Twisting Tongues and Twisting Arms:

The Power of Political Rhetoric

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Abstract

While political scientists have usually treated rhetoric as epiphenomenal, one strand of constructivism has recently returned rhetoric to the heart of political analysis, especially through the mechanism of persuasion. We too maintain that rhetoric is central to political processes and outcomes, but we argue that persuasion is theoretically and methodologically problematic. We aver that rhetoric's role may be more usefully conceptualized in the context of coercion, and we advance a stylized model that illustrates how rhetorical coercion operates, explains why it works, and identifies key scope conditions. We subsequently illustrate our model's relevance through two "hard" cases. This article's agenda is twofold. First, it advises political scientists to avoid focusing on unanswerable questions about actors' motives and to examine instead what actors say, in what contexts, and to what audiences. Second, it lays the groundwork for a "coercive constructivism," complementing the liberal version so prevalent today.

Talk is often thought to belong to the realm of diplomacy, war to the realm of action. Yet, during the recent war in Iraq, the Bush administration was nearly as preoccupied with how the combat was portrayed as with the combat itself. Its foreign policy team, guided by Karl Rove's political shop, invariably spoke of coalition forces rather than American forces, the war to liberate Iraq rather than the invasion of Iraq, Saddam's death squads rather than Saddam's *fedayeen*. Rhetoric is central to politics, even when politics takes the form of war.

Yet rhetoric is curiously *not* central to our discipline. Politics is marked by rhetorical competition, but our theoretical frameworks are generally hard-pressed to make sense of its dynamics and outcomes. Whereas the dominant materialist tradition treats rhetoric as epiphenomenal, we argue, following recent constructivist work in comparative politics and international relations, that the rhetorical interplay itself provides leverage in explaining outcomes. We are less comfortable, however, with the argument advanced by some constructivists that political actors deploy resonant rhetorical forms and thereby *persuade* their interlocutors of the correctness of their preferred course of action. We contend that a focus on mechanisms of persuasion is both theoretically and methodologically problematic inasmuch as they rest on a strong specification of the subjective motivations of individuals. Moreover, although persuasion undoubtedly does occur in the political arena, it is also undoubtedly quite rare, especially among elites with well-developed views and complex cognitive schema. The recent constructivist literature has prompted a refreshing debate on the place of deliberation and argumentation in politics, and it has advanced our understanding of these processes. But persuasion, the best-elaborated mechanism in the existing literature, does not exhaust the possible ways through which rhetoric might shape political contest.

We seek to fill this gap by proposing a model of "rhetorical coercion."[1] Employing an expansive definition of rhetoric that includes all speech acts—whether they are oral or written, whether they take place under conditions approximating Habermas' "ideal speech situation" or not—we argue that rhetorical maneuver can prove critical to success in political contests even when one's opponents have not internalized the promoted values. While claimants may deploy arguments in the hope that they will eventually persuade, their more immediate task is, through skillful framing, to leave their opponents without access to the rhetorical materials needed to craft a socially sustainable rebuttal. Rhetorical coercion occurs when this strategy proves successful: when the claimant's opponents have been talked into a corner, compelled to endorse a stance they would otherwise reject. It is the public nature of rhetoric that makes this possible, as the relevant audiences impose limits on the arguments that can plausibly be advanced.

Most narrowly conceived, this article suggests and systematically explores a language-focused mechanism of political influence complementing recent constructivist scholarship, but it also has a broader agenda. At the level of methodology, it calls on political scientists to avoid centering causal accounts on unanswerable questions about actors' true motives and to focus instead on what actors say, in what contexts, and to what audiences. At the level of substantive theory, it joins other recent work in returning rhetoric to the heart of political analysis. But rhetoric is often both the medium and the locus of political contest, and thus focusing on its role in the context of deliberation can take us only so far. Rhetoric matters, we argue, when human

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[1] Definitions of coercion—in both political science and everyday usage—typically focus on the use of material force and the manipulation of material costs and benefits to alter the target's behavior, but they too tightly link the instrument of influence with the nature of influence. The defining feature of coercion is rather (non-consensual) compliance: as David Baldwin (1985, 38) puts it, "The basic intuitive notion of coercion refers to a high degree of constraint on the alternative courses of action available to … the target of an influence attempt."

beings power as well as when they puzzle (Heclo 1974). This article represents a step away from constructivism with a liberal flavor, focused on the transformation of values, toward constructivism with coercive characteristics, focused on the exercise of power.

This article proceeds in four sections. First, we critically review existing approaches to rhetoric in empirical political science, demonstrating that our model of rhetorical coercion occupies a unique conceptual space. The theoretical core of the article then sets forth our generalizable mechanism of rhetorical coercion and explicates both its logic and its limits. We subsequently illustrate this mechanism's operation through two "hard" cases: (1) the efforts of Druze Arabs in Israel to garner full citizenship rights by framing them as the just desserts of their military sacrifice, and (2) the campaign to forge an American commitment to the reconstruction of Europe after World War II by framing it as essential to the defense of "Western Civilization." We maintain that these outcomes are not entirely explicable without close attention to the dynamics of the competing rhetorical claims put forward by the opposed parties and that our model of rhetorical coercion helps make sense of these puzzling and important cases.

Reclaiming Rhetoric

Most political scientists disparage rhetoric as epiphenomenal. The very phrase "mere rhetoric" captures the view that what counts is not the language people use or the ideas that they espouse but the material power resources upon which they can draw. This perspective is shared by "realist" (and especially rationalist) writers on international relations, comparative politics, and American politics, and it accords with a well-established understanding of political power.

Disenchanted with narrow materialist approaches, political scientists have in recent years sought to harness the power of ideas. Many have invoked beliefs, ideas, and culture to supply inputs—such as actors' preferences, beliefs, and information—and to serve as coordination

devices in games with multiple equilibria (Goldstein and Keohane 1993; Laitin 1998). Political psychologists have long argued that ideas—in the form of belief structures, cognitive maps, scripts, and schemas—influence how actors interpret evidence and sift through information (Jervis 1976). Students of collective action have suggested that principled commitments can motivate participants and render them unusually insensitive to the costs of protest (Cohen 1985).

But scholars with an ideational bent have typically relegated rhetoric to the margins. For "idealists," words matter only insofar as they reflect actors' true beliefs, with private statements seen as more revealing than public pronouncements. Public rhetoric is of causal consequence only from the top down, as leaders of states and social movements deploy resonant language in an effort to mobilize support (Edelman 1964; Snow et al. 1986; Snow and Benford 1988). While devotees of "interests" and "ideas" vigorously debate the relative causal power of their favored variables, scholars in both traditions have little use for public rhetorical contestation.

The rhetorical struggles of real political actors, however, suggest that their rhetorical formulations are not merely fat surrounding the meat of politics. To treat rhetoric as epiphenomenal is to render much of politics puzzling and to do violence to politics as lived by its participants. Rhetoric is certainly a weapon of the weak, but those holding the reins of power can and must deploy it as well. The acquisition and maintenance of rule ultimately hinge as much on legitimacy as on physical coercion, and such legitimacy can be established only through rhetorical action (Weber 1968). While political contestants unquestionably further their agenda by exploiting material resources, they generally at the same time "frame" their political activity, explaining the purposes to which their material power is put. They advance "a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events, weaving a connection

among them" (Gamson and Modigliani 1987, 143). Such contests among state leaders and societal activists should be at the center of the study of politics.

Rationalists and political psychologists might both protest that they have done precisely this. Rationalist scholars have pointed out that talk is not *always* cheap. State leaders who renege on their public rhetorical commitments may bear substantial domestic and international costs, giving them incentives both to tell the truth and to strategically manipulate audience costs (Fearon 1994; Sartori 2002). Though important, this insight flattens rhetoric into a purely informational tool, a way of efficiently revealing whether one is a high-cost or low-cost actor. As such, it cannot shed light on the framing competitions that often lie at the heart of politics.

Political psychologists have powerfully demonstrated that how an issue is framed is critical to both elite decision-making and mass opinion. But nearly all framing experiments have abstracted far from reality in exposing subjects to just a single issue frame (Druckman 2001). Even the exceptions have failed to interrogate fully the *dynamics* of framing. Recent studies have concluded that the framing effect disappears when targets are exposed to competing frames from equally credible sources and that targets then respond by acting in ways that mirror the rational choice assumption of invariant preferences (Druckman 2004; Sniderman and Theriault 2004). By this account, the intense framing contests endemic to politics are both peripheral and baffling— peripheral in that their only effect is to render frame competition inconsequential, and baffling in that actors continue to expend copious resources on their rhetorical efforts.

