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Saints and Savages: American Religion and the Construction of Victory Culture

Jacob Tyler Hayes
jhayes2034@gmail.com

The American concept of Victory Culture and the religious faith of her people have a history as old as America itself. It was the religious faith of the settlers that brought the war story to these shores, the concept of Divine sponsorship that led this country across the continent, ideas of "benevolent supremacy" that helped craft the American Empire, and the desire to deal out God's judgment upon America's attackers that led victory culture through both the highs and lows of its existence.

Saints and Savages

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Section I

Crafting an American War Story

The commonly held definition of victory in the simplest sense is to be successful against one's opponent, to see your enemy defeated. For many different people, victory over one's opponent can mean various things, and the outcomes of the conflicts between two groups are not so easily placed in to categories of "victory" or "defeat". But for the purposes of this discussion, I will assume that if one seeks victory, they must do so through competition with their perceived enemy. When this understanding of victory is applied to American cultural studies and its actors, the historian can begin to see various trends within political discourse, media expression, and societal development that convey the narrative of one group achieving victory over another. The concept of what scholars have termed victory culture is the amalgamation of these trends, and its survival has been dependent upon the efforts of culture warriors attempting to fuel the assumptions within the various discourses and media products. Victory culture, as it can be seen in the United States, is the perception that a certain class of Americans are destined to be victorious over their enemies and become the unchallenged power of the world. As if by Divine right, the proponents of victory culture have assumed that they as (white) Americans were chosen to be the greatest nation on earth and all nations and peoples who did not conform to that worldview were enemies to be defeated. It became a hegemonic force through many years of conflict within and without the United States, and its effects have generated cultural descendants that can be viewed even in the supposed postmodern era.

The history of victory culture is nearly as extensive as the history of modern colonial conflict on the North American continent. The images first given life in the era of European colonialism were cultivated in the early years of the United States and grew almost as rapidly as

America itself through much of its history. Since its colonial origins it has become a part of American life in ways that few other cultural phenomena can claim, pervading all manner of entertainment, political discourse, academic scholarship, and even children's toys. Politicians, actors, film producers, and marketing executives for various brands of goods were themselves all influenced by victory culture, became a part of it, and it helped them shape how people within the dominant American culture viewed the world and themselves. This ideological machine owes its extended presence in the cultural sphere to the perceived validity of the stories it created, the images it presented, and the future glory it promised. The receptiveness of the story, the way it reinforced racial binaries and gender-based hierarchies, and the martial nature of the "Us against Them" mentality continued to strengthen hegemonic forces within the United States through much of the nation's colonial origins, as well as its expansion westward and the formation of the American empire into the first half of the 20th century. These various actors, members of the white male hegemony with their motivations and products, were central in creating that narrative for the nation's history, one that existed both inside and outside of school textbooks, and available to all Americans for the right price.

By the time of this tradition's peak in the 1940's, the narrative had evolved into what Tom Engelhardt calls in his work *The End of Victory Culture* the "war story". It was a tale found in American literature, movies, and speeches that conjured images of non-white savage outsiders threatening the American way of life. Whether it created a perceived duty to protect what was pure or called for vengeance against those that violated that purity, war stories created by the victory culture remained strong and influential in various forms of media expression and political discourse. Of course, Engelhardt's war story did not come from thin air. It was the product of a process that began years earlier. American faith, its religious ideals of Divine sponsorship and

purpose, were key sources of the images upon which victory culture was built. The ultimate conflict of God and the devil, of Light against darkness, was a foundational principle for early Americans and their cultural descendants. The concept of victory over one's enemies, of being triumphant in battle and confident in your ideals, was colored by the march to ultimate victory in the eyes of Heaven. When viewed with this understanding of victory culture, I make the claim that the American war story was in more ways than one a crusade.

With this thesis, I aim to trace Engelhardt's war story through history – both in the events feeding into the Cold War era, and moving through it – to the tumultuous years in the late 1960's and how it has operated in three significant arenas of American life. First, racial divides have been at the heart of some of the oldest and most violent cultural conflicts in U.S. history. Beginning with the European settlers' engagements with Native American tribes and later with conflicts resulting from the history of enslavement and struggles of African Americans, Americans defined many of the conflicts in which their country was engaged as a struggle between white Americans defending themselves against dark, savage invaders. This was the impetus behind several captivity narratives, adventure novels, and later on Western films. Many times the reader or viewer was presented with a masculine frontier hero attempting to claim previously undiscovered (though not uninhabited) land for "civilization".[1] Most of the conflicts after the end of the Civil War were also characterized along racial divides: white Americans against Indians, Filipinos, Spaniards, Ottoman Turks, the Japanese, Vietnamese "gooks", and so on. These divides operated within the construct of the war story crafted years before their respective conflicts, and although the Civil Rights movement and other minority rights movements worked to reverse some of the elements of the black-white dichotomy (such as the

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[1] Silliman, Stephen "The 'Old West' in the Middle East" p. 241

inherent savagery of non-whites and the Divine sponsorship of white power), the image of white frontiersmen in a savage land continues to have more than a little resonance with Americans.[2]

Secondly, closely tied to this narrative are dynamics between masculinized aggression and feminine docility. When one examines the frontiersman vs. savage image, the frontiersman is often fighting to protect the home, to protect the women cowering in the wagons. In this fashion, victory culture had an impact on how gender roles were defined in the United States for much of its history. The conflicts leading up to and including World War II were defined by the war story as wars of liberation, to rend from the savages territory, peoples, and civilizations. The overt aggression in conflict, the surety of purpose, was inherent in the images produced by these engagements. This represented the masculinity of absolute victory, of America achieving its goals without qualification or anxiety of defeat.[3] Against this expectation, the conflicts experienced after World War II represented a crisis of masculinity, a reversal of the image of America triumphant. The perceived passivity, the readiness to negotiate with other nations, and the "containment" rather than explicit destruction of America's enemies represent what Susan Jeffords would call "feminized America", a nation that was fearful of the repercussions of total war in a nuclear world.[4] Domestic gender roles were similarly defined by victory culture. The image of the homestead tended by the faithful wife was seen as the bastion of American life that had to be safeguarded. It was an image that was present in the years of westward expansion and empire, as well as the period of World Wars. In America's Cold War with the Soviet Union, a conflict of culture erupted in which the men controlling the government sought to root out any

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[2] Ibid. p. 242
[3] Semmerling, Tim, "'Evil Arabs' in American Cinema" p. 140
[4] Jeffords, Susan, *The Remasculinization of America: Gender and the Vietnam War,* p. 167

form of dissention or any reversals of the image of an honorable woman protecting the home. Those that worked against that image were seen as out-of-place and expressly un-American.[5]

American religiosity has been and still is a third pillar fueling war story narratives and confrontational domestic social interactions. Its use as a rallying cry in conflicts arguably has been present in every engagement in which the United States has been involved, and I contend that it serves as an axiomatic foundation upon which subsequent forms of racialization and gender hierarchy were built. Early European settlers defined their religious existence as a conflict of light against darkness, and consequentially they viewed their Western European Christianity as the white light of civilization in contrast with the "darkness" of the heathens. They saw their lives in the New World as the shining light of God's people at work.[6] These religious claims allowed the early Anglo-Protestant settlers to place their encounters with the Native Americans in a racialized context. These proponents of a Christian empire in the New World viewed their actions as freeing the "savage" from his ignorance of God. As the country grew and expanded, the call to save the New World for Christ was often the most available justification of empire for those that benefitted from it. This religious motivation coupled with the racial binaries it engendered would prove to be a deadly combination. At best, these empire builders were seeking to save the "Noble Savage" from his darkness, and at worst, taking on a crusade to destroy the heathen enemies of God.[7] This early American scene set the stage for the prevalence of religiosity in conflicts for years to come, with Americans invoking God's aid against their enemies. These enemies could be other Americans, as in the Civil War, or against pagan Indians,

[5] Stoors, Landon, "Attacking the Washington 'Femmocracy'" p. 120
[6] Williams, W.A. "Empire as a Way of Life" p. 31
[7] Ibid. p. 35

Catholic Spaniards and Filipinos[8], Japanese mystics[9], godless Communists[10], or more recently Islamic Arabs.[11] These dichotomies were bred in a frenzy of religious confrontationalism that was utilized by politicians, religious leaders, and later on filmmakers and advertisers to garner popular support for their respective conflicts. They created the ultimate "Us against Them" mentality that had, for some, Biblical implications.

The American war story has always been influenced by religious motivations. It helped American settlers to define their existence in the New World. It is a place where Manifest Destiny found its footing. It was a major source of America's Great Commission to save the world from itself. It led Americans to see their armies as God's wrath on earth, seeking vengeance for attacks committed against the homeland. These images it helped to create formed entire societal structures of racial bifurcation and gendered politics that became a way of life for hundreds of years. The resonances of those images determine the influence victory culture has had upon them, and the implications of that influence. Themes of Divine purpose, moral superiority, and revenge appear within the concept of victory culture as the sources of many of its assumptions. As these assumptions threatened to crumble in the 20th century, it would be religion that provided the bastion for victory culture's warriors. And when the tides of change subsided, the ongoing resonances of a religious war story would be a major foundation upon which these warriors would attempt to rebuild an American century for the new millennium.

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[8] Hixson, Walter, *Myth of American Diplomacy* p. 94
[9] Dower, John "Cultures of War" p. 195
[10] Smidt, Corwin "Religion and American Attitudes Towards Islam and an Invasion of Iraq" p. 243
[11] Salaita, Steven "Ethnic Identity and Imperative Patriotism" p. 155

Protecting the Wagon Train

God's Chosen in a New Jerusalem

Cultural resonance is very often the determining factor in the success or failure of images, and how certain events are interpreted. Encounters between groups and civilizations create narratives that could last decades and even centuries. As I have argued, the religious motivations inherent in white colonial society colored the early engagements with Native Americans as a clash between darkness and light, God and the devil. Furthermore, these religious overtones of Biblical contest between God's chosen and the Others have been in the background of nearly every conflict in which the U.S. has engaged for much of its history. Over the years these resonant themes have provided the war stories that fuel victory culture.

