Make America Exceptional Again

Critical Discourse Analysis

Julian Thomas Donno
Malmö Högskola
M.A. Media and Communication Studies: Culture, Collaborative Media, and Creative Industries
Faculty of Culture and Society at the School of Arts and Communication
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Supervisor: Dr Ilkin Mehrabov
Examiner: Dr Temi Odumosu
ABSTRACT

Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), this study seeks to illustrate how Donald Trump’s Inauguration Address incorporates elements of power which are embedded in various forms of American exceptionalism. Since the American myth of exceptionalism does not necessarily reveal itself at first glance, this thesis traces its variety of roots back in American history. By doing so, it explains how this myth emerged, how it became infused with power and how Trump’s rhetoric keeps it alive. The theoretical framework of this study is built on Michel Foucault’s writing on power and van Dijk’s concept of ideology. In addition, this study introduces the idea of legitimising myths in the context of Social Dominance Theory to highlight the effect ideologies have on societies. This thesis finds that some references to American exceptionalism in Trump’s speech can be attributed to the Colonial era. More specifically, Trump’s call for social cohesion, his allusions to predestination, his image of civilisation and his language on American labour bear close resemblance to Puritan discourses. Further, the theme of nationalism and limited government run through his speech, both of which are integral to American history and the myth of exceptionalism. In line with the general goals of CDA, this study exemplifies how ideologically charged language needs to be contextualised socio-historically to expose its relationship with power.

Keywords
Critical Discourse Analysis
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1 Introduction

On 20th January 2017, Donald Trump held his Inauguration Address during which he revealed his promises for the next four years of his presidency. It is difficult to pigeonhole this speech as it is unique in a few ways. Writing for the Washington Post, Jessica Stahl points out that the speech presents an unusual break from Trump’s improvised and often incoherent way of speaking (2017). Yet, one can still trace Trump’s black and white thinking throughout the speech, which manifests itself in his contempt for the current course of the United States and a promise to restore its greatness. It is hard to find an Inaugural Address which is so unapologetic in its brashness and lack of soulful language. As O’Toole argues, Trump’s speech is different from previous Inauguration Addresses in that he seems to imply that his election itself marks a significant change for the United States rather than his future actions (2018). Still, the entire speech is framed by century-old American themes. Writing for Vox, Kevin Mattson explains that Trump’s Inauguration Address connects back to the roots of American history in an interesting way as it bears close resemblance to a Puritan jeremiad (2017). Arguably the first American literary invention, the jeremiad was a text which decried the moral deterioration of a community with apocalyptic undertones (Bercovitch, 2012, p. xii). Interestingly, The New York Times sees Trump’s speech in similar ways and even calls it an “angry jeremiad” (Landler, 2017).

Throughout Trump’s political career, one has been able to observe this dichotomy of him overthrowing traditional forms of rhetoric and policymaking whilst clinging to age-old American values. In general, it seems that conversations on Trump usually focus more on the newness of him as a political figure rather than seeing the continuation of certain American ideals in his politics. In my academic writing I have been more interested in the historical continuity of some ideas which can be found in Trump’s language and politics. In one paper, I tried to pinpoint how he was rehashing old racist ideas and using them against Black Lives Matter. In my Bachelor thesis I aimed at pointing out that a lot of his political success may lie in his innovative way of reverberating old American values.

This thesis focuses solely on the topic of American exceptionalism in Trump’s Inauguration Address. The aim of the study is to highlight different forms of American exceptionalism in his speech and to trace these individual appearances of exceptionalism back to their historical roots. By doing so I hope to lay bare the underlying power of these
discourses. This thesis uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to guide this research and to structure the arguments. As the concept of power is a dominant idea in this thesis, Foucault’s thoughts on power play a leading role in the theoretical framework. This study also works with the notion of ideology as imagined by Teun van Dijk, one of the leading figures in the school of discourse analysis. Connected to the concept of ideology, this work employs Social Dominance Theory by Jim Sidanius and Felicia Pratto. In short, the main research question of this study is as follows:

How does Trump’s Inauguration Address incorporate elements of power which are embedded in various forms of American exceptionalism?

Through the socio-historical contextualisation of the Inaugural Address, this study also seeks to answer the following sub-question:

How does the Puritan heritage leave an imprint on Trump’s language in the Inaugural Address?

2 Context, contribution and relevance

In 1789, the first president of the United States, George Washington, held the very first American Inauguration Address. Given the fact that he was partaking in the founding of a new nation, he was aware of the significance of this first speech (National Archives, 1998). Every president since has delivered a speech before or after taking the oath of office. Until today, excerpts from historic Inauguration speeches are referred to. Franklin D. Roosevelt, for example, famously said, “we have nothing to fear but fear itself” (Inaugural Senate, n.d.). In fact, Austermühl even explains that there is great intertextuality between Inaugural Addresses (2014, p. 5). Kennedy, for instance, instructed his speech writer to find out what made Lincoln's Gettysburg Address so distinguished (ibid.). Certain concepts and passages from presidential speeches are thus handed over continuously to future presidents and help shape a collective American identity.

So, on a superficial level these speeches reveal how individual presidents appear to think about the past and future of the United States. On a much deeper level, however, when analysed in certain ways, these Inauguration Addresses reveal deep power structures which have their roots in American history. Through Critical Discourse Analysis of these speeches, one can lay bare how forms of power “are expressed, enacted, legitimised and reproduced” (van Dijk, 1995, p. 19). Proponents of CDA tend to believe dominance is
integral to discourses and the element of domination can be lost through the normalisation of power (Wodak, 2001, p. 3). This study should thus contribute to the field of Communication Studies in that it exemplifies how seemingly innocent words can carry meaning pertaining to power. It should serve as an example of how it is necessary to denaturalise power in certain texts.

In the mid-eighties, van Dijk was surprised that researchers were paying very little attention to the analysis of what Communication Studies is about at its core, namely dissecting texts and discourses (1985, p. 1). He similarly criticised those who did study texts in depth for their apparent lack of interest in the social and historical roots of certain discourses. Whether this concern is pressing to this day or not, this thesis moves back to the origins of Communication Studies and illustrates how some texts gain far more meaning once they are placed in their appropriate context. It is a continuation of Saussure’s idea of language as a social phenomenon. This thesis moves away from seeing language as merely a product of an individual person but more of a joint outcome of the individual and his or her culture and history (Hall, 1997, p. 34). Additionally, by merging multiple fields of research, this study aims at building a small bridge across disciplines. One can imagine that the argumentative structure of this thesis could be applied to a multitude of fields which deal with the interpretation of texts as it urges for a historical contextualisation. Even with daily conversations, this thesis could potentially serve as a reminder of how our language might be infused with power and rooted in our socio-historical background. While there is a strong base of research on the intersection of topics in this study i.e. language, power, ideology and socio-historical context, this study applies these frameworks to an emerging field of research, namely that of Donald Trump and his rhetoric.

The results of this study should be of societal relevance since the idea of American exceptionalism is deeply engrained in American culture and is intertwined with concepts of the American dream, Manifest Destiny and nationhood. According to a survey conducted by The Pew Research Center in 2014, almost one third of Americans believed that the United States stood above all other countries in the world (Tyson, 2014). Almost 60% of Americans stated that their country was one of the greatest countries together with other nations. Just over 10% of Americans ticked the box “there are other countries that are better than the United States”. Interestingly, the percentage of those who believed that the United States exceeded all other nations in its greatness was more than 10 points higher among Republicans than among Democrats. One could, however,
observe a decline in the belief in the superiority of the United States in the years leading up to 2014 (ibid.). As it should become clear in the course of this thesis, American exceptionalism can be slightly more diverse than the above-mentioned statistics show. But these surveys do indicate that this thesis could be thought-provoking for a large number of Americans and more so, among Republicans. I hope that this kind of study provides the necessary arguments to call into question the term American exceptionalism and highlight how problematic it can be due to its inherent notion of power. Naturally, the United States is not the only nation which believes strongly in its exceptional nature especially now that we are witnessing a surge in nationalism across Europe. Independent of the nation, studies like this thesis could serve as an example of why it is necessary to analyse key concepts of a speech in depth with a specific focus on their historical roots and the potential power behind them.

3 Theoretical framework and literature review

3.1 Foucauldian power

Power is of great importance in this study as this thesis seeks to uncover the underlying power structures in the individual forms of American exceptionalism in Trump’s Inaugural Address. Power is also closely linked to the methodology of this study, namely Critical Discourse Analysis. On the one hand, CDA seeks to examine social injustice in the form of power or privileges (Fairclough, 2001, p. 2). On the other hand, it looks for the root cause of this injustice (Tenorio, 2011, p. 6). It does so by unravelling the often-hidden link between a given discourse and the socio-historical structure behind it. The books *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* and *Power-knowledge* by Michel Foucault seem indispensable here. Not only is Foucault one of the key initiators of discourse analyses, but he is also credited for having revolutionised the concept of power. To help synthesise and elaborate on the ideas from Foucault’s extensive writing, this study also refers to Stuart Hall’s *The Work of Representation*.

3.1.1 Power/knowledge

Power and knowledge are interdependent in Foucault’s eyes. Not only is power a productive force for him which can produce knowledge, but reversely, power is a result of knowledge (Foucault, 1977, p. 27). According to Foucault, every culture and historical
period is characterised by its belief in certain truths which “go right down into the depths of society” (ibid.). Stuart Hall cites the example of crime to make this point clearer. He writes that our understanding of concepts like crime and the regulation as well as control thereof has been shaped by the combination of power and knowledge. This in term entails real-life effects for both the prisoner and the punisher (Hall, 1997, p. 76). One has to be clear that Foucault thinks that this knowledge does not pertain to objective reality, but to a subjective one or as he calls it, “a régime of truth” (1980, p. 131). It refers to the “types of discourse which it [society] accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned” (Foucault, 1980, p. 131). In other words, Foucault thinks that cultures accept certain norms and behaviours as normal and have justifications of these discourses. To avoid confusion, one should clarify that in the Foucauldian sense the word discourse shows a break from the traditional notion of language purely in the linguistic sense, but it also includes the actions and behaviours caused by this language (Hall, 1997, p. 72). This combination of power and knowledge called power/knowledge in Foucault’s works is important in this thesis. It helps understand how American exceptionalism was accepted in the past and how it continues to be normalised. Further, it helps highlight how the societal truths of the time gave birth to the various forms of American exceptionalism.

