



Either You Are With Us, or You Are With the Terrorists

A Discourse Analysis of President George W. Bush's Declared War on Terrorism

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Abstract

The focus of my thesis is how the 'war on terrorism' was discursively constructed as the appropriate response to the terrorist attacks in the US on 11 September 2001. To answer this research question, a discourse analysis was undertaken of six of President George W. Bush's speeches and one official strategy document by the Bush administration.

The background for my thesis is that the US today is a hegemon with the power to do virtually whatever it wants, and thus it is important to understand what it does and how it does it. However, in this study my focus is on from what *premises* and *worldview* the hegemon starts. This thesis is thus an attempt to reframe the 'war on terrorism'.

I start from a specific constructionist epistemological assumption, namely that our understanding and knowledge about the world is historically and culturally contingent. The focal point of the analysis is on the discursive construction of the 'war on terrorism' and on giving a critical review of this construction by exposing the contingency of particular representations of 'us' and 'them'. The particular representations identified in my material are the structured oppositions of *freedom* and *fear*, *good* and *evil* and *civilization* and *barbarism*.

I argue that the key component in discursively constructing the war is continuous discursive reinforcement of a simplistic dualism between 'us' and 'them'. Furthermore, I suggest that 'us' and 'them' are not only differentiated and set in opposition to each other; a hierarchy is also imposed where the subordinate sign ('them') is placed outside the boundaries of what is desirable. I view reasoning in this manner with a simplistic paired zero-sum relation between 'us' and 'them' as a blueprint for heightened difference and conflict. I view it as an attempt to unite through the logic of confrontation: either you are with 'us' against 'them', or you are with 'them' and thus against 'us'.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Acknowledgements | i |
| Abstract | ii |
| Table of Contents | iii |
| 1. Introduction | 1 |
| 2. Discourse Analysis: Epistemology and Methodology | 5 |
| 2.1 Epistemology: Four Much Referred Principles in a Constructionist Approach | 5 |
| 2.1.1 Be Critical to Taken-for-Granted Knowledge: The War on Terrorism as a Result of the Construction of Truths | 6 |
| 2.1.2 Historical and Cultural Specificity | 6 |
| 2.1.3 Knowledge is Sustained by Social Processes | 7 |
| 2.1.4 Link between Knowledge and Social Action | 7 |
| 2.2 Defining Discourse | 7 |
| 2.3 The Discursive and the Non-discursive. What about Reality? | 9 |
| 2.4. Relativism and Reflexivity | 10 |
| 3. Theoretical Framework | 14 |
| 3.1 The Linguistic Turn | 14 |
| 3.2 Oppositional Structuring – and the Unmasking of the Taken-for-granted | 16 |
| 3.3 Discourse Theory as an Analytical Framework | 17 |
| 4. Discourse Analysis as a Method | 21 |
| 4.1 Qualitative Content Analysis | 21 |
| 4.2 Texts as Monuments | 23 |
| 4.3 The Selected Empirical Material | 25 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| <i>4.4 Challenges related to the Selection and Analysis of the Empirical Material</i> | 28 |
| 5. Analysing the Construction of a War | 30 |
| <i>5.1 The Relational Logic of ‘Us’ and ‘Them’</i> | 31 |
| 5.1.1. It’s ‘Us’ Against ‘Them’ | 32 |
| 5.1.2 Differentiating ‘Us’: Constructing a National ‘Us’ with Friends, Allies and Partners | 34 |
| 5.1.3 Specifying ‘Them’ in the Question ‘Why do They Hate Us?’ | 37 |
| 5.1.4 ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ Revisited | 43 |
| <i>5.2 The American Way of Life: A Discourse of Freedom and Fear</i> | 44 |
| 5.2.1 Defending the ‘American Way of Life’ Against Fear | 45 |
| 5.2.2 Enduring Freedom? | 50 |
| 5.2.3 The ‘American Way of Life’: The Only Way of Life? | 52 |
| <i>5.3 The Battle between Good and Evil</i> | 53 |
| 5.3.1 Constructing ‘Them’ as Evil and ‘Us’ as Good | 55 |
| 5.3.2 Evil has Returned | 57 |
| 5.3.3 An Axis of Evil | 59 |
| 5.3.4. On a Mission from God? | 62 |
| <i>5.4 Civilization and Barbarism</i> | 65 |
| 5.4.1 Constructing Barbarians | 66 |
| 5.4.2 Making the Barbarians Visible | 67 |
| 5.4.3 How to Deal with Barbarians | 69 |
| 5.4.4 The Battle is Broader | 72 |
| 5.4.5 Making the Exception | 75 |
| 6. The ‘War on Terrorism’ Reframed | 77 |
| Bibliography | 80 |
| Annexe: The Empirical Material | 83 |

1. Introduction

A war on terrorism was verbally declared by US President G.W. Bush on 11 September 2001 (Bush, 2001a). This was a reaction to the attacks performed by 19 hijackers who flew two passenger aeroplanes into the World Trade Center in New York, one plane into the Pentagon, while a fourth plane crashed in a field in Pennsylvania. Almost 3,000 people were killed in this tragic but spectacular way. That such an attack could happen in a nation that spends almost unimaginable amounts of money on national security, and that it could happen at this moment in time, came as a shock in the West.

Seeing on television, over and over again, the two planes crashing and people in New York throwing themselves out of the burning towers, naturally made a huge impact not only on Americans. From a Western perspective, these were ‘people like us’ and when something horrific happens to ‘us’ it evokes an enormous empathy and sympathy. On the other hand, millions of people slowly dying of hunger and disease or tens of thousands dying in an earthquake in some remote corner of the earth do not necessarily stir up the same response. To make such a comparison is by no means to diminish the atrociousness of what happened that day in the US. Rather, it indicates something that we all do – we seem to grieve more profoundly over our own, over ‘our people’, than we do over ‘the others’. It seems that the distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’ is a more powerful mechanism in social life than for example the distinction between ‘just’ and ‘unjust’.

The US’s response to the terrorist attacks was the ‘war on terrorism’, where the enemy, to a large degree, was not exhaustively defined, as the Bush administration made a polarized distinction between ‘*us*’ and ‘*them*’. Shortly after 11 September 2001, President Bush declared (Bush, 2001b):

Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbour or support terrorism will be regarded by the United states as a hostile regime. (2:5:16-19)¹

Furthermore, this polarization was framed in terms of a moral dualism between *good* and *evil* (Bush, 2001a):

Today, our nation saw evil, the very worst of human nature. And we responded with the best of America [...] we go forward to defend freedom and all that is good and just in our world (1:1:18-2:21).

Finally, the distinction between respectively ‘*civilised*’ and ‘*barbaric*’, and between ‘*freedom*’ and ‘*fear*’, is an important line of division, separating the world into two different spheres with different moralities (Bush, 2001b):

¹ Reference code for Text 2, page 5 lines 16-19 of my empirical material. I explain my code further in 4.1.

This is the world's fight. This is civilization's fight [...] And in our grief and anger we have found our mission and our moment. Freedom and fear are at war. The advance of human freedom – the great achievement of our time, and the great hope of every time – now depend on us. Our nation – this generation – will lift a dark threat of violence from our people and our future. (2:6:11-8:21).

My interest with this thesis' subject was *not* sparked by the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington in September 2001 in themselves. My reaction to the attacks was one of shock, disbelief and enormous sympathy for all of the people involved. Rather, my interest and concern were sparked by the way in which President Bush made sense to the American people (via television) of what had happened, thus creating the official US framework for responding to these events. In crisis situations, such as the 11 September 2001 events, the state's leadership is expected to provide not only an explanation, but also a solution. Under such circumstances the words of the president are spoken on behalf of the nation, thus carrying authority and power.

The quotes above are examples of a meaning-making process that triggered my interest in this material. I was concerned with how quickly the 11 September attacks and the 'war on terrorism' became synonymous, as if there was no need to separate the two. This is important in my view because, despite how horrific the 11 September events were, they did not grant *carte blanche* for how to respond. My interest was therefore in how a response to terrorism was constructed, how President Bush in a particular historical moment constructed a narrative where it was taken for granted that 'us' going to war against 'them' was the natural, obvious and only right thing to do. Underpinning my interest in the construction of the 'war on terrorism' was a specific methodological assumption: that our understanding and knowledge of the world is historically and culturally contingent. That is, our knowledge and representations of the world could have been different and they can change. This is an important distinction in my view, because as time passes since the terrorist attacks in the US, many people tend simply to accept the so-called 'war on terrorism' with its tragic consequences as 'just the way things are' (a matter of fact). It was dissatisfaction with this line of reasoning that made me want to investigate how this war came to life, how it became a 'truth' that was no longer critically discussed. In my presentation in chapter two of the epistemological departure point, I will draw on the constructionist assumption that in a 'war on terrorism', as in the social world in general, there are no objective 'truths' but only socially constructed 'facts' that compete to establish a monopoly over what is true and false. President Bush has his 'order of things' and it is not for me to claim that they are false, as that is an impossibility from a constructionist point of view, but it is validated by its own regime of truth. Different understandings of the world lead to different actions, which is to say that the construction of knowledge and 'truth' has social consequences. Bush, being

president of today's sole superpower, thus has great power to convey his constructed 'truth', with the consequences that entails. I will therefore focus on President Bush's point of view as delivered in selected documents.

On 20 September 2001, President Bush conveyed his perspective to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People, centred around the question 'Americans are asking, why do they hate us?' (Bush, 2001b):

They hate what they see right here in this chamber – a democratically elected government. Their leaders are self-appointed. They hate our freedoms – our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other. (2:4:15-18).

This might have been intended as a rhetorical question or even as an unanswerable question, but when President Bush posed this question he invited interpretations as to why 'they' could do something so dreadful to 'us'. It could also be argued that the question could be seen as an answer in itself: by working as a one-way mirror it took away the possibility for 'us' to see ourselves as 'they' do and it forcefully closes the door on any nuanced analysis of 'us'. Some commentators were provoked by President Bush's answer and have been quite stark in their assessment of reasons for the Bush administration to see the perspective of 'the other', disagreeing with President Bush that 'they' hate America for her values. Indian novelist Arundhati Roy is a case in point:

Could it be that the stygian anger that led to the attacks has its root not in American freedom and democracy, but in the US government's record of commitment and support to exactly the opposite things – to military and economic terrorism, insurgency, military dictatorship, religious bigotry and unimaginable genocide? (Roy quoted in Gregory, 2004: 24).

However, my analytical focus is not on these questions and counter-questions, but rather on trying to understand the dichotomies reproduced through them. Thus, this thesis is itself an effort to deconstruct the oppositional structuring in the 'war on terrorism'. My focal point is on the US and President Bush and I do not consider 'the others'' representations of the world. This does not suggest that I think representations from 'them' are less important or interesting; they are simply not to my purpose here. Although the topics of the terrorist attacks and the 'war on terrorism' have been the focus of many scholars, I will argue that this specific research is important because the US is today a hegemon that does virtually whatever it wants. It is therefore necessary to understand *what* it does, and *how* it does it. However, the importance of this study lies in the question of from what *premises* and *worldviews* it starts.

Therefore the research question that I would like to answer in this thesis is:

How was a 'war on terrorism' constructed as the appropriate response by the US to the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001?

In an attempt to answer this research question, an empirical analysis was needed. Guided by the purpose of my research to analyse the construction of the 'war on terrorism', a methodology of discourse analysis was chosen. Methodology is here understood as the research design that lies behind my choice and use of method, and also links the choice and use of this method to the desired outcome (Crotty, 1998:3). Following this, the specific method of qualitative content analysis was chosen. Furthermore, there is a theoretical perspective informing my methodology of discourse analysis. Theoretical perspective can be viewed as the philosophical stance lying behind the chosen methodology, which provides a context for the research design and grounds its logic and criteria (Crotty, 1998). Finally, there is an epistemology, a theory of knowledge, embedded in my theoretical perspective and thereby in my methodology. Thus generally speaking, the epistemology informs the theoretical perspective, which in turn informs the methodology that guides the choice of method. However, in undertaking discourse analysis these four elements are not always so easily separated. As, for example, Neumann points out, in discourse analysis there is no sharp distinction between theory and method (Neumann, 2001:14). This feature of discourse analysis is also emphasized by Jørgensen and Phillips, who state that theory and method are intertwined in discourse analysis and that researchers must accept the basic philosophical premises in order to apply discourse analysis as their method of empirical study (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 4). Regardless of this apparent muddle, I will in the next three chapters first outline my epistemological and methodological starting point. I will then move on to my theoretical framework and finally my chosen method. My hope is that these first chapters will act as a sufficient and coherent foundation from which the new knowledge to be presented in the analysis can be produced.

2. Discourse Analysis: Epistemology and Methodology

This thesis expresses general interest in how knowledge, truth and meaning are constituted and a specific interest in how President Bush constructed a ‘war on terrorism’ through the use of words. The words of the president’s speeches articulate a certain worldview, resting on particular assumptions and beliefs. Language is thus the focal point of the analysis, taking as a starting point the general idea that language is structured according to different patterns and that it is in the concrete use of language that the patterns are created, reproduced and changed. Discourse analysis is the analysis of these patterns. However, as Jørgensen and Phillips argue, discourse analysis is a heterogeneous field — that is, it is not just one approach but rather a series of interdisciplinary approaches. It can be applied to various social domains in several different types of studies (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002:1).

As mentioned in the introduction, in discourse analysis, theory and method are intertwined. This implies that researchers have to accept a ‘complete package’ which includes four elements: epistemology; theoretical models; methodological guidelines; and specific techniques for analysis (methods). This means that discourse analysis cannot just be applied as a method for analysing data, in a more technical sense, but it has to be viewed as a theoretical and methodological whole (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 4). So when undertaking discourse analysis, one has to accept the notion of a whole package, but elements from different discourse analytical perspectives can be combined. The aim is to create one’s own package that will provide knowledge about a specific research problem and together with other ‘packages’ produce a broader understanding of the research area.

In this chapter I will first introduce four well-known basic constructionist principles that act as my epistemological starting point in this thesis. Second, I will provide an insight into the multiple definitions of the term ‘discourse’ and present my understanding of the concept. Thereafter, I will discuss the relationship between the discursive and the non-discursive, which in turn leads to the question of relativism and reflexivity.

2.1 Epistemology: Four Much Referred Principles in a Constructionist

Approach

The reason for introducing these principles is that a constructionist epistemology both opens up analytical possibilities but also puts constraints on knowledge claims that are made in its name. This will become apparent in the remaining sections of this chapter. A constructionist epistemology asserts the notion that we cannot find an objective truth about the social world, only

different socially constructed perspectives that are more or less in fluctuation. The interest is not in how the world *is* — that being an ontological question — but more how these perspectives came about, how they are sustained and how they are challenged by other perspectives. In this thesis I adhere to the following four principles that are to some extent interconnected and as mentioned also have consequences for the knowledge claims that can and will be presented in this project. The following is based on Burr (2003) and also Jørgensen and Phillips (2002), which both refer to Gergen (1985) as their primary source.

2.1.1 Be Critical to Taken-for-Granted Knowledge: The War on Terrorism as a Result of the Construction of Truths

This principle is based on the view that we should be critical to taken-for-granted understandings of the world, including our own. The taken-for-granted is by definition something that is seen as unproblematic and also as something that one does not even think can be seen as problematic. The taken-for-granted are naturalized ascriptions of meaning that set limits for possible ways of thinking and acting. In constructionism our knowledge of the world should not be treated as an objective truth. Furthermore, the view is that reality is only accessible to us through categories, so our knowledge and representations of the world are not reflections of a reality out there but rather they are products of our ways of categorizing the world (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 5). In this thesis this critical stance towards the taken-for-granted is viewed as a guiding principal throughout the research process. When approaching the ‘war on terrorism’, the question becomes how the representations of the taken-for-granted are (re)presented. Because the taken-for-granted is seen as something naturalized, it can be difficult to identify. I discuss the methodological consequences of this principle for my study in chapter three.

2.1.2 Historical and Cultural Specificity

The second epistemological principle is that the categories and representations that we use to understand the world are historically and culturally specific (Burr, 2003: 3-4). Our knowledge, identities and worldviews are contingent, hence they could have been different and they can change over time. As opposed to a foundationalist view, where knowledge is seen as grounded on a solid metatheoretical base, the position here is anti-foundationalist, in the sense that knowledge is seen as historically and culturally contingent (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 5-6). Therefore the understanding and knowledge presented by President Bush regarding the situation after the terrorist attacks in September 2001 should be seen as positioned in time and space. As mentioned above, a starting point in this thesis is the idea that language, and thus discourse, is struc-

tured according to different patterns, and that it is in the concrete use of language that the patterns are created, reproduced and changed. Hence, discourse is viewed as ‘forms of social actions’ that shape some part of the production of the social world, including the knowledge, identities and social relations, and thus maintain specific social patterns. This way of thinking is anti-essentialist, in the sense that the social world is constructed socially and discursively. This implies that the character of the social world is not pre-given or determined by external conditions and that there are no fixed essences inside things or people that make them what they are (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). This view of all things being in flux provokes the question of how it then is possible to do scientific research. Jørgensen and Phillips suggest that the answer is that even though knowledge is always contingent in principle, it is always relatively inflexible in specific situations (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). This set of problems will be discussed further under the heading of relativism and reflexivity in chapter 2.4.

2.1.3 Knowledge is Sustained by Social Processes

Following the principle above, the question of where our common understandings and knowledge of the world comes from surfaces. The answer that constructionism gives is that people construct it between them (Burr, 2003: 4). It is through social interaction that our versions of knowledge and understandings are constructed. Therefore, in a study like this one, social interaction — here in the form of language in use by President Bush’s speeches addressed to an abstract public — is of great interest. It is through social interaction that we construct common truths and compete about what is true and false.

2.1.4 Link between Knowledge and Social Action

These negotiations of truths can take different forms, thus opening up several possible constructions of the world. Within these constructs there are rules for acceptable and unacceptable actions, hence the social construction of truth and knowledge has social consequences (Burr, 2003: 5). This principle is of vital importance, because it was through constructing a particular understanding and knowledge of the situation that made the act of going to war in Afghanistan acceptable in the world community.

2.2 Defining Discourse

An often-used example in an initial attempt to understand the concept of discourse is to think of so called ‘expert’ languages. Medical practitioners, for example, draw on an expert medical language that allows them to identify symptoms, make diagnoses and prescribe therapy. This

language is not easily accessible to people who are not medically trained (Tonkiss, 1998: 248). By excluding all non-medically trained people, this is an example of a homogeneous discourse. Another example is the saying 'one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter' (Edwards, 2004:166). This is an example of heterogeneous discourse, meaning that in one discourse a person is defined as a terrorist and in another the same person is defined as a freedom fighter. However, in order to clarify what discourses are, how they function and how to analyse them, I want to go beyond these initial understandings of the term discourse.

As I will show in the next chapter, discourse analysis can be viewed as having its roots in the critique of structuralism in France in the late 1960s. A central contributor in this critique was Michel Foucault. Foucault is still used today, and perhaps sometimes misused, in attempts to define and analyse discourse across the humanities and social sciences. What is certain is that he is recognized as having a decisive influence in the development of discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2003: 123, Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 12, Neumann, 2001: 13). When commenting on his own use of the term discourse, Foucault writes:

Instead of gradually reducing the rather fluctuating meaning of the word 'discourse', I believe I have in fact added to its meanings; treating it sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements (Foucault quoted in Neumann, 2001:17).

The term 'discourse' is here used abstractly for 'the general domain of statements' and more specifically for 'groups of statements' or for the 'regulated practice', meaning the rules that govern such a group of statements. I see this last point as central, and it goes to my overall interest in the structure of the rules of truth claims (re)presented by President Bush in different discourses in the 'war on terrorism'. As briefly mentioned in the introduction, in constructionism truth is regarded as a discursive construct and different regimes of knowledge establish what is true and false. Another quote from Foucault might highlight this point:

We shall call discourse a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation. [...Discourse] is made up of a limited number of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined. Discourse in this sense is not an ideal, timeless form [...] it is, from the beginning to end, historical – a fragment of history [...] posing its own limits, its divisions, its transformations, the specific modes of its temporality (Foucault quoted in Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 12).

As I have argued, defining 'discourse' can be done in several ways, from the examples at the beginning of this chapter to Foucault's more complex definitions. Before I present the preliminary definition of discourse that I will apply in this thesis, I want to indicate two more notions introduced by Jørgensen and Phillips concerning how to view the concept of discourse.

First, they suggest that we should, to a greater extent, treat discourse as an analytical concept, thus as an entity that the researcher projects onto the reality in order to create a framework for study. This means that the delimitation of where one discourse in my empirical material ends and another begins is determined strategically in relation to the research aim. In the case of this thesis, the research aim (the deconstruction of a ‘war on terrorism’) has delimited the relevant discourse to President Bush’s speeches. Yet, this remains a theoretical exercise, as these speeches cannot actually be detached from a wider context.

Second, this view of how to delimit discourses involves understanding discourses as objects that I construct rather than as objects that exist in a delimited form in reality, ready to be discovered and mapped (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 143-144). The way that I relate to them is mediated through my own perspective.

At this stage I will follow Jørgensen and Phillips’ preliminary definition of discourse, understood ‘as a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or aspects of the world)’ (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 1). Here, the ‘way of talking’ is understood in a constructionist sense and is based on a general idea concerning language that will be presented in chapter 3.1 as the ‘linguistic turn’, where our ways of talking are not seen as neutrally reflecting our world, identities and social relations. Rather, our ways of talking have an active role in creating and changing them. ‘Understanding the world’ relates to the view that discourses can be seen as ways of representing aspects of the world, as different knowledge claims that struggle to appear as *the* understanding of the world. I choose to apply this general definition at this stage because in my view it is an open and inclusive definition, in chapter 3.2 I will, however, elaborate on my understanding of discourse.

2.3 The Discursive and the Non-discursive. What about Reality?

Discourses are ‘practices that form the objects of which they speak’. This apparently circular statement sums up the relation between discourse and the world of ‘things’ that we inhabit (Burr, 2003: 64). The relationship between the discursive and the non-discursive, the latter being the physical world around us, is viewed differently by various discourse analytical approaches (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 18-21, and Burr, 2003: 81-82). It can be difficult to conceptualize the relationship between the discursive and reality. Some might claim that ‘discourse is all there is’, while others try to incorporate non-discursive theories into their analysis. Neumann points out that discourse analysis is focused on how and why things *appear* to be a certain way, thus it is an epistemological question. How we *know* the world is therefore the focus of the analysis, while the ontological question of what the world *is* becomes less important (Neumann, 2001:

14). In this thesis the tension inherent in the constructionist epistemology concerning this relationship is recognized, but the focus of this thesis is on the discursive. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the interest here is how categories and perspectives are discursively constructed and not how the world really *is*.

2.4. Relativism and Reflexivity

As I have argued above, a constructionist epistemology rejects the possibility of absolute knowledge and a final universalistic truth. Following an anti-foundationalist premise leads to the view that all knowledge is historically and culturally embedded and that truth is a discursive effect rather than a transparent account of reality. Thus, our understandings and knowledge about the world are viewed as historically and culturally contingent — that is, they are possible, but not necessary.

The inherent relativism in constructionism has been criticized: claims have been made that constructionism is unsuitable both scientifically and politically. It is viewed as scientifically unsuitable because it cannot determine what is true and what is false. Politically, the critique goes to the alleged inability to determine what is good and what is bad (Kjørup, 2001). In this section I draw heavily on Jørgensen and Phillips and I agree with their notion that this critique is too pessimistic in its assessment of constructionism (2002: 175-211). I will come back to this criticism at the end of this section.

