

Rhetoric of crisis

Retoryka kryzysu

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“Our Grief and Anger”: George W. Bush’s Rhetoric in the Aftermath of 9/11 as Presidential Crisis Communication

„Nasz ból i gniew”: retoryka George’a W. Busha po zamachach z 11 września 2001 r. jako prezydencka komunikacja kryzysowa

Abstract

This paper offers a review and analysis of speeches delivered by President George W. Bush in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001. Bush’s motivations, goals, and persuasive strategies are discussed in detail in the following study, with consideration for the cultural and political contexts of American oratory and the idiosyncratic features of the Republican as a public speaker. The characteristics of Bush's 9/11 communication acts are then compared with Franklin D. Roosevelt's Pearl Harbor speech in order to analyze the differences between the two politicians' rhetorical *modi operandi* as well as the changing political environment of the U.S.

Artykuł obejmuje przegląd i analizę przemówień wygłoszonych przez Prezydenta George’a W. Busha w okresie po zamachach terrorystycznych z 11 września 2001 r. Motywy, cele i strategie perswazyjne Busha zostały w nim szczegółowo omówione, z uwzględnieniem kulturowych i politycznych kontekstów krasomówstwa amerykańskiego oraz wyróżniających cech republikanina jako mówcy publicznego. Charakterystyka aktów komunikacyjnych Busha z 9/11 została następnie porównana z przemówieniem Franklina D. Roosevelta w sprawie ataku na Pearl Harbor w celu przeanalizowania różnic pomiędzy retorycznymi *modi operandi* obydwu polityków, jak również zmian zachodzących w środowisku politycznym USA.

Key words

United States of America, George W. Bush, rhetoric, political communication, Franklin D. Roosevelt
Stany Zjednoczone Ameryki, George W. Bush, retoryka, komunikowanie polityczne, Franklin D. Roosevelt

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“Our Grief and Anger”: George W. Bush’s Rhetoric in the Aftermath of 9/11 as Presidential Crisis Communication

The Al-Qaeda terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001, were a tragic occurrence of a great political significance not only for the United States, but also the whole international community. For the Republican administration of George W. Bush, who assumed presidency only eight months prior to the disastrous Tuesday morning, it was also the first real test of leadership. This paper is an analysis of the most important speeches delivered by President Bush in September 2001, at the time of the arguably most acute and unanticipated geopolitical crisis of the American state since the attack on Pearl Harbor¹. Bush’s motivations, political goals, and persuasive strategies are discussed in detail in the study, and then collated with an earlier communication of related nature – Franklin D. Roosevelt’s response to the events of December 7th, 1941. This allows for an insight into the transformation of presidential rhetoric in the United States during the almost 60 years that passed between the two tremendous crises. The paper’s principal claim is that Bush’s 2001 communication acts were focused on the emotional and “visual” qualities of persuasive speech, reflecting to some degree the changes of the United States politics, society, and media in that period.

1. George W. Bush, Politician and Communicator

George Walker Bush was born in 1946 to a family of wealth and privilege in New Haven, Connecticut. After graduating from Harvard and Yale and a brief military stint, Bush had a business career in the oil industry, before winning 1994 gubernatorial election in Texas. Six years later, after a controversial presidential campaign and a lengthy legal battle, George W. Bush became the 43rd President of

1. The selection of orations analyzed in this paper was based predominantly on the compilation of President George W. Bush’s speeches, created by the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration (*Selected Speeches of President George W. Bush 2001-2008*).

the United States. In contrast with his Northeastern roots and upper-class upbringing, Bush projected a folksy, cowboy-like aura (not unlike President Reagan), bringing him closer to many of his voters; Carlita Peterson Greene calls it “a strategy of de-WASPING [...] the blue-blooded Bushes” (Greene 2006, 152). This ostensible lack of sophistication could be also seen as a deliberate campaigning tactic: matched against experienced debaters such as his 2000 rival Al Gore, George W. Bush would win as long as he (more or less) stood his ground and did not commit any major blunders, by simply surpassing the public’s expectations of him (Gregg II). Throughout his presidency, Bush was routinely presented in the media as a person of lesser than heavyweight intellectual capabilities, due, at least to some extent, to his frequent unconventional statements and malapropisms, such as the neologism “to underestimate” (used during a stump speech in Arkansas during the 2000 presidential campaign).

