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International political responses to the 2005 London bombing

Bernard McKenna and Neal Waddell
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Using a computer-assisted content analysis, this study analyzes a 32,000 word corpus drawn from mediated political statements made in response to the July 2005 London bombing. This grounded research led to a focus on the deontic nature of these statements, and also revealed a relative absence of condoling. Although condemnatory, statements did not specifically attribute the “evil” to particular people. Particularly mindful of Widdowson’s (2004) distinction between analysis (text) and interpretation (discourse), the paper first identifies the textual features, but then “hermeneutically” interprets their meaning within a wider context of international political discourse. The paper concludes that the statements performed a positive epideictic purpose, although it tended to occlude the compassionate element of public grieving.

Keywords: condemnation; condolence; deontic modality; discourse; epideictic rhetoric; media genres; political oratory; should; terrorism

Introduction

On Thursday July 7, 2005, bombs were detonated on three trains and one bus in London, killing over 50 civilians. In response, news media reported not only the details of the terrorist attack, but also political responses within the UK and worldwide. Using linguistic analysis and interpretation, this paper describes the responses from politicians and officials that were reported in worldwide major electronic and press news outlets as collected in the electronic source, Factiva (Reuters and Dow Jones Interactive 2005). From this grounded method, we have identified a number of characteristics with which we tentatively propose to describe an
emergent genre of discourse: the media-disseminated [media-ted] political oratory following terrorist events.

Discourse, Genre, and Political Oratory

The notion of a genre of discourse might seem an awkward concept. We understand discourse as a comprehensive notion that determines the epistemic boundaries and interpersonal relations of any utterance (Foucault 1972, 1981; Halliday 1978). Genre is understood in the Bakhtinian sense of a secondary or complex genre: of similar thematic content, style and compositional structure (Bakhtin 1994a; Gardiner 1992: 81). In this way, a genre is a replicable textual instantiation of discourse.

Epideictic rhetoric evolved from speeches given in the panegyris (Rollins 2005), although we acknowledge that these were originally intended as inspirational speeches designed to encourage the audience to emulate noble deeds. Nonetheless, we believe that the Greek form of the panegyris, which later incorporated the funeral oration, is sufficiently homologous to contemporary political utterances spoken at the death of people killed in a politically motivated attack. Aristotle privileged forensic and political forms, because he considered audiences of this rhetoric to be judges (kritics) rather than as spectators (theoroi) of epideictic rhetoric. On the other hand, Plato and Isocrates saw epideictic rhetoric as reinforcing civic values and promoting social cohesion (Rollins 2005: 8; see also Vickers 1988: 55). The temporal element of these forms of rhetoric also needs to be considered. That is, Aristotelian epideictic rhetoric deals with the present while deliberative, or political, rhetoric deals with the future. Nonetheless, we use Rollins’ (2005) review of a number of rhetoric theorists, namely, Gonsigny, Loraux, Ochs, Perelman and Olbrechts, Vickers, and Walker, who see no clear-cut division between epideictic’s presence and deliberative’s future orientation. These theorists emphasise the strength of epideictic rhetoric that enables its hearers to “reach communicative resolutions through appeals to shared values” (Rollins 2005: 9). Consequently, we see the political rhetoric in this paper’s corpus characterized by epideictic intention, but also time-oriented towards the future.

Methodology

Data Gathering

The data come from a 32,000 word corpus derived from ‘political’ announcements about the London bombings as disseminated by the Factiva database, which encompasses more than 8,000 news sources including newspapers, (Dow Jones and
Reuters) newswires, radio and television transcripts, and news websites. In Factiva, we used the search terms London and terrorism to find either direct political quotations or journalistic paraphrasing of politicians’ words. These were gathered to the point of content saturation, which is when no new stories can be found that report new political comments.

We were careful not to use text from the same report more than once, or different news events that effectively repeated the same words. The time range of nine days (7 to 15 July, 2005) was sufficient to cover the intense initial reaction to the bombing. This yielded 10,449 stories during that period which marked the point of content saturation. Only those reports directly attributed to politicians, their representatives (spokespersons), or those with apparent authority to make comment such as politically motivated public servants, were included. All these comments constitute political responses. This required us to eliminate texts by spokespersons who, because of traditional separation-of-powers doctrines, are not authorized to make ‘political’ statements. Words representing commentary of any type by journalists or spokespersons other than politicians and officials were also discarded.

