

Legitimising Language: 9/11 and Liberal Democracy

Andrew Edward Ennis ENNAND001

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This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced

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Abstract

Since the famous 9/11 terrorist attacks in America, the American government has increased their military presence across the world, most notably by occupying Iraq and Afghanistan. This they have done under the banner of spreading liberal democracy to oppressed peoples in far off places, arguing that their actions represent a sense of moral clarity and are necessary if the world is going to be safe from evil. This paper argues that the term liberal democracy and all the ideological rhetoric of freedom that is employed give the Americans a moral high ground from which they seek to excuse and legitimise their actions. This thesis shows how the framework of spreading liberal democracy has been and is being used in order to legitimise actions which appear to be contradictory to the professed goals of spreading liberty and equality, to oppressed people – In so doing it draws on a range of liberal and leftist thinkers, including Slavoj Zizek, Manuel Castells, Noam Chomsky, Frank Ferudi and others.

The argument made in this paper is that in the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan what makes the United States morally superior by definition is their employment of the frame of spreading liberal democracy and protecting international security from terrorism. This paper continues to argue that these and other actions taken under the banner of spreading liberal democracy have little to do with exporting principles of freedom and democracy to developing nations and much more to do with the violent imposition of global capitalism by strong nations onto weaker ones. The discourse of spreading liberal democracy has allowed America to legitimise their actions of occupying Iraq and Afghanistan as being a benevolent, charitable and

altruistic missions and that the events of 9/11 are evidence that their actions in the middle-east are necessary both for their own protection and that of the international world order.

The conclusion drawn from this argument is that although the threat of physical force is the most direct means of exerting dominance it is in the ability to control the discourse in which actors find themselves that the true key to power lies. America holds both the ability to exert massive military force but also has the means by which to construct the framework in which they act. This power allows them to legitimize their actions without much negative response whilst those they oppose find themselves unable to express their own position adequately.

Legitimising Language: 9/11 and liberal democracy

Throughout the power struggles of the twentieth century the proponents and protectors of the principles of liberal democracy have always been heralded as the ‘good guys’ fighting for what is ‘right’, and after the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 there didn’t appear to be anyone left to argue with this claim of moral superiority. The claim to moral superiority that liberal democracy holds has come to be largely unquestioned and could even be considered as being unquestionable. The intention of this paper is to show how the unquestionable nature of this claim to moral superiority – that liberal democracy as an ideology holds – allows for its language to be appropriated in order to legitimise actions that have very little to do with the promotion of its principles. This it is argued is because of the gap between its actual practice and effects, and its rhetorical claims. Slavoj Zizek sums up this disjunction in his book *Violence* by noting how:

On 11 September 2001 the Twin Towers were hit. Twelve years earlier, on 9 November 1989, the Berlin Wall fell. That date heralded the ‘happy ‘90s’, the Francis Fukuyama dream of the ‘end of history’ – the belief that liberal democracy had, in principle, won; that the search was over; that the advent of a global, liberal world community lurked just around the corner; that the obstacles to this ultra-Hollywood happy ending were merely empirical and contingent (local pockets of resistance where the leaders did not yet grasp that their time was up). In contrast, 9/11 is the main symbol of the end of the Clintonite happy ‘90s. (Zizek. 2008, 86-87)

Accordingly 9/11 represents a new era of global politics in which the practice and rhetorical claims of liberal democracy need to be re-examined. The claim to moral superiority that spreading liberal democracy affords those who act under its banner needs to be critically examined in order to establish to what extent this process actually leads to what Zizek above describes as an “ultra-Hollywood happy ending”.

Since the famous 9/11 terrorist attacks in America, the American government has increased their military presence across the world, most notably by occupying Iraq and Afghanistan. This they have done under the banner of spreading liberal democracy to oppressed peoples in far off places, arguing that their actions represent a sense of moral clarity and are necessary if the world is going to be safe from evil. This

paper argues that the term liberal democracy and all the ideological rhetoric of freedom that is employed give the Americans a moral high ground from which they seek to excuse and legitimise their actions. This papers purpose is to show how the framework of spreading liberal democracy has been and is being used in order to legitimise actions which appear to be contradictory to the professed goals of spreading liberty and equality, to oppressed people – In so doing it draws on a range of liberal and leftist thinkers, including Slavoj Zizek, Manuel Castells, Noam Chomsky, Frank Ferudi and others.

The intent of this exercise is to show how the construction of meaning through language legitimises some acts of violence as being in the name of good and some bad regardless of the actual act and its real world effects. In this ideology anything done in the name of spreading liberal democracy is automatically seen as good and anything opposed is automatically bad. There seems to be little place for middle ground within this framework; those who profess to be spreading liberal democracy are always seen as good even if their acts appear self-interested. On the other hand those opposed to the process are always bad even if their grievances are legitimate. The argument made here shows how the frame of liberal democracy and the narrative of freedom associated with it have been hijacked in order to legitimise actions that contradict the professed ideals of liberal democracy, the ideals of equality and freedom.

This paper will firstly examine how power can be divided into two components, one being the imposition of physical force – or violence – and the other the control of discourse. The control of discourse allows for the control of how events are mediated and perceived. The argument here is that currently any action taken in the name of spreading liberal democracy globally is considered morally justifiable regardless of the real world effects or intentions. In order to understand why spreading liberal democracy is considered such a morally desirable quest this paper will examine the ideology of liberal democracy as exemplified in Francis Fukuyama's, *The End of History and the Last Man*. This leads to an explanation as to why the civilising discourse of colonialism followed by the discourse of liberal democracy has been experienced by the Muslim populations of the middle-east as an inherently violent process and how this is evidenced by Slovoj Zizek's notion of subjective and

objective violence which shows how wealthy western nations use the banner of liberal democracy as a mask for the violent imposition of global capitalism and free trade. This is argued by examining Zayn Kassam's account of how Middle Eastern countries have experienced the West over the last century since colonialism and how representations of the West have in turn been received by them. This shows how events such as 9/11 can be seen as stemming from the violent processes of capitalism which is legitimized by calling it spreading liberal democracy.

This discussion of the Muslim dilemma leads to the events of 9/11 which were represented and mediated as being the lone acts of evil madmen that hate democracy and freedom. As such I discuss what America symbolises and how it is represented and mediated – both from the perspectives of Americans and from the Muslim middle-East. I am by no means arguing that 9/11 was a good thing, or that the Americans deserved it. What I am arguing, is that there were and still are real reasons why Islamic terrorists commit the acts they do and the reasons for these act are ignored at great peril.

This is followed by an analysis of the Bush administrations neoconservative agenda and its objectives. As such I will examine what the neoconservative agenda is, how it is rationalized and how the events of 9/11 afforded the Bush administration the opportunity to pursue these objectives. The argument is that the Bush administration utilized the banner of liberal democracy in order to achieve their specific political goals; whilst ignoring any real questions as to why the attacks occurred in the first place, and in turn heightening the chance and reasons for more attacks. In order to explain why the Bush administrations agenda was accepted with so little debate or dissention a closer examination of particular examples of the narrative they employed and how it was reinforced by the media is needed in order to show how pervasive even the smaller nuances of this discourse or narrative are. Lastly an examination into how the mind is framed – according to Castell – is presented in order to show why it is that people are so receptive to this linguistic sort of control; the effects of which are arguably enhanced by the current political climate of, as Frank Ferudi describes, political exhaustion and disengagement in Western democratic nations.

The overall argument is that although the ideology of Liberal democracy outlined by Fukuyama may represent, in principle, a noble mission, the actual practice of this ideology appears to be far from morally driven. Instead the term itself has become an excuse that those in a position to create meaning often employ in order to legitimise their actions. These actions are almost always completely self-interested and objectively violent to those on the receiving end. The term liberal democracy is defined by the 2009 Encarta World dictionary as a **modern Western political system:**

A political system that has free elections, a multiplicity of political parties, political decisions made through an independent legislature, and an independent judiciary, with a state monopoly on law enforcement (Encarta® World English Dictionary [North American Edition] (2009).

The idea of spreading political freedom to oppressed people through the imposition of this political system is arguably not what is actually occurring in reality. As such this term has been detached from its ideological roots and set adrift in a sea of meaning in which it has come to legitimise many actions that have little or nothing to do with the actual spreading of the principles of liberty and equality. I am not arguing that the spread of liberal democracy is a bad thing in fact I believe that it would be good if that is what was actually taking place, the point here is that the term itself has become an all purpose tool or frame which, with the help of some linguistic gymnastics – such as employed by the Bush administration – could potentially be applied by any politician in almost any situation in order to legitimise their actions. As such one must be wary when any nation attacks another or occupies their country or controls their resources and politics in the name of their freedom. The discourse of liberal democracy is becoming more like the civilising discourse of colonialism which can also be thought of as a violent, racist and bigoted process. Liberal democracy has become merely another label that allows for forced control of others wealth and resources.

Notions of Power

In order to understand the symbolic field or frame we find ourselves in, in the post 9/11 era let us first consider one account of what power is, how it is formed and

how it is employed. Manuel Castells in his 2009 book *Communication Power* defines power:

Power is the relational capacity that enables a social actor to influence asymmetrically the decisions of other social actor(s) in ways that favour the empowered actor's will, interests, and values. Power is exercised by means of coercion (or the possibility of it) and/or by the construction of meaning on the basis of the discourse through which social actors guide their action. Power relationships are framed by domination, which is the power that is embedded in the institutions of society. The relational capacity of power is conditioned, but not determined, by the structural capacity of domination. Institutions may engage in power relationships that rely on the domination they exercise over their subjects (Castells: 2009, 10).

In this definition Castells defines power as the ability of a social actor to influence asymmetrically the decisions of another social actor. According to Castells "the concept of *actor* refers to a variety of subjects of action: individual actors, collective actors, organizations, institutions, and networks" (Castells: 2009, 10), and "*Asymmetrical* means that while influence in a relationship is always reciprocal, in power relationships there is always a greater degree of influence of one actor over another" (11). The two methods of exerting influence are identified as coercion – or violence – and the construction of meaning – or discourse. He notes that "there is a complementary and reciprocal support between the two main mechanisms of power formation identified by theories of power: violence and discourse" (11). As such:

The more the construction of meaning on behalf of specific interests and values plays a role in asserting power in a relationship, the less the recourse to violence (legitimate or not) becomes necessary. However, the institutionalisation of recourse to violence in the state and its derivatives sets up the context of domination in which the cultural production of meaning can deploy its effectiveness (Castells: 2009, 11).

As such violence and discourse are the two main factors that influence power relations both within a particular nation and in the world in general. Initially power may lie in the form of coercion or violence but it is in discourse that power is legitimized and exerted. Controlling the cultural production of meaning, means there is less need to resort to actual violence but the ability to use violence allows for the ability to create meaning and control discourse. When viewed in this light one could see the history of the Middle-East since the beginning of the 20th century – which will

be described below in greater detail – as the successful imposition of institutionalised violence by the strong states of first England and then America yet with an unsuccessful attempt at controlling the production of meaning in those countries. That is, that they could control these states by force but have never truly been able to win the minds of their peoples. However for America or England to assert dominance over these states has never required them to win the hearts and minds of the people ‘over there’ – although achieving that would have made life, and conquest simpler – what was required however was to convince their own populations that they were morally in the right. The populations in what is labelled the West or the 1st world or the post-industrial developed nations, by and large consider themselves moral people who act ethically when dealing with other nations and groups of people and as such they require legitimisation for actions taken on their behalf by their governments. This legitimacy is to be found in the civilising discourse of colonialism – which is discussed in greater detail below in relation to Zayn Kassam’s essay *Can a Muslim be a Terrorist*. This is followed by the quest to spread liberal democracy, and finally now in the post 9/11 world the need to protect the liberal democratic world from Islamic terrorism. As such it can be seen that although America holds the means to power through which they could successfully invade any country or even wipe them off the map by means of nuclear weapons they need their own populations’ consent before acting, which requires the setting of the symbolic field or framing the minds of the people. As such 9/11 must be seen as the incident which allowed the American government to legitimize their use of power over the Middle-East to their own people and defend their actions to the rest of the world. In order to understand how the frame of liberal democracy has been hijacked in order to legitimise Western and particularly American domination, one needs to understand where this mission or quest to democratise the world comes from and why it is depicted and mediated as such a necessary and charitable mission for wealthy Western nations to undertake and why it is always seen as the moral high ground in world politics. In order to understand the crusade to spread liberal democracy to all corners of the earth this paper will examine Francis Fukuyama’s *The End of history and the Last Man*.

The Triumph of Democracy?

Through the 90's, the 'happy 90's' as Slavoj Zizek has referred to it, we lived in what Francis Fukuyama has described as the 'end of history'. His belief being that the fall of the Berlin Wall represented the triumph of liberal democracy over its major competitors – i.e. communism and National Socialism. His assertion was that what this triumph represented was what he called the 'end of history'. The 'end of history', according to Fukuyama refers to “a theory of modernization that raised the question of where the modernization process would ultimately lead” (Fukuyama: 2006, 341). He argues that between the publication of Marx's *Communist Manifesto* in 1848 and the end of the 20th Century it was believed by many intellectuals that Communism was the logical end of history, in which the surplus and abundance generated through expansive capitalism would lead to a socialist form of wealth redistribution (342). Fukuyama argues that “as of 1989, it didn't look like this was going to happen” (342). Fukuyama's observation was that:

To the extent the human historical process was leading anywhere, it was towards what the Marxists called bourgeois democracy. There didn't seem to be a higher form of society that would transcend one based on the principles of liberty and equality (Fukuyama: 2006, 342).

As such everything that happened after could be seen as “just backfilling, as those principles were universalized across the world” (Fukuyama: 2006, 342). The question he tackles is “whether the principles of liberty and equality that we see as the foundation of liberal democracy have a similar universal significance” (343). He states that he “believes this is the case”, and that “there is an overall logic to historical evolution that explains why there should be increasing democracy around the world as our societies evolve” (343). There is – according to him – a “set of underlying forces that drive human social evolution in a way that tells us that there should be more democracy at the end of this evolutionary process than at the beginning” (343). He notes that development in science and technology leads to increased productivity which has “driven modern capitalism and the liberation of technology and ideas in modern market economies” (343). He continues that this economic development leads to a universally desirable increase in living standards, the proof of this universality lies in the fact that “every year millions of people in poor, less developed societies seek to move to Western Europe, to the united states, to Japan, or to other developed countries, because they see that the possibilities for human happiness are much greater in a wealthy society than in a poor one” (344). However he does note that the

drive for development outweighs the drive for democratisation. The two, he says, are linked; for development leads to better educated higher income groups – or a middle class – which tends to “promote the desire for democratic participation, and thus drive from the bottom up, demand for democratic political institutions” (344). He continues that the “final aspect of the modernization process concerns the area of culture” (344). He asserts that “everyone wants economic development, and economic development tends to promote democratic political institutions. But at the end of the modernization process nobody wants cultural uniformity; in fact, issues of cultural identity come back with a vengeance” (344).

