



## **New Classical Rhetoric?**

**Tony Blair's Rhetorical Strategies and Features of Discourse**

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## **Abstract**

Orators have throughout history used strategies to communicate as effectively as possible with their listeners. The ex-British Prime Ministers Winston Churchill and Tony Blair both engaged their people in war and hence gave account for the serious situations in broadcast speeches to the public. The purpose of this paper is to detect the features of Blair's discourse in a speech from 2003 and point out what rhetorical strategies he uses. I contrast my findings with a speech given by Churchill in 1940 to show to which extent Blair builds on tradition, and how different political circumstances might affect a speech. The conclusion shows that Blair's inclusive approach, deriving from the New Labour discourse "The Third Way", is apparent in e.g. the frequent use of vaguely defined pronouns as "we". Blair's speech is in line with the demands of a classical speech, and he uses the same persuasive devices as Churchill. Nevertheless the two ex-Prime Ministers' different political situations do affect the way in which they communicate their messages – which result in both differences and similarities.

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## 1. Introduction

My first encounter with the rhetoric of the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill came through a music record that I bought – with my complete savings – at the age of thirteen. The double-LP was a live recording of a concert performed by the British “heavy metal band” Iron Maiden in 1985. A part of a Churchill speech was used as an intro to the opening song “Aces High” – a song about British fighter pilots during World War II. I had in fact heard a studio recording of the song before (without the speech intro) and rather liked it, but the mighty power of Churchill’s words and voice added a new dimension to it, making this rather ordinary rock song more important, bigger, and more powerful. Although not being very educated in English at the time, strong repeated words and phrases like “fight in the hills”, “fight on the landing grounds” and “We shall never surrender” definitely made a lasting impression on me and my fellow just-turned-teenager peers.

At the time of my first Churchill experience, Churchill’s words were already more than 40 years old – and still they knocked me out! This is even more remarkable if you also consider the fact that a young boy living in the peaceful country of Sweden would probably be as far as you could possibly get from the target group the speech originally was addressed to. How is it possible that spoken words have this lasting impression? What is it that makes the orators’ words so powerful that they actually succeed in justifying killing and war? Churchill definitely had the ability of conveying his message to the masses, but was it only theory skilfully put into practice, or what other factors might have affected the outcome of the speech?

Tony Blair recently resigned as British Prime Minister and has, just like his predecessor Churchill, sent British troops off to war. Has the rhetoric changed in 65 years? Will Blair's speeches also become classics in the world of rhetoric?

In this essay I will compare ex- British Prime Minister Tony Blair's way of conveying a message to a speech given by Winston Churchill. I will look closely at the discourse of Blair and then study what is to be found in the Churchill speech from 1940.

## **2. Rationale**

Politicians use the spoken word to rule, inform, strengthen, and communicate with the people around them in order to implement their own, or their own party's, ideas and politics. If we, as their potential voters, become more aware of the tactics, the strategies and the structures behind the actual performance – or broadcast – of a speech, we will increase our possibility to make a fair judgement of the actual essence of the speech. And hence make decisions based on information rather than rhetoric – when, and if that is possible.

## **3. Research questions**

The purpose of this essay is to analyze a present day speech given by Tony Blair in 2003 and shed light upon the features of his discourse. I will then compare and contrast the findings to a speech given by Winston Churchill in 1940 in order to discover similarities and differences of discourse. How do both of the speeches make use of effective rhetorical strategies?

## 4. Literature review

### 4.1 Historical overview

The art of rhetoric is an old science. Western rhetoric is based largely on that created and developed in ancient Greece and Rome. Although originating from this first peak of western civilisation, rhetoric – the art of speaking– is sometimes still recognized as the most effective and sophisticated tool of communication at hand, according to Johannesson (2000) who also states that many things have changed in the last 2000 years, but “hardly people’s way of thinking, feeling and speaking”<sup>1</sup>. By this statement he sheds light upon the value of using respected sources on effective rhetorical strategies, which in fact are available through many years of written and recorded material.

The Greek philosopher and teacher Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) wrote a rhetoric textbook in which he tried to objectively define the goals and distinguishing features of the new art. Johannesson states: “Rhetoric is the art of - whatever it might concern – finding what’s most suitable to convince” (12). Rhetoric found its place in Greek schools for many years, and the conquering Roman Empire embraced and developed the art before passing it on to the Christian Church, which kept it alive during medieval times. Since the classical arts of Greece and Rome at that time were considered the unquestionable ideal, preservation rather than progress was accomplished, according to Cassirer (1997). The old laws of rhetoric lived on in the modern world – especially in politics – and the battles of World War II weren’t exclusively fought in the fields, at sea and in the air, but also *on* the air by great orators like Hitler, De Gaulle and Churchill (Cassirer 88).

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<sup>1</sup> “knappast människans sätt att tänka, känna och tala” (Johannesson 2000:8) All translations from Swedish are mine.

After the end of World War II, the German catastrophe was – to a great extent – blamed on the Nazi war rhetoric. Although rhetoric alone can't be held accountable for the success of Nazi ideas in Germany during the 1930s and 40s, research on the area of rhetoric was stimulated in post war Germany, and then later on spread over Europe (Cassirer 90).

#### **4.2 Classical rhetorical structures**

Johannesson (65) refers to five phases in the creating of a classical speech: *inventio*, *dispositio*, *elecutio*, *memoria* and *actio*.

*Inventio* is the preparatory work you do to gather – or as the Latin term suggests – *invent* good and strong arguments to support your thesis and thereby convince your audience (Joh 281).

Sorting your arguments i.e. giving your speech an efficient structure is what *dispositio* is all about (65). Studying skilful orators – succeeding in leaving traces of convincing evidence among their listeners – a model of an ideal composition was worked out, beginning with the so called *exordium*. The exordium – the opening of the speech – was considered extremely important for the outcome of the actual speech. Gaining the benevolence of the audience, and – primarily – their attention, was necessary to prepare them to listen carefully to the upcoming core of the speech (Joh 66).

The preparation of the audience was further developed in the following part – the *narratio* – which served to give essential background information to the crowd. The speaker could stress, trivialize or even omit details in the story to make it serve his cause better. According to the demands of classical rhetoric

the *narratio* should be “clear, short, concentrated and likely to be true” (Joh 66).

When the conditions of the matter were set, the thesis was presented in the part called *propositio*. This leads to the main objective of the speech: to prove and confirm your thesis using suitable arguments – the so called *argumentatio*. A part of *argumentatio* was called *refutatio* or *confutatio*. By acknowledging, and then rebutting, anticipated critical arguments from the opponent, a skilled orator could turn a hostile argument into something useful – undermining the *argumentatio* presented by the other side (Joh 68).

The last part of *dispositio* and consequently the last part of the speech was called *peroratio* or *conclusio*. This should consist of a short summary of the thesis and arguments, and a “final potent and preferably passionate plead to the addressees on the subject matter” (Joh 68). Having properly done one’s *dispositio*, next thing to worry about would be the third phase of classical rhetoric, namely the *elecutio* – or rather: *how* to say what you want to say.

The distinguishing features of the language used in a speech should, according to *elecutio*, be correctness and clarity. To achieve this, full knowledge of words and their different meanings would be absolutely necessary for the writer (Joh 145). In opposition to the above, the classical rhetoric also taught the need for “language adornment”, since a style of language – too clear and correct – could somewhat be conceived as cold and boring – and hence not worth listening to (Joh 147). Carefully choosing words and expressions to reach a high level of clarity, and then adding a reasonable amount of adornment was not enough to make the *elecutio* complete. The social situation in which the speech is to be held should also be of great

interest to the orator. Different countries have different traditions and rules, and this affects what might and might not be appropriate to say in various situations (Joh 147).

*Memoria* and *Actio* are the remaining two parts of five phases of classical rhetoric. *Memoria* was originally about remembering what to say in your speech. In ancient Rome and Greece the speaker was not even allowed to bring a manuscript (Joh 184). Although the settings might differ a lot between a speech held at the town square in ancient Rome and a speech delivered on the radio – where the speaker could have any possible aids at hand to remember what to say – one fact remains the same: People are more likely to believe you if it appears as if “the orator’s thoughts and words are being born that particular instant” (Joh 184).

*Actio* concerns the physical delivery of the speech. Having chosen words and phrases according to the demands of *elecutio*, the speaker’s performance in terms of facial expressions, motions, body language and changes in vocal pitch should be thoroughly considered ; this to enhance the message, and thereby have a greater impact on the spectators (Joh 189).

### **4.3 Language and Culture**

As noted above, classical rhetoric emphasizes that the words used in a speech are not isolated units, but should instead function *together* in a specific situation – regarding both social and cultural factors relevant to the circumstances.

“The majority of linguists today would acknowledge the importance of context for the study of communication”, Brøgger (1992) argues and illustrates his

statement by quoting the literature critic Stanley Fish: “A sentence is never not in a context. We are never not in a situation. [...] A sentence that seems to need no interpretation is already a product of one” (Brøgger 47).

Most linguistic studies focus on rules regarding specific features of language and grammar, such as morphology and syntax. Running the risk of losing the “hard science stringency” (Br. 49) – generated by this kind of narrowly defined studies – relatively little research had been carried out from a cultural point of view (Br.49) at the time Brøgger conducted his research.

The cultural influence on language use is though detectable at all levels (Br. 49); from e.g. *syntactical* choices so as to diminish or increase certain features – for instance by changing who’s to be subject and object in a sentence – to *discourse analysis*, in which you regard the interplay between words and phrases in the whole speech, analyzing in what way it – as a unit – is culture specific (Br. 58).

*Cultural pragmatics* is another subdiscipline to Brøgger’s cultural linguistics, and deals with the additional information a phrase or a word might carry, besides the most obvious meaning. This additional information often expresses core values shared by the people involved, and hence it strengthens the bonds and solidarity between a specific speaker and a specific group of listeners (Br. 56).

On the subject of pragmatics Geoffrey Finch (2000) states that a language has a “natural logic” (Finch 2000:149) that enables language users to imply meanings beyond what is actually stated in words; implicit meanings which he labels implicatures. Referring to the linguist H.P. Grice, Finch continues: “The study of implicatures is fairly well developed and forms the cornerstone of most

pragmatic approaches” (Finch149). ‘The cooperative principle’ constitutes the unspoken agreement between speaker and listener on how to interpret the language and its implicatures. Associated with the ‘cooperative principle’ are the four maxims of: quality, quantity, relation and manner (Finch 149), which give guidance so as to communicate efficiently. *Quality* refers to speaking what is true, *quantity* refers to giving enough information in the situation at hand, *relevance* emphasizes making your contributions relevant, and finally *manner* aims at being perspicuous by avoiding obscurity, ambiguity and by stressing the importance of being brief and orderly (Levinson 1992:101).