For example, eliminated were situational statements from the corpus such as Fifty-one bodies have been removed from the scenes of the bombings… and As authorities in London continue to hunt those responsible for last week’s horror attacks… Details that were considered peripheral to these news reports have also been removed from the text. For example, a statement such as Prime Minister, Tony Blair’s Thursday briefing to reporters told them… has been replaced by Tony Blair said, and instead of using Townsend told ‘Fox News Sunday’ that…, we use Townsend said….

Titular descriptions have been reduced to the minimum necessary, such as Congresswoman Jane Harman, or Foreign Minister Alexander Downer.

Method

Using Leximancer in Grounded Research

Leximancer is particularly suitable for grounded research which requires predetermined concepts to be minimized so that analysis and interpretation are not overly influenced or biased (cf. Glaser and Strauss 1967: 2–6). Although we acknowledge that fully grounded research is never really possible (Rahaman and Lawrence 2001: 154), we did not bring to this paper’s corpus any a priori assumptions about what politicians would say. However, such assumptions should not be confused with what Glaser (1978: 78) himself calls the immanent “pre-emergent analytic thinking” that underlies most social research.
Leximancer has the capacity to overcome potential bias because it mathematically limits the human element in its internal system of data analysis and display (Smith and Humphreys 2006: 276). Its bootstrapping technique helps researchers to avoid fixating on "particular anecdotal evidence that may be atypical or erroneous" (Smith and Humphreys 2006: 262), by reducing expectation bias. Even though one can hand-seed to encode concepts from one’s textual corpus, researcher influence is limited because Leximancer builds these concepts without the need of an external lexicographic reference. In other words, this conceptualizing is derived from Leximancer’s unique thesaurus that is generated exclusively from the textual resources of individual corpora under analysis. This distinguishes Leximancer from methods of corpus linguistics that rely on already established lexicographic references in determining their corpora’s concordances and collocations (Sinclair 1991: 41–2).

Leximancer is best described as a computer-assisted, content analysis tool, as it follows the conventions of content analysis by codifying text into various groups or categories depending on selected criteria (Krippendorff 2004: 19). Leximancer recognizes that, even though “concepts” are known to correlate with “human learning and performance…they are still textual concepts” [author’s italics], which means that correlation with mental states is somewhat problematic (Smith and Humphries 2006: 263). Therefore, within its analysis, Leximancer caters for the “polysemic character of texts” in that it formulates inclusive concepts “located in determinate semantic and discursive fields” (López 2003: 143). Users of Leximancer, however, do have the option of changing parameter settings to suit their analytic aims irrespective of their nature or theoretical basis.

The advantages of Leximancer’s computer-based content analysis are significant in offering the meaning potential in text for human interpretation. Its semantic-mapping capacity allows content analysis of text corpora of any size. This is broadly achieved through four steps (Smith and Humphreys 2006: 262):

1. From a corpus, it derives a “ranked list of important lexical terms based on word frequency and co-occurrence usage”.
2. Then, from this ranked list of terms, it statistically develops a thesaurus comprised of a set of classifiers, known as ‘concepts’. This thesaurus is developed from within individual corpora with no need of a prior or external dictionary.
3. Leximancer then classifies the corpus text over three-sentence segments to produce a “concept index into the text and a concept co-occurrence matrix”.
4. Finally, this relative frequency of concept co-occurrence is used to calculate an asymmetrical co-occurrence matrix which, in turn, algorithmically produces a two-dimensional concept map. This map also includes a display of themes or parent concepts, as a classificatory show of concept connectedness, which
adds a semantic hierarchy to the network of concepts (Smith and Humphreys 2006: 267).

Without any intervention from users, these four steps in Leximancer entail a process of automatic concept selection (Smith and Humphreys 2006: 262). The most common method of using Leximancer is to begin with this option and then hand-seed concepts. Hand-seeding means redefining the analysis by deleting concepts with low semantic content, while merging concepts and frequently occurring words to encode new concepts, in order to reflect the research focus (Smith 2006). This is demonstrated in Analysis, below.

Before discussing how meaning is negotiated in this paper, we distinguish between co-occurrence and collocation. In Leximancer, word co-occurrence approximates ‘collocation’, although the latter’s application can vary from one researcher to the next (Pearce 2006). Acknowledging this variation, we adopt Leximancer’s usage of the term ‘co-occurrence’, because its analysis classifies text in segments of (defaulting to) three sentences. Collocation in linguistics usually applies to units ranging from two words to whole sentences (Lennon 1998: 15), but seldom more.

