

Political Myth and the Need for Significance: Finding Ontological Security During Times of Terror

Alexander Tom Sebastian Kirke

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Thesis supervisors:

Prof. Hartmut Behr

Dr. Kyle Grayson

School of Geography, Politics and Sociology

Newcastle University

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In memory of Jason Fyles (1994-2013).

Abstract

This thesis offers a novel theoretical framework for analysing how political and media elites invoke political myths following terror attacks. It does not define political myths as necessarily false claim or untrue stories, but instead draws on the existentialist approaches of Hans Blumenberg and Chiara Bottici to argue that they are form of dramatic narrative that answers human needs for significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*). Human beings require significance to live in a world that is otherwise indifferent to them or, as Martin Heidegger put it, they are “thrown” into. The thesis thereby connects modern literature on political myth to concept of *Angst*, most prominently discussed by Søren Kierkegaard and expanded upon by later existentialist philosophers. The thesis elaborates on this with the novel insight that the process of finding significance is also an act of constructing ontological security, and that this is particularly apparent in times of crisis. Following the works of Anthony Giddens and Stuart Croft, the thesis defines ontological security as a condition in which people have constructed a sense of biographical continuity, have a strong web of trust-relations, and are able to avoid *Angst*. The thesis argues that terror attacks are moments where ontological security (not just physical security) is under threat, and that the process of finding significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) through the work on myth simultaneously (re)establishes ontological security. It focuses on two empirical examples: the 7th July 2005 bombings in London and the 2013 Murder of Fusilier Lee Rigby. Following these terror attacks, senior political figures and media commentators invoked a political myth which portrayed the United Kingdom as embroiled in an existential conflict with violent radical Muslims inspired by a warped interpretation of Islam. The thesis concludes that its novel theoretical framework can enable an understanding of discursive responses to other terror attacks across the globe.

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Thesis Introduction

This thesis intends to demonstrate the importance of *political myth* and *ontological security* following terror attacks. While recent literature on political myth has substantially enriched the study of politics, it is currently missing a golden opportunity to engage with the burgeoning literature on ontological security. This is somewhat surprising since both are concerned with fundamental questions about our individual and social existence and how we relate to the world around us. The thesis therefore seeks to enhance the existentialist theories of political myth in particular¹ by incorporating ontological security literature while simultaneously strengthening the philosophical underpinnings of the latter.² But why is this oversight important and why should it be addressed? More specifically, what is the original contribution of this thesis and what will it enable us to do? The main contribution is that it provides a novel theoretical toolkit through which to analyse the rhetoric following terror attacks that concentrates specifically on how political language is deployed in order to answer existential concerns (of “being” as discussed in existentialist philosophy) in these crucial moments. This is important for two reasons. Firstly, these crises tend to dominate media and political discourses in their immediate aftermath and may form the backdrop for legitimising radical policy changes, normally in the form of new counter-terrorism legislation. Secondly, these crises can often have substantial social impacts and, in recent years, this has taken the form of empowering the far-right. Finally, in terms of the contribution to the political myth literature more specifically, it is the first piece of work to my knowledge that links existentialist theories of political myth to political crises, specifically terror attacks. This is important both can coalesce and provide a currently absent framework for

¹ Chiara Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Chiara Bottici and Benoît Challand, "Rethinking Political Myth : The Clash of Civilizations as a Self-Fulfilling Prophecy," *European Journal of Social Theory* 3, no. 9 (2006); *The Myth of the Clash of Civilizations* (Oxford: Routledge, 2010).

² Stuart Croft, "Constructing Ontological Insecurity: The Insecuritization of Britain's Muslims," *Contemporary Security Policy* 33, no. 2 (2012); Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991).

understanding the relation between political rhetoric and answering the human problems discussed by existentialist philosophy.

In part I of the thesis, I develop an existentialist approach to political myth that incorporates vital insights from the ontological security literature. In part II, I utilise two examples of how politicians and media elites responded to two terrorist attacks: the 2005 London bombings and the murder of Lee Rigby in 2013. I argue that both politicians and media elites attempted to evoke a sense significance and ontological security for their audiences by invoking political myth following these attacks – regardless of whether they would use this terminology or not. To be more specific, I make the novel argument that the process of finding significance via political myth is simultaneously a process of constructing ontological security. However, it must be said from the outset that I am *not* referring to myth in the mainstream pejorative sense as a necessarily false narrative or claim. Indeed the vast majority of academic studies do not assess myth in terms of its claims to truth, but in the nature of its content and its function in society.³ I shall first proceed with a literature review before outlining the structure of the thesis.

Literature Review

There is no universally agreed-upon definition of myth. However, scholars are nonetheless united in the conviction that myth is at least a “socially significant product of humanity’s irrepressible urge to construct meaning”.⁴ This is especially reflected in the literature on *political* myth, which has taken many different forms throughout the twentieth century in particular. The revolutionary syndicalist Georges Sorel saw the creation of myths as necessary for any successful revolutionary movement, not least because human beings require more than just reason but also passion and imagination in order to incite great social changes.⁵ Ernst Cassirer similarly

³ To stress this point further, I am not arguing that there is no physical threat posed by people conducting acts of violence in the name of particular interpretations of Islam.

