forms of emotional appeal). Recently however, qualitative research methods have been used to deconstruct

the political rhetoric of leaders such as George W. Bush using: critical discourse analysis (de Beaugrande, 2004); membership categorization analysis (Leudar, Marsland, & Nekvapil, 2004); intertextual analysis of Bush and previous American presidents (Lazar & Lazar, 2004); discourse-historical accounts of speeches made throughout history (Graham, Keenan, & Dowd, 2004); and textual analysis of enemy image construction (Merskin, 2004). Content analysis has also been used to explore the Canadian state's construction of risk and terrorism (van Brunschot & Sherley, 2005); Bush's rhetoric and media coverage pre- and post-9/11 (Bligh, Kohles, & Meindl, 2004); and the degree to which the Australian government's "terror kits" could be classified as propaganda (Tilley, 2004).

In summary, much of the work in this area has focused on broad processes through which political rhetoric is able to convey, monger, or sustain a supposed "climate" of fear. However, discourse and content analyses are rarely used to specifically examine how fear appeals are constructed. When fear itself is explored, such as in content analyses of agenda-setting effects (Cho et al., 2003; Craft & Wanta, 2004), it has been considered in terms of the impact of news-media coverage of terrorism rather than information coming from government sources. At other times, fear is treated as an unproblematic construct assumed to follow from attempts by politicians to induce it. It would be reasonable to assert on the basis of this literature, that investigation into the processes of fear-mongering in the wake of 9/11 has focused more on the conditions of a climate conducive to fear than on fear appeals and responses themselves.

The allegation that politicians use specifically fear-inducing rhetoric to bolster support for the War on Terror therefore remains an untested assertion. We cannot however, prove whether politicians are deliberately using rhetoric in this way (such a task is best suited to the methods of investigative journalism or by an impartial and properly constituted inquiry). The methods of social psychology do, however, allow us to falsify such a claim. If a competent communicator's rhetoric does not contain fear-inducing content then it is difficult to sustain the claim that that communicator is seeking to induce fear. If, on the other hand, fear-inducing content is explicitly linked in rhetoric with the articulation of a political program and calls to support a course of action then the claim remains plausible.

To test this proposition we explored the political rhetoric on terrorism of John Howard, former Prime Minister of Australia between 1996 and 2007. Howard was, with UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, a key supporter of both the War on Terror and the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. Howard represents an excellent test case because (unlike U.S. President George Bush) he is widely regarded as a competent and clear communicator. Prime Minister Howard has also explicitly disavowed fear as a tool for political purposes: "I don't want Australians to become frightened, I don't want Australians to stop living their

ordinary lives, if that happens then the terrorists win” (cited in Morris, 2002, December 28). This was also the theme of the Australian government’s \$15 million public information campaign in 2002—“Be alert but not alarmed” (see Tilley, 2004).

If fear appeals are being used explicitly and directly for political purposes, then we would expect their form and frequency to vary with changing political situations and agendas that suit those circumstances. If we find that fear-inducing content is constantly absent from a politician’s rhetoric, then this suggests that the politician is not seeking to induce fear or (less charitably) does not know how to induce fear successfully. If we find that fear-inducing content is constantly present in the rhetoric, this may also provide cause to doubt the charge of fear mongering. The constant presence of fear content may reflect nothing more than the conventional patterns of discourse about a putatively frightening topic such as terrorism. However, if this is the case we would expect such content to be present in close proximity to alarming events such as the attacks in the United States in 2001, in Bali in 2002, Madrid in 2004, and London in 2005. We are at pains to point out, however, that the presence of such a pattern does not prove that the speaker deliberately intended to invoke fear, and we are very happy for that to be left to a matter of political judgment that is well beyond the scope of this article.

If rhetoric induces emotional reactions in listeners then we need a mechanism that explains how these reactions can occur. To this end we turned to appraisal theory. This is the most widely used psychological theory of emotion and the only theory that provides a cognitive formula for identifying and predicting the exact cognitive content that produces discrete emotions. Appraisal theories postulate that specific emotional reactions stem not from situations, events, or objects but from cognitive interpretations or appraisals of these things (Frijda, 1986, 1993; Lazarus, 1991a; Ortony, Clore, & Collins, 1988; Roseman, 1984, 2001; Scherer, 1984; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). In this case, fear is not induced by terrorism directly but by the way people think about or interpret (i.e., appraise) the situation as a threat from terrorists to themselves or to things they value. To evaluate speech content for emotional appeals we applied appraisal theory in a novel way. If a skilled communicator were seeking to manipulate a target’s emotional reactions, it would be expected that their communication would contain content that would lead the target to develop appraisals consistent with the production of those emotions.

Appraisal Theory

Appraisal theory differs from other theories of emotions because of its emphasis on “the interpretations of events rather than the events themselves that cause emotion” (Roseman & Smith, 2001, p. 6). Certain combinations of discrete emotion-eliciting cognitive appraisals are argued by appraisal theorists to produce

specific and discrete emotions. Emotional states are differentiated by different patterns of underlying appraisals, explaining why different emotional reactions may be experienced by different observers in relation to one emotion-eliciting situation or by the one perceiver over time.

One of the best known appraisal theory models is Lazarus' cognitive-motivational-relational theory of emotion (Lazarus, 1991a, 1991b; Smith, Haynes, Lazarus, & Pope, 1993; Smith & Lazarus, 1990, 1993). In this model, Lazarus identifies three key appraisal components necessary for the production of fear. These include: (a) an appraisal that the situation, event, or object is motivationally or goal relevant to the perceiver; (b) an appraisal that the situation, event, or object is motivationally/goal incongruent to the perceiver; and (c) an appraisal that one has low or uncertain ability to cope with a present threat.