While most approaches fail to accord public rhetoric per se causal status, one major exception has been the vibrant constructivist literature (Checkel 1998; Finnemore and Sikkink 2001). A central problem for constructivists has been explaining how and why new norms emerge and why actors might obey norms despite contrary material pressures. Among the

universe of mechanisms through which political actors develop "shared understandings," and arguably occupying pride of place, is persuasion: "normative claims," Finnemore (1996, 141) asserts, "become powerful and prevail by being persuasive" (see also Payne 2001; Johnston 2001). The targets of successfully persuasive rhetorical moves do not grudgingly comply, but rather sincerely internalize new beliefs and consequently adopt new identities and preferences. Through persuasion, "agent action becomes social structure, ideas become norms, and the subjective becomes the intersubjective" (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 914). Through persuasive rhetoric, national and transnational social movements prompt not merely compliance with but consent to existing norms, and norm entrepreneurs need not resort to coercion to effect change. Persuasion—and public rhetoric as its medium—have emerged as the coins of the constructivist realm (Checkel 2001; Crawford 2001; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Risse et al. 1999; Risse 2000).

Though sometimes only implicitly, these scholars have often drawn on Jürgen Habermas' logic of "communicative action" to explain the power of rhetoric (Johnson 1993; Müller 2001; Risse 2000).[2] Habermas acknowledges that political actors often engage in narrowly goal-directed (teleological) action, but what makes his political vision distinctive is its affirmation of the possibility and prevalence of rational dialogue, of open-minded deliberation in the quest for truth. Every legitimate use of language, Habermas argues, is premised on mutual understandings, on "idealizations that transcend any particular language game," and these "give rise to the perspective of an agreement that is open to criticism on the basis of validity claims" (Habermas 1990, 199). For Habermas, politics (at least in its ideal form) is less about contest than

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[2] Among those drawing on social psychology are Checkel 2001; Crawford 2002, 26-27; and Johnston 2001. Others have remained agnostic as to how persuasion operates (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998). We limit ourselves here to discussion of the Habermasian version, since in our judgment it is the most clearly articulated mechanism.

consensus, less about powering than puzzling, and rhetorical interchange consequently takes center stage (Habermas 1984). Ideally, actors do not deploy arguments in a strategic mode; they leave power and rank at the door, and they seek to persuade others and are themselves open to persuasion. Precisely because Habermas' project combines the normative and the positive, however, his work raises challenges for political scientists engaged in empirical research without an explicitly normative component. Insofar as constructivists invoke "communicative action" to explain real-world processes, it is fair to ask whether open communication and rational deliberation characterize actual political debate (Lynch 2002, 197-198). Only when they do can Habermasian discourse ethics yield empirical insight into political contestation.

We are very much in sympathy with this emphasis on public deliberation, but we are skeptical as to the utility of privileging persuasion as a causal mechanism. As Habermas himself recognizes, the unconstrained dialogue of "communicative action" is not an empirically accurate portrait of politics, for power and rank are omnipresent in the political sphere. Actors do not leave their identities at the door when entering into dialogue, and they do not employ language unadulterated by earlier political contestation. Discourse is therefore always structured—and not by reason alone. Rules of exclusion and employment dictate what arguments can be proffered, under what conditions, and by whom (Foucault 1972, 215-37; Foucault 1991). For empirically oriented social scientists, who seek to explain and understand *actual* political processes and events, it would seem more helpful to adopt a theoretical framework that explicates the power of rhetoric even when politics is *not* truth-seeking and truth-generating, and a conception of rhetoric that includes *all* speech, no matter how interlaced with power relations.

Perhaps more importantly, we are skeptical that analysts can overcome the methodological hurdles standing in the way of demonstrating that persuasion has occurred. Such an explanation

presumes that one can pin down the "real motives" driving individual choice, so that one can distinguish beliefs sincerely embraced from those adopted for strategic or other reasons (Payne 2001, 39-41). But conclusive proof of persuasion is elusive, for it requires unmediated access to people's minds (Wittgenstein 1953, §150-155). Did Gorbachev accede to the reunification of Germany because he had been *persuaded* by the trump card of self-determination (Risse 2000) or because he had *calculated* that the net costs of resisting the United States were prohibitive? It is impossible to say based on the available evidence, nor is it clear what evidence could in principle clinch the case. Relying on statements delivered in private settings does not escape the problem, since even these articulations may be as strategic as their public counterparts (Scott 1990).

Many of these questions have received attention elsewhere. Scholars of transnational activism have drawn attention to the "mobilization of shame," and they too have concluded that ways of framing claims cannot be fabricated out of whole cloth (Crawford 2002; Price 1998; Price 2003; Risse and Sikkink 1999). Elements of William Riker's suggestive work on "heresthetics" (1996) are apropos, as is Frank Schimmelfenig's research on "rhetorical action" (2001). We seek to build upon and systematize these important contributions, but we also depart from them. First, while many constructivists recognize that the targets of activist efforts may comply at first for strategic reasons, they claim that *lasting* normative change—the final phase of their staged model—requires internalization.[3] This formulation is problematic because it relies upon incompatible microfoundations in stage one (instrumental adaptation) and stage two (internalization). On methodological grounds, we prefer to elucidate a mechanism of political influence highlighting strategic action throughout the entire episode. We agree with Weber that

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[3] We are grateful to Kathryn Sikkink for helpful discussion on this point.

consistency, not completeness, should be the hallmark of sound work in the social sciences (Weber 1949).

We further object to this approach because we are reluctant to characterize any normative change as "lasting" in the sense of forestalling normative contestation over the long run. We proceed from the premise that norms are inherently subject to challenge and that the rhetorical arrangements sustaining norms are at best *relatively* stable and never *fully* stabilized. Rhetorical contestation is thus always possible in theory, although it may not always be manifest in practice. Consequently, we focus our analytical efforts on specific bounded episodes of contestation (McAdam et. al. 2001, 29-30). We treat the combination of factors generating those episodes as parametric constraints limiting the scope of our model.

In addition, existing accounts focusing on the strategic uses of public language continue to be crafted around assertions about the "interests" served by various rhetorical deployments and the "motives" driving both speakers and targets. We seek to place the mechanism of rhetorical coercion on firmer methodological footing and, more broadly, to demonstrate the viability of a non-purposive social science.[4] Our skepticism regarding explanations rooted in the identification of motives is not novel. Hans Morgenthau, for one, declared the search for statesmen's motives "futile" because "motives are the most illusive of psychological data" (Morgenthau 1993 [1948], 5). Scholars in the rational-choice tradition have offered similar observations (Frieden 1999).

Our "solution," however, is more controversial. We are not prepared to follow our rational-choice colleagues down the path of assuming and deducing preferences. Rather, we take a less-traveled road and argue that social scientists should not begin by specifying the intentions of

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[4] For treatments closer to our own, see, among others, Barnett 1998; Bially Mattern 2004; and Fierke 1998.

agents. Let us be clear: we are not arguing that actors do not possess motives, that those motives do not shape actors' behavior, or that such behavior is irrelevant to political outcomes. But we do aver that purposive accounts are *analytically* less useful than models in which preferences need not be specified or ranked. We therefore seek to minimize the place of motives as driving forces in our accounts of political processes and outcomes.

We do not recommend this course lightly, for it flies in the face of deeply held epistemological commitments among social scientists in general and political scientists in particular. Purging empirical narratives of the language of subjective motivation is consequently difficult indeed. Moreover, we recognize that *all* methodological choices are problematic, since the modeling of complex social processes requires abstracting from reality. Yet we follow Charles Tilly, among others, in attempting to avoid the invocation of subjective motivation or individual consciousness as a causal factor and in opting for a relational approach that "shifts the emphasis from consciousness to conversation, from action to interaction, from selves to sociabilities" (Tilly 1998, 400; see also Emirbayer 1997 and Shotter 1993).[5]

This serves as the point of departure for our model of *rhetorical coercion*. We cannot observe directly what people think, but we can observe what they say and how they respond to claims and counterclaims. In our view, it does not matter whether actors believe what they say, whether they are motivated by crass material interests or are inspired by sincere commitment. What is important is that they can be rhetorically maneuvered into a corner, trapped into publicly endorsing positions they may, or may not, find anathema. Rhetoric affects political outcomes

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[5] Indeed, relational sociologists have long argued that individualist approaches commit the sin of reductionism: even if we *did* know people's motives, that would not help us explain *social* processes and outcomes. Social constructivists' contention that collective identity and culture cannot be captured through the aggregation of individual attitudes illustrates this point. See Jepperson et al. 1996; Ross 1997.

even when it is deployed strategically, even when all actors are cynical political operators with little interest in genuine deliberation. The resolution of political issues through public debate need not imply any significant level of intersubjective consensus.

