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# *The Power of Political Words: “Regime Change” and the Drive towards War*

by Alex Urevick

George Orwell, in “Politics and the English Language,” states that “The great enemy of language is insincerity” and asserts that political language is robbing English words of their meanings. A quick look at the news in the past few days, where the war to take control of Iraq has been labeled “Operation Iraqi Freedom” and pundits worry not about the loss of innocent civilian lives, but of unfortunate yet necessary “collateral damage,” gives credence to Orwell’s thoughts. However, within the context of this war we can also see one area where the meaning of language has not decayed, where leaders are sincere when they speak, and where the meaning of political language carries immense power behind it: that is, when they make threats to other nations. On the national scale mispercep-

tions and miscommunication can be useful, for example, as Orwell indicates, more people would probably be against just about every war if it was described in a way that brought pictures of what was actually happening to mind. However, misperceptions and miscommunication can be fatal on the international stage, where they can lead to conflicts and wars. Nations communicate their intentions to one another mostly, though not entirely, through words. It is no wonder, then, that nations put a large value on their words, and no words are more valuable than those that threaten force.

It could be argued that the term “regime change” exhibits exactly the “defense of the indefensible” that Orwell claimed made up the majority of political language. After all, how many Americans would support “regime change” if it were called “killing thousands of people to conquer and occupy a nation that has not attacked us” or stomach the thought of “collateral damage” if it was labeled “blowing innocent women and children to bits of bloody pulp”? The fears of my fellow countrymen and women