Fukuyama states that one of the most widespread misapprehensions of his argument is that he argues for a “specifically American version of the end of history” (Fukuyama: 2006, 344). He continues that “many have taken the end of history to be a brief for American Hegemony over the rest of the world, not just in the realm of ideas and values, but through the actual exercise of American power to order the world according to American interests” (344). To show the differences between the American and European approach to Liberal Democracy he argues that he believes the European Union to be a better reflection of “the concept than is the contemporary United States” , and that the European dream is to “transcend national sovereignty, power politics, and the kinds of struggles that make military power necessary” (346). This he puts in contrast to America who “Have a rather traditional understanding of sovereignty, applaud their military, and like their patriotic Fourth of July parades” (346). The difference, he continues to note, is that “Modern liberal democracy is based on twin principles of liberty and equality” and that a balance must be struck between the two, a gain of one cannot occur without a loss of the other (346). He explains that:

The two are in perpetual tension: equality cannot be maximized without the intervention of a powerful state that limits individual liberty; liberty cannot be expanded indefinitely without inviting various pernicious forms of social inequality. Each liberal democracy thus must make a trade-off between the two (Fukuyama: 2006, 346).

Thus the difference between American and European approaches to liberal democracy lie in Europe’s favouring of equality over liberty and America the opposite. It is my argument however that although Fukuyama wasn’t arguing for a

particular American brand of liberal democracy to be imposed on the world, it is the American society that is in the position to and has the power to, impose their particular point of view to a greater a degree than others. As this paper will argue below those who control the cultural production of meaning are afforded the ability to set the frame within which others must define themselves. Fukuyama's writing is focussed mainly on how liberal democracy applies within an individual nation state, arguing that it is desirable everywhere and by everyone. The problem is in its application, especially today where we live in a world in which this argument seems to be accepted without question – i.e. that the quest to spread liberal democracy and the values of freedom and equality is a necessary and charitable quest. Although I do believe that this would be a good exercise it is this paper's intention to argue that because the perception is that any action taken in the name of this cause must by definition be a good act taken with the best of intentions, the term liberal democracy can be and is being used in order to undertake actions which not only do not serve to spread the principles of freedom and equality but actually undermine these principles in the process.

Fukuyama originally wrote the end of history as a short paper in 1989, and he is quoted from the *Afterword* he wrote in 2006. His theory of spreading liberty and equality to all seems a noble aspiration and a truly altruistic banner to lead politics into the future, and this dream seemed to be in the process of being fulfilled throughout what Zizek has described as the 'Happy 90's' of the Clinton era, it seems that the events of 9/11 have brought this success into question and consequently should have also brought into question the actual processes which are carried out under the banner of spreading liberal democracy; unfortunately this was not the case, and served instead – as this paper will show – to reinforced the perceived moral rightness of the mission to democratize.

Fukuyama states that he believes that “there is a broad historical trend toward liberal democracy”, and continues that “statesmanship, politics, leadership, and individual choice remain absolutely critical to the actual course of historical development” (Fukuyama: 2006, 354).

These notions and principles while being well intentioned are arguably not truly reflective of what is in actuality being spread around the world under the banner of liberal democracy; in fact in practice they seem only to be an afterthought to the spread of global capitalism and free trade which hides behind the label of liberal democracy. Accordingly Derrida, in his book *Spectres of Marx*, notes that “depending on how it works to his advantage and serves his thesis, Fukuyama defines liberal democracy here as an actual reality and there as a simple idea” (Derrida: 1994, 62-63). As such it is important to distinguish between the idea – and ideal – of liberal democracy and how it is actually experienced in reality.

This paper argues that 9/11 is symbolic of the disjunction between what Fukuyama above describes as “a broad historical trend towards liberal democracy” which encourages the spread of equality, liberty and stability around the world – and what the reality of the program is – as Kassam describes below – of the self interested expansion into, and economic exploitation of, developing countries by the developed nations and multi-national entities – such as oil companies for instance (Fukuyama: 2006, 354)(Kassam: 2003). This disjunction between the altruistic notion of spreading Liberal Democracy – or as the Americans have it, just ‘Freedom’ – to developing nations, and the actual violent process of globalising capitalism – and more specifically free trade – is one of the main reasons why an event like 9/11 occurred in the first place. Yet it appears not to have called into question what is actually being carried out under the banner of spreading liberal democracy. The argument here is that because the frame of liberal democracy now carries such moral weight it has become beyond question. As such any action can be legitimised by excusing it as an attempt to spread liberal democracy. As the moral high ground of spreading liberal democracy is perceived as being beyond question, no action done in its name can be considered as bad, regardless of the outcome. For instance criticism of the Iraqi war came mainly in the form of questioning the manner in which it occurred and not in the fact it occurred at all. This – as is discussed below in greater detail – is due to the inability to question any actions performed under the banner of spreading liberal democracy, and in this case the goal of ‘freeing’ Iraq stifled any moral questioning as to whether it really was America’s ‘duty’ to ‘free’ them at all.

In order to understand our current historical climate or narrative as it could be described we need to look at both sides of the picture. We now live in – according to Zizek - what has been termed as the post 9/11 era which is as unique from the previously described ‘happy 90’s’ as they were to the cold war era. First and foremost the post 9/11 era has allowed for the creation of a new symbolic enemy to liberal democracy in the form of Islamic terrorism, which is perceived in Western countries as irrational, destructive, and somewhat pointless – that is it achieves very little. Whereas, on the contrary in developing nations particularly in the middle-east the spread of liberal democracy is seen largely as a farce used to legitimise the self-interested economic exploitation and political – and military – control of weaker countries – such as Iraq or currently Afghanistan.

Arguably, the processes of first Colonialism and now the spreading of liberal democracy have been experienced as violent and oppressive, and these processes can be seen as having ultimately led to events such as 9/11. This is evidenced, I believe by the long history of the interaction between the developed West and the Muslim Middle East. To establish this let us firstly discuss the concept of subjective and objective violence as exemplified by Zizek in order to explain how – in the context of the longer history of interaction between the Western Superpowers and the Muslim world in general – the civilising discourse of colonialism and now that of spreading liberal democracy has been experienced as a violent process which has done more harm to those peoples than it has helped them.

Zizek on Subjective and Objective Violence

In the introduction to Zizek’s 2008 book *Violence* he outlines his main theme of subjectively violent acts seen in the context of a larger systemic objective violence. Subjective violence he describes as being “at the forefront of our minds, the obvious signals of violence are acts of terror, civil unrest, international conflict.” From this subjective violence he argues it is necessary to “step back, to disentangle ourselves from the fascinating lure of this directly ‘subjective’ violence, violence performed by a clearly identifiable agent” and to “perceive the contours of the background which generates such outbursts”. He continues that this “enables us to identify a violence

that sustains our very efforts to fight violence and to promote tolerance” (Zizek: 2008, 01)

Zizek argues that this subjective violence must be viewed in context with two types of objective violence. The first being “the symbolic violence embedded in language and its forms.” This objective violence of language he continues is “not only at work in the obvious – and extensively studied – cases of incitement and of the relations of social domination reproduced in our habitual speech forms”, but also that “there is a more fundamental form of violence that pertains to language as such, to its imposition of a certain universe of meaning” (Zizek: 2008, 01). The argument here is that, the language of liberal democracy imposes a ‘universe of meaning’ in which acts may be framed so as to legitimise them as being not only necessary but also as being altruistic and charitable. For instance occupying a country in order to liberate it, is not perceived as a contradictory action, as long as it is done in the name of spreading liberal democracy. The second type of objective violence Zizek describes as ‘systemic’ violence, “or the often catastrophic consequences of the smooth functioning of our economic and political systems” (2008, 01). The first type of objective violence – that of language – will be discussed later in relation to Castells’ notions of power, communication, and meaning; the second that of systemic violence refers to the underlying processes involved in what is called spreading liberal democracy. The fact that the spreading of liberal democracy is always seen as positive – regardless of the underlying processes that accompany it – is also an example of the violence of language; in that the construction of the meaning of that label allows for it to be used in defence of greater systemic violence’s that occur in its name. Liberal democracy is the frame that is employed to enforce the symbolic field – as Zizek would have it – or dominant narrative – as Castells might say – that sets the so-called playing field of global politics. If, as according to Fukuyama liberal democracy is seen as representative of universal freedom and happiness then all those opposed to it and its spread must be seen as the enemies of freedom and happiness. This constitutes the main frame in which the ‘war on terror’ is seen through – i.e. the defenders of liberal democracy and freedom are the so-called ‘good-guys’ whilst any opposition are automatically perceived as the so-called ‘bad guys’.

Zizek describes subjective violence as what is noticeable against the background noise of systemic or objective violence. “It is seen as a perturbation of the ‘normal’, peaceful, non-violent state of things.” (Zizek: 2008, 02) As such the objective systemic violence must be taken into account if subjective acts of violence are to be properly understood. Thus, he states, “When we find ourselves bombarded with mediatic images of violence. We need to learn, learn and learn what causes this violence.” (2008, 07)

Zizek’s theory of subjective and objective violence can be applied to many cultural and political phenomena – for instance – although Zizek does not himself make the comparison – one could make the observation that children who have violent outbursts often come from a violent home environment. The issue he has is that acts of subjective violence are mediated in such a way that attention is deflected from the actual cause of the violence, the underlying systemic or objective violence that underlies the act itself. For instance he discusses the massive uproar caused by Danish cartoons of Mohammad by noting that, “The Muslim crowds did not react to the Muhammad caricatures as such. They reacted to the complex figure of the *West* that they perceived as the attitude behind the caricatures.” He continues that, “what exploded in violence was a web of symbols, images and attitudes, including Western imperialism, godless materialism, hedonism, and the suffering of Palestinians, and which became attached to the Danish cartoons” (Zizek. 2008, 51). What this theory of violence implies is that when the Western audience perceives the subjective violence of the Muslim response of rioting, boycotting Danish products and threatening death to the author of the cartoons, attention is deflected from the real cause of such extreme outbursts. According to Zizek the reason that this hatred spread from Denmark to encompass Europe and the West as well, was the condensation of a torrent of humiliations and frustrations” that could be attributed to the West. (51)

In order to truly understand the background to the events of 9/11, the attack on Afghanistan and the war in Iraq we need to understand how “a torrent of humiliations and frustrations” have been experienced by the Muslim populations both in the Middle-East and in their diasporas across Europe and the rest of the world in a longer historical context. It is important to acknowledge the motives and politics that set these events in a larger historical framework.

The Violent Process of Modernisation

In order to understand to a greater extent why there is such hatred towards the so-called Western world and its perspectives and practices, both culturally and politically, one needs to analyse how the Muslim populations have experienced modernisation – or modernisation as westernisation - and how they have come to perceive themselves in relation to the West. If an act like 9/11 is to be seen as the consequence of objective systemic violence one needs to understand how the progress of modernity and capitalism was experienced by these people. As such it is important to understand at least some of the long history of Western influence on the Muslim populations.

Zayn Kassam in his essay *Can a Muslim Be a Terrorist* identifies three factors that have influenced the rise of Islamist organisations in the middle-east throughout the previous century. Before I continue I believe that his definition of an Islamist as opposed to a Muslim is necessary in distinguishing between the various actors in the Middle-East scene during this time:

Hence the definition of an Islamist as one who holds that every aspect of a Muslims life must be governed by Islam through Shariah law and whose ultimate aim is to take over the reins of both public and private life and to regulate these to the particular legal regime to whom they subscribe. While all Islamists are Muslim, all Muslims are not Islamists. Further, while all Islamists subscribe to versions of the ideology stated here, the majority of these do not believe in utilizing physically violent means in achieving their aims, although some Islamist groups do have an organizational arm devoted to this purpose (Kassam: 2003, 120).

For instance, he gives an example of a group that mostly concerns itself with social service delivery yet do have a militant wing in the Palestinian group Hamas. He explains that not all wars fought by a Muslim is a *jihad*, and that there is different language that relates to a war in defence of their religion (i.e. *jihad*) and language that refers to war in defence of territory (i.e. *jang* and *harb*) (Kassam: 2003, 115). This distinction, he continues, has unfortunately been lost “on Muslims currently engaged in struggling for their causes, whatever they may be” (115). The Muslim community is made up of many different factions with different goals. However under the gaze of

liberal democratic discourse the Muslim community tends to be viewed as one homogenous group, and as is discussed below this defines them in a mostly negative light.

Kassam identifies three main factors that have influenced the current state and mindset of the Muslim peoples that has given rise to the various factions of extremists that are now labelled as the enemies of the 'free world'. Starting with the affects of colonialism and its civilizing discourse I contend that the spread of liberal democracy can be seen as a continuation of this civilising discourse and not far off in nature and practice to the colonialism of the previous century, especially in its expression of having altruistic goals while in practice acting mainly out of self interest. That is to say that the spread of liberal democracy can be seen as a front which makes it easier for the exploitation of developing nations – caused by the actual spread of global capitalism – to succeed. This civilising discourse sets the distinction between colonisers and colonised along religious lines, with the religion of Islam being blamed for the perceived backwardness of the subject people. Kassam notes that during the colonial era, the segregation of woman was often cited as an example to the 'home' constituencies that the civilizing and Christianizing of the peoples was right and necessary (Kassam: 2003, 115). The rights of women are still one of the many excuses employed to legitimise interference in Muslim countries. In response to the argument that Islam was the reason for the peoples' perceived 'backwardness' the counterargument became that Islam would rescue them from subordination to the colonisers (116). This is still a main line of argument in attracting people to Islamic fundamentalism as it is meant to be a fight against subordination to Western Imperialism. In this light the spread of liberal democracy appears to be the continuation of the colonial civilising mission, just under a new heading. Whereas during colonial times the West imposed their rule by military force alone, rule is now imposed by economic force, coupled with the West's ability to create – what Zizek calls – the symbolic field in which Muslims find themselves positioned – that is they are still considered to be 'backwards' and in need of social correcting or 'guidance' to use a less strong term. This is where the altruistic intentions of spreading liberal democracy is meant to lie, yet as this essay will continue to argue the actually spreading of the principles of liberal democracy has never truly been the goal or effect of political and military interference in the Middle East.

