

JOHN F. KENNEDY, "INAUGURAL ADDRESS" (20 JANUARY 1961)

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Abstract: John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address is frequently praised as one of the greatest speeches in American public address, but the speech also set the tone for Kennedy's foreign policy plan. Kennedy's rhetoric upheld a polarized worldview of the Soviet Union and United States. Moreover, Kennedy proposed a vision of U.S. foreign policy that would increase U.S. expansion, protection, and involvement around the globe, a vision that influenced U.S. foreign policy for decades.

Key Words: John F. Kennedy, cold war, inaugural address, presidential rhetoric, foreign policy

The Inaugural Address of John F. Kennedy is considered one of the greatest speeches in twentieth-century American public address. Communication scholars have ranked the speech second in a list of the hundred "top speeches" of the twentieth century based on its impact and artistry.¹ It is famous for its eloquence and for its call to duty: "Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country (26)."² The young president spoke to the nation after a close, divisive election, and at a time when the American people were growing increasingly fearful of a long, drawn-out cold war. Yet instead of reassuring his audience by minimizing the dangers, Kennedy warned of a long, difficult struggle, emphasized differences between the United States and its enemies, and outlined the specific responsibilities and obligations of the United States and its citizens.

Historians of the cold war and biographers of Kennedy agree about the quality and significance of the speech. Thurston Clarke claims that Kennedy's address is "generally acknowledged to have been the greatest oration of any twentieth-century politician."³ Robert Dallek writes that the speech "thrilled the crowd of twenty thousand dignitaries and ordinary citizens" gathered in front of the Capitol building.⁴ Arthur Schlesinger, who served as a Special Assistant to the president and later wrote a best-selling history of the Kennedy administration, calls the Inaugural Address a "splendid speech."⁵ And James C. Humes identifies the speech as one of those rare presidential addresses that truly shaped history, calling it a speech of "brilliant eloquence" that inspired "American hopes" for the future.⁶

The tradition of the presidential inaugural address in the United States is well established. Inaugural addresses typically aim to unify the nation and provide a vision for the future. They are supposed to be eloquent and pleasing to the ear.⁷ Kennedy's Inaugural Address was certainly a well-crafted speech stylistically, and that alone may account for some of its fame. Yet there was much more to the speech than its stylistic eloquence. Kennedy's speech also created a bolder vision for American foreign policy, a vision that raised the stakes of the

cold war competition and foreshadowed decades of diplomatic, economic, and even military action to support and defend freedom and liberty around the world.

This essay will examine Kennedy's Inaugural Address and its legacy. Building on the existing scholarly literature, I acknowledge and account for the perceived eloquence of the speech. At the same time, however, I will assess the address as an example of hard-line cold war rhetoric that reduced global politics to an apocalyptic battle between democracy and communism —indeed, between good and evil —discursive features that Kennedy inherited from the country's earliest cold warriors. A close reading of the Kennedy inaugural and an analysis of its legacy in American politics will foster greater understanding of the intersections between U.S. foreign policy and presidential rhetoric. In his inaugural, Kennedy continued the polarizing rhetoric of the earliest cold war presidents, rhetoric that helped escalate cold war tensions and perpetuated a dichotomous world view. Kennedy called for increased U.S. expansion and intervention around the globe, ostensibly on behalf of freedom, pledging U.S. support to any nation or individuals seeking to pursue liberty and democracy. The rhetorical force of Kennedy's inaugural persisted for decades during the cold war and is reflected, at least in part, in the rationalizations of U.S. military actions in the war on terror.

Biography of John F. Kennedy

John Fitzgerald Kennedy was born May 29, 1917, in Brookline, Massachusetts. He was the second child and second son of Joseph P. and Rose Kennedy. The Kennedys represented a new, wealthy Catholic urban class in American society. Joe Kennedy, a third-generation Irish-American Catholic, made his fortune investing on Wall Street, producing movies, and importing liquor.⁸ Kennedy's young life was one of privilege and ease. He was born outside Boston, but in 1926, his father moved the family to a suburb of New York City. The Kennedys spent vacations in Hyannis Port and later on Martha's Vineyard, maintaining a summer residence in Massachusetts.⁹

Kennedy's early academic record was unimpressive for a man who would later be considered one of America's most intellectual presidents. After enrolling in parochial grammar schools, JFK attended Choate, a prestigious boarding school in Wallingford, Connecticut. At Choate, he was more likely to be found socializing or playing sports than studying, and he graduated sixty-fifth in a class of 110.¹⁰ Still, his family name—and fortune—earned him a place at Harvard University, where he again was best known for his social status and dubbed the "Play-boy."¹¹ Kennedy himself later admitted that in high school he was "just a drifter" and that he "didn't really settle down" until near the end of his college career.¹²

A trip to Europe changed JFK's perspective on education and his purpose in life. Joe Kennedy was ambassador to Great Britain, and his status opened doors for Jack across the European continent. The young Harvard student spent the summer of 1937 traveling around Europe with a college friend, and he began to take a genuine interest in politics and international relations. Returning to Harvard the following fall, Kennedy became a strong student in his government and politics courses.¹³ In the summer of 1939, Joe Kennedy arranged for his son to accept an internship with the London embassy. Taking a leave from his studies at Harvard, he spent the next semester traveling and assisting various American diplomats around Europe, the Soviet Union, the Balkans, and the Middle East.

Kennedy's experiences in pre-World War II Europe represented the genesis for a 151-page undergraduate honors thesis addressing the isolationist tendencies of Great Britain in the years before the war. The thesis argued that the "self-indulgent British democracy could not be awakened by a few shouts but only by . . . cannon fire."¹⁴ The thesis—although receiving the lowest of honors grades at Harvard—was revised for publication with the help of *New York Times* columnist Arthur Krock.¹⁵ In the final manuscript, JFK took his father's advice and placed the blame less on democracy as a system of government and more on the leaders of Great Britain.¹⁶ In 1940, the publishing house Wilfred Funk, Incorporated published the thesis as *Why England Slept*, a deliberate play on the words of Winston Churchill's *While England Slept*.¹⁷ The first printing of *Why England Slept* sold about 12,000 copies, although father Joe Kennedy may have bought several hundred copies in an attempt to boost sales.¹⁸ Kennedy's book became a warning to Americans about the dangers of complacency and isolationism in the modern world.