The first conception of victory for European settlers in the New World was to be triumphant against the land, the elements, and the savage. White men saw their challenge in their new home as a process of bringing civilization in to the wild, to take what had been misused by the Native peoples and see it to its full potential. In other words, white settlers would take the land that they deemed underutilized and craft a new world in the image of God.[12] As for the Natives, clearing them from desirable areas was a matter akin to removing unsavory animals from farmland. They were seen as ravening wolves, the devil's instruments, vermin to be exterminated; none other than George Washington once referred to them as "beasts of prey".[13] Victory over these savages would be nothing less than their complete removal to lands less

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[12] Williams, W.A. p. 34; John Winthrop, seeker of that City on a Hill, in his writings on the issue believed that the Natives chose to disregard the land entirely, thereby giving the white settlers claim to it. "[They] inclose noe land neither have any settled habitation. The keep noe fences and noe cattle, leaving noe other but a naturall right to those countries [Europeans]. If we leave them sufficient for their use we may lawfully take the rest."

[13] Engelhardt, Tom, *The End of Victory Culture* p. 18 *See also* Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence: Mythology of the American Frontier* pp. 73, 88; Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire-Building* p. 53

favorable to the settlers' intentions. As observed by David Campbell, the English were far less likely to willfully interact with Natives than their French or Spanish counterparts: "Extermination, rather than colonization or enslavement, was the early English response to otherness."[14] For the English it was a matter of spreading light across the dark continent, and to assimilate was to accept the Other as culturally equal, or at least relevant. The abhorrence of the Indian culture represented the Puritan fear of devolving into the savage. They at all times guarded themselves against the desires of the world, for to engage with them would be to abandon the kingdom of God. Cotton Mather provided the impetus for the English conflict with the Indian as a matter of moral righteousness, and feared what would become of those who abandoned their Christian duty to spread God's kingdom on earth: "We have [become] shamefully Indianized in all those abominable things. Our Indian wars are not yet over." These fears of being "Indianized" fueled an existential anxiety for the early colonists who feared the devil lurking in the forests, and hence provided their motivation to expand civilization.[15] For the settlers, this new world represented their test from God, their commission to establish in that land a New Jerusalem and to save the pagan heathens from their sins. To conquer the land and save the people was to defeat the devil himself.[16]

Of course, as the budding nation moved forward, they found the Natives to be less accepting of their fate than was hoped. The sometimes brutal Native retaliations against imposing settlers fueled many of the horror stories frequently shared along the frontier. Captivity narratives were the most prominent of these early tales. Often factually exaggerated, and often with female protagonists, these stories represented the white fears of the dark savage and the

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[14] Hixson, Walter, *The Myth of American Diplomacy* p. 19
[15] Ibid. p. 23 *See also* Jill Lepore, *The Name of War* pp. 176, 182
[16] Slotkin p. 40

threat he posed. The confrontation with that threat was the challenge that had to be met to continue the march of civilization. Slotkin further places these narratives in a religious context: "In the Indian's devilish clutches, the captive had to meet and reject the temptation of Indian marriage and/or the Indian's 'cannibal' Eucharist…the captive's ultimate redemption by the grace of Christ and the efforts of the Puritan magistrates is likened to the regeneration of the soul in conversion. The ordeal is at once threatful of pain and evil and promising of ultimate salvation."[17] Captivity narratives from Mary Rowlandson and Cotton Mather produced a number of sequels and imitations, with each establishing the struggle between the purity of the captive and the brutality of the heathen. In the captivity narratives, American history is seen as a parable of human regeneration and purification from sin, through the suffering of an ordeal by captivity; the captivity occurs in the context of a universalized race war, in which the strife of Indians and Christians is identified with the warfare between the world and the Soul, the devil and Christ.[18] These images pervaded several works from the early settlers in the form of vivid descriptions of violent raids, sexual transgressions, and demonic possessions.[19]

These narratives represent some of the earliest depictions of the Native savage attacking and violating the pure, white, and often female settler. It served as a cultural ancestor for future images by establishing a racial binary of savage and saint that itself was not limited to interactions between whites and Native Americans. Furthermore, it set before male settlers the task of protecting the homestead (and in that same sense, their masculinity) from the intrusions

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[17] Ibid p. 41; Slotkin qualifies the various structures of captivity narratives as containing a suffering or vengeful hero struggling against the forces of darkness (nature). The hero's reconfiguration results in him either becoming a vulgar human like the Indian, or persevering through the trial to come out pure on the other side.
[18] Ibid. p. 42
[19] Ibid. p. 45

of a dark Other.[20] These narratives pervaded American consumption media for nearly a century after the nation's independence. The struggles of the captive became a part of what Slotkin calls the American "mythic structure"; it began to illustrate how American settlers defined their place in the world and characterized their encounters with the non-white inhabitants in the blank edges of the map.

Facing the Other

As history unfolded, with new nations being formed and new Constitutions written, there grew within the US dominant culture an intense desire to expand the nation's borders so that its ideals could be fully realized. As a result, the United States continued its expansion westward and southward, in an effort to supposedly save the untilled earth from the neglectful hands of the savages. Industrialization brought desires for more land, more resources, and more wealth. In this period, the nation went to war again with Britain, then with Mexico. These wars, fought over land and the resources within, were the early conflicts of conquest for the United States and the beginnings of an American empire. The strategies that defined them, the ambitions that fueled their heroes' resolve, would go on to characterize the American conflicts of the 19th century, including the Civil War.[21]

Within these conflicts lie the first examples of revenge narratives. The U.S. government sought war with Great Britain for a second time over what Henry Clay called the "shameful degradation" of trade disruption and the impressment of U.S. sailors. It was a reactionary conflict

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[20] Ibid. p. 49 *See also* Robert Lifton *Superpower Syndrome* pp. 126-28,

[21] Williams p. 86; Williams describes the "logic of empire" as "no growth implies death", and therefore the impetus for various expansions in American history, including incursions into Canada in 1812, the acquisition of territory in Oregon, Texas, and California in the 1840's, and the South's struggle to expand slavery in the 1850's and 60's.

that engendered new Patriotic fervor and even led to the creation of a new national anthem.[22] In 1847, calls to "Remember the Alamo" pushed U.S. forces onward to conquer Mexico, a conflict that Americans defined as "gloriously triumphant". These calls for vengeance also had sexual connotations. It became an imperative for the United States to assert its masculinity, its duty to protect the innocent females at home. What arose in this period was what Walter Hixson describes as "martial manhood": a hegemonic discourse that feminized Mexico and represented the war as a conquest of the weaker sex, thus reaffirming the cultural construction of manliness on the home front. After noting that the United States had "penetrated" Mexico, the *Southern Quarterly Review* championed the idea of U.S. soldiers claiming Mexican wives as trophies, so that they could become "wives and mothers of a better race", and that Mexico "like the Sabine virgins will learn to love her ravisher."[23] These blatant sexual images extended the cultural precedent established by captivity narratives. The female is either a treasure to be protected or a trophy to claim, and for the American male his status a man is measured by his victories over the savage and his sexual virility. The conquest of the Southwest embodied American (male) desires to expand and shape the continent in their image, to assert their dominance as the superior race, and to continue the image of America triumphant. It was a campaign of purpose for the United States, who, according to Theodore Parker, "as the exemplar of the superior race, with superior ideas and a better civilization" had a duty to extend the "idea of America" over Mexico.[24] Such a testosterone-fueled imperial expansion of God's country would charge forward for many years, until it hit a road block in Southeast Asia.

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[22] Hixson p. 51
[23] Ibid. p. 69 *See also* Amy Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood* p. 118
[24] Ibid. p. 71

Caught within this hegemonic framework was a minority group that shared similar classifications as the Indian or the Mexican, although with a different flavor. Anglo-Protestants attributed to African American slaves a similar racialized otherness as that which was endured by Native Americans and other non-white groups. Racialized imagery, which became deeply embedded in American identity, cast the darkened other in a state of cultural or even "scientific" inferiority, and allowed its proponents to exalt whiteness in concert with the subjugation of other races. The culturally constructed binary drawn between black and white, as between red and white, facilitated both seizure of Indian lands and expropriation of slave labor. This binary too was based upon some religious principle. Slavery's power brokers often derived Divine approval from Biblical texts, therefore placing their black subjects within the Puritan concept of conflict between the light of civilization and the darkness of a wild expanse populated by evil devils that roamed outside of that light. By casting African slaves in this shade of inferiority and savagery, whites compounded their fears of invasion and attack, themselves often in frenzy over the potentiality of slave rebellions, or even worse, collaboration between Indians and African slaves. The fact that slaves outnumbered whites in much of the South did even more to support the image of the homestead surrounded by enemies and a way of life in need of protection. White Americans, while dependent upon slave labor for their economy, saw them as "black demons" inclined toward torture and mutilation and inherently ravenous for white female innocence.[25] It was for these reasons that black Americans were excluded from "heroic" roles in the American war story until late into the 20th century, including during the Civil War. The victory that freed the slaves was not theirs to claim, despite the fact that 200,000 black soldiers fought for the

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[25] Ibid. p. 27, 29 *See also* Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black*; D.B. Davis *Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* p. 6; Engelhardt p. 32

Union armies.[26] The narrative of the Civil War instead became split, much like the factions that perpetuated it. For the North, it was an astounding victory, for the South humiliating defeat, but in the reconciliatory atmosphere that followed the conflict (amongst whites) the dominant narrative became one of white men possessing mutual respect for the valor of their former enemy, especially for the Southern "Lost Cause" (which itself played into the outnumbered hero narrative). Peace ceremonies at famous battlefields were cast in visions of a "golden mist of American valor", except for the black veterans, who were excluded from such exercises.[27]

But unlike the American Indian, who could be relocated to a reservation, or the Mexican, who was far away to the south, the African American (former) slave remained very much a looming presence on white American life. Comments in the *Cincinnati Enquirer* described this situation bluntly: "Slavery is dead, the Negro is not. There is the misfortune." Southern whites continued to feel outnumbered by the (newly freed) blacks, and fears of "black rule" were genuine. Because of these fears, the years following the Civil War were marked by white attempts to separate the dark image from their society, or in the case of minstrelsy, to remove the fear of it.[28] Because they continued to stand outside of what was considered civilization, black Americans continued to be viewed as enemies of a white community which in turn would attempt to cast them out much in the way they removed their Native American enemies. These narratives would establish the African American as the localized Other, the dark threat that was close to the homestead, an image so entrenched in white society that it would not face challenges until several years later.