Furthermore, Lazarus (1991c) argues that a synthesis of particular sets of molecular appraisals into a molar-level appraisal, which he termed a core relational theme, be taken into account as a summary statement of more specific appraisals related to the emotion process. Lazarus (2001) defines core relational themes as "a terse synthesis of the separate appraisal components into a complex, meaning-centered whole [which] determines the nature of the emotional response" (p. 64). Lazarus' (1991a) model suggests that the emotional experience of fear or anxiety begins and is bound up with a core relational theme of uncertain existential threat or danger. Motivational relevance and motivational incongruence are the two key primary appraisal components and refer to evaluations of how important the situation is to the person and whether the encounter is appraised as harmful or beneficial (Smith et al., 1993). As such, appraising a situation as personally relevant and potentially harmful will contribute to the experience of fear especially where the perceiver has low or uncertain coping potential. In the context of appraising fear, this refers to one's perceived ability to psychologically adjust to and deal with the threatening situation (Smith & Kirby, 2001). Together these appraisal components produce fear when one perceives a situation as threatening, personally relevant, potentially harmful, and difficult to cope with. This last component is critically important for fear to emerge according to appraisal theory. A morally violating and threatening situation would provoke anger or disgust rather than fear if the perceiver appraised their own capacity to handle the situation to be adequate.

We used Lazarus' (1991a; Smith & Lazarus, 1993) appraisal theory to examine whether fear-arousing content is present in the rhetoric of John Howard. To our knowledge, it represents the first empirical application of appraisal theory to the analysis of political communication. We examined Howard's speeches about terrorism to assess whether all necessary appraisal components are present to produce a fear response if appraised according to Lazarus' model. This research project is exploratory in nature and draws on both

quantitative and qualitative research methods by combining the use of content and textual analysis approaches. The core objective of the current project is to explore if and how the politics of fear in a post-9/11 environment is used in an attempt to bolster public support for the government's policy agenda (such as foreign and national security policy). We seek to identify whether or not fear-arousing content is present in a prominent politician's political speeches about terrorism and the form, frequency, and function of such appeals in their appropriate context. The current project cannot, however, make claim to the political intentions behind the presence or absence of such content, nor can it demonstrate that the presence of appraisal components will necessarily induce fear in the wider public.

Australia's former Prime Minister, John Howard, was selected as the key spokesperson for analysis. Howard was Australia's second longest-serving prime minister, making him one of Australia's most successful politicians. During his time in government he shaped much of Australia's defence and foreign policy as well as the nation's identity in international politics. He is also widely regarded as a skillful communicator (Lewis, 2007; McAllister & Bean, 2006; Tiernan, 2006), and his public comments about terrorism have been both influential and prolific in the years following the 9/11 terrorist attack.

To explore fluctuations in appraisal content over time, terrorism-related speeches were sampled across a six-year period beginning with John Howard's public comments made in response to 9/11 and concluding with speeches made up until his election defeat on November 24, 2007. We sought to answer three key questions. (Q1) Is there evidence of fear-arousing content in Howard's political rhetoric about terrorism? If there is, then two other questions emerge. (Q2) Does fear-arousing content change in style, frequency, or form over time? And (Q3) does fear-arousing content appear and vary in ways that are consistent with Prime Minister Howard's overt political interests at those times? To address questions one and two, we used content analysis to identify whether fear-arousing content is present in Howard's political speeches about terrorism; the amount of content in these speeches that contain fear appraisal components; and, whether this amount fluctuates over time. To address Q3 and to better understand Howard's arguments in their appropriate context, we conducted a textual analysis of key speeches. This approach was intended to contextualize the content coded, both within the speech and within the broader political climate in which it was delivered. The qualitative analysis also enabled us to examine Howard's political arguments in more detail, including: the key themes and how they may have changed over time; the target audiences; and possible subtext or implied content that may not have always met the criteria for coding. In this way, our analysis was intended to improve transparency and better explore the political and domestic circumstances that may have been connected to changes in fear-related language.

Method

Texts

Howard's public addresses about terrorism were sourced from the Prime Minister's website (<http://www.pm.gov.au>).¹ The site's newsroom section provides a link to all key public speeches presented by Prime Minister Howard each year, ordered by date. A total of 765 public speeches are listed from September 2001 to November 24, 2007, 26 of which were selected because of their focus on terrorism-related issues. A second slightly larger sample was drawn from the Parliamentary Document Repository, ParlInfo (<http://www.parlinfoweb.aph.gov.au/piweb>). A guided search was used to identify all speeches by John Howard using the keyword "terror*." Date parameters were set to return speeches between September 11, 2001, and November 24, 2007. The search returned 44 results increasing the total sample to 70. Of these 70 sources, we excluded repeat items, interviews, question and answer sessions, ministerial arrangements, and speeches that contained less than 400 words on terrorism. The reduced sample consisted of 27 speeches for coding with an average word count of 2,363. Of these 27 speeches, 13 were coded in their entirety. The other 14 contained sections that did not relate to the themes of terrorism or threats posed by terrorism (in relation to the postulated presence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq). When these unrelated sections were greater than 500 words, they were omitted from coding and the total word count of coded material was reduced accordingly.

Content Coding

Each speech was independently coded by the researcher for sentences containing core-relational themes of threat or danger; statements which were motivationally relevant, motivationally incongruent, and statements that promoted low or uncertain ability to cope with the present threat. Some sentences contained more than one appraisal component and all components were coded where they were present. This implies that the proportions obtained for the different components are not independent of each other.

Two additional coders independently coded a selection of 20 statements that represented a broad sample of content from all speeches. These statements were selected by the researchers to cover instances of all four response options and were chosen arbitrarily from the text blocks using criterion sampling. In response to each statement, coders were required to indicate which (if any) appraisal components were present by ticking the appropriate combination of boxes. Five options

¹ In December 2007 after Prime Minister Howard's election defeat, the content of this site was moved to the following location: <http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/10052/20061221-0000/www.pm.gov.au/news/speeches/2000/speeches.html>.

were provided for each statement including: core relational themes, motivational incongruence, motivational relevance, uncertain coping, and no content. A correct answer was recorded when coders ticked the same boxes as the researcher and when they left the same boxes unchecked. In total the 20 statements provided a score out of 20 for each appraisal element with a total set of 120 right or wrong responses. The mean of the coders' correct response ratings provided a percentage score of total agreement with the researcher's coding.

