The Genesis and Maturation of a Propaganda Claim
Outline

- Rhetorical Life & Propaganda
- Central Research Questions
- Overview of Methods
- Illustrative Analysis of a Rhetorical Life
- Concluding Remarks
A Rhetorical Life

- Biological Reproduction & Development
  - *give birth to ➔ propagate*
  - *embryonic ➔ immature ➔ mature*
  - *short-lived ➔ long-lived*
  - *thrive ➔ flourish ➔ decline*

- Sustaining Life & Causing Death
  - *keep alive, revive*
  - *kill, axe, bury*
  - *on life support; dead on arrival*
  - *zombie claim*
Quality of Life

- Care
  - fostered, nurtured, sustained, strengthened, dressed up
  - stripped down, weakened, abused, neglected, ignored, abandoned

- Socialization
  - greeted, welcome, popular
  - unwelcome, scorned

- Fidelity
  - faithful, true to
  - unfaithful, pervert, corrupt, debased

- Mobility
  - put to bed, stopped, held back
  - run, travel
Questions

- Why does some rhetoric live, while other rhetoric dies?
- Why does some rhetoric get nurtured and sustained, while other rhetoric gets neglected, buried, or killed?
- Why does some rhetoric gain strength and popularity, while other rhetoric loses strength and popularity?
- Why does some rhetoric seem to demand fidelity, while other rhetoric can be corrupted?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recontextualization Types</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>None</strong></td>
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| I don’t understand what they’re saying.  
I didn’t see it.  
This doesn’t matter to me. |
| **Adverse** |
| Support our troops by ending the war now!  
Why should we support them in an illegal occupation?  
This is just a propaganda slogan used to distract us. |
| **Neutral** |
| Perhaps we should support our troops.  
I saw a sign that says support our troops.  
The president said “support our troops.” |
| **Faithful** |
| Support our troops!  
Support our troops as they defend our freedom!  
Support our troops so we can defeat terrorism! |
| **Unquestioned Assumption** |
| Our support for the troops is helping us win the war!  
Why doesn’t Obama support our troops?  
Trump’s support for our troops makes him the best candidate. |
Propaganda

- Semiotic signals indicate comparative detachability/repeatability of some discourse.
  - E.G. Metadiscourse: “A claim that bears repeating is…”
- Discourse is recontextualized faithfully, persistently, and on a mass scale.
Questions

- **Goal**: Trace the life of a claim “from the cradle to the grave”
- **Q1**: Were there signals that rendered the claim more detachable and worthy of recontextualization?
- **Q2**: To what degree was the claim kept alive without corruption? Did it travel? And what linguistic transformations did it undergo as it was recontextualized?
Methods

- Began with a mediated claim: “Iraq purchased aluminum tubes for a gas centrifuge in a nuclear weapon”
- Followed it in these prewar texts:
  - Declassified Intelligence Reports
  - Presidential Speeches
  - Public Appearances by Cabinet Members
  - *New York Times* articles; and a few other outlets
  - NBC Evening News reports
- Subjected Each Iteration of the Claim to Several DA Methods:
  - Micro-Transformation Analysis
  - Argument analysis
  - Stance analysis
  - “Metadata” analysis
- Historical Accounts & Records, FOIA Requests, Interview
In Utero

...have little use other than for a uranium enrichment program. Using aluminum tubes in a centrifuge effort would be inefficient and a step backward from the specialty steel machines Iraq was poised to mass-produce at the onset of the Gulf War. Iraq successfully used outdated enrichment technologies...
## Potential Counterargument

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Premise</strong></th>
<th>Iraq would not want to use inefficient materials and take a step backward.</th>
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<tbody>
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<td><strong>Premise</strong></td>
<td>The tubes are inefficient and a step backward for Iraq’s nuclear program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Claim</strong></td>
<td>Thus, the tubes are unlikely intended for a gas centrifuge.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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## Favored Argument

<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Premise</strong></th>
<th>Iraq successfully used outdated technologies to enrich uranium in the past.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td><strong>Premise</strong></td>
<td>Iraq would presumably use outdated technologies again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Claim</strong></td>
<td>Thus, the tubes, though outdated, are likely intended for a gas centrifuge.</td>
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Based on the reported specifications, the tubes could be used to manufacture gas centrifuge rotor cylinders for uranium enrichment. However, our analysis indicates that the specified tube diameter, which is half that of the centrifuge machine Iraq successfully tested in 1990, is only marginally large enough for practical centrifuge applications, and other specifications are not consistent with a gas centrifuge end use. Moreover, the quantity being sought suggests preparations for large scale production of centrifuge machines, for which we have not seen related procurement efforts—and the tubes’ specifications suggest a centrifuge design quite different from any Iraq is known to have. Thus, we assess that this procurement activity more likely supports a different application. [...] For example, the tube specifications and quantity appear to be generally consistent with their use as launch tubes for man-held anti-armor rockets or as tactical rocket casings. Also, the manner in
In Utero

- the tubes “exceed any known conventional weapons application”, but “match those of a publicly available gas centrifuge design from the 1950s, known as the Zippe centrifuge”
- “an outer diameter of 74.2-81.9-mm, an inner diameter of 68.6-76.3-mm, a wall thickness of 2.8-mm, a length of 279.4-381-mm and a tolerance of 0.1-mm”
- tubes are roughly three times longer and thicker than those called for in the Zippe design.
- Using these tubes, Iraq would need to operate “more than 12,000-16,000 centrifuges,” a task for which they had neither the machinery nor the operational experience. “In short, we judge it unlikely that anyone could deploy an enrichment facility capable of producing weapons significant quantities of HEU based on these tubes”
In Utero

- “a gas centrifuge application is credible but unlikely”; rocket application is “more likely”
- tubes “could be used as rocket bodies for multiple rocket launchers,” but this is the “less likely” scenario
Happy Birthday!