⁴ Andrew Von Hendy, *The Modern Construction of Myth* (Bloomington, IL: Indiana University Press, 2002), 333.

⁵ Georges Sorel, *Reflections on Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 28.

noted the power of myth in politics. However, where Sorel glorified violence and had a generally favourable view of myth, Cassirer saw it as a regression with potentially horrific consequences. In his classic work *The Myth of the State*, Ernst Cassirer was horrified by what he saw as the power of mythic thought to lead to barbaric and repressive politics.⁶ Having lived through the rise of the Nazis, he had witnessed the rise of myth in its most pernicious and volatile form.

These two classic studies were influential in informing other theoretical approaches to myth throughout the twentieth century. Most other studies emphasised the cognitive and emotional aspects of political myth. Regarding the former, Lance Bennett aptly describes myths as being “lenses” through which we view the world.⁷ Christopher Flood borrows from the discipline of social psychology to describe myths as functioning effectively as invokes the concept of “cognitive schema” or, a socially acquired cognitive framework which functions as an “organizing and filtering procedure for the reception of new information, be it the combination of sights and sounds into images of physical objects or the complex perception of social situations”.⁸ For Flood, and many other modern-day scholars of political myth, part of this important filtering feature in politics is found in ideology.⁹ Bruce Lincoln for instance refers to political myths as ideologies in narrative form.¹⁰ While Flood, Lincoln, and others who have approached myth in conjunction with ideology make valuable contributions to the literature, the overly-close association of myth and ideology is problematic (I discuss this further in Chapter 2). However, political myths are not simply a means through which we process

⁶ Ernst Cassirer, *The Myth of the State* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974).

⁷ Lance Bennett, "Myth, Ritual and Political Control," *Journal of Communication* 30, no. 4 (1980).

⁸ Christopher G. Flood, *Political Myth: A Theoretical Introduction* (New York: Garland, 1996), 81.

⁹ Bruce Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society: Comparative Studies of Myth, Ritual and Classification* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Alexander Wöll and Harald Wydra, *Democracy and Myth in Russia and Eastern Europe* (London/New York: Routledge, 2007); M.A. Ashraf, *Al Qaeda's Ideology Through Political Myth and Rhetoric*, in *A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD at the University of St Andrews* (University of St Andrews, 2012); Flood, *Political Myth: A Theoretical Introduction*.

¹⁰ Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society: Comparative Studies of Myth, Ritual and Classification*.

information. They also have a strong emotive element that engenders feelings of belonging and attachment. Indeed, Carl J. Friedrich argued that any form of political community is inconceivable without myth. For him, myths function as emotional glue that unites communities while softening “the cold rationality of reason of state.”¹¹ National myths in particular rely on this kind of emotional power, as well-elaborated upon by Anthony Smith.¹²

The most promising recent developments in the study of political myth – and the ones I make the most extensive use of – are those that have been described by Christoffer Kølvrå and Jan Ifervsen as “existential” approaches to political myth.¹³ These are found primarily in the works of Chiara Bottici.¹⁴ Bottici argues that myth is a process of work on a basic narrative pattern that responds to a need for significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*). While human beings require a sense of meaning in order to master the world they live in, they also require significance to live in a world that is less “indifferent” to them. In this sense, political myths are narratives that allow us to orient ourselves, feel about, and act within, our political world.¹⁵ The two core features of Bottici’s conceptualisation of political myth – that they are a *process* and respond to a need for *significance* – are heavily influenced by German philosopher Hans Blumenberg. In his *Work on Myth*, (*Arbeit am Mythos*), Blumenberg argues that myth answers a human problem: how to function in the “absolutism of reality.”¹⁶ Put simply, this is a condition in which human beings are unable to ground a position of significance in a world full of unaccountable simultaneous events that are indifferent to them. Failure to do this threatens the rise of extreme *Angst*, which is a condition I reflect upon on more generally in Chapter 1. For now, we can understand it as a state of a negative feeling that results from a uniquely human condition

¹¹ Carl Joachim Friedrich, *Man and his Government: An Empirical Theory of Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963), 97.

¹² Anthony Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

¹³ Christoffer Kølvrå and Jan Ifervsen, Myth and History Politics in European integration: The Myth of the Fathers, in *Paper presented at the European Union Studies Association conference* (Boston, Massachusetts 2011), 5.

¹⁴ Bottici refers to her approach as a “philosophical” approach to political myth, and outlines this extensively in: Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth*.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Hans Blumenberg, *Work on Myth* (MIT Press, 1985).

of freedom and responsibility. There is no objective sense of meaning for human beings that is not created by them. The problem with *Angst* is that it does not provide us with a “direct object”, unlike fear. While unpleasant, fear can be understood and addressed more easily since it has a definite, tangible source.

