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## Constructing a World War II America: The Rhetorical Craftsmanship of Franklin D. Roosevelt

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## **Abstract**

In this thesis I add to existing scholarship an explanation of the rhetorical priming work that Franklin D. Roosevelt employed to overcome isolationism in the United States. Roosevelt asked the American people to trust him through the next great world crisis and used his prior two terms as well as strategic enemy construction as support. He framed the memory of his first two terms tightly and told them what to remember from their shared experiences to formulate an America ready for war. His leadership through the Banking Crisis and initiation of many domestic policies to keep America great were the basis upon which Roosevelt would prime the American people to venture through yet another trying crisis with him. The generation who would fight in the noble and good war against the evil Nazi regime was still reeling from the Great Depression and the sting of involvement from the First World War. They would need to be rhetorically primed to be moved out of their isolationist slumber.

Constructing a World War II America: The Rhetorical Craftsmanship of Franklin D. Roosevelt

by

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B.A. Willamette University 2011

M.A. Syracuse University 2013

Thesis

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The experience of the past two years has proven beyond doubt that no nation can appease the Nazis. No man can tame a tiger into a kitten by stroking it. There can be no appeasement with ruthlessness. There can be no reasoning with an incendiary bomb. We know now that a nation can have peace with the Nazis only at the price of total surrender.

- Franklin D. Roosevelt, *On the Arsenal of Democracy*

Hostilities exist. There is no blinking at the fact that our people, our territory, and our interests are in grave danger. With confidence in our armed forces—with the unbounding determination of our people—we will gain the inevitable triumph, so help us God.

- Franklin D. Roosevelt, *Address to Congress Requesting a Declaration of War*

The long known and the long expected has thus taken place. The forces endeavoring to enslave the entire world now are moving toward this hemisphere. Never before has there been a greater challenge to life, liberty, and civilization. Delay invites greater danger.

- Franklin D. Roosevelt, *Message to Congress Requesting War Declarations with Germany and Italy*

## **Introduction**

The decision to go to war is a process that requires the lessons of the past to inform what a nation is capable of and what it is willing to do. World War II is remembered as “The Good War” and a pillar of morality in America’s past. A nation remembers and makes decisions based upon their foundation and shared memories as a way to ensure they are maintaining their core values (Bostdorff and Goldzwig, 2005, p. 661). The generation who fought in it is remembered fondly for their courageous involvement and sacrifices abroad as well as on the home front.

Their mission was to protect people all around the world from the oppression of tyrannical dictators. In addition to the bloody battles, the Holocaust is known as one of the worst atrocities of the twentieth century and of mankind’s history overall (Hasian, 2003, p. 155). The perpetrator of the Holocaust, Adolf Hitler, is the evil the world now uses to measure all other evildoers.

Surely someone so evil in Europe was known to that great generation of Americans and they were ready to march against him. Yet, what is not always mentioned in the lore about the greatest generation is that between World War I and World War II, the United States was staunchly isolationist (Johnson, p. 3, 1944). I will add to existing scholarship an explanation of

the rhetorical priming work that Franklin D. Roosevelt employed to overcome isolationism in the United States. Roosevelt asked the American people to trust him through the next great world crisis and used his prior two terms as well as strategic enemy construction as support. He framed the memory of his first two terms tightly and told them what to remember from their shared experiences to formulate an America ready for war. His leadership through the Banking Crisis and initiation of many domestic policies to keep America great were the basis upon which Roosevelt would prime the American people to venture through yet another trying crisis with him. The generation who would fight in the noble and good war against the evil Nazi regime was still reeling from the Great Depression and the sting of involvement from the first world war. They would need to be rhetorically primed to be moved out of their isolationist slumber.

In the 1930s the United States was not looking to get involved in another European war. With the effects of the Great Depression and the Banking Crisis of 1933 still palpable, the same year Adolf Hitler rose to power, the American public was not concerned about what was happening overseas. National security had not been a concern because geographically the United States had an ocean on either side to protect them from the Axis dictators and the dangers of war. The European war was a European problem.

The United States had taken a neutral stance in 1939 when war broke out in Europe and Hitler was taking over large swaths of Europe by force. Franklin D. Roosevelt had begun to monitor the rise and progress of Hitler shortly after he was elected for his first term in 1933. He pensively watched the situation in Europe unfold, but bided his time and waited for the right time to articulate the threat to the isolationist public. Germany and most of Europe had also been struggling economically at the time. Hitler was pulling Germany out of its depression and simultaneously built an army (Casey, 2001, location 611). Roosevelt became concerned with the

rise of Nazi power early in his presidency and wanted to warn the American people about the ferocity of the Third Reich. Though it was only after the attacks at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, that America deployed troops in the second world war, Roosevelt had long been planning and working to involve the United States in the front against the Nazi regime. Though it is a common notion that Pearl Harbor got America in the war, Franklin D. Roosevelt had busily and gradually involved America behind the scenes well before war came to American soil.

How did Roosevelt move an isolationist nation into the war before the Pearl Harbor attacks? Slowly and carefully. Publicly he used rhetoric and the radio. Privately he knew that war was coming and wrote that American efforts against the Nazis had been “futile” in comparison to Great Britain in a letter to King George in November of 1940 (“archives.gov,” 1940, para. 5). My master’s thesis examines the rhetoric Roosevelt deployed to prime the American people for war. Roosevelt’s particular combination of appeals to enemy construction, metaphors, and memory in his December 29, 1940 Fireside Chat 16: *On the Arsenal of Democracy* were essential in such priming. I selected this particular speech out of the prewar period because it was the first instance of explicit naming of the Germans as the enemy to the American public. This was also his first speech about war. According to Steven Casey (2001) “Throughout the summer and fall he still habitually refused to name the offending aggressors. Of course, it was never difficult to recognize the aggressive dictatorial threat that Roosevelt constantly referred to. But before December 29, 1940, he only employed the term Nazi on five occasions, and two of these were in a speech on October 26, 1939, that dealt with the New Deal’s internal opponents” (p. 37). The December 29, 1940, Fireside Chat was given at a key moment, after the fall of France, and Roosevelt had waited for the opportunity to give the enemy a face and a name that the

American people could rally against. Roosevelt finally felt that public sentiment was malleable enough to label the threat against the United States and prime them for war.

I propose that *On the Arsenal of Democracy* is not just a Fireside Chat but presidential justificatory war rhetoric as well. The sixteenth Fireside Chat was Roosevelt's first speech directly about the war and about what the United States must do to ensure the Nazis would not become victorious. I also argue that enemy construction and memory in tandem were the main rhetorical tools that Roosevelt used to prime the nation for and eventually declare war against Japan, Germany, and Italy. To examine how the rhetorical priming and enemy construction Roosevelt began in *On the Arsenal of Democracy* succeeded, I include in my study citizen letters written in response to the *On the Arsenal of Democracy* address and Roosevelt's speeches of formal war declaration against Japan on December 8, 1941, and against Germany and Italy on December 11, 1941. These texts best exemplify Roosevelt's World War II enemy construction and reflect the priming he did in his *On the Arsenal of Democracy* Fireside Chat. It was not until the Pearl Harbor attacks and the official war declaration that he was specific about the Japanese enemy when speaking to the American public. Yet I argue that the declaration of war following Pearl Harbor and especially the declarations of war against Germany and Italy were so brief because the justificatory work to go to war had already been done one-year prior in *On the Arsenal of Democracy*.

My thesis will thus investigate the connections between enemy construction and public memory as rhetorical resources in presidential justificatory rhetoric. Demonstrating that the rhetorical priming Franklin D. Roosevelt introduced in December of 1940 does a bulk of the persuasive work to ensure the success of his later war declarations. His priming the year before the war came to American soil framed events in ways that demanded less explanation and

justification for war. The official war declarations will support the claims I make about the potency of the rhetorical priming that Franklin D. Roosevelt accomplishes in his *On the Arsenal of Democracy* Fireside Chat. Questions driving this study are the following: How did Roosevelt portray the enemy for the American people? How did he draw upon the past to justify his assertions about the enemy? I will now supply the context of the *On the Arsenal of Democracy* Fireside Chat in order to demonstrate why the rhetorical maneuvering was necessary for priming the American people for what was to come.

## Methodology and Order of Chapters

My thesis will consist of two background and literature review chapters, an analytical chapter, an effects chapter to demonstrate the reach of Roosevelt's priming, and a concluding chapter of implications of the concept of rhetorical priming that I propose Franklin D. Roosevelt delivered in his *On the Arsenal of Democracy* Fireside Chat. The first chapter contains both historical and political context that constrained Roosevelt's *On the Arsenal of Democracy* Fireside Chat. Chapter 2 contains relevant literature and explains the concepts used to parse through the addresses selected from Roosevelt's pre-war and initiation of war speeches. I approach the three addresses in my study to the public with close-textual analysis. Chapter 3, the analytical study, will be a focused analysis of Fireside Chat 16: *On the Arsenal of Democracy*. The following, chapter 4, I conduct a reception study to see what the public response was to Roosevelt's proposal to move America out of isolationism. This chapter works to demonstrate the impact of the rhetorical priming I argue is at work in the Fireside Chat. Chapter 5, a subchapter of effects, is an analysis of the official war declarations against Japan, Germany, and Italy to support my claim that these official declarations were brief because of the work done in the *On the Arsenal of Democracy* address. The nation was primed to go to war the year prior with memories of Roosevelt's prior two terms to build their trust in his leadership and vision for the American people.

In Chapter 2 I provide historical context for the address. Next I preview and define rhetorical terms specific to my claims about this Fireside Chat that are different from the official war declarations. Since this speech is the most pivotal prewar point in Roosevelt's enemy construction, I incorporate the guidance of Martin J. Medhurst's (1997) "strategic" criticism for rhetoric that precedes the declaration and literal involvement of the nation in war (p. 20).

Strategic criticism takes into account the circumstances surrounding the symbolic action taken by the rhetor to further explain his or her choices by way of a thorough exploration of the rhetorical situation (pp. 20-21). This lens is necessary given historical accounts of Roosevelt's pensive and conscientious approach to persuade the American people to become involved in the Second World War. Since the country was not yet involved in foreign matters, Roosevelt had to prime the country psychologically for impending war. It is important that I establish the literal actions, political, and economic context of America in 1940 to understand Roosevelt's decision to address the public and situate the Fireside Chat firmly within the category of war discourse and presidential justificatory rhetoric.

This route has also been encouraged by Amos Kiewe in his book *FDR's First Fireside Chat: Public Confidence and the Banking Crisis* (2007). Kiewe emphasized the strategy and timing that Roosevelt exercised as crucial but in order for the critic to fully analyze it, he or she must take into account the context of the speech (p. 21). Not only did Roosevelt face the challenges of moving an isolationist country into action, he had to illustrate the unseen enemy verbally to the Americans who mistook two oceans as sufficient protection from enemy forces. This approach is also suggested due to Roosevelt's direct and simple, yet unconventional, approach to speaking directly to the American people.

In this Fireside Chat Roosevelt did what the American people would expect the President to do in the official declaration of war. Roosevelt had already accomplished the justification work in this Fireside Chat so he had little work to do in the declaration against Japan and almost no work was necessary to declare war against Germany and Italy. Casey (2001) offers perspective behind this decision to emphasize the Germans before the war officially began for the United States: "Roosevelt therefore viewed both Germany and Japan through a similar

framework of fears and hopes, but with one vital difference: in his opinion, the Japanese threat clearly paled next to the danger posed by Hitler and the Nazis, who aimed at world, rather than regional, domination. Unlike the Japanese, the Nazis also had a military machine impressive enough to directly menace the Western Hemisphere, especially if Britain or the USSR were to collapse” (location 685-691). The Germans were the literal threat in Europe at the time *On the Arsenal of Democracy* was delivered and the Japanese were not considered a threat until they attacked Pearl Harbor the following year.

Along with analysis of the speech I analyze public reception of the sixteenth Fireside Chat by collecting popular opinion of the speech. I will do this by finding tropological consistencies in citizen letters, correspondence from reporters, and other documents available in the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library Archives. I will look for consistencies and then code them to offer a glimpse into how the shift in national identity that Roosevelt proposed in the *Arsenal* address was received and to demonstrate the effectiveness of Roosevelt’s priming. The President's Personal File #200, "Public Reaction Letters," in the archives will be the resource for this chapter. This will help illustrate the American psyche after the speech and before the Pearl Harbor attacks. After the attacks were carried out and the Axis threat Roosevelt warned of materialized, there was clearly support for sending more than armaments to fight. I will follow the methodology of Gerard Hauser’s chapter from *Vernacular Voices: The Rhetoric of Publics and Public Spheres* (1999) to sort through the correspondence and analyze trends in the public reactions to the address. Hauser (1999) suggests that studying the correspondence from citizens during Roosevelt’s presidency offers access to, “a discursively constituted world shared by the people and a leader who is designated to decide” (p. 235). Since Roosevelt redefined national identity in the process of priming the public for war, access to the sentiments after the speech

was given offer insight into whether or not the proposed identity resonated with the American people and how prepared they would be for when war reached American soil.

Finally I perform a close-textual and strategic analysis of the official war declarations. I offer a brief synopsis of the historical conditions in which the speeches were delivered and then demonstrate where enemy construction and memory are deployed by Roosevelt to justify war against these three countries. The bulk of this work will be done on the declaration against Japan because it is the longer of the two addresses. I attend to trends and similar language clusters from *On the Arsenal of Democracy* to see how he crafted his argument for war. How Roosevelt referenced his prior statements in his Fireside Chat offers insight into the potency of that particular address and how it enabled him to make succinct arguments about the nature of the Axis enemy in the Pacific and Europe. I also attend to uses of enemy construction as well as memory to expose the commonalities of all three addresses, since they are, as I argue, all justificatory war rhetoric.

The declaration against Japan needed to be longer because Roosevelt's focus in 1940, and still in 1941, was on Germany and the Nazi threat to democracy in America. The implications of rhetorical priming are helpful to scholarly discourses surrounding national identity, memory, enemy construction, and justificatory rhetoric because it offers a way of cognitively grasping the work that Roosevelt's addresses to the public did. Rhetorical priming is a synesthetic rhetoric that makes the public see what is heard and thereby make the listener more involved in the vision put forward. For historians or political scientists looking at Roosevelt's presidency, rhetorical priming is another way to explore the immense amount of changes that took place while he was in office as well as contribute to understanding his popularity. Roosevelt's policy decisions as well as his inner fears about the Axis powers were expressed in his rhetoric to the public.