- THREATS AND RESPONSES: THE IRAQIS; U.S. SAYS HUSSEIN INTENSIFIES **QUEST FOR A-BOMB PARTS**
- Iraq has stepped up its **quest for nuclear weapons**
- In the last 14 months, Iraq has sought to buy thousands of specially designed aluminum tubes, which **American officials** believe were intended as components of centrifuges to enrich uranium.
The diameter, thickness and other technical specifications of the aluminum tubes had persuaded American intelligence experts that they were meant for Iraq's nuclear program, officials said....

A key issue is whether the items Iraq tried to buy are uniquely designed for centrifuge use or could have other applications.
Happy Birthday!

• Experts say the dimensions and precise specification of the aluminum tubes would provide a clear indication of its intended use.

• …American experts know what type of tubes are needed to make such centrifuges.

• Senior administration officials insist that the dimensions, specifications and numbers of the tubes Iraq sought to buy show that they were intended for the nuclear program.
Same Day as NYT article...
Staying Alive!

CHENEY:

- [Saddam] now is trying, through his illicit procurement network, to acquire the equipment he needs to be able to enrich uranium to make the bombs.

- Specifically aluminum tubes. There’s a story in *The New York Times* this morning... it’s now public that, in fact, he has been seeking to acquire, and we have been able to intercept and prevent him from acquiring through this particular channel, the kinds of tubes that are necessary to build a centrifuge.
POWELL & RICE:

- And as we saw in reporting just this morning, he is still trying to acquire, for example, some of the specialized aluminum tubing one needs to develop centrifuges that would give you an enrichment capability.

- We do know that there have been shipments going into … Iraq, for instance, of aluminum tubes that really are only suited to—high-quality aluminum tools that are only really suited for nuclear weapons programs, centrifuge programs.
Top Bush officials push case against Saddam

September 8, 2002 Posted: 8:46 PM EDT (0046 GMT)

WASHINGTON (CNN) -- Top officials in the Bush administration took to the Sunday television talk shows to argue the president’s case that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein is a global threat and must go.

With a former U.N. weapons inspector in Baghdad saying the U.S. position on Iraq is overstated, the vice president, two Cabinet secretaries, the national security adviser and chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff pressed the point that a military intervention could be the only way to topple Saddam’s regime.

"There simply isn’t a case that this is a peace-loving man who wants to be left alone," national security adviser Condoleezza Rice said on CNN's "Late Edition With Wolf Blitzer."

On NBC’s "Meet the Press," Vice President Dick Cheney accused Saddam of moving aggressively to develop nuclear weapons over the past 14 months to add to his stockpile of chemical and biological arms.

"Increasingly, we believe that the United States may well become the target of those activities," Cheney said.

"And what we’ve seen recently that has raised our level of concern to the current state of unrest ... is that he now is trying, through his illicit procurement
Strengthening the claim!

the next night on NBC News…
They’ve blocked several shipments of aluminum tubes heading toward Iraq, the kind of tubes only used in a centrifuge to make nuclear fuel.
This is not like we’re producing three or four. It is multiple orders, going into the thousands of tubes. This looks like a classic import for a gas centrifuge program.
Reanimating and Burying a Challenge
Iraq has made several attempts to buy high-strength aluminum tubes used to enrich uranium for a nuclear weapon. Should Iraq acquire fissile material, it would be able to build a nuclear weapon within a year.
• Officials acknowledged yesterday that there have been debates among intelligence experts …

• but added that the dominant view in the administration was that the tubes were intended for use in gas centrifuges to enrich uranium.

• They also said it was the intelligence agencies’ unanimous view that the type of tubes that Iraq has been seeking are used to make such centrifuges.

• Although the C.I.A. position appears to be the dominant view, officials said some experts had questioned

• But other, more senior, officials insisted last night that this was a minority view …and that the C.I.A. had wide support, particularly among the government’s top technical experts and nuclear scientists.
Dr. ElBaradei said his agency had looked into Iraq's attempts to purchase aluminum tubes. While the agency's investigation is still going on, he said Iraq had made a plausible claim that the tubes were for making nonnuclear rockets.
Sustaining!

high-strength aluminum tubes and other equipment needed for gas centrifuges, which are used to enrich uranium for nuclear weapons
Our intelligence sources tell us that he has attempted to purchase high-strength aluminum tubes suitable for nuclear weapons production.
Mobility!
Reproduction!
Regeneration!
Propaganda!
Concluding Questions

- Can we inoculate ourselves from “viral” propaganda?
  - Read past the headlines, read the inner pages, read alternative sources
  - Note attribution to anonymous officials, treated as a monolithic plural category
  - Note lack of actual evidence, as opposed to descriptions of evidence
  - Note when a claim has become a fact and ask what changed?
  - Note hedges, counters, boosters—all places to push

- How do we ensure that “good news” (accurate, sourced, evidence-based) doesn’t get buried?

- How do we ensure that “good rhetoric” leads a “good life”? 
Questions