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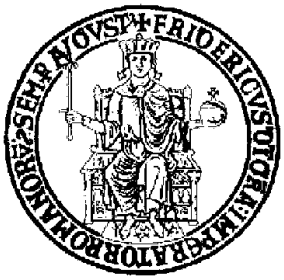

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A CADS ANALYSIS OF DISCOURSE FEATURES AND POLITICAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES.

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Words are actions,
and they make things happen.
Hanif Kureishi, *Intimacy*

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Before my experience at the Department of Scienze Statistiche began, I expected I would spend the three years of my PhD as a lonely bookworm, just browsing libraries, writing a terribly long dissertation.

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Introduction

Today's world is witnessing the development of a "social technology of influence" (Manheim 1998: 100-1), orchestrated by political actors by exploiting a number of means of communication, including the traditional media and new ones, but also by making use of marketing tools and techniques, with the goal of shaping the public opinion in such a way as to gain support for the achievement of specific political goals.

Discourse – which, following Stubbs (1996) and Martin and Rose (2007), I regard as constitutive of social reality – is undoubtedly one of the primary means through which such advanced communication strategies are realized. In particular, I argue that the exploitation of specific discourse strategies on the part of individual actors or groups on the political scene goes hand in hand with their political strategies, and that most of these discourse strategies are realized through the repetition of patterns and the conveyance of meanings in ways that are invisible to the naked eye.

In line with this hypothesis, I have chosen to exploit the Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (*CADS*) approach (Partington 2004, 2006a, 2008b; Bayley 2008) to explore a specific discourse type through the combined use of quantitative and qualitative analytical techniques, in order to be able to identify the way a number of discourse features are exploited by specific participants in order to achieve specific strategic goals.

More specifically, I have chosen to explore the discourse strategies enacted by the participants in one of the most important arenas of political communication today: the daily press briefings that take place at the White House, where the press secretary to the president meets reporters with the twofold goal of responding to reporters' demands for presidential news and, more importantly from the White House point of view, of setting the

agenda for the day by making certain issues more salient than others, according to the priorities established by the administration.

In particular, I focus here on the White House press briefings held during the first term of the George W. Bush administration (January 2001 – January 2005). As reported by a number of presidency scholars (Perloff 1998; Han 2001; Kumar 2007), indeed, the importance of communications and media relations at the White House has been steadily growing throughout the 20th century, and nowadays "the president and the news media jointly occupy center stage" (Perloff 1998: 58). The advent of the new millennium has then brought with it the rise of the Internet as a primary source of information, especially for the young people, and the multiplication of cable television networks – both factors that have led to an unprecedented transformation in the news cycle, which is now active 24 hours a day and in which pieces of news tend to have a very short life (Kumar 2007: xxx-xxxi), with the risk of generating a situation where there is "an abundance of information but a lack of understanding of what it means" (Kumar 2007: 2-3). In such a transformed context, the George W. Bush White House has deliberately chosen to make communication strategies one of the key aspects of the administration, working hard on developing specific messages, attempting to place them on the agenda at a given moment, and in such a way as to have them framed by the media as they were intended to be (Kumar 2007: 3-4; 71-72). Due to such a strong emphasis placed on communication by this administration, the press briefings which took place at the White House during those years are likely to represent an interesting starting point for the exploration of the way discourse strategies are exploited by the wizards of communication in today's political scene.

In sum, this research project revolves around the analysis of a

specialized discourse type – the discourse of the White House press briefings – and aims to identify its most salient and distinctive features. Due to the nature of these briefings, the language used in this context is likely to be a mixture of institutional, media and political discourse. Indeed, while, on the one hand, the White House press secretary is likely to make use of an institutional discourse type, the reporters will use the typical media jargon. Furthermore, since the main topic debated in the briefings is the US domestic and foreign policy, typical features of political discourse are likely to be present in the briefings. One of the aims of the present dissertation will thus consist in finding out which features of the aforementioned specialized discourse types are actually present in these briefings, mainly through a contrastive analysis of the press secretary's and reporters' talk.

In order to explore and analyze them, I have collected all the official transcripts of the briefings and of the informal 'gaggles' that are publicly available on the White House website for the four years of the Bush administration's first term, amounting to a total of 697 texts and 3,367,340 words. I have subsequently assembled them in a corpus, to which I have added XML markup in order to be able, when analyzing it, to easily retrieve information about individual speakers and their roles, date, location and type of each briefing and text structure, among other things. In this way it has been possible to carry out a corpus-based investigation without losing sight of the context of interaction, which is generally regarded as a shortcoming of most corpus work (Widdowson 2000: 6-9).

One typical *CADS* research question type aims to find out how, in a given discourse type, participants use specific discourse features to pursue specific strategies. In the present dissertation, I focus on research questions of this type, as I intend to investigate:

1. what kind of strategies can be observed behind the press secretary's and reporters' use of reported discourse in the briefings;
2. how lexical items typically used in the jargon of political communication are exploited by the White House press secretary, in relation to specific topics and in the perspective of achieving specific political goals.

Although, as Bayley observes (2008: 38), even the length of a book might not be sufficient to carry out the linguistic exploration of a whole discourse type by examining both the whole corpus and individual texts, and by taking into account the wider context of text production and reception, I will attempt here to cover some of the linguistic features whose analysis might be able to shed light on the most significant aspects both of the communication strategies of the George W. Bush administration and of the White House press briefings as a discourse type.

In this perspective, before analyzing and discussing corpus data, I start this dissertation by sketching a picture of the broader context: in Chapter 1, I therefore discuss the importance of language in politics, explore current trends in political communication and outline the way in which the White House deals with communication and media relations today. In Chapter 2 I move on to introduce the analytical approach I adopted in this research project, I outline the methodology I applied and describe the tools I exploited. Furthermore, I provide some insight into how the corpus on which this project is based was assembled, and introduce some preliminary data regarding the corpus itself. In Chapters 3 and 4 I attempt to provide an answer to the two main research questions listed above. Finally, I try to draw some conclusions about how discourse strategies adopted in the briefings and emerged from the analysis carried out in this project can be assumed to be related to the political communication strategy and, more

generally, to the George W. Bush administration's policies and politics. In so doing, I hope I will be able to shed some light on the Bush years by producing objective linguistic evidence to illustrate specific phenomena.

1. Understanding the George W. Bush administration through the analysis of political discourse

1.1 Discourse and politics, politics and discourse: a two-way street

Discourse has traditionally been defined as either "language use" or "language above the sentence/clause" – two different definitions corresponding respectively to the functionalist and formalist paradigms (Schiffrin 1994: 20-21). However, as Jaworski and Coupland (1999: 1-3) point out in reviewing definitions of discourse throughout literature, most of these go beyond this basic notion, and encompass a view in which prominence is given to the relationship between discourse and social reality – a relationship of mutual influence, in which social reality is shaped by discourse, and discourse is in turn shaped by social reality. Stubbs (1996: 20-21), for example, observes that

> texts, spoken and written, comprise much of the empirical foundation of society: they help to construct social reality. And textual analysis is a perspective from which to observe society: it makes ideological structures tangible.

Similarly, Martin and Rose "treat discourse as more than an incidental manifestation of social activity" and they "focus […] on the constitutive role of meanings in social life" (2007: 1). In this perspective, the study of the way language is used in a given context becomes a means to understand reality from a point of view other than the ones of social studies and political science. In the present dissertation, I opt for this more complex notion of discourse and I set out to investigate in what ways discourse can play an active role of primary importance in a specific setting. I also share Partington's view (2006a: 267) of discourse as consisting of "the processes

of interaction between speakers or between authors and readers". I will thus attempt, in my analysis, to shed as much light as possible on the context of production and reception of texts.

Politics is one of the realms where the importance of discourse is paramount at various levels, as already acknowledged by ancient Western philosophers such as Aristotle (1995: 3), who linked the political nature of humans to their being endowed with the ability to speak. As Chilton observes, even though politics cannot be regarded a merely linguistic fact, "the doing of politics is predominantly constituted in language" (2004: 6). On the one hand, indeed, politics is made up of "conflicts of interest, struggles for dominance and efforts of co-operation" (Chilton 2004: 3) – all of which are language-based behaviours – while, on the other hand, institutions are largely based on discourse – that is, on laws, debates, interviews – (Chilton 2004: 4) and defined by the text types used in those environments (Stubbs 1996: 12-14).

In addition to its being constitutive of the practice of politics, political discourse is assumed to be purposefully "designed to achieve specific political goals" (Wilson 1991: 19) or "designed to be deployed in the service of public policy" (Silberstein 2002: xiv) and, further, "to create and manipulate a specific view of the world" (Wilson 1991: 10), thus contributing in very specific ways to the establishment of social reality as it is. As mentioned above, critical discourse analysts (Fairclough 1989; 2003) start from such assumptions and develop on them to identify ways of fighting social inequalities as they are realized through language use. Though I strongly believe that, in political as well as in other contexts, and especially in the present age, which Fairclough has dubbed as a "linguistic epoch" (1989: 2), discourse is a primary means of achieving, preserving and extending power, in this dissertation I will not take a critical perspective. I

will, however, through the application of some tools for the analysis of discourse, attempt to provide some insights into the ways political discourse strategies are devised and implemented in today's world, as well as to suggest possible links between these strategies and wider political strategies. I indeed believe, in agreement with Chilton and Schäffner (2002: 4), that political discourse may greatly contribute to a correct understanding of political phenomena since, "if the premise that politics is largely language is correct, then there is abundant empirical evidence in the form of text and talk".

While, in the fields of political science and communication studies, a large number of studies have been carried out in the last few decades regarding the role of communication in today's political world, few of them specifically focus on the role of political discourse. Chilton (2004: 5) indeed complains about the general trend, in academic studies about politics, not to fully acknowledge the importance of language, discourse and communication. Even one of the most authoritative and up-to-date works on political communication (McNair 2007) fails to explicitly discuss the role of discourse in political communication today, while the *Handbook of Political Communication Research* (Kaid 2004) only briefly refers to the application of content analysis techniques (Kaid 2004: 53-60) in political communication research.

One of the few accounts of the relevance of language in politics written by a political scientist is Doris Graber's 1981 essay on "Political languages", which she introduces by claiming that "politics is largely a word game" and that politicians need to be capable of using language in a successful way both in order to achieve power and to carry out the bulk of their daily activities once elected (Graber 1981: 195). In the remainder of her article (1981: 195-224), Graber goes on to further specify in what ways

language serves the purposes of political actors, by pointing out that political language has five different pragmatic functions: sharing information with the public, setting the agenda by making certain issues more salient than others, providing interpretations of facts and issues, reflecting upon past events and outlining expectations for the future, and fuelling social initiatives. In discussing such functions, thus, rather than abstractly emphasizing the importance of language in politics, she provides a detailed description of how language use influences political action in actual fact.

Similarly, Denton and Woodward (1998) emphasize the relationship between language use and political strategies. In defining political language, indeed, they point out that

> what makes language political is not its particular vocabulary or linguistic form, but the substance of the information the language conveys, the setting in which the interaction occurs, and the explicit or implicit functions the language performs.
>
> (Denton and Woodward 1998: 46)

In this perspective, they discuss a number of strategies political actors carry out through language use. Besides argumentation and persuasion, these include the reinforcement of people's attitudes also in order to prevent a change of opinion (*reinforcement* and *innoculation*), the establishment of a common identity between the text producer and the targets of communication and the distancing from different groups (*identification* and *polarization*), the definition and evaluation of people and issues (*labeling*), the display of power, the structuring of dramatic events with actors and roles and the expression of messages, feelings and ideas (Denton and Woodward 1998: 51-54).

Quite predictably, thus, while linguists analysing political discourse focus their attention on the use of specific linguistic features in political contexts, political scientists mainly take into account the purposes discourse serves in the same setting. I regard the marriage of the two perspectives – that is, discourse analysis carried out keeping in mind the strategies enacted by politicians when making specific linguistic choices – as the most fruitful approach to the analysis of political discourse.

1.2 Political communication today: an overview of theories and trends

All in all, political communication can be seen as a process taking place in the public sphere, involving three main sets of participants (political actors or leaders, the media, and citizens), and consisting in the transmission of various sorts of messages regarding politics and policy, which are aimed at mutually exerting influence on the other participants and of their agendas (McNair 2007: 3-4; Perloff 1998: 8; Kriesi 2004: 188). Denton and Woodward (1998: 3-13) further specify that political messages almost always have very specific purposes, which are generally to be achieved in a relatively short period of time, and are "not neutral". Rather, they "are created with a targeted audience in mind".

When it comes to the scenario of political communication in the 21st century – defined by Blumler and Kavanagh (1999) as "the third age of political communication" – there is broad agreement among scholars about the central role played by the media in such a framework. The main reasons for their current relevance are mainly to be traced to a series of interconnected transformations in the social and institutional background: on the one hand, universal suffrage and the consequent emergence of a mass electorate (McNair 2007: 5), coupled with the decline of traditional

parties and of the old-school politics, where most decision-making would take place far away from the spotlight (Perloff 1998: 7-8; Kriesi 2004: 184); on the other hand, and probably most significantly, the evolutions in the media market, fuelled by technological developments and by the global economy (Pfetsch and Esser 2004: 4-6), which have led to the pervasiveness of the electronic media in people's everyday lives on a global scale (Perloff 1998: 7-8; McNair 2007: 200-201; Hallin and Mancini 2004: 32-3). Such changes are thought to have led to the establishment of today's "media democracy" (Orren 1986: 9), where the media have replaced parties in some of their functions, becoming political institutions in their own right (Cook 1998), and political actors have adapted to this new role of the media, mainly by placing more emphasis and spending more energies and resources on their communication strategies, which are now in the hands of public relations experts (Pfetsch 1998: 70).

These wizards of political communication, generally referred to as 'spin doctors', which is the negatively connoted phrase coined by journalists to indicate them (Esser, Reinemann and Fan 2001: 22-23), can be regarded as "a third force in news making" (Manheim 1998: 95-6), whose existence relies on the reciprocal need for political actors and news media to bridge the gaps in their relationship (McNair 2007: 118). The tasks they are required to perform mainly consist in making sure that political messages effectively reach their target (McNair 2007: 118), by "controlling the flow of news" regarding both past and future events (Pfetsch 1998: 71-76). This, according to Manheim (1998: 100-103) is generally achieved through four main steps: first, by determining who the targets of their messages will be and in what specific ways it will be possible to successfully influence each of them; second, by establishing positions, which are mainly based on discourse and visual choices; third, by building alliances with

strategically important groups; fourth, by interfering with the flow of news and thus shaping the way their targets perceive reality.

With the expansion of the media and the rise of spin doctors, as Swanson (2004: 50) points out, such marketing techniques as polling and aggressive advertising campaigns have been introduced as a fundamental part of political action, not only during election campaigns. Due to increasingly volatile public opinion and to the decline of party loyalty, voters must be persuaded day by day to support the politicians' decisions, through what, in the past three decades, has become known as the "permanent campaign" (Blumenthal 1982). The importance of such practices for those in charge of government is to be considered, according to Pfetsch (1998: 89), in the framework of the competition for power in democratic systems, which relies on people's endorsement of the government's policymaking and on the ensuing possibility for the leaders to be re-elected.

What most of the studies cited above fail to give adequate prominence to is the primary importance of discourse in the enactment of these strategies and in the exploitation of these techniques. As Chilton points out, public relations and spin can be regarded as a form of rhetorical practice, since the work of spin doctors requires them, among other things, "to design and monitor wordings and phrasings" (2004: xi) in such a way as to allow their clients to achieve their political goals through the communication of messages. Even though it needs to be acknowledged that images – photographs, videos, graphics and logos – are of utmost importance in the design of such messages, the shaping power of effective rhetoric cannot be disregarded. It is therefore vital to explore the interconnections of discourse strategies to the wider communication strategies in the 21st century political world, dominated by spin and

permanent campaign.

1.3 Strategic importance of communication in US politics and at the White House

The significance of the current trends in political communication discussed in the previous paragraph is all the more striking when focusing on the American context. As Perloff (1998: 5) observes, "communication has always played a role in politics in the United States". However, as he points out later on in the same book (Perloff 1998: 58), this role has changed dramatically in the latter half of the 20th century, mostly due to a significant increase in the influence exerted by the media in the US political system. Today, indeed, US politics takes place in a "mass media-dominated arena" (Crigler 1998: 1), where political success largely depends on the overt struggle for the conquest of public opinion.

The US system has been regarded for a long time as the "media democracy" *par excellence* (Pfetsch and Esser 2004: 5). As reported by Hallin and Mancini (2004: 25-27), a number of studies have postulated the "Americanization" of political and media systems throughout the world, critically seeing the transformations taking place in other countries – often leading to the loss of local peculiarities – as the devastating effect of cultural domination exerted by the US. Hallin and Mancini, however, while acknowledging the role of the US influence in this process, suggest that the phenomenon should rather be encompassed under the broader umbrella of globalization, which has led, due to a number of interconnected factors, to the worldwide diffusion of a model originated in the US.

Whatever the process that has led such a model to become dominant throughout the world, the reasons why sophisticated communication

strategies, marketing and spin have developed earlier and are more advanced in the US political world than in other countries may be traced to some specific features of the US media and political system. First, the US media enjoy considerable freedom thanks to the First Amendment of the American Constitution – a fact that leads the American people to expect unrestricted access to information regarding what the institutions that represent them are doing (Perloff 1998: 11; Pitcher 2002: 216; Manheim 1998: 98). Second, the US media are mostly privately owned and they are in the hands of large corporations, whose commercial interests undoubtedly influence the content and quality of the news (Perloff 1998: 11; Pfetsch 1998: 72). Third, despite corporate ownership of the media, America has a long tradition of adversarial journalism (Pfetsch 1998: 72), which, during American history, has even been able to contribute greatly to the fall of a president, as happened with Richard Nixon. Last, the United States is a presidential democracy, in which, according to both Pfetsch (1998: 78-79) and Kriesi (2004: 202), media-centered political communication strategies prevail. Pfetsch indeed points out that, since in the US system presidents are not elected by the Congress and remain in office for a fixed time span, they seek support from the electorate rather than from their own party, and legitimize their positions through the approval they receive from the people. Similarly, Kumar (2007: xiii) observes that

> The president's need to communicate derives from the nature of our representative political system and from the reality that he must continually seek support for everything he does. […] An emphasis on presidential communications can also be traced to the reality that chief executives are guaranteed no victories by dint of their election.

Therefore, while nowadays communication strategies are a fundamental

aspect of governance all over the world, the presidency of the United States – the world's most powerful political institution – operates in a context in which communication and media relations represent a key to success. Indeed, most studies of presidential communication – see for example Kumar (2007: xiv) and Han (2001: 2) – explicitly point out that understanding the White House communication strategies is vital for the understanding of the presidency as a whole. As Campbell and Jamieson (1990) observe, it has been thanks to the constitutive powers of discourse, exploited in the main genres of presidential rhetoric, that the US presidency has established continuity, survived crises, adapted to change.

As mentioned above, presidential communication has both direct and indirect targets. Its main direct target is the general public, which must be persuaded that the president is an effective leader and that the administration is acting properly on their behalf. The indirect, but equally fundamental, target of presidential communication is represented by the elites – Congress, members of the president's party, large corporations, administration officials – who will only feel pressed to support the president if he is backed by a favourable public opinion, which is measured through approval ratings expressed in polls. The media thus represent the main channel through which the presidency attempts to shape the public opinion in order to achieve its political goals (Perloff 1998: 59; Newman and Perloff 2004: 18-19). At times indeed, as pointed out by Grossman and Kumar (1981: 32), "the administration uses the news media to communicate messages when direct contact with the intended recipient might lead to a conflict the White House could lose".

The 'permanent campaign' is therefore a reality at the White House. It is indeed widely reported in literature that the US presidency invests more time and resources in communicating what is being done than in actual

decision-making (Perloff 1998: 98; Hart 1984: 6). A large share of the activities carried out at the White House today has to do with communication in direct or indirect ways, as proven by the fact that, as reported by Kumar (2007: 5), about 350 people employed at the White House at the beginning of George W. Bush's second term were assigned to work in communication and publicity. The number of employees and offices focusing on communication has been growing at a fast rate throughout the 20th century, in parallel with the increase in the media coverage of the presidency. Before 1929, when president Hoover established the post of press secretary to meet the increasing demands coming from reporters, there was not a single White House employee working exclusively on communication (Grossman and Kumar 1981: 22). Since then, not only has the number of reporters covering the White House – collectively dubbed 'White House press corps' – considerably increased and diversified, both due to the expansion of the media market and to growing interest in the presidency, but also, and perhaps more importantly, the advent of television has provided the presidency with a more direct, less filtered means of communication with the public (Perloff 1998: 104). Starting from the 1960s, the communication strategies at the White House have been specifically devised in such a way as to maximize the favourableness of the news about the presidency reported in the evening TV news programmes (Grossman and Kumar 1981: 29; Cohen 2008: 498-499), which, according to a study reported by Pfetsch (1998: 76-77), devote a large share of their political news section to the White House, and which, until the advent of cable television and of the Internet, represented the main source of information for most of the American audience (Grossman and Kumar 1981: 29). It was in this complex scenario that Nixon – whose relationship with the media was quite stormy – decided to establish the

White House Office of Communications, which has since then been "at the center of the administration's persuasion efforts" (Kumar 2007: xxi), and which is mainly in charge of long-term planning of public relations and communication and of a centralized news management system, based on the political marketing approach outlined above.

Between the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the new millennium, the scenario has further evolved. Technological innovation, with the rise of cable TV and the web, and the increasing competition between media outlets, have resulted in a shortened, accelerated news cycle (Kumar 2007: 197), in which news reporting is less accurate and less issue-centred and, in contrast, more focused on personalities and scandal (Han 2001: 15). This change has of course also affected the way news regarding the presidency is reported today, marking, according to Misciagno (1996), the end of the "mythic presidency". This is one of the reasons why the White House, despite all the efforts described above, does not have much control over the final outcome of the communication process. All the messages they send have indeed to pass the filter represented by the press, which may distort them, report them inaccurately, or simply adapt them to its own needs (Han 2001: 12). As Han observes (2001: 3), then, investing heavily in communication does not automatically translate into governing successfully.

1.4 The White House communications operation: the Office of Communications and the Press Office

The White House communications operation is nowadays a complex apparatus, involving hundreds of staff members and a number of offices, which each president may choose to structure in different ways. Its domain may range from the Office of Communications, the Photography Office,

the Office of Global Communications, to the Press Office and to the Media Affairs and Speechwriting units. In addition to these, there are the communications and press offices to the Vice President, the First Lady, the National Security Council, as well as communication staff dealing with publicity and press relations on behalf of other White House offices (Kumar 2007: 4-5).

Four main functions are performed by different units of this apparatus, as outlined by Kumar (2007: 6-32). The first of these is to advocate for the president and for his policies and priorities, which needs a proactive approach in order to forge people's views on issues and policies as early as possible; this task prevalently involves the Office of Communications and is mainly achieved by having the president speak in public on as many occasions as possible, since, as Kumar (2007: 8) observes, "the most important advocate of presidential initiatives and priorities is the president itself". The second important function is to explain and illustrate what the president decides and does, by providing additional information and answering queries. It is mainly the Press Office that deals with this type of work, both through press briefings held by the press secretary or, less frequently, by White House officials, and through individual contact between Press Office staff and reporters. The third function regards defensive communication strategies, which are required whenever the president commits a *faux pas* or is the target of fierce criticism on the part of his opponents or of the press. This is another area in which the press secretary plays a vital role. The fourth and last function involves the coordination of all aspects of communication and public relations efforts carried out by different White House offices and by communication staff in other institutions.

Among the White House communication units listed above, the two

that play a major role in performing these four functions are the White House Office of Communications, headed by the White House communications director, and the Press Office, headed by the press secretary to the President. The former office, as mentioned earlier, was established by Nixon in the 1970s and has been in existence since then, while the latter enjoys considerable stability, being the only office that has existed in every administration since the end of the 1920s, when it was set up (Kumar 2007: 180). The two offices, as mentioned by Maltese (1994: 5), differ substantially in their targets and in the functions they perform: while the Office of Communications focuses on public relations techniques aimed at directly reaching the general public as well as specific interest groups bypassing the filter represented by the media, the Press Office deals with the White House press corps – the reporters based at the White House; while the Office of Communications pursues long-term strategic goals, the Press Office works to meet the daily requests coming from the White House press corps; more generally, "whereas the Press Office is primarily reactive, the Office of Communications is primarily proactive" (Maltese 1994: 5).

The importance of the White House Office of Communications and of its head, the communications director, for the development and implementation of presidential communication strategies is unquestionable. However, while the communications director mainly works behind the scenes, the press secretary, being "the major conduit of news and information from the president to the news media" (Perloff 1998: 68) and the official representative for the president, "whose statements are regarded as representing the thoughts and words of the president" (Kumar 2007: 178), enjoys great visibility. According to Larry Speakes, former Reagan's press secretary, the person in this position "is the second most visible

person in the country" (Nelson 1998: vii). Furthermore, the Press Office can be regarded as "the most common point of interchange between the news media and the White House" (Grossman and Kumar 1981: 17). Such an influential public role of the press secretary and his or her office and the strategic importance of the press briefings that s/he holds almost daily at the White House suggest that an analysis of the discourse strategies employed by the participants in these briefings might be particularly useful in revealing trends and patterns in the communication strategies enacted at the White House. These briefings have been examined in a number of books, but most of them, as mentioned by McKay and Paletz (2004: 315), are chronicles and memoirs written by former press secretaries or by reporters, while fewer are the result of academic work carried out by political scientists (Grossman and Kumar 1981; Kumar 2007). The only notable exception is represented by the works by Partington (2003; 2006b), who has been the first to explore a number of press briefings dating back to the Clinton and George W. Bush administrations by carrying out a rigorous linguistic analysis. In the present dissertation I attempt to build on Partington's effort and analyse the discourse strategies employed by press secretaries and reporters in the briefings of the George W. Bush administration.

1.5 White House press briefings as a setting and as a genre

Press briefings are the meetings with the press held by the White House Press Secretary, through which the White House delivers official information and announcements about the President's daily schedule, explains the administration's decisions and policies, responds to criticism, provides commentary on current events, and answers the questions posed by the press (Kumar 2007: 235). Through the press briefings, the president

indirectly 'appears' to the press, and what he thinks and does becomes part of the public record (Kumar 2007: xxii): every word uttered by the spokesperson, who provides the press with official responses on his behalf, becomes an official presidential comment or statement (Kumar 2007: 179-180).

While the briefings are not the only source of presidential information for the journalists and, in particular, their importance has declined as the 24-hour news cycle has transformed the reporting of political news, they still retain considerable significance for both the White House and the press (Kumar 2007: 222). Although, as Carter's press secretary Jody Powell observed, "there is clearly not something that is newsworthy every day" (quoted in Grossman and Kumar 1981: 32) and therefore there might be no good reason for a briefing to take place every day, the briefings are useful to both sets of participants beyond their main informative function: they allow the press to sense the moods of the moment at the White House, and at the same time they let the administration get an immediate impression of the success or failure of their policies.

As Partington (2003: 27) observes, "briefings […] are news-making activities where no newsworthy events occur outside the words themselves. The news is in the language". In this perspective, the briefings can be regarded, in Boorstin's (1962) terminology, as 'pseudo-events', that is, staged political happenings, which are set up with the purpose of providing the media with packaged information to be reported. The rise of pseudo-events, according to Boorstin (1962: 25), is part of a wider process in which "newsgathering turned into news making", which means that the need for more and more pieces of news in the ever-growing media market has led to the creation of events specifically devised for the production of news. The briefings are indeed one of such events, since, as Maltese (1994: 216)

remarks, they "serve as a watering hole for packs of journalists in search of news".

The briefings can be included in the wider category of political press conferences, which, according to Bhatia (2006: 176-177), can be regarded as a part of both political and media discourse, and whose participants "are not only the people present at the scene itself, but also those whom the messages reach in the end". The scope of the briefings, indeed, goes well beyond the mere interaction between the press secretary and the reporters; through the briefings, the White House communicates with two main sets of receivers which are not present in the briefing room: not only the worldwide audience reached through the media, but also, and perhaps more importantly, US political actors and groups of interests, foreign governments, corporations and international organizations. The briefings thus have considerable significance in both the domestic and the international political context, and, as Partington (2003: vii) points out, anything the press secretary says during these sessions may be interpreted by enemies and friends of the US as the administration official policy.

The briefings are held almost every weekday at the White House in the James Brady Briefing Room, where eight rows of six seats each are assigned to specific news organizations. The two front rows accommodate the reporters from the most important organizations, some of whom have spent over forty years of their lives as White House correspondents, and are therefore much more familiar with the White House communications operation than the Press Secretary, at least when s/he has just assumed the post. As reported by Kumar (2007: 242), about two-thirds of the average briefing are spent by the press secretary to answer questions posed by these most prominent reporters. The duration of a briefing under the George W. Bush administration has been considerably reduced compared to the

Clinton administration, and the average briefing now lasts about half an hour (Kumar 2007: 220).

The traditional structure of each briefing includes three main "speech routines" (Partington 2003: 49-50): an opening statement by the press secretary, a subsequent question-response session and a less frequent closing statement. In the opening statement, which is mostly proactive, information is provided regarding the president's schedule and nominations at the White House, and issues or facts may be highlighted in the attempt of having the briefing revolve around them, in order to emphasize the White House 'line-of-the-day' or of avoiding discussing troublesome topics. The question-response session takes up most of the duration of each briefing; this is mostly a reactive phase, in which unexpected issues and queries might emerge. However, at times there is no opening statement and the press secretary decides to start the briefing directly with questions from the floor. In the second half of George W. Bush's first term as president, the then press secretary Scott McClellan usually chose to close the briefing with announcements, rather than place them at the beginning of the briefing.

When the President is not in Washington, the press secretary and a so-called 'pool' of selected reporters travel with him and the presidential staff, and the briefing takes place either aboard the Air Force One or at the location the President is visiting, depending on the President's schedule.

The briefings, however, are absolutely not the only occasion at which the press exchanges information with the White House staff. The less official 'gaggles' – relatively brief, informal morning meetings between press secretary and reporters, which used to be held around the press secretary's desk until 2001, when they were moved to the briefing room – are likely to provide the press with more interesting information than the

briefings, especially due to the lower level of formality of the situation. At the same time, the gaggle generally proves to be useful for the Press Office staff, as it allows them to start spreading any important news just at the beginning of the day (Kumar 2007: 223).

In addition to the briefing and the gaggle, reporters have other opportunities to obtain information and explanations from the Press Office. The White House press corps are indeed allotted a space inside the West Wing of the White House – where the Press Office is located, and not far away from the Oval Office – and they are provided facilities to cater for their logistical needs (Kumar 2003a: 670; Kumar 2003c: 238; Kumar 2007: 180). The presence of accredited reporters at the West Wing makes the Press Office "unique among White House offices […]: it is the only office that has its outside constituents housed within the building" (Kumar 2000: 5). Due to such proximity, reporters have the opportunity to meet the Press Secretary and other Press Office staff throughout the day, ask them for explanations and clarifications regarding statements and issues, and be ready in case anything newsworthy happens at the White House (Grossman and Kumar 1981: 36-37; Pfetsch 1998: 82).

Since Clinton's presidency, press briefings are not only transcribed and made available on the White House website, but also filmed and broadcast live both on television and on the Internet. Partington (2003: 29) suggests that this decision was made in an attempt to circumvent the filter represented by the press and show the public the briefings for themselves. Some commentators point out that this recent evolution has transformed the briefings into "a political stage" where "a unique form of reality TV" takes place (Cooper and McKinnon 2005). Kumar (2007: 243) also observes that "televising the briefing influences not only the language people use but also the way they deport themselves and the messages they

send". The televised briefing, according to Jim Kennedy, communications director for the White House Counsel's Office during the Clinton administration, resembles a duel, where the way questions are formulated is influenced by the need to get answers that, informative or not, sound interesting or even sensational on TV (quoted in Kumar 2007: 56).

A number of metaphors, reported by Partington (2003: vi), have been used by reporters and commentators to illustrate the briefings. Most of these emphasize the conflict existing between the press secretary and the press, in line with the traditional adversarial view, in which the president-press relationship has always been regarded as being characterized by antagonism between the two sides (Perloff 1998: 89). More recently, however, a number of studies (Grossman and Kumar 1981; Perloff 1998: 89-91; Han 2001: 12-13; Kumar 2003c: 232-233; Kumar 2007: xviii, 180-183) has suggested that the relationship between the presidency and the media, and, as a consequence, the relationship between the press secretary and the White House press corps, is rather one of interdependence and cooperation. In what has been termed as the 'exchange model', the two sides are seen as unable to carry out their jobs without cooperating with each other, as the White House cannot but benefit from an effective dissemination of presidential news, while White House correspondents need to obtain newsworthy information from the Press Office staff in order to meet their deadlines. Although Kumar (2007: xx) points out that the presidency-press relationship is now more conflictual than it used to be, mainly due to an increased need for information on the part of the press in the 24-hour news cycle, she also remarks that cooperation between White House staff and reporters still drives the relationship.

The main feature that makes the White House press briefings an interesting object of linguistic investigation lies in their being a type of

institutional talk (Partington 2003: 30), which, in Habermas' terms, can be regarded as an instance of strategic discourse, in which linguistic choices consciously made by the two sets of participants – the press secretary and the press – are oriented to the achievement of certain goals associated with the institutions they represent. As observed by Partington (2003: vi),

> the two parties involved, the podium and the press, have very different interests and aims in life, which are in conflict on several levels. The podium wishes to project his political ideas and particular view of the world, the press to test that view – to destruction if necessary.

Another good reason for analysing these briefings lies in their being a particular instance of spoken discourse. While presidential speeches, for example, are written-to-be-spoken text and, as such, they are structured to achieve certain goals by adopting a precise and intentional strategy, press briefings still retain a certain spontaneous character that makes it possible to emphasize subconscious mechanisms underlying specific linguistic choices. At the same time, however, the briefings cannot be regarded as instances of completely spontaneous talk, as the press secretary regularly plans statements and responses, together with his or her staff, in order to be able to prevent as much as possible any surprise which may arise from the reporters' questions. Thus, although not every single word uttered by the press secretary has been predetermined, overall discourse strategies can be seen as a part of the more general communication strategy of an administration, planned together with the White House Office of Communications.

1.6 The voice of the president: the White House press secretary

The role of the press secretary in the White House communications operation has been outlined in the previous paragraph as being of fundamental strategic importance. In addition to this, his or her role is also a very complex one. While their counterparts in the briefings arena – the White House press corps – only have to cater for the needs of the news organizations for which they work, the press secretary has two or three clients: s/he, as former White House press secretary Marlin Fitzwater observed, "always fights with one arm behind his back, trying to serve two masters" (Fitzwater 1996, quoted in Nelson 1998: 1). According to Kumar, however, the White House press secretary has not only two, but "three constituents – the President, the White House staff, and the representatives of news organizations – and one boss: the President" (2003c: 232). All of them depend upon the press secretary's precious work and on his or her ability to cope both with the needs of the White House and with those of the reporters. In practical terms, indeed the Press Secretary must "work together with a variety of White House officials in creating the portrait of the President and his policies they want to publicly deliver" (Kumar 2003c: 224).

Such a complex job involves a number of different responsibilities, which the press secretary has to perform with the support of his or her deputies and aides. The first of these is the representation of the aforementioned constituents. The press secretary must earn the trust of the White House press corps, which is mainly done by feeding them with leaks – that is, by disclosing confidential pieces of news – or with newsworthy stories (Kumar 2007: 211). At the same time, s/he must effectively protect the other two constituents – the White House staff and the President – in case any problem should arise. S/he is expected to report presidential information as accurately as possible, as well as to seek to prevent the news

media from publishing unwanted troublemaking stories about the White House (Kumar 2007: 212-215).

Information conduit is the second fundamental responsibility of the press secretary (Kumar 2007: 200-209), who has to release as much information as the president chooses to release, at a given moment and by using a carefully devised wording. S/he has to attain a complicated balance between the satisfaction of the reporters' constitutional right to provide the people with information about the government (Pitcher 2002: 217-8) and the need to avoid disclosing any information that might put national security at risk (Perloff 1998: 69). In doing this, the press secretary finds himself or herself to be "walking the tightrope" or "tiptoeing on a narrow precipice", as Kurtz (1998: 14) and Perloff (1998: 69) similarly put it. In order to work effectively, the press secretary needs to be trusted by the president and the White House staff. A press secretary who does not have access to the most important information and is not allowed to have close contact with the president – which is what happened to Clinton's first press secretary, Dee Dee Myers (Nelson 1998: 246-249) – is not in the position to provide the press with newsworthy items as well as with the correct answers to their queries. Furthermore, the press secretary must be able to persuade the president and other White House officials to release a truthful version of facts and events even when, for whatever reason, they are reluctant to do so (Kumar 2007: 178; 208-209). Lying to the press, indeed, is indirectly lying to the people, and a failure to provide, on request, the White House press corps with true and verified information, would result in a total loss of credibility for the press secretary (Kumar 2003c: 248; Kumar 2007: 188-189).

Third, being the head of the Press Office, the press secretary is responsible for arranging and lubricating the mechanicals that allow the

office to work effectively. S/he has a number of daily meetings with the Press Office staff, through which information is gathered and verified (also through contact with other offices and agencies), strategies are orchestrated and coordinated between different parts of the office, and the daily routine of the office is organized, assigning deputies and assistants to rotations in order to cope with the 24-hour news cycle.

Before the creation of the Office of Communications, the press secretary was also involved in general communications planning, but now this is not the case anymore: the fast pace of today's news cycle does not allow the press secretary to go beyond short-term communications planning and its enactment (Kumar 2007: 96, 199).

A successful press secretary must be able to meet all of these responsibilities at the same time. According to Towle (1997) the press secretary's success is assessed by the three aforementioned constituents, and depends on how much they all respect him or her, how much s/he is an insider in the administration and to what extent it is the president who decides what information the press secretary will release. Furthermore, Kumar (2007: 193) regards it fundamental for the press secretary to remember that his or her own personal opinions should never be expressed during briefings, in which the press secretary's words are automatically interpreted as expressing the president's official position on an issue. In Chapter 3, I will attempt to explore to what extent the press secretary can be regarded as being expressing the president's views, rather than his or her own.

In the light of considerations that will be outlined in Chapter 3, Partington (2003) chooses to use the term 'podium' rather than 'spokesperson' to refer to the White House Press Secretary. Accordingly, I will henceforth refer to the person who officially represents the White

House at the briefings as the 'podium', regardless whether the person speaking in this role at a given briefing is the press secretary, his or her deputies or one of the Press office aides. I will, on the other hand, continue to refer to the person holding the position of White House press secretary with that title, when discussing the institutional and political setting outside the context of the briefing.