3.1.2 Power as a net

The quote at the beginning of the previous paragraph about knowledge seeping into the depths of society hints at a new Foucauldian idea concerning power. Prior to Foucault, power was generally conceptualised as a spear which goes from the top of a hierarchy to the bottom (Hall, 1997, p. 77). For Foucault, power needs to be seen more as a net-like structure (1980, p. 98). This means that individuals are not only the targets of power but also those who execute power. On the one hand, this creates the interesting image of the oppressor and the oppressed. On the other hand, it refers to the idea that power is a force of creation in that it generates discourses and new truths (Foucault, 1977, p. 194). This image of power being a net is closely connected to Foucault’s idea of “micro-power” (1977, p. 27). He also calls it a capillary mechanism of power. This means that every member of society is influenced by power and this power influences his or her actions and behaviour (Foucault, 1980, p. 39). Foucault believes that micro-power can be a reflection of a much higher power such as the government. But due to the net-like structure of power, he also believes in a “synaptic regime of power” (1980, p. 39). In
other words, he thinks that discourses of power can form independently from a higher hierarchical structure.

As Michel Foucault was one of the most influential writers from the 1970s, he wrote a multitude of books with relevance to many fields. It goes without saying that his concepts have been used as tools for a myriad of other writers. This is even true when it comes to the topics mentioned in this study. One scholar wondered how Foucault would see Trump as president (Knauft, 2018). Others have applied Foucauldian ideas to exceptionalism in the context of liberalism and foreign policy in the Bush era (Cuadro, 2011). More recently, one book discusses exceptionalism in connection with cultural pluralism (Fong, 2014).

This study should serve as a continuation of understanding American politics through Foucauldian ideas. Foucault’s idea of power serves as a connector of American exceptionalism and Trump’s Inauguration Address.

As explained further on, this conceptualisation of power is helpful to understand how the religious manifestation of American exceptionalism came into being. Once one has a rough understanding of these beginnings, one can tie them to Trump’s speech and see the connection.

3.2 Ideology

3.2.1 Ideology – power/knowledge

Just as power is crucial in CDA, ideology is integral to its structure too. In Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach, van Dijk explains his definition thereof: “[I]deologies allow people, as group members, to organize the multitude of social beliefs about what is the case, good or bad, right or wrong, for them, and to act accordingly” (van Dijk, 1998, p. 8). For van Dijk ideologies are always shared group beliefs, not personal opinions (2011, p. 11). First of all, there is a strong parallel here between ideology and Foucault’s concept of power/knowledge. They both refer to subjective truths within groups. Additionally, both mention the productive strength of these ideas or in other words, the subsequent action which comes out of these shared beliefs. While Foucault views power as ubiquitous and an inevitability in every society, for van Dijk, ideology is mostly self-serving for groups in their quest for empowerment or domination (van Dijk, 1998, p. 138). So, it is crucial to note that ideologies can be morally reprehensible or the basis of moral progress. And while Foucault does not reject the possibility of the co-existence of power and
ideology, he states that ideologies cannot be the root of power (Foucault, 2003, p. 33). Rather, the root has to be knowledge in the subjective sense, which has no connection to ideology.

3.2.2 Ideology in CDA

In *Language and Peace*, van Dijk proposes the idea that ideology is manifested in the triangle of society, discourse and social cognition (1995, p. 17). One arrives at this triangle in the formation of an idea, belief or even emotion in someone’s mind. So, ideologies refer to “clusters of beliefs in our mind” (van Dijk, 1998, p. 26). These ideologies do not stay mere mental representations but are also expressed outwardly. In other words, they are shared with others and also have an impact on a given society. Individual brains do not simply give rise to ideologies out of nothing. Any mental representation is thus a product of societal input in the form of conversations or social conditioning through traditions or institutions. Discourse comes into play since beliefs are often expressed through text or talk and shape societies in the form of actions and societal structures (van Dijk, 1995, p. 22). As soon as discourses show some self-serving aspect of creation, confirmation and justification of a power hierarchy, they can be scrutinised in an ideological analysis (ibid., p. 23). Van Dijk sees the need for such an analysis especially in the light of social struggles with socio-political origins. These analyses then typically reveal an “us” versus “them” thinking and highlight the underlying ideological meaning in seemingly harmless texts. Ideally, a critical analysis brings to the surface engrained meaning pertaining to power. Once again, this demonstrates the importance of taking ideology and discourse into account when examining such a potent idea as American exceptionalism.

Van Dijk’s approach to ideology has been influential in the understanding of injustice in fields like racism, the media and other topics. A good example is his thesis examining the role of the media and the news in the perpetuation of racial division (van Dijk, 2000) or his book *Elite Discourse and Racism* which claims that racism is generally top-down phenomenon and not only an occurrence throughout society (1993). His concept of ideology has even been helpful in the understanding of Trump’s language and his ingroup and outgroup thinking (Mcclay, 2017). This thesis should fill a research gap by using van Dijk’s literature to demystify American exceptionalism and by doing so, to reveal hidden elements of power in Trump’s speech.
While it should be obvious for most readers of Trump’s speech that his plans to “eradicate [Radical Islamic Terrorism] completely from the face of the Earth” (93-95) are a display of ideology, other passages in his speech show more opaque levels of ideology which need to be shown through a close analysis.

3.3 Social Dominance Theory

Social Dominance Theory is an amalgamation of theories belonging to the field of social psychology and theories about ideology as well as the normalisation of social inequality (Islam 2015, p. 1779). The two founders of this theory, Sidanius and Pratto argue that all societies are structured by group-based hierarchies (2011, p. 418). In the most general terms they explain that these hierarchies grant the dominants groups access to things which are associated with well-being e.g. social status, health or wealth, while the opposite is true for the subordinate groups. They elaborate that there are three main pillars of Social Dominance Theory. Firstly, they assert that societies and the structures of dominance therein change over time (ibid., p. 420). Secondly, social hierarchies can manifest themselves in various forms of ideologies such as racism, sexism or nativism. And lastly, the theorists propose that an analyst of a hierarchy must understand the multitude of forces which produce influence and maintain it (ibid.). Moreover, group power is often held on intersecting levels of dominance in a society e.g. racism together with sexism (Pratto and Stewart, 2012, p. 1).

Applied to this thesis, this means, for example, that dominant groups have been able to maintain their status of exceptionalism through nationalistic and religious domination at the same time.

3.3.1 Legitimising myths

It is important to mention that Social Dominance Theory does not say that inequality between groups comes from pure discrimination or force directed towards the subordinate groups by the powerful groups (Pratto et al., 2006, p. 275). Rather, van Dijk and others have suggested that values, beliefs and ideologies shared by a group can be called legitimising myths. These myths influence the decisions individuals make and shape social practices and social institutions. The theorists argue that one should differentiate between two different types of myths. Hierarchy-enhancing legitimising myths legitimise oppression and power through all kinds of concepts like fate, nationalism or Manifest
Destiny. *Hierarchy-attenuating legitimising myths*, on the other hand, are myths which are used by subordinate groups to challenge the status quo of the current power structures (ibid., p. 276). So, in Social Dominance Theory, power is not only seen as a coercive means, but also in the Foucauldian way, as a force of creation, liberation and a way to grow (Sidanius and Pratto, 2011, p. 431). Legitimising myths are interwoven in the fabric of societies as to make them seem normal to the majority of a group. In turn, those within the group who criticise them, inevitably stand out (ibid., p. 426). Being closely related to van Dijk’s idea of ideology, with Social Dominance Theory one observes that ideologies share both a personal and a societal space i.e. they do not stay mere mental representations.

Social Dominance Theory is widely applicable across fields to explain how intergroup conflicts arise and what mechanisms perpetuate these phenomena (ibid, p. 432). Rather than being a set of ideas which is just used in a theoretical way, Social Dominance Theory is meant to highlight real-life injustice or a struggle against it (Sidanius et al., 2004, p. 872). It has been applied to a number of topics which are relevant to the United States. A few examples include the study of the death penalty and its link to social factors (Mitchell and Sidanius, 1995), an enquiry into the support of violence between the Middle East and the United States (Sidanius et al., 2005) and a look at the relationship between racism and job preferences (Sidanius et al., 1991).

This study adds to the existing body of writing by applying the idea of hierarchy-attenuating legitimising myths to help explain how American exceptionalism came into being through an opposition of the Puritans against the Church of England. It also uses the theory of hierarchy-enhancing legitimising myths to outline how the early American settlers constructed “the civilised” and “the uncivilised” in similar ways as Trump does in his Inauguration Address.

4 Methodology

In order to reveal how Trump’s speech contains elements of power which are integral to different levels of American exceptionalism, this study operates along the lines of a Critical Discourse Analysis. Depending on one’s perspective, this is a daunting task or a liberating opportunity. This is because CDA is a fluid approach in the context of discourse analyses and does not refer to one fixed method. Rather, it is generally accepted that any method works in CDA as long as it highlights the relationship between a given discourse
and power (Fairclough, 2010, p. 8). The word “critical” does not imply that an analysis is judgemental or even that it claims an objective truth. It is, however, “unapologetic” (Tenario, 2011, p. 187) in its examination of human values. It makes strong claims about language not happening a vacuum. As stated earlier, it is a preservation of the Saussurean idea that language is largely influenced by an individual’s culture. An important pillar of Critical Discourse Analysis is thus the contextualisation of a discourse in history to lay bare the often-hidden origins of power structures (van Dijk, 2008, p. 353). By tendency, this study pays greater attention to the historical context which most likely gave birth to concepts in Trump’s speech and less to an in-depth analysis of the linguistic pieces in the speech.

