

# **From Infamy to Evil:**

the development of presidential post-cataclysm rhetoric, Franklin  
Delano Roosevelt following Pearl Harbor and George Walker Bush  
(post-)9/11

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## **Abstract**

This thesis sets out to determine whether there was a development between the post-cataclysm rhetoric of president Franklin Roosevelt following the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and that of George Bush following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Three academic concepts - American exceptionalism, nationalism and strategic thinking - are linked to several American myths to support the analysis of presidential rhetoric and framing. The notion of exceptionalism is proven the most enduring, while the strongest development is noticeable in a re-conception of nationalism, due to changes in American society – particularly multiculturalism – in the six decades between Pearl Harbor and 9/11. This is represented in Bush's rhetoric, with further developments informed by changes in the media landscape, resulting in a more visual rhetoric and more engagement with the audience. This study further posits Pearl Harbor and the United States of America's subsequent entry and victory in World War Two – achieved by the 'greatest generation' – were effectively used as new American myths by Bush, informing a further rhetorical development.

## Table of Contents

	Page
<b>Introduction – The Rhetoric of Tragedy</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Academic background – Framing and Myths</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Chapter 1 – The Evil Beyond the Frontier</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Chapter 2 - Freedom, Culture and the 'Greatest Generation'</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Chapter 3 – How and Why We Fight</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Conclusion – Enduring Myths, Different Times</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>84</b>

“Yesterday, December 7th, 1941 - a date which will live in infamy - the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan. [...] I believe that I interpret the will of the Congress and of the people when I assert that we will not only defend ourselves to the uttermost, but will make it very certain that this form of treachery shall never again endanger us.”

**- Franklin Delano Roosevelt, December 8, 1941.<sup>1</sup>**

“Today, our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts. [...] These acts of mass murder were intended to frighten our nation into chaos and retreat. But they have failed. Our country is strong. A great people has been moved to defend a great nation. Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America.”

**- George W. Bush, September 11, 2001.<sup>2</sup>**

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- 1 Roosevelt, Franklin D. *Address to Congress Requesting a Declaration of War with Japan*. December 8, 1941. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16053&st=st1=>>>
  - 2 Bush, George W. *Address to the Nation on the Terrorist Attacks*. September 11, 2001. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=58057&st=&st1=>>>

## **Introduction - The Rhetoric of Tragedy**

This thesis is a study comparing the rhetorical response of the incumbent presidents of the United States of America to the surprise attacks of December 7 1941, by the Japanese army on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, and the September 11 2001 terror attacks by al Qaeda. The rhetoric of president Franklin Delano Roosevelt about the first event and president George W. Bush about the second is analyzed regarding three different aspects: their characterization of the attacks and perpetrators, their description of the impact of the attacks on American society and how this should be addressed, and how the United States of America should respond politically and militarily abroad.

The responses of the presidents to said events are taken into account, up until their subsequent State of the Union addresses, which are considered as final piece of 'response'. The reason for this is that demarcating the boundaries of the time frames as such keeps this study manageable in terms of scope, whereas these State of the Union addresses followed a month (for Roosevelt) and four months (for Bush) after the events and can be seen as clear points where they looked back on the incident from a position with some perspective, while simultaneously looking ahead to what had to be done. As for the definition of rhetoric, for the sake of this study this entails any speech, address or remark, but also written statements accompanying for instance a president signing legislation or executive orders. Important to establish, hereby, is that for both Pearl Harbor and 9/11 as historic events, this thesis does not go into what can commonly be considered conspiracy theories, assuming both to have been genuine surprise attacks.

Comparing the presidential rhetoric and framing of the events and aftermath, it is necessary to look at various academic concepts. The first is American exceptionalism, as this is prevalent in the rhetoric of Roosevelt and Bush. There are two different dimensions to exceptionalism that are especially relevant to Roosevelt's and Bush's rhetoric. The first

is of the notion of exceptionalism within the domestic sphere, wherein it as Seymour Martin Lipset argues is a type of American Creed imbued by the principles of “liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, populism and laissez-faire.”<sup>3</sup> To that, Amy Kaplan adds that exceptionalism “goes beyond America's separateness and uniqueness of its own particular heritage and culture.”<sup>4</sup> According to Kaplan, its exceptionalism “lies in its exemplary status as apotheosis of the nation-form and as model for the rest of the world.”<sup>5</sup>

Kaplan touches on the second dimension to exceptionalism, of it in the foreign sphere. It is therefore especially useful to also consider the definition by Anders Stephanson. He sees a religiosity to exceptionalism, giving the United States of America a sense of “special calling”, of a providential role to “lead the world to better things.”<sup>6</sup> Lipset notes this too, arguing “protestant-inspired moralism” informs American foreign relations, as well as “the ways we go to war.”<sup>7</sup>

Considering the aftermath of both catastrophes, conceptions of nationalism are relevant to establish whether and how Roosevelt and Bush appropriated this in trying to create national cohesion. This thesis takes the stance that American nationalism, as argued in *American Crucible* by Gary Gerstle, also has two dimensions: civic and racial. Gerstle defines the first as linked to the American Creed, embodying “inalienable rights to life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness and democratic governance.”<sup>8</sup> According to Gerstle, this civic nationalism has a paradoxical relationship with racial nationalism, the “conceiving of America in ethnoracial terms”, with whites being the only “fully-fledged” members of

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3 Lipset, Seymour Martin. *American Exceptionalism, a Double-Edged Sword*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company (1996). p. 10

4 Kaplan, Amy. *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press (2005). p. 16.

5 Ibidem.

6 Stephanson, Anders. *Manifest Destiny. American Expansion and the Empire of Right*. New York: Hill and Wang (1995). p. xii.

7 Lipset, Seymour Martin. *American Exceptionalism, a Double-Edged Sword*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company (1996). p. 20.

8 Gerstle, Gary. *American Crucible. Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press (2001). p. 4.



society.<sup>9</sup> The combination of nationalisms, Gerstle argues, was instrumental to twentieth century processes of “war mobilization and communal imagination.”<sup>10</sup>

Finally, the concept of strategic thinking is incorporated in this study to establish how calls to respond politically and militarily were represented in the relevant presidential rhetoric. For the Bush era this means hegemonic thinking, an idea prevalent among his administration. Terrorists were thereby considered creatures of the state in that they couldn't survive without (secret or tacit) support by colluding host nations, providing safe haven, passage or strategic assistance, for instance.<sup>11</sup> Informed by the belief the United States of America is a “unique great power, and seen as such by others”, Ivo Daalder and James Lindsay point out, this hegemonic thinking prompted (more) unilateral action.<sup>12</sup> While a similar, explicit security doctrine was non-existent during Roosevelt's era, it will be necessary to see if he stated things perhaps not tied to a specific comparable ideology, but similar in nature.

### **History and frame**

It is important to make a distinction between positions on Pearl Harbor and 9/11 as historic events, and differing opinions on how it was framed. The first point is succinctly described by Erik J. Dahl, distinguishing between 'conventional' war acts and surprise (terror) attacks, arguing Pearl Harbor and 9/11 were similar in being surprise attacks and thus “essentially tactical operations.”<sup>13</sup> This is the position this paper will take as well, considering both events similar in nature.

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9 Gerstle, Gary. *American Crucible. Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press (2001). p. 5.

10 Ibidem.

11 Daalder, Ivo H., James M. Lindsay. *America Unbound. The Bush Revolution in Foreign Policy*. Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2003. p. 41-45.

12 Ibidem.

13 Dahl, Erik J. *Intelligence and Surprise Attack: Failure and Success from Pearl Harbor to 9/11 and Beyond*. Washington: Georgetown University Press (2013). p. 177.

Regarding presidential rhetoric, John Dower in *Cultures of War* argues comparisons between Pearl Harbor and 9/11 were made “obsessively and perhaps sincerely” by White House speech writers, “but most analogies were misleading.”<sup>14</sup> Dower admits, though, that the “resonance between the catastrophes” was immediately visible, making the “similarity of battle cries no coincidence.”<sup>15</sup> He argues the rhetoric has two sides: as rallying cries *and* as “language of peace, freedom and justice [...] the lifeblood of America's patriotic oratory, and more than cynical propaganda.”<sup>16</sup> Joanne Esch adds this rhetoric informs “myths of American exceptionalism *and* of civilization vs. barbarism, which have long defined America's ideal image of itself and its place in the war.”<sup>17</sup>

A partially opposing view is taken by Douglas Kellner, arguing Bush rhetorically used 9/11 to usher in a “crusade” against a new “evil other.”<sup>18</sup> John Murphy, meanwhile, posits Bush through his carefully crafted rhetoric “dominated public perception of the events to justify policy and garner electoral support.”<sup>19</sup> Additionally, James Kimble argues that Roosevelt too primarily used his “noble rationale to tacitly justify the possibility of direct American involvement in the war”, of which he was a proponent.<sup>20</sup> Taking the position the presidential rhetoric of Roosevelt and Bush is exceptionalist, this thesis argues comparisons between Pearl Harbor and 9/11 were drawn deliberately by Bush, and that both presidents purposely invoked not only American (protestant) moralism, but also the idea of civilization versus barbarism to stimulate national cohesion and generate support for their ensuing policies. An important note is that although Bush's invocation of Pearl

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14 Dower, John W. *Cultures of War: Pearl Harbor/Hiroshima/9-11/Iraq*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company (2010). p. 8-14.

15 Ibidem.

16 Ibidem. p. xxxi.

17 Esch, Joanne. 'Legitimizing the “War on Terror”': Political Myth in Official-Level Rhetoric'. In: *Political Psychology*. Vol. 31, no. 3. p. 357.

18 Kellner, Douglas. 'Bushspeak and the Politics of Lying: Presidential Rhetoric in the “War on Terror”'. In: *Presidential Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 37, no. 4 (december 2007). p. 625-626.

19 Murphy, John M. "'Our Mission and our Moment": George W. Bush and September 11<sup>th</sup>'. In: *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*. Vol. 6, no. 4 (winter 2003). p. 608

20 Kimble, James J. 'The Illustrated Four Freedoms: FDR, Rockwell, and the Margins of the Rhetorical Presidency'. In: *Presidential Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 45, no. 1 (March 2015). p. 49.

Harbor and – by extension – Roosevelt's rhetoric is in certain cases quite overt, most of the in-depth academic analysis of post-surprise attack rhetoric is focused on what Bush said and how this related either to the aforementioned academic concepts *or* the echoing of Roosevelt's post-Pearl Harbor-rhetoric. Roosevelt's rhetoric on its own has not been studied as extensively, however. Therein thus lies an opportunity to make a more direct comparison to establish if they did indeed utilize similar concepts in their post-attack rhetoric and whether or not there was a development in the invocation thereof.

### **Rhetoric**

The focus of this paper is to determine to what extent there was a development in the presidential rhetoric and framing when relating the (post-)9/11 rhetoric of president George Walker Bush to that of president Franklin Delano Roosevelt following the attack on Pearl Harbor. To determine this, there will be three sub-questions: how did Roosevelt and Bush characterize the attacks and perpetrators; how did they contextualize the attacks by describing their impact on American society and how did they indicate this should be addressed; and how did they argue the United States of America should respond politically and militarily in the foreign sphere.

Answering these questions has shown that although there is a development in presidential rhetorical responses to catastrophic surprise attacks, the same themes and myths (more on myths later) are invoked to frame the attacks, perpetrators, aftermath, and desired societal, political and military response. The development in presidential rhetoric, then, can largely be attributed to differing interpretations by Roosevelt and Bush of these concepts and myths, although particularly in the case of the idea of civic and racial nationalism, there were societal developments that played a large role in the development of the representation of this aspect in the presidential rhetoric as well. Furthermore, the

different nature of the media landscape of the 1940s and early 21<sup>st</sup> century contributed to a development in rhetorical techniques and appeals. In any case, that there was a development in the rhetoric and (albeit less so) in the aforementioned concepts, provides further insight into the perceived similarity between the Pearl Harbor and 9/11 attacks and their impact.

### **Sources and statements**

This thesis relies on the study of presidential speeches and statements and legislation as primary sources. This includes presidential addresses of December 8 1941 - the first time Roosevelt spoke publicly about the attacks on Pearl Harbor - and September 11 2001, when Bush within minutes after the attacks addressed the nation. It further includes subsequent rhetoric about or referring to these events, up to Roosevelt's State of the Union Address of January 6, 1942, and Bush's State of the Union Address of January 29, 2002. There are two brief excursions to earlier pieces of rhetoric, however, serving as background information to illustrate the way of thinking of either president with regard to very specific themes. The primary sources have all been retrieved digitally, in the form of transcripts. As for the relevant enacted legislation and accompanying official written statements, these too have been studied. For the secondary literature, there are the selected studies of the respective presidents, also regarding their ideologies and the ways political processes affected their rhetoric. Additionally, literature specifically comparing Pearl Harbor and 9/11 and responses there to have also been considered. Throughout, this study emphasizes how the aforementioned concepts of exceptionalism, nationalism and strategic thinking feature in the rhetoric, supporting the framework for the analysis.

## Academic Background – Framing and Myths

Framing is, as Richard Whitaker, Janet Ramsey and Ronald Smith state in *MediaWriting* focused not on an issue's perceived newsworthiness, “but on the presentation of the story.”<sup>21</sup> They discuss framing as being related to a media text producer, but it can equally be applied to an orator discussing an issue on a public stage, such as a president addressing the nation. Framing, then, “provides a rhetorical context for the text, involving the use of metaphor, story-telling, myths, legends, jargon, word choice, and other narrative elements, including 'spin'.”<sup>22</sup> It is in essence about determining “which version [of a story] becomes the standard”, as put even more succinctly, framing is about “how the audience *thinks about* an issue.”<sup>23</sup>

In the case of 9/11, but addressing the broader issue, David Zarefsky argues president Bush applied the war metaphor as a frame, whereby it seems “plausible to suggest that presidential definition altered the rhetorical landscape by changing the terms in which people think about an issue.”<sup>24</sup> Specifically on comparing 9/11 to Pearl Harbor, John Dower notes the following about Roosevelt's famous 'infamy speech', his first address following the attack, about December 7 1941 from then on being “a date which will live in infamy”:

Immediately “infamy” became an American code for Pearl Harbor, as well as code for Japanese treachery and deceitfulness. [...] When the September 11 terrorist attacks occurred in New York and Washington just a few months short of six decades later, “infamy” was the first word many American commentators summoned to convey the enormity of these crimes.<sup>25</sup>

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21 Whitaker, Richard W., Janet E. Ramsey and Ronald D. Smith. *MediaWriting. Print, broadcast and public relations*. Hoboken: Taylor and Francis (2012). EBL Reader digital edition. p. 8-9.

22 Ibidem.

23 Ibidem. **Emphasis mine.**

24 Zarefsky, David. 'Presidential Rhetoric and the Power of Definition'. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 34, no. 3 (September 2004). p. 618.

25 Dower, John W. *Cultures of War: Pearl Harbor/Hiroshima/9-11/Iraq*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company (2010). p. 4.

It can be argued, then, that presidential rhetoric is the aforementioned standard, or at least by all measures the standard and narrative set by the executive branch. As Theodore Windt quotes Richard Neustadt: “Presidential *power* is the power to persuade.”<sup>26</sup> David McKay meanwhile points out another aspect to the presidents rhetoric significance is that since the United States of America “has relatively few symbols of national unity”, the president as institution functions as such, while also serving as “voice of the people”.<sup>27</sup> This means, according to McKay, that “during crises and natural disasters, the public look first to the president for leadership, action and moral support.”<sup>28</sup> Additionally, McKay asserts that the public looks to the president to “shape the terms of debate for national legislation and action” but also particularly to set the course in terms of foreign policy.<sup>29</sup> Although the effectiveness of presidential rhetoric is not examined here, the underlying intention to do so – and thus frame events – very much is.

### **Theoretic background**

As stated, a set of theoretical concepts is required to establish how presidents Franklin Delano Roosevelt and George Walker Bush rhetorically framed Pearl Harbor and 9/11 and the aftermath. A first element to consider are the individual differences among recipients of their messages. “The way issue-oriented messages are viewed can change from person to person”, Whitaker, Ramsey and Smith write, arguing this to be a consequence of individual demographics and experiences.<sup>30</sup> Interestingly, their use of the word 'demographic' immediately refers to what they later dub 'social categories theory', which supposes that “people sharing demographic characteristics will respond similarly to a

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26 Neustadt, Richard E. *Presidential Power: the Politics of Leadership*. New York: Signet Books (1964). Via: Windt, Theodore Otto Jr. 'Presidential Rhetoric: Definition of a Field of Study'. In: *Presidential Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 16, no. 1 (Winter 1986). p. 102.

27 McKay, David. *American Politics and Society*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell (2013). p. 216.

28 Ibidem.

29 Ibidem, p. 216-217.

30 Whitaker, Richard W., Janet E. Ramsey and Ronald D. Smith. *MediaWriting. Print, broadcast and public relations*. Hoboken: Taylor and Francis (2012). EBL Reader digital edition. p. 4.

message.”<sup>31</sup> In short: individuals have their own reception of a message, but are not so unique – nor have as singular a reception as – to supersede a broader collective reception of said message. People can thus be categorized (and often cross-categorized) in demographics. This is why “media writers are most effective when their writing uses words and phrases that apply to everyone in their audience [...] and must also pay attention to how their words reflect physical and social characteristics.”<sup>32</sup> Within these demographics, there may be preconceived ideals or beliefs that factor into how a message is received, just as group dynamics can create (or distort) the perception and valuation of said message. A further element to this, is the so-called utilization of stereotypes, as recipients use these “as a simplified representation of reality”, which is something which can be exploited as well by someone trying to convey and frame a message, like a president addressing his nation.<sup>33</sup> This element will be expanded upon in the following section on mythology.

Another way to appeal to an audience, is stipulated by the theory of 'wants and needs gratification', meaning that a media message must “fulfill some perceived want or need” of the audience, because its media engagement is based on the “expectation of a reward.”<sup>34</sup> On the topic of wants and needs, agenda setting is important as well. This is something an orator can do by addressing a specific theme or topic more elaborately than others. An important difference, however, is that news media traditionally “only tell audiences what to think about, not what to think”, whereas in presidential rhetoric the shaping of opinion typically is a primary consideration, and informing the audience of secondary importance.<sup>35</sup>

Public relations are therefore paramount to presidential rhetoric. There are two important aspects to this. The first is to be considerate of the audience's wants and needs –

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31 Whitaker, Richard W., Janet E. Ramsey and Ronald D. Smith. *Media Writing. Print, broadcast and public relations*. Hoboken: Taylor and Francis (2012). EBL Reader digital edition. p. 7.