The podium's role in the briefings will indeed be the object of linguistic analysis in Chapter 3, where the discourse strategies s/he employs in order to achieve legitimization as an authoritative source will be investigated in detail.

1.7 The George W. Bush administration's communications operation: a brief introduction

In the present dissertation, I examine the discourse strategies enacted in the White House press briefings dating back to George W. Bush's first term as president. Although a number of elements of continuity have characterized the management of communication strategies at the White House throughout the 20th century and well into the 21st century, each presidency, as shown by Han (2001), has had its own way of managing communications, publicity and press relations. Han (2001: 247) demonstrates how, despite efforts undertaken by every administration in this direction, some presidents have been more successful than others in effectively communicating their views, positions and policies. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, she claims that an analysis of presidential communication strategies is vital for the understanding of a presidency's activities and policies and for an assessment of their success. I therefore hope I will be able to shed light on some features of the George W. Bush administration by examining trends and patterns in the discourse choices

made by podium and press during the briefings.

Two different people have been working in the position of White House press secretary during the George W. Bush's first term as President. The first of these was Ari Fleischer, who was appointed after having worked in Bush's team during the presidential campaign. He served as press secretary since Bush's inauguration in January 2001 until July 2003, when he stepped back due to personal reasons. When Fleischer left the post, he was replaced by the young Scott McClellan – his former deputy – who had already acted as podium in some briefings as a temporary replacement for Fleischer. McClellan retained the post until well into Bush's second term, and had to resign in April 2006 due both to low presidential job approval ratings and to his failure to provide accurate information to the press regarding the controversial Plame affair[1] (Kumar 2007: 178-180). McClellan has recently published an account of his years as press secretary, in which he describes that period as a time when "the presidency of George W. Bush veered terribly off course" (McClellan 2008: x). As many White House press secretaries in recent administrations, both Fleischer and McClellan were chosen because of their familiarity with the Washington political environment: both of them had background as institutional spokespeople, or as members of election campaign staff.

One of the aspects that make the George W. Bush administration's communication strategies a particularly interesting object of investigation is

[1] Valerie Plame Wilson was a covert CIA officer, whose identity was disclosed in a newspaper article in The Washington Post in 2003, after Plame's husband, a former US diplomat, had written a series of op-eds in which he questioned George W. Bush's claim that Saddam Hussein had attempted to buy uranium in Africa in order to manufacture nuclear weapons. The author of the Washington Post article specified that he had been informed about Plame's status by senior White House administration officials, who had, in this way, violated criminal law. Although a number of senior administration officials were found to be involved in the affair, only Richard Cheney's chief of staff, Lewis "Scooter" Libby, was found guilty and sentenced to 30 months in prison and a fine. The prison sentence was subsequently commuted by President George W. Bush.

that, as Kumar (2007: 3-4, 71-118) points out, this administration made effective communication efforts one of its priorities. This choice was especially made in consideration of the revolution taking place in the media market, which led the George W. Bush administration to have to face, for the first time, a news media environment characterized by the more and more pervasive diffusion of the Internet as a vehicle for news circulation, and by presence of five cable TV networks broadcasting all day long from right outside the White House and ready to immediately inform the world about any breaking news (Kumar 2003a: 670; Kumar 2007: 3).

According to Kumar (2003b: 388-390; 2007: 71-72), the George W. Bush administration did a good job as regards communications planning and the control and discipline over the release of information. They attempted to establish a number of priorities and develop messages in order to draw attention on them, and they were quite successful in this kind of proactive communication management. In particular, during Bush's first year in office, they worked in the perspective of emphasizing those messages that had been at the core of the election campaign (Kumar 2007: 75). On the other hand, what this administration's communications operation lacked, in Kumar's view (2003b: 392-393; 2007: 72, 104-105) was the ability to react to unexpected events – both favourable and unfavourable ones. This, in contrast, had been one of the strengths of the Clinton administration (Kumar 2007: 71).

It is also noteworthy that this administration made a deliberative strategic choice, in its communication efforts, in the direction of giving prominence to the president "as a person and as a leader" (Kumar 2007: 76), rather than to the administration as a whole. This was partly due to the fact that the American people, according to polls, appeared to like this president more than they agreed with his views (Kumar 2007: 77).

However, this strategy might also be encompassed in a wider trend towards the personalization of politics and, in particular, of presidential news. On the one hand, stories focusing on people rather than on abstract issues are likely to appeal more to the audience, especially on television (Perloff 1998: 88). On the other hand, as Perloff observes, "presidents believe they will be more persuasive if they personalize political decisions and link themselves with abstract policy matters" (1998: 107). In the case of the Bush administration, this one, according to Kumar, was a successful strategy, which contributed greatly to the incumbent's re-election in 2004 (Kumar 2007: 76-77). This strategic choice also accounts for the considerable reduction of briefings held by Cabinet members or other White House officials, compared to previous administrations (Kumar 2007: 80-81).

While this administration emphasized the importance of communication strategies, and worked in such a direction in very specific ways right from the start of George W. Bush's first term as president, I argue that the events that characterized this presidency and the controversial policy decisions which were made as a result of those events required increased communication efforts in order to both legitimize those choices in the eyes of the American people and of peoples and governments throughout the world and to react to widespread criticism.

At the end of the Cold War, the United States of America was indeed left as the world's only military superpower. As such, it has been involved in numerous military operations abroad: in the Persian Gulf, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq. In the cases of the 1991-92 Gulf War and of the 1999 Kosovo conflict, US troops and allies fought under the mandate of an officially recognized international organization: the UN in the former case, and NATO in the latter. The foreign policy pursued by the George W. Bush Presidency represented a turning point: Iraq was invaded without a

UN or NATO mandate by a so-called 'coalition of the willing', a multinational force led by the United States. In terms of its political agenda, one of the pillars of the current administration's foreign policy is unilateralism – a term that has come back into vogue with the advent of George W. Bush, taking on a new meaning: the United States arrogates to itself the right or duty to carry out unilateral military intervention in other sovereign states when multilateral solutions are not possible.

The implications of the US-led 'war on terrorism' – namely, the existence of a ghost-like enemy escaping definitions and threatening the security of ordinary Americans in their daily lives, the introduction of the controversial Patriot Act, passed by the US Congress and inflicting a number of limitations to civil liberties in the US, and the unilateral strike against Iraq – thus brought about a substantial change in American history, and therefore called for a specific discourse strategy, which of course is likely to have been enacted not only through presidential speeches and press conferences, but also, and all but negligibly, in the White House press briefings.

In the present dissertation I will thus look for the existence of links between political strategies and discourse strategies at the White House between 2001 and 2005. When discussing linguistic choices and assessing what strategies they serve, I will take into account the political phase in which a specific linguistic feature was employed. In particular, I haven chosen the main events that characterized the George W. Bush presidency as watersheds separating one phase from another, so as to be able to check whether different strategies were used during national crises than at other times. It is indeed widely reported that presidents enjoy much greater popularity and more favourable reporting in the media during times of crisis (Han 2001: 14; Denton 1994: xi) – a fact that is also verifiable as far

as the George W. Bush administration is concerned, as the president's official job approval rating, shown in Figure 1.1, dramatically rose after the 9/11 attacks and then, again, when the US-led coalition attacked Iraq.

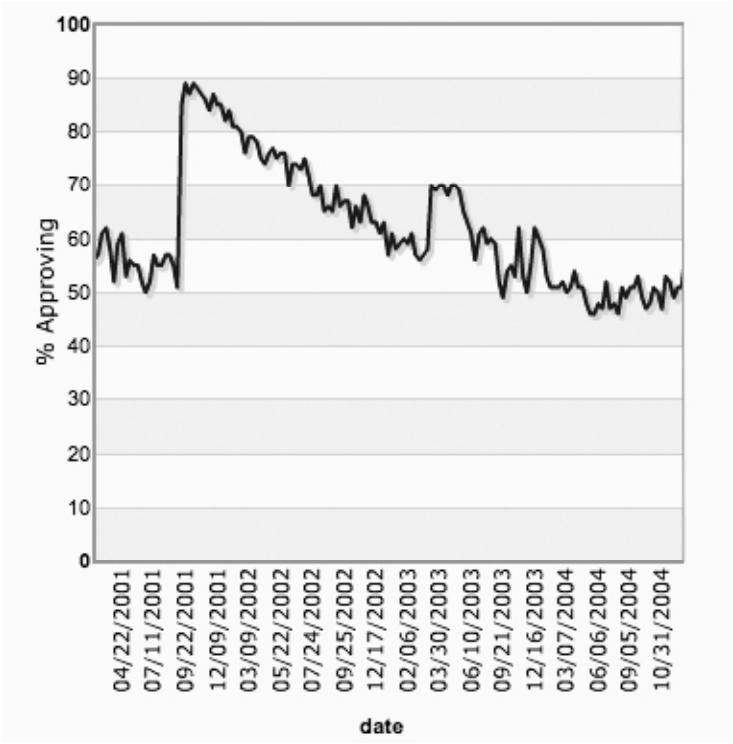

Figure 1.1 Presidential popularity over time. Job approval: George W. Bush (first term). Source: the American Presidency Project: http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/data/popularity.php (last accessed 22 August 2008)

2. Theoretical background, corpus overview, analytical tools and research questions

2.1 Analyzing a specialized discourse type by using a corpus

As mentioned earlier, the present dissertation focuses on the investigation of the strategic use of a number of linguistic features in a specialized discourse type – White House press briefings – during a specific political phase – the first term of the George W. Bush administration. Following what is outlined by Partington (2003: 4), I intend to carry out a complex investigation that covers a discourse type by focusing not merely on single texts but also on trends and recurring patterns that may be assumed as characterizing the discourse type as a whole, or subsections of it, and by taking into account both the co-text in which a given linguistic feature occurs and the wider context of text production. In order to do so, I intend to exploit a combination of quantitative and qualitative analytical techniques.

Until a few years ago, quantitative analyses conducted on corpora and aimed at discovering discourse strategies rather than merely focused on lower-level grammatical or lexical features represented an exception rather than the rule (Biber, Conrad and Reppen 1998: 106-107), mainly because the analysis of such features required more complex corpus-building and analytical tools than the ones that were available at the time. Most corpus-based studies used to be based on the analysis of large commercial general-purpose corpora, which mainly comprised excerpts rather than whole texts, and did not provide sufficient information regarding the context of text production and reception (McEnery and Wilson 1996: 98; Partington 2004: 11-12) – a fact that led Widdowson (2000: 7) to point out that "the textual

product that is subjected to quantitative analysis is itself a static abstraction" and that "if the language is to be realized as use, it has to be recontextualized". In more recent years, however, the free availability on the Internet of an increasing amount of texts from innumerable different domains together with the widespread diffusion of powerful computers with larger and larger hard disks has made it possible for individual researchers or small research groups to build their own specialized corpora (Bowker and Pearson 2002). This, together with the development of new, more advanced corpus processing software, as well as with the incorporation of contextual information in general-purpose corpora, has turned corpora into an extensively exploited tool in the analysis of discourse, with particular regard to specialized discourse (Partington 2004: 13-14).

Baker (2006: 5) provides a list of some of the discourse types that have been most frequently investigated through corpus building and analysis; these include, among others, "political texts […], teaching materials […], scientific writing […] and newspaper articles"; he also points out (Baker 2006: 5-6) that the corpus-based approach has been exploited in studies of identity and gender, but also of ideology and disadvantage. As regards this latter field, Hunston (2002: 109-123) provides a review of the ways corpus analysis has been applied to critical research regarding culture, ideology and social inequality. Nonetheless, critical discourse analysts generally regard quantitative findings as a supplement of limited value to those results that are provided by qualitative research (Fairclough 2003: 6).

Among the reasons for using corpora in the analysis of discourse, Baker (2006: 10-17) cites some that, I argue, are particularly valid as far as the analysis of political discourse is concerned. The first reason is the possibility to reduce the researcher's conscious and subconscious biases,

and shift toward greater objectivity – which, I argue, is a fundamental aspect in such fields as political discourse analysis, where the researcher is more likely to be accused of having been influenced by his or her own personal views in carrying out the study.

A second point in favour of the use of corpora, Baker argues (2006: 13-14; 19-20), is that repeated patterns of use of certain words, phrases and grammatical constructions in a specific discourse type, which are likely to escape notice unless they are identified by carrying out quantitative investigations on a wealth of data, can, once detected, reveal subtle discourse strategies we are unaware of. Such a belief is mainly based on Hoey's theory of *lexical priming* (2004: 8), according to which

> we can only account for collocation if we assume that every word is mentally primed for collocational use. As a word is acquired through encounters with it in speech and writing, it becomes cumulatively loaded with the contexts and co-texts in which it is encountered, and our knowledge of it includes the fact that it co-occurs with certain other words in certain kinds of context.

Hoey goes on to explain that "priming leads to a speaker unintentionally reproducing some aspect of the language, and that aspect, thereby reproduced, in turn primes the hearer" (Hoey 2004: 9). Such a theory, I believe, is particularly relevant to the study of political discourse, where specific linguistic choices may be deliberately enacted recurrently in ways that are not visible to the naked eye; indeed, as Manheim (1998: 103) observes, "strategic communication is most effective when it is least visible, and least effective when it is revealed"; thus, repeatedly occurring words, phrases and structures might have been carefully chosen in order to influence the audience's world view.

Of course, as Partington (2006a: 299) points out, when focusing on

discourse features, "more qualitative, in-depth procedures including intuition, introspection and immersion in a text" are of fundamental importance in eliciting and interpreting data – a fact that is also highlighted by Biber, Conrad and Reppen (1998: 4). Despite recent technological developments, no software is indeed capable of generating ready-made interpreted data regarding discourse strategies, which obviously need to be elicited by the researcher by taking into account co-text and context. Corpus annotation and mark-up, which will be dealt with in paragraph 2.4 can definitely help the researcher in this direction, by incorporating contextual information in single texts and portions of them. But, however sophisticated the mark-up and software may be, the human intellect remains a powerful resource in the interpretation of corpus data.

2.2 Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (*CADS*)

In agreement with what Partington (2008b) suggests, I regard the marriage of introspection with data observation as the best possible option for the investigation of specialized discourse types. In this dissertation I have therefore chosen to rely on the burgeoning Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies – or *CADS* – approach, outlined by Partington (2004; 2006a; 2008b). The *CADS* approach combines quantitative and qualitative analytical techniques in the investigation of *ad hoc* specialized corpora. *CADS* analysts thus explore discourse features of a particular discourse type after having become familiar with it in various ways: by using concordancing tools and by reading single texts or excerpts, but also by resorting to external data – such as information regarding the wider context of text production and reception – and, of course, by relying on the researcher's own intuition.

In particular, *CADS* investigations mainly focus on research questions

of the following type: how does a given participant achieve a specific goal with language, and what does this tell us about this participant? (Partington 2006a: 270). However, in order to be able to claim that a specific discourse feature is typical of a given participant or group or of a single discourse type, rather than being a feature of a language as a whole, comparisons need to be carried out, either by comparing a specialized corpus and a general reference corpus, or by taking into account two or more discourse types, or even by contrasting discourse strategies enacted by different participants within a single discourse type (Partington 2006a: 269). Thus, *CADS* research questions such as the one referred to above need to contain an element of comparison: data need to be tested again other data sets.

One possible way of carrying out comparative research within a discourse type and among different ones is to assemble a modular corpus, that is, one which is made up of different sub-corpora, each representing a different discourse type, or containing texts from a single discourse type but from different authors, dating back to different time spans, originating in different contexts, dealing with different topics. *CADS* research carried out in recent years has mainly been based on corpora of this type.

One notable example of *CADS* research carried out on a modular corpus is the *CorDis* (Corpora and Discourse) project[2], which focused on political and media discourse regarding the conflict in Iraq in 2003 (Bayley and Morley forthcoming; Haarman and Lombardo forthcoming). The project was based on the creation and analysis of a modular corpus made up of independent sub-corpora, each of which included texts belonging to

[2] The *CorDis* (Corpora and Discourse: A quantitative and qualitative linguistic analysis of political and media discourse on the conflict in Iraq in 2003) was a national research project involving research groups in four Italian universities, funded by the Italian Ministry of University and Research through the PRIN 2006-2007 programme and coordinated by prof. John Morley (University of Siena).

a different discourse type: parliamentary debates, news conferences, newspapers, TV news programmes and parliamentary inquiries, most of which both from the UK and the US. All the texts relate in some way to the Iraq war and they mainly date back to the time of the invasion of Iraq and to the months immediately surrounding it. The goal of the project was to explore, through the combination of quantitative and qualitative linguistic analysis, the way this war was dealt with in different political arenas and types of media outlet.

Partington (2006a: 270; 2008) observes that much of the existing *CADS* research has been carried out in Italy, and that most of it focuses on political and media discourse. Among *CADS* research of this type, he (Partington 2006a: 270-273) cites Vaghi and Venuti (2004) and Garzone and Santulli (2004). Both studies are based on corpora and explore media texts regarding political events by exploiting frequency lists, concordances and keywords lists. Garzone and Santulli (2004: 355) specifically point out that they integrated corpus tools and techniques into a theoretical framework mainly based on Critical Discourse Analysis, by adopting a bottom-up and a top-down approach. In the former case, "explicative hypotheses were worked out starting from raw data obtained by means of computer queries" while, in the latter, "hypotheses formulated by means of qualitative analysis on a limited sample of texts were checked by means of computer queries carried out on the whole subcorpus".

Bayley (2008) proposes a theoretical framework that shares most of the assumptions on which Partington's *CADS* approach relies, and which he names "corpus-assisted discourse analysis". He argues in favour of a methodology in which key meanings are identified by examining a corpus as a whole and they are subsequently explored by moving back and forth from text to corpus and vice versa (2008: 38). He also points out that this

kind of analysis is time-consuming, both due to the complexity of procedures and because, he argues, analysts following this approach should read their corpus as a whole (Bayley 2008: 39) – which is only possible with small corpora. As regards the present study, the large size of the corpus made it impossible for me to read all the texts it includes. Therefore, quantitative data represented as a starting point through which to shed light on interesting features to be subsequently subjected to more detailed, qualitative investigation.

2.3 The design of the 2001-2005 White House press briefings corpus

The corpus on which the present study is based comprises all the press briefings and 'gaggles' that are publicly available on the White House website[3] for the first term of the George W. Bush administration. The earliest briefing dates back to 24 January 2001, three days after the President had entered office, while the most recent one took place on 19 January 2005, the day before the President swore in for his second term.

This corpus, which I named White House press briefings 2001-2005 corpus (henceforth *WHoB* corpus) and which I assembled myself, includes 3,367,340 tokens in 697 texts – a quite considerable size for a specialized corpus. Rather than selecting a representative sample of briefings to be investigated, I have indeed chosen to collect all the available texts, in order to attempt to make the results of the analysis as accurate as possible, and to sketch a picture of discourse strategies enacted by the participants in the briefings as they are realized throughout the four years of Bush's first term as president.

Needless to say, the *WHoB* corpus is a corpus of spoken discourse

[3] http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/briefings (last accessed 19 August 2008)

(Partington 2003). However, while building a corpus of spoken data is generally problematic and time-consuming due to the need for the analyst to record and transcribe the data (Cameron 2001: 19-25), this corpus was built by collecting ready-made official transcripts that are made available by the White House on their website. These appear to be quite accurate, as spelling mistakes occur rarely and there are few instances of 'inaudible' words or sentences. Anyway, since the press secretary is the only one in the briefings who speaks in a microphone, his words are more clearly reported in transcripts than those of the reporters, which tend to overlap with each other.

Thanks to the use of the XML mark-up, which will be illustrated in detail in paragraph 2.4, it has been possible to subdivide the *WHoB* corpus into modules – or sub-corpora – following three different criteria. Each set of sub-corpora can be activated separately when carrying out the analysis.

First, the corpus has been subdivided into five sub-corpora on a chronological basis, choosing four major world events that occurred during George W. Bush's first term as President as watersheds dividing one phase from another. The five phases were thus identified as follows:

1. from George W. Bush's inauguration as President to the day before the 9/11 attacks (21 January 2001 – 10 September 2001);
2. from the 9/11 attacks, throughout the US-led attack against Afghanistan, until the days marking the end of Taliban control over Afghanistan (11 September 2001 – 6 December 2001)
3. from the end of Taliban control over Afghanistan to the day before major military operations in Iraq began (10 December 2001 – 19 March 2003);
4. during the US-led invasion of Iraq until Bush's declaration of 'mission accomplished' (20 March 2003 – 1 May 2003);

5. from Bush's declaration of the end of major combat operations in Iraq and until the end of his first term as President (2 May 2003 – 20 January 2005).

In practice, thus, phase 1 covers George W. Bush's first few months as a president, during which the White House agenda was focused on those issues that had been at the core of the presidential election campaign, such as tax relief, energy reform and a restructuring of the armed forces. phases 2 and 4 respectively cover two periods of national and international crisis: the former includes the months starting with the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent US-led attack against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, while the latter covers the month and a half in which the US and its allies invaded Iraq and removed Saddam Hussein from power. Phase 3 covers the year and a half in which the Bush administration worked hard to persuade the international community about the urgency of disarming Saddam Hussein and removing him from power, and strived in vain to obtain a UN Security Council resolution authorizing the attack against Iraq. Phase 5, finally, covers the period following the removal of Saddam Hussein from power, which was characterized by the onset of civil war in Iraq and by the revelation that the Iraqi regime did not possess WMDs.

The main reason behind this subdivision lies in the assumption that different types of communication strategies must have been required by circumstances in such different political phases, and, more specifically, that political communication and media-presidency relations during a time of crisis are generally regarded as being characterized by quite peculiar patterns, as mentioned in paragraph 1.7.

The five sub-corpora are quite different from each other in size, as shown in Table 2.1. However, it will be possible to compare them by normalizing raw frequency and co-occurrence data.

Phase	Phase 1: Before 9/11	Phase 2: 9/11 + invasion of Afghanistan	Phase 3: Build-up to Iraq war	Phase 4: Invasion of Iraq	Phase 5: After the invasion of Iraq
Texts	86	53	199	26	333
Tokens	466304	307629	1100878	161672	1330857

Table 2.1 *WHoB* corpus: number of texts and tokens per sub-corpus, on a chronological basis

Second, the corpus has been divided into three sub-corpora according to the type of press conference: briefing, gaggle or briefing with a guest. Besides 444 briefings and 220 gaggles – the two types of event that have been dealt with in paragraph 1.5 – the corpus also contains 33 briefings with guests, in which cabinet members, senior administration officials and experts in various fields are called to discuss specific issues with reporters. This latter type of briefing occurred much more often in the Clinton administration than during the George W. Bush years, as the latter administration placed the president, rather than White House officials and cabinet members, at the centre of presidential communication strategies (Kumar 2007: 80). As shown in Table 2.2, gaggles are much shorter than briefings on average, mainly due to their informal nature.

Type of briefing	Briefing	Gaggle	Briefing with guest
Texts	444	220	33
Tokens	2740163	456796	143876
Average tokens per text	6172	2076	4360

Table 2.2 *WHoB* corpus: number of texts and tokens per event-type sub-corpus

Finally, the files in the corpus have been classified depending on the place in which the briefing or gaggle took place. While most briefings and gaggles indeed take place in the James S. Brady briefing room at the White House, when the president is travelling or on vacation, briefings or, more often, informal gaggles take place on the Air Force One, at the location the

president is visiting, or at Crawford, Texas, where the president has a ranch. Briefings and gaggles may also take place at the Eisenhower Executive Office building in Washington, where numerous White House offices are located. Table 2.3 shows a breakdown of texts and tokens in the corpus according to the location in which the briefing took place, indicating that, after the James S. Brady briefing room, the second most frequent location for briefings and gaggles during the first term of the Bush administration was the Air Force One.

Location	James S. Brady Briefing Room	Location visited	Air Force One	Crawford, TX	Press Secretary's office	Eisenhower building
Texts	389	25	187	35	2	4
Tokens	2434126	55575	387716	102968	5101	34779

Table 2.3 *WHoB* corpus: number of texts and tokens per event-type sub-corpus

2.4 XML mark-up as added value

Corpus mark-up, or the addition of metadata to corpora, is defined by McEnery, Tono and Xiao (2005: 22) as "a system of standard codes inserted into a document stored in electronic form to provide information *about* the text itself". Marking up a text involves incorporating data regarding the data themselves, as the meaning of the word 'metadata' implies (Burnard 2005). In particular, mark-up allows the researcher to incorporate contextual information into the corpus (Baker 2006: 19; McEnery, Tono and Xiao 2005: 22), which is a fundamental aspect in a project based on the *CADS* approach, in which attention to the context of production and reception of texts needs to be maximized.

Although some corpus linguists prefer to work on a raw corpus, many others agree that mark-up is of vital importance, especially when dealing

with large corpora (Hunston 2002: 79) or with any corpus that is not small enough to be read by the researcher as a whole – as in this case. Once mark-up has been added to a corpus, however, it is fundamental for other researchers to be able to understand and exploit it, for similar or different purposes. As Leech (1997: 4-6; 2005) points out, thus, both mark-up and annotation – the latter being defined as the practice of adding interpretative, linguistic information to an electronic corpus – are re-usable and multi-functional resources, but require those carrying out the mark-up to release exhaustive documentation regarding procedures and standards applied.

The need for researchers to share information included in a corpus' annotation and mark-up has led to the establishment of a non-profit consortium, called TEI (Text Encoding Initiative)[4], which maintains and develops standard guidelines for the mark-up of texts, which are now widely adopted. The TEI introduced a new component in mark-up procedures, which is called the TEI Header, and which contains metadata regarding the whole text included in the file. Other information regarding portions of a text are encoded in the remaining part of the file. TEI initially adopted SGML (Standard Generalized Markup Language) as its standard mark-up language; more recently, however, XML (Extensible Markup Language) has superseded SGML in the TEI guidelines (Burnard 2005). XML has been adopted since, despite its flexibility, it has a fixed set of rules.

The *WHoB* corpus has been marked-up with XML by myself, mainly following the TEI-conformant schema developed by Cirillo, Marchi and Venuti (forthcoming) for the *CorDis* project. Information encoded in the TEI Header for each file includes, among other things:

[4] http://www.tei-c.org (accessed 29 August 2008)

- the title of each briefing;
- the date in which the briefing took place;
- the phase in which it took place (see paragraph 2.3);
- the location where it was held;
- the type of press conference (briefing, gaggle, or briefing with a guest).

Other information that is encoded in the mark-up, related to specific portions of text, includes:

- the structure of the briefing, which may be divided into two or three main speech routines (Partington 2003: 49-50; see also paragraph 1.5): an opening statement, a question and answer session and an optional addendum;
- the role of the speaker in each utterance, organized into the following categories: podium, press, Cabinet member, Press Office staff, Presidential staff, Department staff, Federal agency head, other guest;
- the individual speaker in each utterance;
- pauses;
- kinesic information (e.g. gestures) only when included in the briefing transcript;
- non-linguistic events reported in the transcript (e.g. a phone rings while a briefing is taking place).

Thanks to the incorporation of such information in the corpus it has been possible to carry out a corpus-based investigation without losing sight of the context of interaction, which is generally regarded as a shortcoming of most corpus work (Widdowson 2000: 6-9). More specifically, discourse strategies enacted by different sets of speakers – namely, the podium vs. reporters – could be identified and compared in the *WHoB* corpus thanks to the presence of the XML mark-up. Furthermore, thanks to the information included in the TEI header for each briefing and gaggle, it was possible to make the corpus searchable within different sub-corpora, as outlined in paragraph 2.3. In order to fully exploit the opportunities

provided by the XML mark-up, corpus-processing software specifically designed for XML marked-up corpora was used in the present research project. The functions and use of such a tool will be described in the following paragraph.

2.5 Research questions, analytical tools and methodology

As mentioned in paragraph 2.2, one typical *CADS* research question type aims to find out how, in a given discourse type, a given participant achieves a given goal with language and what this tells us about that particular participant. In the present study, I focus on research questions of this type. The main aim of the present dissertation may be outlined as follows: what do specific discourse features exploited in the briefings tell us about the ways in which the George W. Bush administration employs briefings in the enactment of its political and communication strategies? More specifically, I attempt to provide an answer to the following questions:

1. in what ways and in order to pursue what kind of strategies do the press secretary and reporters exploit reported discourse in the briefings?
2. how are lexical items identified as corpus keywords and typically used in the jargon of political communication exploited by the podium in relation to specific topics and in the perspective of achieving specific political goals?

These research questions will be developed in more detail in Chapters 3 and 4 respectively, where I will attempt to provide answers by exploring the 2001-05 White House press briefings corpus applying the *CADS* approach as outlined above. In particular, as suggested by Partington (2003: 27), who in turn quotes Schäffner (1997: 2-3), I will "start from 'the linguistic micro-

level and ask what strategic functions specific structures (e.g. word choice, a specific syntactic structure) serve to fulfil' (Schäffner 1997: 2-3)".

As mentioned earlier, lexical and syntactic choices made at the micro-linguistic level both by podium and reporters will be examined in the first place through the analysis of quantitative data, which avails itself of a number of techniques.

In the first place, I have compared normalized frequency data (per 1,000,000 words) in different subcorpora (e.g. in different phases) or for different speakers/speaker roles. Normalized data have been obtained by comparing the number of occurrences of each word in each subcorpus or in the words of each speaker/speaker role with the total number of words uttered in that subcorpus or by that speaker/speaker role. The total number of tokens for each phase, for the two main speaker roles and the two main podiums, used as the starting point for all frequency data normalization procedures in this study, are reported in Table 2.4 below.

	whole corpus	press	podium	Fleischer	McClellan
all phases	3367340	1029737	2185700	1382940	768139
phase 1	466304	159203	300466	293934	6560
phase 2	307629	94297	181293	181293	0
phase 3	1100878	347474	725597	683081	41103
phase 4	161672	49940	106655	103410	2192
phase 5	1330857	378823	871689	121222	718284

Table 2.4 Total number of tokens for each phase, for the two main speaker roles and the two main podiums

Another type of procedure involves comparing an item's normalized frequency in the *WHoB* corpus to its normalized frequency in other, larger corpora, namely the British National Corpus (*BNC*)[5], the Corpus of

[5] The British National Corpus is a collection of 100,000,000 words and comprises samples from a range of spoken and written discourse types. Information about it may be found online: http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/ (last accessed 12 September 2008). Frequency data were

Contemporary American English (*COCA*)[6] and the *CorDis* corpus.[7] Through the former procedure, differences between the sections of the corpus can be highlighted, while the latter may be used to spot significantly high or low frequency figures of specific items in the corpus compared to other discourse types.

In the second place, I generated keyword lists as a more advanced way of comparing the *WHoB* corpus to other corpora, with the aim of identifying "words which are significantly more frequent in one corpus than another" (Hunston 2002: 68). The two corpora chosen as reference are the collection of all spoken English texts contained in the British National Corpus (*BNC*)[8] and the American sub-corpus of the *CorDis* corpus[9]. As recommended by Scott (1998b: 70), the wordlists chosen as reference were obtained from corpora that are larger than the *WHoB* corpus.

In the third place, I generated concordances of selected items, as they "can be used to give very general ideas about the ways that words behave and the meanings that can be associated with patterns", but which also "tends to lead to more specific observations about the behaviour of individual words" (Hunston 2002: 50-51). Due to the large size of the corpus, however, and to the consequently high number of occurrences of some of the words investigated, it was not always possible to examine

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obtained by using the web interface developed by Davies and available online: http://corpus.byu.edu/bnc/ (last accessed 2 November 2008).

[6] The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) is a collection of over 385,000,000 words of American English texts dating back to years from 1990 to 2008 and including spoken texts, fiction, popular magazines, newspapers, and academic texts. Assembled by Davies at Brigham Young University, it may be accessed online at: http://www.americancorpus.org (last accessed 2 November 2008).

[7] See footnote 2.

[8] This subcorpus' frequency list in WordSmith's wordlist format is freely available online at http://www.lexically.net/downloads/spoken.zip (last accessed 31 August 2008)

[9] The *CorDis* Us subcorpus contains texts related to the war in Iraq, namely transcripts of TV news items from CBS, US Congress debates, editorials, op-eds and reports from the US press and a small number of White House press briefings.

concordances line by line. In these cases, as suggested by Sinclair (1999), cited in Hunston (2002: 52), sample concordances consisting of 100 random lines were examined in order to identify the most significant patterns; the procedure was reiterated until no new pattern emerged from the concordance. In so doing, as Hunston (52-56) emphasizes, I mainly focused on phraseology. Collocate lists were also used, in this perspective, as they help "summarising some of the information to be found in concordance lines" (Hunston 2002: 75) by highlighting frequent and statistically significant co-occurrences in the corpus.

Finally, a wider dimension was explored by looking beyond the concordance line, at larger excerpts containing the item under examination. Again, due to the large size of the corpus, only a limited sample of excerpts was examined, after having been selected starting from seemingly interesting concordance lines. The analysis of a wider co-text is vital to the identification of non-obvious meanings, which represents the core of the *CADS* approach. By moving back and forth from the excerpts to the concordance, it is possible to identify less straightforward lexico-grammatical and syntactic patterns.

Since, as outlined in paragraph 2.4, the corpus was marked up using XML in order to incorporate contextual information in it, corpus processing software specifically designed to handle XML marked-up corpora was chosen for use in this research project to explore and analyze the corpus. The *Xaira* package[10], which is freely available and allows the user to perform XML-based queries, was chosen to this purpose. *Xaira* includes both an indexer and a client. The indexer is used to create an index of the XML marked-up files making up the corpus, and will only work if the XML files are well-formed according to pre-established rules. Through

[10] http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/rts/xaira/ (last accessed 27 August 2008)

the client, then, it is possible to perform queries on the corpus by using the previously generated index file.

The main difference between *Xaira* and other corpus processing software packages lies in the fact that *Xaira* allows the user to perform various types of query apart from the commonly performed textual ones. It is indeed not only possible to search the corpus for a word, a phrase or a regular expression pattern; XML elements can also be retrieved through a query, and the different types of query can be combined in order to search, for example, for a phrase only when it occurs within a given XML element. As shown in paragraph 2.4, these queries can be of great use in carrying out quantitative analysis without losing sight of the context, which is a fundamental aspect of *CADS* research. Furthermore, provided that the corpus has been marked-up in such a way as to be subdivided into a number of partitions, queries can be performed in a single sub-corpus rather than in the whole corpus, if necessary. This is useful especially when carrying out comparative analysis on modular corpora of the type described in paragraph 2.2.

Each query generates a concordance, which is displayed in the usual KWIC output. However, each concordance line can be expanded in order to be viewed in a single page, in order to make the co-text more easily explorable. Collocates for an item can be generated starting from a concordance, and they can be displayed both by frequency and by statistical significance – expressed either by Mutual Information or by Z-score.

In order to perform some additional tasks that are not available in *Xaira*, such as the generation of keywords and clusters, the *WordSmith Tools* 3.0 suite (Scott 1998a) was also used in this research project. The version of the corpus used in *WordSmith* is not the XML-marked-up one, but a version without the mark-up, containing only the words actually spoken by the

participants in the briefing. By combining the tools available in *WordSmith* with the opportunities provided by the XML mark-up it was possible to carry out more complex analytical procedures.

2.6 Frequency and keyword lists

A preliminary analysis has been conducted on the corpus in order to identify its main features and select potentially interesting items to be investigated in detail. First of all, in order to sketch a general picture of the *WHoB* corpus and to obtain a list of keywords for the corpus, a list of all the words present in the corpus has been compiled and sorted by frequency, by using the *Xaira* word query option. *Xaira* does not have a specific tool for the generation of frequency lists, but it allows the user to generate the list of all the items present in a corpus or in a sub-corpus by performing a query which retrieves all words, numbers and punctuation marks – the latter will have to be subsequently eliminated manually from the list – in the corpus. Table 2.5 shows the most frequent words in the corpus, obtained following this procedure. Predictably enough, this list mostly contains grammatical words, as is the case with most corpora (Baker 2006: 53-54). However, it already shows that a single lexical item, namely *president*, has a strikingly high frequency in this corpus, where it is the

1	the	229505
2	to	119255
3	that	104700
4	and	90453
5	of	79974
6	a	60260
7	in	56391
8	is	53678
9	president	44431
10	i	43493
11	it	42020
12	you	38684
13	on	35975
14	s	35919
15	we	32095
16	he	30819
17	this	30334
18	have	24994
19	are	24990
20	for	24494
21	be	23768
22	with	23450
23	will	21868
24	as	21566
25	there	20731
26	they	19983
27	what	19738
28	about	19678
29	not	19343
30	has	18212
31	was	17183
32	but	15198
33	at	14322
34	think	13358
35	so	13234
36	people	12995
37	or	11600
38	do	11134
39	well	11071
40	can	10750
41	going	10713
42	his	10663
43	said	10291
44	if	10239
45	from	10173
46	would	9970
47	an	9922
48	re	9765
49	been	9679
50	all	9665

Table 2.5 *WHoB* corpus: the 50 most frequent words

ninth most frequent word and makes up 1,31 per cent of the total items in the corpus. This is not surprising, however, since, as mentioned in Chapter 1, most communication strategies at the White House revolve around the figure of the president, and this was particularly the case during the George W. Bush administration. Due to the absence of a reference corpus of briefings dating back to a previous administration, it will not be possible here to find out whether the relative frequency of *president* in the Bush administration briefings is higher than it was in previous administrations. The dispersion of these occurrences throughout the corpus (Baker 2006: 60), however, will be investigated, in order to find out whether references to the president were more frequent in some periods than in others. Other lexical items present in this list include the noun *people*, which can be very generally assumed to refer to the government's counterpart – the public opinion – and two verb forms generally used to report someone's statements (*said*) and thoughts (*thinks*). The high frequency of these two verbs in the corpus may be confirming that the process of reporting, discussing and explaining presidential statements and opinions is at the core of the briefings as a discourse type. The functions of these and similar verbs in the corpus will be investigated in Chapter 3.

A clearer picture of what a corpus is about, however, can only be obtained when a list of the most frequent lexical items in the corpus is compiled (Baker 2006: 54-55). Table 2.6 shows the 50 most frequent lexical items in the *WHoB* corpus, obtained by removing grammatical words from the entire corpus' frequency list. The words that are found in this list mainly belong to a few categories:

- words referring to issues which were on the agenda during the first term of the Bush administration, such as *Iraq*, *security* and *war*;
- words referring to actors on the domestic and international political scene: *president*, *people*, *united states/nations*, *congress*, *white house*, *government*,

world, *secretary*;

- words more strictly related to the briefings' routines: *Ari* and *question*;
- time-related words: *now*, *time*, *today*;
- mental verbs[11]: *think*, *know*, *want* and *see*;
- communication verbs: *said*/*say* and *talk*;
- adjectives: *important*, *new*, *first* and *last*.

