

Abstract

The power of discourse in shaping public opinion is not to be underestimated. Words have a distinct ability to demonstrate political might, establish a narrative status quo, and, in many cases, manipulate an audience into adopting a particular view. In the case of the 1999 NATO bombing of Yugoslavia, U.S. President Bill Clinton was tasked not only with presenting the political situation to the American public but framing it in a certain way to justify and legitimize NATO's intervention in the Kosovo War. By spinning a narrative based around poignant historical linkages and Us vs. Them oppositions, Bill Clinton not only made his case for the bombing, but set the stage for similar rhetoric to be operationalized by future leaders for their own political gain. Investigating Clinton's own speeches from the period of NATO's intervention, this text employs van Dijk and Fairclough's methods of Critical Discourse Analysis to investigate exactly how Clinton constructed his narrative, and furthermore employs a poststructuralist framework to better understand the ways in which Bill Clinton used language to imbue a sense of truth or essential nature into his tale.