Metaphors in Politics

A study of the metaphorical personification of America in political discourse

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C-EXTENDED ESSAY

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Abstract

The language of politics is a complex issue which includes many strategies of language use to influence the receiver toward a desired attitude or thought. Depending on the aim and conviction of the speaker, the use of language strategies differs. The topic of this essay is metaphors in politics and more specifically the personification of America in the first inaugural addresses by Ronald Reagan, George H W Bush, Bill Clinton and George W Bush. The focus is on how the metaphors are used, how they can be interpreted and what message they send to the receiver. This essay will argue that the conceptual metaphors used in political discourse in the inaugurals are highly intentional, but not always as easy to detect. The rhetorical strategy of conceptualizing America as human is analyzed and the conceptual metaphors accounted for and analyzed are THE WORLD AS A COMMUNITY, NATION AS A PERSON, NATION WITH HUMAN ATTRIBUTES and NATION ACTING AS HUMAN. The conclusion drawn is that the four presidents included all frequently use metaphors to personify the nation with the aim to make the American people identify with and understand their beliefs and goals for America.
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1. Introduction

In the United States of America, the presidents elected by the citizens need to make an abiding impression and comply with the desires and demands of the American people. The president’s ambition is to increase political participation, to encourage mutual understanding and to show common ground in world politics and domestic matters. Politicians as well as presidents have to work with rhetorical strategies to convince the American people of their discernment.

The use of metaphor as a part of figurative language aims to help the listener to visualize what is meant by a phrase or expression. Politicians use language to persuade people that their thoughts, aims and ideas are equitable and to make their point clear and vivid to the people. The speaker needs to use various language tools in order to make the message persuasive and comprehensible to the listener. Politicians seek to comply with the emotions, desires, and needs of the audience. The use of metaphor is one of the most prominent tools for persuasion and an instrument for propaganda in political rhetorical language.

Some may argue that the purpose of political speeches is to manipulate listeners and that the speaker only desires to gain or keep their power (Beard, 2000: 36). The goal for politicians is not primarily to present facts, but to be persuasive. The speaker needs to use their language to appeal to emotions and to include and affect the audience. The aim is to emphasize suitable issues and hide others and an apt tool is the use of metaphors in addresses to the public. The orator does not have to distort the facts when using metaphoric language, the response to the address depends on the interpretation in the mind of the listener. Politicians are rewarded for how vividly and convincingly they present their argument, rather than for how honestly they present their views.

1.1 Aim

The aim of this essay is to analyze and elucidate the metaphorical personification of America in political discourse. For what purpose are the metaphors used and what do they suggest to the audience?
1.2 Method and material

The material analyzed in this essay are four inaugural addresses delivered by the four latest presidents of the United States; George W Bush (2001), Bill Clinton (1993), George H W Bush (1989) and Ronald Reagan (1981).

The conceptual metaphors introduced and analyzed in this essay are THE WORLD AS A COMMUNITY, NATION AS PERSON, NATION WITH HUMAN ATTRIBUTES and NATION ACTING HUMAN. The analysis will be based on the cognitive semantic approach originated by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). According to this theory metaphors are a matter of thought; metaphor analysis is subjective and interpretation is mostly due to differences in knowledge of the world and personal experiences of the interpreter. The method for analysis will be to locate the conceptual metaphors mentioned and analyze how a non-human entity (America) is specified as being a human entity, the probable intention of the speaker will also be accounted for.

The fact that the politicians are both Republicans and Democrats and that neither of them wrote the speeches themselves is not something that will be discussed in this essay. The inaugural addresses presented are the first inaugural; the fact that Ronald Reagan, George W Bush and Bill Clinton spent more than one term in office and delivered more than one inaugural speech is excluded from this essay.
2. Background

On Inauguration Day, January 20, the president of the United States swears the oath of office. The president subsequently delivers an inaugural address to the people, setting the tone for the new administration. In political speeches, some utterances may be literal and some metaphorical which is determined by the discourse. In rhetoric discourse, metaphors are related to the event and adjusted to the purpose and area in which the speech is delivered. Therefore, it is of relevance to know the context, the purpose and beliefs of the speaker to be able to locate and interpret the metaphors. Metaphors are used efficiently in many areas to express a thought by alluding to another thought, either to clarify and make it simple to comprehend or to make it more vivid and to catch the attention of the listener. Some metaphors are so conventional and commonly used that they are not conceptualized as being metaphors; they are understood as part of the literal language. The distinction between metaphors and literal language is not undisputed and according to Charteris-Black (Charteris-Black, 2005: 14), any word order can be perceived as metaphoric language depending on the context in which the metaphor is used. The mind of the receiver is central for the awareness and understanding of metaphoric language. Hence, the conception of metaphor is dependent on the receiver’s knowledge of the language in which the metaphor is used, knowledge of the world and society and, further, it is dependent on the context in which the metaphor is used (Goatly, 1997: 137).

Before the mid 1900s, a political public speaker’s audience was a special interest group who was concerned with and attentive to the political issues presented by the politician. Today, the audience has been largely extended; a greater number of people have access to a public speech through media, the Internet etc. A speech reported by media is adjusted to appeal to a larger group of people. Thus, the speeches need to contain highlights and memorable phrases to be remembered and to catch the attention of people beyond the special interest group. The press freely interprets public issues and determines what facts are more or less important to present to the people (Beard, 2000: 18). Politicians and other persons in positions of authority use metaphors that represent their theories and plans. The speaker makes an active choice of words and a decision whether to use metaphors or not in order to make a point more vivid or persuasive (Charteris-Black, 2005: 17). Metaphors in political discourse are tools for making abstract
political issues accessible to the listener and they are frequently used to emphasize or soften certain issues. Metaphors can be used to convey the problem as well as implying the solution in the same metaphor. The values of the speaker are often revealed and influence the receiver’s interpretation. The truth may easily be altered since metaphors are received, understood and categorized differently by different people and therefore open for interpretation (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 163). Lakoff (2003) asserts that people are not interested in whether a statement is true but to which extent it is believable or if it is deliberately deceiving and misleading. A lie which is perceived as not causing any greater harm could be justified as serving a good cause and is therefore acceptable.

A lot of research has been made on the subject of metaphoric language and use, and following the publication of Lakoff and Johnson’s *Metaphors we live by* (1980), the research interest has expanded. The definition of metaphor has been explained by a general rule that “X (source) is Y (target)” and classical metaphors are dependent on the similarity between the two entities: “Man is a wolf” and “Harry is a pig” (Lakoff, 1987). *Metaphors we live by* is said to have been the starting point of the view of metaphors in language today. According to Lakoff and Johnson, there is a close correlation between language, metaphors and thought, and Lakoff (1995) argues that we think in metaphors. Lakoff and Johnson claim that whether consciously or not, people think in metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 3). In accordance with this theory, Charteris-Black (2005: 13) asserts that metaphor uses language to activate unconscious emotional associations and influences our values and beliefs by transferring positive or negative associations into the metaphor target. Charteris-Black further brings forward the persuasiveness of metaphoric language because of the fact that it influences both the intelligence and the emotions of the receiver.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) developed an idea that has become known as the “cognitive linguistic view of metaphor”. According to this idea, metaphors are not only a property of words, but of concepts and are not simply used as artistic and aesthetic tools. Metaphors are used in order to make concepts understandable and Lakoff and Johnson asserted that metaphors are often not based on similarity between the entities. Metaphor use does not require any special talent; it is just as frequently used in everyday language by ordinary people (Kövesces, 2002: viii).
Metaphors are matters of conceptualization; conceptual metaphors have a correlation between two conceptual domains. As previously mentioned metaphors has been explained by the rule that “A is B”, however, with conceptual metaphors the source and target are conceptual domains and not based on similarity between entities. According to Lakoff and Johnson, “[c]onceptual metaphor is a natural part of human thought and linguistic metaphor is a natural part of human language” (1980: 246-247). Conceptual metaphors include a larger semantic field, they have more general meaning than the classical metaphors “Harry is a pig” and “man is wolf” which only point to specific attitudes or attributes. The conceptual metaphor THE WORLD AS A COMMUNITY can be broken down into NATION AS PERSON which furthermore can be divided into NATION WITH HUMAN ATTRIBUTES and NATION ACTING HUMAN metaphors.