Once the United States became involved in World War II, Kennedy was determined to become part of the military effort to repel the Axis. His poor health and bad back, however, prevented him from enlisting in the Army. With his father's help, Kennedy obtained a naval officer's commission and served as an ensign in the Naval Intelligence Office. In 1942, he requested sea duty and was admitted into the training program for PT boat officers. After just sixty days of training, Kennedy was sent to the South Pacific.¹⁹

His experience in the war catapulted him into national fame. On August 1, 1943, PT-109 set off to attack the "Tokyo Express"—the regular convoy of Japanese cargo vessels attempting to supply their forces. Kennedy, now a lieutenant, was the skipper of the motor torpedo boat. Japan sent several destroyers to accompany the Tokyo Express, and PT-109 was ambushed. A Japanese destroyer sliced the American boat in half, killing two sailors instantly and leaving the other eleven in the dark, cold water. Kennedy led the survivors to a nearby island, towing one severely injured sailor by his life vest.²⁰ After the survivors were rescued, Kennedy became a media hero. The *New York Times*, the *Boston Globe*, *The New Yorker*, and other major media featured stories on the young officer's daring rescue of his injured comrade. He earned the Navy and Marine Corps Medal for his lifesaving efforts. Later, his political campaign team used the story to portray him as a war hero.²¹

Kennedy's life in politics had a tragic beginning. As the second son, JFK never expected to be the one who would fulfill his father's dream of raising the first Catholic president. Kennedy's older brother, Joe Jr., had seemed destined for that honor since birth. But the eldest Kennedy son, a naval aviator, was killed in a flying accident off the coast of Great Britain in 1944. JFK thus became the heir to his father's political ambitions.²² Fifteen years after the death of his brother, Kennedy remarked, "I never would have run for office if Joe Jr. had lived."²³

In 1946, Kennedy began the first of his many campaigns for public office. Running on the slogan, "A New Generation Offers a Leader," he marshaled the support of veterans and young people during a campaign for U.S. Representative from the 11th congressional district of Massachusetts. The Kennedys built an impressive campaign machine, and the twenty-nine year old handily won his first election.²⁴ He subsequently served three terms in the House of Representatives. In 1952, he challenged Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr. and won, becoming the junior U.S. Senator from the state of Massachusetts. Kennedy's congressional record was unimpressive, but he did serve on the influential Senate Foreign Relations Committee while also gaining public notice from the publication of his 1956 book, *Profiles in Courage*.²⁵

While still in Congress, Kennedy's eyes were already focused on higher things. He lobbied heavily to become Democratic nominee Adlai Stevenson's vice presidential running mate in 1956, but he graciously backed out when it became clear that Stevenson—and the convention in general—would not support putting him on the ticket.²⁶ Kennedy's initial setback at the Chicago convention in 1956 positioned him for a presidential bid of his own in 1960. After Stevenson's humiliating defeat in 1956, Democrats were ready for a new, more vibrant candidate. As Arthur Schlesinger commented, "In later years, Kennedy rejoiced that he had lost in Chicago."²⁷ That loss helped set the stage for one of the most dramatic and memorable presidential campaigns in U.S. history.

The Election of 1960

After the nominating conventions in 1960, neither candidate was on firm political ground. John F. Kennedy narrowly won his party's nomination at the Democratic convention; the final state to announce their vote, Wyoming, secured him the necessary delegates.²⁸ Many of the Southern Democrats were wary of Kennedy due to his liberal, pro-civil rights stance and, admittedly, because he was a Catholic. JFK chose Lyndon Johnson as his running mate in an attempt to unite the party behind the ticket. The Republican nominee, Richard Nixon, won his nomination uncontested but still faced significant problems in the general election. He was the sitting vice president of an administration that was well-liked and respected by Americans, but he did not have the full support of President Dwight D. Eisenhower on the campaign trail. Kennedy was young, vulnerable to charges of inexperience, and a staunch supporter of civil rights—a stance that hurt him in the Democratic South. And, of course, he was Catholic. Nixon was abrasive and abrupt at times, but he also had a strong anti-communist record and significant foreign policy experience—an important issue in the 1960 campaign. Polls during the fall of 1960 "showed Nixon and Kennedy locked in a dead heat."²⁹

The Kennedy campaign recognized that there were two major concerns about his candidacy: his religion and his youth. Kennedy addressed the "Catholic Question" before a hostile audience of protestant ministers in Houston, Texas on September 12, 1960. He failed to persuade many conservative evangelicals to vote for him, but his campaign later used footage from the Houston Ministerial Address as television advertisements in key states. As Arthur Schlesinger writes in his account of the Kennedy presidency, Kennedy's smooth, effective performance in the first televised presidential debate on September 26, 1960, helped answer concerns about his maturity and undermined "Nixon's key issue—Kennedy's supposed youth and inexperience."³⁰ Kennedy also framed his foreign policy discussions in tough, cold war terms. He attacked Nixon and the current administration for allowing the Soviet Union to gain dominance in the late 1950s. In speeches and television appearances, Kennedy spoke of a "missile gap" between the United States and the Soviet Union and reminded voters of the successful launch of Sputnik. He also blamed the administration for the ascendancy of a communist regime in Cuba. These issues played on the fears of many Americans that the Soviet Union was the "primary problem facing the nation" in 1960.³¹

After the hotly contested campaign, John F. Kennedy won the presidency, defeating Nixon by an electoral count of 303 to 219. The popular vote, however, indicated that the race was far closer. The people chose Kennedy by a margin of just 118,574 votes, with more than

sixty-eight million cast. JFK won only 49.72 percent of the popular vote, since a third candidate, Senator Harry F. Byrd, garnered more than 500,000 votes. Kennedy was appalled that the margin was so small but attributed his narrow victory to a false sense of hope and confidence in Eisenhower, as well as to anti-Catholic sentiment.³²

As Kennedy prepared his Inaugural Address, he was acutely aware of the mood in the United States. The 1950s had brought concern and even pessimism to the United States. Eisenhower had suffered a heart attack, bungled the U-2 spy plane incident, and dispatched federal troops to Little Rock to enforce school desegregation. Fidel Castro had established a communist regime just ninety miles off the coast of Florida. The Soviets had launched Sputnik, and their leader, Nikita Khrushchev, had threatened to "bury" the United States.³³ In his Inaugural Address, Kennedy would announce the start of a new era in American politics, one in which Americans could look forward with optimism and confidence despite all these challenges. In his acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention, Kennedy had spoken of the "new frontier of the 1960s."³⁴ His task in his Inaugural Address, then, was to explain what that "new frontier" might entail and to unite the nation behind his new, more aggressive approach to cold war politics.