32 Ibidem, p. 97.

33 Ibidem, p. 5.

34 Ibidem, p. 5.

35 Ibidem, p. 8.

for information or opinion – as well as questions and criticism. The second is to be persuasive, which even for rhetoric means “show, don't tell”, since 'text' which “demonstrates a fact and invites the reader [audience] to draw a conclusion” is most persuasive.<sup>36</sup> For rhetoric, this means not spelling this out too much or linking this to partisan (policy) statements, but instead using tools like stereotypes and analogies and combining these with facts and what Whitakers, Ramsey and Smith call George Orwell-inspired 'doublespeak'.<sup>37</sup> This traditionally means “statements that tend to misrepresent reality”, but can also be seen as 'spinning' something negative “to make it seem positive”.<sup>38</sup> No president would frame Pearl Harbor or 9/11 as positive, but an arguably positive consequence is the opportunity to stand up to adversity, as both Roosevelt and Bush argued.

Another way for a president to persuade the public, is through ethics, as at its core, “persuasion is a process of communication that intends to influence others using ethical means.”<sup>39</sup> This means there must be interaction between sender and receiver – rather than a strictly hierarchical relationship – whereby the sender must take care not to let the narrative stray from persuasive to propaganda, as that will dent the relationship of trust with an audience.<sup>40</sup> In terms of structure and content this means that, ideally, speeches “engages them [the audience] in dialogue with the speaker” instead of a speaker just “talking *at* people”.<sup>41</sup>

A final matter to take into account is that the visual media representation of Pearl Harbor and 9/11 were completely different, and thus a president's way to address the people would have to be too, as David Rothkopf of *Foreign Policy* makes clear:

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36 Whitaker, Richard W., Janet E. Ramsey and Ronald D. Smith. *Media Writing. Print, broadcast and public relations*. Hoboken: Taylor and Francis (2012). EBL Reader digital edition. p. 92.

37 Ibidem, p. 92.

38 Ibidem.

39 Ibidem, p. 335-336.

40 Ibidem.

41 Ibidem, p. 340. **Emphasis mine.**



The war that began for America on the morning of September 11, 2001, was the first in the country's history that began with an image. It was a scene that within hours of taking place was almost universally observed. In the past, wars were triggered by actions that were reported in dispatches, recounted in newspapers, described in speeches - whether before the Congress, in local meeting halls, or on radio or television. They were presented in prose, couched in arguments that, even when infused with emotion, appealed to citizens through their intellects. Yes, populists and demagogues and newspaper publishers sought to tug at heartstrings and stir anger, but the path to these reactions always traveled through the mind before it reached human hearts. The gallery of images presented on the morning of al-Qaeda's attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon was something else again.<sup>42</sup>

As Rothkopf emphasizes, on 9/11, "there was no need for words. Indeed, commentators were left speechless. We were shaken. We were made afraid. We could hardly believe our eyes."<sup>43</sup> Roughly sixty years prior, however, "few Americans saw images of Pearl Harbor before war was declared and, when they did, what they saw were grainy newsreels of a place far, far away."<sup>44</sup> These differences, then, are something that will also be taken into account. A big difference between the media ages of Roosevelt and Bush, as Mary Stuckey points out, is that Roosevelt had already been in office for a long time, trying to establish a personal relationship with the press, whereby he had "set very specific rules for his press conferences."<sup>45</sup> Prior to Pearl Harbor, having had to address a myriad of social issues and garner support for the New Deal, Roosevelt managed to "establish a deep and intimate relationship with the American public", thanks in part to his frequent so-called fireside chats, which acquainted them with his rhetoric and caused a

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42 Rothkopf, David. *National Insecurity: American Leadership in an Age of Fear*. New York: PublicAffairs (2014). EBL Digital Edition. p. 2-3.

43 Ibidem.

44 Ibidem.

45 Stuckey, Mary E. 'FDR, the Rhetoric of Vision, and the Creation of a National Synoptic State'. In: *Quarterly Journal of Speech*. Vol. 98, no. 3 (August 2012). p. 310.

large part of his audience to “see as he saw”.<sup>46</sup> Bush, on the other hand, due to what Dan Scroop calls the “ferocious news hunger of the modern media” had to navigate a very different media landscape and “expose himself to questioning” and make off-the-cuff, unscripted statements “much more often than he, or his handlers, might otherwise like.”<sup>47</sup> Having won his election in a controversial manner – with some even questioning the legality of his incumbency – he had what John Murphy calls a “middling” beginning of his tenure, appearing to many as “a little slight for the job”.<sup>48</sup> Bush had not yet succeeded in building up a similar personal relationship with his 'audience', although as Murphy suggests, 9/11 provided him the opportunity to finally do so.

### **Myths and mythology**

Two valuable tools to help avoid misinterpretation and aid in the framing of a message, are the aforementioned stereotypes and analogies. An extension thereof are the myths informing American culture and political tradition. This paper will consider a few of these, namely the frontier myth, the myth of national insecurity, the myth of 'Fortress America', and the myths of the reluctant empire and the city upon a hill.

### **The Frontier, reluctant empire, and 'others'**

The Frontier myth is perhaps the most well-known framing device in American culture. It is, as Leroy Dorsey argues in *We Are All Americans: Pure and Simple*:

a narrative that has informed America's beliefs and behaviors for over two centuries.

This myth initially explained and justified the establishment of American colonies. As time passed, Richard Slotkin notes, the myth accounted for 'our rapid economic

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46 Stuckey, Mary E. 'FDR, the Rhetoric of Vision, and the Creation of a National Synoptic State'. In: *Quarterly Journal of Speech*. Vol. 98, no. 3 (August 2012). p. 309-310.

47 Scroop, Dan. 'September 11<sup>th</sup>, Pearl Harbor and the Uses of Presidential Power'. In: *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*. Vol. 15, no. 2 (2002). p. 325-326.

48 Murphy, John M. "'Our Mission and our Moment': George W. Bush and September 11<sup>th</sup>". In: *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*. Vol. 6, no. 4 (winter 2003). p. 622.

growth, our emergence as a powerful nation-state, and our distinctively American approach to the socially and culturally disruptive processes of modernization.' The Frontier Myth framed frontier and Wild West protagonists as heroic archetypes who were responsible for the development of a democratic nation and who faced both human and environmental dangers in order to conquer the uncharted wilds of the North American continent.<sup>49</sup>

Ira Chernus in *The Mythology of Hope and Change* asserts that the mythic frontier is “a clearly defined line separating civilization, order, and virtue from wilderness, chaos and sin.”<sup>50</sup> He insists it creates “an absolute dichotomy between good and evil”, fitting within exceptionalist and conservative hegemonic notions of the United States of America's uniqueness and righteousness.<sup>51</sup> Like exceptionalism, the frontier has “an inescapable religious dimension”, Chernus asserts, whereby the frontier, even after attack, “can [again?] become a paradise, because all obstacles and enemies lurking beyond it prove to be a blessing in disguise.”<sup>52</sup> This makes it no surprise then, that Bush invoked the frontier.

The Frontier myth, however, isn't just a useful legend to appropriate to engage a domestic audience, it also informs the United States of America's role in the world. Globally, there is a similar American political and rhetorical tendency to refer to mythological archetypes found on the frontier, intertwining it with the myth of the reluctant empire. Although differ on whether the United States of America is an empire, and if so, what kind, the myth of the reluctant empire supposes that despite its position as superpower – industrial and cultural before the Second World War, military and political as well thereafter – the United States of America does not conduct itself as a traditional

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49 Dorsey, Leroy G. *We Are All Americans, Pure and Simple. Theodore Roosevelt and the Myth of Americanism*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press (2013). EBL Digital Edition. p. 5.

50 Chernus, Ira. 'The Mythology of Hope and Change'. *Mythic America Essays*. MythicAmerica. Visited on: 22 may 2015. Url: <<https://mythicamerica.wordpress.com/the-two-great-mythologies/the-mythology-of-hope-and-change/>>

51 Ibidem.

52 Ibidem.

empire. This is, according to Niall Ferguson, explained, in part, due to a lack of commitment to, or even a disdain for, imperialism by the American people, lasting vestiges of a tendency for isolation, and the notion of imperialism not being congruent with the exceptionalist conception of a nation promoting universal freedom.<sup>53</sup> It is, however, this very exceptionalism that can - and as some argue *does* - inform American imperialism, as it casts the United States of America as a reluctant hero stepping up to fulfill its providential role and lead the world to freedom. It implies an undesired, or at the very least unsought, role as protagonist, which in turn implies an exceptionalist 'chosenness' which is accepted with a wary sense of calling and obligation best reflected in comic book terms: "With great power, comes great responsibility."

Another significant dimension to the frontier myth is informed by evil others, Chernus says, referring to Edward Said's theory of 'othering', the conceiving of one's own identity (national or cultural) by first and foremost establishing what differentiates oneself from others and what it therefore first and foremost is *not*. The frontier myth contributes to a persistent presence of "an evil 'other' that must constantly be resisted", and the myth essentially saying that "we may not know who are what we Americans are, but whatever else we may be, we are definitely the opposite of the evil we confront most clearly at the frontier."<sup>54</sup>

It has been argued that the United States of America *needs* an 'other' for societal cohesion, especially as the frontier myth informs a duality in American identity. As Dorsey emphasizes, it "lauds the 'rugged individualism' needed to survive on the frontier, but not at the expense of social order."<sup>55</sup> Legends of the frontier and the confrontation of others "help an audience remember its origins as community 'based on rights and laws'", but at the same time maintained "a community 'based on xenophobic patterns of identification'",

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53 Ferguson, Niall. *Colossus. The Price of America's Empire*. New York: Penguin Press (2004). p. 3-29.

54 Chernus, Ira. 'The Mythology of Hope and Change'. *Mythic America Essays*. Mythic America. Visited on: 22 May 2015. Url: <<https://mythicamerica.wordpress.com/the-two-great-mythologies/the-mythology-of-hope-and-change/>>

55 Dorsey, Leroy G. *We Are All Americans, Pure and Simple. Theodore Roosevelt and the Myth of Americanism*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press (2013). EBL Digital Edition. p. 36.

Dorsey cites Lane Bruner.<sup>56</sup> This, combined with what Chernus calls the myth of hope and change – exceptionalist and creedal beliefs of freedom, economic opportunity and individualism – results in a national identity paradoxically torn between Gerstle's civic and racial nationalism discussed in the introduction.

### **Fortress America, the city upon a hill**

The final myths relevant to this study pertain to what Chernus calls the myth of national insecurity and the earlier mentioned exceptionalism. The United States of America – when it was still a collection of colonies, in 1630 - was described by the later governor of the Massachusetts Bay colony John Winthrop as: “a Citty upon a Hill, the eies of all people are upon us”, or as it is often translated in modern English: “a city upon a hill, with the eyes of the world upon us.”<sup>57</sup> This sentence has two very important implications for this paper.

The first – as later quoted by Ronald Reagan in his farewell address – is of the “shining city upon a hill” that after years is “still a beacon, still a magnet for all who must have freedom.”<sup>58</sup> This fits within the exceptionalist beliefs mentioned before, of the new nation's sense of calling and mission to be a shiny example for the world and prompt others to emulate it, as so described by Anders Stephanson.<sup>59</sup> Additionally, this refers to the enduring theme of the United States of America as an example and symbol of civilization, caught in a struggle against barbarism, which are roles which can clearly be delineated along the frontier. Joanne Esch argues in *Legitimizing the War on Terror* that the myth of civilization vs barbarism is one of two myths at “the heart of American political culture”, the key difference between this myth and that of exceptionalism being that the myth of

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56 Dorsey, Leroy G. *We Are All Americans, Pure and Simple. Theodore Roosevelt and the Myth of Americanism*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press (2013). EBL Digital Edition. p. 6.

57 Winthrop, John. 'City Upon a Hill'. *Digital History*. Digital History. Visited on: 26 May 2015. Url: <[http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp\\_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=3918](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=3918)> **Modern translation mine.**

58 Reagan, Ronald. *Farewell Address to the Nation*. January 11, 1989. American Rhetoric. Transcript: <<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/ronaldreaganfarewelladdress.html>>

59 Stephanson, Anders. *Manifest Destiny. American Expansion and the Empire of Right*. New York: Hill and Wang (1995). p. xii.

civilization vs barbarism “favors cultural or civilizational explanations for conflict over political or economic ones.”<sup>60</sup>

The second part of the city upon a hill myth is, Chernus points out, predicated on a feeling of physical safety, whether that literally is upon a hill, or metaphorically: “From the churches of the earliest colonial settlements to the nuclear 'umbrella' and the Star Wars 'shield'. All were depended on for security.”<sup>61</sup> This sentiment is predicated on the real dangers and violence along the expanding frontier, a Revolutionary War, a destructive Civil War and the threat of immigrants and other 'ethnics' being incorporated into the American nation, changing its originally Anglo-Saxon identity. For the foreign – or domestic but alien – threat, whether it is an ideology or nation or people, “the name of the enemy is a secondary matter”, according to Chernus: “The mythology of homeland insecurity requires only that someone or something endangers – and will always endanger – the very existence of the nation.”<sup>62</sup> This myth exists dichotomously alongside the myth of 'Fortress America', which paradoxically presupposes the city upon the hill be as safe from assault as its many gated communities. Questing for a feeling of absolute security and protection, the United States of America has tried at different times to find this in political isolation, international diplomacy and treaties, weapons development and huge defense spending. As John Dower remarks, however, the myth of 'Fortress America' has proven a fallacy, as much to the “horrified realization” of the American people, they were proven “vulnerable to attack by determined enemies” on both December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1941, and September 11, 2001.<sup>63</sup>

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60 Esch, Joanne. 'Legitimizing the “War on Terror”': Political Myth in Official-Level Rhetoric'. In: *Political Psychology*. Vol. 31, no. 3 (June 2010). p. 358-370.

61 Chernus, Ira. 'The Mythology of Homeland Insecurity'. *Mythic America Essay*. Mythic America. Visited on: 22 May 2015. Url: <<https://mythicamerica.wordpress.com/the-two-great-mythologies/the-mythology-of-homeland-insecurity/>>

62 Ibidem.

63 Dower, John W. *Cultures of War: Pearl Harbor/Hiroshima/9-11/Iraq*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company (2010). p. 14.

## Chapter 1 – The Evil Beyond the Frontier

“The issue of our time, the issue of the war in which we are engaged, is the issue forced upon the decent, self-respecting peoples of the earth by the aggressive dogmas of this attempted revival of barbarism.”

**- Franklin D. Roosevelt, December 15, 1941<sup>64</sup>**

“There is a great divide in our time, not between religions or cultures but between civilization and barbarism. People of all cultures wish to live in safety and dignity. The hope of justice and mercy and better lives are common to all humanity. Our enemies reject these values, and by doing so, they set themselves not against the West but against the entire world.”

**- George W. Bush, December 7, 2001<sup>65</sup>**

On December 7, 1941, Hawaii was woken up by the heavy whirl of Japanese bombers and violent roar of 'zero' propeller-powered fighters racing over the island, followed shortly by heavy machine gun-fire of the fighters strafing American military airports and encampments, and the thundering blows of detonating bombs and splashed-down torpedoes hitting their targets. The attack, at least to the scrambling citizens and soldiers, came as a complete surprise. A little under sixty years later, it was the East Coast that on

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<sup>64</sup> Roosevelt, Franklin D. *Message to Congress on the History of Relations Between the United States and Japan*. December 15, 1941. The American Presidency Project. Transcript:

<<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16061&st=&st1=>>

<sup>65</sup> Bush, George W. *Remarks at a Ceremony Commemorating the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Pearl Harbor in Norfolk, Virginia*. December 7, 2001. The American Presidency Project. Transcript:

<<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=63634&st=pearl+harbor&st1=>>

the morning of September 11, 2001, woke up to terror. Two hijacked commercial airliners, American Airlines 11 and United Airlines 175, American-made Boeings, came in low over Manhattan, and – with a little more than a quarter of an hour between them – crashed into the World Trade Center. 34 minutes later, the Pentagon was struck by a third plane, American 77, before at 10:03 AM local time, United 93 came down in a field in Pennsylvania.

The attacks on Pearl Harbor were perpetrated by the Japanese imperial army, as a surprise first strike in the Pacific theater of the Second World War. The 9/11 attacks were committed by Islamic terrorists and would engulf the United States of America in a new war, not against a nation-state, but against the ideology of terrorism. Interestingly, there are many similarities in how presidents Roosevelt and Bush framed the attacks and attackers. Unsurprisingly, both initially reacted with shock as they addressed the nation. “The United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan”, Roosevelt told the American people, a day after the event in his radio-broadcast speech, both exemplifying that news traveled more slowly in the 1940s *and* emphasizing it had been the Japanese behind the attack.<sup>66</sup> In 2001, meanwhile, the first plane hit the World Trade Center at 08:46 AM, and Bush addressed the nation just 44 minutes later – before American 77 and United 93 crashed - at 09:30, from Booker Elementary school. “Today, we've had a national tragedy”, the president informed the nation, confirming reports this tragedy was no accident: “Two airplanes have crashed into the World Trade Center in an apparent terrorist attack on our country.”<sup>67</sup> Half an hour later, the other two planes had crashed down and the nature of the attack was apparent. While the fear of follow-up attacks lingered, a visibly flustered Bush made another statement a little after 01:00 PM, from Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana. “Freedom itself was

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66 Roosevelt, Franklin D. *Address to Congress Requesting a Declaration of War with Japan*. December 8, 1941. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16053&st=&st1=>>

67 Bush, George W. *Speech from Emma Booker Elementary School*. Florida. September 11, 2001. American Rhetoric. Transcript: <<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911florida.htm>>



attacked this morning, by a faceless coward.”, Bush expanded the scope of the attack to global and symbolic, making clear it wasn't just Manhattan that was struck, but the entire country and its principles.<sup>68</sup>

## **Infamy**

While Roosevelt had had more time to prepare a response, he also had the certainty of knowing who was responsible for the attacks, and immediately set the narrative for how the Japanese were to be viewed. He first and foremost posited that December 7, 1941 would be “a date which will live in infamy”, intending to persuade his audience that Japan – which did not officially end conversations about finding a peaceful solution to tensions in the Pacific through a memo until an hour *after* the attacks – was therefore clearly not to be trusted, as it had been planning the attack for “many days or even weeks”.<sup>69</sup> The “unprovoked and dastardly attack” was, he repeated, part of a Japanese surprise offensive in the Pacific, with near-simultaneous attacks having taken place in the Philippines, Guam, Malaya, Hong Kong and Wake and Midway islands, inverting the strategy of 'show, don't tell' by actively encouraging the American people to draw their own conclusions and *telling* them “the facts of yesterday and today speak for themselves”.<sup>70</sup> An interesting note, however, pointed out by John Dower is that “this fine rhetoric ['A date which will live in infamy'] was an editorial afterthought.”<sup>71</sup> Roosevelt originally dubbed December 7, 1941 'a date which will live in world history', whereas his second draft – like his first, written without speech writers – included 'infamy': “an indelible part of American history.”<sup>72</sup>

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68 Bush, George W. *Speech from Barksdale Air Force Base*. September 11, 2001. American Rhetoric. Transcript: <<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911barksdale.htm>>

69 Roosevelt, Franklin D. *Address to Congress Requesting a Declaration of War with Japan*. December 8, 1941. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16053&st=&st1=>>

70 Ibidem.

71 Dower, John W. *Cultures of War: Pearl Harbor/Hiroshima/9-11/Iraq*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company (2010). p. 3-4.