## Chapter 1--Historical and Political Context

### *The Years Between World War I and World War II*

The years leading up to United States involvement in the Second World War were complicated. Roosevelt faced steep challenges. Privately he watched the situation in Europe unfold as Hitler rose to power and took the reigns of Germany. Publicly he knew that the American people wanted to avoid war at all costs and 1940 was an election year. The isolationists in political positions worked hard to keep Roosevelt out of office because of his eagerness to extend aid to Great Britain and France. They feared that this would make the United States look involved and less than neutral with regard to European affairs a tactic that proved costly during World War I. Politicians and citizens alike were uneasy about the escalating aggression abroad. According to Walter Johnson, “The fear of a new war came at a time when the country was extremely skeptical of the wisdom of having entered the last conflict. In 1934 a great many books and articles were written describing the intrigues and profits of munitions-manufacturers. In the spring of that year the Senate set up a committee with Gerald Nye as its chairman to investigate the activities of the American munitions industry. The committee showed that excessive profits had been made during the First World War by bankers and armament-makers” (1944, p. 14). The war abroad was viewed by some as an opportunity to become engaged for reasons less noble than saving democracy. The interests were feared to be economic at the cost of young American lives.

Politically the times were fraught with tensions for Roosevelt as the Republican Party sought to regain control. Running for a third term, let alone pondering getting the United States involved in European affairs, were both contentious issues that the Republicans were not hesitant to hold as evidence they should regain office. The Republicans viewed Roosevelt’s efforts to

change neutrality laws as flippantly disrespectful to the many in the nation who were isolationist and identified it as evidence that Roosevelt acted like a dictator rather than a president (Johnson, 1944, p. 52). Many thought that Roosevelt would respect Washington's decision to retire due to age and health reasons and not exceed the two-term tradition set before his presidency.

According to Gerard Hauser (1999):

The possibility of Franklin D. Roosevelt's candidacy had been a subject of highly partisan speculation almost since his reelection in 1936. By 1940 the outbreak of war in Europe strengthened these partisan views. For those opposed to a third term, recollections of World War I evoked intensified expressions of isolationism and fears that FDR was leading the nation into war. For those in favor of his candidacy, the world crisis mandated experience in the White House to preserve the country's neutrality while preparing its defenses against the Nazi threat. The electorate also was deeply concerned and divided about the direction of the economy if Roosevelt were or were not to continue in office” (pp. 235-236).

Concerns over the economy, the war abroad, and the memories of World War I were issues circulating while Roosevelt campaigned against Wendell Willkie. “When the Democratic convention adopted a plank calling for material aid to the victims of ‘ruthless aggression,’ both parties were on record as favoring all legal aid to the Allies. However, throughout the campaign the editor of the *Emporia Gazette* was for Wendell Willkie. Since both candidates stood for aid to the Allies, his opposition to Roosevelt centered around the third term. He felt that a third term was dangerous because it was not wise to keep one party in control for twelve years. The party out of power for twelve years might disintegrate, and the country would have a one-party system. White also thought that Wendell Willkie, because of his executive training, was better equipped

to the job of arming American and that he had more political courage than Roosevelt” (Johnson, 1944, p. 126). The Republican Party had been out of power for twelve years and was certain that it was their turn to lead.

World War II is now remembered as a just and uniting war supported by all Americans. Yet, jumping into the fray was not something that the American people wanted. The war abroad was a deeply dividing issue amongst the Democrats and the Republicans. David Kennedy (1999) said, “Despite the president’s measured caution, the announcement of a special congressional session instantly galvanized the champions of isolation. Senator Borah broadcast a lurid warning on September 14, 1939 that tampering with the neutrality law would surely lead to eventual American belligerency (a prediction that was to prove correct)” (p. 433). Many Republicans seized the opportunity to rally isolationist sentiments behind defeating Roosevelt’s reelection efforts. Roosevelt worked slowly and cautiously to send more aid to Great Britain because Churchill had regularly requested assistance for the past year. Casey (2001) states that Franklin D. Roosevelt was keenly aware of the overwhelming isolationist sentiment leading up to the war: “Indeed, what frequently struck Roosevelt was not the high levels of support for the war, but the constant mutterings of discontent, the lack of awareness of the true nature of the enemy, and the sometimes half-hearted support for his administration’s policies” (p. xviii). Roosevelt, with the 1940 presidential election behind him, could work in December of that year to reveal his policy efforts to keep the United States safe to the American people. Marouf Hasian (2003) states, “As we assess the rhetorical histories that appear on our hermeneutic horizons, we need to keep in mind the many material and symbolic constraints of the times-what looks feasible today may not have looked that way in the 1940s” (p. 167). Roosevelt had to carefully construct his argument for military involvement as well as an increased naval presence in both the Atlantic and Pacific

oceans. He also needed to compel the American people that the industrial readiness of the United States would be economically beneficial and a neighborly necessity, in line with the Monroe Doctrine, to Allied nations overseas in order to keep the American people safe from Nazi world domination.

Despite the ardent isolationist sentiment, Roosevelt worked to prime the American people for intervention in Europe. He worked behind the scenes; built up armaments, sent what little arms the United States had to Great Britain, and enacted a meager draft. Casey (2001) comments that the fall of France assisted in shifting public sentiment though there was still a debate about how involved America should be overseas. “In the shock that followed the fall of France, Congress appropriated all the funds, and more, that the president and his military advisers asked for, allocating \$3 billion to the armed forces in June, when in April legislators had been reluctant to even approve military expenditures of \$853 million. Support from the general public for compulsory military service also shot up. The support for growing the United States military through compulsory commitment rose from 39 percent in October 1939 to 50 percent June 1940. And if worst came to worst, and Germany did emerge triumphant in Europe, 88 percent of Americans wanted the United States to ‘arm to the teeth,’ while only 8 percent thought the United States could get along peacefully with the Third Reich” (pp. 25-26). Roosevelt was aware that the public stance had shifted in 1940, and federal representatives of the public were more willing to allocate wartime funds, as events abroad turned more bloody and dire.

The American people were caught in a debate as European countries and the Nazis engulfed even North African countries. The nation was caught between people who wanted to remain neutral and isolationist and people who wanted to ensure the war would stay away from the United States. Kennedy remarked, “Public opinion and official policy alike hung quivering

between hope and fear—hope that with American help the Allies could defeat Hitler, and fear that events might yet suck the United States into the conflict” (1999, p. 434). Some people read the fall of France as a warning to stay neutral and others viewed it as a good time to become involved. Casey articulates the shift here: “As this ‘great debate’ unfolded, Roosevelt soon recognized that the sheer force of events was encouraging most Americans to adopt a moderate interventionist stance” (location 1009). Fueled by winning the 1940 election, Roosevelt’s confidence and the changed tides in the American public concerning involvement in Europe meant securing aid to Britain. Roosevelt’s decision to aid Britain was highly public and he made his case for action clear in the *On the Arsenal of Democracy* speech. Casey (2001) also marked the November election as pivotal for Roosevelt’s policy toward the war abroad: “Thereafter, the president recognized that most Americans endorsed extending aid to Britain, even if it meant risking war” (p. 28). Roosevelt understood that the public had finally come around, he understood that and the timing of the sixteenth Fireside Chat was key to priming the public for intervention in the war. By the end of 1940, the American people seemed more aware of the German threat and polling data showed that they also viewed Japan as a threat secondary to Germany (Casey, 2001, p. 29).

Roosevelt recognized the power of directly speaking to the public and he ensured his messages would be viewed as reflective of public sentiment by combing through citizen letters, opinion polls, newspapers, and unofficial channels to assess the pulse of what they were thinking before he would speak. This allowed Roosevelt to respond to public fears directly without the bias of the media. Casey accounts for the way in which Roosevelt would write his Fireside Chats in 1940: “By 1940, the president generally relied on three men to sort through these and fashion them into a rough draft: Samuel I. Rosenman, a New York State judge who had worked for

Roosevelt since the late 1920s; Robert E. Sherwood, the staunchly pro-interventionist playwright; and Harry Hopkins, Roosevelt's closest confidant who lived and worked in the Lincoln Bedroom on the second floor of the White House" (2001, p. 33). Roosevelt's access to multiple channels, official and unofficial, assisted in his ability to craft such compelling speeches. He incorporated the fears, hopes, and dreams of the American public in order to persuade them that his leadership would maintain their wishes and keep the nation in good order.

Roosevelt's style and manner of speaking was also an asset in his rhetorical priming. The American people were already familiar with his voice on the radio and he was selective with his wording. This was Roosevelt's sixteenth Fireside Chat and the American people had been listening to these particular types of addresses over the radio since March 4, 1933 (Kiewe, 2007, p. 9). He put things simply and expressed a deep commitment to the people. His selection of words and cadence made the message readily accessible because the language he used was visceral and corporeal. His use of vision metaphors and bodily rhetorics enabled him to strike a chord of action and capability with the American people (Houck, 1997, p. 32). Just as Roosevelt had a vision in his first term for the American people to defeat the Great Depression and Banking Crisis of 1933, he had a vision of how America would keep democracy safe from Nazi clutches.

The way Roosevelt used his words to visualize the enemy for the public was particularly effective. Enemy construction was a tool the President used to alert the public and get them to rally around the war effort. Casey (2001) concurs that the rallying power of enemy construction was part of Roosevelt's plan, "This it does by depicting the enemy as 'altogether evil' and thereby inciting the masses 'to paroxysms of hatred.' In adopting this course, American leaders are able to forge a popular consensus behind the war effort" (p. xix). Roosevelt waited until after the American people watched the fall of France to Nazi power to name, describe, and indict the

German government of their quest for world domination. After this movement of occupation was grossly apparent in Europe, Roosevelt made it clear that they were now headed for the North American continent. Crafting a new take on the American national identity was the greatest maneuver that Roosevelt had to accomplish in the prewar period before the attacks at Pearl Harbor. In the following section, I review relevant scholarship that shows how enemy construction and memory both have the ability to construct and inform national identity.

## **Chapter 2--Literature Review: Tools for Rhetorical Priming**

### ***Enemy Construction***

Understanding the functions of rhetorically constructing an enemy is essential to this study. Enemy construction facilitates national identity, group cohesion, and justifies force against the named enemy. Effective use of enemy construction would also assist Roosevelt to overcome some of his obstacles both politically and historically. Unity and cohesion of citizens can be secured through the introduction of a common foe. The situation abroad early in World War II needed to be explained through the antagonist in order to fully demonstrate the threat to the United States and the military action that Roosevelt wanted the American people to take. Benjamin R. Bates (2004) offers insight into war justification and how enemy construction lends itself well to such efforts: "In war rhetoric, metaphors are often used to reshape public perceptions of the enemy so that there is no alternative to war. Rather than seeing metaphors as illustrative, they become constitutive of reality" (p. 451). Metaphors enable comprehension of a complex situation in simple terms, so comparing the foreign enemy to something the American people are familiar with is highly effective in enemy construction.

Enemy construction constitutes the enemy but it also reconstitutes the historical situation. Enemy construction often shapes realities, creates the need for force, and then demands that force be taken up against the enemy constructed. For their analysis of the Cold War, Lynn B. Hinds and Theodore O. Windt (1991) argue, "Language itself is a creative act, not an added-on interpretation that comes from an act. ... This process of uniting the two, we call a language-event, a unity of political language and actual events that creates political reality both in perception and in expression" (p. 9). The construction of an enemy is not isolated; it sends

ripples out into the present and the future. Hinds and Windt cite naming, metaphor, and formal definitions as specific elements of language essential to constructing a reality and an enemy for the public (p. 11). Enemy construction also supplies a motive and implies a way to deal with the Other. This shapes the situation in which the enemy is constructed significantly. Enemy constructions should also make the argument that the actions that must be taken against the “savage” Other are just and further the promotion of overall peace (Bates, 2004, p. 454). Building a foul motive is a pillar to the construction of an enemy. Temporally, the development of an enemy makes it easier to look back and remember why force was the only option.

Motives of the enemy add to the cogency of the argument to go to war or to halt an aggressor. In Ivie’s (1980) article *Images of Savagery in American Justifications for War* he investigates the specific justificatory functions of enemy construction for a democratic country entering war. He lists the dichotomies commonly offered while constructing an enemy: “force vs. freedom, irrationality vs. rationality, and aggression vs. defense” (p. 281). These dichotomies establish the characteristic nature of the enemy and the one naming the enemy simultaneously. Notice that Ivie’s findings point to the motives of either party as well. An enemy’s motives can never be for good or for pursuits that align with civilization. This makes the civilized party look righteous in their quest to obliterate the enemy.

The simple use of pronouns in the rhetoric of enemy construction assists the function of identity construction. Bhatia (2007) states, “The determiner ‘our’ and pronoun ‘we’ can be seen to muster support for future actions, arousing a sense of patriotism, unity, and moral obligation with the good American people standing against the evil terrorists” (p. 512). In this example, the American identity is strengthened in opposition to the “Evil” terrorists. The “us” versus “them” binary, common to enemy construction, works both ways. The “us” is always stronger, more

rational, and civilized in comparison to the Other and is in the position to create the distinction as well as place the Other into a dichotomous category. According to Bhatia, "...the notion of good evokes something absolute and unquestionable." Evil is personified rather than simply being an, "intensifier or adjective" (2007, p. 516). This is where "evil" is fleshed out as a useful term in the discursive strategy of enemy construction. The term "evil" is value laden, not just the opposite of "good." It includes all the facets of moral life and connotes that the Other is deprived in every possible way, which enables forgetting the consequences of using force.

Enemy construction works from a point of shared values that are projected upon a collective of "civilized" people and set up in opposition to the "savagery" they face together. This is a point of connection and unification that furthers the construction of the "us" versus "them" dichotomy. This dichotomy works to rally support from multiple and varied audiences because, according to Bates (2004), "If a people views itself as civilized (which nearly all do), then the savage should be seen as a threatening force in a universal sense" (p. 454). The dichotomous language of "us" versus "them" is a prevalent trend in enemy construction. The strategy involves developing an Other, different and unintelligible as fully human. John R. Butler (2002) argues that the development of a savage other has continuity based in the history of the United States as a world power. The construction of an enemy simultaneously defines the other as savage and the rhetor as civilized (p. 9). Furthermore, enemy construction also involves the following features listed by Roger Bromley, such as "reductionism, simplification and essentialism" that the United States consistently uses to describe the enemy (2011, p. 51). This assists in forming the enemy as well as the coherence and acceptability of the dangers the enemy present to the civilized group.

While Roosevelt needed to approach the war carefully in front of the American people, it was also necessary to make it look as though the peaceful nation was being forced into the conflict. Roosevelt needed to appear unwillingly tangled up in foreign affairs yet prepared and determined to protect the American people from war and a voracious enemy. Roosevelt cultivated an American identity as a nation that would defend democracy and keep liberty intact around the world. Ivie (1980) furthers this point by explaining that enemy construction is useful to expiate guilt and “establish the enemy’s culpability” thus excusing the use of force while maintaining a wholesome and democratic identity (p. 280). Ivie cites Kenneth Burke’s conception of the victimage ritual as a means of using force without the consequences or blame of the violent act. Enemy construction not only reifies the identity of the civilized party but it also keeps the party innocent while perpetrating violent acts. The constructed enemy is the scapegoat onto which all blame and guilt is placed, then the enemy must be destroyed in order to expiate the negativity that accompanied the use of force (p. 280). This is common in the history of wars and how Americans have justified past actions. Typically the scapegoat is “out there,” as Spurr (1993) puts it, and is in a place where the other is viewed as primitive, in need of intervention, and the intervention could not simply be diplomatic since the enemy lacks the civilization necessary for such an act to be productive (p. 25). The dangers abroad were what Roosevelt called upon to craft the new national identity as a people ready and willing to defend democracy against the evil Axis bent on destroying its way of life.