Kennedy's Inaugural Address

John F. Kennedy is routinely characterized as one of America's greatest orators and his Inaugural Address is generally counted among the great speeches in U.S. history. Virtually all who have commented on the speech consider it a success. In a 1965 essay, rhetorical scholar Edward B. Kenny recalled "the splendor of the occasion and the forceful manner in which the newly elected president delivered his marks."³⁵ In *Speech Education*, Takato Sugino went even further, proclaiming the speech a "success all over the world."³⁶ Other critics have emphasized the sincerity of the address and Kennedy's high hopes that it would be remembered as one of the great inaugurals in U.S. history. Rhetorical critic Sam Meyer, for example, commented, "We can be sure that the inaugural oration was the product of Kennedy's deepest convictions and embodied his fervent hopes that it would win a high place as one of the lasting documents of American history."³⁷ Similarly, Sugino concluded that Kennedy's "bright and vivid personality" was "reflected through his unique style" in the inaugural, and that Kennedy's "ideas, personality, and his emotional feelings were skillfully woven into refined language and well-balanced sentences." In short, "President Kennedy said all that he wanted to in that brief speech on January 20, 1961."³⁸

A few critics have noted the ways in which Kennedy's speech differed from the typical inaugural address. Focusing on Kennedy's use of antithesis, for example, Edward B. Kenny emphasized how the speech cast global events as a simplistic struggle between two opposing forces, the United States and the Soviet Union.³⁹ Similarly, Meyer observed that Kennedy polarized the world into "two camps with opposing ideologies," concluding that even the salutations within the speech—e.g., "To those old allies," or "Let both sides"—contained "revelations of Kennedy's central thrust and meaning."⁴⁰ Other scholars have noted that the speech was shorter and perhaps more succinct than other inaugurals, and Donald L Wolfarth observed that it also was more focused on foreign policy than most inaugural addresses. Despite these differences, however, Wolfarth judged the speech to be "quite consistent" with

the "broad outline of inaugural tradition," although perhaps a bit "above the average inaugural" because of its "emotional color."⁴¹

Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson have written extensively about the inaugural address as a rhetorical genre, and their theories help illuminate the specific virtues of Kennedy's speech. Defining genres as recurrent forms of speech with common "pragmatic ends and typified by their substantive, stylistic, and strategic similarities," they identify four generic elements that distinguish inaugural addresses.⁴² First, inaugurals aim to unify their audience after a politically divisive election by rhetorically constructing a portrait of "the people" as committed not to partisanship but the common good. Second, they typically rehearse a set of communal values drawn from the collective memory of the American people. Third, inaugurals set forth the ideals and political principles that will guide the new administration's policies and actions. Finally, inaugurals demonstrate that the president understands and appreciates the requirements and limits of his executive power.⁴³

By these generic standards, Campbell and Jamieson have declared Kennedy's speech "one of the more eloquent inaugurals." According to Campbell and Jamieson, the speech reflected the "ritualistic nature of the occasion," phrasing each assertion or promise as "a pledge jointly made by leader or people." It also "achieved timelessness" by reflecting on "the history of the cold war" and by expressing "the resoluteness required under any circumstances to sustain a struggle against a menacing ideology." By using parallelism, Kennedy invited his listeners "to ponder these ideas, ideas less suited to contemplation when stated in more mundane language." In short, Campbell and Jamieson count Kennedy's speech among the "great" presidential inaugurals. It not only fulfilled the generic requirements of a presidential inaugural address, but it did so in language that invited deep reflection on the ideas it articulated.⁴⁴

Kennedy's speech was no doubt a fine example of the inaugural genre. But it also was a forceful, persuasive response to a particular situation—an escalating cold war that, in Kennedy's view, would demand commitment and sacrifice from all Americans. Kennedy's Inaugural Address was not *merely* ceremonial or ritualistic. To the contrary, it crafted a vision of public service that inspired a whole generation of political and civic leaders, boldly announced an ambitious and far-reaching policy of defending freedom around the globe, and influenced American presidential discourse for decades to come. In the process, the address also may have exacerbated cold war tensions and encouraged a more rigid, hard-line American foreign policy. In dividing the world between the forces of good and evil and committing the United States to a "long twilight struggle," Kennedy employed a polarizing rhetoric that not only put the Russians on the defensive, but also foreshadowed the rhetoric of later American presidents, including Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush. Such divisive rhetoric was not new to the American presidency and the rhetoric surrounding the cold war; Kennedy, however, used the polarized worldview to ground his bold foreign policy plan.

Kennedy delivered his Inaugural Address on a cold, windy afternoon—January 20, 1961—before an audience of some twenty thousand people outside the U.S. Capitol building. As both journalists at the time and later historians have noted, there seemed to be something different about that day, something that suggested a new sense of optimism and hope for the dawning of a new era. Kennedy's youth and vigor plainly contrasted with that of the outgoing president sitting near him on the platform. Dwight Eisenhower was now seventy years old—the

oldest sitting president in the history of the United States. He, like others on the platform, was bundled in a coat and scarf on that blustery day. Kennedy, in contrast, was twenty-seven years Eisenhower's junior. Eisenhower was born in the nineteenth century, Kennedy in the twentieth. Eisenhower was balding and had suffered two strokes during the second term of his presidency. Kennedy was young and glamorous, and, as historian Thurston Clarke notes, "one of the most handsome men to become president."⁴⁵ As Kennedy rose to take the oath of office, he left behind his hat, coat, and scarf, thereby reinforcing his image of youthful vigor.

