Master Thesis

Competitive Victimhood in Political Speeches: a Critical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract

This study attempts to draw from a selection of speeches of George W. Bush and Osama bin Laden during the war on terrorism and looks at them through the lens of competitive victimhood. The question this thesis aims to answer is: how and to what extent is competitive victimhood employed in political speeches in public appearances of politicians during the war on terrorism, and what purpose does the use of religious metaphors in this discourse serve? The speeches are analyzed using a critical discourse analysis. This research finds that competitive victimhood was dominant in the discourse of political speeches in public appearances of politicians during the war on terrorism and, contrary to popular belief, the use of religion and religious metaphors in particular serves the purpose of strengthening this particular discourse. Both George W. Bush and Osama bin Laden claimed to be the 'true' victim of the conflict. Their identical language is employed to describe entirely different realities. This research also suggests that competitive victimhood is often not as binary as a good deal of literature state it is. Especially in discourse, the relationship with different groups in conflict are more complex, diverse and distinct.

Key notes: competitive victimhood, War on Terror, political discourse, critical discourse analysis

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Content

List of symbols, abbreviations and words

Below is a list of all symbols, words and abbreviations used. Words borrowed from languages other than English are italicised in the text.

[ ] Text between block brackets is added or altered from the original transcription in order to increase clarity

( ) Text between rounded brackets is added text to explain where or what participants are referring to

(...) Deleted text from the transcript to increase clarity

9/11	September 11, 2001, the date of the terrorist attacks against the United States of America
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CV	Competitive victimhood
EU	European Union
EV	Extended victimhood
GWB	George W. Bush (used when relevant speeches are mentioned; GWB 1, 2 & 3)
OBL	Osama bin Laden (used when relevant speeches are mentioned; OBL 1, 2 & 3)
US / USA	United States (of America)

"On September the 11th, enemies of freedom committed an act of war against our country. […] what is at stake is not just America's freedom. This is the world's fight. This is civilization's fight. This is the fight of all who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom."

George W. Bush, 2001 Presidential address to Congress September 20

"We fight because we are free men who don't sleep under oppression. We want to restore freedom to our nation, just as you lay waste to our nation. So shall we lay waste to yours."

Osama Bin Laden, 2004 video broadcast on Al-Jazeera October 29

1. Introduction

1.1 Religion & Conflict

We hear it everywhere today, implicitly or explicitly: religion is inherently violent, and it often incites violent behaviour or even fuels entire conflicts for that matter. Especially after the attacks on 11 September, 2001, many journalists, researchers and politicians quickly pointed their finger towards religion as one of the main drivers for the attacks. Religion is said to continue to play a crucial part in the subsequent conflict that was quickly dubbed the war on terrorism. Scholars and journalists argued that the religious dimension of this conflict is central to its meaning (Sullivan, 2001; Esposito, 2003; Habeck, 2006; Glucklich, 2009; Brahimi, 2011; Muqit, 2012). Whether it is this particular or any other conflict or attack: if there's an outbreak of violence, people tend to point at religion as the culprit or the driving force behind the violent act(s). It shows us the inclination we have in our understanding of the connection between religion and violence. In this particular conflict, as evidence for this claim, the discourse of the two most prominent political leaders – George W. Bush and Osama bin Laden - is often cited. The words of bin Laden and Bush are indeed saturated with religious argument and theological language. For example, three months after 9/11, Osama bin Laden released a video in which he condemned the West, the United Nations and Israel, and explaining all of the unfolding events as fundamentally a religious war (Bin Laden, 2001). When George W. Bush addressed his shocked and astounded nation on September 11, 2001, he comforted the citizens of the United States with a passage from Psalm 23:4:

> *"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil for you are with me."*
> (Bush, 2001)

In his speech to the US Congress a couple of days later, Bush frequently touched upon the beliefs of the hijackers, saying: "The terrorists practice a fringe form of Islamic extremism that has been rejected by Muslim scholars and the vast majority of Muslim clerics; a fringe movement that perverts the peaceful teachings of Islam" (Bush, 2001). Later on in the speech, he added that "the terrorists are traitors to their own faith, trying, in effect, to hijack Islam itself" (Bush, 2001). The vast majority of Muslims, including political and religious leaders, were also horrified and condemned the 9/11 attacks (Esposito & Mogahed, 2019). Some simply did not believe that Muslims could have carried them out because Islam specifically prohibits killing non-combatants and innocent civilians (Esposito & Mogahed, 2019). Nonetheless, a large number of scholars and journalists argue that the very use of religious terminology in relation to conflict, war and violence is evidence of religious violence. However, the belief that religion is one of the main

drivers for violence misses the key learning that no religion is violent in and of itself: only the tenacity of individuals and groups acting in the name of a particular religion is relevant as to whether/the extent to which a religion can be appropriated and deployed to perpetrate violence (Tarusarira & Chitando, 2017). In other words: religion is often a presence in conflict but it's not the cause.

1.2 Competitive victimhood

Instead, I argue that one of the main drivers for 9/11 and the subsequent counterterrorist attack by the US government was not religion, but built on feelings of victimhood and that the evidence for this claim can be traced back in the discourse of the political speeches during the war on terrorism. To confirm this hypothesis, this thesis draws from the collection of speeches and public appearances from George W. Bush and Osama bin Laden during the war on terrorism, puts them under a magnifying glass and looks at them through the lens of competitive victimhood. The term 'competitive victimhood' requires some additional explanation. The topic of competitive victimhood has been gaining attention in academic research in recent years and the term denotes group members' efforts to establish that their ingroup has suffered greater injustice than an adversarial outgroup (Schnabel, Halabi & Noor, 2013). In other words, when two or more parties clash during times of conflict, they often tend to portray themselves as the biggest victim. Academics convincingly argued that a sense of self-perceived victimhood emerges as a major theme in the ethos of conflict of societies involved in intractable conflict and is a fundamental part of the collective memory of the conflict (Bar-Tal, Chernyak-Hai, Schori & Gundar, 2009). Research on the topic of competitive victimhood, while acknowledging the role of discourse, methodologically places it on the side line. Studies on the topic of competitive victimhood tend to focus on the cognitive, psychological or theoretical aspects of victimhood rather than exploring the ways in which it is articulated (McNeill, Pehrson & Stevenson, 2017). Some research on the discourse of competitive victimhood have been conducted (e,g, Ben Hagai et al., 2013; Adelman et al., 2016; McNeill, Pehrson & Stevenson, 2017), but they tend to focus on the discourse in conversational context by members of the ingroup and not on the discourse in speeches by political or theological leaders, whilst exactly those leaders play a crucial role in spreading feelings of victimhood. In the academic literature, the influence of political leaders - through discourse - is often underlined. In her research, Jacoby convincingly argues that as victims are incorporated into broader political campaigns, it becomes nearly impossible to separate the victim from the politics (2014). Noor et al. (2012) argued that political leaders are 'group leaders', which can 'construct a discourse that revolves around competitive victimhood' (p. 353). However, how this is articulated in political speeches is an

underexposed question in the research field around competitive victimization. One research showed that recent studies on competitive victimhood could pay more attention to the discourse of victimhood, mainly because focusing on the discourse of victimhood gives insight into the variability and complexity of the matter (McNeill, Pehrson & Stenson, 2017). Since there hasn't been much research conducted on the role of competitive victimhood in political discourse and how it is articulated, an unexplored question in the study of victimhood is, **how and to what extent is competitive victimhood employed in political speeches in public appearances of politicians during the war on terrorism, and what purpose does the use of religious metaphors in this discourse serve?** This thesis focuses specifically on the case of the War on Terror with speeches from George W. Bush and Osama bin Laden. My hypothesis is that both George W. Bush as Osama bin Laden competed over who was the 'true' victim of this conflict in order to justify violence and gain more considerable advantages, and that this strive for victimhood becomes prominent in the discourse of the political leaders during the War on Terror. Religion and religious metaphors were used to strengthen the victimhood narrative.

This study aims to broaden our understanding of competitive victimhood and the use of it in political discourse. In order to do so, this thesis is divided into five main sections. The initial section briefly describes the methodology employed in the study. I will then take a closer look at the war on terror. This will be helpful to establish common ground, because the war on terror is such a broad and diverse conflict, with many aspects to it. I will then review several dimensions of competitive victimhood currently identified in the literature and in turn determine how these may be reconceptualized as discursive and rhetorical accomplishments to see if, to what extent and with what purposes politicians use competitive victimhood in their rhetoric during times of conflict. This thesis then analyses a selection of speeches by George W. Bush and Osama bin Laden in an attempt to illustrate how both actors use almost identical forms of competitive victimhood discourse in order to produce diametrically opposed versions of reality. Employing the methodology of critical discourse analysis (CDA), this thesis examines the key features and characteristics of the discourse of Osama bin Laden and George W. Bush. To narrow the scope of this thesis, three speeches will be analysed from each side of the conflict. The goal is not merely to point out what the functions of competitive victimhood are when it occurs in political discourse, but to show when it occurs and how it is articulated. In doing so, this thesis will add to the debate of (the rhetorical complexity of) competitive victimhood during times of conflict. It will also give insight into the variability and complexity of the matter. This thesis contributes to the understanding of rhetoric in the war on terrorism and in conflicts as a whole. Young and Sullivan (2016) stated that much remains to be learned about competitive victimhood and that such research would be rewarded, as CV is 'one of the most prominent – and growing – obstacles

to positive intergroup relations in the world today'. This particular research likewise helps to get a better understanding of the war on terror, which is needed, because in order to successfully resolve this conflict, there needs to be a clear understanding of the intentions and messages of both parties. Analysing these speeches will lead to a better understanding of its underlying motivations, intentions and reasons.

2. Methodology

In a media age, conflicts are waged not only with direct force like weapons, bombs and soldiers but also with video and sound bites (Silberstein, 2002). To manufacture approval while at the same time suppressing individual doubts and circumventing the organization of political opposition requires a powerful discourse (Jackson, 2007). It is thus an inherent and inseparable part of the social world, of the broader social context. It shapes and is shaped by society. For example: whether a person is 'a terrorist' or 'a freedom fighter' depends on the politicians view of the action that has taken place and can in turn influence societies' view. Language, therefore, is more than just a tool for communicating with another. Dominant discourses become routines or *habits* based on Bourdieu's definition of *habitus* (1977), and as such are largely accepted by individuals in society. Scholars even argued that it is through discourse that power relations are maintained in society (Pitsoe & Letseka, 2012). Groups and individuals who control most influential discourse also have more chances to control the minds and actions of others. Such powers of dominant groups may be integrated in laws, rules, norms, habits and even a quite general consensus leading to 'hegemony' (Gramsci, 1971). By employing the methodology of critical discourse analysis (henceforth, CDA), this thesis examines the key features and characteristics of the discourse of the speeches of Osama bin Laden and George W. Bush during the war on terrorism. The speeches chosen were the ones that garnered most media attention and were exemplary for the behaviour, language and worldview of the political leaders. They came at a vital point in the conflict and they all had some major statements in it, either it being a justification for a cruel act (e.g. Osama bin Laden October 2004 speech in which he gave justification for the 9/11 attacks) or the reasons behind a violent response (e.g. Bush speech on 20 September, 2001, in which he declared war on terrorism). In times of crises and conflict, discourse can have the purpose is to criminalize, demonize and delegitimize the other and by so doing emphasize the rightness, authenticity, legitimacy, and justice of one's own narrative (Tarusarira & Chitando, 2017). It is important to emphasize that CDA does not primarily aim to contribute to a specific discipline, paradigm, school or discourse theory. It is primarily interested and motivated by pressing social issues, which it hopes to better understand through discourse analysis (van Dijk, 1993).

2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

It is precisely because critical discourse analysis operates on the crossroad of language, discourse, and social structure (McKenna, 2004) that I employ it in this research. CDA explores the connections between the use of language and the social and political contexts in which it occurs (Fairclough, 1989). The objective of CDA is to perceive language use as social practice. The main assumption is that the users of language do not function in isolation, but in a set of cultural, social and psychological frameworks that affect language, grammar and vocabulary. Teun van Dijk argued that critical discourse analysis goes beyond the immediate, serious or pressing issues of the day:

> "Among the descriptive, explanatory and practical aims of CDA-studies is the attempt to uncover, reveal and disclose what is implicit, hidden or otherwise not immediately obvious in relations of discursively enacted dominance or their manipulation, legitimation, the manufacture of consent and other discursive ways to influence the minds (and indirectly the actions) of people in the interest of the powerful" (van Dijk, 1995, p.18).

With CDA one can analyse any piece of speech written or oral critically, not as it is. Subsequently it can give us insight into the intentions of the speaker/orator behind these particular set of words. CDA assumes that discursive practices are never neutral, but rather that they possess a clear ideological character; ideologies are shaped and echoed in the use of discourse. They are the construction and deployment of meaning in the service of power (Jackson, 2005). CDA aims to systematically explore relationships between discursive practices, texts, and events and wider social and cultural structures, relations, and processes. Even more so, by doing a critical discourse analysis, we can unlock the beliefs and ideologies of the orator and recover the social meanings expressed in discourse (Teo, 2000). It is therefore that the methodology deemed suitable for this particular research: CDA studies the connections between textual structures and takes the social context into account and explores the links between textual structures and their function in interaction within the society (Fairclough, 1989). Their structural understanding assumes more generic insights, and sometimes indirect and continuing analyses of fundamental matters, conditions and consequences of such issues. As stated previously, the speeches by Bush and bin Laden came at a crucial point in the conflict. Both politicians knew it would garner a great deal of media attention, so the words and the use of language were carefully considered and weighed. They were crucial for elucidating their perspective, motivation and worldview. In a sense of self-perceived victimhood lies a whole range of experienced and assumed dominance, inequality and power structures. It explores issues such as ideology,

cultural difference and identity. CDA helps to identify how these are constructed and reflected in texts or – in this particular research – speech (Fairclough, 1989). In short, by applying CDA, I want to get insight in how competitive victimhood is manifested in discourse and make a specific contribution, namely to get more insight into the crucial role of discourse in the production of dominance, power and inequality.