The simplicity of my model which focuses on just the two nodes of text and historical context to reveal power can most likely be attributed to Fowler’s idea of CDA (Qianbo, 2016, p. 34). There is also a need to acknowledge the change in discourse over a period of time. Especially the concept of American exceptionalism has been subject to various changes over time. This idea of change in the historical contextualisation of a discourse is highlighted by Ruth Wodak (2001, p. 65). The importance of historical change is also a reflection of the first core assumption of Social Dominance Theory which states that societies and the hierarchies within change over time (Sidanius and Pratto, 2011, p. 420).

Over the decades, many discussions have been geared towards the question whether a top-down approach, a bottom-up approach or mixture of the two is advisable. For a dynamic analysis and to avoid a purely descriptive style narration of the micro and respectively macro level, this thesis moves between the two. That way I also hope to decrease the inevitable gap between the micro level, namely the Inauguration Address and the macro level or the historical discourse which helped shape the speech.

For easier quoting, this study refers to the exact line numbers of the Inauguration Address with the numbers in brackets. The speech with the added lines is attached in the appendix. Even though this study does dissect the speech at length, the following word cloud visualises the most used words from which one can draw conclusions about the gist of Trump’s Inauguration Address.
4.1 Steps

As mentioned before, it is limiting to use one fixed definition of American exceptionalism. Not only has the definition changed over time, but it also branches out into a multitude of other related concepts. The diversity of this idea is in fact mirrored in Trump’s speech. It is thus inevitable to divide the analysis into various steps.

As the first step, it is necessary to outline how the thought of American exceptionalism first came into existence. By using Social Dominance Theory, it explains how the Puritans established a community in America. This step serves as a point of reference in the following steps of the analysis because it helps with the understanding of the concepts Trump is referring to. More importantly, however, through this step one realises why American exceptionalism exists, how strongly it is linked to power and religious ideas and how deeply anchored it is in American society.

The second step summarises Trump’s pleas for greater unity within the United States. His rhetoric further suggests that this unity is a prerequisite for a civilised nation in the eyes of the Christian God and a crucial tool to combat Islamic extremism. Then, these points are analysed in the light of a 17th century Puritan sermon called “A Model of Christian Charity”. This brings to the foreground Trump’s hints at the predestined duty of the United States to lead as a model society and to battle uncivilised groups. With the help of the concept of “radical rebirth” by Winfried Fluck one realises why Trump’s promise to conquer “the savage” and his desire to transform the United States is integral to American exceptionalism.

The last step summarises how Trump’s bleak image of the current state of the United States is constructed through his belief that fundamental American principles have been abandoned. He blames the government for having acquired too much power and claims
that foreign countries have been taking advantage of people of the United States. With the help of the letters of a 18th century writer named Jean de Crèvecoeur and the founding ideas of the United States, this study points out exceptionalism in Trump’s call for a limited government. It then proceeds to highlight the historical continuity of Trump’s nationalist rhetoric and puts especial emphasis on the importance of American labour for the American national identity.

4.2 Sample size

The analysis of solely one speech and just one concept therein, namely American exceptionalism, seems adequate when it comes to the length of this study. I have argued for the political and societal importance of this speech, but it also makes sense along analytical lines. The speech is full of traces of exceptionalism which are not obvious and only surface through a deep historical contextualisation. These traces are not, however, so hidden as to allow for a complete misinterpretation. With such a text-driven analysis, it is hard to state how many sources are needed in the analysis. Carla Willig writes that the “selection of suitable texts for analysis is informed by the research question” (2013, p. 131). If the selection size is too small, the analysis might lack depth or be misguided in the first place. If there is too much material, the analysis falls apart through an oversaturation of information. In short, this research attempts to strike a good balance by aiming at coherence and clarity. The main criterion of the sample selection was to find enough useful sources as to make the hidden traces of exceptionalism in Trump’s speech visible to the reader.

4.3 Limitations

One obvious limitation of this study lies in the fact that the Inauguration Address is treated as a text and not as a speech. So, it neglects verbal characteristics such as intonation, breaks or volume. Van Dijk proposes that one starts an analysis on “surface structures” (1995, p. 23). In the case of a text this means that an analyst could pay attention to varying font sizes, colours or other design choices which may indicate hierarchies. As the speech is published on whitehouse.gov, it is kept very functional, which is why it probably is not worth conducting a surface structure analysis. Considering that the Inauguration Address bears so close resemblance to a jeremiad in its bemoaning tone, it makes sense to stay on a textual level of analysis as one would with a tradition jeremiad. One should also keep
in mind that the written speech contains minor word alterations compared to the spoken version.

Due to spacial limits, this study does not comment on the production of the text to a great degree. This brings up a number of different issues. On the one hand, one may want to point out that some people have criticised Trump’s personal integrity. Some would thus put forth that it is unclear to what degree he truly believes in the content of his speech. According to the Wall Street Journal, Stephen Miller and Steve Bannon wrote large portions of the speech (Farand, 2017). So, on the other hand, the role of Trump’s agency and commitment to this speech becomes even less clear. Furthermore, there is a good point to be made about the need to contextualise the speech in the entirety of Trump’s political rhetoric to be able to interpret his words.

As Angela Morgan writes, there is a problem with the change of meaning over time and across people (2010, p. 4). One weakness of discourse analyses in general is that the analyst can potentially misinterpret meaning. The possibility of misinterpreting meaning in this study is present as it compares the meaning of American exceptionalism in its very historical roots to a present manifestation thereof. For this reason, I am especially careful not to claim false links between past discourses of power and Trump’s speech.

The aforementioned gap between text and the contextualisation thereof is an unavoidable limitation of CDA (van Dijk, 2008, p. 354). The writer has to strike a balance between the micro and macro level. In this thesis, the focus lies more on the contextualisation and less on the linguistic details since it aims at explaining how power emerged in American exceptionalism and how this myth can take various shapes.

If someone were to replicate this study with the above-mentioned methodological steps, the future study would most likely also find the concept of power as part of American exceptionalism in Trump’s Inauguration Address. American exceptionalism has been studied for a long time and framed by excellent literature. An in-depth analysis of these individual creations of exceptionalism automatically brings to the foreground the element of power. This should be especially true when supported by the literature from the theoretical framework of this study. That way, the sometimes-hidden connection between the speech and American exceptionalism should fall into place. Naturally, there would be varying interpretations as I tend to agree with Angela Morgan that meaning is flexible depending on time, space and people (2010, p. 4).

The validity of this study is ensured by a consistent and coherent structure of the research questions, method and theoretical framework. CDA is a fitting method to filter out power
structures in a micro as well as macro level and to find the link between the two. Likewise, the concepts in the theoretical section have been chosen meticulously in order to match the research questions and method and to make the idea of power more accessible through theories like knowledge or ideology. Interpretive work plays a significant role in this study which is why it claims no objective truths. This stance in research is common practice for proponents of Critical Discourse Analysis (Tenario, 2011, p. 187).

4.4 Ethical considerations
The first major consideration a critical researcher of a discourse has to take into account is connected to the Foucauldian idea of power and knowledge. A researcher cannot criticise a discourse in a neutral way since he is unavoidably taking up a position of power (Wrbouschek, p. 39, 2009). While this position of power does not have to be an unethical position, the engagement and criticism of a discourse still entails reshaping of the discourse at hand and producing new discourses. This study tries to work with this issue in two ways. Firstly, it aims at being as nuanced as possible when talking about the issue of power as it can range from simple empowerment to social oppression. Secondly, I work with the pragmatist way of thinking and admit that I am in danger of being swayed by personal bias and my social surroundings (Creswell, 2013, p. 12).

If one is not careful as a researcher, one may easily lose touch with the complexity of power. Claudio Ramírez makes the point that a researcher should pay attention to the element of power even before a discourse is created (2013, p. 24). This is vital as discourses are complex structures and the influence of power is not always unidirectional. To study power even before it shapes a discourse is crucial in the understanding of the creation and distribution thereof and its influence on society. Due to the intricacy of American exceptionalism, there is a need to explain the roots of power which led to the inception of exceptionalism. The first step of the analysis is thus dedicated to the description of the circumstances which shaped the idea of American exceptionalism in the first place. As mentioned previously, this step is necessary to grasp how exceptionalism is infused with power and how deeply rooted in American thinking it is. This step also goes in hand with the third pillar of Social Dominance Theory which emphasises the many levels which produce and reproduce a hierarchy (Sidanius and Pratto, 2011, p. 420).
One last consideration is concerned with Trump’s stance towards American exceptionalism itself. During an interview at a high school in 2015, Trump claimed that he didn’t like the term American exceptionalism and that he would never use it. He argued that it was patronising towards other nations as it implied that they are not exceptional and that he didn’t need to use such a boisterous term due to his small ego (TexasPatriots, PAC, 2015). This statement seems like a weak attempt to sound humble and in the context of the interview one realises that it fits in with his common strategy of criticising the current state of the country. He often attempts to position himself in a good light by perpetuating the narrative of a failing country and promising to return it to its greatness. As outlined before, the issue of authorship and production of the Inauguration speech is complicated and Trump’s attitude towards American exceptionalism is not too important as long as this theme is shown to be contained within his speech. Whether Trump is aware that his speech reverberates the theme a lot or not should be a separate question.