Those *bushisms*, as they were called by the press, did not, however, prevent the Republican from being an efficient public speaker. While George W. Bush was often judged to lack the charisma of a silver-tongued orator (according to James A. Barnes of the *National Review*, Bush was “an uneven communicator [...] usually more effective in a conversational setting than in delivering a formal speech”; quoted in Crockett 2003, 436), it can be argued that many of his orations from the campaign trail and the White House were perfectly functional, if not always spectacular acts of political communication. The Republican’s calm and steady performance during the 2000 presidential debates (Novak 2000) was seen as one of the factors contributing to his eventual victory in the Electoral College; political scientists Robert S. Eriksen and Christopher Wlezien note that Bush gained about two points in all debates over his opponent (Eriksen and Wlezien 2012, 81).

While never having received the same amount of praise and scrutiny as rhetorical oeuvres of certain other American presidents, Bush’s oratory (especially his communications of the War on Terror era) has nevertheless attracted significant interest from public speaking scholars: John Murphy, for example, attempted to define Bush’s post-9/11 speeches in categories of genre, visual character, and creation of self and the audience (2003, 608), Kevin Coe explored in detail the efficiency of his oratory in building support for the Iraq war (2011, 307-308), Michael J. Lee studied the portrayals of Arabs and Muslim in Bush’s rhetoric (2017, 5), while Christian Spielvogel focused on the Republican’s framing of War on Terror in the 2004 presidential campaign (2005, 557-561).

2. Initial Responses

The early, fairly uneventful, period of Bush’s presidency ended abruptly on a sunny Tuesday, September 11th, 2001, when two commercial airliners crashed

into the World Trade Center towers in New York City. After several dozen minutes, the two buildings collapsed, one after the other, burying hundreds of people. For the first time since a “date that shall live in infamy”², December 7th, 1941, the United States of America fell victim to an attack on home soil.

The situation George W. Bush found himself in during the early hours of September 11th was in every respect difficult and associated with a plenitude of rhetorical challenges. First, the very magnitude of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, unprecedented in recent history, caused a substantial danger of panic among the U.S. population (McQuail 2007, 476-478). The second factor was the initial lack of information about the identity of the perpetrators, fueling the feeling of uncertainty and increasing the risk of all sorts of chaotic reactions from the public. The third thing involved the President being still a relative rookie at this stage, having only seven years of executive leadership (with six of them as the Governor of Texas) under his belt and not being widely known for any particular vision of international policy. The rhetorical goals of the Republican in the days and weeks to come after the dreadful morning of September 11th included thus: calming the spirits of the nation, restoring the faith in the American leadership at home and abroad, and presenting a coherent plan for action, all while maintaining the trust of U.S. citizens.

It was already during the first day of the crisis that George W. Bush had several occasions to address the nation. He spent the majority of September 11th travelling between different secure locations before returning to Washington in the evening (the exact number of hijacked airplanes and the risk of associated terrorist acts were still unknown at that time so extra precautions were taken). The President’s brief remarks were recorded at a Florida elementary school he was visiting during the attacks and at Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana. On both occasions the Republican used a familiar, folksy register of language, including his trademark *bushism* “make no mistake”, while the content of his statements reflected the growing amount of data gathered by the authorities during the day. Bush confirmed that terrorist attacks took place, assured the audience that the security resources of the nation were put to good use, and expressed his sympathy for the victims.

The most important oration of the day was however undoubtedly the president’s evening speech, televised from the White House. This solemn effort, while still relatively short, was much more elaborate than Bush’s previous communication acts, both in form and content. The President starts with an emotional, graphic recollection of the dramatic events of the passing day, focusing on their human toll. The terrorist attacks are depicted in the speech as acts of evil, giving a moral dimension to the nation’s tragedy and allowing for the introduction of one of the

2. An expression famously used by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt after Pearl Harbor (see below).

main organizing devices of the oration: the opposition between differing values and qualities. “Today our nation saw evil, the very worst of human nature”, says Bush, “and we responded with the best of America” (Bush 2001a).