Content was first coded for core relational themes. These were defined as statements about a threat from or conflict with the dangerous terrorist outgroup. These statements frequently arose in the context of fighting the "war on terror"; claims about "evil" terrorists; or warnings of the dangers that the public face as a result of terrorism. For example: "This is no isolated act of terrorism: this is the product of years of careful planning, it is the product of evil minds . . ." and "fighting terrorism is a cause that involves us all." Across the three coders, 97.5% of the items for core relational themes were coded identically, indicating high interrater reliability for this construct.

For the purposes of coding, motivational relevance was defined as any statements in Howard's speeches which promoted thinking about how the situation specifically affected the listener, was bad for them, or placed them in danger. It included the use of inclusive words like "us" and "we," and statements about the responsibilities of and dangers facing Australia, Western nations, or even the world at large: "The number of Australians who have died is a reminder of just how interconnected we all are" and "Although the attacks of September 11 took place on American soil . . . it was an attack on the values that the entire world holds in common." Inter-coder reliability for this category yielded a 95.7% rating, again indicating strong internal consistency across coding for this measure.

Motivationally incongruent statements were defined as claims about the importance of the situation and its harmful, evil, or dangerous nature. Appraisal of motivational incongruence included statements of remorse, hatred, or disgust at terrorists or terrorist attacks, concerns for the future, and possible risks that Australians or others may face. For example: "12 October 2002 [The date of bombings in Bali, Indonesia] is a day that will ever be remembered as a day on which evil struck with indiscriminate and indescribable savagery" and "It is an act of terror. It is an act which is repugnant to all things that we as a society believe in." Interrater reliability was once again high with 91.4% agreement on items across the three independent coders.

Content was coded under the secondary appraisal component of uncertain coping when statements suggested to listeners that they were in danger, at risk of terrorist attack, and unable to ensure their protection against such risks. This secondary appraisal component requires that most other appraisal components are present. For example: "We are living in a different world. We're living in a world that is more challenging. We're living in a world where the possibility of a terrorist attack on our own soil is more likely that it would have been a year ago or even six

months ago . . .”; “the world in which terrorism is a threat is not a world that any of us can escape. We haven’t escaped it and there’s always a worry that we won’t escape it in the future”; and “Those who imagine [a terrorist attack] can’t happen here, are misplaced, it can happen here and we would be very complacent if we imagined it will not.” Reliability across coders for this category was slightly lower than the others at 84.7%, but was still within an acceptable range.

Results

The proportion of the coded speech containing each appraisal component was calculated by dividing the sentences coded for each category by the total number of sentences in each speech. The proportion of terrorism speeches devoted to the various appraisal components—core relational themes (CRT), motivational incongruence (MI), motivational relevance (MR), and uncertain coping (UC)—was then graphed to provide a visual representation of their prevalence in each speech over the six-year period (see Figure 1).

Overall Presence of Appraisal Content

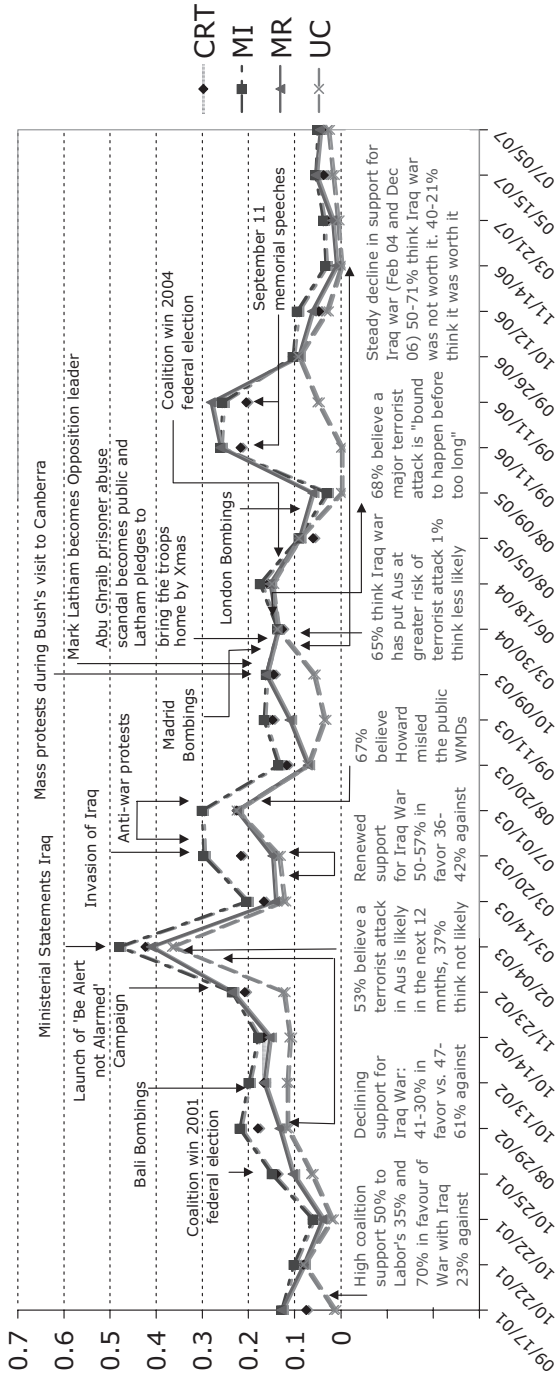
According to appraisal theory, all four appraisal components need to be present to promote a fear response. Results of the content analysis revealed that the four key components for fear appraisal are present in all but three of the 27 speeches sampled from 2001 to 2007. This indicates that the majority of Howard’s political speeches about terrorism met the criteria for promoting fear-consistent appraisals. Three speeches—a speech given in response to the London terrorist attacks (August 9, 2005), a commemoration of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center (September 11, 2006), and an address at the American-Australian Association dinner (November 14, 2006)—did not meet all four criteria in that they did not appear to promote uncertain coping.