### ***Memory and Epideictic Rhetoric to Bolster the Creation of the German Enemy***

Coaxing the nation into war was going to take more than an enemy in a distant land. Bolstering the enemy with both strategic evocations of national memory and an epideictic call to the American people assisted in priming them rhetorically for war. Roosevelt had to refashion

the national identity as a defender of democracy rather than a neutral and isolationist state. Though memory has many different labels, for example “public memory,” “collective memory,” or “cultural memory,” my focus is to employ memory as a rhetorical resource for the rhetor (Casey, 2004; Browne, 1993; Sturken, 1997). Memory can be a useful tool to assist the audience’s comprehension and the orator’s credibility for an argument. Stephen Browne (1993) refers to successful orators as “custodians of public memory,” who “convince others to collaborate in strategic and stylized conceptions of the past,” (p. 465). Roosevelt had a foundation on which to select and craft an updated identity to match the new oppressive forces in 1940. That foundation was the cultural memory of the time: Roosevelt had his prior two terms as president to rely on to build his argument. Kendall Phillips (2004) states, “These memories that both constitute our sense of collectivity and are constituted by our togetherness are thus deeply implicated in our persuasive activities and in the underlying assumptions and experiences upon which we build meanings and reasons” (p. 3). Roosevelt would supply meaning and reason by crafting a specific version of the past that offered the American people a starting point from which to support his stance for sending aid to Great Britain and becoming the arsenal of democracy. Memory and epideictic rhetoric, the latter a component of war rhetoric, are interwoven in this craftsmanship. Marita Sturken’s definition of “cultural memory” as, “a field of contested meanings in which Americans interact with cultural elements to produce concepts of the nation, particularly in events of trauma, where both the structures and the fractures of a culture are exposed,” is the most helpful to this study (pp. 2-3). Sturken’s definition is most suitable to my pursuit because Roosevelt had conscientiously responded to what was on the minds of the American people in the *On the Arsenal of Democracy* address. Roosevelt’s time in office and the experiences he shared with the American public were ripe for the picking. By

selecting which moments from the past to highlight he could more tightly control how the past was used to support his calls for sending aid to Great Britain and simultaneously leave out looming concerns of war racketeering, dispel isolationist sentiments as un-American, and leave the Republican Party looking out of date. Leaving out his experience as Woodrow Wilson's Assistant Secretary of the Navy was a key part of his tight framing of his ability to lead for pure reasons, unaffiliated with the negative memories from World War I. His time and involvement in the Wilson Administration is absent.

By utilizing recent cultural memory, Roosevelt made a case for intervention and war through tactics that revealed the structure, fractures, and potential fractures in American culture at the time of his *Arsenal* address. To shore up the fractures and the potential fractures Roosevelt suggested improvements and assigned both praise and blame internally. Epideictic rhetoric assigns virtues to a community and is concerned with the present, which is necessary in order to cultivate a coherent national identity (Aristotle, 2007, p. 48). Bradford Vivian (2006) adds, "Epideictic speech, like political manifestoes, commonly adheres to familiar rhetorical forms. Its 'contours' do not provide mere ornamentation but acquire a semiotic dimension, signifying its customary meaning and value in the perpetuation of civic norms and traditions" (p. 7). The Fireside Chat was a common and well-known form of public address at the time. The American people were well accustomed to it by the sixteenth one. Recalling portions of the national identity that would assist Roosevelt's efforts to involve the United States in war were essential in order to make the American people feel heard yet allow Roosevelt to shepherd them toward agreement with his policy decisions.

Memory serves multiple rhetorical purposes. Memory, as a rhetorical tool, assists the orator to build national identity, construct enemies in contrast to the nation, and provide a

common ground for the people. Stephen H. Browne (1993) cites rituals of public memory as potent and useful for orators. “These performances take on a powerfully rhetorical aspect because they help negotiate conditions of community and provide symbols of identity and difference” (p. 465). Browne states that memory is a “symbolic construction” in so far as it is a “product of public, persuasive memory” (p. 465). By selecting and framing the moments of his presidency that would build his ethos best for leading the United States through a world crisis were harnessed in order to move the nation toward war. As part of identity crafting, Roosevelt’s addresses belong in the genre of epideictic rhetoric as well. Browne finds that memory is a common resource for epideictic rhetoric (p. 465). The memory of the people is channeled to the purposes of the orator. Browne (1993) cites the benefits of epideictic rhetoric because of the memory it readily evokes: “As a genre, it is defined by its capacity to project back onto the audience values it believes to possess already” (p. 475). Roosevelt did not have to completely break down and remake the national identity; he simply needed to select from the resources of memory what he wanted them to remember. Edward Casey (2004) remarks that public memory possesses a “bivalent” quality and maneuvers between the past and the future by acting “to ensure a future of further remembering of that same event” (p. 17). To evoke the past in public address is a way to reintroduce a prior event into present-day public memory.

As will be apparent in the analysis, Roosevelt’s ability to regulate what should be remembered and how it should be remembered is evident. Vivian (2010) finds both memory and forgetting symbolic resources that supply order and meaning to the present (p. 12). Vivian also finds that public memory assists in offering a coherence of identity (p. 55). An orator who harnesses both components of memory can effectively use them to his or her advantage and reorder the past to serve his or her rhetorical purposes. Offering a new order can alter the way the

public envisions its nation and its role in the world. Roosevelt in a sense was asking the American people to forget the old ways of isolationism and their fears of economic suffering because of war. Roosevelt's *reenvisioned* America could overcome these fears and embrace the responsibilities of supporting the Allied powers as proactive defenders of democratic principle and morals at home and abroad.

Memory serves the purposes of the orator as much as it does the cogency of a community and the enemy being constructed. The past has already been proven and provides a factual reference point, whereas the future is unforeseen. The American public would have been familiar with the economic woes and the Banking Crisis that Roosevelt asked them to recall. With the assistance of these particular memories, Roosevelt's rhetorical priming was enhanced. Orators who evoke memory often incorporate existing American myths and values. According to Denise Bostdorff and Steven Goldzwig (2005) there are "two mythic strands—one moralistic and one materialistic" (p. 664). These strands combine Constitutional rights with the ideals of democracy and with the materialism Americans are accustomed to, both necessary for building an argument of national identity and crafting it to the orator's needs. Sturken (1997) argues that cultural memory is important to history because it is "essential to its construction" (p. 4). Cultural memory and history, consistent markers of American identity from the nation's birth, strike a symbiotic balance. Cultural memory can be used to invoke history and craft a moment that will live in infamy. Roosevelt balanced the nation's cultural memory, fondly remembered events as well as those that made the public withdrawn from foreign affairs, to express the identity that he envisioned for it. With the picture of a contrasting enemy image, this feat was more manageable. Roosevelt led the nation to one of the most monumental wars in American history. World War II shaped the way the nation saw itself and is now remembered as what fully pulled the United

States out of the Great Depression. He accomplished all of this even though national identity was still bound to isolationist sentiments that dated back to the horrors of World War I. Cultural memory both enabled and constrained his arguments in the speeches for this study.

### **Chapter 3: *On the Arsenal of Democracy*: Priming America for War**

Though the common perception is that America engaged in World War II after the December 7, 1941 attacks at Pearl Harbor, American intervention commenced gradually the year before the war officially began for the United States. Franklin Delano Roosevelt's sixteenth Fireside Chat titled *On the Arsenal of Democracy* was delivered to the American public after a long line of decisions and actions Roosevelt had carried out behind the scenes. The Fireside Chat in December 1940 represents a critical stage, making the intervention public, in this succession of literal and symbolic actions. It served as a priming mechanism to explain prior actions and to persuade the American people that this was the right path to be on. Becoming involved in world affairs was necessary to protect democracy at home and abroad. Recognizing the speech as presidential justificatory rhetoric as well as war rhetoric is crucial to identifying this priming function. This speech supplied the proof to support these actions and Roosevelt further justified the orientation toward war in a public manner.

In July of 1940 Roosevelt consulted with Congress and passed the '*Two Ocean Navy Expansion Act*.' This act allowed the United States Navy more presence in the Pacific and Atlantic oceans to curb attacks from either German or Japanese forces ("worldwar2.net," 2006). In October there was a modest draft enacted for Americans who were eighteen to nineteen years of age and conscription began for the first time during a period of peace on October 29, 1940. Young American men from all over the United States either volunteered or were drafted to start training with left over gear from World War I in places all over the Southern states and Alaska ("worldwar2.net," 2006; "WWII in HD," 2009).

The Fireside Chat came after cooperation between Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill agreed to the "Destroyers-for-Bases" treaty with England, an allied power already

steeped in combat and strife with German forces (Miller Center, 2012). This was a public move that Roosevelt made to assist the British forces that stood between America and the German threat. Roosevelt was keenly aware of the struggles in Europe and wished to become prepared for impending war. Roosevelt foreshadowed the intention to increase industry of munitions in a November 22, 1940 letter to King George. In the letter Roosevelt refers to those who did not want to see him reelected because of his willingness to assist the British. He described them as “Pro-Germans,” “Communists,” and “Total Isolationists” who did not wish to assist Great Britain, a country already dealing with mass air raids and German attacks in 1940. Furthermore Roosevelt stated, “In regard to materials from here, I am, as you know, doing everything possible in the way of acceleration and in the way of additional release of literally everything that we can spare” (“archives.gov,” 1940, para. 3). He referred to the American efforts toward the war as “futile” in comparison to what the British had endured and sacrificed and ensures King George that the “monthly production here is speeding up and will continue to do so” (para. 6). The materials and increased speed of production Roosevelt spoke of were the very topic of the sixteenth Fireside Chat. Roosevelt understood that he must get the nation to collectively take steps to prepare for war. The modest draft enacted earlier that year and the training of U.S. soldiers was necessary because the United States military was small and underdeveloped at that point. Roosevelt saw what was happening in Europe with the rapid Nazi advances and the brutal Japanese expansion into the rest of Asia. Across the pond in either direction was war.

*On the Arsenal of Democracy* is remarkable for a few reasons. It stands on its own, not as a formal declaration, but as a priming mechanism for the impending declarations to follow one year later. Though Roosevelt’s rhetoric has been thoroughly covered in the discipline, this speech has not received much attention. It also has yet to be claimed as war or justificatory

rhetoric. Typically American war rhetoric is reserved for when the country is entering a war or is already in the thralls of it. *On the Arsenal of Democracy* was delivered to the American people on December 29, 1940. I demonstrate that the sixteenth Fireside Chat is an example of war rhetoric by conducting a close textual analysis of the speech. More specifically I substantiate my claim by showing how Roosevelt's Fireside Chat was a priming mechanism for the impending war declarations that would follow the December 7, 1941, Japanese attacks on Pearl Harbor. Roosevelt used war and geographical metaphors to focus on a supportive yet active role in the European war that prepared the American people, economy, and American industry for wartime duties. This particular instance of war rhetoric justifies the U.S. government's active preparation for military commitments, though at that point Roosevelt had not proposed sending troops, just armaments.

In 1939 Germany invaded Poland and World War II began in Europe. In little over a year Hitler's regime stretched over many European countries, all had been taken by force. Japan joined the Axis power alliance in September of 1940, three months before the Fireside Chat, but they were not yet a proven foe to the United States. With German U-boats back in the Atlantic, the memory of World War I and the proven German threat nearing the United States could not have been more pertinent to constructing the German enemy. Constructing the German enemy was surely assisted by the memory of the First World War and the aggression of the German army toward the United States in the past. The German threat needed to be more pronounced than the Japanese since German forces were doing the most damage in the European theater. The Japanese threat was too distant at that point though Roosevelt does allude to their might and determination for world domination ("worldwar2.net," 2006).

I argue enemy construction was a critical tool that Franklin D. Roosevelt used to prime the

public for war in this radio address. Key to Roosevelt's rhetoric of enemy construction is when he invokes the public's memory to prime the nation for the war effort. In this chapter, I seek to forge the connections between American identity and the building of an enemy to justify war to the American people. Memory is a key function to building national identity as well as an enemy that the nation had fought in World War I. Along with this theme of memory, the evocation of past wars and the banking crisis are catalysts for the epideictic and citizenry expectation functions in the speech. Memory, in this case prior wars and the economy prior to World War II, both enabled and constrained the justifications Roosevelt used to involve the United States in war. The speech provided a rhetorical foundation in 1940 for the rest of the war and how involved America would eventually become. By identifying the German army as the enemy and true foe to the entire globe, Roosevelt engaged in epideictic rhetoric. Roosevelt had developed trust and credibility with the American public by psychologically leading them away from fear with the banking crisis. Now he was asking them to trust him again and support his choice of militarizing production in the United States to keep them safe, secure, and free from fear. Much like his March 4, 1933 First Inaugural, Roosevelt wants the American people to remember that their nation is great, that they should not fear, and that they should act promptly in the face of a challenge. What Roosevelt highlighted as examples from the past to construct the motive for the present is key to identifying how he primed the American people. By naming the enemy and its attributes, Roosevelt established the foil against which the Allies would be measured. The defense of democracy and America's ties to other nations set up constraints that demanded the American people become involved in the war through supportive actions, such as armaments sent to Great Britain who was identified as an Ally to the United States. This speech foreshadows the commitments that Americans would have to make in order to preserve freedom and liberty

on their own soil. This effort would require citizens to sacrifice directly for the war effort abroad to prevent the Germans from being able to carry out an assault on American soil. One year later, the Japanese did what Roosevelt warned both they and the Germans would do. *On the Arsenal of Democracy* was a long and compelling Fireside speech because Roosevelt needed to contextualize the transition from a largely isolationist sentiment to a war mentality. Finally, I also focus on the imagery and description of the enemy that Roosevelt constructs in the speech to justify the involvement in European affairs. Roosevelt made apparent that these threats to Europe were threats to America too. He needed to illustrate the growing threat for the American people through vivid and descriptive language. In order to do this Roosevelt depicted an enemy savage enough to wake America from its isolationist slumber.

### **The Power of Fireside Chats**

Though Roosevelt gave many radio addresses, only a select few were labeled Fireside Chats. That is part of why *On the Arsenal of Democracy* is such a profound address. The “Fireside Chat” label itself is significant. Fireside Chats were well known for their intimate, simple, and conversational style for addressing complex issues with the American public. This was a signature of Roosevelt’s presidency and his public relations success. The Fireside Chats were highly anticipated by the American people and the message was guaranteed to be heard by many (Aoki, 2006; Kiewe, 2007). This label marked it as an important address in which Roosevelt set the context and gave the justification for what he knew was an impending war. The speech also came at a time when Americans were still coming out of the Great Depression and the banking crisis of 1933. The nation’s economy was not fully restored at the end of the 1930s. The justification for the impending intervention in the European theater required great significance in order to mobilize the United States industry to focus on war. World War II is now

remembered as what pulled the American economy fully out of the Great Depression but at the time worrying about foreign affairs would have been a low priority for the public. The importance of this Fireside Chat can be discerned in the fact that it was broadcast in six languages to homes in the United States and around the world in order to declare America's defense plan.