The second factor identified by Kassam is the realisation of recently independent Muslim nations that their “survival and ongoing viability as nations depended on their ability to be players in the Western hegemonic realm of economics and politics” (Kasam: 2003, 116). He makes a distinction between two understandings of modernization prevalent in Muslim populations; one is that of ‘technologization’ and the other is that of ‘Westernization.’

For many Muslims, enjoying the fruits of scientific progress is seen as a form of Devine bounty; Westernization, on the other hand, is fraught with issues of power and domination and exemplifies societies that have lost their moral mooring. Modernization as Westernization connotes secularization or the separation of religion from public life, especially politics, and herein lies the crux of the debate between Muslim modernists, who argue that religion should be separated from what is in the best interests of society (itself a laudable aim), and Muslim conservatives, who argue that indeed the best interests of society lie in the re-Islamisation of public institutions, including the law (Kassam: 2003, 117).

Muslim nations challenged by the notion that the adoption of Western technologies might entail the adoption of Western cultures and values led to a search for a uniquely local form of modernization, a form of modernization which could be “modern in its use of technology and ability to parlay at the economic table of emergent globalization, and yet culturally resonant with its own history, social institutions, and peoples” (Kassam: 2003, 117).

Kassam notes that the end of colonialism did not mean the end of Western influence in the region and cites the example of the creation of Israel and the dispossession of the Palestinians with the financial and political support of the United States as one main factor. The other he notes relates to the Cold War, in which “several Muslim nations became pawns in a larger power struggle between the forces of capitalism and the forces of communism, and in smaller power struggles between Muslim nations” (Kassam: 2003, 118). This last part relating to the cold war is vitally relevant to the current circumstances surrounding terrorism and the so called ‘war’ on it. The Americans had interest in arming, training and motivating armed groups, particularly in Afghanistan to fight against the Soviets in their countries. Kassam describes John K. Cooley as suggesting that “American, Pakistani, and Saudi funding

and collaboration in support of Islamist groups was based on ‘(t)he tacit consensus... that the Muslim religion, fundamentally anti-Communist, if translated into politics, could be harnessed as a mighty force to oppose Moscow in the Cold War, in a world growingly polarized by that war’” (118). This is important to the debate today surrounding Islamist ‘terrorism’ as this could be seen as one of the main influencing factors in the formation of fundamentalist groups with a political agenda and military training. This is also another example of how the cause of spreading liberal democracy has had negative effects, as the reason for arming and training these groups was to drive out the Soviets in the fight against communism. Kassam continues to relate how after the Soviets were driven out of Afghanistan, “the land was left to its own devices, and in disarray, hence fertile ground for the Islamist recruitment” (119).

The rest is history. The smaller power struggle between the Pakistani need to have pliable neighbour to the north in order to safe guard their borders to the South ensured their preference for Islamist rather than left-leaning Afghan leadership, thereby providing logistical and government support and encouragement to a politicized form of Islam rather than to Muslims who sought to modernize their country and address the challenges facing development without drawing religious norms into the equation (Kassam: 2003, 119).

This second factor as discussed above shows how Islamist, fundamentalist groups can be seen as rising in the face of the challenges posed by colonialism and then facing modernization after independence. The challenges of Westernization to traditional Muslim values led to a questioning of the role of religion in public life and as such inspired both groups who would want to see religion and public institutions separated and those that wanted public life to adhere strictly to religious principles. This combined with Western interference, most notably in the cases of the formation of Israel and displacement of the Palestinians, and secondly in the arming training and encouragement of Muslim groups to fight against the Soviet forces in the name of religion and then abandoning them after, has led to great dissatisfaction with the Western powers and particularly America. Thus post Cold-War the middle East and most notably Afghanistan can be seen as suffering a long history of being subjected to Western influence that has done more harm than good and has left “fertile ground for Islamist recruitment” (Kassam: 2003, 119).

The third and last – yet no less important – factor in the rise of Islamist activist groups – as they could be called – is found in the politics concerning access to oil. “The establishment of military bases in oil-bearing regions and the propping up of governments and leaders friendly to American and European interests have been detrimental to the growth of democracy and institutions devoted to social welfare in the region. One might wonder whether the discovery of oil has been a curse as it has assured American and other foreign intervention in the politics of the region” (Kassam: 2003, 119). This third and last factor has been a major influence in the region for much of the twentieth century and has played a role in the formation of Islamist ideologies in the face of increasing Western influence and interest in the region. The discovery of oil in the region has meant despite all other reasons for Western influence – i.e. the civilizing mission, modernity, and the cold war – oil has been, still is, and will remain the dominant reason for Western interference in the middle-east. For – as I have come to believe – when all the supposedly altruistic Western ideologies of championing civilization, or freedom or democracy to the peoples of these nations falls away the dominant interest to Western nations is the self serving need for access to oil – and cheap oil at that.

This gives a good background to the systemic objective violence that Muslim countries have been subjected to over the years, which seem to give some legitimate grounds to their grievances. This systemic violence has generally been carried out under the altruistic banner of spreading liberal democracy and the universal principles of freedom and equality, as Fukuyama has described, yet the practice has been experienced by the nations it is imposed upon as the freedom to be exploited by those more technologically and economically developed. Although the objective and systemic violence of capitalism does give good ground for grievances it does not completely explain the nature of the resistance movements. In order to understand this better it is necessary to discuss the Muslim cultural and how they view the representation of the West.

How the West Culture is Represented and Mediated

Western culture, Kassam notes, is viewed – from a Muslim perspective – as being “rapacious and self serving”, despite of and possibly influenced by courses on

Western civilization which portray it as, “glorious, humanistic, and universalistic in its hopes of rights and dignity for all humans” (Kassam: 2003, 119). Challenges to the Western view he notes, were voiced over fifty years ago due to the discovery of oil, thus Islamist reaction to Westernization began to occur “long before the Mujahiddin were trained in Afghanistan largely to serve Western purposes” (119). According to him many writers during this period “contributed toward forming totalizing conceptualizations of what it means to be a Muslim in a Muslim society governed by Muslim institutions,” and that these writers all drew their influences from the “writings of medieval Syrian jurist Ibn Taymiyya (d.1328)” (119-120). Such thinkers – and the example is given of Ayatollah Khomeini and his successors – attempted to “define their visions of an Islamic ‘orthodoxy’ that is exclusivist, anti-Western, and highly Shariah oriented in the hopes of incalculating pride in the Islamic tradition and attempt to create Islamic nations that would provide an alternate model to Western nations” (120). Accordingly, drawing from these ideologies “provided by such orthodoxy creationists, innumerable groups have sprung up all over the Islamic, and now Western, world, in the hopes of garnering political power that would ensure the running of Muslim states in a Muslim manner as defined by such Ideologues, and thereby able to resist Western control over minds, resources, culture, and politics while simultaneously reinstating pride in Islam and self-governance” (120). These three factors give a great deal of insight as to how the Muslim world currently finds itself in relation to the Western nations economically, politically and philosophically. If one views the history as depicted above one might come to the conclusion that the events of 9/11 were only the latest example of the consequences of the issues that surround the Muslim worlds struggle to identify itself in the wake of modernization and Westernization, and that these issues of identity in the modern world have only been compounded by constant political and economic influence and interference in these areas. As such taken from a long view of history this struggle is nothing new and September 11 should not have been a complete surprise even though this does constitute the first direct and successful attack to occur on American soil in many, many years. This I believe is a fairly good account of how the systemic violence of modernism and capitalism can be seen as a violent process that inspires the response of radical fundamentalists in their acts of subjective violence. Zizek explains how subjectively violent acts such as 9/11 can be seen as a response to modernism and how it was experienced as a violent intrusion by the Muslim populations:

In Europe where modernisation took place over several centuries; there was time to adjust to this break, to soften its shattering impact, through *Kulturarbeit*, the work of culture. New social narratives and myths slowly came into being. Some other societies – notably the Muslim ones – were exposed to this impact directly, without protective screen or temporal delay, so their symbolic universe was perturbed much more brutally. They lost their (symbolic) ground with no time left to establish a new (symbolic) balance. No wonder then that the only way for some of these societies to avoid total breakdown was to erect in panic the shield of ‘fundamentalism’, the psychotic-delirious-incestuous reassertion of religion as direct insight into the divine Real, with all the terrifying consequences that such an insertion entails, and including the return with a vengeance of the obscene superego divinity demanding sacrifices (Zizek: 2008, 70).

Zizek above argues that fundamentalism was created in a panicked reaction to the fast onslaught of modernism into their traditional societies and their inability to modernise in the European sense due to the suddenness of its imposition. He explains that the difference from these terrorist ‘fundamentalists’ “be they Christian or Muslim”, and true religious fundamentalists is that “what they lack is easy to discern in all authentic fundamentalists, from Tibetan Buddhists to the Amish in the US: the absence of resentment and envy, the deep indifference towards the non-believers’ way of life” (Zizek: 2008, 72). He continues to explain that if these fundamentalists really believed they had found their way to truth then they would have no need for envy or resentment (72). As such, “In contrast to true fundamentalists, the terrorist pseudo-fundamentalists are deeply bothered, intrigued, fascinated, by the sinful life of the non-believers” (73). He sees the violent outbursts of Muslim fundamentalists as being proof of their lack of true conviction. “How fragile the belief of a Muslim must be, if he feels threatened by a stupid caricature in a low circulation Danish Newspaper” (73). Contrary to fundamentalist propaganda which rallies for the superiority of religion in the management of culture and politics Zizek argues that:

The fundamentalist Islamic terror is not grounded in the terrorists’ conviction of their superiority and in their desire to safeguard their cultural-religious identity from the onslaught of global consumerist civilisation. The problem with fundamentalists is not that we consider them inferior to us, but rather, that *they themselves* secretly consider themselves inferior. This is why our condescending politically correct assurances that we feel no superiority towards them only makes them more furious and feeds their resentment. The problem is not cultural

difference (their effort to preserve their identity), but the opposite fact that the fundamentalists are already like us, that, secretly, they have already internalised our standards and measure themselves by them. (Zizek: 2008, 73)

If, as is described above, the fundamentalist have already internalised Western values then it is possible to view their frustration as being a result of the disjunction between what Western liberal democracy professes to stand for and their actual real world experience of it and their role in it.

Globalization can be seen as one of the objective systemic violence's that give rise to subjective violence due to the proper functioning of global capitalist systems. Zizek notes that an overwhelmingly overlooked point when discussing the protests against the Danish newspaper cartoons was that most of the people demonstrating had not even seen the cartoons. He argues that this is a consequence of the "global information village", which allows for the spread of information halfway across the world almost instantly:

This fact confronts us with another, less attractive aspect of globalisation: the 'global information village' is the condition of the fact that something which appeared in an obscure daily in Denmark caused a violent stir in distant Middle Eastern countries. It is as if Denmark and Syria, Pakistan, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon and Indonesia really were *neighbouring* countries. (Zizek: 2008, 47)

As such peoples from all over the world who have felt snubbed by the wealthier Western nations for a long period of time took these cartoons, which they had not even seen, as a final straw that led to the venting of frustrations that have built up over a great deal of time. These frustrations ultimately can be linked to how these peoples having been placed in a position where they are perceived within the dominant global frame as being decidedly against the ideology of liberal democracy. And, as argued above, it is not the ideology of liberal democracy that they are ultimately against but rather the objectively violent process of capitalist expansion that is carried out under the altruistic banner of spreading liberal democracy that puts these people in opposition to the perceived moral rightness that legitimises it.

Those who understand globalisation as an opportunity for the entire earth to be a unified space of communication, one which brings together all of humanity, often fail to note the dark side of there proposition. Since a

neighbour is, as Freud suspected long ago, primarily a thing, a traumatic intruder, someone whose different way of life (or, rather, way of *jouissance* materialised in its social practices and rituals) disturbs us, throws the balance of our way of life off the rails, when it comes too close, this can also give rise to an aggressive reaction aimed at getting rid of this disturbing intruder. (Zizek: 2008, 50)

If, the Muslim populations can be seen as trying to find their own balance between developing both economically and technologically whilst avoiding Westernisation then the effects of globalisation are to put in direct comparison the attempts of these people to self govern within the standards of American and European cultures. Thus when a nation such as America professes to be spreading freedom to countries that they have a vested interest in, it inevitably must be taken as an insult by people who – as described above – have long been labelled as backwards and in need of social ‘guidance’.

As such the process of globalization is experienced as an objectively violent process which consequently causes conflict. The imposition of the ‘global-communication-village’ is that with instant communication there is instant debate and as Zizek has been noted as arguing, the reaction was not just to the Cartoons but rather to “a torrent of humiliations and frustrations” that were condensed into the caricatures.” As such the experience of being a neighbour is arguably a traumatic experience and although the geography that separates these countries is great the nature of instantaneous global communication allows for the symbolic space occupied by both parties to become very small and for reaction to be immediate and often extreme. Zizek quotes the German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk as noting in his 2006 piece entitled *Zorn und Zeit* that the problem with global communication technology is that:

‘More communication means at first, above all more conflict.’ This is why he is right to claim that the attitude of ‘understanding-each-other’ has to be supplemented by the attitude of ‘getting-out-of-each-other’s-way, by maintaining an appropriate distance, by implementing a new ‘code of discretion.’ (Zizek: 2008, 50)

In this manner the Muslim population can be seen as fighting for any appropriate symbolic space in which to engage with the global capitalist world that encapsulates them; and possibly the solution would be to maintain distance and

practice a ‘code of discretion’. Zizek’s argument seems to be that Islamic fundamentalists despite all their own propaganda are experiencing an identity crisis when confronting the hedonistic, self-indulgent Western lifestyle. He explains that through years of subjection to Western standards and ideals they have already internalised our way of life and “that *they themselves* secretly consider themselves inferior” (Zizek: 2008, 73). This identity crisis I believe is a consequence of having the principles of liberal democracy held over them whilst simultaneously being prevented from achieving them by the same people.