**Meaning Negotiation: Text/Discourse and Analysis/Interpretation**

Widdowson (2004: 20) distinguishes between analysis and interpretation. For him, analysis constitutes the “process of identifying what semantic features are manifested in a text”, while interpretation “involves recognizing how a text functions as discourse by discriminating which, and how, these features are pragmatically activated” (Widdowson 2004: 20). Because Leximancer acknowledges that text cannot be dissociated from context in assessing people’s mental concepts (Smith and Humphreys 2006: 265), it is used only for text analysis which provides the resource for contextualization and thus interpretation at the discourse level. Researchers can use Leximancer’s data mining facility to look beyond its derived concepts to consider the context in which they appear. This course from text to context, in Widdowson’s (2004: 20) terms, takes research from analysis to interpretation. This analysis-interpretation distinction thus allays Widdowson’s (2000: 7) concern that some linguistics-based research struggles to “account for the complex interplay of linguistic and contextual factors”. In this study, we use this approach to describe the discourse under analysis, media-ted political responses to terrorist attacks.

**Analysis Validity**

Leximancer analysis achieves the validity much sought after by qualitative researchers (Bryman 2001: 70, 75; Hoff and Witt 2000: 146). This is because Leximancer
has been successfully tested for "face validity, stability (sampling of members), and reproducibility including structural validity (sampling of representatives), and predictive validity" (Smith and Humphreys 2006: 277). Specifically, internal reproducibility is achieved at the point of attention to the "similarity in concept network patterns" that is displayed in the stochastic concept map (Smith and Humphreys 2006: 268). The calculations of Leximancer's concept maps draw from other techniques of statistics such as corpus linguistics, computational linguistics, and psycholinguistics (Smith and Humphreys 2006: 265). Beyond these internal measures, Leximancer also accounts for "correlative validity", namely, comparisons with other (external) analyses (Smith and Humphreys 2006: 277).

Analysis

As stated above, we begin with a lexical analysis. This process is iterative in that successive adjustments were made to the automatically derived concepts by eliminating and seeding words (see Table 1). We then looked more closely at the grammatical concept of deontic modality.

Concept Mapping

The initial Leximancer analysis revealed 37 concepts. However, as some were unrelated to this paper's search for political intention, they were eliminated. By intention, we simply mean the human property of mind tied to "those mental acts which lead to, guide and accompany actions" (Simons 2001: 16). Intention is important to this paper because discourse, as the "pragmatic process of meaning negotiation", becomes manifest at the "convergence of intention and interpretation" (Widdowson 2004: 8 12). Consequently, we hand-seeded a number of concepts for elimination, for three reasons.

1. deleting those considered peripheral;
2. merging those that are expressed separately but signify similarly (e.g., bombing and attack);
3. encoding certain concepts that can be fully represented only when merged with their various other forms of expression (these are taken from Leximancer's frequently occurring words listing, e.g., condolence and suffering).

Table 1 provides the seeding changes (deletions, mergers, and encodings) and the rationale for each. As well, the word must was removed from the stopwords, which are those frequently occurring words arbitrarily designated by Leximancer as having little lexical meaning. This was done because the deontic modality of must is
likely to underlie much of the intention expressed by politicians, particularly in times such as the London bombings (discussed below). These changes enhanced the relevance of the concept map.

After these changes, a second iteration of the corpus was formulated and mapped using Leximancer extraction (see Figure 1). A face-value examination points to the emergence of certain terrains on the map that indicate the general
compatibility of concepts in that terrain (the location of the quadrant in N, S, E, or W is immaterial; it is the proximity of concepts that matters). For example, terrorism and attacks are understandably central to the text and closely relate to terrorist concerns of each country. Government officials (Blair, leaders, minister) are peripherally in the right terrain concerned predominantly with the attacks, although Blair obviously is the leader most concerned with UK security measures. Also peripheral is police, who are understandably also concerned with security and other more locally based intelligence. In a sense, the lexicon of these representations is largely operational. This is quite separate from the themes of the top terrain of the map which, at face value, interconnect with issues of how/why the world and its leaders, must take steps so that the world condemns, and (should) fight this ‘war’ on, terrorism. Because Leximancer analyses Iraq (bottom left quadrant) as insignificant to the corpus (see Interpretation, below), it shows as a weak concept with little concept co-occurrence.

This hand-seeded concept map in Figure 1 displays 15 themes (identified as circles):
Media-ted political oratory following terrorist events

These themes are not as important as the 22 concepts (identified as dots) that they organize, which appear at 100% Leximancer exposure (this entails allowing Leximancer to display its full range of concepts, strong and weak, on the concept map; it defaults to a 50% strength concept exposure so as to focus on the strongest ones). The 22 concepts are:

terrorism, attacks, country, terrorist, security, should, must, condemnation, leaders, minister, police, world, government, Iraq, and Blair.