It is because of these problems that human beings need “significance” (*Bedeutsamkeit*). Significance accordingly provides “closure” by reducing the innumerable possibilities of “being” within the multitude of possibilities within the absolutism of reality.¹⁷ Myths must therefore be more than mere narratives; they must, as Bottici argues borrowing from Karoly Kerényi, “ground” (*begründen*) significance.¹⁸ Myths ground significance and a sense of certainty in a world that would otherwise be indifferent to us. However, they do not do this permanently; they need to be constantly re-articulated to suit present circumstances. This means that myths are constantly in a process of being invoked in different contexts with different variations depending upon people’s needs. This is what Blumenberg called the “work on myth”. The work on myth refers to the fact that myths are told, retold, and invoked in different contexts all the time, albeit with the same general features. As Blumenberg puts it, “[M]yths are stories that are distinguished by a high degree of constancy in their narrative core and by an equally pronounced capacity for marginal variation.”¹⁹ Blumenberg was referring to literary myths in particular, but his theory can also apply to politics. The changeability and immediate needs of politics practices necessitates myths being adapted to suit present circumstances. Indeed, as Bottici points out, political myths are always told from the standpoint of the present and:

...it is in light of the continual change in their present conditions that human beings are impelled to go back to their political narratives, revise them in light of their new needs and exigencies through their reception, or, when this is not possible, dismiss them.²⁰

In co-authored publications with Benoît Challand, Bottici has applied this theory of myth into two empirical case studies. The first is the

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth*, 123; Karoly Kerényi, "Prolegomena," in *Essays on a Science of Mythology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 7.

¹⁹ Blumenberg, *Work on Myth*, 34.

²⁰ Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth*, 187.

“Clash of Civilizations”, which they argue is more than an academic theory, but a political myth that permeates multiple aspects of society.²¹ The second study investigates the role of political myth and memory in forming European identity.²² Joanne Esch has also discussed the role of political myth in legitimising the US-led “War on Terror” following 9/11.²³ Drawing from Piotr Cap, she argues that political myth was invoked as part of a strategy of “legitimation via proximation”, wherein threats of the “other” were portrayed in speeches by the speaker as literally closing in on the addressee.²⁴ This ultimately, she argues, contributed to “legitimising” the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan.

While existential approaches to political myth have enriched the study of politics, I believe there is an important gap within them that needs to be addressed. Namely, that the literature on political myth has barely engaged with the literature on ontological security.²⁵ To my knowledge the only exception to this is Vincent Della Sala’s recent work on political myth and the European Union. He argues that the EU’s political myths become normative and cognitive maps which provide the EU with ontological security. However, he does not explore the concept of ontological security in great detail and is less concerned with the existential philosophical underpinnings of either ontological security or political myth, which I explore in Chapter 1. My thesis explores the relations between these concepts at a more fundamental level. It also provides a methodological toolkit to analyse how these phenomena appear in political and media rhetoric. The lack of engagement between the two literatures is an important oversight for the existential approaches to political myth in particular owing

²¹ Bottici and Challand, "Rethinking Political Myth : The Clash of Civilizations as a Self-Fulfilling Prophecy."; *The Myth of the Clash of Civilizations*.

²² *Imagining Europe: Myth, Memory and Identity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

²³ Joanne Esch, "Legitimizing the "War on Terror": Political Myth in Official-Level Rhetoric," *Political Psychology* 31, no. 3 (2010).

²⁴ Ibid.; Piotr Cap, "Language and Legitimization: Developments in the Proximation Model of Political Discourse Analysis," *Lodz Papers in Pragmatics* 1 (2005); Proximation in the Discourse of Politics: Legitimizing the War on Terror, in *Paper Presented at the Conference on Culture, Language and Social Practice* (Boulder, Colorado 2007); "Towards the Proximation Model of the Analysis of Legitimization in Political Discourse," *Journal of Pragmatics* 35 (2008).

²⁵ Vincent Della Sala, "Europe's Odyssey?: Political Myth and the European Union," *Nations and Nationalism* 22, no. 3 (2016)..

to the concern of ontological security research with the core existential concept of *Angst*, as discussed initially by Søren Kierkegaard, and which is indirectly invoked by Hans Blumenberg in his theory of myth.

Ontological security goes beyond traditional physical/somatic notions of security and is instead concerned with the security of *being*. R.D. Laing first coined the term “ontological security” to refer to a “continuous person” that enjoys a stable and whole existence in reality.²⁶ Despite Laing’s importance, the most prominent modern-day scholar of ontological security is Anthony Giddens. He argues that it concerns a “person’s fundamental sense of safety in the world and includes a basic trust of other people” and obtaining this trust is “necessary in order for a person to maintain a sense of psychological well-being and avoid existential anxiety”.²⁷ Giddens emphasises the importance of a continuous narrative, or “sense of self” which can be found in the self’s ability to “keep the narrative going”. When we are ontologically secure, we feel whole and can act in comfort since we bracket out “questions about ourselves, others, and the object-world which have to be taken for granted in order to keep on with everyday activity”.²⁸

Ontological security has been applied to an array of studies across the Humanities and Social Sciences. Jayde Cahir has conducted research on the ontological security of people who were subjected to a policy of mass surveillance of individuals in Australia following the Cronulla riots.²⁹ Stephen F. Ostertag has investigated how people mentally intercept, negotiate and use news media in ways to maintain ontological security. He finds that this normally results in “lay theorising” and “ignorant othering” in an attempt to simplify the complexities of social environments.³⁰ Karie Marie Norgaard has revealed how a desire to avoid unpleasant emotions that threaten people’s ontological security could prevent social movement

²⁶ R.D. Laing, *The Divided Self* (London: Penguin, 1990).