Kennedy delivered the strong, eloquent words of his Inaugural Address slowly and deliberately, trying to deemphasize his pronounced Boston accent. The language was artistic and formal—appropriate for a presidential inaugural. His successful style, however, rested more on the simple elegance of his phrasing than particular word choices. Kennedy used repetition to add emphasis to important sections, such as when he reminded Americans that man "holds in his mortal hands the power to abolish *all forms* of human poverty and *all forms* of human life" (3).⁴⁶ He used anaphora, or repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of a sentence, to create a rhythmic flow in his speech. Kennedy's speech also is filled with visual imagery, such as when he referred to the developing world "struggling to break the bonds of mass misery" (9). Of course, the most memorable rhetorical device in Kennedy's speech was his use of antithesis or "inversion" in two famous lines: "Let us never negotiate out of fear, but let us never fear to negotiate" (15), and "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country" (26). These "inversions sound deceptively easy and inevitable, as do all such concise and pointed expressions," according to rhetoric critic Burham Carter, Jr. In Carter's assessment, Kennedy's inversions were "short, witty, and precise."⁴⁷

While Kennedy's style was no doubt impressive, his speech also fulfilled the substantive, generic functions of an American presidential inaugural address. From the opening of his address, Kennedy placed his listeners within the communal memory of the American experience. To encourage his audience to transcend their differences, he redefined the occasion of the inaugural as "not a victory of party but a celebration of freedom" (2). The American people, both Democrats and Republicans, were urged to celebrate the historic past of their nation and to face the future together, as a united people. In reminding them of their common heritage, Kennedy declared his audience the "heirs of the first revolution" (4), a phrase that reminded his listeners of the special character of the American experience.

Kennedy placed special emphasis on his role as the voice of a new generation, a group with exceptional values and qualities. The "torch" had been passed to them (4), symbolic not just of the transfer of power but of generational change. This new generation was "born in this century," suggesting that they possessed a spirit of innovation. They were "tempered by war" and "disciplined by a hard and bitter peace," suggesting fortitude and strength. They recognized the importance of the American democratic experience and were forward-looking, yet "proud of their ancient heritage" (4). As Campbell and Jamieson noted in their study of presidential inaugurals, Kennedy portrayed this new generation of Americans as a people "willing to sacrifice for an ideal"⁴⁸—the ideal of freedom at home and around the globe. His portrait of the people was no doubt attractive to his audience, motivating them to embrace the communal values, political principles, and ambitions that Kennedy articulated in the remainder of the speech.

Kennedy appeared to accept the limitations of his own powers as head of the executive branch by acknowledging historical tradition and attributing his power to the people. He reminded the audience that he was swearing the "same solemn oath our forebears prescribed nearly a century and three-quarters ago" (2), and he suggested that the ultimate power to enact his vision of protecting and defending freedom rested with the people: "In your hands, my fellow citizens, more than mine, will rest the final success or failure of our course" (22). Thus, Kennedy challenged the people themselves to determine their own future. Any proposals or promises that Kennedy made as the leader of the nation were witnessed by—and jointly pledged to —by his "fellow Americans."⁴⁹ Even in urging Americans to "ask not what your country can do for you" but what "you can do for your country" (26), he displayed an understanding and respect for the limitations of the executive office. The people had elected him, and Kennedy pledged that his role would be to empower and inspire the people to act for the good of the nation.

Yet while Kennedy's speech met the generic expectations of an inaugural address and appeared to defer to the people, it also suggested a different global role for the United States. Polarizing the world into two antagonistic camps, Kennedy depicted world politics as a life-or-death struggle between the forces of freedom and democracy and the forces of totalitarianism—cold war depictions that were more commonplace by the time of JFK's presidency. Truman and Eisenhower both used a variety of rhetorical devices to persuade the public that the Soviet Union was the ultimate enemy other.⁵⁰ Kennedy continued to employ polarizing rhetoric, and also used such rhetoric to propose a more active, more aggressive foreign policy. Kennedy's foreign policy vision was committed not only to peaceful co-existence or the containment of communism but to the spread of freedom and democracy, perhaps even the liberation of those already under communist domination.

Kennedy's commitment to this vision came early in the speech. In perhaps the most controversial line of the address, he made a forceful pronouncement: "Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty" (5). The repetition of the word "any" suggested a total commitment to defending freedom and democracy, wherever it might be threatened. The implications of the statement were far-reaching indeed. Kennedy, of course, did not start the cold war, nor did he create the antagonism towards communism that fueled its escalation. Yet while previous presidents had responded to perceived communist threats with economic programs (like the Marshall Plan) or defensive military postures (like Truman's "containment" policy), Kennedy seemed to be suggesting something more: an all-out crusade to promote the ideals of freedom, liberty, and democracy around the world.

Kennedy elaborated on this commitment to promoting liberty throughout the address. Promising "loyalty" to those "faithful friends" who joined with the United States in "a host of cooperative ventures" (7), he offered U.S. aid to developing nations in Asia and Africa: "To those new states whom we welcome to the ranks of the free, we pledge our word that one form of colonial control shall not have passed away merely to be replaced by a far more iron tyranny" (8). To those people "struggling to break the bonds of mass misery," he promised "our best efforts to help them help themselves, for whatever period is required" (9). In the Western hemisphere, Kennedy promised to "convert good words into good deeds" and to "assist free

men and free governments in casting off the chains of poverty" (10). Kennedy's promise to "bear any burden," it seemed, was no empty promise; it opened the door for a wide variety of never-ending international commitments. The promise to assure liberty's survival was vague, encompassing a wide range of possible responses to those actions that threatened human freedom around the globe. Kennedy's pledge to protect, assist, and encourage nations struggling to be free seemed open-ended and permanent—a bold departure from the cautious policies of the past.

Kennedy's use of antithesis highlighted the dramatic scope of that commitment. Antithesis as a literary form highlights a contrast between two opposing objects or ideas. As Edward B. Kenny notes in his analysis of the Kennedy inaugural, antithesis is "reminiscent of courtly conceits and self-conscious writers who strove after a deliberate effect."⁵¹ In contemporary discourse, antithesis sometimes comes across as artificial or trite. In Kennedy's speech, however, the prolific use of antithesis—at least fifteen times, by Kenny's count—emphasized the stark dichotomy between the forces of freedom, led by the United States, and the communist world. The United States represented freedom and liberty, while the Soviet Union and its satellites represented "aggression" and "subversion" (10)—common cold war constructions that Kennedy inherited from his two presidential predecessors and other political leaders.