The sheer terror of the ferocious attacks is juxtaposed with the strength of the nation, the “despicable acts of terror” – with “the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity” (Bush 2001a) that is America, introducing the theme of the country’s unique virtues (a motif repeated in subsequent speeches³). Using powerful metaphors and parallel structures, the orator paints a picture of a nation resolute in the face of adversity. The middle part of the speech is composed of brief descriptions of the initiatives undertaken by the government in the previous several hours, assuring the audience that federal agencies, the military, and emergency teams are working efficiently to help those who are suffering and avenge those who have fallen. Additionally, Bush thanks both U.S. statesmen and world leaders for their support, implying that neither his administration nor the United States stand alone in this critical moment.

Near the end of the speech, George W. Bush quotes the well-known “valley of death” passage from Psalm 23, offering a comforting message to the vast Christian majority of his audience (and exploiting to his advantage a rhetorical commonplace shared with them). The oration closes with yet another opposition: “None of us will ever forget this day. Yet we go forward to defend freedom and all that is good and just in the world” (Bush 2001a), reinforcing its good vs. evil theme. It should be emphasized that this very motif would soon constitute the core of Bush’s War on Terror era rhetoric (e.g. in the expression “axis of evil”, initially used in the 2002 State of the Union Address; see also: Spielvogel 2005, 557).

On Friday, September 14th, the 43rd President participated in a solemn remembrance service held at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. During the ceremony, Bush delivered a brief, eight-minute long oration, with several former Presidents and many prominent U.S. officials in attendance. The tone used by the Republican throughout the speech, given in the national shrine of the United States, was dignified and serious, his discourse – inspired by the American homiletic tradition.

George W. Bush begins by acknowledging the amount of suffering of the American nation in the aftermath of 9/11. He uses anaphora (“They are the names of...”) in order to give rhythm to a listing of victims of the terrorist attacks. His depiction of the conflict at hand is based on ethical themes, juxtaposing the “peaceful” United States with “stealth and deceit and murder”, characterizing the hijackers (Bush 2011b). In the middle part of the oration, the Republican enters into deliberations of quasi-theological nature, discussing the problem of theodicy:

3. References to American exceptionalism are a staple of the U.S. political oratory.

“God’s signs are not always the ones we look for. We learn in tragedy that his purposes are not always our own” (Bush 2001b). He then moves on to focus on the virtues of the American people, mentioning several stories of compassion and personal bravery demonstrated by U.S. citizens in the face of the disaster, only three days earlier. Quoting Franklin Delano Roosevelt, he calls this response “warm courage of national unity”, transcending ethnic, denominational, and political differences. America, argues Bush in yet another praise of American exceptionalism, was targeted for attack since “in every generation the world has produced enemies of human freedom” and “we [the United States] are freedom’s home and defender” (Bush 2001b). The oration ends with a direct address to God: “May He bless the souls of the departed”, states Bush in a parallel concluding structure, “May He comfort our own. And may He always guide our country” (Bush 2001b).

One of the most iconic media images of 2001 depicted President Bush standing on the rubble of the World Trade Center. The Republican visited the site of the terrorist attacks merely hours after attending the remembrance service in the National Cathedral; the contrast between both rhetorical venues could not be greater. His goal was to boost the morale of the emergency teams working at Ground Zero and to indicate to Americans everywhere that the federal administration is active and efficient in coordinating the rescue operations. Encouraged by enthusiastic reception at the site, Bush grabbed a megaphone and delivered an improvised speech targeted at fire fighters and first responders standing around him.

“The Bullhorn Speech” (Bush 2001c), as that was the name under which Bush’s oration entered the political discourse, went on to become one of the proudest moments of the Republican’s presidency⁴, highlighting the significance of non-verbal communication, rapport with the audience, as well as choosing the correct time and place for an orator’s success. Perhaps the most striking quality of the Republican’s speech concerns how rhetorical *ethos* was created for and by the speaker on this occasion. While the President of the United States gets an enormous amount of personal credibility just because of his position as the most powerful person on the planet, Bush’s rhetorical assets were further boosted in this particular case by his very appearance on the debris of the World Trade Center – in a moment when the whole nation, still shell-shocked from what happened only three days earlier, compulsively watching 24/7 news channels in a state of eerie disbelief, was desperately clinging to any notion of hope and sense, and a leader to gather around.