²⁷ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 37.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Jayde Cahir, "Balancing Trust and Anxiety in a Culture of Fear: Text Messaging and Riots," *SAGE Open* 3, no. 2 (2013).

³⁰ Stephen F. Ostertag, "Processing Culture: Cognition, Ontology, and the News Media," *Sociological Forum* 25, no. 4 (2010).

participation on crucial issues such as climate change.³¹ Ontological security was first introduced to the discipline of International Relations (IR) by Jef Huysmans.³² Jennifer Mitzen and Brent Steele have both comprehensively theorised on how ontological security could be applied to IR,³³ with the latter focusing particularly on how European states stabilise their self-identity as “civilising” actors.³⁴ Dmitry Chernobrov has analysed the role of ontological security in satisfying identity-needs during perceived international crises.³⁵ Karl Gustafsson has argued that the deterioration of Sino-Japanese relations is partly due to challenges to ontological security, with this resulting from disruptions to their reciprocally performed and routinised processes of recognition.³⁶ However, Stuart Croft’s work on ontological security is the most directly relevant to this thesis. Croft has sought to bring the existentialist roots of ontological security (as elaborated on in section 1.3) back to the forefront. He argues for ontological security to be understood in terms of a need to construct biographical continuity, a web of trust relations, self-integrity, and a continual struggle against insecurity.³⁷ However, what is often missed by these studies is the manner in which conflict itself can help (re)establish ontological security, despite any physical or somatic threats. This has recently been addressed by Bahar Rumelili et al, who make precisely this argument and supports it with a series of case-studies.³⁸ Rumelili points out that although conflicts “threaten

³¹ Kari Marie Norgaard, ““People Want to Protect Themselves a Little Bit”: Emotions, Denial, and Social Movement Nonparticipation,” *Sociological Inquiry* 76, no. 3 (2006).

³² Jef Huysmans, “Security! What Do You Mean? From Concept to Thick Signifier” *European Journal of International Relations* 4, no. 2 (1998).

³³ Jennifer Mitzen, “Ontological Security in World Politics: State Identity and the Security Dilemma,” *ibid.* 12, no. 3 (2006); Brent Steele, *Ontological Security in International Relations* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

³⁴ Jennifer Mitzen, “Anchoring Europe’s Civilizing Identity: Habits, Capabilities and Ontological Security,” *Journal of European Public Policy* 13, no. 2 (2006).

³⁵ Dmitry Chernobrov, “Ontological Security and Public (Mis)Recognition of International Crises: Uncertainty, Political Imagining, and the Self,” *Political Psychology* 37, no. 5 (2016).

³⁶ Karl Gustafsson, “Routinised Recognition and Anxiety: Understanding the Deterioration in Sino-Japanese Relations,” *Review of International Studies* 42, no. 4 (2016).

³⁷ Croft, “Constructing Ontological Insecurity: The Insecuritization of Britain’s Muslims.” *Securitizing Islam: Identity and the Search for Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

³⁸ Bahar Rumelili, “Introduction,” in *Conflict Resolution and Ontological Security: Peace Anxieties*, ed. Bahar Rumelili (Abingdon/New York: Routledge, 2015), 2.

the physical security of the parties involved” they also “help settle certain existential questions about basic parameters of life, about being, self in relation to external world and others, and identity.³⁹ This is largely because they augment the social production of definite objects of fear (as distinguished from *Angst*), construct unambiguous moral standards, and create systems of meaning that clearly differentiate friends from enemies.⁴⁰ The core argument by the authors of this edited volume is that the prospect of peace processes can in fact induce ontological *insecurity*, and they demonstrate this with a series of case studies discussing protracted conflicts including Israel/Palestine, Turkey’s Kurdish conflicts, the Cyprus conflicts, and the “troubles” in Northern Ireland.⁴¹

Both political myth and ontologically security deal with the same fundamental existential concerns regarding *Angst* as discussed above. Furthermore, conflicts are often supported by and legitimised by political myths. This is particularly true in the case of legitimising the US-led “war on terror” and also the legitimisation of violent *jihād*.⁴² Political myths are fundamentally dramatic and contain themes of good and evil, tragedy and joy, and victory and defeat among other things. They simplify phenomena into dramatic absolutes, and provide people with the sense of certainty and security that we would need to avoid the conditions of *Angst*. They additionally add a sense of significance (as discussed in Blumenberg and Bottici)⁴³ which not only provides the consistency of ontological security, but grounds a stronger sense of meaning that makes the world less indifferent to us. Furthermore and crucially to this thesis, my argument is that political myth is often invoked as part of an attempt to re-establish a sense of ontological security in response to perceived crises. More

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 3.