5 Analysis and discussion

5.1 The creation of a myth

To understand how the element of power is contained within the framework of American exceptionalism in combination with the Inaugural Address, one should understand where the absolute beginnings of this myth are located. Even before America was discovered by the Europeans, it was often imagined that there was some terrestrial paradise lying in the west (Kroes, 1996, p. 4). One could argue that the combination of increasing oppression in the Old World, a longing for religious freedom and the discovery of a continent which was imagined in paradiasiacal ways culminated in a hierarchy-attenuating legitimising myth (Pratto et al., 2006, p. 276) for the English Puritans. It provided a justification for emigrating from England. Depending on the group of Puritans, the desire was either to reform the doctrines of the Church of England or to detach completely from this community. Compared to other colonies, the Puritan settlement proved the most successful (Greene, 1993, p. 55). The initial successes strengthened the confirmation bias of the Puritans that they were practicing the correct form of Christianity and were meant to establish a safe community for God’s chosen people. Their encounters with the native population only reinforced this notion. Prior to the Puritan arrival, the European conception of Native Americans was often clouded by
an image of a devilish people practicing cannibalism. It is argued that the Puritans attempted to live peacefully and convert the Natives in the beginning (Vaughan, 1995, p. ix). As the realisation dawned on the Puritans that a wide-spread conversion of the native population was not possible, they started what would become an over-two-century long massacre. Lum and Harvey explain that European settlers mixed racial and religious thinking in a concept called “limpieza de sangre” (2018, p. 8). European in its origin, this belief stated that the impurity of some peoples’ blood made it physically impossible for them to be real Christians. At this stage, the Puritans had moved away from their role as the oppressed in England to becoming the oppressor. The belief that they were destined by God to populate this newly discovered land and the rising conviction that the Natives were heathens or even creatures of the devil shaped the hierarchy-enhancing legitimising myth (Pratto et al., 2006, p. 276), which justified the territorial expansion and murders of the Native Americans. It is crucial to realise that this was most likely the wellspring of American exceptionalism. America was no longer a mystical spot on the map, but a safe haven for religious and political freedom as it was protected by God. Its exceptional status was especially elevated because it was seen as a counterimage of Europe with its political and religious oppression and crowded countries (Kroes, 1996, p. 10. One needs this point of reference to understand any following form of American exceptionalism.

5.2 Colonial exceptionalism

Trump’s Inauguration Address contains various statements which are grouped under the term “Colonial exceptionalism” in this thesis as the origin of the underlying exceptional idea first emerged in the Colonial era. As Veracini explains in the introduction to his book *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*, settler colonialism is a complex topic which needs to be approached carefully. This study refers to settler colonialism as the subjugation of a majority population of natives by a foreign minority which deems itself superior along racial or cultural lines (Veracini, 2010, p. 4). It is this definition which justifies calling the encounter between the Puritans and the Native American population and the subsequent subjugation of the Natives an act of settler colonialism. One should be mindful of the fact that settler colonialism was enforced all across the Americas for centuries and affected a multitude of different groups. While one could place Trump’s rhetoric in a number of different colonial settings, this study focuses solely on Puritan colonialism.
The first step of this analysis points out these passages in Trump’s speech and shows how they relate to power and American exceptionalism. The second step explains how these concepts are rooted in the Colonial era. The goal of this step is thus to highlight how power is embedded in Trump’s referral to American exceptionalism to a greater degree than a surface reading allows.

5.2.1 Superiority, unity and civilisation

“[We will] unite the civilized world against Radical Islamic Terrorism, which we will eradicate completely from the face of the Earth” (93-95).

This is one of the most powerful statements in Trump’s Inauguration Address. Even at a surface reading, the element of power stands out. Trump is creating a divide between what he sees as the civilised countries and uncivilised people i.e. Islamic terrorists. Not only does this imply that the United States is among the most civilised nations, but also that it has strong leadership roles as it is meant to unite all civilised nations. Additionally, he takes an unapologetic stance in his conviction to kill off Islamic terror. The notion of American exceptionalism already lies at this surface level of analysis. His language shows a belief in the cultural, moral and political superiority of the United States.

It is telling that Trump talks about Islamic terrorism. This term is often avoided in politics as exemplified by Obama who thought that Islamic terrorism was the result of a distorted reading of the Quran (Diaz, 2016). He also believed that people use Islam as a cover to commit violent acts. Obama was afraid that the word Islamic was too general and would encompass peaceful Muslims too. But for Trump the battle between the civilised and uncivilised accommodates an inherent religious aspect. It is a fight between the United States as well as other countries which he deems civilised and extreme forms of Islam. There is, however, good reason to believe that Christian ideology also plays a role in his conception of the civilised. One reason for this assumption lies in the fact that he quotes the Bible a few sentences later with “How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity” (100-101). This phrase ties in with his previous statement about Islamic terrorism as both mention the idea of unity. The Bible passage claims that God’s people lead a blissful life when united and Trump sees the necessity to unite nations to eliminate the threat of Islamic terrorism. One can easily think that Trump is using the Bible passage as an argument in favour of creating a bond of nations. To some degree, Trump seems to be implying that he is planning on fulfilling biblical work of unifying people. It is not a big step to conclude that Trump’s wish to eradicate Islamic terror lies in his belief that
this form of extremism is at best a looming threat to civilised countries and at worst already an impediment to the life of the people in these nations. From this one can deduce that he may also be using the Bible quote to justify a battle against Islamic terror because the Bible calls for a life in unity. In his eyes, this unity does not align well with a coexistence with Islamic terrorism. This militaristic attitude infused with religious rhetoric becomes even clearer two sentences after the Bible quote where Trump states that “[w]hen America is united, America is totally unstoppable” (104). The reoccurring theme of unity connects this statement with the previous passages making the connection between unity, God and a subsequent justification for an opposition against Islamic terror even more obvious.

In the following lines, Trump even claims that the United States will always be protected by the military, but “most importantly, […] protected by God” (107). One can either argue that he is talking about a protection against any forces in general or that this is still a continuation of his promise to battle Islamism. At this point, however, the link between his belief in the superiority of the United States and a militaristic stance supported by God is even more pronounced. The utterance, “[i]n America, we understand that a nation is only living as long as it is striving” (109), can also be interpreted in this way. A benign reading of this statement would probably lead one to believe that Trump is referring to strive for greater curiosity and a will to explore. This makes sense because he talks about standing on the brink of great scientific and technological advances (117-119). Placed in the context of what this study has already concluded from Trump’s Inaugural Address, it is not far-fetched to believe that the striving he is speaking of also encompasses some form of combative attitude.

In short, a close reading of Trump’s rhetoric contained in just a few phrases reveals that he seems to believe in a connection between the idea of civilisation and the Christian God. The link between the two becomes especially apparent in the reappearing theme of unity. Trump is implying that unity should be the bedrock of American society. On the one hand, he sees it as a biblical principle, but he claims that unity among civilised nations is a necessary prerequisite to fight Islamic terrorism. American exceptionalism is integral to these ideas in that he views the United States as the unifier of all civilised nations and as a country which is protected by God and arguably even meant to fulfil the work of God. This elevates the status of the United States and justifies its superior position. This justification of a power hierarchy is a good indication that an ideological analysis makes sense (van Dijk, 1995, p. 23).
5.2.2 A city upon a hill

Despite the fact that one can extract some power structures from a close reading of Trump’s Inaugural Address, the real essence of American exceptionalism only comes to the fore with a contextualisation in the American Colonial era.

“How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity” (100-101).

Trump’s reference to the Bible presents a good opportunity to contextualise his speech historically. This passage is taken from Psalm 133:1 and is preceded by the following words: “A song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem. A psalm of David” (New Living Translation, 1996). In biblical times, Jews sang Psalm 133 when ascending the mountain on which Jerusalem was erected. The temple in Jerusalem was a meeting point for Jewish pilgrims who hoped to meet God at this high point (Koester, 2009). This Bible passage bears close resemblance to a famous passage from Jesus’ Sermon on a Mount. In Matthew 5:14-15 it says, “You are the light of the world. A city located on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do you light a lamp, and put it under a measuring basket, but on a stand; and it shines to all who are in the house” (New Heart English Bible, 2008). This is one of Jesus’ central teachings in which he addresses his disciples and makes it clear to them that it is their responsibility to lead a Christian life and thus be a role model for the rest of the world.

