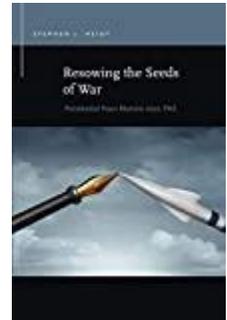




Stephen J. Heidt. *Resowing the Seeds of War: Presidential Peace Rhetoric since 1945.* East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2021. 366 pp. \$54.95, paper, ISBN 978-1-61186-384-0.



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It seems that the American presidency, whomever occupies the office, assumes that that person will be a leader, a visionary, an empath, and a rhetorical master. Everything the president says, and this has grown worse over time, is pulled apart and pored over for explicit as well as implicit meaning. Professor Stephen Heidt, an expert in presidential rhetoric concerning policy deliberation, adds to this analysis with his book, *Resowing the Seeds of War*. Considering the United States' current efforts to manage an end to the war in Afghanistan and the "War on Terror," Heidt's book is both timely and illuminating. The problem identified is how a president, and their administration, can effectively end a war in the post-1945 world. In each case Heidt notes the complexities created by wartime rhetoric, the discursive embodiment of the enemy's actions, if not their persons as "savagery." As Heidt states: "Archetypal metaphors of savagery endure and manifest a significant hurdle for making peace because, to get out of a war, the enemy must be redeemed or otherwise dealt with" (p. xv).

Resowing the Seeds of War includes an extended preface and five lengthy chapters, although the fifth chapter functions as a conclusion. Each of the first four chapters deals with a different war and a different president, although there is some overlap. Heidt asserts that presidents make use of four rhetorical strategies to change the way an enemy should be viewed postbellum. The first is "recivilization," where the enemy civilians are recast as the victims of their leaders. The second, "mobility," relocates the enemy's motivations to another cause, like an ideology or pressure as a client state. Third, "erasure" moves from specific individuals on the international level to the actual international system itself. Finally, "disembodiment" is the displacement of an enemy from a specific place to the world in general. Each of these four are illustrated by an example of presidential policy efforts in the United States, and the primary evidence comes from speeches by different presidents and members of their administrations, and the foreign policy bureaucracy.

In each of the four examples, the broad reality is a president's effort to find a metaphor to justify the change in representing a formerly demonized enemy. Public opinion must be walked back from the "otherization" that has been used, and often relatively quickly. In all of the examples given, a president was necessarily looking to close one conflict with the coming of another, be it the Cold War or the War on Terror. Chapter 1 looks at the efforts of Harry Truman to switch the view of Japan and Germany by the use of a disease metaphor. Both had been framed as "sick" societies: anti-democratic, fascist, and militaristic. Truman took the role, through his use of language, of the doctor, using diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up. The disease cured leads to the recivilization of the enemy. Truman then applied this strategy the "disease" of Communism in the guise of Soviet power.

In chapter 2, dealing with the Korean War, Eisenhower shifted his rhetoric, and that of Truman, from the specific conflict—Korea—to the broader one of the Cold War. Since the Korean War was just a part of the competition with the USSR, its limited nature allowed for a negotiated settlement. In chapter 3, as Nixon looked to end the Vietnam conflict, he made use of rhetoric that suited a change in policy and his broader geopolitical goals. Nixon asserted that the war had not been about ideology but the failure of the structure of the international system. He looked to move from the "domino theory" metaphor to one of Nixon as architect, where peace was something that could be planned and built. Finally, in chapter 4 Heidt makes an analysis of Obama's effort to "disembody" Afghanistan as the loci of the terror threat and promote the War on Terror as a fight against a much broader, universal threat. The intention was to pave the way for the minimization or end of the fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Heidt must be commended for the study at hand, which is a welcome and important addition to Michigan State University Press's Rhetoric and Public Affairs Series. *Resowing the Seeds of War*

not only deals with the complex language and metaphors involved in presidential attempts to redirect public and bureaucratic thinking toward ending American wars, but also shows how, since 1945, such have attempts have opened the door to the next conflict. In all of the examples there is no real end to war; hence the book's title. Instead, one conflict must necessarily end so that another, likely broader, fight might be managed. Here the end of the Korean and Vietnam Wars as part of the Cold War have a fascinating comparison with the end (hopefully) of the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq as part of the War on Terror. Heidt's conclusion in chapter 5 is a sober effort to speak to the seemingly unavoidable slip by American policy into "necropolitics," the use of death for political policy. The book, which is clearly geared at those fluent in the details of modern American foreign policy, will reward the reader's effort by stimulating interest in how wars end rather than just how they start.

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