Brøgger completes his emphasis on the importance of cultural linguistics by stating that *cultural semantics* is the most indispensable subdiscipline. “A word means a hundred different more things than a dictionary knows of” (Br. 57), he quotes the Danish-Norwegian author Axel Sandemose to explain the difficulties in studying a foreign language without actually “living the language”, i.e. being fully aware of the various functions and meanings a particular word might have – outside the formal, out of context, dictionary environment (Br. 57).

#### **4.4 Discourse analysis**

According to James Paul Gee (2005) the primary functions of human language are “to support the performance of social activities and social identities and to support human affiliation within culture, social groups, and institutions” (2005:1). Language “gets recruited ‘on site’ to enact specific social activities and social identities” (Gee 1). Depending on under which circumstances a communication act takes place the communicator assumes different ‘identities’

suitable for the specific situation and Gee labels those different situations 'discourses'.

The term 'discourse' has according to Norman Fairclough (2007), been subject to numerous different definitions over the years and he presents his version by stating that he sees "discourses as ways of representing aspects of the world – the processes, relations and structures of the material world, the 'mental world' of thoughts, feelings, beliefs and so forth, and the social world" (Fairclough 2003:124). Depending on which positions people have in the world – socially and personally– they develop different perspectives on it. Discourses can both unite and separate groups of people depending on the situation at hand. (Fairclough 2007:124).

The language we choose to use is dependent on the particular situation we are in. The opposite: the language we use in a special situation creates that particular situation, is *also* true in accordance with Fairclough and also with Gee's theory on "reflexivity" (Gee 94) which is the mutual, forever reflecting, relationship between language and situation (Gee 10).

Gee refers to language use as being an act of building. Language has – whenever written or spoken – seven building tasks (Gee 11). These building tasks construct seven 'areas of reality', which serve to give meaning and value to things. This *significance* we give to things by using language Gee identifies as the first building task. To each building task Gee adds a "discourse analysis question" which is appropriate to ask of any piece of language-in-use so as to identify that particular building task. The first building task is detectable by answering the following: "How is this piece of language being used to make certain things significant or not and in what ways?" (Gee 11).

By using language certain *activities* are enacted. Language signals what activity we are actually involved performing. This is the second building task and Gee's discourse analysis question reads: "What activity or activities is this piece of language being used to enact (i.e., get others to recognize as going on)?"

The third building task is building *identities*. To take on different identities or roles we use language. Identities could be changed rapidly and different identities could be enacted in the same social situation (e.g. a meeting), just by altering one's language-in-use. Discourse analysis question number three is: "What identity or identities is this piece of language being used to enact (i.e., get other to recognize as operative)?" (Gee 12).

The discourse analysis question "What sort of relationship or relationships is this piece of language seeking to enact with others (present or not)?" leads us to an answer concerning the building of *relationships* (fourth building task). Through language we signal the social relationships we have or want to have (Gee 12).

Gee states that the language always is "political"; meaning there are always "social goods" e.g. status, value, power, possessions and morality that shape the language-in-use (Gee 2). Gee labels the fifth building task *politics* (*the distribution of social goods*) and attaches the discourse analysis question: "What perspective on social goods is this piece of language communicating (i.e. what is being communicated as to what is taken to be "normal", "right", "good"---?)" (Gee 12).

By using language we build *connections* between things that are relevant for the present situation. We can also do the opposite, i.e. break assumed existing

connections. The sixth building task– *connections* – corresponds with the answer of the discourse analysis question: “How does this piece of language connect or disconnect things; how does it make one thing relevant or irrelevant to another?” (Gee 13)

Making cross-references to other types of written or spoken language while engaging in language use is referred to as *intertextuality* and can be an example of the above mentioned *connections*. Gee also points out that a piece of language can refer to an ongoing *Conversation*<sup>2</sup> in society. Not as with intertextuality, where your language communicate with particular excerpts of other written or spoken language, but rather to an ongoing debate of current importance and interest in the society, as for instance global warming and terrorism.

The seventh and last building task is about *sign systems and knowledge*. Language can treat different sign systems supportively or as being irrelevant. For instance English, a particular dialect of English or technical language could be favoured to other varieties of language in a particular situation (Gee 13). Fairclough (2001), for instance, explains that Standard English as opposed to other social or regional dialects is “an asset because its use is a passport to good jobs and positions of influence and power” (2001:48). Gee’s discourse analysis question to detect this building task in language-in-use would be: “How does this piece of language privilege or disprivilege specific sign systems (e.g. Spanish vs. English, technical language vs. everyday language, words vs. images, words vs. equations) or different ways of knowing and believing or claims to knowledge and belief?”(Gee 13).

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<sup>2</sup> Gee uses capital C to separate the term *Conversation* from the word ‘conversation’.

#### **4.5 Language and politics**

Communicating party policy and persuading people to go along with it are two vital assignments to any politician set for success. Making speeches is one important way to do this, and there are numerous linguistic tools at hand in order to do well. Beard (2000) refers Cockcroft and Cockcroft's definition of Aristotle's three main 'means of persuasion' as being persuasion through personality and stance, persuasion through the arousal of emotion, and persuasion through reasoning (Beard, 37). The performance of all these three categories is crucial to how the speaker will be perceived by the audience; whether he/she will be considered sincere or manipulative.

Up to the 1960s politicians made more appearances, and crowds actually attending the meeting, i.e. listening to the speech, were of greater importance than today. Nowadays a speech reaches most of its audience through TV or radio broadcasts and it is often quoted in the newspapers the following day. This has, according to Beard (37) emphasized the importance of carefully planned highlights, so called 'soundbites', which effectively – in just a few seconds – can make an impact on the modern consumer of media. Verbless sentences as the Tony Blair quote: "Tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime" are good examples of soundbites that are easily remembered and very likely to stick to people's memory. Popular as they seem to be Blair used over a hundred of these verbless sentences in a speech given at a party conference in 1998 (Beard 43).

"The importance of three" (Beard 38) is – due to cultural heritage – a cultural value in western Europe, and this gives the speaker another tool to work with. 'Three' gives a "sense of unity and completeness" (Beard 38) which appeals to

both speaker and listener. For instance Winston Churchill used three 'so' (in italics below) within the now classic sentence originating from the 1940 praise of the British fighter pilots: "Never in the field of human conflict has *so* much been owed by *so* many to *so* few"<sup>3</sup>, and Tony Blair stated that: "Education, Education, Education" was his main concern in the 1997 election campaign (Beard 38). In addition to the actual repetition so called prosodic features, for example: tempo, pitch and rhythm – also add to the effect of this particular rhetorical device (Beard 39).

Another effective device is that which is referred to as *contrastive pairs* or *antithesis* (Beard 39). Instead of using three words striving in the same direction as above, the orator uses two contrasting parts which – although sometimes being each other's total opposite – form a unity by the use of repetition. An example of the use of contrastive pairs and repetition is the above mentioned 'soundbite' from a Tony Blair speech held during the Labour Party election campaign in Britain 1997. Rebutting the Conservative Party's statement to be "tough on crime", Blair said they (Labour) would be "Tough on crime, and tough on the causes of crime" (Beard 41). Adding the latter part of the statement to the original, a contrasting effect is achieved, yet not at all *that* contrasting or conflicting to risk breaking the unity generated by the repetition of the word 'tough'. (Beard 42) Both contrast and repetition can be realized in various linguistic ways, not only by using opposite words or repeating adjectives – respectively (Beard 40).

"The pronouns politicians use in their speeches are worth looking at because they make a significant contribution to the overall effect" (Beard 44). The choice of first person pronouns is limited to two, namely: 'I' and 'we'. The use

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<sup>3</sup> My italics

of the singular form 'I' signals personal involvement and is often used by politicians when bringing good news or giving account of successful accomplishments. A disadvantage with using this pronoun is of course, if the 'good news' would turn out to be 'not so good' after all; one person – the speaker – would have to take the blame (Beard 45).

When facing difficult decisions where the outcome is hard to predict, or the failure is already a fact, 'we' is often preferred to share the orators' blame with government, party, colleagues etc. However, if things would turn out *better* than expected, the speaker would miss out on the full credit. 'We' is also used to include – to embrace – a large group of people, making them a part of the struggles or opinions of the speaker. 'We' representing for instance 'the nation' or 'the world' (Beard 24,45).

To minimize the amount of personal responsibility, a so called 'agentless passive' can be used to construct a sentence without a first person pronoun: Today a decision was made on the upcoming crisis<sup>4</sup> (Beard 45).

Depending on how much responsibility a politician is prepared to take and share, he and his speechwriters have to make up their minds about which pronoun to use – if any – and whether to use passive.

## **5. Historical Background**

### **5.1 The UK and Churchill**

Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill (1874-1965) is according to Mobärg (49:2004) the greatest name among British politicians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Born into the aristocracy he followed his father taking on a political career. Representing both the Conservative and the Liberal party at different stages of

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<sup>4</sup> My example

his life, he also led the war cabinet – a coalition – which ruled the British Empire during World War II. Before entering the political stage Churchill served in the army and took active part as a cavalry lieutenant and a war correspondent in several colonial wars (Mob. 49).

Having failed miserably at being responsible for the British Navy during the First World War, he had to resign, only to come back and become Prime Minister during the following world war (Mob. 50). “Churchill became a symbol of the free world. His characteristic bulldog appearance, his cigar, his V-for-Victory sign, and his powerful oratory, not least on radio, all helped to inject courage in the people and nations who were fighting Hitler” (Mob. 50).

Churchill was a productive writer, writing predominately on history and politics, and was awarded the Nobel Prize of literature in 1953 (Mob. 50).

The situation in Europe was – at the end of May 1940 – very dramatic. The British House of Commons no longer had faith in Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain who had failed his foreign policy aimed at a peaceful solution with Nazi Germany through negotiations and treaties. He had to resign and Winston Churchill succeeded him (<http://sv.wikipedia.org>).

Having launched a successful military offensive on Holland, Belgium, and France the German army seemed to march towards complete victory in Europe. The British Expeditionary Force<sup>5</sup> found itself having been cut off due to a German breakthrough and the unexpected surrender of the Belgian army, and had nothing to do except retreat towards the coast to avoid immediate captivity and defeat. Churchill who had only been in power for about two weeks had to deal with the critical situation, and decided upon May 26 there should be a rescuing operation to save what could be saved of the allied

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<sup>5</sup> A British army deployed in Belgium to guard the French-Belgian border from German attacks.

forces from the Nazi onslaught. Operation Dynamo, as the rescue operation was called, succeeded – miraculously – to bring 338 000 soldiers from Dunkerque, France over the English Channel to England and temporary safety. Despite this successful operation the Allied defeat was unquestionable and devastating, having left or lost all heavy equipment to the Germans and with France falling into enemy hands (Jordan & Wiest). At this moment of truth – June 4 1940 – when Britain stood alone, Churchill gave a speech to the House of Commons on the situation at hand.