As Baker (2006: 71) points out, "frequency lists can be helpful in determining the focus of a text, but care must be taken not to make presuppositions about the ways words are actually used within it." Therefore, in order to obtain information about why specific items occur quite frequently in a corpus, concordances, lists of clusters and collocates have to be generated for these words, in order to carry out a more detailed investigation, which goes in the direction of more qualitative analytical procedures. But before moving to this kind of analysis, it is useful to generate a keywords list for the *WHoB* corpus by using *WordSmith*'s KeyWords tool, in order to determine which words are more salient in this corpus than in two other corpora that have been chosen as references, by carrying out a statistical measurement (Baker 2006: 125).

The comparison between the frequency list of the *WHoB* corpus and those of *BNC spoken* and *CorDis US*, which, as mentioned earlier, had been

1	president	44431
2	think	13358
3	people	12995
4	going	10713
5	said	10291
6	united	7708
7	house	7490
8	know	6495
9	now	6343
10	get	6290
11	iraq	6255
12	states	6254
13	white	6138
14	question	6094
15	make	5749
16	time	5677
17	security	5452
18	ari	5351
19	made	5192
20	congress	5022
21	go	4859
22	say	4700
23	American	4699
24	today	4637
25	way	4619
26	take	4574
27	important	4537
28	continue	4461
29	war	4373
30	work	4349
31	want	4263
32	administration	4252
33	information	3801
34	see	3740
35	right	3738
36	nations	3734
37	two	3732
38	here	3703
39	new	3664
40	talk	3604
41	like	3592
42	look	3541
43	need	3516
44	government	3460
45	point	3392
46	first	3318
47	world	3311
48	secretary	3268
49	meeting	3253
50	last	3246

Table 2.6 *WHoB* corpus: the 50 most frequent lexical items

[11] The classification of verbs into semantic domains follows Biber et al. (1999: 360-374)

chosen as reference corpora, yields interesting results about the significance of frequency data obtained from the frequency list. The keyword lists thus obtained, reported in Tables A.1 and A.2 respectively in Appendix A, are quite different from each other, although they share some significant features – the most visible of which is that *president* is the first word on both lists. This is due to the different nature of the two corpora chosen as reference. The former, the *BNC spoken*, is more likely to share with the *WHoB* corpus features of spoken discourse; therefore, in the keywords list obtain by using it as a reference, the majority of words are lexical items referring to issues dealt with in the briefings. The *CorDis US* sub-corpus, in contrast, shares more or less the same topic of the *WHoB* corpus; therefore, many keywords obtained in this case have to do with what is said and done in the briefings. These two keywords lists, therefore, provide two different, but both interesting perspectives for the identification of salient items in the *WHoB* corpus.

In particular, in each of the two tables the following data are reported for each word: keyness value[12]; position in the other keyword list (if present); phase in which the word was most frequent; speaker role (podium or journalist) who uses this word most often; podium (Fleischer or McClellan) who uses this word most often. The three latter pieces of data have been calculated by referring to normalized frequency data (occurrences per million words).

The words included in Tables A.1 and A.2 that are more frequent in phase 1 than in other phases either refer to the leading actors of the US domestic political scene (*president*, *Bush*, *he*, *his*, *Congress*, *Senator*, *Bush*, *administration*, *White*, *House*, *Hill*) or to issues around which Bush's

[12] Keyness value is defined by Baker (2006: 125) as "a measure which takes into account the relative size" of two corpora or sub-corpora "combined with the relative frequencies of each word"

presidential campaign had revolved (*economy*, *defense*, *tax*). Most of them are more frequent in the press' words than in those of the podium. Items that are most significant in phase 2, most of which occur more frequently in the podium's than in the reporters' words, include *American*, *nation* and *terrorism*, all related to the US reaction to the 9/11 attacks, and *meeting*, *information*, *Governor* which refer to the search for news and actions being taken after the tragic event. In phase 3, when the US government was striving to obtain authorization to invade Iraq, the bodies which were expected to authorize military action are referred to most often: *United*, *Nations*, *Security*, *leaders* and *Senate* (all of which are more frequently mentioned by the podium). Quite predictably, such words as *war*, *military*, *Iraq*, *Iraqi*, *Saddam*, *Hussein* and *weapons* were most frequent during the invasion of Iraq (phase 4); it is probably not by chance that *Iraq*, *war* and *weapons* are mentioned more by the reporters than by the podium. Words that became more frequent after Iraq had been invaded include *important*, *efforts*, *forward*, *continue*. They may be supposed to be used by the podium to emphasize progress in the situation in Iraq.

3. Voices in the briefings: talking about news, making news through talk

The White House press briefings are mostly a matter of providing official presidential or administration comments on events or issues, or explaining previous statements, decisions, actions and policies, when prompted by reporters. As mentioned earlier, Partington observes that the only newsworthy event which occurs in the briefings consists of the words used by podium and reporters (2003: 27-28). Furthermore, reporters need to rely on the press secretary – and, to a lesser extent, on other institutional sources – to obtain information that, in most cases, they do not have the time to check, especially in today's hectic news-making world. Indeed, as Sigal (1986: 15) noted, "news is not what happens, but what someone says has happened or will happen".

For this reason, most of what is said in the briefings revolves around something that has been said by someone, or that represents someone's opinion. The people whose statements and opinions are discussed include the President, the administration, individual cabinet members or administration officials, the Republican and Democratic parties as a whole, individual members of Congress, experts in fields relevant to specific issues, reporters, the American people, the US and its allies, terrorist organizations, world leaders and other actors on the domestic and international political scene.

Reporting people's statements and opinions is thus a fundamental aspect of the briefings, and specific reporting strategies are likely to emerge from the analysis of the podium's and reporters' discourse in the briefings. In this chapter, I therefore focus on the use of reported discourse in the briefings and, for reasons of space, limit only carry out a quantitative

analysis of features of verbs used to report statements, rather than opinions.

To this purpose, I present a brief overview of all the verbs present in the corpus that are used in reporting structures that may be followed by a reported clause. Among these, I only take into account those used to report what people say. By combining the list of verbs used to report what people say and the one including all the reporting verbs that may be followed by a that-clause, as they are reported in Sinclair (1990: 315; 321), I have obtained the following list of verbs used to report statements in the briefings: *acknowledge*; *add*; *admit*; *agree*; *allege*; *announce*; *answer*; *argue*; *assert*; *assure*; *boast*; *claim*; *comment*; *complain*; *confirm*; *contend*; *convince*; *deny*; *dispute*; *explain*; *guarantee*; *imply*; *inform*; *insist*; *maintain*; *mention*; *note*; *notify*; *object*; *observe*; *persuade*; *pledge*; *pray*; *predict*; *promise*; *prophesy*; *reassure*; *recall*; *record*; *remark*; *repeat*; *reply*; *report*; *reveal*; *be rumoured*; *say*; *state*; *suggest*; *swear*; *teach*; *tell*; *threaten*; *vow*; *warn*; *wish*; *write*.

reporting verb	rank/*CorDis*	keyness/*CorDis*	rank/*BNC*	keyness/*BNC*
saying	73	323	-----	-----
answer	145	205	-----	-----
comment	190	163	-----	-----
informed	196	158	-----	-----
announce	216	138	354	659
announced	232	126	194	1244
say	338	81	-----	-----
confirm	355	76	-----	-----
mentioned	370	74	-----	-----
recall	384	69	-----	-----
said	398	65	-----	-----
report	409	63	355	658
stated	-----	-----	490	454

Table 3.1 Rank and keyness value of verbs used to report what people say in the *WHoB* keywords list obtained by comparing it to the *CorDis US* subcorpus and to the *BNC spoken*

As shown in Table 3.1, a number of these verb forms used to report what

people say is included in one of the two keyword lists for the corpus, namely, the one obtained by comparing the briefings corpus with the US subsection of *CorDis*. They are indeed found to be significantly more frequent in the *WHoB* corpus than in the *CorDis US* subcorpus. *Saying* was also found by Partington (2003: 25) to be significantly more frequent in his Clinton briefings corpus (2003: 25) than in his reference corpora. Other verb forms belonging to the same class, but not included in Sinclair's list, were found to be included in these keyword lists: *anticipate* (214th word in the *CorDis US* list and 382nd in the *BNC* list), *indicated* (25th word in the *CorDis US* list and 57th in the *BNC* list), *indicate* (395th in the *CorDis US* list) and *remind* (401st in the *CorDis US* list). For this reason, *anticipate*, *indicate* and *remind* were added to the list of the verbs to be taken into account in this chapter.

Reported discourse implies the existence of someone who makes a statement, and of someone who reports that statement, and who, in so doing, chooses a specific way of reporting it, i.e. a specific reporting verb, which has its specific shades of meaning. Therefore, an analysis of reported discourse cannot but take into account both the sources of statements and the way they are reported, and in examining the use of reporting verbs in the briefings, I will focus in particular on the selection of specific sources of statements.

Such an analysis will require a theoretical premise in which I discuss both possible strategic functions of the use of reported discourse in the briefings (paragraph 3.1) and the role of the White House press secretary as the 'relayer' of his clients' statements or a 'voice' in his own right (paragraph 3.2). The theoretical premise will be followed by a practical one, in which I compare frequency data for the words that refer to those actors that are most likely to be the most frequent sources of statements in the

briefings (paragraph 3.3). After these two premises, data regarding the selection of sources in the most frequent reporting verbs in the *WHoB* corpus will be analyzed in more detail. In particular, throughout this investigation, I will compare the use of reporting verbs in the discourse of reporters and of the podium, as well as in the discourse of different podiums. Furthermore, I will examine the use of reporting verbs in different phases of the briefings, so as to be able to detect and explore trends related to the succession of political phases.

3.1 Reporting statements and opinions as a way of achieving legitimation

As Partington points out (2003: 30), press briefings are a type of *institutional talk*, which, in Habermas' terms, can be regarded as an instance of *strategic discourse*. The Habermasian theory of communication, as reported by Chilton (2004: 28; 45) holds that most language use is strategic, since it is biased by interests. Some strategies enacted by participants in an interaction to further their interests can be thus identified.

One of the "'strategic functions' that linguistic expressions of various types may be (perceived to be) used for" (Chilton 2004: 46-47), is *legitimization/delegitimization*. Through legitimization – which is a key concept in Habermas' view of human communication – political actors establish the conditions by which they come to be regarded as authoritative. As Chilton observes, legitimization, "usually oriented to the self, includes positive self-presentation" (2004: 47), which comes in various guises, one of which is "self-identification as a source of authority, reason, vision and sanity, where the self is either an individual or the group with which an individual identifies or wishes to identify" (2004: 47). More specifically, van Leeuwen (2007: 92) identifies "authorization, that is, legitimation by reference to the

authority […] of persons in whom institutional authority of some kind is vested" as one of the four main categories of legitimation[13], which are "realized by specific linguistic resources and configurations of linguistic resources".

In the specific case of the White House press secretary, their authoritativeness in their professional role – the official representative of a number of clients, including the President, the administration, the White House staff, the American people – depends on their ability to present themselves as providing reliable and truthful information on behalf of their clients. On the other hand, when asking a question to the podium, reporters generally need to make reference to pieces of information that constitute the basis for their question, and that they necessarily have to claim to be true.

As Chilton observes, "political speakers have to guard against the operation of their audience's 'cheater detectors' and provide guarantees for the truth of their sayings" (2004: 23), and such guarantees are often obtained through reference to a source, depending on whose authoritativeness the credibility of the embedded statement – and, consequently, of the speaker – may be enhanced or diminished (Chilton 2004: 22). In van Leeuwen's framework (2007: 94-95), personal authority legitimation is realized by using a "'verbal process' clause (Halliday, 1985: 129) in which the 'projected clause', the authority's utterance, contains some form of obligation modality", while "expert legitimation takes the form of 'verbal process clauses' or 'mental process clauses' with the expert as subject".

Similarly, in a study about lexical semantics of reported speech in newspaper articles, Bergler (1995) claims that in reported speech the source

[13] Van Leeuwen uses the term *legitimation*, rather than *legitimization*.

of information, represented by the subject of the reporting clause (e.g. *I* in *I said they were all important priorities*) plays a fundamental role in the evaluation of that statement's reliability or credibility, and that three main aspects contribute to such evaluation process: the source's identity and personal attributes, their role or official position and their relevance to the topic (Bergler 1995: 104).

Thus, one of the discourse strategies that can be adopted by speakers – and by political speakers in particular – in order to construct themselves as sources of authority involves the linguistic representation of other people's thoughts or utterances, that is, the reporting of what other people say or think. Halliday and Matthiessen (1999: 108-116) call the reporting of people's statements and thoughts *projection*. As explained by Martin and Rose (2007: 49-52), projection is generally realized in the relation between a quoting or reporting clause (e.g. "he said") and the quoted or reported clause. By using such a structure, they claim, a speaker or writer can identify sources and attribute evaluation to them. On the other hand, Wilson calls this linguistic phenomenon *metarepresentation* (2000: 411), and he defines it as "a higher-order representation with a lower-order representation embedded within it". As regards lower-order representation, three different types are identified by Wilson: "public representations, e.g. utterances; mental representations, e.g. thoughts; and abstract representations, e.g. sentences, propositions" (2000: 414). Of these, representation of the first type will be investigated in this chapter.

In the present chapter, thus, I will attempt to investigate whether one of the functions of reported discourse in the podium's and reporters' discourse strategies is to achieve legitimation as authoritative sources.

3.2 The White House press secretary: issues of footing

Institutional and organizational aspects of the role of the White House press secretary have been widely discussed in paragraph 1.6. However, one of the aims of the present chapter is to identify some features of the press secretary's role during the first term of the George W. Bush administration as they are realized through discourse strategies. First of all, therefore, I will briefly review work carried out by other researchers in this direction. Namely, I will focus on Partington's analysis (2003) of production roles in the White House press briefings.

In order to explore the role of the White House Press Secretary, Partington exploits Goffman's concept of *footing*, as further developed from a linguistic perspective by Levinson (1988). As Levinson reports, Goffman argued that "talk is properly analysed […] only in the context of the participation status of each person present in an encounter" (Levinson 1988: 162). In the light of Goffman's claim, White House press briefings as a discourse type cannot be analysed without taking into consideration the participation status of the Press secretary and the journalists.

In this perspective, Partington analyses the participant role of the press secretary following Levinson's scheme, in which the concepts of speaker and receiver are decomposed into their underlying component concepts and then recombined into more specialized participant roles. In particular, speaker roles are decomposed into four components, namely participation, transmission, motive and form. Their presence or absence in a single utterance differentiates a speaker role from another.

By analysing the press secretary's utterances in four briefings, Partington observes that the Press Secretary plays a number of roles in them. First of all, he "acts as *relayer* [neither responsible for motive nor form] when reading out a prepared statement or making an

announcement" (2003: 88), as it usually happens in the introductory part of the briefings. Much more frequently, however, Partington finds the Press Secretary to be acting as *spokesperson* (2003: 88), a speaker role which in Levinson's scheme includes responsibility for the form of words but not for the motivation behind them; the Press Secretary, thus, appears to be speaking in his own words on behalf of one or more of his clients (Levinson's *principals*), including the people of America, the United States, the White House administration and/or its staff, and, of course, the President. The role of *principal* – responsible for motive as well as for form – is, in contrast, "one the podium professes to eschew" (Partington 2003: 89), but which he anyway at times exploits either by adding "tactical touches of principalship to messages from a distant source" (2003: 89) or by personalizing "his relationship with the audience" (2003: 89).

It is in the light of these considerations that Partington chooses to use the term 'podium' rather than *spokesperson* to refer to the White House Press Secretary, since, as demonstrated in his analysis, the role played by the Press Secretary in the briefings does not necessarily correspond with the participant role of *spokesperson* as outlined by Levinson. Accordingly, I have chosen to refer to the White House Press Secretary as the 'podium' throughout this dissertation.

Furthermore, Partington reports Levinson's observation as to "the potential vagueness of the participant role [of spokesperson] associated with the institutional role" (Levinson 1998: 203). It is indeed this inherent vagueness and the complexity of the podium's production role, together with the multiplicity of *principals* he may be speaking on behalf of, that make the White House Press Secretary a very interesting figure to analyse in terms of professional identity. Partington's analysis of the podium's production roles constitutes one of the starting points for the investigation

I carry out in this chapter.

3.3 Some raw data: actors and voices in the briefings

Before moving on to the analysis of the use of reported discourse in the briefings, it might be interesting to have a look at some general frequency data for the whole *WHoB* corpus.

Although mere frequency data may be regarded as being limited use in themselves, as their observation might lead to oversimplified conclusions, nevertheless they can help the researcher to identify aspects of a corpus that, while in need of further investigation (Baker 2006: 47; 68), highlight trends, outstanding word frequencies but also significant absences.

Thus, as this chapter is mainly concerned with finding out who the podium and the reporters speak about and on behalf of, the most significant words referring to those sources were selected: *President* (the Press Secretary's boss), *we/our* (inclusive or exclusive, may refer to podium and press, to the Bush Administration, to the White House staff, to the American people, to the United States, to the White House press corps and so on), *I* (the podium as an individual – only examined in the podium's words) and *you* (only when used by reporters). Normalized data[14] regarding the occurrences of these items in the podium's and reporters' words – including frequencies in different phases of George W. Bush's first term as President – are reported in the following tables and figures.

[14] Normalized data have been obtained by comparing the number of occurrences of each word in each phase and for each speaker or speaker role with the total number of words uttered in that phase by that speaker or participant in that speaker role.

	podium	Fleischer	McClellan	press	all speakers
whole corpus	14191	16659	9779	12302	13194
phase 1	18225	18306	13719	12776	16148
phase 2	16316	16316	----------	10816	13259
phase 3	16582	16924	10948	12375	14939
phase 4	13494	13499	11861	10112	12061
phase 5	10526	14378	9670	12694	10838

Table 3.2 Occurrences of *President* per million words in the *WHoB* corpus in different phases and for different speakers and speaker roles

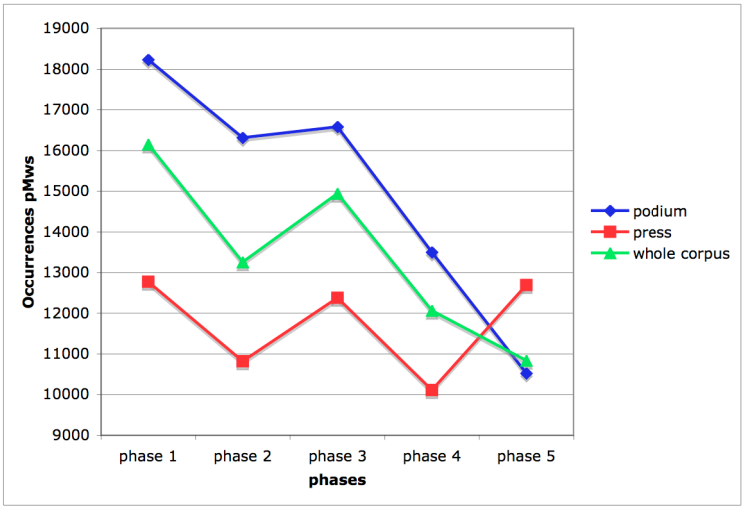

Figure 3.1 Occurrences of *President* per million words in the *WHoB* corpus in different phases and for different speaker roles

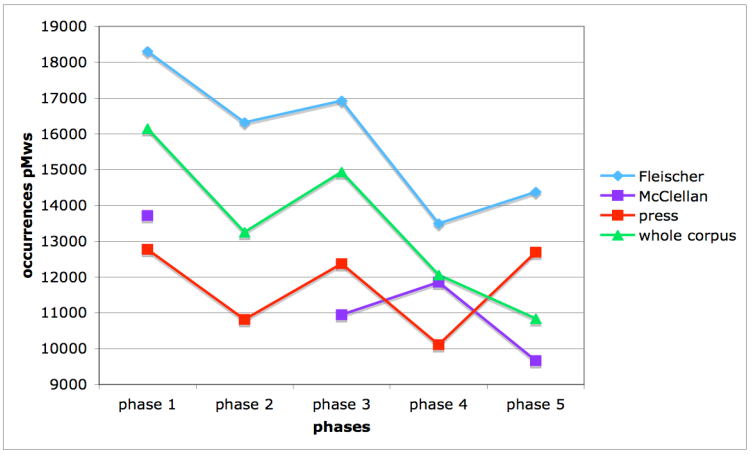

Figure 3.2 Occurrences of *President* per million words in the *WHoB* corpus in different phases and for different speakers

Normalized frequency data show that a number of significant changes took place in the language used by the podium during the first four years of the George W. Bush presidency.

As shown in Table 3.2 and Figures 3.1 and 3.2, *President*, which is the most frequent noun in the whole corpus, is actually found much more often in the podium's utterances during the first two years of the George W. Bush era (phases 1 and 2) than later on, and this decrease does not correspond to an equally significant decrease in the occurrences of the same word in the journalists' utterances. Although of course not all the occurrences of *President* refer to George W. Bush, the vast majority of them does – the remainder referring either to leaders of other countries or to Vice President Cheney. What this may suggest is that while the press kept on asking questions mentioning the President throughout Bush's first term, the podium gradually tended to make less and less reference to him in the responses. The frequencies of *President* in the different speech routines – that is, the subparts into which a briefing is generally divided – indicate, as shown in Table 3.3 that the decrease in references to the president is observable both in the announcements session, in which the podium generally acts as a mere *relayer* reading out prepared statements, and in the question and answer session.

	announcements	Q&A
whole corpus	21254	12673
phase 1	27053	15801
phase 2	15835	13045
phase 3	26312	14283
phase 4	24262	11445
phase 5	18328	10240

Table 3.3 Occurrences of *President* per million words in the *WHoB* corpus in different phases, in the two main speech routines

	podium	Fleischer	McClellan	press	all speakers
whole corpus	11457	5856	21353	4671	9531
phase 1	5947	5648	18902	3913	5278
phase 2	3674	3674	-------	5324	6089
phase 3	6568	5740	20242	4616	6082
phase 4	10098	9796	18704	5907	9006
phase 5	19210	6913	21447	4715	14734

Table 3.4 Occurrences of *we* per million words in the *WHoB* corpus in different phases and for different speakers and speaker roles

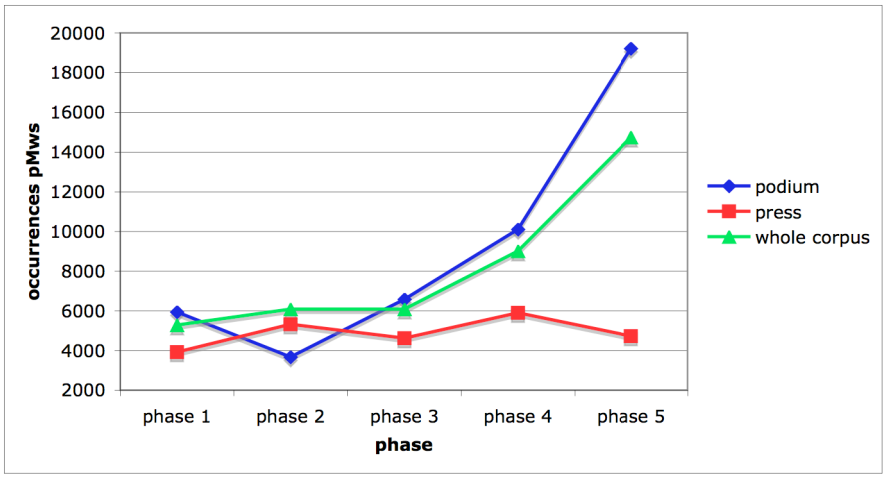

Figure 3.3 Occurrences of *we* per million words in the *WHoB* corpus in different phases and for different speaker roles

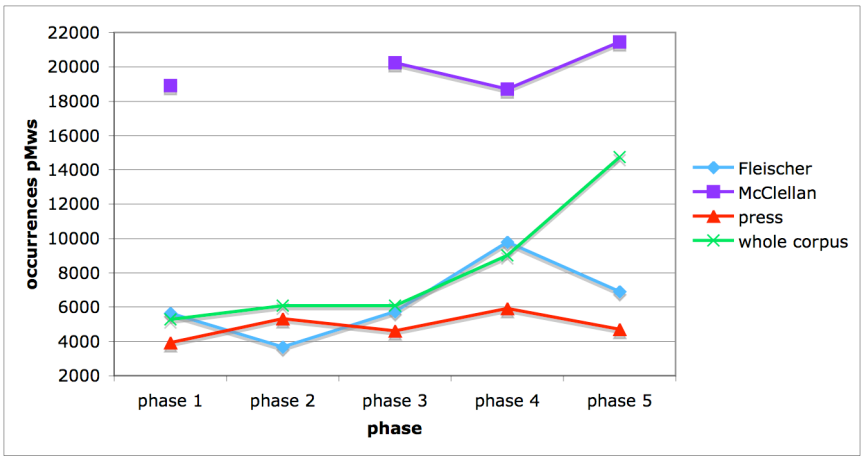

Figure 3.4 Occurrences of *we* per million words in the *WHoB* corpus in different phases and for different speakers and speaker roles

	podium	Fleischer	McClellan	press	all speakers
whole corpus	3070	1918	5128	581	2298
phase 1	2057	2031	3201	553	1520
phase 2	2035	2035	------	764	1934
phase 3	2073	1881	5206	593	1606
phase 4	1978	1944	3193	581	1528
phase 5	4599	1658	5147	536	3321

Table 3.5 Occurrences of *our* per million words in the *WHoB* corpus in different phases and for different speakers and speaker roles

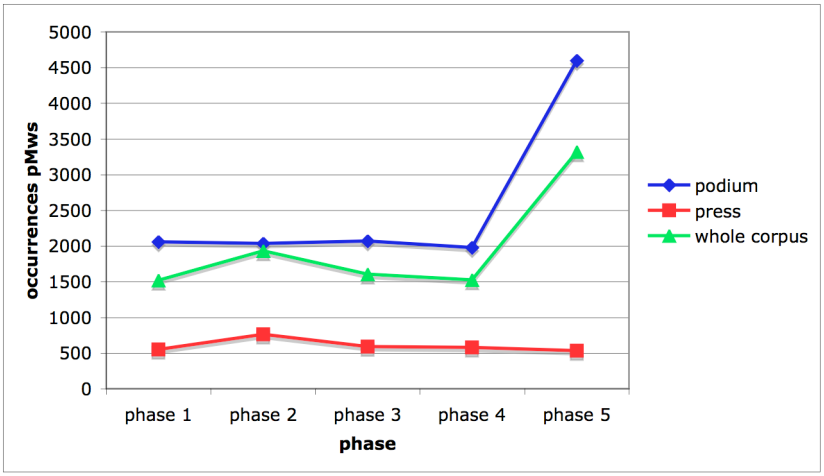

Figure 3.5 Occurrences of *our* per million words in the *WHoB* corpus in different phases and for different speaker roles

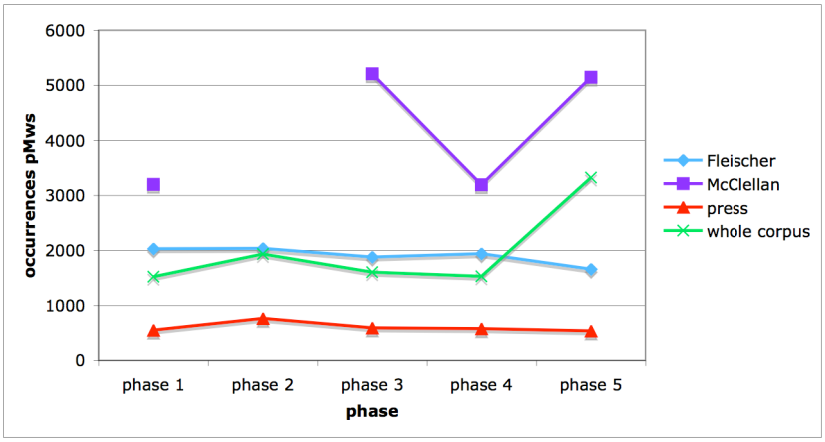

Figure 3.6 Occurrences of *we* per million words in the *WHoB* corpus in different phases and for different speakers and speaker roles

What is more interesting, however, is to observe trends in the use of the

first person plural pronoun *we* and the possessive *our*, especially in the podium's words. As shown in Tables 3.4 and 3.5 and in Figures 3.3, 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6, the use of both the pronoun and the possessive in the briefings has become considerably more frequent as years went by, but only in the podium's talk. These data might be indicating a trend during Bush's first term, showing that while at the beginning the podium used to talk more often about the President and used to present himself mainly as the 'voice' of the President, later on he tended to identify more and more with a collective entity that might be represented by either the whole Bush Administration, or the White House staff, but also by the American people, the United States and even the often mentioned 'international community' and 'civilized world'. The use of the first person plural pronoun, indeed, is often regarded as significant from a strategic point of view, especially in political discourse, as its meaning often remains vague: it may be either inclusive or exclusive, and "the intended reference can even vary in the same context" (Biber et al. 1999: 329). More specifically, as Wilson (1991: 77) points out,

> selectional choices, such as those which operate between exclusive and inclusive 'we' for example, offer politicians ways of directing attention towards or away from their own existential centre, i.e. themselves.

For this reason, particular attention will be devoted to the use of the first person plural pronoun and of the possessive adjective in the analysis of data.

	podium "I"	Fleischer "I"	McClellan "I"	press "you"
whole corpus	15653	14553	17516	18513
phase 1	13702	13370	28353	18429
phase 2	15703	15703	----------	17222
phase 3	15029	14572	22480	18033
phase 4	15189	15124	15054	18782
phase 5	16892	15104	17140	19275

Table 3.6 Occurrences of *I* and *you* per million words in the *WHoB* corpus in different phases and for different speakers and speaker roles

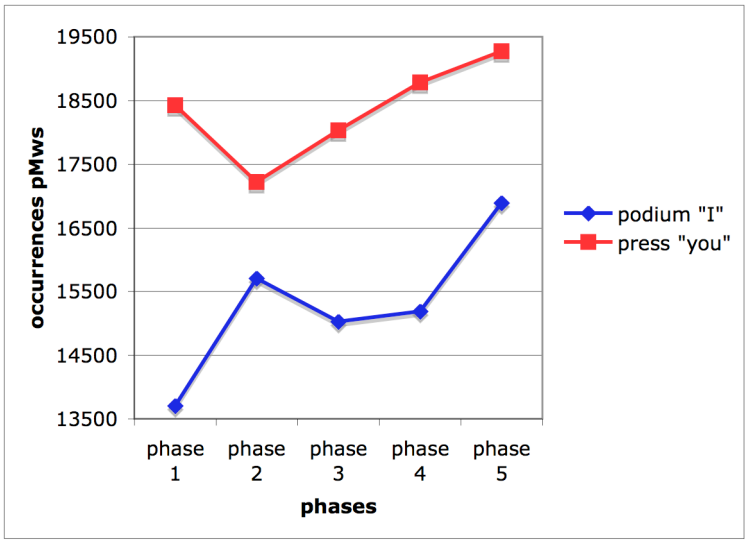

Figure 3.7 Occurrences of *I* and *you* per million words in the *WHoB* corpus in different phases and for different speaker roles

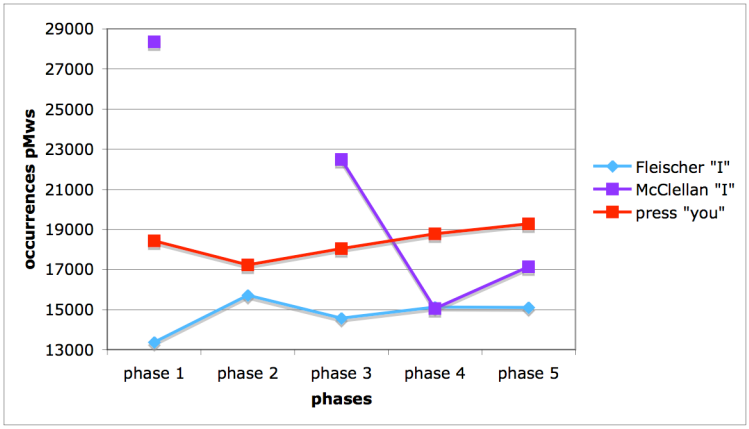

Figure 3.8 Occurrences of *I* and *you* per million words in the *WHoB* corpus in different phases and for different speakers and speaker roles

Finally, as regards the podium's reference to himself in the briefings through the use of the first person singular pronoun *I*, Table 3.6 and Figures 3.7 and 3.8 show how instances of self-reference have become more frequent in the podium's words as years went by, while the number of occurrences of *you* in reporters' questions has not grown correspondingly. A more powerful presence of the Press Secretary on the stage of White House communications can be hypothesized to have characterized the latter years of Bush's first term as President, when the invasion of Iraq and its consequences had become the main focus of the US policy and, therefore, of the briefings. The increased podium's reference to self in phase 5 is also likely to depend on a different approach adopted in the briefings by Scott McClellan compared to his predecessor, whom he replaced just two months after the beginning of phase 5. Thus, the data discussed above might also indicate a different process of construction of identity for the two podiums, respectively in the former and the latter half of George W. Bush's first term. Occurrences of *President* in McClellan's utterances, on the other hand, are remarkably more rare than in Fleischer's ones. Occurrences of *we*, moreover, are strikingly more frequent in McClellan's talk than in Fleischer's.

This paragraph has thus shown how frequency data can provide a starting point for the identification of significant trends and outstanding phenomena in a corpus. The hypotheses formulated here will be discussed in the following paragraphs in relation to the strategies deployed by podium and reporters in order to be perceived as authoritative through the reporting of other people's statements.

3.4 Methodology and frequency data

Table B.1 in Appendix B shows the relative frequency of all the reporting verbs mentioned in paragraph 3.1, as they are distributed throughout the various chronological phases of the corpus. Occurrences are lemmatized, which means that all the forms of each verb have been taken into account[15]. However, only occurrences in which these verbs are actually used as reporting verbs have been counted. Since the *WHoB* corpus is not part-of-speech tagged, in some cases, such as for example *state*(*s*), *remark*(*s*) and *comment*(*s*), it has been necessary to manually eliminate occurrences of homographs.

SAY and TELL – the unmarked reporting verbs, to which no additional semantic value is generally attached – are, quite predictably, by far the most frequent ones in this corpus. Their relative frequency is significantly higher in the words of reporters than in those of the podium. The third most frequent verb, INDICATE, is, in contrast, much more frequently used by the podium than by reporters. The occurrences of the first two verbs will be examined in the next paragraphs looking separately at each verb, in an attempt to identify specific strategies related to the selection of sources whose statements are reported. Due to the high frequency of these verbs, the analysis of their use in the corpus will be based on quantitative data, which will be illustrated and discussed in the following paragraph.

3.5 Distribution of sources: analysis of individual verbs

3.5.1 SAY

As mentioned above, SAY is the most frequent reporting verb in the *WHoB*

[15] Lemmatized forms are always indicated by small capitals.

corpus, and it may be regarded as the reporting verb *par excellence*. In her study about reporting verbs and the semantics of their collocational patterns, Bergler (1991: 217) observes that SAY is "the most unmarked reporting verb", which only presupposes "that there was an original utterance, the assumption being that this utterance is represented as closely as possible". According to the Oxford American Dictionary, the basic meaning of this verb is to "utter words so as to convey information, an opinion, a feeling or intention, or an instruction". What this definition suggests is that this verb may be used to perform a variety of actions in reporting speech.

In its different forms, SAY occurs 18,721 times in the *WHoB* corpus[16], and its absolute frequency is higher than the sum of all other verbs used to report what people say in this corpus, listed in Table B.1. Data regarding it can therefore be used to account for about a half of the total occurrences of reporting verbs in the corpus.

Table 3.8 shows the absolute frequency of each of its forms in each phase of the corpus and for the two main speaker roles. Although the number of its occurrences is slightly higher in the podium's words than in those of the press, normalized frequency data, reported for the whole lemma in Table 3.9, show that this verb is used by reporters twice as often as by the podium. In absolute terms, three of the four forms (*say*, *says*, *saying*) are used more by reporters than by the podium, and only *said* is more frequent in the podium's words rather than in those of the press.

[16] Occurrences of *saying* and *say* as nouns meaning respectively "a short, pithy expression that generally contains advice or wisdom" and "an opportunity for stating one's opinion or feelings" were not counted.

	total	podium	press	phase 1	phase 2	phase 3	phase 4	phase 5
say	4687	2276	2277	650	451	1768	236	1582
says	993	363	606	116	71	348	37	421
said	10291	6148	3923	1128	960	3566	561	4076
saying	2750	707	2014	356	230	891	146	1127
SAY	18721	9494	8820	2250	1712	6573	980	7206

Table 3.8 SAY: absolute frequency in the whole corpus, by speaker role and by phase

	total	podium	press	phase 1	phase 2	phase 3	phase 4	phase 5
SAY	5560	4344	8565	4825	5565	5971	6062	5415

Table 3.9 SAY: Occurrences per million words in the whole corpus, by speaker role and by phase

Due to its very high frequency, a qualitative analysis of the co-texts in which SAY occurs cannot be reported here due to lack of space. Therefore, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, the main focus here will be on quantitative data, and will regard the distribution of sources of statements reported by using SAY.

First of all, as mentioned above, the selection of a source rather than another – the President rather than Condoleezza Rice, the US Ambassador at the UN rather than the UN inspectors in Iraq – is regarded as indicative of the ways podium and reporters construe their legitimacy as the representatives of their respective clients. Therefore, I will start by identifying the main sources of statements reported by podium and press using SAY. This was done by counting the co-occurrences of SAY with the words referring to the main sources of statements in the briefings, examined in paragraph 3.3: *president*, *I*/*you* and *we*. All data reported below are normalized per 1,000,000 words, so as to make it possible to compare frequencies in subsets of different size.

As regards *president*, its occurrences as a collocate of *said* and *says* up to the third word to the left, and as a collocate of *say* and *saying* up to the fifth

word to the left have been counted, and are reported in Table 3.10 and Figures 3.9 and 3.10. This span was chosen because a preliminary analysis of the concordances of the four forms of SAY showed that by setting such a span it was possible to count approximately all the occurrences of words acting as subject of SAY. For the same reason, occurrences of *I* as a collocate of *said* up to the third word to the left, and as a collocate of *say* and *saying* up to the fifth word to the left have been counted in the podium's words; occurrences of *you* as a collocate of *said* up to the third word to the left, and as a collocate of *say* and *saying* up to the fifth word to the left have been counted in the reporters' words. They are reported in Table 3.11 and Figures 3.11 and 3.12. As regards *we*, its occurrences as a collocate of *said* up to the third word to the left, and as a collocate of *say* and *saying* up to the fifth word to the left have been counted, and are reported in Table 3.12 and Figures 3.13 and 3.14.

	podium	press	Fleischer	McClellan	whole corpus
total	784	742	1037	341	749
phase 1	732	672	745	152	682
phase 2	1230	774	1230	---------	985
phase 3	1050	794	1083	535	933
phase 4	1116	741	1141	0	965
phase 5	447	715	1105	333	531

Table 3.10 Occurrences per million words of SAY with *president* as a collocate to the left in different phases and for different speaker roles

As mentioned above, Table 3.10 and Figures 3.9 and 3.10 illustrate the distribution in different phases, and for different speakers and speaker roles, of the co-occurrences of SAY and *president*. What these data show is that the mention of *president* as a source of statements expressed by using SAY remains quite frequent in phases 2, 3 and 4, that is, from the 9/11 attacks to Bush's declaration of "mission accomplished" after the invasion of Iraq, while it was not so frequent in phase 1, and becomes much rarer in

phase 5.