However, the critique above prompts a discussion concerning discourse analysis's potential for producing knowledge. One aspect concerns the consequences of adopting a constructionist epistemology when conducting a research project. Reflexive strategies can be of assistance in pursuit of producing an as-good-a-representation of the world as possible despite the inherent relativism in constructionism. In chapter 4.4 I will discuss in more detail how reflexive principles aided the selection and handling of my empirical material, and in chapter 3.2 I will elaborate on how theoretical starting points can also function reflectively. Here I will point out that reflexivity, in the sense of the researcher being aware of her or his own role in the research process and the evaluation of results in relation to their consequences, is an important principle that should follow the researcher throughout the research process. This relates to the notion that a researcher is not in a position simply to observe the world as it 'really' is and give a transparent account of reality. There is an inherent perspectivism, because a researcher always 'comes from somewhere' and the researcher's knowledge production is as productive as all other discourses — that is, it creates reality at the same time as representing it.

Another aspect of the status of knowledge that is produced by a discourse-analytical approach concerns the constructionist epistemological starting point, with its critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge and understandings of the world. The question then becomes: why do I want to identify the taken-for-granted? One answer is that, as a minimum, critiques in constructionism can be seen as the unmasking of naturalized taken-for-granted understandings of the world. Following this, the aim is to create distance between the researcher and the taken-for-granted and thus to make naturalized categories visible as an object of study. I will show this in more detail in chapter 3.2. In this project, because the discourses under study were familiar to me both culturally and temporarily, a challenge was to treat them *as* discourses – that is, as socially constructed meaning systems. Different strategies for identifying the taken-for-granted provide an epistemological base from which knowledge can be produced. But questions remain: What status should be awarded to this new knowledge that I as a researcher produce? How can I guarantee that the understanding that I present of reality is better than the one that I am criticizing? A further question is: How can I invest my claims with academic authority and political force without reference to a fixed foundation of knowledge? Here the question again arises concerning whether the inherent relativism in constructionism makes it impossible to distinguish good descriptions of reality from the not-so-good, and progressive political principles from reactionary ones.

Following Jørgensen and Phillips, I will point to two main features: namely, either embracing relativism; or making efforts to circumscribe relativism (2002:196-201). With an unconditional embrace of relativism, it could be argued that critical research is not possible, because all statements about the world would then be viewed as equally good. In attempts to circumscribe relativism, one could adhere to the relativist position that representations are socially constructed, but some are seen as more real than others. The problem then becomes who can/should be the judges deciding which representations are better than others.

This negotiation of relativism can also be related to the principle of objectivity in science. From a relativist standpoint, objectivity becomes problematic because, as mentioned above, knowledge always ‘comes from’ somewhere, from a perspective, and thus cannot be objective. Also, if all knowledge is historically and culturally embedded, then objectivity is impossible. Jørgensen and Phillips utilize feminist research as an example to highlight an opposition between relativism and objectivity (2002: 201-203). The point is that the researcher has to give an account of how and from where her or his own representations come — that is, within which historical and cultural context their knowledge is produced. In this way, it is possible to give a more objective and less distorted reading of the world.

Again, problems arise because this understanding of reflexivity implies that it is possible for the researcher to give a transparent account of her or his role and the cultural and historical context. Consequently, this leads back to a researcher position where one can produce a transparent neutral description of reality. It can seem as if there is no way out of these dilemmas and that there are only two choices: total acceptance of relativism with the consequence that there can be no judgement of the quality of scientifically produced knowledge and no difference between scientific knowledge and other types of knowledge; or, by making efforts to get around relativism, ending up in a position where someone, perhaps scientists, are given the role of judging which representations of the world are more or less good and bad.

Once more, I find Jørgensen and Phillips' discussion fruitful. Their contribution is a division into two levels: a level of principle; and a grounded concrete level (2002: 203-207). At the level of principle, scientific knowledge is bound by the same conditions as all other forms of knowledge — that is, it is historically and culturally specific and therefore contingent. This symmetry at the level of principle is vital, because it is difficult to have a democratic political discussion if an a priori distinction is made between those who have legitimate knowledge and those who do not. In this way, contingency at the level of principle opens up for continued discussion. However, at a grounded level things do not have to be constantly contingent. Utterances are always articulated in specific contexts that actually set narrow boundaries for what is understood as meaningful and meaningless, and what is perceived as true and false. Jørgensen and Phillips propose the concept of critique to combine these two levels, and they see critique as a *positioned opening for discussion*. Critical research should therefore explicitly position itself and distance itself from alternative representations of the world, on the grounds that it strives to do something specific for specific reasons. But critical research should also at the same time emphasize that this particular representation of the world is just one among other possible representations and hence is open for further discussion. The aim is simultaneously to keep the level of principle and the level of the concrete in perspective, so that scientific knowledge can be seen as a *truth that can be discussed*.

My position is that it is rewarding to separate the notion of contingency into two levels and that these two levels can successfully be active at the same time. Actually, it is crucial that they are simultaneously kept in perspective, because that is what makes scientific knowledge production evolve. If we only operate at the level of principle, then we can never say something about anything, because everything is contingent. And if we only operate at the grounded level, then there is no room for discussion or change. Thus I believe that it is possible to defend a particular 'truth' in a specific case *and* understand 'truth statements' *in principle* as relational and

contingent constructs at the same time. In my view, it is important to recognize the challenges that inherent perspectivism and relativism pose to constructionism, and thus the challenges for the epistemological status of all knowledge produced in more essentialist scientific traditions. As I see it, there are no final solutions to these problems, but different reflexive strategies can make the challenge less, or at least prevent us from forgetting that the problem exists. This is an important issue that needs to be debated, but I am, however, critical to a debate where adherents to constructionism and critics of it end up reading each other in an extreme manner. There is no creative value in that.²

Thus, in this project I regard relativism as a principle to further discussion and debate, but I also recognize that boundaries and limits exist in concrete meaning-making. Still, in stretching these boundaries, I apply reflexive strategies in order to make the taken-for-granted visible – both in my empirical material and in my analytical perspective on it.

The next chapter will introduce my theoretical framework, which will include a suggestion that theoretical concepts can create a distance to the empirical material and thus function reflectively.

² One example among many others is the interchange between Carl Ratner (2004) and Barbara Zielke (2005) in Forum for Qualitative Social Research.

3. Theoretical Framework

The previous chapter introduced an interest in language and the meaning-making process in the construction of a 'war on terrorism'. At the end of the previous chapter I discussed some challenges for conducting social research within a constructionist perspective, related to a notion of cultural and historical contingency. This chapter will present my theoretical framework, which I will argue opens up for social enquiry of a constructed and contingent social reality.

This presentation will have three steps. First I will consider some ideas presented by the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure around the beginning of the last century. His understanding of language as a system that is not determined by the reality to which it refers is one of the fundamental principles of structuralism. Second, I will turn to two main points of critique of the structuralist approach brought forward by poststructuralism. It is this critique of linguistic structuralism that brought with it a general 'linguistic turn' in the social sciences. A central aspect of the 'linguistic turn' was to study social interaction where it took place, namely in language (Neumann, 2001: 80). Therefore, in this thesis I treat the 'linguistic turn' as a door opener that acts as a necessary base for the third and final step in this chapter, where I expand on my theoretical framework for the empirical analysis. I will use the terms structuralism and poststructuralism below as if they were unitary approaches, even though they are both labels for several different approaches.

3.1 The Linguistic Turn

In both structuralist and poststructuralist philosophies, a starting point is that our access to reality is always through language. Our way of talking is seen not only as reflecting our world, identities and social relations. Rather, language plays an active role in creating, maintaining and changing them. It is through language that we create representations that are not mere reflections of an already existing reality but also contribute to the construction of reality. These representations are the models that we use to make sense of the world, and they can be viewed as socially produced 'facts' (Neumann, 2001: 33). Hence, things in the world do not have meaning in themselves but acquire meaning through our ways of representing them. This does not necessarily imply that meanings and representations are not as real as physical objects, but they acquire meaning through our ways of representing them. The question of a physical reality for representations is answered differently by various approaches within discourse analysis, and I discussed the relationship between the discursive and the non-discursive in the previous chapter.

As mentioned, the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure understood language as a system and that this system is not determined by the reality to which it refers. De Saussure argued that

meaning should be studied as a system of signs. Words derive their meaning from their place in such a system of signs and their relations to different signs in this system. So according to de Saussure, a thing is known by everything that it is *not* (Neumann 2001:18). De Saussure also argued that signs consist of two components: form and content. The form of a word, also called a *signifier*, is the sound or the image of a word. The content or *signified* is a concept that we attach to the *signifier*. Together these two make a sign. According to de Saussure, the relationship between the *signifier* and the *signified* is arbitrary. The meanings that we attach to words are not inherent in them but are results of social conventions operating in a particular culture at a particular time. De Saussure saw the structure of signs as a social institution and therefore as changeable over time. This implies that the relationship between language and reality is also arbitrary (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002: 10). Take the sign 'yellow', for instance, where the form is different in different languages (for example the English form 'yellow' becomes 'gul' in Norwegian). Also the content of the sign 'yellow' can change, from a colour to being cowardly if used in a situation of being 'yellow'. For de Saussure it was the stable and unchangeable *system* of signs, what he called *langue*, that should be the object of scientific study. The other level in language, *paroles*, which are the signs people actually use in specific situations, was seen as too random to be studied scientifically (Neumann 2001: 19).

Emerging as a reaction to some of the problems inherent in structuralism (such as disregard for power in meaning-making or the question of where does change come from in such rigid structures), poststructuralism was advanced in the 1960s by authors such as Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and others. Poststructuralism raises two main critiques to structuralism. First, it rejects structuralism's notion of language as a stable, unchangeable and totalizing structure. In the poststructuralist view, structures do exist, but always in a temporary state. Poststructuralism follows de Saussure in the idea that signs derive their meaning through their internal relations within a network of signs and not through their relation to reality. It also agrees that the meaning of a sign comes into being only in relation to at least one other sign. In poststructuralist theory, however, while meaning is entirely dependent on the presence of at least one other *signifier*, that second or third term by which we can know the meaning of the first is not given by nature and can change according to the context in which they are used. In poststructuralism, meaning is culturally contingent and a dynamic process. In structuralism, with the focus on underlying and fixed structures, it is problematic to understand change, for where would the change come from? The poststructuralist view, that the structures become changeable and the meaning of signs can alter in relation to one another, makes it possible to explain how change can occur (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002:11).

The second critique follows the first and is directed at the sharp distinction between *langue* and *parole* in structuralism. In poststructuralist linguistic philosophy, this sharp distinction is rejected. In contrast to de Saussure's view that *parole* is too random to be studied, poststructuralists emphasize that it is in the concrete use of language that the structure is created, reproduced and changed. The view is that it was in specific acts of speech that people draw on the structure, but that it was also here that people would challenge the structure by introducing alternative ideas for how to fix the meaning of signs (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002: 12).

The 'linguistic turn' refers to how these modified linguistic ideas were utilized in the social sciences by applying them to the relationship of language, society and culture. In this thesis the 'linguistic turn' is seen as particularly important, because it provides the means to make the constructed nature of society visible.

3.2 Oppositional Structuring – and the Unmasking of the Taken-for-granted

The poststructural critique, leading to the loss of a fixed structure as the basis and direction for analysis and with it the notion of a culturally and historically contingent meaning, might at first sight not leave much space for social enquiry. However, in the following two sections I will discuss two related notions that both allow for an analysis of a constructed and contingent social reality. First, I will discuss meaning-making, seen as a disposition and procedure of the *oppositional structuring* of signs, and how this procedure can lead to taken-for-granted understandings and knowledge of the world. Following this, I will argue for the critical potential of an effort to unmask the taken-for-granted through a theory of deconstruction. In this effort Laclau and Mouffe's poststructuralist discourse theory can be useful, and I will introduce some of their most central analytical concepts.³

In the late 1960s, the philosopher Jacques Derrida critiqued de Saussure's structuralism. Derrida criticized the notion that a thing can be known *only* by what it is not. He agreed that the meaning of a sign comes into being only in the presence of at least one other signifier. Derrida's critique was that the second or third term by which we can know the meaning of the first is not given by nature but by cultural and historical contingency (Gregory, 1989: xv-xvi). Ashley goes on to elaborate the meaning-making procedure critiqued by Derrida. The procedure was named logocentrism and it is seen as a practical orientation and a procedure that at once presupposes, invokes, and effects a normalizing or taken-for-granted expectation. This procedure can be viewed as having at least two qualities. First, it regards a coherent sovereign voice as a central

³ My aim, however, is not a theoretical discussion of these concepts and my presentation is therefore based on secondary literature.

interpretive orientation that provides a unified rational meaning and direction to the multiple interpretations of spatial and temporal history. Second, this sovereign voice is seen as an unproblematic, extrahistorical identity that does not need any critical accounting (Ashley, 1989: 261). In Derrida's description of the logocentric procedure, the author or the text will reason by structuring signs in opposition. Examples of such oppositions are nature/culture, peace/war, domestic/international, us/them, inside/outside, good/evil, civilized/barbarian. These signs are not only differentiated and set in opposition to each other, but a hierarchy is also imposed where the subordinate sign is placed outside the boundaries of what is significant and desirable (Ashley, 1989). Derrida proposed a method of deconstruction to expose the inevitability of the structuring of paired concepts in opposition and opposed in a zero-sum relation.

What Derrida is critiquing is the inability to see the historical and cultural contingency of the philosophical categories. As I discussed in chapter two, this is also a central aspect in a constructionist epistemology: our understandings and knowledge of the world could have been different. This thesis aims to explore how meanings in different discourses in the 'war on terrorism' were transformed from cultural to natural. An aim is thus to unmask taken-for-granted understandings in the 'war on terrorism' and transform them into potential objects for discussion and criticism and, eventually, open to change (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002: 178).

Cynthia Weber presents an informative account of how Roland Barthes utilized the concept of 'mythologies' to make sense of the transformation of the cultural into what appears to be universal, natural and purely empirical (Weber, 2005: 4-8). The *myth function* transforms a cultural interpretation into a 'natural fact'. This transformation is seen as a highly political practice that depends on different configurations of power. How power works to mythologize varies from context to context, but in a general sense, power works through myths by appearing to take the political out of the ideological. This is because something that appears to be natural and unchangeable also appears to be apolitical. However, according to Weber these 'natural facts' are the most intense political stories there are, because they remove themselves and their position from political debate. This is why Barthes refers to myths as 'depoliticized speech' (Weber, 2005).

3.3 Discourse Theory as an Analytical Framework

In an attempt to repoliticize the 'war on terrorism', I will not present any claims to truth. Rather, the aim is to expose the contingency in the meaning-making. This task is a challenge, because as I mentioned in the last chapter I am to some extent part of the culture under study and thus share some of the taken-for-granted understandings expressed in my empirical material. In order to

identify the naturalized ascriptions of meaning, I need to distance myself from them in some way. In this task the discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe can be a useful starting point. Laclau and Mouffe's theory can be viewed as both drawing on similar ideas to Derrida concerning the critique of structuralism for not seeing the historical and cultural contingencies implicit in the theory of language, and they also apply the method of deconstruction (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 48).

Furthermore, Laclau and Mouffe also utilize a concept of *myths*. In my analytical attempt to identify the taken-for-granted, I will draw on what Jørgensen and Phillips refer to as 'analytical redescription', where Laclau and Mouffe's theory of discourse can function as a 'language of description' to translate my empirical material (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 189). Concepts from Laclau and Mouffe's theory can be seen as a form of language that can describe my empirical material in a different manner from the way in which it describes itself, thus giving me the required distance to the material.

I will not aim to give a complete account of Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory; rather I will highlight some general features of their theory that are relevant for this specific project. In my analytical chapters I will introduce and explain applicable concepts from Laclau and Mouffe's theory in the most useful order for functioning as a 'language of description'. I build my account of Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory from the very informative illustration given in Jørgensen and Phillips (2002: 24-59 and 176-212) and where specifically referred to from Howarth and Stavrakakis (Howarth, Norval and Stavrakakis, 2000: 1-23).

Laclau and Mouffe appropriate and modify two major theoretical traditions: Marxism provides the basis for their ideas concerning the social; and structuralism the ideas concerning meaning. These two starting points are fused into a single poststructuralist theory. Laclau and Mouffe adhere to the poststructuralist critique of structural linguistics, but the Saussurian stable structure can function as what we discursively strive to achieve — the fixing of the meaning of signs. We continuously try to fix the meaning of signs by placing them in particular relations to other signs. According to Laclau and Mouffe, this is a futile endeavour because every concrete fixation of the meaning of signs is contingent — it is possible but not necessary. This is a central notion in Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory, that the contingency of meaning is the opening to investigate how some fixations of meaning become so conventionalized that we think of them as a 'natural fact'.

In the following I will discuss the concept of discourse and narrow down the broad definition presented in chapter 2.2. In Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory a discourse is seen as a fixation of meaning within a particular domain. All signs in a discourse are *moments*; their

meaning is fixed through their difference from one another. A discourse is formed through the partial fixation of meaning around certain *nodal points*. A nodal point is a privileged sign around which the other signs are ordered. The other signs acquire their meaning from their relationship with the nodal point. A discourse is established as a totality in which each sign is fixed as a moment through its relation to other signs. This is done through the exclusion of all other meanings that sign could have had. Thus a discourse is a reduction of possibilities. It is an attempt to stop the sliding of signs in relation to one another and hence to create a unified system of meaning.

Laclau and Mouffe use the concept of *the field of discursivity* for all of the possibilities that the discourse excludes. Related to this, Jørgensen and Phillips suggest that it can be fruitful to introduce the concept of *order of discourse*, which they borrow from Fairclough's critical discourse analysis. I agree with Jørgensen and Phillips that it is rewarding to make this analytical distinction, thus I follow their reformulation of the relationship between *discourse*, the *field of discursivity* and *order of discourse*:

Discourse is the term for the structuring of a particular domain in moments. A discourse is always structured by the exclusion of other possible meanings and the term for this general exterior is 'the field of discursivity'. But now 'order of discourse' denotes two or more discourses, each of which strives to establish itself in the same domain (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 56).

Returning to Laclau and Mouffe's definition of concepts, the *field of discursivity* denotes all that a given discourse excludes. Thus a discourse is always constituted in relation to something external and is in danger of being undermined by other ways of fixing the meaning of signs. This is where the concept of *elements* becomes relevant. Elements are signs with a 'floating' character; they have multiple, potential meanings and their meaning has not yet been fixed (Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000: 7-9). Discourses therefore strive to transform elements into moments and thus establish *closure*, which can be seen as a temporary stop to fluctuations in the meaning of signs. There is a problem, however, that the closure is never definitive, that moments are under no circumstances so completely fixed that they cannot become elements again. It can here be useful to return to the concept of nodal points, which can be viewed as *empty signifiers* — that is, they do not give much meaning in themselves, but have to be positioned with other signs to receive meaning. This is done through *articulation*, which is defined as every practice that establishes a relation between elements in such a way that the identity of the elements is modified. Because discourses strive for but can never fully achieve closure and hegemony, the articulation of a discourse can only take place around an empty signifier that functions as a nodal point.

Thus emptiness is viewed as an essential quality of the nodal point, as an important condition of possibility for its hegemonic success (Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000).

Laclau and Mouffe introduce the concept of *floating signifiers* to refer to signs in which different discourses try to invest meaning (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 28). Nodal points are thus floating signifiers, but Laclau and Mouffe reserve the term nodal point for a sign within a particular discourse and the term floating signifiers for struggles between different discourses. Finally, all signs referring to society as a totality are floating signifiers; they are invested with a different content by different articulations. Laclau and Mouffe call these floating signifiers that refer to a totality *myth*.

It should be clear by now that discourse in Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory can be understood as a type of structure in a Saussurian sense – the fixation of meaning of signs in relation to each other. But as opposed to a Saussurian structure with a permanent closure, Laclau and Mouffe advocate the view that a discourse can only obtain a temporary closure, because there is always room for struggles over what the structure should look like. Thus, where de Saussure was interested in uncovering the structure, Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory is concerned with how the structure, in the form of discourse, is constituted and changed (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 29-30)

Finally, Laclau and Mouffe's theory has something to add to the critical task of unmasking the taken-for-granted. In their theory of the hegemonic practices of discourse, they conceptualize how reality comes to appear as natural and non-contingent. They suggest that discourse, through hegemonic closure, fixes the meaning in particular ways and therefore excludes all other meaning potentials. Furthermore, the discursive constructions appear as natural and delimited aspects of reality through myths about society and identity. By way of reading the hegemonic discourses against themselves through the method of deconstruction, Laclau and Mouffe strive to show the contingency of the articulations — that is, they could have been articulated differently (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 186).

In this sense, for the purpose of my analysis I will further try to read President Bush against himself. The aim is to highlight the contingent character of different discourses in the 'war on terrorism' through an 'analytical redescription', utilizing concepts from Laclau and Mouffe's theory of discourse as a 'language of description' to translate my empirical material. Where necessary, I will introduce other theories and discuss specific key concepts in more detail as they appear for my analytical redescription of the construction of a 'war on terrorism'.

4. Discourse Analysis as a Method

In chapter two I introduced the idea of discourse analysis as a ‘complete package’. This is the notion that in discourse analysis, method is part of an integrated epistemological, theoretical and methodological whole, and the researcher has to consider this ‘package’ throughout the research process. Within the discourse analytical ‘package’, my understanding of method or research techniques is the methodological procedure in a more technical sense. I have employed a qualitative content analysis of certain documents and will discuss some aspects of this method and some characteristics of the chosen documents in more detail. Finally, in this chapter I will discuss some challenges related to the selection and analysis of the empirical material.

4.1 Qualitative Content Analysis

The empirical material that has been analysed in this thesis consists of written documents. These documents are transcripts of six speeches by US President George W. Bush and an official strategy document of the Bush administration. When analysing documents such as these it is possible to approach the material either in a qualitative or a quantitative manner. Within these two main categories there are a multitude of different methodologies, but generally speaking it is possible to talk of quantitative approaches and qualitative approaches.

According to Grønmo, a general point is that quantitative strategies have their strength in their structured approach and their ability to make statistical generalizations. Generally speaking, these approaches take their starting point in the positivistic tradition where the ideal is that social sciences can and should use the same criteria for knowledge production as natural sciences. At the base of this view of science is the belief that it is possible to establish an absolute distinction between fact and value. In the qualitative approaches, however, these ideas are seen as problematic. The critique is that one cannot view the social world in terms of a fact-value distinction (Grønmo, 2004: 9-10).

Narrowing these approaches down to two strategies for analysing documents, the choice is between quantitative or qualitative content analysis. Again, there are several distinctive methodologies within the two strategies. Here I want to point out that the choice between undertaking qualitative and quantitative research occurs at the level of methods. It does not occur at the level of epistemology or theoretical perspective, so it is, for example, possible to start from a constructionist epistemology and choose a quantitative method (Crotty, 1998: 14-15). Therefore, even though I reject positivism as an ideal, in social science this does not mean that I reject all quantitative methods. In this particular project, however, my choice of method was guided by my general interest in how a ‘war on terrorism’ was discursively constructed. Accordingly,

qualitative content analysis was chosen because it was seen as a process capable of fulfilling the purpose of my research.

Qualitative content analysis can be viewed as an expanding and cyclic process between an overall understanding of the empirical material and the specific textual analysis. I started with a research question and selected potentially relevant documents for analysis. In the course of analysis, some texts stood out as more relevant than others, and throughout the project there was a need to evaluate the relevance of different texts. This process and the final selection of seven texts are described in the next section of this chapter. There was also a need to evaluate the sources of the texts, the trustworthiness of the texts and the context of the texts (Grønmo, 2004: 190). At the official White House home Page (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/>), all speeches and documents signed by President Bush are attainable. Hence the question of authenticity was not a problem. There is also a satisfactory search option at this home page that aided the process of finding relevant texts. In qualitative content analysis, an important point is that the texts are not viewed as standing on their own; the texts' context always matters in the analysis. The broader context in this thesis is that these are speeches and a strategy document signed by the President of the United States, and they all relate to a constructed 'war on terrorism' as a response to the attacks on 11 September 2001. The context of the individual texts will be discussed in the analysis.

