

# **The Politicisation of Death**

## **Methods of Embedding Ideology within the News: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Two News Articles**

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Choose two news/current affairs texts, one from English-speaking media (e.g. a British or American TV news report, an Australian newspaper, etc) and the other from a media outlet in another country/language, but both dealing with the same 'global' events (e.g. the war in Iraq, the Asian Tsunami...). Critically discuss the two texts with reference to CDA (see Written Discourse unit 7). What differences in the representation of events, and in relations with the intended audience, can be identified? How might any such differences be related to underlying cultural or ideological issues?

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## **1.0 Introduction**

Using features of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) that include *context of culture* and *situation*, *ideational meaning*, *interpersonal meaning*, *cohesion* and *intertextuality* I will explain the methods applied to support the ideologies embedded within two texts relating to Hurricane Katrina and the intended audience of each text. In the first section I will discuss the methods used by CDA, as demonstrated in *Written Discourse* (Caldas-Coulthard and Holland, 2001 111-138). The second section will then use CDA to analyze the two news articles, one from an English speaking country and the other from a non-English speaking country

## **2.0 Critical Discourse Analysis**

Through CDA, the language of discourse is explained within texts by deconstructing the methods used to maintain hegemony by elite groups via their use and influence of media to further their own ideological dominance over individual lives within societies. Dijk (1996: 90) says that:

if discourse access is a measure of power, Critical Discourse Analysis becomes an important diagnostic tool for the assessment of social and political dominance

By hiding behind the methodologies they employ to influence and manipulate their viewership individuals within media are able to distance themselves from their intended audience. CDA aims to highlight social inequalities and the tools used to maintain that power (Fairclough, 1995, cited in Coffin, 2001: 99). Fairclough says that "...it is mainly

in discourse that consent is achieved, ideologies are transmitted, and practices, meanings, values and identities are taught and learnt. (2001: 99).” This is discourse that not only reflects the social order but also shapes the social order of individuals’ interactions with society. CDA (Dijk, 2001: 353) equips analysts with the means of explaining the structures of social and political issues within discourse. Utilizing the tools implemented within CDA relations of power and dominance in society can be challenged, and not only described, but explained.

A central feature of CDA (Caldas-Coulthard and Holland, 2001:117) is to impart the discourse process of text production and interpretation with social practice. Using Fairclough’s framework of Discourse Analysis (Caldas-Coulthard and Holland, 2001:121) CDA incorporates a three dimensional view of discourse: description of the text, interpretation of the interaction and finally explanation of how the first two dimensions are inserted in social action. This provides the critical aspect to the discourse analysis. Fairclough, (1992) (cited in Jaworski and Coupland, 1999: 2) says:

Discourse constitutes the social. Three dimensions of the social are distinguished—knowledge, social relations, and social identity—and these correspond respectively to three major functions of language...Discourse is shaped by relations of power, and invested with ideologies

Further, drawing from the Hallidayan model of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), Fairclough’s framework of Discourse Analysis (Caldas-Coulthard and Holland, 2001: 122) corresponds with the three metafunctions of language within SFL: the *ideational*,

the *interpersonal* and the *textual*. The ideational metafunction is a broad understanding and experience of the environment. The interpersonal metafunction allows individuals to enact change in their social identities and their social relations. Linguistically, the ideational and the interpersonal are achieved through the textual.

## **2.1 Context of Culture**

*Context of Culture* refers to the environment in which a text was produced.

To comprehend the meaning of a text Malinowski points out the necessity of understanding the context it was produced within (1923, 1935) (cited in Burns and Coffin, 2001: 151).

## **2.2 Context of Situation**

*Context of Situation* is divided into three areas: *field*, *tenor* and *mode*. *Field* refers to the subject matter that is written about within a text. *Tenor* refers to the position a writer takes in relation to the intended audience. *Mode* refers to the means of communication, whether the text is spoken or written.

## **2.3 Ideational Meaning**

*Ideational Meaning* is the reflection of events or experience within a text. It is divided into two parts: *Process Types* and *Participants and Nominalization*.

### **2.3.1 Process Types**

*Process types* are verbs or verbal phrases that describe existence, states of being or having. Process types (Caldas-Coulthard, Holland, 2001: 128) are divided into four processes: *Relational*, *Material*, *Mental* and *Verbal*. *Relational processes* refer to existence. *Material processes* demonstrate actions. *Mental processes* signify thinking, feeling and perceiving. *Verbal processes* involve saying.

### **2.3.2 Participants and Nominalization**

*Nominalization* is the backgrounding or foregrounding of *participants* within a text. Leeuwen (1996: 38) states that *participants* and their representations are included or excluded to suit the interests and purposes of the intended reader. *Nominalization* of a proposition allows a writer to universalize an opinion, making it difficult to challenge, by transforming a subjective statement into an evidently objective one (Caldas-Coulthard, Holland, 2001: 130). For example, the article, SOS from New Orleans states “*Anger mounted across the soggy ruined city, with thousands of storm victims hungry...*” However, if the statement is reverbalized it becomes more personalized and easier to question. Rewritten as “*I believe thousands of storm victims are angry and hungry in the soggy, ruined city...*” the statement is easier to contest and the writer more readily identifiable as a participant in the gathering of information for the text.