⁴¹ All of these are relevant, but interesting engagements with ontological security can be found in: Ayşe Betül Çelik, "The Kurdish Issue and Levels of Ontological Security," *ibid.* Amir Lupovici, "Ontological security and the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process," in *Conflict Resolution and Ontological Security: Peace Anxieties*, ed. Bahar Rumelili (Abingdon/New York: Routledge, 2015); *ibid.*

⁴² Esch, "Legitimizing the "War on Terror": Political Myth in Official-Level Rhetoric."; Xander Kirke, "Violence and Political Myth: Radicalizing Believers in the Pages of Inspire Magazine," *International Political Sociology* 9, no. 4 (2015).

⁴³ Blumenberg, *Work on Myth*; Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth*.

specifically, significance-making (*Bedeutsamkeit*) in the work on political myth has the effect of providing ontological security.

The examples throughout this thesis show myth being invoked by political and media elites in response to terror attacks, bringing all the themes of good/evil, tragedy/joy, heroism/villainy to the fore. It simplifies phenomena to at least make the self/other relation seem constant. Even if the threat posed by the “other” generates fear (and sometimes it does not), this is a preferable situation to the absolutism of *Angst*. What my thesis demonstrates is that there are important links between ontological security – particularly relating to the need for biographical continuity as discussed by Anthony Giddens and Stuart Croft - with the existential political myth literature that need to be further explored. While the empirical example discussed in this thesis is the political myth of a perceived conflict with a violent, radical form of Islam and Muslims, I believe the theoretical framework to be compatible with multiple studies of conflict or perceived conflict.

Structure of the thesis

Chapter 1 discusses the concept of political myth. While there is no universally agreed definition of political myth, the vast majority of academic studies do not use the term in the mainstream pejorative sense as necessarily false or implausible stories. Drawing from the existentialist approach in myth, I argue that myths provide us with a way of making sense of the world. They do not necessarily answer the ultimate meanings of existence, however, which would be the domain of religion. What matters is that they enable people to act in the “here and now;” to make sense of social processes within the world. As Henry Tudor once claimed, a political myth is a story told for a specific purpose and is not just a source of amusement.⁴⁴ In this section I also stress a vital point: by referring to Britain’s conflict with a violent, radical form of Islam as a political myth, I am *not* claiming that it is not true. I am *not* saying that there are no objective threats to life and limb posed by people who claim to represent Islam.⁴⁵ Rather, I am using

⁴⁴ Henry Tudor, *Political Myth* (London: Macmillan, 1972).

⁴⁵ While this may not be relevant to the overall argument, I of course do accept that there are individuals who have and are likely to continue killing and maiming for

the concept of myth in the existentialist philosophical sense as a narrative that responds to a need for significance and ontological security. The most important thing to consider is what a particular political myth *does* rather than whether it is objectively true or false. Foundation myths for instance, like those of the USA and the European Union, all have a particular function for people within those political orders which may be irrelevant for those who are not associated with them. Spaniards would be unlikely to be enthused by the tales of the heroism of the founding fathers of the USA, for example, whereas a very different reaction may be expected from an American citizen. It is likely that neither would deny that all (or most) of the events actually occurred, and neither of their views about the same event are necessarily true or false. They are just viewed differently and have vast discrepancies in their importance for these respective countries.

In this section I also discuss the three core aspects of myth: the *cognitive*, the *integrative*, and the *mobilising*. Myths are dramatic and often highly emotive narratives. They can (and often do) incite people towards political action for a whole variety of different causes. The scholar who perhaps best elaborated on the mobilising potential of political myth was Georges Sorel, who saw the creation of myths as necessary for any successful revolutionary movement. According to him, myths are not simply “descriptions of things”, but are “expressions of a determination to act.”⁴⁶ For Sorel, the human mind is “so constituted that it cannot remain content with the mere observation of facts” and therefore cannot function on reason alone.⁴⁷ Indeed, if we relied on just reason, then we would have not had any of the major historical changes which, Sorel argues, were always created through imaginative means. Myth allows us to capture “the activity, sentiments and the ideas of the masses as they prepare themselves to enter on a decisive struggle.”⁴⁸ Sorel felt that this kind of motivating force could be used to unite people under a myth of the General Strike more than any deep intellectual inquiry could. I then assess two further critical features of the work on myth: the “cognitive” and the “integrative aspect”. The

this cause. This analytical observation is not particularly relevant to arguments of this thesis, however.

⁴⁶ Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, 32.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

cognitive aspect of myth is fundamentally simplifying. Myth provides people with mental maps to interpret events and also gives guidelines for behaviour. The integrative aspect of myth allows people to associate themselves within social and political collectives. Many scholars have pointed out that myths have a certain unifying capacity. My approach draws from social psychology and specifically the research into the concept of “entitativity.” Entitativity was first introduced to social psychology by D.T. Campbell to refer to “the degree of having nature of an entity, of having real existence.”⁴⁹ This refers to the perception of groups as possessing unity and coherence which is abstract from the individuals which constitute it. Ultimately, political myths provide cognitive lenses through which people can interpret and make sense of political events.⁵⁰ They also allow individuals to associate themselves more firmly within social and political collectives.⁵¹ The relational and process nature of societies means that myths are always circulating, being altered, and adapted to, different parts of society. The narratives of a clash between goodness and evil, respective heroic and villainous figures of these categories, and the idea of a constant threat posed by the other (some Muslims), are all repeated but applied contextually.

