ISSA Proceedings 2006 - Encroachments On State Sovereignty: The Argumentation Strategies Of The George W. Bush Administration

Increasingly, many realist assumptions embodied in international relations have come under assault. Moves to transcend conventional thinking about national boundaries permeate trade agreements, climate accords, and military coalitions. Many nations have revised their own laws to account for emerging global realities (e.g. by adopting anti-money laundering statues that widen access to international banking information, by signing mutual legal assistance treaties that broaden extradition privileges, by establishing dual jurisdiction over certain criminals, and by implementing regional currency arrangements, to name but a few).
As the world increasingly embraces globalization, the temptation by some to encroach on traditional boundaries of state sovereignty in the pursuit of their own self-interest swells. Businesses move across national boundaries to access needed material resources and cheap labor. Ethnic, tribal, and religious groups transcend the confines of the nation state to unify their membership and gain more control over their community's beliefs and behavioral expectations. Powerful nations capitalize on the chance to secure their economic and physical security positions within the global community.

Argumentation studies provide an important means for understanding the shifts in strategies used to reconstitute conventional norms of state sovereignty. Approaches designed to redefine associations between states are grounded in argumentation studies. Van Eemeren, et. al. (1996) elaborate on the key role that argumentation plays in the process of association when they state, "Every association that has a justifying function puts elements into a particular argumentative relation." (p. 106) Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969) identify the processes of association to be "schemes which bring separate elements together and allow us to establish a unity among them, which aims either at organizing them or at evaluating them, positively or negatively, by means of one another." (p. 190) They identify a typology of associational argument that includes quasi-logical argumentation, argumentation based on the structure of reality, and argumentation that establishes the structure of reality. They also explicate the meaning of argumentative strategies of dissociation (also involved in re-characterizing of government legitimacy) when they note, "Dissociation, on the other hand assumes the original unity of elements comprised within a single conception and designated by a single notion. The dissociation of notions brings about a more or less profound change in the conceptual data that are used as the basis of the argument." (pp. 411-12)

This essay examines the Bush administration's strategic use of arguments by association and dissociation to build its public case for regime change in Afghanistan. The case study has merit for the broader topic of encroachments on the boundaries of state sovereignty because it deals with an extreme situational context of redefined sovereignty, i.e. where the leadership of one state relieved another of its legitimacy throughout the broad international community. The Bush's administration's public case for using military force in Afghanistan demonstrates not only the incremental erosion of a state's powers commonly expected in the globalization era, but in a broader sense, illuminates argumentative strategies for justifying the complete ouster of a sovereign government.

1. *The Taliban's Initial "Choice"*

In the immediate aftermath of the attacks of 9/11, the Bush administration publicly presented the Taliban with a choice. They could take actions to qualify as a member of the civilized international community or they could accept an unqualified association with bin Laden and the al-Qaeda terrorists housed within their borders. Bush used quasi-logical argumentation to reduce both terrorists and the states associated with terrorists into a singular threat that embodied Perelman and Olbrecht-Tyteca's associational qualities of homogeneity, comparability, and similarity. Bush announced, "We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them." (*Federal Document Clearing House,* Sept. 11, p. 2) With this new standard of enmity, the administration focused public attention on who the Taliban would choose as their ally, while removing the option of deciding whether the Afghan leaders wished to associate with either al-Qaeda or those battling terrorists around the globe.

For a brief period, the administration publicly presented arguments that structured reality in a way that appeared to permit the Taliban to retain its status as Afghanistan's government (albeit, even then, not as a fully internationally recognized entity). Secretary of State Colin Powell stressed the sequential argumentative opening available to the Taliban when he noted, "Perhaps these states [which sponsor terrorism] . . . will now come to their senses that it is not in their interest, now that the entire international community is mobilized – it is not in their interest to continue acting this way, because they will risk further isolation and increasing pressure if they participate in such activities. And hopefully the message will get through, and they'll start to change past patterns of behavior." (*Federal News Service*, Sept. 26, p. 3) Powell's argumentative scheme suggested that the Taliban had the opportunity to move past their prior bad acts with terrorists and gain legitimacy with the American government by obliging Bush's request for extradition.