As argued above the events of 9/11 can be seen as occurring in response to not only the real political and economic interference of Middle-eastern countries by the highly developed Western superpowers, but also as a response to the “certain symbolic field” or frame these people find themselves being forced to act within.

As has almost always been the case, terrorists see themselves as freedom fighters and activists; the label one chooses to employ depends on what side of the ideological line one stands. Most commonly a group is considered as terrorist when not in a position of power and are considered freedom fighters only if they actually win. What this example portrays is that the power to label is the power to set the playing field.

How America Undermines the Spreading of Liberal Democracy whilst Appearing to Champion the Cause

Given this history one must wonder why the events of 9/11 were so surprising to the American citizenry in general. As outlined above the interference of the Western superpowers with the middle-east has always been legitimised as being part of a benevolent altruistic mission of helping the Muslim nations. Given this perception, the American population could not understand why these people hated them so much when all they were doing was trying to help. This is the effect of utilising the framework of spreading liberal democracy; that is, that no matter what is really occurring on the ground in the middle-east – or anywhere else for that – it is

always perceived as being done with the best intentions, and in a utilitarian manner, the ends are always perceived as eventually justifying the means.

Noam Chomsky has written for many years as to the real world actions of the American government in various developing nations, and has largely been ignored or overlooked as a radical leftist in his own country. Yet the consistency of his work and the resources that back him up makes one wonder why he is not more noticed within his own country. Milan Rai in the introduction to his book, *Chomsky's Politics*, notes that although Chomsky is considered a respected linguistic philosopher, the reaction to his social criticism “has been described as ‘a weird mixture of neglect and abuse’ in the major journals” (Rai: 1995, 2). He quotes the literary critic Jim Merod as noting that his writings are “read by nearly everyone with an ounce of intellectual curiosity, yet ignored in the traffic of normal critical debate” (1995, 2).

In the first essay in Chomsky’s book *Interventions* he points out that President Bush was not the first president to ask “why do they hate us?” Chomsky notes that many years before, “President Eisenhower described ‘the campaign of hatred against us [in the Arab world] not by the governments but by the people.’ His National Security council outlined the basic reasons: The U.S. supports corrupt and oppressive governments and is ‘opposing political or economic progress’ because of its interest in controlling the oil resources of the region” (Chomsky: 2007, 01). Chomsky continues to note that forty years later post 9/11 surveys show that the same beliefs and reasons exist today (01). As such Americans “do themselves few favours by choosing to believe that ‘they hate us’ or ‘they hate our freedoms.’ On the contrary, this is the attitude of people who like Americans and admire much about the United States, including its freedoms. What they hate is official policies that deny them the freedoms to which they, too, aspire” (02). Chomsky continues that even amongst those who hate Osama bin Laden there is a certain resonance to his ranting about “U.S. support for corrupt and brutal regimes, or about the U.S. ‘invasion’ of Saudi Arabia” (02). Americans, Chomsky continues “should also be aware that much of the world regards Washington as a terrorist regime. In recent years, the United States has taken or backed actions in Columbia, Central America, Panama, Sudan and Turkey, to name only a few, that meet official U.S. definitions of ‘terrorism’ – or worse – that is, when Americans apply the term to enemies” (02). “The current ‘campaign of hatred’

in the Arab world is, of course, also fuelled by U.S. policies toward Israel-Palestine and Iraq. The United States has provided crucial support for Israel's harsh military occupation, now in its thirty-fifth year" – as of 2002 (03). It is against this backdrop of American government and military interference in much of the Arab world in pursuit of self serving interests, that the events of 9/11 must be interpreted. In this light 9/11 can be seen as a result of long standing tensions that exist between the American government and their invasive foreign policies, and Arab nations and their fight for political autonomy. What Chomsky is describing can be compared to what Zizek calls the objective and systemic violence of "the smooth functioning of our economic and political systems" (2008, 1). 9/11 therefore can arguably be seen as the catastrophic consequences of the systemic violence of economic and political forces.

In the 2003 book *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, Giovanna Borradori interviews Jacques Derrida on the significance of 9/11 in our history. Derrida responds to the notion that 'September 11' constituted an unforeseeable, unprecedented, singular event by stating that:

It was not impossible to foresee an attack on American soil by those called terrorists..., against a highly sensitive, spectacular, extremely symbolic building or institution. Leaving aside Oklahoma City (where it will be said, the attacker came from the United States, even though this was the case of 'September 11' as well), there had already been a bombing attack against the Twin Towers a few years back, and the fallout from this attack remains very much a current affair since the presumed authors of this act of 'terrorism' are still being held and tried. And there have been so many other attacks of the same kind, outside American national territory but against American 'interests'. And then there are the notable failures of the CIA and FBI, these two antennae of the American organism that were supposed to see these attacks coming, to avert such a surprise. (Borradori: 2003, 91)

As Derrida indicates through his references to previous assaults on American "interests" on foreign soil and the previous attempt on the world trade centre, the events of 9/11 had historical precedence in recent American history. Although the scale and method of the attack may have been excessive it has to be seen in the context of a longer history of dissatisfaction with American foreign policy. He continues to explain how one should approach an explanation for this event:

We must thus look for other explanations – meaningful and qualitative explanations. First of all, whether one is or is not an ally of the United States, whether one approves or not of what has remained more or less constant and continuous in U.S. policy from one administration to the next, no one, I think, will contest an obvious fact that determines the horizon of the ‘world’ since what is called *the end of the Cold War...*

The obvious fact is since the ‘end of the Cold War’ what can be called the world order, in its relative and precarious stability, depends largely on the solidity and reliability, on the *credit*, of American power. On every level: economic, technical, military, in the media, even on the level of discursive logic, of the axiomatic that supports juridical and diplomatic rhetoric world wide, and thus international law, even when the United States violates this law without ceasing to champion its cause. Hence to destabilize this superpower, which plays at least the ‘role’ of the guardian of the prevailing world order, is to risk destabilizing the entire world, including the declared enemies of the United States (Borradori: 2003, 93).

What he is saying is that America symbolises the stability of the current political and economic world order and the attack represents an attempt to destabilize America’s position, at least symbolically. So it can be seen that although Fukuyama states that he was not arguing specifically for an American brand of liberal democracy, it is America and their brand that has come to represent it and enforce it on a global level – at least in name. As such organisations such as the European Union, which Fukuyama has described as “a house built as a home for the last man who would emerge at the end of history” (Fukuyama: 2006, 346), has been made irrelevant through their impotence – in the face of America’s power – to act on their own ambitions. There was never any hope of truly bringing America down through a physical attack but the events of 9/11 had the effect of pulling America’s identity as the unbeatable superpower and protector of the world order into question amongst the world population, whilst at the same time having the opposite effect of enforcing this notion within the United States.

The event was highly mediated with graphic videos showing scenes almost as they happened, yet with little context. The American people are described above as having experienced this event as being unanticipated and it was largely mediated as a complete shock and surprise to the nation and the world. The difference is the rest of the world largely found the fact that it happened on such a scale and so successfully the most surprising aspect and not that an attack actually occurred. The Americans on the other hand could not understand why it was that any one could hate them enough

to do such a thing and the events of that day were mediated in Žižek's sense of a subjectively violent act that was completely at odds with the normal non-violent state of things. As such the symbolic impact of 9/11 was never truly felt by the American people due to how it was mediated, they never truly got the message and it never caused any true self reflection as to their own role in the cause of the event. While the rest of the world were led to question America's eminence as the global role model – in the sense of both politics and culture – the attacks seemed only to confirm the moral righteousness of this global dominance to the American citizenry. This I believe can be attributed largely to how America legitimised its foreign policy to their own people, who as mentioned above believe that their government would only act against others with the best intentions and with the best possible end result in mind for all involved. The consequence of them holding this moral high ground – afforded by the banner of liberal democracy – is that they can do no wrong they can only make mistakes and try to do better next time. This end game argument allows for any action still to be legitimised as being in the pursuit of spreading freedom and equality regardless of the actual effects, whilst any failure on their part is easily blamed on the perceived backwardness of the nations that are subjected to these actions. It is this symbolic field that allows for American action to always be considered as altruistic whilst any who attempt to appose are depicted as madmen who want to fight for oppression and intolerance. As such there is no space to argue against the violent capitalist expansion of Western superpowers due to their position as the ones with the power to construct the framework and narrative that others have to work within. 9/11 could possibly be seen as an attempt to challenge this symbolic playing field by bringing into question how altruistic and benevolent the practices involved in the so-called spreading of liberal democracy really are, and how it is truly experienced by those who are supposed to be benefiting from it. Unfortunately – as will be discussed below – quite the opposite occurred and the narrative of bringing freedom and democracy to the oppressed was strengthened, and the violence carried out in its name was increased.

Žižek states that when subjectively violent acts like 9/11 become the centre of media attention and not the underlying systemic objective violence that sustains such acts it should be viewed with suspicion:

Is there not something suspicious, indeed symptomatic, about this focus on subjective violence – that violence which is enacted by social agents, evil individuals, disciplined repressive apparatuses, fanatical crowds? Doesn't it desperately try to distract our attention from the true locus of trouble, by obliterating from view other forms of violence and thus actively participating in them (Zizek: 2008, 9)?

In the context of 9/11 the systemic violence is a consequence of a combination between America's foreign policies in the middle-east, their capitalist expansion and foothold in the area and also their ability to control what Zizek describes as "a certain symbolic field" in which the Muslim world find themselves defined within (Zizek: 2008, 51). This systemic violence he describes as being inherent to capitalism and as the unavoidable by-product of the capitalist system functioning normally:

It is the self-propelling metaphysical dance of capital that runs the show that provides the key to real life developments and catastrophes. Therein resides the fundamental systemic violence of capitalism, much more uncanny than any direct pre-capitalist socio-ideological violence: this violence is no longer attributable to concrete individuals and their 'evil' intentions, but is purely 'objective,' systemic, anonymous. (Zizek: 2008, 11)

He describes the French Marxist philosopher Etienne Balibar as distinguishing in his 1997 work *La crainte des masses: politique et philosophie avant et après Marx* between "two opposite but complementary modes of excess violence":

The 'ultra-objective' or systemic violence that is inherent in the social conditions of global capitalism, which involve the 'automatic' creation of excluded and dispensable individuals from the homeless to the unemployed, and the 'ultra-subjective' excess, in short racist 'fundamentalisms' (Zizek: 2008, 12).

In this light one can look at 9/11 as the 'ultra-subjective' consequence of the 'ultra-objective' violence to be found in capitalist and modernist expansion. The objective violence of capitalism differs from the subjectively violent acts of 9/11 in that there is no particular individual to blame, no particularly evil people with particularly evil agenda's, but rather that it was "objective, systemic and anonymous". This can be seen as contributing to the rage of fundamentalists who can only find a target in the U.S. and can only hope to achieve symbolically what Derrida describes as an attempt to, "destabilize this superpower, which plays at least the 'role' of the guardian of the prevailing world order", which in turn could assist in "destabilizing

the entire world, including the declared enemies of the United States” (Borradori: 2003, 93). Thus while 9/11 is a subjective event easily mediated with clearly discernible agents and goals – that of Islamic fundamentalists and their problematic engagement with Western civilisation – the objective violence underlying this act is anonymous, systemic and inherent in international practice of spreading global capitalism under the banner of liberal democracy. As such one cannot view the attack of the world trade centre as being an unforeseeable, unprecedented, singular event.

As mentioned above the response to 9/11 was to increase military and political interference with the middle east and this was argued once again along the terms of fighting the ‘good fight’ of bringing freedom and democracy to oppressed people and protecting the stability of the current world order for all those concerned. The strategy employed by the Bush administration in response to 9/11 was conceived of some time before the events by the neoconservative think tank the PNAC – or the Plan for a New American Century (Kristol: 2004, 75).

The Legitimising of America’s Radical Foreign Policy

I would now like to explore what I believe the Bush administration’s agenda to have been during this time and how it was formulated under the two banners of spreading liberal democracy and freedom, and protecting the security and stability of not only America but of the world in general.

In order to understand the actions and rhetoric of the Bush administration it is important to note that Bush and his administration appear to follow what is now considered the neoconservative school of political thought. The school of thought that is currently called neo-conservatism in the United States departs from traditional conservatism both in domestic and foreign policy. The most striking difference between them is that where traditionally conservatism calls for less government control over the population and less interference in foreign affairs, neo-conservatism calls for the opposite in certain ways. The best example of their mission statement can be found in the writings of members of what was – until recently – called the PNAC or Plan for a New American Century. In the post-script to an essay published in the book *Neoconservatism* – published 2004 – William Kristol describes PNAC as a

think-tank formed in 1997 in order to push for a “Neo-Reaganite foreign policy” and for a “rebuilding of American’s defences” (Kristol: 2004, 75). This “strain of thought”, he continues received some support in the late 1990’s although it was he notes a minority even among republicans and conservatives (75). He continues to describe the defining moments of the neoconservative movement:

Then George W. Bush was elected. Still nothing much happened. Then came 9/11. Suddenly there was a lot more receptivity to the argument that the world was more dangerous than it seemed in the 1990s. Suddenly political leaders were open to the claim that American leadership, American strength, and American principles were needed to deal adequately with these dangers. Suddenly an emphasis on containment and ‘realism’ seemed less compelling and the case for regime change and democracy promotion as goals of American foreign policy seemed more convincing. Suddenly it didn’t seem outlandish to suggest that moral clarity could be an important quality of a successful American foreign policy. And so this new school of thought seemed to influence, maybe even guide, the Bush administration, as it removed the Taliban in late 2001, articulated a new national security strategy in September 2002, and moved to go to war against Saddam (Kristol: 2004, 75-76).

In this paragraph the concepts of moral clarity and democracy promotion are used to legitimise strong military action against countries that America has an interest in or are seen as a threat to their continued influence in that region. As has been argued above it is the history of interfering in the politics of the region under the guise of moral clarity and democracy promotion that led to the events of 9/11 in the first place and there is little reason to believe that increased interference in the region will make the world any safer. However as has also been argued the promotion of liberal democracy holds a symbolic moral high ground and any actions carried out in its name are automatically represented as positive. As such the process of spreading liberal democracy is inevitably almost always a guise for the economic and political exploitation of developing nations.