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[26] Engelhardt p. 31 *See also* Nell I. Painter *Exodusters*
[27] Ibid. p. 30
[28] Hixson p. 84 *See also* Edward Blum, *Reforging the White Republic* p. 52; James McPherson and William Cooper, Jr., *Writing the Civil War* p. 154, 173; As described by W.E.B. DuBois, "The slave went free; stood for a brief moment in the sun, then moved back again toward slavery."

Chasing Destiny

After a partial hiatus during the Civil War, the United States continued to follow its

Destiny westward. The Indian Wars fought in the closing years of the 19th century, as with the

conflict with Mexico, were seen as the struggle between civilization and an inferior culture and,

once again, of spreading God's light in the world. The same racial motivations either to save the

"Noble Savage" from his ignorance or to destroy him were guiding principles of the wars with

the Lakota, the Apache and several others. It was here as well that the U.S. was given an

"infamous defeat" around which to rally the troops. The destruction of G. A. Custer and his men

at the hands of the Lakota at Little Big Horn was all that was needed to solidify the United States

in its purpose. "Custer's Last Stand" had to be avenged for all of American civilization.[29] The

revenge narratives of these conflicts represent the cultural embodiment of what Engelhardt calls

the "exterminatory impulse", the desire of (white) Americans to avenge the deaths of their

comrades at the hands of the devious savage. These rare defeats (i.e. the impressments of U.S.

sailors, the defeat at the Alamo, Custer's Last Stand) all served as "illustrations of the enemy's

incomprehensible infamy and deceit. Their aberrant nature ingrained them in the national

memory as proof of the righteousness of the subsequent acts of vengeance."[30] This new vengeful

narrative represented an especially potent version of the war story, compared to the relatively

more effeminate captivity tale. It brought forward an image of the racialized Other in the form of

the ambush. Civilization, represented by the wagon train or other forms of expansion into the

West, was constantly under the threat of the savage invader, the dark brute that refused to accept

his place on the reservation. As with the conflict with Mexico, the masculine drive to remove the

savage supplied much of the fuel for this war story, and any attempts to work among Indians

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[29] Hixson p. 89 *See also* Jeffery Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism* p. 83
[30] Engelhardt p. 39

were feminized.[31] The combination of desire for empire and the fears of savagery crafted new variations on the war story of the West, complete with frontier heroes and damsels in distress. Dime novels describing horrible captivities by Natives and hopeless battle scenes with outnumbered white heroes set the framework for future western films that would hold on to such images. Such narratives set the tone for future conflicts in the 20th century, when U.S. cowboys would again seek revenge upon the savages that had secretly attacked the homestead.

As the country expanded on to fill the North American continent, it turned an eye to new resources in faraway islands and countries. Elites in American trading industries worked to open trade to Japan, China, Africa, and Latin America – regardless of whether or not this "opening" was expected or even welcomed by the target nations. Expansionist Protestants saw this period as an opportunity to save the globe for God. Reverend David Gregg called upon America's leaders with soul-saving in mind: "A nation with the truth of God, a nation in covenant with God. That is what the world needs for the true peace and progress and good of all nations." Commander Mathew C. Perry would later inform the "weak and semi-barbarous" Japanese that it was God's will that they begin trade with the United States. It was during this time that Christian missionaries in East Asia tripled.[32] The industrial revolution laid piece of the foundation for the expansion of global colonialism, as the new era of steel, oil, and modern finance capitalism drove the quest for natural resources, markets, and coaling stations for naval and merchant ships. These areas further offered sites for spreading Christianity and generally manifesting U.S. prestige. While condemning Old World European aggression, the United States pursued

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[31] Hixson p. 91

[32] Ibid. p. 92 *See also* Blum, *Reforging the White Republic* p. 214

hegemony in areas of the Western hemisphere, including Latin America.[33] The territories in

Cuba and Hispaniola, as well as Spanish holdings in the South Pacific caught its attention.

What was needed to justify seizure was a matter of being in the wrong place at the right

time. America's confrontation with Spain was given its *Alamo* with the explosion of the *U.S.S.*

Maine in the Havana harbor in 1898. Once again, the U.S. called for war to avenge this travesty.

"Remember the *Maine*, to hell with Spain" was a popular exclamation.[34] America's efforts to

capture Spanish territories in Cuba and the Philippines were characterized by similar motivations

for the conquest of Mexico.[35] As for the justification of war, President McKinley provided the

missionary impulses alongside the more mechanized aspirations of empire. While speaking of

the U.S. intentions in the Philippines, the president explained that his motivation had come to

him through prayer: "There was nothing else for us to do but to take them all, and to educate the

Filipinos, and uplift, and civilize them, and Christianize them." This motivation was central to

U.S. involvement in the region, despite the fact that the Philippines had been Catholic for several

hundred years by this point.[36] Future president William Howard Taft claimed the United States

had a Christian duty to support "our little brown brothers" there, and Senator Albert Beveridge

greeted news of U.S. victory over the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay by stating: "American law,

American order, American civilization, and the American flag will plant themselves on shores

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[33] Hixson p. 93
[34] Ibid. p. 94
[35] Williams p. 119; Williams here conceptualizes the American expansionist ideology as the inherent desire to chase destiny, to "expand the sphere". To quote Tocqueville, Americans are "obsessed with the bootless chase for that complete felicity which is ever on the wing" and are "brooding over advantages which they do not possess." It is a unique form of empire that is not dependent upon the acquisition of resources (of which, domestically, the U.S. had in abundance) but rather the pursuit of an ideal that rings of Divine purpose.
[36] Ibid. p. 97

hitherto bloody and benighted, but by those agencies of God henceforth to be made beautiful and bright."[37]

Such examples show how the "logic of empire" employed by the United States for most of its history leading up to the First World War was different from its European ancestors. Because of perceived ideals of universal justice, representation, and freedom, the U.S. faced a peculiar problem regarding the proper implementation of a republican empire. Instead of outright enslavement and mercantilism (at least beyond the continental U.S.), the leaders of the country at the time saw their ideals as a commodity in itself, one that had to be exported to the uncivilized world. It was their duty, their responsibility, their destiny to save the North American continent as well as most of the Western hemisphere from the inferior Indians, Mexicans, Spaniards, and all manner of "unsavory folk". [38] W.A. Williams would characterize the situation as such: "The ensuing debate and activities, interacting with each other, gradually produced an image among Americans of the United States as a benevolent, progressive policeman…We would improve the world just as we improved ourselves."[39] It was the desire to democratize, to Christianize, and to civilize that took the U.S abroad in the late 19th century, and it would be present again as the U.S. sought to save the people from themselves in Korea, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East in the years to come.

The 20th Century brought big challenges to the American war story. Images of men massacred in trenches in France and Belgium, apocalyptic flu epidemics, and demoralizing economic depression all played a part in reversing certain images, especially those of America's

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[37] Dower p. 79

[38] Skrentny, John p. 244; When consulted on the state of Latin America, President Theodore Roosevelt in 1905 likened the situation to "savages" bickering with one another, the remedy being "a good spanking". *See Also* Paul Lauren, *Power and Prejudice: The Politics and Diplomacy of Racial Discrimination* p. 48

[39] Williams p. 94, 108 *See also* Engelhardt p. 42, 45-46

dreams of Empire. Yet, after years of gloomy stagnation these narrative images of the innocent

homestead and its virginal inhabitants, of savage outsiders, and of the Providential American

imperial destiny would receive their Godsend.[40] Feelings of anti-interventionism and a general

distaste for war had gained significant cultural presence after the close of World War I. The

Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor was a major turning point in how Americans would view and

understand their place the war that had already been raging in Europe for years. These four years

of war led to a climax of victory culture and its war stories – a harmony of democratic

expansionism, morality politics, and racialized binaries. It is also how this war ended – in the

intense heat of atomic bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki – that would set in motion major

reversals of the triumphalist images. The end of the conflict with fascism launched the United

States into four decades of conflict that was unlike anything the nation had experienced before,

and it was these years of profound change that marked the apparent end of victory culture in a

traditional sense. As Engelhardt summarizes: "Nothing could rally Americans for such a war.

The mobilizing last stand had been replaced by a demobilizing one. After this Alamo, there

would be no Texas; after this Little Big Horn, no Montana; after this Pearl Harbor, no Hawaii."[41]

"Remember Pearl Harbor – Keep 'em Dying"

For American culture warriors, the attacks on Pearl Harbor were the sort of savagery that

they had come to expect from the uncivilized. The attacks provided the best possible tool that

could have been used to launch a nation built upon war stories into the great conflict that

engulfed the whole world. It was an act predicated by a people that seemingly abandoned all

reason and logic in its attempt to challenge U.S. hegemony. The explanation for imperial Japan's

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[40] Dower pp. 141-42
[41] Engelhardt p. 53

act of war was, for Americans at least, attributable to cultural and ethnic rejection of Western

rational thought.[42] Joseph Grew, the U.S. ambassador to Japan from 1931 up to the attacks,

surmised this thesis of Japanese imbecility in a cable sent on September 29, 1941 to the State

Department: "The Ambassador stresses the importance of understanding Japanese psychology,

fundamentally unlike that of any Western nation. Japanese reactions to any particular set of

circumstances cannot be measured, nor can Japanese actions be predicted by any Western

measuring rod. This fact is hardly surprising in the case of a country so recently feudalistic." In a

postwar Congressional hearing, Grew added that Japanese sanity "cannot be measured by our

own standards of logic."[43] The leaders of the American empire could not believe that anyone

would rationally attack the United States in such a fashion, to the point that for anyone to do so

(especially an island nation dependent upon American exports) was insanity. This error of

judgment on the part of the Americans is certainly one of the primary reasons the U.S. failed to

properly defend itself on December 7th, but it is not surprising. It is a product of the war stories

crafted decades before any bombs landed in Pearl Harbor. The Japanese Orientals where on the

periphery, located in an area few Americans could find on a map, with a culture even fewer

understood. The American empire that launched in to the Pacific at the end of the 19th century

took the same images of the dark savage creeping in the wild and projected it upon the Japanese,

the Chinese, Filipinos, and all manner of the South Pacific's inhabitants. So it is far from

shocking when one learns why on December 6th Lieutenant General Walter Short's air force was

tightly bunched together unfueled, most of the ammunition locked away, and the major airfields

such as Hickam without a single anti-aircraft gun deployed, or why Admiral Husband Kimmel's

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[42] Dower, John p. 18
[43] U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Japan*, *1931-1941* vol. 2: pp. 648, 704-706

entire Pacific Fleet (with the exception of his aircraft carriers) was anchored in the harbor.[44] This was a result of what John Dower calls a "failure of imagination". Despite receiving a warning from Washington of a potential attack on November 27th, a full ten days before the assault, U.S. armed forces command did not believe such an attack from the likes of the Japanese was possible. The commanders would tell Congress that it was a lack of coordination with Washington as well as Federal intelligence officials intentionally keeping the specifics of the Japanese attack to themselves that left the American armed forces in the garage. Both of these explanations have some merit. But when that same Congressional hearing broke for lunch, Admiral Kimmel had this to say to Edward Morgan, a lawyer who drafted the majority report: "I never thought those little yellow sons-of-bitches could pull of such an attack, so far from Japan."[45] Admiral Kimmel's remarks represent the American perception of the non-Western world and its non-white inhabitants. To catch a world power unprepared in such a fashion was beyond the strategic or logistical capabilities of a nation "so recently feudalistic".

