Reading Rhetorical Theory
Reverse Outline Activity
Created by Atilla Hallsby (hall1039@umn.edu)
Last Updated: Fall 2021

(To be paired with "Argumentation" Chapter, Exercise to Teach Logically Dependent and Independent Organization as executed in writing)

Selections below drawn from David Zarefsky. 2007. "Making the Case for War: Colin Powell at the United Nations," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 10(2): 275-302.

Instructions

1. Read the **Text of the Essay** and create a *topic sentence outline* in a separate document.
    a. A *topic sentence outline* is an outline version of the essay that selects the topic sentence of each paragraph and lists them in the sequence they appear. You should be able to read the topic sentence outline as a single continuous paragraph that follows the same progression and has the same main ideas as the long-form essay.
2. Using the *topic sentence outline,* determine whether each paragraph is *logically dependent* or *logically independent* relative to the paragraph that comes before it.
    a. *Logically dependent* sequences will "stick together" by continuing a single same thought or idea. For example:
        i. *Many of the tropes used in Powell's speech were borrowed from speeches that were popular during Cold War*
            1. *The most widely received speeches delivered about the possibility of armed conflict during the Cold War were often delivered by the U.S. President, rather than the Secretary of State*
            2. *It was therefore a marked departure from the norm that the Secretary of State would deliver an important speech regarding the United States' decision to declare war.*
    b. *Logically independent* sequences provide several non-overlapping sentences in a parallel structure. For example:
        i. *Many of the tropes used in Powell's speech were borrowed from speeches that were popular during Cold War/*
            1. *One of the tropes was the amorphous threat of terror from an unknown source*
            2. *Another of the tropes was about the terrifying enormity of the weapons that war would unleash.*

Text of the Essay

Introduction

In the months leading up to March 2003, those who favored U.S. military action in Iraq did so for one or more of three basic rationales. For some, the principal concern was the tyrannical character of the regime of Saddam Hussein. He was a dictator and violated the rights of his people, the argument went; therefore he should be overthrown. Among advocates of this position were many who believed that the first President Bush had erred in bringing the Persian Gulf War of 1991 to a close with Saddam Hussein still in power. This was the opportunity to finish the job. What made this a kairotic moment, creating the opportunity to mobilize public opinion in support of the goal, was the same factor that gave urgency to the other two rationales: the psychological effect of September 11, 2001.

Others found this first rationale insufficient—not because they disagreed with the assessment of Saddam Hussein or with deep-seated antipathy for dictatorships, but because they believed that these deplorable circumstances did not justify intervention by an outside power. They may have upheld this belief as a general principle, or have thought that waging aggressive war was not in keeping with the American tradition, or have recognized that acting consistently on the principle would threaten other totalitarian rulers of nations that were U.S. allies. For any or all of these reasons, they were not committed a priori to the goal of regime change in Iraq. Their goal was instead to eliminate the danger articulated in either of the other two justifications for war.

The second rationale was the possibility that Saddam Hussein was actively colluding with al Qaeda, which President George W. Bush had described to Congress in 2001 as "a collection of loosely affiliated terrorist organizations." There were rumors that Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, alleged to be the leader of a terrorist network in Iraq, was doing the bidding of Osama bin Laden and was in contact with Saddam Hussein. Those who accepted the rumors found in them evidence of a clear and present danger of Iraqi sponsorship of terrorist attacks against the West. Perhaps because the evidence of this nexus was far from conclusive, depending mostly on the assertions of Iraqi defectors and refugees, it seldom carried the full burden of making the case for war.Without asserting directly what could not be proved, President Bush and—even more so—Vice President Cheney implied that there was a link between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda. Polls suggested that significant numbers of Americans believed that there was a link, with substantial numbers believing that Saddam Hussein actually had orchestrated the attacks of September 11, a claim for which there was no evidence at all.

The most substantial of the justifications for war was not the direct connection to al Qaeda but the claim that Iraq either was rapidly developing or already had weapons of mass destruction, in violation of sanctions imposed after the 1991 Persian Gulf War. The danger lay not just in the destructiveness of the weapons but in the widely shared assumption that a rogue state such as Iraq would freely make them available to terrorist organizations who would not hesitate to use them against Western powers. This was the sense in which Bush administration officials argued that September 11 had brought to the threat a new sense of urgency.