This is important because one can argue that Trump’s Inauguration speech contains a reference to Matthew 5:14-15. After stating that he believes every country should be allowed to highlight their own interests, he says, “We do not seek to impose our way of life on anyone, but rather to let it shine as an example for everyone to follow” (91-92). Multiple American presidents hinted at this passage, which is an example of the aforementioned intertextuality between American Inaugural Addresses (Austermühl, 2014, p. 5). But it is also a central idea of American exceptionalism. One can of course argue that Trump is perpetuating the powerful image of America being a second Jerusalem which serves as an example of excellence for the world to see. While this reading does explain part of the power structures behind this rhetoric, it does not fully explain how this exceptional image entered the American consciousness or in other words, why it specifically pertains to American exceptionalism and why it is so powerful. Matthew 5:14-15 has played a significant role in American politics and in the American belief in its exceptional nature thanks to a lawyer called John Winthrop. It is believed that he held a sermon called “A Model of Christian Charity” on a boat sailing to New England
in 1630 (Brauch, 1998, n.p.). In this sermon Winthrop told his congregation that their plan to establish a colony in the New World was not only favoured but in fact ordered by God. They stood in a close covenant with the Christian God and were entrusted to establish a “city upon a hill” (The Winthrop Society, 2015). “The eyes of all people” (ibid.) would be upon them as their city was going to be the “light of the world” (New Heart English Bible, 2008). It is important to note that this conviction was especially strong because these Puritan settlers believed in predestination. This Calvinist doctrine held that everyone was innately sinful as a result of the original sin committed by Adam and Eve. Some select people would, however, realise in the course of their lives that they belonged to the chosen few to be spared from eternal damnation (Calvin, 1536). Winthrop’s colony believed that their model community in the New World would purify all churches and thus usher in the return of Christ as well as save all Christians from hell (Madsen, 1998). I have argued that the Puritan move to America was motivated by a number of self-serving myths which justified their schism from the Church of England and rationalised their dominant behaviour in America. So, the Puritan settlers dedicated their lives to pleasing God and establishing a perfect community. In the Foucauldian sense, they also knew that they were destined to colonise America. Their knowledge of their superiority had an empowering effect on them. It seems fitting to argue that Winthrop and his congregation were living in their “régime of truth” (Foucault, 1980, p. 131). One must emphasise that the colonialization of America was an archetypal undertaking for Winthrop’s colony. In their eyes, the eternal fate of all Christians depended on their success as a colony. The image of a city on a hill could thus hardly be more powerful.
So, when Trump insists that the United States should shine as a model to guide everyone, one needs to read it through this Puritan lens. While Trump is of course not claiming that the United States is meant to save other nations from eternal damnation, he is suggesting that Islamic terror is a door to a terrestrial hell which needs to be closed by the United States and its allied nations. In fact, the quintessence of predestination seems to prevail in his speech, too. In one instant, Trump states the following: “We share one heart, one home, and one glorious destiny” (54-55). Later on, he states: “Your voice, your hopes, and your dreams, will define our American destiny” (130). Using the word destiny when referring to a country implies that this nation was meant to be in a certain way or act according to laws which were set before the founding of the very nation. In the United States, destiny has a dark connotation as it alludes to “Manifest Destiny”. Despite being of Puritan origin, it was first coined by editor John Louis O’Sullivan in the 1840s. He argued that the United States was ordained by God to spread across the entirety of the continent in order to live the “great experiment of liberty and federated self-government” (O’Sullivan, 1845, cited in Mountjoy, 2009, p. 10). One could put forth the argument that Trump’s wish to eradicate Islamic terrorism is motivated by the belief that the United States is ordered by God to spread certain western values. The seemingly insurmountable
task of ridding the earth of Islamic terror would inevitably entitle invading other countries. As with recent wars in the Middle East, Trump could justify an invasion by continuing O’Sullivan’s idea of the United States being the bringer of democracy as destined by God. In this context it is interesting to revisit Trump’s following statement: “In America, we understand that a nation is only living as long as it is striving” (109). As mentioned before, it stands to reason that this phrase is nothing more than a reminder that the United States is a meritocracy which aims to improve itself. Given the historical context of Manifest Destiny and Trump’s militaristic attitude towards Islamic terror, it is not far-fetched that the striving includes fighting. This position could be supported by his claim that the United States is unstoppable when united (104).

To conclude, using the imagery of a city on a hill to describe the role of a country in global affairs is in of itself a strong image. Due to its Puritan roots, it has become a powerful image of American exceptionalism. Once one combines it with the concept of predestination, this myth could hardly be more exceptional. It proposes that the United States was ordained by God to lead as an example before the nation even existed.

5.2.3 Radical rebirth

“This American carnage stops right here and stops right now” (52).

Trump’s Inauguration Address is also so powerful in terms of American exceptionalism because he portrays the United States as a highly civilised nation. As said before, Trump cites a Bible passage as an argument in favour of unity. In addition to unity being the tool for the United States to being unstoppable, Trump deems it the responsibility of the United States to “unite the civilized world” (93). It is also telling that the word “we” appears nearly 50 times in Trump’s speech. Unity is a concept which is deeply American as the very name of the United States suggests. It is also integral to the idea of American exceptionalism and bears a close connection to the idea of civilisation. Winthrop and his community were convinced that the project of establishing a perfect Christian state depended entirely on brotherly love (Brauch, 1998, n.p.). As God ensured the prospering of Israel in the Bible, Winthrop believed that a close bond with God and within the community would lead America to be a blessed nation. The Puritans lived in an interesting paradox. On the one hand, they were convinced that the Christian God was infinitely merciful towards them. On the other hand, they were terrified of making mistakes as this would inevitably lead to a failed mission and subsequently, eternal damnation. Since the Puritan community believed that they were chosen by God to save all Christians from
hell, one can imagine the level of self-confidence they were filled with. The mutual fear of failure, the high degree of self-pride and the communal love culminated in the Puritans believing they were highly-civilised people. This is crucial as the Puritans inevitably encountered the Native American population upon arrival. Though historians debate to this day to what degree the Puritans really intended to live peacefully with the Native population, there is good reason to believe that their intentions were good for the most part of the 17th century (Vaughan, 1995, p. ix). The issue lied in the fact that the Puritans thought the Native Americans had to give up their language, religion, culture and economic ways in return for an uncompromised Puritan life (ibid., p. xvi). The settlers were prohibited by law to appropriate any form of Native American culture. Even when the Natives accepted Christian ideas, their version of Christianity was not pure enough and provided the basis for further discrimination (Fisher, 2018, p. 324). This made the contrast between savagery and civilisation even bigger (ibid., p. xvii). Vaughan puts it eloquently by arguing that the divide between the cultured people and the animalistic people in the Puritan view grew this large because the view shifted from being purely “an ethnocentric perception into a legal and psychological imperative” (ibid., p. xviii). In other words, the image of Native Americans being savages was no longer just painted through travel accounts, but it was instantiated by law and thought to be true. Vaughan’s quote invites van Dijk’s concept of ideology. For him, ideology emerges from society, discourse and social cognition (van Dijk, 1995, p. 17). Vaughan’s statement is thus especially helpful to understand the role of social cognition. I have argued before that the Puritan failure to convert the Native population created a hierarchy-enhancing legitimising myth (Pratto et al., 2006, p. 276) which justified the increased killing of the Native population. On a deeper level, this myth was not just self-serving, but a deeply held religious idea which was deemed to align with God’s intentions. It was thus a form of power which emerged as a counterpower against the religious power structures of the Church of England. The Puritans were the victims of power, but also the creators of new power structures. As Foucault explains, power creates new discourses and new truths a given society believes in (1977, p. 194). All of this historical background is indispensable to grasp how deeply entrenched and intertwined the concepts of civilisation, unity and Christianity are in American history. It is especially important in the following paragraph in order to understand the similarities between the Puritan conception of the Natives and Trump’s idea of Islamic terror.
In Trump’s Inauguration speech, the idea of civilisation does not only come in the form of religion but also in promises to establish great infrastructure (84-85), to restore economic power (77-79), to value American patriotism (121-123) and to giving the people the power to govern the nation (17-18). It is, however, crucial to notice that Trump does not see these elements of civilisation in the United States at the point of his speech. Rather, a great portion of his speech is geared towards decrying the current system and vowing to improve it immensely. Trump speaks about “mothers and children trapped in poverty” (46-47), “rusted out factories” (47), lives having been taken by drugs and gangs (49-50) and an infrastructure which “has fallen into despair and decay” (62-63). In short, he calls for an end to the “American carnage” (52).

With the help of a concept taken from an American studies scholar, one can understand why this rhetoric connects back to the Colonial era and how it aligns with American exceptionalism. Winfried Fluck claims that the concept of “radical rebirth” (2009, p. 89) is a dominant narrative in the United States. He explains that the founding of America is so powerful because it meant venturing into the unknown and hostile wilderness of a new country (ibid., p. 89-90). But it was through this dangerous undertaking that the Puritans believed they could rid themselves from the ills of their previous society. In this context, Fluck mentions the Puritan jeremiad (ibid., p. 89). Winthrop’s sermon is a good example of a jeremiad as it lamented the moral decline of a community and stressed how important it was to live according to God’s rules (Bercovitch, 2012, p. 4). Puritan preachers saw conflicts with Natives as a punishment by God and at the same time as a justification to combat the savage (Michna, 2017, p. 34). Of course, Trump’s condemnation of the current state of the country is not entirely religiously motivated. But his rhetoric is so powerful because a radical rebirth has worked in the past as seen by the founding of America. The Inauguration Address is a jeremiad as Trump is warning the American people about the decline of the nation. To some degree, Trump is even acting in similar ways to a Puritan preacher. By establishing and linking ideas of civilisation, unity and American greatness together, he is creating a divide between the civilised United States as well as its allies and the uncivilised Islamic terrorists. Just as the Puritans eventually turned to killing Native Americans, Trump is now calling for the killing of terrorists. In a way, this is a promise to conquer the savage again. It is repeating the idea of cleansing a civilisation by going into the unknown and killing off the uncivilised. Naturally, one could argue that this is an overinterpretation of Trump’s speech and that a promise to improve the nation simply is a good political strategy. The Puritan jeremiad is, however,
detectable in a number of American Inaugural Addresses (Maru, 2013, p. 36). Likewise, the national myth of radical transformation of the self and of a community is deeply engrained in the American consciousness. Even if the connection of this myth to the Puritan community may be hard to see and the Puritan influence may not be the only source of this myth, it still plays a crucial role.

In short, the myth of American exceptionalism lies here in the confidence that America is meant to be a leading civilisation. Through his speech, Trump perpetuates the notion of a failing nation and assures that he will create a prospering state. This bears close resemblance to the founding myth of radical rebirth. In the light of this theory, the eradication of Islamic terrorism is integral to cleansing the nation and entering a new era.

5.3 Political and economic exceptionalism

A considerable portion of Trump’s Inauguration speech addresses themes of political and economic American exceptionalism. The first step extracts the passages from his speech which pertain to these types of exceptionalism. While this surface reading may show various forms of power, the concept of American exceptionalism does not necessarily come to the foreground yet. It is through the second step, the historical contextualisation of these passages, that one realises how power is embedded in their referral to American exceptionalism.