However, we have selected only five of these concepts: condolence and condemnation; must and should; and work. The reason for this is that these are the only concepts of the 22 that are generic to an epideictic form of political oratory. This form of utterance is intended to be inspirational. This is done, as we have stated, by calling upon the audience to resolve the crisis through shared values and by directing them to a better future. Choosing concepts according to our research focus, irrespective of their strength, accords with a wealth of scholarship that ranks implicit and weakly represented concepts of meaning potential equally with those that are explicit and strongly represented in that domain (Dewey 1938: 60; Margaroni 2005: 86).

Many of the 22 concepts (e.g., the most prominent, attacks and terrorism) obviously emerge because they are central to news reportage, or statements of media “fact”. Eliminating these in our hermeneutic process left us with just five pivotal concepts, four of which are in related pairs, which we decided either underscore political oratory or are crucial in expressing it: condemn/condolence; and those of deontic modality, should/must. As well, we retained work from Leximancer’s analysis despite its minor frequency and co-occurrence status (only 43 instances, including its word forms, worked and particularly, working). This choice was made iteratively following the assumption that work would appear primarily as a reportage noun as the venue of Londoners’ day-to-day activities. However, data-mining in the analysis (see below) showed otherwise. Before describing these selected concepts more fully, it is crucial to re-emphasize the distinction between word frequency and concept occurrence in Leximancer. Even though a word like work may appear 43 times in this corpus compared to 22 instances of condolence, this does not make it twice as strong conceptually because Leximancer’s analysis is based on an internally derived thesaurus. As will be seen below, work may be more polysemic, but condolence is more intricately expressed linguistically, meaning that the latter will co-occur and thus be conceptualized more widely within a corpus.
Condemnation and Condolence

Two user-defined concepts, condemnation and condolence, were identified to compare the relative strength of the two notions as expressions of affect and judgment by politicians (explained further in Interpretation, below). We approached the interpretation of this paper's corpus expecting the conventional practice of politicians to express condolence in times of disaster and human loss (cf. Boucher 1998; Evans 2002; Wittad 2002), and to condemn the perpetrators. However, condolence was represented weakly. We argue that this concept's under-representation could be a significant characteristic of this genre. On the other hand, condemnation was strong (appearing at the 54th percentage point in the concept map).

Of the 59 word-form instances of condemnation, the Goal (cf. Halliday 1994: 34) was terrorism or acts of terror (20), attacks (20), bombs or blasts (14), media (3), and crime or criminal act (2). Typical of these instances are:

A. Azerbaijan resolutely condemns terrorism in all its forms and believes that it is necessary to wage a joint fight against this terrible evil,” said the message sent to Queen Elizabeth II.

B. German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder condemned Thursday’s “perfidious attacks” in London and stressed the importance of fighting terrorism “with all the means at our disposal.”

C. President Gen. Pervez Musharraf condemned a series of deadly bombings in London Thursday, offering condolences for the loss of lives and calling for a joint fight against terrorism, the Foreign Ministry said.

D. “Bangladesh strongly condemns this mindless criminal act against innocent people.”

Significant in this analysis of condemnatory statements is their lack of specificity about the likely perpetrator. The act itself was condemned. That the bombing was a terrorist act seems to be slightly diminished by this emphasis. However, there was a degree of linkage in some of the statements. In the following, blasts is explicitly reformulated as acts of terrorism:

E. South Africa on Thursday condemned the series of blasts that hit London, leaving at least two dead and scores injured, calling it an “act of terrorism” and a “heinous deed.” “Clearly these constitute acts of terrorism and must be condemned in the strongest terms and without equivocation by the international community,” Deputy Foreign Minister Aziz Pahad said in a statement.

On the other hand, condolence was comparatively weak: it did not appear until the 97th percentage point in Leximancer’s concept map. In the entire corpus, the
condolence concept was used either in singular or plural forms only 22 times. Even if combined with (close) synonyms, sympathy (8 times), compassion (3), sorrow (3), and regret (2), the concept still displayed weakly. Similar words like commiseration, pity, or consideration were not used at all by politicians and officials. It is noted that two of the public statements that actually expressed condolence were from Ireland which, as a country previously associated with the IRA terrorist bombings in the UK, was understandably likely to react with sensitivity. For example, Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister), Mary Harney, offered my deepest sympathy and solidarity to the families of the bereaved and to all the injured. Another came from Green Party leader, Trevor Sargent, expressing our solidarity with the victims and all those bereaved, injured and traumatised by the unpalatable cruelty of these explosions. As well, US Homeland Security Secretary, Michael Chertoff, stated:

F. From all of us on the Homeland Security Committee, we wish the very best for the people of London, and especially the families of the dead and wounded. We share in your grief, and we pray for the speedy recovery of the survivors.