Before the publication of Metaphors we live by, the view of metaphors was constituted as a “figure of speech”. Lakoff and Johnson took the view of metaphors to a different level, arguing that metaphors are not just linguistic phenomena, but a matter of thought. Lakoff (1986: 218) argues that the phrases “We’ve hit a dead-end street” and “The marriage is on the rocks” are both to be conceptualized by the LOVE IS A JOURNEY metaphor. However, he also asserts that different linguistic expressions do not necessarily have different metaphorical meaning; the meaning of the metaphor is cognitive and depends on the mental process in which the expression is treated. The same linguistic expression in different contexts may have different meanings, as well as different linguistic expressions may have the same metaphorical meaning. Lakoff (1986: 224) adds that when theories change so does the meaning of language.

The use of metaphors in political discourse is strategic. According to Beard (1997: 17-21), it is a skill to appeal to the emotions of the listener in a way that feels natural to the audience. Metaphoric language use and how it could be construed in political discourse depend on the ideologies of the writer and the speaker; the words are deliberately chosen to appeal to the emotions and beliefs of the receiver and to have significant effect. Metaphors are highly dependent on and make sense in context. Bosman explains in his article on the study of how metaphors affect political attitudes that “[d]escribing a political problem in metaphorical terms will obviously not produce the same effects in all participants. Not everyone is receptive or sensitive to metaphorical language” (1987: 104).
According to Lakoff (2003), the most common metaphor in foreign policy is NATION IS A PERSON. Some nations are friends with America, friends who are expected to be loyal, stand up for each other and help each other in times of need. This correlates with his earlier writings together with Mark Johnson about personification, which is defined as “[…] a general category that covers a wide range of metaphors, each picking out different aspects of a person or ways of looking at a person” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 34). Lakoff and Johnson further explain that the reason for defining various phenomena in human terms is so that people can understand it “on the basis of our own motivations, goals, actions, and characteristics” (1980: 34). Lakoff (1995) states that the NATION AS FAMILY metaphor is very common in political discourse where the nation is seen as a family, the government as a parent and the citizens as children. He argues that if the system of metaphorical concepts is not apperceived, the effects will be incomprehensible or altogether missed. Lakoff’s theory is further elaborated by Rohrer (1995), who analyzed George H W Bush’s public speeches where Bush on several occasions referred to the Kuwait invasion as “eating” with the metaphor TERRITORIAL EXPANSION IS EATING. Rohrer refers this to the nation’s economy and military forces and suggests that when a nation-person eats it becomes stronger which means economic and military strength. Rohrer also elaborates the neighbourhood and neighbourhood bully metaphors, where neighbours behave either good or bad, and the neighbourhood bully becomes a neighbouring country behaving badly towards the own nation.

In his later works, Lakoff states that since the end of the Cold War, THE WORLD COMMUNITY metaphor, where nations are persons, have been developed and extended (Lakoff, 1999). The extensive and powerful metaphor NATION AS PERSON is part of the INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY metaphor where nations are friendly, hostile, passive, active etc. The aim for the nation-person is to be healthy and strong (economically and military). According to Lakoff (2003), the most common use for the NATION AS PERSON metaphor is to justify war as “just war”. Lakoff claims that Bush used the metaphor of self-defence in Gulf War 1 to justify the attack. The people, however, did not accept this metaphor to justify the attack. Thus, Bush was forced to change the story and changed it into the accepted rescue story where he stated that the Iraqi people were the victims and had to be rescued.
3. Presentation and analysis

Metaphors:

THE WORLD AS A COMMUNITY
NATION AS PERSON
NATION WITH HUMAN ATTRIBUTES
NATION ACTING HUMAN


Reagan’s speech in full is available in Appendix A.

NATION AS PERSON

“We suffer from the longest and one of the worst sustained inflations in our nation’s history.”

“The economic ills we suffer have come upon us over several decades.”

When Reagan took office the nation was undergoing a rough economic period. Reagan therefore emphasises how deficient the economy is by conceptualizing the inflation as a physical ill hurting the nation-person. He presents the economic issue to be perceived as being a disease that is impairing the nation-person. The inflation is, according to Reagan, a serious ill that has affected and controlled the nation for a long period of time. However, Reagan does not offer any solutions; his aim is to make clear the seriousness of the problem.

NATION WITH HUMAN ATTRIBUTES, NATION AS PERSON

“With the idealism and fair play which are the core of our system and our strength, we can have a strong and prosperous America at peace with itself and with the world.”

Reagan implies that America could be a strong nation-person at peace with itself and the area in which the nation-person is active. With some effort, America will be the best it can be. He suggests and invites solidarity with the nation-person by implying that America has potential to
be content and at peace with the rest of the world. This is not a problem he is presenting, but he encourages the citizens to feel for the nation the way a person feels for another person.

NATION ACTING HUMAN

“Now, there will be no misunderstanding, it is not my intention to do away with government. It is, rather, to make it work – work with us, not over us; to stand by our side, not to ride on our back. Government can and must provide opportunity, not smother it; foster productivity, not stifle it.”

Metaphorically Reagan says that the nation has a human body; a back that the government is able to ride on and a side to stand by. Reagan was of the opinion that the government was not the path to prosperity, that private industrials and businesses was the way to deal with the issue. The presented problem is that government has been smothering and limiting the nation-person’s opportunities. However, Reagan’s opinion is that this nation-person is not about to be smothered and stifled. He wishes and aims for the nation to be self-governed and autonomous.

NATION AS PERSON

“It is time for us to realize that we are too great a nation to limit ourselves to small dreams.”

Reagan says here that the nation is able to dream. The nation-person has hitherto limited itself to petty dreams, but according to Reagan, this self-hampering has to come to an end. America is a nation-person that might be suffering from megalomania and so might have too big of a head to limit itself to small dreams. It is not an option for such a great nation-person to have limited dreams or ambitions.

THE WORLD AS A COMMUNITY, NATION AS PERSON, NATION WITH HUMAN ATTRIBUTES

“To those neighbours who share our freedom, we will strengthen our historic ties and assure them of our support and firm commitment. We will match loyalty with loyalty. We will strive for mutually beneficial relations. We will not use our friendship to impose on their sovereignty, for our own sovereignty is not for sale.”
The aim with these metaphors is for the people of America to see America’s place in the community of the world. The fact that America is dependent on the rest of the world to be able to be sovereign is of vital importance. Reagan emphasizes the influence America has on other nation-persons and the influence they have on America and the importance of the human attributes of loyalty, support and commitment for mutually beneficial relations. America has had enemies in the past and will continue to have enemies in the future, therefore America will be in need of support and allies, and hence Reagan’s concern for commitment towards neighbours and friends.

NATION AS PERSON, NATION WITH HUMAN ATTRIBUTES, NATION ACTING HUMAN

“Our reluctance for conflict should not be misjudged as a failure of will. When action is required to preserve our national security, we will act. We will maintain sufficient strength to prevail if need be, knowing that if we do so we have the best chance of never having to use that strength.”

Reagan implies that America has a will; this is true in a way that the people of the nation are unwilling to act when action is uncalled for. However, Reagan says that America is physically strong and would use that strength to defeat enemies which jeopardize the national security. Reagan uses these metaphors to justify war if that time would come and implies that America only would act in self-defence. In reality, America is, according to Reagan, a friendly and non-violent nation-person.

3.1.1 Discussion and conclusions – Reagan

Reagan emphasizes the extent of America’s economic problems when he says that America “suffers” from “economic ills”. This is a way of making the issue vivid and comprehensible for the listeners. As mentioned in the background, the aim for the nation-person is to be healthy and strong (economically and military). This purpose is made clear when he says that: “With the idealism and fair play which are the core of our system and our strength, we can have a strong and prosperous America at peace with itself and with the world”. The conceptual metaphors are used to make political abstract things comprehensible to the people.
America is not a *neighbourhood bully*, who behaves badly towards other nation-persons, but Reagan also says that if America is put in a situation when action is required to maintain security, the nation-person will act. With this metaphor he implies that America would act in self-defence if action is needed. America would not take action if it is not required and this is comparable and corresponds with George W Bush’s metaphor of self-defence to justify the Gulf War I attack. If this self-defence metaphor was accepted by the American people is here left unsaid. To conclude, Reagan emphasizes the vulnerability of the nation, but also how great a nation America is. He conceptualizes America as a loyal and supportive friend and neighbour who is against conflicts and war, but who at the same time is ready to take action if action is needed.

### 3.2 Inaugural address George Herbert Walker Bush 1989 (-1993)

H W Bush’s speech in full is available in Appendix B.

**NATION ACTING HUMAN**

“A new breeze is blowing, and a nation refreshed by freedom stands ready to push on. There is new ground to be broken and new action to be taken.”

H W Bush reveals that the administration has plans for the future and that actions are about to be taken. He implies that America is feeling like a person in need of change. This metaphor also suggests that any action taken will be necessary for the country to improve and develop. If other countries do not like America’s actions, too bad for them, H W Bush implies that the ground to be broken is a necessary step for America. His aim is to assure the people that change is good because it is essential for the continuous prosperity of America.