## **5.2 The UK and Blair**

Tony Blair was born in Edinburgh in 1953. Before taking on his political career he studied law at Oxford to become a barrister. He entered the House of Commons at the age of 30 and made a speedy rise through the Labour Party hierarchy. In 1992 The Labour Party was in opposition and Blair was promoted to Shadow Home Secretary by Labour leader John Smith. After the unexpected death of Smith in 1994, Blair won a large majority of his party's support and took on the leadership of what he announced to be "New Labour". Re-claiming the political centre leaving some of old Labour's historic commitments, he led his party to a landslide victory in 1997 and became – at the age of 43 – the youngest Prime Minister since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. ([www.number10.gov.uk/output/Page12006.asp](http://www.number10.gov.uk/output/Page12006.asp))

According to the official website of 10 Downing Street – the home of the PM – major government efforts were made within health care and education throughout 1997-2000. During the same period Blair took an active political part in two conflicts outside Britain: Firstly by persuading NATO to intervene in

the Kosovo crisis, and secondly by sending troops to Sierra Leone to save the elected government from collapsing due to hostile rebel attacks.

Re-elected in 2001 – once again a landslide victory – the new term was dominated by foreign policy issues following the September 11 attacks on the USA. Starting in Afghanistan “the war on terror” later moved on to Iraq ([www.number10.gov.uk](http://www.number10.gov.uk)). On March 20, 2003 Tony Blair publicly announced that British forces were engaged in military action in Iraq.

### **5.2.1 The discourse of Blair and New Labour**

Depending on which position a political party has in the political field it develops its own representation and vision of the world. These representations/visions are from a language perspective referred to as “discourses” by Fairclough (2003). “New Labour has built a new political discourse that has incorporated elements of the political discourse of Thatcherism and has thus transformed the field of political discourse” (Fairclough 2003:21). A political discourse is not static but might change due to various circumstances, and a discourse of this kind demands work in order to sustain it. New Labour’s new discourse is known as the ‘The Third Way’ and is supposed to transcend the division between inherited assumptions of left and right in politics. This idea is built upon the assumption that focusing on strengthening British enterprise “in the knowledge-based economy” will establish greater social justice. (Fairclough 2003:22)

The discourse of ‘The Third Way’ is explicitly committed to a ‘one-nation politics’ stressing national community and its ‘shared values’ (Fairclough 2003:34). It is also inclusive and consensual and tries to include everybody.

There are exceptions though; for instance when it came to taking sides in the Kosovo crisis 1998. Slobodan Milosevic – political leader of the Serbs – was then clearly defined as *the* enemy (Faircl. 2003:34).

The discourse of 'The Third Way' uses the pronoun "we" in mainly two ways: in an excluding way as in 'we – the government', and in an including way as 'we – the people of Britain. Moreover 'we' is used implying for instance NATO (Faircl. 2003:116). There is though a notable vagueness in many of the occasions where 'we' is used, and this puts – according to Fairclough – the finger on a not 'all-inclusive' discourse or politics that it initially might seem to be (Faircl. 2003:37).

Also typical for the discourse of New Labour is a mix of self-interest and morality when it comes to logically supporting a point of view. To illustrate this Fairclough returns to the above mentioned example regarding Blair encouraging NATO to intervene in the Kosovo crisis (Fairclough 2003:64).

Blair's rhetoric style during this conflict rendered him a status as being one of the toughest NATO-leaders arguing with a mix of moral/righteousness and toughness. The toughness partly gained by speaking both for NATO as a whole using first person plural 'we' and for himself using the first person singular 'I' – showing personal commitment. (Faircl 2003:117)

## **6. Methods/ Delimitations and limitations**

I have analyzed Tony Blair's address to the nation of March 20, 2003 applying the methods of analyzing discourse and rhetoric accounted for in the literature review. I have presented the features of Blair's speech in the findings, and in

the conclusion I have compared them to a speech given by Winston Churchill in 1940.

Blair's speech is found on the Internet address: <http://www.number10.gov.uk/output/Page3322.asp>, which is the official website of the Prime Minister's home and office. The address to the nation was recorded at this location and televised March 20, 2003. Neither the PM's official website, nor any websites browsed with the most common web browsers, do provide a full TV-recording of Blair's speech. Having only been able to retrieve a short clip of the opening of the speech I have omitted any analysis concerning the actual performance e.g. features of voice and body language.

The Churchill speech used for comparison and contrast was originally given in the House of Commons, June 4, 1940, and found at the Internet address: <http://www.winstonchurchill.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=393>. The speech, later referred to as "We Shall Fight on the Beaches", was actually given a second time by Churchill – in a studio – to be recorded and broadcast on the radio. I have chosen to use the original version, the written full script of the speech, since the different recordings available are edited in different ways, and I have not been able to retrieve a recording corresponding fully to the original speech. This probably because parts of the speech – only relevant to the House of Commons – were left out when recording, to better suit the listeners.

It is hard to know when to stop collecting information for a literature review, and the same goes for gathering facts and information about Blair, Churchill and the circumstances under which they gave their speeches. At a certain

point I had to make a decision that I had enough to make a relevant analysis. This is of course a limitation, since the more you know about a situation the more you know about what certain words or phrases mean to the people involved in the communication activity.

My knowledge of English is also a limitation since English is not my mother tongue. Having studied the two speeches, there is always a risk I might have failed to notice some vague allusions, implications or intertextuality. I estimate the risk of doing this more likely working with the Churchill speech, since the language is further away in time from me and due to natural changes of vocabulary, style, and figures of speech it turns out somewhat less interpretable to me. Another important factor diminishing my understanding of Churchill is, I do not have the knowledge i.e. the experience, of life in the 1940s – with all that comes with it in terms of being aware of public discussions, politics etc. going on – which I do have, to a greater extent at least, of present day society. Consequently the Churchill speech from 1940 is used only for comparison and contrast where I found it enlightening and interesting for the understanding of Tony Blair's discourse and rhetoric.

## **7. Findings**

### **7.1 Tony Blair's speech and discourse**

I rely mainly on Gee's schema in analyzing Blair's speech but I'm informed by the other researchers reviewed above and will refer to them along with presenting my findings and my conclusion.

Blair's address to the nation on March 20, 2003 officially declared that he had given the order "for British forces to take part in military action in Iraq"

(paragraph 1) and that British soldiers now were engaged in military action to “remove Saddam Hussein from power” (par. 1).

According to Gee discourse analysis can be carried out by defining the seven building tasks (Gee 97) of a piece of language; the first building task being “significance”. Tony Blair’s mission – to remove Saddam Hussein – is given significance in a number of different ways throughout the speech. The means taken by Blair is motivated – given significance – by describing the threat Hussein and terrorism pose to Britain and other parts of the world. The word ‘threat’ is used no less than seven times during the speech and on several occasions in relation to “weapons of mass destruction”. Blair makes clear what is at stake when he speaks of a “new threat: of disorder and chaos born either of brutal states like Iraq, armed with weapons of mass destruction; or of extreme terrorist groups. Both hate our way of life, our freedom, our democracy” (par. 5). The ‘new threat’ will according to Blair deliver: ‘disorder’, ‘chaos’, ‘catastrophe’ and ‘carnage’ to the world, and it also threatens the very existence of “a world of order and stability”(par. 18) since it is not even caring “for the sanctity of human life” (par. 6).

‘Weapons of mass destruction’ is part of the threat in question, and the phrase is used twice in the speech, but Blair also refers to ‘the new threat’ as not being a “conventional threat” implying this is a war not fought with conventional weapons but rather the opposite, which would be ‘weapons of mass destruction’. “Vast amounts of chemical and biological poison” (par. 11) have according to Blair not been accounted for by Iraq and he strongly insinuates the Iraqi possession of ‘Weapons of mass destruction’. He

continues: "Should terrorists obtain *these weapons*<sup>6</sup> now being manufactured and traded round the world" (par. 9), once more alluding to what is undoubtedly 'weapons of mass destruction' making the threat seem even more evident and severe.

Blair also makes his speech and task significant by giving account for the sources of information upon which he has based his decision, for instance the supposedly impartial United Nations: "UN weapons inspectors say vast amounts of chemical and biological poison [---] remain unaccounted for in Iraq" (par. 11). And then there is: "My fear, deeply held, based in part on the intelligence I see, is that these threats come together and deliver catastrophe to our country and world" (par. 6) which implies the PM has crucial information originating from the secret service, adding credibility to his decision. Looking more closely at this phrase, the PM in fact says that his "*fear*" is based "*in part*" on the intelligence he sees, which is not the same as if he would have said that he in fact *based* his *decisions* on intelligence. This rather big difference in meaning is though made *not* significant since the short phrase "in part" and the sudden switch of reference to "my fear" instead of the previously stressed "threat" or "mission" is very likely not to be noted if not analysing the speech thoroughly. In this case Blair hardly keeps the unspoken agreement of the cooperative principle – serving to establish efficient communication between speaker and listener (Levinson, 1992:101) – by not fulfilling the last of the four maxims explained above, namely "manner" – which aims at being perspicuous by avoiding obscurity and ambiguity.

By giving account for the number of people that would benefit from the removing of Saddam Hussein from power the speech is given concrete

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<sup>6</sup> My italics

significance. “*Four million Iraqis are in exile. 60% of the population dependent on food aid. Thousands of children die every year through malnutrition and disease. Hundreds of thousands have been driven from their homes or murdered*”<sup>7</sup> (par. 14). Adding the statements: “on the courage and determination of British men and women, serving our country, the fate of many nations rests” (par. 19), “all nations are targets” (par. 7) and “President Bush and I” (par. 17) Blair leaves no doubt about the global significance and importance of the task as well as his strong bond with President Bush.

All use of language enacts a certain activity (Gee12). Language signals what we are involved performing. The activity Tony Blair is enacting is on the surface: delivering news to the people about the situation in Iraq. The situation is a situation of war, and since this is the first official statement after the military actions taken in Iraq this speech is also a declaration of war against the regime of Saddam Hussein. “Tonight, British servicemen and women are engaged from air, land and sea. Their mission: to remove Saddam Hussein from power, and disarm Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction” (par. 2). That the ‘activity’ is ‘giving a speech’, which is an uncommented and uninterrupted piece of language, becomes obvious when looking at disposition and specific features as for instance the closing phrase “thank you”, which wouldn’t be found – used in this particular way – in other kinds of spoken language.