5.3.1 “A nation exists to serve its citizens”

In the beginning of the Inauguration Address, Trump spends some considerable time promising to return power from the government in Washington to the American people (17-18). He stresses that this presidential transfer indicates more of a historic significance compared to others as it signifies the restoration of a small government (15-18). He criticises the previous governments for having given too much power to a few people in Washington which led the American people to suffer economically (19-20). And while he does admit that the establishment celebrated some successes, he highlights that the population of the United States was barred from these victories (24-26). His zeal to limit the power of government lies in his belief that “a nation exists to serve its citizens” (41-42). To underline how the status quo has affected the American people negatively, he employs emotional language. He implies that this style of governing has caused “[m]others and children [to be] trapped in poverty”, he paints the image of the United
States being like a graveyard of old factories (47-48), he feels sorry for the multitude of “young and beautiful students” (49) who were robbed of education and decries how crime has held back a lot of talent (50-51).

Upon summarising Trump’s vow to contain the power of Washington and transfer it to the population of the United States, one can find two levels of power. Firstly, he is criticising the current hierarchical power structure of the nation which favours the few people in the government and neglects the wellbeing of the people. This reminds strongly of Social Dominance Theory which states that all societies are built upon group-based hierarchies (Sidanius and Pratto, 2011, p. 418). In the broadest terms, this inevitably allows the dominant groups to lead a happier life than the subordinate one. Secondly, Trump presents himself as the powerful figure who will go down in history for subverting this system of inequality. The issue is that this brief reading does not yet reveal any form of American exceptionalism. It is, however, the necessary step to understand the historical contextualisation of this passage later on.

The topics of work and nationalism also play a central role in Trump’s speech. As argued later on, this is another element of American exceptionalism. Trump doesn’t only blame the current government for the decay of the economy, but he emphasises that too little money was invested in the American economy and that policies were not nationalistic enough. For him, the “rusted-out factories scattered like tombstones” (47) are also caused by American companies relocating to foreign countries and thus leaving American workers unemployed (66-67). On his account, this has led to downsizing in the military (59-60) and to a crumbling middle-class (68). At the same time, he condemns the past American governments for having diffused money in foreign countries (57-58). He even maintains that the United States has been eager to protect foreign borders, while failing to do so with its own national borders (61). The strong notion of economic and political nationalism is a central theme in Trump’s speech and really crystallises in the following statement: “At the center of this movement [Trump’s election] is a crucial conviction: that a nation exists to serve its citizens” (41-42). Apart from seeing a great deal of economic turmoil by failing to follow this position, Trump links it to a downfall in national security. He states that “safe neighbourhoods” (43) are desired by all Americans and “just and reasonable demands of a righteous public” (45). He then affirms that these demands have not been met (46). In this context, it makes sense to reiterate “the crime and gangs and drugs that have stolen too many lives” (50). This is important because he vows to stop the “American carnage” (52). While this statement could only refer to self-
inflicted carnage through bad governing, he also appears to be suggesting that it is caused by foreign countries and porous borders (61). More importantly, however, he sees the need to protect the borders of the United States “from the ravages of other countries” (77) as these nations destroy the job market by making American products and stealing American firms (77-78).

Once again, there are two apparent components of power at play. On one level, Trump attempts to illustrate how the United States has been exploited by foreign countries and has consequently lost its economic standing. On another level, he presents himself as the saviour who will put America first (74) when it comes to decisions “on trade, on taxes, on immigration and on foreign affairs” (75).

If one wanted to find the myth of American exceptionalism in this summary without further historical contextualisation, one would quickly come to a dead end. In fact, every claim of American exceptionalism would quickly collapse at this point because Trumps himself says that he believes “that it is the right of all nations to put their own interests first” (90). As argued in the following paragraphs, one needs to look at the roots of the concepts of limited government, the symbolism of American labour and nationalism to spot American exceptionalism here.

5.3.2 Closing the great American asylum

“Together, We Will Make America Strong Again” (132).

Trump’s promise to return the power of the government to the American people can be reframed as a call for a limited government. This idea is deeply American and once traced back to its roots, one can see why it fits into the concept of American exceptionalism. One could redirect one’s attention to the Puritan settlers and argue that they were the first to establish a system which was detached from a higher form of governance. Their settlement in America was after all a defiance of the English monarchy. America was seen as a tabula rasa, unspoilt from European monarichies and as the philosopher George Berkeley wrote, a place “[w]here [n]ature guides and [v]irtue rules” (Winkler, 2005, p. 405). One could put forth the idea that the entire process of westward expansion in America can be seen as a journey into the unknown where settlers were solely supported by self-reliance. In short, American exceptionalism encompassed in the idea of limited government has always sprung into existence through a comparison with Europe. Rob Kroes notes that the Frenchman Jean de Crèvecoeur was one of the first to document the
political differences between Europe and America in his letters to a friend in England (1996, p. 9).

In 1782, de Crèvecoeur wrote:

It [America] is not composed, as in Europe, of great lords who possess every thing and of a herd of people who have nothing. Here are no aristocratical families, no courts, no kings, no bishops, no ecclesiastical dominion, no invisible power giving to a few a very visible one (p. 1).

Obviously, de Crèvecoeur was criticising European aristocracies and monarchies, while Trump is only taking issue with the government in the democratic system of the United States. Yet, the criticism they both voice bears close resemblance. Towards the beginning of the Inauguration Address, Trump says the following: “For too long, a small group in our nation’s Capital has reaped the rewards of government while the people have borne the cost” (19-20). Both de Crèvecoeur and Trump vilify a political system which favours those few governing and places the people at a disadvantage. In de Crèvecoeur’s letters, it is not hard to find the myth of American exceptionalism. He stated explicitly that freedom was at the heart of America and made it “the most perfect society now existing in the world” (de Crèvecoeur, 1782, p. 1). Interestingly, Trump also references “glorious freedoms” (123) which embraces all Americans. I have summarised how Trump connects
a too powerful government to poverty and a lack of national safety. This is mirrored in de Crèvecœur’s image of America. De Crèvecœur spoke of a “great American asylum [for] the poor of Europe” (1782, p. 2). Contrary to their home countries in Europe, America was fit to provide them with “land, bread [and] protection” (ibid., p. 3). Work was no longer performed as an act of “servile dependence” (ibid.) but for the sole purpose of “self-interest” (ibid.). In short, de Crèvecœur believed an American was stripped of political oppression and was defined by his own self-reliance and independence. It is now easier to see why Trump’s call for a limited government reflects American exceptionalism. In a way, Trump is decrying the departure from the very essence of what it supposedly means to be an American.

It is telling that his rhetoric suggests that the power of governance was at one point on the side of the people and his wish to take it away from the government is not his newly found idea. His promise of “giving it [power] back to you” (17-18) and his claim that the day of his speech “will be remembered as the day the people became the rulers of this nation again” (35-36) both hark back to past times. It is also interesting that Trump addresses the American people directly through the use of second person pronouns when speaking of limited government. This stands out as the rest of the speech is written almost exclusively in the first-person plural and the third-person singular. This choice of grammar highlights his message and connects with the audience on an emotional level.

Trump presents his idea of limited government in simplified terms in the following line: “And this, the United States of America, is your country” (32). If one returns to the belief that America is divinely ordained to “shine as an example for everyone to follow” (91-92) and should thus be a model society in the eyes of God, then a divine argument for limited government enters the picture here too. Trump appears to be implying that this model society should be framed by limited government. According to Trump, this model society is protected by God (107) and is made up of Americans who are all “infused with the breath of life by the same almighty Creator” (126).

Further even, limited government is a founding idea of the United States as it is inscribed in the Constitution. One must realise that the American colonies in the late 18th century felt that they were living under tyrannical rule from the Old World. To borrow Winfried Fluck’s term, the Constitution initiated a “radical rebirth” (2009, p. 89) and established the exceptional nature of the United States by law. The entire American Constitution is saturated with restrictions on the power of the government. The First Amendment, for example, prohibits Congress from passing laws against the freedom of religion, speech,
press and assembly (Brady, 2007, p. 13). Likewise, the Tenth Amendment is meant to delegate power to the individual states or to the people if it is not restricted to the government (ibid.). The ideology of limited government can be explained nicely through the triangle of society, discourse and social cognition (van Dijk, 1995, p. 17). In van Dijk’s words, the framers of the Constitution had formed “clusters of beliefs” (1998, p. 26), had then expressed these views outwardly and influenced the discourse of the time and consequently, changed the social cognition of the American people. Trump’s rhetoric reconnects with this deep-seated social belief about what makes the American government or lack thereof so exceptional.