Kennedy also used antithesis to suggest that the United States was morally superior to the Soviet Union. The United States was committed to peace; it was only responding to Soviet acts of aggression. The communists were attempting to bait the free world into war, but not the kind of war Americans historically had fought. Kennedy explained:

Now the trumpet summons us again—not as a call to bear arms, though arms we need—not as a call to battle, though embattled we are—but as a call to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle, year in and year out, rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation—a struggle against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease and war itself.
(23)

In Kennedy's dichotomous world view, the battle was not just between the United States and the Soviet Union, but between the United States and the "common enemies" of mankind: tyranny, poverty, disease, and war itself. And that would not be a "war" that would end anytime soon or with victory parades in the streets of America. Instead, it would be a "long twilight struggle"—one with few obvious victories and no end in sight.

Kennedy spoke of abstract ideals, like freedom and democracy; the enemies he had in mind would also have been clear to anybody in his audience. The "iron tyranny" threatening the developing world was obviously a reference to what Winston Churchill had earlier dubbed the Iron Curtain of communism. The "nations who would make themselves our adversary" were clearly the Soviet Union and its allies (12). Those nations, presumably opposed to the ideals of the United States, could not be appeased or trusted to act in good faith. Kennedy warned, "We dare not tempt them with weakness. For only when our arms are sufficient beyond doubt can we be certain beyond doubt that they will never be employed" (13). The Eisenhower administration, as Martin J. Medhurst has shown, had built up America's nuclear arsenal behind a propaganda campaign emphasizing "Atoms for Peace."⁵² Kennedy seemed to go even further,

pledging to "bear any burden" and create "arms sufficient beyond doubt" in an effort to roll back communism's advances and promote liberty and democracy around the world.

Towards the end of his Inaugural Address, Kennedy appeared more conciliatory while subtly reinforcing the dichotomous worldview he had created. He encouraged both sides to "begin anew" in the search for peace, while "remembering on both sides that civility is not a sign of weakness, and sincerity is always subject to proof" (15). Yet Kennedy's appeals to "both sides" apparently required that the Soviet Union abandon its own communist principles and values and instead embrace the American ideals of freedom and liberty. "Let both sides explore what problems unite us instead of belaboring those problems which divide us," Kennedy intoned (16). He also called for "both sides" to "invoke the wonders of science" instead of promoting "its terrors" (18), and he imagined "both sides" creating a "new world of law, where the strong are just and the weak secure and the peace preserved" (20). Yet his repeated references to "both sides" subtly reinforced a polarized worldview that was characteristic of earlier cold war depictions. He also called upon "both sides" to heed "the command of Isaiah—to 'undo the heavy burdens . . . (and) let the oppressed go free'" (19). The biblical injunction was an odd appeal to make to the explicitly atheistic Soviet Union. It seemed unlikely the Soviets would be persuaded by religious quotations and calls for peace. Moreover, the statement implied an open-ended commitment to liberating those already under the domination of totalitarian regimes in "all corners of the earth."

In sum, Kennedy's speech no doubt possessed the literary style and elegance of a great inaugural address. It rehearsed the communal values of the typical inaugural, and it aimed to unite the public in common cause. In terms of its generic qualities, it clearly ranked among the best inaugural addresses in U.S. history. Contextualizing the speech historically, however, casts it in a somewhat different light. With its polarized world view and its implicit claims to moral superiority, Kennedy's Inaugural Address proposed a new vision of American foreign policy that one could imagine the Soviets interpreting as disrespectful and even threatening. And, in fact, the Soviets responded to the speech, not with conciliatory gestures, but by stationing "defensive" missiles in Cuba. In short, the speech appears to have escalated cold war tensions and contributed to a legacy of heightened American interventionism that persists to this day. In the remainder of this essay, I examine the legacy of Kennedy's speech in subsequent events and in the rhetoric of presidents as diverse as Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush.

The Legacy of JFK's Inaugural Address

Evaluating the legacy of John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address is difficult. Kennedy will always be seen as a man whose young, vibrant life—and presidency—was tragically cut short. His assassination in Dallas on November 22, 1963, is still shrouded in mystery; every few years a new conspiracy theory emerges to explain who shot the president and why.⁵³ Kennedy remains the iconic figure of America's Camelot—an era we remember for the energy and idealism emanating from the White House. He was the youthful, earnest visionary who might have changed the world, if not for his cruel fate. In *A Thousand Days*, Arthur Schlesinger captured the sense of loss that many felt after Kennedy's death: "It was all gone now—the life-affirming, the life-enhancing zest, the brilliance, the wit, the cool commitment, the steady purpose."⁵⁴ For many Americans, the assassination of America's youngest president was a tragedy of almost

unimaginable proportions, and public memories of Kennedy's life and death have colored our assessments of his Inaugural Address.

Kennedy's Inaugural Address was clearly much more than "merely" a ceremonial speech. It engaged in the classical epideictic topoi of praise and blame, yet it also included a vision of America's role in the world with profound political implications. Cynthia Miecznikowski Sheard has written that epideictic speeches are not only "an invitation and an opportunity for participation and engagement," but also can be seen "as a means of envisioning and urging change for the better."⁵⁵ Similarly, rhetorical scholar John Murphy has argued that epideictic rhetoric often "provides the backdrop of values and beliefs, heroes and villains, triumphs and tragedies against which and through which deliberative and forensic judgments are made in a ceaseless swirl of discourse."⁵⁶ Kennedy's speech created just such a "backdrop" by articulating the beliefs and values of a committed cold warrior. In his speech, Kennedy identified the heroes and villains of the "long twilight struggle" between the forces of freedom and tyranny, and he foreshadowed the triumphs and tragedies that would define American foreign policy for years to come.

From the start, Kennedy's Inaugural Address was recognized as a well-written and successful speech. Former president Harry S Truman told journalists that history would remember it as one of the greatest speeches of all time. The address, Truman proclaimed at a dinner party the night of the inauguration, was "a magnificent political speech." He elaborated the following day: "It was short, to the point, and in language anyone can understand . . . Even I could understand it, and therefore, the people can."⁵⁷ The same day, the *New York Times* quoted Senator Mike Mansfield (D-Montana) calling the speech "magnificent," while Senator Thomas H. Kuchel (R-California) expressed his hope that all Americans would "subscribe to the splendid goals outlined" in Kennedy's speech. Senator Kenneth B. Keating (R-NY) called the speech "brilliant" and opined that the president had "said to both our friends and foes abroad exactly what needed to be said."⁵⁸ The *New York Times* also published a collection of largely celebratory editorials on the speech from across the nation. The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* called the speech "an inspirational message that should do much to rally the American people and set the Kennedy administration on the high road to the New Frontier." Similarly, Cleveland's *Plain Dealer* editorialized that "seldom has the torch of liberty burned more brightly than it did yesterday" and called the new president "bold, courageous, and confident." Even the conservative *Chicago Tribune* admitted, "rhetorically, it was very good," although the editors warned Kennedy to be cautious about accepting any "expressions of good will" from the Kremlin.⁵⁹