The fact that an attack from this world would lead to a racialized American response is, again, unsurprising. It is surprising, however, how quickly perceptions of the Japanese had changed from a quasi-"Noble Savage" figure to the "little yellow sons-of-bitches" that attacked the nation. After the Japanese Westernization and defeat of Russia and China in 1905, Western observers saw them as the "Yankees of the Pacific", tough, semi-Caucasian, Christianized industrialists that would be a strong supporter of the American way of life in the region. Although there continued to be a palpable fear of the "Yellow Peril" presented by an

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[44] Dower p. 41, 42
[45] Ibid. p. 43 *See also* Gordon Prange, *Pearl Harbor* p. 515; Morgan recounted this to Prange in an interview in October1976. Prange would go on to classify such failure of imagination as "psychological unpreparedness"; Roberta Wohlstetter in her investigations would describe the situation as a result of "the very human tendency to pay attention to the signals that support current expectations about enemy behavior." Wohlstetter p. 392

economically stable and militarily formidable Japan, they were nonetheless viewed in a more favorable light than the Russians or certainly the Chinese.[46] Obviously any form of aggression will change perceptions between nations, but unlike the Germans (who were more likely to be viewed as fellow humans caught in the fascist machinery), the Japanese after 1941 were presented as a nation of "monkeys" or vermin, buck-toothed and treacherous.[47] Much of this uneven characterization of the Axis powers reflects the blend of racism and what Engelhardt calls the "exterminatory" response. As with the Alamo, as with Custer, and as with the *Maine*, Americans felt especially hostile to the nation who had dared to test them. The attack on Pearl Harbor was an insult to the American male tasked with defending the homestead, who in his rage would return the favor tenfold. The months following Pearl Harbor would see an increasing animosity for "hyphenated Americans" as well as swelling emotional calls to remember the lives lost.[48] For example, John Ford, the man behind the Western film *Stagecoach*, would take the same roles filled by the wagon train and their Indian attackers and replace them with innocent children and youthful soldiers being targeted by devious "hyphenated" Americans in his 1942 film *December 7th*. The viewer is shown an actual Uncle Sam wrestling with his conscience on December 6th, 1941. After Sam dreams of the innocence and beauty of Hawaii, he is brought back to the reality by that conscience, reminding him that the Japanese residents of the island are "hyphenated souls" whose allegiances lie elsewhere, in lands of pagan "so-called religions" like Shinto. They are a people who worship their ancestors and their emperor, engage in strange acts of mysticism, and lack Western ideas of courage or the logic of self-preservation. All of these

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[46] Ibid p 45
[47] Engelhardt p. 48 *See also* Hixson p. 169
[48] Dower p. 276

qualities, the conscience reminds Sam, are fiercely un-American.[49] In other words, they could not be trusted.

The attacks on December 7th removed any apprehension for Americans, and whatever controversy that remain operated on the margins, removed from the dominant culture. The homeland had been brutally attacked by an outsider. And now, as Kipling once said, with "the drumming guns that have no doubts", the nation charged into war both to avenge those they had lost and to teach the Japanese a lesson. The rousing "date which will live in infamy" would remain clear in American minds as they sought to defeat their enemy. And this time, nothing short of complete annihilation would suffice.[50]

Section II

Reversing the Image

The Destroyer of Worlds

Outside of Alamogordo, New Mexico in July 1945, the U.S. 509th Composite Group in conjunction with J. Robert Oppenheimer and other military planners oversaw the first live test of their nuclear "Gadget" in an attempt to estimate its military effectiveness. The weapon, code-named "Trinity", was launched by a deployment crew sometime in the early evening on July 16th, with military personnel observing from a concrete bunker twenty miles away. What followed put the fear of God into the observers. Every living creature within a radius of a mile

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[49] Ibid. p. 65 *See also* Engelhardt p. 49-51; Films like *Bataan, Destination Tokyo*, *Guadalcanal Diary* (1943)*,* and *Halls of Montezuma* (1950) all depicted the Japanese soldier or citizen as cruel and treacherous fighters, without a sense of honor. They were referred to as "apes", "gooks", "monkeys", and other forms of subhuman imagery. Their valuation of life and reason are further characterized in these films as alien when one Japanese officer states in *Halls of Montezuma*, "My people for centuries have thought not of living well but dying well. Have you not studied our Judo, our science? We always take the obvious and reverse it. Death is the basis of our strength."
[50] Ibid. p. 139, 142

from the Trinity hypocenter – every reptile, every insect, and all plant life – was incinerated. Twenty miles away, car windows were shattered, debris was displaced, and observers had to wear special polarized goggles to prevent being blinded by the flash. It was estimated by the Strategic Bombing Survey that nuclear weapons were 6,500 times more efficient than a conventional explosive in producing death and injury.[51]

Such observations created a measureable amount of anxiety amongst American war planners, to the point that they feared Divine judgment for releasing such power. After witnessing the July 16th test, Brigadier General Thomas Farrell expressed his overwhelming sense of disquiet: "The strong, sustained, awesome roar warned of doomsday and made us feel that we puny things were blasphemous to dare tamper with the forces hitherto reserved to the Almighty." Harvard chemist and explosives expert George Kistiakowsky described the blast as "the nearest thing to Doomsday that one could possibly imagine" and was recorded later saying, "at the end of the world – in the last milli-second of the earth's existence – the last man will see what we just saw!"[52] When Churchill learned of the test and heard the figures, he described it as "the Second Coming – in wrath," and President Truman observed that upon achieving a successful test, "we have discovered the most terrible bomb in the history of the world. It may be the fire destruction prophesied in the Euphrates Valley Era, after Noah and his fabulous Ark." The President's Secretary of War Henry Stimson feared that "modern civilization might be completely destroyed" as a result of what they had seen in the desert, and in the weeks and months after the test would describe the weapon with increasingly ominous adjectives such as

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[51] Dower, p. 206
[52] Ibid. p. 208 *See also* Martin Sherwin, *A World Destroyed* p. 312; The quote from Kistiakowsky was recorded in the *New York Times* Sept. 26, 1945 issue by William Laurence, the only journalist allowed to observe the blast.

"the dreadful," "the terrible," "the dire," "the awful," "the diabolical," and so on.[53] It would be Oppenheimer however that would characterize the general feeling of those present after the blast, albeit with the use of Hindu religious imagery rather than Christian ones, "A few people laughed, a few people cried. Most people were silent. I remembered the line from the Hindu scripture, the Bhagavad Gita; Vishnu is trying to persuade the Prince that he should do his duty; and to impress him, takes on his multi-armed form and says, 'Now I am become death, the destroyer of worlds.' I suppose we all thought that, in one way or another." For the Americans, the image of the mushroom cloud marked the first time the builders of the Empire feared what their actions would unleash upon the world.[54]

Initially, the nuclear bomb and the destruction it caused offered what the Americans desired: complete and total victory over its enemies. But it was this new victory that ushered in an era of warfare on Earth where complete victory could also bring about the end of civilization. The uranium-235 bomb, nicknamed "Little Boy", that was detonated 1,900 feet above Hiroshima at 8:15 a.m. on August 6th had a thermal heat register at the hypocenter between 5,400 and 7,200 degrees Fahrenheit and a blast radius of 2.8 miles. Three days later "Fat Boy" was detonated over Nagasaki to a similar effect. It is estimated that close to 50,000 residents between the two cities were instantly incinerated, and compounded by deaths resulting from flash burns, internal bleeding, and radiation poisoning, the generally accepted estimate puts fatalities at 140,000 in Hiroshima and 75,000 in Nagasaki.[55] This bomb represented what Engelhardt calls "victory by atrocity". It gave nations the ability to end tens of thousands of lives in the span of a few

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[53] Ibid. p. 502 (See notes on citation number 68); *See also* Sherwin p. 291-92; Elting Morison, *Turmoil and Tradition: A Study of the Life and Times of Henry L. Stimson* p. 618

[54] Ibid. p. 208 *See also* Bird and Sherwin, *American Prometheus* p. 309

[55] Ibid. p. 198 *See also* U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey, *Effects of the Atomic Bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki* pp. 3, 5, 15

seconds, with a power unlike anything witnessed on this earth. So great was the devastation that the use of such a weapon, even against the Japanese, those devious savages that attacked the American homestead, was seen as inviting the wrath of God.[56]

Obviously this fear did not prevent the U.S. from using the bomb, but unlike American victories in Germany, unlike the march of empire seen at the end of the previous century, this victory elicited feelings of guilt and anxiety for what a nuclear world would mean in the future. The only rationalization readily available to the Americans would be the revenge narrative, as the memories of the Pearl Harbor attacks and Bataan death march were still firmly within the American conscious. The desire to punish the savages tempered the shock and awe of the nuclear events somewhat. [57] What could not be assuaged however was the growing fear of what the future held in store. Nearly four years to the day after the Pearl Harbor attacks, nuclear scientists met in Chicago to issue a joint statement stressing the regulation of these weapons: "Three thousand Americans – mostly members of our Armed forces – lost their lives in the Japanese sneak attack. Thirty million Americans – civilians, women, and children – may be doomed to perish if a sneak attack on our cities by atomic bombs ever comes to pass. This catastrophe will be inevitable if we do not succeed in banishing war from the world. Our own better preparedness could have saved Pearl Harbor – but in a world of atomic bombs, preparedness can only give us the power to retaliate – to smash in our turn the cities of the nation which attacked us."[58] These fears, coupled with the rise of a nuclear Soviet Union, would rob the United States of its

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[56] Ibid. p. 210, 272; While writing in his "Potsdam diary" on July 25, the same in which Truman wrote of possessing "the most terrible bomb in the history of the world," the president expressed the desire to spare as many lives as possible: "I have told the Sec. of War, Mr. Stimson, to use it so that military objectives and soldiers and sailors are the target and not women and children. Even if the Japs are savages, ruthless, merciless and fanatic, we as the leader of the world for the common welfare cannot drop this terrible bomb on the old capital or the new [Kyoto and Tokyo]. *See also* Engelhardt, p. 56-57

[57] Ibid. 279-281

[58] *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists of Chicago*, vol. 1, no. 1 (December 10th, 1945)

masculine authority in war, its surety of purpose and destiny. These fears would be ever-present in the new conflicts of the 20th century. And with the changes brought by domestic social movements in the following years, the victory culture of the 19th century began to lose hold of cultural hegemony in the forty-four months between December 7th, 1941 and August 6th, 1945.