72 Ibidem.

For Bush, it wasn't clear beyond reasonable doubt who was behind the 9/11 attacks until later in the day. His first instinct had been to reassure and calm the nation: "I knew my reaction would be recorded and beamed through the world. The nation would be in shock; the president could not be. [...] I wanted to assure the American people that the government was responding and that we would bring the perpetrators to justice."<sup>73</sup> For his evening address Bush carefully considered what to say from the Oval Office: "My first instinct was to tell the American people that we were a nation at war. But as I watched the carnage on TV, I realized that the country was still in shock. Declaring war could further contribute to the anxiety. I decided to wait one day."<sup>74</sup> Roosevelt and Bush both waited a day to declare war, whereas in Bush's case, it would take even longer to name al Qaeda and Usama bin Laden as the ones responsible. The reason for that, in part, was that on the 11<sup>th</sup> and the first couple of days thereafter, the focus was on reassuring the nation, on saving those still caught in the rubble, and emphasizing there would be not follow up attack. The enemy could – according Chernus's myth of *Homeland Insecurity* - remain abstract a little while longer. After Pearl Harbor, however, it was apparent who the enemy was, as Hawaii wasn't struck by American built Boeings, but the downed and crashed Japanese fighters were a clear calling card.

Roosevelt had in fact not spoken to the nation on the day of the attack itself, which began a little after 1 P.M. Washington time, on a Sunday. With news traveling more slowly in the 1940s, and additional time required to gather information and draft a response, Roosevelt elected not to address the nation until Monday. Since tensions had already been high between the United States of America and Japan and the European fascist powers, and war for a long time mooted as a possibility, the actual and definite declaration of war Roosevelt issued on Monday December 8 undoubtedly came as little surprise, nor was it surprising Roosevelt played a large role in shaping perceptions of the Pearl Harbor attack.

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<sup>73</sup> Bush, George W. *Decision Points*. London: Virgin Books, 2011. Digital Edition. p. 131-133.

<sup>74</sup> Mueller, John. 'Pearl Harbor: Military Inconvenience, Political Disaster'. In: *International Security*. Vol. 16, no. 3 (Winter 1991-1992). p. 139.

Although according to John Mueller “the attack itself was dramatic and spectacular”, the actual long-term damage to American naval and other military materiel – not counting the many lives lost – should be more aptly be described as “an inconvenience” rather than an apocalyptic disaster.<sup>75</sup> Mueller argues that the media was a leading cause for the misrepresentation of Pearl Harbor, over-dramatizing the attack due to its “historic importance” and the – admittedly – huge “dramatic appeal” of images thereof.<sup>76</sup>

Roosevelt himself initially did not go into specifics when discussing the consequences of the attack, other than saying the armed forces had been dealt a heavy blow and that there were a lot of casualties.<sup>77</sup> A day later, during his fireside radio chat, Roosevelt declared further study would be necessary to determine the extent of the damage. Beyond using terms as vicious, surprising and severe, words that fit the by then prevalent stereotype of treacherous Japanese, Roosevelt – having not witnessed the attack itself – spoke little of the visual elements, but did further set the agenda of having to take action against the reprehensible Axis. Although Roosevelt according to Mary Stuckey did typically rely heavily on “visual rhetoric” he avoided utilizing it when describing Pearl Harbor.<sup>78</sup> Perhaps he felt it was inappropriate. Perhaps he didn't want to upset the American people, although many had surely seen photographs of the attack. Perhaps he really felt the facts spoke for themselves, even if photographs and news reports seem to us today a meager substitute for live television.

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75 Mueller, John. 'Pearl Harbor: Military Inconvenience, Political Disaster'. In: *International Security*. Vol. 16, no. 3 (Winter 1991-1992). p. 188.

76 Ibidem.

77 Roosevelt, Franklin D. *Address to Congress Requesting a Declaration of War with Japan*. December 8, 1941. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16053&st=&st1=>>

78 Stuckey, Mary E. 'FDR, the Rhetoric of Vision, and the Creation of a National Synoptic State'. In: *Quarterly Journal of Speech*. Vol. 98, no. 3 (August 2012). p. 298-300.

## Images and words

Bush on the other hand *did* extensively describe the visual and symbolic dimension to the 9/11 attacks. As explained by David Rothkopf in the previous chapter, what would be the War on Terror was, from the morning of September 11, 2001 on, was “the first in the country's history that began with an image.”<sup>79</sup> Images of the attack were broadcast, live, on television, throughout the country and world. Bush had seen them too. “I watched in horror as the footage of the second plane hitting the south tower replayed in slow motion. The huge fireball and explosion of smoke were worse than I had imagined. The country would be shaken”, he realized.<sup>80</sup> In his later evening broadcast address on 9/11, Bush acknowledged his audience had seen the images too, he thus specifically mentioned them, allowing him to show, instead of tell: “The pictures of airplanes flying into buildings, fires burning, huge structures collapsing have filled us with disbelief, terrible sadness, and a quiet, unyielding anger.”<sup>81</sup> Poignantly, he immediately recognized not only the symbolic significance of terrorists striking the World Trade Center, a bastion of American capitalism, and the Pentagon - its most well-known intelligence and defense center - but also utilized rhetoric fitting Whitaker, Ramsey and Smith's redefinition of 'doublespeak': “Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America”, Bush said, arguing there was good in the bad, since these symbolic attacks would not destroy the American spirit.<sup>82</sup>

On the evening of 9/11, Bush according to John Dower wrote in his diary that “the Pearl Harbor of the 21<sup>st</sup> century” had just taken place.<sup>83</sup> It is no surprise to Dower that Bush conceived the event as such and used the memory of Pearl Harbor and Roosevelt's

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79 Rothkopf, David. *National Insecurity: American Leadership in an Age of Fear*. New York: PublicAffairs (2014). p. 2-3.

80 Bush, George W. *Decision Points*. London: Virgin Books, 2011. Digital Edition. p. 131.

81 Bush, George W. *Address to the Nation on the Terrorist Attacks*. September 11, 2001. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=58057&st=&st1=&st2=>

82 Ibidem.

83 Dower, John W. *Cultures of War: Pearl Harbor/Hiroshima/9-11/Iraq*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company (2010). p. 4.

rhetoric as framing devices when it suited him, as “infamy, American code for Pearl Harbor [...] was the first word many American commentators summoned to convey the enormity of these crimes.”<sup>84</sup> On September 11, 2001, Roosevelt and Pearl Harbor were once again on Bush's mind, as a low-flying marine helicopter took him over a Washington, D.C. In lock-down, with the stricken Pentagon on the horizon.<sup>85</sup> “My mind drifted back over history”, Bush writes, “I was looking at a modern-day Pearl Harbor. Just as Franklin Roosevelt had rallied the nation to defend freedom, it would be my responsibility to lead a new generation to protect America.”<sup>86</sup> Having set the stage with his image-heavy addresses of the 11<sup>th</sup>, Bush would give a more event-based, but still visual description of the attacks two days later, before again underlining wide reception of the images by Americans from all demographics, when on the 14<sup>th</sup> he remarked that “We have seen the images of fire and ashes and bent steel.”<sup>87</sup> According to John Murphy in *Our Mission and our Moment*, Bush purposely used such visual imagery, in order to “dominate public interpretation of the events.”<sup>88</sup> Murphy characterizes Bush's speeches and comments as war rhetoric, which he defines as “rhetorical hybrid”, combining *deliberative* discourse - “arguments to justify the expediency or practicality of an action” - and *epideictic* rhetoric, focused on blame (reserved for the enemy) and praise for the own community, as this epideictic rhetoric is based on “appeals that unify the community and amplify its virtues.”<sup>89</sup> Murphy notes that Bush spoke almost exclusively in epideictic terms when laying the rhetoric foundation for the ensuing War on Terror, which Murphy deems logical, as Bush's co-opting the role of “voice of the people” was made possible by “the amplification strategies inherent in the genre mesh[ing] nicely with the display and entertainment functions of a contemporary

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84 Dower, John W. *Cultures of War: Pearl Harbor/Hiroshima/9-11/Iraq*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company (2010). p. 4.

85 Ibidem, p.140.

86 Ibidem, p.140.

87 Bush, George W. *Remarks at the National Day of Prayer and Remembrance Service*. September 14, 2001. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=63645&st=&st1=>>

88 Murphy, John M. “Our Mission and our Moment”: George W. Bush and September 11<sup>th</sup>. In: *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*. Vol. 6, no. 4 (winter 2003). p. 608.

89 Ibidem, p. 609.

televised culture.”<sup>90</sup> As Kellner points out, “the images of the destruction of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were an iconic part of the mediascape at the time that Bush and his administration constantly referred to.”<sup>91</sup>

Which isn't to say Bush 'exploited' this perfectly. As discussed, Bush unlike Roosevelt, who had often had plenty of time to prepare statements, had to be more improvisational, which according to some resulted in some poor public responses. Murphy, for instance, characterizes Bush's speech on the evening of 9/11 as “poor” and “not helpful”, whereas Denise Bostdorff describes him as displaying “nervousness and shock”, offering “very little” reassurance to his audience.<sup>92</sup> As an orator, he steadied himself thereafter, however, with his impromptu address to rescue workers at Ground Zero perhaps as sea-change moment, or at least an evocative symbol thereof. Or as Bush himself describes meeting “soot-covered” rescue workers and addressing them, bullhorn in hand:

To most of these men and women, I was a face they had seen on TV. They didn't know me. They hadn't seen me tested. They wanted to make sure I shared their determination. [...] People shouted 'We can't hear you'. I shot back, 'I can hear you!' It got a cheer. I had been hoping to rally the workers and express the resolve of the country. Suddenly I knew how. 'I can hear you. The rest of the world hears you', I said prompting a louder roar. 'And the people who knocked these buildings down will hear all of us soon.' The crowd exploded. It was a release of energy I had never felt before. They struck up a chant of 'USA, USA, USA!'<sup>93</sup>

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90 Ibidem, p. 609-610.

91 Kellner, Douglas. 'Bushspeak and the Politics of Lying: Presidential Rhetoric in the “War on Terror”'. In: *Presidential Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 37, no. 4 (december 2007). p.626.

92 Murphy, John M. "Our Mission and our Moment": George W. Bush and September 11<sup>th</sup>. In: *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*. Vol. 6, no. 4 (winter 2003). p. 610-611. **And:** Bostdorff, Denise M. 'George W. Bush's post-September 11 rhetoric of covenant renewal: upholding the faith of the greatest generation'. In: *Quarterly Journal of American Speech*. Vol. 89, no. 4 (November 2003). p. 313.

93 Bush, George W. *Decision Points*. London: Virgin Books, 2011. Digital Edition. p. 150-151.

It was a key example of what Jon Roper calls a strength of Bush, that his “spontaneity allowed him to connect at a visceral level with his audience: acting simultaneously as their leader and expressing their feelings in the highly charged atmosphere of the time.”<sup>94</sup> More than that, he not only connected with his audience, despite holding a bullhorn in hand, he spoke *to* them, not *at* them. He physically interacted with the people around him (“I can't hear you” – “I can hear you”) with the bullhorn symbolizing that his words were meant for more than just those around, making his “the rest of the world hears you” especially appropriate, since it would in fact be Bush's voice that the rest of the world would hear.<sup>95</sup>

Bush, answering the call of the rescue worker to speak up, therefore didn't just answer his question, but questions burning on the lips of all Americans, when he simultaneously insisted the nation would overcome the tragedy and almost literally set the agenda: “The people who knocked these buildings down will hear all of us soon.”<sup>96</sup> That one, brief unscripted moment helped Bush become, at least in the immediate aftermath, the voice of (a large portion of) the people, in their suffering and resolve. Admitting that he sometimes “spoke a little too bluntly”, although that surely only humanized him, Bush himself had also heard his people's voices: “I still hear the voices of the loved ones searching for survivors and the workers yelling 'Do not let me down!' and 'Whatever it takes!' [...] September 11 redefined sacrifice. It redefined duty. And it redefined my job.”<sup>97</sup> What it did as well, is show just how different the respective media landscapes were in the 1940s and early 2002, and how much influence this had on the development of presidential rhetoric. Roosevelt referred to the facts and spoke more factually of the event as well, having the time to consider and plan his statements, whereas Bush had to deal with 24 hour news

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94 Roper, Jon. 'The Contemporary Presidency: George W. Bush and the Myth of Heroic Presidential Leadership'. In: *Presidential Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 34, no. 1 (March 2004). p. 135-136.

95 Bush, George W. *Remarks to Police, Firemen, and Rescueworkers at the World Trade Center Site in New York City*. September 14, 2001. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=65078&st=&st1=>>

96 Ibidem.

97 Bush, George W. *Decision Points*. London: Virgin Books, 2011. Digital Edition. p. 142, 153.

cycles. This meant that even with the threat of subsequent attacks still hanging in the air he already had to answer to the American *need* to know what had happened, while in the following days he had to do more to explain and contextualize an attack that had come out of left field, but had been seen by all, explaining the visual nature of his rhetoric. Roosevelt, on the other hand, had to talk about how Pearl Harbor had been the – admittedly surprising - starting shot of a war that already had been on the cards.

### **Bandits and terrorists**

Bush, writing in *Decision Points* about his speech from the Oval Office on the night of September 11, 2001, remembers that one thing that was important to him was “to convey my sense of moral outrage. The deliberate murder of innocent people is an act of pure evil.”<sup>98</sup> Bush's repeated reference to the 'evil' nature of those behind the attack, of al Qaeda, fits with what Murphy calls a puritan interpretation of the attacks, “shaping our understanding of an inexplicable event.”<sup>99</sup> One way to do so was by framing the attackers utilizing the well-known myths of civilization versus barbarism and exceptionalism mentioned before. As Joanne Esch emphasizes, these were “reappropriated to make significance of the 9/11 narrative.”<sup>100</sup> In this case, they cast a frame of both civilization versus barbarism and good versus evil whereby the existence and presence of an evil other, as defined by Bush, by default defined the United States of America as good and civilized.

Although there is a difference between the United States of America in Roosevelt's time facing an imperial nation-state and its army, and the essentially state-less – but often abetted - terrorists of 9/11, the way Roosevelt and Bush described the respective enemies

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98 Bush, George W. *Decision Points*. London: Virgin Books, 2011. Digital Edition. p. 139.

99 Murphy, John M. "Our Mission and our Moment": George W. Bush and September 11<sup>th</sup>. In: *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*. Vol. 6, no. 4 (winter 2003). p. 611.

100 Esch, Joanne. 'Legitimizing the "War on Terror": Political Myth in Official-Level Rhetoric'. In: *Political Psychology*. Vol. 31, no. 3 (June 2010). p. 365.



and their 'roles' within the myth of civilization versus barbarism was similar. Roosevelt dubbed the attacks treacherous – because of ongoing state relations – and criminal, perpetrated by “war lords”, “bandits” and “gangsters”, displaying “barbaric aggression”, using a frame, or stereotype, his audience could relate to.<sup>101</sup> For Bush, the attacks originally were perpetrated by a “faceless coward”, before becoming terrorists and, then, as more information had become available and had to be shared with the American people to give them a tangible enemy: “a collection of loosely affiliated terrorist organizations known as al Qaeda, with terrorists in more than 60 countries”, which had committed “acts of mass murder” under the leadership of Usama bin Laden and was “to terrorism as the mafia is to crime”.<sup>102</sup> Like the Japanese war lords, the terrorists were “enemies of freedom” and had according to Bush committed barbaric acts attacking “not just our people, but all freedom-loving people everywhere in the world”, again emphasizing the scope.<sup>103</sup>

Bush utilized the frame of the United States of America and other civilized nations taking on oppressive, anachronistic (terrorist) forces, as previously invoked by Roosevelt describing the Axis of Japan, Germany and Italy. “We have seen their kind before”, Bush said of the terrorists, presenting them within a recognizable frame: “They are the heirs of all the murderous ideologies of the 20th century. By sacrificing human life to serve their radical visions - by abandoning every value except the will to power - they follow in the path of fascism, Nazism, and totalitarianism.”<sup>104</sup> Drawing these parallels, Bush emphatically characterized the terrorists to the American people as setting out to do more

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101Roosevelt, Franklin D. *Fireside chat* of December 9, 1941 **and** *Message to Congress on the History of Relations Between the United States and Japan* of December 15, 1941. [See bibliography for full note.](#)

102Bush, George W. *Speech from Barksdale Air Force Base* **and** *Address to the Nation on the Terrorists Attacks*, September 11, 2001. **Also:** *Remarks In and After Meeting with National Security Team*, September 15, 2001, **and:** *Address to the Joint Session of Congress Following 9/11 Attacks*, September 20, 2001. [See bibliography for full note.](#)

103Bush, George W. *Remarks Following a Meeting with the National Security Team*, September 12, 2001, **and:** *Address to the Joint Session of Congress Following 9/11 Attacks*, September 20, 2001. [See bibliography for full note.](#)

104Bush, George W. *Address to the joint session of Congress following 9/11 attacks*. September 20, 2001. American Rhetoric. Transcript:  
<<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911jointsessionspeech.htm>>

than simply attacking and hurting the United States of America, not unlike the Axis of World War II who had been on a “blood-stained quest of conquest.”<sup>105</sup> Al Qaeda, too, wanted to remake the world and impose “its radical beliefs on people everywhere”, Bush essentially updated Roosevelt's rhetoric to the present time and thus drew American a familiar picture in trying to persuade them that action, once more, was needed.<sup>106</sup> Terrorists targeted the United States of America, Bush argued, because “we stand in their way”, thereby not hinting at any specific American policy or action having been the root cause for the attack – such as the supposed imperialism al Qaeda accused it of - but rather implying the United States of America's very existence and inherent and traditional promotion of its freedom and values had been cause enough to warrant the attack.<sup>107</sup> The Japanese, as Axis, nation had similar designs to change the world and similar objections to American propagation of freedom during World War II, according to Roosevelt, who at times used a stereotype (of the Nazi's and fascism in general) as simple reference to describe the Japanese to his people, whereas his broader description of the Axis would in turn be as a useful frame for Bush to contextualize the motivations of the new enemy six decades later.<sup>108</sup>

Like Roosevelt, Bush too would construct an Axis, an Axis of Evil in his case, which he did in his January 29, 2002 State of the Union address. States like Iran, North Korea and Iraq “and their terrorist allies” constituted an Axis of Evil, “aiming to threaten the peace of the world.”<sup>109</sup> As Douglas Kellner argues, however, “Bush's term 'Axis of Evil' is indeed highly misleading and semantically inaccurate. An axis implies a coalition and

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105Roosevelt, Franklin D. *State of the Union Address*. January 6, 1942. The American Presidency Project.

Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16253&st=&st1=>>

106Bush, George W. *Address to the joint session of Congress following 9/11 attacks*. September 20, 2001. American Rhetoric. Transcript:

<<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911jointsessionspeech.htm>>

107Ibidem.