Chancellor, Gordon Brown, mixed condolence with epideictic resolve:

G. While buses and buildings can be destroyed, our values are indestructible. While hearts are broken, hope is unbreakable. Every generation is tested with the problems and dilemmas of the time and each era calls on great men and women to come forward and it is they who determine the character of an age.

Grammatical Analysis: Deontic Modality

Should and must are grammatically related insofar as they are both modal verbs. Modality is a concept shared by linguistics and formal logic. The logician, G. H. von Wright’s (1951) seminal paper divides modal concepts into alethic, epistemic, deontic, and existential. However, we are concerned only with deontic modality because it modalizes the lexical verbs of political statements and, therefore, the degree of judgment and obligation. The modal verbs should and must, and may and might express epistemic modality (knowledge and belief) as well as the deontic form expressing permission and obligation (Groefsema 1995: 53). But, because of our specific interest in the deontic within intention, we left may, and might in the stopwords because they both appeared infrequently in the corpus (23 and 9 times respectively). Because these examples represented predominantly epistemic rather than deontic modality (20 to 3 and 8 to 1 respectively), may and might were relatively unimportant in this analysis.

Must After taking the abovementioned step of replacing have to with its singular equivalent must, its conceptualization is set out in Table 2 to demonstrate
its strong role in expressing political intention. *Must* as a deontic modal verb occurred 74 times (there are another 10 occurrences as epistemic modality).

Of the 74 instances of *must* modality, only once does it combine with *condemn* as a collocation, when the South African Foreign Minister said:

**H.** these constitute acts of terrorism… [that] must be condemned in the strongest terms.

Although their word collocation was singular, their concept co-occurrence (within three sentences of each other) was quite high. This can be seen on the map in Figure 1 which places *must* and *condemnation* close to each other. This means that the concepts are strongly semantically related. That is, following the condemnation of a past action, the politicians then point to the future using *must* as a “compulsive modality” (see Strang 1968: 165) inspiring the international “community” to a better future. This is evident in the following:

**I.** The [Colombian] foreign minister said that “we received this news with great sorrow”. Colombia’s solidarity with the British people is “total”, as is the condemnation of “any form of terrorism”, she said. “We must join forces against terrorism.

This deontic call to future action is practically devoid of retributive impulses. Instead they call for vigilance, resolution, and unity. The strongest use of *must* modality is to insist on winning a battle against terrorism.

**J.** The G-8 leaders are in agreement that the international community must do everything to combat terrorism together with all the means at our disposal, he added. (German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder)
K. The attacks were a direct challenge to an emerging unity of approach, and the attackers must not be allowed succeed. (Mr Kenny, US Ambassador to Ireland)

L. It is because of this that terrorism may not become a fixture in any country. We must fight it with all the means we have available. (Janez Drnovšek, President, Slovenia)

The only instance of must being related to evil is in a statement by a Muslim Labour MP in the British parliament, Shahid Malik:

M. Condemnation is not enough and British Muslims must, and I believe are prepared to, confront the voices of evil head on.

The need for vigilance is evident in:

N. …but it is an issue of international concern and all countries must be vigilant in fighting these barbaric acts. (Alfred Mutua, Kenyan Government Spokesman)

as is the need for opponents of terrorism to maintain and strengthen their resolve:

O. The terrorist attacks in London must strengthen the resolve of the global society to wage an uncompromising battle against the terrorism. (Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov)

An important feature evident is the need for cooperation and unity among nations opposing such political tactics [because must lacks a past tense phrasal equivalent, we retained had to in this example]:

P. Europe had to work together to fight terrorism which posed a threat to the whole continent. (Dutch Prime Minister, Jan Peter Balkenende)

Should Must marks “compulsive modality” (cf. Strang 1968: 165) that expresses strong obligation and certitude (Rahimian 1999: 157). By contrast, should marks “tentative modality” (Larreya 2003: 36). Should appeared in the corpus 72 times, which is similar to 74 for must. However, half of should examples were eliminated from our analysis for two reasons. Information peripheral to the London bombings, usually relating to domestic issues, was eliminated, for example:

Q. [border protection] should not come at the cost of migrant immigrants who come to the US to find work. (Michael Chertoff, US Homeland Secretary)

The other reason for exclusion occurred where should expressed epistemic modality, as in:
R. Muslims living in their adopted countries should contribute meaningfully to the success… (Malaysian Prime Minister, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi)

The 39 usable instances of should as deontic modality that are considered directly relevant to political oratory that is resolute, collaborative, and future-oriented were categorized into six motifs:

a. Promoting Practical Political Action (17 instances)
b. Solidarity, Collaboration, and Cooperation (11)
c. Condemnation and Punishment (6)
d. Desire to Maintain Normal Liberties and Freedom (3)
e. Supporting Moderate Muslims (2)

The rhetorical purpose of solidarity and collaboration evident in the must log is stronger here, as is the element of condemnation. However, what is evident in this log of words is the importance of promoting a particular political objective, and the relative weakness of the cautionary statements in support of civil liberty and freedom. It is worth noting that three weeks later, on 22 July 2005, an innocent man was shot dead by police at Stockwell, a London underground station because he "refused to obey an order" (BBC News 2005, July 22). These motifs are now considered more closely.

Promoting Practical Political Action

There were 13 instances of this motif promoting practical political action related to terrorism. In some cases, these were politically partisan statements in the sense that the cause advocated was contested politically in the democratic process. For example, President, George W. Bush, stated

S. The terrorist threats against us will not expire at the end of this year, and neither should the protections of the Patriot Act.

The Russian Defense Minister, Sergei Ivanov, said

T. We should pay greater attention to the problem of extraditing terrorists at the request of the states concerned.

Australian Prime Minister, John Howard, advocated a national identity card system:

U. We haven't made a decision to have an ID card in this country but it should properly be on the table.

Even the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, used the occasion to argue that
V. The deadly London attacks should spur world leaders to revive long-stalled talks to craft a convention against terrorism.

Britain’s UN Ambassador, Emyr Jones Parry, said that

W. leaders should at least agree that any acts targeting civilians be defined as terrorism.

A subset of this rhetorical purpose is the call for practical action (4 instances). For example, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov says

X. Terrorists cannot be given refuge…and none of the terrorists or those who harbour them should be given refuge in any civilised country.

Russian Federation Council’s Committee for International Affairs, Mikhail Margelov, says

Y. Countries should abandon the policy of double standards, clearly define the terrorist threat and combine their intelligence and skills to fight this problem.

Solidarity, Collaboration, Cooperation

As stated above, the motif of solidarity is relatively strongly associated with this deontic modal. For example, Turkish Foreign Minister, Abdullah Gul, says

Z. The world should establish a joint platform to fight terrorism, which, he argued, is a common responsibility of all countries.

Indian Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, says that the London bombings

AA have demonstrably made it evident that all of us should work together to evolve a collective strategy to free the world from this scourge.

Bangladesh Prime Minister, Khaleda Zia, states

BB. This tragic event should strengthen the resolve of our nations to work together in fighting the menace of terrorism.

Condemnation and Punishment

The motif encompassing condemnation and punishment occurred relatively seldom in the deontic modality aspect of the corpus. The Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ statement is typical:
CC. We vehemently condemn committed criminal actions. Clients and performers of these acts of terror should be found and punished as soon as possible.

Desire to Maintain Normal Liberties and Freedom

A minor motif is that normal liberties should be maintained:

DD. The recent terrorist attacks have underscored the need for political leaders to join efforts, as they did in their joint fight against fascism... We should not restrict civil freedoms. (Russian Defense Minister, Sergei Ivanov)

Related to this sense of normalcy was a mood of defiance towards the bombers as statements were made urging that life go on unaffected by the bombing:

EE. I think whatever it is, they should go wherever they want to go. We should not prevent them. (Malay Foreign Minister, Syed Hamid Albar)

Supporting Moderate Muslims

There were two deontic instances related to a desire by British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, to incorporate Muslims. This feature is further developed in the next section.