A more focused examination of the argumentative context of the administration's offer, however, reveals that the explicit choice the Bush team announced was refuted implicitly by their other associational strategies. In multiple ways the Bush administration removed any choice by publicly associating the Taliban with terrorists. Bush, for example, immediately followed his publicly broadcast demands to the Taliban with the statement, "These demands are not open to negotiation or discussion." (*Federal Document Clearing House,* Sept. 20, p. 4) Bush's pronouncement recalled the U.S. no-negotiation/no concession terrorism policy, a mandate in public force since the Nixon administration's adoption of the Israeli response to the terrorist attacks in the 1972 Olympic Games. The evocation of America's public posture against terrorists invited the public to equate the Taliban with historical terrorists that had plagued the nation, not as the legitimate government of a foreign nation.

The Bush administration underscored the Taliban's equivalency with terrorists by articulating a strikingly different course of action for the list of nations that the United States officially recognized around the world. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld drew the distinction when asked whether the United States had demanded any help from NATO less than a month after the 9/11 attacks. He replied, " . . . we recognize that every country has its own circumstance, it has its own neighborhood, it has its own history, and each country will make a judgment as to the kinds of ways that it can be helpful in dealing with the problem of international terrorism. And we do not make demands. (*Federal News Service*, Oct. 5, p. 2) Since Bush was making explicit and focused demands on the Taliban, that group, by inference, lacked the decision-making latitude afforded official states in the international community.

Finally, Bush's central demand to the Taliban underscored the group's lack of state status. In short, Bush demanded extradition when he publicly declared in a speech delivered before the U.S. Congress that the Taliban had to "Deliver to United States' authorities all of the leaders of al Qaeda who hide in your land." (*Federal Document Clearing House,* Sept. 20, p. 4) Within this context of international terrorism policy, Bush's call for extradition of the al-Qaeda leadership appeared on its face to reinforce the Taliban as the legitimate government of the Afghani people. The legal basis for the Bush administration's position recalled the Reagan administration's interpretation of state responsibilities related to terrorism embodied in international law. Robert McFarlane, Reagan's head of his National Security Council, relayed that group's understanding of the U.N. charter as the following:

The commission of terrorist violence by one state against the personnel and facilities of another is clearly an unlawful use of force under the U.N. Charter; *this includes instigating or assisting private groups or individuals in the commission of such acts.* The state which is the target of terrorist violence has the right, in accordance with Article 51 of the U.N. Charter, to act in legitimate self-defense including, if necessary, the use of appropriate force . . . . Such use of force without the consent of the host state is entitled only when the host country is unable or unwilling to take effective action. [emphasis mine] (McFarlane, 1984)

Correspondingly, extradition agreements with foreign states become a key, growing centerpiece of America's response to terrorism. The Reagan administration passed the Terrorist Protect Act of 1985, a law that granted the United States joint jurisdiction with foreign states over individuals who murdered or assaulted American citizens abroad. The Clinton administration broadened the global scope of terrorist extradition by securing a record number of mutual legal assistance treaties with forty nations. (Winkler, 2006) As the agent targeted for action in Bush's extradition demand, the Taliban appeared to function in the capacity of the governing body of a foreign state.

Viewed from the perspective of argumentation theory, however, the Bush administration's extradition demand reinforced the Taliban's lack of status as the legitimate government of Afghanistan. Calls for extradition between governments typically fall within what Goodnight (1981) has referred to as the technical sphere of argument. Extradition functions argumentatively as a legal matter between the judicial systems of two countries according to the constraints of treaties or other binding agreements. In the case of the Taliban, the Bush administration did not have the option of allowing its extradition demand to channel through the normal technical sphere of argument. The Taliban, having only been recognized as the official government of Afghanistan by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Pakistan, had no extradition treaty with the United States. Bush's shift of the extradition demand into the public sphere left the status of the Taliban ambiguous, as they had no internationally recognized legal system to protect those housed within their own borders.