**NATION ACTING HUMAN**

“But this is a time when the future seems a door you can walk right through into a room called tomorrow. Great nations of the world are moving toward democracy through the door to freedom.”
America is as previously stated on the verge of change. H W Bush conceptualizes change with a room and the act towards change as a door of a house. The metaphor suggests changes and movement at home. The nations are changing the structure of the domestic area and people within the nation are moving around. H W Bush aims for the American people to accept and welcome change and not see it as a negative but necessary condition.

NATION AS PERSON, NATION WITH HUMAN ATTRIBUTES, NATION ACTING HUMAN

“America is never wholly herself unless she is engaged in high moral principle.”

H W Bush conceptualizes the nation as a woman because women are generally seen as morally superior and women are seen as being innately serene and good. In matters of taking action and being strong the nation is probably a man, but when it comes to moral engagement America is a woman. It is understood that America is in fact a nation-person with high moral principles and this is emphasized by the concept of a female nation-person. The metaphor is not only used to explain an American attribute, but is also essential to emphasize the importance of engagement in the matter. The metaphor implies that positive change will not just come upon the nation. H W Bush aims to show that America is actually a morally strong nation-person, but has to make an effort toward becoming better and being her moral self. The citizens need to support the actions and the policies of America.

NATION AS PERSON

“It is to make kinder the face of the nation and gentler the face of the world.”

The metaphoric language here suggests that the nation has a human body with a face which shows the emotions and expressions of America. H W Bush indicates that the nation-person has not shown the rest of the world its prettiest and kindest facial expression and this is not the way to make friends and allies around the world. The problem and solution presented by H W Bush is that the facial expression of the nation has to change in order to be more inviting and humble towards other countries.
“We have more will than wallet; but will is what we need. We will make hard choices, looking at what we have and perhaps allocating it differently, making our decisions based on honest need and prudent safety. And then we will do the wisest thing of all: We will turn to the only resource we have that in times of need always grows – the goodness and the courage of the American people.”

America is presently considered an economically weak nation-person with visions and a strong will. As people with economic issues will recognize, it is a depressing situation to be in when the means do not match the will. However, H W Bush claims that if America makes the hard choices, is honest and avoid risks, the nation-person will get back on track. He insinuates that only necessary expenses will be made to support the family, as would a person do if the financial situation was bad. The problem presented is the economic situation of America and the solution is to save and only spend money on necessary affairs. The citizens may have to help the nation to afford it, but the problem can be solved and the people will get so much more in return. The nation-person is a person who lacks the means to support the family and will not, unless it is absolutely necessary, ask for help.

“…we offer new engagement and a renewed vow: We will stand strong to protect the peace. The “offered hand” is a reluctant fist; but once made, strong, and can be used with great effect.”

America as nation-person is making a promise to the rest of the world to protect peace. H W Bush changes the feminine nation-person to a strong, engaged and earnest nation-person. Humans make vows, but here the vow is metaphorically given from one nation-person to other nation-persons. An offered hand is open to the world, but the reluctant fist is closed and prepared to make an impact and this is associated with the relationship America has with the nations of the world.
NATION ACTING HUMAN, NATION WITH HUMAN ATTRIBUTES

“When America says something, America means it, whether treaty or an agreement or a vow made on marble steps. We will always try to speak clearly, for candour is a compliment, but subtlety, too is good and has its place. While keeping our alliances and friendships around the world strong, ever strong, we will continue the new closeness to the Soviet Union, […]”

Literally, a nation could not possibly say anything, metaphorically, the nation-person America can say a lot - it can make honest promises and can be sincere. H W Bush implies here that it is of great importance that America knows what it wants and is clear and honest with the rest of the world of its ambition and wishes. He emphasizes candour and subtlety as well as the importance of being on friendly basis with other nation-persons. Of current importance is the newly found relationship with the Soviet Union. Furthermore, the issue presented by the president is that peace is not something to take for granted.

NATION AS PERSON

“And when that first cocaine was smuggled in on a ship, it may as well have been a deadly bacteria, so much has it hurt the body, the soul of our country.”

The bacterium H W Bush speaks of does not only hurt the body of the nation-person, but is also able to kill it. The intensity of the problem is not to be mistaken as other than extremely severe. This is an issue that H W Bush obviously wishes to do away with, but no solution is offered in the metaphor. The aim for the president is for the people to realize how serious the problem is by conceptualizing it with a human body, with which it is easy to identify and recognize. People know or can vividly imagine how a deadly bacterium affects the body of a human in contrast to what happens to the country when illegal drugs are imported.

3.2.1 Discussion and conclusion – H W Bush

George H W Bush points out to the citizens the importance of accepting and embracing change. As mentioned in chapter two, metaphor uses language to activate unconscious emotional associations and H W Bush clearly does this when he conceptualizes the nation as a woman. This metaphor may be understood in different ways depending on the maternal experiences and the
mind of the receiver but is clearly aimed to be seen as a positive female being. The statement that America says something and means it refers to an honest and good friend, and is included in the NATION ACTING HUMAN metaphor. As mentioned in the background, Lakoff states that the NATION AS PERSON metaphor is a part of the INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY metaphor where nations are friendly, hostile, passive, active etc. (Lakoff, 1999). According to H W Bush, America is an honest and active nation-person and aims to gain and keep good and honest relationships around the world. Peace and national-security is not something that comes for free. H W Bush conceptualizes drugs as a deadly bacteria and this has no place in America when the aim is for the nation-person to be healthy and strong. This is apparently a vital and serious problem which the president has not yet found the solution to.

3.3 Inaugural address William (Bill) Clinton 1993 (-2001)

Clinton’s speech in full is available in Appendix C.

NATION ACTING HUMAN

“We know we have to face hard truths and take strong steps. But we have not done so.”

In this metaphor the nation has a human body which has to take steps. America is required to take strong steps and face hard truths, but have not done so. Clinton sees this as a shortcoming, which people can identify with similar to when a personal weakness has to be overthrown and conquered. The change is not easily made, however Clinton aims to acknowledge the requirement for action as important. Clinton implies that America has a weakness that has to be taken care of and presents the problem and solution in the same metaphor.

NATION AS PERSON

“Instead, we have drifted, and that drifting has eroded our resources, fractured our economy, and shaken our confidence.”

Clinton continues to display America’s weakness, says that the confidence of the nation has been shaken, and is therefore not as stable and solid as it should and could be. The economy of the
nation is conceptualized as a bone in the nation’s body that has been fractured. Clinton emphasizes the share of adversities that has needlessly affected the nation-person both physically and emotionally. He conveys this as a problem that has to be solved because in this condition America is not strong enough to be effective. His aim is to make the people realize that the current situation is unacceptable and the actions necessary have to be taken.

NATION AS PERSON

“There is nothing wrong with America that cannot be cured by what is right with America.”

Clinton suggests a solution for America’s weaknesses that he has previously acknowledged. The weakness is conceptualized as a disease that has to be cured and he vaguely defines the cure of this disease as “what is right with America”. In this negative phrase he says that the body and mind of America is sick, but can be cured. He implies that the condition can be cured and the citizens should have hope of improvement.

NATION AS PERSON

“We must provide for our nation the way a family provides for its children.”

In this metaphor, America is a child that needs to be provided for. The American people have to support the nation-person so that America can grow and become a strong and confident leader of the world. Clinton aims to appeal to the parental emotions of the listener. A family has an obligation to take care of the children, thus does the nation need nurturance.

NATION ACTING HUMAN, NATION AS PERSON

“Let us put aside the personal advantage so that we can feel the pain and see the promise of America.”

Clinton aims for the people to first and foremost acknowledge the needs and prospects of America. He seeks support and appeals to the people to look beyond their own needs and to see the bigger picture. He appeals to the emotions of responsibility and support of the listeners.
“Clearly America must **continue to lead the world** we did so much to make. While America **rebuilds at home**, we will not **shrink from the challenges, nor fail to seize the opportunities**, of this new world.”

Concurrent with the fact laid forward that America is fragile and indigent this nation-person is also a leader. Clinton points out the importance of America keeping the gained power. America renovates at home and the metaphor could be seen as a person who has problems at home, who still has to go to work and make necessary decisions and tasks. This argument is probably more vivid to the American citizens in leading positions who have trouble combining home and family life with the demanding leadership at work.