Some appraisal components appeared more frequently than others with motivational incongruence accounting for the largest proportion of content, followed by core relational themes and motivational relevance, and then, by the secondary appraisal component, uncertain coping. Together these four appraisal components show similar patterns of variance.

Frequency of Appraisal Content over Time

Across other speeches, prevalence of appraisal content varies over time from less than 10% after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, up to approximately 40% just prior to the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. This finding suggests that Howard’s use of potentially fear-invoking language changed over time and context. A surprising finding was the relative lack of appraisal elements in Howard’s speeches in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Given the spontaneous, unprecedented, and

Fear Appraisal Components in Howard's Terrorism Speeches



Speech Date

Figure 1. Proportion of Fear Appraisal Content in Howard's Political Speeches about Terrorism.

frightening nature of the attacks on the World Trade Center, one might have expected Howard's political speeches at this time to be particularly loaded with fear-related content. However, his speeches over September and October 2001 contain very little such content. In contrast to his earlier speeches, the major spikes in appraisal content appear prior to and during the Iraq war, including: Howard's ministerial statements about Iraq presented on February 4, 2003; his address to the nation on March 20, 2003; and, his address to the Sydney Institute about weapons of mass destruction on July 1, 2003.

We have sampled almost the entire population of Howard's formal rhetoric on this matter so the suitability of formal statistical analyses to these data is a matter for some debate. To accommodate such analyses by others, however, we would suggest that confidence intervals for proportions provide a straightforward way to draw statistical inferences about the extent to which changes in proportions can plausibly be interpreted as chance variations. Such confidence intervals tend to be well behaved for proportions close to .5 and with large sample sizes (see, e.g., Smithson, 2003). A 95% confidence interval for a proportion of .4 from the average sample of 87 lines of text covers a range between approximately .3 and .5 (the confidence intervals are somewhat narrower for proportions closer to 0 or 1). Placing 95% confidence intervals around the proportions for the February 4, 2003, speech shows that the obtained proportions for the other speeches fall outside the range of plausible values on all four measures. Put another way, there were significantly higher levels of these appraisals in this speech than in any of the other sampled speeches. It is also apparent that the level of appraisals in some other speeches was very low (with not all confidence intervals excluding zero).²

Textual Analysis

To better understand whether there has been a qualitative shift over time in the nature and form of fear content, we used a textual analysis to examine selected speeches in more detail. We also sought to better explain how and why Howard's speech content varied so substantially over time by looking at the political circumstances that prevailed at the time of each speech. For this reason, we have provided a comprehensive overview of all major international and domestic issues that arose in the lead up to each of the three speeches under analysis. This political overview has been supplemented with polling data to further contextualize the speeches within the broader political climate in which they were delivered.

² One possible objection to our method is that as we have analyzed relatively lengthy formal speeches, our findings might only reflect the formal nature of the communication. To guard against this possibility we analyzed six transcripts of Howard's remarks taken from radio and TV interviews. These transcripts were selected to be as close as possible in time to the three speeches analyzed in more detail below (two at each time). The pattern was almost identical to that found in the formal speeches (with the exception that none of the short transcripts showed the extreme spike in fear content that was evident on February 4, 2003).

Three speeches were chosen for closer examination. These included: (a) Howard's first address in response to the attacks on the World Trade Center (September 17, 2001); (b) Howard's parliamentary speech prior to the Iraq invasion (February 4, 2003); and (c) Howard's response to the Labor policy pledge to bring Australian troops home by Christmas (March 30, 2004). The proximity of the first speech to the events of 9/11 means that this speech demands consideration. The second speech was selected because of the high frequency of appraisal components present. The third speech was chosen because of its relatively higher level of uncertain coping content. In this speech, all four elements coded also appeared at approximately the same frequency suggesting a possible shift in the form and content of fear appraisal.

Speech 1: United States of America Terrorist Attacks (September 17, 2001)

In the first half of 2001 the Australian Labor Party seemed set for victory with a comfortable and relatively consistent poll lead over Howard's Coalition government of up to 13 percentage points (Australian Electoral Survey, see Bean, Gow, & McAllister, 2002; McAllister, 2003a). However, the Tampa crisis in late August, and the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States, together changed the course of the upcoming federal election as well as the direction of Australia's defence and foreign policy for years to come. The Tampa crisis began on the 26th of August when a Norwegian freighter, the MV Tampa, rescued 438 mainly Afghan asylum seekers from a sinking Indonesian vessel off the Western coast of Australia. The government refused the Tampa entry into Australian waters at Christmas Island and toughened its stance on "illegal" asylum seekers. Despite domestic and international criticism (Beeson, 2002; McAllister, 2003a; Tiernan, 2006; Wear, 2002), the Howard government's strict stance on "illegal" asylum seekers found widespread public support within Australia with 80% of poll respondents endorsing the policy (McAllister, 2003a).

The 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon was the second major event to transform Australia's political environment. At the time, Prime Minister Howard was in Washington involved in official talks with President George W. Bush. When the U.S.-led antiterrorist retaliation began, he immediately activated the ANZUS Treaty and committed Australia without reservation to the military campaign (Warhurst, 2002). McAllister (2003b) argues that these issues all served to emphasise the necessity for strong defence—a point that was not lost on the Howard government, who linked the issues by stressing the need to screen asylum seekers for possible terrorist connections. In Australia, the Tampa crisis and terrorist attacks overshadowed all other news for several months resulting in an unprecedented focus on international security and increased anxiety about the nation's immediate safety in the region. It is perhaps no coincidence then that the Australia federal election was called only three weeks after the attacks. Denmark, Ward, and Bean (2007) argue, "by choosing

this timing for the election, Prime Minister Howard effectively suffused the election with the 11th-hour international issues, as well as the spectre of external threat to the nation, which has historically benefited incumbents and the leader of government" (p. 93).