In terms of examining the role and use of language, there are two levels at which CDA functions (Jackson, 2005). CDA calls for a balanced focus on social issues as well as linguistic (textual) analysis, considering the complex ways in which language and the social world are intertwined (Souto-Manning, 2013). First, it engages directly with specific texts in an effort to discover how discursive practices operate linguistically within those texts. Individual text analysis is not sufficient on its own to evaluate the link between social processes and discourse, CDA adds a wider interdisciplinary perspective which combines textual and social-political analysis. Fairclough identified three stages of CDA (1989):

a) *The micro-level* or *description* is the stage which is concerned with the formal properties of the text. It involves studying metaphoric structure, syntax and rhetorical devices;

b) The *meso-level or interpretation* is concerned with the relationship between text and interaction – with seeing the text as a product of a process of production, and as a resource in the process of interpretation. The meso-level of analysis consists of looking at the text's production and consumption and the power relations involved;

c) *The macro-level* or *explanation* is concerned with the relationship between interaction and social context – with the social determination of the processes of production and interpretation, and their social effects. In this particular thesis, the social analysis will focuses specifically on feelings of victimhood.

CDA does not limit its analysis to specific structures of text or talk, but systematically relates these to structures of the socio-political context. In Fairclough's view, there are three levels of discourse which are in line with the three stages of CDA. These three stages of analysis are interrelated and then superimposed over each other (See Figure 1). Parker (1999) refers to it as the physical text itself (in this case the transcripts of the various speeches, videos and audio tapes), the discursive practices referring to "production, distribution and consumption", and finally the social practice, which entails the underlying social structures:
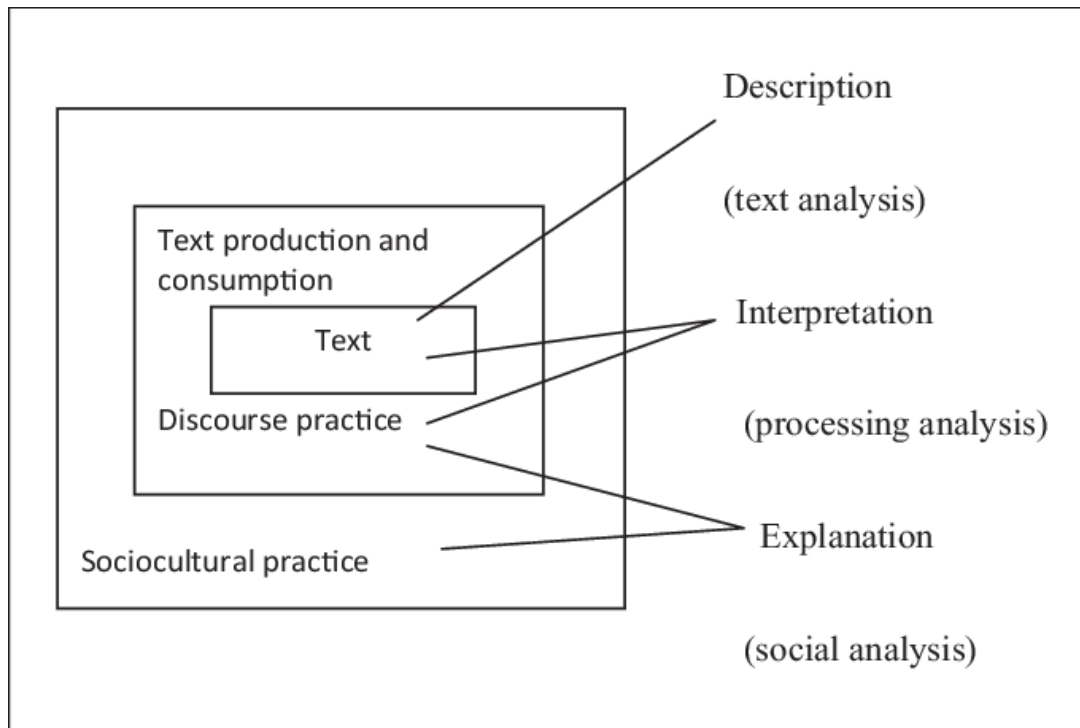
Figure 1. Fairclough's three-dimensional framework for analysis of discourse.

CDA has been used to observe political dialogue and speeches, to unravel the rhetoric behind these, and any forms of speech that may be used to manipulate the target audience. As Fairclough (1989) states that the objective of *explanation* "is to portray a discourse as part of a social process, as a social practice, showing how it is determined by social structures, and what reproductive effects discourses can commutatively have on those structures, sustaining them or changing them" (p. 163.). In this particular thesis, the social analysis will focuses specifically on feelings of victimhood and how feelings of victimhood may have influenced discourse and actions. This methodology is considered suitable and appropriate because this thesis seeks to establish how power, ideology and social context manifest themselves through the various linguistic choices of the two politicians. To decode the victimhood discourse in political speeches and reveal the interaction among language, politics and society, I will employ Fairclough's three-dimensional model as the analytical framework of the study. In practice, the first two steps — description and interpretation - are combined to explicitly look at the linguistic features of the speeches. I will do that by answering the following questions (based on Campbell and Burkholder, 1996):

A) Act's purpose?

B) Role of rhetor?

C) Target audience?

D) Act's tone or attitude?

E) Structure?

F) Supporting materials?

G) Strategies (styles, appeals, arguments)?

By analysing the abovementioned aspects in the speeches, a general idea will be obtained of the use of competitive victimhood in political speeches. After exposing the sense of victimhood through description and interpretation, I will try to explain the social reasons, that is, under what kind of social contexts are such thoughts derived and in turn, how such thoughts influence the language use. In short, I first describe the linguistic features of the speeches, and then interpret the discourse of victimhood reflected by the linguistic devices; and finally I try to explain the discursive practice from a socio-cultural perspective.

2.2 Data collection

The data was obtained in a variety of ways. The transcripts of the speeches of George W. Bush were found on the internet (see References for specific details). The transcripts of the speeches from Osama bin Laden were found in either *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama bin Laden* edited by Bruce Lawrence and translated by James Howarth (2005) or *Terrorism: essential primary sources* by K. Lee Lerner and Brenda Wilmoth Lerner (2006). The speeches were delivered between 2001 and 2006 and were purposively selected for numerous reasons: (1) they were exemplary for the behaviour, language and worldview of the political leaders, (2) the selected speeches garnered most media attention, (3) they came at a vital point in the conflict and (4) they all had some major statements in it, either it being a justification for a cruel act (e.g. Osama bin Laden October 2004 speech in which he gave justification for the 9/11 attacks) or the reasons behind a certain response (e.g. Bush speech on 20 September, 2001, in which he declared war on terrorism and first coined the term War on Terror). The chosen speeches have been analysed in their entirety, but in this thesis representative passages have been highlighted and delved deeper into. The highlighted sections are exemplary for the rest of the speech – and other speeches for that matter. In analysing the data collected, the speeches were coded as GWB 1, GWB 2, GWB 3, OBL 1, OBL 2 and OBL 3 for easy referencing, where GWB means George W. Bush and OBL means Osama bin Laden. The following are the summaries of the speeches:

- George W. Bush 1 (GWB 1) - Statement by the President in His Address to the Nation (September 11, 2001)

On the evening of the September 11, President George W. Bush delivers an address to the nation regarding the attacks on the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and the hijacked airplane that crashed in rural Pennsylvania. The address came after several brief statements throughout the day.

- George W. Bush 2 (GWB 2) - Address to Congress and the American People (September 20, 2001)

President Bush addressed a joint session of Congress and a national television audience in which he assured American citizens of their safety. He declared war on terrorism and asked for the help of other nations. Bush coined the phrase 'War on Terror' for the first time in this speech.

- George W. Bush 3 (GWB 3) – Address to the Nation on the War on Terror (September 7, 2003)

In this speech, George W. Bush stated that Iraq had become the "central front" in the war against terror. Bush also stated that the war against terrorism will cost an additional $87 billion – but that America must "do what is necessary" to defeat the international "enemies of freedom." President Bush delivered the speech to a nationally televised prime-time address.

- Osama bin Laden 1 (OBL 1) – 2001 Osama bin Laden video (October 7, 2001)

On the same day that the United States and NATO forces launched strikes in Afghanistan, bin Laden released a video tape. It was the first time the world heard from the leader of the Al Qaeda network since the September 11 attacks. He does not, however, claim responsibility for them.

- Osama bin Laden 2 (OBL 2) - 2004 Osama bin Laden video (October 29, 2004)

Osama bin Laden addressed the people of the United States in this video that was first broadcasted on Al Jazeera. In this video, bin Laden takes responsibility for the attacks on 9/11. Furthermore, the leader of the Taliban condemns the Bush government's response to those attacks. The video was broadcasted a few days before the presidential elections in the United States.

- Osama bin Laden 3 (OBL 3) - 2006 Osama bin Laden tape recording (January 19, 2006)

On January 19th, an audio tape was released in which Bin Laden threatened that preparations for a fresh wave of terror attacks on the US were under way, although he also simultaneously offered a "long truce".

3. The war on terror: a brief overview

There are many factors that must be taken into consideration when evaluating the messages of political leaders that are at the forefront of conflict. An understanding of the conflict, what the conflict is about and when the conflict arose are all major inquiries requiring answers. Therefore I will start by giving a brief overview of the war on terror, before I will dig deeper into the concept of competitive victimhood. Although opinions are divided, most experts state that the war on terrorism took off on the morning of September 11, 2001, when terrorists affiliated with Al Qaeda hijacked four airliners and flew them into major landmarks of the United States. At quarter to nine in the morning, American Airlines Flight 11 crashed into the North Tower of the World Trade Center in Manhattan, New York City. Roughly twenty minutes later, another passenger airplane crashed into the South Tower of the World Trade Center. By this time, several media organizations were covering the first plane crash and millions of people saw the impact of the second crash live on television. Not long after the attacks on the World Trade Center, a third plane flew into the Pentagon, the headquarters of the United States Department of Defense. Little over an hour from the first attack, United Airlines Flight 93 was crashed by its hijackers due to fighting in the cockpit 129 km southeast of Pittsburgh. By this time, The South Tower of the World Trade Center had already collapsed, 56 minutes after the impact of the plane. Shortly after, the North Tower collapsed as well, after burning for 102 minutes. In total, 2977 people lost their lives during the attacks, 412 of them being emergency workers, and more than 6000 people were injured (Baptist, 2015). The material and infrastructural damage was estimated to be at least $10 billion (Baptist, 2015). Although at the time of the catastrophe it wasn't clear who or what was behind the attacks, it soon became clear that terrorists affiliated with Al Qaeda hijacked the planes and deliberately flew them into the major landmarks in the United States. It didn't took long for the United States to respond. On September 20, George W. Bush delivered a speech to the United States Congress in which he declared war on terrorism, a war that sought justice for the attacks and was meant to put an end to anti-American terrorism. These events marked the start of worldwide conflict targeted against "radical network of terrorists and every

government that supports them" (Bush, 2001). George W. Bush pledged in his speech that the war on terror would end only when "every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated" (Bush, 2001). Bush defined Al-Qaeda as the center of a vast and well-organized international terrorist network that coordinated and funded the terrorist attacks and therefore, Al Qaeda became the primary target for the United States and its allies. The United States government swiftly identified Usama bin Mohammed bin Awad bin Ladin, known as Osama Bin Laden, as the leader of the organisation and made him their prime suspect. On October 17, the United States launched its first airstrikes on Afghanistan which was ruled by a group of Islamic fundamentalists, known as the Taliban, who were said to protect Al Qaeda and its leader. The airstrikes were quickly followed by ground troops supporting the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance. Quickly, a new Afghan government was installed which undid many laws that were installed by the Taliban regime. Training camps in Afghanistan were closed and the United States army captured or eliminated many of al-Qaeda's senior members, and increased levels of international cooperation in global counterterrorism efforts. Critics argued that the response from the Bush' administration in Afghanistan had effectively scattered the al-Qaeda network (Jackson, 2014), thereby making it even harder to counteract, and that the attacks in Afghanistan and Iraq had increased anti-Americanism among the world's Muslims (Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2004), thereby amplifying the message of al Qaeda and uniting disparate groups in a common cause (Jackson, 2014). The war on terror set the tone for the next 15 years of international relations. The conflict was (and arguably still is) a multidimensional campaign of almost limitless scope (Jackson & Pisoiu, 2017). Undoubtedly, the war on terror represented a new phase in global political relations. In its scope, investments and effect on international relations, this conflict was immense and had significant consequences for human rights, intelligence, security, international law, and governance (Jackson, 2014). The Bush administration identified the "Axis of Evil"; four countries that harboured terrorists. Besides Afghanistan, these were North-Korea, Iran and Iraq. Especially the latter was the décor in the latter stage of the war on terrorism. In March 2003, the United States, Britain and a coalition of other countries invaded Iraq, because it was suspected that Iraq had illegally build atomic weapons. Within a month, Bagdad was captured, Saddam Hussein was arrested and Iraq created a new government. It quickly became clear that the United States had underestimated the difficulties of building a functioning government from scratch. Critics argue that the Bush' administration neglected to consider how this effort could be complicated by Iraq's sectarian tensions (Haddad, 2011). Saddam's repressive regime made sure that the tensions never surfaced, but his removal resulted in a release of those tensions (Jackson, 2014). By late 2004 it was clear that Iraq was sinking into a civil war, although this cannot simply be explained by the power vacuum in the aftermath of the U.S. led interference: it is also the reflection of

decades of dictatorship and violence, which have exposed large swathes of the population to massive violence and loss and has destroyed individual and social structures throughout Iraq (Mlodoch, 2012). Estimates of the number of Iraqi civilians killed during the period of maximum violence — roughly 2004 to 2007 — vary widely but commonly exceeds 200,000 (Jackson, 2014). United States casualties during this period far outnumbered those suffered during the initial 2003 invasion (which was approximately around 200). Afghanistan, which for several years had seemed to be under control, soon followed a similar path, and by 2006 the U.S. was facing a full-blown insurgency there led by a reconstituted Taliban. The Bush administration was fiercely criticized during the conflict for actions that it deemed necessary to fight terrorism but which critics considered to be immoral, illegal, or both. Examples being the detention of accused enemy combatants without trial at Guantánamo Bay and at several secret prisons outside the United States, the use of torture against these detainees in an effort to extract intelligence, and the use of unmanned combat drones to kill suspected enemies in countries far beyond the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan. By the last years of Bush's presidency, public opinion had turned strongly negative concerning his handling of the Iraq War and other national security matters. Under Obama, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were gradually wound down, although at the end of Obama's presidency in 2016 there were still U.S. troops in both Afghanistan and Iraq. Osama bin Laden was captured and killed by U.S. forces on May 2, 2011.