Without the option to extradite the leadership of al-Qaeda, the Taliban was left with no legal means for complying with Bush's demands. If they captured members of al-Qaeda and forcibly removed those prisoners to the United States, the action would constitute kidnapping under international declarations related to terrorism agreed to in Bonn (1978), Venice (1980), and Ottawa (1981). (McFarlane, 1984) Acts of kidnapping routinely appear in U.S. counts of international terrorism and are tallied to inform the Secretary of State's determinations of which nations qualify as a state sponsors of terror.

In short, the Bush administration laid the argumentative groundwork for denying the Taliban status as the government of Afghanistan at the same time it was explicitly offering them a choice of amnesty and perhaps a chance to elevate their status as the recognized head of Afghanistan. When the Taliban publicly announced that al-Qaeda were the "guests" of Afghanistan, the United States removed any competing option for government legitimacy. As Powell argued, "The president made it clear from the very beginning that if the Taliban regime did not turn over Osama bin Laden and the al Qaeda organization resident in Afghanistan, that they had essentially designated themselves as a terrorist regime. They did not. And they have to pay the consequences, and the Taliban government must now go, because they are part and parcel to al Qaeda." (*Federal News Service*, Oct. 24, p. 7) The quasi-logical argument was now complete; Al Qaeda and the Taliban had been publicly leveled into a homogenous threat entity.

Having unequivocally removed the option of reconsideration of the Taliban's status as a legitimate government, the Bush administration utilized three associational moves that integrated the relationship of terrorism and the state. These included public arguments about state-sponsors of terrorism, about terrorist states, and about terrorist-supported states. Given the flexible meaning of the terrorist label, (Weimann & Winn, 1994; Jenkins, 1975; Pillar, 2001; Laqueur, 1987), the Bush administration's utilization of the various combinations of the terrorism/state relationship articulated a public argument strategy for encroaching on state sovereignty with wide potential application around the globe.

2. *State-Sponsor of Terrorism*

In the aftermath of the Iranian hostage crisis, the United States passed the Export Administration Act of 1979. The act gave the U.S. Secretary of State power to designate the label of state sponsors of terrorism to foreign nations who had supported multiple acts of international terrorism. Nations placed on the list are subject to various export controls, including no arms-related exports, controls over dual-use exports, restrictions on economic assistance, and financial restrictions on items such as high-cost defense contracts, U.S. government licenses, and tax credits for income earned in the listed countries. At the time of the 9/11 bombings, Afghanistan was not on the U.S. list of state-sponsors, principally because the U.S. had not formally recognized the Taliban as the official government of that nation.

Despite the seeming lack of relevant application to Afghanistan, the Bush administration still raised the specter of state-sponsorship of terrorism as it articulated the early argumentative foundations of its war on terror. Vice President Dick Cheney maintained in internal administration meetings that state-sponsors of terrorism were critical to the war on terror, given that confronting states was easier than confronting non-state actors. (Woodward, 2002) Publicly, Rumsfield justified the focus on state sponsors of terrorism, when he argued, "Those terrorist networks could not operate successfully without the support of countries and businesses and banks and people and non-governmental organization that harbor and finance and facilitate and tolerate them." (*Federal Document Clearing House,* Sept. 23, p. 1) The arguments both in public and private revealed the Bush administration's reluctance to abandon the usage of state-sponsorship as a justification for retaliatory military action in the terrorism arena.