At Ground Zero, Bush was wearing a grey bomber jacket and dark blue jeans, instead of a fancy suit associated with the ivory towers of federal government institutions. He was making the most of his “average Joe” charisma and

4. Years later, a photo of President Bush holding a bullhorn on the debris of the World Trade Center was used for the inside cover of his memoir “Decision Points”. The megaphone itself is now an exhibit at the George W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum in Dallas, Texas.

conversational skills, chatting casually and shaking hands, apparently comfortable in the “people’s champion” role. When offered a bullhorn, he hugged a fireman (an FDNY veteran named Bob Beckwith) standing nearby and started speaking. The content of the Republican’s brief remarks is not unusual or very significant here indeed: Bush talks about the unity of the American people and thanks the first responders for their service and sacrifice. The oration is interrupted several times by loud cheering and chanting (“U.S.A.! U.S.A.!”), “God bless America!”). What is important, however, is a moment of rhetorical brilliance from George W. Bush, perfectly showcasing his abilities as a quick-thinking, mindful public speaker. Thirty-six seconds into the speech, one of the rescue workers, apparently unable to discern the words of the oration due to inadequate amplification, shouts to the President “I can’t hear you!”. Bush immediately responds by saying: “I can hear you! I can hear you! The rest of the world hears you! And the people, and the people who knocked these buildings down will hear all of us soon!” (Bush 2001e), gracefully moving to the main themes of the speech: appreciation of the rescuers and restoring justice. His words unleash a huge wave of applause from the crowd.

It might be argued that the audience member’s spontaneous reaction unlocked the true rhetorical potential of the 43rd President, instantly transforming the situation from a public (“one-to-many”) speech to a more intimate (“one-to-one”), interpersonal conversation, in which Bush has always genuinely thrived. Unlike many other orators⁵, whose forte was communicating to large crowds, George W. Bush was much more at ease when talking to individual persons, drawing rhetorical ethos from his personal credibility as a normal guy, a man able to empathize with the common people and understand their problems and aspirations. It can be also speculated that the first responders’ enthusiastic reception of the Republican at Ground Zero boosted his confidence (perhaps for the first time after three extremely difficult, agonizing days “in office”), allowing Bush to relax enough to go off book and show his true rhetorical colors.

Years after the delivery of the Bullhorn Speech, it is still remembered as one of the defining events in Bush’s political career. Reminiscing about the speech, Kenneth T. Walsh of the *U.S. News & World Report* wrote in 2013:

“It was George W. Bush’s ‘bullhorn moment’, one of the most riveting and important points in his presidency, illustrating the personal qualities he was most proud of: a pride in making decisions from the gut, an overwhelming trust in his instincts, a certain brio in how he conducted himself during a crisis. [...] Bush’s spontaneity and his instinctive way of making decisions didn’t look so appealing as the war on terror escalated [...] but on Sept. 14, 2001, Bush found his voice as a leader during a crucial and dangerous time” (Walsh).

5. For example, Richard Nixon is often regarded to have been a socially awkward introvert, feeling comfortable only in his close circle of friends and family, who nonetheless was able to perfectly mask his insecurities and transform into a formidable public speaker whenever it was needed (Bochin 1990, 85).

3. War on Terror Address

The most important political consequence of the terrorist attack on America was, without any doubt, the War on Terror – an international military campaign announced by President Bush in a speech delivered on September 20th, 2001, before the Joint Houses of the U.S. Congress. Given more than a week after the tragic Tuesday morning, the oration was designed as the official response of the American government to the events of 9/11. The audience for the speech included not only Senators, Congressmen, and other high-ranking members of the American government, but also foreign dignitaries and numerous special guests. Millions of people, in the United States and all over the world, watched the landmark oration broadcast live on television. Compared to the previously analyzed communication acts, the September 20th speech was much longer (nearly 40 minutes); it was also interrupted numerous times with applause (including several instances of standing ovation from the audience). The rhetorical goals of George W. Bush included building political support at home and abroad for a military retaliatory action and further reinvigoration of the nation's moods at that difficult time. In the spirit of the harmony of rhetorical genres, Bush's oration combined epideictic, deliberative, and forensic elements, with the ceremonial (epideictic) aspects coming to the fore (similarly as in the case of his other 9/11 communications; Murphy 2003, 609).

The *exordium*, or the introductory part, of the oration was presented in a lofty, pathos-heavy style. Thanks to a witty play on words, George W. Bush was able to begin the speech with a strong, eloquent opening:

“In the normal course of events, presidents come to this chamber to report on the state of the Union⁶. Tonight, no such report is needed; it has already been delivered by the American people. [...] My fellow citizens, for the last nine days, the entire world has seen for itself the state of Union, and it is strong” (Bush 2001d).