The Fireside Chats were conducted through the medium of the radio. People sitting around the radio in the comfort of their own homes were informed by a welcome and soothing voice that had gotten them through the banking crisis in 1933. According to Kiewe these direct addresses to the public functioned to "persuade a majority of the American people to accept his domestic and foreign policy agendas, and to support his personal political ambitions" (2007, p. 20). This simple, straightforward, and personal approach assisted Roosevelt in psychologically preparing the nation for war.

The medium of the radio was uniquely advantageous for yielding a large audience for Roosevelt's address (Kiewe, 2007, p. 21). Radios were prevalent technology in the American home and the Fireside Chats were already well attended to by the sixteenth presentation. I posit that the official war declarations against Japan, Germany, and Italy the following year were so brief in nature in comparison to this Fireside Chat because much of the persuasion of danger and need for action had already been justified. *On the Arsenal of Democracy* persuaded the American people in the intimate and direct manner of a Fireside Chat.

### **Definition of Terms**

The speech, I argue, fits within the discipline as both war and presidential justificatory rhetoric. John M. Murphy (2003) defines war rhetoric as: "a rhetorical hybrid, combining the qualities of what Aristotle termed *deliberative discourse*, arguments to justify the expediency or

practicality of an action, and *epideictic rhetoric*, appeals that unify the community and amplify its virtues” (*italics* in original, p. 609). The Fireside Chat foreshadowed the actions that America and the American people would need to take. The virtues of the American citizen were also invoked, which made the act of war seem feasible and securing victory in line with what Americans could achieve. The epideictic quality of war rhetoric is essential for the discussion here. Epideictic rhetoric, as adapted from classical times, is the combination of informing citizens of their identity, world making, and assigning blame and praise simultaneously (Murphy, 2003, pp. 609-613). These functions serve as a foundation for understanding a newly fashioned American identity as not isolationist. Through praise and blame Roosevelt reinforced the differences between the democratic nations and the Axis powers even further. It was right and just to be on the side of democracy as well as to take necessary steps to protect democracy from evil foes.

The president often performs justificatory rhetoric because he is bestowed with the authority to engage the country in the act of war. Richard A. Cherwitz and Kenneth S. Zagacki (1986) contend that: “justificatory rhetoric-where presidential discourse was from the very beginning part of a larger, *overt* military retaliation taken by the government of the U.S.” (p. 308). *On the Arsenal of Democracy* was clearly priming the nation for war, only after the Japanese attacks on Pearl Harbor could Roosevelt explicitly make this about retaliation specifically for American citizens but there are allusions to the threat that the war in Europe and Asia would surely come to America’s shores.

Enemy construction is integral to war rhetoric because it assists the justification for action and the use of force. James Jasinski (2001) describes discourse that constructs an enemy as functional and action oriented. Constructing an enemy creates “communal identity and

solidarity” as well works to establish “public anxiety” which lends itself well to the public acting in compliance with the government to keep themselves safe (p. 202). This was essential for the winter of 1940, because America was in an isolationist mentality and still economically recovering from the Great Depression of the 1930s. Jolting Americans into the mindset of needing to meddle in foreign affairs would require a threat to their well-being. Roosevelt’s sixteenth Fireside Chat took up the mantle of constructing the threats plaguing Europe and Asia as shared by the United States in the speech. Identification is a key component to enemy construction. In *A Rhetoric of Motives* (1950), Burke states, “Put identification and division ambiguously together, so that you cannot know for certain just where one ends and the other begins,” he writes, “and you have the characteristic invitation to rhetoric” (p. 25). This affirms the epideictic and deliberative nature of the speech by developing a foe worthy of taking action against and building the new identity of the American people. Roosevelt’s speech fulfills the functions of war rhetoric. According to Murphy’s aforementioned definition, I argue that *On the Arsenal of Democracy* is a “rhetorical hybrid” of deliberative and epideictic rhetoric (2003, p. 609). Roosevelt’s enemy construction brings to life an unseen fascist enemy while constituting a presently isolationist nation as one prepared and able to defeat the Nazi threat.

Next I explore Roosevelt’s rhetorical prowess further by illuminating his ability to bring the U.S. out of isolationism and into action directly against the newly established enemy. He did this with a vision metaphor. First there was the vision of the past, where Americans overcame the adversity of the banking crisis in 1933. In the beginning of the speech Roosevelt’s explains, “We met the issue of 1933 with courage and realism. We face this new crisis -- this new threat to the security of our nation -- with the same courage and realism” (para. 6-7). Second, there was the dystopic vision of the future that will surely happen if America does not act immediately to stifle

aggressors across the oceans in either direction. Lastly, the vision of the present America where Roosevelt dismisses isolationist sentiment where it exists and the swift ability and values of the American people that would enable them to carry out his prescribed action. In this aspect, the speech is inherently epideictic. Roosevelt was able to constitute the enemy with such immense immediacy because he was also able to define who Americans were, what they were capable of, and who opposed such fine attributes.

### **Enemy Construction: A not so distant foe and the new crisis**

Roosevelt established a new crisis by illuminating a threat to the American people. This was a unique challenge for a few reasons: the nation held an isolationist sentiment and the war was in Europe. First Roosevelt had to name a crisis worthy of American action. He did this almost immediately: “This is not a Fireside Chat about war. It is a talk on national security” (para. 1). He framed the speech and the crisis that he introduced strategically. Roosevelt immediately focuses on national security to assuage isolationist sentiments and to avoid giving the impression of hastily entering a war. Next he started to develop his portrait of the enemy:

For, on September 27th, 1940, this year, by an agreement signed in Berlin, three powerful nations, two in Europe and one in Asia, joined themselves together in the threat that if the United States of America interfered with or blocked the expansion program of these three nations [Germany, Italy, Japan]--a program aimed at world control--they would unite in ultimate action against the United States. (para. 9)

Part of why this Fireside Chat had to be handled delicately was the isolationist mode that the country was in. There were also many political hurdles and partisan divides over how foreign relations ought to be approached with the horrors of World War I in recent memory. But as Roosevelt pointed to in the passage, the enemy was already hostile and poised to attack.

Though we remember Roosevelt as a champion to the American people, this was not necessarily an easy argument to make. Matthew A. Baum and Samuel Kernell (2001) conducted a quantitative study that correlated FDR's Fireside Chats with his high approval ratings of 65 percent during his first three terms and long lasting admiration from the nation that ranks him as one of the "top five presidents" in our nation's history (p. 198). Here, after combing the FDR history, Baum and Kernell assert that, "According to these historical assessments, the nation desperately needed leadership and found it in FDR" (p. 199). As early as 1939, they state that Roosevelt, despite a "backdrop of partisan strife and an eroding [democratic] base, gingerly began cultivating the public's support for aid to Britain in its war against Germany" and began developing the rhetoric he used extensively in the *Arsenal of Democracy* Fireside Chat (p. 201). Roosevelt had, by January 1939, privately decided that war was inevitable and after the State of the Union address of that year began focusing his rhetoric toward the ends of preparing America for war (p. 211). Through mere mention during direct addresses to the public, a president holds the power to direct public attention to specific issues and rally support for war on foreign soil (p. 212). The Fireside Chat circumvented the usual route of war preparations and Roosevelt went directly to the public with his priming techniques to gain support and assistance in Britain's fight against the Germans. Baum and Kernell contend that Roosevelt's peacetime addresses were directly correlated with rise in his approval ratings, which shows that the majority of Americans were listening to them (p. 215). He had the ear of the public, now he needed to cultivate a crisis and a menacing foe. He introduced the enemy more explicitly:

The Nazi masters of Germany have made it clear that they intend not only to dominate all life and thought in their own country, but also to enslave the whole of Europe, and then to use the resources of Europe to dominate the rest of the world. (para.

10)

Bringing the Nazi threat into view and making their malicious goals clear, during a peace time address, made the new crisis apparent and the need for immediate action explicit. He framed the Nazi threat as tyrannical, which means one cannot reason with them, and by proxy made the American people rational and good: not wanting the world to be enslaved, but to be the defender of freedom. The enemy was clearly the aggressor and action must be taken to stop them from toppling the free world. Robert Ivie's (1980) "Images of Savagery in American Justifications for War" investigates the specific justificatory functions of enemy construction for a democratic country entering war. He lists the dichotomies commonly offered while constructing an enemy: "force vs. freedom, irrationality vs. rationality, and aggression vs. defense" (p. 281). These dichotomies establish the characteristic nature of the enemy and the one naming the enemy simultaneously. Notice that Ivie's findings point to the motives of either party as well. An enemy's motives can never be for good or for pursuits that align with civilization.

The construction of an enemy invites a unified "we." George Cheney (1983) extended Burke's notion of consubstantiality and the dual nature of identification: "we never find a 'pure' form at either extreme because in identification there is implied congregation and segregation; identification always suggests a 'we' and a 'they'" (p. 148). Building consubstantiality is essential to identification. Roosevelt detailed the crisis and constructed an enemy while simultaneously constituting the American people as capable of overcoming it. In order for it to be successful and convincing, the "we" has to be deployed in a way that creates a sense of consubstantiality, which is the sense of shared substance-be it values, friends, or foes. Roosevelt made it clear who the Americans are and the shared values that would help them through this approaching crisis. Roosevelt simultaneously induces an Other and defines the "we" that he calls

into being, at the same time naming an enemy. In epideictic terms, he praises the Americans and blames the enemy for forcing them into the war effort.

Consubstantiality is called upon when Roosevelt explicitly connects the new crisis that the United States is facing with the banking crisis of 1933. Just like the banking crisis, Roosevelt needed to identify the culprits in order to reinforce the persuasive appeal. Americans experienced severe economic strife and overcame it collectively through the actions prescribed and the psychology of fear being lifted rhetorically by Roosevelt (Kiewe, 2007, p. 66). Roosevelt made a similar move at the beginning of the *Arsenal* address: “I tried to convey to the great mass of American people what the banking crisis meant to them in their daily lives. Tonight, I want to do the same thing, with the same people, in this new crisis which faces America” (para. 4-5). Roosevelt was connecting the courage and realism that the American people displayed in 1933 to the present crisis. He was calling on them to recognize the reality at hand and is trusting them to understand the weight of the present crisis and its ultimate meaning. He also had specific action in mind to save them again. He made it apparent that the present danger is currently held at bay: “At this moment, the forces of the states that are leagued against all peoples who live in freedom are being held away from our shores” (para. 14). The word “moment” connotes that it would not be long before the threat would be on American shores. The moment would pass soon so action must be immediate.

Metaphors give a rhetorical foundation for coming to know an enemy. This strategy is effective because metaphors cultivate qualities through cognitive shortcuts and constrain possible programs of actions toward the enemy. According to Ivie (1997), “metaphor is at the base of rhetorical invention. Elaborating a primary image into a well-formed argument produces a motive, or interpretation of reality, with which the intended audience is invited to identify” (p.

104-105). The metaphor served an illustrative function and provides verisimilitude to the rhetor's case. Ivie explains that metaphors, especially the metaphor of evil, can stifle dissent and constrain possible actions against the enemy. "The face of evil colonizes judgment, neutralizes arguments for pragmatic alternatives, and diminishes deference to ethical constraints" (2007, p. 226). The creation of an *other*, described through the vehicle of evil or savage, can become naturalized to the point that politicians, as well as citizens, lose their critical faculties and are no longer able to identify it as a construct. In Burke's notion of naming and the implied program of action, enemy construction justifies a certain course of action as well as the use of force in order to alleviate of guilt.

Another way Roosevelt illuminated the new crisis was through deploying visual metaphors. By shrinking the seas and describing the technologies of war, which further justifies the need for armaments and aid to those keeping the Nazis at bay, Roosevelt developed a cognitive shortcut for the listeners to see the world in a new way. He visualized the globe for listeners, "At one point between Africa and Brazil the distance is less from Washington than it is from Washington to Denver, Colorado--five hours for the latest type of bomber. And at the North end of the Pacific Ocean America and Asia almost touch each other" (para. 23). Roosevelt's geographic metaphors effectively shrink the distance between the United States and the European war such that danger is all the more imminent. He also suggested that the Nazi advance, if they overcame the British, could easily establish assault bases in South America or Africa. The bomber, new military technology for the war, could bring the Nazi and Japanese menace to American soil quickly. Roosevelt states plainly: "And remember that the range of a modern bomber is ever being increased," which makes it known that even if the enemy is not capable now, they will be soon (para. 24). Spatial and temporal metaphors are used effectively to

define the situation as critical.

John Murphy points to the strong isolationist mood that America was in and that Roosevelt rhetorically coaxed them out of (p. 129). To undo isolationist reforms as well as win over the hearts and minds of the American people, FDR had to, according to Murphy, “make the Axis threat present and real” to justify “all aid short of war” (p. 136). Roosevelt did this with visual language, shrinking America’s protection from the Pacific and Atlantic oceans by describing the capability of bomber technology in addition to the analogy of the banking crisis (p. 137). These metaphors created a new perspective for the American people and, as I argue, primed them for actions to support Great Britain and eventually enter the war themselves. The work of justifying force had begun in his *Arsenal of Democracy* Fireside Chat before the American people even realized the magnitude of the Axis powers in Asia and Europe. Offering direct support through munitions and other provisions to keep the British military strong meant that Americans were complicit in the violence of the war.

This indirect force from American factories empowered the force of the British military that was the last stand against the Germans at that point. Murphy cites the “well of trust” that Roosevelt had developed earlier during the banking crisis (p. 141). The president had gotten the American people through hard times before and now, with this particular Fireside Chat, he brings this new crisis to life rhetorically and prescribes the quick action to support Great Britain. Like the development of the banking crisis as a psychological malady of fear, the same simplicity is present. Roosevelt puts the foreign war in terms that Americans are familiar with, like putting the distance from Washington to Denver, Colorado, in terms of bomber capabilities without the need to refuel. This spatial and technical metaphor assists the audience to see the enemy in familiar and even more menacing terms. The necessity of force and involvement comes out strongly

when Roosevelt explained:

The experience of the past two years has proven beyond doubt that no nation can appease the Nazis. No man can tame a tiger into a kitten by stroking it. There can be no appeasement with ruthlessness. There can be no reasoning with an incendiary bomb. We know that a nation can have peace with the Nazis only at the price of total surrender.

(para. 38)

Packed into this statement are additional metaphors. The enemy is put into terms the audience will know and relate the characteristics of to the new face of the threat. The enemy is reduced to a wild animal. The Nazi is a powerful tiger, one would not attempt to reason with a tiger or stroke it into domesticity. Next, the enemy is reduced to a weapon of destruction. The enemy, whether a wild animal or a bomb, cannot be dealt with any other way than force and both are threatening and destructive. While building such a threatening foe Roosevelt knows he cannot paralyze the American people by overwhelming them with the might of the enemy. History can offer the support that the American people are capable and will win the fight.