As argued before, Trump blames the government for the economic problems of the United States but also chastises other nations for this reason. This rhetoric works so well because the United States stands in a special relationship with work. One needs to look back at the Puritan times and revisit the doctrine of predestination. As the Puritans did not know who was going to be saved from hell, they saw industriousness as a sign of salvation (Weber, 2001, p. 106). Puritans were so obsessed with hard work that they didn’t only see the acquisition of wealth as morally just but even a requisite for a good believer (Jones, 2014, p. 14). In the beginning of the 20th century, Max Weber wrote the famous book The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism in which he argued that the Puritan work ethic was a crucial force in the creation of modern capitalism. Even though the thesis of this book is questioned today, there still seems to be a remnant of Puritan industriousness in American society. For instance, a study from 2013 sampling people from 82 societies found that unemployment feels significantly worse to Protestant countries than to other nations (Winkelmann, 2014, p. 6). Even within a country, one can observe a higher degree of unhappiness among self-declared Protestants compared to others (ibid.). The United States is predominantly Protestant and it is possible to see how Trump’s talk on work and the economy in general fits into the pattern of American exceptionalism in the form of Puritan work ethic. It fits because a driving force behind the discovery and expansion in America was a commitment to hard labour. As outlined before, the success of the Puritan settlements can partially be attributed to a relentless devotion to hard labour. Despite the horrific nature of the westward expansion lasting until the end of the 19th century, it is still hard to dispute that hard work and self-reliance were at the very core of this movement. Elsewhere, I have argued at length that work was intertwined with the concept of salvation and civilisation (Donno, 2017). More importantly, it was held in such high esteem that it was even used as a tool to claim
superiority over the Native Americans. One can observe this reoccurring theme in 19th century paintings where the hard-working settlers were placed on the right side of the canvas and the brutish Natives were pushed into the left half of the painting as exemplified in the painting *American Progress* by John Gast. This right-left divide was meant to mirror the geographical placement of the settlers as they were usually to the east of the Native Americans. The viewer was thus invited to participate in the normalisation of power (Wodak, 2001, p. 3) in the form of westward expansion. It was through the dissemination of this kind of art, similar kinds of literature that the general discourse of the American population formed a net-like structure of power/knowledge (Foucault, 1980, p. 98). In other words, every member of society was affected by this “micro-power” (Foucault, 1977, p. 27). The belief in hard work persisted as a part of the American identity in the 20th century, too. This was exemplified by a speech held by Theodore Roosevelt called “The Strenuous Life”. Here, he condemned a “life of slothful ease” (Johnson, 2017, p. 189-190) because he viewed it as incompatible with a successful 20th century existence.

The belief in hard work remains today and Trump’s rhetoric of “rusted-out factories scattered like tombstones across the landscape of our nation” (47-48) attests to this deeper truth. The image of the economic graveyard which Trump employs symbolises the death of an important part of the American identity. Obviously, it makes sense for a politician to lament the loss of jobs in his nation. But with some historical context his rhetoric also encompasses a loss of a national myth which shaped the United States. It is this myth which strengthens the reoccurring concept of unity in Trump’s speech and which he dreams to revive in order to rekindle a “new nation pride” (120). The national myth of hard work is what makes the United States special and it counts as an element of American exceptionalism. This study does not draw parallels between Trump’s wording and the racist rhetoric which used the idea of hard work as a tool to subjugate Native Americans. One still needs to acknowledge, however, that the idea of work counts as an ideology in the United States. Ideologies can serve as arguments for domination (van Dijk, 1998, p. 138) and said before, they have been employed in this manner. Today, the ideology of work is a more productive and positive belief system.

The ideology of work does, however, still bring to the foreground an obvious form of “us” versus “them” thinking. One can use the ideology of work as a lens to see an overt display of nationalism in Trump’s speech. Most of Trump’s nationalist rhetoric in the Inauguration Address is, after all, expressed through the filter of the American economy.
This study has pointed out that on the most basic level, Trump’s statements on nationalism are founded on the assumption that the previous governments have been driven by a globalist agenda and have not been dedicated to prioritising the needs of the United States. To some degree, Trump’s perception that the government is not limited enough precedes his nationalist wording. He believes, for instance, that the United States was too proactive in stabilising the borders of other nations (61) or was investing too much money abroad (62). One can argue that Trump faults the government for the loss of American jobs and is thus implying that this act has caused a loss of the American identity associated with the ideology of work. But on another level, Trump also attributes the downfall of the American economy to the interference of other nations. As said before, Trump wants to stop other nations from making American products and from destroying the job market by taking over American companies. His promise to reconstruct the United States with “American hands and American labour” (87) further implies that immigrants coming to the United States play a role in the decline of the American economy. So, he seems to be advocating for a nationalist stance to protect the country from outside forces but also to restrict the power of “non-American” groups within the country. Nationalists have been fearing the negative impact outsiders might have on the economy since the beginnings of America. Likewise, there is continuity in the fear that non-American groups working within America are not “American” enough and will harm the nation in economic, cultural or even moral terms. The nationalist worry about outside groups or foreign countries has always placed America on a pedestal from which one can infer American exceptionalism. As mentioned, the settlers in the Colonial era were motivated by a strong work ethic. In those times, Native Americans were animalised as they failed to live up to the settlers’ standards of what constituted hard and successful labour (Ross et al., 2016, p. 80). So, labour served as a hierarchy-enhancing legitimising myth (Pratto et al., 2006, p. 276) to justify the subjugation of the Native population. Further even, the image of the black savage played a role in the justification of slavery. Most other nationalist rhetoric was about protecting this economic dominance which was achieved through the acts of oppression. For example, Germans and Irish Catholic immigrants were crucial cheap workforces in the Industrial Revolution (Perea, 1997, p. 18). The resistance against these immigrants was shaped by a fear of a Germanisation of the American people and doubts about their willingness to assimilate to the Anglo-Protestant society (ibid., pp. 18-19). In the decades after the Civil War, the American government recruited eastern and southern Europeans. This fuelled a debate about the
cultural and intellectual inferiority of these people and their desire to take over the American economy (ibid., pp. 20-21). In the beginning of the 20th century and even during and after World War II, the image of money-grabbing Jews became more widespread (ibid., 26-27). Mexican immigrants have played an important part in the American workforce and have been subject to discrimination accordingly. In 1847, for example, a columnist wrote the following words about Mexicans: “They must amalgamate or be lost, in the superior vigor of the Anglo-Saxon race, or they must utterly perish” (Deverell, 2004, p. 11). Next to the fear that Mexico will overrun the United States with its culture and foreign language, Mexican immigrants have been targeted with accusations of stealing American jobs. At the same time, these accusations have often led Mexicans to be publicly labelled illegal aliens (Perea, 1997, p. 2). One needs to be careful once again when observing the historical continuity of nationalism and then placing Trump in this continuum. While he clearly manifests nationalist rhetoric, which has its roots in old ideologies, his claims do not reveal the same degree of racism as those uttered at the peak of 19th century expansionism, for example.

At first sight, Trump’s want to rebuild the United States with American workers (87) appears to be a purely economic argument. His promise to rebuild the American border is, after all, placed between a claim to bring back jobs and a pledge to enrichen the nation (82-83). This is paired with yet another reiteration of his commitment to strengthening the job market with American workers and products only (88).

The belief that immigrants upset the economic opportunities of Americans has been a dominant nationalist idea for ages and surfaces most often in times of economic turmoil (Perea, 1997, p. 13). The decline of the United States is the red thread running through almost every point in Trump’s speech. It is this outlook which helps position Trump as the saviour of the United States and which warrants his slogan “Make America Great Again”. At times, nationalists have been standing in opposition to capitalist interests in the history of the United States. This becomes clear in times of labour shortage, during which nationalists still have not been willing to give up their stance (ibid., 18-19). Yet, businesses have been finding ways to profit from cheap foreign labourers despite nationalist efforts to contain immigration by law. Naturally, this does not mean that American nationalism and capitalism are at odds. In fact, nationalists generally simply pursue the idea that capitalism should be fostered by American workers as much as possible. This is why the border between the United States and Mexico has been a central issue for nationalists.
But apart from wishing to strengthen the actual physical borders of the United States to ward off illegal immigrants, Trump talks about the border in a looser sense, too. This becomes apparent in the light of this line: “We must protect our borders from the ravages of other countries making our products, stealing our companies, and destroying our jobs” (77-78). It is possible to read this statement as a demand to stop intellectual property theft. Intellectual property encompasses “patents, copyrights, trademarks, and trade secrets” which grant the owner the right to make and sell a product with certain attributes (Warburton, 2014, n.p.). A company could, for example, be committing intellectual property theft by appropriating a famous brand and merely modifying it to such a small degree as to cause brand confusion. This worry about intellectual property theft isn’t really connected to the issue of immigration, but the philosophy behind it is structured along similar lines. Most importantly, this form of theft by foreign companies does harm the American economy and job market. So, the act itself falls into the old narrative of “the other” taking American jobs. From a nationalist’s point of view, intellectual property theft might be more unethical than immigration. The reason being that the theft of a strong American idea is more comfortable than working hard in the United States as an immigrant. It promises economic success with a shortcut and slowly forces American companies out of business. It is an insult to the American ideology and identity of hard work and suggests moral inferiority in similar ways as it has been attributed to immigrants for ages. It is telling that Trump talks about the “ravages of other countries” (77) in this context. The imagery of ravage is mirrored in the “rusted-out factories scattered like tombstones across the landscape of our nation” (47-48). It is in this paragraph where the suffering caused by economic disarray is detailed in highly emotional terms.

Even though it is not implicit in this paragraph, Trump’s concern with “the crime and gangs and drugs” (49-50) suggests that these have been brought in by foreigners. This interpretation works because he claims that these three vices have “robbed our country” (50). The use of the first-person plural implies that someone else than the United States has taken away all the “unrealised potential” (51). If this interpretation is incorrect, then Trump is stating that the United States has been stealing its own potential with the above-mentioned vices. This reading seems to work too as Trump’s image of the United States is bleak and the former governments appear to have failed on all levels. However, as Tony Payan notes, crime, drugs and gangs automatically invoke images of the U.S.-Mexican border (2016, p. 4). This rhetoric serves as a dog-whistle to remind nationalists about the influx of danger seeping through the southern border of the United States.
One can observe a sense of historical continuity in Trump’s nationalist rhetoric. In the most general terms, American nationalists have been warning about non-American groups taking away something valuable from the American people. In Trump’s speech, there is an economic layer of theft i.e. the direct stealing of American jobs by immigrants and a more indirect theft of intellectual property by other countries. This itself implies the moral inferiority of these groups, but this notion is strengthened through the suggestion that moral corruption enters the country in the form of drugs and crime. Ultimately, the dystopian picture becomes complete in the inference that the United States is losing its American identity. The American border is thus more than a physical separation, but also a political, economic, moral and cultural delineation (Montoya, 1996, p. 641). Each transgression of this border is seen as proof that the United States is exceptional since these non-American groups see the need to take away some form of Americanness to better their own life. In short, nationalists want to close the doors to the “great American asylum” (de Crèvecoeur, 1782, p. 2) because they believe it has been overrun and exploited by foreign groups. The history of American nationalism also seems to verify the claim put forth by the Social Dominance theorists that dominance is often established through multiple ideologies at the same time e.g. political, religious and cultural ideas (Pratto and Stewart, 2012, p. 1).