My qualitative data were seven selected texts, and a starting point in the analysis was to locate underlying patterns in the material. I started with numerous readings of the texts with the aim of categorizing the content. This was done through a process of *coding* the material. Coding is here understood as finding some key words that can describe or characterize larger segments of the texts (Grønmo, 2004: 246). This was combined with writing analytical notes to increase insight into the empirical patterns. Following Potter and Wetherell, my first stage in coding the material was open — that is, it was first and foremost the empirical material that determined the codes (Potter and Wetherell, 1995: 80-92). The next step in the analysis was to combine the transcripts of the texts and the codes that I had developed. During this process it was possible to identify emerging *themes* and connections between them in the material. This process was not as open as the previous; it had to be more systematic in the attempt to identify and define the various themes' properties. This process was also cyclic in the sense that in addition to reviewing the initial codes, I had to review the transcripts again in search of possible common properties within and across the coded material. The themes thus gradually became increasingly coherent. In an effort to remain open to unexpected occurrences, the ideal was initially for the themes to grow solely out of the empirical material, but eventually the research question also guided the

analysis so as to analyse patterns in the texts in the light of the epistemological and theoretical starting point. I use the term ‘ideally’ because in discourse analysis the view is that themes cannot just appear out of the material. This is because of the inherent perspectivism in the constructionist epistemology, thus the specific themes became visible to me because I read the texts through my lens, through my perspective. The challenges concerning this set of problems will be discussed further in 4.4.

At this point in the analysis, I had located four major themes in the texts. When I identified each theme, a note was made as to which text it was identified in, on which page and on which line(s). In this thesis all of the empirical material — the seven texts — are included as an appendix and the references made in the analytical chapters refer to which text, page and line the quote stems. Thus, for example, the reference (4: 8:12-9: 4) indicate that the quote is from text four, page eight, line twelve, until page nine, line four.

After organizing the relevant raw material from the data in a coherent, conceptual and manageable form, it was possible to move on to presenting the analysis’s results. There is tension in this process, since the more organized the relevant raw material becomes, the further the move is from the individual transcripts that generated the themes (Smith, 1995: 22). Also, the method presented here might seem mechanical, but what will determine the value of the analysis at the end is the quality of the interpretive work undertaken by the investigator. So it is essential to be systematic, but it is also important to be analytical and creative (Smith, 1995).

4.2 Texts as Monuments

Before I define my understanding of what a monument text is, I will clarify my understanding of the concept *text*. Neumann advocates the view that everything can be studied *as* text, as phenomena bound together by a code. This does not imply that everything *is* text; rather it means that everything can be read *as* text (Neumann, 2001: 23). Roland Barthes’ analysis of various non-discursive artefacts from popular culture can work as an example here (Gregory, 1989: vii). Barthes was interested in why artefacts such as photographs, the sport of wrestling and Garbo’s face were meaningful to so many people. What Barthes did was that he *read* these objects, articulating in words what everyone knew they meant but knew without the object having uttered anything in words. Barthes showed through this how things get their meaning by being part of a culture and how meaning can precede the thing.

So in order to see the world as a text, the issue of meaning should be tackled in a new manner. If the objects described above can be said to have meaning independently of the person who took the photograph or what the wrestling match meant to the wrestler, then written things

too may in some way have meanings independently of the author, hence the expression ‘the death of the author’ (Neumann, 2001: 40). Another point in this context is Derrida’s notion of ‘there is nothing outside of the text’ (quoted in Burr, 2003: 67). This is based on the view that language is situated between the world and people in the world and therefore nothing can exist outside of the text. My view of *text* is that everything can be read as text, and that by loosening the text from the author, authority is relocated in the culture.

Returning to the question of how I selected the texts for analysis, I have drawn on the ‘monument’ concept as, for example, presented in Neumann (2001: 51-52). A text can be considered a ‘monument’ if it is seen as sufficiently important and central. The text gets its centrality and importance from its relation to other texts, by being quoted and/or referred to by a considerable number of other texts. After the decision to make the ‘war on terrorism’ my research focus, I discovered an enormous amount of literature on the subject, both scientific and journalistic. Following an initial study of some of this literature, I noticed that some speeches by President Bush stood out – that is, they were quoted and referred to over and over again in a broad spectre of literature produced after 11 September. As my research question became more developed, with an interest in how the ‘war on terrorism’ was discursively constructed as a response to terrorism by President Bush, some texts stood out even more. I finally selected seven texts as the empirical material for the analysis, because they deal with the terrorist attack on 11 September 2001 and the succeeding construction of a ‘war on terrorism’ as the appropriate response. As explained earlier, six are speeches by President Bush and the last text is the official *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, published in September 2002. Time and space restricted the amount of material to be included in the analysis. There is an immense amount of speeches by President Bush, and also numerous official documents signed by his administration. As will become apparent, the seven texts have a timeframe of approximately one year, from September 2001 until September 2002. I will argue that the starting point of 11 September 2001 is given by the overall theme of the thesis – the construction of a ‘war on terrorism’ as the response to the terrorist attacks. The in-between texts, I will assert, are all in their own way central, in the sense that they give insight into the process of waging war. The last text, the *National Security Strategy*, can be seen as the first manifestation of action-oriented guidelines for the future foreign policy of the United States.

A critical point is whether the selected texts can be viewed as ‘monuments’. I will argue that they can be viewed in this way, on the grounds of the above-mentioned criteria of centrality and importance. The most important events of foreign policy, not only on the US domestic stage but the whole world shortly after 11 September 2001, are dominated by expressions from these

speeches. The phrase ‘war on terrorism’ (Bush, 2001a) or ‘freedom at war with fear’ (Bush, 2001b) or ‘axis of evil’ (Bush, 2002a) all first occurred in one of these speeches. The wide-held view that Bush is president of today’s only superpower and to a large extent has the means to back up his claims on, for example, ‘either you are with us or you are with the terrorists’ (Bush, 2001b) gives these texts a special importance. In the next section each text will be presented.

4.3 The Selected Empirical Material

Chronologically, the first text to be analysed in this thesis is the prime-time speech delivered by President Bush on 11 September. I see this text as important because from the very beginning Bush made a sharp distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Bush, 2001a). As will become apparent in chapter 5, I see the oppositional structuring of ‘us’ and ‘them’ as a crucial element in the construction of ‘the war on terrorism’. In addition, President Bush made it clear from the start that this was a conflict between *good* and *evil* and *freedom* and *fear* (Bush, 2001a):

Today, our nation saw evil, the very worst of human nature. And we responded with the best of America [...] Yet, we go forward to defend freedom and all that is good and just in our world. (1: 1: 18-2: 21).

Only hours after the attacks on 11 September, President Bush set the stage for ‘the war on terrorism’. As remarked by Silberstein, this was predicted as having long-lasting consequences:

In his first formal speech of the day, President Bush has set into motion the themes that will accompany US policy and actions for the foreseeable future: Evil, Terror and the War on Terrorism (Silberstein, 2002: 10).

Another important point that was communicated from the very beginning was that the enemy were not only the actual perpetrators, the terrorists behind the attacks, but rather the enemy were also anyone who harboured them (Bush, 2001a):

We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them (1: 2: 7-8).

Making this link, which was elaborated upon in later texts, was the logic that made *war* the appropriate response to terrorism and that later legitimized the response of going to war in Afghanistan.

Text 2 is *The Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People* on 20 September 2001 (Bush, 2001b). In this speech President Bush gave a worldwide ultimatum: that ‘everyone’ had to choose on which side they wanted to be — either the side of the United States or the side of the terrorists. This was a development of the argument in the first text (Bush, 2001a) where ‘we’ make no distinction between the terrorists and those who harbour them. Now, nine days later, President Bush was forcing the rest of the world to make a choice: either you are with ‘us’ and if not you are by ‘our’ definition with ‘them’. Daalder and Lindsay comment on this:

The need to force countries to choose sides, even if only rhetorically, was essential (Daalder and Lindsay, 2003: 86).

Forcing this oppositional structure on the rest of the world was important in the construction of a 'war on terrorism' because it made it impossible *not* to choose sides. In the world of President Bush there was no middle ground, no room for compromise. From then on it was either you are with 'us' or you are with 'them'.

On 7 October 2001 Bush announced the bombing of Afghanistan. According to President Bush, this was not an act of war but a 'military action' that would rid Afghanistan of the brutal Taliban regime, which by not meeting the demands made by the United States to hand over the leaders of the al Qaeda network, had brought this on themselves (Bush, 2001c):

None of these demands were met. And now the Taliban will pay a price (3: 1:17-18).

In this third text, again, the rest of the world was put on notice. President Bush made it clear that this 'military action' was only the beginning of a broader conflict where everyone still had to choose sides (Bush, 2001c):

Today we focus on Afghanistan, but the battle is broader. Every nation has a choice to make. In this conflict, there is no neutral ground (3: 2:8-9).

On 10 November 2001, approximately two months after the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington and approximately one month after initiating the war in Afghanistan, President Bush addressed the United Nations General Assembly. Of the selected empirical material, this text had the widest audience as it included all of the nations represented in the UN. At the beginning of his speech President Bush expressed that the civilized nations in the UN are against terror and lawless violence, also stating that there are uncivilized nations represented in the General Assembly (Bush, 2001d). In this text President Bush presented his view of a world in a time of terror. He stated that the 'war on terrorism' would not end with the war in Afghanistan, and he sent a strong message about the future of regimes that he defined as the uncivilized that support and harbour terrorists (Bush, 2001d):

And some governments, while pledging to uphold the principles of the U.N., have cast their lot with the terrorists. They support them and harbor them, and they will find that their welcome guests are parasites that will weaken them, and eventually consume them. For every regime that sponsors terror, there is a price to be paid. And it will be paid. The allies of terror are equally guilty of murder and equally accountable to justice (4: 4: 4-8).

The fifth text is the State of the Union speech delivered on 29 January 2002 (Bush, 2002a), where President Bush:

[...] famously proclaimed North Korea, Iran and Iraq to be an 'axis of evil', and in contrast, he called the United States 'a moral nation' (Singer, 2004: 1).

This announcement of the existence of an ‘axis of evil’ that threatens the civilized world is a discursively relevant feature that I will pursue further in chapter 5.3 of my analysis. Text 5 is also important because it is where President Bush elaborates on some of the implications of the waged ‘war on terrorism’. A prominent feature was the definition of what would constitute an imminent threat to the security of the United States, something to which Daalder and Lindsay also draw attention:

The full extent of Bush’s war on terror became apparent when he delivered his first State of the Union address [...] Then, using the most dire language heard in any presidential speech since John F. Kennedy’s first State of the Union address four decades earlier, Bush declared that the United States could no longer afford to sit and wait until America was struck again (Daalder and Lindsay, 2003: 120).

At first glance Text 6 might not give the impression of being considered a ‘monument’, since it is an address to the graduation class of West Point Military Academy and not to a broader audience. Still, this text can be viewed as both central and important because this is where President Bush first presents the major shift in US foreign policy from deterrence and containment to pre-emption (Melby, 2004: 148). This new feature has been labelled as the ‘Bush Doctrine’:

In four succinct paragraphs, he spelled out a new view of when it is justifiable to take military action – a view that has come to be known as the ‘Bush Doctrine’ (Singer 2004: 178-179).

At the same time, Text 6 was the forerunner to the final text: *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Bush, 2002c). This last text of my empirical material is where the new foreign policy principles became the official strategy of the United States. The ideas behind the policy were by no means new, but the events of 11 September 2001 worked as a catalyst for these views and made it possible for them to become the official policy (Melby, 2004: 148, and Gregory, 2004: 51). This text is considered both to be the official strategy of the complete administration and the most detailed document concerning the ‘war on terrorism’ until that date. As Singer points out:

Bush’s words at West Point were carefully chosen. They represented the considered conclusions, not only of the president, but of his entire national security team. That became evident with the release of *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Singer, 2004: 180).

The same conclusion is also drawn by Daalder and Lindsay:

The fullest elaboration of Bush’s strategy for defeating the terrifying combination of terrorism, tyrants, and technologies of mass destruction came in the National Security Strategy [...] (Daalder and Lindsay, 2003: 122).

In this section I have presented the seven texts that embody my empirical material. I have aimed to show how each text can be seen as important and central and thus can be viewed as a monument text. The last section of this chapter will discuss challenges related to the inherent perspec-

tivism in discourse analysis and challenges concerning validity in the qualitative content analysis and in the overall research project.

4.4 Challenges related to the Selection and Analysis of the Empirical Material

In this project, the challenges posed by perspectivism concern both the process of selecting the empirical material and its analysis. First, the challenge to determine which texts to analyse relates to how the researcher's perspective influences this selection. The seven texts in my empirical material were selected because in my opinion they are central and important and thus create a gravitation centre for discourses – that is, they are viewed as monuments. Second, the notion of perspectivism also has consequences for the analytical process, where I recognize that the knowledge that I produce is obtained from my particular perspective and is context bound and contingent. There is, however, also an up-side in recognizing this, because highlighting that 'I come from somewhere' can aid in demystifying that President Bush also 'comes from somewhere'. Therefore, what can seem a natural, unproblematic and universal understanding of the world is actually a process of transforming meanings from cultural to natural. Third, the challenge that perspectivism brings with it is the problem of relativism, which is related to the larger epistemological discussion of the character and status of knowledge that I discussed in chapter two and particularly in 2.4. Related to this is also the concept of *validity* – that is, the question of what standards my research must meet in order to count as qualified academic research (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 171). One way of determining the academic standard of the research can thus be to evaluate the validity of the study, because according to Jørgensen and Phillips, relativism does not in itself reduce the academic value. Because even though discourse analysis rejects objectivism's scientific demands for reliability and validity, it does not mean that all demands for validity are dismissed (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 117). There are two levels to consider here: the validity of the overall research project and the validity of the empirical material's content analysis.

In determining the validity of a qualitative content analysis, one place to start is by focusing on the *coherence* of the analysis and the *fruitfulness* of the analysis (Grønmo, 2004: ch 10 and 12). Coherence in the analysis relates to the point that analytical claims should form a coherent discourse. In evaluating the fruitfulness of the analysis, the focus is on the explanatory potential of the analytical framework, including its capability to provide new explanations. The criteria of coherence and fruitfulness are, however, not uncontested.⁴ In this project I will therefore follow Jørgensen and Phillips in their view that the most important criterion is to *explicate*

⁴ See, for example, Jørgensen and Phillips 2002: 171-174.

and follow the criteria of validity to which I adhere (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 173). Following this notion, and as mentioned earlier in this chapter, qualitative content analysis is here seen as a circular process between the specific textual analysis and an overall understanding of the empirical material. A question related to the validity of the text analysis thus becomes: when to consider it as completed, when can/should the analyst break the interpretive circle and stop the analysis?

According to Jørgensen and Phillips, there is no final answer to this question. They do, however, make some suggestions. First, the analysis should be *solid* — that is, it should ideally be based on more than one textual feature. Second, the analysis should be *comprehensive* — that is, the questions posed to the text should be answered fully and textual features that conflict with the analysis should be accounted for. Third, the analysis should be *transparent* — that is, the analysis should be presented in a transparent way. The reader of the analysis should be allowed as far as possible to ‘test’ the claims made (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002).

Finally, in this chapter I want to indicate some notions related to the overall validity of this research project. One aspect in this respect is the inner consistency of the research — that is, do the epistemological premises, the theoretical claims and the methodology employed form a ‘complete package’ as presented at the beginning of this chapter? As presented in chapter two, my view of the status of scientific knowledge is as *a truth that can be discussed*. My aim with this project is to say something about a discursive construction of a ‘war on terrorism’, and I recognize that in achieving this aim it is important to conduct the research in a particular way and according to particular rules.

Throughout this project I have aimed to follow the general principle that the research steps should be as transparent as possible and that the argumentation is consistent. More specifically, I have aimed for the rules set by my choice of ‘language of redescription’ in chapter three to form a coherent system. Following Jørgensen and Phillips, theoretical and methodological consistency is in this way a research constraint — that is, as a researcher I understand the world in a particular way rather than in other possible ways. However, this necessary constraint is also productive. Because, as I discussed in chapter three, the use of a specific theory in the production and analysis of the empirical material enables me to distance myself from my everyday understanding of the material, which in turn is vital to constructionist research (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 207). It is my hope that in these first four chapters I have defined sufficiently the standards that this research aims to meet and that they function as an explicit foundation for the knowledge to be produced in the chapters to follow.

5. Analysing the Construction of a War

More than a rational calculation of interests takes us to war. People go to war because of how they see, perceive, picture, imagine and speak of others; that is, how they construct the difference of others as well as the sameness of themselves through representations (Der Derian, 2002: 110).

My aim is to explore how President Bush and his administration discursively constructed the 'war on terrorism' as a response to the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001. As will become apparent, I see the discursive buttressing of a simplistic dualism between 'us' and 'them' as the key component in the construction of the war. I will argue that this buttressing is an attempt to unite by using the logic of confrontation and that this heightens the level of conflict.

In any type of community, small or large, there exist different ways of representing the world. In the United States, as in most countries, one can find examples of multiculturalism and tolerance, as well as racism and xenophobia. I will argue that it is by tapping into familiar discourses that the Bush administration constructed the 'war on terrorism' as part of a common-sense strategy for foreign policy. An important process is the move from cultural to natural. It could be argued, for example, that to construct an intolerant *evil* 'them', one would have to tap into a xenophobic strain in the audience. Furthermore, it can be postulated that the construction of 'them' as *evil* is a cultural construction based on naturalization of a religious dualism of the struggle between *good* and *evil*. The construction of 'us' as *good* is dependent on 'them' being *evil*. Thus in the process of constructing 'them', the 'us' is also constructed on the basis of 'our' difference from 'them'. In the course of reading, identifying, coding and categorizing primary patterns in the empirical material, I identified four discourses that I view as vital in the construction of the 'war on terrorism'. In accordance with my epistemological and methodological starting point of constructionism, it is important to emphasize that these discourses are my constructions and that they are therefore not to be regarded as ontological entities.

In chapter 5.1 to 5.4 I will present four discourses that I have delineated from my empirical material. I will start in chapter section 5.1 with an outline of how a distinction between 'us' and 'them' functions as the key division in discursively constructing the 'war on terrorism'. I therefore view the 'us-them' discourse as a superior category and the other three discourses as sub-discourses — that is, the sub-discourses acquire their meaning from being qualities that are ascribed to either 'us' or 'them'. The 'us-them' discourse fixes the meaning of, for example, *good* and *evil* as something intrinsic in 'us' and 'them' — 'we' *are* good and 'they' *are* evil. In order to create a unity of meaning, this process thus excludes other possible meanings that *good* and *evil* have or had in other discourses.

All four discourses are visible from the beginning of the timeframe covered by my empirical material. After introducing in 5.1 the key oppositional categories of ‘us’ and ‘them’, in 5.2 I will analyse the first sub-discourse: the representation of ‘us’ as *freedom* and ‘them’ as *fear*. In 5.3 I will focus on representations of *good* and *evil* in my empirical material. Finally, in 5.4 I will explore how the representations of ‘us’ as *civilization* and ‘them’ as *barbarism* are utilized by President Bush and his administration in the discursive construction of the ‘war on terrorism’. I will show that there is a semantic development within each of the four discourses, resulting in my view that the construction of the ‘war on terrorism’ is composed of parallel processes. I will discuss the specifics of these developments in each chapter section.

5.1 The Relational Logic of ‘Us’ and ‘Them’

In general, the distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’ is an essential mechanism that we utilize in identifying who we are. The identity of ‘us’ is dependent on a ‘them’ that is both different and outside of ‘us’. As Buzan argues, for example, if we accept this interdependence then we also have to accept that there can never be a worldwide universal sense of community, because political communities are built on oppositions between ‘us’ and ‘them’. There can thus never be a ‘world democracy’ including everyone, providing full freedom and equality (Buzan, 2004: 17). In my opinion, what is important is that even though there will always be an ‘us’ and a ‘them’, it is possible and also paramount that an ideal to strive for is the most possible equality in the world. Moreover, this interdependence does not have to be antagonistic. ‘Them’ being different from ‘us’ is not necessarily something to be feared. As Connolly points out, the identities of ‘us’ and ‘them’ are bound together. It is not possible to reconstitute the relation to the second without confounding the experience of the first (Connolly, 1989: 329). When it comes to analysing the division between ‘us’ and ‘them’ in the construction of the ‘war on terrorism’, an important notion is that any given story about ‘them’ also reveals a story about ‘us’. Jørgensen and Phillips make an important point when recognizing that analysis of ‘them’ is always hand in hand with the creation of ‘us’. Furthermore, analysis of ‘them’ can also disclose what a given discourse about ‘us’ excludes, and what social consequences this exclusion has (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 50-51). Even though my focus is on the construction of an external ‘them’ (that is, ‘them’ outside of the United States), it is worth noting, as Connolly does, that if one views the world through dichotomies such as ‘us’ and ‘them’, this also has consequences for how one views difference within the ‘us’. Because if you deny the enigma of external otherness and think of it as innocent, evil, barbaric, etc., then one also treats difference within as an otherness to be naturalized, converted or defeated (Connolly, 1989: 326). Thus one focus in this thesis is on how

contemporary US foreign policy defines and copes with otherness. In line with the introductory quote from Der Derian, the central question then becomes: how do we (here the United States) speak, perceive, imagine and act in our relation to ‘them’? (Der Derian, 2002: 110).

5.1.1. It’s ‘Us’ Against ‘Them’

Huntington provides one possible answer to the above question when he states that we know who we are only when we know who we are not, and then he adds that often we only know who we are when we know who we are against (Huntington, 2002: 21). This way of making sense constructs an antagonistic worldview of friends and enemies. Huntington’s logic takes for granted that the identity of ‘us’ is dependent on a fear of ‘them’. Thus his argument begins with a premise of fear, and if one questions that premise then his argument loses its logic. In his article and the later book⁵ regarding the alleged ‘clashes of civilizations’, Huntington claims that culture will become the dominant axis of conflict in the twenty-first century, and that civilizations will be the primary cultural groupings. He introduces three sets of clashes: first, ‘the clash of civilizations’, which in the end boils down to the dualism of the ‘West versus the Rest’ (Huntington, 2002: 33); second is what he calls ‘the real clash’, which involves the ‘West versus the Post-West’, where Huntington is concerned with the problem of multiculturalism and the focus on ‘group’ (ethnic, racial, cultural, etc.) identities over national identity (Huntington, 2002: 307); finally, he describes ‘[...] the global “real clash” between Civilization and barbarism [...]’ (Huntington, 2002: 321). The idea of this last ‘clash’ will be discussed further in chapter section 5.4 where I analyse this ‘clash’ as it is reflected in my empirical material. What concerns me in Huntington’s analysis is the way that the question of ‘who we are’ and ‘who they are’ is answered, and also the claim of culture/religion being the ‘new’ fault line between ‘us’ and ‘them’. Conflicts along the axis of culture and identity are zero-sum conflicts (Salter, 2002: 3). This implies that there are no in-betweens, no room for compromise. One is either part of ‘us’ on the inside or belongs to ‘them’ and hence is placed on the outside.