This research' main focus is on the first stage of the war: from the attacks on 9/11 until the invasion of Iraq by the United States. It was not the period of maximum violence but during this period of time, Osama bin Laden and George W. Bush gave their views, justifications and thoughts about the conflict through speeches and other public appearances. It is widely accepted that the language of both Bush and Osama throughout the conflict was highly strategic (Holland, 2011). It was meant to 'sell' the conflict to a wider audience and gain the support, approval or collaboration of the audience. For any country or group to commit excessive amounts of public resources and risk the lives of its citizens in military conflict, it has to persuade the wider society that such an undertaking is desirable, even necessary, and achievable (Jackson, 2014). The process of creating such widespread consent among society and political establishment calls for the construction of a powerful discourse. These speeches demonstrates how similar rhetorical and linguistic tools are manipulated by people in a position to influence society, as they attempt to depict their individual representations of reality as true and objective (Bhatia, 2007).

4. Theoretical Framework

4.1 Competitive victimhood

As stated in the introduction, the notion of competitive victimhood has been gaining attention in academic research in recent years after Noor and colleagues introduced this construct to the social identity literature (2008). A growing body of relevant social psychological research has been conducted on this topic since, but it is important to recognize that the notion of CV also been discussed in other disciplines, such as history (e.g. Todorov, 2003), political psychology (e.g. Volkan, 1997), political science (e.g. Cole, 2007), linguistics (McNeill et al., 2017), humanities (e.g. Seltzer, 1997) and sociology (e.g. Furedi, 2004; Campbell & Manning, 2014). Overall, it appears that competitive victimhood is a phenomenon that is both increasingly common in the world today and increasingly recognized by a range of scholars (Young & Sullivan, 2016). The notion of victimhood is in my view an important category for understanding and analysing current conflicts and socio-political processes. While the amount of research on the topic of victimhood has been grown considerably in recent years, research on the discourse that evolves around *competitive* victimhood remains limited. In this chapter, I highlight the current state of research on the topic of competitive victimhood, the different dimensions of competitive victimhood and the discursive expression in which CV is manifested. If we want to study the concept of competitive victimhood, it is necessary to take a closer look at the phrase *competitive* – it is what sets it aside from other variations of victimhood. The concept of *competitive* victimhood refers to each group's effort to claim that it has suffered more than the outgroup. This competition over the quantity of suffering also implies some dispute over the illegitimacy of the suffering. It does not matter that some groups may be quite easily identifiable as perpetrators – even they can identify as victims (Noor et al., 2008). While critical of the inflated use of the concept of victimhood in both the academic and the public debate, I am referring to a socially and politically contextualized concept of victimhood. I approach it not as a purely individual experience, but as a collective, shared feeling and the representation of this in the political and social context. We know that victims of violence are capable of violence themselves (Enns, 2012). We see this every day, not only in conflict but also in daily life. Think of the killer that had a rough youth and was once the victim of sexual abuse when he was younger. Or think of gang violence where retaliation is not exceptional in everyday life. The notion of competitive victimhood originates from the rich history of groups and social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 2001). Noor et al. (2012) and Young & Sullivan (2016) argued that competitive victimhood manifests in three basic types of intergroup relations: intractable conflict, structural inequality (and historical conflict) and intra-minority intergroup relations. The war on terrorism is a combination of the previously mentioned types.

Intractable conflict – When two groups engage in conflict, both groups tend to make subjective claims that it has suffered more than the outgroup (Noor et al., 2008). The victim stance is a powerful one: the victim is always right, neither responsible nor accountable, and forever entitled to sympathy (Zur, 2008). Feelings of victimhood can have disastrous consequences for inter-group relationships, as recently manifested by several leaders in different parts of the world (e.g., in Northern Ireland, Israel/Palestine and former Yugoslavia) who led their followers into violent conflicts with their historical perpetrators by evoking their past and (sometimes) even ancient victimhood experiences (Ignatieff, 1993; MacDonald & Bernardo, 2006).

Structural inequality – Recent evidence implicates that both high-status and low-status groups in conditions of structural inequality will engage in competitive victimhood (Sullivan et al., 2012). The topic of structural inequality involves socio-economic and power disparities rather than direct violence between groups (Young & Sullivan, 2016). For instance, one study shows that the extent to which members of the English Defence League *feel* oppressed by the Muslim other is a predictor of prejudice and fundamentalism (Oaten, 2014). Members of the EDL tend to employ a narrative of working-class marginalization where the working class is primarily portrayed as a group of *victims*: victims of failed multiculturalism, victims of a radical left establishment and, in recent times, victims of a radical Islam that the left establishment is seen as allowing, even embracing (Oaten, 2014). In this narrative, the Muslim other is being constructed as the *perpetrator* in a binary relationship with *white* victims while the groups are not engaging in direct conflict.

Intra-minority intergroup relations – Recent research show that disadvantaged minorities tend to rally together and provide mutual support, or display increased intra-minority prejudice and discrimination. For example, in Catholic and Irish-nationalist parts of Northern Ireland, notably in Belfast, murals mourn the sufferings of people in Gaza and demonstrate support for hunger-striking Palestinian prisoners. As journalist Conor Humphries pointed out, 'flying the green, black, red and white flag of the Palestinian territories is a sign of support for Catholic Irish Republicans and their aspiration for a united Ireland against what they see as British occupation' (2014). On the other hand, in Protestant areas the Israeli flag is a common sight. Research on this topic shows that focusing on one's own group's victimization may lead to heightened feelings of moral obligation to help other outgroups, including other low-status groups (Warner, Wohl & Branscombe, 2014).

4.2 Discourse of CV

In this research, notably the first type of competitive victimhood, the type used in intractable conflict, is of interest, although the three types of intergroup relations are entwined. In this chapter, I review several dimensions of competitive victimhood currently identified in the literature and in turn determine how these may be reconceptualized as discursive and rhetorical accomplishments to see if, to what extent and with what purposes politicians use competitive victimhood in their rhetoric during times of conflict. A discourse around competitive victimhood can have powerful effects on both individuals and groups (Noor et al., 2017). The way a victim group responds to its suffering not only affects the quality of its relationship with the perpetrator group, but it can also be one of the major obstacles in the road to reconciliation and even fuel further violence in other contexts (Noor et al., 2017). Other scholars argue that victimhood narratives are key in maintaining conflicts (Adelman et al., 2016). Groups and political leaders may make their case for victimhood by engaging in discourses that highlight the unique nature of their suffering. Victimhood narratives must be framed in rhetorical ways because they are competitive and seek to argue against the other side's narrative while justifying the ingroup narrative (McNeill et al., 2017). The cohesiveness that then emerges can be understood as sharing the same general arguments about ingroup suffering and outgroup perpetration (McNeill et al., 2017). It is important to notice that competitive victimhood is functional: it is a symbolic resource to get suffering acknowledged and to gain political advantages (Smyth, 1998). Other studies underlined this argument and showed that the construction of competitive victimhood within political discourse serves the rhetorical function of arguing for various entailments, such as violence or material support or acknowledgement (Billig, 1987; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; McKinlay & McVittie, 2009). Noor et al. (2012) gave several other functions of competitive victimhood like increasing ingroup cohesiveness, justification of violence, denial of responsibility, avoidance of negative group emotions, requests for compensation and recruitment of moral and material support from third parties. Scholars Masi Noor, Nurit Shnabel, Samer Halabi and Arie Nadler did extensive research on the topic of competitive victimhood and identified five dimensions of suffering: physical, material, cultural, psychological and the legitimacy dimension of suffering. For each of these dimensions, the discursive expression can be understood in rhetorical terms.

Physical dimension of suffering - Physical suffering results from groups engaging in deliberate, direct violence (Galtung, 1969), such as the terrorist attacks on September 11, mass killings in the former Yugoslavia, genocides like the Rwandan genocide, suicide bombings in Israel or the torture of prisoners in Guantanamo Bay. When direct violence is used by both groups, groups have the tendency to battle over

the severity over the acts. Groups may mutually accuse each other of committing cruel and intentional acts of violence and quantify suffering and portray their ingroup as having experiences a larger share of the overall suffering (Noor et al., 2008). At the same time, groups may devalue the sufferings endured by the outgroup (Pratto & Glasford, 2008). A term closely related to the physical dimension of suffering is chosen trauma. Chosen trauma refers to the shared mental representation of a past historical event during which a large group suffered losses and humiliation at the hands of an enemy group (Volkan, 1997). If a trauma is too great, the loss involved in the injury cannot be mourned; instead it becomes a chosen trauma, a mythologized representation of past sufferings that becomes part of the identity of one group. This chosen trauma can be used within political discourse to exemplify the suffering of a certain group in the past that becomes exemplary of the suffering of the group in the present. It even determines certain actions in the present. For example, in the conflict between Israel and Palestine, you often see that the Israelis chosen the Holocaust as their chosen trauma, while the Palestinian community chose the Nakba as the central trauma of their identity (Nadler, 2015).

The *material* dimension of suffering - Beyond the direct violence there may be structural violence, resulting in inter-group inequalities, such as education, housing, and employment (Noor et al., 2012; Christie et al., 2008; Galtung, 1969). When a group faces material disadvantages, it tend to feel like they are unrightfully disadvantaged compared to the outgroup. This tendency can strengthen victimhood feelings and in turn can fuel the conflict. For example, in the case of Northern Ireland, the Catholic community experienced discrimination in terms of employment, housing, education and even territory (for example, in Londonderry, the Bogside, the Catholic/Irish republican area, was seen as the unpleasant, inexpensive part of the city, just outside the more prestigious walled city centre where the Protestant community lived). Several studies suggest that competition over real resources can be driven by a subjective sense of deprivation (e.g., de la Sablonniere et al., 2009). Groups are likely to believe that the prevailing distribution of resources is the result of a corrupt political system benefiting the outgroup (Eidelson & Eidelson, 2003).

The *cultural* dimension of suffering – Groups that are in conflict may call upon their sense of cultural deprivation or threat of cultural extinction (Noor et al., 2012). Cultural deprivation can entail the loss of language, unique practices (e.g., religious or healing practices), or customs, or represent simply a general threat to the ingroup's 'way of life' that expresses its cultural continuity, identity, norms, values, and heritage (Gone, 2008; Hammack, 2008). Other studies has shown that a perceived attack on ethno-cultural groups' worldviews can be a trigger that sparks outrage among their members (Huntington, 1993; Ross, 1997; Eidelson & Eidelson, 2003). A prime example of this is the Jyllands-Posten Muhammad cartoons

controversy, that sparked demonstrations and riots in some Muslim countries.

The *psychological* dimension of suffering – Suffering can also result in psychological distress and emotional pain (e.g., Gidron, Gal, & Zahavi, 1999; Barber, 2001; 2010; Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006). An important remark with the psychological dimension is that distress and emotional pain do not develop merely from actual physical, material, or cultural harm but can also result from the threat of harm (Eidelson & Eidelson, 2003). Over time, focusing on the in- groups' psychological suffering can lead such suffering to become embedded in the groups' collective narratives and collective identities (Hammack, 2008; Volkan, 2001).

The *legitimacy* dimension of suffering - Groups may recognize that the other group has also suffered in a particular conflict, but they tend to compete over the legitimacy and injustice of their suffering (Bar-Tal, 2000). Groups may claim not only to have suffered but also that their suffering was distinctly more unjust than that of the outgroup (Noor et al., 2008). The legitimacy dimension of competitive victimhood may help to legitimize violence through the rationale of self-defense (Noor et al., 2008; Čehajić & Brown, 2010).

In the following table we see how the different dimensions of CV can manifest themselves in discourse:

Dimension of competitive victimhood	In discourse
Physical dimension of suffering	Accusing outgroup of cruel acts. Accentuate the unjust harm, evil deeds and atrocities perpetrated by the adversary. Use of chosen trauma.
Material dimension of suffering	Accusing outgroup of structural violence and consciously give the ingroup material disadvantages
Cultural dimension of suffering	Sense of cultural deprivation or threat of cultural extinction
Psychological dimension of suffering	Focus on the in- groups' psychological suffering
The *legitimacy* dimension of suffering	Ingroups acknowledge that the outgroup has suffered, but claim that their suffering was distinctly more (unjust)

Political and theological leaders can highlight each of these dimensions of suffering, trying to be crowned the 'true' victim of the conflict. Other scholars have add to the discursive expressions of victimhood. For example, Bar-Tal and Salomon identified several societal goals of victimhood narratives that are constructed in times of conflict. Although their main goal was to describe the main functions of this narrative and the consequences thereof, they also explained how these narratives might be articulated (Bar-Tal & Salomon, 2006).