Different identities are being constructed in different situations according to Gee (99). Throughout the speech Tony Blair seems to be a determined, well informed, righteous and powerful leader who has the ability to liberate the world from the menace of Saddam Hussein and Al Qaida. With the words “On Tuesday night I gave the order for British Forces to take part in military action

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<sup>7</sup> My italics

in Iraq” (par. 1) Blair opens his speech clearly signalling that he – “I” – has the power to do such a thing, and that he has in fact done so! Using the first person pronoun ‘I’ he takes full responsibility for the decision, shows personal involvement, and he steps forward as a man of power and resolve; he speaks inclusively about the British and that he knows his people and that they will “be united” (par. 3) with him in supporting their forces abroad. “My judgement, as Prime Minister is that this threat is real” (par. 10), Blair says as if reminding the people of who he is, and who would be most likely to possess the best information available to make correct decisions.

Blair does not only enact the role of the PM. He also takes on the leadership of a vaguely defined coalition of people and nations. Starting off as the Prime Minister of the UK (“On Tuesday night I gave the order”), he moves on using the first person pronoun in the plural form ‘we’ and the possessive pronoun ‘our’ sometimes indicting the people of Britain as in: “Some say if we act, we become a target” (par. 7) and “I have asked our troops to go into action tonight” (par. 19); but just as frequently ‘we’ and ‘our’ are used to include an undefined “world” opposed to Saddam Hussein. For instance – speaking about the threat of enemies with weapons of mass destruction – Blair says: “the carnage they could inflict to our economies, our security, to world peace, would be beyond our most vivid imagination” (par. 9). By using the plural form ‘economies’ he clearly shows that he speaks not only for Britain but he is also representing other nations – other economies – as well.

The pronouns ‘our’ and ‘we’ are used on various occasions – 18 and 7 respectively – during the speech but it is often unclear whether these pronouns represent the English, the English and the USA, or the English and other

states opposed to Saddam Hussein – including the oppressed people inside and outside Iraq. All this is in line with the previously mentioned inclusive discourse of New Labour and the Third Way

In addition to enacting the identity of the world leader Blair also assumes the identity of the righteous liberator determined to succeed. “Removing Saddam will be a blessing to the Iraqi people” (par. 14) he says, and he even addresses the Iraqi people directly: “I hope the Iraqi people hear this message. We are with you. Our enemy is not you, but your barbarous rulers”(par. 15). ‘The liberator’ Blair’s *righteousness* and *determination* is communicated in for instance: “Our commitment to the post-Saddam humanitarian effort will be total. We shall help Iraq move towards democracy” (par. 16), alluding to the Iraqi people becoming included rather than excluded in the future. Blair also *righteously* promises to “put the money from Iraqi oil in a UN trust fund so that it benefits Iraq and no-one else” (par. 16), and shows his and his allies’ determination by solemnly stating: “President Bush and I have committed ourselves to peace in the Middle East” and “we will strive to see it done”. (par. 17).

Any situation involves relationships as a component and through language we signal the relationships we have or want to have (Gee 99). Tony Blair has a very inclusive approach towards his listeners. As accounted for above he uses ‘we’ and ‘our’ to identify with – and include – all English, all English and Americans or simply, all nations and people opposed to Saddam Hussein and Al Qaida. The relationship Blair enacts with his own people is the one of strong leadership; as he points out he is the “Prime Minister” (par. 10) – which by definition would be – their chosen leader. This leadership – coming from above

– is balanced by the more personal phrases showing faith in, and concern about the ordinary people, the families and service men and women: “They are the finest in the world and their families and all of Britain can have great pride in them” (par. 3).

The good and strong relationship to the USA is manifested several times throughout the speech. The USA is in the following statement presented as a peace loving victim of unprovoked violence, and Blair stands unconditionally by America’s side by justifying the United States’ war on terror: “America didn’t attack Al Qaida. They attacked America” (par. 7). In Blair’s discourse the war on terror is a case of self defense, and no one would deny a nation its right to defend itself. Using these seemingly logical and shared values as arguments, his discourse once again becomes inclusive. It’s easy to agree with something that sounds logical, obvious and in theory already assumed.

In the end of the speech Blair finally calls one of his allies by name, and it is of course President Bush. Having used numerous very vaguely defined ‘our’ and ‘we’ combined with statements on what to accomplish in Iraq, the reference to President Bush is more than just a reference where it occurs. Bush is after he has been mentioned – if not before – the obvious ally, who together with Blair constitutes the unity expressed as ‘we’ and ‘our’ when speaking of future undertakings in Iraq. Although one cannot say for certain that Blair includes Bush when for instance stating “we are with you” (par. 15), “our commitment [---] will be total” (par. 16) and “We shall help Iraq” (par. 16), Bush is without doubt the most likely since he’s the only ally mentioned by name, but also since paragraph 17: “Neither should Iraq be our only concern. President Bush and I have committed ourselves to peace in the Middle East [–

-] We will strive to see it done”, implicates that the next mission for the unity consisting of “President Bush and I” will be establishing peace in the Middle East, clearly implying that the present mission is – with united strengths and resources – to remove Saddam Hussein and all that follows with it. Since Bush represents one of the “big powers” (par. 4) the established unity between him and Blair obviously brings a lot of new strength and confidence into Blair’s discourse.

As with the Kosovo Crisis in 1998, where Blair painted the Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic in black – clearly defining him as the enemy – the regime of Saddam Hussein and also the global network Al Qaida are described as evil, brutal and not wanted when it comes to relationships. The ‘new threat’ consists of: “brutal states like Iraq armed with weapons of mass destruction; or of extreme terrorist groups. Both hate our way of life, our freedom, our democracy” (par. 5). Blair is consistent in presenting his targeted enemies in strongly negative words: “These tyrannical states do not care for the sanctity of human life. The terrorists delight in destroying it” (par. 6) and Saddam Hussein and his aides are labeled: “barbarous rulers” (par. 15). Having established this non-relationship with Hussein and Al Qaida, Blair makes a clear distinction between Iraqis in favor of Hussein and Iraqis *against* Hussein. He emphasizes this by addressing the Iraqi opposition directly: “I hope the Iraqi people hear this message. We are with you. Our enemy is not you, but your barbarous rulers” (par. 15), reaching out to, and welcoming the Iraqi people inside the inclusiveness of his discourse.

Fairclough (2001) states there are relations of power in all conversations and he exemplifies with a doctor’s relationship to a patient – in a situation

discussing medical treatment – where it's assumed and quite natural the doctor makes the final decision. This kind of assumed relations of power is according to Fairclough “embedded in the forms of language that are used” (2001:2) – but often of course, they are not as obvious as in the example above. In accordance with this Gee declares language is always political in the respect there are always social goods as for instance status, value, power and morality that shape the language-in-use (Gee 2).

The text analyzed is, as we know, a speech given by a politician on a matter concerning an international conflict and it is therefore obviously political. As previously mentioned – concerning the building task *relations* – the wanted and not wanted relationships are explicitly conveyed in the speech. Unlike an ordinary conversation in which the building tasks *relationships* and *politics* would be more easily separable, they here seem to correspond very much to each other. Since this is a political speech explicitly directed towards the people the relations concern, the building tasks *relationships* and *politics* turn out very similar to each other, with some additions concerning politics. A nation marching off to war had better be united since domestic quarrels might prove negative for the strength and outcome of the military operation abroad. Blair's will to unite his people is detectable in, for instance: “the British people will now be united” (par. 3) where he actually tells his people – whatever they might think about it – that they “now” are “united”. “They [the British troops] are the finest in the world and their families and all of Britain can have great pride in them” (par. 3). Being “the finest in the world” is undoubtedly something to be proud of – and according to Blair “all of Britain” can participate in sharing this pride. As an example of Brøgger's (56) cultural pragmatics – which deals with

the additional information a phrase or a word might carry – Blair’s statement: “Britain has never been a nation to hide at the back” (par. 8) is an illustrative one. The Brits are hardly likely to contradict this since that would be criticizing themselves, and revealing them as cowards – not brave enough to stand up against the new threat. Emphasizing the assumed bravery among the British Blair closes his speech by solemnly stating: “As so often before, on the courage and determination of British men and women, serving our country, the fate of many nations rests”, again making it very hard for any British citizens to back down, since it would prove them less courageous than what is expected from the Prime Minister, fellow citizens and fellow human beings around the world, and not the least: from history. This bravery is one of the shared values that is favored in Blair’s speech. Other so called “shared values” (Fairclough 2003:34) worth defending are the vaguely explained “our way of life, our freedom, our democracy” (par. 5) which all are threatened by the hateful enemy.

Relevant for both the fifth building task *politics* and for the sixth one *connections* is the following phrase: “But it is true also- as we British know- that the best way to deal with future threats peacefully, is to deal with present threats with resolve” (par. 13). The British do not only have shared values, but they also have, as suggested by Blair, common knowledge of how to deal with difficult situations. Using “we British” the Prime Minister speaks for all the British people *including* himself; thereby making him one of them – the same unit – and hence they are united.

The sixth building task is called *connections* and concerns how a particular text – in this case a speech – connects or disconnects things, making them

relevant or not (Gee 13). As quoted above Blair uses the phrase: “But it is true also- as we British know- that the best way to deal with future threats peacefully, is to deal with present threats with resolve” (par. 13). This phrase connects the present with history. The “British know” because they’ve been there before. The nation has fought wars before, and looking at the circumstances preceding World War II, Britain and its allies might have been better off if they at an early stage had chosen to deal with the Nazi threat “with resolve”, instead of waiting until the world war was a fact. Although pointing out that the world sees a *new* threat – unlike the ones “of my father's generation” (par. 4) Blair keeps making references to the victorious history of British troops: “Britain has never been a nation to hide at the back” (par. 8), he says, and continues – quite likely pointing towards World War II again: “As so often before, on the courage and determination of British men and women, serving our country, the fate of many nations rests” (par. 19). By placing this speech, himself and the British in relation to history, Blair makes his and his people’s task historically relevant, that is: he gives the mission in Iraq a greater significance and relevance than it historically might deserve. Unknowing of the outcome of the Allied mission in Iraq and its future place in history Blair’s discourse – in advance – borrows the importance and relevance of previous wars and victories by relating and referring to them; all too vaguely to be accused of making unfair comparisons though.

*Sign systems and knowledge* is the last of Gee’s building tasks and it deals with how a piece of language supports and privileges different sign systems, knowledge, ways of knowing and believing, or the other way around: disprivileges the same. Blair wants to remove Saddam Hussein by force, and

he supports his decision to do it by using arguments based on information – knowledge – that he considers to be superior. “My fear, deeply held, based in part on the intelligence that I see” (par. 6) gives the impression that he has classified, high quality information that others do not. He continues: “Some say if we act, we become a target. The truth is, all nations are targets” (par. 7), clearly implying that the knowledge *he* possesses is true unlike other pieces of information “some” may provide. And who would logically be likely to have better knowledge of the situation than the Prime Minister? Blair does not ask this particular question but he stresses who is actually speaking, letting logic have its way: “My judgement, as Prime Minister, is that this threat is real, growing and of an entirely different nature to any conventional threat to our security that Britain has faced before” (par. 10). Blair treats the information that he has as superior, better and more trustworthy; in other words: he privileges and supports his own knowledge in favor of other sources of information.