Thinking about public rhetoric in this fashion avoids the crudeness of vulgar materialism, the reductionism of ideational approaches, and the heroic optimism of persuasion. Our perspective, which one might term "coercive constructivism," both relates to and is different from existing approaches. Unlike both materialist and ideational accounts, we argue that language has a real causal impact on political outcomes. Unlike ideational approaches and liberal constructivism, we are skeptical that politics is more often characterized by puzzling than powering; we are equally skeptical that actors can transcend coercion and participate in fully rational deliberation.

A Model of Rhetorical Coercion

Rhetoric lies at the heart of politics. But our accounts of politic fail to accord it much weight, and our models fail to appreciate its explanatory leverage. This section seeks to explain how and why skillful rhetorical maneuvering can underpin a successful political campaign—not by persuading one's opponents of the rectitude of one's stance, but by denying them the rhetorical materials out of which to craft a socially sustainable rebuttal. Rhetorical coercion is a political strategy that seeks to twist arms by twisting tongues. This section proceeds by clarifying what rhetorical coercion is, how it operates, and the conditions under which it can be effective.

What is Rhetorical Coercion?

We begin with a stylized account of an episode of rhetorical contestation. Seeking to effect change in some policy or ongoing course of action, a claimant (C) directs an argument toward the opposition (O) in view of a public (P). For the purposes of the model, it does not matter whether O has exclusive control over the actions at issue (if O is, for example, the government)

or whether C and O share responsibility (if they are, for example, political parties in a legislative assembly). All that matters is that O's accession or resistance is critical to the outcome.

Any argument that C puts forward contains two analytically separable parts: a *frame* (or set of terms) that characterizes the issue at hand and a set of *implications* that C suggests follows from that frame. For example, C might be a group of students protesting a war; their argument, advanced against the national government O through speeches and signs at a rally, portrays the war both to O and to P as unjust and unnecessary (frame) and calls for the end of hostilities and the withdrawal of troops (implications). In responding to C, O may accept or reject either or both the frame and the implications of C's argument. These alternatives yield four different potential outcomes of this episode of rhetorical contestation, reflected in Table 1.

[TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

In case 1, O accepts both the frame and the implications of C's argument, and policy changes accordingly.[6] For C, this outcome represents an unmitigated triumph. Case 2 is more mixed. In case 2, O accepts the proposed implications and changes the policy, but it rejects C's reasoning. An example would be if an environmental movement (C) urged the government (O) to restrict logging for ecological reasons, and the government agreed to restrict logging but justified the policy shift in economic terms. Though the movement would have won the substantive battle, it would have lost the rhetorical war and might reasonably perceive its victory as less than complete; the government might in the future expand logging rights on economic grounds as easily as it had earlier restricted them on that very basis. It is possible that the environmentalists'

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[6] Note that "acceptance" here does not imply agreement, but refers only to O's public reaction to C's argument.

rhetorical tactics drove the government's concessions, but determining that would require access to the authorities' true motives—something we earlier argued one can never ascertain.

Both case 1 and case 2 mark (at least temporary) terminuses; contestation might resume at a later stage, but these cells represent relatively stable outcomes in the short to medium run. In contrast, cases 3 and 4 are cases of continued contestation. In case 3, O accepts the terms of C's arguments, but rejects the implications that C draws. For example, a lobbying group (C) may argue that high taxes are an unfair burden on the citizenry and should be reduced through an across-the-board reduction in tax rates; a political party (O) may agree that high taxes are problematic but suggest instead targeted tax cuts. As this relatively narrow policy debate occurs *within* a common issue frame, it might be termed an *implication contest*.

In case 4, the two parties disagree about the very terms of debate as well as the policies that follow, and their rhetorical efforts consequently focus on advancing their preferred issue frame in the hope that their political opponents will accept it (along with the concomitant implications). Without a common frame bounding the debate, such rhetorical interchange—a *framing contest*— is far more fluid, wide-ranging, and fundamental than in an implication contest. Politics is replete with such framing contests. Advocates of bilingual instruction invoke diversity and inter-cultural respect, while critics charge that instruction in anything other than the dominant language would threaten national ideals and students' eventual success in the marketplace. Opponents of abortion call the fetus an unborn child, portray the act as murder, and label themselves defenders of the right to life; supporters of abortion rights depict the fetus as an insentient being, portray the act as a medical procedure, and dub themselves the defenders of a woman's right to choose.

Engaged in either an implication contest or a framing contest, C seeks through its claims and counter-claims to alter the rhetorical environment within which political battle is waged. While C

might ideally prefer to persuade O, it must design a political strategy that can attain its desired ends even if persuasion proves impossible. The public plays a crucial role: both C and O must craft their appeals with an eye to some audience which sits in judgment of their rhetorical moves. If C can shift the rhetorical basis on which O justifies its stance to P, C can limit the range of O's possible responses and policy options, transcending the erstwhile implication or framing contest. Put simply, rhetorical coercion has taken place when this strategy proves successful—when O, regardless of its private beliefs, can no longer sustain its public opposition.

How Does Rhetorical Coercion Work?

Rhetorical contestation consists of parties attempting to maneuver each other onto more favorable rhetorical terrain and thereby to close off routes of acceptable rebuttal. Rhetorical coercion is successful when C's rhetorical moves deprive O of materials out of which to craft a reply that falls within the bounds of what P would accept. In the end, O finds itself, against its better judgment, endorsing (or at least acquiescing in) C's stance *regardless* of whether O has been persuaded or believes the words it utters. The alternatives—enduring punishment at the hands of P or investing significant resources in creating new arguments—would be prohibitively costly and time-consuming. In our model of rhetorical coercion, neither the motives nor the sincerity of the parties is particularly relevant.[7]

C can succeed in rhetorically coercing O because of two key facts of social life. First, political actors can rarely take tangible steps or advance policy positions without justifying those stances and behaviors—in short, without framing. Politics may entail coercion or distribution,

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[7] While we make no strong assumptions regarding the *content* of the actors' motives, the model does rely on the thin, almost trivial, assumption that actors are fundamentally strategic—that they pursue policies that they believe will further their goals (McAdam et al. 2001).

but at the same time it involves the struggle over meanings. Meanings, however, cannot be imposed unilaterally or through the exercise of material power alone. They are, by their very nature, intersubjective (Laffey and Weldes 1997), and the effort to forge shared meaning implicates some audience in the process. The debate between C and O does not transpire in a vacuum: both are continually striving to legitimate their positions in P's eyes (Perelman 1982).

Second, speakers may not say just anything they would like in the public arena: rhetoric is not infinitely elastic but is structured.[8] Every community of discourse shares a number of *topoi*, or rhetorical commonplaces, that both enable and constrain speakers' rhetorical possibilities. These commonplaces are not "fully predetermined, already decided distinctions," but weakly shared notions that can be "expressed or formulated in different ways in different, concrete circumstances" (Shotter 1993, 170-171). While C and O are free to weave together these commonplaces in creative ways, they are *not* free to deploy utterly alien formulations in the course of contestation: such arguments would fall, almost literally, on deaf ears. The available space for rhetorical contestation is, therefore, locally bounded, and the parties to a contentious episode cannot introduce entirely novel arguments. They must configure their appeals utilizing rhetorical tools drawn from a chest that is, in the short term, effectively fixed (Swidler 1986).

Rhetorical innovation, while possible and even inevitable in the long run, is far less likely in the short run for three reasons. First, while structures of discourse are never fully hegemonic and are continually being reworked, coherent political action would be impossible if rhetorical universes were in a state of continuous deep flux. Relative rhetorical stabilities must emerge to

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[8] For related arguments, see Cruz 2000; Schudson 1989; Spillman 1995; and Steinberg 1999.

permit the construction of political strategies, and thus, at any given time, "the terrain of dominant discourse is the only plausible arena of struggle" (Scott 1990, 102).