108Roosevelt, Franklin D. *Message to Congress on the History of Relations Between the United States and Japan*. December 15, 1941. The American Presidency Project. Transcript:

<<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16061&st=&st1=>>

109Bush, George W. *Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union*. January 29, 2002. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29644&st=&st1=>>

connection between countries, embarking on a common project of domination. Iraq and Iran have long been bitter enemies [...] North Korea, of course, is a whole other question.”<sup>110</sup> Joanne Esch too asserts Bush lumped together “countries with vastly divergent interests and agendas”, by doing so relating the threat they posed to that of the Axis powers of World War II and “Ronald Reagan's evil empire” of the Cold War.<sup>111</sup> The reason for this, again, was to underline the United States of America's exceptional calling and mission, but also unify the country at a time crisis, like in World War Two.

On December 7, 2001, sixty years after Pearl Harbor, Bush himself would during a commemorative ceremony explicitly touch upon the myth of civilization versus barbarism. “There is a great divide in our time, not between religions or cultures but between civilization and barbarism”, he spoke, setting the stage and stakes, as persuasive means of underlining the inevitability of the War on Terror: “People of all cultures wish to live in safety and dignity. The hope of justice and mercy and better lives are common to all humanity. Our enemies reject these values, and by doing so, they set themselves not against the West but against the entire world.”<sup>112</sup> He thus reinforced a narrative he introduced earlier, on September 13, when he argued that: “These people [al Qaeda] can't stand freedom; they hate our values; they hate what America stands for.”<sup>113</sup> Bush implied there would be no possibility for appeasement or containment, telling Americans this enemy was as dichotomously opposed to them as possible, as it was the very thing that made America, America, that these terrorists abhorred and wanted destroyed. His narrative mirrored that of Roosevelt, who in his State of the Union of January 6, 1942 said Adolf Hitler and his “Italian and Japanese chessmen were bent on “the destruction of the

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110Kellner, Douglas. 'Bushspeak and the Politics of Lying: Presidential Rhetoric in the “War on Terror”'. In: *Presidential Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 37, no. 4 (December 2007). p. 634.

111Esch, Joanne. 'Legitimizing the “War on Terror”': Political Myth in Official-Level Rhetoric'. In: *Political Psychology*. Vol. 31, no. 3 (June 2010). 375-380.

112Bush, George W. *Remarks at a Ceremony Commemorating the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Pearl Harbor in Norfolk, Virginia*. December 7, 2001. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=63634&st=pearl+harbor&st1=>>

113Bush, George W. *Remarks in a Telephone Conversation with New York City Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani and New York Governor George E. Pataki and an Exchange with Reporters*. September 13, 2001. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=58062&st=&st1=>>

material and spiritual centers of civilization.”<sup>114</sup> Roosevelt also followed up on an earlier characterization, made on December 15. Commemorating the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ratification of the Bill of Rights, he posited that the American values of liberty and individual freedom encapsulated in this document were to the Axis “incomprehensible”, and “hateful [...] empty words which they proposed to cancel forever.”<sup>115</sup> Therefore, Roosevelt pointed out, as Bush would sixty years on, there was no substitute for action, as the Axis were striving to “impose again upon the peoples of the world doctrines of absolute obedience [...] which the free nations of the world have long ago rejected.”<sup>116</sup> Such invocations of the myth of civilization versus barbarism in both epochs created similar representations of a struggle for a civilized world, by the civilized nations, immediately casting opposing nations and ideologies in Frontier-like good and bad guy, or white and black hat, roles.

### **Evil and religion**

The main difference in the presidents characterizations, then, seems to lie in religion. Although exceptionalism is rooted in Christianity and Roosevelt too invoked this when referring to the duty to stand up to the enemies of freedom, he only referenced religion three times when characterizing America's enemies or describing the events, not counting the almost obligatory 'God bless us' or 'so help us God'. He did so for the sake of 'othering', by pointing out how Americans were righteous in their faith and being, while the Axis nations only practiced hate, and obedience to their leaders. There is no clear indication as to why, compared to Bush, Roosevelt referred comparatively little to religion in his war rhetoric. Roosevelt was religious, Episcopalian, and despite according to Merlin

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114Roosevelt, Franklin D. *State of the Union Address*. January 6, 1942. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16253&st=&st1=>>

115Roosevelt, Franklin D. *Radio Address on the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Ratification of the Bill of Rights*. December 15, 1941. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16062&st=&st1=>>

116Ibidem.

Gustafson' and Jerry Rosenberg's *The Faith of Franklin Roosevelt* not wanting to think too deeply about it, and preferring to practice his faith – in part because of his handicap and the attention he drew as president – personally rather than attending church, it was something they argue informed his political ideology. What can be argued to have deterred him from speaking out about it too frequently is the “assumption that many, if not most, of the religious references in his speeches were provided for him by his more knowledgeable speech writers”.<sup>117</sup> This makes it plausible that he did not want to imbue a topic he would have to speak on a lot with a religious dimension he was not rhetorically comfortable with. Additionally, Gustafson and Rosenberg point out that Roosevelt's pragmatism and politicking “tempered any tendencies toward radical idealism.”<sup>118</sup> Relating this to his rhetoric, it is not illogical to assume he wanted to avoid espousing rhetoric too apparently Episcopalian in a time the nation needed to unite and Jewish, Jewish-Americans and Catholic Southern European immigrants and their descendants had to be incorporated.

Bush, as indicated, wasted no time emphasizing the otherness of the al Qaeda terrorists, but stressed that “we should not hold one who is a Muslim responsible for an act of terror.”<sup>119</sup> During his September 17 speech at the Islamic Center of Washington he drew the distinction between “Muslim friends and citizens just as appalled as us” and fundamentalists who “violate the fundamental tenets of the Islamic faith” with acts of violence against innocents.<sup>120</sup> Bush went as far as to quote the Koran: “In the long run, evil in the extreme will be the end of those who do evil. For that they rejected the signs of Allah and held them up to ridicule.”<sup>121</sup> Terrorism, Bush continued, is “not what Islam is about”, he drove home the point for those demographics amongst his (media) audience

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117Gustafson, Merlin, Jerry Rosenberg. 'The Faith of Franklin Roosevelt'. In: *Presidential Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 19, no. 3 (summer 1989). p. 563

118Ibidem, p. 565.

119Bush, George W. *Remarks in a Telephone Conversation with New York City Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani and New York Governor George E. Pataki and an Exchange with Reporters*. September 13, 2001. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=58062&st=&st1=>>

120Bush, George W. *Address at Islamic Center of Washington*. September 17, 2001. American Rhetoric. Transcript: <<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911islamispiece.htm>>

121Ibidem.

that did not yet understand Islam, simultaneously making clear to American Muslims and Arabs (and those abroad) that he himself *did* understand and make the distinction.<sup>122</sup> On October 7, when speaking on Operation Enduring Freedom, the military campaign in Afghanistan, Bush reiterated the terrorists were “barbaric criminals who profane a great religion by committing murder in its name.”<sup>123</sup> As a president who was vastly reliant on his Christian religion – due to his own being born again after a myriad of personal problems and failures in his early life, and due to his electoral campaign being highly predicated on his religiosity to garner support from the then decisively large group of conservative Christian voters - he used his religion and its principles extensively as means of comforting and stimulating the nation after 9/11, and despite the prominence of religion in his rhetoric emphasized that the War on Terror was no religious war. To define the evil other, meanwhile, Kellner Argues, Bush relied on the underlying religious “binary discourse” of a war between good and evil, like the final battle between good and evil in the Bible.<sup>124</sup> For further framing of the attack and attackers, he didn't just use the Bible, as he had other American myths.

### **No more frontier**

Roosevelt and Bush also related Pearl Harbor and 9/11 to the frontier myth. Roosevelt did so in one of his fireside chats, in which his rhetoric as Mary Stuckey points out typically “created a participatory experience for listeners [...] encouraging the country to think, believe and act as a nation.”<sup>125</sup> In the December 9 chat, Roosevelt pointed out Americans had learned “that we cannot measure our safety in terms of miles on a map anymore.”<sup>126</sup> A

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122Bush, George W. *Address at Islamic Center of Washington*. September 17, 2001. American Rhetoric.

Transcript: <<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911islamispence.htm>>

123Bush, George W. *Speech regarding Operation Enduring Freedom*. October 7, 2001. American Rhetoric.

Transcript: <<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911intialafghanistanops.htm>>

124Kellner, Douglas. 'Bushspeak and the Politics of Lying: Presidential Rhetoric in the “War on Terror”'. In: *Presidential Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 37, no. 4 (December 2007). p. 626.

125Stuckey, Mary E. 'FDR, the Rhetoric of Vision, and the Creation of a National Synoptic State'. In: *Quarterly Journal of Speech*. Vol. 98, no. 3 (August 2012). p. 310.

126Roosevelt, Franklin D. *Fireside Chat*. December 9, 1941. The American Presidency Project. Transcript:

new outlook on defense and strategy was thus needed, he indicated when he told Americans something they no doubt all needed to know, but not wanted to hear, as he warned that the assault on Pearl Harbor could be “repeated at any one of many points, points in both oceans and along both our coast lines.”<sup>127</sup> Roosevelt thus also invoked the myth of national insecurity, using logical and symbolic persuasion to make clear that the idea of America as a fortress, of total security, was a fallacy, since there were no more natural boundaries providing protection: “The forces endeavoring to enslave the entire free world now are moving toward this hemisphere.”<sup>128</sup>

Bush reminded Americans of the same thing, lest it had been forgotten and not yet remembered, on September 11: “The victims were in airplanes or in their offices: secretaries, business men and women, military and federal workers, moms and dads, friends and neighbors. Thousands of lives were suddenly ended by evil”, and thus, no one was safe, secured by a frontier.<sup>129</sup> A difference compared to the Axis powers of Roosevelt's age, however, was that these Japanese invaders could still be tied to a nation. In the case of al Qaeda, Americans were facing “a different enemy than we have ever faced. This enemy hides in shadows. [...] This is an enemy who preys on innocent and unsuspecting people, then runs for cover”, Bush essentially continued his 'stereotypical faceless coward'-narrative of September 11<sup>th</sup> itself.<sup>130</sup> The implication was that more terrorists, like those who hijacked the planes on 9/11, could hide and come from wherever, including the United States of America itself, where the terrorist pilots had received flight training.

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<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16056&st=&st1=>  
127Roosevelt, Franklin D. *Fireside Chat*. December 9, 1941. The American Presidency Project. Transcript:

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16056&st=&st1=>  
128Roosevelt, Franklin D. *Message to Congress Requesting War Declarations with Germany and Italy*. December 11, 1941. The American Presidency Project. Transcript:

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16058&st=&st1=>  
129Bush, George W. *Address to the Nation on the Terrorist Attacks*. September 11, 2001. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=58057&st=&st1=>

130Bush, George W. *Remarks Following a Meeting with the National Security Team*, September 12, 2001. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=58058&st=&st1=>

Another way the ensuing conflict would differ from the previous, with regard to the idea of a frontier, was that it would be “a conflict without battlefields or beachheads, a conflict with an opponent who believes to be invisible.”<sup>131</sup> Throughout his addresses Bush stressed the war against terror – not unlike Roosevelt's war against an Axis of fascism – was “not a war against one terrorist leader or one group”, but against “a movement, an ideology”, imbuing it with a recognizable gravity to a nation which had previously gone through lengthy (cold) wars with the ideologies of colonialism, fascism and communism.<sup>132</sup> Where Hitler was figurehead of the Axis for Roosevelt, bin Laden was the archetypal evil figurehead of terrorism for Bush. Speaking from his cowboy perspective, Bush went so far as to say that he wanted bin Laden “dead or alive”, although that was a case in which he later admitted he had perhaps spoken “a little too bluntly.”<sup>133</sup> In any case, his rhetoric was more that of a tough-talking puritan sheriff who would go gun-slinging to pre-emptively protect the United States of America and the free world from further attack by evil, than the more prosecutor-like tone of Roosevelt, who described his Axis as comprised of bandits and war lords. Where Roosevelt repeatedly referred to the importance of standing up to tyrannic and barbaric forces and protect American (and universalist) freedom and democracy, for Bush this struggle as stated contained an added Biblical dimension. What he said on the evening of September 11 mirrored Roosevelt's December 9 fireside chat of accepting the challenge to fight alongside “other free people” to protect and defend the nation, and freedom itself, but with a twist.<sup>134</sup> “Today our Nation saw evil, the very worst of human nature. And we responded with the best of America”, he asserted, even on the 11<sup>th</sup> already addressing all, not just those that were struck. He concluded his statements of 11<sup>th</sup> acknowledging the hurt, but also 'doublespeaking',

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131 Bush, George W. *First radio address following 9/11*. September 15, 2001. American Rhetoric. Transcript: <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911radioaddress.htm>

132 Bush, George W. *Remarks at a Ceremony Commemorating the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Pearl Harbor in Norfolk, Virginia*. December 7, 2001. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=63634&st=pearl+harbor&st1=>>

133 Bush, George W. *Decision Points*. London: Virgin Books, 2011. Digital Edition. p. 142.

134 Roosevelt, Franklin D. *Fireside Chat*. December 9, 1941. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16056&st=&st1=>>



extolling American resilience and telling Americans they knew what would be next, and what to do, even if it would be hard: “None of us will ever forget this day. Yet, We go forward to defend freedom and *all that is good and just in our world.*”<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>135</sup>Bush, George W. *Address to the Nation on the Terrorist Attacks*. September 11, 2001. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=58057&st=&st1=>>  
**Emphasis mine.**

## Chapter 2 – Freedom, Culture and the 'Greatest Generation'

“The act of Japan at Pearl Harbor was intended to stun us—to terrify us [...] We have not been stunned. We have not been terrified or confused. This very reassembling of the Seventy-seventh Congress today is proof of that; for the mood of quiet, grim resolution which here prevails bodes ill for those who conspired and collaborated to murder world peace.”

- **Franklin D. Roosevelt, January 6, 1942**<sup>136</sup>

“These acts of mass murder were intended to frighten our nation into chaos and retreat, but they have failed. [...] These acts shattered steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve. America was targeted for attack because we're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world. And no one will keep that light from shining.”

- **George W. Bush, September 11, 2001**<sup>137</sup>

War, the adage goes, can unite a nation, but it can also divide it. Following the Pearl Harbor and 9/11 attacks, presidents Franklin Delano Roosevelt and George Walker Bush were certainly counting on the former, and thus rhetorically set out to make it so. Following the tragedy of December 7, 1941, Roosevelt, in his December 8 request to Congress for a declaration of war on Japan, his first address following the attack, attempted to rally the nation, emphasizing that it was, surely, of one mind as to the

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<sup>136</sup>Roosevelt, Franklin D. *State of the Union Address*. January 6, 1942. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <[http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16253&st=&st1=</a>](http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16253&st=&st1=)

<sup>137</sup>Bush, George W. *Address to the Nation on the Terrorist Attacks*. September 11, 2001. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <[http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=58057&st=&st1=</a>](http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=58057&st=&st1=)

egregiousness of the assault: “The facts of yesterday and today speak for themselves. The people of the United States have already formed their opinions and well understand the implications to the very life and safety of our nation”, he argued, already aware of the historic significance: “Always will our whole nation remember the character of the onslaught against us.”<sup>138</sup> Although not directly addressing the people, Roosevelt was undoubtedly aware all would hear his request to Congress and proclaimed he believed to “interpret the will of Congress and the people asserting that we will not only defend ourselves to the uttermost, but will make it very certain this form of treachery shall never again endanger us.”<sup>139</sup> Bush, as indicated, addressed the people within an hour after two planes hit the World Trade Center, but while Flight 77 and Flight 93 were still in the air. Keenly aware his reaction would be seen by a terrified nation, Bush spoke on what he then called “an apparent terrorist attacks”, immediately characterizing it as “a national tragedy”.<sup>140</sup> About three and a half hours later, Bush gave another address, in which he wanted to “re-assure the American people”, not just those in New York, that the “full resources of the federal government” were being deployed to deal with the crisis and protect them: “We will do what is - whatever is necessary to protect America and Americans.”<sup>141</sup> In his final sentences, he began rallying the people, telling them they would overcome: “The resolve of our great nation is being tested, but make no mistake. We will show the world that we will pass this test.”<sup>142</sup> Bush and Roosevelt thus both early on indicated the attacks transcended the here and now. They imbued them with significance beyond their facts, as the world had seen them take place and history would remember the tragedies, and the American response.

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138Roosevelt, Franklin D. *Address to Congress Requesting a Declaration of War with Japan*. December 8, 1941. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16053&st=&st1=>>

139Ibidem.

140Bush, George W. *Speech from Emma Booker Elementary School*. Florida. September 11, 2001. American Rhetoric. Transcript: <<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911florida.htm>>

141Bush, George W. *Speech from Barksdale Air Force Base*. September 11, 2001. American Rhetoric. Transcript: <<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911barksdale.htm>>

142Ibidem.

In his evening address and through the ensuing days, Bush directly engaged his audience by reiterating that psychologically, the attacks had not torn the nation apart, as he again implied its character was in *all* the American people, in their spirit, not in things. He did so by saying what's quoted at the top of this chapter, to which he added that: “These acts shattered steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve[...] This is a day when all Americans from every walk of life unite in our resolve for justice and peace.”<sup>143</sup> Similarly, a day later, Bush made clear this crisis would “require our country to unite in steadfast determination”, whereby it would be important in both the political and public response to “not allow this enemy to win the war by changing our way of life or restricting our freedoms”, since that's what Americans stereotypically hold most dear.<sup>144</sup> Bush, who repeatedly asserted freedom and democracy were under attack, mirrored Roosevelt, who on December 11 argued there had never before been “a greater challenge to life, liberty and civilization.”<sup>145</sup> Four days later, commemorating the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ratification of the Bill of Rights, Roosevelt, spoke of the “long history of freedom” and its self-evident truths, insisting Americans not only knew what to fight for, but also how: “We will not, under any threat, or in the face of any danger, surrender the guarantees of liberty our forefathers framed for us in the Bill of Rights.”<sup>146</sup>

Both Bush and Roosevelt had recourse to the myth of civilization versus barbarism, insisting their barbaric attackers did not believe in these American, civilized ideals (as discussed in the previous chapter) and were determined to challenge Americans to surrender these by their attacks. “Remember the Nazi technique”, Roosevelt acutely cautioned his people, warning against stereotyping within their own community: “[The

143 Bush, George W. *Address to the Nation on the Terrorist Attacks*. September 11, 2001. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <[http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=58057&st=&st1=>](http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=58057&st=&st1=)

144 Bush, George W. *Remarks Following a Meeting with the National Security Team*, September 12, 2001. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <[http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=58058&st=&st1=>](http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=58058&st=&st1=)

145 Roosevelt, Franklin D. *Message to Congress Requesting War Declarations with Germany and Italy*. December 11, 1941. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <[http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16058&st=&st1=>](http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16058&st=&st1=)

146 Roosevelt, Franklin D. *Radio Address on the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Ratification of the Bill of Rights*. December 15, 1941. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <[http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16062&st=&st1=>](http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16062&st=&st1=)

Nazi's] Pit race against race, religion against religion, prejudice against prejudice. [...] We must not let that happen here. We must not forget what we are defending: liberty, decency, justice.”<sup>147</sup> Bush spoke similar words. “They hate our freedoms”, he'd repeat, warning his 21<sup>st</sup> century audience that: “We are in a fight for our principles, and our first responsibility is to live by them.”<sup>148</sup> The goal of the American response and resolve, after all, was to remain on the side of civilization, to remain exceptional: “America was targeted because we're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world, and no one will keep that light from shining.”<sup>149</sup> Although both presidents called on the myths of the 'city upon a hill' and civilization versus barbarism, a difference between Bush and Roosevelt was that Bush's narrative was predicated on the barbaric forces hating the United States of America and the rest of the free world, whereas Roosevelt spoke about nations that were considered civilized up until fascists rose to power. This distinction can be explained by Bush framing the ensuing War on Terror as a conflict between good and evil. Muslim fundamentalists were an evil to be eradicated, not redeemed, whereas Roosevelt's Japanese, Germans and Italians were products of “a decade of international immorality”, but especially the Europeans were not beyond saving if the United States of America and its allies would win the war.<sup>150</sup> These nations had, after all, prior to their corruption through immorality adhered largely similar values as the United States of America, Roosevelt argued.<sup>151</sup> Without their fascist leaders in place, he implied, the people of the Axis nations could be brought back into civilization and the shining light of American values.