In two different paragraphs Blair uses words that are strongly associated with religion and thereby makes his cause something more than ordinary earthly business. “But I know also the British people will now be united in sending our armed forces our thoughts and prayers” (par. 3). Using “prayers” Blair privileges Christianity in favor of other religious discourses since he in fact is a confessing Christian himself ([www.iht.com](http://www.iht.com) ) and he represents a nation (England) whose state religion is the Christian Anglican Church of England. He continues speaking about: “Removing Saddam will be a blessing to the Iraqi people” (15), using the word “blessing” which by definition means:” a favor or gift bestowed by God, thereby bringing happiness” ([www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com)),

hence making this mission holy, and a matter of interest to God; and coming from a Christian, quite logically: the Christian God.

By describing the new threat – involving weapons of mass destruction – as extraordinary lethal and grave, and also referring to unbiased sources of information and qualitative intelligence, the stated number of people that would benefit from the removing of the enemy Saddam Hussein, makes a strong argument for the necessity of a military operation. Tony Blair enacts the identity of a well informed, righteous and powerful leader who has the ability to liberate the world from terror. He takes on the leadership of a vaguely defined coalition for which he speaks – very inclusively – using the pronouns ‘we’ and ‘our’. The same pronouns are though used to indicate various constellations including Blair and, for instance, the British people – and more notable – President Bush, with whom a strong bond is manifested. The strength and confidence in Blair’s discourse partly derives from the coalition with the USA but also from a united UK. The notion of ‘The brave British people’ – for instance sustained by connecting to history – is another feature of Blair’s discourse that strengthens the unity of the nation, which is crucial for a successful overseas military campaign. Relying on the British Christian God, and armed with supreme sources of information and American military support, Blair is confident of victory.

## **7.2 Rhetorical structures**

The phases and features of a classical speech are more or less applicable to Blair’s address to the Nation, March 20, 2003, but studying *dispositio* – i.e. the composition of the speech – an obvious resemblance with the classical

features is detectable in Blair's speech. Blair's opening *exordium* serves its primary purpose getting the audience's attention. Starting by stating Great Britain is at war is dramatic enough news to gain huge attention all over the world. Then giving the background to the arisen situation, describing the new lethal threat, unlike anything the world has seen before, Blair's *narratio* paves the way for the *propositio* – the presentation of the thesis: "our choice is clear: back down and leave Saddam hugely strengthened; or proceed to disarm him by force" (par. 12). To leave no doubt there is nothing but a rhetorical question in the thesis above, whether to back down or proceed to disarm, Blair supports his actions in Iraq by a strong *argumentatio*. The number of people all over the world that will benefit from the removal of the "barbarous rulers" (par. 15) in Iraq, alone makes a very strong case for military intervention. Promising there will be a total commitment to establishing democracy in Iraq as a step to peace in the Middle East Blair leaves little room for criticism of his thesis. Possible criticism is dealt with in two examples of *refutatio*: First rebutting the relevance of becoming a target because of interfering: "Some say if we act, we become a target. The truth is, all nations are targets" (par. 7), and then admitting Saddam is not the only threat, but still claiming he is the one to be dealt with first: "It is true Saddam is not the only threat. But it is true also - as we British know- that the best way to deal with future threats peacefully, is to deal with present threats with resolve" (par. 13). Bringing his speech to an end Blair concludes that "these challenges and others that confront us [---] require a world of order and stability" (par. 18). By summing up the thesis and the main argument just before solemnly stating "on the courage and determination of British men and women, serving our country, the fate of many nations rests" (par. 19), he acts

all in line with how to end a classical speech, according to the classical *conclusio* (Joh 68).

Beard (2000) writes about common persuasive devices (36) used by orators in speeches in order for them to be perceived as sincere, rather than manipulative. These persuasive devices could be sorted in categories, namely the three classical means of persuasion according to Aristotle. As accounted for above they are: persuasion through personality and stance, persuasion through the arousal of emotion, and finally, persuasion through reasoning (Beard 37). Identifying the occurrence of the persuasive devices (described in Beard, 2000) in Blair's speech, it is consequently possible to connect those devices to the three categories of the classical means of persuasion.

Political speeches nowadays reach most of their audience through TV or radio broadcasts, and they are often quoted in the newspapers the following day, and so was the case with Blair's address to the nation, March 20, 2003. Beard (37) emphasizes the importance of planned highlights – so called 'soundbites' – that will stick to, and have an impact on the media consumer of today. Blair's speech was televised in full on the evening of March 20, 2003 and published and commented in various news media the day after. The phrases that seem to have stuck to the BBC political correspondent Nyta Mann enough to earn a quote in her article ("Blair's Blunt Address" – BBC news) were: "**disorder** and chaos born either of **brutal states** like Iraq **armed** with **weapons of mass destruction** or of **extreme terrorist groups**", "**Both hate our way of life, our freedom, our democracy**", "**catastrophe** to **our country** and **our world**" and "my judgement as prime minister is that this **threat** is real, growing and of an **entirely different nature to any**

**conventional threat to our security that Britain has faced before"**<sup>8</sup>. All these quotes contain words or series of words that are, in one way or another, dramatic or charged with emotions. Targeted on people's emotions these phrases are carefully engineered to leave lasting impressions; and picked up and highlighted by media, they make good examples of the so called soundbites. The soundbites are likely to stick to people's minds, and doing that, they here constitute a case of the classical means of persuasion: persuasion through the arousal of emotion.

The Blair soundbite "Education, education, education" from the election campaign 1997 illustrates one of the most common "means of eliciting approval" (Beard 38) repeating the word 'education' three times. In his speech from 2003 Blair uses this – in western Europe so favored – "list of three" (Beard 38) on five occasions<sup>9</sup>. The first four: "Both hate *our way of life, our freedom, our democracy*"(par. 5), "the carnage they could inflict to *our economies, our security, to world peace*" (par. 9), "My judgement, as Prime Minister, is that this threat is *real, growing and of an entirely different nature*" (par. 10), and "chemical and biological poisons, such as *anthrax, VX nerve agent, and mustard gas*" (par. 11) all communicate the seriousness of the new threat, listing its terrifying features. Connecting them to the "means of persuasion", persuasion through reasoning and persuasion through arousal of emotion are the most relevant. Emotions are logically aroused by listing the frightening details of the threat, and by giving details, making it evident how serious a threat it is, it is also a question of persuasion through reasoning. The fifth example of "list of three" is: "But these challenges and others that confront

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<sup>8</sup> In bold the emotionally charged words according to me.

<sup>9</sup> My italics, indicating 'list of three'.

us - poverty, the environment, the ravages of disease require a world of order and stability" (par. 18) rather serve to communicate what kind of future global missions there are to address by the world leaders – among them of course both Blair and Bush – once the menace of Iraq and Al Qaida has been dealt with. Anyone undertaking difficult assignments – obviously important for all of humanity ("poverty, the environment, the ravages of disease") – would quite naturally gain respect, appreciation and high status. Obvious as it seems, this "list of three" is sorting under "persuasion through personality and stance". The occurrences of "list of three" in Blair's speech thereby cover all three categories of Aristotle's classical means of persuasion. As Beard points out: "the linguistic reasoning cannot be persuasive without the other two categories" (Beard 37).

'Contrastive pairs' also uses repetition – but in a contrasting way – to create a clear and illustrative message packaged in a well-designed unity – not unlikely to be picked up as soundbites by the media. Blair uses contrastive pairs on at least two occasions throughout his speech and they occur very close to each other in the same paragraph. "Some say if we act, we become a target. The truth is, all nations are targets" (par. 7), is closely followed by "America didn't attack Al Qaida. They attacked America" (par. 7). These contrastive pairs are similar to each other in construction. One word from the first sentence is repeated in the next – target/targets and attack/attacked respectively – hence forming a unity. The former contrastive pair operating to *correct* the – according to Blair – false statement cited in the first sentence ("The truth is, all nations are targets"); the contrasting words of course being the stressed "all nations". The latter contrastive pair uses repetition to straighten things out; again correcting assumed false information ("They

attacked America”). “Attacked” forming the unity with the former “attack”, and the important contrasting word in the second sentence of course being the stressed “They”. By using contrastive pairs of this kind, Blair makes his position clear, projected against the contrasting opposite point of view. These statements, first and foremost being examples of persuasion through reasoning, also bear the features of persuasion through the arousal of emotion (“all nation are targets” and “They attacked America”), as well as persuasion through personality and stance – since Blair strongly expresses his points of view in clear opposition to other conceptions of reality – showing strength and self confidence.

How the orator will be perceived by his audience is dependent on how well he succeeds performing the classical means of persuasion. Having noted the occurrence of all three means of persuasion – by recognizing several persuasive devices – it is fair to state that Blair is very aware of the importance of succeeding in performing the classical means of persuasion.

### **7.3 Comparison with Churchill’s rhetoric**

Which of the most notable features pointed out in the Blair discourse are detectable in – and maybe derived of – the Churchill speech from June 1940, known as the *We shall fight on the beaches*-speech? By comparing the findings of the discourse analysis carried out on Blair’s address to the nation in 2003, I will look into this, later on trying to shed some light upon what in an orator’s discourse make a memorable and classic speech.

The seemingly apparent purpose of Churchill's speech June 4, 1940 is the equivalent of Gee's second building task *activities*<sup>10</sup> – i.e. the obvious activity he is enacting giving the speech. Churchill acts in order with his duties as Prime Minister and informs the House of Commons on the situation in the ongoing war in general and the outcome of the dramatic evacuation of allied soldiers from Dunkirk, France in particular. Aware of the fact that the speech would be made public Churchill does not exclusively turn to the audience present – members of the House of Commons – but he is rather addressing a diverse group of listeners with an obvious aim at igniting will of resistance among the British and sending out a clear message to the USA to join the war.