**NATION AS PERSON, NATION WITH HUMAN ATTRIBUTES, NATION ACTING HUMAN**

“But **our greatest strength** is the power of **our ideas**, which are still new in many lands. […] Our hopes, our hearts, are with those on every continent **who are building democracy** and freedom. Their cause is **America’s cause**.”

The nation has, according to Clinton, visions and ideas, it has both human attributes and is like a person striving to make things better. Clinton states that America is a well-developed nation with powerful and just ideas to be proud of and that the nation is to be seen as a fair and pioneering country compared to other countries. America has visions, hopes and dreams and these are to be supported by the citizens of the nation. The hopes and hearts Clinton mentions in this conceptual metaphor refers to, according to the context, the hopes and hearts of the citizens and is therefore not a metaphorical personification of the nation.

**3.3.1 Discussion and conclusion - Clinton**

Clinton uses metaphors to bring forward the weaknesses of America as a problem, however, as mentioned in chapter two, he is not only able to present the problem, but also indicates a solution. Also mentioned in chapter two, Lakoff (1995) claims that in the **NATION AS FAMILY** metaphor, the nation is seen as a family where the government is a parent and the citizens are children. However, in Clinton’s inaugural the president uses the **NATION AS PERSON** metaphor describing
the citizens as a family and the nation as a child that the family has an obligation to provide for. Clinton also puts forward his vision of America’s greatness, and, as stated in chapter two, the metaphors used represent the speaker’s theories and plans. He aims, similar to previous presidents, to build up a healthy and strong America that is able to continue to lead the world.

3.4 Inaugural address George W Bush 2001-

W Bush’s speech in full is available in Appendix D.

NATION AS PERSON

"The grandest of these proposals is an unfolding American promise that everyone belongs, that everyone deserves a chance, that no insignificant person was ever born."

W Bush claims that America is able to make promises to the people. He lets the people see the nation as a parent or guardian that promises to take care of the children (the citizens). The aim of the metaphor is for every person to feel important and unique.

NATION ACTING HUMAN

“Today, we affirm a new commitment to live out our nation’s promise through civility, courage, compassion and character.”

The nation-person has made promises for the citizens to live out through civility, courage, compassion and character. A nation, literally, cannot make promises, people do. The nation is metaphorically a caring and decision-making person who expects things in return. W Bush wishes for the citizens of America to take responsibility and to support the nation’s actions. Attributes also mentioned in this conceptual metaphor are civility, courage, compassion and character. However, interpreted according to the context, these are attributes of the American people and are therefore not included in the metaphorical personification of America.
NATION AS PERSON

“America, at its best, matches a commitment to principle with a concern for civility. A civil society demands from each of us good will and respect, fair dealing and forgiveness.”

According to W Bush, America as a nation-person has principles and a concern for civility. For the nation to continue to be at peace and a strong authority of the world, the nation has to keep all its parts together. Bush aims for support and respect for America from the people.

NATION WITH HUMAN ATTRIBUTES, NATION AS PERSON

“America, at its best, is compassionate. In the quiet of the American conscience, we know that deep persistent poverty is unworthy of our nation’s promise.”

W Bush claims that America is a compassionate nation-person. However, he suggests that America is not at its best and is therefore currently not compassionate. In times of need and desperation, the nation-person may not be at all compassionate and think of others. He implies that America is a humble nation-person that looks after others and that America is decent and respectable. What promise he refers to when he indicates that the poverty is not worthy of the nation’s promise is not clear because of the many promises made by the nation.

NATION ACTING HUMAN

“And I can pledge our nation to a goal: When we see that a wounded traveller on the road to Jericho, we will not pass to the other side.”

The nation is here conceptualized as a confident person who is not afraid to reach out to help others through the metaphor of the Good Samaritan; however, this is a biblical metaphor within the NATION ACTING HUMAN metaphor. The travellers are the developing countries striving towards democracy. America is a democratic country reaching out to help other countries to become as developed as America.
“But the themes of this day he would know: our nation’s grand story of courage and its simple dream of dignity.”

The recurrent theme of America’s dream here only consists of a simple dream, much unlike Reagan’s statement that America will not merely settle for small dreams. W Bush implies that the only dream America has as a nation-person is a dream of dignity. America has had a grand story and has made grand things and now the nation-person only wants respect and dignity. W Bush relates to Jefferson and states that he would have been like a proud father of the humble and valiant America. America is a nation to be proud of, according to W Bush.

3.4.1 Discussion and conclusion – George W Bush

Similar to previous presidents, George W Bush uses the NATION AS PERSON metaphor with the “American promise” target, this is a common metaphor which is not as easy to reflect on because of its frequency in political discourse and may not always be seen as being a metaphor for something else. W Bush uses the “American promise” several times in his inaugural speech; however, the metaphor does not have the same meaning every time. Depending on the context and the mind of the receiver, which is relevant for interpretation, the metaphor may have different meaning.

3.5 General discussion – differences and similarities

The most commonly used metaphor of personification in the inaugural speeches is clearly NATION AS PERSON. Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton and George W Bush use this metaphor more frequently than any other conceptual metaphor. However, George H W Bush uses the NATION ACTING HUMAN metaphor more often than NATION AS PERSON in his speech. He focuses more on emphasizing the fact that America has to act and change than on promoting solidarity and national loyalty among the American people. H W Bush aims to make the people accept change and see the benefits of making friends in the world. He is the president that uses metaphors of personification most frequently in his inaugural speech compared to Reagan, Clinton and W
Bush. He uses almost twice as many conceptual metaphors of personification and three times as many NATION ACTING HUMAN metaphors as his son George W Bush.

H W Bush is the only president of these four that conceptualizes the nation as a woman. The way of showing morality as a female attribute is not chosen by any other president. George H W Bush and George W Bush do not as clearly as the other presidents point out the greatness of America, they concentrate on the promise; they emphasise qualities like American candour, honesty and compassion. Ronald Reagan is the only president that uses THE WORLD AS A COMMUNITY metaphor by mentioning neighbours. The other presidents use relationships in terms of friends instead of the relationship among neighbours. Bill Clinton contradicts earlier investigations of how the nation is personalized in political discourse by conceptualizing the nation as a child that the family has to provide for and take care of. However, in the same speech, Clinton points out the strength and greatness of America. This is something that Reagan also points out by saying that America will not limit itself to small dreams and that America has to maintain and use its strength. Reagan and Clinton use similar personification of the economy where Reagan conceptualizes the inflation as a disease, an “economic ill” and Clinton conceptualizes this as a “fractured economy”. Both conceptions present the nation as having a body which is suffering or broken. Similar to George H W Bush’s domestic terms, Clinton uses the metaphor of America “rebuilding at home”.

Bush junior uses less unique metaphors compared to the other presidents. Only Reagan uses THE WORLD AS A COMMUNITY metaphor, as mentioned earlier, H W Bush uses domestic things such as wallet, door and room and Clinton is the only president that conceptualizes the nation as a child, but George W Bush is more careful. He does not use as many conceptual metaphors personifying the nation as the other presidents. Both presidents Bush and president Clinton uses the American promise in their speech but this metaphor is not used by Ronald Reagan. Reagan claims that America as a nation-person has great dreams, in contrast to George W Bush who says that America only has a simple dream of dignity. The presidents mainly use metaphors of strength and weakness, dreams, family and friendships in one way or the other. This is a way of appealing to the emotions of the listener and because they probably are efficient metaphors to use in political discourse the four presidents use them often in their inaugural speeches.
4. Summary and conclusion

This essay has dealt with how American presidents use conceptual metaphors to personalize the nation. The research and analysis was based on four similar speeches - the inaugural addresses which are used to set the tone for the administration. Chapter one introduces the subject and clarifies the aim, method and material used. Chapter two consists of the background and deals with previous research and is mostly based on George Lakoff’s theories and Lakoff and Johnson’s book *Metaphors we live by*. This, because the view of metaphors basically changed with the theories they presented. Chapter three includes the material collected and the analysis of how the chosen conceptual metaphors THE WORLD AS A COMMUNITY, NATION AS PERSON, NATION WITH HUMAN ATTRIBUTES and NATION ACTING HUMAN are used. The analysis showed that some metaphors are subtle implications of issues that have to be discussed and acted on and other metaphors are powerful and serious explanations, highlighting current issues. Political speeches are not primarily about politics itself, but are a way to present current issues in a way so that the people realize the problems and the visions of the politicians.