Work

Contrary to our expectations, work did not appear often as a reportage noun of everyday life in London (4 times). Also rare were other noun forms, e.g., work of terrorism, intelligence or governments (9). However, work was used predominantly in verb forms to denote that governments should collaborate: world governments working against terrorism (11 times); terrorists work against humanity (2); security measures had worked (1); while most were coupled with the adverb together (11), for example:

FF. All countries must work together against terrorism." (British Prime Minister, Tony Blair)

Of the other five instances, two signified similarly, asking governments to work for a common goal against terrorism, even to the point of crossing political boundaries. The minor motif of normalcy is worthy of mention here as we approach interpretation in this paper. That is, there is in the statement
GG. The men, women, and children of England will continue to work, learn, and help others...[despite] these cowardly attacks on innocent civilians. (British House Homeland Security Committee Chairman, Christopher Cox)

an encouragement towards returning to everyday life. Although not specifically using the word, work, Blair's two attempts to advance national unity and the nature of "real" Britain, both drew from this normalcy motif. He called for supporting the moderate and true voice of Islam by root[ing] out extremists. However, as we show in our interpretation of this corpus, these types of statement, pointing away from the political agenda, are unusual.

**Interpretation**

International public political discourse has two significant intentions. First, it seeks to give meaning to circumstances affecting citizens' lives within the framework of political values and beliefs ordered by the normative procedures that collectively legitimate the international conduct of 'good' nations (Reus-Smit 1997: 567). A secondary intention for politicians is to show national voters that their ideas are appropriate, thereby securing public appeal and commitment (Williams 1995: 129). Notwithstanding that much of this discourse is grey rhetoric — a form of vacuous talk and other language games that masquerade as meaning-making (Waddell and McKenna 2005: 2) — significant events, such as economic turmoil, natural disasters, and terrorist incidents, provide political leaders with a rare opportunity to declare their values and proposed actions to a world audience. Despite the scepticism about political rhetoric being 'hot air', on occasions such as the London bombings, public political statements form an important part of the meaning-making generated by media who, often limited to journalistic speculation, provide a mixture of 'fact', hope, and human interest perspectives (Taylor 2000: 33). In other words, even though this paper is not researching journalistic commentary, we argue that public political discourse plays an important role in shaping the discursive space for a public response to such horrible events. This was evident after the 9/11 bombings when US President, George W. Bush's first public response, referring to the terrorists as "folks", was seen as ineffectual. He later referred to them as "evildoers" (Altheide 2004: 294), thematizing the US approach to international relations thenceforth (the "axis of evil" speech occurred four months later). Similarly, when New York Mayor, Rudi Giuliani, rejected a ten million dollar donation from a Saudi prince whom he regarded as critical of America (Chetwynd 2001), he further limited the discursive boundaries for discussing the 9/11 incident.
Our analysis reveals some defining characteristics of public political discourse that accompanied the London bombings, and which are noticeably different to the US post-9/11 response. While these characteristics cannot yet be treated as generalizable, they do provide a set of descriptors by which other responses to terrorist events can be compared. Of particular interest is the political use of deontic modality. Political leaders, when reacting to media inquiry into their handling of contentious world events, tend to use both categorical assertions and modalized, or more abstract, responses (Montgomery 2006). What follows are examples of these modality choices that attempt to promise a positive turn that sets human obligations to be fulfilled at some time in the future (Hoye 1997: 43). The two most significant findings are the role of deontic modality and the speakers’ orientation to the concepts of condemn and condolence.

Deontic Modality: Should and Must As well as anticipating future action, deontic modality seeks human action, but also seeks commitment to bringing that action about (Bandura 2001: 6). Epideictic rhetoric seeks a collective response by the public by asserting that certain civic values remain intact so that social cohesion is maintained in the face of terrorist attack. In other words, epideictic utterances are motivated by collective intention. Collective intention is distinctive because it is practiced and communicated according to an international discourse determined by constitutive rules that decide how political leaders act and behave (Ruggie 1998: 871). The grounded analysis of our corpus identifies must and should, and the minor concept work as important concepts in developing this collective intention. In fact, their deontic purpose led us to consider the epideictic role they play in such political statements.

Abstractness Another significant characteristic of this corpus is the absence of specific references, even to Muslim extremism, with the focus being on terror and terrorism, these days, both abstract, international terms (see Ackerman 2004; Klusmeyer and Suhrke 2002: 35). This abstract focus by politicians on the action (the instance of terrorism) rather than on those who may be implicated by association suggests a high degree of restraint, which are features of rhetorical nobility and diplomacy. This led to abstract nominals such as forces of evil or the neutral term, the attackers being deployed rather than more specific nominals. The should and must deontics were distinctively directed to solidarity and cooperation, or working together. In this sense, the effect of the bombing — in public discourse at least — was to unify rather than divide, another ennobling feature of the discourse.