### **History as analogy**

While depicting the enemy in terms that the Americans were familiar with, Roosevelt must also present the enemy as something the America people could face successfully. As Barbara Biesecker (2002) posits, it is the past that serves as the current exigency's civic lesson. The past, in this instance invoked by the President, informs citizens how they ought to behave as citizens for this particular exigency (p. 394). Invoking the Banking Crisis, Roosevelt reminded Americans: "We met the issue of 1933 with courage and realism. We face this new crisis--this new threat to the security of our nation -- with the same courage and realism" (para. 6-7). The past supplies the resources for the American people to approach the dangers abroad with

confidence because their president, Franklin D. Roosevelt, has led them through overwhelming predicaments before and it was his leadership that saw them through it. His proposed action is to supply Great Britain with armaments so they can assist the war effort over seas without placing troops in Europe yet. Roosevelt describes that possibility and constituted Americans as able friends, "I want to make it clear that it is the purpose of the nation to build now with all possible speed every machine, every arsenal, every factory that we need to manufacture our defense material. We have the men--the skill--the wealth-- and above all, the will" (para. 71). If Roosevelt's leadership got them out of the Depression, and through the banking crisis, and is solid enough to transition manufacturing to military efforts, then he could keep them safe in the face of an aggressor.

Roosevelt's citing of recent history and comparison of past enemies to current ones helps to justify preparations for war. History has hermeneutic qualities and allows people to understand current events. In his article *Operation Enduring Analogy*, Noon (2004) explains how "Historical analogies offer cognitive frameworks through which we might evaluate new information and experience" (p. 340). Roosevelt roots this new crisis in the nation's history of enemies they have overcome: "Never before since Jamestown and Plymouth Rock has our American civilization been in such danger as now" (para. 8). This known historical chapter and its allusions to the current situation triggers emotional support for the political decision because it is similar to the actions the nation has taken in the past. Noon explains why such analogies are persuasive: "When issued by political leaders, historical analogies more often than not serve prescriptive rather than descriptive or analytical functions" (p. 340). Roosevelt's great ability to lead the nation and gain enough trust for the American public to agree with his prescribed action is something that many scholars have noted. Suzanne Doughton (1993) specifically cites

Roosevelt's rhetorical ability to "activate" the American people (p. 428). She found his first inaugural full of war imagery and metaphor to add a sense of drama and immediate concern to the predicament of the banking crisis and overall economic dilemma (p. 431). Though then the danger of the economic woe was very real, the American people needed a plan of action and a leader to execute it. In the *Arsenal of Democracy* Roosevelt used this type of language to bring the foreign war and danger home, to make it immediate and apparent. His language assisted in making the American public realize that Roosevelt had the prescribed action readily available for the winds of war. Roosevelt emulated past Americans, or a prophet telling the righteous people what to do to prepare for disaster. He was, as he did with the Banking Crisis, ready to lead them through the impending struggle against the fascist enemies waiting at their shores.

### **From isolation to action**

Roosevelt was well aware of the challenges he faced in persuading Americans to become involved in foreign matters. Davis Houck (2009) points to Roosevelt's active role in Woodrow Wilson's administration as the Assistant Secretary of the Navy and long political resume, which bolstered his rhetorical credibility (p. 22). Roosevelt strategically gives voice to the isolationist sentiment and then reasons against it after he develops the new crisis, projecting the menace of the fascist enemy, threatening a geographically vulnerable United States of America. Part of his tactic involves the use of the rhetorical question that he could confidently respond to. Roosevelt asks, "Does anyone seriously believe that we need to fear attack anywhere in the Americas while a free Britain remains our most powerful naval neighbor in the Atlantic? And does anyone seriously believe, on the other hand, that we could rest easy if the Axis powers were our neighbors there?" (para. 19). Here, Roosevelt's experience as the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for President Wilson assists his ethos for conveying the urgency of the situation. Within

the response to the rhetorical questions is where Roosevelt situates the dystopic vision of the future to come if America does not act against her aggressors. This leverages both his response as well as what is posited in his warnings of America's inaction. If Britain falls and the Axis powers succeed in taking control of the entire Eastern hemisphere and seas, "It is no exaggeration to say that all of us, in all the Americas, would be living at the point of a gun--a gun loaded with explosive bullets, economic as well as military" (para. 20). Furthermore the American economy would forever turn into a "militaristic power on the basis of war economy" and permanently shift away from being an independent nation that could hold onto any isolationist policies (para. 21). It was better to face the threat, act immediately to support Great Britain, and stay distanced.

Roosevelt's next appeal to move people beyond isolationist policy was to imply that it is an outdated way of being a nation in the world. His shrinking of the oceans was a way to express this, "Some of us [isolationists] like to believe that even if Britain falls, we are still safe, because of the broad expanse of the Atlantic and of the Pacific. But the width of those oceans is not what it was in the days of clipper ships" (para. 22-23). He juxtaposed this with how citizens should be approaching this new crisis and the European war: "During the past week many people in all parts of the nation have told me what they wanted me to say tonight. Almost all of them expressed a courageous desire to hear the plain truth about the gravity of the situation" (para. 25). The later quote implies that these Americans, with the courage to hear the truth, are in the majority and will support the decision to keep America safe by supporting the British. This strategy of empowerment would enable America to keep their soldiers at home and keep the enemy across the Atlantic.

## **Epidictic call**

Part of war rhetoric involves the epidictic function of informing citizens of their identity, world making, and the assignment of blame and praise simultaneously. Epidictic rhetoric is a speech of praise and blame. Describing the world in a particular way that illuminates the present situation and the American role in the European war was imperative. This is also part of the presidential justificatory function of the speech. Roosevelt simultaneously blamed the enemy and praised U.S. citizens as capable and gifted with foresight enough to see that action is demanded of them. Roosevelt had to prepare the country for war without directly declaring war.

Since the *Arsenal* address was so direct and clearly foretelling a significant change in United States policy, Roosevelt chose to include a telegram from a citizen who is blamed for having the wrong outlook on the situation. He used the example to justify inching the United States toward war in the Europe:

One telegram, however, expressed the attitude of the small minority who want to see no evil and hear no evil, even though they know in their hearts that evil exists. That telegram begged me not to tell again of the ease with which our American cities could be bombed by any hostile power which had gained bases in this Western Hemisphere. The gist of that telegram was: "Please, Mr. President, don't frighten us by telling us the facts." (para. 25)

Roosevelt's use of this quotation allowed him to respond to those in the country, whether a citizen or those in Congress, and inform them that they are wrong. Just as he implied with the "clipper ships" were no longer sailing the vast oceans, the isolationists' view was an outdated way for Americans to view the world. An ocular metaphor comes in again while addressing the isolationists:

There are those who say that the Axis powers would never have any desire to attack the Western Hemisphere. That is the same dangerous form of wishful thinking which has destroyed the powers of resistance of so many conquered peoples. The plain facts are that the Nazis have proclaimed, time and again, that all other races are their inferiors and therefore subject to their orders. And most important of all, the vast resources and wealth of this American Hemisphere constitute the most tempting loot in all of the round world. Let us no longer blind ourselves to the undeniable fact that the evil forces which have crushed and undermined and corrupted so many others are already within our own gates.

(para. 33-34)

Roosevelt's statements are points of connection and unification that furthers the construction of the "us" versus "them" dichotomy. The dichotomy works to rally support from multiple and varied audiences because, according to Bates (2004): "If a people views itself as civilized (which nearly all do), then the savage should be seen as a threatening force in a universal sense" (p. 454). Even the isolationists would agree that Americans should not be subject to Nazi rule and that America has valued commodities that would tempt a Nazi attack. John R. Butler (2002) contends that the development of a *savage other* is consistent with the history of the United States as a world power. The power hungry Nazi tiger is savage and will viciously rule. Enemy construction also involves features listed by Roger Bromley—"reductionism, simplification and essentialism" that the United States consistently engages in to describe the enemy (2011, p. 51). The reduction of Germans to animals or savages assist in forming the enemy and demonstrating the dangers it presents to the *civilized* group. The metaphor also enables better comprehension of a foreign threat.

This statement also works to construct a new, non-isolationist American identity.

Roosevelt defines Americans as defenders of democracy instead of people who took it for granted. Jason Flanagan's (2004) critique of Woodrow Wilson's rhetoric recounts the "rhetorical restructuring of the American 'self,'" that he describes as, "inextricably connected to the development of an enemy image" of Germany (p. 138). While describing the enemy, Wilson was concurrently constructing the image of America. Roosevelt similarly does that in *On the Arsenal of Democracy* and once more the Germans are the enemy (though Japanese and Italian threats are mentioned, they are not developed). Flanagan explains that, "Comparisons with the American Revolution ... also served to reinforce the image of the war as one between the forces of tyranny, represented by the German government, and the forces of liberty, represented by the United States" (p. 135). Tyranny versus Liberty fall into the categories that Ivie developed and make force the inevitable recourse for the situation. Ivie (1980) furthers this point by explaining that the construction of an enemy is useful to expiate guilt and "establish the enemy's culpability," which excuses the use of force while maintaining a wholesome and democratic identity (p. 280). Certainly Americans, who had thought of themselves as isolationists cautious of entering a European war again, would want to be seen as defenders rather than aggressors. Roosevelt understood such caution and framed the support of Britain as a way to avoid further involvement while maintaining democracy and freedom at home.

Roosevelt defined a new crisis, a menacing enemy, and a new proactive democratic identity in this speech. Here he explained that there are temptations to go along with the new regime the Nazis are proposing and how it is not in line with who Americans are:

These people not only believe that we can save our own skins by shutting our eyes to the fate of other nations. Some of them go much further than that. They say that we can and should become the friends and even the partners of the Axis powers. Some of them even

suggest that we should imitate the methods of the dictatorships. But Americans never can and never will do that. (para. 37)

The way to approach the European war is to maintain support for the last stands against the Axis powers. Roosevelt reinforced this stand with the consequences of inaction or continued isolationism with the dystopic future language:

They may talk of a "new order" in the world, but what they have in mind is only (but) a revival of the oldest and the worst tyranny. In that there is no liberty, no religion, no hope. The proposed "new order" is the very opposite of a United States of Europe or a United States of Asia. It is not a government based upon the consent of the governed. It is not a union of ordinary, self-respecting men and women to protect themselves and their freedom and their dignity from oppression. It is an unholy alliance of power and pelf to dominate and to enslave the human race. (para. 44-45)

Roosevelt portrayed the enemy as vicious and deceptive. He mocks the Nazis' "new order" mantra pointing to recent examples of other nations who were subsumed by Nazi powers such as Italy, Belgium, and Poland, nation that thought that they would be spared by nonintervention pacts. After establishing the threat, the identity of the enemy, and crafting a non-isolationist American identity, Roosevelt states the precise prescription and rationale behind the choice of action.

### **The Present vision: Supporting Britain**

Supporting Great Britain, one of the few allied powers not taken over by Nazi forces in Europe, was the prescribed action that had to be taken immediately. Roosevelt's direct manner of speaking and detailed description of the Allied power constructed Britain as a friend and equal in the fight against world domination:

The people of Europe who are defending themselves do not ask us to do their fighting. They ask us for the implements of war, the planes, the tanks, the guns, the freighters which will enable them to fight for their liberty and for our security. Emphatically we must get these weapons to them, get them to them in sufficient volume and quickly enough, so that we and our children will be saved the agony and suffering of war which others have had to endure. (para. 49)

This is not an act of pity or an intervention, nor is that being asked of the Americans. The sacrifice is limited to sending armaments. Roosevelt compelled through empathy, believing that, Americans understood the physical sacrifice and loss of European wars from their involvement in WWI. This is the lowest level of risk Roosevelt saw for America and he made that explicit by stating, “Our national policy is not directed toward war. Its sole purpose is to keep war away from our country and away from our people” (para. 54). The freshly proposed identity and role in international affairs was new so Roosevelt was careful not push the American audience too far toward war as he came to the conclusion of his address. The goal was to reassure them of their ability in the war effort but scare them into supporting the proposed action as well. The balance is struck rhetorically with the vision of the present situation. The example of visions from the banking crisis and their ability to pull through then is the assuagement that they can assist Britain in the fight to keep the war at bay. The dystopic future descriptions are intended to scare them out of isolation and ignorance of the real danger at their gates. The present vision takes on a deliberative function of Roosevelt’s veiled war rhetoric. The present exigence demanded action immediately, “We are planning our own defense with the utmost urgency, and in its vast scale we must integrate the war needs of Britain and the other free nations which are resisting aggression” (para. 56). This was a demand for action that would still appease the American wish

to not join another European war--a clear recognition that World War I was still fresh in the mind of many isolationists. Indeed, at this point, Roosevelt prescribed action as a way to stay out of war and to only sacrifice a few luxury items that couldn't be manufactured since production will shift largely to producing armaments.

Roosevelt describes the benefits of ramping up production and frames it as a nonissue for the economy. He assures listeners that the present situation which demands this response will not lead to an economic crisis again. The government would ensure the "stability of prices and with that the stability of the cost of living" since the American people's support would largely depend on Roosevelt's ability to allay anxieties (para. 63). The troubling memory of the banking crisis and the Great Depression that was still prominent in the minds of the American people, as well as part of part of Roosevelt's ethos, both enabled and constrained the appeals and framing of this action:

Democracy's fight against world conquest is being greatly aided, and must be more greatly aided, by the rearmament of the United States and by sending every ounce and every ton of munitions and supplies that we can possibly spare to help the defenders who are in the front lines. (para. 55)

Once again he mentioned "Democracy's fight" against the enemy and he lumped the United States in with the nations already involved. This supports the call for action again. The theme was repeated often and directly throughout the latter half of the address. He focused on the industry, weapons, and technology of war to frame the action as the least risky: "Guns, planes, and ships and many other things have to be built in the factories and the arsenals of America" (para. 64). He carefully constrains the potential for fear by focusing on the prescribed action and then nestles the action in a way to avoid an all-out war here: "We must be the great arsenal of

democracy. For us this is an emergency as serious as war itself. We must apply ourselves to our task with the same resolution, the same sense of urgency, the same spirit of patriotism and sacrifice as we would show were we at war” (para. 75). The call to action and seriousness as if the nation were at war echoes Roosevelt’s 1933 First Inaugural. The theme to take action immediately, both the Government and the people working together, is present in both speeches. Both speeches take place when the nation is either in crisis or on the precipice of one. Here Roosevelt speaks of the approach to the economic woes of 1933, “It can be accomplished in part by direct recruiting by the Government itself, treating the task as we would treat the emergency of a war, but at the same time, through this employment, accomplishing greatly needed projects to stimulate and reorganize the use of our natural resources” (*First Inaugural*, para. 9). Roosevelt made this statement after he described the economic issues as solvable. It was a problem that demanded immediate action to solve it and get Americans back to work.