### **2.4 Interpersonal Meaning and Modality**

*Interpersonal Meaning and Modality* involves the foregrounding or backgrounding of presuppositions, or the writer’s opinions, on the topics within a text. Emphasis and de-

emphasis on key concepts is achieved through the use of *modality*. McCarthy (1991: 85) says that modals inform the reader of the writer's stance through use of "assertion, tentativeness, commitment and other crucial aspects of interpersonal meaning." Usage of this depersonalized and objectified language allows the writer to position himself/herself as authority without the use of the first person "I" (Caldas-Coulthard, Holland, 2001: 131). For instance, the article *The American Way of Death*, backgrounds the writer's voice through modal usage when it states, "While there seems to be no limit to the resources the US can deploy abroad, at home, it appears to be ill-equipped to deal with calamity." The writer may have withdrawn the first person "I" from his statement, but his attitude and judgement toward the subject matter remains. Rewriting his statement as "I think there is no limit to the resources US can deploy abroad, and at home I think it is ill-equipped to deal with calamity" diminishes the authority of the presupposition to be assumed as fact.

## **2.5 Cohesion**

*Cohesion* is the linking of information throughout the text to provide meaning. In this paper I will address *exophoric* and *endorphoric* references. References that point to the world outside a text are *exophoric* , while those that link different points within a text are *endophoric* (Moon, 2001: 53).

## **2.6 Intertextuality**

Intertextuality refers to other texts cited within the text. Such references are employed to align ideas, provide an ideological framework and/or achieve an interconnected authority (Caldas-Coulthard, Holland, 2001: 137).

### **3.0 Textual Analysis**

#### **3.1 Context of Culture**

SOS from New Orleans is written within a cultural context of two intertwining ideologies: individualism and conservatism. The tradition of the individual as being self-reliant has a long history in the US. However, the notion of the underprivileged individual as being a threat to the security of the nation also has a long history. The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina presented a context in which the tradition of individualism and the tradition of conservatism clashed together in a very politicised environment due to individual disparity in economics and government bureaucracy. In addition to the American crises in New Orleans, the US government was also engaged in wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The American Way of Death also concerns itself with the role of government and the nature of the individual during Hurricane Katrina. However, it is written from a context that apparently accepts the American government has a singular purpose: war. The text is written from a geographic location situated significantly closer to the wars in the Middle

East, Egypt. In addition, it would appear that the proximity to the wars in the Middle East also highly influence its pertaining ideologies.

### **3.2 Context of Situation**

#### **Field**

SOS from New Orleans is written as an informative news piece. It describes the situation in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina

The American Way of Death is written as an opinion piece. It focuses on the impact of Hurricane Katrina and the consequences of America's wars abroad for the inhabitants of New Orleans. It also uses the event to comment on the negative consequences of US foreign policy.

#### **Tenor**

SOS from New Orleans is written as an authoritative piece of journalism. It is written by Adam Nossiter and was distributed through the Associated Press to the Washington Times, a conservative newspaper. The conservative positions within the article are probably expected from readers as a manner of strengthening the readerships view on the role of government. It can be assumed at this time that intended readers were aware of an escalating situation in New Orleans and information presented confirmed reader's

opinions that New Orleans was descending into ruin and chaos, regardless of the actions taken by the US government.

The American Way of Death is an authoritative opinion piece of journalism from Al-Ahram Weekly written by Azmi Bishara. Readers of the article are probably familiar with Bishara and would expect his opinions to present a stance contrary to American dominance. The article is highly critical of the US government and sensitive to the hardships and sufferings of victims affected by the hurricane. Readers, especially from the Middle East, would possibly have also had hardships because of direct or indirect actions by US government involvement in the Middle East. Readers in the US would possibly have also come from or have family in the Middle East.

### **Mode**

SOS from New Orleans was accessed through the mass media on The Washington Times website. The Washington Times is a public site for conservative sources of information in the US.

The American Way of Death was accessed through the mass media on the Al-Ahram Weekly website. Al-Ahram Weekly is a public site with English news and opinions from Egypt.

### 3.3 Ideational Meaning: Process Types

Depiction of an event or the construction of a reality within a text can be accomplished by use of process types. SOS from New Orleans uses a high percentage of material processes for the construction of its reality and the reinforcement of its title. Through the use of material processes the negative actions of individual victims are reflective of the group as a whole. Although agency is unclear, victims as a whole are presented as instigators of the chaos, as opposed to individual criminals. Material processes are used for the positive depictions of government response. Government, through use of Congress, National Guardsmen and police, is presented as an agent of aid to the victims. Some examples:

(2) *Storm victims are raped and beaten; fights erupt with flying fists, knives and guns are breaking out; corpses litter the streets; and polices... are repeatedly fired on.*

(3) *..National Guardsmen poured in to restore order and stop the lootings, carjackings and gunfire.*

(22) *“There are people just taking potshots at police...”*

(23) *Anger mounted across the soggy ruined city, with thousands of storm victims hungry, desperate and despairing of the promised buses to take them out.*

(28) *Congress returned to pass a \$10.5 billion emergency aid package to keep FEMA from running out of money...*

(32) *Police Chief Eddie Compass said he sent in 88 offices to quell the disorder, but they were quickly beaten back by the mob.*

Confirmation of the dangers within New Orleans by the victims of the hurricane and towards the government is achieved through the use of relational processes. Relational processes are used to reinforce the government's role as protector of their city. Images of the victims are used to present the dangers involved for government in its assistance. For example:

(8) ...300 Iraq-hardened Arkansas National Guard members were inside New Orleans with shoot-to-kill orders”

(10) They have M-16s and are locked and loaded.

(16) He warned that the slow evacuation had become an “incredibly explosive situation.”

(31)...15,000 to 20,000 persons who had taken shelter at the convention center to await buses grew increasingly hostile.