Societal goal(s) of competitive victimhood	In discourse
Security	Stress the importance of personal safety and national survival
Delegitimize the opponent	Delegitimize the opponent and deny his or her humanity
Positive self-image	Project a particular positive self-image: positive traits, values and behaviour to one's own society
Patriotism	Generate an attachment to the country and society, by propagating loyalty, love, care and sacrifice
Unity	Refer to unity in the ingroup and ignore internal conflicts and disagreements
Peace	Present an idyllic peace as an ultimate goal of the society, and society members as 'peace loving'

Discourse that engage in competitive victimhood serve to fulfil the above mentioned goals. However, as stated in the introduction, research on this topic tend to focus on the discourse in conversational context by members of the ingroup and not on the discourse in speeches by political or theological leaders. Analysing speeches from George W. Bush and Osama bin Laden will lead to a better understanding of the use of competitive victimhood in political discourse. Constantly scrutinizing whether the subjects say one of the above allows me to paint a clear picture of the use of competitive victimhood in political discourse

during times of conflict. In addition, I keep the option open that competitive victimhood returns in a different form in the speeches of the political leaders.

Part I: George W. Bush

5. Part I: George W. Bush

The speeches that are analysed from George W. Bush are the following:

- Statement by the President: Address to the Nation (September 11, 2001)
- Address to Congress and the American People (September 20, 2001)
- President addresses to the Nation (October 7, 2003)

By most accounts, Bush did an excellent job of speaking for and to the American people (Gregg, 2018). In the weeks after the 9/11, Bush's approval rating rose to 90 percent — the highest recorded job-approval rating in U.S. presidential history (Gregg, 2018). In the months that followed, this approval rating hovered in the upper 80s (Schubert, Stewart & Curran, 2002).

5.1 Speech I: Statement by the President: Address to the Nation (11 September, 2001)

First stage of analysis: description & interpretation

After several brief statements throughout the day that addressed the unfolding events of 9/11, Bush gave his official statement on live television at 8:30 PM. In his memoir, *Decision Points*, George Bush described that he had a clear vision for this speech: "Above all I wanted to express comfort and resolve [to the American people] —comfort that we would recover from this blow, and resolve that we would bring the terrorists to justice" (2010, p. 137). This sentence clearly shows that the main target audience for this speech were the American people. Besides the goal of comfort and resolve, this speech was also meant to send a message to the world: that the United States of America would do everything to win the war against terrorism. In this speech, Bush uses several metaphors to reach his goal and evoke certain feelings among the listeners, such as patriotism and unity: "A great people has been moved to defend a great nation," where the phrase 'A great people' refers to the Americans. Throughout this speech, Bush uses similar metaphors and imagery. The metaphors are also used to ask the people for confidence in the nation and its government; "Terrorist can shake the foundations of our biggest building but they cannot touch the foundation of America" being a prime example.

Second stage of analysis: explanation

In his first sentence, Bush states:

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> "Today, our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts."

This sentence is exemplary for the rest of this speech and Bush deliberately touches upon several dimensions of competitive victimhood. He names the victims <u>our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom</u>, immediately creating a sense of unity in the ingroup and generating a form of patriotism ('our fellow citizens'). He depicts the attacks not only as a direct attack on American citizens, but as an attack on the American way of life. This demonstrates how terrorism is rhetorically constructed as posing a catastrophic threat to the American 'way of life', to freedom, liberty and democracy and even to civilization itself. The terrorist will not only kill, but they also impose a threat for cultural deprivation. Bush correspondingly projects a positive self-image when connecting the ingroup with 'our very freedom', which has a positive connotation. He continues to address the victims:

> "The victims were in airplanes or in their offices: secretaries, business men and women, military and federal workers, moms and dads, friends and neighbours. Thousands of lives were suddenly ended by evil, despicable acts of terror. The pictures of airplanes flying into buildings, fires burning, huge -- huge structures collapsing have filled us with disbelief, terrible sadness, and a quiet, unyielding anger."

Here George W. Bush is humanizing the victims of the ingroup by painting a vivid picture of who they were and what they did in normal life. Even more so, this is a way of normalizing the terrorist threat in everyday experience: terrorists can attack you at any time, no matter who or where you are. In other words, the terrorist threat is a rational and reasonable fear to have and you could be the victim of this threat. It is a psychological fear, more that an actual threat to one's safety. Research show there were only three fatalities between 2002 and 2007 that were considered the victim of a terrorist motivated attack (START, 2016). While academics continue to debate the ultimate goal of terrorism, the end result for many people affected is fear and terror (Sinclair & Antonius, 2012). The psychological fear Bush is creating is ironically one of the most important goals of terrorism, as terrorism aims to destroy the fabric of communities, leaving citizens fearful and vulnerable (Ryan, 2003). However, George Bush is using it in his advantage: as a central force underlying resilience and post-traumatic growth in the context of terrorism and political violence (Sinclair & Antonius, 2012). At the same time, he dehumanizes the terrorists and accuses them of cruel acts. The use of the word *evil* deserves particular attention. The concept of evil opens up a range of (religious) imaginary, invoking biblical concepts of good and evil. The use of this word accentuates the unjust harm (friends, family

and neighbours don't deserve this destiny) done by the perpetrators. Ergo: the perpetrator must be evil, thereby ignoring the argument brought forward by Richardson (2006):

> Terrorist are neither crazy nor amoral […] They come from many walks of life […] They come from all religious traditions and from none. One thing they do have in common. They are weaker than those they oppose. (p.38)

In his speech, George W. Bush also touches upon cultural dimension of suffering. He paints a vivid picture of the major landmarks in the United States that are on fire and collapsing. The skyscrapers in Manhattan are inextricably linked to and part of the American culture (Leach, 1993), as Bush also recognizes:

> "Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America."

He immediately connects the foundation of the buildings to the foundations of America, connecting material suffering to cultural resilience, appealing again to a sense of unity and patriotism. He continues by naming the main reason why – according to Bush – the U.S. was the target of the attacks:

> "America was targeted because we're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world. And no one will keep that light from shining. Today, our nation saw evil -- the very worst of human nature -- and we responded with the best of America."

At the time of the speech, it was still unclear who masterminded the attacks, but Bush names the primary reason as being 'the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world', automatically making the perpetrators the opposite. George W. Bush continues to play with religious rhetoric by using words that immediately evoke a sharp contrast. The superlative 'brightest' is an example of that, evoking the term 'darkest'. 'Evil' in combination with 'very' and 'worst' portrays terrorists as the opposite of everything that the nation of United States is. As Ricento stated, 'We', 'our' and 'us' is also used throughout this speech as a metonym, in this case as a direct replacement for 'Americans' (2003, p. 619).

> "This is a day when all Americans from every walk of life unite in our resolve for justice and peace. America has stood down enemies before, and we will do so this time. None of us will ever forget this day, yet we go forward to defend freedom and all that is good and just in our world."

The closing statement in this first speech after the attacks on 9/11 is particularly interesting. He, again, calls upon feelings of patriotism ('all Americans from every walk of life unite'), but he directly combines it with 'our resolve for justice and peace'. Here, Bush present an idyllic peace as the only right ultimate response to the attacks and as the ultimate goal, thereby suggesting that the acts perpetrated by the terrorists are

acts of war. He also implies war when stating that the U.S. have stood down enemies before, implicating past enemies like Nazi Germany, Vietcong and the Soviet Union. 'Defending freedom' implies that a violent response is necessary in order to reach that idyllic peace.

5.2 Speech II: Address to Congress and the American People (20 September, 2001)

First stage of analysis: description & interpretation

The second speech that will be analysed is the speech George W. Bush gave to the Congress on 20 September, 2001. In this speech, the President rallied support for the "War on Terror," a term he coined for the first time. This support would eventually lead to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Experts agree that this speech was one of the defining speeches of his presidency (Schubert, Stewart & Curran, 2002). The speech clearly reflects a definition of the situation as war. There were different target groups for whom the speech was intended. First, he addresses the American nation. There is a short message to the Taliban when Bush lays down his demands (One of the demands being: 'Deliver to United States authorities all the leaders of al Qaeda who hide in your land.') In the latter part of the speech, Bush is giving a clear message to Muslims throughout the world when he states that "We [the Americans] respect your faith." The metaphors in GWB2 are purposefully used to make the people want to seek revenge on the terrorists, no matter the cost. By using metaphors such as comparing the terrorism with the mafia, the president is creating images of long-lasting threats and the kind of control the mafia had in the United States. Bush also uses metaphors to encourage his army, and make them feel proud about their task ("Our nation, this generation will lift a dark threat of violence from our people and our future"). The words *will lift a dark threat of violence* creates an image of proud soldiers fighting for the right cause and saving their people.

Second stage of analysis: explanation

In this speech, Bush makes several appeals to history to show how horrendous this particular attack was:

> "Americans have known wars, but for the past 136 years they have been wars on foreign soil, except for one Sunday in 1941. Americans have known the casualties of war, but not at the center of a great city on a peaceful morning. Americans have known surprise attacks, but never before on thousands of civilians."

Later on in this speech, he calls the victims 'casualties of war'. These discursive renderings of terrorist acts by Bush were central in an understandable *war* narrative, and justifying a military rather than a criminal

justice response (Jackson, 2006). Throughout this and other speeches from around this period, he states that 9/11 was the start of that war. Discursively reconstructing the attacks as *acts of war* functioned to call upon on the state powers, as well as domestic and international justification for military-based self-defense. The Sunday mentioned in this section is Pearl Harbor, the attack of Japanese soldiers during the Second World War. This passage is an example of a past trauma or past victimhood experience. In recent times, leaders in different parts of the world (e.g., in former Yugoslavia and Rwanda) successfully led their followers into violent conflicts with their historical perpetrators by evoking their past and sometimes ancient victimhood experiences (Ignatieff, 1993; MacDonald, 2002). However, in the passage above, Bush is recalling past suffering from a different perpetrator (Japan), but the psychological function of recalling this past suffering is to underline how excessive the terrorist acts of 9/11 were. In a rhetorical way, Bush hints that the 9/11 attacks were more violent, cowardly and horrific than the past trauma of Pearl Harbor, because it was aimed at 'thousands of civilians' in the 'center of a great city'. Several other rhetorical moves are evident in the speech, including dehumanizing the enemy, forcing all nations to choose sides, minimizing the sacrifice required, and forecasting inevitable victory. What is striking for this speech, is that George W. Bush doesn't solely position the American people as the victims of the terrorist threat; he positions everyone that is not part of the terrorist movement as the victims. He's urging for a sense of unity among many people of different descent, different language, especially those of Arabic descent. A clear example is in the following passage:

> "We've seen the unfurling of flags, the lighting of candles, the giving of blood, the saying of prayers in English, Hebrew and Arabic."

In this section, Bush is showing – what would I define as – *extended victimhood* (see figure 3). The concept of *competitive* victimhood refers to each group's effort to claim that it has suffered more than the outgroup. There are two quite easily identifiable groups which compete over who is the 'true' victim of the conflict. It can be portrayed as such:
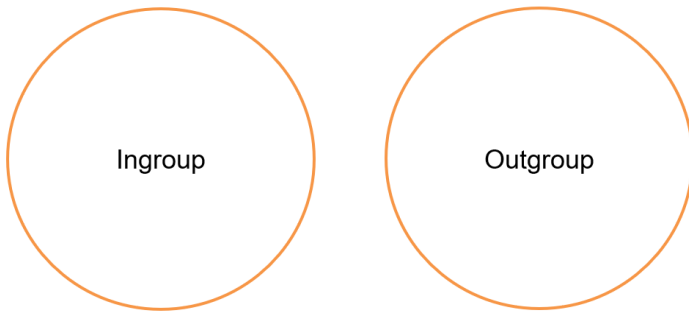
Competitive victimhood

Figure 2: Competitive victimhood, two binary groups are competing over who is the true victim of the conflict

However, '*extended*' victimhood slightly differs from this tendency. Where competitive victimhood implies a binary relation between two clearly identifiable groups, extended victimhood is more complicated. In this particular passage Bush names Hebrew, the language native to Israel, and Arabic, the main language of the Muslim community, alongside English when referring to the prayers. It is no coincidence that Bush uses these two languages as an example. It is meant to break down barriers between different groups – in particular groups that are supposedly direct opposite to each other. What sets *extended victimhood* aside from other forms of victimhood we've seen in literature thus far is that it tries to emphasize with the group that the perpetrators see as the ingroup and sets aside a specific group as the perpetrators. Often the perpetrators are portrayed as a small, extreme and rigid group. This tendency is shown in figure 3:
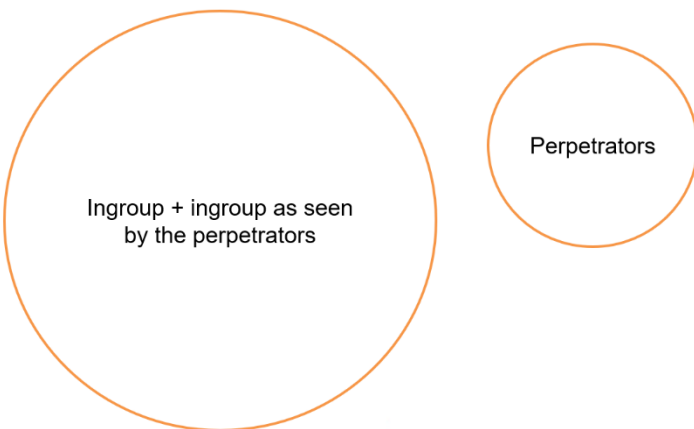

Figure 3: 'Extended' victimhood, the ingroup emphasizes with the ingroup as seen by the perpetrators, to put the perpetrators apart

In this particular example, Osama bin Laden is considering the Muslim community – or the *ummah* - his ingroup, so Bush is trying to depict the Muslim community as the *victim* of bin Laden and the Taliban; simultaneously depicting the American people as their allies. It is meant to say: you, who my enemy considers a victim and part of *his* group, are actually not a victim of *us*, but a victim of *our enemy*. Ergo: we have a common enemy. One of the clearest examples of extended victimhood, is when George W. Bush focuses on the Afghan people in the following section and clearly portrays them as the victims of the Taliban regime, which he is accusing of protecting the terrorist cells:

> "Afghanistan's people have been brutalized — many are starving and many have fled. Women are not allowed to attend school. You can be jailed for owning a television. Religion can be practiced only as their leaders dictate. A man can be jailed in Afghanistan if his beard is not long enough."