In order to understand the logic behind the Neoconservative agenda I will discuss William Kristol’s and Robert Kagan’s joint article entitled *National Interest and Global Responsibility*, which was first published in 2000 but appears in the more recent *Neoconservatism* (2004). They explain that America emerged from the Cold War as the Sole Superpower and as such America had the opportunity and ability “to shape the international system in ways that would enhance its security and advance its

principles without opposition from a powerful, determined adversary” (Kristol & Kagan: 2004, 57). Accordingly they see the 1990s as a wasted decade in which America squandered a unique opportunity to capitalise on their post-Cold War situation as sole Superpower. What “ought” to have been America’s task during this time, according to them “was to prolong this extraordinary moment to guard the international system from any threats that might challenge it (58). This they continue “meant, above all, preserving and reinforcing America’s benevolent global hegemony, which under-girded what president George H. W. Bush rightly called a ‘new world order’” (57). Therefore they assert that, “the goal of American foreign policy should have been to turn what Charles Krauthammer called a ‘unipolar moment’ into a unipolar era” (57). They argue that The Clinton administration through actions of diplomacy and disarmament allowed “evil regimes” such as those of “Saddam Hussein, Slobodan Milosevic, and the totalitarian regime of North Korea” to survive and continue and as such has put America’s security in danger (58-59). The problem they sum up was that “rather than confronting the moral and strategic challenge presented by these evil regimes, the United States tried to do business with them in pursuit of the illusion of ‘stability’”. Thus they continue that, “Rather than squarely facing our world responsibilities, American political leaders chose drift and evasion” (59). The argument is that it is possible that within ten years – from 2000 that is – “We likely will be living in a world in which Iraq, North Korea, and China all possess the ability to strike the continental United States with nuclear Weapons” (60). Taking examples from history such as Napoleon and Hitler they argue that much can happen over a ten year period and that although “none of this argues that the world *must* become a vastly more dangerous place, the point is that the world *can* grow perilous with astonishing speed (61). They continue to outline what their view suggests a new American foreign policy should be:

American statesmen today ought to recognize that their charge is not to await the arrival of the next great threat, but rather to shape the international environment to prevent such a threat from arising in the first place. To put it another way: the overarching goal of American foreign policy – to preserve and extend an international order that is in accord with both our interests and our principles endure. (Kristol & Kagan: 2004, 63-64)

This they follow by an explanation of exactly what this foreign policy should entail in order to secure American dominance of the international order:

In the post-Cold War era, the maintenance of a decent and hospitable international order requires continued American leadership in resisting , and where possible undermining, rising dictators and hostile ideologies; in supporting American interests and liberal democratic principles; and in providing assistance to those struggling against the more extreme manifestations of human evil. If America refrains from shaping this order, we can be sure that others will shape it in ways that reflect neither our interests nor our values (64).

Although this benevolent world order in which America protects the weak against ‘evil’ men and their ‘evil’ regimes, sounds altruistic in its proposed mission there is some troubling wording, such as the extensive need to express decisions in terms of American interests and American principles – which as discussed above with relation to the Muslim world – seem to often clash with the interests and well beings of others. As such they admit that America cannot “root out evil wherever and whenever it rears its head. Nor does it suggest that the United States must embark on a crusade against every dictatorship” (Kristol & Kagan: 2004, 64). They seem to argue that these missions must be performed in line with what is in the United States ‘national interest’. Discovering the nature of national interest, they claim, should be considered as “an art, not a science” (64), As such, “It requires not only the measurement of power but also an appreciation of beliefs, principles, and perceptions, which cannot be quantified”. “That” they continue, “is why we will occasionally have to intervene abroad even when we cannot prove that a narrowly construed ‘vital interest’ of the United States is at stake” (64). In such a way the argument they seem to put forward has the power to excuse both American action and inaction in terms of national interest which they seem to tacitly link to the world’s best interest. The excuse seems to be that America is the only force strong enough to intervene in world politics and that American principles are in the best interest of all other nations. As such they argue that it is America’s duty, as the only nation able to fight in the name of freedom and democracy, to act against what they think is wrong or evil. Yet their qualification based on national interest allows them to target specific areas such as Iraq – in which they have a vested national interest in the sense of oil – under the pretence of ousting a dictator, yet at the same time ignore other dictators – such as Robert Mugabe was in Zimbabwe during the same time. The argument would be that

America had no national interest –that is I believe economic interest – in intervening in the latter situation. This one example of American selectivity in their drive to ‘spread’ they’re own version of American ‘freedom’ and ‘democracy’ around the world seems to me to undermine the benevolence of this creed. As such it could be seen that this neo-conservative agenda acts as a moral excuse for aggressive political manoeuvres that allow the United States greater control in lands in which the have economic or strategic interests and to likewise ignore states that hold little value to them. Kristol and Kagan have described America as the leader of the free world and assigned them the task of world policeman. Yet if the United States is to be seen as the policeman of the world it appears to be a rather bias and corrupt one, one that decides only to use its’ so called ‘right’ to force in its own best interests, ignoring those of all others concerned. In order to maintain “American Pre-eminence” they argue that:

In fact, a strategy aimed at preserving American pre-eminence would require even greater U.S. commitment to its allies. The United States would not be merely an ‘offshore balancer’, a saviour of last resort as many recommend. It would not be a ‘reluctant sheriff’, rousing itself to action only when the threatened townsfolk turn to it in desperation. American pre-eminence cannot be maintained from a distance, by means of some post-Cold War version of the Nixon doctrine, whereby the United States hangs back and keeps its powder dry. The United States would instead conceive of itself as at once a European power, an Asian power, a Middle Eastern power, and, of course a Western Hemispheric power (Kristol & Kagan: 2004, 66-67).

Their argument seems to be that it is in America and the worlds’ best interest if America increased its military strength and presence around the globe:

A strong America capable of projecting force quickly and with devastating affect to important regions of the world would make it less likely that challengers to regional stability would attempt to alter the status quo in their favour. It might even deter such challengers from undertaking expensive efforts to arm themselves in the first place. An America whose willingness to project force is in doubt, on the other hand, can only encourage such challenges. In Europe, in Asia, and in the Middle East, the message we should be sending is: ‘Don’t even think about it.’ That kind of deterrence offers the best recipe for lasting peace; it is much cheaper than fighting the wars that would follow should we fail to build such a deterrent capacity (Kristol & Kagan: 2004, 67).

The fact that others may resist against such American hegemony is not overlooked, yet they seem to see it as inconsequential. “It is fair to ask how the rest of the world will respond to a prolonged period of American dominance”, and continue to note that:

Those regimes that find an American–led world order inhospitable to their existence will seek to cut away at American power, will form tactical alliances with other dictatorships and ‘rogue’ states for the common purpose of unsettling the international order, and will look for ways to divide the United States from its allies (Kristol & Kagan: 2004, 71).

China, Russia, and Iran are identified as examples of “opportunistic attempts to undercut American dominance” and it is noted that “even an ally such as France may be willing to lend itself to these efforts, viewing a unified Europe as a check on American power using the UN Security council as an arena for forging diplomatic roadblocks, along with China and Russia, against affective U.S.-led international action” (Kristol & Kagan; 2004, 72). This affect is described as being “part of the price for American global pre-eminence”, and they state that “the main issue is not American arrogance,” but rather “the inescapable reality of American power in all its forms” (72). Their argument is that:

Unless the United States is prepared to shed its real power and influence, allowing other nations genuinely to achieve a position of relative parity on the world stage, would-be challengers of the international order – as well as those merely resentful at the disparity of power – will still have much to resent (Kristol & Kaan: 2004, 72).

They seem to see little chance of other nations ganging up on America and describe “much of the current international attack on American ‘hegemonism’ is posturing.” They state that although France is vocal about their weariness of the American ‘hyperpower’ they “recognize their dependence on the United States as the guarantor of an international order that greatly benefits France” (Kristol & Kagan: 2004, 72). They argue that as America is so powerful it would be difficult for other nations to gang up against America, yet they locate the reason for other power’s unwillingness to gang up on America with “the fact that it does not pursue a selfish definition of its national interest, but generally finds its interests in a benevolent international order” (72-73). As such, “it is precisely because American foreign policy is infused with an unusually high degree of morality that other nations find they have

less to fear from its otherwise daunting power” (73). Accordingly Kristol and Kagan’s article can be seen as legitimizing any interference by America in other countries affairs under the banner of protecting the current liberal democratic order and possibly in spreading these principles to developing nations. This is the crux of the current discussion, that being that America’s selective meddling in other countries affairs is always legitimized as being in the altruistic cause of helping oppressed people and defending international security. The reality of these professed altruistic actions almost always seems to have the opposite effect – as Kassam seems to suggest – of making life worse for the civilians in those countries and encouraging the growth of so-called ‘terrorist groups’, thus defeating both the professed principles (Kassam 2003, 119). The only true effect seems to be the protection of American interests, yet as previously mentioned the defining of these interests must be seen as an art not a science. As such although Kristol and Kagan above describe Americas interests as being in line with the best interests of the rest of the world, their ability to re-define these interests at a whim allows for almost any action to be morally justified regardless of the effects. In this way the defining of America’s interest’s is more like an art form due to the subjective nature by which the definitions of this interests are arrived at, as opposed to a Science which would have an empirical set of standards by which to objectively define these interests. As such America’s interests are so open for interpretation that almost any action could be argued as being in their cause.

Outlined above is what can be called the neoconservative world view which shows how the events of 9/11 have allowed for a strengthening of America’s argument for aggression against nations that don’t serve their interests and how this is done under the guise of moral clarity and the benevolent mission to spread liberal democracy. The neoconservative agenda is to secure and expand American political and military dominance around the world in order to preserve the status-quo. The argument is that whatever is in America’s best interest is probably in the best interest of the rest of the world and therefore any action furthering this cause is for the greater good of all. Kristol and Kagan acknowledge that other nations – even current allies such as France – are likely to be sceptical of American benevolence and attempt to undermine such power. These nations, they feel, are unlikely to take any real action as they recognize the benefit to them from the existing world order. They also note that unless America forfeits power allowing other actors to have a real say in the

international realm there will continue to be resentment against American dominance. Their main argument is that America holds a uniquely strong position on the world stage, one that cannot be countered by any individual power, thus it is America's moral duty to further tighten their grip on international politics and to mould the world into one that suits their interests – both, economically and politically – best. They have argued that the American foreign policy “is infused with an unusually high degree of morality” and as such other nations have little to fear – as long as they comply. Yet it must be observed that Kristol and Kagan's outline for American domination of the world political stage would not have been so easily accepted and employed – and with so little debate – if it weren't for the advent of the Bush administration coupled with the events of 9/11, which – as is discussed below – afforded them a unique moment in which to create a new national narrative and control the extent of debate surrounding these issues.

The Opportunities afforded by 9/11

Peter Singer describes in his book *The president of Good and Evil*, to what extent this doctrine of American pre-eminence can be seen as motivating the actions of the Bush administration. He notes that in 1997 three years before Bush was elected President, the PNAC had already outlined its ‘Statement of Principles’ in which they made no secret of their goals. “The signatories to this document”, he continues, “included Bush's brother Jeb, his future vice president, Dick Cheney, Cheney's chief of staff, Lewis Libby, and five others who would later serve in the Bush Administration” (Singer; 2004, 188). He continues to relate, how in 1998 the PNAC organized a remarkable “Letter to President Clinton on Iraq” (189). This letter he describes as remarkable because although it was formed several years before the events of September 11, “it sets out a course of action that was acted upon only after those events, and has been widely seen as a response to it” (189).

The letter opens by urging the president “to enunciate a new strategy that would secure the interests of the U.S. and our friends and allies around the world. That strategy should aim, above all, at the removal of Saddam Hussein's regime from power.” From that opening, the letter warns of the danger of Saddam acquiring weapons of mass destruction, and then adds, “It hardly needs to be added that if Saddam does acquire the capability to deliver weapons of mass destruction, as he is almost certain to do if we

continue along the present course, the safety of American troops in the region, of our friends and allies like Israel and the moderate Arab states, and a significant portion of the worlds supply of oil will all be put at hazard.” (Singer: 2004, 189)

He continues to note that apart from those members of the Bush administration that signed the PNAC ‘Statement of Principles’ a year earlier, others who signed this letter included: “Donald Rumsfeld; the person who would later become his deputy in the Department of Defence, Paul Wolfowitz; Richard Armitage, subsequently deputy to Colin Powell at the State Department; John Bolton, later Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security; and Richard Perle, later chair of the defence Policy Board” (Singer: 2004, 189). With so many PNAC members appointed to positions of power in the Bush administration it was little wonder that their agenda of United states ‘pre-eminence’ was acted upon, and it was the events of September 11 that allowed the rhetoric and ideology of the PNAC to become so accepted amongst the media, the administration and the general population of post-9/11 America.

For the first eight months after he took office, Bush was not strongly focused on foreign affairs, but with Cheney as his vice president and Rumsfeld as his secretary of defence, it was predictable that many of those involved in the Project would be appointed to influential positions in his administration. That the Bush administration would not ‘humble’ in world affairs was certain once these appointees were known. Nevertheless, without the devastating shock that September 11 gave to the American psyche, they may not have been able to persuade the president to pursue their policy in Iraq – a policy that simultaneously achieved three of their major goals: removing Saddam Hussein from power, establishing a substantial American force in the Gulf, and asserting American pre-eminence over the United Nations and the rest of the world (Singer: 2004, 190).

In the wake of 9/11 the Bush administration set about forming and implementing a new foreign policy that differed strikingly from the post-Cold War policy of deterrence. Elisia L. Cohen in her essay entitled *National Security Strategy and the Ideology of Preventive War*, to be found in the collection of Essays, *Bring ‘Em On* (2005), argues that the “Bush administration’s arguments for change in the United States’ global security strategy relied on the shared premise that the September 11 attacks created a new security environment” (Cohen: 2005, 38). In 2002 a new *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* was released. This

document, Cohen notes, “prominently features rhetoric that works to reinforce the risk posed by terrorism” (38). Cohen quotes the *National Security Strategy* as stating, “the United States of America is fighting a war against terrorism of a global reach...The enemy is terrorism – premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against innocents” (38).