There are very few mental processes used throughout the article. By commenting only on the logistics of rescue operation Nossiter limits the use mental processes. Such usage reinforces the negative images of the victims as helpless and reinforces the positive images of the government as providing security. For example, Mayor Ray Nagin states, (5) “...We need busses...” In addition, Gov. Kathleen Babineaux Blanco (11) says, “These troops know how to shoot to and kill and they are more than willing to do so if necessary and I expect they will.” Michael Brown of FEMA says, (19) “I actually think the security situation is pretty darn good.” Verbal processes, such as said, warned and

*told* are used to quote participants, including the national guardsmen, police, government officials and hurricane victims. In the case of all quotes for authorities they are given titles and/or descriptions of their job/job status. Examples of quoted authorities with titles include:

Mayor Ray Nagin,

Gov. Kathleen Babineaux Blanco,

Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff,

Coast Guard Lt. Cmdr. Cheri Ben-Iesan (spokesman at the city emergency operations center),

President Bush,

Police Chief Eddie Compass,

Col. Henry Whitehorn (chief of the Louisiana State Police),

Dr. Ruth Berggren,

Police Capt. Ernie Demmo.

While a high number of authorities are quoted to present information on government actions, only a few victims are quoted. They seem to emerge from the crowd to confirm the articles descriptions and images of degradation and helplessness. For example, in lines 41 and 42 Nossiter writes, “*At one point, the crowd began to chant, “‘We want help!’ ...Later a woman, screaming, went on the front steps of the convention center and led the crowd in reciting the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm...*” Brief descriptions are given of victims as

average citizens rather than job titles, except in the case of one, a reverend. Individuals quoted from the crowd are listed as:

Rev. Issac Clark (68),

a woman (screaming),

Daniel Edwards (47-year-old),

tourist Debbie Durso of Washington, Mich.,

a little boy (who cried).

Criticisms of the US government are acknowledged though by Daniel Edwards (47-48) when he says, “*You can do everything for other countries, but you can’t do nothing for your own people. You can go overseas with the military, but you can’t get them down here.*” This is used as a means of giving voice to the frustrations of the victims trapped within the city.

An entirely different reality is depicted through the use of process types in *The American Way of Death*. There is a much higher usage of relational processes to reinforce the presuppositions of the writer that the American government is dangerous. For instance:

(1)...*there are different ways to die in Bush’s America.*

(7) *America is a maximalist state viewed from the outside, and a minimalist state when the perspective is from within.*

(8)...*America had to bring troops back from Iraq to deal with the crisis...*

A high usage of material processes is also present, however, the focus is on that of the US government as instigator of the chaos rather than the hurricane victims. This change in agency clearly contrasts with the government's participation in Nossiter's article as agents of aid. Material processes are used as a means of substantiating Bishara's suppositions in regards to US actions abroad and their consequences. His suppositions present America as not only dangerous, but as incompetent. For example:

*(5) America is a great power, capable of evacuating millions and of sending hundreds of thousands of young men and women on rescue operations providing, of course, those young people are soldiers and the "rescue" a military operation abroad.*

*(6) America presents itself across the globe as the state writ large.*

*(8) Tellingly, Washington had to bring troops back from Iraq to deal with the crisis in Louisiana."*

Mental processes are used infrequently throughout the article. Their usage is limited to the depiction of government to reinforce images of incompetence and bias. For example:

*(37) On the ground police appeared more concerned about protecting shops from looting than about those stranded in their homes or in the stadium."*

*(51) ...White House is currently feeling the heat of mounting popular anger at Bush...*

*(66) "I don't think anyone anticipated the breach in the levees..."*

The incompetence of government officials is also presented through verbal processes. By restricting verbal processes to what officials said or was said about them Bishara can choose quotes that reinforce his presuppositions against government actions. For instance:

*(34) Four days into the flood and the head of FEMA told ABC news the he had learned about the disaster victims like everyone else, from the television.*

*(63) ...The New York Times... called the president 'casual to the point of carelessness' as it questioned whether he 'understood the depth of the crisis.'*

### **3.4 Ideational Meaning: Participants and Nominalisations**

Participation by Nossiter is completely backgrounded within SOS from New Orleans as a method of shifting the reader's attention to the details described in the article by the additional participants. For example, Mayor Nagin's participation is foregrounded in the beginning of the article to establish the dangers presented by the victims and to highlight the actions taken by the US government in response. Mayor Nagin states in line 4, "*This is a Desperate SOS...*" Representation is then shifted to Gov. Blanco as an agent of the government to demonstrate its role as protector of its citizenry and owner of the city when she states, (9) "*These troops are...under my orders to restore order in the streets.*"

Depictions of lawlessness are used by Nossiter to substantiate his own propositions that the government is doing all it can. Participation by individuals who could provide

commentary on the government's lack of prior planning is entirely omitted from the text. Assistance is presented as unable to arrive from the US government, because of the anarchy in New Orleans created by the victims of the hurricane. Participation by the government is detailed as an agent of aid, while the victim's participation is presented as a unified threat. Lines 37-39 state:

*...a sniper...opened fire outside... as National Guard vehicles prepared to evacuate patients. A military helicopter tried to land... But the rushing crowd forced the copters to keep their distance. Troopers tossed the supplies to the crowd... and flew away.*

*(14) ...rescue operations were suspended in areas where gunfire had broken out...*

*(22) There are people just taking potshots at police...*

*(23) Anger mounted across the soggy ruined city, with thousands of storm victims hungry, desperate and despairing...*

*(31) 15,000 to 20,000 persons who had taken shelter at the convention center to await buses grew increasing hostile.*

*(33) We have individuals who are getting raped; we have individuals who are getting beaten.*

*(41) At one point the crowd began to chant...*

*(52) Huge crowds, hoping to finally escape the stifling confines of the stadium, jammed the main concourse... a seething sea of tense, unhappy people ...*

*(61) These individuals will not take control of the city...*

The sniper is presented as any one of the victims of the hurricane and is therefore clearly a representative of all victims. Distinction between criminals and hurricane victims is never given clear agency. Government is then presented as responding to a single threat: the people. The use of such descriptions of the victims adds to the conservative view that the government must act as protector of society from the underprivileged masses. By shifting the proposition of responsibility away from the government and its lack of prior planning, agency can then be placed on hurricane victims and depictions of anarchy.