The aim of this essay was to detect and analyze conceptual metaphors of personification in American inaugural addresses. The speeches chosen and analyzed were the first speech delivered by the four presidents. The analysis showed that all presidents frequently used metaphors to personalize America to activate the emotions of the listener. The presidents may use the same word order, but the meaning differs and this is dependent on the aim of the speaker. The conceptual metaphors are not individual words, but phrases that emotionally appeals to the listener in one way or the other. The analysis also revealed the importance of interpreting the metaphors in accordance to the context because in some cases the language is literal and sometimes metaphorical. Furthermore, the presidents’ aims showed to be quite similar at first glance because of the similarity of chosen words, but a closer look and comparison showed that they were not as alike.

To summarize, it is important to be aware of metaphoric language; how it is used and how the metaphors affect us. Metaphors may be highly manipulative at the same time as they are highly enlightening and the effect may be both positive and negative. In any given situation language
becomes more vivid and alive with metaphors, but they cannot, however, be perceived as being harmless.
WORKS CITED OR REFERRED TO

PRIMARY SOURCE


SECONDARY SOURCES


Appendix A

Ronald Reagan

First Inaugural Address

Tuesday, January 20, 1981

Senator Hatfield, Mr. Chief Justice, Mr. President, Vice President Bush, Vice President Mondale, Senator Baker, Speaker O'Neill, Reverend Moomaw, and my fellow citizens: To a few of us here today, this is a solemn and most momentous occasion; and yet, in the history of our Nation, it is a commonplace occurrence. The orderly transfer of authority as called for in the Constitution routinely takes place as it has for almost two centuries and few of us stop to think how unique we really are. In the eyes of many in the world, this every-4-year ceremony we accept as normal is nothing less than a miracle.

Mr. President, I want our fellow citizens to know how much you did to carry on this tradition. By your gracious cooperation in the transition process, you have shown a watching world that we are a united people pledged to maintaining a political system which guarantees individual liberty to a greater degree than any other, and I thank you and your people for all your help in maintaining the continuity which is the bulwark of our Republic.

The business of our nation goes forward. These United States are confronted with an economic affliction of great proportions. We suffer from the longest and one of the worst sustained inflations in our national history. It distorts our economic decisions, penalizes thrift, and crushes the struggling young and the fixed-income elderly alike. It threatens to shatter the lives of millions of our people.

Idle industries have cast workers into unemployment, causing human misery and personal indignity. Those who do work are denied a fair return for their labor by a tax system which penalizes successful achievement and keeps us from maintaining full productivity.

But great as our tax burden is, it has not kept pace with public spending. For decades, we have piled deficit upon deficit, mortgaging our future and our children's future for the temporary convenience of the present. To continue this long trend is to guarantee tremendous social, cultural, political, and economic upheavals.

You and I, as individuals, can, by borrowing, live beyond our means, but for only a limited period of time. Why, then, should we think that collectively, as a nation, we are not bound by that same limitation?

We must act today in order to preserve tomorrow. And let there be no misunderstanding—we are going to begin to act, beginning today.

The economic ills we suffer have come upon us over several decades. They will not go away in days, weeks, or months, but they will go away. They will go away because we, as Americans, have the capacity now, as we have had in the past, to do whatever needs to be done to preserve this last and greatest bastion of freedom.

In this present crisis, government is not the solution to our problem.

From time to time, we have been tempted to believe that society has become too complex to be managed by self-rule, that government by an elite group is superior to government for, by, and of the people. But if no one among us is capable of governing himself, then who among us
has the capacity to govern someone else? All of us together, in and out of government, must bear the burden. The solutions we seek must be equitable, with no one group singled out to pay a higher price.

We hear much of special interest groups. Our concern must be for a special interest group that has been too long neglected. It knows no sectional boundaries or ethnic and racial divisions, and it crosses political party lines. It is made up of men and women who raise our food, patrol our streets, man our mines and our factories, teach our children, keep our homes, and heal us when we are sick—professionals, industrialists, shopkeepers, clerks, cabbies, and truckdrivers. They are, in short, "We the people," this breed called Americans.

Well, this administration's objective will be a healthy, vigorous, growing economy that provides equal opportunity for all Americans, with no barriers born of bigotry or discrimination. Putting America back to work means putting all Americans back to work. Ending inflation means freeing all Americans from the terror of runaway living costs. All must share in the productive work of this "new beginning" and all must share in the bounty of a revived economy. With the idealism and fair play which are the core of our system and our strength, we can have a strong and prosperous America at peace with itself and the world.

So, as we begin, let us take inventory. We are a nation that has a government—not the other way around. And this makes us special among the nations of the Earth. Our Government has no power except that granted it by the people. It is time to check and reverse the growth of government which shows signs of having grown beyond the consent of the governed.

It is my intention to curb the size and influence of the Federal establishment and to demand recognition of the distinction between the powers granted to the Federal Government and those reserved to the States or to the people. All of us need to be reminded that the Federal Government did not create the States; the States created the Federal Government.

Now, so there will be no misunderstanding, it is not my intention to do away with government. It is, rather, to make it work—work with us, not over us; to stand by our side, not ride on our back. Government can and must provide opportunity, not smother it; foster productivity, not stifle it.

If we look to the answer as to why, for so many years, we achieved so much, prospered as no other people on Earth, it was because here, in this land, we unleashed the energy and individual genius of man to a greater extent than has ever been done before. Freedom and the dignity of the individual have been more available and assured here than in any other place on Earth. The price for this freedom at times has been high, but we have never been unwilling to pay that price.

It is no coincidence that our present troubles parallel and are proportionate to the intervention and intrusion in our lives that result from unnecessary and excessive growth of government. It is time for us to realize that we are too great a nation to limit ourselves to small dreams. We are not, as some would have us believe, doomed to an inevitable decline. I do not believe in a fate that will fall on us no matter what we do. I do believe in a fate that will fall on us if we do nothing. So, with all the creative energy at our command, let us begin an era of national renewal. Let us renew our determination, our courage, and our strength. And let us renew our faith and our hope.

We have every right to dream heroic dreams. Those who say that we are in a time when there are no heroes just don't know where to look. You can see heroes every day going in and out of
factory gates. Others, a handful in number, produce enough food to feed all of us and then the world beyond. You meet heroes across a counter—and they are on both sides of that counter. There are entrepreneurs with faith in themselves and faith in an idea who create new jobs, new wealth and opportunity. They are individuals and families whose taxes support the Government and whose voluntary gifts support church, charity, culture, art, and education. Their patriotism is quiet but deep. Their values sustain our national life.

I have used the words "they" and "their" in speaking of these heroes. I could say "you" and "your" because I am addressing the heroes of whom I speak—you, the citizens of this blessed land. Your dreams, your hopes, your goals are going to be the dreams, the hopes, and the goals of this administration, so help me God.

We shall reflect the compassion that is so much a part of your makeup. How can we love our country and not love our countrymen, and loving them, reach out a hand when they fall, heal them when they are sick, and provide opportunities to make them self-sufficient so they will be equal in fact and not just in theory?

Can we solve the problems confronting us? Well, the answer is an unequivocal and emphatic "yes." To paraphrase Winston Churchill, I did not take the oath I have just taken with the intention of presiding over the dissolution of the world's strongest economy.

In the days ahead I will propose removing the roadblocks that have slowed our economy and reduced productivity. Steps will be taken aimed at restoring the balance between the various levels of government. Progress may be slow—measured in inches and feet, not miles—but we will progress. Is it time to reawaken this industrial giant, to get government back within its means, and to lighten our punitive tax burden. And these will be our first priorities, and on these principles, there will be no compromise.

On the eve of our struggle for independence a man who might have been one of the greatest among the Founding Fathers, Dr. Joseph Warren, President of the Massachusetts Congress, said to his fellow Americans, "Our country is in danger, but not to be despaired of.... On you depend the fortunes of America. You are to decide the important questions upon which rests the happiness and the liberty of millions yet unborn. Act worthy of yourselves."

Well, I believe we, the Americans of today, are ready to act worthy of ourselves, ready to do what must be done to ensure happiness and liberty for ourselves, our children and our children's children.

And as we renew ourselves here in our own land, we will be seen as having greater strength throughout the world. We will again be the exemplar of freedom and a beacon of hope for those who do not now have freedom.

To those neighbors and allies who share our freedom, we will strengthen our historic ties and assure them of our support and firm commitment. We will match loyalty with loyalty. We will strive for mutually beneficial relations. We will not use our friendship to impose on their sovereignty, for our own sovereignty is not for sale.

As for the enemies of freedom, those who are potential adversaries, they will be reminded that peace is the highest aspiration of the American people. We will negotiate for it, sacrifice for it; we will not surrender for it—now or ever.

Our forbearance should never be misunderstood. Our reluctance for conflict should not be misjudged as a failure of will. When action is required to preserve our national security, we will act. We will maintain sufficient strength to prevail if need be, knowing that if we do so we
have the best chance of never having to use that strength.