The reason for this brief introduction of Huntington’s analysis is that even though the Bush administration has declared that the ‘war on terrorism’ is not a clash between civilizations,⁶ both Huntington and the Bush administration start from worldviews with an antagonistic relationship between ‘us’ and ‘them’. As pointed out by Edwards and Martin, initial reactions to the terrorist attacks outside the United States were of sympathy and concern, but this attitude

⁵ A first draft of the argument was first presented in Samuel Huntington, ‘The Clash of Civilizations?’ in *Foreign Affairs* 72/2 (1993). Gregory points out that Huntington’s thesis had its origin from Bernard Lewis (Gregory, 2004: 56). I will argue below that Lewis can be seen as having an influence on the Bush administration’s view on Islam.

⁶ See Bush, 2002c, 7: 38: 6-7.

proved difficult to sustain as the US quickly opted for an unsubtle ‘us-them’ scenario, which in turn led to the simplistic mantra of ‘with-us-or-with-the-terrorists’ (Edwards and Martin, 2004: 149). The notion of ‘either or’ as the only two options is clearly reflected in my empirical material. It is probably most evident in the following quote from President Bush’s speech on 20 September 2001, which was also quoted in my introduction (Bush, 2001b):

Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime (2: 5:16-19).

This is a powerful and absolutist statement in several ways. First, it is directed to every single nation in the world. Second, it reveals an attitude of power: when something disastrous happens to the United States, the rest of the world is expected actively to take a stand. Finally, there is a powerful and aggressive warning in this statement: any nation that does not follow orders and choose ‘us’, will by definition be regarded as a ‘*hostile regime*’ by the US.

Even if not communicated in the same spellbinding manner, the warning to choose ‘us’ or ‘them’ is repeated in my material:

Every nation has a choice to make. In this conflict, there is no neutral ground (3: 2: 8-9).

Any government that rejects this principle, trying to pick and choose its terrorist friends, will know the consequences (4: 6: 5-6).

But some governments will be timid in the face of terror. And make no mistake about it: If they do not act, America will (5: 4: 1-2).

There can be no neutrality between justice and cruelty, between the innocent and the guilty. We are in a conflict between good and evil, and America will call evil by its name (6: 5: 19-21).

In these quotes one can observe the repetition of this as a question for every nation in the world. Everyone has to choose between the only two options — ‘us’ or ‘them’ — there can be no compromise, ‘*no neutral ground*’. The powerful warning to nations that if they do not choose ‘us’ they ‘*will know the consequences*’ is also repeated. In the last quote President Bush not only represents the situation as a choice between ‘us’ and ‘them’; it is also a choice between ‘*justice*’ and ‘*cruelty*’, ‘*innocent*’ and ‘*guilty*’, ‘*good*’ and ‘*evil*’. Hence there is a development where positive values are ascribed to ‘us’ and negative values are attributed to ‘them’.

In addition to the explicit division between ‘us’ and ‘them’, there are two more distinctions in the empirical material that I regard as crucial for the construction of the ‘war on terrorism’. First is the notion that the attacks on 11 September 2001 were not criminal acts, but were acts of war (Bush, 2001b):

On September the 11th, enemies of freedom committed an act of war against our country (2: 2: 16).

This quote is from the speech on 20 September 2001, and by declaring the terrorist attacks acts of war at such an early stage, President Bush prepared the world for a warlike response from the US. In relation to the Bush administration interpreting the attacks as acts of war and thus declaring a 'war on terrorism', philosopher Jürgen Habermas makes an interesting argument. He considers the decision to call for a 'war on terrorism' as a serious mistake on two grounds: first, by recognizing the attacks as acts of war, President Bush elevates the criminals behind the attacks to the status of war enemies; second, pragmatically one cannot lead a war against a 'network' (for al Qaeda is seen as a terrorist network) if the term 'war' is to retain any definite meaning (Borradori, 2003: 34-35).

The second crucial distinction was that state governments that harboured, supported or aided terrorists in any way would be regarded as equally guilty as the actual perpetrators:

We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them (1: 2: 7-8).

We make no distinction between terrorists and those who knowingly harbor or provide aid to them (7: 8: 17-18).

As the quotes reflect, this decision was made from the very beginning and it is also repeated in the last text of my material, the *National Security Strategy* from September 2002 (Bush, 2002c). It was precisely this distinction that opened up the possibility of going to war in Afghanistan, since the Taliban were harbouring al Qaeda.

In the next two sections I will first analyse the construction of 'us' and second I will turn to 'them'. As stated above, all of the analytical chapters can be viewed as distinctive ways of constructing 'us' and 'them'. Thus the aim of this chapter is not to exhaust the categories, but to introduce some key characteristics of the oppositional structuring of 'us' and 'them' in the construction of the 'war on terrorism'.

5.1.2 Differentiating 'Us': Constructing a National 'Us' with Friends, Allies and Partners

In my empirical material the 'us' category is first and foremost the national identity of the US. This is the core that is reinforced throughout my empirical material. The process of constructing a shared national identity on the basis of 'our' difference from 'them' becomes apparent in Text 1 of my empirical material: President Bush's prime-time speech on 11 September 2001 (Bush, 2001a). In this speech President Bush (re)constructs the national identity of the American people and the American nation based on 'our' difference from 'them':

A great people has been moved to defend a great nation. Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America. These acts shattered steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve.[...] America and our friends and allies join with all those who

want peace and security in the world, and we stand together to win the war against terrorism.[...] This is a day when all Americans from every walk of life unite in our resolve for justice and peace. America has stood down enemies before, and we will do so this time. None of us will ever forget this day. Yet, we go forward to defend freedom and all that is good and just in our world (1: 1: 13 - 2: 21).

As I indicated in chapter 3, I utilize some key concepts from Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory. In analysing how President Bush (re)constructs the US identity in the context of a 'war against terrorism', it can be fruitful to apply Laclau and Mouffe's concept of *chains of equivalence*. As I will show below, *chains of equivalence* can be seen as the linking together of signifiers and as a result establishing the identity of a *nodal point* relationally (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 42-43). The identity of a certain nodal point is established in the quote above: the nodal point of 'America'. It is established through its relation to other *moments* in a positive chain of equivalence. President Bush represents 'us' (America) as a '*great people*' and a '*great nation*' and links 'us' to the moments: '*peace*', '*security*', '*justice*', '*freedom*' and '*goodness*'. Hence, under normal circumstances 'we' are peaceful and non-aggressive, but when 'we' are faced with terrorism as an enemy 'we' possess an ultimate determination, a determination as strong as '*steel*', a resolve that 'we' have shown '*before*'. In Laclau and Mouffe's terms, 'America' can here be seen as a *floating signifier* — that is, a signifier that appears with different meanings within different discourses. While President Bush strives to fill 'America' with positive meaning by relating it to moments such as '*peace*', '*security*' and '*justice*', etc., this peaceful, secure and just depiction is not necessarily uncontested. Others might invest a different meaning in the sign 'America'.

Because 'America' refers to a society as a totality, it is also a *myth* in Laclau and Mouffe's terms. The constant recreation of this myth is visible throughout my empirical material. The identity of the national 'us' (America) is constructed in both a particular and a universal manner, as one can see in these quotes from Texts 2 (Bush, 2001b), 3 (Bush, 2001c) and 5 (Bush, 2002a):

We have seen it [the state of the Union] in the courage of passengers, who rushed terrorists to save others on the ground — passengers like an exceptional man named Todd Beamer. And would you please help me to welcome his wife, Lisa Beamer, here tonight? (2: 1: 9-11).

I recently received a touching letter that says a lot about the state of America in these difficult times — a letter from a 4th-grade girl, with a father in the military: 'As much as I don't want my Dad to fight' she wrote, 'I'm willing to give him to you'. This is a precious gift, the greatest she could give. This young girl knows what America is all about. Since September 11, an entire generation of young Americans has gained new understanding of the value of freedom, and its cost in duty and in sacrifice (3: 3: 12-17).

Last month, at the grave of her husband, Michael, a CIA officer and Marine who died in Mazar-i-Sharif, Shannon Spann said these words of farewell: 'Semper Fi, my love'. Shannon is with us tonight. Shannon, I

assure you and all who have lost a loved one that our cause is just, and our country will never forget the debt we owe Michael and all who gave their lives for freedom (5: 2: 13-17).

In the first quote above, two individuals, Todd and Lisa Beamer, are brought forward by President Bush as symbols of individuals making up the identity of 'us'. Todd Beamer was an '*exceptional man*', who when faced with 'them', the '*terrorists*', sacrificed himself to '*save others*'. Thus the state of the Union, the state of the national identity of the United States, is represented as one of '*courage*' and exceptional sacrifice.

The second quote is from President Bush's speech declaring the commencement of *Operation Enduring Freedom*, which was initiated against Afghanistan on 7 October 2001 (Bush, 2001c). I contend that President Bush presents the letter from the little girl as a letter to the nation. The context is the nation going to war and a little girl understanding '*what America is all about*'. Thus when even a little girl understands this simple truth, how could anybody who wants to be included in this discursively constructed 'we' not also be able to understand? 'America' is represented literally to be *all* about the universal value of '*freedom*'. 'America' represents the '*value of freedom*' and it is for this value that 'we' are going to war. 'We' have a '*duty*' to make the ultimate '*sacrifice*' for this value. The little girl with her father in the military understands what 'we' are all about, and she is '*willing to give him to you*'. She is willing to sacrifice her father for the '*freedom*' of the nation. While President Bush in the first quote constructed the identity of 'us' in a time of crisis, in the second quote he was aiming at the necessity for this 'us' to make individual sacrifices for the nation and initiate a war.

In the third quote the nation has experienced its first casualties in the 'war against terrorism'. '*Michael*' had died in battle and President Bush, representing the nation, is comforting his wife Shannon that Michael and others sharing his destiny '*gave their life for freedom*'. With these quotes President Bush continuously constructs the national identity of 'us'. Individual US citizens are brought forward as examples of the condition of the nation that is as '*strong*' as '*steel*', and 'we' also represent the universal value of '*freedom*'. *Freedom* is constructed to be what '*America is all about*', and hence 'we' go to war in the name of '*freedom*'.

The core of all of the arguments in my empirical material is a national 'us' that is constantly reinforced. The 'us' in varying degree is extended to include friends, allies and partners in 'the war on terrorism'. In Text 3, announcing the initiation of *Operation Enduring Freedom*, it is made clear who 'our' friends are (Bush, 2001c):

We are joined in this operation by our staunch friend, Great Britain. Other close friends, including Canada, Australia, Germany and France, have pledged forces as the operation unfolds. More than 40 countries in the Middle East, Africa, Europe and across Asia have granted air transit or landing rights. Many more have shared intelligence. We are supported by the collective will of the world (3: 1: 10-14).

President Bush is not only constructing different versions of ‘us’ in this quote; he is also discursively constructing a hierarchy within the ‘us’. First the US ‘us’, then ‘our’ closest friend Great Britain, then further other close friends are listed by name, followed by the more diffuse 40 countries, and finally the US is supported by a joint ‘*will of the world*’. The construction of partners in the ‘war on terrorism’ is also essential, even if partners are discursively placed at the bottom of the hierarchy. Russia and China are mentioned in this relation in three of the seven texts.⁷ The quote below is from Text 6, the speech at West Point (Bush, 2002b):

I’ve just returned from a new Russia, now a country reaching toward democracy, and our partner in the war against terror. Even in China, leaders are discovering that economic freedom is the only lasting source of national wealth. In time, they will find that social and political freedom is the only true source of national greatness (6: 6: 12-16).

Russia is named here as a ‘*partner*’ in the ‘war on terrorism’, while it can be argued that China is not considered close enough to be regarded as a partner. Still, China’s move in what is considered the right direction is regarded as important. The description of China can be interpreted in several ways. It could be argued that for China to acquire ‘*national greatness*’ they have to become more like ‘us’, or rather like the US. This interpretation depends, of course, on the notion that China today does not have any ‘national greatness’, a notion probably not shared by most Chinese. There are also two interpretations concerning how China could be considered ‘a partner’ to be included in the ‘us’. To reach ‘partner status’ China either has to become more democratic or become more obvious in its support of the US ‘war on terrorism’ — or perhaps both.

As will become apparent, the composition of ‘us’ changes during the one-year period covered by the empirical material. The next section will argue that since the ‘us’ and ‘them’ are related, when one category discursively changes so does the other.

5.1.3 Specifying ‘Them’ in the Question ‘Why do They Hate Us?’

The previous section argued that especially in the first texts of my empirical material, President Bush constructed an ‘us’ that was a mix of a particular and a universal national US identity, and a hierarchical common identity consisting of an alliance of friends, allies and partners. China was used as an example of an outsider that can, if it adjusts, be on its way into the alliance.

This section focuses on President Bush’s construction of ‘them’. Because the overall aim is to investigate different representations of ‘us’ and ‘them’ in the context of constructing a ‘war on terrorism’, I will here narrow down my focus to the Bush administration’s answer to the ques-

⁷ The importance of China and Russia as partners in the ‘war on terrorism’ is in addition to be found in Bush, 2002a (5: 10: 14-18) and Bush, 2002c (7: 29: 4- 31; 26).

tion ‘Why do they hate us’. The question revolves around why ‘they’ hate ‘us’ so intensely that ‘they’ were willing to perform such a terrorist attack as ‘they’ did on 11 September 2001. The answer changes during the one-year timeframe of my material. More specifically, I will trace the answers given where ‘they’ are represented as Muslims, and thus also the answers to why in general Muslims would have reason to hate the United States.

In relation to the question and the internal battle in the Bush administration concerning official policies in the immediate aftermath of 11 September, the account by former speech-writer for President Bush David Frum is of interest (Frum, 2003). He states that even though President Bush’s popularity was extremely high with the general public in the first two months after 11 September, it was falling among the conservative elite in Washington. They did not like Secretary of State Colin Powell’s attempt to recruit Syria and Iran into the antiterrorism coalition, they were critical to the idea of postponing the war in Afghanistan until after Ramadan, and most of all they did not like President Bush praising the religion of Islam (Frum, 2003: 152-153). According to Frum, President Bush had a guiding principle of not committing himself to any one particular course when it came to foreign policies until he had to. President Bush would also often allow two courses of action to develop at the same time to give himself more time to decide which one was superior. It was this line of thinking that led to what Frum calls: the great ‘why do they hate us?’ debate.⁸ The internal White House battle took place in October 2001 (Frum, 2003: 168). President Bush asks and answers the ‘why do they hate us?’ question in Text 2 from 20 September 2001, and I analyse this in chapter section 5.2. Meanwhile, this section explores the story behind the question ‘why do they hate us?’ and the internal struggle in the administration of how to guide President Bush. When reading Frum’s account, it is clear that the ‘they’ in ‘why do they hate us?’ are Muslims, and according to Frum by early October 2001 it was no longer possible to pretend that ‘Bin Ladenism’ was a peripheral phenomenon in the Muslim world. Frum dismisses the possibility that ‘they’ hate ‘us’ because of any unjust, pro-Israeli and anti-Islamic policies by the US, but he does so in the light of how the US should/can respond to the terrorist attacks. The logic was that if ‘they’ hate ‘us’ for our unjust policies, then ‘we’ should *give* ‘them’ a Palestinian state.⁹ But, Frum argues, that would indicate that if ‘they’ kill more Americans ‘they’ will get more bonuses, and that would not be right – so the US and

⁸ The ‘why do they hate us?’ question was not only debated within the White House. As Gregory indicates, on 15 October 2001 *Newsweek* distributed a thematic issue organized around the question, and Gregory comments that the answer, significantly, was to be found among ‘them’ and not among ‘us’. (Gregory, 2004: 21-22).

⁹ Frum tells the story in this fashion: that within days of 11 September, the US State Department began to leak a story that Colin Powell was to make a big speech on the Middle East, presumably staking out a more pro Palestinian line. Most of the Bush White House reacted to this idea with horror. The speech was postponed time and again and in the end Condoleezza Rice managed to remove all of its policy content (Frum, 2003: 169).

Israel were not to blame for the terrorist attacks. There was thus a need for another reason for 'them' to hate 'us', and the great 'why do they hate us?' debate divided the administration into two camps with two competing theories.

The two theories were presented, according to Frum, by the two most powerful aides to the President: Karen Hughes¹⁰ and Karl Rove¹¹. Hughes's answer to the question was that 'they' hate 'us' because 'they' do not understand 'us'. 'They' think 'we' are materialistic, immoral and godless. Therefore the solution would be to convince 'them' that Americans are honest God-fearing people. Rove provided another answer, which was influenced by Orientalist scholar Bernard Lewis: 'they' hate 'us' because 'they' resent 'us'. 'They' resent 'us' because 'they' have not reconciled themselves with the fact that 'they' are no longer the great Empire that 'they' once were. 'They' resent 'us' because 'we' now possess what 'they' ought to possess. Thus it is unlikely that Muslim hatred of the US will decline until Islam itself changes. And here is the punch-line: while waiting for that change to happen, the US should recognize that although it cannot be loved, it can enforce respect. The surest way to forfeit this respect is to seem overeager to please. According to Frum it was Hughes's views that had influenced the President's interpretation of 'why do they hate us?', as delivered in speeches, in the first two months after 11 September 2001, but after that President Bush decided that it was time to go with Rove's theory (Frum, 2003: 153-175).

There are some particularly interesting points in Frum's story. One thing to which I reacted after going through all of my empirical material was the entire lack of any recognition that the reason behind the terrorist attacks could have anything to do with US foreign policy. Frum's story suggests that the reason for the 11 September attacks and the response of going to war are closely linked. My focus in this project is not to trace the reason behind the attacks, but rather to investigate how the response of going to war was discursively constructed. Frum's account of how the Bush administration dealt with the question of 'why do they hate us?' illustrated the apparent lack of interest in finding a reasonable answer. The focus was on which type of response they wanted to go with and adjusting the answer to the question accordingly. If the goal was not to alienate the Islamic world, then go with Hughes's answer that 'they' do not understand 'us'. If, however, the response was to be war, then the Bush administration *had* to go with

¹⁰ Karen Hughes served as an adviser to President Bush for more than ten years. As Counsellor to the President for his first 18 months in the White House, she was involved in major domestic and foreign policy issues, led the communications' effort in the first year of the 'war against terrorism', and managed the White House Offices of Communications, Media Affairs, Speechwriting and Press Secretary (US Department of State homepage: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/biog/53692.htm>).

¹¹ Karl Rove was until recently (April 2006) Deputy Chief of Staff in the Bush administration, senior advisor and chief political strategist, also widely referred to as 'Bush's brain' (commentary by Elvik, Halvor, in *Dagbladet* 20 April 2006).

Rove/Lewis. The answer to the question ‘why do they hate us?’ had to be that ‘they’ hate ‘us’ because ‘they’ resent ‘us’, with the only possible US response being to show no weakness and enforce respect.

Returning to the empirical material, one aspect of ‘them’ will now be examined, namely ‘them’ as Muslims, and how ‘they’ as Muslims are constructed and changed through the material. In the first quotation from Text 2, President Bush constructs Islam as peace (Bush, 2001b):

The terrorists practice a fringe form of Islamic extremism that has been rejected by Muslim scholars and the vast majority of Muslim clerics — a fringe movement that perverts the peaceful teachings of Islam. [...] I also want to speak tonight directly to Muslims throughout the world. We respect your faith. It is practised freely by many millions of Americans, and by millions more in countries that America counts as friends. Its teachings are good and peaceful, and those who commit evil in the name of Allah blaspheme the name of Allah. The terrorists are traitors to their own faith, trying, in effect, to hijack Islam itself. The enemy of America is not our many Muslim friends; it is not our many Arab friends. Our enemy is a radical network of terrorists, and every government that supports them (2: 3: 1 - 4: 12).

President Bush here constructs an ‘Islam is peace’ discourse. I view *‘faith’* in the sentence *‘We respect your faith’* as a nodal point. An ‘Islam is peace’ discourse is made meaningful through a chain of equivalence linking the moments *‘freely’*, *‘Americans’*, *‘friends’*, *‘good’* and *‘peaceful’* to the nodal point *‘faith’*. It is also pointed out that ‘we’, the United States, have *‘many Muslim friends’* and *‘Arab friends’*. There are furthermore two representations of ‘them’ in this quotation: ‘they’ are first represented in positive terms as ‘Islam is peace’; whereas the actions of ‘them’ are not — *‘those who commit evil’*. Thus it is made clear that not all Muslims are terrorists, that actually ‘they’, the terrorists, are a *‘fringe movement, a fringe form of Islamic extremism’*. This representation of ‘them’ is constructed through a negative chain of equivalence linking the moments *‘perverts’*, *‘radical’*, *‘evil’* and *‘traitors’* to ‘them’. President Bush even goes as far as to suggest that Bin Laden and his followers were trying to *‘hijack Islam itself’*. Importantly, at this stage in time in the negative construction of ‘them’, ‘they’ are represented as a relatively small group of people — there are no ordinary people in this group and it is not a movement. ‘They’ are a limited number of people, a peripheral extremist Islamic movement.

Utilizing Laclau and Mouffe’s vocabulary, in the quotation above ‘Islam’ can be seen as a *moment* in an ‘us-them’ discourse. Through a specific *articulation*, President Bush tries to obtain *closure* in an ‘us-them’ discourse, where the identity of ‘Islam’ is one of peace. The negative representation of ‘them’ is constructed outside the domain of ‘Islam’: ‘they’ are *‘traitors to their own faith’*.

On 10 October 2001 President Bush spoke at the UN General Assembly, which is Text 4 in my material (Bush, 2001d). According to Frum, this was when the change from Hughes to

Rove materialized. There would be no more 'Islam is peace'. Now it was time to 'enforce respect' (Frum, 2003: 173). In this speech President Bush continues to insist that 'they', the terrorists:

are increasingly isolated by their own hatred and extremism. They cannot hide behind Islam (4: 3: 17-18). 'They' are still therefore represented by President Bush as fanatics and not proper Muslims, but in this speech Islam is not praised in the same manner as in the speech quoted above. At this stage in time, the war in Afghanistan had been going on for a month and after thanking those countries that approved the war through Resolution 1373, President Bush goes on to make the expectations of the US explicit:

Yet, even beyond Resolution 1373, more is required, and more is expected of our coalition against terror. We're asking for a comprehensive commitment to this fight. We must unite in opposing all terrorists, not just some of them. In this world there are good causes and bad causes, and we may disagree on where the line is drawn. Yet, there is no such thing as a good terrorist. No national aspiration, no remembered wrong can ever justify the deliberate murder of the innocent. Any government that rejects this principle, trying to pick and choose its terrorist friends, will know the consequences (4: 5: 27 - 6: 6).

President Bush makes it clear with this statement that the war in Afghanistan is not the end of the US response to the 11 September terrorist attacks, thus the 'war on terrorism' continues. Furthermore, it not only continues, but it expands: '*We must unite in opposing all terrorists, not just some of them*'. I interpret this quote to be directed at the situation in the Middle East, and particularly the Palestinian/Israeli conflict.¹² Moreover, I take the statement '*In this world there are good causes and bad causes, and we may disagree on where the line is drawn*' to be directed at divergent world opinion on where the main grievance lies in the conflict. This, however, is where the tolerance of differing opinions ends: '*Yet, there is no such thing as a good terrorist. No national aspiration, no remembered wrong can ever justify the deliberate murder of the innocent*'. I will argue that from President Bush's perspective it is only the Palestinian side that performs terrorism ('*deliberate murder of the innocent*') and not the state of Israel. Thus it is the Islamic '*aspiration*' and '*remembered wrong*' to which President Bush is referring. I interpret the last sentence in the quotation to be directed at any Islamic state that supports Palestine: '*Any government that rejects this principle, trying to pick and choose its terrorist friends, will know the consequences*'. With this warning by President Bush in the UN, the 'war on terrorism' is thus expanded: there will be consequences for any states that the US decides are involved with terrorism as terrorism is defined by the US. Moreover, this particular warning is

¹² Frum comments on this quote: 'There would be no more tolerance for the corrupt side arrangements that many Islamic governments had made with terror. And terror did not become more tolerable when it targeted Israelis rather than Americans' (Frum, 2003: 173-174).

directed towards Islamic states that fraternize with Palestine. Thus I will argue that ‘they’ are constructed at two levels in this speech. First, at the individual level, ‘they’ are the actual performers of terrorist acts, and these are misguided, extreme Muslims hiding behind a false label of ‘holy war’. Second, in this speech ‘they’ are also any Islamic states that reject the principles set forward by President Bush.