Indeed, as public preoccupation with border security increased, so did their support for Prime Minister Howard and his "War on Terrorism" policies. The first voting intention polls conducted by *Newspoll* after 9/11 (*Newspoll* and *The Australian*, September 21–23) document an unprecedented 50% support for the Coalition, while intention to vote Labor declined to 35%. Support for Australian military involvement in the "War on Terrorism" was also at a record high at this time. A survey conducted by *Newspoll* (September 14–16, 2001) found 70% overall in favor of military involvements, 7% uncommitted, and only 23% against.

The first speech under analysis, Howard's parliamentary address on September 17, 2001, was made in response to the attacks on the World Trade Center six days earlier. It was thus delivered at a time of heightened public anxiety about border security issues—perceived threats from both asylum seekers and terrorists. In this speech, Howard primarily expresses his disgust at the terrorist attacks and his sympathy for Australians who have been affected by the tragedy, and he argues for the need to bring those responsible to justice. The speech is 2,376 words long and contains all key appraisal components associated with fear including core relational themes of danger and threat; statements that establish motivational incongruence by constructing images of an evil and dangerous "other"; motivationally relevant appeals that connect the events with personal losses and concerns; and appeals that provoke low or uncertain belief in Australia and its allies' ability to cope with the present threat.

In this speech, appraisal elements appear as relatively distinct entities—with some overlap across items promoting uncertain coping. Howard establishes motivational incongruence by using words like "repugnant," "evil," "appalling," "terrible," and "cruel" to describe the attacks on the World Trade Center. He further describes the terrorists as "the moral outcasts of mankind" and as "evil" people "without any skerrick of moral authority." Core relational themes emerge with thematic statements describing the attacks as "an act of terror," an "assault on the values of . . . free men and women," and "the product of years of careful planning . . . the product of evil minds." Together these statements work to define the situation as something highly important and harmful. Motivational relevance appears in the form of empathetic arguments, reinforcing the "deep bonds" Australia shares with the United States, and by explaining the event as an attack on shared Western values of liberty and peace: "Its context represents a massive assault on the values not only of the United States of America but also of this country . . . and [all] decent people and decent societies around the world." Empathetic statements further promote motivational relevance by conjuring images of personal loss:

Nobody is ever really prepared for personal tragedy. Nobody is ever really prepared for the sudden death of a wife, a husband, a son, a daughter, a sibling or another loved one, or a close friend.

Themes of uncertain coping appear in only two assertions including: “this is no isolated act of terrorism . . .” and “the world has changed. We are all diminished . . . and we are all rather struggling with the concept that it will never be quite the same again.” These statements frame the attacks as an unprecedented and unpredictable danger to the world, and one that poses a significant threat to our future. These statements begin to introduce a theme that Jackson (2005) describes as the “dangerous new age” narrative. Jackson suggests that this narrative frames the global post-9/11 environment as a time where terrorist activities threaten the peace, safety, and security of all Western nations.

Despite the suggestions of this emerging narrative, it is difficult to classify this speech in appraisal theory terms as a typical fear appeal. While there is a focus on the “evil other” (core relational themes and motivational incongruence), and the attacks’ impact on Australians (motivational relevance), there are few statements promoting “uncertain coping.”

It is also the case that this speech does not develop a call to support a program of action, perhaps because—as noted above—there was already strong public support for the Howard Government and Australia’s military involvement in the “War on Terror” at this time (*Newspoll* and *The Australian*). The content of this speech is also particularly notable because it demonstrates that the presence of fear-related content in Howard’s rhetoric is not invariably connected to the subject matter or events surrounding a speech’s delivery. This is evident in the absence of fear-arousing content in this first speech despite its delivery immediately after intensely alarming events.

Speech 2: Ministerial Statements Iraq (February 4, 2003)

For most of 2002, Australian politics maintained a largely external focus on security and foreign affairs with particular attention to mandatory detention for asylum seekers and the “children overboard” affair. In August and September discussion quickly returned to national security with talk of an impending war with Iraq and the passage of the ASIO (Australian Security Intelligence Organisation) Amendment Terrorism Bill (on September 24), a bill that extended ASIO’s (the Australian equivalent of the FBI) powers when interrogating terrorist suspects. With this continued focus on international issues the Coalition government consistently retained its lead in the polls. This trend increased further when on October 12, 2002, Australia gained first-hand experience with terrorism in the aftermath of the Bali bombings.

The Bali bombings of October 12, 2002, saw the death of 88 Australians (in a total death toll of 212) and were later found to be the work of al-Qaeda linked

terrorist group Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). Gurry (2003) explains, “the profound sense of shock felt by most Australians about the 12 October bombings in Bali is difficult to overstate. Amidst horror footage of burnt bodies and covered corpses, Australians tried to make sense of the brutal nature of the events which had taken hundreds of lives . . .” (p. 228). The government’s immediate response was to deploy an antiterrorist task force including ASIO agents, Australia Federal Police, and state police officers before placing the nation on “high alert.”

Early October and December also saw declining support for the government’s Iraq policies with sizeable antiwar protests in capital cities. Polling data (*Newspoll* and *The Australian*, September 11–12, 2002) revealed that despite initial support, now only 33% of those surveyed supported U.S. military involvement in Iraq, with 47% against and 20% uncommitted. In the absence of evidence, support for Australian military involvement was even lower with only 20% overall in favor, 75% overall against, and 5% uncommitted. A later poll (*Newspoll* and *The Australian*, December 13–15, 2002) suggests that this decline continued throughout late 2002. When asked to indicate their overall support for “Australian armed forces being part of a U.S.-led military campaign against Iraq” only 41% of respondents were in favor, while 50% were against and 9% uncommitted.

In late December the Government launched a \$15 million antiterrorism campaign to increase awareness and vigilance against terrorism and to encourage the reporting of “suspicious behavior” (Tilley, 2004; Williams, 2003a). The campaign slogan “Be Alert not Alarmed” featured on television advertisements and in an information mail out to 7.2 million Australians (*Sydney Morning Herald*, December 28, 2002). However, despite the campaign theme, many Australians appeared to be genuinely “alarmed” about the risk of terrorism, and by June, nearly 20,000 calls had been received that were of an “emergency nature” (*Sydney Morning Herald*, June 30, 2003).