Divine Sponsorship in the Cold War

The reversals of the 1960's and 70's were not complete destructions of the assumptions made by victory culture. In fact, many of the ideas behind masculinized America (revenge narratives, racialized binaries, protection of the homestead) remained very important to leadership in these periods. It was the way certain events challenged these ideas that eventually led many people to doubt the legitimacy of the war story. I contend however that these images inherent to victory culture were not completely destroyed: they only lay dormant, ready to arise again behind a catalyzing event and a leader prepared to use such language and imagery that revived those images. I would also posit that the religious aspects of victory culture, namely the Divine sponsorship assumption, religious binaries and Manichean worldviews of Good vs. Evil, never left the cultural atmosphere, and have remained a stable characterization of the U.S. conflicts with the Soviet Union and later the Muslim world (either against nation-states like Iran or Iraq, or non-state actors such as Al-Qaeda). The social developments in the 20th century certainly contributed to a reduction in the overt racism once targeted at Native Americans, African Americans, and East Asian foes; gender politics also saw a similar development with the resistance to testosterone-fueled tales of vengeful annihilation of enemies as well as shifting gender roles domestically. However, I argue that the ideas behind Western Orientalism, very

similar in their assumptions on race, gender, and religion to those of victory culture, have allowed the same cultural atmosphere present in America at the start of World War II to once again take hold, its proponents once again constructing images of the United States and its enemy, the Other.

In 1945, the United States felt it was on the cusp of what Henry Luce called "The American Century".[59] With most of Europe and East Asia in ruins, and entire generations of Soviets perished at the hands of the Nazis, the United States remained the only nation on the planet that still maintained a healthy economy, infrastructure, and workforce. Spared most of the horrors the war wrought upon European soil, America stood poised to claim its destiny as the most powerful nation in the world. It was with this spirit that Paul Nitze, the chief of the Policy Planning Staff of the State Department, drafted NSC-68, a document that would become the blueprint for Truman's foreign policy and the doctrine that would lead the U.S. into its prosperous future. It was a direct call upon the leaders of the new American Century to combat the "slave state" that threatened the globe, to push back against the perverted rhetoric that was being preached to the Third World. It established the dichotomy between the ideas of freedom (free public institutions and free market capitalism) against the slavery of Communism, and total victory over such a foe would require the "demonstration of the superiority of the idea of freedom."[60] But this document represented more than foreign policy. For those that built NSC-

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[59] McAlister, Melani, *Epic Encounters* p. 47; Luce's descriptor was first seen in *Life* magazine on February 17, 1941. It would later be the main idea behind a work published by Luce himself titled *The American Century,* in which he expressed the idea that the United States had the "right to go with our ships and ocean-going airplanes, however we wish, when we wish, and as we wish." His views expressed here assume a universal acceptance in American values and the belief that the U.S. had a duty to see those values manifested around the world. *See* also Herzog pp. 145-46; Nikhil Pal Singh "Culture Wars" pp. 479-482
[60] McAlister p. 53 *See also* NSC-68 pp. 27-32

68, the new world order was a matter of good vs. evil. If the United States was to achieve its

destiny, it had to defeat the devil: Soviet Communism.[61]

For some, this characterization placed the burgeoning Cold War in a Biblical context.

McAlister describes the situation as "the construction of the Cold War as a global contest of wills

and of values, in which slavery, sexuality, and sin are central to the political struggle for

ascendancy in the postwar order."[62] Early on in the conflict with the Soviets, American military

planners, administration officials and cultural heroes established the binary of us against them, of

God's Chosen against the maniacal atheists in the Kremlin. All manner of American politicians,

media personalities, and culture warriors sought to fight this Cold War by maintaining the

traditionalist values that favored those within the cultural hegemony. The nation's leaders

mobilized to ensure that the United States would be as near to God as possible. Adoption of the

line "under God" within the national anthem, as well as placing the motto "In God We Trust" on

paper currency occurred in this period.[63] The U.S. military reformed its chaplaincy program and

its governing board to emphasis massive recruitment and cultivation of a "moral force" within

the military.[64] Religion also saw a revival within public education, with the establishment of

thousands of parochial schools and renewed battles over prayer in classrooms and evolution in

textbooks. America would be the shining light for the Lord before the world, or as the Memphis

Commercial Appeal would say in 1946: "God and these United States and communism and

social and economic enslavement by the forces of the antichrist."[65] Hollywood Biblical epics

rose in popularity in the midst of this "freedom vs. slavery" narrative. Filled with themes of

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[61] Herzog, Jonathan *The Spiritual-Industrial Complex* p. 76
[62] McAlister p. 51
[63] Herzog pp. 103-5, 107-8
[64] Ibid. pp. 114-15
[65] Ibid. pp. 138-39, 144

liberation from bondage, the power of traditional gender roles in marriage, and the conflict between "authentic" religion and the pagan/atheist, these films represented the cultural presence of the "benevolent supremacy" narrative.[66]

It was in this time that the idea of an American Empire took on new meaning as God's kingdom on earth. In the summer of 1947 Truman wrote to Pope Pius XII declaring, "Your Holiness, this is a Christian Nation. I believe that the greatest need of the world today is a renewal of faith. I believe with heartfelt conviction that those who do not recognize their responsibility to Almighty God cannot meet their fully duty toward their fellow men." Truman proposed to the Vatican an alliance of moral and religious forces, a crusade by men of good will across the world against the evil encroachments of Communism.[67] This Divine call to defeat evil in the world, coupled with calls of NSC-68 to spread freedom and democracy, led to the creation of a new war story, one of "benevolent supremacy". Total victory in this new world would not come from strength of arms (due to the fear of what set weapons would unleash) but rather through the establishment of a global culture based on the American way of life. This motivation was the cultural descendant of ideals established years before with the builders of the American Empire in the 19th century and the early Puritan settlers seeking to build their City on a Hill, and with it came the same racialized binaries, gender hierarchies, and religious confrontationalism.

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[66] McAlister p. 64-65, 67, 77, 82; McAlister posits that epics from this period such as *Quo Vadis* (1952), *The Ten Commandments* (1956), and *Ben-Hur* (1959) project the Cold War ideologies present in NSC-68: liberation from the "perverted gender roles" of slavery (in which less masculine men are enslaved by other men), the construction of Hebrew/Christian nationalism as the morally superior successor to imperial rule and the slave state, and the ultimate victory at the hands of those who truly have the favor of God. These epics, often themselves media events on a grand scale, for McAlister represent the collaboration between political events and Hollywood films to produce representations of the power democratic institutions held over "slave states". They created cultural images that further placed the Cold War in religious connotations. *See also* Herzog p. 125-26

[67] Herzog, p. 77; This initial round of correspondence was reprinted by the White House in a press release, August 28, 1947

What would be discovered however was that fighting such wars of ideology often eventually required brute force, and victory in this new American Century would prove fleeting.

Victory of a Different Sort

The new war story crafted in this early Cold War period became problematic for those who wished to maintain the racialized binaries that characterized victory culture in the previous century. The themes of liberation from slavery and the superiority of freedom rang particularly close to home for African Americans living where institutional racism was a way of life. The Exodus story shown in movie theaters and preached to nations under the Soviet boot became a religious mainstay for the leaders of the fledgling Civil Rights movement. In more ways than one, black religious leaders connected the Hebrew struggle in Egypt to their own, and soon these figures too called upon God to liberate their people.[68] This created a reversal of the American libertarian image, one that threatened the nation's credibility abroad. As Doug McAdam put it, "[Given the] obvious conflict between the country's professed democratic values and the reality of racism at home, American racism suddenly took on international significance as an effective propaganda weapon of the Communists." Indeed, after the events of the Birmingham riots in 1963, the Soviets broadcast 1,420 comments on the civil rights violations of the United States.[69]

In this context, American Civil Rights leaders saw an opportunity. The image of the United States as the champion of liberty and justice in the world was severely challenged by those who were experiencing a different kind of America, one in which they were viewed with

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[68] McAlister pp. 68-71; *See also* Engelhardt pp. 108-110

[69] Skrentny, pp. 238, 245-247; Secretary of State Dean Acheson expressed the fear that such racial issues would be a detriment to the U.S. global mission: "…the existence of discrimination against minority groups in this country has an adverse effect upon our relations with other countries…..Frequently we find it next to impossible to formulate a satisfactory answer to our critics in other countries; the gap between the things we stand for in principle and the facts of a particular situation may be two wide to be bridged."

fear by the white population as the dark savages that were just outside of plain view. The imagery created shortly after the Civil War remained entrenched in the United States, but as young black men came back from Europe and the Pacific in 1945, having borne the battle for liberty's sake, they questioned why they did not have more rights in the Land of the Free than those living under Nazism or Stalinism. And while these challenges from the black community were far from new, the newly placed value of global human rights amongst the winners of the war gave American blacks an increased audience and new allies, giving their calls more resonance. At a time when the U.S. hoped to reshape the post-war world in its image, the international attention given to racial segregation was troublesome and embarrassing.[70]

Faced with mounting global opposition to the treatment of African Americans (and at times African diplomats in country)[71] the U.S. political and social elites had no choice but to take up the issue of institutional racism. The glaring contradiction of values and practice launched the African American struggle for civil rights into the international spotlight, aided by an ever-supportive Soviet Union. This climate spurred American leaders in Washington to seriously consider a Federal response to Jim Crow in the South and other regions of the country. Civil Rights became a Cold War story, a reversal of the victorious image. Here the American heroes were not the aggressive white alpha-males charging in to battle. They were preachers, school teachers, home-makers, and writers, all engaging in passive protest. Moreover, some within the

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[70] Dudziak, Mary *Desegregation as a Cold War Imperative* p. 62, 67, 102; Swedish sociologist Gunnar Myrdal described the situation as "an American Dilemma". A nation that so prided itself on the fundamental quality of its values but still denied most of those values to a whole segment of the population was damaged tremendously on the international stage: "The situation is actually such that any and all concessions to Negro rights in this phase of the history of the world will repay the nation many times, while any and all injustices inflicted upon them will be extremely costly." *See also* Skrentny p. 239-40; DiMaggio and Powell's theory of the "legitimacy imperative" dictated that socially constructed rules amongst the international community played an important role in shaping the actions of even the most egoistic states.