At various points in their public statements, the Bush administration appeared to reinforce the Taliban as a state-sponsor of terrorism. The unacceptable activities commonly associated with the occupants on the list, such as harboring or providing safe haven for fugitives or offering logistical support, do appear in the

administration's public characterizations of the Taliban. Bush, for example, maintained, " . . . we condemn the Taliban regime. It is not only repressing its own people, it is threatening people everywhere by sponsoring and sheltering and supplying terrorists." (*Federal Document Clearing House*, Sept. 20, p. 4) In short, the Bush administration explicitly argued that the Taliban was a sponsor of terrorism.
However, administration spokesperson simultaneously avoided equating the Taliban with the state portion of the state-sponsor label in their discourse justifying the U.S. military operation in Afghanistan. Powell focused on the spatial associational relationship of al-Qaeda to Afghanistan. He maintained, "Our campaign objective is to go after the Al Qaeda organization and its leader, Osama bin Laden. The headquarters of this organization and Osama bin Laden are located in Afghanistan . . . . We are focusing on Al Qaeda and focusing in Afghanistan." [emphasis mine] (*Federal Document Clearing House*, Oct. 3, p. 2) The strategy left open the question of who was permitting al-Qaeda to remain within the borders of Afghanistan.

The administration bolstered its refusal to identify the Taliban as the government of Afghanistan by utilizing the appearance-reality strategy of disassociation. As Perelman and Olbrects-Tyteca (1969) illuminate, "the effect of determining reality is to dissociate those appearances that are deceptive from those that correspond to reality." (p. 416) Rumsfeld attempted to unveil the Taliban's deception by encouraging his audience to recognize that the Taliban did not fully control Afghanistan. He reduced the Taliban's influence to only portions of the country, when he argued, "We also seek to raise the cost of doing business for foreign terrorists who have chosen Afghanistan from which to organize their activities and for the oppressive Taliban regime that continues to tolerate terrorist presence in those portions of Afghanistan which they control." (*Federal News Service,* Oct 7, p. 1) He further isolated those members of the Taliban that supported al Qaeda by suggesting that they did not represent either the interests of the Afghan people or even the Taliban itself as a whole. He argued, " . . . the only way that the Afghan people are to be successful in heaving the terrorist network out of their country is to be successful against the Omar's – that portion of Taliban and the Taliban leadership that are so closely linked to the al Qaeda. And certainly we are working with the elements on the ground that are interested in overthrowing and expelling that group of people." (*Federal News Service,* Oct. 12, p. 3) The Bush administration treated the Taliban as a group of extremist

individuals, not as the legitimate, representative government of Afghanistan.
The Bush administration further attempted to break the connecting linkages between the Taliban and the Afghan state by focusing public attention on the certain defining elements of a nation-state. The Bush camp reiterated the conventional expectations of the nation-state, while noting that those elements were not present in U.S. campaign against the Taliban and al-Qaeda. As Rumsfeld surmised, ". . . there are not a lot of high-value targets. I've pointed out that the Taliban and the Al Qaeda do not have armies, navies and air forces – and that's clear, they don't. I've, therefore, characterized this conflict, this campaign, this so-called war, as being notably different from the others." (*Federal News Service*, Oct. 7, p. 5) By breaking the conventional linkage between the state and the Taliban occupation, the Bush administration hoped for a profound shift in the audience's perspective about considering the Taliban as the established government of Afghanistan.
By highlighted the Taliban as a sponsor of terrorism without qualifying the group as a state, the Bush administration created a potentially powerful new association in America's arsenal against terrorism. Capitalizing on the American's public acceptance of sharp consequences for those who sponsor terrorism, the administration expanded the range of actors who could potentially qualify for executive action. Groups falling short of internationally recognized governing entities could invite a retaliatory response against a state as a whole.