Throughout January and February 2003, public support for Australian military involvement in the Iraq War was also at an all-time low—with only 30–35% in favor and a staggering 60–61% opposed (*Newspoll* and *The Australian*, 17–19 January; 31 January–2 February, 2003). Polling also revealed high levels of public anxiety about terrorism with 61% of Australians believing “life had changed since the Bali terrorist attacks,” and 53% believing a terrorist attack in Australia a likely possibility within the next 12 months, with only 37% thinking it unlikely (*Newspoll* and *The Australian*, 17–19 January 2003). This suggests that throughout this period, many Australians were indeed appraising the issue of terrorism in a way that could evoke fear according to Lazarus’ model—they believed terrorism was a serious risk facing Australians, one from which they could not protect themselves, and one that threatened their safety in the near future. This suggests that for very many Australians, their thinking on the topic of terrorism may have met the criteria for all four key appraisal components.

This period of heightened anxiety and declining public support for Australia’s involvement in the “War on Terror” provided the political context in which

Howard delivered the second speech under analysis. Williams (2003b) argues that public anxieties and fears at this time “provided the Coalition Government with a plausible rhetorical framework in which to prepare the public for war” (p. 558). The speech was presented in the lead up to the invasion of Iraq which took place on March 20, and in his address, Howard stated that the chief objective of his speech was to explain to the House and to the Australian people why “the world community must deal decisively with Iraq,” “why this issue is of direct concern to Australia,” and why the Australian government authorized the deployment of Australian troops to the Persian Gulf. Of the speech’s total of 6,314 words, 1,470 deal with the general themes of terrorism and the putatively related dangers of weapons of mass destruction. These parts were coded for appraisal elements. Other parts of the speech focused more specifically on Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi regime, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, information from Australian, British, and American intelligence, the actions of the United Nations Security Council, and the alliance between Australia and the United States of America. Despite the relatively small amount of content coded, the prevalence of appraisal components was the highest coded across all terrorism speeches sampled, averaging 37 instances of each appraisal element.

Unlike Howard’s first speech (September 17, 2001), in the current speech, appraisal components primarily appear together in statements that contain combinations of core relational themes, motivational incongruence, motivational relevance, and uncertain coping. For example:

- (1) The rise of international terrorism adds a new and frightening dimension to the threat posed by the proliferation of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons.
- (2) The ultimate nightmare for us all must be that weapons of mass destruction fall into the hands of terrorists. The more the world leaves unchecked either the possession of such weapons by rogue states or the spread of those weapons, the more likely it becomes that terrorists will acquire and use them.

And,

- (3) We now understand, after the events in Bali and those of 9/11, that we are living in a world where unexpected and devastating terrorist attacks on free and open societies can occur in ways that we never before imagined possible.

Together the four key appraisal elements account for between 35 and 50% of the coded content, indicating a substantial increase in potentially fear-arousing content, especially that of uncertain coping. The presence of claims containing combined appraisal components indicates not only a quantitative increase in appraisal elements present in Howard’s speeches, but also a qualitative shift in argument from his first speech delivered on September 17, 2001. In contrast to earlier statements that focused on criticizing the terrorists and their actions, the

second speech is primarily a discussion about “risks,” “dangers,” “concerns,” and “vulnerabilities.” Statements promoting uncertain coping frequently arise as overt or implied messages cautioning listeners against inaction or behavior that could conflict with national interests: “The atrocity in Bali demonstrated . . . that we are truly vulnerable . . . we understand the danger of leaving threats unaddressed.” The combined use of appraisal components in these statements is much more consistent with traditional fear appeals than the content in the first speech, and as such, may be more likely to promote fear among listeners.

A comparison between Howard’s first political speech about terrorism and this latter speech indicates a clear transformation in the quantity and form of content that meets the criteria for fear appraisal. Textual analysis of this later speech reveals that unlike the discrete appraisal elements identified in Howard’s first terrorism speech, appraisal components primarily appear in combination, tied together with a substantial increase in statements promoting uncertain coping.

Simon Crean, the Leader of the Opposition at the time, labelled Howard’s February 4, 2003, address “a justification for war, not a plan for peace” (*Australian*, February 5, 2003, cited in Williams, 2003b). It does indeed seem clear that the speech is an appeal for support for a course of action that was yet to be taken.

Speech 3: Australian Defence Force Deployment (March, 30, 2004)

Throughout the Iraq war and in the months that followed, the Howard government faced substantial criticism in Australia. Mass protests broke out across Australia, and in April protestors climbed the Sydney Opera House and painted “No War” on its sails (*Sydney Morning Herald*, March 19, 2003). Former Prime Ministers Paul Keating, Bob Hawke, and Malcolm Fraser publicly criticized the government’s actions, and in June and July 2003, the Howard government faced mounting pressure to substantiate its claims about Iraq’s weapons capabilities. No weapons had been found during the war or after its official end, and July polling conducted by *Newspoll* and *The Australian* found that 67% of Australians surveyed believed the Howard government had misled the public in its claims about Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction (18–20 July, 2003).

On the 2nd of December, Mark Latham became leader of the Opposition, and Williams (2004) explains that the first half of 2004 saw the newly instated Labor Leader carve out a distinctive leadership style while the Coalition government spent much of this period developing strategies to counter a resurgent opposition. Whereas military involvement in Iraq had once been an electoral asset, throughout 2004 support deteriorated substantially making the issue a costly liability for the Coalition government. In the months prior to Howard’s March 30th speech, support for Australia’s involvement in the Iraq War remained low with only 46% of respondents believing that going to war with Iraq was “worth it,” 45% declaring it “was not worth it,” and 9% “uncommitted” (*Newspoll* and *The Australian*,

February 6–8, 2004). Public anxiety about terrorism may have also remained high throughout this period. However, unlike public fears in the lead up to the invasion of Iraq, 65% of Australians now believed it was the nation's involvement in the war that made a terrorist attack in Australia more likely, 30% believed it had made no difference, and only 1% thought the risk of such attacks had been reduced (*Newspoll*, 19–21 March, 2004).