Using memorable examples of several rhetorical devices, including anadiplosis (“Our grief has turned to anger and anger to resolution”) and antithesis (“Whether we bring our enemies to justice or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done; Bush 2001d), George W. Bush gives the first hint about a planned military operation. He then thanks the people of the world for their support in the face of the disastrous events of 9/11:

6. The State of the Union address is an annual message delivered by the President of the United States to the Congress at the beginning of a year.

“America will never forget the sounds of our national anthem playing at Buckingham Palace, on the streets of Paris and at Berlin's Brandenburg Gate. We will not forget South Korean children gathering to pray outside our embassy in Seoul, or the prayers of sympathy offered at a mosque in Cairo. We will not forget moments of silence and days of mourning in Australia and Africa and Latin America” (Bush 2001d).

Special words of appreciation go to Prime Minister Tony Blair, foreshadowing future involvement of the United Kingdom in the War on Terror coalition. Among other guests mentioned by name are not only U.S. officials, whose support and unity in the face of crisis are praised by the orator, but also a very special person: Lisa Beamer, the widow of Todd Beamer – one of the heroic passengers of Flight 93. Acknowledging her presence in the audience (as the first person in attendance to receive such a mention) is of course a part of a rhetorical strategy of presenting a wider problem through a prism of an individual tragedy (i.e. putting a “human face” on an issue) for greater emotional appeal⁷.

The goal of the second part of a classic rhetorical speech, *narratio*, is to give the audience some background knowledge to better understand the argument of the speaker. George W. Bush commences this section of the oration by recalling the events of September 11th, extensively using parallel structures to emphasize the scale of the attacks. He then goes on to reveal the findings of American agencies responsible for the 9/11 investigation, pointing out to Al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden, and the Taliban regime, harboring terrorists in Afghanistan. His description of the subversive organization uses easily comprehensible comparisons and metaphors for clarity: “Al-Qaeda is to terror what the Mafia is to crime. But its goal is not making money, its goal is remaking the world and imposing its radical beliefs on people everywhere” (Bush 2001d) and focuses on details of the bizarre policies of the group.

Having explained the nature of the terrorist threat to the United States, the president moves on to the crux of his argument, addressing the Taliban directly and presenting a list of demands, including “delivering to United States authorities all of the leaders of Al-Qaeda who hide in [their] land” and “closing immediately and permanently every terrorist training camp in Afghanistan” (Bush 2001d). The orator puts an emphasis on the gravity of the situation, announcing in a distinct and serious manner: “These demands are not open to negotiation or discussion. The Taliban must act and act immediately. They will hand over the terrorists or they will share in their fate” (Bush 2001d).

What is significant, however, is that George W. Bush exercises utmost care to accentuate the differences between the extremist Al-Qaeda and the vast majority of the Islamic community:

7. As in the saying: “A single death is a tragedy; a million deaths is a statistic”, sometimes falsely attributed to the Soviet leader Joseph Stalin.

“I also want to speak tonight directly to Muslims throughout the world. We respect your faith. It's practiced freely by many millions of Americans and by millions more in countries that America counts as friends. Its teachings are good and peaceful, and those who commit evil in the name of Allah blaspheme the name of Allah. The terrorists are traitors to their own faith, trying, in effect, to hijack Islam itself. The enemy of America is not our many Muslim friends. It is not our many Arab friends. Our enemy is a radical network of terrorists and every government that supports them” (Bush 2001d).

The emphasis put on this distinction by George W. Bush is partly strategic in nature: failure to do so could antagonize Muslim people everywhere against the United States and hinder the chances of future anti-terrorist initiatives (see also: Lee 2017, 7-9). In the next minutes of the oration, the Republican elaborates on the philosophy of Al-Qaeda, comparing it to the totalitarian doctrines of the past and condemning it to “history's unmarked grave of discarded lies” (a glorified, more lyrical reference to Ronald Reagan’s “ash heap of history”, known from his Westminster Address of 1982).

The second half of the speech starts with a lengthy presentation of initiatives undertaken or planned by the U.S. government in order to fight terrorism, and people chosen to head those enterprises. In the rhetorical tradition of Churchill’s “blood, toil, tears and sweat”, the 43rd President tries not to offer false hopes or easy solutions to his audience, yet he vigorously expresses his confidence about the final victory. Meanwhile, the people of the United States are simply asked by Bush to restore the American way of life that the terrorists conspired to destroy.