In some ways, the longer-term legacy of Kennedy's speech was even more positive than the immediate reactions. Kennedy's vision of improving the lives of people around the world inspired many young Americans to dedicate their lives to public service. Heeding Kennedy's call to fight against the "enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease, and war itself" (22), many joined efforts to fight poverty and despair in America's inner cities and rural areas.⁶⁰ Others went overseas as part of the Peace Corps' effort to "help foreign countries meet their urgent needs for skilled manpower."⁶¹ By the end of Kennedy's presidency, more than 7,000 mostly young Americans were "in the field," bringing both material aid and "democratic cooperation" to poor, underdeveloped countries around the world.⁶²

Many Americans, including some who later rose to political prominence, were personally inspired by Kennedy's Inaugural Address. Donna Shalala, who later served as President Clinton's Secretary of Health and Human Services, watched the inaugural on the television in her college dormitory and was "inspired to pursue a career in public service." She graduated college, became a Peace Corps volunteer in Iran, and would later serve as Chancellor of the University of Wisconsin before joining Clinton's cabinet.⁶³ The night after Kennedy's address, James Meredith, an African-American Air Force veteran, was inspired to apply for admission to the all-white University of Mississippi. In 1963, Kennedy would order thousands of U.S. Army troops to the UM campus to protect the young man inspired by his words.⁶⁴

Kennedy was praised by the literary community as well. Novelist Carson McCullers wrote to the White House, saying, "I think that I have never been moved by words more than I was by your inaugural address." Writer Eudora Welty wrote that after hearing the speech, she had felt "a surge of hope about life in general." John Steinbeck observed that Kennedy's words were "nobly conceived and excellently written and delivered."⁶⁵ Others dedicating their lives to Kennedy's New Frontier program included researchers and inventors who created exciting new innovations in science and technology. Rosemary Dew, one of the first female FBI Special Agents, opened her memoir by recounting how she was "inspired by John F. Kennedy and hoped to make a difference in the world. Kennedy's challenge—'Ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country'—affected me deeply . . . I wanted to serve my country."⁶⁶ Clearly, the "new generation" connected to the young president's words and seemed to welcome the challenge to "light the world" with the fire of American principles and ideals (25).

Still, there is a darker side to the legacy of Kennedy's Inaugural Address, particularly in foreign affairs. While JFK's call to public service was inspirational, his pledge to "pay any price, bear any burden" in the defense of liberty laid the groundwork for a series of foreign policy disasters in the 1960s. The Kennedy administration struggled to fashion policies consistent with the ideals of the inaugural, sometimes resulting in embarrassing military blunders. First came the Bay of Pigs invasion, in which a group of Cuban refugees, with support from American advisers, launched an ill-planned invasion of Cuba in hopes that it would inspire a popular uprising against Cuba's communist dictator Fidel Castro. The invasion proved to be a fiasco.⁶⁷ On April 17, 1961, 1,400 Cuban rebels, trained and equipped by the U.S. military, landed at the Bay of Pigs in Cuba and were promptly met by Castro's much larger and better prepared army. The rebels failed to establish their position on the beach, and Kennedy refused to provide U.S. planes for air support.⁶⁸ The following day, more than 1,200 of the rebels surrendered to Castro's 20,000 men army. Castro also arrested more than 20,000 Cuban civilians to prevent any movement towards an internal uprising.⁶⁹ In retrospect, the Bay of Pigs invasion was an ill-conceived and ill-advised military action. Political scientist Piero Gleijeses argues that Kennedy's campaign rhetoric—including the inaugural—left him with no options except to support the "fighters for freedom" in their attempt to overthrow the "Communist menace."⁷⁰ Indeed, Kennedy did not see the Bay of Pigs as a reason to leave Cuba alone, but rather as evidence of the need to "intensify his efforts to overthrow Castro."⁷¹

A year later came the Cuban Missile Crisis, during which Kennedy stood toe-to-toe with Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev in a conflict over the Soviet's stationing of nuclear missiles in Cuba, just ninety miles off America's shore. For nearly two weeks, Americans, Soviets, and the

entire world watched as Kennedy and Khrushchev brought their nations closer and closer to nuclear war. In the end, Kennedy gave assurances against any future U.S.-supported invasions of Cuba in exchange for Khrushchev removing the missiles.⁷² Some characterized the missile crisis as Kennedy's finest hour, a time when a man of principle stood his ground and forced the Russians to remove their missiles from the Western hemisphere. Schlesinger, for example, praised Kennedy's actions in the crisis, insisting that the president "saw more penetratingly into the mists and terrors of the future than anyone else."⁷³ Historian Robert Dallek agrees, writing: "October 1962 was not only Kennedy's finest hour in the White House; it was also an imperishable example of how one man prevented a catastrophe that may yet afflict the world."⁷⁴ Yet the case can be made that the crisis might have been avoided in the first place had Kennedy assumed a more peaceful, less aggressive attitude toward the Soviets that he articulated in his Inaugural Address. Historian Gary Wills, for example, is among those who consider Kennedy's rhetoric inflammatory and provocative: "If the Russians had made even a *limited* attack in Europe or elsewhere, the Kennedy buildup of crisis rhetoric would have made it hard to refrain from nuclear response."⁷⁵

Kennedy's pledge to defend liberty around the world also likely inspired him to escalate the U.S. involvement in the war in Vietnam. The Vietnamese under communist rule and influence were apparently among the "people in the huts and villages . . . struggling to break the bonds of mass misery" that JFK spoke about in his Inaugural Address. America, therefore, had an obligation to help them "help themselves" (9). Despite warnings from advisors that South Vietnam was "a can of snakes" and could involve years and years of guerilla warfare, Kennedy "himself personally decided that South Vietnam was strategically important" in the global struggle between communism and the free world.⁷⁶ Thus began one of the longest, costliest, and ultimately unsuccessful wars in American history, and the legacy of that failed U.S. intervention still haunts us today.