Declining Coalition support was also apparent in voting intentions with support for Labor at an all time high in 2004 at 46% to the Coalition's 41% (*Newspoll*, 19–20 March, 2004). This trend continued after the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse scandal was made public in the *New York Times* on March 21. The Australian government's immediate response was to deny any knowledge of torture activities despite later evidence to the contrary from the International Committee of the Red Cross (Ungerer, 2004). However, this period of soaring public support for Labor was short lived, and in late March, Latham's unscripted pledge on national radio to "bring the Australian troops home by Christmas" marked the beginning of the end of Latham's "honeymoon period" (Williams, 2004).

Latham's pledge put the party in a precarious position, and one that was quickly exploited by Howard, who used wedge politics to divide party support. He criticized Latham for a "cut and run" withdrawal, warning that "artificial deadlines" would send the "wrong signal to the wrong people at the wrong time" (Ungerer, 2004). The debate only escalated further when U.S. President George W. Bush described Latham's plan as a "disastrous" policy that would "embolden the enemy" (Williams, 2004). Polling at this time revealed that the public was indeed divided on the issue. Of the 55% originally against Australia's military involvement in Iraq, only 36% were in support of the troops' immediate withdrawal, with 13% believing that they should nonetheless remain in Iraq, and 6% uncommitted (*Newspoll* and *The Australian*, 19–20 March, 2003).

Howard's speech on March 30, 2004, was given to parliament in response to the Opposition's pledge to bring the Australian Defence Forces home by Christmas. The speech addressed the need for continued Australian involvement in Iraq. It is 3,367 words long, and in Howard's words, is intended to express his "continued support for and confidence in the 850 Australian Defence Force personnel currently deployed in or around Iraq," and his opinion "that no elements of this contingent . . . should be withdrawn," and that "no arbitrary time should be set for such withdrawal." The major themes present in this speech consist of warnings about the consequences of withdrawing Australian troops and appeals that such action is "not the Australian way."

Content consistent with fear appraisal is much lower in this speech than the one presented on the 4th of February, 2003, with approximately 15% of content coded as potentially fear invoking. Despite the drop in core relational themes and motivationally incongruent and motivationally relevant elements, there is a significant peak in statements promoting uncertain coping—the third largest increase across the speeches sampled. Once again, potentially fear-arousing content appears in a

similar form to that in Howard's ministerial speech about Iraq (Feb 4, 2003). Appraisal components arise in combination with many of the statements coded meeting the criteria for three or four appraisal elements at once. For example:

- (1) If the world at the present time trembles and shows any kind of equivocation in the face of the threat posed by terrorism, I believe that the world—of which Australia is inextricably a part—will pay a very heavy price in the future.

and

- (2) The nature of the threat this country faces . . . it is not a traditional military threat. The signals you send by your action, by your indecision, by your reacting to events which are designed to divide and confound the free nations of the world, if they are the wrong signals, will do great long-term damage to this country.

As seen here, the presence of several appraisal components in each statement and the increased use of statements promoting uncertain coping is relatively typical of traditional fear appeals. If appraised accordingly, these statements could be expected to invoke fear and anxiety around terrorism. The use of words like "trembles," "equivocation," "inaction," and "indecision" in the above quotes further disavows behavior that is cowardly, uncertain, or weak. This language works to promote fear of fear itself—an idea similar to that made famous by Franklin D. Roosevelt's statement "let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyses needed efforts to convert retreat into advance" (Roosevelt, 1938).

Once again, statements promoting uncertain coping arise as justifications for Australia's involvement in the Iraq war and as warnings against the withdrawal of Australian Defence Forces. Howard argues this would not only damage Australia's relationship with allied nations, it would provide encouragement to terrorists and could prompt future attacks:

If we were to cut and run, if we were to take the advice of the Leader of the Opposition . . . we would not only let down the reputation of this country . . . we would let down our allies and friends at the worst possible time in the worldwide struggle against terrorism, and worst of all in the immediate context, we would send the wrong signal to the terrorists not only in Iraq but around the world.

To further reinforce this message, Howard argues that "it has always been the Australian way to stay there," to "go the distance," to "see it through," and to "do

what is right in the long-term interests of this country and the interests of the people with whom we have aligned ourselves.”

The content of this speech revealed a qualitative shift away from the type of content present in Howard’s first political speech on terrorism (September, 17, 2001), towards the themes that emerged in the second speech analyzed (February, 4, 2003). Both of these later speeches contain a greater density of appraisal components in each sentence coded and a significant increase in statements promoting uncertain coping. Despite the relative decrease in the quantity of other fear appraisal elements, in this later speech uncertain coping remains prevalent. Together these components appear in statements offering cursory warnings about the consequences of withdrawing Australian troops from Iraq and frame this suggestion as something that communicates weakness, fear, and cowardice to terrorists.

Polling taken less than three weeks after the delivery of this speech suggests that the Australian public may have indeed been fearful of the dangers posed by terrorism at this time. An isolated poll in mid-April revealed that 68% believed that “a major terrorist attack in Australia was inevitable or bound to happen before too long” with only 25% disagreeing with this statement (*Newspoll* and *The Australian*, 16–18 April, 2004). This was the second of only two polls that explicitly asked about the perceived probability of an attack on Australia in the near future. And once again, this suggests that the majority of Australians, at least at this time, were indeed appraising the situation in a way that could evoke fear.

Discussion

The results of the content analysis show that potentially fear-arousing content is present in the majority of Howard’s political speeches about terrorism. However, the presence of this content varies in quantity and form over time. In the first speech examined (September 17, 2001), some of the fear appraisal components were present, but the content was not typical of a traditional fear appeal. This was due to the lack of content promoting uncertainty around one’s ability to cope with the threat of terrorism. Uncertain coping is an important element in fear appraisal and largely determines whether fear is the emotional reaction experienced. According to appraisal theory, the presence of content that is motivationally relevant and motivationally incongruent (as in this first political speech about terrorism), can promote anger rather than fear when there is a core relational theme of other-blame, and secondary appraisal of other-accountability (Smith & Lazarus, 1993). Given the presence of claims attributing blame and intent to the terrorists, the content of this speech may have been more likely to evoke anger rather than fear as the salient emotional response.