The finishing section, or *peroratio*, brings more pathos. The orator underlines the historical role America has to take in the new global circumstances and assures the audience of the strength of the American resolve. Coming to the end of the oration, Bush looks to the future, acknowledging that “We’ll go back to our lives and routines and that is good. Even grief recedes with time and grace”. The determination of the American people, however, must not pass, as “Each of us will remember what happened that day and to whom it happened. [...] Some will remember an image of a fire or story of rescue. Some will carry memories of a face and a voice gone forever” (Bush 2001d).

Here, the 43rd President approaches the boldest and most risky part of his speech. Reaching into a pocket of his jacket, he takes out a police officer’s badge, saying: “And I will carry this. It is the police shield of a man named George Howard who died at the World Trade Center trying to save others. It was given to me by his mom, Arlene, as a proud memorial to her son. It is my reminder of lives that ended and a task that does not end” (Bush 2001d). Let us focus on what happened here: not only does George W. Bush employ the “personal tragedy” strategy again, but he also uses an actual prop (!) to intensify the emotional appeal of his story.

In the last few sentences of the speech, George W. Bush continues the argument of an eternal dualistic struggle between good and evil; a motif reminiscent of many other successful rhetorical endeavors from the past, such as Ronald Reagan's "Evil Empire" speech. In the landmark 1983 oration, Reagan – speaking in front of a very peculiar audience (members of the National Association of Evangelicals) – presented an unorthodox interpretation of international relations of that time, drawing heavily from the Holy Scripture and Christian apologetic sources (such as C. S. Lewis's "The Screwtape Letters"), and depicting the arms reduction conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union along strictly ethical lines, in order to consolidate the support of his electoral base for the foreign policy initiatives of his administration (Kuś 2019, 27-42). In his 9/11 oratory, Bush attempted to do much the same⁸, but since he was – most of the time – communicating with a wildly more diversified audience, his argument was stripped of Reagan's evangelical overtones and focused on the universal themes of good and evil instead (as in the above-mentioned metaphor of "axis of evil").

The 43rd President's conviction that the righteous side will eventually prevail is legitimized by a reference to the Supreme Being, giving the oration a powerful and optimistic ending: "The course of this conflict is not known, yet its outcome is certain. Freedom and fear, justice and cruelty, have always been at war, and we know that God is not neutral between them" (Bush 2001d).

4. Bush's 9/11 Response v. Roosevelt's "Date That Will Live in Infamy"

In order to better understand the characteristics of Bush's rhetorical endeavors in the aftermath of the WTC disaster, it is worthwhile to look at them from a broader perspective. Traumatic as they were, the events of September 11th have not marked the only time when America was insidiously attacked by a foreign power. The most notorious of such occurrences, the Japanese sneak offensive of December 7th, 1941, was arguably a similar shock for the United States society and required a comparable reaction from the nation's authorities. However, while President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Congress oration of December 8th evidently served purposes analogous to Bush's post-9/11 communications, it might be argued that the instruments employed by both leaders differed in many respects.

The 32nd President of the United States was himself a renowned orator and a pioneer in using electronic media for gathering support (his "Fireside Chats" revolutionized American political communication in the 1930s; Yu 2005, 90), with

8. As a sign of things to come, for this perspective dominated the Republican administration's portrayals of the War on Terrorism era conflicts, no doubt due to its usefulness and efficacy in domestic politics, Christian Spielvogel argues that "Bush's good-versus-evil frame functioned as a ritual expression, test, and affirmation of conservative morality" (Spielvogel 2005, 552).

several of his speeches having a lasting impact on the public discourse and national ideological imagery. The most famous rhetorical effort of the Democrat, however, was arguably his December 8th, 1941, message, delivered to a joint session of the Senate and the House of Representatives less than 24 hours after receiving news of the attack of the Empire of Japan armed forces on the American naval facilities at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The solemn and brief oration (Roosevelt spoke for six and a half minutes only) achieved its purpose as it led to a declaration of war between the United States and Japan being issued by the Congress.