Once again Roosevelt invoked the vigor and collective memories of a nation pulling together as if they were at war. The use of natural resources, the labor force, and getting the American people to work will solve the crisis that face the United States. The actions necessary required the approval of Congress, much like the declaration of war. Roosevelt reinforces the demands of war and the importance of leadership during a time of crisis again, “I shall ask the Congress for the one remaining instrument to meet the crisis—broad Executive power to wage a war against the emergency, as great as the power that would be given to me if we were in fact invaded by a foreign foe” (*First Inaugural*, para. 21). Though when the *Arsenal of Democracy* was given Roosevelt had not lead them through a war before, the American people would have already been familiar with Roosevelt’s invoking of war terms to familiarize them with the economic strife and conquering of that crisis. Roosevelt had already effectively “waged war” on

the Great Depression and brought them to victory once. His first inaugural laid important ground for the *Arsenal* Fireside Chat as Roosevelt had demonstrated his executive power as effective against the internal foe of economic strife (“[www.archives.gov](http://www.archives.gov),” 2012, para. 4). The metaphor of war is a trend between these two speeches, only in *The Arsenal of Democracy* the move away from neutrality would indeed lead to involvement in a war abroad.

This focus on the supportive yet active role of America is essential to priming the nation for war and was reinforced by Roosevelt’s habit of invoking war to convey the meaning of crisis. He ends the address by saying, “As President of the United States I call for that national effort. I call for it in the name of this nation which we love and honor and which we are privileged and proud to serve” (para. 81). Roosevelt reminds the public of his role and duty as the President to assist the rhetorical priming. By the end of *The Arsenal of Democracy*, the role of the people and the President was clear. He would lead the people through the new crisis he proposed as the present exigence while building upon the familiar foundation of the Banking Crisis to reassure them of his ability to do so. There was no way around Roosevelt’s presentation of the imminent dangers or any place to hide from the enemy. The American people would have to trust their leader to steer them again through the troubled waters of crisis. In this chapter I demonstrated that Roosevelt’s *On the Arsenal of Democracy* Fireside Chat is presidential justificatory war rhetoric cloaked in epideictic form. Furthermore, Roosevelt deploys enemy construction, geographic metaphors, and appeals to public memory in order to rhetorically prime the nation for war. Though explicitly stating that the Fireside Chat was not about war but rather about national security, Roosevelt was able to construct an enemy and an American public that was no longer isolationist, ready for war. To further this point, I examine citizen letters that Roosevelt received in response to the Fireside Chat and show how the rhetorical priming resonated with the public.

## Chapter 4 The Effects of Roosevelt's Rhetorical Priming

### *Citizen Letters*

In what David M. Kennedy referred to as one of Roosevelt's "most memorable Fireside Chats," Roosevelt included the words of citizens to build his argument. He had gathered both public opinion and facts in order to confirm to the American people his commitment to Great Britain as well as his all measures short of war position regarding the European war (1999, p. 468). Roosevelt engaged the American public before this particular address to find out what the general feeling was about the European war; furthermore this practice was a habit for Roosevelt to pay close attention to the correspondence he received in response to his public addresses. It offered valuable insight and strengthened his engagement with the public.

Correspondence to the White House from citizens was common for Roosevelt ever since his first term in office. Roosevelt had staff dedicated to reading, recording the trends in the responses, and replying to the citizens who wrote letters to the president. Hauser remarked, "Roosevelt's Fireside Chats, however, are lessons on the possibilities of democracy when a leader addresses the masses with messages that actually have something to say. Roosevelt's monitoring of the mail enhanced his ability to engage citizens in terms that related to their problems and allowed them to understand what the government was considering to do about them" (1999, pp. 238-239). This practice was well established by Roosevelt's third term. The *On the Arsenal of Democracy* address introduced one of the most ambitious international policy decisions of his presidency and, in the face of neutrality and intense isolationism, Roosevelt involved the public's opinion heavily.

A debate about Roosevelt's position on the war sprung up immediately after the sixteenth Fireside Chat. Congress convened shortly after to assemble the Lend-Lease Bill H.R.—1776 to

aid Great Britain with armaments and materials (Kennedy, 1999, p. 470). According to Kennedy, “Fortunately for the president’s purposes, the debate over Lend-Lease took place at a favorable moment. England’s apparent victory in the Battle of Britain had fended off the threat of immediate invasion, and Roosevelt’s recent electoral victory had freshened his political popularity. As the debate began, public opinion polls showed solid majorities behind the president’s Lend-Lease policy” (1999, p. 470). This is supported by the vast amount of mail and telegrams filled with messages of approval of the president’s position that poured in the evening of the address and for up to two weeks afterward. These excerpts reflect the manner in which Roosevelt’s rhetorical priming resonated with the public.

There are 14.3 boxes full of letters, postcards, and telegraphs from citizens in response to Roosevelt’s *On the Arsenal of Democracy* Fireside Chat. The boxes are full of approximately 500 to 750 pages each. Letter writing was a common way to respond to the President’s addresses to the public. Fourteen of the boxes in the President’s Personal File #200 contain what the archivists label “pro” letters. In the partial box, that is a third full, are citizen responses labeled “con” letters.

In the following chapter I present a sampling of the citizen response to the sixteenth Fireside Chat. The letters gauge the response to the address in a revealing way. While the response is overwhelmingly positive, there were letters that expressed the concerns from the dissenting citizens. The dissenting letters offer a balance to the perspective about changing America’s neutrality policy that had been in effect since Hitler took power of Germany. The letters are evidence of how the rhetorical priming succeeded and how it missed parts of the public. With millions of listeners from every corner of the nation, the letters provide rich insight into what was on the minds of those huddled around their radios for Roosevelt’s address on

national security. For the critic, the letters signal the effect of the letters on the populous and display the turn in policy and support for an America engaged as “the great arsenal of democracy” in the European war. First I demonstrate the “pro” side of the citizen response. Four prominent themes are present in the letters. First and most pronounced is the message of full support for Roosevelt’s stance regarding the European war. Second is that the United States is great and blessed. Third, many of the letters remark that the speech itself is great and stands out among the numerous speeches Roosevelt had made during his three terms. Finally, a concern about Fifth Columnist or generally subversive agents being present and active in the United States that may work against Roosevelt’s plan to aid Great Britain was expressed.

### ***Full Support for the Arsenal of Democracy***

Many of the “pro” letters in the archive note that they fully supported Roosevelt’s position on the European war. Many citizens wrote because they knew the president would measure the success of the address upon the correspondence received. There was also a swell of popularity for the stance introduced in the address in polls taken about the Lend-Lease program. Roosevelt’s timing and use of the familiar Fireside Chat medium seemed to resonate with many citizens who wrote to him. One gentleman, Matthew R. Hitch, wrote on December 30, 1940 from New Bedford, Massachusetts, “As the effect of a pronouncement from a high official of the Government to the Nation seems to be measured in part by the mail received concerning it, I will add to the number of those who unreservedly commend your Fireside Talk of Sunday night.”

The rhetorical priming and message of Roosevelt’s ability to lead resonated with many. The following five excerpts are examples of that. The Czech American National Alliance from Toledo, Ohio wrote in a telegram that was sent to the White House on January 6, 1941, “We

thank you for your truly American stand you revealed in your last Fireside Chat. Proudly with admiration we stand behind you. You lead, we follow. God bless you, you bless America.”

The evening of the address, secretary S.T.E., on behalf of Senator Gibson of Vermont, in a Memorandum for the President stated, “Senator Gibson of Vermont called. Said your radio talk last night was ‘100% good!’ and then he said, ‘Tell the President I am FOR him!’” The political support would be important for the bill to go into law and allow support to Great Britain materialize.

On December 30, 1940 Harold L. Ireland from Portland, Oregon wrote, “Many of my friends as well as myself and my wife who heard you over the radio last night thoroughly approve of your stand and we desire to back you up 100%. We sincerely trust that you will continue to take the leadership for all possible to aid to Britain. If a poll were to be taken of all your constituents I am sure you would have a backing of more than 90%. You need have no fear in this direction and you can well afford to proceed towards the quickest kind of aid to England knowing that it will meet with the hearty approval of most all citizens.”

The evening of the address, Leo Lowy sent a telegram, “Mr. President as a pilot and aircraft inspector I wish to express my deepest appreciation and fullest accord with your statements of tonight and can also assure you of the same sentiments of thousands of co workers of mine.” His profession allowed him to confirm for himself the statements about modern bomber capabilities that Roosevelt cited as evidence that the oceans were not enough of a deterrent for attacks from either Germany or Japan. War and sending armaments abroad were now on the minds of these supportive citizens.

On December 31, 1940 E.H. Norris and Mrs. Norris from Kingston, New Mexico wrote, “We, Mrs. Norris and I, listened with profound interest to your broadcast of December 29. It

was, without doubt, the most clear statement yet uttered by any individual in these United States, and defined to the majority of your countrymen exactly the position they have hoped that you and the entire government body would take toward solving the world crisis. In passing, it is our sincere wish that you will receive without hesitation the supreme support of every Senator and every Congressman down to the last man, for such is the will of every true American.” This couple expressed their understanding of the address and the Congressional process that lay ahead. The support of the citizens was something that Roosevelt could rely upon for evidence to Congress against the isolationist and Republicans who had waited for him to make a mistake.

Some citizens accurately sensed that war was not far behind this move in international policy. December 29, 1940, John B. Morrill expressed his vested interest and willingness to sacrifice for the president’s position and extended support for the arsenal as well as full engagement in this telegram, “One boy in Navy another in in August. Heard your message. Agreed hundred percent. Declare war when necessary. I am Navy yard worker. Charleston we the people are behind you. Help my boy to Annapolis. Appreciate your friendly talk.” These messages reveal that the priming message of sacrifice had struck an empathetic chord. Furthermore, the looming specter of WWI was grim but not insurmountable rhetorically.

On January 1, 1941 a World War I veteran named Otto W. Hammer from New Springfield, Ohio wrote a lengthy letter to the president:

There were six in our particular group who listened to your talk last Sunday and each of us heartily approved the stand taken and your plans for the future. No one wants to go to war, but what can we do to prevent? –seemed to be the gist of our discussion following your speech. Certainly the only way we can stay out of this war is to render all possible aid to Great Britain, for if they lose, we either “sink or swim” –surrender or fight. In all

fairness, sincerity and good common sense, how can Senator Wheeler or any one else arrive at the conclusion (with past events to guide us) that Hitler will peaceably agree to surrender to their peoples of the lands he has invaded and practically ruined and take himself and his armies within the boundaries of pre-war Germany? Then finally our group came to the conclusion that probably the most effective way to win this war would be to have our country on a war basis, actually declare war on these axis powers and by that very act arouse industry, labor and the public at large to the seriousness of the situation and at the same time stop the silly and meaningless arguments advanced by the “peace-at-any-cost people.

Furthermore Mr. Hammer also firmly situated himself as a man who has seen war and is an American willing to do whatever he needed to help. “This letter comes to you as just an ordinary citizen- a court stenographer by trade who was in the army for about a year during the World War and who, incidentally, is wondering just what he could possibly do to help.” Though the situation was daunting, many Americans were behind Roosevelt and found his leadership comforting in the face of a world crisis.

### ***A Blessed Nation***

Another theme that was prominent was the notion that the United States was a great and blessed nation that should extend help. Citizens also wrote that Roosevelt should be blessed for his leadership and was reminded that the citizenry had faith in him. The evening of the address Edwin E. White from Pleasant Hill, Tennessee wrote, “As a plain citizen, I am grateful for the superb address to the nation that you have just made. It was beyond praise in conception, wording, and delivery. Surely the time for hesitation is past. Our one hope to preserve our liberties, under God, is to aid Britain to the utmost in every possible way. Some of us will be

exceedingly happy to see this the established policy of America. Why have we been so signally blessed among nations if we are not to put our resources into the defense of the great human achievements of freedom, justice, and decency? Why not keep the nation informed as to the actual facts? I believe it will back you to the limit if you do.” Picking up on the named enemy in his letter and with the ethos of being a Reverend this gentleman, Rev. W. N. Lowrance from Oxford, Mississippi wrote on December 31, 1940, “Your Fireside address hit the nail squarely on the head. We must stand for the right regardless. Blinding ourselves to the truth and pulling the cover over our head will only help to make bad matters worse. Nazism must crumble and we must help it crumble. God is with the righteous. He cannot be with the gangsters.”

The evilness of the foe Roosevelt constructed resonated with this gentleman as well. On January 1, 1941 Pastor Rev. D’Arcy G. Cook from Providence, R.I. commended Roosevelt, “I want to indorse every word of your speech last Sunday evening. It is the sentiment of nearly all the people I meet. Christian people cannot be neutral in the presence of evil. Christ called the Pharisees vipers and hypocrites, and Hitler is a double crossing lyer, a cruel murdering gangster, a bloated power loving monster depriving nations of liberty, and cowardly enough to blame others for his own crimes.” Making clear that he understood that the best way to defeat and correct Hitler Cook also stated, “It is our best insurance to help Britain in every way. We trust you to find the best way. We will support you in courageous action.” Action and trust were strong calls in the Fireside Chat.

December 30, 1940, Francis M. McDermott sent a telegram from Barranquilla, Columbia, “Please accept my heartiest congratulations for the masterful speech you gave last night. As I looked at your picture and listened to your voice I was proud indeed that we have such a brave and able President. God bless you and best wishes for a Happy New Year.” The

address was broadcast internationally; the priming had a long reach through the medium of the radio. This letter responds to the priming as well as Mr. McDermott's fondness of the Fireside Chats and Roosevelt's radio addresses in general.

Another telegram sent the evening of the address from Jacob Ilowite expressed a similar sentiment, "God bless you for your clear and honest analysis of our position in this terrible war. May your health and strength sustain you so you can steer us safely out of chaos now confronting our country and the world." Though Roosevelt does not use religious language in the address, citizens felt compelled to put the call to be *The Arsenal of Democracy* in religious terms. Enemy construction places the dichotomy of good versus evil on the situation and the priming of action as well as the new role America would have is expressed well by citizen through their use of religious language.

### ***A Great Speech***

The citizens were used to hearing Roosevelt often on the radio but this speech in particular stood out to a few of those who wrote to him. Though a plain spoken and direct orator, Roosevelt was a popular president. This was due in part because people enjoyed his addresses immensely. On December 30, 1940, A.E. Clampitt of Saginaw, Michigan discerned, "I think your speech of last evening will go down in history with Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg speech, as two of the greatest ever uttered by an American citizen. I am sure the great majority of the American people thank God we have a man like you at the head of our government." Lincoln, also a war time president, was notable for his addresses to a divided nation.

Spyrous P. Skouras, President, Greek War Associations from New York wrote in on December 31, 1940, "Dear Mr. President: May I extend my wholehearted congratulations on your splendid talk Sunday night. Your profound observations the sound judgment and foresight

that impelled your remarks on American policy is admirable and on behalf of all identified with this movement may I express our deep gratitude for the inspiration and impetus that your words have given us to bring to a small but valiant nation all material and spiritual support that American generosity and sympathy can provide.” Here the speech itself and the action to send support to Britain are lauded simultaneously. The epideictic call is being responded to.