These two messages – to the British and to the USA – are given *significance*<sup>11</sup> by – just as Blair – making it clear what kind of severe threat the British and the rest of the world are facing. Without using the word 'threat' – the total war is already upon the British – Churchill paints a non-flattering picture of the Germans, capable of war crimes such as attacking non-military targets. Often referring to the Germans as 'the enemy' Churchill also (on three occasions) uses the prefix 'Nazi' to label them, or as in this case, their bombs: "The hospital ships, which brought off many thousands of British and French wounded, being so plainly marked were a special target for Nazi bombs" (Churchill speech, paragraph 10). Being 'brutal' and 'treacherous' are some of the characteristics Churchill uses to describe the enemy: "when we see the originality of malice, the ingenuity of aggression, which our enemy displays, we may certainly prepare ourselves for every kind of novel stratagem and every kind of brutal and treacherous maneuver" (Churchill par. 22). Although not

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<sup>10</sup> Gee's building task 2

<sup>11</sup> Gee's building task 1

calling Hitler anything more degrading than “Herr” (Churchill par. 19) the Churchill description of Nazi rule is the description of tyranny. What the English and their PM are facing is: “to defend our Island home, to ride out the storm of war, and to outlive the menace of tyranny, if necessary for years, if necessary alone” (Churchill par. 23). Just as Blair does later, Churchill gives the cause of fighting back the enemy global significance on several occasions by including various parts of the world in his speech: “Even though large tracts of Europe and many old and famous states have fallen or may fall into the grip of the Gestapo and all the odious apparatus of Nazi rule, we shall not flag or fail” (Churchill par. 23). Making it even more important a task, he also states the whole cause of civilization is at stake: “May it not also be that the cause of civilization itself will be defended by the skill and devotion of a few thousand airmen?”, hoping there will be more participants in the battles to come than the already praised British airmen that made Operation Dynamo successful. This is similar to what Blair does fearing the new threat will deliver “catastrophe to our country and world” (Blair par. 6), but there are also differences in how the two Prime Ministers emphasize the significance of waging war. Churchill, unlike Blair, does not give accounts for any sources of information to increase the significance of his message. The reason is of course that the World War is already upon Churchill’s countrymen in quite a concrete way compared to today’s “new threat” consisting of *possible* attacks from Saddam Hussein or Al Qaida. Having already lost 30,000 men (Churchill par. 16) in Belgium and France it’s likely the people of the 1940s Britain do not need any more proof of the lethality of the German expansion; what they need is someone to lead them, and someone to give them hope.

Churchill, as well as Blair, enacts the identity of a strong, righteous leader. Churchill – leading the last free European nation explicitly opposed to Hitler – dares to challenge the seemingly unstoppable Nazi onslaught on Europe – thereby offering hope of delivery to his people and allies. Although Churchill claims not being “content with a defensive war” (Churchill par. 20) there must have been doubt at the time whether Britain – alone – would be able to resist. Unlike Blair, Churchill, rather unexpectedly in such a grave situation, uses humour as a tool to signal – real or pretended – strength both to his people and to the enemy. “When Napoleon lay at Boulogne for a year with his flat-bottomed boats and his Grand Army, he was told by someone. ‘There are bitter weeds in England.’ There are certainly a great many more of them since the British Expeditionary Force returned” (Churchill par. 19). Only a confident and strong leader would challenge an aggressive superpower like Nazi Germany. Whether this signalled strength or confidence is real or not is of less importance, as long as it appears to be real, and discourse creates reality.

Blair speaks inclusively – using ‘we’ and ‘our’ – about the British, the Americans and everybody else opposed to Saddam Hussein, relying on, first and foremost, the strong military partnership with the USA. Churchill only uses ‘we’ and ‘our’ implying himself, the House of Commons and the British people. Speaking about, for instance, France he refers to “our ally” instead of using an inclusive “we” – although the two nations’ enemy would be the same. The USA is referred to as “the New World” (Churchill par. 23) but since they at this point had not entered the war Churchill cannot, unlike Blair, use the United States to strengthen his position in the conflict. Obviously hoping for the very important American intervention in the war: “until, in God's good time, the New World,

with all its power and might, steps forth to the rescue and the liberation of the old”, Churchill paints his countrymen – the British – as heroes, alone in fighting the evil of Nazi Germany: “Very large formations of German aeroplanes – and we know that they are a very brave race – have turned on several occasions from the attack of one-quarter of their number of the Royal Air Force, and have dispersed in different directions (Churchill par. 12), appealing to America’s conscience; because who could ignore a bravely fighting friend in need? In opposition to the discourse of Blair ‘we’ and ‘our’ here exclusively imply the British and hence the sympathy for the “last man standing” i.e. Britain – is accentuated to an extent that could leave no one – especially the Americans – unmoved.

Blair relies strongly on the unity of his nation in his speech, for instance by describing them as being traditionally brave and historically not “a nation to hide in the back” (Blair par. 8). Churchill also uses historical references but not in quite the same way. Churchill has a different – and maybe easier – task to take on building national unity, compared to Blair. Blair needs to unite his people to get support for a military campaign, of which the significance had been questioned a lot, whilst Churchill does not have to worry very much about domestic criticism of wanting to defend the nation against an invasion; the nation is desperate for someone to lead them. Churchill has to ignite will of resistance among the British; but facing invasion and tyranny if they don’t comply, the Brits should logically be quite easy to persuade. Blair has a more complex task, since it is not at all obvious what would happen – if anything – if the British would not go along with their leader – and the USA – in waging war in Iraq. Blair places the present day English people in history and thereby he

“borrows” the glory from famous and victorious battles from the past – making the soldiers of today, a natural extension of the heroes from World War II and the past. Churchill uses historical references in another way – namely by presenting the time of his speech, 1940, as the most important for the fate of the British nation. Instead of letting this huge responsibility paralyse the British, he turns it into an opportunity, stating: “There never has been, I suppose, in all the world, in all the history of war, such an opportunity for youth. The Knights of the Round Table, the Crusaders, all fall back into the past “ (Churchill par. 13).

Finally, rather desperately, appealing to “the New World” i.e. the USA to join the war, Churchill invokes a higher power in his closing phrase: ”until, in God's good time, the New World, with all its power and might, steps forth to the rescue and the liberation of the old”. Compared to Blair's several references to Christianity, Churchill turns out more moderate in his relation to God and Christianity than Blair. Regarding the fact that the enemy – Nazi Germany – also was a nation recognizing Christianity as their religion might explain this discrepancy between the two British Prime Ministers' discourses on this matter. Blair's enemies are high profile confessing Muslims, consisting of the Regime of Saddam Hussein and Al Quaida, and to even more illuminate who is the enemy – and not the least: gain the support of the political Christian right wing of both Britain and the USA – the use of religious i.e. Christian implicatures could be favourable. This, especially since they are not obvious enough to cause *major* bad will among the domestic minorities of Muslims in the country.

Soundbites are “carefully engineered excerpts, which the speakers hope in advance will receive attention” according to Beard (37), and I have given

account for several examples in Blair's speech. Although Beard claims the use of soundbites primarily developed after the 1960s – following the expansion of the news media business – I would suggest that Churchill uses them as well – in the same way as Blair – or more likely: Blair has learnt the value of soundbites from Churchill and others. A classic in the world of rhetoric is the Churchill quote – which I claim is a good example of a soundbite: “We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender” (Churchill par. 23). This quote obviously uses repetition, and as Beard (39) emphasizes, apart from the actual repetition so called prosodic features – tempo and rhythm – also add to the overall effect of such a rhetoric device. The three means of persuasion identified in Blair's speech are, not surprisingly, detectable in Churchill's speech as well, and two of them clearly in the soundbite quoted above. United with his people Churchill uses ‘we’ as a pronoun and the decisive ‘shall’ which is repeated no less than ten times. This decisiveness and resolve constitute a good example of an orator well aware of the importance of success in his use of persuasion through personality and stance. Making it clear that the British will fight everywhere – no part of the nation will be abandoned – Churchill includes all citizens of Great Britain in the task, making them emotionally involved by for instance using phrases like the above quoted: “We will go on to the end”, vaguely referring to the end of the war, the end of the British nation or ‘the end’ as in ‘to the death’; and :“We shall defend our

Island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills”, where ‘our island’ with its beaches, fields, streets and hills of course visualize what is at stake for the British. Being very dramatic, using emotionally charged words Churchill’s soundbite carries the same features as the Blair equivalents described and analyzed above. Quoting myself writing about Blair’s soundbites: ” Targeted on people’s emotions these phrases are carefully engineered to leave lasting impressions” (40) I argue this is valid for Churchill as well.

Being a man of emotionally charged words and phrases, there are however examples where Churchill uses persuasion through reasoning; here calming the British, arguing their momentary safety using logical reasoning: “We must never forget the solid assurances of sea power and those which belong to air power if it can be locally exercised” (Churchill par. 22).

Borrowing from literature history and the poet Tennyson, Churchill’s speech contains an excellent example of use of contrastive pairs, also noted in Blair’s speech. Speaking of the possibilities for the young people of Britain to make a contribution to the defence of the nation Churchill utters: “Every morn brought forth a noble chance, and every chance brought forth a noble knight” (Churchill par. 14), where ‘knight’ and ‘noble’ are the repeated pairs and the reversed positions within the pairs constitute the contrast. Using this piece of Tennyson poetry, this is also an example of intertextuality – where different kinds of texts refers or alludes to each other, here connecting the English youngsters to the glory of the classic fairytale knight.

Having identified the persuasive device – by Beard referred to as ‘list of three’ – in Blair’s speech, I also give an example to show the same occurrence in the 1940s Churchill speech. Churchill, seemingly more fond of repetition involving more than three repetitions, there are however examples of typical “lists of three” in his speech; for instance here, speaking about the German failure to stop Operation Dynamo: “**They** tried hard, and **they** were beaten back; **they** were frustrated in their task<sup>12</sup>” (Churchill par. 12).

## 8. Conclusion

The features of the discourse of the third way – the discourse of New Labour – are definitely a prominent feature of Tony Blair’s Address to the Nation, 2003, predominantly by its inclusiveness towards everybody except the uncovered evil enemy. The discourse of ‘The third way’ does not care about traditional left and right in politics; it assumes the notion that a strong and prosperous British enterprise is the recipe for an all-embracing, better society – in which everybody is welcome. By his use of vaguely defined pronouns as ‘we’ and ‘our’ – again not excluding anyone except the enemy – Blair makes it easy for anyone to agree with and follow what he is set out to do. This speech is on a matter outside the daily domestic political life in Britain, but the features of the third way discourse are to a great extent repeated and thereby the discourse is sustained. ‘The third way’ actually turns out ideal when it comes to waging war abroad. The mentioned inclusiveness and another third way feature – the stressing of national unity – is exactly what any leader marching off to war would need to communicate to his people. Already being a part of the

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<sup>12</sup> Repeated word ‘they’ in bold by me.

successful discourse of ‘the third way’, Blair simply continues strengthening and sustaining it throughout his speech.

Britain’s special bond with the USA has been noted several times throughout history. In both world wars America came to aid their British friends, the second time after being asked by a certain Winston Churchill invoking a higher power to make them join. By placing his task in Iraq in history referring to historical achievements by the British people, Blair borrows – for his discourse – some of the glory once achieved by his predecessor Churchill and the people of the past. Adding bravery to the British assumed “shared values” Blair makes it easy for any English to go along with his mission, but very difficult to back down – since that would mean denial of a positive quality like bravery, or denial of being a part of the British society and history.