Franklin D. Roosevelt's speech begins with the notorious words "yesterday, December 7th, 1941, a date which will live in infamy", conveying the notion of the historical significance of the events of that day. In the following passages, the 32nd President presents a sober and detailed account of the diplomatic and military proceedings of the previous hours, emphasizing the fact that in spite of continuing negotiations between the governments, the very logistics of the offensive "make it obvious that the attack was deliberately planned many days or even weeks ago". Presenting the Empire's recent advances in Pacific, FDR consistently utilizes a parallel structure: "Yesterday the Japanese Government also launched an attack against Malaya. Last night Japanese forces attacked Hong Kong. Last night Japanese forces attacked Guam. Last night Japanese forces attacked the Philippine Islands. Last night the Japanese attacked Wake Island. And this morning the Japanese attacked Midway Island", creating a mental picture of the Imperial forces striding incessantly eastwards. The danger is coming closer and closer to the U.S. mainland, as even "American ships have been reported torpedoed on the high seas between San Francisco and Honolulu". This rhetorical strategy of using dry information to evoke terror and anger is perhaps best summarized by the Democrat himself in one of subsequent sentences: "the facts of yesterday and today speak for themselves". It is only in the last one third of the oration that Roosevelt's rhetoric becomes more fiery and pathetic, with his words conveying growing condemnation of the Empire of Japan's actions. The President asserts that he is expressing the will of the American people in the denunciation of the Pearl Harbor "treachery" and "onslaught", assures the audience of the "inevitable triumph" of America's armed forces and God's assistance for them, and asks the Congress to declare war against the Japanese on the grounds of their "unprovoked and dastardly attack".

Comparing Roosevelt's address to Bush's post-9/11 oratory, it should be emphasized that while both rhetorical situations included alike elements (such as the historical circumstances, the speakers' goals, general characteristics of audiences), the strategies employed by the Democrat and the Republican were very different. The most important distinction involved the persuasive appeals used in their communication acts. Although both orators adhered to the old principle of combining different types of arguments into a coherent, effective whole, the proportions

between *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos* differed significantly between the two analyzed cases. In his December 8th speech, Franklin D. Roosevelt utilized a textbook logical approach, drawing persuasive power from a precise, rather dispassionate presentation of facts, and a rational, easy-to-follow analysis of relations between the discussed events: since the preparation of an offensive of Pearl Harbor magnitude evidently required plenty of time, the Japanese government must have acted insincerely in their recent diplomatic conversations; since the Japanese attacks are happening closer and closer to Western coast of the United States, there is a clear and present danger menacing the whole American nation, etc. George W. Bush, as evidenced in the examples discussed above, was a champion of a different strategy; he focused more on *pathos* and *ethos*, emphasizing emotional imagery (“Some will carry memories of a face and a voice gone forever” [Bush 2001d]), using personal charisma as a focal point for the community to gather around (“I can hear you! I can hear you! The rest of the world hears you!” [Bush 2001c]), and not shying away from mawkish gimmicks to amplify the impact of his words, such as in the case of the fallen officer’s badge gambit.

Another difference between the two rhetorical styles involves the inherently visual quality of George W. Bush’s oratory as opposed to Franklin D. Roosevelt’s address. The ekphrastic aspects of the Republican’s speeches can be clearly – *nomen omen* – seen in several of his communication acts of the 9/11 era, drawing persuasive power from vivid, elaborate portrayals of events, concepts, and issues being discussed. Examples from among the orations analyzed in this paper include passages such as his recount of the morning of September 11th: “the pictures of airplanes flying into buildings, fires burning, huge structures collapsing have filled us with disbelief, terrible sadness, and a quiet, unyielding anger” (Bush 2001a), a memorable depiction of sympathetic reactions from the people of the world, offering a series of evocative visual snippets of distant places (as quoted above [Bush 2001d]), and colorful metaphors, instantly evoking imagery from the American cinematographic tradition: “Al-Qaeda is to terror what the Mafia is to crime” (Bush 2001d). Franklin D. Roosevelt, on the other hand, while a master of presenting complex problems in an accessible and suggestive manner (as evidenced not only in the December 8th speech, but e.g. in his ingenious classification of the “Four Freedoms” in the 1941 State of the Union Address, as well as the many radio broadcasts on New Deal policies he made since 1933) and devising clever, catchy slogans (e.g. “the only thing we have to fear is fear itself” from his first inaugural speech), was never known for an exceptional vividness of his style, generally aiming for the clarity and precision instead, working on concepts rather than representations. Risking an obvious major oversimplification (and the danger of being ironically carried away with visual metaphors), it might actually

be argued that one of the differences between Roosevelt's December 8th, 1941 Pearl Harbor address and Bush's September 20th, 2011 speech can be compared to a contrast between an expertly done infographic or a flow chart and an epic painting (or at least an illustrated magazine pictorial).

