

**LANGUAGE OF  
TERROR**

*How Neuroscience Influences  
Political Speech in the United States*

WELLY KENDALL, JOSEPH M. STRAUSS,  
AND KEVIN NODDCHI

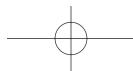
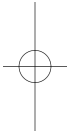
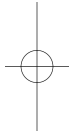
**CONSPIRACY**

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# LANGUAGE OF TERROR



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## ***How Neuroscience Influences Political Speech in the United States***

**Wesley Kendall, Joseph M. Siracusa,  
and Kevin Noguchi**

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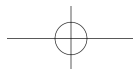
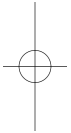
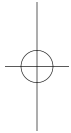
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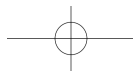
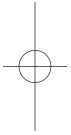
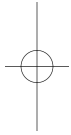
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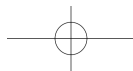
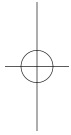


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## PREFACE

**[B02.0]** *What is this book about?*

**[B02.1]**

This book, in essence, is about America. A relatively young country, America's identity has been cast by war; after announcing its tumultuous birth to the world with a gunshot at Concord, it has been riven by perpetual conflict ever since. Early westward expansion and the fulfillment of manifest destiny would see America at war with all the leading European powers, seizing land from indigenous Americans and decimating their entire population with guns, germs, and steel. Sundered by a bloody civil war, a fledgling America endured a crisis over the right to enslave labor, a fight that shed the blood of thousands of its native sons and slaves. Although the North claimed victory, both sides would savagely simmer, as tinder ready for the spark. Much later, with a devastating detonation, the nuclear bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki were a resounding declaration; after a mere one hundred fifty years of life, a fully grown America was now the most powerful war maker in history. Following World War II, the United States has been busy; it has been involved in over fifty foreign military actions and has established over fifty military bases abroad from which to project the global power of America. With a massive federal budget, the largest free-market economy in the world, and a colossal military-industrial complex, President Eisenhower's prophetic speech regarding the influence of a privatized war machine on American politics and society would resonate more alarmingly with each successive decade. On 9/11, America was historically, economically, and socially primed for a protracted war on terror.

**[B02.2]**

The culture and language of America reflects its violent past; children are reared on military-themed toys; popular movies and art glorify war; education directs students to the histories of violent conquests, and communities blithely revere the service of their military heroes. The words of war permeate American civil society, and after 9/11 these words of war were amplified by the language of terror. Common words such as “honor,” “duty,” “service,” and “loyalty” have become imbued with nationalistic and military significance and have been conferred a burnished status that evokes emotion in many audiences. Other words, formerly benign or irrelevant to war, became subsumed into the national nomenclature of a fearful mythology that wars perpetuate; “infidel,” “torture,” “kidnapping,” and “Muslim” are words that saw their previous meanings distorted in the war narrative, decontextualized to reduce their meanings to a baser form, with their association only contained within the terrorism milieu. Americans became the “infidel” to an ungodly “Muslim” religion that condoned murder, “kidnapping” and “torture.” In the warped lexicon of the language of terror, it was seen as a lawful matter of course that the predominantly Christian U.S. military would conduct “enhanced interrogation” methods on “terrorist” subjects covertly whisked off of the world’s streets and obtained through practices of “extraordinary rendition.” Understanding the war on terror, and the language of terror which this war has spawned, is the object of this book.

**[B02.3]**

The use of language, and its interpretation, is largely predicated upon a complex biochemical process. Thoughts that are expressed as language originate in the transmission of neurochemicals between neurons that reside within the folds of gray matter that comprise our brains. The neurochemical patterns that provide us with thoughts are all orchestrated by genetic conductors that determine how and what amount of neurotransmitter should be released to send a message or to respond to one. Our brains are a veritable symphony of synaptic connections, and the cascade of chemical notes that encompass our thoughts can be influenced not only by the conductor but by the reception of the audience. Just as enthusiastic applause can invigorate a performance, social and environmental factors can also shape how language is received, interpreted, and acted upon. This book will also examine the genetic foundations of language and explore how genetic predispositions can influence the perception of terror related communications.