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147Roosevelt, Franklin D. *Statement Against Discharging Loyal Aliens from Jobs*. January 2, 1942. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16220&st=&st1=>>

148Bush, George W. *Address to the joint session of Congress following 9/11 attacks*. September 20, 2001. American Rhetoric. Transcript:

<<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911jointsessionspeech.htm>>

149Bush, George W. *Address to the Nation on the Terrorist Attacks*. September 11, 2001. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=58057&st=&st1=>>

150Roosevelt, Franklin D. *Fireside Chat*. December 9, 1941. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16056&st=&st1=>>

151Roosevelt, Franklin D. *Radio Address on the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Ratification of the Bill of Rights*. December 15, 1941. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16062&st=&st1=>>

## Freedom and 'the other'

The utilization of the myth of civilization versus barbarism with regard to how the attacks impacted American society, was another way for Roosevelt and Bush to define American identity through 'othering', following the maxim as put forth by Ira Chernus that “whatever else we may be, we are most definitely the opposite of the evil we confront most clearly at the frontier.”<sup>152</sup> Since after Pearl Harbor the frontier no longer had natural boundaries like the oceans, or even air – and 9/11 was a stark reminder thereof – the threat was omnipresent and thus freedom itself was very much under threat. Or, at least, it was in the rhetoric of Roosevelt and Bush. As Kevin Coe argues in *The Language of Freedom in the American Presidency, 1933-2006*, it was no coincidence this was emphasized by Roosevelt and Bush as “there is perhaps no value Americans cling to more tightly than freedom. Freedom has been the rallying cry of the revolution and the foundation of great social movements.”<sup>153</sup> In order to create the national unity necessary to go to war, Roosevelt continued a trend set forth in his earlier rhetoric, as Stuckey asserts – and pointed out before – trying to unite the American people through his leadership by creating a “participatory experience” with his rhetoric.<sup>154</sup> As Coe points out, following Pearl Harbor and Roosevelt's rhetoric characterization thereof, “most citizens found little reason to doubt the president's repeated claims that America was engaged in an epic struggle to preserve its cherished freedoms.”<sup>155</sup> Roosevelt's rationale was predicated upon a civil nationalism as described by Gary Gerstle. However, this came with a racial nationalism in what Gerstle calls 'the Rooseveltian Nation': a nationalism founded on Theodore

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152Chernus, Ira. 'The Mythology of Hope and Change'. *Mythic America Essays*. Mythic America. Visited on: 22 May 2015. Url: <<https://mythicamerica.wordpress.com/the-two-great-mythologies/the-mythology-of-hope-and-change/>>

153Coe, Kevin. 'The Language of Freedom in the American Presidency, 1933-2006'. In: *Presidential Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 37, no. 3 (September 2007). p. 375.

154Stuckey, Mary E. 'FDR, the Rhetoric of Vision, and the Creation of a National Synoptic State'. In: *Quarterly Journal of Speech*. Vol. 98, no. 3 (August 2012). p.310.

155Coe, Kevin. 'The Language of Freedom in the American Presidency, 1933-2006'. In: *Presidential Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 37, no. 3 (September 2007). p. 391-392.

Roosevelt's belief that whites of western European descent were the ones most suited to fully appreciate, bring to fruition and profit from civic nationalist principles.<sup>156</sup>

This 'ethnoracial' perception of the nation, as Gerstle calls it, meant non-whites, which up until the 1920s included Southern and Eastern Europeans, “did not belong in the republic and could never be accepted as full fledged members.”<sup>157</sup> An important point made by Gerstle in *American Crucible*, however, is that after processes of Americanization had begun to bring Southern and Eastern Europeans into the (white) mainstream from the 1920s on, the Second World War concluded this process of melting together Euro-Americans.<sup>158</sup> Although the “elimination of racial and religious prejudice was central to the United States of America's war aims” and featured prominently in Roosevelt's rhetoric.<sup>159</sup> After Pearl Harbor, Americans felt the threat coming from the East, from the Pacific. They related this to Japanese-Americans by ascribing to them something Donna Gabaccia calls 'immigrant foreign relations': “immigrants' ongoing relationships to foreign places.”<sup>160</sup> Although Roosevelt cautioned against the dangers of thinking in terms or race against race, he – unlike Bush six decades later – did little else to address or allay such sentiments. In fact, his *Executive Order 9066* of February 19, 1942, gave the military the authority to designate “military areas” on the West coast from which they could – in his words – exclude, restrict, refuse entry to and subsequently provide transportation, food and shelter to residents excluded from these areas.<sup>161</sup> It was a veiled and *de facto* justification for internment of Japanese-Americans. Although, as Deborah Schildkraut emphasizes, it was an “ethnically neutral order”, only Japanese and Japanese-Americans were “excluded from these military areas and subsequently interned”, whereby by her

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<sup>156</sup>Gerstle, Gary. *American Crucible. Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press (2001). p. 4.

<sup>157</sup>Ibidem, p. 4-5.

<sup>158</sup>Ibidem. p. 5, 187-191.

<sup>159</sup>Ibidem, p. 167, 187-188.

<sup>160</sup>Gabaccia, Donna. *Foreign Relations. American Immigration in Global Perspective*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press (2012). p. 27.

<sup>161</sup>Roosevelt, Franklin D. *Executive Order 9066 – Authorizing the Secretary of War to Prescribe Military Areas*. February 19, 1942. The American Presidency Project. Transcript:

<<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=61698&st=9066&st1=>>

estimation “roughly two-thirds of the 120,000” interned held American citizenship<sup>162</sup>

Although around 10,000 German-Americans (or simply Germans) were interned as well, Schildkraut – referring to John Dower – points out “official rhetoric and public consciousness made a distinction between “Good Germans” and Nazi soldiers, whereas all Japanese were characterized as treacherous and barbaric.”<sup>163</sup> Roosevelt thus overtly addressed all Americans, but frequently implicitly distinguished between their underlying 'individual differences' as recipients of his messages, setting an apparent frame in which all residents of Japanese descent were suspect. As Schildkraut points out, Roosevelt contributed to this by referring to “the European enemy as 'The Nazi's' and 'The Fascists', whereas he referred to the Pacific enemy as 'The Japanese’”, which corresponds with “policy reactions to Pearl Harbor, where internment signaled every person of Japanese descent on the West Coast, citizen or not, should be considered a threat to national security.”<sup>164</sup>

Bush, on the other hand, made a clear distinction between good Muslims and evil fundamentalists. From September 13 on, when a telephone call he made to Rudy Giuliani, the mayor of New York City, and George Pataki, the governor of the state of New York, was broadcast, he declared: “Our nation must be mindful that there are thousands of Arab Americans who live in New York City who love their flag just as much as the three of us do.”<sup>165</sup> Bush called for them to be treated with the respect they deserve and to “not hold one who is Muslim responsible.”<sup>166</sup> Having framed the terrorists as barbaric fanatics and portrayed them as evil, Bush emphasized that “this world He [the Christian God] created is of moral design”, and following the attacks, America was showing the best of itself and

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162Schildkraut, Deborah J. 'The More Things Change... American Identity and Mass and Elite Responses tot 9/11'. In: *Political Psychology*. Vol. 23, no. 3 (September 2002). p. 511.

163Ibidem, p. 522.

164Ibidem, p. 520-521.

165Bush, George W. *Remarks in a Telephone Conversation With New York City Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani and New York Governor George E. Pataki and an Exchange with Reporters*. September 13, 2001. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=58062&st=&st1=>>

166Ibidem.



would “feel what Franklin Roosevelt called 'the warm courage of national unity'.”<sup>167</sup> This was an interesting remark, as Roosevelt, who spoke those words during his first inaugural address, in 1933, declared the “warm courage of national unity” came with “the clear consciousness of seeking old and precious moral values.”<sup>168</sup> Although Roosevelt barely stimulated unity with regard to Japanese-Americans, it was an important point to Bush, who argued this was “a unity of every faith and background”, appealing to the nation's mythic diversity, immigrant history and religious tolerance.<sup>169</sup> Bush thus essentially gave a new meaning to a concept introduced by Roosevelt, even though Roosevelt himself not adhere to it in World War Two. Denise Bostdorff in this regard argues Bush's insistence of a universalism among all faiths was to appeal to a transcendent religiosity, citing Bush's chief speech writer Michael Gerson stating that the idea had been to “employ religious language in a way that unites people.”<sup>170</sup> This was important to Bush, he explains in *Decision Points*, as “backlash against Arab and Muslim Americans” was a concern, because he remembered the “ugly aspects of America's history during war”:

In World War I, German Americans were shunned, and in extreme cases jailed. In World War II, President Roosevelt supported placing huge numbers of Japanese Americans in internment camps. One was [Bush's Secretary of Transportation] Norm Mineta, interned as a ten-year-old boy. Seeing him in the Cabinet Room that morning [September 12] was a powerful reminder of the government's responsibility to guard

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167Bush, George W. *Remarks at the National Day of Prayer and Remembrance Service*. September 14, 2001. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=63645&st=&st1=>>

168Roosevelt, Franklin D. *Inaugural Address*. March 4, 1933. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=14473&st=&st1=>>

169Bush, George W. *Remarks at the National Day of Prayer and Remembrance Service*. September 14, 2001. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=63645&st=&st1=>>

170Bostdorff, Denise M. 'George W. Bush's post-September 11 rhetoric of covenant renewal: upholding the faith of the greatest generation'. In: *Quarterly Journal of American Speech*. Vol. 89, no. 4 (November 2003). p. 302-303.

against hysteria and speak out against discrimination. I made plans to convey that message by visiting a mosque.<sup>171</sup>

And he did. On September 17, Bush spoke at the Islamic Center in Washington, D.C., again distinguishing between good and evil Muslims. “The American people were outraged at last Tuesday's attacks. And so were Muslims all across the world”, he said, stating that: “It's important my fellow Americans understand that. The face of terror is not the true face of Islam. Islam is peace. These terrorists don't represent peace.”<sup>172</sup> Again, Bush called for respect for American Arabs and Muslims, because they are “doctors, lawyers, law professors, members of the military, entrepreneurs, shopkeepers, moms and dads.”<sup>173</sup> It was a way for Bush to individualize American Muslims and Arabs, but simultaneously emphasize that as a group they made an “incredibly valuable contribution to our country”, separating them from the barbaric extremists beyond the frontier and persuading others to do the same.<sup>174</sup> Furthermore, however, Bush stressed that not only millions of Americans adhered the Islamic faith, but a billion people abroad did too. Although he did not admit this publicly, Bush needed to ensure Muslim nations that the War on Terror wouldn't be a war on Islam, as he would need their support fighting it. That is why after initially describing the War on Terror as a crusade, he backed off from that terminology, as Bostdorff points out, when his aides “convinced him not to use the word 'crusade' in public again because of its historical negative connotations in the Middle East”, thereby acknowledging the global reach of his words and reception thereof by those within the Islamic demographic.<sup>175</sup>

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171Bush, George W. *Decision Points*. London: Virgin Books, 2011. Digital Edition. p. 143.

172Bush, George W. *Address at Islamic Center of Washington*. September 17, 2001. American Rhetoric. Transcript: <<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911islamispac.htm>>

173Ibidem.

174Ibidem.

175Bostdorff, Denise M. 'George W. Bush's post-September 11 rhetoric of covenant renewal: upholding the faith of the greatest generation'. In: *Quarterly Journal of American Speech*. Vol. 89, no. 4 (November 2003). p. 304-305.

Bush was not only acutely aware of the backlash against and internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II, but according to Schildkraut many Americans also “recalled the camps and the mistreatment of many innocent people.”<sup>176</sup> Whereas after Pearl Harbor the emergent patriotism and national unity following the attack was in that sense untempered, Americans after 9/11 could use both the patriotism *and* cautionary tales of World War Two as “inspiration and warning.”<sup>177</sup> Although Schildkraut doesn't deny “lingering ethnocultural conceptions of American identity have been awakened by the [9/11] attacks”, she argues that this narrow definition of what it means to be an American was counterbalanced by Bush's rhetoric and – on a broader level – the post-World War Two rise of multiculturalism.<sup>178</sup> Without engaging too much in a debate on ethnicity and identity in this space, for the purpose of this paper the early 21<sup>st</sup> century view on being American is summed up well by Schildkraut. She asserts it *is* still very much subject to debate, but even as “the stereotypical image of an American as a white Christian” – and with 9/11 reintroducing “festered” questions on American identity and immigration – there are “cracks in the ethnocultural tradition” as past decades “have seen the rise and growing acceptance of a rival conception of American identity rooted in the nation's immigrant legacy and cherished cultural diversity.”<sup>179</sup> For Bush, reports of Americans harassing Muslim and Arab countrymen, were disturbing. “That's not the America I know. That's not the America I value”, he spoke out against such behavior, arguing it did not rhyme with American values and ethics and appealing to common decency: “Those who feel like they can intimidate our fellow citizens to take out their anger don't represent the best of America, they represent the worst of humankind.”<sup>180</sup> Bush in that way underlined his sensibilities to the multicultural American society of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and by selectively

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176Schildkraut, Deborah J. 'The More Things Change... American Identity and Mass and Elite Responses tot 9/11'. In: *Political Psychology*. Vol. 23, no. 3 (September 2002). p. 511-512.

177Ibidem.

178Ibidem, p. 512.

179Ibidem, p. 514.

180Bush, George W. *Address at Islamic Center of Washington*. September 17, 2001. American Rhetoric. Transcript: <<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911islamispence.htm>>

applying the rhetoric and lessons of Roosevelt and World War Two, reflected these new times.

## **Playboys**

Bush needed Americans at their best, as he like Roosevelt before him knew difficult times were ahead. Roosevelt declared that “it will not only be a long war, it will be a hard war.”<sup>181</sup> Bush issued a similar warning, cautioning that the conflict would no be short or easy: “the course to victory may be long.”<sup>182</sup> For Bush, the response to Pearl Harbor once again proved an example, as he as Bostdorff contends implored “younger generations to uphold the faith of their 'elders', the World War II generation.”<sup>183</sup> Much like how the World War II generation was prior to entry in the war seen as as “weaklings and playboys” by the Axis, as Roosevelt perhaps provokingly reminded his audience to get a rise out of them, although they would go on to win the war and through legend became to be seen as the so-called 'greatest generation'.<sup>184</sup> Bush needed the new generations to similarly rise to the occasion and seemed to recognize this. Roosevelt, after the Pearl Harbor attacks said the Axis had challenged the United States of America, and the United States of America would meet it.<sup>185</sup> Bush echoed this. He posited during his State of the Union of 29 January, 2002, that “our enemies believed America was weak and materialistic, that we would splinter in fear and selfishness”, but instead, Bush argued, Americans had shown “the true character of this country in a time of testing”, using the idea of 'doublespeak' as mentioned

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181Roosevelt, Franklin D. *Fireside Chat*. December 9, 1941. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16056&st=&st1=>>

182Bush, George W. *First radio address following 9/11*. September 15, 2001. American Rhetoric. Transcript: <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911radioaddress.htm>

183Bostdorff, Denise M. 'George W. Bush's post-September 11 rhetoric of covenant renewal: upholding the faith of the greatest generation'. In: *Quarterly Journal of American Speech*. Vol. 89, no. 4 (November 2003). p. 293-294.

184Roosevelt, Franklin D. *Fireside Chat*. February 23, 1942. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16224&st=&st1=>>

185Roosevelt, Franklin D. *Fireside Chat*. December 9, 1941. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16056&st=&st1=>>

in *MediaWriting* to praise them for turning tragedy into a triumph, leading him to conclude the terrorists "were as wrong as they are evil."<sup>186</sup>

Prior, on September 14<sup>th</sup>, Bush had already introduced the theme that "adversity introduces us to ourselves."<sup>187</sup> During his State of the Union Address he not only referred to this, but directly returned to this theme, connecting it to a new call for cultural change stating that: "this time of adversity offers a unique moment of opportunity, a moment we must seize to change our culture", he called back to a remark he'd made earlier in his address: "For too long our culture has said 'if it feels good, do it'. Now, America is embracing a new ethic and creed: 'Let's roll'", he quoted the battle cry of the Americans who took United 93 back out of the hands of terrorists.<sup>188</sup> "In the sacrifice of soldiers, the fierce brotherhood of firefighters, and the bravery and generosity of ordinary citizens, we have glimpsed what a new culture of responsibility could look like", he preached, specifically praising heroic public servants – co-opting a narrative that was propagated by the media – and 'regular' people who aspired to emulate the character of these heroic public servants, exemplifying ordinary citizens could greatly contribute too.<sup>189</sup> "We want to be a nation that serves goals larger than *self*. We've been offered a unique opportunity, and we must not let this moment pass", he verbalized the idea of 9/11 being not just a tragedy, but a chance for betterment, as long as his nation remembered that *too* could be part of the September 11 legacy.<sup>190</sup> Bush's insistence of cultural change was a consequence of:

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186 Bush, George W. *Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union*. January 29, 2002. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29644&st=&st1=>>

187 Bush, George W. *Remarks at the National Day of Prayer and Remembrance Service*. September 14, 2001. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=63645&st=&st1=>>

188 Bush, George W. *Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union*. January 29, 2002. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29644&st=&st1=>>

189 *Ibidem*.

190 *Ibidem*.

Parallels immediately drawn between the threats faced by the World War II generation and those faced now and in the foreseeable future by younger generations. [...]