As a method of establishing greater authority Bishara also backgrounds his participation in *The American Way of Death*. Representation as a participant is again granted to Mayor Nagin, however, his involvement is foregrounded as a means of addressing the inadequacies of government, and thus supporting the suppositions of Bishara. Lines 29-31 state:

*Food, medicine and evacuation remained distant promises, while politicians in Washington offered speeches and press conferences. New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin was desperate. Instead of food, he said, “they’re feeding the public a line of bull and they’re spinning, and people are dying down here.” He pleaded with officials in Washington to “get off your asses and do something and fix the biggest goddamn crisis in the history of this country.”*

Earlier presuppositions about the US government's single priority of war are reasserted by use of Mayor Nagins quote: politicians are disinterested because no war is involved and individuals have no intrinsic value. In an effort to recontextualize his argument Bishara uses several instances of nominalization to appear objective and natural when he writes:

*(5) America is a great power, capable of evacuating millions and of sending hundreds of thousands of young men and women on rescue operations providing, of course, those young people are soldiers and the "rescue" a military operation abroad.*

*(19) "Hurricanes are not the kind of enemy on which you can pin a face."*

No additional representation is granted to individual government officials, the military, or FEMA representatives to discuss successful operations of the past concerning natural disaster or other crises.

### **3.5 Ideational Meaning and Modality**

Although the participation by Nossiter is invisible throughout SOS from New Orleans, ideational meaning surfaces in three descriptions. For instance:

*(1) New Orleans—The city that care forgot...*

*(16) He [Terry Ebbert] warned that the slow evacuation had become an "incredibly explosive situation."*

*(19) Michael Brown, the undersecretary in charge of FEMA, seemed oblivious to the widespread despair.*

By evoking an emotional response Nossiter attempts to hook the reader in the first line of the article. Who he believes forgot to care is never explained. In the second and third instances *warned* and *seemed oblivious* are subjective observations formed by Nossiter, or others, involved in the editing process to describe the reactions of participants to the events. These details contribute to the depictions of danger in New Orleans, however, *said* could have been used to maintain stronger objectivity. Nossiter, undoubtedly aware of his audience, understands that while the average reader would be politically conservative, they would also be sympathetic to the plights of individuals trapped in New Orleans. Criticism of the undersecretary of FEMA gives voice to issues that are not addressed in the article: the government's lack of prior planning and its refusal to accept responsibility for it.

To position himself as an authority on victimization within *The American Way of Death* Bishara employs several modalizing constructions. This usage allows Bishara to present his judgement on America's pursuit of death for its own people as politicised and on the complacent involvement of the media in commodifying that death:

*(16) There is nothing like casting the blame on the victim, who most likely had no idea of the magnitude of the threat and even less of an idea where to go to escape it, let alone how to get there.*

(50) *Their lives, apparently, are without intrinsic value. (51) Whatever significance they have derives exclusively from a set of economic and political calculations... (52) The “victims of terrorism”, or the relatives of soldiers killed in action, are given at least some explanation of their suffering through the invocation of patriotism, the defence of the American way. (53) They are allowed concrete symbols... (55) For the flood victims, though, there was no such pomp and circumstance. (56) Their last rites were the colour of their bloated bodies... (57) The difference is the product of mankind’s hypocrisy, made all the more horrific by the hypocrisy of a consumerist media for which even the spectacle of death is a product to be placed.*

Asserting his commitment to the support of the victim Bishara corroborates his intended audiences perceived ideologies by incriminating both government and media for their hypocrisy. Additionally he states, (33) “*The disgrace goes deeper than the appalling indifference and incompetence of the federal government.*” And, (27) “*It was impossible to get even a rough estimate of how many had already died though the hundreds bloated bodies floating on the water provided a horrifying testimony to America’s shame.*”

However, Bishara does not disclose how he arrives at his presupposition for the US government’s incompetence or shame and its refusal to cede non-monetary value to its citizens: the media. By relying on modalizing constructions, such as *there is nothing like, apparently, significantly and the difference is*, to assert his judgement Bishara attains a conspirational relationship with his audience. Asserting that there is a difference in how

you die in or for America, Bishara gives voice to the apparent concerns of those who fear being killed by America's actions abroad.

### 3.6 Cohesion

The title of the text, *SOS from New Orleans*, provides the strongest use of exophoric reference within the article. It is a reference to the famous Morse code distress signal and an allusion to a sinking ship. Depictions of New Orleans interplay with the title to provide a framework throughout the text. SOS, while a distress call, also provides allusions to submersion, calls for aid, and the eminent threat of danger. Mayor Nagin's distress call is an exophoric reference to the outside world of the text and an endorphoric reference to the title: (4) "This is a desperate SOS." This allusion provides the framework of secure ideological assumptions of danger that the article is constructed upon. Eminent danger is then reinforced throughout the article by endophoric reference to other instances of danger:

- (1) "New Orleans...descended into anarchy..."
- (2) Storm victims are raped...
- (23) Anger mounted across the city...
- (25) "We don't have help."
- (49) "Go to hell—It's every man for himself."
- (50) "This is just insanity."