This speech was held in the UN, and it is possible to ask the question: What if some of the points in President Bush’s speech had been delivered by a representative of ‘them’? Could the exact same words be directed at the US or Israel? Could one of ‘them’ have said: ‘*we must unite in opposing all terrorists, not just some of them*’, meaning that the UN should also consider opposing terrorism performed by states? ‘They’ could have followed up with: ‘*Yet, there is no such thing as a good terrorist. No national aspiration, no remembered wrong can ever justify the deliberate murder of the innocent*’. In this context this would mean either legitimate grievance going back to the Second World War concerning Jews or legitimate US grievances concerning 11 September. These grievances could then not legitimate bombing the state of Afghanistan, resulting in the killing of innocent Afghans besides toppling the Taliban. This paragraph utilizes a particular discourse analytical strategy of *substitution*. Substitution draws theoretically on the structuralist point that a statement always gains its meaning through being different from something else that has been said or could have been said (Jørgensen, 2001: 242-243). In relation to the quotation above, by using this strategy of substitution it becomes obvious that the meaning that President Bush presents as taken for granted and ‘universal’ can be seen as a contingent attempt to pin down the meaning of the statement hegemonically.

One last quotation is presented that highlights the relationship between ‘us’ and ‘them’, and how the official US view of ‘Islam’ alters in the empirical material. This quotation is from the seventh and final text: the official *National Security Strategy* from September 2002 (Bush, 2002c):

The war on terrorism is not a clash of civilizations. It does, however, reveal the clash inside a civilization, a battle for the future of the Muslim world. This is a struggle of ideas and this is an area where America must excel (7: 38: 6-9).

The first sentence can be seen as a direct reference to Huntington’s theory of the clash of civilizations referred to at the beginning of this chapter. The Bush administration clearly wants to distance the ‘war on terrorism’ from any association to a ‘Western civilization’ at war with an ‘Islamic civilization’. The second sentence could indicate that the US perceives the blame for the 11 September terrorist attacks as lying within an Islamic civilization. Thus in relation to the ‘why do they hate us?’ question, the answer is found within ‘them’. It is not any clash between

‘us’ and ‘them’; the clash is within ‘their’ civilization and that is what led to the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001.

This section has focused on Islam as one aspect of ‘them’ (in relation to ‘us’) within the context of constructing a ‘war on terrorism’, and how the perspective on Islam changed during the one year timeframe covered by my material. I have argued that ‘Islam’ has been a *moment* in an ‘us-them’ discourse, but a moment containing three different meanings: in Text 2 Islam was represented as peace; in Text 4 Islam is represented as resentful, not only as a religion but as a former empire (‘they’ have never reconciled themselves with the loss of their power and domination); finally, in Text 7 Islam is represented as a failed civilization that is not able to conform to modern life.

5.1.4 ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ Revisited

This chapter section has shown how the narrative of ‘either you are with us or you are with the terrorists’ is repeated throughout my empirical material, and that the relationship between the two options — ‘us’ or ‘them’ — was constructed as antagonistic. I have also suggested that President Bush early on made two crucial strategic choices that had consequences for the relationship between ‘us’ and ‘them’: first, defining the 11 September terrorist attacks as acts of war and thus paving the way for a warlike response by ‘us’; second, from day one President Bush made it clear that any state that harboured terrorists would be regarded as equally guilty as the actual perpetrators. This warning was repeated in different ways throughout the empirical material. I have also shown how President Bush discursively constructed a hierarchy within the ‘us’, with the US as the main focal point, but also the construction of friends, allies and partners in the ‘war on terrorism’. With the relational logic of ‘us’ and ‘them’, the construction of ‘them’ is also a construction of ‘us’, and with the ‘either-or’ feature, when one category is expanded the other shrinks. This chapter section has focused on one aspect of ‘them’, namely ‘them’ as Muslims, demonstrating how this aspect discursively changed and how the category of ‘them’ was expanded in the material.

The next chapter section — 5.2 — will follow up the distinction of ‘us’ and ‘them’ by focusing on representations of ‘them’ as *fear* and ‘us’ as *freedom*. In the context of constructing a ‘war on terrorism’, this distinction is especially visible in the first two texts, even though representations of *freedom* and *fear* persist throughout the one-year timeframe. I will show how ‘they’ are constructed as al Qaeda-supported and supporting the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, and how *freedom* and the ‘American way of life’ are constructed as synonymous.

Thereafter, chapter section 5.3 will show how the ‘war on terrorism’ is constructed as a battle between *good* and *evil*. This construction will be analysed through a religious lens, where ‘we’ are constructed as purely *good* and aligned with God while ‘they’ are represented as entirely *evil*. This rhetorical feature of a sharp distinction between *good* and *evil* reached its peak in Text 4, where the *evil* category is expanded to include *evil* states as defined by the US ‘us’.

Finally, chapter section 5.4 will analyse representations of *civilization* and *barbarism* in the empirical material. This distinction is also clear early on in the construction of the ‘war on terrorism’, and I will argue for an intertextual relation between Texts 2 and 3 where President Bush constructs his vision of how *civilization* should deal with *barbarians*. I will also analyse how framing the ‘war on terrorism’ as a war between *civilization* and *barbarism* legitimizes exceptional actions by ‘us’ against ‘them’, and how this exceptionality is embedded into the official *National Security Strategy*.

5.2 The American Way of Life: A Discourse of Freedom and Fear

A prominent feature in US self-image is the notion that it is an exceptional nation, and that the ‘American way of life’ embodies supreme and universal values (Moen, 2005: 78-81; and Buzan, 2004: 154-165). Moen points out that American nationalism, what he calls the ‘American way of life’, is in fact unusual because it is not dependent on special ethnic or racial constellations. It is rather based on a common value system and a unique political decision-making structure with its emphasis on a balance of power that is seen as superior to any other (Moen, 2005: 78-81). Buzan argues that the US is the most liberal of the Western states, with its values of nineteenth-century liberalism and its *laissez-faire*, anti-state attitude based on the idea of individual freedom. However, when it comes to socio-economic rights, there is a remarkable divergence between the US and other democratic governments. In a comparative perspective, the US has a relatively non-consensus-based conception of economic rights, particularly in the areas of labour and social welfare. This tendency of not recognizing socio-economic rights finds few parallels, neither in the communist world, the developing world, nor among advanced industrial democracies. Moreover, Buzan observes that the idea that the US is exceptional because of its economic and political values, and that it is destined to shape the future of humankind, is the ‘everyday stuff’ of American political rhetoric (Buzan, 2004: 155).

This ‘everyday stuff’ is prominent in my empirical material. The key value at stake in the ‘war on terrorism’ is represented as *freedom*. As I will show below, President Bush declared that *freedom* was at war with *fear* at an early stage. Thus, in the process of discursively constructing the ‘war on terrorism’, the first representation of ‘us’ was the US ‘us’ being the incarnation of

freedom and ‘they’ being a manifestation of *fear*. Furthermore, *freedom* is a persistent and frequent sign throughout my empirical material. President Bush ascribes the value of *freedom* to ‘us’ and the value of *fear* to ‘them’. The other discourses that I have delineated are also structured in binary oppositions between *good-evil* and *civilized-barbarian*. However, *freedom* is not the expected opposite of *fear*. Nevertheless, in the context of a ‘war on terrorism’, it makes sense that ‘they’ are represented as *fear*, as terrorism is defined as the systematic use of terror that can be seen as synonymous with *fear*.¹³ In addition to President Bush declaring ‘them’ as *fear*, I will also argue that in my material *freedom* appears as a defining, fundamental concept, mainly in relation to expressions of opposition to *freedom*. ‘They’ are enemies of *freedom*. To understand fully why President Bush uses *freedom* as synonymous with the national identity of the US ‘us’, one would have to undertake a historical study of the cultural roots of the United States. In this chapter section I will, however, attempt to explore how the representations of ‘us’ as *freedom* and ‘them’ as *fear* are utilized in the discursive construction of the ‘war on terrorism’.

I will develop my argument in three steps: First, I will argue that President Bush constructs the ‘American way of life’ as synonymous with *freedom* and that the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 were seen as attacks on the ‘American way of life’. The ‘war on terrorism’ is thus constructed as defending the ‘American way of life’ that is equal to *freedom*. I will also argue that it was essential at an early stage in constructing the ‘war on terrorism’ to link al Qaeda and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan to *fear*. Second, I will point to how the war in Afghanistan became the logical response to the terrorist attacks, and how the state of Afghanistan went from foe to friend. Third, I will develop an argument concerning the scope of the sign *freedom* constructed by the Bush administration.

5.2.1 Defending the ‘American Way of Life’ Against Fear

The previous chapter section argued that in Text 1 — the prime-time speech on 11 September 2001 — President Bush constructed the identity of the *myth* ‘America’ through a positive *chain of equivalence*, including the *moments* of ‘*peace*’, ‘*security*’, ‘*justice*’, ‘*freedom*’ and ‘*goodness*’ (Bush, 2001a). I will here elaborate on this construction, and introduce a parallel myth, namely the ‘American way of life’. The construction of this myth is especially visible in the first two speeches of my material, beginning already in the first paragraph of the first speech, where President Bush unites the nation by referring to ‘*our way of life*’ that is linked to *freedom* (Bush, 2001a):

¹³ For a definition, see Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary at <http://www.m-w.com>.

Good evening. Today, our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts. [...] America was targeted for attack because we're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world. And no one will keep that light from shining (1:1:4-17).

In this quotation President Bush takes for granted that all US citizens are familiar with what '*our* [the American] *way of life*' stands for: in one word it stands for '*freedom*'. It was America's '*freedom*' that was attacked. Thus the logic is that '*they*' are the opposite of '*us*'; '*they*' are enemies of *freedom* and thus enemies of the '*American way of life*'. With the sentence '*America was targeted for attack because we're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world*', President Bush confirms the myth of the '*American way of life*' as exceptional, with a positive connotation. '*We*' were attacked because '*we*' are exceptional; the '*American way of life*' is the way of life that offers the most *freedom* and opportunity in the world. In the context of a discourse where '*we*' represent *freedom* and '*they*' represent *fear*, President Bush constructed a myth with this first speech: '*the American way of life*', to which he linked the moments '*peace*', '*security*', '*justice*', '*goodness*' and most important '*freedom*'. '*They*' must be the opposite of '*us*', since '*they*' are constructed as attacking '*us*' because '*we*' are the incarnation of *freedom*.

Nine days after 11 September, President Bush delivered a speech to a Joint Session of Congress and the American people (Bush, 2001b, or Text 2 of my material). The headline on the White House Homepage was, and still is, '*President Bush declares freedom at war with fear*'.¹⁴ I will therefore focus my analysis in this section on this text. At this stage the '*war on terrorism*' was thus seen as a war between '*us*' represented as *freedom* and '*they*' represented as *fear*. In the first part of the speech President Bush constructs '*them*' as the enemies of *freedom*:

Tonight we are a country awakened to danger and called to defend freedom. [...] On September the 11th, enemies of freedom committed an act of war against our country. [...] and night fell on a different world, a world where freedom itself is under attack. [...] Americans are asking: Who attacked our country? [...] Al Qaeda is to terror what the mafia is to crime. But its goal is not making money; its goal is remaking the world — and imposing its radical beliefs on people everywhere. [...] The terrorists' directive commands them to kill Christians and Jews, to kill all Americans, and make no distinction among military and civilians, including women and children (2: 1: 18 - 3: 5).

The first sentence concerns '*us*': '*we*' are in '*danger*' and '*we*' need to '*defend freedom*'. After that the focus changes to '*them*': '*they*' are the reason that '*we*' are in danger; '*they*' '*committed an act of war*' against '*us*'/*freedom*. By perpetrating this act of war against '*us*' — that is, the US represented as *freedom* — '*they*' are constructed to have attacked the entire '*world*'. After this universal depiction of '*them*' as enemies of *freedom*, President Bush becomes more particular as

¹⁴ <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/>

to who 'they' are. 'They' are al Qaeda, which is compared to the mafia. The mafia could be seen as a well-organized criminal organization, thus al Qaeda must be a well-organized terror movement, a movement that spreads *fear*. The comparison to the mafia continues as President Bush states that the mafia's goal is '*making money*', which does not sound too bad when compared to al Qaeda, which is given the aim of '*remaking the world – and imposing its radical beliefs on people everywhere*'. President Bush again constructs the attacks in the US as a concern of the entire world: all people in the world are affected by this attack on the 'American way of life'. The last sentence in the quotation above, however, does indicate that some people have more to worry about than others, thus with a starting point in who 'they' are it becomes clear who 'we' are. In order of importance, 'we' are 'Americans', 'Christians' and 'Jews'. 'They' are continually constructed as heinous. There is supposedly a '*terrorist directive*' that '*commands*' 'them' to '*kill Christians and Jews*' and '*to kill all Americans*' and to make '*no distinction*' between '*military and civilians*' – 'they' even aim to kill '*women and children*'. I will argue that this sentence reveals several things: 'they' do not only want to take over the world with their radical beliefs, but that 'they' actually have the goal of killing civilians. Thus 'they' symbolize an extreme notion of *fear*. President Bush also constructs the line of conflict to be one of religion: 'they' are Muslims, and now it is clear that 'we' are Christians and Jews in addition to all Americans. Thus President Bush draws the boundary of a specific social space where the territorial myth of the 'American way of life' now also includes Christians and Jews. There is also a uniting aspect: all Americans should be frightened. It does not matter what political views you have or what religion you profess, if you are a US citizen and thus part of the 'American way of life' 'they' want to kill you. Thus 'they' are given the aim of killing the *people* of the US, and not only the government.

The next quotation is a continuation of the previous, as 'they' still represent *fear*, which is constructed on the basis of 'them' being the total opposite of 'us'. Now President Bush goes on to link the al Qaeda 'them' to the state of Afghanistan (Bush, 2001b):

The leadership of al Qaeda has great influence in Afghanistan and supports the Taliban regime in controlling most of that country. In Afghanistan, we see al Qaeda's vision for the world. [...] The United States respects the people of Afghanistan – after all, we are currently its largest source of humanitarian aid – but we condemn the Taliban regime. It is not only repressing its own people; it is threatening people everywhere by sponsoring and sheltering and supplying terrorists. By aiding and abetting murder, the Taliban regime is committing murder (2: 3: 12-23).

There is an obvious problem with both of the slogans: a 'war on terrorism' and 'freedom at war with fear'. If 'they' are represented as 'terrorism' or 'fear', neither is accessible to military power. Thus as Gregory points out, 'they' had to be made visible and the first move was to iden-

tify al Qaeda with Afghanistan, to fold the one into the other, so that it could be the object of a conventional military campaign (Gregory, 2004: 49-50). I argue that this is precisely what President Bush is doing in the quotation above, and he does this in three steps. First, al Qaeda is linked to Afghanistan – ‘they’ have ‘*great influence*’ in the country and ‘*support the Taliban regime*’. Second, Afghanistan is constructed as being al Qaeda’s ideal state – ‘their’ (al Qaeda’s) ‘*vision for the world*’. And President Bush tries to reassure the Afghan people by stating that the US ‘*respects*’ them, the evidence being that the US is ‘*currently*’ their ‘*largest source of humanitarian aid*’. Thus ‘we’ are the opposite of ‘them’. ‘They’ want to kill all the people of the US, plus Christians and Jews, while ‘we’ are only after the ‘Taliban regime’. Third, the Taliban regime is equated to al Qaeda; the Taliban is constructed in similar terms as al Qaeda. ‘They’ are politically repressive, ‘they’ are ‘*threatening people everywhere*’ and ‘they’ too are murdering criminals – the ‘*Taliban regime is committing murder*’. With this statement, the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and al Qaeda now form a coherent ‘them’.

After stating that ‘they’ have a directive to kill all Americans, it is natural to wonder *why* ‘they’ have this goal. The previous chapter section discussed an internal debate at the White House concerning the answer to the question ‘why do they hate us?’ According to Frum, the debate had its peak in October 2001 (Frum, 2003: 168). The quotation below is still Text 2, so in September 2001 President Bush answered the question like this (Bush, 2001b):

Americans are asking, why do they hate us? They hate what we see right here in this chamber — a democratically elected government. Their leaders are self-appointed. They hate our freedoms — our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other. [...] These terrorists kill not merely to end lives, but to disrupt and end a way of life. [...] the only way to defeat terrorism as a threat to our way of life is to stop it, eliminate it, and destroy it where it grows (2: 4: 15 – 6: 4).

As one can observe, it is still ‘they’ that are constructed as representing the opposite of ‘us’. ‘They’ hate the American people because ‘they’ hate ‘*a democratically elected government*’. ‘Their’ leaders are the opposite: ‘they’ are ‘*self-appointed*’. ‘*They hate our freedoms*’, that is the freedoms that are at the base of the ‘American way of life’ – the ‘*freedom of religion*’, ‘*freedom of speech*’, etc. Thus ‘they’, ‘*these terrorists*’ (al Qaeda and the Taliban regime) kill ‘*not merely to end lives*’ (all Americans and Christians and Jews) but ‘*to disrupt and end a way of life*’ – the ‘American way of life’.

Through constructing ‘them’ with these intentions and goals, ‘they’ are dehumanized and become like parasites. Hence President Bush’s logical conclusion within the oppositional structure of *freedom* and *fear* is that the only way to defeat ‘them’ as a ‘*threat to our way of life is to stop*’ ‘them’, ‘*eliminate*’ ‘them’, and ‘*destroy*’ ‘them’. This response will be discussed further in

section 5.4 concerning the distinction between what is discursively constructed as *civilization* and *barbarism*.

After constructing the enemy as *fear*, and after having made *fear* tangible as al Qaeda and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, President Bush ends his speech by declaring a war between *freedom* and *fear* and the superiority of ‘us’ compared to ‘them’ (Bush, 2001b):

As long as the United States of America is determined and strong, this will not be an age of terror; this will be an age of liberty, here and across the world. [...] Great harm has been done to us. We have suffered great loss. And in our grief and anger we have found our mission and our moment. Freedom and fear are at war. The advance of human freedom — the great achievement of our time, and the great hope of every time — now depends on us. Our nation — this generation — will lift a dark threat of violence from our people and our future. We will rally the world to this cause by our efforts, by our courage. [...] The course of this conflict is not known, yet its outcome is certain. Freedom and fear, justice and cruelty, have always been at war, and we know that God is not neutral between them (2: 8: 14 - 9: 9).

The future of the world is dependent on a ‘*determined*’ and ‘*strong*’ United States that is the difference between a future of ‘*terror*’ and a future of ‘*liberty*’. I will argue that ‘*determined*’ and ‘*strong*’ can be connected to the remarks about how to deal with the enemies of the ‘American way of life’: ‘*eliminate*’ and ‘*destroy*’. The ‘*human freedom*’ of all people on earth is dependent on the US. President Bush constructs the ‘American way of life’ as the opposite of the *fear* that ‘they’ represent and impose on ‘us’. He constructs an ‘us’, the US, which will lead the world into an ‘*age of liberty*’. This task is constructed literally as a war between *freedom* and *fear*. President Bush finally links ‘*justice*’ to ‘*freedom*’ and ‘*cruelty*’ to ‘*fear*’. Thus ‘our’ universal value of *freedom* is linked to a superior morality – ‘*justice*’ is on ‘our’ side. ‘They’, on the other hand, are ascribed the particular negative value of ‘*cruelty*’. According to President Bush, ‘they’ committed an act of war against ‘us’ because of our ‘American way of life’, our values of *freedom*. Hence it becomes the US’s ‘*mission*’ to lead the war against *fear* and the world towards an ‘*age of liberty*’. The religious aspect of this construction will be discussed further in section 5.3 in a discourse about *good* and *evil*.

My claim here is that President Bush, again through a chain of equivalence, discursively constructs an oppositional discourse of *freedom* and *fear*. The myth about the ‘American way of life’ is constructed in relation to the difference from ‘them’ and their ‘way of life’. The ‘American way of life’ is constructed to embody a universal value of freedom, to which President Bush links several further value-based attributes such as ‘*opportunity*’, ‘*justice*’, ‘*goodness*’ and ‘*peace*’, etc. ‘Their’ ‘way of life’ on the other hand is constructed as both different and outside ‘ours’. ‘Their’ way of life is constructed through linking opposite value-based attributes to it, such as ‘*radical beliefs*’, ‘*cruelty*’, ‘*murderous*’, etc. Constructing ‘them’ as both different and

outside 'us' implies that none of 'their' attributes can exist inside the 'American way of life'. Therefore if the 'American way of life' is defined by 'freedom', 'justice', 'security', 'peace' and 'goodness', then the 'American way of life' does not involve suppression, injustice, insecurity, war or evilness.

In a discourse of *freedom* and *fear*, I argue that President Bush strives to obtain *closure* where the *nodal point* and *moment* 'freedom' is represented as having a universal meaning. I will claim that what is considered the meaning of *freedom* is both historically and culturally contingent and not timeless and universal. Furthermore, it can be argued, like Lazar and Lazar do, that the universal sense of *freedom* that President Bush constructs is rather *freedom* in the particularistic sense of Western capitalist liberal democracy (Lazar and Lazar, 2004: 228-229). In addition, Lazar and Lazar argue that when President Bush links *freedom* to, for example, 'peace', 'liberty' and 'justice', the notion of *freedom* is a very particular politico-economic ideology that appropriates to itself attributes of righteousness. Thus the US claim of the high moral ground is reinforced, together with the universalization of the values that it advocates as normative (Lazar and Lazar, 2004).

Until now President Bush has constructed a situation where on 11 September 2001 the US was attacked by 'enemies of freedom', and where *fear* was made tangible as al Qaeda and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. The next section will first show how 'we' deal with 'them' — the enemy — and second, how a former enemy of *freedom*, the state of Afghanistan, is constructed as an ally in the 'war on terrorism'.

5.2.2 Enduring Freedom?

The constructed 'freedom at war with fear' was set into action in Afghanistan on 7 October 2001 under the name *Enduring Freedom*¹⁵ (Bush, 2001c). President Bush announced from the Treaty Room of the White House that the US was a peaceful nation and that the only manner in which to pursue peace in today's world was to pursue those who threaten it. This way of constructing 'us' follows the above chain of equivalence that gives meaning to the 'American way of life'. 'We' are defined as embodying 'freedom', 'justice' and 'goodness', etc. Hence when 'we' are forced to defend *freedom*, to defend the 'American way of life' by going to war, it is by this very definition a just decision:

We're a peaceful nation. [...] In the face of today's new threat, the only way to pursue peace is to pursue those who threaten it. We did not ask for this mission, but we will fulfill it. The name of today's military

¹⁵ The military operation was first named *Infinite Justice*, but the name was changed when it was pointed out how insulting this name would be to Muslims, as only Allah can dispense infinite justice (Gregory, 2004: 48).

operation is *Enduring Freedom*. We defend not only our precious freedoms, but also the freedom of people everywhere to live and raise their children free from fear (3: 2: 13-19).

President Bush constructs an unquestionable need to use violence to defend '*freedom*' against '*fear*'. *Fear* is here represented by al Qaeda and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Again, it is not only the '*precious freedoms*' that define the 'American way of life' that are threatened, it is '*the freedom of people everywhere*'.