This extended version of victimhood can have several functions. Firstly, it reinforces the image of the United States as the innocent actor in the conflict. Secondly, the perpetrators are portrayed as evil and rigid, but simultaneously as a weak group that stand alone in their cause. Thirdly, if you argue that the outgroup are also victims of your perpetrators, you automatically create space for what Clément, Sangar & Lindemann called a "hero-protector narrative" (2017), in which you can argue that these victims of the outgroup need to be saved. In other words: it causes the Americans to be seen as heroes, saviours. Even more so: I argue that acknowledging that the outgroup are also victims of your perpetrators is <u>necessary</u> for a hero-protector narrative. You create victims for whom you can be the hero and that way, it strengthens some of the functions that competitive victimhood also has:

(1) it justifies the use of violence as a mean to free the oppressed from your perpetrators. If you acknowledge the suffering of the outgroup, using violence can be framed as "heroic" behaviour. Even if that results in violence against the group where one is emphasizing with, one can frame that violence as collateral damage that is needed to achieve a larger goal. In this example: Bush is acknowledging the suffering of the Afghan people, but Afghan civilians suffered greatly during the first stages of the war. Over 31,000 civilian deaths due to war-related violence have been documented (Crawford, 2016). Many of these civilians have been killed by the US military, for example by air strikes and ground fire.

(2) it denies responsibility of the use of violence, because if you're after a specific group of people that are oppressing their own ingroup, violence is a necessity. Even more so, this narrative is a way to encourage your audience to perceive violence as the only morally acceptable course of action.

(3) Avoid negative group emotions, because instead of a 'simple' quest for revenge or a reaction to protect one's own safety, it becomes a mission, a swashbuckling story in which you want to free the 'outgroup'

from their oppressors. This hero-protector narrative – combined with your own victimhood narrative – is a strong way to manufacture emotional consent among your audience (Clément, Sangar & Lindemann, 2017).

(4) in the same light as the argument raised above, it makes requests for compensation and recruitment of moral and material support from third parties easier and more logical.

(5) it delegitimizes the opponent even more, because they are not only violent towards you, but also towards their own group.

(6) By acknowledging the suffering of the outgroup, you can also paint a picture of an idyllic peace where the outcasts of society are eliminated for the benefit of everyone.

In this speech, Bush continuously reaches out to the Muslim community, claiming that the U.S. "respects their faith", "respects the people of Afghanistan" and that the teachings of Islam "are good and peaceful". Bush has stated in several public appearances that the war on terrorism was not [a fight] against religion. Instead, he constantly stressed that it was a fight against evil (e.g. 10/10/01 and 06/11/01). That said, the fact that Bush is constantly referencing the Islamic faith and Christianity gives a contrary impression. The section below being an prime example.

 "The terrorists practice a fringe form of Islamic extremism that has been rejected by Muslim scholars and the vast majority of Muslim clerics; a fringe movement that perverts the peaceful teachings of Islam."

Bush constantly tries to set Islam aside from terrorists, but the repeated mention of terrorists and how they 'practice a fringe form of Islamic extremism' indicts Islam as well. As Larsson (2004) states: 'Although no religious connotations are implied, the very use of religious terminology in relation to conflict, war and violence can open a Pandora's Box of genuine religious violence' (p. 106). In this case, Bush tries to gain the support of the Muslim community, which implicates that there are only two sides in this conflict: that of the terrorists and that of the 'rest' who condemn the actions of the terrorists. This binary view of the conflict becomes clear when he raises a dilemma:

"Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists."

Bush claims that every nation, even when you are not part of the conflict, must enlist on one side or another, without possibility of neutrality, hesitation, or middle ground. This choice is part of Bush's central argument

that this is a war. The president states that the events of 9/11 produced a radical estrangement and categorical division between two rival camps. The victim stance, moreover, helps construct and exacerbate that division, as the opposing side can be portrayed in orienting binaries of this structure – victim/perpetrator, evil/good, murderers/saviours, threat/threatened, etc. It also strengthens the victimhood narrative, because whether the other side are "outlaws," "murderers,", "killers" or "terrorists" (all terms coined by Bush, the latter one he used most frequent); it automatically ensures that its own group are the victims.

5.3 Speech III: Address to the Nation (September 7, 2003)

First stage of analysis: description & interpretation

In this speech, President Bush addressed the nation on the status of operations in Iraq. In his remarks he talked about efforts to combat global terrorism. More specifically, George W. Bush stated that Iraq had become the "central front" in the war against terror. Bush also stated that the war against terrorism will cost an additional $87 billion – but that America must "do what is necessary" to defeat the international "enemies of freedom." President Bush delivered the speech to a nationally televised prime-time address. In this speech, George W. Bush is more rational than in his previous speeches days after 9/11. He looks back on the last two years since 9/11, analyses the events that happened since then and provides clarification. While insisting that Iraq has become the central front of the war, he also touches upon the events in Afghanistan, claiming that the U.S. "destroyed the training camps of terror, and removed the regime that harbored al Qaeda." The target audience were the citizens of the United States. The tone was optimistic, celebrating successes in the war on terrorism, but also cautionary, claiming that it is a lengthy war, a different kind of war and that the terrorists have a strategic goal and want to shake the will of the civilized world. In the latter part of the speech, Bush warns the audience that "the dangers have not passed". In his speech, Bush outlines the strategy of the U.S. in Iraq, which consists of three main objectives: (1) destroying the terrorists, (2) enlisting the support of other nations for a free Iraq and (3) helping Iraqis assume responsibility for their own defence and their own future.

Second stage of analysis: explanation

In GWB3, we find a connection between the terrorist attacks on American soil and the importance of the great mission the United States have taken on:

"Since America put out the fires of September the 11th, and mourned our dead, and went to war,

history has taken a different turn. […] We are fighting that enemy in Iraq and Afghanistan today so that we do not meet him again on our streets, in our own cities."

This metaphor evokes images of the past trauma like the airplanes crashing into the World Trade Center, the collapsing towers, the lost victims and the destruction that followed. The picturesque language was to provoke certain emotions among the listeners and is a way for Bush to justify the war. The use of *our* streets, *our own* cities creates a feeling of belonging and togetherness among the citizens of the United States, while at the same time emphasizing the message of how serious the attacks were. With the word 'again', George W. Bush is calling upon a collective trauma of the past (9/11), to justify their violent response. Although the attacks are fairly recent by historical standards (especially during the time of the speeches), given the mass violence and feelings of injustice, 9/11 is perceived by many Americans as a *chosen trauma*. Volkan argued that the attacks on September 11 have become, in the ensuing decade since 2001, a 'chosen trauma' for most Americans – and even for known allies (Volkan, 2002). The defining feature of a chosen trauma is that it becomes the new core of a group's collective identity. Scholars argued – and this is exemplified in many speeches by George W. Bush – that the attacks on 9/11 have become an historical fulcrum around which can divide the history of the United States into 'before' and 'after' (Duckworth, 2014). It is exactly what Bush touches upon with the phrase 'history has taken a different turn'. This suggests the centrality of the attacks of September 11 to American identity since that day (Duckworth, 2014). Several scholars argued that 9/11 'created an era' (e.g. Jackson, 2006). Bush continues to project a particular positive self-image:

> "Our coalition enforced these international demands in one of the swiftest and most humane military campaigns in history."

While the perpetrator was framed as 'deadly', 'hateful' and 'evil' in this speech, the military campaign of the United States and its allies were 'swift' and 'humane', despite all (civil) victims, expenses and psychological and material damage. He continues to delegitimize the opponent and blaming them for the use of violence long before 9/11:

> "For a generation leading up to September 11, 2001, terrorists and their radical allies attacked innocent people in the Middle East and beyond, without facing a sustained and serious response. […] In Iraq, we are helping long-suffering people of that country to build a decent and democratic society at the center of the Middle East. […] The Middle East will either become a place of progress and peace, or it will be an exporter of violence and terror that takes more lives in America and in other free nations."

Throughout the speech, George Bush portrays the people in the Middle East and beyond as 'innocent',

putting them aside from the terrorists and even emphasizing that they were 'long-suffering', so again an example of extended victimhood. He continues to state that there are two options – and two options only. One of the options is an idyllic peace. If you support the (actions of) the United States, then peace in the Middle East – and even the rest of the world – lies ahead. The other option is if you don't get behind the United States. In that case the terrorists will prevail and a future of violence and terror lies ahead. If that second scenario becomes reality, people in the Middle East, Americans and citizens of other 'free' nations will once again become the victims. In a later interview that Osama bin Laden gave, he noticed this fact as well. He said: "Bush divided the world into two: "either with us or with terrorism' […] The odd thing about this is that he has taken the words right out of our mouths."

Part II: Osama bin Laden

6. Part II: Osama bin Laden

The speeches that are analysed from Osama bin Laden are the following:

- Video released on October 7, 2001
- Video released on October 29, 2004
- Audiotape released on January 19, 2006

Throughout his anti-Western political career, Osama bin Laden conducted interviews and released statements regarding his motives. He released several video and audio recordings in the wake of the war. Most of these tapes were released directly to Arabic language satellite television networks, mainly Al Jazeera, but were quickly picked up by the American press and media of other countries. They ranged from broadly targeted messages to statements directed at specific groups such as the Muslim community, the European Union, Pakistan, Iraq, and the United States. Each speech had its own defined purpose.

6.1 Speech I: Video released on October 7, 2001

First stage of analysis: description & interpretation

The first speech that is analysed is the speech that Osama bin Laden released on the same day that the United States and NATO forces launched strikes on Afghanistan. It came almost a month after the 9/11 attacks. It was the first time the world heard from the leader of the Al Qaeda network since the attacks. This speech was intended for both a Muslim and a non-Muslim audience. The majority of the speech was intended for the global audience, while parts of it were directed at certain designated audiences for different reasons. The Muslim community was specifically addressed in an attempt to convert people into fighters and join 'his' cause. The American citizens were also targeted in the latter part of the speech in an effort to explain to them his objectives for the conflict. The main purpose of this video was to praise the feat of the hijackers and to publicly endorse the attack, although he didn't claim responsibility for them. Various examples of religious imagery, alleged crimes, historical claims, and analogies were used to support his claims and strengthen his narrative. The use of religion - and religious metaphors - in particular serves the purpose of categorizing the 'other' as morally devoid, and the 'self' as being in a position to pass moral judgement. He is dressed in an army jacket, with a version of the Kalashnikov (AKs-74U) in clear sight right beside him. It is very likely that this scene was highly choreographed and the choice for this specific mise-en-scène and the theatrical properties were

deliberate (Hoffman, 2008).

Second stage of analysis: explanation

Osama bin Laden starts his message with a reference to Allah, which is called a *shahada* (Muqit, 2012). It is an obligatory statement for the Muslims in which he declares belief in the oneness of God (tawhid) and the acceptance of Muhammad as God's prophet. The shahada becomes the requirement for those who want to be a Muslim and more so: without saying this, he can't talk on behalf of the Muslim community, which Osama bin Laden is seeing as his ingroup (Muqit, 2012).

> "I bear witness that there is no God but Allah and that Mohammed is his messenger. There is America, hit by God in one of its softest spots. Its greatest buildings were destroyed, thank God for that. What America is tasting now, is something insignificant compared to what we have tasted for scores of years."

This first statement is seemingly a contradiction, as he paints the picture of Allah as the perpetrator ('America, Hit by God'). But what Osama bin Laden does here is in the legitimacy dimension of suffering. He admits that the United States have been attacked and there has been severe losses, but he immediately compares the suffering of the United States with the suffering of his own people – the ingroup. And compared to the suffering of the Muslim community, the suffering of the United States is 'insignificant'. As I will quickly demonstrate, Osama bin Laden often positions himself as the leader of the Muslim community, while simultaneously positioning himself in the same position with them. This way, he is to be a representation of the Muslim community that have suffered undeniably more than the outgroup (the Americans).

> "Our nation (the Islamic world) has been tasting this humiliation and this degradation for more than 80 years. Its sons are killed, its blood is shed, its sanctuaries are attacked, and no one hears and no one heeds."

When Osama bin Laden refers to the Muslim community in his speeches, he often speaks in first-person-plural. In this example he uses the phrase 'our nation', and in other parts of this and other speeches he uses phrases like 'our community', 'our people' and 'our situation'. The use of the first-person-plural serves the same purpose as calling out the *shahada*: to create a defined united group in which he serves as the spokesperson. This feeling of a universal Muslim community is also known as *ummah*, and is one of the key political concepts from the Qur'an. Bin Laden clearly understands the

power of the ummah and regularly uses the construct for his own purposes (Saunders, 2008). That is why references to historical events in Lebanon, Palestine and other predominantly Muslim countries make sense: he speaks not on behalf of a nation, but on behalf of the ummah. As Denoeux (2002, p. 68) also states: "[Al Qaeda's] intended audience is not primarily the population of a single country, but the entire ummah". This can be seen, for example, in bin Laden's description of al Qaeda which he gives in an 2001 interview with Tayseer Alouni, when he stated that "his organisation cannot be separated from this nation (ummah)." He continues to claim that al Qaeda are "the sons of the nation. We are brothers in Islam from the Middle East, Philippines, Malaysia, India, Pakistan and as far as Mauritania" (2001). In the analysed speech, bin Laden names a time span of eighty years immediately after 'our nation'. This time span is a prime example of how this concept is used in practice, because it refers to the period following the fall of the Islamic Ottoman Empire in 1921 (Crenshaw, 2001). According to Osama bin Laden, since then, Islamic "sons have been killed, its blood has been shed, its holy sanctuaries have been violated." Here bin Laden, comparable to what Bush does in his speeches when for example referencing Pearl Harbor and past wars, makes an appeal to history to emphasize structural inequality and past suffering in historical conflicts of the Muslim community. Appeals to history provide a sense of continuity; they bring about coherence in views and perceptions (Bhatia, 2007). In his view, the U.S. were the main responsible for the violence of this continuous suffering, metaphorizing the United States as a cruel monster. When Osama bin Laden states that the United States not only killed the sons of Islam, but also attacked their sanctuaries, it is an appeal to the cultural dimension of suffering. This supports the argument that the United States intentionally and repeatedly attacked not only the Muslim community, but Islam as a religion. Bin Laden claims that this suffering is more severe, unjust and protracted than that of the (citizens of the) United States. In discourse, he contrasts a lengthy process ('tasting humiliation for more than 80 years') with a one-off event (September 11). Osama bin Laden is stretching the fact that he feels that the suffering of his people is not being fully recognized ('no one hears, no one heeds'). It leaves him with no other option than to respond with violence: a message that the world cannot ignore. The primary goal of this violence is not to be violent in itself, but to get recognition for the suffering of his own people. Noor et al. (2008) suggest that this sense of being the true victim may arise out of the need to have the group's suffering acknowledged. In war, as Judith Butler states (2009), victims are divided into those whose lives are grievable and those who are not. The lives of the latter group are those lives that were never counted as lives in the first place (Butler, 2010). In this passage, Osama bin Laden is giving those victims a voice. His response is a way of defending the *ungrievable lives* and make them humane, acknowledging their existence. Butler observed that defending the lives of a particular

population has a negative side-effect: by ending the lives of others. In the view of Osama bin Laden, the concrete experiences of violence and loss of the Islamic world, their testimonies, voices and claims have been hidden and largely excluded from public discourse. He considers it his role to bring their suffering to the limelight and speak on behalf of the Muslim community. Osama bin Laden continues to praise the feat of the hijackers:

> "When God blessed one of the groups of Islam, vanguards of Islam, they destroyed America. I pray to God to elevate their status and bless them."