Allusions to American hegemony and the security against nature that is denied within that hegemony are employed through exophoric reference to the outside world within The American Way of Death. Secure ideological assumptions are presented as truths by Bishara to lend authority to his arguments against American imperialism. Bishara writes:

*(2) People long ago abandoned the custom of making human or non-human sacrifices to ward off natural disaster. (3) The balance of power between man and nature, though, remains the same, and against the fury of nature at its most extreme there are no superpowers. (4) That said, not all nation are equal in their ability to deal with the aftermath of cataclysmic natural events.*

It would seem that reference to the history of humankind is employed as a means of constructing a secure ideological framework for Bishara to criticise US imperialism. Having asserted that America is not as qualified as other nations in dealing with natural disaster, Bishara employs an endorphoric reference to his previous statement, thereby extending his criticism of US imperialism:

*(19) Hurricanes are not the kind of enemy on which you can pin a face... (21) Modern societies do not treat nature as an 'other.' (22) Ancient societies did, formulating collective rites and striking alliances with gods higher up the celestial hierarchy in order to avert disaster. (23) Nature is no longer the unfathomable mystery that gave rise to religious systems. (24) Today science has supplanted myth and technology has taken the place of sacrifice to the gods.*

By denying the US the logic of modern societies, Bishara possibly denies them the ability to learn from mistakes of the past. The implication then is that the US is foolhardy not only in its attitude toward nature, but also in its misuse of science, its dependence on technology and its necessity for enemies.

### **3.7 Intertextuality**

SOS from New Orleans references CNN, an international mainstream source of news and information, multiple times in an effort to present a problem-solution structure to events.

It would seem that the addition of CNN as a source of information within the article suggests a substantiation of conservative ideologies within the mainstream for the intended audience. Quoting officials from CNN may be viewed as an additional layer of legitimacy to the news article. The first quote appears in the beginning of the article to present the problem or danger. Mayor Nagin says, (4)“This is a desperate SOS.” The second quote appears mid article to confirm the danger and the problem. (37) “Dr. Ruth Berggren...told CNN a sniper had opened fire as vehicles prepared to evacuate patients.” The final quote is used to reassure and provide solution to the reader that the US government has fulfilled its obligations to its citizens. (65)“Mr Chertoff said [speaking on CNN] that the evacuation of New Orleans would be completed by the end of the weekend.”

The American Way of Death also references three additional mainstream media sources to provide additional ideological framework for the construction of its reality. In the first instance Bishara quotes Michael Chertoff of Homeland Security from *The Observer* to authenticate his supposition that the US government sees no intrinsic value in its citizens. (12)“The critical thing was to get people out of [New Orleans] before the disaster. Some people chose to not obey that order. That was a mistake on their part.” Bishara uses the quote in the beginning of the article to present a counter-claim argument. The second and third quotes are both employed to vindicate his arguments that President Bush and the US government are incompetent. Both quotes come from US media and are placed at the middle and end of the text. ABC News is a highly regarded source of information and The New York Times is a widely respected newspaper. By aligning his arguments with their authority, Bishara apparently fortifies the impact of his suppositions against the US government. (34) “Four days into the flood the head of FEMA told ABC news that he had learned about the disaster victims like everyone else, from the TV. He hadn’t been notified officially.” (63)“The New York Times...questioned whether [the president] understood the depth of the crises.” It would seem the placement of his views along those of other more recognized media establishments allows Bishara to validate the ideologies of his readership, similar to Nossiter, by presenting such views as mainstream and universal.

#### **4.0 Summary of Analysis**

The articles of SOS from New Orleans and The American Way of Death each detailed accounts of Hurricane Katrina and its consequences on New Orleans by clearly

employing methods to manipulate and influence the perceptions of its intended readers. However, the impact of the event on the people and the government was written from cultural viewpoints that adopted opposing ideologies. Each text constructed a reality to suit the interests of their perceived readers. The readership of SOS from New Orleans would undoubtedly place themselves under the protection of the US government in the event of a crisis and would not identify with the victims in the article, whereas the readership of The American Way of Death would clearly identify with the victims and not the protections of the US government.

SOS from New Orleans was written as a news article and formulated as a conservative confirmation on the role of government as protector of the people against the underprivileged individual. Nossiter generally depicted government action as responsive to mass anarchy by the underprivileged through high usage of material and verbal processes, the foregrounding of government participants and exophoric/endophoric reference to suppositions of danger. In general, depictions of government actions were positive while the depictions of victims' actions were negative. However, it is clear that the failures of government to meet the needs of its citizens before the crises are only briefly articulated or given agency. In addition, it is clear that Nossiter's voice is backgrounded throughout the article as a means of shifting attention from his own involvement in the text to the representations of government authority and the lawless of the victims.

While SOS from New Orleans is structured as a news article on Hurricane Katrina The American Way of Death is constructed as an opinion piece on the confirmation of danger by the US government's preoccupation with war during Hurricane Katrina. Clearly, the US government is not depicted as a protector of the people, but as a threat to all individuals, underprivileged or otherwise. Bishara presented the US government as non-responsive to its citizens needs because of its wars and the incompetence of government officials. Additionally, he challenged the capabilities and morality of US actions abroad and at home through its treatment of underprivileged individuals and their resulting deaths. In order to achieve greater authority and influence with his audience Bishara embedded a high usage of modality to assert his judgments, nominalization to background his own voice and relational/material processes to contextualize the stance of his arguments. It seems clear that by distancing his own participation in the judgements within the article he positions his opinions as fact and outside the realm of debate.