Whichever of these rationales for war one adopted, an additional question was who ought to be the agent to contain the Iraqi danger. Some believed that the United States, having identified the threat, should act alone, preempting the possibility of further terrorism against the West. The *National Security Strategy of the United States*, published in 2002, justified preemptive action as a strategy made necessary by the lethal potential of future terrorist attacks. A variation of this argument was that the United States should not act alone but should lead a coalition of other like-minded nations—a "coalition of the willing." This approach would share the human and financial burdens of the war and reap the additional benefits of multilateralism without subjecting American judgments or control to the approval of others. When criticized later for the seeming unilateralism of the war, President Bush denied the premise, identifying a list of other nations that had contributed money or troops.

On the other hand, there were strong reasons to insist upon, or at least to seek, the support and perhaps the leadership of the United Nations. This was especially the case for those whose goal was to contain the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction. The resolutions that Saddam Hussein was accused of violating were imposed by the United Nations; the weapons inspectors who had been expelled from Iraq worked under the authority of the United Nations; and the UN Security Council had the authority under the UN Charter to authorize member states to use force in order to repel threats to the peace. Reportedly, there were intense discussions within the Bush administration about whether to seek the legitimation of the UN, with Secretary of State Colin Powell emerging as the principal advocate for such a course. He prevailed, at least in part. He persuaded President Bush to make an appeal to the United Nations, but not to make U.S. actions contingent on approval by the international body.

Context

Not long after Vice President Cheney raised consciousness of the Iraqi threat in a speech to the Veterans of Foreign Wars on August 26, 2002, in which he essentially said that weapons inspection would be futile so war would be necessary, President Bush addressed the United Nations General Assembly at the opening of its fall session. He challenged the UN to take action against the threat lest the world body confess its irrelevance. The speech was alternately solicitous and defiant, but on the whole it seemed to indicate that Powell's position had won out within the administration over that of Cheney and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. The United States would go the route of multilateralism.[3]

But the adoption of a Security Council resolution authorizing force against Iraq hardly was a foregone conclusion. Several members, including U.S. allies, were skeptical about the imminence of the threat or about the appropriateness of military action rather than an expanded program of sanctions. In the event, it would take eight weeks for the Security Council to agree on the language of Resolution 1441, which passed unanimously on November 8. In an attempt to convince the Security Council of the seriousness of the U.S. commitment, the administration sought and received congressional passage of a resolution authorizing the president to use force in Iraq. In the midst of a heated midterm election campaign, the resolution received significant bipartisan support, whether out of genuine conviction or fear of political

repercussions. Touted at the time as a way to send a signal to the United Nations, this resolution would be used later as independent authorization for the United States to employ force in Iraq regardless of the action of the UN. Disaffected Democrats who maintained that they were only giving authority to the president, not agreeing that the authority ought to be used, found themselves drawing a very tenuous distinction.

Resolution 1441, like most Security Council resolutions, was ambiguous. As passed, it called for a new round of stringent weapons inspections, required an Iraqi declaration of its weapons of mass destruction and its efforts to eliminate them, and warned Iraq that a material breach of the resolution (consisting of a false declaration and a general failure to cooperate)4 would subject Iraq to "serious consequences." The phrase "serious consequences" was used instead of an authorization for member states to use "all necessary means" (understood as war) to force compliance. Left unstated, then, was whether a violation of Resolution 1441 would automatically authorize war, or whether a second resolution would be required to confirm the finding of material breach and authorize the use of military force. Pressing for clarity on this matter would shatter the unanimity with which the Security Council approved Resolution 1441. The United States insisted that 1441 gave all the authorization that was needed; France and other Security Council members thought not.

Actions in the ensuing months bolstered no one's confidence that Saddam Hussein was prepared to comply with the resolution. The Iraq government submitted an 11,000-page declaration in early December, right before the 30-day deadline. Its length seemed more to obfuscate than to clarify; the data were incomplete and often obsolete. In late January, the leaders of the UN inspection team, Hans Blix and Mohamed El-Baradei, reported cases of Iraqi noncooperation and concluded that Iraq had not yet moved toward compliance. To some, this evidence meant that the weapons inspections should be given more time and power to achieve success; to others, that the time for patience had expired and the United States should now move to war.