While this gives us a definition of myth, it would not sufficiently answer why we need myths. Section 1.3 attempts this. I argue that myths answer fundamental human existential needs for significance and ontological security. I draw from the existentialist philosophies of Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger and, to a lesser extent, Jean-Paul Sartre to argue that human beings are faced with the problem of finding answers to our “being” in the world. We struggle to construct a coherent sense of self which mediates between the totality of the world and our own comparatively small, subjective position within it. In this vein, I

⁴⁹ D.T. Campbell, "Common fate, similarity, and other indices of the status of aggregates of persons as social entities," *Behavioural Science* Volume 3 (1958): 17.

⁵⁰ Bennett, "Myth, Ritual and Political Control."; Flood, *Political Myth: A Theoretical Introduction*; Yves Bizeuil, "Politische Mythen, Ideologien und Utopien: Ein Definitionsversuch," in *Mythos No. 2: Politische Mythen* (2006).

⁵¹ Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1991); George Schöpflin, "The Functions and Taxonomy of Myths," in *Myths and Nationhood* (New York: Routledge, 1997). Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*.

argue that political myths exist in order to respond to the fundamental existential problems that have been discussed by such philosophers for generations: the problems of *Angst* and estrangement. To explain this, I draw from Kierkegaard's idea of the tension between the *infinite* and the *finite*. The "infinite" corresponds to "possibility", or the capacity to envisage new ideas, bring new creations into existence, choose from innumerable potentialities and, ultimately, change oneself. The "finite" corresponds to "actuality" or "necessity", understood as the concrete "here and now" and our reality as a definite "something" in the world.⁵² This tension between the finite infinite is a chief cause of what Kierkegaard refers to as *Angst* (anxiety). For Kierkegaard, *Angst* had to be differentiated from fear, since fear refers to "something definite" whereas "anxiety is freedom's actuality as the possibility of possibility".⁵³ Political myths are *one* way that the tensions between the absolutism of the infinite and the particularity of the finite are addressed. Although Kierkegaard is not generally discussed by modern day theorists of political myth, the same problems that Kierkegaard emphasised seem to resonate with their theories. I argue that his philosophy synthesises well with Hans Blumenberg's existentialist take on myth, that asks how we function within the "absolutism of reality" as discussed above.⁵⁴

In section 1.4 I point out that much of this theory the observations made by existential approaches to political myth are also closely reflected in current sociological research into ontological security. This research is most fundamentally concerned with security of *being*, and not just the physical, somatic, or raw-survival that dominates traditional security studies.⁵⁵ I argue that the existentialist approach to political myth in particular is substantially enhanced when the concept of significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) engages directly with ontological security. This is primarily because what Blumenberg and Bottici both discuss is reflected in decades of ontological

⁵² Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968).

⁵³ "The Concept of Anxiety: The Simple Psychological Orientating Deliberation on the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin," in *The Essential Kierkegaard* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 139.

⁵⁴ Blumenberg, *Work on Myth*, 3-4.

⁵⁵ John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001); Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading: MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979).

security research, and it reveals just how important political myths are to our understanding of politics. I see the main point of interaction between political myth and ontological security as follows: the process of significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) making through the work on myth is also a process of ontologically securitising.⁵⁶ The work on myth ensures that even when one's physical security is threatened, one's security of *being* can be re-assured. This is because myth does not answer questions of existence in the sense of survival, but also wider questions about who we are and what we might become. Although there are numerous approaches to ontological security, I will adopt Stuart Croft's approach which understands ontological security as the need to construct biographical continuity, to construct a web of trust relations, and to act according to self-integrity and, crucially, to struggle against ontological *insecurity*.⁵⁷

Chapter 2 assesses the relationship between political myth and other related phenomena: ideology, religion, and science. After introducing the discussion in section 2.1, I use section 2.2 to distinguish the phenomenon of myth from that of ideology. Although political myths and political ideologies appear together in practice, they are qualitatively different insofar as ideologies are concerned with ideas, whereas myths are fundamentally narratives. They are not the same thing, but they do sometimes appear together in practice, as American ideals of freedom and liberty are often heavily interwoven with myths about the exploits of the founding fathers. I begin this section by tracing the concept of ideology from its original iteration by Destutt du Tracy as the "science of ideas" to subsequent "pejorative" definitions of the concept. I assess a variety of pejorative approaches to ideology particularly as it was influenced by Karl Marx and adopted in much of 20th Century political philosophy. Bottici argues that pejorative ideological views lend themselves to ironically becoming ideological and, furthermore, they risk falling into the trap of distinguishing between "myth" versus "reality."⁵⁸ This latter point is important in particular since adopting a pejorative take on ideology and linking it closely

⁵⁶ This is not to be confused with the securitisation theory discussed in either Economics or International Relations.