Bin Laden calls the jihadist militants 'vanguards of Islam' to indicate that they are part of the broader ummah and committed these acts in order to defend Islam, rather than them being a distinct group of extremists immersed in violent acts. He continues to 'pray to God to elevate their status', to not only approve, but encourage actions like these and give them a holy status. In the following section, he again appeals to the (suffering of the) ummah:

> "Millions of innocent children are being killed as I speak. They are being killed in Iraq without committing any sins and we don't hear condemnation or a fatwa from the rulers. [...] In these days, Israeli tanks infest Palestine - in Jenin, Ramallah, Rafah, Beit Jalla, and other places in the land of Islam, and we don't hear anyone raising his voice or moving a limb. When the sword comes down (on America), after 80 years, hypocrisy rears its ugly head. They deplore and they lament for those killers."

The analysis of this bin Laden's declaration suggests that for bin Laden and his followers, the United States and their allies are undoubtedly terror nations. Muslims have been suffering for years and the culprit is easy to identify: the United States. Here, again, Osama bin Laden states that their suffering is not being recognised ('we don't hear anyone raising his voice or moving a limb'), but the suffering is severe and distinctly more than that of the United States. He also mentions the Israeli oppression of the Palestinian people. In doing so, he references several specific cases where the Palestinian community were the victims of the Israeli army. For example the events on Augustus 26, 2001, when IDF (Israel Defense Forces) tanks and bulldozers entered the West Bank village of Beit Jala and the Gaza Strip town of Rafah following renewed shooting upon Jerusalem's Gilo neighborhood. These recent events are part of a bigger picture that play a crucial part in bin Laden's discourse, namely the suppression of Muslims in Palestinian territory by Israel and - more importantly - the role of the United States in this. The close relationship between the U.S. and Israel has been one of the most salient features in U.S. foreign policy since the 1960's and consists of large-scale military, financial, and diplomatic support. Since 1985, the United States sent over $3 billion annually in military and economic aid (Sharp, 2019). In his 2002 'Letter to America', Osama bin Laden goes

into greater detail and delves deeper into the relationship between the U.S. and Israel. According to him, Israel is guilty of 'oppression, tyranny, crimes, killing, expulsion, destruction and devastation [of the Muslim community]' (bin Laden, 2002), is the creation and continuation of Israel 'one of the greatest crimes in history' (bin Laden, 2002) and the United States are 'the leaders of its criminals' (bin Laden, 2002). In that letter, bin Laden also claims that under the supervision, consent and orders of the United States, Israel prevented Muslims from establishing the Islamic Shariah (*cultural* suffering), gave them a taste of humiliation, and places them in a large prison of fear and subdual (*psychological* suffering), steal their wealth and oil at paltry prices because of the international influence and military threats of the U.S. (*material* suffering). In addition, he also claims that "it is a wonder that more than 1.5 million Iraqi children have died as a result of your sanctions, and you did not show concern. Yet when 3000 of your people died, the entire world rises and has not yet sat down" (*legitimacy* dimension of suffering). In his speech, Osama bin laden often touches upon the physical dimension of suffering and tries to point out the power structure between the U.S. and the Muslim world, e.g. when referencing the two atomic bombs the United States dropped on Japan:

> "When people at the ends of the earth, Japan, were killed by their hundreds of thousands, young and old, it was not considered a war crime, it is something that has justification."

He compares two atrocities from the past (Atomic bombs, 1945 and September 11, 2001) and points out that one of them was fiercely dubbed a war crime while the other was justified in the limelight of circumstances, even though for years debate has raged over whether the U.S. was right to drop two atomic bombs on Japan during the final weeks of the Second World War. Comparable to what Bush did in his speech after 9/11, Osama bin Laden implicates that there are only two sides in this conflict:

> "These events have divided the whole world into two sides. The side of believers and the side of infidels, may God keep you away from them. Every Muslim has to rush to make his religion victorious."

The religious statements here served as an attempt to gain credibility among the Muslim community (Schmid, 2014). In the above section, the difference between Bush and bin Laden becomes clear. As Lincoln (2003) stated, the speeches by both politicians seem to mirror one another. They both offer a clear narrative of the *perpetrator* and the *victim*, but while 'Bush preferred to define the coming struggle in ethico-political terms as a campaign of civilized nations against terrorist cells [...] Bin Laden, in contrast, saw it as a war of infidels versus the faithful' (p. 27). It is therefore logical that he calls upon the faith of the ummah to choose his side. In addition, Osama bin Laden saw the faithful as the victims of the infidels.

6.2 Speech II: Video released on October 29, 2004

First stage of analysis: description & interpretation

This video was broadcasted a few days before the presidential elections. It had been over a year since his last release of a pre-recorded statement. This speech was of particular interest, because it was the first time that Osama bin Laden claimed responsibility for the September 11 attacks. In this 'dramatically choreographed' (Hoffman, 2008) message, Osama bin Laden focuses on the American people as he stated in the first minute (one of the first sentences being: "People of America this talk of mine is for you"). As stated above, it was the first time bin Laden claimed responsibility for 9/11 and in this speech, he wants to "talk to [the American people] about the story behind those events and shall tell [them] truthfully about the moments in which the decision was taken". Historical events from the past are raised as an argument, like the 1982 Lebanon War, the Gulf War and – be it indirectly - the Nakba (the 1948 Palestinian exodus). Bin Laden also condemns the United States' – more specifically the Bush government's - response to 9/11, depicting them as the aggressors. He presents their violent response as part of a campaign of revenge and deterrence motivated by his witnessing of the destruction in the Lebanese Civil War in 1982. In OBL2, the role of the rhetor was to open the eyes of the American people, which – according to bin Laden – were deceived and misled by the American government and the media. Osama bin Laden defended misconceptions regarding himself and al-Qaeda. Multiple rhetorical question are asked to strengthen his narrative. The goal of these rhetorical questions is to challenge the American people to truly consider the arguments that bin Laden tries to put forward. His role in this speech was to appear as an educator and a leader (Olsson, 2008), which becomes visible in the mise-en-scène. Unlike the first speech, he is not wearing army clothes and there is no weapon in sight. Bin Laden appears wearing a turban and a white robe partially covered by a golden mantle, standing in front of an almost featureless brown background and reading his notes from papers resting on a pulpit. He expresses himself in a calm and friendly manner, which becomes visible throughout the speech, for example when he talks about interviews he did in the past ('And you can read this, <u>if you wish</u>, in my interview…') or when talking about the victims of 9/11 ('<u>it behoves you</u> to reflect on the last wills and testaments of the thousands who left you on the 11th'). The timing of the release is noteworthy, because the tape was released in the run-up to the American elections of 2004. According to several scholars (e.g. Cohen et al., 2005; Hoffman, 2008; Jackson, 2005), Osama bin Laden chose this release

carefully, being well aware of the fact that it was a critical time for the United States. The upcoming elections between George W. Bush and Senator John Kerry were in full swing and the debate on the War on Terror was a precarious and decisive matter. The electoral polls showed that it was a very tight race (RealClearPolitics, 2018). According to Cohen et al., 2005, this video was meant to influence voters, although it is unclear what his intention was, as bin Laden ends his speech with a reference to the elections, but fails to provide a clear direction:

> "In conclusion, I tell you in truth, that your security is not in the hands of Kerry, nor Bush, nor al-Qaida. No. Your security is in your own hands."

That being said, Osama bin Laden does criticize Bush throughout this speech, calling the president, among other things, a liar ("Bush is still engaged in distortion, deception and hiding from you the real causes"), an aggressor ("Is defending oneself and punishing the aggressor in kind, objectionable terrorism?"), oil-obsessed ("the black gold blurred his vision and insight") and a murderer ("Bush's hands are stained with the blood of all those killed from both sides").

Second stage of analysis: explanation

Responding to Bush' discourse on freedom and security, Osama bin Laden starts with a statement in which he refutes some of the main arguments put forward by Bush, using a rhetorical question. He continues to reveal the true motivations for 9/11.

> "Before I begin, I say to you that security is an indispensable pillar of human life and that free men do not forfeit their security, contrary to Bush's claim that we hate freedom. If so, then let him explain to us why we don't strike for example - Sweden? […] No, we fight because we are free men who don't sleep under oppression. We want to restore freedom to our nation, just as you lay waste to our nation. So shall we lay waste to yours."

This particular section is a clear example of the main argument that Osama bin Laden wants to bring across to his audience. The argument that they are free and honest men by nature, but acted the way they did, because they had no other option: they are the victims of the oppression from the United States. In this binary narrative, there is one clear oppressor/perpetrator: the United States. Bin Laden continues to give a seeming contradiction by admitting that he attacked the United States – and he plans to continue to attack the U.S. - ("so shall we lay waste to yours"), but unswervingly states that the real culprit is not him, but Bush as he claims that Bush is the one responsible for the casualties on his own side:

> "Bush's hands are covered with the blood of all these casualties, from both sides, all in the

name of oil and more business for his private companies."

Bush's hands are covered in blood is a vivid and literal metaphor. What is specifically notable is that he claims that Bush's hands are covered in blood of all these casualties, <u>from both sides</u>. In Bin Laden's' view, Bush is not only the perpetrator of the Muslim community, but also the main reason for the suffering of the American people, specifically those who lost their lives during 9/11 and the subsequent conflict. This narrative – Bush as the nemesis of both sides – is reoccurring throughout this speech. He also addresses and disproves statements from Bush, often appealing to the American people:

> "Is defending oneself and punishing the aggressor in kind, objectionable terrorism? If it is such, then it is unavoidable for us."

The use of rhetorical questions in this monologue is noticeable, because bin Laden uses this figure of speech numerous times during the course of this appearance. Scholars have often point out that rhetorical questions function as statements or commands, rather than questions. A speaker can use a rhetorical question for multiple reasons: to highlight certitude or incertitude, to evaluate content, or to express a propositional attitude (Schmidt-Radefeldt, 1977). In this particular section, as was the case with the 'Sweden-remark' earlier on in the speech, Osama bin Laden uses this figure of speech to adopt all three functions. The question in this section functions to mitigate bin Laden's view of structural power/inequality/oppression, while simultaneously evaluating the statements made by Bush. The choice for a question instead of a statement is obvious, as Luntz (2007) also points out: "The key to successful communication is to take the imaginative leap of stuffing yourself right into your listener's shoes to know what they are thinking and feeling" (p. xiii). It is exactly what bin Laden is doing here. He addresses the messages from Bush which he assumes his target audience – the American people – must have heard but he asks the public to take a critical approach to these statements and don't take them for granted. He continues to strengthen his argument:

> "I say to you, Allah knows that it had never occurred to us to strike the towers. But after it became unbearable and we witnessed the oppression and tyranny of the American/Israeli coalition against our people in Palestine and Lebanon, it came to my mind. The events that affected my soul in a direct way started in 1982 when America permitted the Israelis to invade Lebanon and the American Sixth Fleet helped them in that. [...] I couldn't forget those moving scenes, blood and severed limbs, women and children sprawled everywhere. Houses destroyed along with their occupants and high rises demolished over their residents, rockets raining down on our home without mercy. [...] They produced an intense feeling of rejection of tyranny, and gave birth to a strong resolve to punish the

oppressors."

This specific passage from his speech is exemplary from the physical, material and psychological dimension of suffering point of view. Bin Laden uses a substantial amount of metaphors (rockets raining down / gave birth to a strong revolve / etc.) and detailed imagery (blood and severed limbs / women and children sprawled everywhere / etc.). He tries to paint a vivid mental image of the violence that was inflicted upon them by the United States. In the same way that Bush tried to humanize the victims of 9/11 in his first speech after the attacks, Bin Laden is doing it from his perspective by framing the victims as both harmless as helpless (women / children / residents). By publicizing these groups, bin Laden normalizes the threat in everyday experience, which has a psychological function. The United States will attack you no matter who you are or where you are, even in your own home. This is an example in which Bin Laden holds up a mirror for the global community and it is used to prove that the United States have different standards than the Muslim community. Stories of victimhood are invested in the vulnerability of the ingroup, while stories of perpetrators are steeped in notions about the extraordinariness of evil, regarding perpetrators as people beyond or outside humanity. Osama bin Laden mentions several historical events in his speech as justification and to frame the Muslim community as the victims of the conflict and the US government as the perpetrators. He does it in such a way that the conceptualizations of culpability and innocence in the field are of religious nature: all Muslims are victims, the Americans – or non-Muslims (*infidels*) - are the perpetrators. It is worth noting that not all of the mentioned events were historically correct. For example, Osama blamed the United States for causing the deaths of millions of children because of the economic sanctions implemented by the United Nations. These sanctions were the result of the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq and were placed on Iraq in order to deter Saddam Hussein from seeking to expand his territory. It was the Security Council of the United Nations that implemented the sanctions. Also, it is not possible to determine who, if anyone was specifically at fault for the deaths of these children. To conclude: there is no definite evidence that can solely blame the U.S. for the fatalities caused by these sanctions. But in the narrative of Osama bin Laden, that doesn't really matter as this is an example of a chosen trauma. These events are a mythologized representation of past suffering that is passed from one generation to the next. By recalling this event – and other events like the destruction of Palestinian towns – he shows that these events are a fundamental part of the collective suffering of their side of the conflict (Bar-Tal et al., 2009).