Repeatedly, news stories quoted young people referring to September 11 as 'our' Pearl Harbor or 'our defining day'. Underlying the Pearl Harbor comparisons was the deeper question of whether the nation, particularly its post-World War II generations, was up to the challenge.<sup>191</sup>

Bush through what Bostdorff calls his “rhetoric of covenant renewal, reassured younger Americans they were.”<sup>192</sup> According to Bostdorff, although such rhetoric “made our allies cringe”, it befit the tradition of exceptionalist rhetorical appeals and was aimed specifically at his countrymen, describing them “as a special people watched over by a benevolent God” pleading for a “renewal of the national covenant, *particularly* by the younger generations.”<sup>193</sup>

Unlike Roosevelt, who made clear “every man, woman and child is in this war” and that there were testing times ahead for Americans who would no doubt “cheerfully give up those material things they are asked to give up”, but since it was inherent to the stereotype of their national character, would just as surely “retain the great spiritual things without which we cannot win through”, Bush made no such requests.<sup>194</sup> From September 11<sup>th</sup> on, he made clear the government was still functioning, a necessary point, since unlike when the outlying Pearl Harbor was struck in 1941, the 9/11 attacks hit America's heart. Ordinary citizens, while asked for patience, resolve and the best of their character, were not expected to make sacrifices in their daily lives, Bush replied when asked: “Our hope, of course, is that they make no sacrifice whatsoever. We would like to see life return to

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191Bostdorff, Denise M. 'George W. Bush's post-September 11 rhetoric of covenant renewal: upholding the faith of the greatest generation'. In: *Quarterly Journal of American Speech*. Vol. 89, no. 4 (November 2003). p. 299.

192Ibidem, p. 301-302. **Emphasis mine.**

193Ibidem, p. 301-302. **Emphasis mine.**

194Roosevelt, Franklin D. *Fireside Chat*. December 9, 1941. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16056&st=&st1=>>

normal.”<sup>195</sup> During his address of September 20, 2001, Bush repeated this message, directly engaging Americans and utilizing the concept of 'wants and needs', voicing answers to their questions: “Americans are asking: What is expected of us? I ask you to live your lives, and hug your children. I know many citizens have fears tonight, and I ask you to be calm and resolute, even in the face of a continuing threat. I ask you to uphold the values of America”, he inverted the narrative, making it appear as a dialogue in which he and the people had engaged and had given them the (right) answers to their questions.<sup>196</sup> What was needed, then, was moral support. For the troops and policies and measures being taken. Unlike World War II, the War on Terror would not require total mobilization. It would, however, as Bostdorff argues, ideally require “Americans to perceive it in the same black and white fashion they thought about World War II” framing it – unlike the Korean and Vietnam war – at least initially as a “good war”, for which they would only need to covenant (and perhaps redeem themselves) spiritually.<sup>197</sup> The most striking similarity in their appeals was that Roosevelt and Bush addressed all Americans, all demographics, morally and politically, to unite and support the nation to be their best. The biggest difference, meanwhile, was the extent of actual (physical) contribution and mobilization. That Bush thereby presented a narrative with Americans *asking* what was expected of them - while Roosevelt simply declared what was expected of them - is perhaps another telling hint as to how society changed, as well as indicative of how Roosevelt trusted Americans were made of the right stuff, whereas Bush despite his public reassurance to new generations of Americans that they were as well, was in private more doubtful as to whether the new generations had the mettle.

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195Bush, George W. *Remarks In and After Meeting with National Security Team*. September 15, 2001. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=63199&st=&st1=>>

196Bush, George W. *Address to the joint session of Congress following 9/11 attacks*. September 20, 2001. American Rhetoric. Transcript: <<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911jointsessionspeech.htm>>

197Bostdorff, Denise M. 'George W. Bush's post-September 11 rhetoric of covenant renewal: upholding the faith of the greatest generation'. In: *Quarterly Journal of American Speech*. Vol. 89, no. 4 (November 2003). p. 305-306.

Regardless, Americans, Roosevelt and Bush publicly argued, stepped up to the new challenges. During their respective States of the Union, they praised them for it, according to the epideictic nature of their rhetoric.<sup>198</sup> “I am proud to say to you that the spirit of the American people was never higher than it is today - the Union never more closely knit together, this country was never more deeply determined to face the solemn tasks before it”, Roosevelt spoke a month and a half after the attacks, while the war effort ramped up.<sup>199</sup> Bush, too, praised Americans for their resilience - “Our Nation is at war; our economy is in recession; and the civilized world faces unprecedented dangers. Yet, the state of our Union has never been stronger” - and *especially* extolled Americans for the character they'd shown: “after America was attacked, it was as if our entire country looked into a mirror and saw our better selves .”<sup>200</sup>

### **Exceptional injustice, exceptional sacrifice**

That Roosevelt and Bush applauded Americans for their response was hardly surprising, since they had after all, been dealt a tremendous blow. According to what Joanne Esch calls the myth of exceptional grievance, she argues Americans, since they are so exceptionally good and innocent, experience a specific “national ownership” of a “unique, historically and politically decontextualized injustice.”<sup>201</sup> The goal of, in the case of Bush, continually emphasizing ownership of the tragedy, was to cast America in “the politically valuable status of primary victim.”<sup>202</sup> This, at least domestically, justified subsequent political and military action and thus corresponded with the myth of the reluctant empire, acting not out of (imperial) desire, but out of necessity after being provoked. Interestingly,

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198Murphy, John M. “Our Mission and our Moment”: George W. Bush and September 11<sup>th</sup>. In: *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*. Vol. 6, no. 4 (winter 2003). p. 609.

199Roosevelt, Franklin D. *State of the Union Address*. January 6, 1942. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <[http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16253&st=&st1=</a>](http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16253&st=&st1=)

200Bush, George W. *Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union*. January 29, 2002. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <[http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29644&st=&st1=</a>](http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29644&st=&st1=)

201Esch, Joanne. 'Legitimizing the “War on Terror”': Political Myth in Official-Level Rhetoric'. In: *Political Psychology*. Vol. 31, no. 3 (June 2010). p. 372-373.

202Ibidem, p. 373.



whereas Roosevelt emphasized the gravity of the infamous and dastardly deed, leading to severe devastation and countless lost lives, he didn't provide a detailed, visual depiction when discussing the attack on Pearl Harbor, as discussed before. His description of American victimhood was thus less visceral and emotional, but more factual.

Unlike Bush, six decades hence, Roosevelt also didn't name victims by name, or describe their suffering and last moments. Bush on the other hand drew parallels between the victims and survivors, as if to make the nation identify with those that perished and those they left behind. "The victims were in airplanes or in their offices: secretaries, business men and women, military and Federal workers, moms and dads, friends and neighbors", he spoke on the evening of 9/11.<sup>203</sup> Two days later, he went into even more detail, arguing that through the attacks:

We have seen our national character in eloquent acts of sacrifice: Inside the World Trade Center, one man who could have saved himself stayed until the end and at the side of his quadriplegic friend. A beloved priest died giving the last rites to a firefighter. [...] In these acts and many others, Americans showed a deep commitment to one another and abiding love for our country.<sup>204</sup>

Interestingly, Bush as John Murphy points out initially did not actually mention victims by name.<sup>205</sup> In his remembrance address of September 14<sup>th</sup>, for instance, Bush referred to "the names of people who faced death and in their last moments called home [...] the names of passengers who defied their murderers and prevented the murder of others on the ground [...] the names of men and women who wore the uniform of the United States and

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203Bush, George W. *Address to the Nation on the Terrorist Attacks*. September 11, 2001. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=58057&st=&st1=>>

204Bush, George W. *Remarks at the National Day of Prayer and Remembrance Service*. September 14, 2001. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=63645&st=&st1=>>

205Murphy, John M. "Our Mission and our Moment": George W. Bush and September 11<sup>th</sup>. In: *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*. Vol. 6, no. 4 (winter 2003). p. 621-622.

died at their posts.”<sup>206</sup> It was a method, a narrative structure, which as Murphy states presented “models” of typical Americans, whose names could be filled in from the profiles on TV, but “in their anonymity, were us”, yet possessing a character and quality to aspire to.<sup>207</sup> Whereas in Roosevelt's rhetoric, this archetypal - or stereotypical – fortitude of character was present more as being *in* the inherent *character* of America as a nation. On September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2001, speaking before Congress, Bush did mention names. He spoke of Todd Beamer - “an exceptional man”, one of the passengers who took back United 93 from the terrorists - and told of George Howard, “who died at the World Trade Center trying to save others”, and whose police shield Bush would carry as “reminder of lives that ended, and a task that does not end.”<sup>208</sup> In October, when combat operations commenced, he spoke about a letter he received from a nameless little girl, the daughter of a soldier:

'As much as I don't want my dad to fight', she wrote, 'I'm willing to give him to you'. This is a precious gift. The greatest she could give. This young girl knows what America is all about. Since September 11, an entire generation of young Americans has gained new understanding of the value of freedom and its cost and duty and its sacrifice.<sup>209</sup>

Bush set a clear example of the kind of character and sacrifice that would be required, while simultaneously reassuring his audience that if little girls could understand and live up to it, their siblings and parents and all their friends certainly could as well.

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206Bush, George W. *Remarks at the National Day of Prayer and Remembrance Service*. September 14, 2001. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=63645&st=&st1=>

207Murphy, John M. "Our Mission and our Moment": George W. Bush and September 11<sup>th</sup>. In: *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*. Vol. 6, no. 4 (winter 2003). p. 621-622.

208Bush, George W. *Address to the joint session of Congress following 9/11 attacks*. September 20, 2001. American Rhetoric. Transcript: <<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911jointsessionspeech.htm>>

209Bush, George W. *Speech regarding Operation Enduring Freedom*. October 7, 2001. American Rhetoric. Transcript: <<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911intialafghanistanops.htm>>

Although their methods of framing victimhood were different and they called for different types of sacrifices from the American people, there was a similarity to how Roosevelt and Bush described the nature of the sacrifice. “It is not correct to use that word”, Roosevelt stated, not only for himself, but also explicitly to rally his fellow countrymen to live up to their and their nation's natural exceptional character: “The United States does not consider it a sacrifice to do all one can, to give one's best to our nation, when the nation is fighting for its existence and its future life.”<sup>210</sup> Citing non-personified examples, he argued “it is not a sacrifice” to serve in the military or “to pay more taxes, to buy more bonds” and work longer and harder.<sup>211</sup> “Rather, it is a privilege”, Roosevelt insisted, since the the fighting was “not for conquest, not for vengeance, but for a world in which this nation, and all this nation represents, will be safe for our children.”<sup>212</sup> Another example of the historic importance of winning, as Americans would not just be fighting for today, but for the future as well. What Roosevelt did, John Kane contends, is “build a conceptual bridge between Americans sense of exceptionalism on the one hand and international order on the other.”<sup>213</sup> Bush did the same after 9/11. Through his rhetoric “rife with pseudo-theological language” imbuing the War on Terror with “apocalyptic significance”, American grief and victimhood fit his frame for a struggle of good and evil, of civilization versus barbarism.<sup>214</sup> In that too, the United States of America had in accordance with its exceptional nature a role to play in shaping the future. Much like how Roosevelt wanted to secure a safe world for Americans today and times to come, for Bush the terror of 9/11 brought along “our mission and our moment.”<sup>215</sup> “Freedom and fear are at war. The advance of human freedom - the great achievement of our time, and the great

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210Roosevelt, Franklin D. *Fireside Chat*. December 9, 1941. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16056&st=&st1=>>

211Ibidem.

212Ibidem.

213Kane, John. 'American Values or Human Rights? U.S. Foreign Policy and the Fractured Myth of Virtuous Power. In: *Presidential Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 33, no 4 (December 2003). p. 780.

214Esch, Joanne. 'Legitimizing the “War on Terror”': Political Myth in Official-Level Rhetoric'. In: *Political Psychology*. Vol. 31, no. 3 (June 2010).

215Bush, George W. *Address to the joint session of Congress following 9/11 attacks*. 20 September 2001. American Rhetoric. Transcript:

<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911jointsessionspeech.htm>

hope of every time - now depends on us. Our nation, this generation, will lift a dark threat of violence from our people and our future”, Bush declared, mirroring the epic scope of World War Two.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>216</sup>Bush, George W. *Address to the joint session of Congress following 9/11 attacks*. 20 September 2001. American Rhetoric. Transcript:  
<<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911jointsessionspeech.htm>>

### Chapter 3 – How and Why We Fight

“We cannot wage this war in a defensive spirit. As our power and our resources are fully mobilized, we shall carry the attack against the enemy - we shall hit him and hit him again wherever and whenever we can reach him. We must keep him far from our shores, for we intend to bring this battle to him on his own home grounds.”

- **Franklin D. Roosevelt, January 6, 1942**<sup>217</sup>

“Americans are asking: How will we fight and win this war? [...] Americans should not expect one battle, but a lengthy campaign, unlike any other we have ever seen. It may include dramatic strikes, visible on TV, and covert operations, secret even in success. We will starve terrorists of funding, turn them one against another, drive them from place to place, until there is no refuge or no rest.”

- **George W. Bush, September 20, 2001**<sup>218</sup>

Although, colloquially, the best defense is considered a good offense, both Franklin Delano Roosevelt after the attack on Pearl Harbor and George Walker Bush after the 9/11 attacks first and foremost insisted there would be no further attacks on Americans on American soil. “As Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy I have directed that all measures be taken for our defense”, Roosevelt emphasized on December 8, a day after more than 2,400 Americans lost their lives and Pearl Harbor, and many of its ships, were

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<sup>217</sup>Roosevelt, Franklin D. *State of the Union Address*. January 6, 1942. The American Presidency Project.

Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16253&st=&st1=>>

<sup>218</sup>Bush, George W. *Address to the joint session of Congress following 9/11 attacks*. September 20, 2001. American Rhetoric. Transcript:

<<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911jointsessionspeech.htm>>

left in ruins.<sup>219</sup> Bush, for his part, in his first address, after the attacks on the World Trade Towers, but before the Pentagon was hit and Flight 93 brought down – when the tragedy was still being described as *apparent* terrorism – made clear all possible help was being extended to the victims. In his second address, he reiterated that: “We will do what is – whatever is necessary to protect America and Americans.”<sup>220</sup>

In the days after the attacks, Roosevelt and Bush spoke of turning to the offensive, but also felt it necessary to re-emphasize the domestic sphere would be actively defended. For Roosevelt, his forces were already at odds with the Japanese in the Pacific and would later lose the Philippines and Wake and Guam. The news, he admitted, “so far has been all bad”, but although Roosevelt did not speak of good news, he did tell Americans there was some, since the year and a half since the fall of France had been used “to great advantage”, despite being blindsided at Pearl Harbor.<sup>221</sup> Roosevelt said little about *how* to defend the United States of America, instead emphasizing the lessons that there was “no such thing” as security – for nation or individual – now that the Axis powers had militarily banded together and set their sights on the United States of America, whose “ocean-girt hemisphere is not immune from severe attack.”<sup>222</sup> This mental image, a mere two days after Pearl Harbor, was a way for Roosevelt to let Americans draw their own conclusions, as he had set defense as a talking and agenda point, and the fight it was now in, was for self-defense, Roosevelt stated when speaking on December 15, 1941. By then, however, he already adhered to the adage that a strong offense would be the best defense. On December 9, he argued the “grand strategy” of the Axis could only be matched by a similar grand strategy, as the theaters of war and all battlefields were inter-connected.<sup>223</sup>

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219Roosevelt, Franklin D. *Address to Congress Requesting a Declaration of War with Japan*. December 8, 1941. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16053&st=&st1=>>

220Bush, George W. *Speech from Barksdale Air Force Base*. September 11, 2001. American Rhetoric. Transcript: <<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911barksdale.htm>>

221Roosevelt, Franklin D. *Fireside Chat*. December 9, 1941. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16056&st=&st1=>>

222Ibidem.

223Ibidem.

Roosevelt staged the conflict as a global, total war, which meant the only way to ensure American safety was to “abandon once and for all the illusion that we can ever again isolate ourselves”.<sup>224</sup>

The idea of isolation had actually polarized the nation until the infamous 7<sup>th</sup> of December. As David Kaiser points out in *No End Save Victory* “much of the nation and the U.S. army and Navy would have been content simply to defend the Western hemisphere”, but Roosevelt had “insisted on planning for total victory”.<sup>225</sup> Pearl Harbor and the Japanese plan to “terrify us to such an extent that we would divert our industrial and military strength to the Pacific area, or even to our own continental defense [...] failed in its purpose”, Roosevelt made clear: “We have not been terrified or confused [...] the mood of quiet, grim resolution which here prevails bodes ill for those who conspired and collaborated to murder world peace.”<sup>226</sup> According to Ronald Krebs' *Tell Me a Story: FDR, Narrative, and the Making of the Second World War* Pearl Harbor now provided Roosevelt “a national audience eager and receptive” to his insistence of full-scale engagement.<sup>227</sup>

Bush rhetorically did more to alleviate American fears of subsequent attacks on their home soil. After his reassurances of the 11<sup>th</sup>, Bush stated on the 12<sup>th</sup> that “We must remain keenly aware of the threats to our country.”<sup>228</sup> As Bush writes in *Decision Points*, he felt compelled not to underestimate the many lingering threats: “The CIA believed that there were more al Qaeda operatives in the United States and that they wanted to attack America with biological, chemical or nuclear weapons. It was hard to imagine anything more devastating than 9/11, but a terrorist attack with weapons of mass destruction would

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224Roosevelt, Franklin D. *Fireside Chat*. December 9, 1941. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16056&st=&st1=>>

225Kaiser, David. *No End Save Victory. How FDR Led the Nation into War*. New York: Basic Books (2014). p. 1.

226Roosevelt, Franklin D. *State of the Union Address*. January 6, 1942. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16253&st=&st1=>>

227Krebs, Ronald R. 'Tell Me a Story: FDR, Narrative, and the Making of the Second World War.' In: *Security Studies*. Vol. 24, no. 1 (March 2015). p. 158.

228Bush, George W. *Remarks Following a Meeting with the National Security Team*, September 12, 2001. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=58058&st=&st1=>>

qualify.”<sup>229</sup> Although Bush did not specify *how* he would protect the homeland, other than just like Roosevelt insisting the full methods and means of the national security and intelligence apparatuses would be utilized, he did on the 12<sup>th</sup> request 20 billion dollar in appropriations, for - among other things - protecting the nation. On the 20<sup>th</sup>, however, Bush introduced a new department, the Office of Homeland Security. “Our nation has been put on notice: we’re not immune from attack”, he echoed Roosevelt, before making a statement to Americans that the Office of Homeland Security would oversee and coordinate the “dozens of federal departments and agencies” that since 9/11 had taken up “responsibilities affecting homeland security”, answering how he would prevent further intelligence failures.<sup>230</sup> Bush thus provided Americans with (slightly) more concrete information as to how he would ensure their safety, although both presidents emphasized such practical information would be scarcely disseminated, as they didn't want to apprise the enemy of American tactics.