6 Conclusion

If one is ready to believe that Trump really is reluctant to use the term American exceptionalism, then one is faced with a fascinating phenomenon. As mentioned before, Trump defends his reluctance by arguing that the term was condescending towards other nations as it implied a hierarchy of nations where the United States was at the top. It is possible that Trump held his Inauguration Address without realising how the entire speech was held together by the very concept he purports to dislike. This study highlights how American exceptionalism is an ideology which is a confluence of many ideas, myths and counterimages of Europe. This ideology has been changing and maturing over the years. This maturation process has caused American exceptionalism to be normalised due to the net-like structure of power (Foucault, 1980, p. 98). In other words, the conversations individuals held about the content of exceptionalism transformed it into a social belief. It is this group belief which makes American exceptionalism an ideology. If one sticks to a surface-level reading of Trump’s speech, the analyst herself becomes
entangled in the normalised structure of American exceptionalism. So, this study goes to the roots of the many forces which formed the ideology of exceptionalism to stress how power is integral to this concept. In the broadest sense, the goal of this study is to show how ideologically charged our language can be and how often we cease to realise this fact through the normalisation of discourses. This is important as ideological language often results from power structures or it produces new forces of injustice. The realisation of these points is especially crucial in the political realm because the belief in national exceptionalism has inevitable effects on policies linked to immigration, economics, foreign politics and society in general. This study brings to the foreground some of the immoral discourses and actions which have arisen out of the idea of American exceptionalism. One by-product of this study is thus also to point out the power of bad ideas. It should exemplify how one must not underestimate how easily and frequently mass opinion can sway towards morally reprehensible ideas through the power of ideologies.

As put forth before, this study is limited by the fact that it is taken out of the context of Trump’s general rhetoric. One could use this study as a starting point and attempt to discern similar forms of American exceptionalism in Trump’s other speeches since his inauguration. Further even, one could ask oneself to what degree Trump has attempted to act upon the exceptional promises made in his Inauguration Address. It is probably also worth elaborating on the theme of the jeremiad in the context of Inaugural Addresses. The “lamentation of the present condition, the evocation of the past, and the calling for renewal” (Maru, 2013, p. 36) are common concepts in Inaugural Addresses. With nationalism on the rise in Europe, one could consider conducting a similar study as this one but with a focus on a European nationalist speech. Doing so would hopefully reveal common national exceptional denominators. If the future study was also a Critical Discourse Analysis, I suspect one would even find similar common ideas which shape the beliefs of a nation about its own exceptional position in the world. Since this study depends greatly on van Dijk’s definition of ideology, one could see the need to conduct similar studies with other definitions of ideology. One could, for example, add a psychoanalytical aspect to the concept of ideology by paying attention to the unconscious factors influencing people’s ideological beliefs (Geuss, 1981, p. 81). Adorno and Marcuse believe, for instance, that some societies indoctrinate their people so successfully as to render them unaware of their own resentment and unhappiness which consequently
manifests itself in their ideology (ibid.). This hypothesis could open the door for an interdisciplinary study of the relationship between well-being and ideology.
7 References


https://monoskop.org/images/5/5d/Foucault_Michel_Power_Knowledge_Selected_Inter


Chief Justice Roberts, President Carter, President Clinton, President Bush, President Obama, fellow Americans, and people of the world: thank you.

We, the citizens of America, are now joined in a great national effort to rebuild our country and to restore its promise for all of our people.

Together, we will determine the course of America and the world for years to come.

We will face challenges. We will confront hardships. But we will get the job done.

Every four years, we gather on these steps to carry out the orderly and peaceful transfer of power, and we are grateful to President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama for their gracious aid throughout this transition. They have been magnificent.

Today’s ceremony, however, has very special meaning. Because today we are not merely transferring power from one Administration to another, or from one party to another – but we are transferring power from Washington, D.C. and giving it back to you, the American People.

For too long, a small group in our nation’s Capital has reaped the rewards of government while the people have borne the cost.

Washington flourished – but the people did not share in its wealth.

Politicians prospered – but the jobs left, and the factories closed.

The establishment protected itself, but not the citizens of our country.

Their victories have not been your victories; their triumphs have not been your triumphs; and while they celebrated in our nation’s Capital, there was little to celebrate for struggling families all across our land.

That all changes – starting right here, and right now, because this moment is your moment: it belongs to you.

It belongs to everyone gathered here today and everyone watching all across America.
This is your day. This is your celebration.

And this, the United States of America, is your country.

What truly matters is not which party controls our government, but whether our government is controlled by the people.

January 20th 2017, will be remembered as the day the people became the rulers of this nation again.

The forgotten men and women of our country will be forgotten no longer.

Everyone is listening to you now.

You came by the tens of millions to become part of a historic movement the likes of which the world has never seen before.

At the center of this movement is a crucial conviction: that a nation exists to serve its citizens.

Americans want great schools for their children, safe neighborhoods for their families, and good jobs for themselves.

These are the just and reasonable demands of a righteous public.

But for too many of our citizens, a different reality exists: Mothers and children trapped in poverty in our inner cities; rusted-out factories scattered like tombstones across the landscape of our nation; an education system, flush with cash, but which leaves our young and beautiful students deprived of knowledge; and the crime and gangs and drugs that have stolen too many lives and robbed our country of so much unrealized potential.

This American carnage stops right here and stops right now.

We are one nation – and their pain is our pain. Their dreams are our dreams; and their success will be our success. We share one heart, one home, and one glorious destiny.

The oath of office I take today is an oath of allegiance to all Americans.

For many decades, we’ve enriched foreign industry at the expense of American industry; Subsidized the armies of other countries while allowing for the very sad depletion of our military;
We’ve defended other nation’s borders while refusing to defend our own;

And spent trillions of dollars overseas while America’s infrastructure has fallen into disrepair and decay.

We’ve made other countries rich while the wealth, strength, and confidence of our country has disappeared over the horizon.

One by one, the factories shuttered and left our shores, with not even a thought about the millions upon millions of American workers left behind.

The wealth of our middle class has been ripped from their homes and then redistributed across the entire world.

But that is the past. And now we are looking only to the future.

We assembled here today are issuing a new decree to be heard in every city, in every foreign capital, and in every hall of power.

From this day forward, a new vision will govern our land.

From this moment on, it's going to be America First.

Every decision on trade, on taxes, on immigration, on foreign affairs, will be made to benefit American workers and American families.

We must protect our borders from the ravages of other countries making our products, stealing our companies, and destroying our jobs. Protection will lead to great prosperity and strength.

I will fight for you with every breath in my body – and I will never, ever let you down.

America will start winning again, winning like never before.

We will bring back our jobs. We will bring back our borders. We will bring back our wealth. And we will bring back our dreams.

We will build new roads, and highways, and bridges, and airports, and tunnels, and railways all across our wonderful nation.

We will get our people off of welfare and back to work – rebuilding our country with American hands and American labor.

We will follow two simple rules: Buy American and Hire American.
We will seek friendship and goodwill with the nations of the world – but we do so with the understanding that it is the right of all nations to put their own interests first.

We do not seek to impose our way of life on anyone, but rather to let it shine as an example for everyone to follow.

We will reinforce old alliances and form new ones – and unite the civilized world against Radical Islamic Terrorism, which we will eradicate completely from the face of the Earth.

At the bedrock of our politics will be a total allegiance to the United States of America, and through our loyalty to our country, we will rediscover our loyalty to each other.

When you open your heart to patriotism, there is no room for prejudice.

The Bible tells us, “how good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity.”

We must speak our minds openly, debate our disagreements honestly, but always pursue solidarity.

When America is united, America is totally unstoppable.

There should be no fear – we are protected, and we will always be protected.

We will be protected by the great men and women of our military and law enforcement and, most importantly, we are protected by God.

Finally, we must think big and dream even bigger.

In America, we understand that a nation is only living as long as it is striving.

We will no longer accept politicians who are all talk and no action – constantly complaining but never doing anything about it.

The time for empty talk is over.

Now arrives the hour of action.

Do not let anyone tell you it cannot be done. No challenge can match the heart and fight and spirit of America.

We will not fail. Our country will thrive and prosper again.
We stand at the birth of a new millennium, ready to unlock the mysteries of space, to free the Earth from the miseries of disease, and to harness the energies, industries and technologies of tomorrow.

A new national pride will stir our souls, lift our sights, and heal our divisions.

It is time to remember that old wisdom our soldiers will never forget: that whether we are black or brown or white, we all bleed the same red blood of patriots, we all enjoy the same glorious freedoms, and we all salute the same great American Flag.

And whether a child is born in the urban sprawl of Detroit or the windswept plains of Nebraska, they look up at the same night sky, they fill their heart with the same dreams, and they are infused with the breath of life by the same almighty Creator.

So to all Americans, in every city near and far, small and large, from mountain to mountain, and from ocean to ocean, hear these words:

You will never be ignored again.

Your voice, your hopes, and your dreams, will define our American destiny. And your courage and goodness and love will forever guide us along the way.

Together, We Will Make America Strong Again.

We Will Make America Wealthy Again.

We Will Make America Proud Again.

We Will Make America Safe Again.

And, Yes, Together, We Will Make America Great Again. Thank you, God Bless You, And God Bless America