6.3 Speech III: Audio tape released on January 19, 2006

First stage of analysis: description & interpretation

On January 19th, an audio tape was released in which Bin Laden threatened that preparations for a fresh wave of terror attacks on the U.S. were under way, although he simultaneously offered a "long truce". In this speech, bin Laden boasted that he was on the winning hand, while the situation for the United States and the U.S. Army was only getting worse. Parts of the tape were aired on Al-Jazeera, which published the entire version on its website. This speech was a clear break in style, message and tone than previous messages during the conflict. The role and attitude of the rhetor were also significantly different than in his previous public appearances. In this speech, it is clear that he wants to be perceived as a winner (Libicki, Chalk & Sisson, 2007), while at the same time depicting the American army as being on the losing side. For them, the situation is desperate and deteriorating rapidly. Bin Laden appears to be addressing the American people, which becomes clear in the first sentence of his speech ('My message to you is about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and how to end them.'). He addresses the conflict and specifically wants to disclose the errors made by President George Bush and the effect his decisions have on the soldiers on the ground. At this point, polls showed that the support for troops in Iraq and Afghanistan declined. Gallup Inc., an analytics and advisory company from the United States, has been surveying U.S. residents' thoughts about the presence of U.S. troops in Iraq. In January 2006 50% of the respondents indicated it was a mistake to send troops to Iraq, compared to 23% in May 2003 (Gallup, 2019). Support for the military intervention in Afghanistan also declined in this period. In November 2001, just after the U.S. sent armed forces into that country in an effort to retaliate against those who had harbored the al Qaeda terrorists responsible for the 9/11 attacks, an overwhelming majority of Americans approved of the United States launching military attacks in Afghanistan and the way President George W. Bush is handled the campaign against terrorism. At that point, fewer than one in 10 Americans said U.S. involvement there was a mistake (Gallup, 2019). In 2006, 46 percent of the respondents indicated that things were going moderately or even very badly for the USA in Afghanistan. With this message, Osama bin Laden Osama bin Laden tried to connect to these feelings.

Second stage of analysis: explanation

As in OBL2, he is addressing the American people and, again, suggesting the American people have peace in their own hands. Throughout this speech, he mentions the weak, hopeless position that the American army is in in both Afghanistan and Iraq, while constantly emphasizing the positive situation from his own side:

"Our situation, thank God, is only getting better and better, while your situation is the opposite of that."

At the time Osama bin Laden made this statement, it was objectively not true that the situation of Osama bin Laden and the Taliban was getting 'better and better'. Large numbers of Al Qaeda training camps and other military targets were destroyed, many important pawns within the organization were arrested or killed and several scholars convincingly argued that the organisation had mutated into a movement that no longer resembled what it started as (e.g. Mohamedou, 2011; Gerges, 2011). Sadam Hussein was also captured two years prior and, although there was no factual evidence for a relationship between Hussein and Al Qaeda, it was perceived as a major victory for the U.S. Army. Al Qaeda has made only limited progress toward its self-declared goals, and in some cases, has reversed gains. Most notable being the fact that U.S. has not fled from the Middle-East: with troops deployed in Iraq, in Afghanistan, and in limited numbers across numerous bases and training missions elsewhere in the Muslim world, the region appears to be even more "occupied". Gerges, a writer and academic on terrorism and Middle Eastern affairs, claimed that by 2006, al Qaeda was 'homeless' and 'largely a spent force' (2011). Despite these developments, bin Laden tells the public something similar further on in this speech when stating that 'war in Iraq is raging with no let-up, and operations in Afghanistan are escalating in our favor.' These statements served to project a particular positive self-image, namely that of the strong victor that, whatever you try, can't be beaten. This image seemingly conflicts with the victim narrative from earlier speeches but, as I will demonstrate quickly, this is not the case. He portrays his group as the underdog; the victim that sticks up for oneself. It is there to demoralize the American people and to generate unity within the ingroup, although the latter one was not the main target audience. Bin Laden tries to attack the morals of the American people in a variety of ways. During the course of this speech, he claims that Bush made some serious errors and backs this up with statistics from the Pentagon in which he claims that the army is in a heavy depression:

"But I plan to speak about the repeated errors your President Bush has committed in comments on the results of your polls that show an overwhelming majority of you want the withdrawal of American troops from Iraq. […] Pentagon figures show the number of your dead and wounded is increasing not to mention the massive material losses, the destruction of the soldiers' morale there and the rise in cases of suicide among them. So you can imagine the state of psychological breakdown that afflicts a soldier as he gathers the remains of his colleagues after they stepped on land mines that tore them apart."

Both George Bush and Osama bin Laden use 'the American army men' as a crucial part of their discourse,

but it serves a different purpose for both speakers. With his portrayal of the soldier, Bush wants to paint a picture of the courageous man who is on a great mission to tackle the perpetrators that threaten the lives and values of the Free Western World. He regularly describes the battle - and the task for the soldiers - as a crucial turning point in history (e.g. in GWB2 when stating 'This is not, however, just America's ... This is the world's fight. This is civilization's fight' which was aimed at the U.S. Army). In a 2004 speech, George Bush stated that he 'respects every soldier' that 'serves us in the hard work of history' (2004). Bin Laden, on the other hand, uses the soldier in his narrative as the men who have been sent by Bush to a distant land and who - terribly far away from home – are in a state of psychological breakdown, committing suicide and are under constant threat. This evokes memories of the Vietnam War, where the image of the suffering soldier in a despairing conflict was widespread under the American people (e.g. Mueller, 1973; Jentleson, 1992; Gelpi, Feaver & Reifler, 2009). Osama bin Laden even mentions Vietnam in the following sentence when calling the U.S. Army 'the Vietnam Butcher', but is used in such a context so that it can also apply to its own soldiers (which would mean that the army as an institution led by the U.S. government is a butcher for its own soldiers). By remaining vague in his explanation of 'the Vietnam Butcher', bin Laden paints a picture of an institution led by the U.S. government that is the aggressor for both its enemies (Vietnam and the Muslim community) and for its own people (soldiers and the American people):

> "… the soldier is caught between two hard options. He either refuses to leave his military camp on patrols and is therefore dogged by ruthless punishments and acted by the Vietnam Butcher or he gets destroyed by the mines. This puts him under psychological pressure, fear and humiliation while his nation is ignorant of that (what is going on). The soldier has no solution except to commit suicide. That is a strong message to you, written by his soul, blood and pain, to save what can be saved from this hell. The solution is in your hands if you care about them (the soldiers)."

By doing this, Osama bin Laden acknowledges that the soldiers are suffering and are also victims in this conflict. In this narrative, the one's inflicting this violence upon them is not al Qaeda, but the Bush regime. Although less visible than in Bush's speeches, where he depicts the Afghani people as victims of the terrorist and the Taliban who need to be rescued, this is also a form of extended victimhood. Osama bin Laden suggests that, in order to stop the suffering for the soldiers, the citizens of the United States need to take faith in their own hands and discharge the Bush government – not coincidentally the same measure that would relieve the suffering on the Muslim community. Bin Laden continues to compliment his 'own' warriors with their recent achievements:

> The mujahideen (holy warriors), with God's grace, have managed repeatedly to penetrate all

security measures adopted by the unjust allied countries.

Osama bin Laden is referencing several terrorist attacks in Europe that happened in the years prior to this statement, mainly the 2004 Madrid train bombings, killing 191 people, and 7 July 2005 London bombing, in which 52 people lost their lives. Both attacks have been described as the product of an independent cell of self-radicalized individuals that were inspired by al Qaeda. Osama bin Laden is calling the terrorists 'mujahideen' or holy warriors, giving them a holy status and making them a part of his cause. Interestingly, two of the bombers made videotapes describing their reasons for becoming what they called "soldiers". In a videotape broadcast by Al Jazeera on 1 September 2005, Mohammad Sidique Khan, of the four homegrown suicide bombers and believed to be the leader responsible for the 7 July 2005 London bombings, described his motivation for his act. The tape had been edited and mentioned al-Qaeda members Osama Bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, describing them as 'today's heroes'. In this tape, Khan employs language comparable to Osama bin Laden's, stating:

> "Your democratically-elected governments continuously perpetuate atrocities against my people all over the world. And your support of them makes you directly responsible, just as I am directly responsible for protecting and avenging my Muslim brothers and sisters. Until we feel security you will be our targets and until you stop the bombing, gassing, imprisonment and torture of my people we will not stop this fight. We are at war and I am a soldier." (Khan, 2005)

The four bombers of the 2005 attacks in London committed suicide, so no motivations were given by the attackers in the wake of the attack, but extensive motivations were given by Omar Khyam, who was arrested for leading another terrorist plot, also in England. Khyam was trained in bomb-making at the Malakand training camp in Pakistan in 2003 (Simcox et al., 2011). He was the leader of a plot to explode a fertilizer bomb in London. During his trial, he provided detailed insights in to why he came to his decision for his deed. Although initially he'd never plan to attack the UK, not even after 9/11 when, according to him, his Islamist social identity came into conflict with his British social identity. Khyam recalled that 'they [the group] felt some allegiance to the UK. So, those who wanted to do something went over to Afghanistan. The vast majority still didn't see the UK as a target and they would make excuses for the UK.' The American invasion of Afghanistan - and the British support for it - changed the orientation of Khyam:

> "Appalling stories were coming out from Afghanistan about the way they were treating the prisoners or the way daisy cutter bombs were being dropped on villages, human rights abuses, et cetera, et cetera [...] Just the way they would be treating the people there: no regard for the culture, the religion, just generally. There were graphic images coming from al-Jazeerah [...] but the BBC

wasn't reporting this."

It clearly evidences several forms of discourse that Osama bin Laden also employs in his speeches, which consists of providing clear, gruesome images, accusing the outgroup of cruel acts, accentuating the unjust harm, but also cultural ('no regard for culture and religion') and material ('human rights abuses') suffering is evident in his motivation. It clearly evidences the impact of Osama bin Laden's discourse that is also evident in OBL3:

> "Oppressive measures adopted by the U.S Army and its agents […] it has reached the degree of raping women and taking them as hostages instead of their husbands. As for torturing men, they have used burning chemical acids and drills on their joints. And when they give up on (interrogating) them, they sometimes use the drills on their heads until they die. Read, if you will, the reports of the horrors in Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo prisons."

Osama bin Laden is trying to be as explicit and gruesome as possible, to show the intense suffering of its people. It is remarkable that in this section, the U.S. Army are the perpetrators, committing horrendous acts, while earlier on in this speech, he depicts the soldiers as the victims. Despite everything, Osama bin Laden continues to offer a long-term truce to the United States:

> "We don't mind offering you a long-term truce on fair conditions that we adhere to. We are a nation that God has forbidden to lie and cheat. So both sides can enjoy security and stability under this truce so we can build Iraq and Afghanistan, which have been destroyed in this war."

He offers an idyllic peace, while simultaneously pointing out that they were still the ones that suffered substantially more in this conflict when mentioning that Iraq and Afghanistan were destroyed in the war by the opposing side. Here, he tries to be the person that does the right thing despite not being advantageous to oneself. It is a type of moral high ground. He appeals to the moral high ground of the United States when referencing Rogue State, a book by the American author William Blum:

> "If Bush decides to carry on with his lies and oppression, then it would be useful for you to read the book Rogue State."

According to its back cover, Rogue State is a 'mini-encyclopedia of the numerous un-humanitarian acts perpetrated by the United States since the end of the Second World War'. Bin Laden specifically quoted the passage from the introduction of this book, written by Blum:

> "If I were president, I could stop terrorist attacks against the United States in a few days. Permanently. I would first apologize - very publicly and sincerely - to all the widows and orphans,

the impoverished and the tortured, and the many millions of other victims of American imperialism. Then I would announce to every corner of the world that America's global military interventions have come to an end." (Blum, 2000)

It is clearly an an argument in favor of Osama bin Laden, because this book also shows the U.S. as an aggressive force on the political world stage and tries to debunk the 'myth' of the humanitarian aspects of acts like the bombings of Yugoslavia in 1999 and the interference in the Middle East. It is a critique on the U.S. global interventionism from an American author, so it is not surprising that he uses this book as an example. Throughout his speeches, we've seen bin Laden try to connect with his audience in a variety of ways (by asking rhetorical questions, by evaluating quotes from Bush, etc.). Quoting an American actor is another way of putting himself in the shoes of his listeners. It serves the purpose of reinforcing his argument.

7. Discussion

This study sought to broaden our understanding of competitive victimhood and the use of it in political discourse. This thesis added to the debate of (the rhetorical complexity of) competitive victimhood during times of conflict and pointed out that the concept as we commonly know it is not as binary as literature often ought it to be. It therefore gave insight into the variability and complexity of the matter and contributed to the understanding of rhetoric in the war on terrorism and in conflicts as a whole. The aim of this thesis was to answer the central research question: **how and to what extent is competitive victimhood employed in political speeches in public appearances of politicians during the war on terrorism, and what purpose does the use of religious metaphors in this discourse serve?** In this chapter I will illustrate the three main findings my research has produced and what these findings mean in a broader context within the existing literature. I will break them down in order of importance.