Above all, we must realize that no arsenal, or no weapon in the arsenals of the world, is so formidable as the will and moral courage of free men and women. It is a weapon our adversaries in today's world do not have. It is a weapon that we as Americans do have. Let that be understood by those who practice terrorism and prey upon their neighbors.

I am told that tens of thousands of prayer meetings are being held on this day, and for that I am deeply grateful. We are a nation under God, and I believe God intended for us to be free. It would be fitting and good, I think, if on each Inauguration Day in future years it should be declared a day of prayer.

This is the first time in history that this ceremony has been held, as you have been told, on this West Front of the Capitol. Standing here, one faces a magnificent vista, opening up on this city's special beauty and history. At the end of this open mall are those shrines to the giants on whose shoulders we stand.

Directly in front of me, the monument to a monumental man: George Washington, Father of our country. A man of humility who came to greatness reluctantly. He led America out of revolutionary victory into infant nationhood. Off to one side, the stately memorial to Thomas Jefferson. The Declaration of Independence flames with his eloquence.

And then beyond the Reflecting Pool the dignified columns of the Lincoln Memorial. Whoever would understand in his heart the meaning of America will find it in the life of Abraham Lincoln.

Beyond those monuments to heroism is the Potomac River, and on the far shore the sloping hills of Arlington National Cemetery with its row on row of simple white markers bearing crosses or Stars of David. They add up to only a tiny fraction of the price that has been paid for our freedom.

Each one of those markers is a monument to the kinds of hero I spoke of earlier. Their lives ended in places called Belleau Wood, The Argonne, Omaha Beach, Salerno and halfway around the world on Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Pork Chop Hill, the Chosin Reservoir, and in a hundred rice paddies and jungles of a place called Vietnam.

Under one such marker lies a young man—Martin Treptow—who left his job in a small town barber shop in 1917 to go to France with the famed Rainbow Division. There, on the western front, he was killed trying to carry a message between battalions under heavy artillery fire.

We are told that on his body was found a diary. On the flyleaf under the heading, "My Pledge," he had written these words: "America must win this war. Therefore, I will work, I will save, I will sacrifice, I will endure, I will fight cheerfully and do my utmost, as if the issue of the whole struggle depended on me alone."

The crisis we are facing today does not require of us the kind of sacrifice that Martin Treptow and so many thousands of others were called upon to make. It does require, however, our best effort, and our willingness to believe in ourselves and to believe in our capacity to perform great deeds; to believe that together, with God's help, we can and will resolve the problems which now confront us.

And, after all, why shouldn't we believe that? We are Americans. God bless you, and thank you.
Appendix B

George H W Bush

Inaugural Address

Friday, January 20, 1989

Mr. Chief Justice, Mr. President, Vice President Quayle, Senator Mitchell, Speaker Wright, Senator Dole, Congressman Michel, and fellow citizens, neighbors, and friends:

There is a man here who has earned a lasting place in our hearts and in our history. President Reagan, on behalf of our Nation, I thank you for the wonderful things that you have done for America.

I have just repeated word for word the oath taken by George Washington 200 years ago, and the Bible on which I placed my hand is the Bible on which he placed his. It is right that the memory of Washington be with us today, not only because this is our Bicentennial Inauguration, but because Washington remains the Father of our Country. And he would, I think, be gladdened by this day; for today is the concrete expression of a stunning fact: our continuity these 200 years since our government began.

We meet on democracy's front porch, a good place to talk as neighbors and as friends. For this is a day when our nation is made whole, when our differences, for a moment, are suspended.

And my first act as President is a prayer. I ask you to bow your heads:

Heavenly Father, we bow our heads and thank You for Your love. Accept our thanks for the peace that yields this day and the shared faith that makes its continuance likely. Make us strong to do Your work, willing to heed and hear Your will, and write on our hearts these words: "Use power to help people." For we are given power not to advance our own purposes, nor to make a great show in the world, nor a name. There is but one just use of power, and it is to serve people. Help us to remember it, Lord. Amen.

I come before you and assume the Presidency at a moment rich with promise. We live in a peaceful, prosperous time, but we can make it better. For a new breeze is blowing, and a world refreshed by freedom seems reborn; for in man's heart, if not in fact, the day of the dictator is over. The totalitarian era is passing, its old ideas blown away like leaves from an ancient, lifeless tree. A new breeze is blowing, and a nation refreshed by freedom stands ready to push on. There is new ground to be broken, and new action to be taken. There are times when the future seems thick as a fog; you sit and wait, hoping the mists will lift and reveal the right path. But this is a time when the future seems a door you can walk right through into a room called tomorrow.

Great nations of the world are moving toward democracy through the door to freedom. Men and women of the world move toward free markets through the door to prosperity. The people
of the world agitate for free expression and free thought through the door to the moral and intellectual satisfactions that only liberty allows.

We know what works: Freedom works. We know what's right: Freedom is right. We know how to secure a more just and prosperous life for man on Earth: through free markets, free speech, free elections, and the exercise of free will unhampered by the state.

For the first time in this century, for the first time in perhaps all history, man does not have to invent a system by which to live. We don't have to talk late into the night about which form of government is better. We don't have to wrest justice from the kings. We only have to summon it from within ourselves. We must act on what we know. I take as my guide the hope of a saint: In crucial things, unity; in important things, diversity; in all things, generosity.

America today is a proud, free nation, decent and civil, a place we cannot help but love. We know in our hearts, not loudly and proudly, but as a simple fact, that this country has meaning beyond what we see, and that our strength is a force for good. But have we changed as a nation even in our time? Are we enthralled with material things, less appreciative of the nobility of work and sacrifice?

My friends, we are not the sum of our possessions. They are not the measure of our lives. In our hearts we know what matters. We cannot hope only to leave our children a bigger car, a bigger bank account. We must hope to give them a sense of what it means to be a loyal friend, a loving parent, a citizen who leaves his home, his neighborhood and town better than he found it. What do we want the men and women who work with us to say when we are no longer there? That we were more driven to succeed than anyone around us? Or that we stopped to ask if a sick child had gotten better, and stayed a moment there to trade a word of friendship?

No President, no government, can teach us to remember what is best in what we are. But if the man you have chosen to lead this government can help make a difference; if he can celebrate the quieter, deeper successes that are made not of gold and silk, but of better hearts and finer souls; if he can do these things, then he must.

America is never wholly herself unless she is engaged in high moral principle. We as a people have such a purpose today. It is to make kinder the face of the Nation and gentler the face of the world. My friends, we have work to do. There are the homeless, lost and roaming. There are the children who have nothing, no love, no normalcy. There are those who cannot free themselves of enslavement to whatever addiction—drugs, welfare, the demoralization that rules the slums. There is crime to be conquered, the rough crime of the streets. There are young women to be helped who are about to become mothers of children they can't care for and might not love. They need our care, our guidance, and our education, though we bless them for choosing life.

The old solution, the old way, was to think that public money alone could end these problems. But we have learned that is not so. And in any case, our funds are low. We have a deficit to bring down. We have more will than wallet; but will is what we need. We will make the hard choices, looking at what we have and perhaps allocating it differently, making our decisions based on honest need and prudent safety. And then we will do the wisest thing of all: We will turn to the only resource we have that in times of need always grows—the goodness and the courage of the American people.

I am speaking of a new engagement in the lives of others, a new activism, hands-on and
involved, that gets the job done. We must bring in the generations, harnessing the unused
talent of the elderly and the unfocused energy of the young. For not only leadership is passed
from generation to generation, but so is stewardship. And the generation born after the Second
World War has come of age.

I have spoken of a thousand points of light, of all the community organizations that are
spread like stars throughout the Nation, doing good. We will work hand in hand, encouraging,
sometimes leading, sometimes being led, rewarding. We will work on this in the White House,
in the Cabinet agencies. I will go to the people and the programs that are the brighter points of
light, and I will ask every member of my government to become involved. The old ideas are
new again because they are not old, they are timeless: duty, sacrifice, commitment, and a
patriotism that finds its expression in taking part and pitching in.

We need a new engagement, too, between the Executive and the Congress. The challenges
before us will be thrashed out with the House and the Senate. We must bring the Federal
budget into balance. And we must ensure that America stands before the world united, strong,
at peace, and fiscally sound. But, of course, things may be difficult. We need compromise; we
have had dissension. We need harmony; we have had a chorus of discordant voices.