Approximately three months later President Bush could announce to the American people that *freedom* had defeated *fear* in Afghanistan (Bush, 2002a):

[Our nation has] saved a people from starvation, and freed a country from brutal oppression. The American flag flies again over our embassy in Kabul. Terrorists who once occupied Afghanistan now occupy cells at Guantanamo Bay. And terrorist leaders who urged followers to sacrifice their lives are running for their own. America and Afghanistan are now allies against terror (5: 1: 15-20).

Afghanistan had been occupied by *fear* but now 'we' have liberated them. 'We' the people of the US have '*freed*' our friends the Afghan people from our common enemy – *fear* – embodied in the oppressive Taliban regime supporting and supported by al Qaeda. Those who earlier invoked *fear* in the Afghan society are now, thanks to 'us', running for 'their' own lives. And not only that: now the US and Afghanistan are '*allies*' in the 'war on terrorism'. Thus a former 'they' has successfully been discursively incorporated into the 'us'.

However, at the end of the same speech President Bush looks beyond Afghanistan and emphasizes that there still exists a hideous 'them' out there (Bush, 2002a):

Our enemies send other people's children on missions of suicide and murder. They embrace tyranny and death as a cause and a creed. We stand for a different choice, made long ago, on the day of our founding. We affirm it again today. We choose freedom and the dignity of every life. Steadfast in our purpose, we now press on. We have known freedom's price. We have shown freedom's power. And in this great conflict, my fellow Americans, we will see freedom's victory (5:12: 4-10).

Thus, in the context of an oppositional structuring between *freedom* and *fear*, 'they' (now no longer the state of Afghanistan) are in contrast to 'us' obsessed with '*tyranny*' and '*death*' and exploiting '*other people's children*' to project *fear* through '*missions of suicide and murder*'. Conversely, 'we' have always, all the way back to '*our founding*', represented the universal value of *freedom*. On 11 September 'we' came to know '*freedom's price*', in Afghanistan we showed '*freedom's power*' and in the great conflict between *freedom* and *fear* 'we' '*will see freedom's victory*'.

Buzan points out that belief in the essential rightness of American values has been greatly reinforced by the fact that the US has been the victor in the three ideological world wars

of the twentieth century (Buzan, 2004: 155). The notion of the ‘American way of life’ as the ideal ‘way of life’ is also visible in my material and will be the topic of the following section.

5.2.3 The ‘American Way of Life’: The Only Way of Life?

In 1989 Francis Fukuyama published an essay entitled *The End of History*, where he claimed that liberal democracy as a system of governance had won such an overwhelming victory over other ideologies that liberalism was thus the only legitimate ideology left in the world (Weber, 2005: 104). The argument was that liberalism does not have any internal irrational contradictions that otherwise lead to the collapse of ideologies, and hence we were witnessing the end of history with liberalism as the final form of human government (Weber, 2005). In classic liberal economic arguments, the nature of international economic relations is seen as harmonious. Economic exchange processes, such as free trade, extend wealth and increase the quality of life for everyone who participates. The view is that economics not only brings economic benefits; it brings political benefits as well. This happens primarily through the spread of liberal democratic institutions in which liberty, freedom and justice for all are guaranteed because the people hold political power (Weber, 2005: 105). I will argue that in President Bush’s construction of a war between *freedom* and *fear*, these ideas have some influence, as can be seen in the following quotations from Text 6 (Bush, 2002b) and Text 7 (Bush, 2002c) :

Today the great powers are also increasingly united by common values, instead of divided by conflicting ideologies. [...] And the tide of liberty is rising in many other nations. [...] Even in China, leaders are discovering that economic freedom is the only lasting source of national wealth. In time, they will find that social and political freedom is the only true source of national greatness (6: 6: 8-16).

The concept of ‘free trade’ arose as a moral principle even before it became a pillar of economics. If you can make something that others value, you should be able to sell it to them. If others make something that you value, you should be able to buy it. This is real freedom, the freedom for a person — or a nation — to make a living (7: 22: 14-17).

The great struggles of the twentieth century between liberty and totalitarianism ended with a decisive victory for the forces of freedom — and a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise. [...] These values of freedom are right and true for every person, in every society — and the duty of protecting these values against their enemies is the common calling of freedom-loving people across the globe and across the ages (7: 1: 4-13).

In the first quotation President Bush constructs a ‘*tide of liberty*’ that is ‘*rising*’. Free markets and free trade are seen as fundamental aspects of ‘*freedom*’. I return to the quote concerning China, because in this context it can be seen as the perfect example of development towards ‘*freedom*’ and more explicitly towards the ‘American way of life’, since a market economy is seen as the first building block in the structure of a liberal democratic state. In the second quota-

tion, '*free trade*' is constructed as a '*moral principle*' and as '*real freedom*'. The concept of '*free trade*' is explained in such a simplistic manner as if to emphasize its rightness. Moreover, in the third quote '*freedom, democracy and free enterprise*' are constructed as universal values, as they are '*right and true*' for everyone, everywhere, at all times and most important of all, they are eternally linked together. Consequently, it is logical that 'we' have to protect these values against '*their enemies*'. In the same text we are again reminded of what is at stake (Bush, 2002c):

In the war against global terrorism, we will never forget that we are ultimately fighting for our democratic values and way of life. Freedom and fear are at war, and there will be no quick or easy end to this conflict (7: 11: 10-12).

Again, the oppositional structuring of *freedom* and *fear* are vital for the construction of a 'war on terrorism'. Yet we are again reminded that it is the value of *freedom* and the 'American way of life' that 'we' are fighting for.

This chapter section argues that President Bush has tried to obtain *closure* in what I see as a discourse of the structured oppositions of *freedom* and *fear*. In this discourse *freedom* and *fear* are viewed as nodal points. *Freedom*, I argue, can be seen as the equivalence of the 'American way of life' and President Bush has linked it to values such as '*justice*', '*opportunity*', '*goodness*', '*free enterprise*' and '*democracy*', etc. Furthermore, these values are represented not only as American values, but as universal and timeless. Thus the values of the 'American way of life' are eternal. The 'American way of life' is constructed in relation to 'them' and 'their' way of life in the sense that 'they' represent what 'we' are *not*. 'They' represented as *fear* are linked to particular and negative values such as '*tyranny*', '*oppression*' and '*cruelty*', etc. I have also pointed to the notion that *fear* and terrorism are not accessible to military power, and I suggest that it was therefore essential for President Bush in the early stages of the 'war on terrorism' to make *fear*/terrorism tangible through constructing a link to al Qaeda and the Taliban regime. I have furthermore offered an alternative interpretation of the meaning of *freedom*, where I suggest that the 'American way of life' is not universal and timeless but rather a particular social, political and economic ideology. Still, the war over values continues and the moral exceptionalism of the United States is the focus of the next chapter section.

5.3 The Battle between Good and Evil

A frequent topic in the literature concerning US foreign policy, especially after 11 September 2001, is the moralizing rhetoric utilized by President Bush and his administration. A repeated term in this respect is the so-called Manichaean tendencies (Buzan, 2004: 157-158; Singer,

2004: 209; and Gregory, 2004: 47-49). The term has its origin in a former world religion, namely Manichaeism, which has influenced several of today's world religions (Thomassen, 2004).¹⁶ In the year 228, in the area that is today Iraq, a young boy aged twelve called Mani had a vision. His Heavenly Twin appeared, sent by the highest God, to teach Mani the mysteries of the true religion. The Heavenly Twin revealed to Mani the great mystery of the battle between light and darkness, and of a grand war that darkness had initiated. When Mani was 24 years old the Heavenly Twin returned and told Mani that it was time for him to go out into the world and teach the truth that he had learned, a suggestion that Mani followed. Manichaeism spread throughout the world from Spain in the west to China in the east. The Roman Empire introduced Orthodox Catholicism as the state religion in around the year 300. Manichaeism was then persecuted, and it was soon abolished in Europe. It lasted longer in China, and had followers at least until around 1500 (Thomassen, 2004). Singer claims that centuries of suppression and persecution did not eradicate the Manichaean way of looking at the world (Singer, 2004: 209). Singer continues to explain that after the Reformation, the Manichaean view emerged in some Protestant sects and was brought by them to the US where it thrived (Singer, 2004).

There are no direct lines between Manichaeism and today's US foreign policy. Why is it then used to describe President Bush's rhetoric and foreign policy? The so-called Manichean tendencies are related to a strongly dualistic worldview portrayed by Manichaeism as the battle between light and darkness and *good* and *evil*. The history of the world is also seen as a progressive process where the God of justice and truth fights against the *evil* powers of violence and lies. In a strict religious sense this dualism is the notion that there can be no Satan in God and no God in Satan, and that it is a duty of every good Manichaean to fight God's fight against Satan. According to Singer, President Bush's readiness to see the world in a dualistic manner, where the US is pure and *good* and its enemies are wholly *evil*, has roots in an American-Manichaean tradition (Singer, 2004.). I claim that throughout my empirical material there is a clear oppositional structuring between *good* and *evil* and that the dualistic worldview of Manichaeism can be useful in exploring how the 'war on terrorism' was discursively constructed by President Bush.

The dualism of 'us' representing *goodness* and 'them' representing pure *evil* is evident from the very beginning of my material, as are the other three sub-discourses. Within what I call a discourse of *good* and *evil*, however, there is a development. Specifically, the concept of *evil* is expanded by President Bush in my material to include more and more in the *evil* category. According to Svendsen, there is an increasing degree of comparison in President Bush's rhetoric,

¹⁶ This is a transcript of a lecture held by Professor Einar Thomassen at Skjervheimseminaret in 2004.

where as a first step the acts as such are characterized as *evil*. Later on he extends this *evil* to include also the method (terrorism), then the perpetrators, the ideology and, finally, all states that harbour, support or aid terrorist as defined by ‘us’ (Svendsen, 2002). ‘They’ being *evil* is thus expanded in the one-year timeframe that my material covers.

In addition to the development of the *evil* category, I will also in this chapter section explore the construction of ‘us’ as representing *good*. I will furthermore show how President Bush compares the situation today with the Second World War and the Cold War. Finally, I will argue that the ‘war on terrorism’ can be interpreted as part of an eternal battle between the forces of *good* and *evil*.

5.3.1 Constructing ‘Them’ as Evil and ‘Us’ as Good

I suggest that there is a constructed dualism between ‘us’ as *good* and ‘them’ as *evil* in my empirical material. This process is relational: ‘us’ as *good* is constructed on the basis that ‘we’ are not *evil*; and ‘they’ are constructed as *evil* on the basis that ‘they’ are not *good*. ‘We’ possess no *evilness* and ‘they’ possess no *goodness*. In the construction of the ‘war on terrorism’, this sharp distinction between *good* and *evil* was an essential moment from the very beginning, as can be observed in Text 1 (Bush, 2001a):

Thousands of lives were suddenly ended by evil, despicable acts of terror. [...] Today, our nation saw evil, the very worst of human nature. [...] And I pray they will be comforted by a power greater than any of us, spoken through the ages in Psalm 23: ‘Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me’. [...] Yet, we go forward to defend freedom and all that is good and just in our world (1: 1: 7 - 2: 21).

In this section I utilize some of Lazar and Lazar’s analytical points regarding President Bush constructing ‘them’ as *evil* and ‘us’ as *good* (Lazar and Lazar, 2004: 236-238). They point out that President Bush’s construction of ‘them’ as *evil* is done simply through lexical reiteration of the word ‘evil’. In the quote above I argue that it is the *acts* that are *evil* — ‘*evil despicable acts of terror*’. Furthermore, Lazar and Lazar point out that *evil* can also be linked to the enemy through action, as the object of ‘our’ perceptual vision: ‘*today, our nation saw evil, the very worst of human nature*’. This way of contextualizing the attacks not only as a terrorist attack, but as a threat that goes beyond the mere attacks as such — makes the threat of *evil* immediate and real. ‘We’ on the other hand are constructed as ‘*defending all that is good and just in our world*’. Thus President Bush from the beginning makes a link between ‘us’ being *good* and justice. The US is on the side of *good*, although, according to Lazar and Lazar, this is seldom stated explicitly. Instead, it is constructed in comparison with an alignment with God and religion. I argue that with President Bush’s biblical quote above, he positions God with the US: ‘*I fear no*

evil, for You are with me'. In Text 2, several of the moments in the constructed dualism between *good* and *evil* are brought to life (Bush, 2001b):

The course of this conflict is not known, yet its outcome is certain. Freedom and fear, justice and cruelty, have always been at war, and we know that God is not neutral between them. Fellow citizens, we'll meet violence with patient justice — assured of the rightness of our cause, and confident of the victories to come. In all that lies before us, may God grant us wisdom, and may He watch over the United States of America (2: 9: 8-13).

In general, a connection to God – the essence of all that is *good* – can be expressed in several ways. First, Lazar and Lazar point to God being appropriated to validate the expressed values of the 'us': '*Freedom and fear, justice and cruelty, have always been at war, and we know that God is not neutral between them.*' Thus the value of '*freedom*' and '*justice*' can be seen as divinely sanctioned in addition to being moments in a discourse constructing 'us'. Second, the link between 'us' and God is made through the constant invocation of blessings on the nation: '*may God grant us wisdom, and may He watch over the United States of America*'.

I further argue that President Bush naturalizes the relationship between 'us' as *good* and 'them' as *evil* — that is, 'us' and 'them' are constructed as enemies from creation. This can be seen as yet another process of making culture into nature. The conflict is depicted as a process, as an eternal battle, where of course '*God is not neutral*', between the forces of *good* ('*freedom*' and '*justice*') and *evil* ('*fear*' and '*cruelty*'). After this universal construction, where 'us' is the values of *goodness*/Godliness and 'they' represent *evil*/Satan, President Bush becomes more particular. In the next sentence, the 'us' are the people of the United States, '*fellow citizens*'. Again, a religious dualism is expressed: 'we' represent '*patient justice*' where 'they' represent '*violence*'. President Bush also informs the US people of the righteousness of '*our cause*'. I argue that President Bush constructs '*our cause*' to be the eternal battle between *good* and *evil*. Therefore in this quote the 'war on terrorism' is constructed as a component in an eternal battle between the forces of *good*/God and the forces of *evil*/Satan. In both quotations above, President Bush has constructed 'them' as *evil* because 'they' performed '*evil, despicable acts of terror*'. Thus the acts were *evil* and the method (terrorism) was *evil*. Furthermore, 'they', the perpetrators, were *evil*. 'They' were the '*very worst of human nature*'.

In the next quotation it is the ideology behind the attacks that is constructed as *evil*. 'They' justify their actions as *jihad* (holy war). Thus another aspect in their construction as *evil* was to disassociate 'them' from such claims to righteousness. Below I will repeat a short version of the quotation presented in chapter section 5.1 in connection with the 'Islam is peace' dis-

course that I delineated at the early stage of the construction of a ‘war on terrorism’ (Bush, 2001b):

The terrorists practice a fringe form of Islamic extremism that has been rejected by Muslim scholars and the vast majority of Muslim clerics — a fringe movement that perverts the peaceful teachings of Islam.[...] Its [Islam’s] teachings are good and peaceful, and those who commit evil in the name of Allah blaspheme the name of Allah. The terrorists are traitors to their own faith, trying, in effect, to hijack Islam itself (2: 3: 1 - 4: 10).

In the context of constructing a religious dualism between ‘us’ as *good* and ‘them’ as *evil*, President Bush here discredits ‘their’ call to religion. As Lazar and Lazar point out, the enemies’ call to religion is not only discredited, but it is discredited as wicked and indeed as *evil*: it ‘*perverts the peaceful teachings of Islam*’. ‘They’ ‘*blaspheme the name of Allah*’ and ‘they’ are in fact ‘*traitors to their own faith*’. Furthermore, ‘they’ are portrayed in this manner not only by an outsider (President Bush); ‘they’ are also constructed as being depicted in this way from the inside. ‘They’ ‘*practise a fringe form of Islamic extremism*’ that has been ‘*rejected by Muslim scholars and the vast majority of Muslim clerics*’ (Lazar and Lazar, 2004: 236-238). I therefore suggest that President Bush here attempts discursively to remove any claim to righteousness by ‘them’ and thus constructs ‘them’ as utterly *evil*.

This section shows how President Bush at an early stage constructed ‘them’ as thoroughly *evil* and ‘us’ as thoroughly *good*. I also point to a development in the early stage of my material where the *evil* category is expanded from *evil* acts to *evil* methods, to *evil* perpetrators, and finally to an *evil* ideology justifying the actions of ‘them’. In the next two sections I will first analyse how President Bush compares the situation today with the Second World War and the Cold War. I will then analyse how the category of *evil* is later developed to include entire states.

5.3.2 Evil has Returned

President Bush compares today’s situation with the Second World War and the Cold War. I present two quotations concerning this comparison: from Text 2, the ‘early days’, which was directed at the US people (Bush, 2001b); and Text 4, the speech at the UN, which is dated approximately two months later (Bush, 2001d):

We are not deceived by their pretenses to piety. We have seen their kind before. They are the heirs of all the murderous ideologies of the 20th century. By sacrificing human life to serve their radical visions — by abandoning every value except the will to power — they follow in the path of fascism, and Nazism, and totalitarianism. And they will follow that path all the way, to where it ends: in history’s unmarked grave of discarded lies (2: 4: 25 - 5: 3).

The United Nations was founded in this cause. In a second world war, we learned there is no isolation from evil. We affirmed that some crimes are so terrible they offend humanity, itself. And we resolved that the aggressions and ambitions of the wicked must be opposed early, decisively, and collectively, before they threaten us all. That evil has returned, and that cause is renewed (4: 1: 14-18).

When analysing these two quotations, it can be fruitful to return to the dualism in Manichaeism. Manichaeism's dualism has two roots (Thomassen, 2004). First, it draws on the ontological dualism between mind and matter as presented in Greek philosophy. Second, it draws on the view from Zarathustra where the world is viewed as a battle between *good* and *evil*. The battle is between a God of truth and justice that is up against the *evil* powers of violence and lies. Manichaeism is hence a synthesis of ontological dualism that is consistent with the opposition between mind and matter and an ethical dualism of *good* and *evil*. According to Thomassen, Manichaeism brought with it one more notion from Zarathustra — namely the vision of world history as a progressing process where the battle between *good* and *evil* is fought. History is leading up to a final battle where the forces of *good* shall overcome the forces of *evil*, and this world will crumble and a new way of life will surface where truth and justice will rule pure and undiluted (Thomassen, 2004).

In the first quotation above, 'we' are the people of the United States, and again I argue that President Bush uses a strategy of (e)vilification where 'they' are *evil* through their actions as objects of 'our' perceptual vision. 'They' are similar to some *'kind'* that 'we' have '*seen before*'. According to David Frum, President Bush's former speech writer, the single most powerful line in the speech quoted above was the observation that political Islam would follow Nazism, fascism and communism (the latter hastily renamed 'totalitarianism' for fear of offending China) into '*history's unmarked grave of discarded lies*' (Frum, 2003: 147). I support the argument that this is indeed a powerful line and that it could be interpreted as 'us' representing light and the purity of truth and 'them' representing darkness ('*an unmarked grave*') and polluted lies. Through this statement President Bush also makes it clear that 'we' will win the battle against 'them' — thus indicating already the material outcome of a 'war on terrorism'.

The second quotation is from Text 4, the speech to the General Assembly in the UN in November 2001, so 'we' are here the civilized nations in the world (Bush, 2001d).¹⁷ President Bush argues here that what 'we' learned in the Second World War was that the civilized had '*no isolation from evil*'. Because of what 'we' experienced last time, 'we' now know how to deal with the '*wicked*'. 'We' must oppose 'them' '*early, decisively, and collectively*'. Thus the force

¹⁷ President Bush began his speech by stating: 'Every civilized nation here today is resolved to keep the most basic commitment of civilization: We will defend ourselves and future against terror and lawless violence' (Bush, 2001d, 4: 1: 11-13). I will elaborate on this statement in the next chapter.

of *'evil has returned'*, and if *'we'* do not want to experience the same crimes, the crimes that are *'so terrible that they offend humanity, itself'*, *'we'* must oppose the *'wicked'*. I argue that this quotation has an apocalyptic ring to it: *'we'*, the forces of *good*, have to unite in the reassumed battle against *evil*.

Approximately two-and-a-half months later the discursive construction of *'them'* as *evil* was further expanded and reached a new climax.

5.3.3 An Axis of Evil

In Text 5 — the State of the Union Address in late January 2002 — President Bush declared the existence of an *'axis of evil'*. At this time the initial military attack on Afghanistan was over and, according to Gregory, the naming of the *'axis of evil'* was an unmistakable echo of ex-US President Reagan's characterization of the former USSR as an *'evil empire'* (Gregory, 2004: 48). When President Bush announced the existence of an *'axis of evil'*, he was drawing on both the *'evil empire'* and the Second World War's fascist coalition of *'axis powers'* (Bush 2002a):

Our second goal is to prevent regimes that sponsor terror from threatening America or our friends and allies with weapons of mass destruction. Some of these regimes have been pretty quiet since September the 11th. But we know their true nature. North Korea is a regime arming with missiles and weapons of mass destruction, while starving its citizens. Iran aggressively pursues these weapons and exports terror, while an unelected few repress the Iranian people's hope for freedom. Iraq continues to flaunt its hostility toward America and to support terror. The Iraqi regime has plotted to develop anthrax, and nerve gas, and nuclear weapons for over a decade. This is a regime that has already used poison gas to murder thousands of its own citizens — leaving the bodies of mothers huddled over their dead children. This is a regime that agreed to international inspections — then kicked out the inspectors. This is a regime that has something to hide from the civilized world. States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. They could provide these arms to terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred. They could attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States. In any of these cases, the price of indifference would be catastrophic (5: 4: 3 - 19).

The *'axis of evil'* section of the State of the Union speech was written by former speechwriter David Frum. His assignment was to write a justification for the US to go to war in Iraq (Frum, 2003: 224). According to Frum, there were dozens of people across the government working on the 2002 State of the Union speech. He was writing what he calls a *'hawkish draft'*; others were working on completely different versions of the speech. In hindsight it is clear that the hawks won the internal disagreements over which line of argument to follow. In his original draft, Frum had applied the term *'axis of hatred'* but this was changed to *evil* to *'use the theological language that Bush had made his own since September 11 [...]*' (Frum, 2003: 238). Berthelsen

claims that Iran and North Korea were included into the ‘axis of evil’ so that the speech would not sound like a direct declaration of war against Iraq (Berthelsen, 2005: 67).

The first important link in the quotation in constructing ‘them’ as an ‘axis of evil’ was to connect ‘*regimes that sponsor terror*’ to ‘*weapons of mass destruction*’ (WMD). It is not the weapons in themselves that are the problem, as several *good* states have WMD — the problem is that ‘they’ hate ‘us’, are *evil* and will use WMD next time that ‘they’ attack ‘us’.

Furthermore, President Bush claims to ‘*know their true nature*’, which in this relation, in my opinion, can be seen as both demonization (‘they’ are not only bad, ‘they’ are *evil*) and naturalization (‘they’ are *evil* by nature) of ‘them’. In the quotation, Iraq is the only regime that President Bush directly links to terrorism: ‘*Iraq continues to flaunt its hostility toward America and to support terror*’. President Bush leaves nothing out when he depicts just how *evil* the Iraqi regime really is: ‘*This is a regime that has already used poison gas to murder thousands of its own citizens -- leaving the bodies of mothers huddled over their dead children.*’ President Bush also claims that ‘they’ ‘*have something to hide*’, clearly hinting at WMD.