Although the United States did not think that a second resolution was necessary, 5 it certainly would welcome one, as that would finesse the issue. Secretary of State Powell did not explicitly call for a second resolution, but it was in this context that he was scheduled to speak to the Security Council. President Bush announced in his State of the Union speech on January 28 that on February 5 Powell "will present information and intelligence about . . . Iraq's illegal weapons programs, its attempts to hide those weapons from inspectors, and its links to terrorist groups." But the president made clear that American action would not depend on what action the Security Council might take. "We will consult," he said, and then added, "But let there be no misunderstanding. If Saddam Hussein does not fully disarm, for the safety of our people and for the peace of the world, we will lead a coalition to disarm him."6

Selecting the United Nations as the venue and Powell as the advocate were both rhetorical choices. The Security Council is the appropriate place to follow up on Blix's report of Iraqi noncompliance with Security Council resolutions and to call attention to Saddam Hussein's contempt for the international organization, And, of course, if one interpreted Resolution 1441 as calling for a second debate and vote in the face of Iraqi noncompliance, then a presentation to the Security Council would set that process in motion.7 Finally, of course, the Security Council is what one writer termed an unrivaled "backdrop for political theater."8 It permits the

U.S. representative to stage "dramatic diplomatic confrontations" with American adversaries for the benefit of a worldwide audience while at the same time being overheard by a domestic audience and using the opportunity to solidify American opinion. Sending an American envoy to present the case at the UN signaled the desirability of gaining as much international support as possible for whatever action the president might take.9

The choice of Powell rather than the UN ambassador or another diplomatic official symbolically highlighted the importance of the issue. In response, 13 of the 15 Security Council members sent their foreign ministers to the meeting as well.10 Powell commanded the respect of the nation and the world; he was known to examine evidence carefully and to develop a persuasive presentation. More than that, his reputation as a skeptic on Iraq, if not an outright "dove" within the administration, enhanced his credibility. This would be no hack presenting the party line; his remarks would be akin to reluctant testimony.He had his doubts about the war in the first place and had been the leading advocate of a diplomatic rather than a military solution. If he now acknowledged that Resolution 1441 had failed to bring about compliance, his words would carry extra weight.11 There also was speculation that his presence at the UN would "keep Washington hard-liners at bay"12 by conveying their message that the United States was prepared to act with or without a second Security Council resolution. This message, in turn, might convince the members of the Security Council to take the whole matter of Iraq more seriously. The speech then could also serve as a test of the likelihood of gaining a second resolution. Of course, despite all these symbolic benefits, the decision to send Powell as the U.S. advocate carried risks. He was such a visible symbol that if he were to fail to change attitudes in the administration's direction, the results could be embarrassing for the United States and for Powell personally.

The symbolism of the speaker and venue was further enhanced by an oft mentioned historical analogue: the presentation almost exactly 40 years earlier in which UN Ambassador Adlai E. Stevenson confronted the Soviet delegate and presented to the world evidence of the construction of offensive missile sites in Cuba. Asking Valerian Zorin whether he denied that such construction was under way, Stevenson received an evasive response: he should continue with his statement and would receive an answer in due course. Stevenson, angry, replied that he would wait for his answer "until hell freezes over" and that he was prepared to present the evidence. With that, he referred to easels on which were placed poster-sized blowups of photos taken by reconnaissance flights. Stevenson interpreted the photos, pointing to evidence of continuing construction at the missile sites. It was a key moment in fixing responsibility for the Cuban missile crisis and convincing delegates that a military response was called for.

In the days leading up to Powell's speech, allusions to Stevenson's presentation were frequent. On January 28, Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle had challenged the president: "If we have proof of nuclear and biological weapons, why don't we show that proof to the world, as President Kennedy did 40 years ago when he sent Adlai Stevenson to the United Nations to show the world U.S. photographs of offensive missiles in Cuba?"13 In a sense, Daschle was calling the administration's bluff, but he also was identifying a way for the Bush administration to win over skeptics and swing support to its position. Daschle's evocation of the 1962 experience resonated in media commentary leading up to Powell's speech, with repeated statements anticipating an "Adlai Stevenson moment." Inevitably, noted the Seattle Times, "Powell's

appearance will invite comparison with one of the most dramatic televised moments of the Cold War."14 Janine Zacharia of the Jerusalem Post portrayed the decision to send Powell to the UN as a choice by the Bush administration "to repeat the Adlai Stevenson performance of the Cuban missile crisis."15 And Bruce Berkowitz forecast that "with enough effort, we will have what people are calling an 'Adlai Stevenson moment.'"16 This was a common theme in the commentary before the speech.