For Congress, too, has changed in our time. There has grown a certain divisiveness. We have
seen the hard looks and heard the statements in which not each other's ideas are challenged,
but each other's motives. And our great parties have too often been far apart and untrusting of
each other. It has been this way since Vietnam. That war cleaves us still. But, friends, that war
began in earnest a quarter of a century ago; and surely the statute of limitations has been
reached. This is a fact: The final lesson of Vietnam is that no great nation can long afford to be
sundered by a memory. A new breeze is blowing, and the old bipartisanship must be made
new again.

To my friends—and yes, I do mean friends—in the loyal opposition—and yes, I mean loyal: I
put out my hand. I am putting out my hand to you, Mr. Speaker. I am putting out my hand to
you, Mr. Majority Leader. For this is the thing: This is the age of the offered hand. We can't
turn back clocks, and I don't want to. But when our fathers were young, Mr. Speaker, our
differences ended at the water's edge. And we don't wish to turn back time, but when our
mothers were young, Mr. Majority Leader, the Congress and the Executive were capable of
working together to produce a budget on which this nation could live. Let us negotiate soon
and hard. But in the end, let us produce. The American people await action. They didn't send
us here to bicker. They ask us to rise above the merely partisan. "In crucial things, unity"—and
this, my friends, is crucial.

To the world, too, we offer new engagement and a renewed vow: We will stay strong to
protect the peace. The "offered hand" is a reluctant fist; but once made, strong, and can be used
with great effect. There are today Americans who are held against their will in foreign lands,
and Americans who are unaccounted for. Assistance can be shown here, and will be long
remembered. Good will begets good will. Good faith can be a spiral that endlessly moves on.

Great nations like great men must keep their word. When America says something, America
means it, whether a treaty or an agreement or a vow made on marble steps. We will always try
to speak clearly, for candor is a compliment, but subtlety, too, is good and has its place. While
keeping our alliances and friendships around the world strong, ever strong, we will continue
the new closeness with the Soviet Union, consistent both with our security and with progress.
One might say that our new relationship in part reflects the triumph of hope and strength over
experience. But hope is good, and so are strength and vigilance.

Here today are tens of thousands of our citizens who feel the understandable satisfaction of those who have taken part in democracy and seen their hopes fulfilled. But my thoughts have been turning the past few days to those who would be watching at home, to an older fellow who will throw a salute by himself when the flag goes by, and the women who will tell her sons the words of the battle hymns. I don't mean this to be sentimental. I mean that on days like this, we remember that we are all part of a continuum, inescapably connected by the ties that bind.

Our children are watching in schools throughout our great land. And to them I say, thank you for watching democracy's big day. For democracy belongs to us all, and freedom is like a beautiful kite that can go higher and higher with the breeze. And to all I say: No matter what your circumstances or where you are, you are part of this day, you are part of the life of our great nation.

A President is neither prince nor pope, and I don't seek a window on men's souls. In fact, I yearn for a greater tolerance, an easy-goingness about each other's attitudes and way of life.

There are few clear areas in which we as a society must rise up united and express our intolerance. The most obvious now is drugs. And when that first cocaine was smuggled in on a ship, it may as well have been a deadly bacteria, so much has it hurt the body, the soul of our country. And there is much to be done and to be said, but take my word for it: This scourge will stop.

And so, there is much to do; and tomorrow the work begins. I do not mistrust the future; I do not fear what is ahead. For our problems are large, but our heart is larger. Our challenges are great, but our will is greater. And if our flaws are endless, God's love is truly boundless.

Some see leadership as high drama, and the sound of trumpets calling, and sometimes it is that. But I see history as a book with many pages, and each day we fill a page with acts of hopefulness and meaning. The new breeze blows, a page turns, the story unfolds. And so today a chapter begins, a small and stately story of unity, diversity, and generosity—shared, and written, together.

Thank you. God bless you and God bless the United States of America.
My fellow citizens:

Today we celebrate the mystery of American renewal.
This ceremony is held in the depth of winter. But, by the words we speak and the faces we show the world, we force the spring.
A spring reborn in the world's oldest democracy, that brings forth the vision and courage to reinvent America.

When our founders boldly declared America's independence to the world and our purposes to the Almighty, they knew that America, to endure, would have to change.
Not change for change's sake, but change to preserve America's ideals—life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness. Though we march to the music of our time, our mission is timeless.
Each generation of Americans must define what it means to be an American.
On behalf of our nation, I salute my predecessor, President Bush, for his half-century of service to America.
And I thank the millions of men and women whose steadfastness and sacrifice triumphed over Depression, fascism and Communism.

Today, a generation raised in the shadows of the Cold War assumes new responsibilities in a world warmed by the sunshine of freedom but threatened still by ancient hatreds and new plagues.
Raised in unrivaled prosperity, we inherit an economy that is still the world's strongest, but is weakened by business failures, stagnant wages, increasing inequality, and deep divisions among our people.

When George Washington first took the oath I have just sworn to uphold, news traveled slowly across the land by horseback and across the ocean by boat. Now, the sights and sounds of this ceremony are broadcast instantaneously to billions around the world.
Communications and commerce are global; investment is mobile; technology is almost magical; and ambition for a better life is now universal. We earn our livelihood in peaceful competition with people all across the earth.
Profound and powerful forces are shaking and remaking our world, and the urgent question of our time is whether we can make change our friend and not our enemy.
This new world has already enriched the lives of millions of Americans who are able to compete and win in it. But when most people are working harder for less; when others cannot work at all; when the cost of health care devastates families and threatens to bankrupt many of

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15. This new world has already enriched the lives of millions of Americans who are able to compete and win in it. But when most people are working harder for less; when others cannot work at all; when the cost of health care devastates families and threatens to bankrupt many of
our enterprises, great and small; when fear of crime robs law-abiding citizens of their freedom; and when millions of poor children cannot even imagine the lives we are calling them to lead—we have not made change our friend.

We know we have to face hard truths and take strong steps. But we have not done so. Instead, we have drifted, and that drifting has eroded our resources, fractured our economy, and shaken our confidence.

Though our challenges are fearsome, so are our strengths. And Americans have ever been a restless, questing, hopeful people. We must bring to our task today the vision and will of those who came before us.

From our revolution, the Civil War, to the Great Depression to the civil rights movement, our people have always mustered the determination to construct from these crises the pillars of our history.

Thomas Jefferson believed that to preserve the very foundations of our nation, we would need dramatic change from time to time. Well, my fellow citizens, this is our time. Let us embrace it.

Our democracy must be not only the envy of the world but the engine of our own renewal. There is nothing wrong with America that cannot be cured by what is right with America.

And so today, we pledge an end to the era of deadlock and drift—a new season of American renewal has begun.

To renew America, we must be bold.

We must do what no generation has had to do before. We must invest more in our own people, in their jobs, in their future, and at the same time cut our massive debt. And we must do so in a world in which we must compete for every opportunity.

It will not be easy; it will require sacrifice. But it can be done, and done fairly, not choosing sacrifice for its own sake, but for our own sake. We must provide for our nation the way a family provides for its children.

Our Founders saw themselves in the light of posterity. We can do no less. Anyone who has ever watched a child's eyes wander into sleep knows what posterity is. Posterity is the world to come—the world for whom we hold our ideals, from whom we have borrowed our planet, and to whom we bear sacred responsibility.

We must do what America does best: offer more opportunity to all and demand responsibility from all.

It is time to break the bad habit of expecting something for nothing, from our government or from each other. Let us all take more responsibility, not only for ourselves and our families but for our communities and our country.

To renew America, we must revitalize our democracy.

This beautiful capital, like every capital since the dawn of civilization, is often a place of intrigue and calculation. Powerful people maneuver for position and worry endlessly about who is in and who is out, who is up and who is down, forgetting those people whose toil and sweat sends us here and pays our way.

Americans deserve better, and in this city today, there are people who want to do better. And so I say to all of us here, let us resolve to reform our politics, so that power and privilege no
longer shout down the voice of the people. Let us put aside personal advantage so that we can feel the pain and see the promise of America.

Let us resolve to make our government a place for what Franklin Roosevelt called "bold, persistent experimentation," a government for our tomorrows, not our yesterdays.

Let us give this capital back to the people to whom it belongs.

To renew America, we must meet challenges abroad as well as at home. There is no longer division between what is foreign and what is domestic—the world economy, the world environment, the world AIDS crisis, the world arms race—they affect us all.

Today, as an old order passes, the new world is more free but less stable. Communism's collapse has called forth old animosities and new dangers. Clearly America must continue to lead the world we did so much to make.

While America rebuilds at home, we will not shrink from the challenges, nor fail to seize the opportunities, of this new world. Together with our friends and allies, we will work to shape change, lest it engulf us.