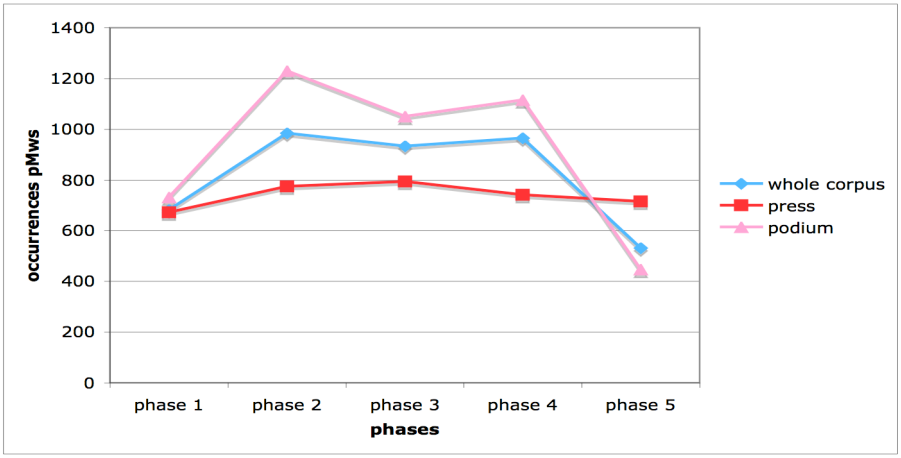

Figure 3.9 Occurrences per million words of SAY with *president* as a collocate to the left in different phases and for different speaker roles

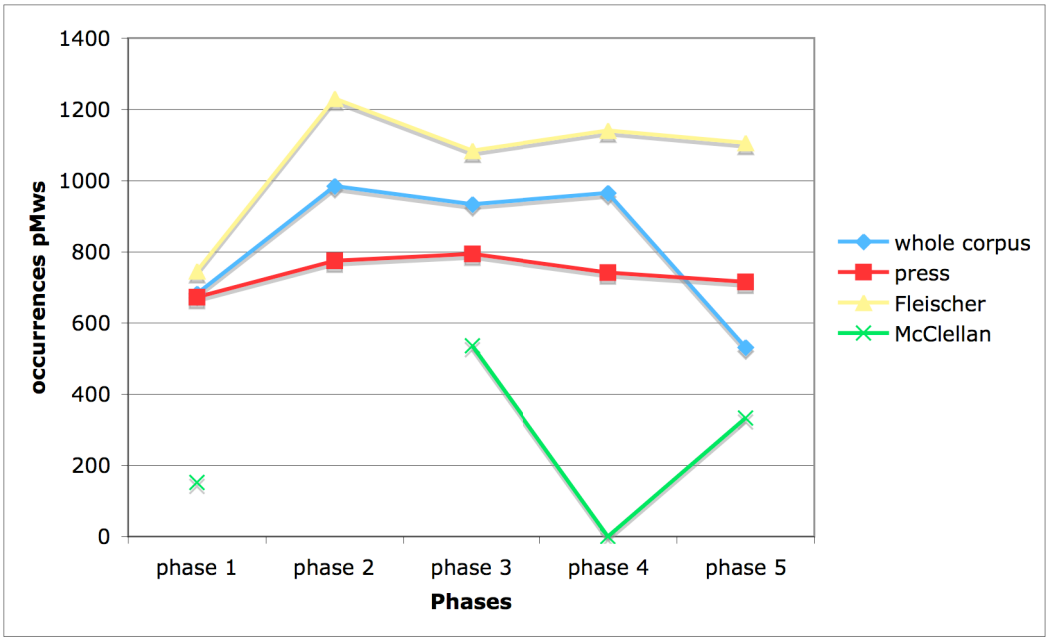

Figure 3.10 Occurrences of SAY with *president* as a collocate to the left per million words in the *WHoB* corpus in different phases and for different speakers and speaker roles.

A breakdown of these figures for different speaker roles (Figure 3.9) shows that while reporters keep using *president* as the subject of SAY constantly throughout the corpus, it is the podium who does so more often from phase 2 to phase 4, and substantially reduces occurrences of this pattern in

phase 5. In particular, as Figure 3.11 shows, it is Scott McClellan – who became press secretary in phase 5 but who had already acted as podium on some occasions in the previous phases – who much more rarely reports the President's statements by using SAY.

	podium "I"	Fleischer "I"	McClellan "I"	press "you"
total	1109	871	1515	2792
phase 1	619	599	1372	2506
phase 2	794	794	----------	2333
phase 3	948	924	1387	2820
phase 4	1219	1189	912	2863
phase 5	1465	1072	1526	2991

Table 3.11 Occurrences per million words of SAY with *I* or *you* as a collocate to the left in different phases and for different speaker roles

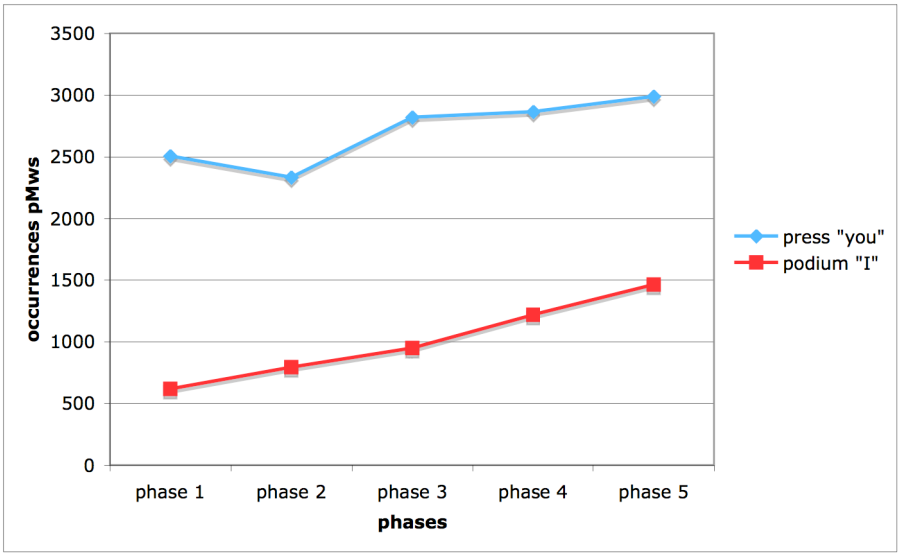

Figure 3.11 Occurrences per million words of SAY with *I* or *you* as a collocate to the left in different phases and for different speaker roles.

As far as occurrences of *I* as the subject of SAY in the podium's words are concerned, a significant increase can be observed from the early days of the administration to the last part of the first term, as shown in Table 3.11 and in Figure 3.11. At the same time, a comparably less dramatic increase is observed in the frequency of *you* as the subject of SAY in the reporters'

words. Thus, such a dramatic increase in the use of *I* as source of statements reported with SAY may only be partly accounted for by pointing out that there was an increase in references to the podium as a source of statements – expressed by the pronoun YOU – in the words of reporters.

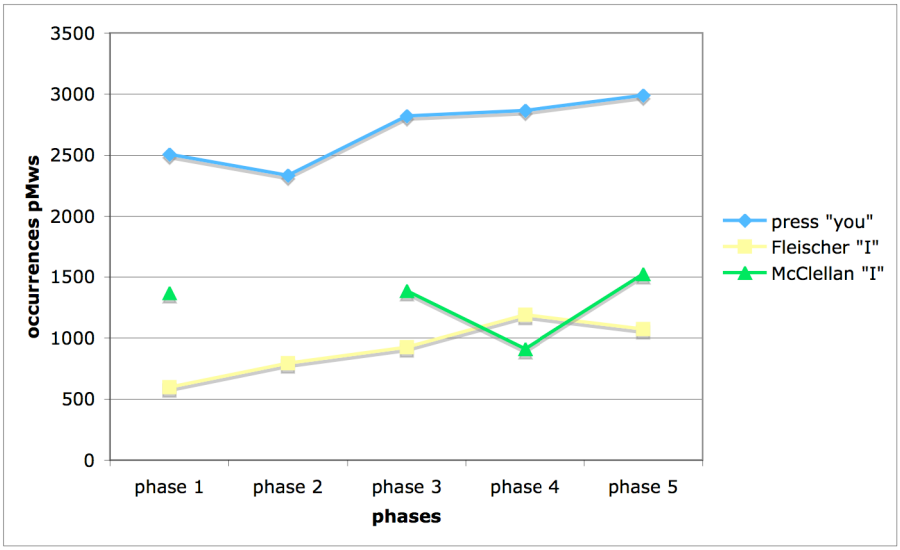

Figure 3.12 Occurrences per million words of SAY with *I* or *you* as a collocate to the left in different phases and for different speakers and speaker roles.

As shown in Table 3.11, also in this case the choices made by Scott McClellan compared to his predecessor are significantly different: the frequency of *I* as a collocate of SAY in his words in the whole corpus is about twice as high as its frequency in Ari Fleischer's words. These data, together with the ones regarding the distribution of *president* as the subject of SAY, might suggest, as hinted at in paragraph 3.3, that the two podiums had a different approach to their role – whereas Fleischer gave more prominence to the role of the President and to his statements, McClellan tended to rely more on his own "voice" as an authority in the briefings.

	podium	press	Fleischer	McClellan	whole corpus
total	162	60	80	306	136
phase 1	47	38	37	457	43
phase 2	11	53	11	---------	72
phase 3	90	69	73	389	84
phase 4	263	100	251	456	210
phase 5	282	58	181	299	217

Table 3.12 Occurrences per million words of SAY with *we* as a collocate to the left in different phases and for different speakers and speaker roles

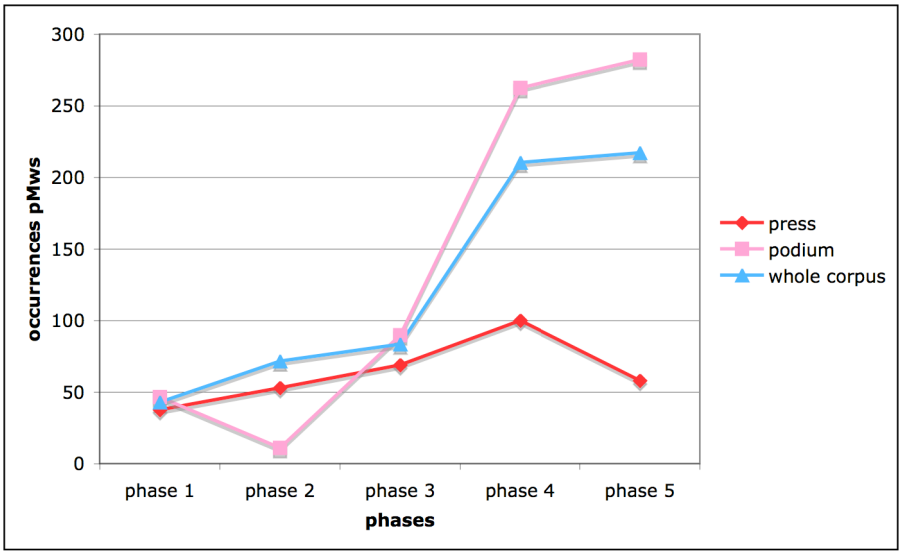

Figure 3.13 Occurrences per million words of SAY with *we* as a collocate to the left in different phases and for different speaker roles

As far as *we* is concerned, its relative frequency as the subject of SAY – shown in Table 3.12 and Figures 3.13 and 3.14 – is definitely higher in the podium's words than in those of the press. Furthermore, a remarkable increase in the reporting of statements whose source is identified by the first person plural pronoun can be observed in phases 4 and 5. This time the increase is not only a feature of Scott McClellan's discourse, as it is also observed, though not so prominently, in the words of Ari Fleischer.

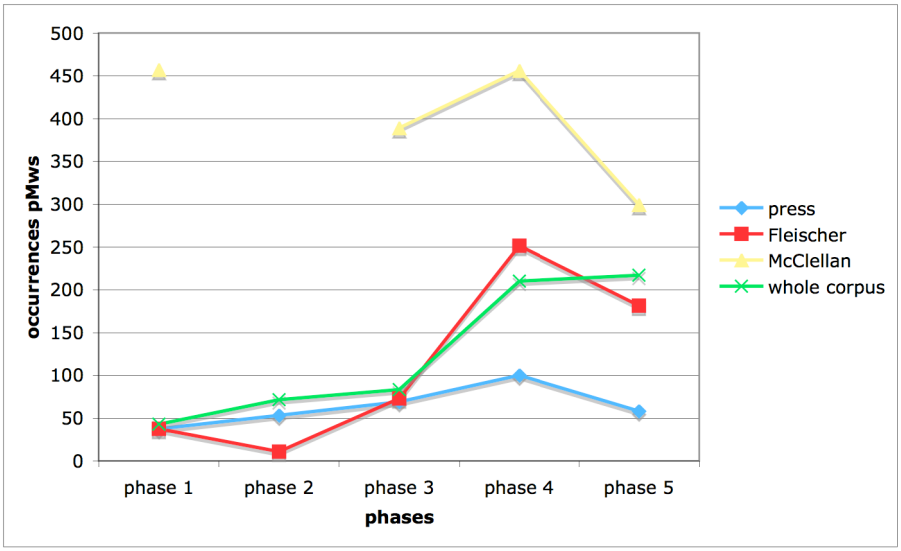

Figure 3.14 Occurrences per million words of SAY with *we* as a collocate to the left in different phases and for different speakers and speaker roles

As mentioned in paragraph 3.3, the first person plural pronoun may be inclusive or exclusive, and may refer to podium and press, to the Bush Administration, to the White House staff, to the White House press corps (when used by the press), to the American people, to the United States, but also to the international community as a whole. Thus, it might be the case that, since the invasion of Iraq, the podium more often chose a collective entity which, in most cases, is likely to be the administration as a whole, as the source of statements, at least when *we* is used.

3.5.2 TELL

I now move on to analyze the distribution of the main sources of statements reported by using TELL. This is the second most frequent verb used to report statements in the *WHoB* corpus. TELL, which is transitive in most cases, like SAY, that may be regarded as a practically unmarked reporting verb. According to the Oxford American Dictionary, its basic meaning as a reporting verb is to "communicate information, facts, or news

to someone in spoken or written words". What this definition suggests is that also TELL, like SAY, may be used to perform a variety of actions in reporting speech.

The different forms of TELL occur 2,377 times in the *WHoB* corpus. Despite its being the second most frequent reporting verb in the corpus, its frequency is therefore about one-ninth of the total frequency of SAY. The absolute frequency of each form in each chronological phase and for podium and press is reported in Table 3.13, while the normalized frequency of the whole lemma in the whole corpus and in its subsets is reported in Table 3.14. What the two tables show is, first of all, that all forms of this verb are more frequent in the words of reporters than in those of the podium – both in absolute and relative terms. The relative frequency of the whole lemma is higher in phase 2, but in none of the other phases it is much lower than its average frequency in the whole corpus.

	total	podium	press	phase 1	phase 2	phase 3	phase 4	phase 5
tell	1380	498	820	187	202	465	83	443
tells	25	9	13	5	0	8	3	9
told	742	304	413	96	76	226	33	311
telling	230	83	144	22	26	87	8	87
TELL	2377	894	1390	310	304	786	127	850

Table 3.13 *TELL*: absolute frequency in the whole corpus, by speaker role and by phase

	total	podium	press	phase 1	phase 2	phase 3	phase 4	phase 5
TELL	706	409	1350	665	988	714	786	639

Table 3.14 TELL: Occurrences per million words in the whole corpus, by speaker role and by phase

I now move on to analyze the main sources of statements for this verb, by following the same procedure adopted with SAY. Due to the transitive nature of TELL, an additional step had to be taken: passive forms such as *we've been told* had to be removed from the count of co-occurrences of *told*

and *president*, *I*, *you* and *we*.

	podium	press	Fleischer	McClellan	whole corpus
total	32	58	40	17	40
phase 1	23	50	24	0	32
phase 2	39	53	39	---------	39
phase 3	44	69	45	24	50
phase 4	38	80	39	0	49
phase 5	23	48	58	17	31

Table 3.15 Occurrences per million words of TELL with *president* as a collocate to the left in different phases and for different speakers and speaker roles

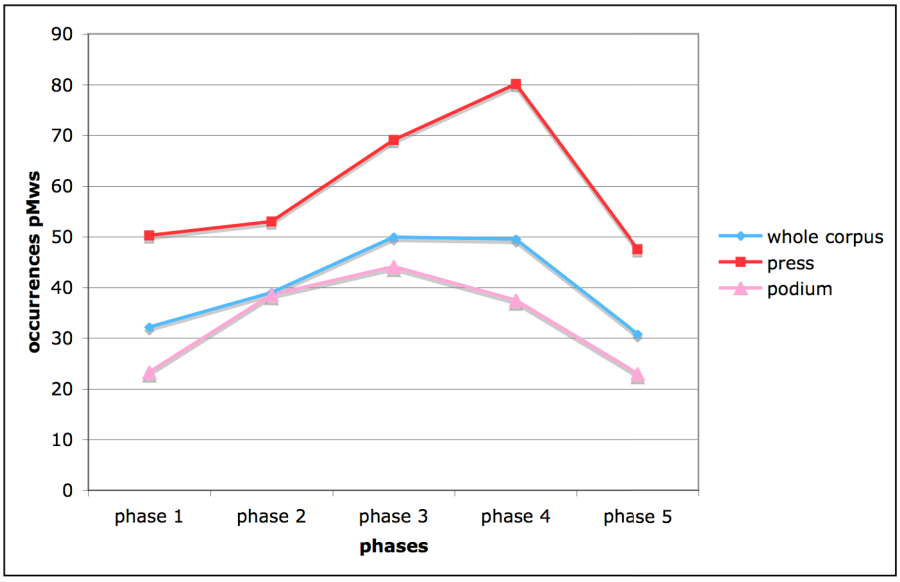

Figure 3.15 Occurrences per million words of TELL with *president* as a collocate to the left in different phases and for different speaker roles

Tables 3.15 and Figures 3.15 and 3.16 show the relative frequency of occurrences of TELL with *president* as a collocate to its left. These occurrences are almost twice as frequent, in relative terms, in the words of reporters as in those of the podium. This is probably also due to the higher frequency of TELL in the reporters' words in the corpus. Occurrences of this pattern both in the press' and podium's words, however, appear to be following quite a similar trend to the one observed when co-occurrences of

president and SAY were examined: the resort to the President as an authoritative source of statements is more frequent in the phases following the 9/11 attacks, and decreases in phase 5, both in the podium's and press' words, this time. As shown by Figure 3.16, once again it is Ari Fleischer, rather than Scott McClellan, who chooses the president as a source of statements. This pattern is indeed very rarely found in the discourse of Fleischer's successor.

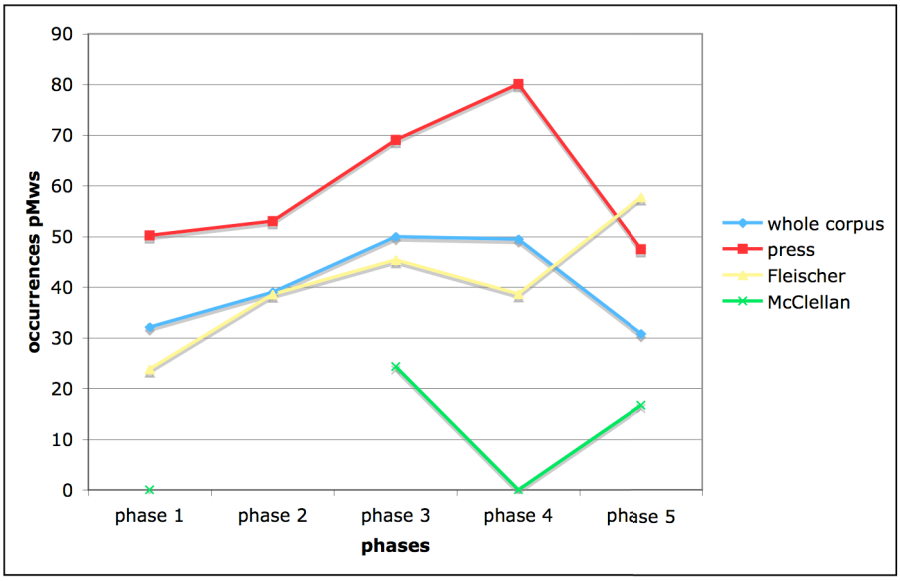

Figure 3.16 Occurrences per million words of TELL with *president* as a collocate to the left in different phases and for different speakers and speaker roles

	podium "I"	Fleischer "I"	McClellan "I"	press "you"
total	180	206	133	653
phase 1	163	167	0	534
phase 2	254	254	--------	1082
phase 3	197	203	49	604
phase 4	206	213	0	641
phase 5	154	239	125	641

Table 3.16 Occurrences per million words of TELL with *I* or *you* as a collocate to the left in different phases and for different speakers and speaker roles

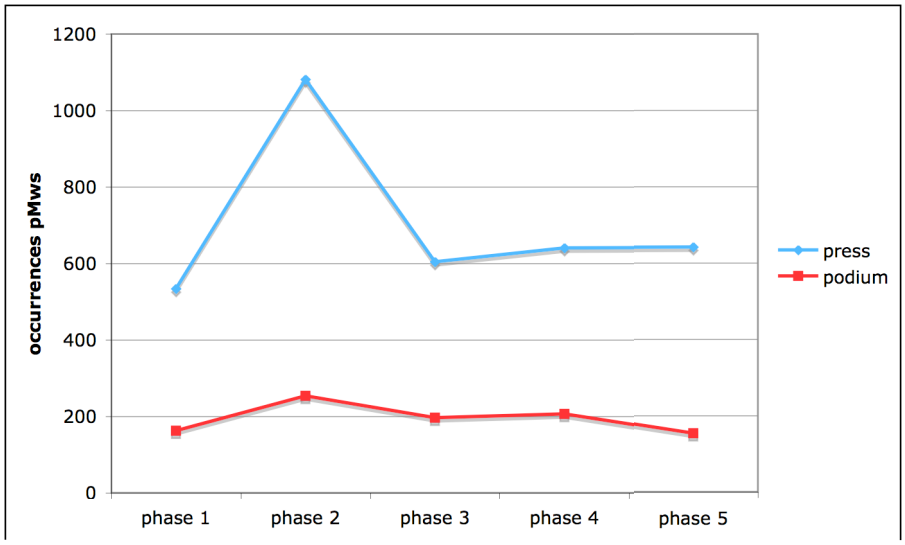

Figure 3.17 Occurrences per million words of TELL with *I* and *you* as collocates to the left in different phases and for different speaker roles

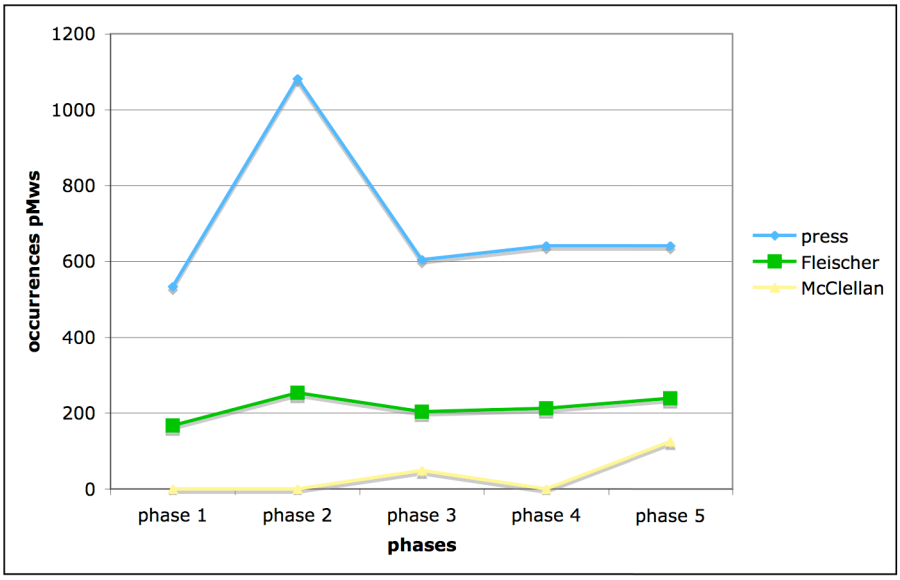

Figure 3.18 Occurrences per million words of TELL with *I* and *you* as collocates to the left in different phases and for different speakers and speaker roles

As regards co-occurrences of TELL and *I* in the words of the podium, and of TELL and *you* in those of the press, whose normalized frequency data are shown in Table 3.16 and Figures 3.17 and 3.18, *you* is much more frequent in the reporters' words than *I* is frequent in the words of the podium.

However, in this case it is Ari Fleischer who uses the first person pronoun more often than Scott McClellan, thus reversing the trend observed in the analysis of *I* as a collocate of SAY, and also in contrast with what was found in paragraph 3.3, where the relative frequency of *I* was shown to be significantly higher in McClellan's words than in Fleischer's throughout the corpus.

	podium	press	Fleischer	McClellan	whole corpus
total	5	10	7	1	25
phase 1	13	6	14	0	5
phase 2	11	32	11	--------	6
phase 3	4	12	4	0	9
phase 4	0	20	0	0	1
phase 5	1	3	0	1	4

Table 3.17 Occurrences per million words of TELL with *we* as a collocate to the left in different phases and for different speakers and speaker roles

Finally, occurrences of *we* as a collocate to the left of TELL were found to be quite rare. As Table 3.17 shows, they are relatively more frequent in the words of the press than in those of the podium, and are particularly frequent in the short phase immediately following the 9/11 attacks. However, it is not worth exploring them in more detail, as the low figures indicate that this pattern is not typical of any speaker of phase in the corpus.

In sum, it can be seen from this brief analysis how TELL is not generally used in the corpus to report statements by people outside the context of the briefing. The patterns *I* + TELL and *you* + TELL are by far more frequent than the other ones in the discourse of the podium and of the press respectively. It may thus be observed how this verb is a feature of the interaction between the two counterparts in the briefings, where the podium often makes reference to his own previous statements, but, perhaps more significantly, journalists very often report previous

statements by the podium in order to ask for more details or to remind him about a position previously taken.

3.6 Discussion and conclusions

I have already pointed out above that frequency data may only be regarded as indicative of trends and phenomena that need to be explored in more detail. Due to the very large amount of data to be examined, it is beyond the scope of this dissertation, which does not merely focus on reported discourse, to carry out a detailed qualitative analysis of the way each of these verbs is used in the *WHoB* corpus.

The analysis carried out here leads to a number of preliminary conclusions, which reveal some interesting aspects of this corpus.

In the first place, the high frequency of the main reporting verbs in the corpus, the presence of a wide range of verbs of this type and the fact that a few of them are included in the corpus' keywords suggests that the reporting of statements is indeed an important phenomenon throughout the corpus.

In the second place, as shown in Table B.1, in relative terms, reporting verbs are used more by reporters than by the podium. The relative frequency of the two most frequent reporting verbs in the corpus – SAY and TELL – is higher in the words of reporters than in those of the press, and the same is true for many of the other frequent reporting verbs in the corpus, such as AGREE, REPORT, SUGGEST, MENTION and EXPLAIN. Reporters' questions, thus, are likely to be often based on previous statements by the podium, by the president or by members of the administration – as well as by other, more varied, sources – which are elaborated on in order to ask for clarification, further details on an issue or

position, to remind the podium of something the administration seems to have forgotten in time, or to report criticism about the administration's actions, asking the podium about the administration's reaction to it.

Reported discourse, however, also appears to be an important feature of podium discourse. The podium undoubtedly needs to present his counterparts with statements characterized by a high truth-value, especially when the truthfulness or coherence of something that has been said is challenged. He does therefore make reference to statements by authoritative sources in order to reinforce what they are saying. The President was shown to have been a frequent source of statements reported by using SAY and TELL, especially in phases from 2 to 4. After Iraq was invaded and problems started to arise, the President's popularity started decreasing, as shown in Figure 1.1, and the podium started looking in other directions for authoritative sources whose statements may be reported. In particular, *I* and *we* became important sources of statements in phase 5, when the podium started making reference to his own statements and to statements attributed to a wider collective entity which may be identified as the whole administration.

Furthermore, significant differences have been highlighted in the discourse strategies adopted by the two press secretaries and, consequently, in the identity constructed by each of them in that professional role. While the first of the two, Ari Fleischer, tended to present himself mainly as the representative of the President, especially in the early days of the Bush era, Scott McClellan tended to seek legitimisation by making reference to his own previous statements or to statements by other members of the administration, rather than merely quoting the President as the authoritative source par excellence.

The two podiums can thus be seen as having tailored different roles

for themselves – while Fleischer mainly based his own legitimacy on the authoritativeness of the president, whom the press secretary officially represents, McClellan – probably also due to George W. Bush's loss of credibility after the invasion of Iraq – chose to present himself as a Press Secretary who mainly represents an authority in his own right.

4. Strategic use of political communication keywords

4.1 The words of political communication in the briefings

As mentioned in Chapter 1, most definitions of political communication present it as a process taking place in the public sphere, involving three main sets of participants (political actors or leaders, the media, and citizens), and consisting in the transmission of various sorts of messages regarding politics and policy, which are aimed at mutually exerting influence on the other participants and, more specifically, on their agendas.

The White House press briefings can undoubtedly be regarded as one of the main stages of today's political communication in a global perspective. They indeed involve three sets of participants, two of which – the representatives of the institutional and political world and the reporters – attend the briefings, and another one – the public – which cannot directly take part, but who may watch them broadcast on TV, see them reported on in the media, or read their transcripts on the web. The briefings' main focus is on the transmission of messages, whose purpose is to influence the other parties involved and bring about changes in the political, media and public agendas. This process is known as "agenda-setting", and is defined by Dearing and Rogers as "an ongoing competition among issue proponents to gain the attention of media professionals, the public, and policy elites" (1996: 1-2). Agenda-setting is a particularly important aspect of the briefings, as Perloff observes, as they "give the president a mechanism to provide spin on current events and, hopefully, to set the agenda for the day's news" (1998: 68).

Assuming that the process of political communication that takes place in the briefings is reflected in the language used by podium and reporters, I set out to explore the corpus' keywords in order to identify, among them, words explicitly or implicitly related to such a process. In particular, I focused on the keywords list obtained by comparing the *WHoB* corpus and the *BNC spoken*, since the comparison is more likely to elicit words related to political communication. First of all, I divided the first 200 words in the list into categories, such as actors (e.g. *President*, *Saddam Hussein*), bodies (e.g. *Congress*, *administration*), activities (e.g. *campaign*, *meeting*), geographical nouns and adjectives (e.g. *American*, *Afghanistan*), function words (e.g. *this*, *are*), issues (e.g. *terrorism*, *tax*), legislation (e.g. *law*, *bill*), processes (e.g. *working*, *attack*), time references (e.g. *September*, *today*), briefing routines (e.g. *question*) and collective entities (e.g. *coalition*, *people*). A number of the remaining keywords can be grouped as referring to the process of political communication as defined above. If political communication consists in the transmission of messages aimed at influencing other participants and their agendas, then such words as *important*, *clear*, *message*, and *importance* cannot but be related to such a process. The aim of the analysis carried out in this chapter will be to ascertain whether these words are exploited by the podium in relation to specific topics and in the perspective of achieving specific political goals. Table 4.1 shows these words' rank in the two keywords list, while Table 4.2 shows their normalized frequency data for the whole corpus and for different speakers and speaker roles. Paragraphs 4.2, 4.3, 4.4 will be focused on the analysis of these four words. In particular, 4.2 will deal with *message* in

word	Rank in keyword list	
	BNC	Cordis
important	40	148
clear	93	161
message	160	264
importance	166	160

Table 4.1 Lexical items related to political communication: rank in the *BNC spoken* and *CorDis US* keyword lists

singular and plural form; 4.3 will focus on *important* and *importance* and 4.4 will explore the use of *clear* in the corpus.

word	whole corpus	speaker roles		podiums		phases				
		podium	press	Fleischer	McClellan	1	2	3	4	5
important	1347	1881	265	1588	2432	995	1034	1223	1348	1646
clear	780	944	446	540	1656	472	540	604	495	1123
message	344	323	413	435	129	287	582	417	538	226
importance	283	407	36	319	570	152	215	273	186	364

Table 4.2 Lexical items related to political communication: occurrences per million words in the whole corpus and for speaker, speaker role and chronological phases

4.2 White House press briefings as messages to the world

4.2.1. Briefings as messages

A *message* is defined in the Oxford American Dictionary as "a verbal, written, or recorded communication sent to or left for a recipient who cannot be contacted directly". It is further specified that a message may come in various guises: it may indeed be "an official or formal communication", "an item of electronic mail", "an electronic communication generated automatically by a computer program and displayed on a VDT", "a significant point or central theme, especially one that has political, social, or moral importance", "a divinely inspired communication from a prophet or preacher", "a television or radio commercial". More specifically, in the context of this study, as Lilleker (2006: 122-123) observes, messages "are of central importance to any form of political communication"; they are used "to convey information and to persuade the receiver to act in a certain way or to believe certain things". Communication between the US and the rest of the world is explicitly described in the briefings in terms of messages (of which the briefings

themselves constitute a fundamental example):

(4.1) **JOURNALIST:** What are you doing here at the White House to make certain that Iran or North Korea or any other countries are not taking advantage of the situation while we're so heavily engaged in Iraq?

MR. FLEISCHER: Well, our nation is a large one and is able to honor its commitments globally, even with the action that is taking place in Iraq. **The message to North Korea**, as you well know, has been **a diplomatic message**, **a message** that is being pursued in a multilateral fashion. […] **The United States carries out its messages daily**, not only to North Korea and to Iran, but to other nations, on a host of issues, with whom we have important trade obligations. [...]

(21 March 2003)

It is therefore worth exploring the way the noun *message* is used in the context of the briefings, in order to identify patterns and structures pointing to specific strategies. The plural form *messages*, in spite of its lower frequency, was also examined, in order to check whether it shares patterns and functions with *message*.

4.2.2. Frequency

As the keyness data reported in Table 4.1 hint at, the frequency of both *message* and *messages* in the *WHoB* corpus (1160 and 98 occurrences respectively) is significantly higher than in the two reference corpora used in this study. The significantly high frequency of *message* and *messages* compared to other corpora also emerges from the comparison, shown in Table 4.3, of the two items' normalized frequency data in *WHoB*, in the *CorDis US* subcorpus, in the whole British National Corpus and in the Corpus of Contemporary American English.

	WHoB	Cordis US	BNC	COCA
message	344	205	68	90
messages	29	15	19	28

Table 4.3 Normalized (per 1,000,000 words) frequency of *message* and *messages* in the *WHoB* corpus and in some reference corpora

As regards the use of *message* and *messages* by different speakers and speaker roles in the *WHoB* corpus, 61 and 62 per cent of their occurrences respectively are found in the podium's words. However, normalized data reported in Table 4.4 show that the relative frequency of the two items is higher in the press' words, except in phases 2 and 4, corresponding to the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. These are the phases in which, moreover, the frequency of these two items is higher. Among the items investigated in this chapter, these are the only ones that are used by the press more frequently than by the podium. The comparison between the use of *message* and *messages* in the podium's and press' words will be further investigated in this paragraph, where the concordances of the two forms for podium and press in the *WHoB* corpus are compared, in order to check whether specific patterns recur only in the podium's words or in those of the press, which may well imply that different sets of participants in the White House press briefings typically employ different discourse strategies.

	all speakers	podium	press	Fleischer	McClellan
total	344	323	413	435	129
phase 1	287	246	377	252	0
phase 2	582	607	583	607	0
phase 3	417	416	443	429	219
phase 4	538	647	280	658	456
phase 5	226	172	375	462	124

Table 4.4 Normalized frequency of *message* and *messages* in different chronological phases, for different speakers and speaker roles

4.2.3. Aims

Beyond the raw statistics, I will now attempt to ascertain whether variations are apparent in the discourse strategy regarding the use of *message* and *messages* in the briefings at different points in time and, if possible, to appraise their significance. In particular, by investigating the role and use of these lexical items, I intend to shed some light on the briefings as communicative events involving numerous actors on the US domestic and international scenes.

The specific research questions, then, can be set out as follows:

- Who are the participants in this particular communicative situation (i.e. senders and receivers of messages)?
- How are messages characterized? Do different ways of characterizing messages correspond to different contexts, including political ones?
- What is the topic of messages?
- Is there a link between political strategy, communicative strategy and the way *message* and *messages* are used?

4.2.4. Collocates of message and messages

In order to provide an answer to these analytical questions, the collocates of *message* and *messages* were generated in *Xaira*, and grouped into the following five categories, considered relevant in regard to the above research questions:

- nouns and names of people;
- geographical and nationality adjectives and nouns;
- personal pronouns and possessive adjectives and pronouns;
- verbs;
- modal auxiliary verbs;
- adjectives.