The partnership with the USA is crucial to Blair’s apparent toughness and self confidence. Knowing that the USA is the only remaining super power, actually the nation most unlikely to lose a war, Blair dares to take on the identity of a strong world leader, because simple and primitive as it might sound: with military strength comes the possibility of an uncompromising foreign policy, for instance waging war against nations that do not comply with your demands. What Blair – as the strongest European ally of the USA – has to give in this partnership with the USA is the shared menace of being the target for possible future attacks – which he also tries to smooth over in his *refutatio* where he claims: “all nations are targets” (Blair par. 7).

The *refutatio* is not the only example of classical rhetoric features found in Blair’s address to the nation. I have shown that Blair’s speech is well in line with the full *dispositio* of a classical speech, and there are many so called

persuasive devices, used throughout history, to – precisely as Blair – establish an impression of the classical orator's ideal of sincerity and reliability.

Comparing Blair's and Churchill's speeches I have pointed out there are many similarities in for instance, explaining the sincerity of the threat and in describing the enemy as evil, but also in giving their causes global significance and, in terms of rhetorical devices, they both use so-called soundbites, repetition, "list of three" and contrastive pairs.

Although both orators enact the identity of a strong leader there are interesting differences in how they do it. The major difference is that Blair uses the inclusive approach towards the world and possible allies, while Churchill speaks more exclusively for Britain. Churchill earns the respect of fighting alone and, by daring challenges of the Nazi regime, he takes on a leadership of a people "between the devil and the deep blue sea". These precarious circumstances for the British – having to choose whether to fight the Germans or face tyranny and invasion – work in favor of Churchill's rhetoric since he offers the hope of deliverance the British need so badly. Blair faces a more difficult task rhetorically, since most of his people are too distanced mentally and physically from a possible threat coming from a Middle East nation with only possible weapons of mass destruction. But Blair's rhetoric is easy to go along with since he uses logical assumptions and the inclusiveness of the discourse of 'the third way'. More importantly is however the fact that he – through his bond with the USA – has access to the strongest military force available, and he is therefore certain of a positive outcome of the military campaign in Iraq, and thereby he is able to enact a high profile, strong and respected leadership.

Rhetorically, Tony Blair's Address to the Nation is skillfully written. Why Churchill's speech "We Shall Fight on the Beaches" always will be considered more of a rhetoric classic, better, more effective and more appealing than Blair's address derives from other factors than the rhetorical skills and knowledge used to compose and perform the speech. Although Blair's speech could be said to build on of the heritage of Churchill – using the same rhetorical devices, being a classically composed oratory and being skillfully performed – it will always be the circumstances under which a speech is delivered that will earn the speech and the speaker their rightful respect. Churchill's Britain faced immediate extinction. Blair's did not.

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## 10. Appendices

### Prime Minister's address to the Nation

20 March 2003

1 On Tuesday night I gave the order for British forces to take part in military action in Iraq.

2 Tonight, British servicemen and women are engaged from air, land and sea. Their mission: to remove Saddam Hussein from power, and disarm Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction.

3 I know this course of action has produced deep divisions of opinion in our country. But I know also the British people will now be united in sending our armed forces our thoughts and prayers. They are the finest in the world and their families and all of Britain can have great pride in them.

4 The threat to Britain today is not that of my father's generation. War between the big powers is unlikely. Europe is at peace. The Cold War already a memory.

5 But this new world faces a new threat: of disorder and chaos born either of brutal states like Iraq, armed with weapons of mass destruction; or of extreme terrorist groups. Both hate our way of life, our freedom, our democracy.

6 My fear, deeply held, based in part on the intelligence that I see, is that these threats come together and deliver catastrophe to our country and world. These tyrannical states do not care for the sanctity of human life. The terrorists delight in destroying it.

7 Some say if we act, we become a target. The truth is, all nations are targets. Bali was never in the front line of action against terrorism. America didn't attack Al Qaida. They attacked America.

8 Britain has never been a nation to hide at the back. But even if we were, it wouldn't avail us.

9 Should terrorists obtain these weapons now being manufactured and traded round the world, the carnage they could inflict to our economies, our security, to world peace, would be beyond our most vivid imagination.

10 My judgement, as Prime Minister, is that this threat is real, growing and of an entirely different nature to any conventional threat to our security that Britain has faced before.

11 For 12 years, the world tried to disarm Saddam; after his wars in which hundreds of thousands died. UN weapons inspectors say vast amounts of chemical and biological poisons, such as anthrax, VX nerve agent, and mustard gas remain unaccounted for in Iraq.

12 So our choice is clear: back down and leave Saddam hugely strengthened; or proceed to disarm him by force. Retreat might give us a moment of respite but years of repentance at our weakness would I believe follow.

13 It is true Saddam is not the only threat. But it is true also- as we British know- that the best way to deal with future threats peacefully, is to deal with present threats with resolve.

14 Removing Saddam will be a blessing to the Iraqi people. Four million Iraqis are in exile. 60% of the population dependent on food aid. Thousands of children die every year through malnutrition and disease. Hundreds of thousands have been driven from their homes or murdered.

15 I hope the Iraqi people hear this message. We are with you. Our enemy is not you, but your barbarous rulers.

16 Our commitment to the post-Saddam humanitarian effort will be total. We shall help Iraq move towards democracy. And put the money from Iraqi oil in a UN trust fund so that it benefits Iraq and no-one else.

17 Neither should Iraq be our only concern. President Bush and I have committed ourselves to peace in the Middle East based on a secure state of Israel and a viable Palestinian state. We will strive to see it done

18 But these challenges and others that confront us - poverty, the environment, the ravages of disease require a world of order and stability.

19 That is why I have asked our troops to go into action tonight. As so often before, on the courage and determination of British men and women, serving our country, the fate of many nations rests.

20 Thank you.

<http://www.number10.gov.uk/output/Page3327.asp>

## “WE SHALL FIGHT ON THE BEACHES”

June 4, 1940  
House of Commons

From the moment that the French defenses at Sedan and on the Meuse were broken at the end of the second week of May, only a rapid retreat to Amiens and the south could have saved the British and French Armies who had entered Belgium at the appeal of the Belgian King; but this strategic fact was not immediately realized. The French High Command hoped they would be able to close the gap, and the Armies of the north were under their orders. Moreover, a retirement of this kind would have involved almost certainly the destruction of the fine Belgian Army of over 20 divisions and the abandonment of the whole of Belgium. Therefore, when the force and scope of the German penetration were realized and when a new French Generalissimo, General Weygand, assumed command in place of General Gamelin, an effort was made by the French and British Armies in Belgium to keep on holding the right hand of the Belgians and to give their own right hand to a newly created French Army which was to have advanced across the Somme in great strength to grasp it.

However, the German eruption swept like a sharp scythe around the right and rear of the Armies of the north. Eight or nine armored divisions, each of about four hundred armored vehicles of different kinds, but carefully assorted to be complementary and divisible into small self-contained units, cut off all communications between us and the main French Armies. It severed our own communications for food and ammunition, which ran first to Amiens and afterwards through Abbeville, and it shore its way up the coast to Boulogne and Calais, and almost to Dunkirk. Behind this armored and mechanized onslaught came a number of German divisions in lorries, and behind them again there plodded comparatively slowly the dull brute mass of the ordinary German Army and German people, always so ready to be led to the trampling down in other lands of liberties and comforts which they have never known in their own.

I have said this armored scythe-stroke almost reached Dunkirk-almost but not quite. Boulogne and Calais were the scenes of desperate fighting. The Guards defended Boulogne for a while and were then withdrawn by orders from this country. The Rifle Brigade, the 60th Rifles, and the Queen Victoria's Rifles, with a battalion of British tanks and 1,000 Frenchmen, in all about four thousand strong, defended Calais to the last. The British Brigadier was given an hour to surrender. He spurned the offer, and four days of intense street fighting passed before silence reigned over Calais, which marked the end of a memorable resistance. Only 30 unwounded survivors were brought off by the Navy, and we do not know the fate of their comrades. Their sacrifice, however, was not in vain. At least two armored divisions, which otherwise would have been turned against the British Expeditionary Force, had to be sent to overcome them. They have added another page to the glories of the light divisions, and the time gained enabled the Graveline water lines to be flooded and to be held by the French troops.

Thus it was that the port of Dunkirk was kept open. When it was found impossible for the Armies of the north to reopen their communications to Amiens with the main French Armies, only one choice remained. It seemed, indeed, forlorn. The Belgian, British and French Armies were almost surrounded. Their sole line of retreat was to a single port and to its neighboring beaches. They were pressed on every side by heavy attacks and far outnumbered in the air.

When, a week ago today, I asked the House to fix this afternoon as the occasion for a statement, I feared it would be my hard lot to announce the greatest military disaster in our long history. I thought-and some good judges agreed with me-that perhaps 20,000 or 30,000 men might be re-embarked. But it certainly seemed that the whole of the French First Army and the whole of the British Expeditionary Force north of the Amiens-Abbeville gap would be broken up in the open field or else would have to capitulate for lack of food and ammunition. These were the hard and heavy tidings for which I called upon the House and the nation to prepare themselves a week ago. The whole root and core and brain of the British Army, on which and around which we were to build, and are to build, the great British Armies in the later years of the war, seemed about to perish upon the field or to be led into an ignominious and starving captivity.

That was the prospect a week ago. But another blow which might well have proved final was yet to fall upon us. The King of the Belgians had called upon us to come to his aid. Had not this Ruler and

his Government severed themselves from the Allies, who rescued their country from extinction in the late war, and had they not sought refuge in what was proved to be a fatal neutrality, the French and British Armies might well at the outset have saved not only Belgium but perhaps even Poland. Yet at the last moment, when Belgium was already invaded, King Leopold called upon us to come to his aid, and even at the last moment we came. He and his brave, efficient Army, nearly half a million strong, guarded our left flank and thus kept open our only line of retreat to the sea. Suddenly, without prior consultation, with the least possible notice, without the advice of his Ministers and upon his own personal act, he sent a plenipotentiary to the German Command, surrendered his Army, and exposed our whole flank and means of retreat.

I asked the House a week ago to suspend its judgment because the facts were not clear, but I do not feel that any reason now exists why we should not form our own opinions upon this pitiful episode. The surrender of the Belgian Army compelled the British at the shortest notice to cover a flank to the sea more than 30 miles in length. Otherwise all would have been cut off, and all would have shared the fate to which King Leopold had condemned the finest Army his country had ever formed. So in doing this and in exposing this flank, as anyone who followed the operations on the map will see, contact was lost between the British and two out of the three corps forming the First French Army, who were still farther from the coast than we were, and it seemed impossible that any large number of Allied troops could reach the coast.