When our vital interests are challenged, or the will and conscience of the international community is defied, we will act—with peaceful diplomacy when ever possible, with force when necessary. The brave Americans serving our nation today in the Persian Gulf, in Somalia, and wherever else they stand are testament to our resolve.

But our greatest strength is the power of our ideas, which are still new in many lands. Across the world, we see them embraced—and we rejoice. Our hopes, our hearts, our hands, are with those on every continent who are building democracy and freedom. Their cause is America's cause.

The American people have summoned the change we celebrate today. You have raised your voices in an unmistakable chorus. You have cast your votes in historic numbers. And you have changed the face of Congress, the presidency and the political process itself. Yes, you, my fellow Americans have forced the spring. Now, we must do the work the season demands.

To that work I now turn, with all the authority of my office. I ask the Congress to join with me. But no president, no Congress, no government, can undertake this mission alone. My fellow Americans, you, too, must play your part in our renewal. I challenge a new generation of young Americans to a season of service—to act on your idealism by helping troubled children, keeping company with those in need, reconnecting our torn communities. There is so much to be done—enough indeed for millions of others who are still young in spirit to give of themselves in service, too.

In serving, we recognize a simple but powerful truth—we need each other. And we must care for one another. Today, we do more than celebrate America; we rededicate ourselves to the very idea of America.

An idea born in revolution and renewed through 2 centuries of challenge. An idea tempered by the knowledge that, but for fate, we—the fortunate and the unfortunate—might have been each other. An idea ennobled by the faith that our nation can summon from its myriad diversity the deepest measure of unity. An idea infused with the conviction that America's long heroic journey must go forever upward.

And so, my fellow Americans, at the edge of the 21st century, let us begin with energy and hope, with faith and discipline, and let us work until our work is done. The scripture says,
"And let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season, we shall reap, if we faint not."

From this joyful mountaintop of celebration, we hear a call to service in the valley. We have heard the trumpets. We have changed the guard. And now, each in our way, and with God's help, we must answer the call.

Thank you and God bless you all.
President Clinton, distinguished guests and my fellow citizens, the peaceful transfer of authority is rare in history, yet common in our country. With a simple oath, we affirm old traditions and make new beginnings.

As I begin, I thank President Clinton for his service to our nation.
And I thank Vice President Gore for a contest conducted with spirit and ended with grace.
I am honored and humbled to stand here, where so many of America’s leaders have come before me, and so many will follow.

We have a place, all of us, in a long story—a story we continue, but whose end we will not see. It is the story of a new world that became a friend and liberator of the old, a story of a slave-holding society that became a servant of freedom, the story of a power that went into the world to protect but not possess, to defend but not to conquer.

It is the American story—a story of flawed and fallible people, united across the generations by grand and enduring ideals.

The grandest of these ideals is an unfolding American promise that everyone belongs, that everyone deserves a chance, that no insignificant person was ever born.

Americans are called to enact this promise in our lives and in our laws. And though our nation has sometimes halted, and sometimes delayed, we must follow no other course.

Through much of the last century, America’s faith in freedom and democracy was a rock in a raging sea. Now it is a seed upon the wind, taking root in many nations.

Our democratic faith is more than the creed of our country, it is the inborn hope of our humanity, an ideal we carry but do not own, a trust we bear and pass along. And even after nearly 225 years, we have a long way yet to travel.

While many of our citizens prosper, others doubt the promise, even the justice, of our own country. The ambitions of some Americans are limited by failing schools and hidden prejudice and the circumstances of their birth. And sometimes our differences run so deep, it seems we share a continent, but not a country.

We do not accept this, and we will not allow it. Our unity, our union, is the serious work of leaders and citizens in every generation. And this is my solemn pledge: I will work to build a single nation of justice and opportunity.

I know this is in our reach because we are guided by a power larger than ourselves who creates us equal in His image.

And we are confident in principles that unite and lead us onward.

America has never been united by blood or birth or soil. We are bound by ideals that move us beyond our backgrounds, lift us above our interests and teach us what it means to be citizens.
Every child must be taught these principles. Every citizen must uphold them. And every immigrant, by embracing these ideals, makes our country more, not less, American.

Today, we affirm a new commitment to live out our nation’s promise through civility, courage, compassion and character.

America, at its best, matches a commitment to principle with a concern for civility. A civil society demands from each of us good will and respect, fair dealing and forgiveness.

Some seem to believe that our politics can afford to be petty because, in a time of peace, the stakes of our debates appear small.

But the stakes for America are never small. If our country does not lead the cause of freedom, it will not be led. If we do not turn the hearts of children toward knowledge and character, we will lose their gifts and undermine their idealism. If we permit our economy to drift and decline, the vulnerable will suffer most.

We must live up to the calling we share. Civility is not a tactic or a sentiment. It is the determined choice of trust over cynicism, of community over chaos. And this commitment, if we keep it, is a way to shared accomplishment.

America, at its best, is also courageous.

Our national courage has been clear in times of depression and war, when defending common dangers defined our common good. Now we must choose if the example of our fathers and mothers will inspire us or condemn us. We must show courage in a time of blessing by confronting problems instead of passing them on to future generations.

Together, we will reclaim America’s schools, before ignorance and apathy claim more young lives.

We will reform Social Security and Medicare, sparing our children from struggles we have the power to prevent. And we will reduce taxes, to recover the momentum of our economy and reward the effort and enterprise of working Americans.

We will build our defences beyond challenge, lest weakness invite challenge.

We will confront weapons of mass destruction, so that a new century is spared new horrors.

The enemies of liberty and our country should make no mistake: America remains engaged in the world by history and by choice, shaping a balance of power that favors freedom. We will defend our allies and our interests. We will show purpose without arrogance. We will meet aggression and bad faith with resolve and strength. And to all nations, we will speak for the values that gave our nation birth.

America, at its best, is compassionate. In the quiet of American conscience, we know that deep, persistent poverty is unworthy of our nation’s promise.

And whatever our views of its cause, we can agree that children at risk are not at fault. Abandonment and abuse are not acts of God, they are failures of love.

And the proliferation of prisons, however necessary, is no substitute for hope and order in our souls.

Where there is suffering, there is duty. Americans in need are not strangers, they are citizens, not problems, but priorities. And all of us are diminished when any are hopeless.

Government has great responsibilities for public safety and public health, for civil rights and common schools. Yet compassion is the work of a nation, not just a government.
And some needs and hurts are so deep they will only respond to a mentor’s touch or a pastor’s prayer. Church and charity, synagogue and mosque lend our communities their humanity, and they will have an honored place in our plans and in our laws.

Many in our country do not know the pain of poverty, but we can listen to those who do. And I can pledge our nation to a goal: When we see that wounded traveler on the road to Jericho, we will not pass to the other side.

America, at its best, is a place where personal responsibility is valued and expected. Encouraging responsibility is not a search for scapegoats, it is a call to conscience. And though it requires sacrifice, it brings a deeper fulfillment. We find the fullness of life not only in options, but in commitments. And we find that children and community are the commitments that set us free.

Our public interest depends on private character, on civic duty and family bonds and basic fairness, on uncounted, unhonored acts of decency which give direction to our freedom.

Sometimes in life we are called to do great things. But as a saint of our times has said, every day we are called to do small things with great love. The most important tasks of a democracy are done by everyone.

I will live and lead by these principles: to advance my convictions with civility, to pursue the public interest with courage, to speak for greater justice and compassion, to call for responsibility and try to live it as well.

In all these ways, I will bring the values of our history to the care of our times.

What you do is as important as anything government does. I ask you to seek a common good beyond your comfort; to defend needed reforms against easy attacks; to serve your nation, beginning with your neighbor. I ask you to be citizens: citizens, not spectators; citizens, not subjects; responsible citizens, building communities of service and a nation of character.

Americans are generous and strong and decent, not because we believe in ourselves, but because we hold beliefs beyond ourselves. When this spirit of citizenship is missing, no government program can replace it. When this spirit is present, no wrong can stand against it.

After the Declaration of Independence was signed, Virginia statesman John Page wrote to Thomas Jefferson: “We know the race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong. Do you not think an angel rides in the whirlwind and directs this storm?”

Much time has passed since Jefferson arrived for his inauguration. The years and changes accumulate. But the themes of this day he would know: our nation’s grand story of courage and its simple dream of dignity.

We are not this story’s author, who fills time and eternity with his purpose. Yet his purpose is achieved in our duty, and our duty is fulfilled in service to one another.

Never tiring, never yielding, never finishing, we renew that purpose today, to make our country more just and generous, to affirm the dignity of our lives and every life.

This work continues. This story goes on. And an angel still rides in the whirlwind and directs this storm.

God bless you all, and God bless America.