

## **Constructing America's Enemies in the Post-Cold War World: Clinton's Use of Modern and Imperial Savagery**

### **Abstract**

Presidents use images of savagery to construct America's adversaries, especially prior to some form of armed intervention. During the Cold War, presidential discourse focused on using images of modern savagery to craft a Soviet enemy and its proxies. In the post-Cold War world, Bill Clinton faced a more diffuse, but complex threat environment than his Cold War predecessors. In this environment, I argue Clinton used images of both imperial and modern savagery to manufacture images of America's enemies.

To explore this argument, I examine the president's discourse, focusing primarily on addresses to the nation, surrounding the interventions in Somalia and Haiti. For Somalia, Clinton's discourse crafted a primitive savage to depict Somalis and their overall civilization. The president relied on scenic elements to build an image of a primitive savage. The chaotic scene of the primitives, wanting to bring it under control, became a motivating factor for American intervention. I suggest that the use of scene, which is an element, not yet developed in cultivating images of savagery, is another *topos* available to American presidents. In Haiti, his discourse shaped an image of a modern savage. To cultivate such an image, the president spoke of Haiti's leaders, primarily Raoul Cedras, in derogatory terms, particularly highlighting the atrocities committed by the Haitian regime. In this intervention, vanquishing the savage agent, not scene, was a primary motivating factor for American intervention. These differences in savagery suggest that Clinton needed more rhetorical flexibility, than his predecessors, to navigate the post-Cold War world threat environment.