Participant roles in the briefings were outlined by compiling lists of nouns,

personal pronouns and possessives, geographical nouns and adjectives that collocate with *message* and *messages* in the *WHoB* corpus. Many of these words are indeed likely to refer to the participants in this communicative situation, either playing the role of senders or of receivers of a message.

word	collocates of message			collocates of messages		
	all speakers	podium	press	all speakers	podium	press
president	345	237	103	9	7	2
people	53	41	12	6	6	0
message	34	22	10	1	1	0
world	33	30	2	3	1	1
congress	26	21	4	0	0	0
administration	19	6	13	0	0	0
nations	18	17	1	2	2	0
house	17	5	12	1	0	1
Hussein	16	14	2	1	1	0
Ari	16	11	5	0	0	0
Saddam	14	11	3	1	1	0
secretary	13	7	6	0	0	0

Table 4.5 Absolute frequency of nouns and names of people collocating with *message* and *messages* up to the 5th word to the left and to the right

word	collocates of message			collocates of messages		
	all speakers	podium	press	all speakers	podium	press
United	35	29	6	4	3	1
States	29	22	7	4	2	2
North	27	20	7	5	4	1
Korea	21	18	3	4	3	1
American	18	13	3	2	0	2
America	15	13	2	0	0	0
Israel	12	9	3	0	0	0
Iraq	11	6	5	3	2	1
Americans	10	5	5	0	0	0
US	8	1	7	0	0	0
Syria	8	8	0	1	0	1
Koreans	6	4	2	0	0	0
Arab	6	4	1	2	1	1
Iraqi	5	4	1	3	3	0

Table 4.6. Absolute frequency of geographical and nationality adjectives and nouns collocating with *message* and *messages* up to the 5th word to the left and to the right

word	collocates of message			collocates of messages		
	all speakers	podium	press	all speakers	podium	press
he	128	68	60	16	10	6
it	114	79	32	1	0	1
his	102	59	42	0	0	0
you	85	27	58	7	3	4
I	84	49	30	6	4	1
we	71	48	18	3	2	1
they	42	29	11	3	2	1
our	29	26	0	0	0	0
your	21	1	20	0	0	0
them	21	10	11	1	0	1
their	13	11	2	5	5	0
him	10	3	7	2	0	2

Table 4.7 Absolute frequency of personal pronouns and possessive adjectives and pronouns collocating with *message* and *messages* up to the 5th word to the left and to the right

lemma	collocates of message			collocates of messages		
	all speakers	podium	press	all speakers	podium	press
SEND	184	90	90	8	5	3
THINK	67	44	19	3	3	0
HEAR	59	49	9	6	5	1
GET	58	20	34	11	10	1
GO	32	15	17	2	0	2
SAY	31	15	16	4	1	3
RECEIVE	29	29	0	4	2	1
WANT	29	15	14	0	0	0
TRY	23	2	19	0	0	0
GIVE	22	14	7	6	3	3
CONVEY	21	18	3	0	0	0
CONTINUE	18	18	0	0	0	0
TAKE	16	9	7	0	0	0
MAKE	14	9	3	1	1	0
HOPE	12	12	0	0	0	0

Table 4.8. Absolute frequency of lexical verbs[17] collocating with *message* and *messages* up to the 5th word to the left and to the right

[17] Occurrences of verbs are lemmatized in this table. The same applies to Table 4.9

word or lemma	collocates of message			collocates of messages		
	all speakers	podium	press	all speakers	podium	press
BE	606	349	237	60	35	25
HAVE	183	116	60	19	10	9
will	94	74	18	4	3	1
DO	89	26	59	6	3	3
would	28	13	15	0	0	0
can	25	18	7	7	5	2
could	8	6	2	1	0	1
should	7	3	4	0	0	0
might	7	2	5	0	0	0

Table 4.9 Absolute frequency of auxiliary and modal auxiliary verbs collocating with *message* and *messages* up to the 5th word to the left and to the right

word	collocates of message			collocates of messages		
	all speakers	podium	press	all speakers	podium	press
clear	44	35	3	0	0	0
same	25	24	1	0	0	0
consistent	17	15	1	1	1	0
strong	16	14	0	1	0	1
important	16	14	0	0	0	0
wrong	13	10	3	1	0	1
powerful	11	10	1	1	1	0
right	11	10	1	1	1	0
mixed	6	0	6	4	0	4
taped	1	1	0	7	7	0
special	7	1	6	0	0	0
central	6	2	4	0	0	0

Table 4.10 Absolute frequency of adjectives collocating with *message* and *messages* up to the 5th word to the left and to the right

4.2.5. Senders and receivers of messages

President stands out in Table 4.5 as the noun that most often collocates with both *message* and *messages* throughout the corpus, as it co-occurs 354 times with them, within a collocation span of 5 words to the left and 5 to the

right[18]. The relative frequency of this collocational pattern is highest during the second phase of the corpus, which immediately follows the 9/11 attacks (202 occurrences per 1,000,000 words compared to an average of 100). *President* and *message* co-occur 244 times in the podium's words and 105 in those of the press.

In 229 cases out of 354, that is, 64 per cent of total co-occurrences of *President* and *message* or *messages*, the President is explicitly mentioned as the sender of the message, in such patterns as:

- *the President's message* (131 occurrences);
- *message* [adverb] *from the President / President Bush* (22 occurrences);
- *message* [*that*] *the President* [verb e.g. SEND/DELIVER/BRING/CONVEY] (39 occurrences);
- *the President / President Bush* [verb e.g. SEND/GIVE/HAVE] [article/adjective] *message* (24 occurrences);
- *what* [*kind of*] *message* [(DO) *you think*] [*does*] *the President / President Bush* [verb e.g. HAVE/DELIVER/SEND]? (8 occurrences);
- *message of the President / President Bush* (5 occurrences).

More specifically, the cluster *the President's message* occurs 106 times in the podium's words and 25 times in those of the press. Although, taking into account normalized frequency data, the co-occurrence of *message* and *president* is almost equally significant in the podium's and press' words, the phrase *the President's message* is used by the podium 4 times more often than by the press. Furthermore, *message* is the sixth most frequent word to the left of *president's* in the whole corpus, preceded only by *position*, *day*, *focus*, *view* and *point*.

In contrast, in 26 cases only (less than 7 per cent of the total) is the President explicitly identified as the receiver of a message. Patterns include:

[18] The same collocation span will be used throughout this chapter.

- *message to the President / President Bush* (4 occurrences);
- *message for the President / President Bush* (2 occurrences);
- *message* [*that*] *the President* [verb e.g. HEAR/RECEIVE/AGREE WITH] (6 occurrences);
- *the President* HEAR [article/determiner] *message* (6 occurrences).

In the remaining cases, either *President* refers to other Presidents, or the President is mentioned in the content of the message, or *President* and *message* or *messages* are found in different utterances or sentences. In addition to this, as Baker (2006: 89-90) suggests,

> when carrying out searches on a particular subject (particularly a noun), […] it might also be the case that it is referred to numerous times with determiners […] or pronouns […]. […] It is important that these cases of anaphora […] are taken into consideration.

Other cases where the sender or the receiver of a message can be identified as the President can therefore be looked for in a search for co-occurrences of *message/messages* and *he/his*. As shown in Table 4.7, these are, respectively, the most frequent pronoun and possessive adjective that collocate with *message* and it may be supposed that they refer to President Bush in most cases, since much of the briefings' talk regards Presidential activities and policies. Indeed, in 76 out of 81 occurrences of *his message* or *his* [adj.] *message*, the possessive actually refers to the President. 70 of these can be added to the count of cases where the President is the sender – the remaining 6 had already been counted as co-occurrences of *message* or *messages* and *President* (e.g. *the President in his message*). Furthermore, in the concordance of *message* and *messages* co-occurring with *he*, 71 more cases can be found, excluding those already counted, where this pronoun refers to

the President, and where *he* is either sender (57 times) or receiver (14 times). *Bush* also co-occurs with *message* or *messages* 13 times in the corpus. These occurrences, however, have already been counted above, since in the briefings Bush is never mentioned without his title, President.

In total, then, in the *WHoB* corpus there are at least 370 distinct cases where the President is portrayed as the sender of a message, while in 40 cases only is he the receiver – a quite significant proportion as it provides clues about the direction the communication in the briefings mainly travels: obviously from the Administration towards the rest of the world, but with a high level of personalization, as about one third of all messages in the briefings is presented as coming from the President in person.

Furthermore, sometimes the President is the implicit sender of the message, in such cases as those where the President's policies are presented as actively conveying a message on behalf of the President, as in the following excerpt, where the tax plan is sending a message, which actually comes, once again, from the President:

(4.2) **MR. FLEISCHER:** [...] Tomorrow **his tax plan** appears on its way to passage. […] And **the President believes that it starts to send the right message** to the country that he meant what he said when he ran on tax relief.

(7 March 2001)[19]

The high level of personalization of communication in the briefings is also indicated by the relatively rare co-occurrences of *administration* and *message* or *messages* (19 cases, see Table 4.5). In 12 of these cases the administration is the sender of a message, only 3 of which in the podium's words – a very low figure compared to the data reported above concerning the President as sender. Thus, the podium tends to present the President

[19] Empasis added in this and following excerpts

rather than the whole administration as the pivot of the White House policies and communications, probably because the credibility of the administration needs to be established in the first place by giving as much prominence as possible to the figure of the President.

At other times, however, it is harder to find out exactly who the message actually comes from. This is particularly the case with *we*, when it collocates with *message* or *messages* (74 times, see Table 4.7). In 23 cases the pronoun refers to the sender of the message and in 18 cases to the receiver (respectively 18 and 14 of which in the podium's words). Moreover, the 2-word cluster *our message* occurs 16 times in the corpus, exclusively uttered by the podium.

m to convey that **message**? Well, that 's **our message** , and Secretary Powell just said to him,
ely with the Kurds. And they understand **our message** . And the **message** is that the territoria
at that level, as well, to communicate **our message** , as well. **We** want to hasten the day whe
rom **the US point of view**? I don't think **our message** could be **any clearer** to the regime in I
e and those who work in mail rooms. And **our message** has been **consistent**, it has been very c
els in Haiti's political system. And so **our message** has been **very clear** that **we** are working
any help from **the United States**? Again, **our message** is that the future of Iran will be deci
tervene to protect them in any way? No, **our message** is the voice of support that you have h
is meeting with parties in the region. **Our message** is **very clear** to the Palestinian Author
retary Powell just said to him, this is **our message** . The same thing in public that you 've
ance, and no more game playing. That is **our message** to Saddam Hussein. Scott, Democrats in
ax. **We** have to be vigilant, and that is **our message** to the American public. When it comes t
to let him say these things? I think -- **our message** to the rebels, or the so-called rebels
erican feelings. So **we** 've communicated **our message** to them. The reconstruction phase, obvi
mission? I think that the Chinese heard **our message very clearly**. Again, **we** will continue t
elp restore calm in the region. That 's **our message** . **We** want to get the parties back workin

Concordance 4.1 *Our message*

But who *we* and *our* refer to is not always clear. This ambiguity strategy exploits the intrinsic twofold nature of this pronoun, which can be either inclusive or exclusive. Whether the audience or other people are intended to be included in or excluded from the communicative act is often left unclear in the briefings. The antecedent of *we* (and *our*) in this context may be the US Administration (exclusive *we*), but also the American people or the US and its allies, or even such abstract groups as 'the civilized world' or

'the international community' (inclusive *we*). A concordance, such as 4.1 above, is of little help in disambiguating the reference. Larger portions of text need to be analysed to find out whether the reference is ambiguous or not.

In some cases the antecedent of the pronoun clearly emerges from the co-text, as in the following excerpt, where the podium, questioned about a US official position, replies using the exclusive first person plural pronoun:

(4.3) **JOURNALIST:** But **does the United States approve** or disapprove of this action? […]

MR. FLEISCHER: […] **The message that we have given**, unequivocally, is that we support the choosing of the next leader of Iraq by the people of Iraq, from both inside and outside Iraq.

(28 February 2003)

Sometimes, in contrast, an involvement of the American people or even of the so-called 'international community' in the Bush Administration's policies and positions is deliberately sought and underlies the podium's statements, as in the following example:

(4.4) **JOURNALIST:** Scott, you said this morning that terrorists shouldn't be allowed to think that they can influence elections or policy. Do you think that that was the case in Spain?

MR. MCCLELLAN: […] Terrorists want to intimidate. They want to shake the will of the civilized world. And as you heard from the President earlier, they cannot. **The United States remains strong in our resolve and in our determination. The civilized world remains strong in its determination and its resolve.** We will continue to pursue this war on terrorism and bring those terrorists to justice before they can carry out their attacks. […] I think **it is the wrong message to send** to make those suggestions. **It is a terrible message to send**. **We must send a message of unity, of strength, and of resolve** in the war on terrorism.

> Terrorists want to break our will and resolve. They want us to cut and run. There is no negotiating with terrorists.
>
> (16 March 2004)

Excerpt 4.4 is part of a long discussion about the then recent victory of the Spanish Socialist Worker's Party (PSOE) in the general election in Spain, and Zapatero's intention to withdraw Spanish troops from Iraq. The Madrid bombings, which had occurred on 11 March 2004, were said to have influenced the election results. By looking at the whole exchange, two possible antecedents for the first person plural pronoun used by the podium to identify the sender of a message of unity, strength and resolve can be found: the United States and the civilized world, which are the subjects of two parallel and almost identical sentences, both containing a noun (*resolve*) and an adjective (*strong*) which are subsequently mentioned to characterize the message that must be sent. Both the US and the civilized world, thus, might be the antecedent of we, in this case. The selection of words here could be construed as presenting the unspecified 'civilized world' as having the duty, indicated by must, to share with the US the message of unity, of strength, and of resolve against terrorism.

In general, a certain degree of vagueness is present when the sender of a message is expressed by the first person plural pronoun. Only in some cases does the co-text help in identifying the antecedent of the pronoun, which is usually the US Administration. When, in contrast, the antecedent cannot be identified, this pronoun could be construed to mean that the message is shared by the American people as a whole, or by even vaguer collective entities such as the aforementioned 'international community' and 'civilized world'.

Interesting observations can also be made about messages sent or received by the US, America or the American people. *America* co-occurs

with *message* 15 times, while it never co-occurs with *messages*. While only twice is America the receiver of a message (*America's men and women* in one case), both times sent by the President, *America* is presented as the sender of a *message* 7 times, the cluster *America's message* occurring 6 times. The content of America's messages is usually left unspecified: it is perhaps taken for granted that these messages are intended to communicate American values around the world. Such values are explicitly mentioned in 2 cases, where *America's message* is specified to be one *of hope and opportunity* or *of idealism and hope*. Also the receivers of these messages are only vaguely defined, and generally referred to as the world or other nations. America's message, thus, appears to be used as a rhetorical device rather than being a real communicative act, since the US Administration chooses to present its policies as based on a set of values that the world needs to share.

Most co-occurrences of *American people* and *message* or *messages*, in contrast, see the American people as receiver (9 cases out of 13). The sender here is usually the President, who speaks to his people mainly in the role of Commander in Chief, as in the following excerpt, dating back to two days before the attack to Afghanistan began:

(4.5) **JOURNALIST:** I'm just saying, does the President not have a responsibility to sit down and tell the American people it's very likely we're going to be attacked when we begin hostilities?

MR. FLEISCHER: John, **the American people have heard that message from the President**, that threats remain.

(5 October 2001)

Only twice is the American people the sender of a message, but in one of these it is the President who is carrying the American people's message to the Congress, while in the other, reported below, the message comes

both from the American people and the American government:

(4.6) **MR. FLEISCHER:** The President also today signed an executive order to create the White House Office of Global Communications, which is a reflection of the importance the President attaches in this modern era to **communicating worldwide the message of the American people and the American government**, particularly as we face a war involving terrorism and other great issues involving diplomacy and the importance of **communicating America's message of idealism and hope around the world**.

(21 January 2003)

Significantly enough, in this announcement *message* appears once again to be the podium's favourite word to indicate the way the US communicates with the world in a strategic way, in particular on the international scene, and in the context of the war on terrorism.

As far as *the United States* is concerned, this cluster co-occurs with *message* and *messages* 30 times, while in 8 cases the acronym *US* is found. In 22 cases the United States or the US (18 and 4 cases respectively) is sending a message, while in just 5 cases are they receiving it. When the United States is the sender of a message, the receiver is usually either unspecified people around the world or any US opponent (*Syria*, *North Korea*, *the Taliban*, *Iran*, *that armed opposition*). It is also significant that the relative frequency of occurrences of the United States as the sender of a message is significantly higher in phases 2 and 4, that is, during the initial phases of the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq.

Different ways of referring to the people or nation that George W. Bush represents as the President, i.e. *the American people*, *America*, *the United States*, thus correspond to different patterns in sending and receiving messages. While the American people is generally presented as receiving

messages from the President rather than sending them to anyone, America as a nation is shown as addressing the world by communicating its values and ideals. The United States, in contrast, is presented as the sender of messages usually directed to its opponents. The existence in the briefings of two types of message that partly overlap – a set of diplomatic messages conveyed by the United States as a state, and a set of messages about values and ideals, conveyed by America as a nation – points to a mechanism illustrated by George Lakoff (1991: online version), who defined it as the State-As-Person System:

> A state is conceptualized as a person, engaging in social relations within a world community. Its land-mass is its home. It lives in a neighborhood, and has neighbors, friends and enemies. States are seen as having inherent dispositions: they can be peaceful or aggressive, responsible or irresponsible, industrious or lazy.

It is clear from this case that the construction of participant roles in such an event as the communication of messages is not left to chance: it is taken for granted that the people of America not only support the administration in conveying its messages, but the whole nation is construed as participant in this communicative act.

The following example illustrates how a characteristic discourse pattern underlies the presentation of America and the United States as senders of messages in the briefings:

(4.7) **JOURNALIST:** Were you able to follow-up on the New York Times story that you have a new disinformation campaign going on, or being planned against the allies?
MR. FLEISCHER: I've looked into this, and let me say to you there is widespread recognition throughout the administration that **the United States has an important role in the world in better communicating America's message of**

hope and opportunity. It is important that it is **a message that is shared throughout the world**, in friendly nations and other places, as well.

(16 December 2002)

Here, indeed, it is the United States that communicates America's message. The administration thus seems to be arrogating to itself the role of presenting to the world the message the people intends to send. The mention of abstract concepts and values such as hope and opportunity, however, rather than merely expressing the American people's communicative needs, is a typical feature of American political discourse, generally used to avoid discussing a specific issue or problem.

There are also cases where a US message is conveyed through another State, person or institution acting as an intermediary.

(4.8) **JOURNALIST:** There's a new GAO report that is critical of public diplomacy efforts by the United States. How is that effort going in Iraq, the effort to inform the Iraqi people? **Is the U.S. message getting across**?

Mr. McClellan: Well, I think that it's always important to make sure that we are communicating the steps that we are taking in Iraq to improve the infrastructure, improve stability and security in the country, and transfer responsibility to the Iraqi people. I think **the Iraqi Governing Council is playing more and more of a role in getting that message across**.

(16 September 2003)

The Iraqi Governing Council, being the provisional government of Iraq consisting of Iraqi political, religious, and tribal leaders appointed to manage the transition of Iraq to elections, was at least formally not supposed to be speaking on behalf of the US and conveying their messages. Other instances of people or groups functioning as senders of messages, who either officially represent the United States or actually send a message

on behalf of the US Administration, are: *government experts and officials*, *the US troops in Iraq*, *the President of the National Association of Letter Carriers*.

Another frequent collocate of *message* and *messages* in the briefings is *world*, which co-occurs with the two items 36 times in total. This pattern of co-occurrence is almost exclusively found in the podium's words (31 times), never before the 9/11 attacks and mainly (23 times) during the prelude to the invasion of Iraq – that is, at a time when communication between the US and the world, expressed in terms of messages, was a particularly important business: the Bush Administration and its allies were striving to obtain support from the UN for military intervention in Iraq. Thus, in the perspective of launching a unilateral attack, it was vital to give the audience the impression that the US-led war on terrorism, far from being unilateral, was supported by peoples and nations throughout the world. As shown by Concordance 4.2, numerous citations refer to messages sent to the world or to people around the world by the President or by the United States (the cluster *around the world* co-occurs with *message* and *messages* 13 times). At times, however, the world is presented as the sender of a message. Highly ambiguous are cases where the receiver is Saddam Hussein and the US purports to be speaking on behalf of the whole world (or world community). In particular, the use of *world* as the sender of a message can only be justified when it is backed by a stance taken by the UN, by a multilateral treaty ratified by most nations in the world or by a mandate given to the US or to a coalition by countries all over the world to try to settle a controversy. Nonetheless, in the same way as the use of the phrase international community is becoming more and more widespread in the discourse of international relations in the twenty-first century (Fairclough 2005), and is frequent also in the *WHoB* corpus, so the world, in the discourse of the White House, turns into an active

participant on the scene, in this case in the transmission and reception of messages.

ut people **in the Arab world** to hear the	**message**	about who the United States is and what
This President has a stated, consistent	**message**	**around the world**, and that includes the
er for democracies to communicate their	**message**	**around the world**, particularly in the f
n that we have work to do to bring that	**message**	**around the world**. And so this office wi
President thinks that sends a powerful	**message**	**around the world**. Can I follow and ask
placed a focus on getting out America's	**message**	**around the world**. It 's something that
ract that today? Well, the President 's	**message**	**around the world** is consistent about th
lso speak and will send a very powerful	**message**	**around the world** that the Congress agre
tions. And I don't think that 's a hard	**message**	**for anybody around the world** to either
the President 's signature, I received	**messages**	**from all over the world** -- from Africa,
ily mean phone calls -- is he receiving	**messages**	**from leaders around the world** on the oc
sed yesterday by President to the **world**	**message**	/ Greece, of course, is an ally of the U
ican people, that, of course, will be a	**message**	**heard around the world**. Ari, another qu
rd way of knowing. But the President 's	**message**	**is clear to the world**: Wherever there a
world in better communicating America's	**message**	of hope and opportunity. It is importan
n **the Islamic world** who subvert Islam's	**message**	of peace and instead use the name of Go
for **people around the world to hear** the	**message**	of the United States. And I think this
h Korea that has turned its back on the	**messages**	**of the world**, on the obligations that N
value, the resolutions count? Or is the	**message**	**of the world** to allow Saddam Hussein to
cracy; it 's always a challenge for the	**message**	**of the world** to be received by people a
rywhere in **the world will listen** to the	**message**	of these Arab Americans and these Iraqi
tions **of the world** are not passing this	**message**	on to the United States; the message ha
de to strengthen our efforts to get the	**message**	out **to the Muslim world**. But there is n
part **in the Arab world** to help send the	**message**	that if you 're in the line of terroris
ieves strongly in. And he hopes it 's a	**message**	**that spreads around the world**. Given fo
hopefully, Saddam Hussein will get the	**message**	**that the world community**, through the U
ent has repeatedly sent, as well as the	**message**	**that the world community has sent** to Ir
more. And this resolution sends a clear	**message**	**that the world does have a responsibili**
upport in Iraq even more, and sends the	**message**	**that the world does have a stake** in hel
roliferation are useless. That is not a	**message**	**the world can afford**. But we have to fa
, even **in all regions of the world**, the	**message**	they 're going to remember today is the
ere? The President has had a consistent	**message**	**throughout the world** about terror. And
ill similarly send a powerful deterrent	**message**	**to terrorists around the world** that the
rd for NATO members & The President 's	**message**	**to the world is that the world** needs to
one more question. Is the President 's	**message**	**to the world leaders** this week generall
ional reinforcement of the President 's	**message**	yesterday that **the world**, broadly speak

Concordance 4.2 *Message* with *world* as context word up to the 5th word to the left

The following excerpts date back to a time when it was not clear yet whether a UN resolution would explicitly authorize the use of force in Iraq:

(4.9) **MR. FLEISCHER:** I think the President has been very serious. And **hopefully, Saddam Hussein will get the message** that the world community, through the United Nations, has called on Saddam Hussein to disarm, and as the President

said, he will either disarm or the United States will lead a coalition to disarm him. That's **a serious message**. It's **not a bluff**. And perhaps as a result of it being such **a serious message**, Saddam Hussein will indeed **get that message** and disarm peacefully.

(6 January 2003)

(4.10) **JOURNALIST:** Ari, the President, in the days leading up to the adoption of that resolution, **spoke in very clear language**. He said that this was Saddam Hussein's final chance [...]. Unless you see a complete change of heart before that January 27th deadline, is the President prepared to tell his representatives at the United Nations to say, game over?

MR. FLEISCHER: [...] I think Saddam Hussein **needs to get the very clear understanding and message from the United States and from the world** that he **needs to** disarm, that **this is indeed serious**.

(17 January 2003)

Again, the wording here is meaningful since, as noted previously, US diplomatic effort was reaching its peak at that time, in the attempt to obtain support from the UN for the invasion of Iraq. Thus, in the first excerpt the United Nations are portrayed as an intermediary (indicated by *through*) between the world community and Saddam Hussein, while in the second the United States and the world appear to be speaking with one voice.

An extreme case of vagueness is one in which the world is the sender and people around the world are the receivers:

(4.11) **MR. FLEISCHER:** [...] **The message of democracy** is often stopped as a result of nations that don't have a free press or an open press, nations that don't welcome ideas. And that's always a challenge for democracy; **it's always a challenge for the message of the world to be received by people around the world**. Not everybody is as tolerant, as open as the United States.

(16 December 2002)

In this ambiguous utterance, the message is actually a product of the US administration, but it is presented as being sent by the world and received by the world itself, so that it suggests that the whole world agrees with the US and endorses its policies.

The first part of excerpt 4.11 also shows that it is often events or even abstract concepts and values that function as senders of a message in the briefings. In these cases the communicative situation is entirely metaphorical. The degree of literalness in the use of message in the corpus ranges from Osama bin Laden's pre-taped messages, to messages of condolences America received from world leaders after 9/11, to the less literal meaning described until now (e.g. *the President's message about the creation of a Palestinian state*), up to the just mentioned fully metaphorical meaning. Abstract nouns and events presented as sending messages in the briefings include, among others: *democracy* (as a set of values); *the use of force against Iraq*; *actions by the US and its allies*; *today's event*. In the briefings events are thus assigned an interpretation functional to the US Administration's worldview, and turn into active participants in international relations, endowed with awareness of the consequences of their occurrence. This mechanism is illustrated by the following excerpt:

(4.12) **MR. FLEISCHER: All of these actions by the United States and our allies** – and we have worked every step of the way with our allies – **have**, I believe, **sent an unmistakable message** to regimes that are seeking or that possess weapons of mass destruction: these weapons do not bring the benefits of security, as the President stated; they bring isolation and unwelcome consequences.

(19 December 2003)

Coming back to Tables 4.5 and 4.6, a number of other nouns and

names of people as well as of geographical and nationality adjectives and nouns that collocate with *message* and *messages* can be supposed to indicate other participants – either senders or receivers – in the communicative situation. They can be grouped into two categories.

First of all, there are words referring to countries, peoples, international organizations, leaders and other protagonists on the international political scene, besides the already mentioned ones: *Korea* (25 occurrences)/*Koreans* (6), *Saddam* (15) *Hussein* (17), *Iraq* (14), *Osama* (9) *bin* (11) *Laden* (10), *Israel* (12), *state* (11), *country* (11), *leaders* (9), *Syria* (9), *Arab* (8), *Iraqi* (8), *Sharon* (8), *terrorists* (7), *Taliban* (7), *Iran* (5), *Afghanistan* (5), *Muslim* (5), *Arafat* (5), *Chinese* (5). Many of these words refer to nations and people that are classified as rogue states or accused of being unsupportive of the US-led war on terrorism.

Other nouns refer to American institutions, parties, politicians: *Congress* (26 occurrences), *White* (13) *House* (18), *Democrats* (8), *Senator* (8), *Senate* (7), *Republicans* (6).

When the receiver of a message is explicitly mentioned, it generally immediately follows *message* or *messages* and is preceded by *to*. Therefore, the concordance of *message to* and *messages to*, sorted to the right, will show some of the most frequent receivers of messages. In this way, messages appear to be frequently directed to countries and people that the US considers as rogue states, selected dictators and terrorists: North Korea, Saddam Hussein, Iraq, Syria, terrorists. Interestingly, however, sometimes the White House sends messages to people, countries and institutions that are not US antagonists, such as the UN, the Perm Five (permanent members of the UN Security Council), the UN inspectors in Iraq, European governments opposing the invasion of Iraq. Features of messages sent to US antagonists and to apparently friendly nations, people and organizations will now be

compared in order to explore possible analogies in the way these two sets of participants are addressed in the briefings.

4.2.6. Recurring patterns and recurring strategies

Coming back to the collocate lists for *message* and *messages*, a number of the lexical verbs that collocate with the two items (see Table 4.8) belong to the semantic fields of transmission (SEND: 192 occurrences; GET: 69; RECEIVE: 33; GIVE: 28; CONVEY: 21; CARRY: 11; DELIVER: 8) and perception (HEAR: 65) – quite predictable associations indeed, as a message needs of course to be transmitted from a sender to a receiver. What is noteworthy, however, is that, as shown in Table 4.8, some of these verbs – namely HEAR, RECEIVE and CONVEY – almost exclusively co-occur with *message* and *messages* in the podium's words. Of these, HEAR was used almost exclusively prior to the invasion of Iraq (85 per cent of occurrences), while the relative frequency of RECEIVE is higher in phases 2 and 4, that is, during the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq.

to promote human rights. And that 's a	**message**	that **we will continue to emphasize** acro
rsal right of all people. And that 's a	**message**	**he will continue to talk about**. He will
and **he 's going to continue taking his**	**message**	across the country. This is one of the
he Northern Alliance. **The United States**	**message**	**will continue to be consistent** with all
was because of the President 's strong	**message**	, which **he continues to repeat**, about th
mportant to **continue talking about** that	**message**	as we move forward, and as we see some
that **North Korea continue to hear** that	**message**	. We are moving forward on that multilat
d I think **you 'll continue to hear** that	**message**	from the President, and I 'm not going
nd **he wants to continue to impress** that	**message**	on Israel. It 's important for Israel t
sident is going to continue to say that	**message**	at all events that he attends, because
ants. And **we will continue to send** that	**message**	as they work in Conference Committee. Ho
way. And **we will continue sending** that	**message**	and we hope that they will agree to a n
ield. And **we will continue to take** that	**message**	to those governments. Would you support
ists. And **we will continue to work** that	**message**	to the Iranians through multiple channe
mon challenges. And that 's exactly the	**message**	that **he will continue to reiterate** to l
Iranian people. **We continue to get** the	**message**	**across** about the importance of Iran act
rtant that **they continue to receive** the	**message**	that they have been receiving in regard
important that **we continue to send** the	**message**	that we have from the international com

Concordance 4.3. *Message* with CONTINUE as context word up to the 5th word to the left

It is also worth mentioning another lexical verb that collocates with *message* and *messages*: CONTINUE. This pattern of co-occurrence, shown in Concordance 4.3, is exclusively found in the podium's words, mostly during the Iraq invasion and the post-invasion phase. Before the attack, thus, the podium insisted on the conveyance of messages and on the need for receivers to hear them, while after the invasion, and especially during the Presidential re-election campaign, he emphasized continuity in the communication strategies. Interesting patterns are also related to the use of HOPE as a collocate of *message* (12 occurrences, all of which in the podium's words). In all of these cases the subject is the President and the verb indicates his hope that the transmission of the message will be successful, as in following case:

(4.13) **JOURNALIST:** Does the meeting today with the Iraqi Americans reflect a concern on the part of the administration that it needs to do a better job of countering the negative public relations backlash that's evident now across the Middle East and much of the Muslim world?

MR. FLEISCHER: The answer is unequivocally no. But, certainly, **the President hopes that people everywhere in the world will listen to the message of these Arab Americans and these Iraqis** who saw firsthand what a brutal dictatorship Saddam Hussein has led, the torture that he has used to stay in power. And I think **you're going to hear a very welcoming message** about why it's so important for the United States and the coalition to be successful at ousting Saddam Hussein. I think it's **a powerful message**, and it's **a message the President hopes will be heard**.

(4 April 2003)

What is mainly emphasized is thus the receiver's responsibility to actually receive and correctly interpret the message, while the sender is relieved

from any responsibility having done their best in the communicative act.

Collocate lists and concordances are of little use, however, when it comes to identifying the topic of messages in the briefings and any linguistic pattern related with such topics; wider portions of co-text need to be analysed for this purpose. A large number of topics is found in this way to relate more or less directly to terrorism, dictatorship and weapons of mass destruction. Most excerpts from briefings reported in this paragraph, indeed, are examples of this kind of message. Such messages are mainly directed to non-democratic governments or to those suspected of supporting terrorist organizations or of possessing chemical, biological, nuclear weapons.

The content of these messages is often expressed through various recurring patterns. In particular, the lexical items *important* and *importance* are found in this context, in patterns that include *message that it's important for* [receiver] *to* [action to be taken] (e.g. *all parties to adhere to the cease-fire*) and *message about the importance of* [receiver + action to be taken] (e.g. *Iran acting as a nation that assumes its proper place in the world*).

In another recurring structure in this context, NEED TO is followed by a verb phrase such as the following:

- *comply with their international obligations;*
- *do their part to create peace;*
- *end the nuclear weapons program;*
- *examine their ties to terrorists;*
- *speak out and counter terrorism.*

Using such a wording implies that those addressed have to change behaviour, not because the United States is threatening them with negative consequences unless they do so, but because of an absolute moral need for them to disarm or stop supporting terrorist networks. Thus, the US justifies

its imposition – at times, but not always, backed by the United Nations – in moral terms, as though they had been assigned the task to bring justice to the world.

NEED TO, in particular, is not only frequently found in the company of *message* and *messages* in the briefings. This verb phrase is actually quite frequent in the whole corpus, and significantly more frequent than MUST, a modal that shares shades of meaning with it, and that never co-occurs with *message* and *messages*, as shown by Table 4.9. While *must*, when it is used deontically, refers to an obligation imposed by the speaker (the wording *Saddam Hussein must disarm* would imply that someone is forcing him to do so), *need to* reflects a moral need imposed by the circumstances, independent of the speaker's will (*the Iraqis need to disarm for the sake of peace*). Indeed, the subjects of *need to* in the briefings are usually rogue states, terrorists, opponents of the US, which confirms that the high frequency of this verb in the corpus can be ascribed to its presence in specific contexts, aimed at imposing US policies by showing them as the best possible option in an absolute sense, for the world's sake.

Coming back to the recurring patterns mentioned before, in the following excerpt the different wordings chosen by press and podium stand out:

(4.14) **JOURNALIST:** Ari, Secretary of State Powell **warns Pakistan of consequences** if it continues to help North Korea with its nuclear program. What consequences – if they are continuing?

MR. FLEISCHER: And I think if you take a look what the Secretary said, he also made clear that it is not continuing. And he did not define what that would be. We will continue to work, **press that message with Pakistan**, as well as other nations around the **world about the importance of making certain they do not take any steps that could destabilize that region**.

(26 November 2002)

While the journalist talks explicitly in terms of warnings and consequences for Pakistan unless they stop supporting North Korea's nuclear program, the Press Secretary uses the phrase *message about the importance of making certain that*, to express in a milder way what is actually a threat. In the following excerpt, in contrast, the content of the message is expressed more explicitly:

(4.15) **JOURNALIST:** […] Does the administration believe that the IRA is a terrorist group, or the new IRA, or the Real IRA?

MR. FLEISCHER: Certainly, the Real IRA is listed on the official list of terrorist groups. But I think the President said what he said for a reason. **He is sending a message** and he's rallying a coalition, **that those who engage in terrorism and those who harbor terrorists need to be worried about the actions that our government will take**.

(19 September 2001)

However, even here, no clear reference is made to the nature of the actions which the US might take.

What emerges here is that the underlying message expressed in the briefings looks more like a threat than an innocent, neutral communicative act. Concordancing the *WHoB* corpus for *threat* shows, indeed, that this lexical item is never chosen by the podium to refer to actions performed by the US, although the administration does often threaten people, states and organizations with negative consequences in briefings, as shown above. As a matter of fact, no one in the world has more adequate military and economic means than the world's first superpower to represent a threat to someone else. The lexical item *threat* is actually found in the briefings to refer to threats other people or groups (e.g. Saddam Hussein or terrorist

organizations) pose to the world. This, however, is quite predictable, as *threat* generally refers to an external situation, and *threaten* is not a performative verb (Bayley, Bevitori and Zoni 2004). The communicative function of expressing a threat, in contrast, is generally expressed through euphemisms, and the greater will be the power of those expressing the threat, the more the threat will be understated. Talking in terms of messages in the briefings is actually a way of expressing threats in an understated way. In addition to this, *message* is often accompanied by phrases that shift responsibility away from the White House for what was just stated, either because emphasis is placed on the receiver's responsibility to understand the message and take necessary measures, or because the message is expressed as if it were descending from an unknown superior moral entity.

The next paragraph will shed further light on the ways messages are characterized in the briefings, in particular through adjectival choices whose recurrence reinforces the hypothesis that *message* here is a sort of euphemism for a threat.

4.2.7. Ways of characterizing messages

The adjectives that most frequently collocate with *message* and *messages* in the *WHoB* corpus are shown in Table 4.10 and can be grouped into two categories:

1. adjectives expressing positive evaluation, associated with the semantic fields of strength (*strong*: 17 occurrences; *powerful*: 12), correctness (*right*: 11), salience (*important*: 16; *serious*: 5) and unambiguousness (*clear*: 44; *consistent*: 18; *unmistakable*: 4), all of which are typical of the podium's discourse;

2. adjectives expressing negative evaluation, and belonging to the semantic field of inconsistency (*wrong*: 14 occurrences; *mixed*: 10).