## **5.0 Conclusion**

Critical Discourse Analysis regards texts as something that can both construct and reflect the social domain (Caldas-Coulthard and Holland, 2001: 138). It is within such discursive practices that the social domain the writers seek to reflect is also shaped. As more individuals become aware of CDA, readers can challenge and explain the methodologies involved in text production, social inequality and ideology that attempt to govern their lives.

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## **Appendix 1**

### **The Washington Times**

#### **SOS from New Orleans**

**By Adam Nossiter**

**ASSOCIATED PRESS**

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1. NEW ORLEANS -- The city that care forgot descended into anarchy yesterday, and the mayor dispatched "a desperate SOS."
2. Storm victims are raped and beaten; fights erupt with flying fists, knives and guns; fires are breaking out; corpses litter the streets; and police and rescue helicopters are repeatedly fired on.
3. The plea from Mayor C. Ray Nagin came even as National Guardsmen poured in to restore order and stop the looting, carjackings and gunfire.
4. In a statement to CNN, Mr. Nagin said, "This is a desperate SOS.
5. Right now, we are out of resources at the convention center and don't anticipate enough buses.
6. We need buses.
7. Currently, the convention center is unsanitary and unsafe, and we're running out of supplies."
8. Last night, Gov. Kathleen Babineaux Blanco said 300 Iraq-hardened Arkansas National Guard members were inside New Orleans with shoot-to-kill orders.
9. "These troops are ... under my orders to restore order in the streets, " she said.
10. "They have M-16s, and they are locked and loaded.
11. These troops know how to shoot and kill and they are more than willing to do so if necessary and I expect they will."
12. Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff said the government is sending in 1,400 National Guardsmen a day to help stop looting and other lawlessness in New Orleans.

13. Already, 2,800 National Guardsmen are in the city, he said.
14. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) rescue operations were suspended in areas where gunfire had broken out, and the head of the city's emergency operations called the federal response a "national disgrace."
15. Terry Ebbert, head of the city's emergency operations, said help is little and late.
16. He warned that the slow evacuation had become an "incredibly explosive situation."
17. "FEMA has been here three days, yet there is no command and control.
18. We can send massive amounts of aid to tsunami victims, but we can't bail out the city of New Orleans."
19. Michael Brown, the undersecretary in charge of FEMA, seemed oblivious to the widespread despair.
20. "I actually think the security situation is pretty darn good," he told reporters.
21. Coast Guard Lt. Cmdr. Cheri Ben-Iesan, spokesman at the city emergency operations center, said she had reports of people shooting at helicopters trying to evacuate hospitals.
22. "There are people just taking potshots at police and at helicopters, telling them, 'You better come get my family,' " Cmdr. Ben-Iesan said.
23. Anger mounted across the soggy ruined city, with thousands of storm victims hungry, desperate and despairing of the promised buses to take them out.
24. "We are out here like pure animals," said the Rev. Issac Clark, 68, sitting outside the New Orleans Convention Center, where evacuees complained that they were dropped off and given nothing -- no food, no water, no medicine.
25. "We don't have help."
26. In Washington, President Bush said there will be "zero tolerance" for looters and price gougers, and advised motorists, "Don't buy gas if you don't need it."
27. He plans to tour the region today.
28. Congress returned to pass a \$10.5 billion emergency aid package to keep FEMA from running out of money while aiding victims of Hurricane Katrina.
29. Last night, the Senate passed the aid package, and the House will meet in special session today to enact it as law.

30. Mr. Bush dispatched former Presidents George Bush and Bill Clinton to reprise their fundraising efforts from the December tsunami in Asia.

31. In the city's Central Business District, 15,000 to 20,000 persons who had taken shelter at the convention center to await buses grew increasingly hostile.

32. Police Chief Eddie Compass said he sent in 88 officers to quell the disorder, but they were quickly beaten back by the mob.

33. "We have individuals who are getting raped; we have individuals who are getting beaten," Chief Compass said.

34. "Tourists are walking in that direction, and they are getting preyed upon."

35. Col. Henry Whitehorn, chief of the Louisiana State Police, said he heard of numerous instances of New Orleans police officers, many from flooded areas, turning in their badges.

36. "They indicated that they had lost everything and didn't feel that it was worth them going back to take fire from looters and losing their lives," Col. Whitehorn said.

37. Dr. Ruth Berggren, a doctor at Charity Hospital in New Orleans, told CNN last night that a sniper had opened fire outside the facility as National Guard vehicles prepared to evacuate patients.

38. A military helicopter tried to land at the convention center several times to drop off food and water.

39. But the rushing crowd forced the copters to keep their distance. Troopers tossed the supplies to the crowd from 10 feet off the ground and flew away.

40. At least seven bodies were scattered outside the convention center, and hungry people broke through the steel doors to a food-service entrance and began pushing out pallets of water and juice and whatever else they could find.

41. At one point, the crowd began to chant, "We want help! We want help!"

42. Later, a woman, screaming, went on the front steps of the convention center and led the crowd in reciting the 23rd Psalm, which begins, "The Lord is my shepherd."

43. An old man in a chaise lounge lay dead in a grassy median as hungry babies wailed around him.

44. Around the corner, an elderly woman lay dead in her wheelchair, covered with a blanket, and another body lay beside her wrapped in a sheet.