Second, imagining, formulating, and disseminating a brand-new commonplace requires an unusual level of commitment on the part of a claimant in terms of material resources, time, and effort. Deploying existing commonplaces—which have already been imagined, formulated, and disseminated—is far less costly (McAdam et al. 2001, 47-50). The process of transforming an unusual rhetorical form into a commonplace is necessarily lengthy and uncertain, but political actors normally possess far shorter time horizons. Arguments can prove powerful only when the commonplaces on which they draw are *already* present in the rhetorical field, which is shaped both by the unintended consequences of prior episodes of contestation and/or by campaigns undertaken in advance with the express purpose of reconfiguring the rhetorical terrain.[9]

Third, and related, novel rhetorical resources are likely to be drowned out by existing arguments and frames. Dense networks of communication carry and regularly reinforce established commonplaces, overwhelming proffered alternatives. Rhetorical innovations consequently tend to arise at the margins, where communication networks are less dense. Overcoming such barriers is possible in principle, but it is in reality so improbable that C and O must, *in a given contentious episode*, play within the rhetorical arena that presents itself to them. And that arena privileges particular frames and places others beyond the pale, regardless of the material resources at the speaker's disposal.

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[9] Although highly committed actors might be willing to invest such resources, the production and dissemination of a novel commonplace would still take so long that it would be available for deployment only in a subsequent contentious episode. We thank an anonymous reviewer for helping us to clarify this point.

If C and O were the only two actors in our stylized story, they might introduce novel arguments costlessly and endlessly, and rhetorical coercion would then be impossible. Their rhetorical maneuvers are constrained, however, because rhetorical contestation is public in nature (Bennett 1980, 805-806). The continual competition for public legitimation ensures that P occupies a critical position, setting limits to the policy stances that the contestants can in practice advance. The relevant audience sets the contours of rhetorical contestation, and stepping beyond or reshaping them requires an investment not attractive or even feasible in the short run.

This focus on the public's role constitutes a point of intersection with scholars in the rational-choice tradition who have ascribed great importance to "audience costs" (Fearon 1994). In such models, the actors and the audience have clear and consistent preferences that precede the contentious episode; public pronouncements serve to signal the content and/or intensity of those preferences. By contrast, our model does not begin by identifying and ordering the parties' desires, and the outcome of a particular episode does not depend on these preferences' content or ranking. The importance of the public P lies not in some affinity between the speakers' substantive stances and the audience's concrete interests, but in the imperative for appeal frames to draw on rhetorical commonplaces present in the public's everyday deliberations (Shotter 1993, 65-69; see also Bennett 1980). Our model presumes not that P has a well-thought-out position in advance on the issue being contested, but rather that there is only a limited set of arguments that P would, in principle, find minimally acceptable.

In sum, one argument "wins" not because its grounds are "valid" in the sense of satisfying the demands of reason or because it accords with the audience's prior normative commitments or material interests, but because its grounds are *socially* sustainable—because the audience deems certain rhetorical deployments acceptable and others impermissible. One cannot, however,

fashion strict covering laws regarding the audience's response to conceivable rhetorical deployments. Students of conversation and argumentation from across several disciplines (anthropology, communications studies, sociology, philosophy, psychology) have vigorously argued that context is unusually crucial to their field of study (Billig 1996; Gumperz 1982; Perelman 1982; Sawyer 2001; Shotter 1993; Toulmin 1958). Classifying structures of discourse, reconstructing the rhetorical possibilities, exploring the rhetorical interplay: these critical challenges require one to formulate arguments limited in time and space and limited by the arena of rhetorical competition. Thus, for example, we do not ask below what sorts of appeals are most effective *in general* at compelling authorities to grant oppressed minorities first-class citizenship. Rather, through an interrogation of the Israeli case, we suggest that a specific claim (framed around military sacrifice and the equation of rights and obligations) is more likely to be successful in a particular discursive context (when talk about citizenship is narrowly republican). Such an explanation is modest, yet powerful and potentially generalizable.

When Does Rhetorical Coercion Work?

The logic of rhetorical coercion suggests that two factors are most important in explaining when the model will have explanatory value. First, is P a relevant party to C's claims-making? Recall that C's power is rooted in its credible threat, implicit or explicit, to bring P in on its side; C's ability to do so deprives O of the option of refusing to respond to or even acknowledge C's claims. If C cannot issue its threat credibly, then O can safely ignore C's claims, no matter how they are framed. We can readily imagine conditions under which P would not be relevant to the interaction between the protagonists in our stylized story. It may be that P simply cannot hear C—perhaps because C is being actively repressed; perhaps because C lacks sufficient resources to publicize its message; perhaps because C's claims regard alleged misdeeds that transpire far

from the public eye.[10] Moreover, in some social contexts, decisions need not be justified.[11] The prevalence of justificatory behavior in the political arena suggests, however, that we are correct to maintain that the scope of the model's application is quite large.

Second, how limited is the universe of rhetorical commonplaces? We have argued that actors must, in any particular claims-making episode, forge their appeals by drawing upon existing commonplaces that represent the boundaries of legitimate framing. When these boundaries are loose, numerous rhetorical strands are available, ensuring that O can almost always put forward a meaningful rebuttal to C. In such circumstances, the terms of debate are hardly constraining. When these boundaries are relatively restricted, rhetorical coercion is more easily achieved, as O has less rhetorical "wiggle room"—that is, fewer socially plausible ways of rebutting C's claim. We recognize that verbal appeals are multivocal, that advocates and opponents of particular policies may advance their arguments employing similar terms. But public language, in our view, is never *infinitely* flexible, and even so capacious a rhetorical formulation as that of "rights" in the American context disciplines the speaker. Such disciplining is more common and thus rhetorical coercion is more likely when speakers have fewer commonplaces on which to draw.

Two Illustrations

These brief studies—the first on "military sacrifice" in Arabs' struggles for first-class citizenship in Israel, and the second on "the West" in debates over the European Recovery

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[10] This is not infrequently the case when O is a government whose commands are implemented by a secretive bureaucracy. A potential weakness of rhetorical coercion is its implication that rhetorical concessions translate smoothly into policy change. O may renege on its commitments, particularly during implementation when there may be little need for public justification. While such breakdowns are likely, we maintain that violations will prove difficult to sustain should C hold O's feet to the public fire in a new episode of rhetorical contestation.

[11] Superiors often do not explain their logic to subordinates, and exasperated parents often tell children, "Just do as I say!" In such circumstances, rhetorical contestation is not likely to be effective. We are grateful to Robert Jervis for pointing this out.

Program (ERP)—illustrate how our model generates insight into concrete empirical cases. We argue that conventional accounts seeking to explain these cases' outcomes are inadequate and that rhetorical strategy can help make sense of remaining puzzles. Our two cases range widely across space, culture, and time. While this would be a liability in a method-of-difference hypothesis test, it is advantageous given our methodological commitment to exploring recurring mechanisms rather than to establishing covering laws. We follow McAdam et al. (2001, 13-14) in examining "partial parallels in order to find widely operating explanatory mechanisms that combine differently and therefore produce different outcomes in one setting or another" (see also Katznelson 1997; Tilly 2001). These two cases demonstrate that the mechanism of rhetorical coercion can operate in a broadly similar fashion in widely divergent empirical contexts.

We pursue two strategies to establish our model's plausibility. First, as we discuss in the introduction to each of the studies, we have selected "hard" cases for rhetorical coercion—that is, cases in which material interests and resources would appear to provide a ready explanation for the policy outcome. We argue that materialist explanations are in these cases either incomplete or incompatible with our findings. Second, while we cannot establish the actors' subjective motivations and thus cannot conclusively reject the possibility of persuasion or confirm the operation of rhetorical coercion, we can identify behavioral evidence that is consistent or inconsistent with these two models. In both cases, we suggest that actors should have behaved rather differently if they had been persuaded of their opponents' position.

1. Military Sacrifice and the Politics of Citizenship

One of the most venerable norms in the West is that linking military service and citizenship. "Whoever puts himself in the service of the state," observed Otto Hintze, "must logically and fairly be granted the regular rights of citizenship" (Hintze 1975, 211), and the call to the colors is

widely considered the supreme example of state service (Janowitz 1976). Thus the leaders of those relegated to second-class citizenship have often counseled in wartime against draft evasion and have even urged voluntary enlistment. Afterwards they have shrewdly contrasted their people's record of loyalty and sacrifice to the reality of entrenched political and social inequity. African-Americans volunteered in droves for the Union Army in the U.S. Civil War and for the American Expeditionary Force in World War I, wrapping their postwar demands in the bloody flag. During the Boer War, Gandhi organized Indians in South Africa, prohibited from fighting for Britain, in a front-line ambulance corps so that they would seem more desirable citizens.