The ways these two sets of adjectives are used by podium and press to characterize different messages in communicative situations involving different participants in the briefings will be now examined.

to get the **very clear understanding and**	**message**	from the United States and from the wor
ecific benefits. There has been a **clear**	**message**	, and the President reinforced that toda
e government to send a **simple and clear**	**message**	: Don't do drugs. Doing drugs will kill
go to make that stand and send a **clear**	**message**	, especially since you say President Bus
the North Koreans are receiving a **clear**	**message**	from these nations, including the Unite
y talks. North Korea is hearing a **clear**	**message**	from those countries. We had a recent r
believes that the election sent a **clear**	**message**	that the American people want to see le
And the President has sent a **very clear**	**message**	that the United States will continue to
more. And this resolution sends a **clear**	**message**	that the world does have a responsibili
ing terrorists. So that 's a **very clear**	**message**	that we 've sent. If I could just follo
es to the United States sending a **clear**	**message**	that we will -- we have the ability to
it be a **strong message** and a **very clear**	**message**	. The federal government -- and, I might
the resolution that would send a **clear**	**message**	to Iraq that their decade of defiance h
tries in the region are sending a **clear**	**message**	to North Korea, and they 're all saying
n the region engaged in sending a **clear**	**message**	to North Korea that it needs to end its
the United States has sent a **very clear**	**message**	to people in this conference, as well a
our allies in Iraq, and to send a **clear**	**message**	to the enemy that we will prevail, they
ve five nations sending that **very clear**	**message**	to the North Koreans. China has also se
. We are sending a **clear and consistent**	**message**	to the terrorists by the actions that w
y seek. And that 's a **clear, consistent**	**message**	universally. The administration argued
and that unless he get a **clear and firm**	**message**	from the United States that this would
f communication. The President made his	**message**	**clear** in a way that was **unequivocal**. He
on Congress would help him do that. His	**message**	on that was **very clear**. One of the thin
e on any timetable, but he did make his	**message**	**very clear**. In preparing the Israeli pe
can expect. The President will make his	**message**	**very plain and clear**. And just to follo
in Haiti's political system. And so our	**message**	has been **very clear** that we are working
meeting with parties in the region. Our	**message**	is **very clear** to the Palestinian Author
in that threat? Well, the President 's	**message**	is **clear**. This can be the year that pat
conclusion or not. But the President 's	**message**	is **clear** to Saddam Hussein, that he nee
rd way of knowing. But the President 's	**message**	is **clear** to the world: Wherever there a
remarks? Well, I think the President 's	**message**	is **very clear**. We continue to call on t
think they 're hearing the President 's	**message**	**loud and clear**. And the President wante
cross-border? I think the President 's	**message**	to terrorists is **clear**: that those who
story of North Korea. The United States	**message**	is **clear** and it 's a message that is ec
to send a **clear, consistent and strong**	**message**	to Iran. I think that Dr ElBaradei has
The head of the FBI yesterday made that	**message**	**clear**, and this government will not tol
sized another message, and I think that	**message**	is **very clear** in the Libyan case: leade
ar statements to Iraq? We have made the	**message**	**clear** to Iran. But let me state somethi
state and federal law enforcement. The	**message**	is **clear**: anyone who participates in or
so far been unwilling to do? Well, the	**message**	is **clear** that the program needs to be r
t brought them neither. And I think the	**message**	is **very clear** from what they 've done t
send an **effective, clear, unmistakable**	**message**	to Saddam Hussein so he knows that this

Concordance 4.4. *Message* with *clear* as context word

Clear is the adjective that most frequently collocates with *message* in the *WHoB* corpus, though it never co-occurs with *messages*, and this co-occurrence is mostly a feature of the discourse of the podium (35 cases out of 44), and its relative frequency is higher during the phases in which Afghanistan and Iraq were invaded. The concordance of *message* with *clear* as context word (4.4) allows the identification of recurring patterns such as the following:

- *a clear and firm message;*
- *the President made his message clear;*
- *the very clear understanding and message;*
- *a simple and clear message;*
- *our message is very clear;*
- *the message he's sending loud and clear;*
- *a clear, consistent message universally;*
- *an effective, clear, unmistakable message.*

Thus, *clear* associated with *message* collocates in turn with other adjectives with similar meaning, and is often reinforced by *very*. *Clear* appears to be mainly used to characterize messages sent by the US or the President to either North Korea, Iraq (and Saddam Hussein) or Iran – the 'regimes that sponsor terror', termed the 'axis of evil' in Bush's 2002 State of the Union address[20] – or to other US antagonists. Near-synonyms of *clear* that also collocate with *message*, sometimes also together with *clear*, are used in similar ways. Both *unmistakable* (found in the *WHoB* corpus only together with *message*, and also paraphrased once in *let there be no mistake about it; let it be a strong message and a very clear message)* and *unequivocal* (and the corresponding adverb *unequivocally*) in the same way as *clear*, imply that the sender has done everything possible to make the message as clear as it can be. Thus, the

[20] http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html (accessed 12 October 2008)

receiver is presented as the only participant responsible for the success of the communicative act. In the same way, *plain* and *simple* are also used, alone or combined with *clear*, as well as such phrases as *make sure they understand/receive/hear it*; in the context of this communicative event, these and similar phrases share the same function as *clear*, *unmistakable*, *unequivocal*.

Messages in the briefings are also characterized as *powerful* or *strong*, two adjectives that co-occur with *message* or *messages* in 12 and 17 cases respectively, the vast majority of which in the podium's words. The strength of a message refers to the effect it has on its receiver. These adjectives here express the US attitude on the scene of international relations: the attitude of the world's only superpower, which can afford to display maximum strength when addressing other actors. In a briefing dating back to the day before Bush's final ultimatum to Saddam Hussein expired, *powerful* is also found in combination with *deterrent*, which reinforces the function of such a message:

(4.16) **MR. FLEISCHER:** And the President also believes that **the use of force against Iraq will similarly send a powerful deterrent message** to terrorists around the world that the United States will do what it takes to prevent terrorist attacks against our country.

(19 March 2003)

Other adjectives such as *important* and *serious* repeatedly highlight the importance of the messages sent in the briefings, as already mentioned in paragraph 4.6.2. Also *important* and *serious* are typical collocates of *message* and *messages* in the podium's discourse (14 occurrences out of 16 and 4 out of 4 respectively), and characterize messages sent by the US or the President, an adjectival choice which emphasizes that the message should be taken seriously and dealt with immediately. This is explicitly stated in a

briefing already reported above (excerpt 4.9). While US aircraft carriers were travelling to the Persian Gulf, the White House insisted that everything possible was being done to avoid war in Iraq. Thus, when asked about the seriousness of such statements, the podium pointed out that the US messages were not a bluff.

Messages sent by the US are also described in the briefings in terms of their consistency: the co-occurrence of the adjective *consistent* (18 times) with *message* and *messages* – also combined with other adjectives – of the verbs CONTINUE and REMAIN and of the adjective *same* (e.g. *the President's message remains the same*; *we will continue to send that message*) emphasizes the idea of the US Administration insisting on certain messages as time goes by:

(4.17) **MR. FLEISCHER:** I think we've continued to send a **consistent series of messages** to North Korea that North Korea has chosen to ignore.

(13 January 2003)

The US unilateral approach to international relations implies, indeed, that a stance taken will remain the same in time although circumstances may have changed.

Interestingly, the two antonyms *right* and *wrong* also collocate with *message* (*wrong* co-occurs once also with *messages*), and, once again, both of them mainly in the podium's words (13 out of 14 times and 10 out of 14 respectively). The opposition between *the right message* and *the wrong message* in the briefings corresponds to an opposition between different senders, receivers and topic of the messages.

So, just as the other adjectives expressing positive evaluation, *right* also characterizes messages sent by the White House, especially regarding domestic issues, as shown by the concordance of *the right message* (4.5). Thus, such a phrase may be used to express the superiority of the Bush

Administration's policies compared to those of the Democrats, and to outline successes achieved by this administration.

be victorious because he has **the right message** , he has the right ground orga
s of working to teach -- send **the right message** to our children. Let me ask y
t are proven to work and send **the right message** to our children. And so that
f parents and coaches to send **the right message** to our children. Drug use als
lieves that it starts to send **the right message** to the country that he meant
It 's important that we send **the right message** with this legislation and tha
y plan because that will send **the right message** to our markets that we are se
y plan because that will send **the right message** to our energy markets who rig
so of the White House sending **the right message** from the bully pulpit of the
round for terrorists. Is that **the right message** to be sending? It 's exactly

Concordance 4.5. *The right message*

Again, as *the right message* emphasizes the rectitude of the current administration's policies, the White House chooses the phrase *the wrong message* to indicate the dangerous consequences that may arise if the administration's opponents' policies (European governments opposing the Iraq war as well as anti-intervention Democrats) were adopted in fighting terrorism. A *wrong message* is, for example, the withdrawal of Spanish troops from Iraq after the 2004 Madrid bombings, a decision the podium regards as an encouragement for terrorists:

(4.18) **MR. MCCLELLAN:** Terrorists cannot think that they can influence elections or influence policy. That is **the wrong message** to send. That's why we must redouble our efforts and take the fight to the terrorists. […]

JOURNALIST: But I wonder, and I think we're all kind of wondering about **the message that is being sent from the Spanish elections**. You say **it would be a terrible message** if the terrorists were to assume that they had influenced the Spanish elections. Well, **that's not a message, is it? It's a fact.** The terrorists influenced the Spanish elections.

MR. MCCLELLAN: [...] I'm not the one who does the analysis of elections. But I will point out the facts. And **it is the wrong message to let terrorists think that they can influence policy**.

(16 March 2004)

The case of *wrong* illustrates how contexts where adjectives expressing negative evaluation, including also *mixed* and *inconsistent*, are found in the briefings differ radically from those where adjectives expressing positive evaluation are found. Adjectives expressing negative evaluation characterize messages sent by opponents of the Bush administration or of the US, and such an adjectival choice can be accounted for in strategic terms as presenting these states and people and their policies as completely unreliable. Otherwise, these adjectives are found in questions, when journalists challenge stances taken by the White House by highlighting ambiguity or negative aspects in them.

When the sender is a US enemy, the impossibility for the world to share the message they sent is often emphasized:

(4.19) **JOURNALIST:** [...] Yesterday, you told us that Baghdad imams called for holy war violence, the drowning of Bush and Blair was opposed by one unidentified imam in Kuwait. And my question is, have there been any other imams or mosques who have publicly disagreed with these calls for holy war and drowning of Bush and Blair? [...]

MR. FLEISCHER: I think you can rest assured, Lester, that the message that you expressed from Baghdad is **not a message shared** by Muslim leaders around the world.

(19 March 2003)

Similarly, when the UN is the sender of a message in the briefings, this generally happens in a negative context: the UN's failure to support US foreign policy is presented in terms of the dangerous consequences of such behaviour; the UN is presented as sending rogue states messages of tolerance, instead of warning them:

(4.20) **MR. FLEISCHER:** If the UN does not enforce the resolution, **the message to Iraq will be one of laissez-faire**, that it is okay to have the weapons you have.
(11 March 2003)

The same happens with those European governments that refused to support the war in Iraq. For example, the podium chooses the interrogative form (*What message are these three countries in Europe sending to the people of Turkey?*) to express his disagreement with the message expressed by Belgium, France and Germany, who blocked the NATO decision to place defences against Iraq in Turkey.

But also when the UN, European governments opposing the war, other seemingly friendly states, people and organizations such as the Perm Five and the UN inspectors in Iraq are the receivers, rather than the senders, of messages interesting patterns can be observed. Despite the difference in status between them and the people and states that are more generally found to be the receivers of messages coming from the White House – rogue states, terrorists, unfriendly regimes – similar messages are sent to both sets of receivers. This may be seen as evidence that the UN and anyone else practically opposing the US strategy, or causing the pace towards war to slow down, are implicitly described in the briefings as though they were on the wrong side in the war on terrorism. In a briefing dating back to a few weeks before Iraq was invaded, the podium harshly criticized the lack of support the US received from the UN Security Council.

(4.21) **JOURNALIST:** This morning the President said, again, that he doesn't think he needs this resolution. Is that **message** intended -- what is that intended to do? Because it could be the signal to other countries that you're -- either get on board

or the train is leaving; **less a message about what he thinks is important**, as a signal to them, that now is your last opportunity.

MR. FLEISCHER: Well, **the President's message is this is a chance for the United Nations to be relevant**. There is no question about it. After all, if the United Nations passes a resolution that says, Iraq must disarm immediately, and then the United Nations says, immediately really means 12 years, what kind of signal are they sending to the next proliferator? **What message are they sending** about the ability of the international system to maintain the peace and fight proliferation? And this is why the President has changed the equation in New York, and he has said it is important for the United Nations to have value and to have meaning for resolutions to be backed up. Otherwise, it's a paper society. It's not a meaningful society to keep the peace. That's what's at stake here.

(25 February 2003)

In this as well as in another briefing, the adjective *relevant* is used to describe how the Bush Administration thinks the UN should be; however, the mere fact that a single member of the UN has the power to make such a statement indicates that this organization is anything but relevant in the eyes of the US, and has such limited power in the context of the Bush doctrine of unilateralism as to be defined *a paper society*.

4.2.8. Conclusions

The use of *message* and of *messages* in the George W. Bush administration's press briefings has been shown to respond to specific discourse strategies linked with the Bush doctrine of foreign relations.

Sender/receiver patterns have been identified by examining briefings as communicative events in which messages are sent and received. The most common pattern has been found to include the President, the US administration and a usually unspecified *we* as the sender of messages, while the receivers are frequently opponents of the United States. In particular,

the podium characterizes messages in different ways depending on the sender and the receiver as well as on the context in which the communicative event takes place.

By analysing both the ways messages sent by the US to their opponents (Iraq, North Korea, terrorist organizations, etc.) are characterized and the topic of such messages, it has been shown that this word is used in this context as a euphemism to express a threat. The use of *message* and *messages* in this sense was particularly frequent in the briefings in the phase that preceded the attack against Iraq. In this period especially, the UN and the European governments not supporting the Iraq war were addressed using the same lexico-grammatical patterns as when addressing opponents.

4.3 Setting priorities on the agenda

4.3.1 Agenda-setting words

As mentioned in paragraph 4.1, such words as *important* and *importance* may be hypothesized to be related to a key concept in political communication: agenda-setting. Since setting the agenda for politics, the media and the public is one of the main purposes of the discussion going on in the briefings, it is not surprising to find that words referring to the salience of issues are significantly frequent in the *WHoB* corpus.

	WHoB	Cordis US	BNC	COCA
important	1347	960	387	362
importance	283	124	96	63

Table 4.11 Occurrences per million words of *important* and *importance* in the *WHoB* corpus and in some reference corpora

Table 4.11 shows that *important* and *importance* are significantly more

frequent in the *WHoB* corpus than in reference corpora, although the difference is more striking when this corpus and general British and American English corpora such as the *BNC* and the *COCA* are compared. In *CorDis US*, in contrast, the frequency of these two words is higher than in general English corpora, but lower than their frequency in the briefings corpus. This might indicate that these words are specific of media and political discourse in general and of press briefings in particular, and it might be worth exploring their function in this context in more detail.

4.3.2 Important

It might be worth starting from the adjective *important*, as it is by far the most frequent among the words examined in this paragraph: its absolute frequency amounts to 4537 occurrences. According to the OAD, this adjective has four main meanings: (a) "significant", (b) "main", (c) "of value" and (d) "powerful". The first of these is the one that appears to be more closely related to the agenda-setting process.

In analysing the role played by the adjective *important* in the *WHoB* corpus, my aim will first of all be to attempt to discover whether the agenda-setting related meaning is actually the most frequent meaning of *important* in this corpus. Secondly, I will attempt to identify differences between the use of *important* in predicative and attributive position in the briefings.

Table 4.12 shows the distribution of *important* in the different chronological phases of the corpus and for different speakers and speaker roles. What emerges is, first of all, that *important* is by far a feature of podium discourse, while its relative frequency in the reporters' words is even lower than in *BNC*, *COCA* and *CorDis US*. Furthermore, its relative

frequency increases steadily during the first term of the George W. Bush administration, and it is almost doubled in phase 5 compared to phase 1.

	all speakers	podium	press	Fleischer	McClellan
total	1347	1881	265	1588	2432
phase 1	995	1414	239	1412	1372
phase 2	1034	1489	170	1489	-------
phase 3	1223	1665	319	1621	2409
phase 4	1348	1885	260	1915	912
phase 5	1646	2304	251	1699	2447

Table 4.12 Occurrences of *important* per million words in different chronological phases, for different speakers and speaker roles

Due to the large size of the concordance of *important*, it was necessary to start from the identification of recurring clusters containing this adjective, which may shed light on phraseology typical of the use of this word in the briefings. The most frequent patterns identified can be divided into two categories: those in which *important* is in predicative position and those in which it is in attributive position. Patterns falling into the first category include:

- *it* BE [adverb/intensifier] *important*: 1663 occurrences
- *what* BE [adverb/intensifier] *important*: 198 occurrences
- *what remains important*: 2 occurrences
- *what* [noun/pronoun] THINK/BELIEVE *is important*: 6 occurrences
- *this is* [adverb/intensifier] *important*: 46 occurrences
- *that* BE [adverb/intensifier] *important*: 122 occurrences
- *how important it is/is it*: 32 occurrences
- *how important that is/is that*: 7 occurrences
- *are very important*: 20 occurrences
- *it remains* [adverb/intensifier] *important*: 9 occurrences

If the above clusters are summed up, a total of 2120 occurrences of *important* in attributive position can be identified. Furthermore, 913 occurrences of *important* are immediately followed by *to*, 417 are followed by

that and 420 by *for*.

As regards occurrences of *important* in attributive position, in 1869 cases the adjective is immediately followed by a noun or by another adjective and a noun. The most frequent clusters of this type are listed in Table 4.13.

cluster	Freq.
important issue	100
important priorities	91
important role	90
important part	82
important priority	82
important progress	77
important step	72
important issues	52
important work	48
important cause	36
important thing	29
important matter	24
important responsibility	18
important mission	17
important piece	17
important principle	16
important steps	16
important way	16
important legislation	15
important question	15
important moment	14
important things	14
important debate	13
important meeting	13
important topic	13
important date	12
important day	12
important initiative	12
important vote	12

Table 4.13. Absolute frequency of clusters containing *important* followed by a noun

Concordances of the most frequent patterns containing *important* in both predicative and attributive position will be now examined.

First of all, occurrences of *it is/'s/was* [adverb] *important* were analyzed. Of these, the overwhelming majority is found in the podium's words, while only 4.53 per cent of these occurrences are uttered by reporters. Three main syntactic structures were identified: *it is/'s/was* [adverb] *important to*; *it is/'s/was* [adverb] *important that*; *it is/'s/was* [adverb] *important for*. These patterns will be examined in more detail below.

In 596 cases, this pattern is immediately followed by *to* and a verb or verb phrase – a pattern which is significantly more frequent in the post-Iraq invasion phase, although it is found throughout the corpus.

Among the verbs and verb phrases found to be following this pattern, listed in Table 4.14, *have* is the most frequent (42 occurrences). Most phrases following the *it is/'s/was* [adverb] *important to* pattern appear to

carry a positive semantic load, e.g. *a welfare system that protects people*, *as broad a consensus as possible*, *a common understanding of the problem*, *some show of unity*, *stability*. Moreover, there are 5 occurrences of *dialogue* (which may be *national dialogue* or may take place between the US and other nations) occurring immediately after this pattern.

The second most frequent veb following the *it is/'s/was* [adverb] *important to* pattern is *keep* (34 occurrences), which is found 14 times in the phrase *it's important to keep in mind* and 9 times in the phrase *it's important to keep Congress/the American people informed*, both used by Scott McClellan only. The first phrase is mainly used to point out that efforts made by the US Administration, either domestically or in the "war on terror", should not be disregarded (e.g. *it is important to keep in mind what we are working to achieve in Iraq*). In some cases, however, the same phrase is used to remind media and citizens about the brutalities committed by the regime of Saddam Hussein (e.g. *it's important to keep in mind that Iraq was a threat*), when reporters, after the Iraq invasion, question the reasons behind the urgency for the US to remove him from power. Similar patterns are found when *remind* and *remember* follow the *it is/'s/was* [adverb] *important*

verb	occurrences
have	42
keep	34
continue	28
look	24
make	24
get	22
let	20
move	18
note	17
do	13
listen	12
work	12
be	12
allow	11
protect	10
remind	9
remember	9
point	9
take	9
pass	8
talk	8
see	8
go	8
confront	7
help	7
learn	6
recognize	6
share	6
treat	5
reach	5
set	5
provide	5
focus	5
give	5

Table 4.14. Absolute frequency of verbs immediately following the *it is/'s/was* [adverb] *important to* pattern

to pattern (9 occurrences each, mostly dating back to phase 5), e.g. *it is important to remember that this was a regime that had mass graves*. The second phrase (*it's important to keep Congress/the American people informed*) is usually referred to the importance of providing information about risks, threats and responsibilities that the US face, and about the US efforts in Iraq. Excerpt 4.22 below shows how the importance of keeping the American people informed about an increased risk of terrorist attacks is contrasted to the journalist's allegation that the President may be manipulating information for political purposes.

(4.22) **JOURNALIST:** […] I mean, it would be a pretty serious allegation to say **a President of the United States is manipulating such information for political gain**. I was wondering what would you say to those Democrats who are saying --

MR. MCCLELLAN: I haven't seen specifically who said what. But what I would say is that we have an obligation, regardless of the time of year or what year we are in, to protect the American people and **keep them informed** about what we are doing to provide for their safety and security. And when we receive credible information like we have regarding the increased risk we face, we believe **it's important to keep the American people informed**. This isn't the first time that we've talked to the American people about this issue. But this is an update to the American people. And **it is also important to update them** on the protective measures that we have put in place and the ramped up security measures that we have put in place in certain areas of the country where terrorists might want to strike.

(8 July 2004)

Continue is the third most frequent verb following the *it is/'s/was* [adverb] *important to* pattern. It is found mainly in phases 2 and 5 and is almost exclusively used by the podium. In 6 cases it is found in such phrases as *it's important to continue moving forward/to move forward*, referred both to actions in

Iraq and to policies and legislation to be approved. Similar phrases such as *it's important to continue that progress* and *it's important to continue our economy moving forward* are also found. Other recurring phrases include *it's important to continue to work with*, where the need for cooperation is emphasized.

Other frequent verbs found to be following the *it is/'s/was* [adverb] *important to* pattern are: *look* (24 occurrences; mostly used to emphasize the importance of assessing an issue by taking a specific perspective on it), *make* (24 occurrences, 15 of which are instances of the *make certain/sure* pattern), *get* (22 occurrences; compared to other verbs in this pattern, it is more frequent in the first phases of the corpus and it is also used by the press; in phase 5 it is used 4 times by Scott McClellan to say the President *believes it's important to get outside* (*of*) *Washington, DC* and talk to the American people), *let* (20 occurrences, only used by the podium but rather evenly distributed in the corpus), *move* (18 occurrences, used by the podium only, mostly in phase 5; in 15 cases it is followed by *forward*, in turn often followed by *quickly*, *timetable* and *priorities*), *note* (17), *do* (13), *listen* (12), *work* (12), *be* (12), *allow* (11), *protect* (10).

The second of the three patterns mentioned earlier is *it is/'s/was* [adverb] *important that*, followed by a pronoun or noun phrase and a verb. This pattern occurs 352 times, and it is by far more frequent in the last phase of the corpus (279 occurrences are found in phase 5). Only 9 times is it used by reporters. Almost a half of the occurrences of this pattern are followed by *we*, but this almost exclusively occurs in phase 5 (155 occurrences out of 161). Patterns here are very similar to the ones mentioned above: the verb that most frequently follows *it is/'s/was* [adverb] *important that we* is *continue* (37 occurrences), which is again found in such phrases as *it's important that we continue to move forward / to move ahead / moving forward* (6, 1 and 3 occurrences respectively, all of which in phase 5, and all

but one in the words of Scott McClellan) and *it's important that we continue to stay the course / stay on the offensive* (6 and 2 occurrences respectively, again all of which in phase 5, and uttered by Scott McClellan only). These phrases are mostly referred to the efforts in Iraq and to the dangers of terrorism. Excerpt 4.23 shows how the use of *important* and *continue* is related to the US determination not to leave Iraq even after a growing number of attacks against them had started taking place.

(4.23) **JOURNALIST:** Is the President surprised at the sophistication of this particular attack? And, specifically, did they have access to these shoulder-fired missiles?

MR. MCCLELLAN: Well, again, I think there is still a lot being investigated about the specific attack from yesterday and I think you need to talk to our military leaders in the region -- get some specifics about the attack, and they are continuing to –

JOURNALIST: What did the President think –

MR. MCCLELLAN: -- they continue to investigate. But, again, the stakes are high in Iraq. This is the central front in the war on terrorism. A peaceful and free and democratic Iraq will serve as an example to the rest of the Middle East, which has been a volatile region and a breeding ground for terrorism. **It's important that we continue to stay the course**. **It's important that our military leaders have the tactical flexibility** to adjust to the enemy, and that's what they're doing.

(3 November 2003)

Other verbs that follow the *it is/'s/was* [adverb] *important that we* pattern are, again, *move*, *make*, *have* (9 occurrences each), *do* (8), *keep* (6).

The *it is/'s/was* [adverb] *important that* pattern may also be followed by *they* (37 occurrences). This is a pattern that is mainly found in Scott McClellan's words. In 14 cases, it is followed by (*move forward* (*as quickly as possible*) *to*) *complete their work*. In all these cases, *they* refers to committees appointed to shed light on controversial issues: the 9/11 Commission and the Iraq Survey Group. In particular, in the case of the latter, the use of this

phrase emphasizes the White House will that the committee go on with its survey so as to attempt to find missing evidence for the existence of a WMD development program in Iraq. Excerpt 4.24 shows an example of this.

(4.24) **JOURNALIST:** Any evidence that some of the WMD is hidden in Syria or in other countries?

MR. MCCLELLAN: I don't have anything to report on that, Connie. But there are a lot of different theories out there. **The work** of the Iraq Survey Group **continues**. **It's important that they complete their work**. But make no mistake about it, Saddam Hussein's regime was a danger before the war, and everything that we've learned since the war only reconfirms that he was a danger. And the world is safer and better because of the action that we took.

(2 March 2004)

As regards patterns in which *it is/'s/was* [adverb] *important that* is followed by a noun, the most frequent are *Congress* and *Senate* (13 occurrences in total). During different phases of the corpus, the two podiums use this pattern to say that these two bodies should carry out, often quickly, something they are supposed to do, as shown in concordance 4.6 below.

nd of care that they deserve. And it 's	**important** that	**Congress** -- that the **Senate move f**
State of the Union address that it was	**important** that	**Congress act** on this initiative. S
important oversight role to play. It 's	**important** that	**Congress** be kept informed of these
ber 11th. The President thinks it is so	**important** that	**Congress create** this commission, t
rtheast and parts of the Midwest. It 's	**important** that	**Congress move forward as quickly** a
ion here in the United States. So it 's	**important** that	**Congress move forward** on that plan
g committee and floor action. And it 's	**important** that	**Congress move forward** on those nom
ove our national security. And so it 's	**important** that	**Congress move forward** to pass a co
tional Intelligence Director, and it 's	**important** that	the **Congress move forward quickly**
lly, that 's another reminder why it 's	**important** that	the **Congress pass** the President 's
Dodd. And so the President thinks it 's	**important** that	the **Senate actually follow through**
n the Senate to be confirmed. And it 's	**important** that	the **Senate finish its business**, be
Senate? The President does think it 's	**important** that	the **Senate take action** on the nomi

Concordance 4.6. *it is/'s/was* [adverb] *important that* (*the*) *Congress/Senate*

The third recurring pattern mentioned above was *it is/'s/was* [adverb] *important for*, which is found 297 times in the corpus and quite evenly distributed – even though its relative frequency reaches top level during the initial invasion of Iraq and is lower in the first phase of the corpus. Only 6 per cent of its total occurrences are found in the words of the press. In most cases, this pattern is followed by a noun or pronoun and by an infinitive with *to*. Thus, it is used to say that "it's important for someone to do something".

Again, in 37 cases the noun following this pattern is *Congress*, and the verbs of which *Congress* is the subject are similar to the ones shown in the concordance of *Congress* and *Senate* above: *act* (7 occurrences), *take action* (6), *pass* (6), *get* (3: *get moving*, *get together* or *get* something *done*). Thus, it is used in order to put pressure on Congress so that they enact the policies proposed by the administration, which, as mentioned in Chapter 1, is not obvious. Excerpt 4.25 below shows an example of the way this structure is used by the podium to put pressure on Congress.

(4.25) **JOURNALIST:** In addition to the pork, what does the administration see as the main stumbling blocks to the passage of the emergency supplemental? And if it isn't passed by the end of the week, would the President consider going directly to the public and appealing for them to **pressure Congress to pass one**?

MR. FLEISCHER: Well, I'm not going to speculate on anything that may or may not happen in terms of **how to help Congress take action**. But the President doesn't -- he hopes it's not necessary for that to happen. The President thinks **it's important for Congress to act, and act now**, given the fact that this is an emergency and given the fact that the year, fiscal year, is almost at an end.

(10 July 2002)

Senate also occurs 13 times in the same pattern and is followed by similar verbs.

In 19 cases, this pattern is followed by *the American people* or by (*all*) *Americans*, mostly in contexts where the emphasis is on the need for the Americans to know something, possibly in a complete way: *to hear the full story*, *to have the full picture*, *to have all the facts*. These patterns often occur when the situation in Iraq after the invasion, the events leading to the 9/11 attacks, or the search for weapons of mass destruction are concerned. The following excerpt clearly shows the context in which this pattern is frequently used:

(4.26) **JOURNALIST:** Scott, the President, it seems by referring to the national press corps as the filter and talking about a need to talk over our heads, seems to be borrowing a page from his father who, during his reelection campaign asserted that you should "blame the media." If the President believes that there's so much progress on the ground in Iraq, then why does he feel the need to hop-scotch over the national press corps and speak to local and regional outlets who don't cover these issues every day and don't seem to follow up --

MR. MCCLELLAN: I think he speaks to all media. He speaks to the media at the national level, he speaks to media at the local level. And those are all -- **it's all important for the President to get his message directly to the American people**. And that's what he'll continue to do. […] **The President believes it's important for the American people to hear the full story** about the progress we are making in Iraq. We are making a tremendous amount of progress to move toward a free, sovereign, democratic Iraq. And there is a lot of important progress being made on the ground.

(14 October 2003)

Here, *message* also comes back as one way in which presidential communication is referred to, and the disagreement between podium and reporter is about the way the administration chooses to deliver that message. In order to justify their choice to address local press to circumvent the less favourable White House press corps – which is the task

of the White House Office of Communications – the podium emphasizes the importance of providing all the people with all the information.

Another frequent noun phrase following the *it is/'s/was* [adverb] *important for* pattern is (*all*) (*the*) *parties*, which occurs 17 times and mostly refers to the parties involved in the Middle East crisis. This phrase is mostly the subject of such verb phrases as (*continue to*) *work together*, *continue talking*, *lay down the arms*, *adhere to the ceasefire*. In this way, again, the podium puts pressure on these parties to follow a given path in the peace process.

In 12 cases, the noun following this pattern is *the United Nations* or *the UN*. These citations, shown in Concordance 4.7, are found only in Ari Fleischer's words, mostly date back to phase 3, when the US was striving to obtain authorization from the UN to remove Saddam Hussein from power.

e judgment and the decision that it was	**important for the UN**	that an American President g
tions. The world is watching, and it 's	**important for the UN to fulfill its mission**	so th
Just as the President said that it 's	**important for the United Nations Security Council**	
s that he believes that it remains very	**important for the United Nations Security Council**	
ar? The President thinks that 's it 's	**important for the United Nations Security Council**	
President has made it clear that it is	**important for the United Nations to act,**	through
rk through the United Nations and it 's	**important for the United Nations to act.**	After al
l as the other leaders said, that it 's	**important for the United Nations to have a role**	I
ions because the President thinks it 's	**important for the United Nations to have a role**	I
for world bodies to be effective. It 's	**important for the United Nations**	to have the supp
tion in New York, and he has said it is	**important for the United Nations to have value**	an
f days and weeks, and not months. It 's	**important for the United Nations to move quickly**	

Concordance 4.7. *it 's/is/remains/was important for the UN/United Nations*

Similarly to what happened with Congress and Senate, the emphasis here is on the need for the UN to take action (*act*, *move quickly on this*). But in other cases this need is stressed in a more subtle way: the podium says *it's important for the United Nations to have value and to have meaning* or *to have/play a* (*meaningful*) *role* or *to be an effective organization*. What is implied by this kind of statements is that if the UN does not make the right decision regarding Iraq, from the point of view of the US administration, it will become a

useless organization. This pattern is similar to the one found to be used by the podium when referring to *messages* sent to the UN.

Other noun phrases following the *it is/'s/was* [adverb] *important for* pattern are *the Palestinian people/institution/Authority* (6 occurrences), *Syria* (3 occurrences), *Saddam Hussein* (3 occurrences). In most of these cases, what is indicated as important is *to disarm*, *to comply with Resolution 1441*, *to crack down on terrorists*, *not to harbor Iraqi leaders*. In these cases, thus, the US administration is telling these governments and peoples that they should act in a certain way in order to avoid being considered opponents of the US.

What emerged from the analysis of these patterns is that, when *important* is used in predicative position, its function is not that of emphasizing the importance of an issue compared to others on the agenda. Rather, it is used by the podium to point out that someone – the administration itself, a US institution, an international organization or a foreign government – needs to do something. As discussed in paragraph 4.2, also here the imposition of a given path to be followed is not expressed by using explicit markers of deontic modality, but presented as though what the US administration is saying is to be done on moral grounds.

The patterns *what's/is/was/remains* [adverb] *important* and *what* [noun or pronoun] THINK/BELIEVE *is important* occur 209 times, almost equally distributed throughout the corpus, except for phase 2 where their relative frequency is significantly lower. Only 3 times are the two patterns found in the reporters' words. To the right of these patterns, *is* + *that*-clause, *is* + infinitive with *to*, for + noun phrase + infinitive with *to*, *is* + noun phrase, *is* + present participle are found 65, 26, 25, 20 and 2 times respectively. By choosing such structures, the speaker emphasizes an idea or an issue more strongly than he would have done by saying *it is important*.

Nouns and noun phrases following the *what's/is/was/remains* [adverb]

important and *what* [noun or pronoun] THINK/BELIEVE *is important* patterns include: *the return of our servicemen and women*, *the dismantlement of organizations that engage in terror, the substance of the tax cut*, *the safety of women*, *transparency*. These issues are emphasized by the podium in order to avoid discussing other aspects of the same topic, about which a question has been asked, as shown in the exchange reported in excerpt 4.27.

(4.27) **JOURNALIST:** Ari, have U.S.-Chinese relations been damaged at this point?

MR FLEISCHER: Keith, the President made it clear yesterday that he hopes that this accident will not turn into an international incident, and in his meeting with the Deputy Premier of China, they discussed the fruitful aspects of our relationship with China and our hopes to grow those aspects. The President said yesterday that if the event that our servicemen and women are not returned, that it could damage U.S.-China relations. And that is another reason why it's important for our servicemen and women to be allowed to come home.

JOURNALIST: So it could damage U.S.-China relations; it has not so far?

MR FLEISCHER: Again, **what's important is the return of our servicemen and women. That's where the President's focus is**.

JOURNALIST: Okay, but they've held these servicemen and women, I assume against their will, and they want to come home for three days now. That has not damaged U.S.-Chinese relations?

MR FLEISCHER: Again, I think we are still at that sensitive point in this accident, where the President repeats his call, it's time for our men and women to come home.

(4 April 2001)

When the *what's/is/was/remains* [adverb] *important* and *what* [noun or pronoun] THINK/BELIEVE *is important* patterns are followed by a *that*-clause, an infinitive with *to* – also preceded by *for*+noun phrase – or a present participle, the importance of an action to be carried out or of a process to take place is emphasized. In particular, what is shown by Concordance 4.8

is a list of priorities for the US administration at different points in time. This concordance presents the administration as proactive, as it emphasizes its efforts through a list of verb phrases carrying a positive semantic load (*enact*, *be active*, *be available*, *continue to make progress*, *protect the country*, *protect the economy*, *provide the maximum safety*, *help*).

nt said today in the Rose Garden,	**what's important is not to have a focus on an arbitrary**	
tigma of homosexuality? I think	**what's important is to allow the office to develop** and t	
is saying. The President thinks	**what is important is to be accurate**, not political, and h	
e on that.	**What** the President thinks **is important is to be available** to answer reporters	
he President in the Middle East.	**What's important is to continue to make progress**, as the	
bombings and martyrdom? Because	**what's important is to diminish**, if not eliminate, the i	
trigger, President Bush believes	**what's important is to enact the tax cut**. We need to get	
where numbers are bandied about.	**What's important is to find the facts**. And that 's why t	
tinue to stand by that. But	**what's most important is to focus on what we 're doing** to win	
tients' bill of rights, and	**what's most important is to get an agreement** so it can get si	
an address the deficit. But	**what's most important is to get the economy growing** even stro	
el. This is part of the process.	**What's important is to get to the process** so these issue	
t we support, and	**what** we think **is most important , is to have mandatory reliability stand**	
that. So the President believes	**what's important is to hold both parties accountable** for	
straightforward about this.	**What's most important is to look at the case**, and the case wa	
r so 50 votes can be arrived at.	**What's important is to protect the country** and to pass h	
d be appropriate? I think	**what is most important is to protect the economy**. There are ce	
, the President 's view is that	**what is important is to provide the maximum safety** for pa	
hat statement. And he prevailed.	**What's important** now **is to bring the parties together** so	
d the President believes that	**what's so important** now **is to focus on the future**. And the	
ead to agreements on the ground.	**What's important** now **is to get back to that point**. Ari,	
o fight terror in all its forms.	**What's important** now **is to have a real crackdown on terr**	
map has three phases to it. And	**what's important** now **is to help** the Israelis and to help	
get to that one, will we? Well,	**what's important** now **is to move to the implementation** ph	

Concordance 4.8. *What's/is/was/remains* [adverb] *important* or *what* [noun or pronoun] THINK/BELIEVE *is important* followed by *is* + infinitive with *to*

Similarly, the concordance of *what's/is/was/remains* [adverb] *important* followed by *is that we* (12 occurrences) provides a list of priorities for the US administration which carry a positive semantic load (e.g. *what's most important is that we create the greatest number of jobs*; *what's most important is that we succeed in Iraq*) and of the administration's achievements (e.g. *what's important is that we have made significant strides in winning the war on terrorism*; *what's most important is that we are now insisting on results*).

Occurrences of *what's/is/was/remains* [adverb] *important* [adverb] *is that*,

when this pattern is not followed by *we*, and of *what's/is/was/remains* [adverb] *important* [adverb] *is for* followed by pronoun or noun phrase + infinitive with *to* (the latter is shown in Concordance 4.9) confirm what was observed earlier with regard to occurrences of *it is/'s/was* [adverb] *important that/for* not followed by *we*. They occur exclusively in the podium's words and both the noun phrase following *for* and the subject of the *that*-clause are often institutions or foreign governments that are told by the US government what they should do. Examples include: *what's* (*most*) *important is that Congress enact it/Iran fully comply/the terrorist be stopped/100 per cent effort be made by the Palestinian Authority/they dismantle the program/both parties take the actions to reduce the tensions/they both share the outcome of the document*.

ident 's point of view, **what's foremost important for Congress to remember is** that under
is a red line. But, obviously, **what is important here is for North Korea to recognize** th
sy? Jean, **what the President thinks is important is for a process to be in place** that al
are playing a helpful role, and **what's important is for all to cooperate**. Terrorism does
Hamas to stop being terrorists. **What's important is for everybody in the region to work**
ariance with what I said. I said **what's important is for Iraq to dismantle**. North Korea.
le. North Korea. I 'm sorry, **what was important , is for North Korea to dismantle** its n
ons to? On your first question, **what's important is for North Korea to understand** that t
progression of events. I think **what's important is for Saddam Hussein to show the world**
at 's why the President believes **what's important is for the American people to be steady**
fronted that threat. But, again, **what's important is for the commission to have full acce**
e. In the President 's judgment, **what's important is for the Palestinian Authority to bri**
big a step would that be? Well, **what's important is for the Palestinian Authority to mov**
prisoners? Well, I think that **what's important is for the parties to continue talking**
he President approaches it. **What's most important is for the power of the President 's** id
, so that won't be the case. But **what's important is for the Senate to act**. If the Senate
resident say in the Rose Garden, **what's important is for the Senate to get moving** and for
the process moving. And that 's **what is important now, is for the Senate** -- as Senator Da
evelopment. The President thinks **what's important now is for all parties to focus** on thei
er than the one that was passed. **What's important now is for the House and Senate** to get
ening; the attacks continue. And **what's important now is for the Palestinian Authority** to
that the Senate can pass a bill. **What's important now is for the Senate to compromise**. Th
tunately, and hence the problem. **What's important now is for the United Nations to make s**
uation has built itself up. **What's very important now is for the world to join together** a

Concordance 4.9. *What's/is* [adverb] *important* [adverb] *is for* followed by pronoun or noun phrase + infinitive with *to*

Examples including the *for* + noun phrase or pronoun + infinitive with *to* pattern are reported in Concordance 4.9, which shows how this pattern is

often used by the podium to invite governments opposing the US (e.g. *what's /what was important is for North Korea /Iraq to dismantle*), but also the US Senate and the whole Congress, to comply with the American government's requests.