Condoleeza Rice explains the governments new strategy in a short piece entitled *The Presidents National Security Strategy* – also to be found in the book *Neoconservativism* – which emphasises how much the new strategy differs from the Cold War policy of deterrence and diplomacy. According to Rice:

Perhaps most fundamentally, 9/11 crystallized our vulnerability. It also threw into sharp relief the nature of the threats we face today. Today’s threats come less from massing armies than from small, shadowy bands of terrorists – less from strong states than from weak failed states. And after 9/11, there is no longer any doubt that America faces an existential threat to our Security – a threat as great as any we faced during the Civil War, the so-called ‘Good War’, or the Cold War. (Rice: 2004, 81)

So Rice has explained that a new security environment was created by and is evidenced by the events of 9/11 and that in the face of threats greater than and different from any America has ever before faced, a new strategy is needed to secure America’s safety. She continues to describe Bush’s new policy as a “bold vision for protecting our nation that captures today’s new realities and new opportunities” (Rice: 2004, 81). She explains in words remarkably similar to those of Kristol and Kagan’s, how this calls for America to “use our position of unparalleled strength and influence to create a balance of power that favours freedom” (81). As I have argued here, the reality of the situation is that America’s use of their position of strength and influence is what has caused their ‘new security environment’ in the first place; this in turn has created the opportunity to legitimise their use of more strength and influence in the name of the principles of freedom, or the framework of liberal democracy as has here been suggested.

Rice quotes Bush as stating on the cover letter to the new security strategy document, “we seek to create the ‘conditions in which all nations and all societies can choose for themselves the rewards and challenges of political and economic liberty” (Rice: 2004, 81). As mentioned above this seems at odds with the manner in which

they systematically undermine these principles in order to pursue their own interests first. Rice consistently states that America will do what is needed to preserve itself and its own interests, yet almost always follows up with how America is acting in the interest of all nations. For instance:

Defending our nation from its enemies is the first and fundamental commitment of the federal government. And as the world's most powerful nation, the United States has a special responsibility to help make the world more secure. (Rice: 2004, 82)

She then continues to describe how America will fight terrorists, their allies or any state that harbours them by all means deemed necessary. She states that the new strategy does not get rid of the notions of deterrence nor containment. These "strategic concepts" she states "can and will be employed where appropriate" (Rice: 2004, 82). As such the new environment post-9/11 calls for new thinking and thus the new security strategy argues that "as a matter of common sense, the United States must be prepared to take action, when necessary, before threats have fully materialized" (82). As such she can be seen as arguing that America maintains the right to shoot first and ask questions later, the more so as diplomatic routes such as deterrence and containment are considered to be weak and inefficient. She argues that pre-emptive war is not a new process and that countries are not required to wait till they are attacked in order to defend themselves, As such America has the right to attack a perceived and potential threat to their interests before it has had a chance to actually materialize as a threat. "To support all these means of defending the peace" according to her, "the United States will build and maintain twenty-first-century military forces that are beyond challenge" (83). As such the United States will "seek to dissuade any potential adversary from pursuing a military build-up in the hope of surpassing, or equalling, the power of the United States and our allies" (83) She continues to justify American interests in the name of freedom and democracy, and the protection of the World order as it is. Although the words appear to be somewhat softer than those of Kristol and Kagan the concept is the same as that outlined by them in the PNAC statements. As such the New Security Strategy and the aims of the PNAC seem to be very much the same, and although they both speak of protecting American interests and those of their allies it also states that America's interests come first. In this manner it could be seen that an ally of America is one that agrees with their actions and anyone who disagrees is by definition not an ally. So as long as nations attempt to

align their interests with those of the United States they are allies yet if America goes against a particular nations interests and they complain then they are a potential enemy. What is different from the PNAC statements is the notion of a 'war on terrorism', which is defined so broadly as to seem to allow for any action as long as it can be linked to the word terror. No doubt if the opportunity of 9/11 had arisen earlier the PNAC would have employed the 'war on terrorism' frame but as such it presented itself as a wonderful opportunity to legitimise almost any direct action in the Middle East without much debate or criticism. Between the PNAC statements and the short explanation by Rice of the over all message of the United States' new security strategy' one can see how the events of 9/11 were the catalyst for the Bush administrations new foreign policy already set out by Kristol and others in 1998. The objectives seem to be clear, to preserve American dominance in world affairs and to protect the perceived interests of the United States in all areas of the world; what legitimises this action is America's so-called 'moral clarity' and their professed mission to be spreading and protecting liberal democracy and its values of freedom and equality on a world-wide basis. The argument presented in the new national security doctrine might possibly have had some justification if the effects of these actions were to bring actual peace and freedom to oppressed peoples and even if it were to enhance America's security, yet there is good reason to think that it will have the opposite effect.

The Potential Consequences of the Bush Doctrine

Elisia L. Cohen sees "the decision to withdraw from the United Nations diplomatic efforts to contain Iraq and to choose invasion instead" as being a great political risk (Cohen: 2005, 45) She notes that, "For many members of the international community, how the Bush administration waged war to topple Saddam Hussein confirmed their worst fears about the Bush doctrine. Specifically she refers to how the "Bush administration's use of its post-September 11 moral claim to aggressively defend itself, coupled with its 'go-it-alone' approach to foreign affairs, consistently plays to a broader narrative of U.S. arrogance" (46). The danger of this new strategy is that it may in fact defeat its own proposed ends by actually increasing the risk of terrorism. In this light the Bush doctrine can be seen as a threat to not only world safety but also to American domestic safety, by increasing the risk of terrorism.

If this is the case then the Bush Administrations new approach to foreign affairs appears to be a rather risky stance to adopt. As for the professed motives of promoting world security and spreading the principles of liberal democracy, it appears that the chances for either of these being a consequence of this new approach to foreign policy is low at best. She notes that, “attacking groups and nations that do not pose an imminent threat could activate additional people to join al Qaeda, or other U.S. enemies, thereby increasing the risk of global terrorism to U.S. elite interests and citizen safety” (48-49). She also argues that the doctrine of pre-emptive war is not only a threat to global security in the sense that it sets a precedence for future actions taken by America and other nations meaning that it may be used for not altogether benevolent means, but also a risk to America’s own democratic processes. She states that:

A doctrine of pre-emptive military intervention may threaten democracy if the executive uses the doctrine to usurp power from Congress’s constitutional basis for declaring war. The Bush administration’s doctrinal values favouring pre-emptive military action may displace deliberations about prudent foreign policy making, thereby short-circuiting routes of international diplomacy in pursuit of the War on Terror. (Cohen: 2005, 49)

In the face of the international perception of this new security strategy and more aggressive foreign policy, and the good chance that it could make the situation worse, the question must be asked as to how the American people came to accept this policy and how the Bush Administration managed to successfully argue for this policy both domestically and internationally with very little opposition? It is my argument that, due to the age we live in, that of the network society and media politics, the bush administration was able to use the events of 9/11 and the narrative of defending liberal democracy, in order to rally together a vast majority of the overtly patriotic and frightened populace in support of the somewhat radical neoconservative policies described above without much criticism or opposition. The opposition that there was to the new security strategy and to the war in Iraq was largely ignored by the media and was thus largely ineffectual.

As discussed above Fukuyama argues that the principles of liberal democracy are universal and historically inevitable, and he discounts the notion that his theory can be seen as a brief for a particularly American version of this. I have argued that

although Fukuyama may not be arguing for an American version of liberal democracy, America in reality hold the means to spread and enforce their own particular brand and that it is the events of 9/11 that ultimately allowed them to legitimise and pursue their self-interested agenda in the Middle-East. The assertion here is that if it were not for 9/11 the United States would not have so easily convinced their own people of the need to go to war and to exert dominance over the peoples of the Middle-East. Although America has always had the potential force with which to act they have not had the political will to engage their own people in this act. 9/11 allowed for the change in the symbolic field or frame in which the United states government could operate, and the frame of a ‘war on terror’ has had the affect of legitimising the United States use of force in the middle east in both the name of spreading liberal democracy, or ‘freedom’ and in defence of their own threatened security.

In order to understand how the Bush administration managed to legitimise the strategy adopted from the PNAC it is necessary to look closer at how – with the use of clever rhetoric – the framework was set for America to be the ‘good-guys’ no matter what they did. This leads to an explanation as to why it is that this narrative was so easily accepted and how 9/11 can be seen as the catalyst that enabled them to achieve their goals.

A New National Narrative

Frank Rich in his book *The greatest Story Ever Sold*, states that:

Whatever else 9/11 was, we can see now that it was the beginning of a new national narrative – a compelling and often persuasive story told by the President of the United States to mobilize a shell shocked country desperate to be led (Rich: 2006, 02).

As such 9/11 may have had a political and historical background which indeed influenced the event taking place, but it stands in history as the event which allowed the American government to capitalise on the fear of its own people in order to achieve its particular political objectives as discussed above. Jeremy P. Tarcher in the book *Weapons of Mass Deception* refers to the rhetoric of the Bush administration in

legitimizing their policies and goals in the terms of ‘doublespeak’ which he relates to the term “doublethink” which George Orwell coined in his book *1984* “to describe a contradictory way of thinking that lets people say things that mean the opposite of what they actually think” (Tarcher: 2003, 114). He also defines Orwell’s term ‘newspeak’ as referring to words “deliberately constructed for political purposes: words, that is to say, which not only had in every case a political implication, but were intended to impose a desirable mental attitude upon the person using them” (114). When applied to the language of the PNAC doctrine or the new security strategy words like ‘freedom’ and ‘interests’ not to mention phrases like ‘war on terrorism’ look dubious at best, yet these just make up the larger framework. When we look more closely the entire narrative within this framework is riddled with small tricks of rhetoric or verbal sleight of hand; such as Tarcher describes as being reminiscent of Orwell. One example is the phrase coined by Bush in his State of the Union address on January 29, 2002, in which he described Iran, Iraq and North Korea as an “axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world” (114). He notes that the word Axis evokes memories of the “Axis Powers” of World War II, as such the word “functions to prepare the public for acceptance of war against other nations that purportedly belong to the axis” (114). The reason that this is deceptive according to him is that it implies some sort of alliance or co-operation between these states yet “Iran and Iraq have been bitter adversaries for decades, and there is no pattern of collaboration between North Korea and the other two States” (114-115). The second part of the phrase, labelling the states as “Evil” is even more contentious. He notes that the meaning of “evil” differs depending on ones politics and theology and that it is unclear what basis these nations are more “evil” than others. He continues that although all three of the above nations have bad human rights records it is uncertain what makes them different from other “U.S.-supported nations that violate human rights on a comparable scale, such as Columbia or Saudi Arabia, as well as countries that already possess nuclear weapons, such as China, France or Israel – not to mention India and Pakistan, which recently came close to using them” (115). As mentioned above this is probably due to America’s definition of interests being ‘more of an art than a science’. He concludes that this phrase must be seen as “a term chosen to selectively stigmatize countries for the purpose of justifying military actions against them” (115). No matter how contentious and ill defined or employed the term is, it is undeniable that it has “played an influential role in creating the frame through which

the public has perceived the problem of terrorism and the question of whether to go to war with Iraq” (115-116).

As opposed to the “Axis of Evil” which refers to the ‘bad guys’ in the Bush administration’s narrative, the ‘good guys’ have been labelled as a “coalition of the willing”. Tarcher sees the term coalition as an attempt to evoke “the feeling of international unity that existed in 1991, when the first Bush administration persuaded the United Nations to endorse a broad international coalition of nations that participated in a war to drive Iraq from Kuwait” (Tarcher: 2003, 116). He quotes the then Secretary of defence Donald Rumsfeld as stating during a press briefing on March 20, 2003 that “The coalition against Iraq, called Operation Iraqi Freedom, is large and growing” (116). Rumsfeld continues that “this is not a unilateral action, as is being characterized by the media. Indeed, the coalition in this activity is larger than the coalition that existed during the Gulf War in 1991” (116). Tarcher’s response is that this “so-called ‘coalition of the willing’ was almost entirely a U.S.-British campaign, with virtually no military contribution from any other country except Australia” (117). He continues to explain that many leading nations in Europe and the Middle-East that formed the 1991 coalition refused in 2003 and that these were replaced by other nations such as Albania, Ethiopia, Rwanda and a list of other nations that could not provide any real material military or economic support for the war but were willing to offer token support such as use of their airspace or a political endorsement in return for U.S. aid packages or international recognition (117). He notes that “by the date that war commenced, the United States had cobbled together a list of 30 nations that were willing to be publicly named as supporting the war, and it claimed to have a list of 15 nations that secretly supported the war but wished to remain anonymous” (117-118). Of the nations willing to be named, he explains, the majority of their populations were against the war. For instance:

According to a survey of the British population in January 2003, 68 percent remained unconvinced of the need for war. In Spain, 80 percent opposed the war, as did 73 percent in Italy, 79 percent in Denmark, 67 percent in the Czech Republic, 82 percent in Hungary and 63 percent in Poland. (Tarcher: 2003, 118).

These two contentious phrases, “Axis of Evil” and “Coalition of the Willing” set the stage for the conflict by defining it as a war against Good and Evil with clearly

discernible ‘good guys’ and ‘bad guys’. Although it should be obvious that these phrases and the words employed are ideologically loaded and far from being an accurate picture of the situation, they have succeeded in becoming the dominant terms in the discussion of the war. Tarcher states that “Doublespeak often suggests a noble cause to justify death and destruction” (Tarcher: 2003, 118). And this appears to be accurate when one views the Bush administration rhetoric when arguing the case for the war on Iraq. “Practically speaking”, he notes, “a democratic country cannot wage war without the popular support of its citizens” (118) This however can be achieved, he notes, through the use of a “well-constructed myth, broadcast through mass media” which “can deliver that support even when the noble cause itself seems dubious to the rest of the world” (118). This myth as I have been attempting to argue is that of the righteousness of spreading liberal democracy to oppressed peoples. As has also been argued it is not that I believe the principles of liberal democracy to be a myth but rather that it is a myth that spreading these principles are the actual objective.

The branding of the two sides as ‘Axis of Evil and ‘Coalition of the Willing’ are striking examples of how language can frame issues. Propaganda is not new in warfare, yet it is has become noticeable during the period following 9/11 and the Iraqi war to what extent control of the media allows one a voice. As such, although anti-American propaganda or anti-Western propaganda is not uncommon, it has been forced into the more private space of local news or internet sites as opposed to the massive international news networks such as CNN or Sky news which have a huge audience base worldwide and tend only to play one side of the story. Even the names given to the operations make the warfare sound more sanitary and fair. For instance Tarcher notes that the ‘code names’ given to particular wars have become a part of the branding process in which a war can be made to seem noble:

Rather than referring to the invasion of Panama as simply a war or invasion, it became “Operation Just Cause” (note also that the word “operation” becomes part of the substitute terminology for war.) The war in Afghanistan was originally named “Operation Infinite Justice,” a phrase that offended Muslims, who pointed out only God can dispense infinite justice, so the military planners backed down a bit and called it “Operation Enduring Freedom” instead. For the invasion of Iraq, they chose “Operation Iraqi Freedom (Tarcher: 2003, 119).