Kennedy's vision also is clearly reflected in the discourse of those presidents seeking to justify U.S. foreign policy in the aftermath of the Vietnam War. Ronald Reagan employed Kennedy's themes throughout his presidency, referring to the Soviet Union as the Evil Empire and pledging every effort to help bring down the iron curtain of communism in Eastern Europe. On the night before he was elected president, Reagan promised that his America would not be "turned inward but outward—toward others. Let it be clear that we have not lessened our commitment to peace or to the hope that someday all of the people of the world will enjoy lives of decency, lives with a degree of freedom, with a measure of dignity."⁷⁷ Echoing Kennedy's commitment to liberating the oppressed around the globe, Reagan promised in his first inaugural that America would once again be "the exemplar of freedom and a beacon of hope for those who do not now have freedom." Repeating Kennedy's assurances that Americans desired peace and would "negotiate for it, sacrifice for it," Reagan also pledged that the United States would never "surrender" just for the sake of peace—not "now or ever."⁷⁸ Reagan, like Kennedy, committed the nation to supporting "freedom fighters" around the globe, echoing Kennedy's own explanation for his support of the Cuban rebels more than twenty years earlier.⁷⁹

Even after the cold war was over, Bill Clinton took up the mantle of advancing liberty and democracy in a rapidly changing world. In his first inaugural address, President Clinton proclaimed, "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." Like Kennedy, Clinton pledged to promote freedom around the globe, and that commitment led to U.S. military action in Iraq (1993, 1998), Haiti (1994), the Sudan (1998), Afghanistan (1998), and, most significantly, in Bosnia, Serbia, and Kosovo in the Balkans (1994, 1998).⁸⁰ Clinton justified these actions in his 1995 State of the Union Address, arguing, "Our security still depends upon our continued world leadership for peace and freedom and democracy. We still can't be strong at home unless we're strong abroad."⁸¹ In the 1998 document, "A National Security Strategy for a New Century" (NSSR-98), the Clinton administration articulated a vision for U.S. foreign policy clearly in the tradition of Kennedy's inaugural: "At this moment in history, the United States is called upon to lead—to organize the forces of freedom and progress; to channel the unruly energies of the global economy into positive avenues; and to advance our prosperity, reinforce our democratic ideals and values, and enhance our security."⁸² Promoting freedom and liberty abroad—with U.S. dollars and U.S. soldiers—had become firmly entrenched, not only as a strategic or economic principle, but as a moral obligation.

Echoes of Kennedy's Inaugural Address could even be heard in George W. Bush's rhetoric on the war against terrorism. Casting the United States as the defender of freedom and liberty around the world, Bush has redefined the enemy as "rogue states" and "terrorists," yet his basic message remained the same: the United States will defend democracy wherever it may be threatened. Addressing "all who live in tyranny and oppression" in his second Inaugural Address, Bush promised that "the United States will not ignore your oppression, or excuse your oppressors," and he made the same sort of sweeping pledge that Kennedy made to those living under communism in Eastern Europe, Cuba, and elsewhere: "When you stand for your liberty, we will stand with you." Indeed, the Bush administration has gone beyond Kennedy's policy of helping others to defend their own freedom by taking the offensive in the war on terror. Launching preemptive wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, Bush may not possess the eloquence of John F. Kennedy, but his commitment to defending democracy harkens back to Kennedy's pledge to "pay any price" and "bear any burden" to assure "the survival and the success of liberty" (5).

America's role as the world's champion of freedom and democracy did not begin with Kennedy, of course. JFK's commitment to preserving American principles and ideals might, in turn, be traced back to Wilsonian internationalism or even to the Monroe Doctrine. American presidents have long celebrated American "exceptionalism" and claimed a special, perhaps even God-given right to define and defend the "rule of law" in international affairs. Still, Kennedy's vision of American foreign policy—a vision explicitly expressed in his inaugural and carried out in his administration's policies—raised the stakes of America's global leadership by pledging a whole generation to the defense of freedom and liberty around the globe. Kennedy's eloquence inspired many Americans to public service, yet he also committed the United States to a "new frontier" of international responsibilities that has cost the nation dearly in both resources and lives.

Sara Ann Mehltretter is a graduate student at the Pennsylvania State University. She would like to thank J. Michael Hogan and Shawn J. Parry-Giles for their guidance and editorial assistance on this unit.

Notes

1 Stephen E. Lucas and Martin J. Medhurst, eds., *Words of a Century: The Top 100 American Speeches, 1900-1999* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

2 All quotations from the Kennedy's Inaugural Address are cited by paragraph numbers in the text that accompanies this essay.

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5 Arthur M. Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), 165.

6 James C. Humes, *My Fellow Americans: Presidential Addresses That Shaped History* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1992), 207.

7 Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Deeds Done in Words* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 29-30.

8 James M. Giglio, *The Presidency of John F. Kennedy* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991), 2.

9 Garry Wills, *The Kennedy Imprisonment: A Meditation on Power* (Boston, MA: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1981), 62.

10 Michael O'Brien, *John F. Kennedy: A Biography* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005), 75.

11 Dallek, *An Unfinished Life: John F. Kennedy, 1917-1963*, 45.

12 John F. Kennedy, as quoted in O'Brien, *John F. Kennedy: A Biography*, 75.

13 Dallek, *An Unfinished Life: John F. Kennedy, 1917-1963*, 64-65.

14 Laurence Leamer, *The Kennedy Men* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2001), 151.

15 Dallek, *An Unfinished Life: John F. Kennedy, 1917-1963*, 65.

16 Leamer, *The Kennedy Men*, 145.

17 Dallek, *An Unfinished Life: John F. Kennedy, 1917-1963*, 64.

18 Leamer, *The Kennedy Men*, 145.

19 Dallek, *An Unfinished Life: John F. Kennedy, 1917-1963*, 87.

20 Theodore C. Sorensen, *Kennedy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 15-16.

21 O'Brien, *John F. Kennedy: A Biography*, 160. Kennedy's commander, Alvin Cluster, recommended him for the more prestigious Silver Star and felt "burned" when Kennedy received the lesser commendation.

22 Leamer, *The Kennedy Men*, 215.

23 Kennedy, quoted in Sorensen, *Kennedy*, 15.

24 Leamer, *The Kennedy Men*, 234.

25 Dallek, *An Unfinished Life: John F. Kennedy, 1917-1963*, 131.

26 Giglio, *The Presidency of John F. Kennedy*, 8.

27 Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House*, 9.