[71] Skrentny p. 255 *See also* Dudziak p. 90; Ambassadors from Chad, Haiti, and Ghana while visiting the nation's capital and other regions were on occasion denied service at restaurants and hotels for "reasons of color".

black freedom movement began to view the white man as the enemy, as a "devil" or "wolf".[72] As the decade of the 1960's progressed, as violence became more and more used by some activists, the Civil Rights movement became a war all its own, and the attempts to contain it began to lose their resonance. Images created by assassinations, bombings, lynchings and school protests would prevent the racialization and fear of the Other from taking hold of the U.S. government, and with the influence of international pressure and Cold War rhetoric of ideological warfare (elements that had been absent in previous racial conflicts within the U.S.) this new war story became a story of victory, but one that was different from any that came before it.

Encountering the Orient

As Puritans settled North America in an effort to build a New Jerusalem, their understanding of the actual Jerusalem and the vast region that surrounded it was limited to what they gathered from medieval histories of the Crusades and the King James Bible. Yet within the conceptions drawn from these stories of ancient miracles, Divine prophecies, spectacular Christian victories, and barbarous tactics of the Muslims, these early Americans crafted the same light vs. darkness binary with the same religious implications and racialized tones. More so than with the Native Americans, to the white mind the image of the Arab, of the Orient, was quite literally reminiscent of a pagan demon living in his hellish desert habitat. It was a region entirely separate and fully opposite from the New World.[73] Because this enemy was far removed from the homestead, there was little these settlers could do other than lamenting that the Holy Land

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[72] Engelhard p. 110-11
[73] Semmerling, p. 47

was in the hands of infidels.[74] As we have seen, they turned their attentions to the clearing the wilds of the devils closer at hand. Nevertheless, the Occidental settler continued to view the Oriental world as monolithic and altogether different from their own. It was seen as a place of great power, a place their Bibles told them would be the location upon which the ultimate fight between good and evil would occur. The Muslims that lived there were not merely latecomers; they were the followers of a false prophet, the descendants of ancient pagan empires. And for the European, these "Mohammedans" continued to be presented with memories of the Crusades in view: warlike, ferocious in battle, a threat to Christianity in general. Even by the late 18th Century, when the power of the old Muslim kingdoms was declining, Europeans (and their American cousins) feared the dark Arabs that lurked in the periphery, ready to attack.[75]

This understanding in which New World Christians established a possessive investment in the Middle East is an example of what Melani McAlister has called "moral geographies". The religious narratives these settlers used to shape their worldview and define their existence created a series of connections and separations with the Oriental Other that were so culturally resonant that one can find these narratives' descendants in the postmodern American culture. They have been present in foreign policy; they have helped frame transnational affiliations and supported the religious and racial superiority complex with which the U.S. has viewed the region.[76] By understanding this framework, one can see how Orientalism is closely tied to the white American process of image construction. As with Native Americans, African American slaves and their Civil Rights activist descendants, Filipino rebels, the Japanese, and the Vietnamese, the Arab was presented as the dark and savage other, the agent of the devil. He was the wild animal that

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[74] Little, Douglas, *American Orientalism* p. 12 *See Also* Robert Alison *The Crescent Obscured* p. 190-92
[75] Said, Edward *Covering Islam* p. 5
[76] McAlister p. 80

needed to be removed, and if he did attack Christendom, the exterminatory impulse would respond to him uniquely as a Crusade, as a Holy War. His culture, his religion, and even his language were seen as a contortion of what was the Gospel truth. The religious foundation of racial binaries give the moral geographies of the Middle East Biblical context and make the encounter between white and Arab in some ways far more resonant and far more potent.

After the end of the Second World War in 1945, Orientalism in the traditional sense evolved in to something different. The American brand of Orientalist imagery was itself directed towards realizations of its superpower status after the war. The idea of America as the benevolent supreme, a power that sought its goals through cultural exportation and economic liberalization rather than blatant colonialism, was a marked change from the Orientalist style of the 19th century. Furthermore, the existence of the Jewish state of Israel, and the American loyalty it wielded, would alter the Western perception of the region from the image of a distant, exotic locale to one that required an understanding of relations with the Middle East in the secularist patina of geopolitics. This was compounded by the Western need of crude oil to fuel its economies and the Cold War dynamics presented by Soviet interactions with Syria, Iran, and engagements in Afghanistan. This "post-Orientalist" framework is useful in explaining American engagements (or lack thereof) with its ally Israel and her enemies, as well as the tenuous economic and natural resource-based partnership held with Saudi Arabia and other oil-producing nations. Themes of asymmetric warfare, multilateral conflicts, and stymied military prowess (read: masculine aggression) can be seen when examining Orientalism in a postmodern world. I contend that the religious connotations of American engagements with the Middle East still maintained an influence even into the 21st century, albeit in an atmosphere that lends itself more to the goal of spreading American democracy rather than conquest. Furthermore, the reversals of

the 60's and 70's (i.e. challenges to the black/white binary and American purpose in war) were involved in the "anxiety of defeat" that prevented American armies from putting boots on the ground in conflicts such as the Six Day War in 1967 and the Soviet incursions into Afghanistan in 1980, among others. When military commitment did become necessary, American culture warriors were so preoccupied with kicking the Vietnam Syndrome that they manufactured a new triumphalist war story for conflicts like Operation Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom that would eventually ring hollow for the American public, not least of which the soldiers fighting in these conflicts. When the attacks on September 11th, 2001 facilitated a return of the vengeful narrative it also brought about a resurgence of the war story unmarred by the shadow of Vietnam, complete with religious overtones and, to a much lesser extent, racialized binaries. What would make this instance characteristic of the postmodern environment in which it arose would be the purported humanitarian motivations of the Bush administration as it waged wars in Iraq and Afghanistan for nearly a decade. As the motivations of the late 19th century American Empire were slightly different from Old World imperialism, so was the American flavor of Orientalism a significant change from the colonialism of the past to an effort to export the nation's ideals (democracy and free market capitalism) to a world that was supposedly in desperate need of them.

America's first encounter with the Muslim world came in the form of Barbary pirates. Three decades of sporadic maritime warfare created images within the American conscious of greedy sultans seeking riches, and when these were compounded by the pre-existing notions of Muslim inferiority, these North African pirates quickly became for Americans a test of their national resolve and an early barrier to their imperial destiny. It would be here that captivity narratives would play a role as well. Caleb Bingham's *Slaves in Barbary* and Susanna Rowson's

Slaves in Algiers were similarly exaggerated accounts of U.S. sailors' impressment and captivity

on the aggressor's ships, both playing off tropes Americans would find in more familiar tales of

captivity at the hands of Native Americans.[77] For most of the 19th century, whatever idea the

average American had of the Middle East was one constructed by the literature, magazines, and

all other manner of consumable media available to them, and as a result the images present in

those narratives held a significant influence over how the people characterized that part of the

world and the "degraded Arabs who hold it".[78] Perhaps the most famous of these works was

Mark Twain's *The Innocents Abroad*, published in 1869 and selling more than 100,000 copies in

two years. This work was unlike other accounts of the Middle East, mainly due to the fact that

Twain's sarcasm can be ascertained from the pages describing his tactless and oafish Americans

companions that joined him on his quest. Still, the images of the Arab within as "a people by

nature and training filthy, brutish, ignorant, unprogressive, and superstitious" and as a people

who "do not mind barbarous ignorance and savagery" only confirmed the characterization

previously given to them by other forms of American representation.[79]

This was the assumed imagination of the Middle East for much of American history

leading up to the world wars. As the country expanded across the continent and eventually the

western hemisphere, the Orient remained a distant destination for the wealthy, but did not garner

the same attention as the American Southwest or the Pacific Rim. Starting shortly after the fall of

the Ottoman Empire however, this scenario would change intensely. Certain events soon created

an American possessive investment in the region that would be instrumental in creating

McAlister's "moral geographies". The discovery of crude oil, the decolonization movements of

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[77] Alison p. 204, 206

[78] *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* January 1855

[79] Little, p. 13-14 *See also* Mark Twain *Innocents Abroad* 101, 431, 433, 499; Kathleen Christison, *Perceptions of Palestine* pp. 16-25

the 1950's and 60's, and the establishment of the Jewish state of Israel would for decades keep American interests focused in the region and allowed Orientalist images to persist long after the assumptions of victory culture in America began to break down. After the end of the war in 1945, the United States began its exportation of its values, eager to protect those that shared them from the auspices of the Communists. As the Middle East rapidly began to throw off imperial ties with Europe, the Americans feared that revolutionary states like Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Iran would adopted by the evil Soviet slave state. This struggle was one not only for the strategic value of the region, but for the Americans (as hinted by NSC-68) victory in the Middle East was one that was foretold in the book Revelations. The Holy lands of Jerusalem and the surrounding regions could not fall in to the hands of the Muslims, or worse yet, the godless Communists.[80] American support for Israel was predicated partly on this venture. And so, because of newly found investments in the region, because the fate of God's country hung in the balance, the United States sought to prevent any form of pan-Arabian union under the Red banner. The "benevolent supremacy" mentality that was crafted during and after the war period would be the characteristic ideology that guided American exploits in the Middle East for decades to come.[81]