Once again we come back to the frame of freedom which as I have argued seems to be able legitimize almost any action on the grounds of how desirable the proposed ends to these means are. The significance of the term “Operation Iraqi Freedom” was analysed by columnist Paul Holmes in the publication *PR weekly*, and Tarcher quotes him as saying “It’s possible, I suppose, that Iraqi freedom might be a by-product of this campaign, but to pretend that it’s what the exercise is all about is intellectual dishonesty at its most perverse” (Tarcher: 2003, 119). This seems to hold true not only in the specific case discussed here but also in general of acts taken under the banner of spreading liberal democracy and freedom, that is that these acts rarely have anything to do with the actual spreading of freedom and equality; as quoted above, freedom may be a by-product but it is dishonest to pretend that it is the goal.

Regardless of the misleading implications of these terms, Tarcher explains that they were picked up and proudly display by American television networks – such as MSNBC – who used the term “Operation Iraqi Freedom” as their banner throughout the war, “with the phrase appearing in swooshing 3-d logos accompanied by imagery of flags and other symbols of patriotism” (Tarcher: 2003, 119). He notes that other phrases coined by the Bush administration that were popular amongst the television networks were, “the disarmament of Iraq,” “Coalition Forces,” the “war on terror”, and “America strikes back.” These had the effect of “repeating and reinforcing the governments key talking points in support of war” (119). He then turns to the PNAC who as discussed above have had a fairly specific agenda for some time now. When due to the events of 9/11 they were given the opportunity to put there plans into action it was discovered that they needed “to find language that softened their meaning” (121).The PNAC principles as previously noted, were “criticized overseas as a blue print for U.S. global domination” (120) and at the same time at home – in the U.S. – “these ideas sound a bit radical if stated too plainly” (121). He explains how the rhetoric of the PNAC seems to epitomize the vast amount of the doublespeak employed by the Bush administration:

The PNAC report stated that the United States needs to “perform the constabulary’ duties associated with shaping the security environment in critical regions.” The phrase “constabulary duties” is a vague way of transforming U.S. soldiers occupying foreign territories into friendly neighbourhood cops. “Shaping the security environment” is polite

language for controlling other people at gunpoint, and “critical regions” is a nice way of saying “countries we want to control.” Similarly, U.S. nuclear weapons – which would be called “weapons of mass destruction” if someone else owned them – are described as “the U.S. nuclear deterrent,” while missiles with global reach are “defences to defend the American homeland.” How do they “defend” us? They “provide a secure basis for U.S. power projection around the world” (Tarcher: 2003, 121).

He explains that all these phrases seem greatly different to people who do not live in the United States. For instance, he says, “imagine that some country *other* to the United States – the former Soviet Union, Iraq, or Italy or India – were to issue a document that speaks of using missiles to “provide a secure basis for Italian power projection around the world” and “deter the rise of a new great-power competitor” (Tarcher: 2003, 121). This highlights the fact that America has the ability to control the discourse and therefore has the power to legitimise their actions whatever they may be in the name of the greater good of all. The PNAC have perfected the neoconservative rhetoric to a point where self interest is always altruistic, and have secured for themselves a discourse that as Tarcher states, allows them to “be simultaneously candid and ambiguous” (121). He notes how, using doublespeak, the PNAC argued that although taking out Saddam Hussein would be a good thing Iran may still be a long term U.S. interest and as such troops should stay in the region for security reasons. “Translated into plain English” he continues, “this passage would say, ‘No matter what kind of government they have, we want our soldiers there so we can control their oil’ (122-123). He continues to note that “there are taboos against speaking this frankly, so the writers speak instead of ‘forward base forces’ as a euphemism for soldiers and ‘longstanding American interests’ as a euphemism for oil” (123).

The war narrative is striking and the effect is to not only legitimise the overall reasons for the war but also the particular actions taken. For instance Tarcher describes how terms such as “Shock and Awe” were employed by the Bush administration to describe the strategy behind the carpet bombing of Baghdad. He notes this term as first being introduced “in a 1996 book by military strategists Harlan K. Ullman and James P Wade”, the book was called *Shock and Awe: Achieving Rapid Dominance* (Tarcher: 2003, 123). This book describes the strategy of “Shock and Awe” as being “aimed at influencing the will, perception, and understanding of an

adversary rather than simply destroying military capabilities” (123). And the book points to the examples of Hiroshima and the Nazi Blitzkrieg which both applied massive uses of force over a short period of time in order to destabilize and demoralize the civilian and military populations. The media during the Iraq war depicted a sanitized version of “Shock and Awe” which claimed that “the high accuracy of laser guided ‘smart bombs’ would make it possible to decapitate the Iraqi military while leaving the country’s infrastructure intact and limiting civilian casualties” (125). The effect of the doublespeak of “shock and Awe” notes Tarcher is that it “enables its users to symbolically reconcile two contradictory ideas. On the one hand, its theorists used the term to plan massive uses of deadly force. On the other hand, its focus on the psychological *effect* of that force makes it possible to use the term while distancing audiences from direct contemplation of the human suffering which that force creates” (125-126).

The uses of double speak employed by the Bush administration are many and the effects are pervasive. One is the use of ‘relevance’ when describing the United Nations as having failed a test of relevance for not having the “willingness to rubberstamp whatever demands the U.S. makes” (Tarcher: 2003, 126). Another word or phrase deployed in a manner of doublespeak was ‘diplomacy,’ which usually refers to peaceful conflict resolution but in the context of the war on Iraq referred to “the process through which the United States attempted to pressure other nations into supporting the war. When they refused, this became the ‘failure of diplomacy’” (126). Another already mentioned striking example of this doublespeak is the use of “pre-emptive defence” in order to attack first without provocation, which as Tarcher describes is “a phrase which could be used to justify attacking anyone we want on the grounds that they might attack us one day” (127). Another phrase is ‘regime change’ which is the friendly and sanitized version for overthrowing another countries government, “it makes the process seem tidy, efficient, and rational” (127). He also quotes the *Chicago Tribune’s* Bob Kemper as reporting that “federal civilian employees and military personnel were told by the White House to refer to the invasion of Iraq as a ‘war of liberation’ and Iraqi paramilitary forces were to be called ‘death squads’” (127). This is an excellent example of the roles assigned by the framework. Accordingly the American soldiers are liberators whereas the Iraqi forces are considered as ‘death squads’. Even during the Second World War the Nazi’s were

recognized as soldiers in the German army and treated as such as far as the conventions of war dictate. Yet in the case of the War in Iraq the enemy was not considered a legitimate military force, being labelled as death squads. This has the effect of turning the enemy soldiers from being a legitimate opposition, into a terrorist militia group to whom it is not necessary to afford the rights that protect prisoners of war from abuses of power; consequently this allowed for detention centres such as Guantanamo Bay to run with minimal or no transparency and no access to human rights groups.

As has been argued above the most worrying turn of phrase in the long run is the “idea of a ‘war on terrorism’” (Tarcher: 2003, 128). Tarcher notes the United States already has a pervasive habit of using war as a metaphor for things that are not wars. For instance, he quotes the now deceased comedian George Carlin as stating. “Do you ever notice in this country that when we have a problem with something, we always have to declare *war* on it?” “The War on illiteracy, the War on AIDS, the War on homelessness, the War on Drugs...” (128). Tarcher continues to note that people who launch these metaphorical wars don’t really expect victory in the sense of a conventional war, and that poverty, disease, drug use and terrorism have all existed and will continue to exist regardless of a war waged on it (128). He provides evidence for this by referring to a response by Donald Rumsfeld when asked what a victory in this ‘war’ would constitute, as saying “that victory is persuading the American people and the rest of the world that this is not a quick matter that’s going to be over in a month or a year or even five years” (130). As such, Tarcher identifies Rumsfeld’s message as being that, if terrorism can’t really be defeated then no conventional end can be seen; “his definition of victory, in short, becomes ‘persuading the American people’ that real victory may never happen, and that the war itself might continue indefinitely” (130).

While capitalising on a population’s fear is by no means a new feature in politics and warfare there are some distinct differences in the method and manner of the post 9/11 American government’s propaganda, which allowed the Bush administration to get away with some strikingly deceptive methods of legitimizing their actions. This could not, I believe be accomplished without the complacency of America’s media saturated, ‘infotainment’ culture and the culture of fear caused by

the events of 9/11 which was in turn encouraged and manipulated by the Bush administration in order to achieve their politically goals. As Frank Rich suggests:

The synergistic intersection between that culture and the Bush administrations narrative is a significant piece of the puzzle. Only an overheated 24/7 infotainment culture that had trivialized the very idea of reality (and with it, what once was known as ‘news’) could be so successfully manipulated by those in power. In an earlier America, it would have been far harder for a White House to get away with so many hollow spectacles and misleading public statements for as long as it did. (Rich: 2006, 02-03)

In order to understand how this narrative is imposed upon the citizenry it is important to understand how it is that framing works and how it is effective.

How the Mind is framed

Before the manner in which the Bush administration utilized the fear of the American population post-9/11 is discussed, it will be helpful to examine the nature of politics in the network age according to Castells. This relates to the mind-set of the citizenry and establishes how controlling the post-9/11 narrative has not only allowed the Bush administration to achieve the specific goals in policy making described above but also set the over-all narrative for our time. That being the frame of the ‘age of international terrorism’ post-9/11 in which fear is the driving force behind political decisions and global politics. As such in order to understand how the events of 9/11 led to the establishment of the ‘age of terrorism’ frame and created a consensus as to actions taken, I will discuss Castells theory of politics and communication in the network society that we live in today.

According to Castells, “Since meaning largely determines action, communicating meaning becomes the source of social power by framing the human mind” (Castells: 2009, 136). As such, “power relationships are largely based on the shaping of the human mind by the construction of meaning through image making” (193), ideas are defined as images in the brain, image making, he says, “is played out in the realm of socialised communication, and the media are considered the “decisive

means of communication” (192). The media refers to “the whole array of communications organizations and technologies” (192). He describes “Media politics as the conduct of politics in and by the media”, and argues that “in our historical context, politics is primarily media politics” (194). Consequently “messages, organizations, and leaders who do not have a presence in the media do not exist in the public mind” (194), thus access to the Western media can be seen as direct access to power. He continues to note that:

The fact that politics is essentially played out in the media does not mean that other factors (for example, grassroots activism or fraud) are not significant in deciding the outcome of political contests. Neither does it imply that they are the power holders. They are not the fourth Estate. They are much more important: they are the space of power-making. The media constitute the space where power relationships are decided between competing political and social actors. Therefore, almost all actors must go through the media in order to achieve their goals (Castells: 2009,194).

In this light one can see the events of 9/11 as an act of communication by the perpetrators, the symbolism of 9/11 was that of a message from those without a voice, without a viable presence in the media. And as far as they do have a presence in the media the terms are dictated by those with the power to create the frames and narratives they find themselves defining themselves within. As described above the attack of 9/11 is the consequence of a long history of systemic violence against the Muslim world in general and in the Middle East in particular, and it can be seen as a message from a people largely denied the ability to express their dissatisfaction through the usual channels of communication. As Castells describes, meaning is formed by the media and therefore those with access and the ability to influence the media are those who can set the narrative. So whereas 9/11 possibly should have had the result of calling into question the practices underlying what has been labelled as the spreading of liberal democracy in these countries, it ended up being used as proof of it being as benevolent and altruistic a mission as it is professed to be. This consequently legitimised the heightening of the intensity and aggression of American foreign policy in the middle-east. 9/11, to many in the world, appeared to be the direct result of America’s self-interested interference and engagement with the middle-east and much of the developing world; whereas to American citizens it was portrayed as

proof that their cause was in the service of the ‘good’ while those opposed were on the side of ‘evil’.

According to Castells “Narratives define social roles within social contexts” and “Social roles are based on frames that exist both in the brain and in social practice” (Castells: 2009, 143). He continues to note that “Framing results from the set of correspondences between roles organized in narratives, narratives structured in frames, simple frames combined in complex narratives, semantic fields (related words) in the language connected to conceptual frames, and the mapping of frames in the brain by the action of neural networks constructed on the basis of experience (evolutionary and personal, past and present)” (143). Corresponding to this is the manner in which human action takes place which is described as, “a process of decision-making that involves emotions, feelings, and reasoning components” (143).

The critical point in this process is that emotions play a double role in influencing decision making. On one hand, they covertly activate the emotional issue that is the object of decision-making. On the other hand, emotions can act directly on the process of decision-making, by prompting the subject to decide the way she feels. It is not that judgement becomes irrelevant, but that people tend to select information in ways that favour the decision they are inclined to make (Castels: 2009, 143-144).

So according to Castells, decisions and actions are made not only through rational thought but also by how people emotionally react to the narratives within the set framework. In the case of 9/11 and the post-9/11 world the frame is that of fear and the narrative is that of Islamic terrorism versus the global liberal democratic system – what is often termed in the United states as the free-world. The emotions in play are largely negative and Castells identifies the negative emotions that effect human decision making the most as anxiety and anger; anxiety he relates to risk aversion whereas anger leads to risk taking activity.

Anxiety is associated with heightened vigilance and the avoidance of danger. But anger is not. Anxiety is a response to an external threat over which the threatened person has little control. Anger is a response to a negative event that contradicts a desire. Anger increases with the perception of an unjust action and with the

identification of the agent responsible for the action. Anxiety and anger have different consequences. “Anger leads to an imprudent processing of events, reduction of risk perception, and greater acceptance of the risks linked to a given action. Anxiety is connected to avoidance and induces a higher level of threat evaluation, a higher concern about risks involved, and a cautious assessment of information” (Castells: 2009, 147).