In the above quotation from Text 4, President Bush proclaimed that ‘*evil has returned*’, and that ‘we’ in the civilized world must oppose the ‘*wicked*’. Now in Text 5, approximately two-and-a-half months later, the wicked have specific names, thus ‘a geography of evil’¹⁸ has been constructed. The ‘axis of evil’ constitute ‘*states like these*’ and more importantly for the construction of a ‘war on terrorism’; ‘*their terrorist allies*’. Thus, in terms of an oppositional structured *good-evil* discourse, *evil* is a nodal point to which the other moments — ‘*evil regimes*’, ‘WMD’ and ‘*terrorist allies*’ — are linked through a chain of equivalence. This constructs a naturalized version of ‘them’ as *evil*. This three-headed monster — ‘them’ — driven by ‘*hatred*,’ ‘*could attack*’ ‘us’ and thus ‘they’ could create a catastrophe. The vital word here is *could*. I view this as preparation for the new security strategy — Text 7 — where the principle of pre-emptive action is introduced. The next chapter section will discuss how this new principle is constructed as a common-sense strategy in the ‘war on terrorism’.

One last quotation is presented in this section that I will argue can be seen as an extension of the particularistic picture painted by President Bush in the ‘axis of evil’ speech, this time regarding the imputed existence of a universal moral truth. President Bush below argues (Bush, 2002b):

Some worry that it is somehow undiplomatic or impolite to speak the language of right and wrong. I disagree. Different circumstances require different methods, but not different moralities. Moral truth is the same in every culture, in every time, and in every place. Targeting innocent civilians for murder is always

¹⁸ I borrow the term from Gregory (2004: 48).

and everywhere wrong. Brutality against women is always and everywhere wrong. There can be no neutrality between justice and cruelty, between the innocent and the guilty. We are in a conflict between good and evil, and America will call evil by its name. By confronting evil and lawless regimes, we do not create a problem, we reveal a problem. And we will lead the world in opposing it (6: 5: 15-23).

When President Bush spoke at West Point, approximately four months after the ‘axis of evil’ speech, he made it quite clear that there exists a moral truth and that it is universal both in time and space: ‘*Moral truth is the same in every culture, in every time, and in every place*’ (Bush, 2002b). Contrary to what President Bush states in this quote, I assert that what is considered morally right and wrong is dependent on both time and space. That is, however, not the main point. The point is how President Bush represents a ‘*moral truth*’ as an absolutist fact. If we return to the dualism in Manichaeism, it is on display in the quotation above. ‘We’ are represented as the bearers of this eternal ‘*moral truth*’ (because ‘we’ know it exists). In addition, two more moments are linked to ‘us’, namely ‘we’ are represented as the ‘*innocent*’ and as having ‘*justice*’ on our side, and in opposition to ‘us’, ‘they’ are ‘*guilty*’ and ‘*cruel*’. President Bush again highlights the absolutism of the categories. There are only two options: either ‘us’ (innocent and just) or ‘them’ (guilty and cruel) — ‘*there can be no neutrality between*’ the two. Furthermore, it is stated quite simply that: ‘*We are in a conflict between good and evil, and America will call evil by its name*’. It is clear that ‘we’, the US, are *good* because ‘we’ will confront *evil*, thus ‘we’ have to be *good*. In relation to this, Svendsen makes a valid point. He argues that the *evil* that the US is fighting is only the *evil* that is viewed as a threat to the US. Thus the US is not doing anything with *evil* terrorists that attack the enemies of the US. Svendsen points to Florida where Jed Bush, the President’s brother, is governor, and his protection of anti-Castro terrorists that have both hijacked aeroplanes and boats without persecution. It seems that because Cuba is defined as *evil*, any anti-Cuban terrorism is *good* and thus not in need of combating (Svendsen, 2002).

I argue that there is a sense of duty reflected in the quotation above. Because ‘we’ are *good*, it is ‘our’ duty to ‘*call evil by its name*’ and thus it is ‘our’ duty to fight *evil*. It is clear who ‘we’ have a duty to fight: ‘*evil and lawless regimes*’ (three of them we know by name).

Finally, President Bush points out that by fighting *evil* ‘*we do not create a problem, we reveal a problem. And we will lead the world in opposing it*’. The problem that ‘we’ reveal is the problem of *evil*, and it is ‘our’ duty to lead the (*good*) world into battle against *evil*. This sense of mission is the focus of the final part of this section chapter.

5.3.4. On a Mission from God?

In Bob Woodward's book, *Bush at War*, Woodward describes a meeting between President Bush and his Senior Advisor Karl Rove some days after 11 September 2001. Rove was in the Oval Office and President Bush told him that just as his father's generation was 'called' in the Second World War, our generation was 'called' now. "I'm here for a reason", Bush said, "and this is going to be how we're going to be judged" (Woodward, 2002: 205). I do not claim that President Bush believes that he is chosen by God to lead this mission against *evil*. Rather, my suggestion is that President Bush portrays the 'war on terrorism' as a mission of *good* fighting *evil*, and that it can be fruitful to deconstruct this aspect of the construction of the war through a religious lens. When it comes to religion, the US is the exception to the general rule that the progress of modernity erodes commitment to religion in society (Buzan, 2004: 157). According to Singer, poll after poll show that Americans are much more religious than the citizens of any other developed country (Singer, 2004: 92). According to Singer, more than eight out of ten people in the US still say that God is important in their lives (in Europe fewer than half say the same). About 94 per cent of people in the US believe in God, 89 per cent in heaven and 72 per cent in hell and the devil (Singer, 2004). My focus in this thesis is not on statistics. I therefore see the numbers above as indicators and as an opening for interpretations rather than 'facts'. They could indicate that when President Bush applied theological language after 11 September 2001 he would have got better resonance with a US public than with, for example, a European public. The first quotation in this section was directed at a US audience only nine days after the attacks on 11 September (Bush 2001b):

Great harm has been done to us. We have suffered great loss. And in our grief and anger we have found our mission and our moment. [...] Our nation — this generation — will lift a dark threat of violence from our people and our future. We will rally the world to this cause by our efforts, by our courage (2: 8: 17- 21).

In this quotation President Bush constructs the attacks as '*great harm has been done to us*', but '*in our grief and anger*' 'we' found '*our mission*'. I will argue that '*our mission*' is linked to '*our nation*' and that '*our moment*' is linked to '*this generation*'. As mentioned in the introduction to this section, in the dualism of Manichaeism the light represents a God of truth and justice that is fighting the battle *initiated* by darkness representing the *evil* powers of violence and lies. I argue that there is a clear religious representation in the quotation above. President Bush frames the situation as battle between 'them' (the dark forces of violence) and 'us' (the nation of the US). Because of the great harm that was done to 'us', 'we' the US '*found*' our mission and it is taking place right now. Therefore 'we' are destined to lead the world in this mission against *evil*. The USA will '*rally the world*' to 'our' mission by 'our' actions and '*our courage*'.

I interpret the rhetoric above as representing an apocalyptic view of history. As mentioned above in Manichaeism there is a view of history as a progressive process leading to a final battle between *good* and *evil* where *good* wins and a new order consisting of truth and justice will emerge. According to Thomassen, this view of history has also influenced other religions. We find it both in Judaism, for example, in the book of Daniel and in Christianity in the Book of Revelation and the Apocalypse of John. An apocalyptic view of history is also incorporated in Islam. What is interesting is that Judaism, Christianity and Islam include a new element into the view of history that is not as strong in Manichaeism, namely the idea of a chosen people. Hence the apocalyptic battle between *good* and *evil* is not only on the ethical and ontological level but also a battle between different groups of people. Social dualism is thus constructed in addition to ethical and ontological dualism. These three separate dualisms are often used in different combinations. According to Thomassen, the most common combination is between social and ethical dualism, which leads to the view that one's own group represents *good* while 'they' represent *evil*. When this is combined with monotheism, as is required in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the boundaries between 'us' and 'them' become even more fundamental (Thomassen, 2004). According to Singer, 53 per cent of US adults believe in the Apocalypse, and he points out that projecting this prophecy on to the world can lead to the view that the US nation is leading a divine mission and therefore the nation's enemies are demonized (Singer, 2004: 208). My initial thought was that President Bush would tone down his religious rhetoric when he addressed the UN, but I was surprised to see no marked differences in this regard when I analysed the empirical material (Bush, 2001d):

We stand for the permanent hopes of humanity, and those hopes will not be denied. We're confident, too, that history has an author who fills time and eternity with his purpose. We know that evil is real, but good will prevail against it. This is the teaching of many faiths, and in that assurance we gain strength for a long journey. It is our task — the task of this generation — to provide the response to aggression and terror. We have no other choice, because there is no other peace. We did not ask for this mission, yet there is honor in history's call. We have a chance to write the story of our times, a story of courage defeating cruelty and light overcoming darkness. This calling is worthy of any life, and worthy of every nation. So let us go forward, confident, determined, and unafraid (4: 7: 16-25).

In this quotation President Bush first constructs God as the '*author*' of '*history*' and God '*fills time and eternity with his purpose*'. I interpret this to mean that President Bush sees the situation in an apocalyptic manner where '*evil is real, but good will prevail against it*'. He goes on to state that '*this is the teaching of many faiths*'. He further repeats what he spoke to the US audience two months earlier: that it is now time to respond to *evil*, this is '*the task of this generation*'. According to President Bush, history has an author: God. Thus when he states that '*there*

is honor in history's call, I take this as an indication of President Bush implying that he has, and thus logically 'we' have, a call from God. And this call is a call to action because '*we have no other choice, because there is no other peace.*' President Bush also repeats the apocalyptic religious rhetoric of '*courage defeating cruelty and light overcoming darkness*'.

With this worldview, where the boundaries between 'us' and 'them' are constructed in such an absolutist manner, who is defined as belonging to 'us' and who belongs to 'them' becomes crucial. Throughout the empirical material, the 'us' and 'them' changes across the spectrum, from 'us' being the US people and 'them' being the perpetrators of the attacks on 11 September, until 'us' is civilization with 'them' being barbarism. But I assert that in the battle between *good* and *evil* President Bush clearly limits the 'us' and constructs it as a common identity for people of the United States (Bush 2002c):

Just three days removed from these events, Americans do not yet have the distance of history. But our responsibility to history is already clear: to answer these attacks and rid the world of evil. War has been waged against us by stealth and deceit and murder. This nation is peaceful, but fierce when stirred to anger. The conflict was begun on the timing and terms of others. It will end in a way, and at an hour, of our choosing (7: 8: 3-7).¹⁹

When speaking to a US audience, President Bush constructs the response to the terrorist attacks as a divine mission for the US. The US has a '*responsibility to history*' (that is, God) to '*rid the world of evil*'. Through a religious lens, this could be viewed as a construction of the US people as a chosen people to fight the battle that was initiated by *evil* and fulfil the apocalyptic prophecy: '*The conflict was begun on the timing and terms of others. It will end in a way, and at an hour, of our choosing*'.

This chapter section has analysed the discursive construction of the 'war on terrorism' in the light of what I argue is religious dualism expressed in the empirical material. I have shown how the *evil* category is expanded from *evil* acts to states, by constructing 'them' as *evil*. The dualism in the former world religion of Manichaeism has been utilized to highlight the moral dualism of *good* and *evil* that I argue is present in my empirical material. I have further argued for a dualistic division between 'us' and 'them' that is framed as an eternal battle between the forces of *good* and *evil*, where 'we' the US represent pure *goodness* and different constructions of 'them' are represented as wholly *evil*.

The next and final analytical chapter section will analyse my empirical material in the light of another oppositional structure: namely the dualism of 'us' represented as *civilization* and 'them' represented as *barbarism*.

¹⁹ The quote is from the official *National Security Strategy* of 2002, where quotes from speeches by President Bush are used as introductions to the different sections of the report (Bush, 2002c)

5.4 *Civilization and Barbarism*

Gregory points out that almost immediately after 11 September 2001, President Bush announced that ‘barbarians had declared war’ on the United States, and that this discursive framing of the situation as a conflict between *civilization* and *barbarism* had performative force. Gregory further reiterates a story from the 2000 presidential election campaign, where George W. Bush had recalled growing up in a world where there was no doubt about the identity of America’s ‘other’. ‘It was “us” versus “them” and it was clear who [“they”] were’, he said. ‘Today, we’re not sure who “they” are: but we know they’re there’²⁰ (Gregory, 2004: 48). Of course, after 11 September President Bush was sure who ‘they’ were and, still according to Gregory, he reactivated the interpretative dispositions of the Cold War: ‘the sense of endangerment ascribed to all the activities of the other, the fear of internal challenge and subversion, the tendency to militarize all responses, and the willingness to draw the line of superiority and inferiority between us and them’ (Gregory, 2004).

This chapter section will explore how a discursive construction of ‘us’ representing *civilization* and ‘they’ representing *barbarism* is reflected in my empirical material, and how this is related to the construction of the ‘war on terrorism’. As in the previous chapter sections, the *civilized–barbarian* dichotomy is my construction that I am applying to the material in what I call a *civilization–barbarism* discourse. As in the ‘us’–‘them’ discourse, there is no ultimate distinction between the categories: sometimes ‘us’ as *civilization* is used to describe the US and sometimes ‘us’ as *civilization* is used to denote a larger entity, either the US with its friends and allies or sometimes even representing all of the world’s nations that are defined as *civilized* by President Bush. This, of course, has consequences for the construction of the *barbarians*. The larger one constructs the category of *civilization* the fewer *barbarians* there are, and vice versa. In the course of this chapter section, first in 5.4.1, I will introduce different definitions of the terms *barbarism* and *civilization* and consequences resulting from being defined as one or the other. Section 5.4.2 will focus on the question of how the *barbarians* are made visible in my empirical material. Furthermore, in 5.4.3 I will argue for an intertextual relation between Text 2 and 3 of my material: namely the material consequences of a particular rhetorical construction of *barbarism* and how *civilization* should deal with that. Section 5.4.4 will show how President Bush continues and expands on the *civilization* and *barbarism* categories, and how the ‘war on

²⁰ I would argue that this way of understanding the relationship between ‘us’ and ‘them’ is similar to Huntington’s notion as presented in 5.1, that ‘we’ know who ‘we’ are when ‘we’ know who ‘we’ are against (Huntington, 2002: 21). In my opinion this projects a dualistic worldview of friends and enemies.

terrorism' is discursively extended beyond the war in Afghanistan. Finally, section 5.4.5 will analyse how framing the situation as a battle between *civilization* and *barbarism* legitimizes exceptional actions in the 'war on terrorism'.

5.4.1 Constructing Barbarians

Danchev suggests three different paths in defining *barbarian*. First, etymologically a *barbarian* is a foreigner, one whose language and customs differ from the speaker's. Second, historically a *barbarian* developed from someone who was not a Greek, to one living outside the Roman Empire and its *civilization*, followed by one outside the Christian *civilization*, and finally with the Italians of the Renaissance, one from a nation outside Italy. Third, a *barbarian* can be defined as a rude, wild uncivilized person (Danchev, 2003: 195). Salter elaborates on the trope *barbarian* as lacking in manners, language and morals, but not in organization since the *barbarians* represent a violent threat to the *civilized* inside. The space of the *barbarian* illustrates the limits of the political community, since the figure of the *barbarian*, either alone or in a horde, acts as the constitutive outside of the *polis* (Salter, 2002: 4). *Barbarians* are always depicted in relation to a standard of *civilization*, and are always defined in relation to a lack of *civilization*. In this way *barbarism* is the mirror to *civilization* (Salter, 2002:18). According to Salter, *civilization* was from the start defined as the opposition to *barbarism*. *Civilization* was first understood as a process of cultivation, linked to both manners and agriculture and for a European identity. The term *civilization* first appeared in French in 1767 and in English in 1772, in opposition to *barbarism*. The concept was used in an imperial context both as a support for and a critique of the process of European expansion. *Civilization* was in the nineteenth century taken to represent a mission of homogenization and 'improvement'. Thus the rhetoric of *civilization* was soon appropriated by imperial ideology to mean the 'civilizing mission' (Salter, 2002:15).

Barbarian get its meaning from being both outside and different from the 'us', either as a people, religion, empire or state. The definition of a *barbarian* as one lacking morals and manners can be connected to the moral dualism between *good* and *evil* as discussed in the previous chapter section. In addition to being *evil*, the *barbarians* are depicted as an immediate threat to 'us' — that is, *civilization*. In my view these points are important for at least two reasons. First, because it refers to a basic dualistic notion of 'us' (the *civilized* on the inside) and 'them' (the *barbarians* who are displaced beyond the boundary of *civilization* – on the outside). Being defined as outside the sphere of *civilization* implies that the rules that 'we', the *civilized*, live by do not apply to 'them', the *barbarians*. Hence being defined as *barbarians* has consequences for how 'we' conduct ourselves in relation to 'them'. Second, 'they', the *barbarians*, are perceived

as a threat to ‘us’, to our *civilization* — ‘they’ are violent while ‘we’ are not, ‘they’ are aggressive and ‘we’ are not. Being defined as *barbarians* thus implies violence, for ‘they’ are perceived as ‘our’ enemy by ‘nature’. Since the *civilized* and the *barbarians* have always been at war, the discursive distinction between *civilization* and *barbarism* as a feature of the ‘war on terrorism’ involves a naturalization of this war.

The last aspect of the above definitions of *civilization* and *barbarism* upon which to elaborate is the imperial legacy of the concepts. The early discoverers, the conquistadors and the priests ‘discovering’ America thought that they brought a universal truth to the primitive *barbarians*. The conquistadors posited a single god, enjoying a universalistic religion applicable to human beings equally. In their meeting with the pagan *barbarians* they saw only two strategies: either conquer and convert, or conquer and destroy/eliminate. According to Connolly, the conquistadores mostly pursued the last option and the priests the first, because they believed that even *barbarians* had souls and could come to acknowledge the Christian faith (Connolly, 1989: 326-328). With this reference I want to highlight the dualism in the reasoning of options when faced with otherness. Salter also points out that the ascription of *civilization* or *barbarism* is not a neutral objective description, but rather that a discourse employing this distinction has specific imperial overtones. Salter argues for a relationship between a *civilization–barbarism* discourse and identity and culture. Culture, like *civilization*, becomes something that ‘we’ have, something that distinguishes ‘us’ from ‘them’, the *barbarians* outside. Salter makes one more consequential distinction, which is that the possession of *civilization* justifies the conquest of *barbarism* and that the possession of *civilization* is marked by artefacts of culture (Salter, 2002: 12).

This introduction suggests that there are serious consequences in invoking the rhetoric of a *civilization–barbarism* discourse with its relationship to culture and identity in the construction of a ‘war on terrorism’. In the ‘war on terrorism’, ‘we’ possess culture and *civilization* and ‘they’ are just *barbarians*. Hence, ‘we’ know what is right and true and ‘they’ hate ‘us’ for that, and with this, constructing ‘them’ as *barbarians* is similar to constructing ‘them’ as pure *evil*. Following the described logic of a dualism of reasoning, in dealing with both there are only two options: either conquer and convert, or eliminate and destroy.

5.4.2 Making the Barbarians Visible

The need for *barbarians* is not limited to questions of the larger context of geopolitics. Rather, it is a basic tool in the course of everyday meaning-making and identity formation. Rosenberg, for example, discusses our need for *barbarians*. In his view, the existence of *barbarians* emphasizes our own superiority and goodness. As he argues, there is nothing better for increasing social

integration in a society than a horde of ‘barbarians at the gate’, or on the other side of the iron curtain, or at customs trying to get into ‘our’ superior *civilized* society, or, as he points out, having *barbarians* on the other side of an invisible battleground where ‘we’ are fighting a ‘war against terrorism’ (Rosenberg, 2004). I agree with Rosenberg that the construction of ‘our’ enemy as *barbarians* is helpful for national moral. I moreover suggest that constructing the enemy as *barbarians* has further implications: it legitimizes violence from the *civilized* because *barbarians* are not protected by international law. International laws and rules concern the relations between states, not relations between *civilization* and *barbarism*. *Barbarians* are seen as a threat to states because under normal circumstances states are considered *civilized* entities that follow the rules and regulations set by the international community. However, if a situation is defined as exceptional, as for example *barbarians* threatening national security, then rules and regulations are not unbreakable, even for the most *civilized* of nations. Thus *barbarians*, like suspected members of the al Qaeda organization, can be detained without abiding by the international rules for prisoners of war or human rights laws, as is done in Camp X-Ray within the US naval base at Guantanamo Bay on Cuba. Camp X-Ray can be seen as a ‘non-place’. It is at once outside Afghanistan and outside the continental US and so beyond the reach of US law (Gregory, 2004: 66).

As will become apparent in this chapter section, in the ‘war on terrorism’ it is not only the al Qaeda terrorists that are defined as *barbarians*, but also any state that harbours or aids terrorists. These states are constructed as a threat to *civilization* itself, hence ‘they’ are *barbarians*. *Barbarians* by nature represent a threat to *civilization*. Therefore, if ‘we’ cannot *civilize* ‘them’, ‘we’ have to destroy ‘them’. The *barbarians* in the ‘war on terrorism’ cannot be fought by containment like yesterday’s *barbarians* on the other side of the iron curtain. Today ‘they’ have to be eliminated before ‘they’ eliminate ‘us’.

For the constructed dualism of the *civilized–barbarian* to work, it has to be possible to draw a clear line between ‘us’ and ‘them’. It has to be clear who ‘they’ are and who ‘we’ are and where the boundary between the *civilized* inside and the *barbaric* outside is drawn. In Text 2 of my empirical material President Bush constructed ‘them’ as ‘our’ enemy. ‘They’ are the *barbarians* from the outside, attacking ‘us’ the *civilized* inside. The question is again who attacked ‘our’ country’ (Bush 2001 b):

The evidence we have gathered all points to a collection of loosely affiliated terrorist organizations known as al Qaeda.[...] This group and its leader — a person named Osama bin Laden — are linked to many other organizations in different countries, including the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. There are thousands of these terrorists in more than 60 countries. They are recruited from their

own nations and neighborhoods and brought to camps in places like Afghanistan, where they are trained in the tactics of terror. They are sent back to their homes or sent to hide in countries around the world to plot evil and destruction. [...] The Taliban must act, and act immediately. They will hand over the terrorists, or they will share in their fate (2: 2: 23 - 4: 5).

Once again I would like to apply Laclau and Mouffe's analytical category of a chain of equivalence. By linking certain moments such as 'al Qaeda', 'Osama bin Laden', different 'Islamic' 'terror organizations', 'Afghanistan' and the 'Taliban' to the nodal point — the attacks on 11 September 2001 — President Bush strives to obtain closure in a *civilization—barbarism* discourse. In this discourse 'they', the *barbarians*, get their meaning from being a person (Osama bin Laden), a group (al Qaeda) a religion (Islam) and a state with its regime (Afghanistan and the Taliban). Lazar and Lazar identify this as a specific discursive strategy that they call 'orientalization' (Lazar and Lazar, 2004: 234-235). In the quote above, they identify the stereotype of the duplicitous Arab: not only irrational and immoral, Arabs are also credited with clever devious intrigue. The choice of the material process (to) plot, with reprehensible goals, is one way that this is highlighted: 'They are recruited' and 'trained in the tactics of terror' before 'they' 'are sent back to their homes or sent to hide in countries around the world to plot evil and destruction' (Lazar and Lazar, 2004). I would argue that 'orientalization' can be viewed as a similar discursive strategy to constructing 'them' as *barbarians*. In the quotation above, the *barbarians* are constructed to be possibly everywhere. Thus 'they' can be where the *civilized* 'we' would normally feel safe: in our own 'neighborhoods' and in 'our' 'homes'. The *barbarians* can be anywhere and everywhere, but here 'they' are made visible in Afghanistan, forcing the Taliban to choose, either to be part of *civilization* or to be considered as guilty and *barbaric* as the 11 September 2001 perpetrators.