Victory Culture at the End of History

The conflict in Vietnam marked the first instance where the United States saw the superiority of its armies powerless to remove itself from a conflict, fighting against an enemy it could not see. So great were the challenges of that moment in history that the shadows of Vietnam would haunt American war planners for decades. Even when conflicts arose in the

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[80] Little p. 30
[81] McAlister p. 82

Middle East that threatened U.S. oil prospects or Israeli security, American brass was slow to pull the trigger. Through the various conflicts in which Israel played a significant role (most notably the Six Day war in '67 and the Yom Kippur War), or when Muslim nations threatened to cut off Western oil supplies and shut down the Suez canal, the United States, while maintaining absolute support for the Jewish state and a dependence on foreign energy imports, so feared another protracted conflict that they went to great lengths to prevent regional hostilities from bringing in major world powers.[82] The years after Vietnam saw an American nation slow to call in the cavalry and more likely to negotiate themselves out of a conflict, rather than charge head first into one. This reversal of the image of the confident American represented for some a castration of masculine foreign policy that was difficult to bear, one that soon called into question American legitimacy in conflict and threatened to dismantle the dominant American perception of the world as a struggle between good and evil. This was compounded by events on November 4th, 1979, when a group of radical Islamist students stormed the U.S. embassy in Tehran. The following 444 days would be used as an example of supposed American impotence. This event (which included a disastrous rescue attempt in which refueling helicopters crashed in the desert, killing eight American soldiers) was further perpetuated by fundamentalists in power in Tehran and abetted by conservative coalitions at home, and after nearly fifteen months of continued tension the incident (among other things) cost Jimmy Carter the presidency and

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[82] Little, pp. 240-41, 246-47 *See also* Engelhardt pp. 274, 281; McAlister pp. 158-59, Lifton pp. 49-50; Various "brushfire wars" that occurred between the late 1960's up through the end of the 1980's were characterized in such a fashion as to strike the fear of Saigon into the hearts of some hawkish American leaders like Nixon and Reagan. Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Robert McNamara reminded the president in late May 1967 that "the problem of 'Tonkin Gulfitis' remains acute," and if armed conflict was necessary, it was done so urgently and in secret. Even within the Reagan White House, fears of another Vietnam colored his engagements in Lebanon and Grenada, with the former resulting in quiet withdrawal and the latter conducted with such frenzy that it was named Operation Urgent Fury.

emboldened the nation's opponents in the region.[83] The last years of the Cold War were far from

disastrous for the United States, but heading in to the last decade of the 20th century the ideals of

victory culture continued to lose resonance. The fears of protracted conflict, nuclear war, and

economic collapse were strong enough to prevent major American engagements in this period.

After losing its Soviet foe, these fears would alleviate somewhat, but as Reagan's former vice

president entered the White House in 1989, swift and clean engagements with the Middle East

(should they arise) would be the order of the day. The first Bush in the White House would

attempt to revive the confidant images of good cowboys against bad Indians and exorcise the

ghost of Vietnam.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union meant many things for the world. For the

American war story, it was a total victory where freedom and justice prevailed over slavery and

barbarism. It was the final victory for God against the heathen atheist, the minion of the devil in

the east.[84] It was the climax of history, the end of an era that left the United States as the sole

power left on earth. Scholars from across the Western world declared this victory to bring about

the "end of history", where there would be no war, no poverty, and democracy would reign

across the land for centuries.[85] What occurred after this event was unanticipated, and its

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[83] Ibid. p. 244 *See also* Engelhardt p. 270; Mark Bowden's extensive work *Guests of the Ayatollah* also provides perspective on the rising sense of inadequacy within the American presidency and within the domestic culture during this period. When viewed in this light, the popularity of Reagan's brand of diplomatic muscle is unsurprising.

[84] Herzog p. 212-13; President Reagan would declare before the annual meeting of the National Association of Evangelicals in 1983 that the Cold War represented a "struggle of will" against the "evil empire" of Soviet Communism.

[85] The most famous of these being Francis Fukuyama's "The End of History and the Last Man", in which Fukuyama displays tempered optimism at the prospect of increased cooperation and ideological convergence amongst nations, leading to the establishment of more formidable international institutions and the decreased potential for conflicts in the future. This allowed for the cultivation of theories that aimed to predict future events in this world at the end of history, such as the "democratic peace" proposal from Zeev Maoz and Bruce Russert, as well as prescriptions regarding the role of international institutions and societal norms from James Fearon, Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, and Alexander Wendt.

outcomes continued to baffle the leaders of the American century even to the present day. When Soviet Communism died, America's last great foe died with it, and soon those cold warriors that fought ceaselessly against it would find themselves wielding the might of a superpower but with no target to set before them. It was a crisis of sorts, mainly due to the fact that the image of America as the alpha-male defender of democracy (which itself was already on the brink of collapse after trudging through Vietnam and suffering embarrassment at the hands of the Iranians in 1979) seeking to exert his manliness to the world audience found he no longer had a worthy opponent. Any attempts to take on a new enemy in the form of insurgency and terrorist groups contorted the image of America the hero into America the bully. Even in cases where the United States could be viewed as acting for the moral authority, these humanitarian crusades soon became quagmires all their own. The asymmetric conflict that would characterize the decade after the fall of Communism was indeed the end of an era, but it also marked a new world in which the heroes of victory culture found themselves wanting.

As Saddam Hussein made his move into Kuwait on August 1st, 1990, President Bush was faced with yet another situation that he feared if handled inappropriately would lead to a new Vietnam. Within his Cabinet Room hours after the invasion, Bush considered the repercussions of massive military engagement with his Joint Chiefs chairman Colin Powell, as well as his CIA director and national security advisors. The consensus was clear: the U.S. could not afford another Vietnam, but what they also could not allow was the potential for Saddam Hussein to gain control of nearly 40% of the global oil reserves in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.[86] They could not allow the Iraqi military to strong arm the world's last superpower. And so, after months of negotiations and sanctions failed to deter Saddam, the President gave the order to engage on

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[86] Little p. 257

January 11th, 1991. Congress approved the resolution the next day.[87] As with the engagements of the 1970's and 80's, the theme would be urgency and limited occupation of territory. General Powell, along with Army commander Norman Schwartzkopf, set the game plan for Operation Desert Storm. First, the U.S. Air Force would destroy Iraq's military and economic infrastructure with laser-guided missiles and smart bombs. Then the U.S. Navy would position itself as though it were about to launch an amphibious assault on Iraqi forces dug in at Kuwait City. When Baghdad rushed reinforcements to the coast, the U.S. Army and Marines would execute a swift "left hook" flanking maneuver far to the west in the desert between Iraq and Saudi Arabia, trapping and smashing Saddam's army in Kuwait.[88] At 4:00 a.m. on 24th February, General Schwartzkopf launched 30,000 U.S. marines to storm Kuwait City and sent the 82nd and 101st Airborne and two U.S. armored divisions racing across the desert 300 miles to the west in a massive flanking maneuver that blocked the Iraqis' line of retreat. His armies surrounded, with the Americans in clear sight of Baghdad, Saddam pulled back his forces from the region and surrendered, just a little over 100 hours after the Americans landed. The victory was so complete, the American casualties so few (coming to 148 dead, 467 wounded) that President Bush proclaimed to visiting state government officials on March 1st, "By God, we've kicked the Vietnam syndrome once and for all"[89] For the administration, Operation Desert Storm represented a return to confidence in battle, of charging forth with the aggressive purpose that only comes with the understanding that America was on the right side of things. It acted as the blueprint for military engagements in this new world after the Cold War, and would be attempted again in the future.

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[87] Ibid. pp. 259-60
[88] Ibid. p. 258, 261
[89] Ibid. p. 262

But for the soldiers on the ground, Operation Desert Storm was a different movie. During the decades the United States spent trying to exorcise the ghosts of Vietnam, whole new generations of soldiers were born and bred, men whose only conception of the conflict was in the form of Rambo. For these men, war was an action film.[90] When they arrived in Iraq, and the war was over before most of them could fire their weapons, their own taste of battle was bitter. For them, this wasn't America the triumphant, it was America the meddlesome. The war story their grandparents told them of victory in Europe had them desperate for a war story of their own worth retelling. They would have even taken the war story of their parents in Vietnam, of a hard struggle that bonded them as brothers. Instead, the defining characteristic of their war story would be confusion: confusion of purpose and confusion of identity. They craved battle, to show the world their manhood, but Operation Desert Storm would deny them that.[91] The films *Three Kings* (1999) and *Jarhead* (2005) and their heroes display this search for purpose and identity amongst these men. Their protagonists (Archie Gates and Anthony Swofford, respectively) are at times the embodiment of Jane Tompkins' western hero: jaded, morally ambiguous, searching for purpose, and fiercely reactionary to a world that expects them to be men as jubilant in victory as their president.[92] But the victory never came for them. Instead, they returned home to a world that barely realized they were gone. The impotence that Bush hoped to remove from the American conscious with Desert Storm lived on in the soldier that executed the order. For these men, the war story was a sound bite found on the evening news.

As President Bush turned power to his successor in 1992, many U.S. elites felt confident they had shaken Vietnam's shadow. Operation Desert Storm's success was the culmination of

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[90] Semmerling p. 140
[91] Ibid. pp. 145-50
[92] Tompkins, Jane *West of Everything*

American military prowess and domestic unification, and with its enemy defeated and disgraced, America tried to revive some of the swagger that carried it into superpower status decades before. It wouldn't last long. The same soldiers grown on Rambo would see war in Somalia, the Balkans, and East Africa, and it wasn't pretty. Americans would see images of these wars: American helicopter pilots dragged through the streets of Mogadishu, genocide in Bosnia, and terror bombings in Kenya. The war story crafted by the world at the end of history was more of a nightmare than an action movie. What would be needed to revive victory culture to its days of glory would be an event that would all at once bring back those old feelings of revenge against the savage. It would need new Divine purpose and the assurance that America was the moral authority of the world. And on September 11th, 2001, America would get its new war story.