I now move on to examine occurrences of *important* in attributive position. As mentioned above, *important* pre-modifies a number of nouns and noun phrases, the most frequent of which are listed in Table 4.13.

The most frequent noun pre-modified by *important* is *issue* (100 co-occurrences). If also co-occurrences of *important* and *issues* are counted, 169 citations of this type are found. In terms of relative frequency, they are quite evenly distributed in the first four phases of the corpus, and less frequent in phase 5. By observing the concordance of *important* with *issue* and *issues* as context words up to the third word to the right, it emerges that this pattern is used by the podium either to state that an issue is a priority for the administration, thus placing it high up on their agenda, or to confirm that a certain issue is still a priority for them, despite journalists' questions about changes in the agenda.

President identified. **Energy remains an**	**important issue**. Certainly with the important act
e world; **terrorism insurance remains an**	**important issue**, education, technology innovation
ntrols of our border, but it **remains an**	**important and vexing issue** about how to be an ope
? Well, again, **proliferation remains an**	**important issue** around the world -- to counter ef
on spending. **Welfare reform remains an**	**important issue** that is still mired in the Senate
timulus or not. But no, that **remains an**	**important issue** for many Democrats and Republican
ertain regards. And so, this **remains an**	**important issue** to be negotiated and to be discus
nt? Well, we shall see. This **remains an**	**important issue** for the future, it 's one of the
e soon? Unquestionably. This **remains an**	**important issue**. The President would still like t
point of view, it 's **simply remains too**	**important an issue** for Congress not to get the jo
is? You bet. **Health care remains a very**	**important issue** to the American people, and the P
will continue because it **remains a very**	**important issue**. It will not go away. About the c
atility of energy prices remains a very	**important issue** that the American people and the
ecurity. **Social Security remains a very**	**important issue** to the President, saving and pres
is **war against terrorism remains a very**	**important issue**, regardless of Osama bin Laden's
the **availability of energy remain very**	**important issues** for both the President and the C

Concordance 4.10. *Remain*(*s*) (*a*/*an*) (*very*) *important issue*(*s*)

The second pattern is indicated by the presence of *remain*(*s*) (16 occurrences, frequent in phase 3: see Concordance 4.10) or *always* (9 occurrences, frequent in phase 1). To the left of *remain*(*s*) or *always* there is a list of issues the podium maintains the White House is not disregarding: *energy*, *terrorism insurance*, *health care*, *welfare reform*, *proliferation*, *social security*, *war against terrorism*, *tax reform*, *treatment of journalists*, *food safety*, etc. Excerpt 4.28 below shows the podium's strategic use of this pattern in the context of a discussion about the administration's agenda.

(4.28) **JOURNALIST:** Ari, is it fair to say that this is **the President's number one priority** right now? **There's a lot of other stuff on the table** in the House, and the recess --

MR. FLEISCHER: There are **three important priorities** the President established in a speech he gave approximately a month ago, where he urged Congress to take action, and that is education reform. The second is patients' bill of rights, and the third is his faith-based initiative.

JOURNALIST: Energy and trade **can wait then**? The fast track **can wait**?

MR. FLEISCHER: That doesn't mean anything else is exclusive of those priorities, but those are the three the President identified. Energy **remains an important issue**. Certainly with the important actions that OPEC is considering taking, it's another reminder for why it's important for Congress to act on the President's energy initiative, so that way we don't have to be dependent on decisions made by foreign nations that affect America's energy supplies and America's energy dependence. Trade **is also a very important issue** to the President […].

(25 July 2001)

Similar patterns are found when the concordance of *important* with *priority* or *priorities* as context word up to the third word to the left is examined. These 186 citations are much more frequent in phase 5 than in previous ones. It might then be the case that, while in the first phases of the George W. Bush administration the podium referred to an *important issue* when he

wanted to identify a priority, in the last phase the word *priority* replaced *issue* (in singular and plural form) and the podium more explicitly expressed himself in terms of priorities on the agenda. This lexical change might be hypothesized to be related to the election campaign taking place during that phase, when Bush was running for his second term as president. In a campaign, things to be done and issues to be dealt with become priorities for a second presidential term.

Another noun that is frequently pre-modified by *important* in the briefings is *role*, which co-occurs with *important* 95 times in this corpus. The relative frequency of the occurrences of this pattern is definitely higher during the invasion of Iraq than in other phases, even though after the invasion it remains high. The most frequently recurring pattern in this context is *Congress/United Nations has an important role to play* (14 occurrences), which is similar to the pattern *it's important for Congress/Senate /United Nations to*, which had been identified earlier.

Part occurs 90 times as a collocate of *important* up to the third word to its right. In many cases, this pattern is used by the podium to justify an action or decision – a controversial one, at times – in terms of their being a part of a wider policy or strategy. At times, however, the phrase *an important part of* is used to state that a specific issue is still significant for the administration, but seen in the framework of a more comprehensive plan.

While patterns of co-occurrence of *important* and *priority*, *priorities*, *issue*, *issues*, *part* are in different ways related to the agenda-setting process, a number of other nouns that are pre-modified by *important* appear to serve quite a different function. These nouns, including *progress* (81 occurrences), *step* (84), *steps* (17) as well as other less frequent ones, co-occur with *important* mostly in the last phase of Bush's first term (75, 62 and 12 times respectively). The podium exploits the phrase *important progress* mainly to

refer to the situation in Iraq and, in particular, to emphasize improvements in the conflict, despite the increasing number of bad news coming from the Middle East. *Steps* is used in the same way, but with reference to the Palestinian issue as well as to Iraq, while *step* refers not only to progress in Iraq ("an important step in the process toward a democratic, free and peaceful Iraq"), but also to the administration's achievements on the domestic scene ("an important step toward building a culture of life in America"). This, again, may be accounted for with reference to the election race taking place during the last phase of Bush's first term as president.

In conclusion, occurrences of *important* in predicative and attributive position are almost equally divided in the corpus, and both are by far more frequent in the podium's words than in those of the press. When found in attributive position, *important* either premodifies such nouns as *priority*, *priorities*, *issue*(*s*), *part*, which mostly refer to the salience of issues on the agenda, or nouns emphasizing the achievements of this presidency, such as *step*(*s*), *progress*, *successes*, *accomplishment*, *improvements*. While the first type of pattern is more evenly distributed throughout the corpus, the second type is concentrated in the post-Iraq invasion phase. When found in predicative position, *important* is found in two types of patterns: one is "it is important to do something/that we do something" and is used by the podium to emphasize the US government's current priorities, expressed by referring to positive actions to be carried out by the administration. The second pattern is "it is important for somebody to do something" or "it is important that somebody do something"; in this case, the underlying meaning is more similar to the one identified in the case of *message*: a euphemism for a threat. The US administration, rather than using explicit markers of deontic modality to express the obligation for someone to do something, emphasizes the importance of an action to be taken, thus purporting to be

taking an impartial stance with regard to a given issue.

This analysis has thus shown that the high frequency of *important* in the corpus is not merely to be accounted for by the important role played by the debate on priorities on the agenda in the briefings. A significant share of the occurrences of *important* occurs indeed in a context where the US administration is emphasizing the importance of an action from someone else's point of view, and in so doing is indirectly threatening them with negative consequences if they do not act as suggested.

4.3.3 Importance

As shown in the previous paragraph, *important* has two main functions in the briefings' corpus: it is used by the podium to outline administration priorities and to put pressure on other actors so that they take action in the direction wanted by the administration. In this paragraph, I will attempt to find out whether the use of *importance* in the podium's words follows patterns and serves functions similar to those identified throughout the analysis of the corresponding adjective.

	all speakers	podium	press	Fleischer	McClellan
total	283	407	35	319	570
phase 1	152	220	31	221	152
phase 2	215	331	11	331	-------
phase 3	273	375	46	369	487
phase 4	186	244	80	251	0
phase 5	364	535	26	313	581

Table 4.15 Occurrences per million words of *importance* in different chronological phases, for different speakers and speaker roles.

First of all, the examination of normalized frequency data for *importance*, reported in Table 4.15, reveals that this word, which according to the OAD means "the state or fact of being of great significance or value", is almost

exclusively a feature of podium discourse: here, the ratio between occurrences in the words of the podium and in those of reporters is even higher than that of *important*. Furthermore, the relative frequency of *importance* significantly increases in phase 5, compared to previous ones.

In order to identify the most significant patterns in which *importance* occurs in the corpus, the same procedure adopted with *important* was followed: 2-word to 8-word clusters containing the search term were obtained by using *WordSmith*'s *Concord* tool; they represented a starting point for the examination of recurring patterns of usage of this noun in the briefings. Over 90 per cent of the occurrences of *importance* (865 out of 952) were found in the pattern *the importance of*, followed by a noun phrase, by a present participle or by a nominal relative clause introduced by *what*. I will now examine the most frequent phrases that follow the pattern *the importance of*.

The most frequent pattern in which *importance of* is followed by a verb or verb phrase is *the importance of working*, which occurs 30 times, all of which in the podium's words. The occurrences of this pattern are relatively more frequent in phases 1, 3 and 5, and rarer while the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq were taking place. Here, the emphasis is on cooperation: 18 occurrences of this pattern are followed by *together*, 6 by *with*, one by *cooperatively* and one by *shoulder to shoulder*. Out of these, 20 occur when the podium is talking about US diplomacy and the president's meeting or phone calls with foreign leaders. The remaining 6 are found in contexts in which cooperation between administration and Congress or bipartisan cooperation within Congress is emphasized.

The second most frequent pattern of this type is *moving forward*, which occurs 29 times in the corpus, almost exclusively in phase 5 (27 occurrences) and in the podium's words only. As shown in Concordance

4.11, 17 out of 29 occurrences of this pattern – highlighted in bold below – refer to the transition process that followed the removal of Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq. Thus, the podium often chooses a repeated wording to refer to the specific issue of transition in Iraq, and the repetition reinforces the notion that this issue is a priority for the administration.

so expect they will talk about the **importance of moving forward** as quickly as possible to
esident continues to emphasize the **importance of moving forward** on a constitutional amendm
xpect that they 'll talk about the **importance of moving forward** on a **free and peaceful fut**
ople. And he also talked about the **importance of moving forward** on a **United Nations Securi**
he President also talked about the **importance of moving forward** on a **United Nations Securi**
he issues they did discuss was the **importance of moving forward** on **building a free and pea**
Angola. And they talked about the **importance of moving forward** on **elections**, that the Pre
forward on the elections, and the **importance of moving forward** on elections to helping th
Minister Erdogan talked about the **importance of moving forward** on **Iraqi elections** in Janu
the President will talk about the **importance of moving forward** on reforms in the Middle E
essional leaders to talk about the **importance of moving forward** on strengthening Social Se
uch with leaders in Iraq about the **importance of moving forward** on **the date that was set** b
update, and then talked about the **importance of moving forward** on the domestic agenda, pa
ce, the President talked about the **importance of moving forward** on **the elections**, and Prim
and the President talked about the **importance of moving forward** on **the elections**. The Pres
ek. The President talked about the **importance of moving forward** on the peace process, and
phone call, they talked about the **importance of moving forward** on **the timetable** that was
on track. And he talked about the **importance of moving forward** on **these elections**. I thin
n & and we were talking about the **importance of moving forward** on **this priority**. This Pre
erence. He stated very clearly the **importance of moving forward** on this temporary worker p
ade reaffirming the commitment and **importance of moving forward** on **those elections**. What o
rs will, shortly here, discuss the **importance of moving forward** on trade and moving forwar
we 're making. He talked about the **importance of moving forward** on **transferring sovereignt**
the past, we all agree now on the **importance of moving forward** to **build a free and peacef**
ut right up there with that is the **importance of moving forward** to make America more prosp
I think everybody recognizes the **importance of moving forward** to **transfer sovereignty** to
national community understands the **importance of moving forward with the Iraqi people** on t
inst terrorism. They discussed the **importance of moving forward** with the peace process in
members of Congress recognize the **importance of moving forward** with this request quickly.

Concordance 4.11. *Importance of moving forward*

The third most frequent pattern of this type is *importance of making sure/certain*, which occurs 21 times in the corpus. The former variant (with *sure*) occurs 18 times and is only used by Scott McClellan in phase 5. The latter (with *certain*) occurs less often – just 3 times – and is used only by Ari Fleischer in phases 2 and 3. *Importance of making sure* is used by McClellan to emphasize an objective the administration strongly intends to achieve. In

this case, the focus is more on US economy and welfare than on foreign affairs: in 11 out of 18 cases, references are, e.g., to *the importance of making sure that everyone who is looking for work can find a job / we have an educated workforce / that workers* […] *are trained to fill the high-paying, high-growth jobs / that young Americans have the skills needed to fill these high-paying, high-growth jobs of the future / that people can choose the kind of health care that best fits their individual needs*. Other citations refer to the importance of domestic communication regarding the war on terrorism and the conflict in Iraq (e.g. *the importance of making sure the American people have the full story about the progress that we are making in Iraq / that the executive branch and Congress are getting the best possible intelligence*). Fleischer, in contrast, uses the phrase *importance of making certain*, followed in 2 out of 3 cases by a *that*-clause containing a negation, and expressing the US position about something that other actors should not do: *the importance of making certain that the United Nations doesn't make the same mistake twice / they do not take any steps that could destabilize the region*. Thus, not only do the two podiums use slightly different phrases, but they use them in different co-texts.

The next most frequent pattern is *the importance of passing*, which is found 24 times in the corpus, once again uttered by the podium only. Here, as shown in Concordance 4.12, reference is mainly made to presidential speeches and remarks putting pressure on Congress to pass laws, reforms, packages, which appear in the right-hand side of the concordance below. In a few cases, these pieces of legislation are explicitly presented in a positive way: such adjectives as *robust*, *strong*, *large* and such nouns as *growth*, *protection*, *stimulus* convey an impression that these laws or reforms will positively affect citizens. In 6 more cases, besides, the pattern *the importance of Congress passing* is found. The recurrence of this pattern shows how the administration, having no direct control on Congress, as explained in

Chapter 1, exploits the briefings, and public communication in general, as a primary means to push reforms and legislation and achieve its political objectives.

ant **note** to the **Congress** about the **importance of passing** a **robust jobs** and **growth package**.
Convention. He will **talk** about the **importance of passing** a **strong** patient **protection law**. T
rrow on a similar topic, about the **importance of passing** an economic **stimulus package**. The
e and you will soon **hear** about the **importance of passing** as **large** a **tax cut** as possible, at
e end of his **remarks**, touch on the **importance of passing** comprehensive energy **legislation**,
dent **talk** just last week about the **importance of passing** energy **legislation**, about the impo
the **case** to the **Congress** about the **importance of passing legislation** to create the Departme
the members of **Congress** about the **importance of passing legislation** to provide for a Depar
ients and then **make remarks** on the **importance of passing** medical liability **reform**, before h
sident will **make remarks** about the **importance of passing** medical liability **reform** to help a
the **Senate clearly understands** the **importance of passing** out the President 's nominees. Ar
leaders of those nations about the **importance of passing** the Andean trade preference **act**. A
essage has been **received** about the **importance of passing** the border **security** and 245(i) **mea**
President is going to **focus** on the **importance of passing** the domestic **agenda**, passing the b
of **remarks** this morning about the **importance of passing** the economic **plan**, and we 'll keep
talk to **different people** about the **importance of passing** the **package**. It 's part of how the
the **case** to the **Congress** about the **importance of passing** the President 's economic **stimulus**
he **discussed** with the **leaders** the **importance of passing** the **stimulus package** to help the e
he will **remind** the **Congress** of the **importance of passing** the **vital** domestic **agenda** that we
eld is currently **talking** about the **importance of passing** this **legislation** and we hope that
purpose of going up to **discuss** the **importance of passing** this **legislation** with members on t
ing about the **supplemental** and the **importance of passing** this **quickly**. And we 'll continue
sing energy legislation, about the **importance of passing** tort **reforms**. So the President wil
members of **Congress** to **discuss** the **importance of passing** trade promotion **authority** this fal

Concordance 4.12. *Importance of passing*

Patterns in which the phrase *the importance of getting* is found (19 occurrences) are more varied than those discussed above. The phrase is found 18 times in the podium's words and once in a reporter's question. However, the main meaning of *getting* in this concordance (4.13) appears to be "to succeed in attaining, achieving, or experiencing; to obtain" (OAD): there are 4 occurrences of *getting it/this/reforms done/enacted*, 3 cases in which *getting* (*protection*, *an agreement*) means "obtaining" and 2 where the pattern "*getting* somebody to do something" is found. Here, again, the podium is emphasizing administration objectives and priorities and the need to achieve them.

ult of the attacks, as well as the **importance of getting** a bipartisan **agreement** on the budg
others in the region recognize the **importance of getting** a unified security **team in place** f
ss will focus on education and the **importance of getting** an **agreement** with the Congress on
d the Palestinian Authority of the **importance of getting** back to the road map. Israel says
The President has talked about the **importance of getting Democrats and Republicans to work**
eeds of the Afghani people and the **importance of getting** food to the people of Afghanistan.
President will also talk about the **importance of getting** generic drugs to seniors. He will
rnational community recognizes the **importance of getting Iran to stop** its pursuit of nuclea
sident made his case, stressed the **importance of getting it done**. They also talked about ap
eniors. He 'll also talk about the **importance of getting** medical liability **reforms enacted**
reminder to all parties about the **importance of getting** on track on the road map. What do
deficits. He also talked about the **importance of getting pension protection** for America's w
h and tax plan to create jobs, the **importance of getting** prescription drugs to senior citiz
e President believes deeply in the **importance of getting** prescription drugs to seniors, to
e does he rank in postwar Iraq the **importance of getting** rid of the Saddam Hussein family?
creates surpluses. So that 's the **importance of getting the economy growing**. And at the sa
Iraq. And they also discussed the **importance of getting** the homeland security department l
resident today will talk about the **importance of getting this done**. You know, I think when
hers are. But he has indicated the **importance of getting this done** and sending a signal to
nt will continue to talk about the **importance of getting** this down now. Congress has made a

Concordance 4.13. *Importance of getting*

A very similar meaning appears to be attached to most of the 15 occurrences of *importance of having* in the corpus, which are followed by such phrases as *strong enforcement action / an educated workforce / a denuclearized Korean Peninsula / a non-nuclear Peninsula / sustainable policies / it done / that in place.*

The pattern *the importance of continuing* occurs 19 times, 15 of which in phase 5, and in 7 cases is followed by phrases already retrieved in the concordances discussed above: see for example *the importance of continuing to work together* (3 occurrences) or *the importance of continuing to move forward* (2 occurrences).

Another frequent pattern which is worth mentioning is *importance of advancing*, which occurs 13 times, in the podium's words only, and is shown in Concordance 4.14 below. 3 of these occurrences date back to the period preceding the invasion of Iraq and, while the remaining 10 date back to the post-invasion phase. In the former phase, 2 of the 3 citations are found in the phrase "and both leaders agreed on the historic and strategic importance of advancing Turkey's evolution toward the European Union",

which is repeated twice, with no variation at all, in two different briefings during the same week in November 2002. As regards phase 5, all the occurrences of this pattern dating back to that period, except one, are found in the phrase *the importance of advancing freedom* (9 occurrences), which is extended as *the importance of advancing freedom and democracy* 3 times, and as *the importance of advancing freedom to achieve/achieving peace* twice. What emerges from the examination of the way this pattern is used by the podium is, once again, that each specific pattern is chosen to express a very specific notion or to deal with a topic in particular.

security in the region and the **importance of advancing economic development** through ec
will continue to talk about the **importance of advancing freedom**, because **advancing free**
n, the President recognizes the **importance of advancing freedom**. **Freedom and security** g
e **importance of freedom** and the **importance of advancing freedom**. I don't want to -- a w
I expect he will talk about the **importance of advancing freedom and democracy**, and the
speech he gave last week on the **importance of advancing freedom and democracy**. And the
Iraq. He speaks often about the **importance of advancing freedom and democracy** in a vola
ow's remarks, talking about the **importance of advancing freedom and the power of freedo**
. And so he will talk about the **importance of advancing freedom to achieve peace** abroad
sident & he 'll talk about the **importance of advancing freedom to achieving peace**. And
le. Both leaders also noted the **importance of advancing the Middle East peace process**.
d on the **historic and strategic importance of advancing Turkey's evolution** toward the E
d on the **historic and strategic importance of advancing Turkey's evolution** toward the E

Concordance 4.14. *Importance of advancing*

y, by and large, **recognizes** the **importance of confronting** and defeating these **terrorists**.
e. **September 11th taught us** the **importance of confronting** the **dangerous new threats** that
September 11th taught us of the **importance of confronting** the **new dangerous threats** that
e clear in a very vivid way the **importance of confronting** the **new threats** we face. And th
s briefing by **talking about** the **importance of confronting** the **spread of weapons of mass d**
rd the President **talk about** the **importance of confronting** the **threat from the spread of w**
i Arabia **recognizes** that -- the **importance of confronting** the **threats posed by al Qaeda**.
will continue to **talk about** the **importance of confronting** the **threats** we face, and acting
ia and Pakistan **recognizing** the **importance of confronting** these **threats**. Saudi Arabia is
th vividly **brought to light** the **importance of confronting** these **threats** and confronting t
ed Nations and **talked about** the **importance of confronting** this **threat** in the **post-Septemb**
r 11th world that **taught us** the **importance of confronting threats** before it is too late.
s. **September 11th taught us** the **importance of confronting threats** before they reach our s

Concordance 4.15. *Importance of confronting*

Concordance 4.15 shows another pattern that occurs 13 times, and which is found in a very specific co-text: *the importance of confronting*, which is used

only by Scott McClellan in phase 5. As the concordance clearly shows, what, according to McClellan, is important to confront is the *threat*(*s*) (11 occurrences to the immediate right of this pattern) posed by terrorists and WMDs. Patterns to the right of *importance of confronting* contain, in 6 cases, a reference to the 9/11 attacks, whose occurrence is presented as a lesson about the need for the administration to focus on terrorism and WMDs.

The pattern *the importance of addressing* occurs 12 times, is used by Scott McClellan only and exclusively in phase 5, and is used in co-texts similar, to the ones in which *the importance of confronting* is found, though more varied. What is stressed is the need to address problems such as *threats* (4 occurrences), *deficits* (2 occurrences), *challenges*, *concerns*, *costs*, *the security situation*. However, references to the 9/11 attacks are not found in the proximity of this pattern.

Other frequent patterns of this type, all of which are only found in the podium's words, are *the importance of taking* (11 occurrences, found 6 times in the phrase *the importance of taking action*, once in *the importance of taking steps* and twice in *the importance of taking responsibility*), *the importance of acting* (10 occurrences, all found in phase 5 and in Scott McClellan's words) and *the importance of supporting* (10 occurrences; in 5 cases support is expressed in favour of a category or group such as *small business*, *our troops*, *the Iraqi people* and *community colleges*; in the remaining 5 it is expressed in favour of ideas and actions, e.g. *the ideas of liberty, democracy and freedom*; *democratic reforms*; *free trade*).

As mentioned earlier, not only present participle verb forms, but also nouns and noun phrases are sometimes found to the immediate right of *the importance of* in the *WHoB* corpus. Among these, the most frequent are noun phrases containing *trade*: *importance of free trade* occurs 7 times, *importance of trade* 6 times, *importance of trade promotion authority* 3 times, and *importance of a*

trade agreement, *importance of trade initiatives*, *importance of the trade embargo* each occur once. Other nouns recurring to the right of *importance of* include: (*religious*) *freedom* (7 occurrences); *the United Nations/UN*; *democracy*; *passage* (5 occurrences each); *education*; *faith*; *the mission* (4 occurrences each); *a non-nuclear/nuclear-free peninsula*; *a free media/press*; *a free and peaceful/free, democratic and prosperous Iraq*; *this issue*; *intelligence reform*; *our relationship* (3 occurrences each). This type of pattern is used to emphasize the significance to the administration of a topic, of a value, of an action, of an objective or of an institution. It is, however, much more infrequent than the pattern in which *importance of* is followed by a present participle verb form.

The analysis reported above has shown that patterns containing the noun *importance* recur in the podium's words as a way to give prominence specific issues or to actions to be taken, and that different patterns of this type occur when different topics are discussed. However, it is important to check whether the source of these evaluations about the importance of issues and actions is the podium himself or someone on whose behalf the podium is speaking. In order to do check whether *importance* occurs in reported clauses in the briefings, I will briefly explore the co-text to the immediate left of the search term.

The analysis of collocates up to 5 words to the left of *importance* shows that a number of communication and speech act verbs occur in that position. TALK is the most frequent of these, as its various forms occur 262 times in total, 202 of which in phase 5. The subject of TALK is *he* in 82 cases, in 79 of which the pronoun refers to the President; in 61 more cases, the subject of TALK is *President*. Thus, in 140 cases, such patterns as *the President/he talked/talks/is talking/will talk about the importance* are found, such as in the following excerpt, where, as in numerous other cases, podium and reporters are discussing the topics highlighted by the President in a speech:

(4.29) **JOURNALIST:** On another topic, will the President make any reference to Iraq in **his speech tomorrow**, in his war update?

MR. MCCLELLAN: I'm going to let him address that tomorrow. As I noted earlier, stay tuned for **his speech**, but **he will talk about** the new threats of the 21st century; and **he will talk about the importance of defending freedom, preserving freedom, and defending peace and extending the peace**. And so **we'll let his remarks happen** tomorrow morning. I don't want to get ahead of the President.

(31 May 2002)

In 22 instances, the subject of TALK is *they*, which refers to the President and another leader, such as a foreign president or prime minister, in 17 cases, and to the President and members of Congress in 6 cases. In 11 cases the subject of TALK is *we*, while only in 4 cases, found in the reporters' words, the subject of TALK is *you*, referred to the podium or the administration. Finally, only in 2 cases, found in Scott McClellan's words, the subject is *I*.

The second most frequent verb that collocates with *importance* up to 5 words to the left is RECOGNIZE (47 occurrences). UNDERSTAND, which carries a similar meaning, also occurs 31 occurrences in the same position. In 7 cases, the subject of these two verbs is the President. In these cases the podium appears to be acknowledging, on behalf of the President, the importance of something reporters are accusing him to be disregarding, as shown in excerpt 4.30 below.

(4.30) **JOURNALIST**: I'm interested in the assertion of executive power that the legal counsel is making, that the President needs no further authorization to make war on a sovereign nation and change its government, with a substantial number of

U.S. troops involved. What other President has ever claimed that ability? Would that be LBJ in the Vietnam War?

MR. FLEISCHER: Let me just -- again, I want to assert to you that **the President understands** that when it comes to protecting the American people and people around the world from threats to peace, including Saddam Hussein's threat to peace, **the President knows full-well the importance of public opinion** in a democracy, **the importance of having a country support any such endeavor**. **He understands the importance of congressional opinion**; **he understands the importance of world opinion**. All of these are vital factors to the functioning of democracies. **The President fundamentally understands that**.

(3 September 2002)

Much more often, however, the subject of RECOGNIZE and UNDERSTAND is a third party: foreign countries or leaders (39 occurrences), such as *North Korea* or *Prime Minister Allawi and the Iraqi people*; individuals or groups in Congress or Senate (8 occurrences); *the American people* and *our troops/our men and women in uniform/in the military* (5 occurrences each). In the case of foreign leaders or countries or of members of Congress or Senate, what is presented as important is an administration priority or objective, such as *winning this war against terrorism*, *disarming Saddam Hussein*, or *passing the President's nominees*, and such a pattern is used to exert pressure on these parties to act in the direction wanted by the administration, as in the following excerpt:

(4.31) **JOURNALIST**: **If North Korea is not listening** or not agree any dialogue with the United States, **does the United States assert any aggressive pressure on North Korea**?

MR. MCCLELLAN: We need to continue. We are -- continue to work to keep maximum pressure on North Korea with our friends and others in the region. That's what's going on right now. **North Korea needs to understand the**

importance of dismantling its nuclear weapons program, and we're working through diplomatic channels to achieve a peaceful resolution.

(14 November 2002)

Another verb that frequently collocates with *importance* up to 5 words to its left is DISCUSS, which occurs 46 times. Here, the most frequent subject is *they*, which occurs 11 times, and refers to the President and a foreign leader in 9 cases, and to the President and members of Congress in the 2 remaining citations. The subject is *he*, referred to the President, in 8 cases, and *President* in 5 cases. Rather than being used to talk about the content of a Presidential speech, such a pattern as *discuss*(*ed*) *the importance* is mostly found when the President is attending a bilateral meeting. The importance of an issue or of an action, in these cases, is not merely stated by the President in a speech, but has to be negotiated with other leaders at a summit, during a state visit or a phone call. The two strategies are compared in the following excerpt:

(4.32) **JOURNALIST:** Ari, on the Free Trade Area of the Americas, […] there is also an accusation by the President of AFL-CIO saying since the President took the office, he has been calling him, and the President never called him back. And he says, if the President is ready to discuss labor issues of the Free Trade Area of the Americas, why he isn't taking care of the labor organizations and –

MR. FLEISCHER: […] The Congress, of course, is in recess, and the President looks forward to continuing discussions. **He indicated today in his remarks about the importance of trade promotion authority**, securing that authority from the United States Congress. And upon his return from **the summit in Quebec, where he will again discuss the importance of trade promotion authority**, he looks forward to developing an aggressive strategy with the Congress, so we can pass it. It's always a difficult fight. It will be difficult this year as well. But the President is determined to make the case and to succeed […].

Other verbs that frequently occur to the left of *importance* are EMPHASIZE (26 occurrences, 17 of which with the President as subject), AGREE (17 occurrences, 16 of which with such phrases as *the two*, *both*, *they*, referred to two or more leaders, generally including the US President, as subject; it is used by the podium when outlining the outcome of a bilateral meeting), STRESS (17 occurrences, 11 of which with the President as subject; in the remaining cases, the subjects are foreign leaders or nations), FOCUS (15 occurrences, 9 of which with the President as subject), BELIEVE (11 occurrences, all of which with the podium as subject) and HIGHLIGHT (7 occurrences, 6 of which with the President as subject).

Importance has thus been found to be often used by the podium as the direct object of speech act and communication verbs, the vast majority of which have the President as subject. The assessment of the importance of an issue or of an action to be taken, thus, is often attributed by the podium to other actors such as the President and foreign leaders. When the statement about the importance of something comes from the President, the podium presents him as the guarantee of the salience of an issue. Furthermore, as shown in this paragraph, the use of *importance* appears to represent one way for the administration to put pressure on third parties to comply with the administration's requests: to state the importance of an action to be taken, through the authoritative mouth of the President, inevitably means to put pressure on counterparts, either on the domestic or on the international scene. On the other hand, when foreign leaders and governments, the international community or Congressmen and Senators are represented as stating the importance of something, the verbs used are generally such ones as AGREE, UNDERSTAND and RECOGNIZE. The use of these verbs presupposes that someone else – namely, the Bush

administration – is stating that something is important, and the administration's counterparts are simply acknowledging that assessment and acting in consequence. Thus, in both cases the use of the noun *importance* appears to be aimed at persuading the administration's counterparts at acting in a specific way.

The use of both *importance* and *important* by the podium in the briefings appears to be in the first place related to the negotiation of the position of issues on the agenda. A deeper-level investigation has shown, however, that these words serve a more complex purpose: that of putting pressure on allies and opponents at home or abroad to follow the agenda set by the US administration and act in consequence.

4.4 The clarity of words

As mentioned in paragraph 1.2, for political communication to be effective, messages must be tailored in such a way as to reach their targets and affect their views and positions. It is of utmost importance, then, for messages to be communicated in as clear a way as possible. The presence of the adjective *clear* in the *WHoB* corpus' keyword list may thus be hypothesized to be related with this need for effective communication on the part of the Bush administration. According to the OAD, the main meanings of *clear* are (1) "easy to perceive, understand, or interpret"; (2) "free of anything that marks or darkens something"; (3) "free of any obstructions or unwanted objects". The first of these meanings is the one that is related to the idea of communicating something easy for targets to receive and decode.

In this paragraph, I will attempt to ascertain whether the high frequency of *clear* in this corpus, also indicated by the comparison with reference corpora reported in Table 4.16, is mainly related to such a

process. In order to do so, I will examine the concordances for the main groups of clusters in which *clear* occurs. Before moving to this part of the analysis, however, I will examine the dispersion of the occurrences of *clear* in the *WHoB* corpus, which is shown in Table 4.17.

	WHoB	Cordis US	BNC	COCA
clear	780	496	250	195

Table 4.16 Occurrences per million words of *clear* in the *WHoB* corpus and in some reference corpora

	all speakers	podium	press	Fleischer	McClellan
total	780	944	446	540	1656
phase 1	472	539	339	541	457
phase 2	540	596	244	596	-------
phase 3	604	673	478	590	2092
phase 4	495	403	681	358	456
phase 5	1123	1449	480	330	1646

Table 4.17 Occurrences per million words of *clear* in different chronological phases, for different speakers and speaker roles.

Data reported in the table above show that the relative frequency of *clear*, which occurs 2626 times in the *WHoB* corpus and, together with *important*, is one of the most frequent adjectives in the corpus, is twice as high in the podium's words than in those of the press. Furthermore, the recurrent use of *clear* is more a feature of Scott McClellan's discourse than of Ari Fleischer's, and the relative frequency of this adjective significantly increases in time.

What immediately emerges from the observation of the list of clusters containing *clear* is that more than one third of its occurrences are pre-modified by *very* – there are 933 occurrences of *very clear* in the corpus – or by other intensifying adverbs, such as *pretty* (42 occurrences), *abundantly* (25), *quite* (17), *more* (16), *perfectly* (11), *increasingly* (8), *repeatedly* (8), Furthermore, 27 occurrences of the phrase *crystal*(-)*clear* occur in the corpus.

Clear is indeed the adjective most frequently premodified by *very* in the *WHoB* corpus.

4.4.1 Clear in predicative position

By examining the list of 2-word to 8-word clusters containing *clear*, it can be observed that, out of 2626 total occurrences, this adjective is used 2075 times (77 per cent) in predicative position in the *WHoB* corpus. Of these, 1316 (63 per cent) are occurrences of the pattern MAKE [something] [adverb] *clear* and 723 (35 per cent) of the pattern BE [adverb] *clear*. I will now analyze each of these two patterns individually.

Patterns where *clear* is preceded by MAKE represent about a half of the total occurrences of *clear* in the *WHoB* corpus, and their relative frequency is about twice as high in phase 5, compared to previous phases. In 333 cases MAKE immediately precedes *clear* (*make clear* occurs 52 times, *makes clear* 17 times, *made clear* 249 times, *making clear* 15 times). In the remaining cases, an object, such as a noun phrase or a pronoun, and/or an adverb are found in between. The most frequent pattern of the second type is *made it very clear*, which occurs 343 times, followed by *made it clear*, which occurs 206 times.

The most frequent subject of MAKE when followed, immediately or not, by *clear*, is *president*, which is found 462 times in this position. The relative frequency of this pattern is highest in phase 2, after the 9/11 attacks, but it is also high in phase 5. Only 15 occurrences (3 per cent of the total) are uttered by reporters. Table 4.18 shows the most frequent clusters of this type. The first two (*the President has made it very clear*; *the president made it very clear*) are used almost exclusively by Scott McClellan, and, except one occurrence in the words of a reporter, are uttered by the podium only.

cluster	occurrences
the president has made it very clear	82
the president made it very clear	62
the president has made it clear	60
the president has made clear	58
the president made clear	35
the president made very clear	25
the president made it clear	24
the president made that very clear	19
the president has made it abundantly clear	10
the president has made his views very clear	8

Table 1.18. Most frequent clusters of the type *president* MAKE [object] [adverb] *clear*

Nearly all occurrences of this pattern are either followed by a reported clause – with or without *that* – or include a direct object, such as a noun phrase, pronoun or determiner (e.g. *it*, *that*, but also *his views* and *his position*). In practice, thus, all these cases, *clear* is found in a phrase used to report the president's statements, such as the ones discussed in Chapter 3. I examined the wider co-text of a random sample (20 per cent) of these concordance lines, in order to see what topics are dealt with in the reported clauses. In general, this pattern appears to be used by the podium to report the President's firm and resolute position on issues referred to in reporters' questions. The topics, of course, vary as priorities on the agenda gain or lose importance.

In phase 1, statements are less focused on foreign policy (e.g. *he is not in favor of increasing payroll taxes*), while in phase 2 the focus moves to protecting of the US from terrorism and dismantling terrorism, as excerpts 4.33 and 4.34 show.

(4.33) **JOURNALIST:** In limiting this battle against terrorism to groups which threaten the United States, what incentive is there for the international coalition the

President is trying to assemble to join in? And in particular, with Britain, which has its own issues with fighting the IRA?

MR. FLEISCHER: Well, when I say that, **the President has made it clear to his allies** on the phone that **these attacks were aimed at Western civilization**; they were aimed at those who cherish liberty. And that does include nations outside the United States.

(18 September 2001)

(4.34) **JOURNALIST:** Ari, Iran has soundly rejected any overtures that the U.S. might or might not be making in terms of building an international coalition; in fact, calling the U.S. effort "disgusting." Any reaction?

MR. FLEISCHER: Well, again, **the President has made it clear that this is a time for nations to choose** about whether they are with the United States and the free world in the war against terrorism or they are not. And I will leave it at that.

(26 September 2001)

Here, the tone becomes harsher and more resolute and the President, through the podium, is directly or indirectly addressing other countries' governments and stating a strong position about the reaction to the 9/11 attacks – a position about which the addressees cannot but take a stance.

In phase 3, besides statements about the war on terrorism (e.g. *the President has made very clear his goal of defeating terrorism around the world*), many others specifically regard the build-up to the Iraq war and the related ultimatums issued to the United Nations Security Council on the one hand, and to Saddam Hussein on the other, as shown by excerpts 4.35 and 4.36 below. In excerpt 4.35, the pattern "it's important that somebody do something", discussed in the previous paragraph, is also found, in one of its rare occurrences in the reporters' words.

(4.35) **JOURNALIST**: Ari, you've repeatedly talked about why **it's important that Saddam Hussein follow exactly what the Security Council has mandated** in the 17 resolutions. Should you be defeated in the Security Council on this new resolution that you're introducing today, would the President consider it to be a violation of the Security Council's will to go forward with a military action in any case?

MR. FLEISCHER: Well, **the President has always made clear that he hopes the Security Council will enforce its resolutions** to disarm Saddam Hussein. But **if they do not**, the coalition of the willing will do so.