⁵⁷ Croft, *Securitizing Islam: Identity and the Search for Security*; "Constructing Ontological Insecurity: The Insecuritization of Britain's Muslims."

⁵⁸ Bottici and Challand, *The Myth of the Clash of Civilizations*, 23.

to political myth leaves researchers in a position of adopting a pejorative understanding of myth. In section 2.3 I move on to distinguish between myth and political religion. I argue that political religions answer many of the fundamental existential concerns that political myths do, but in a far more absolutist and totalising manner. My understanding of political religions draws heavily from the writings of Eric Voegelin. Voegelin distinguished between two overarching forms of religion: *Überweltliche Religionen* (transworldly religions) and *Innerweltliche Religionen* (inner-worldly religions).⁵⁹ The former can be described in the traditional sense and the latter could be understood as a form of religion that is less concerned with eschatological salvation “beyond the world”, but a form of salvation “within the world”.⁶⁰ For Voegelin, the latter is problematic primarily because it does not allow itself to be subject to scientific critique. Instead, these inner-worldly religions will attempt only to shift the concept of truth. I argue that political religions were most vividly seen in the communism and Nazism of the 20th century.

Finally, in section 2.4 I argue that myth is not necessarily in opposition to reason and scientific inquiry. Instead, I posit that myths can answer the fundamental existential needs discussed in chapter 1 that reason and science do not necessarily fulfil. I point out that myths are less likely to answer “ontic” questions that science is concerned with. Put more simply, what matters is not whether a myth is able to accurately reflect truth or falseness, but whether it can answer the existential issues discussed in section 1.3. Nonetheless, scholarship in the 19th and early-mid 20th centuries remained wedded to the idea that myths were in tension with reason and science, and I discuss this with reference to Bruce Malinowski and James George Frazer in particular.⁶¹ Furthermore, I consider Ernst Cassirer’s view of myth as a form of social and cognitive regression that he outlines in *Myth*

⁵⁹ Herman Paul, "Religion and Politics: In Search of Resemblances," in *Political Religion Beyond Totalitarianism*, ed. Joost Augusteyn, Patrick G.C. Dassen, and Maartje J. Janse Janse (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

⁶⁰ Eric Voegelin, "Modernity Without Restraint; The Political Religions, The New Science of Politics; Science, Politics and Gnosticism;," in *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, ed. Manfred Henningsen (Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 62-63.

⁶¹ James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd, 1963), 220. Bruce Malinowski, *Myth in Primitive Psychology* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, 1971).

of the State.⁶² I argue, however, that this is not inevitable, and that myth can in fact be used to aid scientific enquiry and some scientific achievements have been mythologised. This is aptly demonstrated by Vincent Mosco's discussion of the "myth of cyberspace".⁶³

Chapter 3 is my methodology chapter. After introducing the discussion in section 3.1, it discusses the linguistic cues that will be analysed as evidence for the presence of the work on myth. I search for instances of deixis and specific linguistic tropes. Deixis refers to the act of "pointing" via language, and any such linguistic form which accomplishes this "pointing" is called a deictic expression. There are three important types of deixis: person, place, and time. *Person* deixis refers to "human participants" who will typically be the speaker their supporters and allies, enemies and opponents, or other members of the intended audience. *Place* deixis encodes spatial relations relative to the location of the speaker, but can also be words or expressions that point to a specific location. Some linguistic tropes are important for the work on myth. I identify two important types of trope: metaphor, metonymy, and the subtype of the latter: synecdoche. One of the observations I make throughout the thesis is that deixis is exceptionally important to the work on myth. This is because deixis is about positioning, and this is particularly important when we are concerned with our places within the world, and even more so when we are concerned with the potential rise of *Angst*.

In section 3.3 I discuss the sources I select for analysis in chapters 5 and 6, I devote substantial time to justifying this selection. I explain that I selected political speeches, parliamentary debates, and newspaper columns. Speeches are carefully orchestrated to appeal to public sentiments and, where possible, to persuade them towards a particular view. My analysis of political speeches and parliamentary debates draws heavily from the works of Jonathan Charteris-Black, who has written extensively on political rhetoric, and especially on the usage of metaphor and myth by speakers. I synthesise this with my analysis of deixis to explain how I will approach the political speeches I select in Part II. I also outline how and why I analyse

⁶² Cassirer, *The Myth of the State*.

⁶³ Vincent Mosco, *The Digital Sublime: Myth, Power, and Cyberspace* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2004).

Newspaper columns. I explain my attempts to find some balance in the political affiliation of the newspapers in question, and why I select a tabloid and a broadsheet newspaper from left and right-leaning publications. My analysis of right-leaning publications comes mostly from the *Daily Mail* and the *Telegraph*, and my left-wing analysis is from the *Guardian* and the *Daily Mirror*. I used the same search terms as I did for section 3.3 and conducted it within the same time period. This meant that some columnists appeared more than others. One example would be Melanie Phillips of the *Daily Mail* who features particularly heavily in this regard, owing largely to her deep concern with the perceived threat of radical Islam.