The rhetoric of military sacrifice has at times proven effective. Mobilized veterans have most obviously exploited their status to gain both political rights and distributional benefits. Oppressed and marginalized ethnic, racial, and religious groups have, based upon their *collective* sacrifice, also advanced claims for citizenship rights, albeit with varying degrees of success. African-Americans, for example, have repeatedly found this path to citizenship blocked. But their lack of postwar progress is hardly surprising given the high stakes of citizenship battles. The demands of subordinate groups for first-class citizenship challenge the core of the existing social order, and the opposition to meaningful change is consequently often fierce. It is not African-Americans' repeated failures that require explanation as much as the successes of others—such as American women after World War I, Japanese-Americans after World War II, and Sikhs in post-independence India—in deploying the rhetoric of sacrifice to win improvements in their status. The opponents of reform typically occupy powerful positions in political, social, and economic structures, and few would expect them to give way before words alone. The politics of citizenship is a "hard case" for the power of rhetoric.

We will argue, however, that the particular rhetorical configurations advanced by Israel's various Arab minorities help explain these groups' differential rates of success in overcoming the barriers to first-class citizenship in this "ethnic democracy" (Smooha 1997). Drawing on their record of military service, Druze Arabs argued that equal obligations demand equal rights. Jewish politicians found themselves unable to craft a culturally meaningful rebuttal to Druze demands, and they were compelled to concede Druze claims. In contrast, Christian and Muslim Arabs, who have never been drafted into the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), insisted that Israel abide by its public commitment to liberal democracy. While this frame also drew on Israeli commonplaces, it permitted Jewish politicians to justify discrimination against Christians and Muslims by arguing that those who do not perform civic duties cannot lay claims to equivalent public rights and benefits. Although the Druze were poorer than their fellow Arabs and smaller in number, for many years they were more effective in placing their concerns on the national agenda and in garnering a favorable response from the authorities. Israel's relationship with its Arab minorities nicely illustrates the power and limits of rhetorical coercion.

Background. Israel's Arab population—today well over a million strong—is divided by religion, with the Muslims, the Christians, and the Druze constituting the three largest groups. Possessing basic political rights, the entire Arab community has enjoyed great socioeconomic progress since Israel's founding in 1948, particularly relative to Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and to Arabs throughout the Middle East. Yet they have also been openly labeled a fifth column, and they have, often without regard to religious affiliation, been the victims of variegated forms of discrimination on the part of the state and the majority Jewish population. The new Israeli government subjected Arabs to military rule, conducted pervasive surveillance within the Arab communities, limited Arabs' capacity for travel and an independent

economy, expropriated the bulk of Arab-controlled land, excluded Arabs from the giant labor federation known as the Histadrut, and so on. Jewish leaders typically invoked the language of security to justify these policies, but its broad definition encompassed ideological, economic, and even partisan interests as well as security more narrowly conceived. Much overt discrimination came to an end by the late 1960s, but substantial discrimination persisted in more subtle forms (Kretzmer 1988; Landau 1969, 1993; Lustick 1982; Shafir and Peled 2002).

Starting from this common baseline, however, the paths of Israel's Arab minorities have diverged. While all continue today to endure second-class status relative to Jewish Israelis, the Druze have made greater headway than the larger and wealthier Christian and Muslim communities. Since 1956 the Druze have been able to deploy a set of rhetorical commonplaces unavailable to their Christian and Muslim neighbors. That year, male Druze became subject to the military draft, reversing a policy of exemption that had been applied to all Arabs since the passage of Israel's universal conscription law in 1950 (Peled 1998). Some have speculated plausibly that the Israeli authorities hoped that Druze service in the IDF would provide proof of Israeli liberalism and thereby neutralize Arab nationalists and satisfy Western critics (Firro 1999; Lustick 1982), but even full declassification of the relevant documents would not definitively establish the government's motives. We argue that, regardless of who wanted to draft the Druze and why, conscription helped the Druze prosper in Israeli politics.

Rhetorical Moves and Political Outcomes. In the mid-1960s, the Druze began to mobilize, and they regularly sought a public forum in which to air their grievances, which they consistently framed around their people's military service and the equation of rights and obligations. In 1967 Druze activists circulated widely an appeal insisting that "since we have done our duties … and see in the lack of equality … an infringement and denial of our rights, we urgently demand

correction of this wrong" (Firro 1999, 187). Surveying the history of Druze claims-making, one scholar noted that, among both Jews and the Druze, "injustices to individual Druzes are usually attacked as ingratitude toward a man who was willing to shed his blood for his country, but now his country turns against him" (Ben Dor 1979, 134-35). Even in recent years, the Druze have continued to gravitate to this rhetorical mode. During a series of public protests in the 1990s, mayors of Druze villages and towns "usually denounce[ed] the Israeli government for its broken promises, and stress[ed] the price paid by the community in the form of hundreds of Druze soldiers killed during their service in the Israeli army" (Yiftachel and Segal 1998, 487). Even the minority of Druze who have objected to the draft have accepted these basic terms. As a Communist Druze Knesset representative argued in the early 1990s, "If this is a blood covenant, then give us the feeling that we are living in our state, in our homeland, with full rights like all citizens.… And if there is to be no equality of rights, then do not demand equality of obligations, and allow Druze to choose—to serve or not to serve in the IDF" (Zohar 1991).

In constructing their claims frame, the Druze have drawn on rhetorical commonplaces deeply rooted in Israel's rhetorical traditions. Although participation in the pre-state Jewish community, the *yishuv*, was necessarily voluntary, it prized individual and group commitment to the public good, defined as the historical mission of the Jewish people to rebuild the land of Israel and epitomized by the kibbutz movement. The new state preserved this emphasis on civic commitment as the basis for membership, grafting a powerful statist ideology onto the earlier discourse (Liebman and Don Yihya 1983). In an early Knesset debate, Prime Minister David Ben Gurion insisted that women too be subject to the draft, bluntly declaring, "There are no rights without obligations. And above all is the obligation of security, the obligation of defending our existence, our freedom, our independence, and our growth" (*Divre Ha-Knesset* 1950, 3:537).

Even dissidents have protested *within* the terms of this dominant definition of citizenship: as one conscientious objector from the Lebanon War put it, "military service, paying taxes, and obeying the law.… That is what makes you a citizen and makes you eligible to enjoy the defense and the fruits that [the state] equally distributes" (Helman 2000, 324).[12]

This civic republican tradition has long sat uncomfortably alongside an ascriptive component in the definition of the Israeli polity. The 1948 Declaration of Independence proclaimed the new country "the Jewish state" even as it promised that Israel would promote the welfare and protect the basic freedoms of all its inhabitants. The country's formal name, the State of Israel, suggests an abiding commitment to pluralistic secularism, but its historical-religious title, the Land of Israel, remains in popular use (Kimmerling 1985). Some have concluded that "Jewish ethnicity is a necessary condition for membership in the political community, while the contribution to the process of Jewish national redemption is a measure of one's civic virtue" (Peled 1992, 435). Yet this ignores the potential contradictions between these discourses. Such tensions are muted when only Jewish citizens are drafted, for then Israeli leaders can publicly embrace civic republicanism while preserving ethnoreligious priorities. But Druze claims-making framed around collective military sacrifice challenged the coherence of Israel's "ethnorepublican" citizenship (Peled 1992). The Druze confronted Jewish Israelis with an unattractive choice: they could either acknowledge their exclusive definition of the political community or open its doors.

While the Druze squeezed concessions out of Jewish politicians beginning in the late 1960s, there is no evidence that their appeals were persuasive: both the limited and incremental nature of Israeli concessions as well as the grudging fashion in which they were offered are not

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[12] Military service occupies so prominent a site in the Israeli cultural complex that "civic virtue has been constructed in terms of and identified with military virtue" (Helman 2000, 320). See also Kimmerling 1993.

consistent with a narrative centered around persuasion. Rather, our model of rhetorical coercion can help explain why the Druze made headway in this ethnic democracy. Faced with Druze claims, Jewish leaders could have launched a framing contest by (a) admitting openly the discriminatory nature of the state. Alternatively, they could have conceded the Druze frame but challenged its implications by (b) claiming that the Druze were not relatively disadvantaged or (c) arguing that the Druze community's problems were of its own making. The first alternative frame was unappealing—not just because of the likely international repercussions, but also because it would have contradicted both Israel's self-proclaimed status as the sole democracy in the Middle East and its dominant way of speaking about citizenship. The second put forward a claim widely known to be false, and the third possible response, while perhaps plausible with regard to questions of economic development, could not justify administrative segregation, which was, whether cleverly or fortunately, among Druze activists' first targets.