45. Flies buzzed over the corpse in the stifling heat.
46. "They've been teasing us with buses for four days," said 47-year-old Daniel Edwards.
47. "You can do everything for other countries, but you can't do nothing for your own people.
48. You can go overseas with the military, but you can't get them down here."
49. Tourist Debbie Durso of Washington, Mich., said she asked a police officer for assistance and said his response was, "Go to hell -- it's every man for himself."
50. "This is just insanity," she said.
51. The Superdome, where about 25,000 people were being evacuated by bus to the Houston Astrodome, descended into chaos as well.
52. Huge crowds, hoping to finally escape the stifling confines of the stadium, jammed the main concourse outside the dome, spilling out over the ramp to the Hyatt hotel next door -- a seething sea of tense, unhappy people packed shoulder to shoulder up to the barricades, where heavily armed National Guardsmen stood.
53. At the front of the line, heavily armed policemen and guardsmen stood watch and handed out water as refugees struggled onto buses.
54. At the back end of the line, some jammed against police barricades in the rain.
55. Luggage, bags of clothes, pillows and blankets were strewn in the puddles.
56. Many people had dogs and were told they had to leave them behind.
57. A police officer took a puppy from a little boy, who cried until he threw up.
58. "Snowball, Snowball," he cried.
59. The policeman told a reporter that he didn't know what would happen to the dog.
60. Col. Whitehorn said authorities are working on establishing a temporary jail to hold those accused of looting and other crimes.
61. "These individuals will not take control of the city of New Orleans," the state police chief said.
62. The first of hundreds of busloads of people evacuated from the Superdome arrived early yesterday at their new temporary home -- another sports arena, the Houston

Astrodome, 330 miles away.

63. In Texas, the governor's office said the state has agreed to take in 50,000 refugees from Katrina in San Antonio and Dallas, in addition to the almost 25,000 expected in Houston.

65. Speaking last night on CNN, Mr. Chertoff said the evacuation of New Orleans should be completed by the end of the weekend.

66. The ambulance service in charge of taking the sick and injured from the Superdome suspended flights after a shot was reported fired at a military helicopter.

67. The military, which was overseeing the removal of the able-bodied by buses, continued the evacuation without interruption, said National Guard Lt. Col. Pete Schneider.

68. A National Guard military policeman was shot in the leg as he and a man scuffled for the policeman's rifle, Police Capt. Ernie Demmo said.

69. The man was arrested.

70. "These are good people.

71. These are just scared people," Capt. Demmo said.

## Appendix 2

### **Al -Ahram Weekly**

#### **The American Way of Death**

By Azmi Bishara

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1. Draped beneath a flag and accompanied by a band or floating bloated on the surface of toxic flood waters: there are different ways to die in Bush's America, writes Azmi Bishara

2. People long ago abandoned the custom of making human or non-human sacrifices to ward off natural disaster.

3. The balance of power between man and nature, though, remains the same, and against the fury of nature at its most extreme there are no superpowers.

4. That said, not all nations are equal in their ability to deal with the aftermath of cataclysmic natural events.

5. America is a great power, capable of evacuating millions and of sending hundreds of thousands of young men and women on rescue operations providing, of course, those young people are soldiers and the "rescue" a military operation abroad.

6. America presents itself across the globe as the state writ large. At home, though, for neo-conservatives -- as, indeed, for their admirers overseas -- the state is a dirty word.

7. America is a maximalist state viewed from the outside, and a minimalist state when the perspective is from within.

8. Tellingly, Washington had to bring troops back from Iraq to deal with the crisis in Louisiana.

9. While there seems to be no limit to the resources the US can deploy abroad, at home it appears to be ill-equipped to deal with calamity.

10. The US is not a Third World country yet it suffers from a desperate shortage of domestic institutions.

11. One might point to the Department of Homeland Security, created in the post-11 September hysteria and allocated massive powers and resources, and claim it was established to cope with exactly the kind of havoc wrought by hurricane Katrina.

12. Homeland Security's Secretary Michael Chertoff would differ with such an assessment: in his own words, "the critical thing was to get people out [of New Orleans] before the disaster.
13. Some people chose not to obey that order.
14. That was a mistake on their part."
15. Shades of social Darwinism, as *The Observer* ("Bush at Bay", 4 September) in which this quote was cited pointed out.
16. There is nothing like casting the blame on the victim, who most likely had no idea of the magnitude of the threat and even less of an idea of where to go to escape it, let alone how to get there.
17. Chertoff conveniently deflects attention away from the responsibility of the state and its sheer incompetence in providing essential services to the needy and destitute.
18. Yet neither Homeland Security nor the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) can claim they lacked advanced warning when the mayor of New Orleans could advise his city's citizens on the Sunday before the disaster struck to leave their homes.
19. Hurricanes are not the kind of enemy on which you can pin a face.
20. Their victims do not stir up the will to avenge.
21. Modern societies do not treat nature as an "other".
22. Ancient societies did, formulating collective rites and striking alliances with gods higher up the celestial hierarchy in order to avert disaster.
23. Nature is no longer that unfathomable mystery that gave rise to religious systems.
24. Today science has supplanted myth and technology has taken the place of sacrifice to the gods.
25. When the levees that protected New Orleans from the floodwaters of the Mississippi and Lake Pontchartrain were breached on 30 August the potential for catastrophe was realised.
26. Most of the city was submerged, leaving more than 100,000 people stranded in their homes.
27. It was impossible to get even a rough estimate of how many had already died though the hundreds of bloated bodies floating on the water provided a horrifying testimony to America's shame.
28. The 20,000 people packed into a sports stadium had to spend a week amid the stench

of decay before they were bussed to proper shelter.