**DRAFT**    **PREFACE**

**[B02.4]**    *Why is this book important?*

**[B02.5]**    This book is important and timely for a number of crucial reasons. The recent developments in neuroscience research, as well as medical technologies that have vastly contributed to its growth, have helped to further our understanding of the genetic and neurochemical components of personality, ideology, and motivation, making a book on the science of language and war timely. As medical technologies that help us understand the biological processes of cognitive thought advance, the technologies of military arsenals evolve, enabling the killing of humans in the war on terror to be more efficient and cost-effective, making a book on the impacts of war rhetoric important; the civilian control of the U.S. military rests upon the informed consent of a knowledgeable electorate, and policies of war that implement weapons capable of mass destruction must be made with delicate deliberation.

**[B02.6]**    Another issue of critical importance that supports this book's publication and readership is the current atmosphere of political division in the United States and the need to understand the origins of the philosophical recalcitrance between political parties that creates impasse and obstruction, effectively vitiating progress in the war on terror; coming to terms with any scientific explanation to the current political dysfunction would supply a diagnosis to the psychological malady that has afflicted a political paralysis on the nation's governing bodies. If all policy makers, combined with the electorates they serve, were to understand the biological mechanisms that influence their political thoughts and attitudes and identify logical errors made in environments of stress or sentiment, which lead to flawed judgments in war policy, rational thought may prevail over emotional reaction. Indeed, rational thought may be considered the nemesis of war. This book is important because it proposes that in order to avert war, a critical self-examination of the thoughts that give way to war must be undertaken.

**[B02.7]**    *What are the intentions of the authors?*

**[B02.8]**    Many of the subjects under scrutiny by the authors of this book are the hallowed institutions of American culture, and any criticism of those honored organizations evokes instant peals of outrage and condemnation by institutional proponents. Lest we be remiss, and leave the gentle reader to infer that our intentions were purposefully to inspire provocation, let us be clear: your intuition obliges. In the tradition of the Socratic gadfly,

scholarship should serve to not only edify and elucidate but to also to be provocative and compelling. Although many revered institutions are the subject of critical consideration (such as the military, the media, the government, and the church), the author's intention is to simply promote debate and contribute to the popular and scholarly discussion. As will be reiterated in the following chapters, the science is in its nascent stages, and no definitive evidence has yet been uncovered that closes the door on the debate regarding what factors shape the totality of our political, religious, or ideological beliefs. The intention of selecting cases that will unquestionably spur dispute is that they serve as an intellectual exercise, rather than as an assertion of categorical proof. Although the facts of the cases are well established, and the science that underlies each case rigorously well researched, the reader may find it challenging to completely detach emotionally and render impartial judgment on the merits of each case dispassionately. The authors would urge readers to remember the overarching theme of the book; visceral emotions aroused by speech are often irrational responses elicited by deeper, possibly genetic, impulses. In reading this book's more controversial chapters, cast a critical eye on the substance and disengage moralistic emotion from the style. As this book will argue, triggering emotional morality is the cornerstone of language distortion in the war on terror. The cerebral challenge of divorcing emotion from reason only demonstrates the contention that logical judgments are often clouded by more obscure factors in contemplating policies in the war on terror.

*Who are the authors?*

A novel element of this book is the multidisciplinary approach inherent in the unique qualifications of its contributing authors. The notion that political language crafted by U.S. policy makers and interpreted by its citizens concerning America's war on terror is influenced by historical, biological, and genetic processes is a multifaceted proposition that lends itself to a diverse analysis. This book brings together an imminent American historian, a political scientist trained in the law, and a professor of neuroscience from one of America's most prestigious medical schools. Together, they view the evidence through a unique lens of professional perspective, and the case analyses bear the indelible imprint of their signature contributions.

[B02.9]  
[B02.10]

**DRAFT**    **PREFACE**

**[B02.11] CLOSING NOTE**

**[B02.12]** To conclude, the authors would like to sincerely express their gratitude to the many researchers in the areas of political science, genetics, history, and neurobiology whose past efforts have greatly informed and enhanced this book, as well as those who may draw future inspiration from this work and continue to contribute to a rapidly evolving area of inquiry. The importance of understanding the intersections between our genetically heritable personality characteristics and those ideologies acquired through social and environmental factors, and how those traits influence the narrative in the war on terror, cannot be understated. Violent ideation and the seeds of war may be sown into the very fabric of our DNA, and understanding the biological loom that weaves together the genetic threads of our conscious minds can help us avoid the destructive impulses that lead us into war.