3. *The Terrorist State*

To augment the claim that the Taliban did not qualify as the legitimate governing body for the people of Afghanistan, the Bush administration also adopted a public strategy of depicting the group as a terrorist government. The decision to justify the Taliban as leading a terrorist state recalled an approach first used in the twentieth century by the George H. W. Bush administration to depict Saddam Hussein. After Iraq's invasion of Kuwait of August 1990, the first Bush administration faced rapidly declining public support for a U.S. military response to the situation. To remedy that problem, administration spokespersons described all of the Iraqi leader's actions (setting oil wells on fire, preventing Americans from leaving the country, occupation of Kuwait, and capture of Kuwaiti oil reserves) as acts of terrorism. Such a strategy was in accordance with polling data that showed the American public would only support a military response in the situation to halt the spread of a terrorist threat. (Winkler, 2006)
Applied in the context of Afghanistan, the characterization of the Taliban as a

terrorist state did not focus on a single leader, but to the entire ruling party. To make the case that the Taliban was a terrorist government, the administration transformed the people of Afghan from national citizens into victims of terrorism. Rumsfeld, for example, referenced the U.S. humanitarian mission to bring food aid into Afghanistan as “feeding and assisting the victims of the Taliban regime.” (*Federal News Service*, Oct. 8, p. 2)
Data used to establish the barbarity of the Taliban reinforced the terrorist image by focusing on civilian atrocities, particularly the plight of women. The administration compared the role of women before the Taliban came into power (i.e. when they had high participation rates in government, the educational system, and the health care system) to the lack of personal autonomy experienced by women under Taliban rule. Rumsfeld recounted the shift when he noted, “Then the Taliban took over, and they forbade schooling for girls over the age of eight, banned women from working, restricted their access to medical care, and brutally enforced restrictive dress codes, and even beat women for the crime of laughing in public.” (*Federal News Service,* Nov. 19, p. 2) Bush reinforced the barbarity by added that, “Women are executed in Kabul’s soccer stadium. They can be beaten for wearing socks that are too thin.” (*Federal News Service*, Nov. 11, p. 3) Laura Bush compared the treatment of women under the Taliban with other women living in the Muslim world. She concluded, “The poverty, poor health, and illiteracy that the terrorists and the Taliban have imposed on women in Afghanistan do not conform with the treatment of women in most of the Islamic world, where women make important contributions in their societies. Only the terrorists and the Taliban forbid education to women. Only the terrorists and the Taliban threaten to pull out women’s fingernails for wearing nail polish.” (Nov. 17, p. 1)

Laura Bush insisted that the children of Afghanistan were equally at risk. She explained, “Long before the current war began, the Taliban and its terrorist allies were making the lives of children and women in Afghanistan miserable. Seventy percent of the Afghan people are malnourished. One in every four children won’t live past the age of five, because health care is not available.” (Nov. 17, p. 1) Using women and children as a representative part of society as a whole, the Bush administration underscored the depravity the Taliban utilized against innocent members of their community.

Beyond cataloging acts against women and children, the Bush administration argued more broadly about the controlling, totalitarian impulses of the terrorist Taliban regime. Rumsfeld attempted to describe the broad nature of the problem when he stated,

… Men are routinely jailed for the most trivial offenses: too short a beard, possession of a television. Religion can be practiced only as Taliban dictate. They have their Ministry of Vice and Virtue, which enforces their rules. And while the Afghan people live in poverty, the terrorist oppressors spend millions of dollars training people and sending them all over the globe to kill people. They traffic in opium, worsening the conditions of Muslims throughout the world. At a time when millions of Afghans are starving, in search of food and water, they have disrupted the distribution of international aid, seized warehouses of food intended for the poor, and created catastrophic starvation. (*Federal News Service*, Nov. 13, p. 2)

The Bush administration associated the actions of the Taliban, including both their control obsession and their lack of concern for the Afghan people, to establish that the group was simply unfit to serve as the legitimate government of Afghanistan.