December 30, 1940 Catesby L. Jones of Bernardsville, New Jersey wrote that Roosevelt’s speech was so great that even Republicans who did not support him were won over by it. “Your speech last night was one of the greatest of many great speeches you have made. Your words will infuriate our foreign enemies and our domestic traitors, will shame our narrow isolationists, will clear the thinking of many muddled minds, and will inspire the vast majority of our citizens who are intelligent and patriotic to greater vigilance and greater sacrifice. In the Republican stronghold of Bernardsville, New Jersey, where I live, I heard this morning nothing but praise for what you said—than which nothing more laudatory can be said.” This reflects the political tensions as well as the predominant isolationist sentiment in the country.

George Watts Hill from Durham, North Carolina thought it was the greatest of all of Roosevelt’s speeches. On December 29, 1940 via telegram he said, “Please accept my sincere congratulations on the outstanding speech of your three terms of office. The general public in this part of the state heartily endorse your position of all aid to Britain as the best defense for America and sincerely appreciate your telling them the true facts of the situation. Many had expressed the feeling that they hoped you would in the very near future declare a state of emergency and thereby eliminate many of the subversive activities of semi-political Nazi organizations such as ‘The Tourist Bureau’ etc.” The latter portion of this telegram brings me to

the final theme that was prevalent in the correspondence in response to the Fireside Chat: the fear of Fifth Column activities that were already at work within the bounds of the United States.

### ***The Threat From Within***

The letters to Roosevelt revealed that the portion of *On the Arsenal of Democracy* that directly addressed the threat of Fifth Columnists and subversive agents from Germany already well rooted in the United States that may have already caused delay to assist Great Britain struck a chord with Americans.

The evening of the address Francis S. Finch of Omaha, Nebraska sent a telegram, "I feel you are fundamentally right this nation cannot last without England and that you have expressed tonight in far more adequate than I will ever know the crisis that confronts us today. I may add however that we have those certain subversive influences in our own ranks who should be corrected to enable you and me to achieve the action we are seeking. The right to preserve as a nation and with your leadership untrammelled it will be obtained." Mr. Finch was concerned as well that those who were not in favor of the action proposed by Roosevelt were part of a plot to keep American aid from Great Britain in order to aid the German win there.

Even extending assistance to keep the Fifth Columnists from succeeding in their subversive ways in the United States were offered to Roosevelt. January 1, 1941, The Kiwanis Club of Roswell, New Mexico sent this letter authored by their secretary Edward L. Harbaugh, "The Roswell Kiwanis Club votes unanimously to support your preparedness program and to congratulate you on a firm stand relative to the world situation. We are ready to assist in any way possible and urge strong action against fifth columnist activities in our country." The message was clear that the presence of subversive agents was not in the address alone, the citizens felt it too.

### *The Dissenting Yet Patriotic Citizens*

Not all of the correspondence was supportive of Roosevelt's plan to aid Great Britain. There were those who thought that America should not become involved in European affairs and were unswayed by the rhetorical priming for war. From parents, concerned citizens, ministers, businessmen, World War I veterans, and young men who would be eligible to fight, citizens expressed their dissent to Roosevelt through letters. Though the address was meant to assuage the fear of going to war, these citizens saw through the call to merely become an "arsenal of democracy."

Themes arise from the sample of letters. From the partial box coded "con" in the Franklin D. Roosevelt archives there are a few distinct messages that come through. First, and the strongest, is the memory of the United States' involvement in the First World War. Many citizens wrote to Roosevelt warning him that their support for him has dropped because he wants to involve the United States in another European war. Roosevelt's exclusion of the topic had not blocked the memory of the Great War. The main support for this fear was the memory of how poorly World War I went and the devastation of that war still lingered when they were writing. Second, distrust in England and the war abroad not being worth the sacrifice at home. Third, that Roosevelt's address was in fact a declaration of war and not a simple extension of aid. The citizens heard the Fireside Chat as a declaration of war in spite of Roosevelt's clear statement that it was not an address about war. Overall each citizen makes it clear that they love their country and there is a deep vein of patriotism that runs through each of the letters. The ethos of citizenry and their love of country is what gave them the right to, in most cases, respectfully disagree with the President's stance on the European war.

### ***The Remembrance of World War I***

On January 6, 1941, a self-proclaimed “disillusioned world war veteran,” D.M. Batton from Charleston, S.C. wrote, “Your address is very much like those delivered by former, President, Woodrow Wilson in 1916 and 1917 when he waged a successful campaign to have our country become embroiled in the European war. Like Wilson, you probably will succeed, but also, like Wilson, you will go out of office the most hated man in the United States.” Furthermore, Mr. Batton warns that the fate of France is telling of what will happen if the United States becomes more involved, “While you lead my country into a war which the people, like those of France, do not want, and will not prosecute successfully. You must remember that million of young men upon whom you must depend to do the fighting have been without employment for years. There may be a question in their mind whether Democracy is worth fighting for.” Clearly the American public still felt the presence of the First World War and some were not naïve to where Roosevelt’s priming would lead.

### ***Distrust in England***

Many citizens did not trust of England, due to the United States’ involvement with them during the First World War. Moreover, it was expressed that they did not view Great Britain as worthy of American aid. On December 31, 1940 Geoff W. Armbruch expressed his concern that Britain might even be an enemy rather than a friend by calling on the United States to become involved in foreign affairs. In the second paragraph the citizen asks, “What did Britain ever do for us?” The citizen points to the United States’ past bondage to Britain and expresses the need for the U.S. to stay untangled from Britain. “All I ask of you is please don’t be British

or pro-British” (underlined words in original letter). This suggests the formation of collective nations who America should be allied with missed the mark.

William R. Gentry, Jr. from St. Louis, Missouri wrote on January 1, 1941, “Sir: I listened with dismay to your radio address on December 29. It amounted to a declaration of war, and we are far from ready for such action. Your pledge about not sending a force abroad cannot be kept.” He then expressed that Churchill has misled the president, “England has ample funds to pay for all she gets from us, and I oppose any leasing arrangement for her benefit. She made some very solemn promises to us before, and broke every one of them; what makes you think she will carry out her engagements better this time? Please do not misunderstand me: I dislike the Nazis as much or more than you do. But England brought this trouble on herself, and I see no reason for us to send our young men to her aid. And unless we do this very thing, all of our other efforts on her behalf will be worthless.” Mr. Gentry acknowledged the enemy construction of the Nazi foe but is still not moved to support the actions proposed in the Fireside Chat.

Geo W. Meartz of Niagra Falls, NY sent a telegram on December 31, 1940 stating, “One who rose up out of a nest of Republicans to vote for you seven weeks ago deeply deplores your talk on the war. ...Believe we may fight in self defense alone with justice.” In a reference to a prior address from Roosevelt, Mr. Meartz extended his argument to demonstrate his distrust of Great Britain and the president’s motives, “I wonder if your British friends know anything of the golden rule you spoke of Christmas. It would have been well if you had told your son Elliott something about the golden rule. Maybe he would not have accepted a job in a swivel chair five thousand miles from where any battle would take place. And only the British. And the British 5<sup>th</sup> columnists in the United States and cowards are afraid of Hitler.” Here the Fifth Column suspicions work in the opposite direction of the “pro” letters. The sentiment is that there are

British installments lurking in the company of the president in an attempt to get the United States involved and on the side of the British.

### *An Undesirable Declaration of War*

Many citizens saw the Fireside Chat as an end to Roosevelt's commitment to neutrality and his all methods short of war approach that had held since 1939. The Administrative Staff of American Youth Conference Congress of Chicago sent a telegram on December 29, 1940 that stated, "We are deeply shocked by your warlike speech and your proposal to shackle American labor to a war economy as patriotic American we pledge ourselves to redouble our efforts to keep America free democratic and at peace." The rhetorical priming for war had the opposite effect in this case and the following excerpt.

Mrs. O. Bandler from Detroit, Michigan wrote on December 31, 1940, "I am in full agreement with a program of aid to England, but feel aid should be extended only so long as it does not endanger our becoming embroiled in this European mess. Inasmuch as you presented the danger that lies in our not helping England, and I well know there are two sides to the problem, I sincerely feel, however, as a true American, that the mightiest of armies and the most powerful of navies would more than offset any threats of Nazi Germany." Here the priming only moved Mrs. O. bandler so far. War is still undesirable and sending armaments are simply not worth the risk.

On December 30, 1940, Dean Mullin of Grand Junction, CO. wrote, "Sir: Your speech last evening made it fairly clear to anyone capable of reading between the lines that you have resolved to take this country into war. Even though such expressions were not actually used, the impression conveyed, not so much perhaps by what was said but the manner of presentation, was that war had been decided upon. And of one of those most directly concerned, I wish to file a

protest. I write as on of the Sixteen million whom you have marked for the slaughter in this conflict. ...I have a feeling that I am being deliberately herded into a war for which I certainly have no liking and which will doubtless be recorded by historians of the future as one of the most colossal mistakes in American history.” As someone who would be sent to fight if the United States involvement escalated to conflict, this citizen was deeply concerned that the war was inevitable and he did not want to fight. He is also picking up on the veiled nature of the address. Though Roosevelt frames the address as one about national security, the priming suggests that war is inevitable.

Similarly, George and Martha Messinger from Bowmansville, NY wrote to the president on December 31, 1940, “Dear Sir: We listened to your speech over the radio and are very much afraid such talk will get us into war. We are the parents of five sons and have told them to give the last drop of their blood in defense of their country but to refuse to leave these shores to fight the battles of European countries.” The Messingers also disliked the strong anti-German tones in the Fireside Chat. “You seem to forget that we are not all of English descent, many of us are of German descent, and while we have no admiration for Hitler or any other dictator, our hearts sympathize with the sufferings of the German people as well as the English people. We would admire you more had you, as the head of a great nation, tried to make peace instead of calling ugly names and thus arousing hate toward this country.” Though there were fewer dissenting voices present in the archives, the arguments were no less passionate than those who Roosevelt had won support. Those who were not won over by Roosevelt’s rhetorical priming were convinced that war was the only option once the attack on Pearl Harbor occurred. America, whether the public unanimously supported it or not, was attacked and going to war.

## **Rhetorical Priming Reflected in the Official Declarations of War**

### ***Address to Congress Requesting a Declaration of War: The Japanese Enemy***

In July of 1937 war broke out in Asia when Japan invaded China. The American people read about it in the newspapers and heard Roosevelt give speeches about the Asian Axis aggressors. In October of that year Roosevelt informed the American people, who were sympathetic to China, that quarantine was enforced upon Japan for their aggressive acts (Herring, 1938, p. 22). Depriving Japan, who the United States was friendly with, of resources they could use to further their war pursuits and remain neutral, was the goal of this quarantine. It also kept Roosevelt's promise of all methods short of war strategy.

Though the American public was aware of Japan's aggression in Asia they were not concerned about the threat that Roosevelt was keenly attuned to. Unlike other Fifth Columnist fears of the day, such as German spies who worked for the Nazis to gain intelligence and keep the isolationist sentiment alive, the American people were not concerned that there were subversive Japanese workings inside the United States (MacDonnell, 1995, p. 82). In 1938 Roosevelt pushed to enlarge the Navy presence of the United States in the Pacific and Atlantic oceans. In May of 1940, the main body of the Navy was sent to Hawaii as a stark warning to Japan (Kennedy, 1999, p. 446). While Roosevelt could not declare officially at that point, he did not want the Japanese Imperial Navy to think they were unprepared, weak, or naïve to the threat they presented in the Pacific. For many American citizens, the attack was a complete surprise. It was only afterward that it was thought of as the most effective Fifth Columnist work of the entire war (MacDonnell, 1995, p. 85).

World War II had finally reached American soil on December 7, 1941, one year after

Roosevelt had warned the American people that they must become involved in order to stop the Nazis in their tracks in Europe. The attack on the main body of the Navy at Pearl Harbor that morning took American lives and was meant to cripple the Navy so they could not counter attack against Japan. On December 8, 1941 Roosevelt approached Congress and the American people with his declaration of war against Japan. This time the American people were ready to go to war and fully engage in the Pacific.

First I demonstrate Roosevelt's construction of the Japanese enemy. Second, I provide examples of how Roosevelt used memory, recent and further back, to build his case against the Japanese enemy. He bridged the enemy construction with the recent past to explain the nature of the situation of the present for the American people. He also, since the nation was officially declaring war, needed to reaffirm the national identity as capable of fighting and winning. Lastly I demonstrate Roosevelt's epideictic notions of America and the foe he built in contrast to let the identity of America at war shine through.

The enemy construction in the declaration of war is more brief in nature than it was in the *On the Arsenal of Democracy* address. Roosevelt has the recent attack to lean on for evidence that Japan is a foe that should be dealt with directly and swiftly. He begins by naming the enemy in the first paragraph of the speech as, "the Empire of Japan" (para. 1). This way of naming the enemy marks them as different than the United States, which is a democracy. The term "Empire" is loaded with negative connotations for the American people. It is also a label of foreignness or otherness that furthers the division between the two countries' political and governing systems. Empire suggests that one holds dominion over the rest and, since the American public would have been fairly uneducated about the Japanese people, this label did not conflict with preexisting notions about Japan. Roosevelt had to wait for the right moment to name the

Germans as an enemy the year prior, there was now no need for caution or delay.

Roosevelt also builds the motive for the Japanese attack as deceptive and strategic. This allowed the American public to further understand why war was the only option. After Roosevelt described the attacks as “sudden” and “deliberate,” he went further to illuminate the relationship that preceded the attacks (para. 1). Roosevelt explains, “The United States was at peace with that Nation and, at the solicitation of Japan, was still in conversation with its Government and its Emperor looking toward the maintenance of peace in the Pacific” (para. 2). Roosevelt makes it clear that the attacks were an act of war and part of the Axis plan that he previewed the year before in *On the Arsenal of Democracy*. The attacks were part of the world domination that he told the American people were at work in Europe and Asia. In the *Arsenal* address he warned, “Some of our people like to believe that wars in Europe and in Asia are of no concern to us. But it is a matter of most vital concern to us that European and Asiatic war-makers should not gain control of the oceans which lead to this hemisphere” (*On the Arsenal of Democracy*, 1940, para. 16). The “Asiatic war-makers” were now doing what he had feared, taking over the Pacific Ocean. Next, he builds the timeline and geographically located the danger of what the attacks on Pearl Harbor mean for the United States.

Roosevelt constructs a memory in the address and he begins the speech by marking the date of the attacks themselves as significant. “Yesterday, December 7, 1941—a date which will live in infamy—the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan” (para. 1). With this statement he begins to simultaneously craft a timeline and call upon the past even though it was not so distant-to build his argument against Japan. Marking the event as significant enough for war was not where Roosevelt stopped in his address. He makes it clear that the day will live in infamy and that the American people

will always remember the threat of the Japanese, “But always will our whole Nation remember the character of the onslaught against us” (para. 12). These statements in the war declaration affirm the attacks-date, time, and place- as important and noteworthy for all time. This along with the timeline provided evidence for his claim that the Japanese had indeed declared war and were building up their offensive in the Pacific Ocean. It also helps make the American entry into the war appear clearly provoked and necessary beyond questioning from isolationists or the remaining public who still were resistant to war. The day has indeed, as Roosevelt proclaimed, lived on in infamy and is still referenced as the first of the United States’ involvement in World War II. The words in Roosevelt’s official war declaration, unlike the steps to aid Great Britain and to be “the great arsenal of democracy” that he ascribed to the national identity in 1940, have been the most memorable (*On the Arsenal of Democracy*, 1940, para. 75).