Finding 1: competitive victimhood was dominant in the discourse of political speeches in public appearances of politicians during the war on terrorism.

Several scholars argued that 9/11 and the subsequent conflict was religiously driven and religion continued to be one of the main drivers that fuelled this conflict. Although I do agree that the war on terror and religion were intricately linked, I oppose the argument that religion was the main driver for the violence. As stated before, this belief misses the key learning that no religion is violent in and of itself. Mounting research show that the causes for violent acts such as 9/11 and the subsequent response by the

United States are more often political and economic of nature, or fuelled by struggles for power, hegemony, wealth and territory. If important actors feel like their ingroup suffers in these fields, it can fuel a conflict. The evidence for this claim can be traced back in the words and discourse of George W. Bush and Osama bin Laden during this conflict. Both actors tried to establish an image that their ingroup has suffered greater injustice than their adversarial outgroup and claimed their suffering was more severe and unjust. As we can also see in the speeches of the two central characters of this conflict: all dimensions of suffering (physical, material, cultural, psychological and the legitimacy dimension of suffering) were touched upon in discourse. They accused the outgroup of cruel acts and accentuated the unjust harm, evil deeds and atrocities perpetrated by the adversary. Both made appeals to historical events to showcase the longevity of their suffering and the structural violence. Cultural deprivation or threat of cultural extinction is also apparent in their discourse, although Bush preferred to define the struggle as a campaign of civilized nations ('free world' / 'our way of life' / 'democratic nations' / etc.) against terrorist cells and Bin Laden, in contrast, saw it as a war of infidels versus the faithful (for instance when claiming that the U.S. attacked their sanctuaries). Bush and bin Laden also regularly discuss the psychological suffering that the outgroup causes, for instance when implementing the fear in everyday experience. What is striking is that the last dimension – the legitimacy dimension of suffering – in particular is used by Osama bin Laden. Bush does claim that the Afghani/Iraqi people suffer, but not from their wrongdoing, but because of the Taliban regime and the terrorists they are harbouring. The only thing that can be understood as acknowledging the suffering of the other from Bush point of view is that he often mentions that the war is going to be long-term, intense and heavy for both parties. Osama bin Laden on the other hand does acknowledge that the outgroup has suffered. On several occasions he compares the suffering – for example on 9/11 - with the suffering of his own people. Bin Laden claims that the suffering of the Muslim community is more severe, unjust and protracted than that of the (citizens of the) United States. In discourse, he often contrasts a lengthy process with one-off events like 9/11. Osama bin Laden also points out that he feels that the suffering of his people is not being fully recognized.

This thesis illustrates how both actors use almost identical forms of competitive victimhood discourse in order to produce diametrically opposed versions of reality. In the discourse of George W. Bush, the Americans are the victims and the terrorists and the Taliban are the perpetrators. In the discourse of Osama bin Laden, the Muslim community are the victims of the violent foreign policy of the United States. The orienting binaries of this structure - good/evil, hero/villain, threat/threatened - are much the same for Bush as for bin Laden, but, predictably enough, they assign the roles in opposite fashion. This finding is in line with the existing literature that states that groups tend to view their own suffering as significantly more

fierce, ferocious and prolonged than the suffering of the outgroup. Although current literature on CV tends to focus on groups or individuals within groups, we can clearly see this tendency being deployed in the discourse of political leaders. They attempt to establish an image that they have suffered more than opposing groups. It underlines the argument made by Noor et al. (2012) whom argued that political leaders are 'group leaders', which can 'construct a discourse that revolves around competitive victimhood' (p. 353). One can therefore argue that political leaders play an important role in sustaining an image of the ingroup as being the main victims of a conflict.

Finding 2: Religion and religious metaphors were used to strengthen the victimhood discourse.

The words of bin Laden and Bush are saturated with religious argument and theological language. However, as I've shown in this research, both Osama and Bush often try to use religion and religious metaphors to strengthen the victimhood narrative. When analyzing the speeches, it becomes clear that religious metaphors enables the creation of new and alternate realities, religion in this case is used to create and reinforce a particular victim narrative – and to give this conflict a spiritual, even 'holy' dimension. The use of religion - and religious metaphors - in particular serves the purpose of categorizing the 'other' as morally devoid, and the 'self' as being in a position to pass moral judgement. It is often used in combination with words that immediately evoke a sharp contrast. 'Hell' versus 'heaven', 'good' versus 'evil', 'sin' versus 'virtue', 'brightest' versus 'darkest', etc. The use of these constructs also serve to legitimize the actions of both George W. Bush and Osama bin Laden, interpreting socio-political issues as religious events. Especially for Osama bin Laden, religion had a considerable role in his discourse, because he saw the ummah, the Islamic community, as his ingroup. For instance, bin Laden is saying the *shahada* in order to talk on behalf of the Muslim community and claim that the entire Muslim community suffered from the foreign policy of the United States. Bin Laden often make appeals to history to emphasize structural inequality and past suffering in historical conflicts of the Muslim community. He mentions several historical events in his speeches as justification and to frame the Muslim community as the victims of the conflict and the U.S. government as the perpetrators. He does it in such a way that the conceptualizations of culpability and innocence in the field are of religious nature: all Muslims are victims, the Americans – or non-Muslims (*infidels*) - are the perpetrators. Religion, in this case, was used to support the argument that the United States intentionally and repeatedly attacked not only the Muslim community, but Islam as a religion. But that religion was the main driver for violence is too simplistic. It is a persistent misunderstanding in the academic literature and in popular media that religion is violent in itself. Western media often brand groups like Al Qaeda – and in more recent times IS - as religious fundamentalists, but it would be more appropriate to label them political factions.

Finding 3: Extended victimhood was deployed to gain even more (political) advantages.

The last finding of this research is that competitive victimhood is often not as binary as a good deal of literature state it is. It is not simply the perpetrator versus the victim or the ingroup versus the outgroup. Especially in discourse, the relationship with different groups in conflict are more complex, diverse and distinct. This research showed that both groups can have a different perceived ingroup and also a different perpetrator. Even more so, these groups are dynamic and can change when momentum asks for it. For George W. Bush for example, the ingroup was not always 'the American people'. He repeatedly reached out to the Muslim community, claiming that the U.S. "respects their faith", "respects the people of Afghanistan" and that the teachings of Islam "are good and peaceful". Where competitive victimhood implies a binary relation between two clearly identifiable groups, extended victimhood is more complicated. What sets *extended victimhood* aside from other forms of victimhood we've seen in literature thus far is that it often tries to emphasize with the group that the perpetrators see as the ingroup and sets aside a specific group as the perpetrators. Often the perpetrators are portrayed as a small, extreme and rigid group. This extended version of victimhood can have several functions. Firstly, it reinforces the image of the rhetor as the innocent actor in the conflict. Secondly, the perpetrators are portrayed as evil and rigid, but simultaneously as a weak, maniacal group that stand alone in their cause. Thirdly, if you argue that the outgroup are also victims of your perpetrators, you simultaneously indicate that these victims of the outgroup can or need to be saved. In other words: it creates an image of your group as the hero. Extended victimhood also strengthens some of the functions that competitive victimhood has. It justifies the use of violence as a mean to free the oppressed from your perpetrators. In addition, it denies responsibility of the use of violence or even encourages the audience to perceive violence as the only morally acceptable course of action. It is also a way to avoid negative group emotions, because instead of a 'simple' quest for revenge or a reaction to protect one's own safety, it becomes a mission in which you want to free the 'outgroup' from their oppressors. It makes requests for compensation and recruitment of moral and material support from third parties easier and more logical. Furthermore, it delegitimizes the opponent even more, because they are not only violent towards you, but also towards their own group. By acknowledging the suffering of the outgroup, you can also paint a picture of an idyllic peace where the outcasts of society are eliminated for the benefit of everyone.

7.3 Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to answer the central research question: how and to what extent is

competitive victimhood employed in political speeches in public appearances of politicians during the war on terrorism, and what purpose does the use of religious metaphors in this discourse serve? To answer this research question, a thorough literature research was conducted on the topic of critical discourse to see how the different dimensions of CV can manifest themselves in discourse. Subsequently, critical discourse analysis was applied on six selected speeches from George W. Bush and Osama bin Laden during the war on terrorism. Based on this analysis, I found three main conclusion. (1) Competitive victimhood was dominant in the discourse in the political speeches during this conflict. Both political actors attempted to establish an image that their own group have suffered more than their opposing group. It underlines the argument that political leaders can construct a discourse that revolves around competitive victimhood. (2) This analysis has also shown that religion is often used to create and reinforce that particular victimhood narrative – and to give it a spiritual, even 'holy' dimension. Religious metaphors were used to categorize the outgroup as morally devoid, and the ingroup as being in a position to pass moral judgement. It therefore accentuates the argument that religion in itself is not violent, only the tenacity of individuals and groups acting in the name of a particular religion is relevant as to whether/the extent to which a religion can be appropriated and deployed to perpetrate violence. Conflicts are more often political and economic of nature, or fuelled by struggles for power, hegemony, wealth and territory. That said, I want to stress the fact that competitive victimhood is often not as binary as the term suggests it is. (3) Based on my data analysis, I conclude that the relationship between different groups in conflicts are complex. Groups can have a different perceived ingroup and also a different perpetrator. Even more so, these groups are dynamic and can change when momentum asks for it. This thesis showed that political leaders often reach out to their perceived outgroup in order to gain some significant advantages. Politicians often try to emphasize with the group that their perceived perpetrator see as their ingroup, while simultaneously portraying the perpetrators as a small, extreme and rigid group who are a danger for their own group (e.g. Bush government being a danger for the American people/army and the terrorists/Taliban being a danger for the Iraqi/Afghani people).

Based on my analysis, I have come to the three conclusions mentioned above. However, I would like to point out / highlight some limitations of this research. Firstly, this research is unmistakable limited, because the scope of the thesis was three selected speeches from two important actors in one conflict. On the basis of such a limited analysis, it is difficult to make grounded statements about conflicts as a whole or even about the war on terror itself. The second remark is about the methodology. Critical discourse analysis offers a promising paradigm for identifying and interpreting the way power structures functions in and through discourse. It bridges the gap between society and discourse and is therefore deemed suitable for this

particular research. However, CDA is not dismissed from critiques itself and has its methodological flaws and theoretical shortcomings. One of the critiques is that CDA draws from a wide range of concepts about society and language. These concepts are not always clearly defined, and there is a tendency to draw on a wide-ranging mix of concepts from different academic traditions, not all of which are compatible. This thesis tried to counter this tendency by using the somewhat defined discourse of competitive victimhood as the lens through which the speeches were analysed. Another critique is that practitioners of CDA have regularly been accused of using "impressionistic" methodology for analysing text. This could very well be the case in this thesis as well, because the research can't be separated from the researcher. The interpretation displayed in the analysis is the interpretation from the researcher. Critical discourse analysts have sometimes been said to move too quickly from the language data to the stage of interpretation and explanation of those data, which can also be a critique in this thesis. CDA does not always consider the role of the reader in the consumption and interpretation, so one might argue that CDA research should include discussion with the producers and consumers of texts. This did happen in this study occasionally, but could have happened more often and consistent. One other point of critique is that the focus in this research was on competitive victimhood, but that very fact may also have caused the researcher to overlook other things. On last point I would like to highlight is a possible critique on the theoretical framework. I tried to reconceptualise the several dimensions and goals of competitive victimhood in rhetorical terms, based on the examples in the literature. This might either be too limited or too broad, as the concept of competitive victimhood is still relatively young in the academic world and not yet thoroughly researched. I would like to raise a few adjustments that could have strengthen this research. Firstly: a larger sample would have made the conclusions raised more substantiated. I could have expand the sample base in a variety of ways. I could have added more speeches from George W. Bush and Osama bin Laden, to demonstrate and be able to say more valid things about the discourse of these two political leaders. I also could have added speeches from several other actors from this conflict, to be able to make more valid conclusions on competitive victimhood in this specific conflict. The third way to improve the sample base was to include speeches from political leaders during other conflicts, to be able to make more valid conclusions on competitive victimhood in the discourse of political during times of conflict. One last adjustment I could have made is on the data collection. Speeches tend to be choreographed to such an extent that every word is carefully weighed and considered. It might strengthen the points made in this research if I had used other bits in which the discourse of political leaders was displayed, but less choreographed – like interviews, discussions, conversations, etc.

Based on the conclusions and the points raised above, I would like to give some recommendations for future

research. First, I think that the tendency of *extended victimhood* deserves more attention and research. While this is a different strategy than competitive victimhood, it shares a common goal – to draw attention to the ingroup and to gain some strategic advantages in times of conflict. But how this tendency is employed and articulated in discourse, remains to be seen. Several scholars argued that the concept of competitive victimhood can be fruitfully used in reconciliation processes, but it would be rewarding to delve deeper into this tendency as well. Another suggestion for future research is to see whether and how the concept of extended victimhood occurs in conversational context by members of the ingroup. The function of extended victimhood is to gain (political) advantages, which is more valuable to high-profile politicians than to 'regular' people from an ingroup. It would be interesting to do the same type of research, but then comparing the discourses of George W. Bush and John Kerry during the electoral campaign in 2004. The War on Terror and related issues were hot topics during these elections, so it would be interesting to see whether or not the American candidates both viewed themselves as victims of the issue. The last suggestion I would like to make is on the methodology: it might be interesting to carry out a narrative analysis instead of a discourse analysis. The latter one focuses on the words and sentences in a speech, while the first one aims to identify the kinds of stories told about the researched phenomenon. Narrative analysis may focus, for example, on speeches, text, written documents, film, music and an environment, which act as a story or have a story like structure. Research on the topic of competitive victimhood in political narrative illuminate the relationship between victim and perpetrator, and engage with questions of ethics and responsibility in new ways, leading us to a new kind of political discourse in which the assignment of culpability to one person or collective outside of the ingroup is brought into focus. With the focus on narrative you can more clearly identify whether or not the dominant narrative was indeed a victim-narrative.

8. Literature

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