There was, however, a fourth option: Jewish politicians could have refused to reply—as long as relevant audiences were unaware of the Druze's plight. The Druze's capacity to engage in rhetorical coercion was consequently dependent on garnering attention from the Hebrew-language media. As a general rule, the Hebrew press rarely covered the Arab communities, for its readership was almost entirely Jewish. But the Jewish masses and the media were basically sympathetic to these Druze arguments so resonant with republican rhetorical practice. As a result, when the Druze made noise, the press amplified it, compensating for the Druze's lack of political clout and ensuring a hearing in the halls of power (Asaad 2000; Toledano 2000).

In short, the Druze trapped Jewish leaders in a rhetorical cul-de-sac in which an implication or framing contest was unsustainable. They maneuvered their Jewish opponents onto a rhetorical playing field on which the Druze could not lose, for no rebuttal would have been acceptable to

key audiences, both domestic and international. Wary of calling forth punishment, Jewish leaders believed they had little choice but to concede. Consequently, "when the Druze demanded something, the ears were much more open" (Toledano 2000). Despite the Druze community's electoral insignificance, cases of alleged discrimination against individual Druze received attention even in the Knesset (Ben Dor 1979, 134-136). The Druze demand in the late 1960s for full membership in the Labor Party was irrefutable: as a prominent Labor functionary wrote in a major newspaper, "How can we explain to that Druze … that he is good enough to endanger his life for the state but that he is not good enough to be a member of the Labor Party?" (Lin 1970).

Confident that their rhetorical resources have bequeathed disproportionate influence, the Druze have resisted an alliance with their numerous fellow Arabs, with whom they share many grievances. Even those Druze otherwise critical of Israel's policies have often supported continued conscription so that the military sacrifice frame would remain available (Atashe 1995, 142). Lacking abundant political resources, the Druze adopted a strategy aimed at rhetorical coercion, and they demonstrated that it could work. Jewish politicians were forced to say things they (likely) did not believe and ultimately even to follow through on those promises.

Like their Druze counterparts, Christian and Muslim Arabs drew on Israeli commonplaces, arguing that Israel needed to eliminate discriminatory measures to live up to its democratic promise. Yet, in comparison to the Druze, they have encountered far greater public resistance, for Jewish politicians had a rhetorical escape hatch. Arab rights, they often argued, were not sacrosanct, for those who did not fulfill their civic obligations (that is, military service) deserved less protection than those who had made the supreme sacrifice. In seeking to convince a wavering Knesset member to support the military administration in 1962, Ben Gurion protested, "I have recognized all these years that rights are dependent on obligations.… I do not understand

why I may limit the freedom and steal the time of young Jewish men and women when they are in the army, but why it is forbidden to limit much less the freedom of those who do not serve in the army."[13] That same Labor functionary who advocated offering the Druze membership in the party justified the exclusion of other Arabs on similar grounds: "I asked them [close Arab friends] how they could sit in the party central committee … next to a bereaved father or mother, next to a party member who had just returned from the front, next to a member who stands ready to leave the next day for reserve service, while they still do not fulfill this obligation" (Lin 1970).

Faced with claims framed in liberal terms, Jewish leaders had a response at the ready, evading the rhetorical dead end into which Christians and Muslims had hoped to maneuver them. As one observer noted, "Equal to the Jews in political rights and before the law, the Arab communities are unequal both in obligations … and in effective claims on public resources" (Shimshoni 1982, 147). For decades, this rhetorical move has frustrated Arab efforts to attain first-class citizenship. As one Arab activist recently complained, "They are trying to link our rights as citizens to performing military service. That's not how a real democracy works" (quoted in Schechter 2003). Christian and Muslim claimants have long remained mired in a framing contest, unable to persuade or rhetorically coerce Jewish politicians.[14]

Alternative Explanations. How else might one explain the relative success of the Druze in attaining increments of Israeli effective citizenship? The most intuitive answer would attribute this outcome to the distribution of material resources. But the Druze's potential voter base has

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[13] Ben Gurion to MK Yizhar, 12 February 1962, State Archives (Jerusalem, Israel), Office of the Prime Minister Files, C 6304/1086.

[14] Christians and Muslims could not control the rhetorical playing field, but they nevertheless made significant gains in the mid-1980s thanks to their raw political power. After the 1977 breakdown of Labor Zionism's stranglehold over the political system, the electoral competition tightened, and the Arab population was actively wooed. Candidates from across the political spectrum stumped for the first time in Arab villages, and the major parties committed themselves to improving the Arabs' lot.

been tiny, their per capita income has remained relatively low, they have historically eschewed violent confrontation with the authorities, and they have often had difficulty creating and sustaining effective lobbying organizations (Firro 1999). By all standard measures of political power, the Druze should have been *less* successful than other Arabs, not more so.

A second alternative would invert the first. Precisely because the Druze were so small, so weak, and so moderate, Israel could countenance their inclusion in the IDF and grant them some modicum of effective citizenship without threatening the state's Jewish identity. Had the Druze's population been as large as Israel's Christian or Muslim communities, concessions would have been unthinkable. The Druze's small size made them an attractive target for cooptation (Lustick 1982). But if this argument were correct, presumably the state should have flung its doors wide open, for the costs would have been negligible and the propaganda advantages substantial. In fact, however, while Jewish decision-makers readily offered rhetorical concessions to the Druze, they resisted implementation: "To say that if the ears were open, things were done—there is a difference" (Toledano 2000). The Druze made tangible progress, but they fought hard for those increments of meaningful citizenship. Nor did the Druze act like a model coopted minority. They were not content with petty favors, but rather became deeply dissatisfied with their status and continually presented Jewish leaders with difficult and uncomfortable choices.

A third alternative might posit that Israel's conquest of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967 and the addition of a large, politicized Palestinian population gave Jewish politicians incentives to grant Druze citizens' demands so as to prevent the Palestinization of the Druze community. Presumably, however, they faced far greater incentives to accommodate the much larger Christian and Muslim citizen populations, whose members had not yet openly allied with the Palestinian national cause. Nevertheless, the Israeli establishment remained highly resistant

to Christian and Muslim claims-making. This argument thus has difficulty accounting for the divergent patterns in Israel's relations with its various Arab communities after 1967—a difficulty not faced by the mechanism of rhetorical coercion.

2. *Legitimating the Marshall Plan*

The provision of aid by the United States to the countries of Western Europe in the late 1940s and early 1950s hardly seems puzzling. In explaining this outcome, realists emphasize the necessity to balance power under anarchy (Mearsheimer 2001), liberals highlight the relative costs and benefits of securing Europe's cooperation (Lake 1999), and constructivists point to the emerging democratic "security community" and shared identity binding the United States with Western Europe (Risse-Kappen 1996). But these accounts all (to a greater or lesser degree) read the later stability of the Cold War backwards into a period when things were still very much up for grabs (Eisenberg 1996, 6-7). Downplaying or ignoring the ambiguous character of the postwar world, they commit the sin of retrospective history. In fact, the postwar U.S. relationship to Europe was not nearly so predictable and the contours of that postwar settlement were not nearly so clear as such accounts imply. It was the subject of controversy and intense debate in the late 1940s, and a very different policy could have emerged. A satisfactory account of the decision to provide Europe with assistance requires sensitivity to that outcome's contingency.[15]

Conventional accounts suffer from a second, related problem. Starting from theories that assume particular motives, they search the historical record for evidence that actors thought likewise about the issues. Not surprisingly, that record is rich enough to accommodate a number

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[15] Marc Trachtenberg's recent account (1999) of the postwar period is a partial exception to this criticism in that it emphasizes the hesitancy with which the United States deepened its involvement in Europe in the early Cold War and in that it takes public rhetoric somewhat more seriously than do other studies. However, Trachtenberg's narrative contains no *real* contingency, and he does not analyze significant public debates.

of ostensibly competing narratives: realists discover that many policymakers expressed a concern with relative state power (Mearsheimer 2001; Sheetz 1999, 4), while liberals point out that those same policymakers were often also obsessed with economic performance (Lake 1999, 134). As we argued earlier, adjudicating such disputes over historical actors' "real" or "dominant" motives is impossible. An additional implication of this overabundance of evidence is that the adoption of the Marshall Plan appears unproblematic from each of these theoretical perspectives, making it a "hard case" for our rhetoric-centered approach.