With their warnings that there no longer was a frontier-like boundary offering protection Roosevelt and Bush thereby took a cue from the earlier discussed myth of homeland insecurity as described by Chernus, namely the conviction that “someone or something endangers – and always will – the nation.”<sup>231</sup> In Bush's era, too, this was paired to an at the time popular call for isolation, to which Bush during his electoral run flirted with. He had declared that he saw a role for the United States of America as the world's peacemaker, but not it's policeman, that he hoped Europe would carry it own weight in its own backyard, the Balkan, and that in short: “There's got to be priorities [...] I'm worried about overcommitting our military in the world. I want to be judicious in its use.”<sup>232</sup> September 11, however, was a reminder of a lesson of World War Two, which not

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229 Bush, George W. *Decision Points*. London: Virgin Books, 2011. Digital Edition. p. 146

230 Bush, George W. *Address to the joint session of Congress following 9/11 attacks*. September 20, 2001. American Rhetoric. Transcript:

<<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911jointsessionspeech.htm>>

231 Chernus, Ira. 'The Mythology of Homeland Insecurity'. *Mythic America Essays*. Mythic America. Visited on: 22 May 2015. Url: <<https://mythicamerica.wordpress.com/the-two-great-mythologies/the-mythology-of-homeland-insecurity/>>

232 Bush, George W. Presidential debate in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. October 11, 2000. The American



just applied to the United Nations, since he was speaking at the General Assembly in New York, but equally to the United States of America in itself: “We learned there is no isolation from evil”, he again spoke words that sounded eerily similar to those of sixty years before.<sup>233</sup> Where Roosevelt had opposed isolationists prior to American entry in World War Two, for the initially more isolationist Bush, as Ivo Daalder and James Lindsay argue, this was a (partially) new found conviction that had been reinforced by another painful realization : “Watching jetliners plow into skyscrapers on a beautiful late summer day made it hard not to believe that evil lurked in the world.”<sup>234</sup>

### **Homeland**

In a way, the idea of homeland security being threatened from abroad was not new, and actually continuously prevalent since World War Two, as John Thompson argues in *Conceptions of National Security and American Entry into World War II*. “World War II was the great turning point in the history of U.S. foreign policy”, Thompson writes, arguing that: “Reliance on geographical location and America’s own military capacity to protect the physical integrity of the North American homeland gave way to an assumption that the safety of the United States from external attack depended upon the balance of power beyond the Western Hemisphere.”<sup>235</sup> Thompson gives two possible explanations for this shift. The first - and it can be argued Pearl Harbor is the cause for this - is that this re-conception “resulted from a belief that a strategy of continental or hemispheric defense would no longer suffice to protect the physical safety of the homeland.”<sup>236</sup> This is something which corresponds with Roosevelt's and Bush' framing of the attacks, as Bush himself – practically paraphrasing Roosevelt – acknowledged: “America is no longer

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Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29419>>  
233Bush, George W. *First Address to the United Nations General Assembly*. November 10, 2001. American Rhetoric. Transcript: <<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911unitednations.htm>>  
234Daalder, Ivo H., James M. Lindsay. *America Unbound. The Bush Revolution in Foreign Policy*. Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution (2003). p. 87-88.  
235Thompson, John A. 'Conceptions of National Security and American Entry into World War II'. In: *Diplomacy & Statecraft*. Vol. 16, no. 4 (2005). p. 671-672.  
236Ibidem, p. 672.

protected by vast oceans. We are protected from attack only by vigorous action abroad and increased vigilance at home.”<sup>237</sup> According to Thompson the re-conception of national security can, however, also be explained as following “an acceptance of the view that the nation’s vital security interests should be conceived as including more than the ability to avert or defeat a direct attack.”<sup>238</sup> Roosevelt clearly believed so, as he after Pearl Harbor attempted to garner support by declaring that “our territory and our interests are in grave danger”.<sup>239</sup> Freedom, naturally, was one of those interests, as he had stated prior to Pearl Harbor, as cited by Thompson, that “The continued political, economic and social independence of every small nation in the world does have an effect upon our national safety and prosperity.”<sup>240</sup>

Whereas Roosevelt did not explicitly mention this element again later on, it was logical for Bush to do so in the context of a globalized 21<sup>st</sup> century world. Aside from declaring early on that “freedom itself was attacked”, he in his September 18 statement on authorizing the *Use of Military Force Bill* set new terms by declaring it necessary to the United States of America's ability to provide a “direct, forceful and comprehensive response to these terrorist attacks and the scourge of terrorism directed against the United States and its interests.”<sup>241</sup> The protection of American interests - which Bush declined to specify, but had earlier during his run for election defined by saying: “Peace in the Middle East is in our nation's interest. Having a hemisphere that is free for trade and peaceful is in our nation's interest. Strong relations in Europe is [*sic*] in our nation's interest” - is elementary to the ideology of hegemonic thinking so prominent amongst his

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237 Bush, George W. *Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union*. January 29, 2002. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29644&st=&st1=>>

238 Ibidem.

239 Roosevelt, Franklin D. *Address to Congress Requesting a Declaration of War with Japan*. December 8, 1941. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16053&st=&st1=>>

240 Thompson, John A. 'Conceptions of National Security and American Entry into World War II'. In: *Diplomacy & Statecraft*. Vol. 16, no. 4 (2005). p. 676.

241 Bush, George W. *Statement on Signing the Authorization for Use of Military Force*. September 18, 2001. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=64595&st=&st1=>>

administration, Daalder and Lindsay point out.<sup>242</sup> It prompted Bush to introduce what has been dubbed the Bush doctrine, which would later mostly be equated to pre-emptive strikes and war. In *Decision Points*, Bush emphasizes he thought it was too early to declare war on the 11<sup>th</sup> because it “would contribute to the anxiety”, but he *did* want to introduce the idea of “war against terrorism”, providing the *initial* definition of the Bush doctrine: “The United States would consider any nation that harbored terrorists to be responsible for the acts of those terrorists. [...] We had to force nations to choose whether they would fight the terrorists or share in their fate.”<sup>243</sup> Bush thereby introduced a new tenet, a new dimension, to the American conception of security. By lack of a clearly demarcated schism between states, as had (mostly) been the case in the Second World War with the Allies and Axis. This labeling can again be seen as a way to make sense of 9/11 and the defining of friends and foes thereafter, but prior to Bush's more overt creation of a World War Two-inspired Axis of Evil in his State of the Union of January 29, 2002.

## **Offense**

A day after Pearl Harbor, on December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1941, the United States of America declared war on Japan, subsequently declaring war on Germany and Italy on the 11<sup>th</sup>. Roosevelt did not accompany those declarations with rhetoric about striking at these nations on their home soil, but elaborated on the greater mission of doing battle. In fact, aside from remarks about inevitable triumph, he only during his State of the Union of January 6<sup>th</sup>, 1942, specifically spoke about going on the offensive, stating that “Powerful and offensive actions must and will be taken in the proper time.”<sup>244</sup> It was also during this address Roosevelt used the concept of 'show, don't tell', to illustrate to his audience the point that “we cannot wage this war in a defensive spirit. [...] We shall carry the attack against the

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242Bush, George W. *Presidential debate in Winston-Salem, North Carolina*. October 11 2000. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29419>>

243Bush, George W. *Decision Points*. London: Virgin Books, 2011. Digital Edition. p. 139.

244Roosevelt, Franklin D. *State of the Union Address*. January 6, 1942. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16253&st=&st1=>>>

enemy – we shall hit him and hit him again whenever we can reach him.”<sup>245</sup> Doing so, fighting the enemy on their “home grounds”, would keep him “far from our shores”, but Roosevelt stressed offensive and defensive operations would go hand in hand.<sup>246</sup>

Roosevelt essentially laid out a framework Bush adhered to after 9/11, even if in his case there was more of a rhetoric emphasis on going on the attack. As indicated, Bush wasted little time introducing a frontier-themed narrative of venturing into the 'wild' and finding and bringing to justice – or bringing justice *to* - terrorists and colluding nations. Practically, this meant the homeland would be protected by cooperative efforts of the new Office of Homeland Security and new methods and means provided by the PATRIOT ACT – giving law enforcement sweeping powers – while this protection would be 'enforced' by military operations abroad.

Whereas Roosevelt described what can be considered a conventional war, Bush described al Qaeda as “different kind of enemy” and the impending war as a “different kind of conflict.”<sup>247</sup> Within his narrative of good versus evil, he framed it as more of a quest for justice, wherein American troops “will smoke them out of their holes; we will get them running”, Bush declared in frontier-terms, appealing no doubt both to backwoods hunters and ordinary Americans who did not just want their nation to get mad, but get even.<sup>248</sup> He stuck to this visual, descriptive narrative of full-scale combat when on September 20<sup>th</sup> announcing the United States of America was now engaged in the War on Terror, featuring “dramatic strikes, visible on tv, and covert operations, secret even in success”, and additionally hunting terrorists using any means possible: “Until there is no refuge or rest.”<sup>249</sup> Thereafter, on October 7<sup>th</sup>, Bush announced the first combat operations

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245Roosevelt, Franklin D. *State of the Union Address*. January 6, 1942. The American Presidency Project.

Transcript: <[http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16253&st=&st1=>](http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16253&st=&st1=)

246Ibidem.

247Bush, George W. *First radio address following 9/11*. September 15, 2001. American Rhetoric. Transcript: <<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911radioaddress.htm>>

248Bush, George W. *Remarks In and After Meeting with National Security Team*. September 15, 2001. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <[http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=63199&st=&st1=>](http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=63199&st=&st1=)

249Bush, George W. *Address to the joint session of Congress following 9/11 attacks*. September 20, 2001. American Rhetoric. Transcript: <<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911jointsessionspeech.htm>>

were taking place in Afghanistan, singled out due to the Taliban regime's abetting al Qaeda and not yielding to Bush's ultimatum of surrendering al Qaeda leaders and shutting down training camps, which American forces would now forcibly do for them. Bush also emphasized humanitarian aid would be provided to the Afghan people, as he – as stipulated – did not wish to wage war on Islam or Afghanistan as a whole, distinguishing between good Muslims and evildoers and their cohorts. After just six days of combat, Bush informed the American people that while “taking the war to the enemy” and reinforcing domestic security, the first objectives had been achieved: “We have disrupted the terrorist network inside Afghanistan”, he spoke, simultaneously cautioning that “This campaign will not be completed in one attack. [...] The best defense against terrorism is a strong offensive against terrorists. That work continues.”<sup>250</sup> It would even continue after the capitulation of the Taliban in late 2001, as Bush made clear during his State of the Union Address of January 29, 2002. With American-backed leadership in place and Afghanistan now an ally in the War on Terror, the message was clear for Americans to draw their own conclusions on the expediency of the military mission after being shown the facts: “Even 7,000 miles away, across oceans and continents, on mountaintops and in caves, you will not escape the justice of this nation.”<sup>251</sup> The mission, though, was open-ended, Bush told Americans who were wondering if the conflict was now done: “What we have found in Afghanistan confirms that, far from ending there, our war against terror is only beginning.”<sup>252</sup> Discussing this topic, regardless of John Murphy characterizing war rhetoric as a “hybrid” Bush relied primarily on epideictic rhetoric.<sup>253</sup> Even when speaking on the commencement of military action: “Objectives and actions were announced, not

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250 Bush, George W. *The President's Radio Address*. October 13, 2001. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=24997&st=&st1=>>

251 Bush, George W. *Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union*. January 29, 2002. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29644&st=&st1=>>

252 Bush, George W. *Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union*. January 29, 2002. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29644&st=&st1=>>

253 Murphy, John M. “Our Mission and our Moment”: George W. Bush and September 11<sup>th</sup>. In: *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*. Vol. 6, no. 4 (winter 2003). p. 609, 612-613.

justified. [...] Bush did not use the occasion to develop a full rationale for the war.”<sup>254</sup>

Throughout, Murphy argues, Bush did not address any of the possible consequences of this course of action, instead adhering to the premise that “we acted out of character, not expediency. We chose the right way, not the easy way.”<sup>255</sup> Although Murphy may have a point in arguing Bush didn't explicitly discuss the many possible effects of his actions, Bush had, however, clearly implied (pre-emptive) action was necessary to prevent further attacks on freedom.

Interestingly, Roosevelt expand on the consequences of *inaction* - “delay invites great danger” - he would consistently relate the necessity to act and stop the Axis' expansion and the proliferation of their fascist ideology to reasons of character.<sup>256</sup> “We are fighting in defense of principles of law and order and justice”, he argued, admitting that the war would be arduous, but the cause worth it.<sup>257</sup> The epideictic appeals of Bush can thus be seen as continuation of Roosevelt's, especially as Dan Scroop in *September 11<sup>th</sup>, Pearl Harbor and the Uses of Presidential Power* points out that certainly “someone in the Bush camp has been set to work on the FDR papers” as Roosevelt's 1942 State of the Union call that “The militarists of Berlin and Tokyo started this war. But the massed, angered forces of common humanity will finish it” was echoed by Bush declaring in his September 14 remarks on the national day of remembrance that: “This conflict was begun on the timing and terms of others; it will end in a way and at an hour of our choosing.”<sup>258</sup>

Just as Roosevelt had, Bush touched upon the myth of the reluctant empire. Roosevelt cast the Axis as fascist imperialist powers, which meant that in representing the opposite end of the scale, he highlighted the United States of America's anti-colonial stance, but

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254Murphy, John M. "Our Mission and our Moment": George W. Bush and September 11<sup>th</sup>. In: *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*. Vol. 6, no. 4 (winter 2003). p. 609, 612-613.

255Ibidem, p. 612-613.

256Roosevelt, Franklin D. *Message to Congress Requesting War Declarations with Germany and Italy*. December 11, 1941. The American Presidency Project. Transcript:

<<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16058&st=&st1=>>

257Roosevelt, Franklin D. *Message to Congress on the History of Relations Between the United States and Japan*. December 15, 1941. The American Presidency Project. Transcript:

<<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16061&st=&st1=>>

258Scroop, Dan. 'September 11<sup>th</sup>, Pearl Harbor and the Uses of Presidential Power'. In: *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*. Vol. 15, no. 2 (2002). p. 323-324.

also vigorously asserted it had been pulled into the war by the attack on Pearl Harbor. The Axis had, after all, “flung” their challenge at the United States of America, which had merely accepted it, so it now fought for self-defense, but did so reluctantly: “When we resort to force, as now we must, we are determined that this force shall be directed toward ultimate good as well as against immediate evil. We Americans are not destroyers - we are builders.”<sup>259</sup> Bush appealed to the same myth, not only by his repetition of the mantra that the war had not begun on the United States of America's terms, but also that it was in fact, as argued in the previous chapter, the exceptional victim that had to respond following a barbaric assault, repeating a political platitude: “this is a peaceful nation, but fierce when stirred to anger.”<sup>260</sup> In addition to anger, however, there was also the obligation to act. “They have attacked America because we are freedom's home and defender, and the commitment of our Fathers is now the calling of our time”, Bush directly invoked the founding fathers and the inalienable rights and self-evident truths (like freedom) they represent, which are of course inherently tied to (the myth of) the United States of America's exceptional and revolutionary birth. A new truth had become apparent on September 11, however, and it was a truth that Bush believed would never again be forgotten by his fellow Americans: “Evil is real, and it must be opposed.”<sup>261</sup> America, which as Bush argued had been awakened by the events of 9/11, and “called to a unique role in human events.”<sup>262</sup> He best summed up the reluctance and responsibility on October 7<sup>th</sup>, however, in one brief, but poignantly exceptional sentence: “We did not ask for this mission, but we fulfill it.”<sup>263</sup> Like Roosevelt, Bush too appropriated the myth of the reluctant empire, or at least characterized the United States of America as a reluctant great

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259Roosevelt, Franklin D. *Fireside Chat*. December 9, 1941. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16056&st=&st1=>>

260Bush, George W. *Remarks at the National Day of Prayer and Remembrance Service*. September 14, 2001. The American Presidency Project. <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=63645&st=&st1=>>

261Bush, George W. *Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union*. January 29, 2002. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29644&st=&st1=>>

262Ibidem.

263Bush, George W. *Speech regarding Operation Enduring Freedom*. October 7, 2001. American Rhetoric. Transcript: <<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911intialafghanistanops.htm>>

nation-power with the potential to be decisive in delivering the outcome desired by the side of civilization. The United States of America did not want to fight in either case, but with so much at stake, it would. And it would win.

### **The cost**

As argued in chapter two, there were great differences between how Roosevelt and Bush appealed to the nation and what they required of the American people. While Americans in World War Two were not only called upon, but actually drafted into the armed forces, Bush only called up (selected) reservists and the National Guard to support the professional army. When fighting commenced on October 7<sup>th</sup> in Afghanistan, he reiterated that as commander in chief he only sent Americans to fight abroad after extensive consideration – and prayer – and understood the sacrifice they were making, but had full faith in them. A month later, he repeated that the United States of America “must have a military organized for decisive and total victory” and what he called his “pledge” to give American soldiers whatever they needed to win.<sup>264</sup> In his State of the Union, he for the first time since his statement regarding the appropriations for funds spoke about the cost. “It costs a lot”, Bush bluntly declared, “We have spent more than a billion dollars a month”, he admitted, immediately justifying the cost: “while the price of freedom and security is high, it is never too high.”<sup>265</sup>

Bush made a distinction between the financial cost and the sacrifice the American people would have to make, expecting them to be patient, resolute and supportive of his policies. Roosevelt, on the other hand, required the World War Two generation to not only serve *and* finance the war effort, but also mobilize and help with the production of ammunition and weapons for the United States of America and its allies. Sending large

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<sup>264</sup>Bush, George W. *Remarks at a Ceremony Commemorating the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Pearl Harbor in Norfolk, Virginia*. December 7, 2001. The American Presidency Project. Transcript:

<<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=63634&st=pearl+harbor&st1=>>

<sup>265</sup>Bush, George W. *Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union*. January 29, 2002. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29644&st=&st1=>>



amounts of war materiel to beleaguered nations was a self-justifying policy, Roosevelt could now tell those who had been critical of the war preparations Roosevelt had taken even before Pearl Harbor, giving a concrete example: “A steady stream of tanks and planes, of guns and ships, and shells and equipment—that is what these eighteen months have given us. But it is all only a beginning of what still has to be done”, Roosevelt asserted, announcing the war machine would need to run non-stop.<sup>266</sup> Despite setting this as talking point early on, Roosevelt would not speak about it in detail again until his State of the Union, in which he specifically mentioned how many units of different weapons were needed. Although he like Bush admitted that “war costs money” and vast financial investments were required, Roosevelt also emphasized that “Production for war is based on men and women”, but he trusted all Americans would give their all, as “on the speed and efficiency of their work depend the lives of their sons and brothers on the fighting fronts.”<sup>267</sup> The message was that there was no time to debate. “Speed will save our freedom and our civilization - and slowness has never been an American characteristic”, he reminded his audience, calling them to unite and live up to their exceptional character.<sup>268</sup> Roosevelt, then, clearly asked his countrymen for more than Bush did. Both, however, regardless of the different characteristics of World War Two and the War on Terror, imbued their rhetoric with appeals based on Americans presumed, or at the least supposed, understanding of the notion that freedom is not free.

### **Coalitions**

Roosevelt's call for labor mobilization fit within the ideas of the grand strategy and total war mentioned before. Since American efforts were contingent on those of their allies, and vice versa, and in order to put their common arms to their best use, the United States of

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<sup>266</sup>Roosevelt, Franklin D. *Fireside Chat*. December 9, 1941. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16056&st=&st1=>>

<sup>267</sup>Roosevelt, Franklin D. *State of the Union Address*. January 6, 1942. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16253&st=&st1=>>

<sup>268</sup>*Ibidem*.