Virtue and Vice The deontic nature of this modality is important, we claim, because of the way that politicians attempt to persuade citizens to settle on a moral position because it is desired and just (Whetstone 2003: 345). This morality underlay Aristotle’s conception of the epideictic speaker who was “concerned with virtue and vice, praising the one and censuring the other” (Aristotle 1991: Ch 9,
The most obvious virtues in this instance are courage, magnificence and prudence, but particularly courage, which Aristotle defines as that which disposes people "to do noble deeds in situations of danger, in accordance with the law and in obedience to its commands" (Aristotle 1991: Ch 9, 1366b).

**International Political Agendas** Underlying these epideictic calls are various international agendas, particularly since the US and UK governments have so clearly established themselves as leading the "fight against terrorism" and are committed to the Second Iraq War. However, other countries such as Russia and Spain have been victims of separatist terrorist violence, unrelated to the Muslim-based jihad. These countries and other countries clearly needed, in this instance, to position themselves in a way that did not necessarily indicate support for the UK government's involvement in the Iraq war. Significantly, the only reference to Iraq in this log of statements is uttered by Charles Kennedy, the Leader of the UK Liberal Democrats:

HH. We **must** **recognise** the occupation of Iraq by the multinational force itself contributes to the insurgency and attracts those from abroad who see the opportunity to spread violent fundamentalism.

**National Agendas** However, a less noble characteristic of the statements is the high incidence of promoting contestable national agendas. In some instances, such as George W. Bush's advocacy for the *Patriot Act* or the Australian Prime Minister introducing the possibility of an identity card, these were plainly partisan, and so were unworthy and inappropriate because they were inconsistent with the tenor of global discourse. Perhaps less culpable were politically driven calls for international agencies to work better together.

**Condemnation and Condolence**

The relative lexical weakness of *condolence* is surprising given the usual practice that politicians epideictically prioritize their condoling with victims (see above), particularly considering the widespread contemporary world focus on terrorism. This weakness contrasts with the relative lexical strength of *condemn*. The contrast, when considered using the linguistic concept of evaluation, provides a useful characteristic of this form of discourse. Evaluation is "the speaker's … attitude or stance towards, … the entities or propositions that he or she is talking about" (Thompson and Hunston 2000: 5, 14), and is lexically, grammatically, and textually realized. Martin (2000) and Martin and Rose (2003: 22, 25) similarly identify appraisal as a system of interpersonal meanings revealing attitude about affect (feelings), judgement (character), and appreciation (value) that are lexically and grammatically realized. Our analysis in this instance comprises lexical presence and absence.
The relative absence of condolence and the relative strength of condemnation renders the discourse as primarily evaluative as speakers clearly render the bombing as an unspeakably evil act. This, for most of us, is uncontentious and shared. However, the relative weakness of affect is worth noting. That is, there is relatively little said about the sadness of lost lives and horrible injuries. In a sense, the victims and their loved ones are not, we would say, sufficiently mourned. There is little time set aside in these early stages for ‘the world’ to share this grief (such events in the public domain are often much later and appropriately ordered). The epideictic function of defining virtue and vice overwhelms the function of mourning.

Conclusions

As happened in the ancient Greek agora, citizens, even postmodern ones, look to their leaders to provide meaning, that is, give sense to, significant events, especially in times of crisis and grief. After the London bombings, global media assisted this process as it went beyond mere reportage to provide statements by world leaders. Our analysis has shown that there was, surprisingly, a relative absence of mourning for the lives of those who died. The statements did epideictically provide deontic counsel about what must and should happen, although some leaders used this to promote partisan political causes. While there was a clear statement of good and evil, the tone was not shrill; indeed, there seemed a clear intention to avoid specific prejudicial statements about who was responsible. Consequently, we would argue that a potentially new journalistic genre is evident in these characteristics. As Fairclough, Jessop and Sayer (2001) point out, genres are “ways of acting and interacting in their specifically semiotic aspect; they are ways of regulating (inter) action”. In the semiotic order — a specific configuration of genres, discourses and styles, which constitutes the semiotic moment of a network of social practices — genres, by definition, emerge slowly given that they are relatively stable. Given this, and our rejection of Fairclough, Jessop and Sayer’s claim that the relationship between genres, discourses and styles is dialectical, we adopt Bakhtin’s (1994b) argument that a complex heteroglossia emerges through dialogic encounters of discourse participants. We have identified particular characteristics of the mediated messages of world leaders, which condemned the action while calling for a shared resolve to maintain civic values. We would suggest, however, that national leaders collectively could have allowed more time to speak to those who wept for the ones they love.
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References


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