

George Galloway's style of communication explained

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Andrew Scott Crines uses an analytical framework to dissect what makes George Galloway's style of political communication so effective. Galloway mainly uses emotional rhetoric and has a dramatic/performative style of delivery. Moreover, his style is packaged to appeal to a specific audience whilst repelling the more deliberative mainstream.



In a [recently published journal article](#), I analysed George Galloway's style of political communication, his target audience, and how he fits in with the broader political discourse in British politics. This article was complimented by a paper I delivered to the University of Leeds as part of the [political leadership workshop](#) in October 2012. Both revealed that Galloway's style of communication can be analysed through an oratorical and rhetorical evaluation that scrutinises his delivery and content.

The first thing to consider is how political communication is analysed. Importantly, rhetoric and oratory are distinct but similar. Rhetoric is the content of a speech, oratory is its delivery. Together they represent two sides of the same coin. There are three rhetorical devices which are used to analyse speeches. These are *ethos* (character/credibility), *pathos* (emotion), and *logos* (logic). Moreover, there are three similar oratorical devices, which are *judicial* (analytical/forensic), *deliberative* (legislative), and *epideictic* (performative/dramatic). These devices are asymmetrical and are often used by politicians interdependently, however the political analyst can use them separately to deconstruct a speech or speaking style. By using this analytical framework, I was able to discern that Galloway drew mostly from *pathos*-driven rhetoric with *epideictic* oratory. By combining these styles of communication he is able to appeal to the expectations of his chosen audience.



Appeals to a specific audience
(Credit: David Hunt)

However before doing this it was first necessary to appreciate Galloway's political context as an Anti-Political Establishment (APE) rhetorician. Such speakers tend to be those who have a small but identifiable audience and/or support base that is loosely distinct from the 'mainstream'. The 'establishment' is broadly defined as mainstream Westminster elites. Respect, UKIP, the Greens, the SNP, and the other nationalist parties stand in opposition to this 'establishment' because they claim an unrepresented audience elsewhere. In Galloway's case, this tends to be younger Muslim men, hard left statists, and elements of the anti-war movement. This support base is by no means definitive, however its composition are often eschewed by the modern Labour Party and certainly by the Tories or Lib-Dems. As a result this loose distinction provides a support base sufficient for Galloway to target his rhetoric.

Galloway's anti-war rhetoric derives from the evolution of the Respect party, which sought to tap into the opposition surrounding the Iraq War in 2003. The origins of the Respect party provided a specific demographic that appeared to be unrepresented by the mainstream elite. Because of the size of this audience, Galloway strives to maintain its broad cohesiveness by positioning himself with their ideological aspirations. More specifically, opposition to the mainstream for its own sake whilst defending against western involvement in the middle east and beyond. Importantly, the more mainstream anti-war protestor tends to express their opposition through mainstream parties. However, Respect's support base expects anti-war rhetoric that anticipates specific personal characteristics from its leaders. For example, Galloway repudiated claims that he wrote a letter in which he denied drinking alcohol and claimed to have fought for Muslim interests all his life. Despite this, his credibility with some of similar values

certainly grew. Indeed, his character as a morally upstanding individual who defends the interests of those being 'attacked' by the west is key to growing his credibility with that specific group. Moreover, he also pre-emptively defends against "the drumbeats for war with Iran" which he suggests "are getting louder, and the escalating provocations by Western capitals are developing a logic of their own". This is appealing to his supporters because they have come to expect this form of defensive rhetoric which simultaneously critiques the West. In terms of rhetorical devices, Galloway's style necessitates emotive language. Moreover, because of his character as an 'anti-western, anti-imperialist' defender of a particular understanding of freedom, he is able to use such rhetoric to draw from previously demonstrated credibility to influence his audience.

But alongside his rhetorical style we must also briefly consider his oratory. Whilst most politicians tend to use deliberative oratory, Galloway firmly uses the *performative* style. This is because it gives him an opportunity to demonstrate his 'ideological righteousness' against his chosen opponents. By having an 'other' to perform against, Galloway eschews the conventions of normal political debate whilst attacking his opponents using romantically formulated rhetoric. He uses a combination of *pathos*-driven *performative*-oratory to allude rather than specify. Such allusions enable him to *imply* that "I am a better Pakistani than he [the Labour candidate] will ever be. God knows who's a Muslim and who is not". These implications enable him to refrain from conventional political debate with opponents. Put simply, this reminds the electorate of his *ethos* as a moral individual with values and beliefs that should be characteristically appealing.

To summarise, Galloway's rhetoric is textured "in the language of emancipation, for the underprivileged, dispossessed and disenfranchised"; however "its solutions can also be traced back to the far-left thinking of the 'new left', much of which is authoritarian". The language of absolutes is packaged to appeal to a specific audience whilst repelling the more deliberative mainstream. This is a deliberate technique because it grows the anti-political establishment image of both Galloway and the party which vital in order to set themselves apart. The continued success of Galloway's style of communication depends firmly upon his ability to maintain that image of difference with his supporters.

Note: This article gives the views of the author, and not the position of the British Politics and Policy blog, nor of the London School of Economics. Please read our [comments policy](#) before posting.

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