Of course, the circumstances were not altogether analogous to those of 1962. Unlike Stevenson, Powell was not trying to prove the presence of some activity; he was trying to prove the absence of efforts by Iraq to disarm. Necessarily, then, his visual evidence would be circumstantial rather than direct. Accordingly, he and others tried to deflate expectations aroused by the comparison to the "Adlai Stevenson moment." As he was developing the speech, Powell reportedly "has conceded that whatever he comes up with is unlikely to have the stunning impact of the photos of Soviet missiles in Cuba."17 Another administration official, reflecting the belief that "new, convincing evidence is hard to come by . . . warned against expecting the kind of vivid pictures" that Stevenson presented in 1962.18 Even so, those involved in the preparations of the speech were convinced that Powell's evidence be clear, sufficient, and convincing.

Powell himself was actively engaged in preparation for the speech. Senior administration officials said that he wanted "a few select, vivid items of solid evidence," not ambiguous material that could be discounted by critics.19 The weekend before the speech, he spent time at the Central Intelligence Agency reviewing intercepts and other evidence and rejecting anything that did not seem credible.20 Vice President Cheney reportedly urged Powell to consider evidence in a report that had been prepared by his chief of staff, Lewis Libby, but Powell was skeptical. He thought that the report presented as certainties statements that were dubious.21 CIA officials looked through information to determine what might safely be included. Meanwhile, Powell engaged in extensive rehearsal for the speech, rearranging the furniture in one room so that it would more closely resemble the Security Council chamber. He insisted on continued fact-checking and refused to insert details requested by hard-liners but which did not have the necessary support.22 He took CIA Director George Tenet with him to the Security Council in order to convey the message that intelligence officials backed up his judgments. On the whole, the preparation for the speech was commensurate with its importance.

That it would be an important occasion, there was little doubt. Asking, "How important will Powell's presentation on Wednesday be to the United Nations about the Bush administration's evidence about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction?" a USA Today/CNN/Gallup poll found that 60 percent replied "very important" and another 27 percent replied "somewhat important." Only 12 percent said "not too important" or "not important at all." In the same poll, majorities of 75 percent or more responded that the United States would be justified in taking military action against Iraq if the evidence demonstrated that Iraq had ties to al Qaeda, or if Iraq had biological or chemical weapons, or if Iraq had nuclear weapons, or if Iraq was obstructing the weapons inspectors. The only circumstance in which a smaller majority would support military action was if Iraq were shown to have facilities to create weapons of mass destruction but did not actually have such weapons. Even then, 60 percent of the poll respondents would find military action justified if Secretary Powell's speech provided convincing evidence.23

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Topic Sentence Outline

Introduction

1. In the months leading up to March 2003, those who favored U.S. military action in Iraq did so for one or more of **three basic rationales.**
2. For some, the principal concern was the tyrannical character of the regime of Saddam Hussein.
3. Others found this first rationale insufficient—not because they disagreed with the assessment of Saddam Hussein or with deep-seated antipathy for dictatorships, but because they believed that these deplorable circumstances did not justify intervention by an outside power.
4. The second rationale was the possibility that Saddam Hussein was actively colluding with al Qaeda, which President George W. Bush had described to Congress in 2001 as "a collection of loosely affiliated terrorist organizations."
5. The most substantial of the justifications for war was not the direct connection to al Qaeda but the claim that Iraq either was rapidly developing or already had weapons of mass destruction, in violation of sanctions imposed after the 1991 Persian Gulf War.
6. Whichever of these rationales for war one adopted, an additional question was who ought to be the agent to contain the Iraqi danger.
7. On the other hand, there were strong reasons to insist upon, or at least to seek, the support and perhaps the leadership of the United Nations.