As an example Castells notes that some studies on emotions and the Iraq War have found a link between anxiety and anti-war attitudes and anger with pro-war attitudes (Castells: 2009, 148). In this light one can also see the Islamic terrorists as acting on anger, and they have clearly defined the United States as the primary agent responsible for their current situation and the long history discussed above gives testament to why this is their perception. Terrorists clearly act in anger and have no concern of the potential risks of their actions. While their anger leads straight to individual acts of aggression towards what they see as their main enemy, i.e. America mainly but the ‘West’ in general as well; America’s anger, and fear in the wake of 9/11 led to a much more systemic endorsement of risky, violent behaviour against anyone that might be an enemy or a friend of their enemy – the enemy being the shadowy, undefined character of the international terrorist. In some ways one can see the terrorists like Satan in Milton’s Paradise Lost who is portrayed not so much as being bad, but rather as having been dealt a negative role in the script, and therefore not being able to escape that stigma regardless of his actions or reasons for them. This gives a reasonable account as to how the media functions as the space for power making, and how without access to it ones opinion might as well not exist. This principle holds true to the world in general, especially in this age of global communication networks where almost everyone has access to some form of global news-media. However, as discussed above, the rest of the world did not interpret these events in the same way as the American public and as such it is important to investigate how in particular the mind-set of the American public was framed.

The Framing of the American Mind-Set

In order to answer the question as to how and why the American public fell in line with the Bush narrative so easily I will discuss Castells’ case study of the process

of framing the American public in the lead up to the Iraqi War. He notes that by 2004 various reports confirmed that the case for the war on Iraq was based on three main misleading statements. “These statements included references to Iraq’s nuclear capabilities, its links to *al-Qaeda*, and Saddam Hussein’s involvement in 9/11” (Castells: 2009, 166). He continues, that “To date, no evidence of weapons of mass destruction has been found and no pre-war connection between *al-Qaeda* has been established” (166). Yet astonishingly, “in December 2006, after years of official information and media reports documenting the falsification of the pre-war situation in Iraq, a new survey conducted by PIPA found that 51 percent of Americans still believed that WMDs had been found or that Iraq had a significant program for making them, and 50 percent of Americans believed that Saddam Hussein had close ties with *al-Qaeda* or was directly involved in 9/11” (166-7). PIPA refers to the Program for International Policy Attitudes and the 2006 survey noted above suggests that more of the American public believed these misperceptions in 2006 than in a previous survey conducted in 2004. The real question according to Castells is:

How and why could such a significant percentage of the population have remained so misinformed for such a long time? What was the social process leading to the widespread adoption of misinformation? And what were the political effects of these misperceptions, particularly with respect to attitudes toward the war? How was support for the war obtained through misperceptions played out in the presidential and congressional elections (Castells: 2009, 167)?

He begins by stating, what is arguably the most fundamental concern when considering how people form their beliefs, that is “*people tend to believe what they want to believe*” and that they:

They filter information in order to adapt it to their predisposed judgements. They are considerably more reluctant to accept facts that challenge their beliefs than those that coincide with their convictions (Castells: 2009, 167).

He states that in order to mobilize the American public to support the war in Iraq two main frames were used, that of ‘the war on terror’ and the other of patriotism (Castells: 2009, 169). According to him the “war on terror and its associated images and themes (*al-Qaeda*, Afghanistan, the Iraq War, radical Islamism, Muslims in general) *constructed a network of associations in peoples minds*” which “*activated the*

deepest emotion in the human brain: the fear of death” (169). The effect of evoking the death principle according to him is that:

Once death is evoked, people hold on to what they have and what they believe in as a refuge and defence, thus reaffirming traditional values, values tested by history and collective experience. People become less tolerant of dissent and more inclined to law and order policies, more nationalistic and more supportive of the patriarchal family. The reasons are deep (Castells: 2009, 169).

He notes that the psychological climate resulting from the 9/11 attacks led to the effective employment of both the *war on terror* and the *patriotism* frames. Both had distinctly different but complementary effects. “The *war on terror* metaphor activated a fear frame, which is known to be associated with anger and anxiety”, whilst the frame of *patriotism* “acted on the emotion of enthusiasm, eliciting mobilization in support of the country, literally rallying people around the image of the American flag waving on television screens, on the trucks of fire-fighters and ordinary citizens, and on the pins displayed by opinion-leaders” (Castells: 2009, 170).

The administrations initial success in imposing the war on terror and patriotism frames on the American political elites (Republican and Democrat alike) disabled their potential opposition. By associating the Iraq war with the war on terror and the defence of the nation, any significant dissent would be easily labelled as un-American, either by the administration or their surrogates in the media, thus jeopardizing politicians’ careers (Castells: 2009, 170).

As Castells notes, “people depend on the media to receive information and opinion” and that “studies of the influence of mass-mediated coverage of terrorism have found a correlation between increased coverage and public perceptions of the threat of terrorism” (Castells: 2009, 170). As such the way in which the war on terror frame was disseminated was that, “By and large, the political agency framed the media, which in turn, conveyed the frames to their audience” (170). The activation of the patriotism frame along with – as mentioned above – the way in which people tend to believe what they want to believe led to overwhelming support for the Bush administrations strategy and very little dissent, query or discussion. For politicians and the public alike the fear of seeming un-patriotic in a war time situation led to the overwhelming acceptance of the misleading narratives presented above. I would argue that it is through both the political mindsets of fear and patriotism combined that

occurred post- 9/11 that the American citizenry was able to accept the frames and narratives deployed by the Bush administration with so little discussion. For both politicians and the media to challenge this narrative could have dire, career ending consequences, and for the public it could mean social alienation. Thus not only the fear of terrorism but also the fear of stigmatism led to a lack of political debate and exploration as to both why 9/11 happened but also to the reactions to it. These two frames of the ‘war on terror’ and ‘patriotism’ can be seen as falling under the larger frame of liberal democracy or as the Americans would have it ‘freedom’. Actions perpetrated in the name of freedom or liberal democracy is disseminated, perceived and mediated as morally desirable and even necessary. The problem is that once the freedom frame is employed debate over the actions is stifled – the ends always supposedly justify the means. It is difficult to argue against actions taken in the name of freedom without appearing to support injustice and oppression, as such when actions are legitimized in the name of freedom or liberal democracy there should be suspicion as to the true motives.

These two frames combined with the carefully scripted narrative the Bush administration manufactured and the media’s complicity in disseminating it functioned in the mass acceptance of false claims and misleading reasoning which allowed the Bush administration to enact the neoconservative policy theorized by the PNAC. Although Castells is right that we live in a network society and an information society in which those in control of the means of communication have control of the political playing field this does not altogether explain why the citizenry remained so happy to receive the message but not to engage in critical thinking over the issue. As Rich has been quoted as saying “In an earlier America, it would have been far harder for a White House to get away with so many hollow spectacles and misleading public statements for as long as it did” (Rich: 2006, 02-03). The ease in which the Bush administration achieved this is partly due to the fact that we now live in the type of network society which Castells outlines but also due to the change in how people in liberal democratic societies find themselves in relation to politics in the current age.

Political Objects not Subjects

Frank Ferudi in his 2005 book *The Politics of Fear* laments the age of anti-politics he describes us as finding ourselves in. According to him we find ourselves in an age of political exhaustion and widespread disengagement with, and disbelief in politics as being able to achieve any real sort of change. He argues that:

The last few decades have seen a radical reinterpretation of the meaning of personhood. This coincides with a constant inflation of the danger and problems which people face today, coupled with a lack of belief in humanity having the ability to tackle any difficulties we might come up against in the process. Such a pessimistic account of personhood renders political criticism and questioning entirely ineffectual. Indeed as I shall argue, what's different today is not the number of problems we face, nor the scale of the dangers confronting us. It is the fatalistic spirit with which they are approached. The principle achievement of this fatalism is the normalization of the idea of 'not if... but when' (Ferudi. 2005, 16).

He notes that the “emergence of the current debate on the politics of fear has been stimulated by the belief that it has become one of the defining features of public life in the post 9/11 era” (Ferudi: 2005, 124). He argues that “fear has become a powerful force that dominates the public imagination” yet this “was the case for some time before 9/11, and its ascendancy has not been predicated on the issue of terrorism”. In actuality, he continues its “defining feature is the belief that humanity is confronted by powerful destructive forces that threaten our everyday existence” (130). As such the politics of fear resides in fear of everything from global warming to killer asteroids, “‘The end is nigh’ is no longer a warning issued by religious fanatics; rather, scaremongering is represented as the act of a concerned and responsible citizen” (131). His argument is that what is behind this fear is the notion of fatalism that belies people’s disbelief and disengagement with politics in general. People no longer believe in the potential for positive change and in the ability of politics to instil that sort of change. This leaves the citizenry with a fatalistic approach to politics and history in which the fear of making things worse means to rather leaving things to fate. The effect of this climate of fatalism and fear can be found in how the citizenry see themselves – and according to Ferudi that state is one of vulnerability – and in how the citizenry are treated by their governments – that is as infants.

Cultivating the vulnerability of people is the main accomplishment of the politics of fear. Governments now treat citizens as vulnerable subjects who need to be treated as individuals and who tend not to know what is in

their best interest...Consequently, the paradigm of public policy has shifted from engaging with responsible citizens to treating them as if they are biologically mature children (Ferudi: 2005, 142).

What he seems to argue is that, people don't trust politicians, and they believe the political system to be corrupt and ineffectual, at the same time the government sees the people as being politically ignorant and unable to grasp deeper political thought. As such citizens find themselves in the position of political objects which government exerts power over as opposed to being political subjects with the ability to engage with government and affect meaningful change. The politics of fear and politicising of fear means that both the people and the government are scared of any real political change or of considering any alternatives to the current situation. In the end to avoid any real sort of political action on a grander scale politics is reduced to the micromanagement of people's private lives and habits:

Since the elite find it difficult to endow their activities with a sense of purpose they find it difficult systematically to pursue such policies. That is why they have opted for an approach that encourages conformity and dependence through the management of people's subjectivity. This approach extends the business of government from the public to the private and more disturbingly to the internal life of individuals (Ferudi: 2005, 158).

The consequences of Ferudi's argument for the current discussion is that if this is the general political attitude of the citizenry in the 9/11 or post-9/11 era it is easy to understand how and why the people found it so easy to accept the government's frame and narrative. Before 9/11 people already lived in a climate of fear and vulnerability which made the acceptance of the new frame of 'the age of terrorism' so easy, in much the same way that people would have accepted news of a killer asteroid. The people as vulnerable were already anticipating one of these "not if, but when" scenarios that he mentions, and whatever action government had taken in response would have been easy to argue for. As such the Bush administration found fear as a useful tool in having to respond to 9/11 and the PNAC already had outlined a response that could be put into action, the people were not in a position where critical thought was valid as they were fearful and consider themselves vulnerable, thus having to and wanting to rely on the strong narrative set out by their government.

The tendency to freeze the present coincides with a fatalistic perception of change. What we are offered is an interpretation of history that distances men and women from the events that impact their lives. Human beings are viewed as extraneous to the process of change and therefore are seen as exercising little influence over their own destiny. Neither autonomous nor self-determining, individuals are assigned an undistinguishable role as objects of history (Ferudi: 2005, 159).

Thus although Castells quite rightly points to power as being held by those who create the frames and narratives that dominate our current place in history; it is also through what Ferudi describes as the current climate of fatalism, fear and vulnerability that people locate themselves as ‘objects of history’ unable to alter the course of the world or events that shape it. In this climate as is mentioned above, “Such a pessimistic account of personhood renders political criticism and questioning entirely ineffectual”, which in turn gives government licence to do whatever is needed in order to defend the status-quo.

Conclusion

This paper argues that in the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan what makes the United States morally superior by definition is their employment of the frame of spreading liberal democracy and protecting international security from terrorism. I have attempted to show that actions taken under the banner of spreading liberal democracy have little to do with exporting principles of freedom and democracy to developing nations and much more to do the violent imposition of global capitalism by strong nations onto weaker ones. The discourse of spreading liberal democracy has allowed for America to legitimise their actions of occupying Iraq and Afghanistan as being a benevolent, charitable and altruistic missions and that the events of 9/11 are evidence that their actions in the middle-east are necessary both for their own protection and that of the international world order. The discussion shows both how the spread of liberal democracy has been experienced by Muslim nations in the middle-east as the violent imposition of global capitalism and also how this framework has been employed within the developed world in order to legitimise actions taken in the middle-east. The argument here is that the American government utilised the events of 9/11 in order to legitimise a more aggressive foreign policy in the middle-east by utilising the narrative of spreading freedom and equality to

oppressed people and the need to protect their own national interest against Islamic terrorists. This essay argues that the long history of interference in those countries by the developed West could be seen as the initial cause for events like 9/11 and that their increased presence is unlikely to bring freedom and equality to the people over there or to increase the United States security situation. The argument here shows how this framework was picked up and employed by the PNAC in order to achieve their own political goals and how it was due to this framework that it was by and large accepted by the American people without much debate. As such the overall claim in this paper is that those who hold the power to create meaning through language have the ability to set the playing field in which political actors are defined and able to act. In this case America under the banner of spreading liberal democracy has been able to establish the moral high ground whereas retaliation from the peoples of the middle-east is depicted as the terrorist actions of people who hate freedom and love oppression. The fact that this simplified view of the conflict is largely accepted by the public and the media is testament to the power of controlling discourse. Thus although it is America's military might that has allowed for them to occupy these countries it is their control of the discourse or framework that has allowed them to legitimise their actions as not only morally acceptable but also as necessary. The political motivations of the Bush administration and the rhetoric they have employed have been outlined in order to show how it is through their use of linguistic gymnastics they have managed to legitimise their actions to their own people. It is also argued here that it is due to the evocation of fear in the wake of 9/11 and patriotism whilst the country is at war that there was very little dissent or debate amongst politicians, the media and the public. As such it can be seen that the strongest weapon in the arsenal of the American superpower is their ability to construct the framework and narratives through which their actions are depicted. It is through the framework of liberal democracy and the narrative of exporting freedom and equality whilst simultaneously protecting the stability of the current world order that their actions are legitimised both at home and abroad. The aim of this paper is not to legitimise the actions of terrorist groups, nor is it to discount the value of spreading the principles of liberal democracy, rather the goal is to show the power that the ability to control discourse allows in legitimising actions taken regardless of the real world effect. Thus to conclude, although the threat of physical force is the most direct means of exerting dominance it is the ability to control the discourse in which actors find themselves

that is the true key to power. America holds both the ability to exert massive military force but also has the means by which to construct the framework in which they act. This power allows for them to legitimize their actions without much negative response whilst those they oppose find themselves unable to express their own position adequately.

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