The question remains whether the differences between Roosevelt's and Bush's oratories are caused by the idiosyncratic qualities of the two statesmen themselves or some other factors and circumstances. After all, George W. Bush's affinity for visual arts is well known – in retirement, the former president took up painting as a hobby with some considerable (if not exactly spectacular) results. Still, it might be argued that this apparent shift in presidential rhetoric stems from fundamental changes of the American political communication and media system that happened over the decades. Whereas the 32nd President's times marked the end of the preponderance of textual communication in politics (FDR's last presidential election in 1944 was also the last one not to be covered by television networks), Bush's era in the White House coincided with the bloom of analog visual broadcasting, with the 24/7 news channels incessantly shelling the audience with pictures. It can be therefore asserted that the Republican was speaking to an audience already conditioned to be sensitive to images and actually expecting the orator to adjust his words to the visually rich media environment of modern times. The vividness of the 43rd President's oratory might also be seen as a way of building a connection with the listeners (not unlike Kennedy's famous "Ich bin ein Berliner" maneuver), since virtually all of them experienced the dramatic events of September 11th through televised images. Bush's apparent penchant for emotional and personal appeals (when compared to FDR's) should also be understood in the wider context of the changing patterns of political communication in the U.S. Ever since the famous 1960 Kennedy-Nixon presidential debate, commentators observed the increasing role of personality and charisma in American electoral politics. What once was a clash of ideas, nowadays becomes often a contest of meticulously cultivated public images and associated emotions, with the candidates being marketed like commercial products (as in the title of a famous Nixon-era campaign memoir, Joe McGinnis's "The Selling of the President"). Canadian media theorist Marshall McLuhan wrote already in 1968 that "Policies and issues are useless for election purposes, since they are too specialized and too hot. The shaping of the candidate's integral image has taken the place of discussing conflicting points of view" (McLuhan 1968, 134). Therefore, it is little wonder that modern political communication, including presidential rhetoric, operates more on the emotional and personal planes, oftentimes leaving logical argumentation behind.

5. Conclusion

While the popular image of President Bush was never that of an inspiring public speaker in the mold of John F. Kennedy, Ronald Reagan, or Barack Obama, a closer examination of his most successful rhetorical endeavors in the initial stages of the War on Terror era suggests that this lack of recognition is perhaps unfair. George W. Bush was a no-nonsense orator who preferred substance over style, relied primarily on rapport with his listeners, was always willing to adjust his message in order to amplify its persuasive power, and did not shy away from using unconventional tactics to achieve his goals or even going off book if the circumstances demanded it. The above analysis of his post-9/11 communication acts, revealing Bush's extensive use of *pathos* and *ethos* appeals as well as his penchant for visually creative imagery, is not only a description of the Republican's rhetorical *modus operandi*, but also a statement on the changing media environment in the United States, requiring specific skill sets from today's political operators.

George W. Bush, whose popularity skyrocketed after 9/11, exceeding 90% approval rating in the autumn of 2001, was able to skillfully use this momentum to push forward many of his political initiatives (Coe 2011, 321); even some of his future harshest critics, such as then Senator Hillary Clinton, were sufficiently under the spell of the 43rd President's War on Terror rhetoric to support his international policies (including voting for the authorization of the invasion of Iraq). Bush's public image of an anti-terrorism champion proved to be more than enough to carry him through the 2004 presidential race (even against John Kerry's generally competent campaign), but eventually this attractive veneer started to grow thin and peel off. Just like in the case of another of the great 20th century orators, Richard Nixon, who was not able to repeat the success of his 1952 Checkers speech in the course of the Watergate proceedings (Bochin 1990, 263), the Republican's political communication strategies did not seem to work that efficiently during the subsequent crises of his presidency, including the 2005 Katrina disaster and the 2008 economic recession (which saw him hit rock-bottom approval ratings). Nevertheless, it might be argued that an enduring proof of the 43rd President's unorthodox rhetorical ingenuity and significance as a public speaker is the fact that some of the expressions coined and popularized in his communication acts ("war on terror", "axis of evil") still influence our understanding of global politics.

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