The enemy attacked on all sides with great strength and fierceness, and their main power, the power of their far more numerous Air Force, was thrown into the battle or else concentrated upon Dunkirk and the beaches. Pressing in upon the narrow exit, both from the east and from the west, the enemy began to fire with cannon upon the beaches by which alone the shipping could approach or depart. They sowed magnetic mines in the channels and seas; they sent repeated waves of hostile aircraft, sometimes more than a hundred strong in one formation, to cast their bombs upon the single pier that remained, and upon the sand dunes upon which the troops had their eyes for shelter. Their U-boats, one of which was sunk, and their motor launches took their toll of the vast traffic which now began. For four or five days an intense struggle reigned. All their armored divisions-or what was left of them-together with great masses of infantry and artillery, hurled themselves in vain upon the ever-narrowing, ever-contracting appendix within which the British and French Armies fought.

Meanwhile, the Royal Navy, with the willing help of countless merchant seamen, strained every nerve to embark the British and Allied troops; 220 light warships and 650 other vessels were engaged. They had to operate upon the difficult coast, often in adverse weather, under an almost ceaseless hail of bombs and an increasing concentration of artillery fire. Nor were the seas, as I have said, themselves free from mines and torpedoes. It was in conditions such as these that our men carried on, with little or no rest, for days and nights on end, making trip after trip across the dangerous waters, bringing with them always men whom they had rescued. The numbers they have brought back are the measure of their devotion and their courage. The hospital ships, which brought off many thousands of British and French wounded, being so plainly marked were a special target for Nazi bombs; but the men and women on board them never faltered in their duty.

Meanwhile, the Royal Air Force, which had already been intervening in the battle, so far as its range would allow, from home bases, now used part of its main metropolitan fighter strength, and struck at the German bombers and at the fighters which in large numbers protected them. This struggle was protracted and fierce. Suddenly the scene has cleared, the crash and thunder has for the moment-but only for the moment-died away. A miracle of deliverance, achieved by valor, by perseverance, by perfect discipline, by faultless service, by resource, by skill, by unconquerable fidelity, is manifest to us all. The enemy was hurled back by the retreating British and French troops. He was so roughly handled that he did not hurry their departure seriously. The Royal Air Force engaged the main strength of the German Air Force, and inflicted upon them losses of at least four to one; and the Navy, using nearly 1,000 ships of all kinds, carried over 335,000 men, French and British, out of the jaws of death and shame, to their native land and to the tasks which lie immediately ahead. We must be very careful not to assign to this deliverance the attributes of a victory. Wars are not won by evacuations. But there was a victory inside this deliverance, which should be noted. It was gained by the Air Force. Many of our soldiers coming back have not seen the Air Force at work; they saw only the bombers which escaped its protective attack. They underrate its achievements. I have heard much talk of this; that is why I go out of my way to say this. I will tell you about it.

This was a great trial of strength between the British and German Air Forces. Can you conceive a greater objective for the Germans in the air than to make evacuation from these beaches impossible, and to sink all these ships which were displayed, almost to the extent of thousands? Could there have been an objective of greater military importance and significance for the whole purpose of the war than this? They tried hard, and they were beaten back; they were frustrated in their task. We got the Army away; and they have paid fourfold for any losses which they have inflicted. Very large formations of German aeroplanes-and we know that they are a very brave race-have turned on several occasions from the attack of one-quarter of their number of the Royal Air Force, and have dispersed in different directions. Twelve aeroplanes have been hunted by two. One aeroplane was driven into the water and cast away by the mere charge of a British aeroplane, which had no more ammunition. All of our types-the Hurricane, the Spitfire and the new Defiant-and all our pilots have been vindicated as superior to what they have at present to face.

When we consider how much greater would be our advantage in defending the air above this Island against an overseas attack, I must say that I find in these facts a sure basis upon which practical and reassuring thoughts may rest. I will pay my tribute to these young airmen. The great French Army was very largely, for the time being, cast back and disturbed by the onrush of a few thousands of armored vehicles. May it not also be that the cause of civilization itself will be defended by the skill and devotion of a few thousand airmen? There never has been, I suppose, in all the world, in all the history of war, such an opportunity for youth. The Knights of the Round Table, the Crusaders, all fall back into the past-not only distant but prosaic; these young men, going forth every morn to guard their native land and all that we stand for, holding in their hands these instruments of colossal and shattering power, of whom it may be said that

**Every morn brought forth a noble chance  
And every chance brought forth a noble knight,**

deserve our gratitude, as do all the brave men who, in so many ways and on so many occasions, are ready, and continue ready to give life and all for their native land.

I return to the Army. In the long series of very fierce battles, now on this front, now on that, fighting on three fronts at once, battles fought by two or three divisions against an equal or somewhat larger number of the enemy, and fought fiercely on some of the old grounds that so many of us knew so well-in these battles our losses in men have exceeded 30,000 killed, wounded and missing. I take occasion to express the sympathy of the House to all who have suffered bereavement or who are still anxious. The President of the Board of Trade [Sir Andrew Duncan] is not here today. His son has been killed, and many in the House have felt the pangs of affliction in the sharpest form. But I will say this about the missing: We have had a large number of wounded come home safely to this country, but I would say about the missing that there may be very many reported missing who will come back home, some day, in one way or another. In the confusion of this fight it is inevitable that many have been left in positions where honor required no further resistance from them.

Against this loss of over 30,000 men, we can set a far heavier loss certainly inflicted upon the enemy. But our losses in material are enormous. We have perhaps lost one-third of the men we lost in the opening days of the battle of 21st March, 1918, but we have lost nearly as many guns -- nearly one thousand-and all our transport, all the armored vehicles that were with the Army in the north. This loss will impose a further delay on the expansion of our military strength. That expansion had not been proceeding as far as we had hoped. The best of all we had to give had gone to the British Expeditionary Force, and although they had not the numbers of tanks and some articles of equipment which were desirable, they were a very well and finely equipped Army. They had the first-fruits of all that our industry had to give, and that is gone. And now here is this further delay. How long it will be, how long it will last, depends upon the exertions which we make in this Island. An effort the like of which has never been seen in our records is now being made. Work is proceeding everywhere, night and day, Sundays and week days. Capital and Labor have cast aside their interests, rights, and customs and put them into the common stock. Already the flow of munitions has leaped forward. There is no reason why we should not in a few months overtake the sudden and serious loss that has come upon us, without retarding the development of our general program.

Nevertheless, our thankfulness at the escape of our Army and so many men, whose loved ones have passed through an agonizing week, must not blind us to the fact that what has happened in

France and Belgium is a colossal military disaster. The French Army has been weakened, the Belgian Army has been lost, a large part of those fortified lines upon which so much faith had been reposed is gone, many valuable mining districts and factories have passed into the enemy's possession, the whole of the Channel ports are in his hands, with all the tragic consequences that follow from that, and we must expect another blow to be struck almost immediately at us or at France. We are told that Herr Hitler has a plan for invading the British Isles. This has often been thought of before. When Napoleon lay at Boulogne for a year with his flat-bottomed boats and his Grand Army, he was told by someone. "There are bitter weeds in England." There are certainly a great many more of them since the British Expeditionary Force returned.

The whole question of home defense against invasion is, of course, powerfully affected by the fact that we have for the time being in this Island incomparably more powerful military forces than we have ever had at any moment in this war or the last. But this will not continue. We shall not be content with a defensive war. We have our duty to our Ally. We have to reconstitute and build up the British Expeditionary Force once again, under its gallant Commander-in-Chief, Lord Gort. All this is in train; but in the interval we must put our defenses in this Island into such a high state of organization that the fewest possible numbers will be required to give effective security and that the largest possible potential of offensive effort may be realized. On this we are now engaged. It will be very convenient, if it be the desire of the House, to enter upon this subject in a secret Session. Not that the government would necessarily be able to reveal in very great detail military secrets, but we like to have our discussions free, without the restraint imposed by the fact that they will be read the next day by the enemy; and the Government would benefit by views freely expressed in all parts of the House by Members with their knowledge of so many different parts of the country. I understand that some request is to be made upon this subject, which will be readily acceded to by His Majesty's Government.

We have found it necessary to take measures of increasing stringency, not only against enemy aliens and suspicious characters of other nationalities, but also against British subjects who may become a danger or a nuisance should the war be transported to the United Kingdom. I know there are a great many people affected by the orders which we have made who are the passionate enemies of Nazi Germany. I am very sorry for them, but we cannot, at the present time and under the present stress, draw all the distinctions which we should like to do. If parachute landings were attempted and fierce fighting attendant upon them followed, these unfortunate people would be far better out of the way, for their own sakes as well as for ours. There is, however, another class, for which I feel not the slightest sympathy. Parliament has given us the powers to put down Fifth Column activities with a strong hand, and we shall use those powers subject to the supervision and correction of the House, without the slightest hesitation until we are satisfied, and more than satisfied, that this malignancy in our midst has been effectively stamped out.

Turning once again, and this time more generally, to the question of invasion, I would observe that there has never been a period in all these long centuries of which we boast when an absolute guarantee against invasion, still less against serious raids, could have been given to our people. In the days of Napoleon the same wind which would have carried his transports across the Channel might have driven away the blockading fleet. There was always the chance, and it is that chance which has excited and befooled the imaginations of many Continental tyrants. Many are the tales that are told. We are assured that novel methods will be adopted, and when we see the originality of malice, the ingenuity of aggression, which our enemy displays, we may certainly prepare ourselves for every kind of novel stratagem and every kind of brutal and treacherous maneuver. I think that no idea is so outlandish that it should not be considered and viewed with a searching, but at the same time, I hope, with a steady eye. We must never forget the solid assurances of sea power and those which belong to air power if it can be locally exercised.

I have, myself, full confidence that if all do their duty, if nothing is neglected, and if the best arrangements are made, as they are being made, we shall prove ourselves once again able to defend our Island home, to ride out the storm of war, and to outlive the menace of tyranny, if necessary for years, if necessary alone. At any rate, that is what we are going to try to do. That is the resolve of His Majesty's Government—every man of them. That is the will of Parliament and the nation. The British Empire and the French Republic, linked together in their cause and in their need, will defend to the death their native soil, aiding each other like good comrades to the utmost of their strength. Even though large tracts of Europe and many old and famous States have fallen or may fall into the grip of the Gestapo and all the odious apparatus of Nazi rule, we shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans,

we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender, and even if, which I do not for a moment believe, this Island or a large part of it were subjugated and starving, then our Empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British Fleet, would carry on the struggle, until, in God's good time, the New World, with all its power and might, steps forth to the rescue and the liberation of the old.