We argue that one can effectively explain the emergence of the Marshall Plan prospectively and without engaging in irresolvable debates about motives by paying greater attention to a process that has featured little in conventional accounts: the rhetorical contest surrounding the Plan's proposal and adoption. The Marshall Plan's passage was not driven by the "Soviet threat," the "crisis of productivity," or a "Western community of values." These supposedly "independent variables" are in fact endogenous to the policy debates that form the centerpiece of this brief case study, and as a result cannot explain the outcome of those debates—that is, the adoption of the European Recovery Program. We maintain that the ERP was implemented (and has seemed so overdetermined ever since) because of how particular rhetorical commonplaces were deployed during policy debates in this particular historical moment.

Policies and Packaging. There was no "Marshall Plan" in the sense of a coherent, fully-articulated program for the reconstruction of Europe (Gimbel 1976, 4). Secretary of State George Marshall himself later characterized his Harvard speech of 1947 as at most a suggestion, not a well-thought-out plan. But although there was no grand plan, there certainly was a coherent pattern of justifications, a rhetorical strategy, which united the diverse bureaucratic initiatives

directed at European recovery and transformed them into "the Marshall Plan." And we shall argue that that strategy made possible the very existence of the ERP and its ancillary institutions.

In order to appreciate the contours of this rhetorical strategy, it is important to recall the rhetorical and political context into which it was deployed. Often mis-characterized as "isolationist," traditional American foreign policy might more accurately be described as "exemplarist." It was argued that the United States could make its greatest contribution to world order by maintaining itself as an unsullied example, a "city on a hill" (Baritz 1964). While this perspective demanded that the United States avoid entanglement in *European* affairs, intervention elsewhere, especially in Asia, was acceptable as a means of "civilizing" other peoples (Stephanson 1995). This long-standing framing of U.S. foreign policy was only reinforced by the Russian Revolution of 1917: in response to the communist challenge, many called for internal purification and argued that the United States should refrain from involvement in postwar European power politics (Leffler 1994, 14-15)—a conclusion precisely the opposite from that which anti-communism would appear to imply three decades later.

The ERP could not have come to pass without severing the rhetorical ties between anti-communism and the exemplarist tradition. Its advocates thus argued that communism was best opposed not by retreating to the shores of the United States, but by changing the political, social, and economic conditions that made communism attractive. Marshall argued to Congress that economic aid to Europe was required to prevent "economic distress so intense, social discontents so violent, political confusion so wide-spread, and hopes of the future so shattered that the historic base of Western civilization, of which we are by belief and inheritance an integral part, will take on a new form in the image of the tyranny that we fought to destroy in Germany" (*DOSB*, 18 January 1948, 71). Such testimony represented a deliberate attempt to wrest the anti-

communist commonplace from the exemplarist camp and claim it for a policy less suspicious of foreign entanglements—and thereby to force declared anti-communists to support the ERP.

The key to this rhetorical strategy was the claim that Western Europe and the United States were both members of a wider cultural community called "Western Civilization." That claim suggested that America's cultural boundaries were not coextensive with the United States' geographic borders, that threats to the former were as serious as threats to the latter, that European and American security were consequently indivisible, and that only the commitment of American resources could save that cultural community from communism. As our model suggests, it was only because of *prior* rhetorical innovations that the raw materials out of which ERP advocates constructed their arguments were available. These rhetorical innovations had not originally been undertaken with the goal of legitimating anything like the ERP, but arose rather from the effort to justify U.S. involvement in the First World War. To explain to American soldiers why they should willingly fight and die on the battlefields of France, the U.S. government commissioned a "War Issues" course, which asserted the unity of Western Civilization (Gruber 1975, 238-39). The course survived the war, filling a perceived curricular need at colleges across the country for a general course on the "Western tradition" and spreading the notion of Western civilization among the educated classes during the interwar period (Allardyce 1982, 704-705).[16] The discursive shift that this course precipitated made available the frame of "the West" upon which proponents of the ERP readily drew.

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[16] The course—variously known as "Contemporary Civilization" or "Western Civ"—was of course not solely responsible for introducing "the West" to the American public. Like any advocacy effort, it drew on pre-existing commonplaces and quilted them together to form a relatively novel rhetorical package; the course's success was bolstered by the surprisingly robust sales of Oswald Spengler's mammoth study *The Decline of the West* during the inter-war years. See Jackson forthcoming, especially Chapter 4.

The practical power of this framing of the issue derived from a concerted campaign that sought to educate the American public about the need for the ERP, performing the "creative cultural/organizational work" (McAdam et. al. 2001, 47) required to make a rhetorical deployment socially sustainable. The campaign consisted of two formally separate but intimately related parts: a speaking schedule by State Department officials, and the efforts of a "Citizen's Committee for the Marshall Plan," which included many establishment figures (Wala 1994, 190-93). Both government and outside figures invoked 'the West' as a unified entity in seeking to mobilize support for the Marshall Plan. In October 1947 Marshall himself argued that the United States could not turn a blind eye to the situation in Europe, which posed "the danger of the actual disappearance of the characteristics of western civilization on which our Government and our manner of living are based." Developments in Europe certainly threatened parochial interests, but Marshall raised the stakes by declaring *Western Civilization itself* at risk: economic stability was needed for political stability, which in turn was required for civilizational stability (*DOSB*, 26 October 1947, 827-8). This last step was critical, for otherwise the political collapse of Europe's democracies need not threaten the United States, and, as we shall see, opponents of the ERP might then have been capable of advancing a credible counterargument.

The Citizen's Committee for the Marshall Plan utilized similar language in its high-profile newspaper advertisements and inserts, a series of pamphlets and booklets, and in countless speaking engagements (Wala 1994, 194-200). In October 1947 former Secretary of War Henry Stimson published a widely read article in *Foreign Affairs*, and nearly all the Committee's public appeals either featured reprints or excerpts of the piece or merely repeated its basic arguments (Wala 1994, 202). Stimson too framed the issue in terms of civilizational survival:

> The immediate and pressing challenge to our belief in freedom and prosperity is in western Europe. Here are people who have traditionally shared our faith in human

dignity. These are the nations by whose citizens our land was settled and in whose tradition our civilization is rooted. They are threatened by Communism—but only because of the dark shadows cast by the hopelessness, hunger and fear that have been the aftermath of the Nazi war (Stimson 1947, 10-11).

Both the Citizen's Committee and the State Department spent months disseminating this framing of the issue among the American public, making it available to interlocutors during the ERP debate that took place in early 1948. While the frame was in a sense novel—never before had anti-Communism been linked to the fate of Western civilization—it was, in a more fundamental way, quite familiar: proponents of the Marshall Plan built on earlier moments of rhetorical innovation to create a socially compelling case for the economic assistance program. The audience was thus prepared to play a role in the coming rhetorical contest.

Outmaneuvering Opponents. Recall that, according to our model, a rhetorical contest is won through the creative deployment of rhetorical commonplaces so that one deprives one's opponent of a publicly acceptable alternative to the suggested course of action. In the case of the ERP, opponents like Senator Robert Taft were unable to sustain their opposition to the program because they lacked access to a socially plausible counterargument. Challenging the *frame* advanced by advocates of the ERP, which justified the assistance program as a reasonable response to the common threats facing Western civilization, was all but impossible. The traditional exemplarist response would have required denying the very existence of a common transatlantic cultural community and asserting the divisibility of European and American security, and such a redrawing of the rhetorical space was of necessity a long-term project. Because of the legislative timetable, such a framing contest was out of the question.