(24 February 2003)

(4.36) **JOURNALIST**: Any reaction to Blix's comments that he regards the January 27th report as simply another interim report, and that it will take him well into March to finish the inspections or to proceed to a point where he can make a so-called comprehensive report? Does this delay the timetable?

MR. FLEISCHER: **From the beginning, the President has made very clear that the burden is on Saddam Hussein to comply and to disarm.** Nothing has changed that. The burden remains with Saddam Hussein. The issue is not how long the inspections will last; the issue is whether Saddam Hussein this time is finally willing to disarm. He's been given a final chance to disarm. And, regrettably, we've seen no evidence that he has made the strategic choice to disarm and to come into compliance with the United Nations. We first saw this is in the Iraqi declaration, which the world agreed was inadequate, and Saddam has not complied and, therefore, time is running out.

(14 January 2003)

In phases 2 and 3, thus, the podium appears to be using this pattern to induce other actors on the domestic and international scene to take action as a consequence of considering the president's position, so strongly stated in these exchanges. The use of this pattern in such contexts is similar to the use of *message* as a euphemism for a threat, signalled in paragraph 4.2.

The tone, however, changed again in phase 4, when the attack on Iraq

had begun and efforts at persuading the world of the need to remove Saddam Hussein from power were over. Statements reported by using this pattern in this phase are relatively less resolute than the ones found in previous phases, as in the following excerpt:

(4.37) **JOURNALIST**: Ari, if I may ask you a related question -- at what point will the regime of Saddam Hussein be disarmed? That is, what do you mean by disarmed in the sense that you've been using it in this room for seven months?

MR. FLEISCHER: Well, **the President always made clear that disarmament applied** to weapons of mass destruction -- biological weapons, chemical weapons, and any infrastructure for the development of nuclear weapons. That's what the President has always referred to as disarmament. That's his focus, and that's what he refers to.

(24 April 2003)

In phase 5, statements reported through this pattern are more varied as far as their topics are concerned. The podium here used this pattern to report the President's position on such issues as the intelligence reform bill, the extension of the 9/11 Commission, the White House's cooperation in the Plame affair inquiry, treatment of Guantanamo prisoners.

The second most frequent subject of MAKE [object] [adverb] *clear* is *we*, which occurs 186 times in the corpus with this function. In agreement with what was noted in Chapter 3 regarding the use of *we* in the whole corpus and as the subject of reporting verbs, the first person plural pronoun is practically absent from occurrences of this pattern in phases 1 and 2 (two and one occurrence respectively) and mostly found in phase 5 (155 occurrences). Only 3 of these occurrences are found in the words of reporters. Table 4.19 shows the most frequent clusters in which this pattern is found.

cluster	occurrences
we've made it very clear	37
we've made that very clear	22
we've made it clear	10
we've made our views very clear	10
we've made clear	8

Table 4.19. Most frequent clusters of the type *we* MAKE [object] [adverb] *clear*

The 18 occurrences of this pattern found in phase 3 are similar to those found in the same phase with *president* as subject: here, again, the podium reports resolute statements where US opponents such as Iraq, Iran and North Korea, as shown in Concordance 4.16, are presented as being given the last chance by the US administration or by the international community – *we*, as shown in paragraph 4.2.5, may refer to more than one group or entity, and its antecedent is not always explicit – to act in such a way as to comply with the US requests.

laying, and **we 've made that abundantly clear** . And it is **his choice**; he needs to foll
-deal issue? **We have made it abundantly clear** from the very beginning that **this is no**
ut **disarmament**. And **we 've made it very clear** he has a **final opportunity** to comply. A
y and **disarm**, and **we 've made that very clear** . He has **defied**, over 11 years, 16 resol
existing settlements. **We 've made that clear** in the past. In his conversation this m
going to be to that? **We have long made clear** our concerns about **Iran's pursuit of nu**
emocratic way. And that as **we have made clear** repeatedly for 20 years into this hemis
arch the 8th of this year, "**We 've made clear** that **actions like targeted killings nee**
at the podium. But **we have made it very clear** that if there is information that **needs**
t 's a good question. **We have made that clear** , that **Iraq does possess chemical and bi**
tting into "ifs" here -- but **we made it clear** that **they need** to follow that and not c
would be required, **we have made crystal- clear** that this is **about disarmament** as well
al opportunity. But **we 've made it very clear** that we approach this with **a zero-toler**
from their immediate duties. **We made it clear** that **we support an investigation** so lon
-- Like I said, I just said **we made it clear** the **Iraqi regime needs to abide** by its
s clear to North Korea, **we have made it clear** to **North Korea**, that **this is not busine**
e attacks. And that 's what **we 've made clear** to the American people, as well, that t
he does not comply, **we 've made it very clear** what **we are prepared** to do. What are yo
g. But **we have made our position pretty clear** when it comes to **Chechnya**. -- any suppo

Concordance 4.16. *We* MAKE [adverb][object] *clear* in phase 3

In phase 4, the same pattern occurs 10 times, of which 9 are found in the podium's words, and is found in exchanges regarding Syria, Iran and North

Korea. Examples include: *we made clear to the North Koreans our policy*; *we have made clear what Syria needs to do*; *we have made clear to Iran that we would oppose any outside organization's interference in Iraq*. Through this pattern, thus, the US administration once again strongly states its position and firm intentions with regard to issues involving their opponents.

In phase 5, statements reported by the podium using the *we* MAKE [object] [adverb] *clear* pattern, which occurs 155 times in this phase, are more varied. In 13 cases, such as the one reported in excerpt 4.38 below, the statement contains the verb NEED TO and in 2 cases it contains MUST and expresses the firm US administration position that someone has to comply with their requests. Most of these statements, including the one in excerpt 4.38, are addressed to nations opposing the US, such as those found in phase 4.

(4.38) **JOURNALIST:** Can you clarify the status of negotiations with Iran to curtail their nuclear energy program?

MR. MCCLELLAN: Yes, there's -- as far as I know at this point, I'm not aware of any formal agreement that has been reached. We will see what happens. Those discussions I think are ongoing between our European friends and Iran. **What we have made clear is that Iran needs to fully comply** with its international commitments. They made commitments and **they need to fully comply**. **If they do not comply**, we think that is a matter that needs to be taken up at the next meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency later this month and referred to the Security Council.

(9 November 2004)

Not all occurrences of this pattern in this phase, however, are used to report such strong statements; others, such as the one in excerpt 4.39, which regards the Abu Ghraib torture scandal, are more similar to admissions than to threats:

(4.39) **JOURNALIST:** […] The President had two interviews today the White House set up for Arabic TV networks. In neither did the President apologize. Why was that?

MR. MCCLELLAN: Well, **we've already said that we're sorry** for what occurred, and we're deeply sorry to the families and what they must be feeling and going through, as well. **The President is sorry** for what occurred and the pain that it has caused. It does not represent what America stands for. America stands for much better than what happened.

JOURNALIST: He didn't think that was necessary to say in his own voice, with his own words?

MR. MCCLELLAN: Well, again, he was -- he was addressing the questions that were asked, but **we've made it very clear that we are deeply sorry** for what occurred. […]

In sum, however, no significant differences were detected in the type of statement reported using MAKE *clear* as a reporting verb, with *President* or *we* as subjects. The significant difference is the same that was detected in Chapter 3 with regard to the distribution of sources: *we* as the source of statements is mostly a feature of podium discourse in phase 5, while the President's statements are more evenly distributed throughout the corpus.

The third most frequent subject of the MAKE [object] [adverb] *clear* pattern is *I*, which is found 102 times in this position, 94 of which in the podium's words. The majority of these occurrences (64) are found in phase 5, where, as shown in Chapter 3, the relative frequency of the first person singular pronoun is significantly higher than in previous phases. When the podium uses this pattern, he does so in order to emphasize a statement that he has already made in the same or in a previous briefing, such as in the following excerpt, in which Scott McClellan reiterates his defense of the White House management of the Plame affair:

(4.40) **JOURNALIST:** Scott, has there ever been an attempt or effort on the part of anyone here at the White House to discredit the reputations or reporting of former Ambassador Joe Wilson, his wife, or ABC correspondent Jeffrey Kofman?
MR. MCCLELLAN: John, I think **I answered that yesterday**. **That is not the way that this White House operates. That's not the way the President operates.** And certainly, I first became aware of those news reports when we were contacted by reporters and the questions were raised. It's the first I had heard of those. No one would be authorized to do that within this White House. **That is simply not the way we operate, and that's simply not the way the President operates.**
JOURNALIST: In all of those cases?
MR. MCCLELLAN: Well, go down -- which two?
JOURNALIST: Joe Wilson and his wife?
MR. MCCLELLAN: No.
JOURNALIST: And Jeffrey Kofman from ABC.
MR. MCCLELLAN: First of all, if there's any truth to it, it's totally inappropriate. Second of all, **I just made very clear, that's simply not the way we operate**.

(23 July 2003)

The fact that this pattern is often used by the podium to reiterate and confirm a previous statement is indicated, among other things, by its co-occurrence with time adverbials: *just* co-occurs with this pattern 15 times (e.g. *I just made very clear what our view is*), *yesterday* 5 times, *today*, *before*, *previously*, *last week* and *last night* twice respectively, and *on a number of occasions*, *repeatedly* and *earlier* once each.

Half of the occurrences of *clear* in the *WHoB* corpus have thus been shown to be used mostly by the podium to report statements by the President or by the administration as a whole – and, more rarely, by the podium himself – whose main feature has to be the clarity of communication. The White House points out in this way that what they communicate may not be misunderstood by their counterparts, who are

therefore entirely responsible for taking action in the way requested by the administration. This pattern's function is therefore very similar to the one identified as the main function of *message* in the corpus (see paragraph 4.2).

As mentioned above, most of the remaining occurrences of *clear* in predicative position are found in the BE [adverb or negation] *clear* pattern, which occurs 723 times in the *WHoB* corpus. Table 4.20 shows the most frequent clusters in which this pattern is found.

cluster	occurrences
be clear	97
is clear	70
is very clear	63
are very clear	56
been very clear	53
it's clear	53
are clear	47
was very clear	39
was clear	28
be very clear	26
it's not clear	24
been clear	14
it's very clear	14
it's pretty clear	10
that's clear	9
i'm not clear	8
wasn't clear	8
were very clear	8

Table 4.20. Most frequent clusters of the type BE [adverb or negation] *clear*

The occurrences of BE [adverb or negation] *clear* are more evenly distributed between podium and reporters than those of MAKE [object] [adverb] *clear*, which were almost exclusively found in the podium's words. I will now examine the most frequent patterns among the ones listed above and check whether they are a feature of the podium's or of the reporters' discourse.

The pattern [noun phrase/pronoun/determiner] *is* [adverb] *clear*

occurs 157 times in the corpus, 24 of which (15 per cent) in the words of reporters. Among the noun phrases found in this pattern, the most frequent is by far *position*, which occurs 28 times, all of which, except one, in phases 1, 3 and 5, and almost all, except two, in the podium's words. In these cases, as shown in Concordance 4.17, the position which is referred to is that of the President or of the administration (*our position*, *the United States government's position*, *the US position*). This is thus another way for the podium to express the administration's strong stance in favour (e.g. *that we support Prime Minister Allawi*) or against something or someone (e.g. *he opposes federal funds for research*). By stating that the administration's *position is* (*very*, *abundantly*) *clear*, the podium is implying that what they are saying cannot and will not be changed.

The **President 's position** is abundantly **clear** on that. As you know, he said that Isra
eterminations. The **American position** is **clear** . The American position is that Israel s
said, the **President-elect's position** is **clear** ; he **opposes** federal funds for research
United States government's position is **clear** about that. And we have said that previ
nuclear ambitions. And **our position** is **clear** , which is that **North Korea must** complet
our position is, and so **our position** is **clear** . Does the President think that Israel
. And **the administration 's position** is **clear** . The United States government **is not go**
l, I think **the President 's position** is **clear** and the President **supports** the reauthor
erday. And **the President 's position** is **clear** that as an assistant to the President,
ways." But **the President 's position** is **clear** , and that is that the burden remains sq
N resolution, if I may. **the position** is **clear** on **tough rules** for new inspections, sin
icultural subsidies, **the US position** is **clear** : We think that agricultural subsidies o
to speak out. And **his position** is very **clear** . Congress also has **responsibilities** to
f other states. So **his position** is very **clear** in **support** of that. This may be a bit
ons in Hong Kong? **Our position** is very **clear** , that **it 's important** to adhere to the
t, and that 's & **Our position** is very **clear** : **he needs to** leave the country. And tha
ers can be there? **Our position** is very **clear** ; that **we will stay** in Iraq for as long
sions. But, again, **our position** is very **clear** . The position of the international comm
ific question. But **our position** is very **clear** . The **regime** of Saddam Hussein is gone;
pdate on that, but **our position** is very **clear** on that, as well. Scott, will the Pres
go from there. But **our position** is very **clear** , and our position is also one of **zero t**
ack to & I think **our position** is very **clear** , that we **support** Prime Minister Allawi
them. But I think **our position** is very **clear** . That it 's -- that Hong Kong should b
ia? Well, I think **our position** is very **clear** on that issue. The purpose of the call
No, **the President 's position** is very **clear** . I think you heard him talk to this iss
. But **the President 's position** is very **clear** , and it **remains unchanged** when it comes
s. So **the President 's position** is very **clear** , and the President **hopes** that progress
, but **the President 's position** is very **clear** , and this is exactly **what he promised** t

Concordance 4.17. *Position is* [adverb] *clear*

With its 11 occurrences, the second most frequent noun in this position is *message*. The co-occurrence of *message* and *clear* has already been discussed in paragraph 4.2, where it has been pointed out that the emphasis in this case is on the need for the addressee of the message to correctly interpret it. The third most frequent noun in this position is *policy*, which occurs 8 times, all of which in phase 5, and in Scott McClellan's words. The policy referred to here, is, again, a US administration policy: *our* […] *policy* occurs 5 times, while *the United States policy* and *the President's policy* occur once each in this concordance. *View* also occurs 7 times in this position, only in Scott McClellan's words. In 5 cases, the phrase *our view is very clear* is found while, in the other two cases, the phrase *the President's view is very clear* is found. Both in the case of *policy* and of *view*, the context in which these patterns are found and the function they play are similar to those present in the concordance of *position is* […] *clear*, as illustrated by excerpt 4.41.

(4.41) **JOURNALIST**: In other words, zero tolerance suggests that the very first inkling of any omission or untruth on Iraq's part is adequate to use force. But a pattern of behavior suggests that you're looking for a few violations that add up to –

MR. MCCLELLAN: Without commenting directly on some comments I have not seen, **we have been very clear in stating that our view is zero tolerance**, that Saddam Hussein does not need to be playing games at this point. No cat and mouse. It is time for him to comply and cooperate and disarm. This is about disarmament. And for too long, for 16 resolutions, for 11 years, Saddam Hussein has defied these resolutions. And it is now time for him to come into compliance once -- one final opportunity. That's what this is. And **the President's view is very clear: zero tolerance** when it comes to the resolution.

(18 November 2002)

While patterns in which a noun is followed by *is* [adverb] *clear* are mostly a feature of podium discourse, the 120 occurrences of the pattern *it*

is / it's [adverb] *clear* are more evenly distributed: 36 of them (30 per cent) are found in the reporters' words. In these cases, not only the podium, but also reporters, are stating facts unhesitatingly, and asking questions as a consequence of those facts being stated, such as in the following excerpt:

(4.42) **JOURNALIST**: Can I please try once more? **It is clear that more troops are needed** in Iraq. **It is clear that India and Pakistan**, among others, **have declined to send more troops** unless the U.N. has a greater degree of control. **Is it not correct to say** that you are doing this in order to persuade India, Pakistan, Turkey to send more troops and, therefore, must give up some additional control to the United Nations?

MR. MCCLELLAN: I think what -- I think the way I would address that is to say that we are working to address some of the concerns that those countries you mentioned expressed, such as India. […]

(3 March 2003)

Excerpt 4.43, where *it's very clear* occurs in the podium's words, shows that the language he uses to tell Iran that they have to stop their nuclear activities includes, besides *clear*, a number of features discussed in the previous paragraphs: *it is important that*, whose function was discussed in paragraph 4.3.2, and *need to*, which was focused on in paragraph 4.2.6 with regard to its use in the content of messages. What emerges is thus that all these structures, including *it's very clear*, but also *we've been very clear*, are used in a similar context, where the podium is clearly stating that the administration's counterparts must take action as requested by the US government.

(4.43) **JOURNALIST**: My question is on Iran. In the last few days, Canadian government - Canadian Ambassador to the U.N., had some kind of resolution on Iran that there is a concern about human rights situation in Iran. And now we are dealing about

these nuclear weapons, or Iran can make a nuclear bomb in a year and all that. Where do we stand on this resolution and all the –

MR. MCCLELLAN: On the nuclear issue?

JOURNALIST: Nuclear and human rights issue.

MR. MCCLELLAN: Well, we have a number of concerns that we've expressed over time regarding Iran. You mentioned two of them. And certainly their support for terrorism has been a concern, as well. And in terms of the nuclear issue, we have supported and continue to support the efforts of our European friends. There has been a positive step, but it is only a first step. There are other steps that **need to be taken** to reach our shared objective when it comes to Iran. And **it is important that Iran now move forward** on implementation of the agreement. […] **It's very clear what they need to do**. Iran **needs to fully comply** with the IAEA. They **need to adhere** -- ratify and adhere to the additional protocol. And they **need to suspend** all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities. **We've been very clear in that regard**.

(16 November 2004)

A similar share – that is, about one third – of the 32 occurrences of *it's / it is not* [adverb] *clear* occur in the reporters' words. Reporters exploit this pattern when asking for clarification or further explanation regarding an issue already dealt with in the current or in previous briefings, such as in the question reported in the following excerpt:

(4.44) **JOURNALIST:** When you keep saying he's troubled and you say he wants to defend it, **it's not quite clear at what point the President thinks** his intervention is necessary. What combination of events requires his intervention?

(18 February 2008)

When, on the other hand, it is the podium who uses the pattern *it's / it is not* [adverb] *clear*, he does so when he is unable to provide information requested by reporters, such as in the following excerpt:

(4.45) **JOURNALIST:** Has the President been briefed on any part of what's going on in Florida?

MR. FLEISCHER: Well, **I can just tell you this**, we're reviewing this**. I don't know** if it's risen to the President's level or not yet. We're reviewing it and, right now, it's just -- **it's not clear if** there is or is not any connection to anything broader. So **it's under review**. Federal authorities are on the ground in Florida working with state and local authorities. But at this point, **there's just nothing to report**.

(13 September 2002)

Another frequent cluster of the BE [adverb or negation] *clear* type is *just to be clear*, which occurs 30 times in the reporters' words and only 4 times in those of the podium, and whose relative frequency is higher in phases 4 and 5. Patterns in the right-hand side of Concordance 4.18 show how this phrase is used by reporters to ask the podium to clarify meaning and implications of his previous statements, as indicated by the recurrence of *you're saying* and similar phrases.

balance between supply and demand. **Just to be clear** , your "big no" **means** that he is no
s so people's lights don't go out. **Just to be clear** , **so you 're saying** that public sen
es, we can return to that subject. **Just to be clear** , the poison pills which you are id
s and Republicans alike. But so -- **just to be clear** -- hold on, Ari, **let me follow up**
s ready for a week ahead? Quickly, **just to be clear** , neither Mrs Bush, nor the daughte
nd they speak for themselves. Ari, **just to be clear** on this, **did President Bush ask** ei
ed forward to hearing the results. **Just to be clear** , **by saying** ongoing -- there are re
nd we do not speculate about that. **Just to be clear** , **you 're saying**, certainly the Pre
he men and women of our Air Force. **Just to be clear** , the briefings today, are they --
t didn't get everything he wanted. **Just to be clear** , in his initial proposal, the $726
ously to reform those programs. So **just to be clear** , the Treasury Department did not c
ng to ask on that very same point. **Just to be clear** , **to quote**, as reported by Ha'aretz
ities in the Middle East, as well. **Just to be clear** , even though since **you stated** all
ing people all across the country. **Just to be clear** , he 'd rather wait for the '04 bud
om for political prisoners. Scott, **just to be clear** , **has the administration made** the d
ou say, "I reject the comparison," **just to be clear** , you 're -- Well, **you were talking**
involved in that kind of activity. **Just to be clear** , whether Rove condoned it or not,
dy asked that, and I said, no. But **just to be clear** , **if you can say** declaratively -- I
nged its application in this case. **Just to be clear** on this, **are you saying** that the W
on about US sanctions. And, sorry, **just to be clear** , **just so I understand your point** a
confronted before it 's too late. **Just to be clear** I **understand what you 're saying** h

years under the President 's plan. **Just to be clear , in other words,** his reaction was
o back and look at those, as well. **Just to be clear , what he 's saying** today is that h
re getting funds. The new rules & **just to be clear ,** the new rules **you 're talking** abo
n what Dr Rice said last night. So **just to be clear , it 's not that** anyone's recollect
rtain information publicly. Scott, **just to be clear ,** the new stream of intelligence th
curity remains a high priority. So **just to be clear , your expectation** is that election
erification process in place. But, **just to be clear ,** until there is movement one way o
to strengthening Social Security. **Just to be clear : that would** leave open the two oth
re control over their own savings. **Just to be clear , you 're saying** the President has

Concordance 4.18. *Just to be clear* in the reporters' words

Thus, when reporters use *clear* in the briefings, they also emphasize the importance of effective, clear communication on the part of the White House.

4.4.2 Clear in attributive position

I now move on to analyze the occurrences of *clear* in attributive position, which are much rarer in the *WHoB* corpus than those of the same adjective in predicative position. They indeed make up 23 per cent of the total occurrences of clear. A list of clusters where *clear* is in attributive position, followed by a noun or noun phrase, is reported in Table 4.21.

First of all, this list includes a number of nouns which can roughly be classified as referring to policy, decision-making and plans for the future: *choice(s), principles, strategy, priorities, vision, guidelines,*

cluster	occurren ces
clear choices	38
clear differences	36
clear skies	19
clear message	17
clear principles	17
clear understanding	16
clear choice	15
clear signal	12
clear strategy	11
clear priorities	10
clear violation	10
clear indication	9
clear sign	6
clear vision	6
clear guidelines	4
clear mission	4
clear reminder	4
clear results	4
clear sense	4
clear shot	4
clear agenda	3
clear case	3
clear conclusion	3
clear contrasts	3
clear difference	3
clear line	3
clear objectives	3
clear plan	3
clear victor	3

Table 4.21. *Clear* in attributive position: list of clusters

going on in this nation, and **there 's a clear choice**. Some people & some people want
t in his State of the Union, **there is a clear choice**. We are at historic period in ou
rences, **the American people have a very clear choice before them**. They can't win when
ice between the two candidates, **it is a clear choice between the President and Senato**
onduct the war on terrorism. **There is a clear choice between the two candidates**, it i
he presidency? John, **this election is a clear choice between two different visions** wh
al regime of Saddam Hussein. **There is a clear choice facing the Iraqi people**, facing
take the fight to the enemy. **There 's a clear choice for Americans** in how we confront
lk about that in his remarks. **We face a clear choice going forward**. We can work to bu
s of all these issues. There was **a very clear choice in this election**, and the Americ
l these debates is that **there is a very clear choice in this election**. There are big
e worked in the first term. **There was a clear choice in this election** for the candida
erican people recognize that **there is a clear choice on the issues facing our country**
ferences on this issue. **There is a very clear choice on this highest of priorities** fo
the campaign. You know, **there is a very clear choice** when it comes to how to lead to
er of steps that we can take. **There are clear choices**, but the policies that we have
mean, he 'll continue to talk about the **clear choices**. I 'm just saying that this spe
is a time when **Americans are faced with clear choices about serious challenges** this n
the United States Senate. So **there are clear choices and clear differences** here. But
what **elections** are about. And **there are clear choices and clear philosophical differe**
nomy. The President will talk about the **clear choices and real differences facing the**
ould be a close election. And **there are clear choices and real differences** on our &
differences on those issues. There are **clear choices and there are clear philosophic**
bout his vision for the economy and the **clear choices facing our nation** as we continu
he economy, health care. **There are very clear choices facing the American people**. Thi
mes him to the race. And **there are some clear choices going forward**. So let me see if
e talking about more broadly, **there are clear choices going forward**. First of all, th
s that we face going forward. **There are clear choices in the war on terrorism**. The Pr
e last few years. **There are**, obviously, **clear choices in the war on terrorism** and how
ee this as policy & Suzanne, **there are clear choices in this election**, and the Presi
is going to hamper him or & **There are clear choices in this election**. And this deba
that voters look at, as well. **There are clear choices in this election**. This election
This is a time for choosing. **There are clear choices in this race**. And so I think th
what this President is doing. **There are clear choices in this race** on this issue. And
inue to talk about it and **there 's some clear choices on this issue**, I think, in this
r America. The President touched on the **clear choices that our nation faces** during th
ending his record and talking about the **clear choices that the American people face**.
nd his agenda, and he 's focused on the **clear choices that the American people face**.
g around the country, talking about the **clear choices that the American people face**.
esident will continue to talk about the **clear choices that the American people face**.
e will certainly tonight talk about the **clear choices that the American people face** g
this ought to be about. **There are** some **clear choices that the voters face** for the fu
're going to continue to talk about the **clear choices that we face**. But we are waging
een now and election day. But **There are clear choices that we face as we move forward**
it 's an opportunity to talk about the **clear choices that we face for the future**. Th
ity for the President to talk about the **clear choices that we face going forward**. The
about his agenda for the future and the **clear choices that we face in this election**.
emarks, he was simply talking about the **clear choices the American people** face, and t
o talk to the American people about the **clear choices they face** on how we lead in the
talking about, he was talking about the **clear choices we face**. **There are** differences
ons. The President has talked about the **clear choices we face** on the important priori
ay, in addition to focusing on the five **clear choices** when it comes to families, I ex
g today in Iowa and Missouri. **There are clear choices when it comes to the war on ter**

Concordance 4.19 *Clear choice(s)*

Among these nouns, *choices* is the most frequent and, together with its singular form *choice*, occurs to the immediate right of *clear* 53 times, all of which in phase 5, and in Scott McClellan's words. The concordance of *clear choice*(*s*) (4.19) shows that this cluster is used by the podium to talk about the future of America, and about the important choices both government and people have to make. The co-occurrence of this cluster with *election*, *race* and *candidates* shows how these choices are referred to the 2004 presidential race and to the decision the Americans must make on whether to vote for Bush or for Kerry. Also *difference*(*s*), which occurs to the immediate right of *clear* 39 times in total, is almost exclusively (38 times) found in the words of Scott McClellan and in phase 5. In the case of *clear difference*(*s*), as well, the topic of the exchanges in which this cluster is found is the election campaign. Here, the podium is making a distinction between Bush's positions and those of Kerry on a host of issues.

Another set of nouns found in the collocate list includes communication-related words: *message, understanding, signal, indication*. Occurrences of *clear message* have been already discussed both in paragraph 4.2 and in this one. The emphasis in these cases is on the effective success of the communicative act, and on the need for the addressee to decode the message. These data suggest that the use of *clear* in attributive position, with reference to a communicative act is less frequent than its use in the description of a political plan or position.

4.5 Conclusions

The analysis conducted in this chapter was mainly aimed at finding out whether some corpus keywords, whose high frequency in the briefings had been hypothesized to be related to their being connected to specific aspects

of political communication. More specifically, *message* was hypothesized to refer to the communicative acts taking place in the briefings between the White House and its counterparts, reaching out to the whole world. *Important* and *importance* were hypothesized to be related to the agenda-setting process, through which the White House and the media negotiate the relevance of issues on the agenda. *Clear* was hypothesized to be referred to successful communication, in which messages manage to reach their target and to be decoded as appropriate.

What emerged from the analysis, however, is that in the majority of cases these four keywords carry with themselves 'non-obvious meanings', such as the ones *CADS* research aims at detecting.

Rather than referring to a neutral communicative act, *message* is indeed used by the podium as a euphemism for a threat addressed to US opponents or to governments, people and bodies who are refusing to comply with requests coming from the US government.

Important and *importance* do in fact in a minority of cases refer to the agenda-setting process and to the administration's priorities. More frequently, however, they are used to replace explicit markers of deontic modality, through patterns that emphasize the need for their counterparts to act in a specific way, not because of an imposition from the US government, but for the sake of the international community or of the US citizens.

A similar role is played by *clear* in the majority of its occurrences: the pattern MAKE *clear*, in which this adjective is found in over 50 per cent of cases, is indeed used by the podium to replace an explicit marker of deontic modality. The request that someone act in a specific way is not expressed explicitly, but it is reinforced in this case by the emphasis on the clarity of the communicative act, which may not be misunderstood by the receiver.

In sum, the analysis of these four words based on the *CADS* approach has shown that recurring patterns and structures in the briefings are assigned by the podium specific functions, often in relation to specific topics. As shown in results reported above, it is often the case that the US administration conveys strong messages to its counterparts by using euphemisms. As mentioned earlier, indeed, the communicative function of expressing a threat is generally realized through euphemisms, and the greater will be the power of those expressing the threat, the more the threat will be understated (Bayley, Bevitori and Zoni 2004). The presence of the US on the international scene as the only remaining superpower may account for such a strategy on the part of the two podiums.

Conclusions

In the present dissertation, I have attempted at applying the *CADS* theoretical framework to a specific discourse type, in order to try to identify recurring strategies enacted by participants in these texts. One fundamental tool for the application of the *CADS* approach has been the use of XML mark-up, which has allowed me to easily discriminate between different patterns exploited by podium and reporters, and by the same speakers in different chronological phases, and to compare them throughout the corpus.

Through the analysis of data I have shown how, as far as the linguistic features examined in this dissertation are concerned, there are clear and significant differences between the linguistic strategies adopted by the podium at different points in time, and that these differences may be related to the state of US domestic and foreign affairs in different periods.

I have also shown how different podiums adopt different linguistic strategies, both as regards the construction of their identity as the White House press secretary and the patterns they choose to exploit to convey similar meanings.

Finally, I have shown how podium and press adopt different tactics and different strategies in the briefings. Some of the words analyzed were remarkably more frequent in the podium's words than in those of the press, and vice versa. Patterns of usage of these words differ substantially in the discourse of the podium and in the one of reporters. Thus, I hope I have been able to demonstrate that the White House press briefings are a hybrid discourse type, in which institutional, political and media discourse intertwine, in the words of speakers playing different roles in the briefings.

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Appendix A. Keyword tables

	word	keyness/*BNC*	rank in *CorDis* keyword list	most frequent: phase	most frequent: speaker role	most frequent: podium
1	president	114219	1	1	podium	Fleischer
2	the	35709	26	4	podium	Fleischer
3	that	18310	4	5	podium	McClellan
4	Iraq	16739	-	4	press	McClellan
5	United	15393	-	3	podium	Fleischer
6	will	13852	20	4	podium	Fleischer
7	has	13386	34	2	podium	Fleischer
8	states	13375	-	2-3	podium	Fleischer
9	Ari	12629	5	1	press	McClellan
10	to	12606	116	1-2-3-5	podium	McClellan
11	security	11736	-	3	podium	McClellan
12	congress	10136	103	1	podium	Fleischer
13	administration	10135	-	1	press	Fleischer
14	nations	8993	-	3	podium	Fleischer
15	continue	8558	28	5	podium	McClellan
16	senate	8129	16	3	podium	Fleischer
17	American	7773	-	2	podium	McClellan
18	terrorism	7185	-	2	podium	McClellan
19	white	6865	14	1	press	Fleischer
20	Saddam	6698	-	4	podium	Fleischer
21	Iraqi	6601	-	4	podium	McClellan
22	question	6452	13	1	press	Fleischer
23	Hussein	5973	-	3-4	podium	Fleischer
24	weapons	5743	-	4	press	Fleischer
25	war	5583	-	4	press	McClellan
26	militare	5423	-	4	even	even
27	Bush	5288	-	1	press	Fleischer
28	secretary	5166	56	4	podium	Fleischer
29	senator	4926	21	1	press	even
30	forward	4799	39	5	podium	McClellan
31	house	4715	108	1	press	Fleischer
32	leaders	4649	183	3-4	podium	McClellan
33	economy	4553	70	1	podium	McClellan
34	believes	4512	23	1	podium	Fleischer
35	he	4325	3	1	press	McClellan
36	of	4306	-	4	podium	Fleischer
37	Scott	4277	66	5	press	Fleischer
38	intelligence	4174	-	5	even	McClellan
39	important	4169	148	5	podium	McClellan
40	issue	4080	69	1-3	even	McClellan

41	issues	4011	41	5	podium	McClellan
42	information	3846	38	2	podium	McClellan
43	Korea	3760	339	3	press	Fleischer
44	his	3712	101	1	press	McClellan
45	efforts	3700	-	5	podium	McClellan
46	tax	3642	292	1	press	Fleischer
47	are	3624	-	5	podium	McClellan
48	defense	3543	-	1	even	Fleischer
49	nation	3470	-	2	podium	Fleischer
50	this	3459	-	5	press	McClellan

Table A.1 The 50 most salient items in the keyword list obtained comparing the *WHoB* corpus with the spoken section of *BNC*.

	word	keyness/CorDis	rank in BNC keyword list	most frequent: phase	most frequent: speaker role	most frequent: podium
1	president	14801	1	1	podium	Fleischer
2	you	11505	-	1	press	McClellan
3	he	5112	36	1	press	McClellan
4	that	4914	3	5	podium	McClellan
5	Ari	3388	9	1	press	McClellan
6	what	2169	-	4	podium	McClellan
7	think	2085	-	5	podium	McClellan
8	well	1997	-	5	podium	McClellan
9	there	1778	-	2-4-5	press	McClellan
10	about	1701	74	5	press	McClellan
11	any	1388	184	2	press	Fleischer
12	does	1297	86	1	press	Fleischer
13	question	1292	23	1	press	Fleischer
14	white	1290	20	1	press	Fleischer
15	it	1183	-	4	podium	Fleischer
16	senate	1135	16	3	podium	Fleischer
17	on	1058	144	1	press	McClellan
18	going	1008	297	1	press	McClellan
19	meeting	933	71	2	podium	Fleischer
20	will	898	6	4	podium	Fleischer
21	senator	870	30	1	press	even
22	morning	830	-	2	press	Fleischer
23	believes	829	35	1	podium	Fleischer
24	so	805	-	2	podium	Fleischer
25	indicated	801	57	1-2	podium	Fleischer
26	the	801	2	4	podium	Fleischer
27	anything	668	-	2-3-4	press	Fleischer
28	continue	667	15	5	podium	McClellan
29	follow	597	84	2	press	Fleischer

30	cannot	569	-	3	podium	Fleischer
31	why	565	-	3-5	press	even
32	mean	557	-	1-5	press	McClellan
33	thinks	544	246	1-3	podium	Fleischer
34	has	536	7	2	podium	Fleischer
35	specific	526	105	5	even	McClellan
36	talk	525	90	5	podium	McClellan
37	hill	523	280	1	press	Fleischer
38	information	521	43	2	podium	McClellan
39	forward	503	31	5	podium	McClellan
40	I	461	-	5	podium	McClellan
41	issues	454	42	5	podium	McClellan
42	Arafat	453	126	3	press	Fleischer
43	something	451	-	3-4	press	Fleischer
44	know	439	-	4	press	Fleischer
45	briefing	438	103	4	podium	Fleischer
46	parties	434	133	1	podium	Fleischer
47	get	432	-	1	podium	McClellan
48	governor	426	142	2	press	Fleischer
49	afternoon	424	-	2	podium	Fleischer
50	made	423	83	5	podium	McClellan

Table A.2 The 50 most salient items in the keyword list obtained comparing the *WHoB* corpus with the US sub-corpus of the *CorDis* corpus

Appendix B. Reporting verbs

lemma	total	podium	press	phase 1	phase 2	phase 3	phase 4	phase 5
SAY	5560	4344	8565	4825	5565	5971	6062	5415
TELL	706	409	1350	665	988	714	786	639
INDICATE	573	750	261	959	1017	791	278	189
AGREE	366	322	476	401	273	426	402	321
ANNOUNCE	347	394	252	532	442	329	130	303
REPORT	342	205	362	272	371	389	470	307
ANSWER	280	319	149	229	348	287	340	268
SUGGEST	274	183	505	324	276	284	278	248
MENTION	264	204	385	178	260	240	241	317
INFORM	167	191	139	133	231	160	136	173
REMIND	164	237	22	202	273	137	204	144
STATE	134	112	157	58	94	96	68	209
ANTICIPATE	124	143	94	178	114	140	254	78
NOTE	119	139	50	152	150	144	148	76
EXPLAIN	114	80	203	133	127	116	99	104
RECALL	112	130	92	118	94	132	93	101
COMMENT	106	96	120	142	120	132	56	76
ADD	104	97	115	167	137	91	99	85
WRITE	81	62	89	101	81	97	93	59
DENY	76	47	97	122	62	89	43	56
ASSURE	64	65	59	36	59	83	118	52
REPEAT	59	70	58	47	65	74	43	50
PROMISE	55	52	64	86	59	72	31	32
PREDICT	53	68	28	17	36	88	136	29
THREATEN	45	36	70	45	85	59	37	25
WISH	43	10	49	30	39	48	43	44
CLAIM	41	19	110	30	39	45	19	46
CONVINCE	40	18	52	43	42	54	37	28
ACKNOWLEDGE	37	30	54	34	23	34	19	46
ARGUE	29	14	65	30	7	35	6	32
NOTIFY	26	20	33	24	55	23	12	25
WARN	25	14	36	21	36	27	31	20
DISPUTE	23	24	19	19	26	29	25	18
REVEAL	22	16	38	6	62	24	25	17
IMPLY	22	10	51	30	29	21	31	17
PLEDGE	21	31	64	13	42	25	25	16
ADMIT	19	9	38	15	13	28	0	17
GUARANTEE	19	23	14	13	13	21	19	21
INSIST	19	12	36	9	3	25	25	20
ALLEGE	19	8	44	6	26	14	25	25
TEACH	17	32	18	4	3	1	6	39
OBJECT	16	6	21	21	16	23	31	7

PERSUADE	9	6	24	15	7	10	6	8
ASSERT	8	5	15	0	0	7	12	13
COMPLAIN	7	2	18	9	13	8	0	5
MAINTAIN	6	5	9	9	7	5	6	6
CONTEND	4	0	14	2	7	7	0	2
REASSURE	4	0	12	2	10	5	0	3
REPLY	3	0	10	4	0	2	0	5
VOW	3	1	6	0	0	3	6	5
OBSERVE	1	0	1	0	0	2	0	0
REMARK	1	0	1	0	3	1	0	0
SWEAR	1	2	0	0	3	3	0	0
BE RUMOURED	<1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
BOAST	<1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
PRAY	<1	0	1	0	3	0	0	0

Table B.1 Lemmatized occurrences per million words of verbs used to report what people say, in the whole corpus and in individual chronological phases