Reclaiming the Frontier

Three days after the attacks on 9/11, President George W. Bush declared on the National Day of Prayer and Remembrance that, "Our responsibility to history is already clear: to answer these attacks and rid the world of evil." Likewise, in an exchange with journalists on September 16th the president, after reminding the nation that "we haven't seen this kind of barbarism in a long time," characterized the country's task in religious terms, "This crusade, this war on terrorism is going to take a while. I'm going to be patient."[93] The September 11th attacks rekindled in America an emotion the country collectively had not felt in decades. After witnessing the horrible events play out before them, there arose a desire for vengeance. The exterminatory response that was present after the Alamo, after Custer's Last Stand, and after

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[93] Dower p. 69 *See also* James Carroll *Crusade: Chronicles of an Unjust War* pp. 24-26, originally published in the Boston Globe dated 24th September 2001

Pearl Harbor came once again, this time in a nation ready to take on its Divine mission to root out evil across the globe. The country faced a foe that was in the minds of the public emboldened by the natural violence of their religion. Victory over these individuals would be nothing short of complete elimination.[94] The tragic events of 9/11 became the defining moment for the Bush administration. In the decade that followed, the United States would find itself in two wars across the Middle-East – not only seeking the life of one man, but to punish the dark savages who supported him. It would also be a conflict that operated "outside of history", one that for the administration could not be tempered by past grievances or terrorists' claims of acting in retaliation. As the deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage put it, "History begins today."[95]

This event was an electric shock that brought victory culture back from the dead. Once again, the guns would drum without any doubt. America could be confident in its purpose and her soldiers aggressive in their victories. The feminized politics at the end of history were abandoned, and the nation was once again given a foe toward which they could direct all of their considerable power. The reversals of the 1960's and 70's prevented any form of overt racialized bifurcation to occur in this period, most notably through the marginal appearance of anti-Muslim propaganda and the somewhat diminished prevalence of racial caricatures and imagery, but American Orientalist assumptions would provide considerable fuel to the flame regarding American perceptions of the Middle East and its inhabitants. This catalyzing event would take

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[94] Tamney, Joseph pp. 599-600, 601-04; Oriana Fallaci published soon after 9/11 a short op-ed piece entitled *The Rage and the Pride*, in which she argued that the terrorist acts expressed the essence of Islam, that most Muslims were happy about the attack, and that Muslims are out to destroy the West. In the 13th March 2003 issue of the *Wall Street Journal* Fallaci claimed that the Middle East couldn't be democratized because "freedom and democracy are totally unrelated to the ideological context of Islam." She would firmly place the response to 9/11 as one of revenge later by stating, "As a proud defender of the West's civilization, without reservations I should join Mr. Bush and Mr. Blair in the new Alamo." *See also* Dower p. 71; Victor Davis Hanson sought to dispel several "war myths" that flared up as America entered its new conflict with "the present evil". America's radical antagonists were "wedded to a medieval world of perpetual stasis. These terrorists hate us for who we are, not what we have done."

[95] Dower p. 68

the United States even farther down the rabbit hole with the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Seemingly seeking to finish the work his father started, President Bush re-entered Iraq with the confidence of a frontier hero, seeking to reclaim the edges of the map for democracy (civilization). The fact that American soldiers referred to Iraq as "Indian country" is very telling.[96] The overt religiosity of this conflict also cannot be ignored. The fact that the nation's new enemy was itself defined in very religious terms, coupled with the deeply seeded religious faith of the American presidency, allowed the war to be defined in apocalyptic terms. It would be for the administration a battle between good and evil for the fate of the world. This new conflict would be given the determination that only favor from the Almighty can grant. But unlike the war started by Pearl Harbor, the war story for this new conflict would take a turn towards disaster within the span of a few years. Launching a "war on evil" as the Bush administration did – with contempt for the grievances or opinions of others, ignorance of the nature and capabilities of the enemy, of how and why that enemy attracted recruits, and only a cherry-picker's regard for history – carried tragic consequences.[97]

The religious nature of America's new war story was very much the cultural descendant of the Divine sponsorship assumption that characterized America's conflict with the Soviet Union. But unlike its predecessors, this new crusade was viewed as an attempt to assert Christian dominance of the world. The fact that the nation was fighting non-state actors further afforded the conflict a regional context that spread across the Fertile Crescent and into the Holy Land. The invasion of Iraq, predicated on claims of Iraqi possession of weapons of mass destruction and aid given to Al-Qaeda, was for the Bush administration the triumphant return to the lands of the Old Testament. On April 8th, 2003, as military vehicles passed underneath the massive crossed-

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[96] Silliman p. 239

[97] Ibid. p. 83 *See also* Carroll pp. 41-44

swords archway in Baghdad, a photo was taken of Americans triumphant in battle, accompanied by this passage from the book of Isaiah: "Open the gates that the righteous nation may enter, / The nation that keeps the faith."[98]

Framed in these terms, the conflict was more than a clash of ideology or a strategic calculation. It was a clash of civilizations. The American empire built upon its ideals and humanitarian motivations was viewed by the Muslims as a baseless façade used to procure American access to resources. For the Bush administration, the nation's mission was one that sought to rid the world from the fear of radicalism, to protect America from the barbarous savages that waited outside the gates. The president's characterization of the conflict as a crusade did not go unnoticed by the nation's enemies, and soon reactionary calls for jihad spread through the region in a fashion that seem unanticipated by American leaders. The United States' conception of the Middle East in this period was a region lost to political chaos and shady economic collusion. In an effort to protect their ally Israel, as well as natural resources, the American possessive investment in the region grew to a state that was beyond the scope of the "brushfire" wars of the previous decades.[99] Now more than ever it came within the realm of possibility that the United States would engage in fully mobilized warfare to protect its resources and Holy places. The retaliatory response, coupled with religious connotations, drove the Americans to war in the Middle East in a fashion that would not have been considered by previous administrations. The cowboys were going to reclaim the frontier for civilization, freedom, and Almighty God.[100]

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[98] Ibid. p. 86

[99] Smidt pp. 247-48 *See also* Tamney p. 607, 619; Thomas Hegghammer "Global Jihadism after the Iraq War pp. 32-32; Polling conducted by Gallup and USA Today in December 2002 showed that nearly 40% of Americans believed that Islam encouraged violence more than other religions.

[100] Silliman p. 244

Then things began to fall apart. The rousing success of the initial invasion of Iraq in March 2003 was capped by the glorious capitulation of the Iraqi government and its Baathist party, followed a few months later by the capture of Saddam Hussein. So total was this supposed victory that President Bush stood aboard the *U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln* on May 1st, 2003 and declared the mission to be accomplished. The bad guys were dead (or were about to be) and the people of Iraq were now free to enjoy freedom, American style. This smash and grab operation was not at all unlike the mission launched by Bush senior a decade before, only this time the Bush in the White House would not hesitate to knock down the doors of Baghdad. When looking for inspiration on how to properly train the Iraqis for independence, Bush looked no further than the American occupation of the Philippines at the turn of the previous century.[101] Now, as then, America would seek to help their comrades in democracy achieve what they could not on their own. Such was the nature of the American empire. But as the American expeditionary forces remained for weeks and then months, they began to look more like an occupation force rather than a liberation army. Then the casualties began to climb. And enemy combatants (who wore no uniform and flew no flag) began entering Iraq from the surrounding country side. As much as Bush senior feared the Vietnam syndrome in the 90's, it would be his son who experienced that particular nightmare first hand. The images of victory that were so strong after 9/11 began to slip again. The soldiers (who upgraded from action movies to video games by this point) were once again losing their confidence in a war that showed no promise of clear victory and had no ticker-tape parades. The Vietnam Syndrome set in again. Even in light of the fact that the losses of personnel and equipment imposed by Iraqi occupation are dwarfed when compared to Vietnam,

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[101] Dower p. 82; Speaking before Filipino government officials in October 2003, President Bush embraced the war story of empire: "Together our soldiers liberated the Philippines from colonial rule. Together we rescued these islands from invasion and occupation." Contrary to popular belief, Bush intoned, non-Western nations could indeed flourish under democracy.

one must understand a universal truth: image is everything. The first time Americans saw repeated promises to deliver WMD's fail again and again, and continued appeals to the spread of democracy invoking God and the Founding Fathers, and images of American soldiers fighting and dying in the desert, the president's frontier riding days were over. By the end of his presidency in 2008, the Bush administration could not shake off comparisons to his predecessors that got lost in Southeast Asia. The animosity generated for the United States in the Middle East was at its peak. And the American people, who were promised rousing victory over the "Axis of Evil", instead received defeat.

Does this event mark the end of Victory Culture? I believe that as long as this country maintains its existential conceptions of religious dichotomies (God vs. the devil, Light against darkness, freedom against slavery) then victory culture will always keep a place in American life. The foundational support it receives from American religiosity cannot be understated. It was this foundation upon which the images of victory culture were constructed in the first place. The cultural resonance of American religion is so great that events that created these images hundreds of years ago still remain with us in some form or another. Yes, the events of the mid-20th Century were monumental, the victorious war story reversed. But while racialized binaries and gendered political hierarchies each faced their own challengers, and each lost significant (but not all) presence, American religiosity and theological conservatism faced no challengers as formidable as the Civil Rights movement or post-modern feminism. The efforts of secularists and liberal Catholics and Protestants accompanied some of these social movements through the years and have indeed changed the religious landscape, but America remains likely the most fervently religious nation on the planet outside of the Middle East. Its population continues to see the world in terms of the moral geographies that have shaped American foreign policy, and the

revenge narrative remains stronger than ever. President Obama on May 2nd, 2011, almost eight years to the day that his predecessor declared the mission accomplished, proclaimed to the nation that "Justice has been done." Osama bin Laden, the man behind this generation's Pearl Harbor, was dead and gone. And as the country joined in jubilation at the death of one man, the roots of victory culture showed again. While it may lose its cultural hegemony from time to time, the images it created through the years remain embedded. All that is necessary to bring them back to the surface is a catalyzing event, a leader ready to use them, and an enemy Other to target. So is victory culture dead? No. Whether we will see it again in the future is a matter of someone being in the wrong place at the right time. One must also remember, as was included in President Bush's briefings on the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the words of Paul in Ephesians 6:13: "Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand."

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