29. Food, medicine and evacuation remained distant promises, while politicians in Washington offered speeches and press conferences. New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin was desperate.

30. Instead of food, he said, "they're feeding the public a line of bull and they're spinning, and people are dying down here."

31. He pleaded with officials in Washington to "get off your asses and do something and fix the biggest goddamn crisis in the history of this country".

32. It is to America's shame that news came before food, the television hookup before medicine, transmission before shelter, images before the victims. And what images.

33. The disgrace goes deeper than the appalling indifference and incompetence of the federal government.

34. Four days into the flood and the head of FEMA told ABC news that he had learned about the disaster victims like everyone else, from the television.

35. He hadn't been notified officially.

36. What more proof do we need that the world of media spectacle has become a universe unto itself.

37. On the ground the police appeared more concerned about protecting shops from looting than about those stranded in their homes or in the stadium.

38. No distinction was made between shops being looted for DVD players and grocery stores raided for the water and food the government had failed to dispatch.

39. Guards supposedly protecting the thousands of stranded stood as far away as possible, rifles at the ready, as if dealing with vast leper colonies.

40. When the floods began to recede America continued to handle the aftermath with all the efficiency of a Third World country.

41. Confusion was aggravated by a lack of coordination between state and federal agencies.

42. In the midst of this chaos priorities surfaced.

43. As New Orleans' poor -- most of them black -- were left to fend for themselves the cameras zoomed in on the plight of the middle class whites trapped amid piles of rubbish in the stadium.

44. The press wondered how water levels in Louisiana would impact on Bush's

popularity ratings, and on the price of oil and gas.

45. In the meantime Arab oil-producing nations scrambled to contribute emergency funds to the US, as if the US is strapped for cash.

46. It wouldn't do to let the storm-struck Americans turn their anger against the hurricane to anger against rising oil prices and, by extension, the oil exporting states.

47. Arab countries had already donated millions of dollars before Saudi Arabia, which custom has long dictated should set the ceiling for Arab generosity, stepped in to do the same.

48. All of this was happening while the fate of the poor and homeless remained pending.

49. Apart from their impact on Bush's popularity ratings, on the settling of political scores with the Bush administration, on the relationship between rising oil prices and rising growth rates, what value do the disaster-struck have?

50. Their lives, apparently, are without intrinsic value.

51. Whatever significance they have derives exclusively from a set of economic and political calculations, from a fortunate coincidence that the White House is currently feeling the heat of mounting popular anger at Bush who spent the month of August holed up in his Texas ranch in order to avoid meeting the distressed mother camped outside who wanted five minutes of his time so that he could explain why her son had to die in Iraq.

52. The "victims of terrorism", or the relatives of soldiers killed in action, are given at least some explanation of their suffering through the invocation of patriotism, the defence of the American way.

53. They are allowed concrete symbols, the flag draped over the coffin, the brass band that plays as the coffin is carried to a final resting place.

54. There are rites and rituals, the paraphernalia of grief, and these are accompanied by the finely modulated voice of the politician, intended to rally hearts around the red, white and blue.

55. For the flood victims, though, there was no such pomp and circumstance.

56. Their last rites were the colour of their bloated bodies, accompanied by the stench of their decay and the sounds of scratching and gnawing as rats consumed their flesh.

57. The difference is the product of mankind's hypocrisy, made all the more horrific by the hypocrisy of a consumerist media for which even the spectacle of death is a product to be placed.

58. Only Bush could have managed to emerge from all of this looking as dull and insensitive as he is.

59. Some American journalists noted that if a terrorist group or foreign troops had invaded Louisiana the necessary armed forces and all the equipment necessary to meet the attack would have been rushed to the scene at the drop of his Texan hat.
60. That, of course, is a conjecture with the benefit of hindsight and influenced by the horror of the death and by the politicisation of death.
61. But, the record does show that Bush can be extraordinarily "cool" in a crisis.
62. The same man who referred to the terrorists who perpetrated the 11 September attacks as "those folks" said in the wake of Katrina that he wasn't looking forward to the "trip" he had to make to the disaster zone, as though disappointed he had to cut his holiday short, but as disagreeable as it was duty called because "we're gonna have to clean up this mess."
63. Little wonder *The New York Times* bristled and called the president "casual to the point of carelessness" as it questioned whether he "understood the depth of the current crisis".
64. Bush's colloquialisms are a part and parcel of his folksy image, but there is more to them than that.
65. This is a president who is rarely caught without a little paper in his hand to tell him what to say, and on this occasion his colloquialisms enabled him to segue smoothly into the big lie.
66. "I don't think anyone anticipated the breach in the levees," he told Diane Sawyer in an interview last Thursday on ABC's "Good Morning America".
67. Odd, considering how much has been in the press about the worst-case scenarios FEMA had presented to the Bush administration in August 2001 regarding a terrorist strike against New York, a devastating earthquake in San Francisco and massive flooding of New Orleans.
68. If those scenarios were hypothetical the same cannot be said of the warning given earlier this year that the levees around New Orleans would not be able to withstand even a grade-three hurricane.
69. But budgetary allocations had not been approved to make the necessary repairs and reinforcements that would protect the city against a grade-three storm.
70. Katrina was grade four, wreaking a catastrophe for which the US was caught totally unprepared, and for one reason.
71. The federal government has a single priority -- war abroad, combined with the fight against terrorism at home.