The timeline Roosevelt crafts not only assists his argument to go to war, it also works to cement the event into the cultural memory of the United States. Roosevelt uses the recent events that occurred the day before in the Pacific to construct an argument and mark it as significant enough to bring the United States fully into World War II. Interestingly Roosevelt’s argument moves with an outward trajectory of attacks from the West Coast of the United States out to the Pacific Islands that were hit by the Japanese Imperial forces. This movement and geographical metaphor for the danger and strategy that the Japanese had pulled off aided in the comprehension of the events and what they all meant together for the American public. This is where Roosevelt’s style and method of presentation is rather remarkable. By moving outward geographically, he isolated the strategy in a way that would resonate with the American people. He begins with the attacks on Pearl Harbor:

The attack yesterday on the Hawaiian Islands has caused severe damage to American

naval and military forces. I regret to tell you that very many American lives have been lost. In addition American ships have been reported torpedoed on the high seas between San Francisco and Honolulu. Yesterday the Japanese Government also launched an attack against Malaya. Last night Japanese forces attacked Hong Kong. Last night Japanese forces attacked Guam. Last night Japanese forces attacked the Philippine Islands. Last night the Japanese attacked Wake Island. And this morning the Japanese attacked Midway Island. (para. 4-9)

He moves outward from Hawaii out to the Pacific Ocean at Midway Island. This illustration demonstrates that the Pacific Ocean, much like Europe, had been overwhelmed by the Axis powers. This goes back to his description in *On the Arsenal of Democracy* of what the Nazis did in Europe and Africa. The dual nature of this argument, that simultaneously builds the heinous nature of the enemy and supports his call for war, brilliantly calls upon the geography of the Pacific Ocean to affirm his work done in the opening paragraphs of the address. This use of geography is similar to the times he deployed it in his arguments in the *Arsenal* address. The geographically based arguments from the prior year sound most like Roosevelt's argument when he makes it sound like common military strategy because of distance to attack Pearl Harbor, "It will be recorded that the distance of Hawaii from Japan makes it obvious that the attack was deliberately planned many days or even weeks ago" (para. 3). This aids the American people to see that the proximity of Japan to United States soil made them an Axis target much as Roosevelt had warned them one year earlier. The oceans that Roosevelt made clear were insufficient to guard them from attack were now being invaded and taken over by the Asiatic war-maker they heard about in the *Arsenal* address.

War rhetoric is one part epideictic and one part deliberative rhetoric. The decision to go to

war is evident in the speech and Roosevelt made his case well. As Roosevelt stated, “The facts of yesterday and today speak for themselves” (para. 10). It was what Roosevelt said in the war declaration that echoed what he established in the *Arsenal* address about the identity and people of the United States that stands out more than the argument for war. There is a distinct flow in this war declaration. First, Roosevelt established who the enemy was. Second, Roosevelt crafted a timeline and placed the attacks firmly within the national memory. Lastly his epideictic affirmation of the American people.

Unlike Roosevelt’s urging the American people to trust in his leadership in the *Arsenal* address, he assigns them autonomy. The American people had just witnessed to the savagery and true might of the enemy so he knew they would know that the attack meant action had to be taken. “The people of the United States have already formed their opinions and well understand the implications to the very life and safety of our Nation” (para. 10). This tone is markedly different from the one he had taken the year before. The preceding year Roosevelt had to awaken the public to the threats that lay in either direction. Now the enemy was on American soil and killing both armed personnel and civilians alike. Roosevelt does however let the American people know that he is prepared for his station as Commander in Chief and was acting alongside the will of the people when he approached the Congress to declare war. That is most clear when Roosevelt says, “I believe that I interpret the will of the Congress and of the people when I assert that we will not only defend ourselves to the uttermost but will make it very certain that this form of treachery shall never again endanger us” (para. 13). The treachery that he spoke of was clearly that of the Axis forces. The attack against the United States described that way also made a statement about the nature of the force that the United States would use to ensure that they would be safe on their soil, that it would be righteous and expected since they had been attacked so

fiendishly.

This is further affirmed when Roosevelt describes the capabilities of the American armed forces, despite the devastating blow to the Navy that the Japanese Imperial forces had just committed. “With confidence in our armed forces—with the unbounding determination of our people—we will gain the inevitable triumph, so help us God” (para. 15). Between the armed forces of the United States and the will of God, they will march into battle and succeed in keeping the American people safe. This last statement made it clear that America was on the righteous side of the battle. The Axis powers, who were clearly made out to be evil enemies in the *Arsenal* address and the opening section of the formal war declaration, were on the wrong side of the war and their quest for world domination was without merit. In this address, the religious allusion of good and evil are explicit. If it was not clear in every Americans mind after the December 1940 address, it was clear now. The Axis powers had to be stopped or America and democracies all around the world would fall. But more importantly, as Roosevelt had set as a precedent in the *Arsenal* address, Americans were more than capable to be a commanding force in this war.

### ***Message to Congress Requesting War Declarations with Germany and Italy***

On December 11, 1941 Roosevelt requested that Congress declare war on Germany and Italy. This request followed Germany and Italy’s formal declarations of war against the United States that occurred earlier that day. The address is short, a mere eight sentences to be precise. I argue that this is a brief address not only because Germany and Italy had already declared war against the United States but also because Roosevelt had already built his case against Germany the year before.

For Roosevelt, the Germans were the biggest threat to the United States because they had

the most advanced military and he saw Hitler as the most determined to dominate the globe (Casey, 2001, p. 9). The German enemy was clearly the focus of the *Arsenal* address and the American people would have been familiar with the German enemy at the time the declaration of war went public. The Germans had taken over large swaths of Europe, which was reported in the United States in newspapers, but were stalled in Russia with their attempts to take over Moscow when Roosevelt formally declared war against them (“worldwar2.net,” 2012). This tone of world domination is present in the first line of the address, “On the morning of December eleventh, the Government of Germany, pursuing its course of world conquest, declared war against the United States” (Roosevelt, line 1). Roosevelt was well aware of the Nazi plan for the world because he had been watching them toil in Europe to build an army and gradually take over as much land across the Atlantic as they could since 1939. According to Casey (2001), “In January 1939, he [Roosevelt] told the Senate Military Affairs Committee that the administration now had ‘rather definite information as to what the ultimate objective of Hitler was, namely, ‘world domination,’ which would proceed step by step until Germany had effected ‘the gradual encirclement of the U.S. by the removal of its first line of defense’”(p. 9). The Axis powers had successfully dealt a devastating blow directly to the United States in the Pacific and the British forces were barely able to hold the Nazis back in Europe and Africa. Roosevelt’s fears expressed warnings to the public had become a stark and upsetting reality.

The rhetorics of enemy construction in this declaration are meager but striking. Roosevelt effectively summarized the German threat and said very little about Italy. This could be because Italy was considered a “satellite” of Nazi Germany with a meager military presence (Kluckhohn, *New York Times*, 1941). Roosevelt effectively lauds the United States and all other democratic states in Europe while condemning the German enemy, “Rapid and united effort by all of the

peoples of the world who are determined to remain free will insure a world victory of the forces of justice and of righteousness over the forces of savagery and of barbarism” (line 6). This combination of enemy rhetoric and epideictic rhetoric, one component of war rhetoric, provided the nation with an affirmed notion of their character in opposition to the enemy who Roosevelt characterized as savage and barbarous. This is in line with the trends that Ivie (1980) revealed in his study of presidential justificatory rhetoric. Roosevelt developed a binary of “justice” and “savagery,” “righteousness” and “barbarism” (line 6). This binary intensified the sentiment of “us” vs. “them” as well as constructed the enemy as the polar opposite of the American people. Reducing the enemy to evil constrains the approach to them. War became the only option and served to strike up further patriotism in the face of danger, unity against a foe, and affirms the morality of defending one’s own nation as well as the democratic states around the world.

The most striking allusion to the *Arsenal* address is when Roosevelt demonstrated that Germany and Italy declaring war upon the United States was expected. The German enemy Roosevelt established the year prior was actively aggressive in a direct and clear way that the American people could not ignore. Roosevelt’s dystopic future of the Nazi reach extending across the oceans had come to fruition. “The long known and the long expected has thus taken place. The forces endeavoring to enslave the entire world now are moving toward this hemisphere” (line 2-3). Roosevelt called upon the memory and the past track record of the Nazi aggressor that he demonstrated for the American public in the *Arsenal* address. The call to action is consistent though obviously intensified, “Never before has there been a greater challenge to life, liberty, and civilization. Delay invites greater danger” (line 4-5). Once again Roosevelt praised the American people by listing their virtues as what was at stake. Delay, like in the *Arsenal* address, is not acceptable. The American people and government had to act immediately

in the face of Axis aggression.

## Conclusion

In this thesis, I have conducted a rhetorical analysis of Roosevelt's war rhetoric from the period leading up to the war as well as the official war declarations against Japan, Germany, and Italy. The primary contribution of this thesis is to demonstrate the rhetorical priming that Roosevelt masterfully used in his sixteenth Fireside Chat, *On the Arsenal of Democracy*, as a way to gain support for the inevitable involvement in the Second World War. The inclusion of an analysis of the citizen response and the official war declarations demonstrate that the priming was effective. Furthermore that Roosevelt's rhetorical pursuits made a largely positive impact on those listening. The tools of rhetorical priming in Roosevelt's priming were enemy construction, memory, and epideictic rhetoric.

*On the Arsenal of Democracy* is akin to justificatory war rhetoric. The excerpts offered throughout this study demonstrate that Roosevelt deliberated an expedient course of action, amplifies the virtues of the American people, and assigns the blame of entering the war on a powerful foe. The psychological priming was impressive given the challenges of isolation, a still recovering economy, and the recent memory of World War I. Roosevelt effectively offered the American people a new way of thinking of themselves, industry, their ability to face challenges, and the threats looming just on the other side of Atlantic and the Pacific that kept them safe for so long. He sternly cast out the isolationism that defined them before and replaced it with progressive and noble defensive capabilities that were in the name of global security. The enemy was so menacing that the rest of the world was crumbling, projecting America as the last stand against tyranny. Roosevelt succeeded in illuminating the threat that only one year later arrived on American shores from the East.

This Fireside Chat is particularly long, direct, and personal. Through the medium of the radio, Roosevelt delivered *On the Arsenal of Democracy* to living rooms across the nation and abroad. This nontraditional route of speaking directly to the American people contributed to the powerful priming of the American people and a pivot point in American identity. Roosevelt expresses this new war industry-centric view of American power throughout the latter portion of the speech, “American industrial genius, unmatched throughout all the world in the solution of production problems, has been called upon to bring its resources and its talents into action” (para. 56). The solution was not industry for one’s own national interests, but for the interests of preserving democracy across the globe. With an armament supply to the British, Roosevelt entered the United States into a European war for a second time. The official war declarations were listened to over the radio as well. The voice of Roosevelt would lead the American people through another crisis, perhaps the most challenging one they had faced together.

Further studies could be done to see how this message was received in the countries outside of America and if it was referenced in public ways, especially in embattled nations. It would be a worthwhile study to see if either Hitler or Emperor Hirohito addressed this particular course of action as a marker of American engagement in the war abroad. Seeking out non-obvious priming for war speeches from other presidents that took place before wars were officially declared to see if the tools are similar would also be a beneficial study to learn more about the rhetorical patterns that lead to war.

The Second World War and how it is remembered could be explored further with this speech now marked as a public acknowledgement of entering the war abroad and the uncanny foreshadowing for the events to come only a year following the address. With military conscription active since October 1940 and a nation already primed for war, the official

declarations before Congress on December 8, 1941 against Japan and the next day against Germany and Italy were made much easier after Pearl Harbor, but also easier given the *Arsenal* Fireside Chat. Roosevelt's masterpiece, *On the Arsenal of Democracy*, had already done the work.

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Curriculum vitae

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## Education

*Pennsylvania State University* PhD. Candidate Communication Arts & Sciences

*Syracuse University*, M.A. Communication and Rhetorical Studies, May 2013

Master's Thesis Title: "Constructing a World War II America: The rhetorical craftsmanship of Franklin D. Roosevelt," Thesis Advisor: Brad Vivian

*Willamette University*, B.A. Rhetoric and Media Studies, Cum Laude, May 2011 Thesis Title: "Palin Reality," Thesis Advisor: Cindy Koenig Richards Comprehensive Exams taken January 2011 Overall GPA 3.74, in major GPA 3.93 Advisor: Catherine Collins

## Conference Participation

*National Communication Association* November 15th-18th, 2012 in Orlando, Florida. Accepted to present "Sights on Palin: Revealing an American enemy through enemyship and metaphorical analysis" and receive the James L. Golden award for Outstanding Student Essay.

*Rhetoric Society of America* May 25th-28th, 2012 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Presented "Palin Reality: A metaphorical and narrative analysis of Palin's vice presidential nomination acceptance speech."

*Symbolic Violence Conference* Texas A&M March 1st-4th, 2012 in College Station, Texas

Presented "Sights on Palin: Revealing an American enemy through enemyship and metaphorical analysis."

*Northwest Association Communication Conference* April 14th-16th, 2011 in Coeur d' Alene, Idaho. Presented The Voice of Proposition 8 Opponents.

*Western States Communication Association Undergraduate Scholars' Research Conference*

February 18th- 22nd, 2011 in Monterey, California. Presented The Demands of Metaphor: Presidential Justificatory War Rhetoric from 1990 and 2001.

## Academic Achievement Awards

*James L. Golden Outstanding Student Essay*, 2012, merit based

*Mary L. Collins Grad Scholarship*, 2011-2014, merit based

*Shannon P. Hogue Scholarship for Excellence in Rhetoric and Media Studies*, 2010, merit based

*Transfer Honor Scholar*, 2008-2011, merit based

*Willamette Compass Scholarship*, 2008-2011, merit based

## **Membership**

*National Communication Association, 2012-Present*

*Rhetorical Society of America, 2011-Present*

*Mortar Board Honor Society, 2010-2011*

## **Teaching Experience**

*Teaching Assistant, Syracuse University, August 2011-Present*

*Presentational Speaking, Fall 2012*

*Public Advocacy, Fall 2011, Spring 2012*

## **Research Experience**

Archival Research, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, National Archives, Hyde Park, NY. 2011 and 2012. Researched and collected citizen letters and collected Japanese American internment maps

Research Assistant, Assisted Prof. Jeremy Miller with “Exploring the Survival Processing Advantage in Recognition Memory” (April 2009). Experiments tested whether objects needed for survival were more readily recognized than non-survival related objects or not.

## **Professional Experience**

*Feature Editor, Collegian Newspaper, May 2010 - December 2010*

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