The Bush camp used an argument by analogy to bolster its case that the Taliban were nothing more than a terrorist government. At the memorial service for the victims lost at the Pentagon on 9/11, Rumsfeld compared the Taliban, by inference, to the Nazis and Communists of the 20th century. He explained, "In the last century, this building existed to oppose two totalitarian regimes that sought to oppress and rule other nations. And is it is no exaggeration of historical judgment to say that, without this building and those who work here, those two regimes would not have been stopped or thwarted in their oppression of countless millions. But just as those regimes sought to rule and oppress, others in this century seek to do the same by corrupting a noble religion." (*Federal Document Clearing House*, Oct. 11, p. 2) Bush drew a similar parallel when he stated, "Like the fascists and totalitarians before them, these terrorists – Al Qaeda, the Taliban regime that supports them and other terror groups across our world – try to impose their radical views through threats and violence." (*Federal Document Clearing House,* Nov. 6, p. 1). By implicit reference to the Nazis and the Communists (two groups that had widespread global influence), the Bush administration associated the plight of the Afghan people under Taliban rule to other nations who might become the next terrorist states.

The Bush administration magnified its case that the Taliban regime was terrorist by maintaining that the atrocities it cited were only a small portion of the total calamities in progress. Expounding on the dictatorial rule of the Taliban, Bush spokespersons explained that many horrors went unreported due to the threatening tactics of the Taliban. Rumsfeld demonstrated the strategy by relaying a personal story from his own travels to Afghanistan: "And I asked this World Food person, who is knowledgeable about it, why don't we hear non-governmental organizations talking about the fact that their warehouses are broken into, the materials are taken, their workers are beaten? And the answer is, it's very simple – the Taliban will shoot their people if they do, so they keep their mouths shut." (*Federal News Service,* Nov. 1, p. 10) The underreporting of the brutality, coupled with the gruesome atrocities that did surface in administration portrayals, invited the public to assume that life under the Taliban was horrific, if not comparable to being held hostage and tortured.

Finally, the Bush administration built the case for the barbarity of the Taliban regime by focusing on that group's response to the U.S. military in Afghanistan. Faced with mounting questions related to whether American forces were killing and harming civilians as they attempted to root out al Qaeda and their supporters, Bush spokespersons explained that those casualties were a result of the Taliban's terrorist tactics. Administration officials claimed that the Taliban used innocent civilians as human shields. Rumsfeld indicated, "We know of certain knowledge they're putting anti-aircraft batteries on top of buildings in residential areas for the purpose of attracting bombs so that, in fact, they can then show the press that civilians have been killed." (*Federal News Service*, Nov. 1, p. 10) Demonstrating that the Taliban's willingness to sacrifice innocent civilians for small public relations victories reinforced the terrorist nature of the regime.
The association of the Taliban with terrorist acts invited reduced conventional expectations of state sovereignty rights and privileges for the regime. The Taliban's cruelty to its own people undercut the legitimacy of the regime's claim that al-Qaeda were only guests on its land, with no deeper associational relationship. Further a terrorist state, that is only marginally, if not wholly, unconcerned with establishing the safety of its citizenry, warrants outside assistance to protect the citizenry. Finally, if the Taliban was cruel to its own populations in the present day, the group's domination might spread to others in the region if left to continue unabated.

4. *Terrorist-Supported State*

On November 15, 2001, Dick Cheney introduced a new phrase to describe the possible relationship between terrorism and foreign states: a "terrorist-supported state." (*Federal News Service*, Nov. 15, p. 4) The phrase borrowed from the logic of the state sponsor label, implying that the existence of one group (here the governing Taliban regime) was dependent on the support of another (the al-Qaeda terrorist network). While administration spokespersons did not explicitly repeat Cheney's new label, several did reinforce the association. Laura Bush reiterated the message by delivering a radio address designed to "kick off a world-wide effort to focus on the brutality against women and children *by the al Qaeda terrorist network and the regime it supports in Afghanistan, the Taliban*." [emphasis mine] (Nov. 17, p. 1) Bush himself, articulated the new way of examining the relationship between terrorists and states when he stated, "The leadership of Al Qaeda has great influenced in Afghanistan and supports the Taliban regime in controlling most of the country. In Afghanistan, we see Al Qaeda's vision for the world." (*Federal Document Clearing House*, Sept. 20, p. 3)