5.4.3 How to Deal with Barbarians

Text 2 also makes it clear how *civilized* nations such as the US deal with the threat posed by the *barbaric* terrorists and 'their' sponsor states (Bush, 2001b):

But the only way to defeat terrorism as a threat to our way of life is to stop it, eliminate it, and destroy it where it grows. Many will be involved in this effort, from FBI agents to intelligence operatives to the reservists we have called to active duty. All deserve our thanks, and all have our prayers. And tonight, a few miles from the damaged Pentagon, I have a message for our military: Be ready. I've called the Armed Forces to alert, and there is a reason. The hour is coming when America will act, and you will make us proud. This is not, however, just America's fight. And what is at stake is not just America's freedom. This is the world's fight. This is civilization's fight. This is the fight of all who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom. [...] The civilized world is rallying to America's side. They understand that if this terror goes unpunished, their own cities, their own citizens may be next. Terror, unanswered, cannot

only bring down buildings; it can threaten the stability of legitimate governments. And you know what — we're not going to allow it (2: 6: 3-22).

To use Laclau and Mouffes' terminology, in chapter section 5.2 I suggested that President Bush has constructed an 'American way of life' as a myth, a social space. Thus in the beginning of this quotation, it is the US that will '*stop*', '*eliminate*' and '*destroy*' the *barbaric* terrorism as a threat to '*our way of life*'. According to Lazar and Lazar, President Bush also dehumanizes the enemy, which is constructed as a plant parasite — '*it grows*' (Lazar and Lazar, 2004: 236). Within the US, '*many will be involved in the effort*' to exterminate these parasites that threaten the 'American way of life'. President Bush mentions the '*FBI*' and '*intelligence*' (CIA) as being part of the extermination process, but he also makes it clear that '*America will act*' with its '*Armed Forces*'.

I view as particularly important in constructing the 'war on terrorism' the link between the paragraph where President Bush concludes that the appropriate US response is a militarized response (2: 6: 7-9) and the next where he states: '*This is not, however, just America's fight. And what is at stake is not just America's freedom. This is the world's fight. This is civilization's fight. This is the fight of all who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom*' (2: 6: 10-12). Until now, *civilization* has been the US, but here President Bush expands the *civilization* category and includes the entire (*civilized*) world into the extermination mission. Now it is the values of '*all who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom*' that are on the line. The 'American way of life' is based on these values, and now *civilization* in its broadest definition is equalled to these values. Therefore the attacks on the 'American way of life' became an attack on *civilization* itself, and thus all of *civilization* must be part of the war against the *barbaric* parasites in 'our' midst. As a consequence of this reasoning, President Bush also naturalizes the process of going to war. Going to war in Afghanistan is constructed to be the *only* appropriate response by *civilization* against *barbarians*. This makes sense since *civilization* and the US are constructed as carrying the same values: thus when the right response for the US is war, it is also the right response for *civilization*, and therefore '*the civilized world is rallying to America's side*'. The *civilized* world is constructed to '*understand*' that if the terrorist parasites and 'their' state sponsors are allowed to grow '*unpunished*' and '*unanswered*', 'they' will flourish and threaten a symbol of *civilization*: '*legitimate governments*'. Thus a defining criterion for belonging to *civilization* becomes willingness to act, and to act with force.

From a discourse analytical perspective, the above quotation could be seen as an example of an 'extreme case formulation', which is used in situations where it is possible that the audience will not accept a story or assertion (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 137). I assert that in this

quotation President Bush is formulating the situation in an extreme manner when he invokes a *civilization–barbarism* discourse where the only option for *civilization* is to eliminate and destroy those who are defined as *barbarians*. Thus I suggest that the quotation is intended to rally both national and international support for a militarized response in Afghanistan, and that the surest way to get that support is to maximize the threat that ‘they’ pose. I would also argue that a clear intertextual connection can be drawn between Texts 2 and 3 where the commencement of *Operation Enduring Freedom* is announced. As I have argued above in Text 2, President Bush frames the situation as extreme: it is *civilization* that is threatened by *barbarians*. In doing so he discursively legitimizes going to war in Afghanistan as the appropriate action for the *civilized* world when faced with *barbarians* (Bush, 2001c):

On my orders, the United States’ military has begun strikes against al Qaeda terrorist training camps and military installations of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. [...] We are supported by the collective will of the world.[...] The United States of America is a friend to the Afghan people, and we are the friends of almost a billion worldwide who practice the Islamic faith. The United States of America is an enemy of those who aid terrorists and of the barbaric criminals who profane a great religion by committing murder in its name.[...] Today we focus on Afghanistan, but the battle is broader. Every nation has a choice to make. In this conflict, there is no neutral ground. If any government sponsors the outlaws and killers of innocents, they have become outlaws and murderers, themselves. And they will take that lonely path at their own peril (3: 1: 5 - 2: 11).

This speech transformed the metaphoric ‘war on terrorism’ into a very real war. Even though President Bush uses rather clinical language in describing what the ‘*United States military*’ is doing, I would argue that it was not only ‘*al Qaeda terrorist training camps and military installations of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan*’ that were destroyed by the ‘*strikes*’. According to Gregory, by May 2002 it was estimated that 1,300-3,500 civilians had died and 4,000-6,500 civilians had been injured, many of them severely, as a direct result of American bombs and missiles (Gregory, 2004: 70).

Jørgensen and Phillips discuss how different discourse analytical approaches have altered views on the role of discourse in the constitution of the world. In Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis, the discursive dimension together with other dimensions of social practice constitute our world, while in Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory, discourse itself is seen as fully constitutive of our world (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 18-19). My point here is that the actions set in motion as a result of Text 3 had (and still have) grave material consequences. I will also argue that for the US as a Western state to initiate a war against an Islamic state without any retaliation, the grounds for going to war had to be discursively legitimized as in Text 2, as *civilizations* fight against *barbaric* terrorists. Salter points out that the rhetorical well of the trope *bar-*

barism is so deep that waging war against *barbarians* trumps all other narratives (Salter, 2002: 167). It therefore makes sense that President Bush claims that ‘we’ the US ‘*are supported by the collective will of the world*’ in going to war. In the quotation, the ‘*Afghan people*’ and Muslims in general are reassured that ‘we’ the US are their ‘*friends*’. However, in the very next sentence President Bush also makes it clear that even though not all Muslims are *barbarians*, all of the *barbarians* are Muslims: ‘[...] *the barbaric criminals who profane a great religion by committing murder in its name*’. In the same speech where he discursively initiated the war in Afghanistan, President Bush also states that the ‘war on terrorism’ does not end with *Operation Enduring Freedom*. The threat being made is directed at other *barbaric* states: ‘*If any government sponsors the outlaws and killers of innocents, they have become outlaws and murderers, themselves. And they will take that lonely path at their own peril*’. Afghanistan was at that moment ‘*on the lonely path*’; consequently other *barbaric* states would not have to wonder what ‘*their own peril*’ would entail.

5.4.4 The Battle is Broader

In Text 4, the speech to the UN General Assembly in New York on 9 November 2001, two months after defining *civilization* as the values of ‘*progress*’, ‘*pluralism*’, ‘*tolerance*’ and ‘*freedom*’ and one month after initiating the war in Afghanistan, President Bush reinforced the need to fight the *barbarians* because of the immense threat that ‘they’ represent for *civilization* (Bush, 2001d). Thus there is an intertextual connection running through Texts 2, 3 and 4. In Text 4 President Bush continues and expands on the meaning of being defined as *civilized* or *barbarians*, and the consequences for the future if ‘we’ the *civilized* do not fight ‘them’ the *barbarians* right now. He also makes it clear that the ‘war on terrorism’ is not limited to the war in Afghanistan, but that it is part of a broader battle (Bush 2001 d):

We meet in a hall devoted to peace, in a city scarred by violence, in a nation awakened to danger, in a world uniting for a long struggle. Every civilized nation here today is resolved to keep the most basic commitment of civilization: We will defend ourselves and our future against terror and lawless violence. [...] Every nation has a stake in this cause. As we meet, the terrorists are planning more murder — perhaps in my country, or perhaps in yours. They kill because they aspire to dominate. They seek to overthrow governments and destabilize entire regions.[...] Few countries meet their exacting standards of brutality and oppression. Every other country is a potential target. And all the world faces the most horrifying prospect of all: These same terrorists are searching for weapons of mass destruction, the tools to turn their hatred into holocaust. They can be expected to use chemical, biological and nuclear weapons the moment they are capable of doing so. No hint of conscience would prevent it (4: 1: 10 - 3: 2).

In the opening of the speech, New York is constructed as a ‘*city scarred by violence*’ and the US as ‘*a nation awakened to danger*’. The ‘*hall*’ of the UN is used as a symbol for ‘*peace*’, which

again I would argue is a trait of *civilization*. In this hall the world is united *'for a long struggle'*. With the distinction *'every civilized nation here today'*, President Bush implies that not all nations represented in the UN can be considered *civilized*, hence some are to be considered *barbarians*. In this first paragraph, *'we'* the *civilized* are constructed as representing *'peace'* and *'we'* are defending *'ourselves'*, thus *'we'* are under normal circumstances non-aggressive. President Bush takes for granted that the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 were only a beginning and that further attacks by the *barbarians* on *civilization* are inevitable: *'As we meet, the terrorists are planning more murder — perhaps in my country, or perhaps in yours.'* The *barbarians* *'kill'* and *'their'* goals are constructed as *'to dominate'* and to *'overthrow governments and destabilize entire regions'* and enforce *'standards of brutality and oppression'*. President Bush also constructs how *'these'* same *barbarians* are to achieve *'their'* goals: *'These same terrorists are searching for weapons of mass destruction, the tools to turn their hatred into holocaust'*. Not only are *'they'* trying to acquire weapons of mass destruction, *'they'* will use them as soon as *'they'* are in possession of them: *'No hint of conscience would prevent it'*. *'They'* are here constructed as *barbarians*, *'they'* kill to dominate, *'they'* want to force the entire world into living by *'their'* *'exacting standards of brutality and oppression'* through the use of weapons of mass destruction, *'they'* represent an enormous threat to *'us'* (*civilization*) because *'they'* are *barbarians*. This notion is reinforced in the succeeding paragraph, where President Bush argues that the threat faced by *civilization* impels action:

This threat cannot be ignored. This threat cannot be appeased. Civilization, itself, the civilization we share, is threatened. History will record our response, and judge or justify every nation in this hall. The civilized world is now responding. We act to defend ourselves and deliver our children from a future of fear. We choose the dignity of life over a culture of death. We choose lawful change and civil disagreement over coercion, subversion, and chaos. These commitments — hope and order, law and life — unite people across cultures and continents. Upon these commitments depend all peace and progress. For these commitments, we are determined to fight (4: 3: 3-11).

I would argue that with the three first lines in this quotation President Bush depicts the *'war on terrorism'* as a question of the survival of *civilization* itself. In chapter section 5.3 I argued that President Bush equalled *'history'* with God. I therefore interpret the sentence *'History will record our response, and judge or justify every nation in this hall'* to mean that every nation in the UN will be judged by God according to how they respond to the threat that *barbarism* poses to *civilization*. This can be seen as an extreme statement, because *civilization* here represents all of the *civilized* people in the world — thus the meaning of *civilization* here represents the highest entity to which *civilized* people in this world can feel they belong. There is a horde of *barbarians* threatening *civilization*, not only the *civilized* US, but all of the *civilized* people on this

planet. As in the quotations from Texts 2 and 3 in this chapter section, President Bush again (re)presents a willingness to act militarily against the *barbarians* as a defining characteristic of the *civilized*: ‘*The civilized world is now responding*’. The *civilized* world is here the US and its allies in the war in Afghanistan. When President Bush goes on to justify why the US and its allies ‘*act to defend ourselves*’, he also utilizes two more constructions. First, by articulating the oppositional character of the *civilized* and the *barbarians* as, for example, ‘*the dignity of life*’ as opposed to a ‘*culture of death*’, President Bush continues to elaborate on the threat that ‘they’ pose to ‘us’. ‘They’ stand for the opposite values and culture than ‘we’ do, and if ‘we’ do not respond, ‘they’ will enforce ‘their’ values and culture on ‘us’. Hence not fighting ‘them’ will have enormous consequences for *civilization*: ‘*coercion, subversion and chaos*’. The second effect of this paragraph is the transformation of *elements* into *moments* in the context of a *civilization—barbarism* discourse. This is achieved through linking elements like ‘*dignity of life*’ and ‘*lawful change and civil disagreement*’ to the nodal point of *civilization*, as well as linking elements like ‘*a culture of death*’ and ‘*coercion, subversion and chaos*’ to the nodal point of *barbarism*. It thus becomes sensible that ‘we’ should fight ‘them’ when given only these two options of a future. After elaborating on the extreme character and intentions of ‘them’ (the *barbarians*), President Bush makes it clear that the ‘war on terrorism’ goes beyond Afghanistan (Bush, 2001d):

Yet, even beyond Resolution 1373, more is required, and more is expected of our coalition against terror. [...] As I’ve told the American people, freedom and fear are at war. We face enemies that hate not our policies, but our existence; the tolerance of openness and creative culture that defines us (4: 5: 27 - 7: 8).

Thus the war in Afghanistan was only the beginning of the ‘war on terrorism’: ‘*more is required, and more is expected of our coalition against terror*’. In the last two sentences in this quotation President Bush constructs the US as representing *civilization*. The *barbarians* attacked the US because the US possesses the values and culture that actually defines *civilization*: ‘*tolerance*’ and ‘*openness*’ as opposed to the *barbarian* values of ‘*brutality*’ and ‘*oppression*’. The *barbarians* that attacked the US, and the extended *barbarians* still threatening the US/*civilization*, do so first and foremost because ‘they’ are *barbarians* and not because ‘they’ for some reason should hate US foreign policy.

5.4.5 Making the Exception

‘Sovereign is he who decides the exception’ is supposedly the German philosopher Carl Schmitt’s key claim (Gregory, 2004: 72). Walker elaborates that Schmitt’s sovereignty involved the capacity to decide the exception that legitimates the norm (Walker, 1993: 165). This is part of a much longer line of arguments, and it concerns sovereignty within a state and not within a system of states, but I would argue that this claim can be used in an effort to deconstruct the ‘war on terrorism’. In relation to a *civilization–barbarism* discourse, it is precisely the ability to make the exception – the capacity to suspend the law, ethics and morality and to suspend peace – that is at stake. As Gregory points out, the exception – *ex-capere* – is literally that which is ‘taken outside’ (Gregory, 2004: 62). I argue that President Bush and his administration in the ‘war on terrorism’ are constructing the situation as exceptional: ‘they’ are represented as *barbarians* threatening the existence of *civilization*. The exceptionality is also reflected in Text 7: the official *National Security Strategy* of 2002 (Bush, 2002c). The security strategy has a guiding principle of ‘a balance of power that favours freedom’ (Melby, 2004: 148), and this balance will be sustained through three main strategies (Bush 2002 c):

We will defend the peace by fighting terrorists and tyrants. We will preserve the peace by building good relations among the great powers. We will extend the peace by encouraging free and open societies on every continent (7: 1: 19-21).

It is the first strategy that relates to my purpose here: how a *civilization–barbarism* discourse is reflected in my material and how that relates to the discursive construction of the ‘war on terrorism’. The US’s strategy for defending the *civilized* goal of peace is to ‘*fight terrorists and tyrants*’. This fight could include pre-emptive action which is constructed as ‘*common sense*’ (Bush, 2002c):

[...] as a matter of common sense and self-defense, America will act against such emerging threats before they are fully formed.[...] In the new world we have entered, the only path to peace and security is the path of action (7: 2: 12-17).

Melby points out that with the *National Security Strategy* of 2002, the principle of pre-emptive action was for the first time incorporated into US official security strategy. Since the Second World War this view of security is, according to Melby, fundamentally new (Melby, 2004: 153). The quotation above states quite simply that ‘*the path to peace and security is the path of action*’. Sovereignty in international decision-making is also made clear (Bush, 2002c):

While the United States will constantly strive to enlist the support of the international community, we will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right of self-defense by acting preemptively against such terrorists (7: 9:23-26).

In this quotation a double move is made first: the US will '*strive*' for international '*support*' for its actions. However, the same sentence makes it perfectly clear that 'we' '*will not hesitate to act alone*', thus the US will do whatever 'we' decide is appropriate. This could be interpreted to mean that the US's rights are above the rights of the rest of the international community. As pointed out in chapter section 5.3, the link between terrorists, states that support terrorists as defined by the US, and WMD is here again crucial – in this case it legitimizes the new strategy of pre-emption. It is further legitimized as a defence of *civilization* against *barbarism* (Bush, 2002c):

The overlap between states that sponsor terror and those that pursue WMD compels us to action [...] The United States will not use force in all cases to preempt emerging threats, nor should nations use preemption as a pretext for aggression. Yet in an age where the enemies of civilization openly and actively seek the world's most destructive technologies, the United States cannot remain idle while dangers gather (7: 18: 24 - 19: 22).

The US/*civilization* will not normally use pre-emptive force, but when faced with *barbarians* seeking weapons of mass destruction the US/*civilization* is compelled to make an exception to the norm and take action: '*Yet in an age where the enemies of civilization openly and actively seek the world's most destructive technologies, the United States cannot remain idle while dangers gather*'. The construction of the exceptionality of the situation today, with *barbarians* posing an imminent threat to the US/*civilization*, serves to justify pre-emptive action by the US to eliminate that threat. I therefore return to the notion that the *barbarian* space functions as the limit of the political community. In '*defending the peace*', the US suspends the norm of the international community by stating that the '*only path to peace and security is the path of action*'.

6. The 'War on Terrorism' Reframed

In my introductory chapter to this thesis I presented my research question as:

How was a 'war on terrorism' constructed as the appropriate response by the US to the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001?

I started to search for an answer in my empirical material and in the first two texts I identified two definitions made by President Bush that influenced the discursive trajectory to come. First, he defined the attacks of 11 September as acts of war, and accordingly he elevated the criminals behind the attacks to the status of war enemies. This also prepared the world for a warlike response. In addition, this could be seen as the first step in making the 11 September attacks and the 'war on terrorism' into one. The second crucial discursive decision was to equate the terrorists with any state that harbours or aids terrorists and thus make the enemy more tangible than an elusive network of terrorists.

In my further analysis of the empirical material, I identified four discourses that I argue are vital for the construction of the 'war on terrorism'. The previous chapters have suggested that President Bush reasons by structuring signs in opposition to each other. In discursively constructing the 'war on terrorism', the main oppositional structure that I identified was the distinction between 'us' and 'them'. Furthermore, I delineated three sub-discourses that could be seen as distinctive ways of ascribing specific qualities to either 'us' or 'them'. The three sub-discourses concerned the structured oppositions of *freedom* and *fear*, *good* and *evil* and *civilization* and *barbarism*.

I have further argued that a perpetual discursive reinforcement can be seen of the simplistic dualism between 'us' and 'them' as the key component in discursively constructing the war. Furthermore, 'us' and 'them' were not only differentiated and set in opposition to each other; at the same time there was also a hierarchy imposed where the subordinate sign ('them') was placed outside the boundaries of what is significant and desirable. I have argued that reasoning in this manner with a simplistic paired zero-sum relation between 'us' and 'them' intensifies the level of conflict. I have viewed it as an attempt to unite through using the logic of confrontation: either you are with 'us' against 'them' or you are with 'them' and thus against 'us'.

My last assertion was that a central aspect of constructing the 'war on terrorism' was to present the situation as exceptional in time and space: the enemy could be anywhere at any time. In this exceptional situation 'we' are represented as holding the universal values of *freedom*, *goodness* (or *Godliness*) and *civilization*, and 'they' are represented with the particular values of *fear*, *evil* and *barbarism*. With these categories President Bush also constructed 'them' as an

active enemy with the goal of eradicating ‘us’, ‘they’ are aggressive, ‘their’ goal is to terrorize ‘us’, ‘they’ the *evil ones* initiated the battle against *good*, and *barbarians* are pounding at the gate.

This thesis attempts to read President Bush against himself, to reframe the ‘war on terrorism’, so to speak. This started from a specific constructionist epistemological assumption, namely that our understanding and knowledge about the world is historically and culturally contingent — that is, they are possible but not necessary. Thus, in an attempt to deconstruct the discursive ‘war on terrorism’, I saw it as important to examine how the ‘us’-‘them’ opposition was constructed in my material and through that to expose the contingent character of the categories. I utilized concepts from Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory as a ‘language of description’ to translate my empirical material. I have thus argued that President Bush strives to obtain *closure* in a particular discursive universe: the discourse of ‘us’ and ‘them’ with three sub-discourses. In this discursive universe, ‘us’ and ‘them’ are mutually exclusive categories where ‘we’ on the inside represent *freedom*, *goodness* and *civilization* and ‘they’ on the outside represent *fear*, *evil* and *barbarism*. However, by exposing the contingency of the categories, these representations are made more complicated. It opens up for alternative, albeit equally contingent, representations of ‘us’ and ‘them’ where even *fear*, *evil* and *barbarism* could exist inside the ‘us’. As an example I present a quotation from Harold Pinter’s Nobel lecture in 2005²¹, where he volunteers to be a speechwriter for President Bush and proposes the following short address that President Bush should make on television to the nation (Pinter, 2005):

God is good. God is great. God is good. My God is good. Bin Laden’s God is bad. His is a bad God. Saddam’s God was bad, except he didn’t have one. He was a barbarian. We are not barbarians. We don’t chop people’s heads off. We believe in freedom. So does God. I am not a barbarian. I am the democratically elected leader of a freedom-loving democracy. We are a compassionate society. We give compassionate electrocution and compassionate lethal injection. We are a great nation. I am not a dictator. He is. I am not a barbarian. He is. And he is. They all are. I possess moral authority. You see this fist? This is my moral authority. And don’t you forget it.

Still within the discursive framing of an ‘us’-‘them’ discourse, Pinter uses irony to highlight the contingency of the ‘us’-‘them’ categories. Through this articulation Pinter presents an alternative fixing of the meaning of the nodal point and myth of ‘America’. Here the moments of *freedom*, *goodness* (*Godliness*) and *civilization* are fixed in such a way that ‘America’ is represented as embodying the opposite values: *fear*, *evil* and *barbarism*. Thus, in addition to emphasizing the contingency of the representations, Pinter criticizes the actions of the US.

²¹ Harold Pinter, Nobel laureate in literature 2005. Pinter’s Nobel Lecture, ‘Art, Truth and Politics’ can be found at <http://nobelprize.org/literature/laureates/2005/pinter-lecture-e.html>, accessed April 2006.

With a starting point in constructionist epistemology, I have argued that there is a link between a discursive construction of the world and social actions. As stated in my introduction, I view the US today as a hegemon and thus I view it as important to understand *what* it does and *how* it does it. However, the importance and focus of my study has been from what *premises* and *worldview* the US starts. My focus has been on analysing the discursive construction of the ‘war on terrorism’ and to give a critical review of this construction by exposing the contingency of the particular representation of ‘us’ and ‘them’. In exposing the historical and cultural contingency of the categories, I hope to have transformed them into potential objects for discussion and criticism that are eventually open to change.

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Annexe: The Empirical Material

Text 1 (Bush, 2001a):

'Statement by the President in His Address to the Nation' 11 September 2001

Text 2 (Bush, 2001b):

'Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People' 20 September 2001

Text 3 (Bush, 2001c):

'Presidential Address to the Nation' 7 October 2001

Text 4 (Bush, 2001d):

'President Bush Speaks to United Nations' 10 November 2001

Text 5 (Bush, 2002a):

'State of the Union Address' 29 September 2002

Text 6 (Bush, 2002b):

'President Bush Delivers Graduation Speech at West Point' 1 June 2002

Text 7 (Bush, 2002c):

'The National Security Strategy of the United States of America' September 2002