These early findings suggest that despite claims that “fear mongering” has been employed in a consistent fashion since 9/11 (Kellner, 2004; Lawrence, 2006), these early speeches in response to the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center (at least in the political rhetoric of John Howard), may actually have been more

likely to promote feelings of anger and righteous indignation than fear or anxiety. Jackson's (2005) claim that political communication about terrorism deliberately constructs a "climate of fear" is also problematic as applied to this Australian politician, as it is evident that fear-arousing content is not consistently present throughout Howard's rhetoric.

Having noted that claims of a concerted campaign of "fear mongering" post-9/11 have not been sustained in the present data, the presence of content related to other key appraisals of motivational relevance and incongruence is nonetheless interesting, particularly as they appear in Howard's early speeches. Lazarus's (1991a) articulation of the relationship between primary and secondary appraisals involves an important distinction between establishing a valence of the ensuing emotional reaction (primary appraisals) and those appraisals that serve to distinguish which discrete emotion within that valence the experience becomes (secondary appraisals). It is therefore informative to note the presence of content aligned with primary appraisals of motivational relevance and incongruence in those early speeches because of the variety of emotions to which they may give rise. What may have been achieved here, rather than immediately creating the specific conditions of a climate of fear through the content of political rhetoric, is a highly self-relevant climate of at least pessimistic and at worst potentially harmful significance to the listener. To the extent that the public believe that the terrorist attacks of 9/11 are relevant to them, and bad, as suggested in Howard's early rhetoric, a range of emotional reactions, including anger and fear, are open to later cultivation as the "new age" of terror unfolds, politicizes, and crystallizes.

If we had only analyzed Howard's speech in September 2001 that shows relatively low levels of specifically fear-related content, we might have concluded that the allegation that Howard was using the politics of fear in his rhetoric had been falsified. The full set of results corrects this picture. Later speeches contain a greater density of appraisal components in each statement coded and a substantially greater proportion of content that promoted uncertain coping. As such, these speeches are more characteristic of traditional fear appeals and more likely to provoke fear among listeners to the extent that they are believed. This increased density of appraisal components may also reflect the strategic cashing in or redemption of earlier rhetorical efforts to construct the attacks of 9/11 as motivationally relevant and incongruent. In propagating a socially normative response to terrorists and the threat of terrorism, fear rather than anger may have been judged by an astute political agent such as Howard to be the most useful or likely response to yield his Government's policies support at that time.

The textual analysis and the political climate surrounding these events strongly suggest a basis for these variations. Fear-related content was most evident when Howard was seeking to overcome strong public opposition to a desired program of action (going to war or maintaining a troop presence). Such pivotal speeches include those delivered in the lead up to the invasion of Iraq (February 2003); and at times of declining public support for the government and Australia's military involvement

in the “War on Terror”—including times of mass protests (June and July 2003); and political controversy such as the Abu Ghraib prison scandal and Latham’s pledge to bring the Australian troops home by Christmas (March and June 2004). The contextual analysis further explains the comparative lack of fear-arousing content at other times such as immediately after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 when public support for the Howard Government and Australia’s military involvement in the “War on Terror” were both at record highs (*Newspoll* and *The Australian*).

We need to reiterate that we cannot prove that Howard was deliberately seeking to frighten Australian citizens. It is also impossible for us to gauge whether the messages had the effect of inducing fear (whether intended or not). However, two isolated opinion polls (*Newspoll* and *The Australian*, 17–19 January 2003; 16–18 April 2004) did find that between 53 and 65% of those surveyed believed a major terrorist attack in Australia was likely or inevitable in the near future. This indicates that the majority of Australians—at least at these times—were indeed appraising the situation in a way that could evoke fear.

The contexts in which fear appeals arose indicate that rather than provoking consistent fear of terrorism, fear-arousing communication may be selectively employed by political leaders with the strongest fear appeals used at times of heightened political uncertainty, conflict, and declining support for the government and its policies. This finding is consistent with claims that fear of terrorism is used to: promote support for the practices of counterterrorism (Flyghed, 2005; Sunstein, 2004); reduce conflict and dissent (Furedi, 1997); and promote national cohesion and support for the political agenda (Jackson, 2005). This may have occurred through the bolstering of specific political opinion-based groups (Blüch, McGarty, Reynolds, & Hendres, 2007). This is an interesting point to explore further given that recent research by Musgrove and McGarty (2008) has shown that pro- and anti-War on Terror groups are associated with divergent emotional reactions and political agendas.

This research has demonstrated that potentially fear-arousing content is indeed present in Prime Minister John Howard’s political rhetoric about terrorism. However, the findings suggest that Howard has not consistently employed fear appeals in his political speeches. Rather, there has been a transformation of this content over time. While early speeches focus on making the case for the relevance of harmful terrorist events to their audience, they arguably begin to instill a baseline normative set of responses to terrorism. As support for antiterrorist policies is increasingly required, these initial relationships between the audience and terrorism appear to be sharpened, in these cases into fear appeals. The strongest fear appeals thus emerged at a time of high political tension and declining support for the government and its policies, in particular, immediately prior to the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq.

It is beyond the scope of this article to determine the political intentions of Prime Minister Howard in his articulation of fear-arousing communication. The

results do, however, suggest that statements promoting fear appraisal are variously and selectively present in this rhetoric. The fact that they are absent in some speeches and pervasively present in other speeches about terrorism suggests that fear-arousing talk is not an inevitable aspect of political rhetoric about frightening topics, but rather, something that has been selectively used by Howard at different times. Of course it remains to be seen whether other communicators deploy rhetoric in a similar way and whether other emotional appeals are present in such rhetoric, but our methods would appear to provide a plausible basis for further analysis of political communication.

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