America had already in August of 1941 formulated with Great Britain the Atlantic Charter, an outline of principles of freedom and democracy to fight for. This was formalized when Roosevelt and a large number of representatives of foreign nations signed the *Declaration by the United Nations on Cooperation for Victory*, on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1942, effectively forming what has come to be called the Allies of World War Two. From that point on, there would be a “continuation of conferences and consultations among military staffs, so that the plans and operations of each will fit into the general strategy designed to crush the enemy.”<sup>269</sup>

Whereas in World War Two the United States of America joined an already raging fight, after 9/11, George W. Bush took the lead. “We will rally the world”, he declared on September 11, insisting that “the freedom-loving nations of the world stand by our side.”<sup>270</sup> As shown in chapters one and two, Bush framed the War on Terror as religiosity-laden conflict between good and evil and used frontier metaphors to make countries choose, making one thing very clear: “Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.”<sup>271</sup> An interesting difference to the rhetoric of Roosevelt is that Roosevelt ascribed such a mentality to the Axis, since they had a plan that “considers all peoples and Nations which are not helping the Axis powers as common enemies.”<sup>272</sup> In accordance with the Bush doctrine – a veritable manifestation of the myth of civilization versus barbarism - nations aiding terrorists were by default considered hostile, and Bush had immediately rallied sympathetic world leaders behind him who, as he emphasized, understood two important things. First, that the “act of war declared on the United States [...] could have as easily been declared on them”, and second, that his coalition of the

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<sup>269</sup>Roosevelt, Franklin D. *State of the Union Address*. January 6, 1942. The American Presidency Project.

Transcript: <[http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16253&st=&st1=</a>](http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16253&st=&st1=)

<sup>270</sup>Bush, George W. *Address to the Nation on the Terrorist Attacks*. September 11, 2001. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <[http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=58057&st=&st1=</a>](http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=58057&st=&st1=)

<sup>271</sup>Bush, George W. *Address to the joint session of Congress following 9/11 attacks*. September 20, 2001. American Rhetoric. Transcript:

<<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911jointsessionspeech.htm>>

<sup>272</sup>Roosevelt, Franklin D. *Fireside Chat*. December 9, 1941. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <[http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16056&st=&st1=</a>](http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16056&st=&st1=)

willing would adhere to the Bush doctrine.<sup>273</sup> Although Bush invoked World War Two by – specifically regarding Great Britain – declaring that “Once again, we are joined together in a great cause”, he had made clear behind the scenes that *he* would determine how the war would be fought.<sup>274</sup> This is apparent from Bob Woodward's *Bush at War*, citing Bush as declaring that “he didn't want other countries dictating the terms or conditions for the war on terror. 'At some point', he said, 'we may be the only ones left. That's okay with me. We are America'.”<sup>275</sup> Such declarations would no doubt have played well with rugged frontiersmen, but Bush kept it far more cordial in his public rhetoric.

Despite his Rooseveltian public insistence on cooperation to promote freedom, this unilateralist behind the scenes position was informed by what Daalder and Lindsay characterize as one of the tenets of hegemonic thinking: the idea that “Multilateral agreements and institutions are neither essential nor necessarily conducive to American interests.”<sup>276</sup> In short “Unilateralism was appealing because it was easier and more efficient, at least in the short term, than multilateralism”, with Bush' “preferred form of multilateralism - to be indulged when unilateral action was impossible or unwise – was to form ad hoc coalitions of the willing.”<sup>277</sup> The big difference was that Roosevelt appears, in this respect, to have been a true Wilsonian, believing in Woodrow Wilson's vision of an America “possessed of an exceptional nature [...] so confident of its strength and the virtue of its aims that it could envision fighting for its values on a worldwide basis.”<sup>278</sup> Bush, as Daalder and Lindsay posit, on 9/11 relinquished his earlier isolationist tendencies and changed into a “crusading internationalist who had embraced Woodrow

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273 Bush, George W. *Remarks in a Telephone Conversation with New York City Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani and New York Governor George E. Pataki and an Exchange with Reporters*. September 13, 2001. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=58062&st=&st1=>>

274 Bush, George W. *Address to the joint session of Congress following 9/11 attacks*. September 20, 2001. American Rhetoric. Transcript:

<<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911jointsessionspeech.htm>>

275 Woodward, Bob. *Bush at War*. New York: Simon & Schuster (2002). p. 81.

276 Daalder, Ivo H., James M. Lindsay. *America Unbound. The Bush Revolution in Foreign Policy*. Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution (2003). p. 44.

277 Ibidem, p. 13-14.

278 Kane, John. 'American Values or Human Rights? U.S. Foreign Policy and the Fractured Myth of Virtuous Power. In: *Presidential Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 33, no 4 (December 2003). p. 780.

Wilson's vision of a democratic world", but with the caveat that instead of changing his underlying world view, the 9/11 attacks instead: "Confirmed much of what Bush already believed: The world was a dangerous place. Terrorists bent on doing harm were not stopped by a smile and an open hand, but by grim determination and a closed fist. International agreements and institutions could not protect the American people; only the might of the American military could."<sup>279</sup>

America's purpose and mission, then, were clear, and when commemorating the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Pearl Harbor Bush made reference to how this had been the case since World War Two: "Pearl Harbor was the start of a long and terrible war for America. Yet, out of that surprise attack grew a steadfast resolve that made America freedom's defender. And that mission - our great calling - continues to this hour."<sup>280</sup> Bush repeated that – in both cases – matters beyond American control had gotten it involved in conflict and the United States of America had subsequently risen from the ashes after attack and taken its responsibility for freedom, whereby he again cast the War on Terror in the familiar frame of World War Two, the colloquial 'good war'.<sup>281</sup> This paper extensively covered the American cause for freedom, so suffice it to emphasize here that a difference in how this frame was used by Roosevelt and Bush is that in Roosevelt's rhetoric, the United States of America – even if there is little question he saw a leading role in the international fight for freedom for it – was together with the other Allies one of the "champions of tolerance, and decency, and freedom."<sup>282</sup> In Bush's rhetoric, there was more of a focus on American primacy in this quest, even if he only on two occasions explicitly imparted it with a leadership role. The first time was when a mere two days after the attacks, with sympathetic world leaders still pledging their support, that "we will lead the world to

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<sup>279</sup>Daalder, Ivo H., James M. Lindsay. *America Unbound. The Bush Revolution in Foreign Policy*. Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution (2003). p. 79-80.

<sup>280</sup>Bush, George W. *Remarks at a Ceremony Commemorating the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Pearl Harbor in Norfolk, Virginia*. December 7, 2001. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=63634&st=pearl+harbor&st1=>>

<sup>281</sup>Ibidem.

<sup>282</sup>Roosevelt, Franklin D. *State of the Union Address*. January 6, 1942. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16253&st=&st1=>>

victory.”<sup>283</sup> The second time was during his State of the Union in late January 29:

“America will lead by defending liberty and justice because they are right and true and unchanging for all people everywhere. No nation owns these aspirations [...] But America will always stand firm for the nonnegotiable demands of human dignity”, Bush spoke, reinforcing the universal character of the values at stake and the War on Terror, while simultaneously reaffirming American leadership.<sup>284</sup>

The circumstances following September 11 had thereby allowed Bush to position the United States of America as unique victim, as seen in the previous chapter, and thus an ideal and righteous proponent of freedom. Unlike in World War Two, with other nations already at war and American entry increasingly afoot before Pearl Harbor was attacked, the 9/11 attacks were the first massively destructive and expressly symbolic 21<sup>st</sup> century terrorist strike in the West. “America was targeted for attack because we're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world”, Bush could therefore declare.<sup>285</sup> He touched upon the concept of an inherent exceptionalism again on September 14, stating: “Just three days removed from these events, Americans do not yet have the distance of history, but our responsibility to history is already clear: to answer these attacks and rid the world of evil.”<sup>286</sup>

Both Roosevelt and Bush thus consistently used the platforms they were given to persuade Americans that (military) action and mobilization were required. In both cases, the objective was singular and there is little development noticeable in their respective rhetoric describing this. For Roosevelt there could be “no result save victory, final and complete”.<sup>287</sup> Speaking in this case specifically about the United States of America - even

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283 Bush, George W. *Remarks in a Telephone Conversation with New York City Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani and New York Governor George E. Pataki and an Exchange with Reporters*. September 13, 2001. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=58062&st=&st1=>>

284 Bush, George W. *Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union*. January 29, 2002. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29644&st=&st1=>>

285 Bush, George W. *Address to the Nation on the Terrorist Attacks*. September 11, 2001. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=58057&st=&st1=>>

286 Bush, George W. *Remarks at the National Day of Prayer and Remembrance Service*. September 14, 2001. The American Presidency Project. <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=63645&st=&st1=>>

287 Roosevelt, Franklin D. *Fireside Chat*. December 9, 1941. The American Presidency Project. Transcript:

if it supported other opponents of the Axis and vice versa - Roosevelt insisted total victory meant not just winning the war, but also winning “the peace that follows.”<sup>288</sup> Roosevelt's America was therefore “all in it – all the way”, which Bush echoed sixty years later.<sup>289</sup> “The definition is, whatever it takes”, Bush repeated a then-popular mantra, when asked how long military operations would last.<sup>290</sup> For Bush, too, there was only one outcome, described in rhetoric akin to that of his predecessor in the 1940s: “This struggle will not end in a truce or treaty. It will end in victory for the United States, our friends, and for the cause of freedom.”<sup>291</sup> That the War on Terror had only just begun, and presumably would last beyond his time in office, was no concern. It had become more than a tragedy or an attack on an early September morning. Between the minutes in which the planes hit the towers, began America's moment. It was a wake-up call, resounding in providence through history: “This campaign may not be finished on our watch; yet, it must be and it will be waged on our watch. [...] History has called America and our allies to action, and it is both our responsibility and our privilege to fight freedom's fight.”<sup>292</sup>

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<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16056&st=&st1=>  
288Roosevelt, Franklin D. *Fireside Chat*. December 9, 1941. The American Presidency Project. Transcript:

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16056&st=&st1=>  
289Ibidem.

290Bush, George W. *Remarks Following a Meeting with the National Security Team*, September 12, 2001, **and**: Bush, George W. *Remarks In and After Meeting with National Security Team*, September 15, 2001. [See bibliography for full note.](#)

291Bush, George W. *Remarks at a Ceremony Commemorating the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Pearl Harbor in Norfolk, Virginia*. December 7, 2001. The American Presidency Project. Transcript:  
<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=63634&st=pearl+harbor&st1=>

292Bush, George W. *Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union*. January 29, 2002. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29644&st=&st1=>

## Conclusion – Enduring Myths, Different Times

Looking at the development in presidential post-cataclysm rhetoric when comparing George Walker Bush's (post-)9/11 rhetoric to Franklin Delano Roosevelt's post-Pearl Harbor rhetoric, what is apparent is that they utilized much the same mythology and academic concepts to make sense of the events and characterize the attackers and the response that was warranted. The six decades that passed between Pearl Harbor and 9/11 did little to change the academic concepts of exceptionalism and strategic thinking, but did significantly change the concept of nationalism. In any case, there *is* an apparent development between the rhetoric of Roosevelt and Bush, informed primarily by the changing of the times, rather than new conceptions of American myths.

A first example thereof can be found in the characterization of the attacks as events themselves. Bush described the 9/11 attacks in a more visual, visceral way than Roosevelt did for Pearl Harbor. Whether this was informed by a conscious desire not to do so on Roosevelt's part, is a question this study unfortunately has not been able to answer, but there is the alternative explanation that the 1940s were simply a less visual age and that this reflected itself in the rhetoric. It can't be denied, after all, that the development of rhetoric for a large part is informed by the different media ages. Unlike Roosevelt, Bush had seen the attacks happen on live television, as had most of the American people. There was thus a greater necessity for Bush to reassure and inform Americans and make sense of a (symbolically) hugely impactful attack in the frenetic, information-hungry television age. This meant that where Roosevelt could make more measured, well-prepared statements, Bush had to improvise more. Both used the principle of 'show, don't tell', however, with Roosevelt letting “the facts speak for themselves” and Bush favoring a more visual, explanatory narrative for the television age.<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>293</sup>Roosevelt, Franklin D. *Address to Congress Requesting a Declaration of War with Japan*. December 8, 1941. The American Presidency Project. Transcript: <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?>

Roosevelt and Bush both immediately framed the attacks as transcending the there and then, as being of greater historic importance than just the events in themselves. Interestingly, Bush did so in part by comparing 9/11 to Pearl Harbor and comparing the War on Terror to World War Two, emphasizing the gravity and magnitude of the situation, but also by trying to characterize it as the next 'good war'. Both Roosevelt and Bush throughout appropriated the frontier myth and myth of civilization versus barbarism to describe the coming conflict as a fight about right and wrong, fought by the forces of civilization and barbaric "enemies of freedom", characterizing their attackers as the latter.<sup>294</sup> Bush, however, gave this myth a religious spin, framing the War on Terror as a biblical showdown between good and *evil*. This frame seems to have originated primarily in his own religiosity and intention to "unite people" by appealing to what Denise Bostdorff describes as a "universalism among all faiths", whereas religion appears to have been more of a divisive element in Roosevelt's time.<sup>295</sup> That Bush was confident appropriating religious terminology, whereas Roosevelt arguably was less so, is an interesting notion, however. A large-scale comparison of how personal religiosity informed their rhetoric, is beyond the scope of this study, but would be interesting to follow-up on.

As stated, the largest conceptual development is found in the concept of nationalism, which particularly pertained to how the attacks and aftermath impacted American society and what kind of response the presidents expected of their people. Nationalism, as defined by Gary Gerstle, can be split in two dimensions: civic and racial.<sup>296</sup> The civic nationalist ideas did not change, but in terms of racial nationalism, there is a marked development. In

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[pid=16053&st=&st1=>](#)

294 Bush, George W. *Remarks Following a Meeting with the National Security Team*, September 12, 2001, **and: Address to the Joint Session of Congress Following 9/11 Attacks, September 20, 2001. [See bibliography for full note.](#)**

295 Bostdorff, Denise M. 'George W. Bush's post-September 11 rhetoric of covenant renewal: upholding the faith of the greatest generation'. In: *Quarterly Journal of American Speech*. Vol. 89, no. 4 (November 2003). p. 302-303.

296 Gerstle, Gary. *American Crucible. Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press (2001). p. 4-5.



Roosevelt's era, being American was still by and large predicated on whiteness (specifically, being White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) whereas after the social revolutions and rise of multiculturalism of the following six decades, as Deborah Schildkraut points out, the idea of 'Americanness' had – albeit somewhat uneasily, and without a firm and definite 'conclusion' – become less “ethnoracial” by the time Bush was elected.<sup>297</sup> When it came to defining what it meant to be American, Bush drew overt distinctions between good and bad Muslims, perverting Islam through the ideology of terrorism, taking care not to let his War on Terror become a war against Islam. Roosevelt did no such thing for Japanese(-Americans) in World War Two, instead even signing off on policies allowing their internment on the West Coast. Another important factor was that 21<sup>st</sup> century Americans - and Bush - remembered and were ashamed by “the camps and the mistreatment of many innocent people” and determined not to repeat it.<sup>298</sup>

Domestically, another important difference is that although both Roosevelt and Bush described the ensuing conflict as a global one, Roosevelt required total mobilization. Bush did not, insisting moral, political and financial support was enough. Bush *did*, however, use the example of the so-called 'greatest generation' of World War Two to implore Americans to change their culture. Where Roosevelt had poignantly spoken about a challenge to be met by the American people, Bush – perhaps tellingly, hinting at a supposed doubt as to the measure of the contemporary generation - spoke about an opportunity for Americans to be their better selves. In addition to Roosevelt asking more of 'his' Americans, Bush also engaged the younger generations in a different way. In terms of their rhetorical approach, a marked development is thereby visible. Where Roosevelt – as posited by Whitaker, Ramsey and Smith - effectively spoke *at* the American people, Bush spoke *to* them.<sup>299</sup> Roosevelt called them up to meet the challenge, much like the idea

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297Schildkraut, Deborah J. 'The More Things Change... American Identity and Mass and Elite Responses tot 9/11'. In: *Political Psychology*. Vol. 23, no. 3 (September 2002). p. 512.

298Ibidem, p. 511-512.

299Whitaker, Richard W., Janet E. Ramsey and Ronald D. Smith. *MediaWriting. Print, broadcast and public relations*. Hoboken: Taylor and Francis (2012). EBL Reader digital edition. p. 335-336.

of exceptionalism did to the nation itself, implying an underlying belief in the American people. Bush, on the other hand, *asked* Americans for support, but also – once again adhering to the strategy of showing rather than telling and employing a more 'visual' rhetoric – gave examples of American heroism to show Americans what was expected of them, tacitly indicating he had doubts whether this exceptional character was still inherent to the American people.

Making sacrifices at the behest of the nation, Roosevelt *and* Bush nonetheless publicly argued, was part of the American character. In a way, this was an analogy to the United States of America's global role as reluctant empire in taking up arms to champion freedom, again corresponding with American exceptionalism. In practical terms, the concept of strategic thinking was appropriated in a similar way. Both presidents invoked the myths of national insecurity and the frontier to make clear there would no longer be any physical boundary offering protection from committed enemies and that overseas action was required to ensure the security of the city upon the hill. By employing these rhetorical devices Roosevelt and Bush created an argumentative 'full circle', wherein national security – in constant imbalance through the dichotomous relationship between the myths of 'Fortress America' and national insecurity – was intricately tied to the exceptionalist idea of adhering to the providential call to spread American values, freedom being the first and foremost, and fight for these if necessary. Bush was thereby slightly more outspoken regarding the United States of America's leadership role, befitting his more unilateral approach according to the ideology of hegemonic thinking, compared to Roosevelt's more multilateral ideology.

The comparison in the United States of America's political and military dealings with the respective aftermaths is, admittedly, a little unfair, since this study has due to its demarcation of timeframes limited Roosevelt's period to one month, whereas Bush's is a little over four. Furthermore, within the boundaries set, most of Roosevelt's studied

rhetoric is focused on the Japanese – or the Japanese as part of the Axis – and Pacific theater of World War Two. Had a longer timeframe been used, Roosevelt's rhetoric about America's enemies and how to fight would have been wider in scope. Unfortunately, such a large comparative study did not fit the scope of this thesis, but would be an interesting topic to develop.

A final note to end on is that regardless of the development in post-cataclysm rhetoric between Roosevelt's post-Pearl Harbor Rhetoric and Bush's post-911 rhetoric being mostly informed by their personalities, zeitgeist and societal developments, it is apparent that to Bush – as well as most other Americans – Pearl Harbor was also a frame to view 9/11 through. It was a “code”, as John Dower calls it, an historical example.<sup>300</sup> Pearl Harbor was a 20<sup>th</sup> century American myth to help 21<sup>st</sup> century Americans and their president make sense of a new national tragedy, and of what was expected of them in the aftermath.

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<sup>300</sup>Dower, John W. *Cultures of War. Pearl Harbor/Hiroshima/9-11/Iraq*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company (2010). p. 4.

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