- 28 Dallek, *An Unfinished Life: John F. Kennedy, 1917-1963*, 266.
- 29 Ibid., 280.
- 30 Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House*, 69.
- 31 Dallek, *An Unfinished Life: John F. Kennedy, 1917-1963*, 286-288.
- 32 Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House*, 118.
- 33 Clarke, *Ask Not: The Inauguration of John F. Kennedy and the Speech that Changed America*, 171.
- 34 Dallek, *An Unfinished Life: John F. Kennedy, 1917-1963*, 203.
- 35 Edward B. Kenny, "Another Look at Kennedy's Inaugural Address," *Today's Speech* 13 (1965): 17.
- 36 Takako Sugino, "Stylistic Aspects of John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address," *Speech Education* 2 (1974): 48.
- 37 Sam Meyer, "The John F. Kennedy Inauguration Speech: Function and Importance of Its 'Address System,'" *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 12 (1982): 241.
- 38 Sugino, "Stylistic Aspects of John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address," 49, 52.
- 39 Kenny, "Another Look at Kennedy's Inaugural Address," 17.
- 40 Meyer, "The John F. Kennedy Inauguration Speech: Function and Importance of Its 'Address System,'" 242, 247.
- 41 Donald L. Wolfarth, "John F. Kennedy in the Tradition of Inaugural Speeches," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 47 (1961): 132.
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- 43 Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Presidents Creating the Presidency: Deeds Done in Words* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1990, 2008), 31.
- 44 Ibid., 35, 36, 47, 48.
- 45 Clarke, *Ask Not: The Inauguration of John F. Kennedy and the Speech that Changed America* 178.
- 46 Emphasis added.
- 47 Burham Carter, Jr., "President Kennedy's Inaugural Address," *College Composition and Communication* 14 (1963): 37.
- 48 Campbell and Jamieson, *Deeds Done in Words*, 17.
- 49 Campbell and Jamieson, *Deeds Done in Words*, 18.
- 50 For more on Truman and Eisenhower's cold war rhetoric, see *Cold War Rhetoric: Strategy, Metaphor, and Ideology*, eds. Martin J. Medhurst, Robert L. Ivie, Philip Wander, and Robert L. Scott (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1990, 1997); Martin J. Medhurst, ed., *Eisenhower's War of Words: Rhetoric and Leadership* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1994); Robert L. Ivie, "Fire, Flood, and Red Fever: Motivating Metaphors of Global Emergency in the Truman Doctrine Speech," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 29 (1999): 570-591; and Shawn J. Parry-Giles, *The Rhetorical Presidency, Propaganda, and the Cold War, 1945-1955* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002).
- 51 Kenny, "Another Look at Kennedy's Inaugural Address," 17.
- 52 Martin J. Medhurst, "Eisenhower's 'Atoms for Peace' Speech: A Case Study in the Strategic Use of Language," *Communication Monographs* 54 (1987): 209-211. For other interpretations of Eisenhower's "Atoms for Peace" speech, see Shawn J. Parry-Giles, "Dwight D.

Eisenhower, 'Atoms for Peace' (8 December 1953)," available at <http://www.voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu/internat/eisenhowerdeltop.htm>.

53 While these accounts vary in accuracy and conspiracy, some of the most well-known (and outrageous) books include: Josiah Thompson, *Six Seconds in Dallas* (New York: Bernard Geis, 1967); Jim Marrs, *Crossfire* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 1993), Gerald Posner, *Case Closed* (New York: Anchor Books, 1994), and Harrison Livingstone and Robert Groden, *High Treason* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 1998). See also John McAdam's website on the JFK Assassination, available at <http://mcadams.posc.mu.edu/home.htm>, accessed January 5, 2009.

54 Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House*, 1030.

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61 Kennedy, quoted in Dallek, *An Unfinished Life: John F. Kennedy, 1917-1963*, 338.

62 Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffmann, *All You Need is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 143-144.

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64 Jonathan Rosenberg and Zachary Karabell, *Kennedy, Johnson, and the Quest for Justice: The Civil Rights Tapes* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003), 32.

65 Literary authors quoted in Clarke, *Ask Not: The Inauguration of John F. Kennedy and the Speech that Changed America*, 207.

66 Rosemary Dew, *No Backup: My Life as a Female FBI Special Agent* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2003), 1.

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68 Robert Dallek, *An Unfinished Life*, 364.

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70 Kennedy, in Piero Gleijeses, "Ships in the Night: The CIA, the White House, and the Bay of Pigs," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 27 (1995): 24-25.

71 Ibid., 42.

72 See Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, 715; and Jim Hersberg, "The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962: Anatomy of a Controversy," *The National Security Archive*, available at http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nsa/cuba_mis_cri/moment.htm, accessed January 5, 2009. Later, when Fidel Castro refused to allow the United Nations to monitor his nation, JFK was able to justify the reinstatement of spy plane missions over Cuba.

73 Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, 830.

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81 William J. Clinton, "Address Before a Joint Session of Congress on the State of the Union," January 24, 1995, available at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=51634>, accessed January 5, 2009.

82 "A National Security Strategy for a New Century," NSSR-98, Clinton administration, October 1998, available at <http://www.fas.org/man/docs/nssr-98.pdf>, accessed January 5, 2009.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 20, 1961. Vice President Johnson, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Chief Justice, President Eisenhower, Vice President Nixon, President Truman, reverend clergy, fellow citizens, we observe today not a victory of party, but a celebration of freedom--symbolizing an end, as well as a beginning--signifying renewal, as well as change. Finally, whether you are citizens of America or citizens of the world, ask of us the same high standards of strength and sacrifice which we ask of you. With a good conscience our only sure reward, with history the final judge of our deeds, let us go forth to lead the land we love, asking His blessing and His help, but knowing that here on earth God's work must truly be our own. Inaugural Speeches Page. John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Speech. after taking the oath of office. Several things should be noted about this speech and the environment in which it was given. As is traditional, when one American President takes the Inauguration. In this case, on January 20, 1961, we have the outgoing Republican president, Dwight Eisenhower, along with the outgoing vice-president, Richard Nixon, both watching and listening calmly as Kennedy is sworn in and gives his inaugural address. Note that Nixon was the man who Kennedy defeated in the