Once opponents of the ERP conceded the frame, however, the scope for opposition was limited. They could not declare their stance without opening themselves to the charge that they were "soft on communism," and they could not advocate strenuous efforts to oppose the spread

of communism without conceding that the primary mission was keeping Western Europe democratic. The communist takeover in Czechoslovakia in February 1948 was invoked by advocates of the ERP as dramatic evidence that communism indeed posed a threat to the West as a whole, and such threats demanded a more active response than that implied by the imagery of an isolated "city on a hill." Truman and Marshall did not hesitate to call for ERP's prompt passage in response to the coup (Freeland 1972, 269-72; Pollard 1985, 151-53). After his proposed amendment drastically reducing the ERP's appropriation was soundly defeated (by all of the Democrats and half of the Republicans), Taft himself publicly accepted the frame, announcing his support for the program and acknowledging that "some aid was necessary in the fight against communism" (Freeland 1972, 266; Patterson 1972, 388). All that could now be done was to contest the frame's implications, but the ERP itself was no longer in jeopardy.

That left much room for contestation, however. Members of Congress challenged the specifics of the program's administration and questioned whether non-European countries should receive aid to shore up their own efforts to resist Communism. Citing concerns about the preservation of individual liberty and the operation of the free market, Congressional critics rejected the Truman administration's original proposal to run the ERP out of the State Department; the administration agreed to appoint a businessman as head of the Economic Cooperation Administration and to limit the ECA to largely "technical" economic issues (Hogan 1987, 91-93, 105-108).[17] Similarly, Congressional advocates of an assertive anti-communist policy in Asia argued, deploying a version of the "domino theory," that the preservation of the

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[17] Contrast this to the failure of another of the Truman administration's initiatives that was framed in terms of the need to defend 'Western Civilization': Universal Military Training. Unlike the foes of the ERP, the opponents of UMT could effectively draw on another American rhetorical commonplace: the imperative of preserving individual liberty by avoiding the creation of a large standing army (Hogan 1998).

United States and Western Europe (the core of the free world) required a strong, non-communist periphery (Ninkovich 1994). This argument, which served to justify the inclusion of assistance to China in the initial emergency aid package, succeeded by accepting the 'Western Civilization' frame and introducing new implications. As the debate over ERP was transformed from a framing contest into an implication contest, it became clear that the administration's victory in round one did not imply that its larger agenda would be enacted.

The 'Western Civilization' frame subsequently pervaded later Cold War debates about the nature of the American commitment to Europe. Debates surrounding the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949 and the stationing of US troops in Europe in 1950-51 took place *within* that frame, although the implications drawn by the administration's spokespersons were increasingly more military than economic (Jackson forthcoming). The extent to which this frame had reshaped the rhetorical field is evident in Taft's 1951 book, *A Foreign Policy for Americans*. Although Taft called for a general policy of military retrenchment in favor of continental defense, Europe, he argued, was to be an exception. Why? "Our cultural background," he wrote, "springs from Europe, and many of our basic principles of liberty and justice were derived from European institutions. American language and ideas, American institutions, and American methods of thought are largely derived from Europe" (Taft 1951, 82). Europe had to be treated differently from other regions—less as an outsider, more as a member of the civilizational club. Had Taft been persuaded? It is difficult to reconcile such an interpretation with his vigorous opposition to the deployment of American ground troops to Europe and with his efforts to reduce ERP's funding whenever it came up for renewal. But even if Taft, in his heart of hearts, still wanted to withdraw American troops from Europe, that option was no longer on the table, for there were no longer sustainable rhetorical grounds on which to fight that battle. American leadership in organizing the defense of 'the

West' was no longer in question, and the only remaining issue was how best to accomplish it. By the late 1940s, the debate had shifted from a framing contest to an implication contest.

This outcome—the commitment of American resources to the defense of Western Europe—looks inevitable in retrospect, far less so in prospect. Structural realists often invoke the "strategic situation" to explain why the United States devoted considerable resources to the reconstruction of Western Europe. That "strategic situation," however, was not some objective feature of the international system. It was endogenous to the rhetorical strategy that the Marshall Plan's advocates pursued. Their introduction into the postwar debate of the theme of 'Western civilization' and their creativity in tying it to the communist challenge deserve a place in any adequate explanation of American policy in this period. Had they not done so or had this commonplace not been available, arguments that the United States should hew to its traditional policy and avoid entangling itself in European politics might have seemed compelling, producing a vastly different postwar settlement. The very appearance of inevitability is, in fact, powerful testimony to the success of ERP advocates in forging a dominant frame asserting the unity of 'the West' and the corresponding inseparability of America and Europe's destiny.

Conclusion

Machiavelli famously advised that "a ruler need not have all the positive qualities…but he must seem to have them…He must seem, to those who listen to him and watch him, entirely pious, truthful, reliable, sympathetic, and religious" (Machiavelli 1994, 55). Realists, not inaccurately, read Machiavelli as warning against allowing moral considerations to impede actions necessary for the pursuit of political power. But, as coercive constructivists, we would add that these lines imply that social identity has an effect on social and political outcomes, regardless of whether or not the actor internalizes the components constituting this identity. A

ruler pursuing policies incapable of public justification would find her path strewn with numerous practical obstacles. This lack of rhetorical resources might even compel her to alter her course of action. In accord with other constructivists, we aver that social norms and social identities matter.[18] In accord with political realists, we argue that whether or not a social actor has internalized a particular set of normative principles is not causally relevant. We combine these positions by focusing on public language, on how normative principles are deployed in public debate, and by exploring the causal impact this deployment can have on what people say and consequently on what they do—not on the impossibly elusive question of what they believe.

Our model of rhetorical coercion can helpfully capture the dynamics of *framing contests*, when there is controversy about how an issue should be characterized, and of *implication contests*, when narrower (yet no less important) battles are waged over the consequences of some accepted framing. Our analysis draws attention to two key conditions affecting the applicability of the model. First, rhetorical coercion can occur only when the public is a party to the debate or when the claimant can credibly threaten to involve the audience. Second, not all structures of discourse are equally conducive to rhetorical coercion. This mechanism is more likely to operate when these structures are relatively restricted (and constraining) than when they are relatively loose (and permissive). Furthermore, our model cannot illuminate the process of rhetorical contest in two circumstances: first, when an opponent accepts a claim without argument, and,

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[18] The language of identity has not figured explicitly in this article, but it is our view that rhetoric and identity are inseparable. Identity is not the mental property of an individual, nor can collective identity be apprehended by aggregating the attitudes of the constituent individuals. Rather, identities are necessarily relational, and thus they are forged *through* the process of their articulation. Political communities are defined by a common rhetorical lexicon and coalesce around particular rhetorical configurations.

second, when an opponent accepts the implications of an argument but not its terms. We contend, however, that much social and political life lies within our model's scope.[19]

Our argument does not apply exclusively to domestic politics or to political contest in democracies, but the model suggests that rhetorical coercion will operate less effectively and less frequently in the international arena and in authoritarian regimes. Rhetorical coercion is not unknown in international politics: it arguably played a central role in driving the eastward enlargement of the EU and NATO (Schimmelfenig 2001). The key factors highlighted by the model are often present in international relations: state leaders speak to international audiences, they are at times highly sensitive to those audiences' reactions, and justificatory speech acts are prevalent. But the international political scene is marked by multiple audiences and hence multiple conceptions of what rhetorical moves are acceptable and appropriate. Due to the complexity of this rhetorical environment, structures of discourse are relatively loose, and thus rhetorical coercion is unusually challenging. As for autocratic regimes, we note that even authoritarian leaders normally justify their actions and stances and that legitimation is the concern of every type of government (Weber 1968). But one may also fairly conclude that the mechanism will operate less frequently and less effectively under such forms of rule—where the scope of public debate is more narrow, where leaders are less responsive, where claimants will have greater difficulty making themselves heard, and where repression is an ever-present threat, thus limiting the role that the audience can play in a particular episode of contestation.

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[19] Our model cannot, however, capture the long-term processes through which new commonplaces enter the rhetorical space. These processes can be described and even explained, but they cannot be modeled: they are too situationally contingent and specific.

In short, this article seeks to invigorate the study of political rhetoric—but in a fashion relatively unfamiliar to recent debates in political science. We argue that rhetorical contestation shapes policy outcomes and that prevalent approaches miss a significant portion of political and social reality. We further suggest that it is possible to make causal claims without trespassing into the murky waters of subjective motivation and without relying on problematic mechanisms like persuasion. Many constructivists would be comfortable with the first of these claims, many realists with the second, few from either camp with their combination. This article has sought to demonstrate that their conjunction is both logically sustainable and potentially productive.

Tables

Table 1. Opposition Response and the Outcomes of Rhetorical Contestation

	Accept frame	*Reject frame*
Accept implications	case 1: policy change	case 2: mixed
Reject implications	case 3: implication contest	case 4: framing contest

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