Publicly, the Bush administration never argued the definitional standards for what constituted a terrorist-supported state. Instead, after the initial period of choice publicly offered prior to military operation, the Bush team presented the two entities (al-Qaeda and the Taliban) as one and the same. Bush spokespersons labeled them both as foreign (Rumsfeld, *Federal News Service,* Oct. 7, p. 2), as invaders (Rumsfeld, Federal News Service, Oct. 12, p. 6) and as criminals. (Bush, *Federal Document Clearing House,* Sept 20, p. 4) Both entities had military targets that, when struck by ordinance from the U.S. military operation in Afghanistan, could undermine their effectiveness. (Bush, *Federal Document Clearing House*, Oct. 7, p. 1)

Perhaps the most resonant point of homogeneity leveled by the Bush administration against the Taliban and al-Qaeda concerned the topic of weapons of mass destruction. Rumsfeld was unequivocal about al-Qaeda's desire to obtain a wide range of weapons that could inflict widespread damage. He argued, "The short answer is, we know of certain knowledge that al Qaeda has, over the years, had an appetite for acquiring weapons of mass destruction of various types, including nuclear materials . . . . Any terrorist network that ends up acquiring weapons of mass destruction, as I've said on other occasions, is a danger to the world, a real danger to the world. Those weapons have the capability of killing many more than thousands – into the hundreds of thousands of people." (*Federal News Service,* Nov. 1, p. 4) Coupled with a willing state, the chance of procurement potentially escalates, making the probability of terrorists acquiring weapons of mass destruction rise.

Constituted as members of the same threat entity with common characteristics and interests, the Taliban and al-Qaeda together became a justification for U.S. claims of self-defense under the United Nations Charter for the attacks of 9/11. With al-Qaeda culpability for the attacks established, the removal of both bin Laden's network and the members of the Taliban could be argued as warranted. The removal to a non-state actor functionally means that the al-Qaeda group would move to another nation to establish its residency. For the Taliban, however, the removal equated with a loss of the sovereign right to govern.

5. *Summary and Conclusions*

The Bush administration laid the argumentative groundwork for associating the Taliban with al-Qaeda from the early days following the 9/11 attacks. While publicly proclaiming that it was providing the Taliban a choice to reenter the community of civilized nations, the Bush camp used association and dissociation to render the Taliban part of a terrorist network. Constrained by the conventional warrants embodied in the administration's discourse, the Taliban lacked the diplomatic and judicial channels to meet Bush's demands.

Having subsequently determined to remove the Taliban from its ruling position over Afghanistan, the administration reconstituted the interplay of associative mergers between terrorism and states. State sponsors of terrorism became transformed into any group (not simply any offending state) that would aid alleged terrorists. With public expectations supporting stiff penalties for foreign states that sponsored terrorism, the argumentative move helped prepare the audience to accept unconventionally harsh and overt removal strategies targeting a foreign regime.

The creation of the Taliban regime as a terrorist state established argumentative topoi for usage of such associational strategies in the future. States can be defined as terrorist by how the leadership treats the innocent women and children within its borders, as the randomness of atrocities has been a long-standing characteristic of terrorism. Totalitarianism and repression of freedom reinforce the depiction of the terrorist state, because of the close linkage between fear and terror with the willingness to accept restrictions on freedom.

Finally, the utilization of the terrorist-supported state has expansive implications for which states might qualify for potential upheaval. Given the myriad of methods that a terrorist group might use to support a ruling party, virtually any state could find itself subject to such a label. With the pressures of globalization increasingly redefining the relationships between and among states, critical attention to flexible threat characterizations such as terrorist-supported states are imperative.

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