Context

1. Not long after Vice President Cheney raised consciousness of the Iraqi threat in a speech to the Veterans of Foreign Wars on August 26, 2002, in which he essentially said that weapons inspection would be futile so war would be necessary, President Bush addressed the United Nations General Assembly at the opening of its fall session.
2. But the adoption of **a Security Council resolution authorizing force** against Iraq hardly was a foregone conclusion.
3. **Resolution 1441**, like most Security Council resolutions, was ambiguous.
4. **Actions in the ensuing months** bolstered no one's confidence that Saddam Hussein was prepared to comply with the resolution.
5. Although the United States did not think **that a second resolution was necessary, it certainly would welcome one**, as that would finesse the issue.
6. Selecting the United Nations as the venue [**for the second resolution**] and Powell as the advocate were both **rhetorical choices.**
7. The choice of Powell rather than the UN ambassador or another diplomatic official symbolically highlighted the importance of the issue.
8. The symbolism of the speaker and venue was further enhanced by an oft-mentioned historical analogue: the presentation almost exactly **40 years earlier** in which UN

      Ambassador **Adlai E. Stevenson** confronted the Soviet delegate and presented to the world evidence of the construction of offensive missile sites in Cuba.

9. (LD, requires the previous sentence) In the days leading up to Powell's speech, allusions to **Stevenson's presentation** were frequent.
10. (LD, requires previous sentences) Of course, the circumstances were not altogether analogous to those of **1962**.
11. (LI -- Powell's own rhetorical choices) Powell himself was actively engaged in preparation for the speech.
12. (LD with respect to a) That it would be an important occasion, there was little doubt.

TS Outline w/ Dependency

Introduction

1. In the months leading up to March 2003, those who favored U.S. military action in Iraq did so for one or more of **three basic rationales.**
   a. (LI -- First) For some, the principal concern was the tyrannical character of the regime of Saddam Hussein.
      i. (LD -- modifies/disagrees with the first rationale) Others found this first rationale insufficient—not because they disagreed with the assessment of Saddam Hussein or with deep-seated antipathy for dictatorships, but because they believed that these deplorable circumstances did not justify intervention by an outside power.
   b. (LI -- Second) The second rationale was the possibility that Saddam Hussein was actively colluding with al Qaeda, which President George W. Bush had described to Congress in 2001 as "a collection of loosely affiliated terrorist organizations."
   c. (LI -- Three) The most substantial of the justifications for war was not the direct connection to al Qaeda but the claim that Iraq either was rapidly developing or already had weapons of mass destruction, in violation of sanctions imposed after the 1991 Persian Gulf War.
2. (LD -- in relation to the first sentence) Whichever of these rationales for war one adopted, an additional question was who ought to be the agent to contain the Iraqi danger.
   a. (LD -- in relation to the sentence above) On the other hand, there were strong reasons to insist upon, or at least to seek, the support and perhaps the leadership of the United Nations.

Context

13. Not long after Vice President Cheney raised consciousness of the Iraqi threat in a speech to the Veterans of Foreign Wars on August 26, 2002, in which he essentially said that weapons inspection would be futile so war would be necessary, President Bush addressed the United Nations General Assembly at the opening of its fall session.
    a. (LD -- requires the prior sentence, a continuation of the thought above) But the adoption of **a Security Council resolution authorizing force** against Iraq hardly was a foregone conclusion.
       i. (LD -- requires the prior sentence) **Resolution 1441**, like most Security Council resolutions, was ambiguous.
14. (LD -- requires reference to the first sentence of the section) **Actions in the ensuing months** bolstered no one's confidence that Saddam Hussein was prepared to comply with the resolution.

a. (LD -- connects to the previous sentence) Although the United States did not think **that a second resolution was necessary, it certainly would welcome one**, as that would finesse the issue.
    i. (LD -- connects to the previous sentence) Selecting the United Nations as the venue [**for the second resolution**] and Powell as the advocate were both **rhetorical choices.**
        1. (LI -- the different rhetorical choices that went into the second resolution) The choice (**#1**) of Powell rather than the UN ambassador or another diplomatic official symbolically highlighted the importance of the issue.
        2. (LI -- second choice) The symbolism of the speaker and venue was further enhanced by an oft-mentioned historical analogue: the presentation almost exactly **40 years earlier** in which UN Ambassador **Adlai E. Stevenson** confronted the Soviet delegate and presented to the world evidence of the construction of offensive missile sites in Cuba.
            a. (LD, requires the previous sentence) In the days leading up to Powell's speech, allusions to **Stevenson's presentation** were frequent.
                i. (LD, requires previous sentences) Of course, the circumstances were not altogether analogous to those of **1962**.
        3. (LI -- Powell's own rhetorical choices) Powell himself was actively engaged in preparation for the speech.
b. (LD with respect to a) That it would be an important occasion, there was little doubt.