This section also discusses the limitations of my methodology and offers a defence of how I select and interpret my material. I do not claim to comprehensively resolve these issues, but offer a defence of my approach. I emphasise that my reading of these materials is somewhat subjective, and that others may read the same material differently. This largely reflects the hermeneutic claim that there is no independently objective reading of such texts.⁶⁴ My examples should not be read as a comprehensive, empirical “case-study” in the sense that much of traditional social science would expect. Rather, it should be read as a discussion about a particular empirical example, with a much closer scrutiny of the work on myth in individual sources. While all actors contribute to the work on myth, some are more influential in being able to “direct” it than others. This is why I focus primarily on prominent media and political discourses in the aftermath of major crises. The section also discusses the general limitations that come with qualitative research grounded in interpretivism. The biggest drawback is the temptation that researchers have to “cherry-pick” their data. I attempt to justify my approach to these issues despite these valid concerns. I conclude in section 3.4 with a reflection on my discussion, and outline briefly what will be discussed in part II of the thesis.

Part II begins to apply the theoretical framework into an empirical example. In chapter 4 I outline the core aspects of the political myth, after introducing the topic in section 4.1, I use section 4.2 to argue that narratives

⁶⁴ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1985). Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

about Britain facing an existential conflict with a pernicious violent radical form of Islam have become a political myth. It must be once again stressed that I do not refer to these narratives as a political myth because I believe they are false, but because they have taken on a dramatic and figurative form that serves to provide people with a sense of significance and ontological security. The myth posits that Britain is facing an existential threat from this radical other and that it must ultimately triumph and resolutely destroy this threat. I point out two key themes of this myth: the notions of “British resilience” and “British values”. The former draws from memories of British resilience in the Second World War, while the latter refers to values of Britishness that are often associated with liberalism. The myth posits that Britain will overcome its nemesis, as the enemy is so barbaric that it cannot be reconciled with Britain and Britishness. The distinction is made more complex by the fact that there are “good” Muslims who can be distinguished from “bad” Muslims. The former, it is often claimed, must do more to convert the latter.

In section 4.3 I point out that there are two variants on the work on myth. As Blumenberg explained, myths are “distinguished by a high degree of constancy in their narrative core and by an equally pronounced capacity for marginal variation”.⁶⁵ I note that the work on myth in this case has high levels of constancy, but all key parts of variation that seem to be associated by political leanings. While both left and right-leaning politicians and newspaper columnists accept the fundamental premise that there is an existential threat posed by a radical, violent, Islamic other, the way they express this view differs. The right-wing is more likely to blame tolerance of multiculturalism and an abject failure to defend British values for such attacks. They are also likely to blame Muslims or Islam itself for their failure to prevent such attacks. By contrast, left wing analysis also tends to defend multi-culturalism and will often refer to the mental deficiencies of the bombers. Section 4.4 concludes by reflecting on these issues before introducing the empirical examples to be discussed in chapter 5 and 6.

Chapter 5 concerns the first two of my empirical examples: the London Bombings of 7th July 2005. As indicated in chapter 3, my empirical

⁶⁵ Blumenberg, *Work on Myth*, 34.

analysis consists of political speeches, parliamentary debates, and Newspaper articles following the attack. I explain what happened on the day of the event in the introductory section (5.1). I subsequently use section 5.2 to analyse the response of senior politicians in their speeches and in parliamentary debates. I comment particularly on Tony Blair's reaction to the event in the two months following the attack, analysing key speeches and parliamentary debate. The section demonstrates how politicians deploy the work on myth in order to evoke this sense of significance and re-establish ontological security. I point out that the "British resilience" narrative theme first discussed in section 4.2 was strongly present in this period. In particular, many comparison were made between the resilience of Britons and Londoners especially and those who resisted the Nazis during the Blitz. The events represented a shattering of ontological security and a potential return to a state of *Angst*. Blair's rhetoric was deployed (consciously or not) to prevent this, find significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) and re-establish ontological security. The section reveals that Blair's rhetoric frequently evoked the integrative and mobilising aspects of myth in order to achieve this and, furthermore, that he sought to provide people with the grounding through which the then-present situation could be addressed.

In section 5.3 I conduct a similar analysis of the reaction of newspaper columns following the attacks. Many of the themes present in the political rhetoric of section 5.2 also appeared in these sources. They frequently make references to the Blitz, with accompanying promises (and prophecies) that Britain would endure against the enemy other and would ultimately be victorious. While both the left-leaning and right-leaning publications evoke the core themes of the work on myth (i.e., that there was a conflict with a radical and violent Muslim other), I note that there are occasional differences in how they respond to the events. Right-leaning publications often express outrage at the failure to confront the enemy sooner, which they attribute to weak governance as a consequence of being in thrall to political correctness. Left-leaning publications tend to cite the failure of British foreign policy (especially the 2003 invasion of Iraq) and warn against the dangers of Islamophobia and the rise of the far-right. The section nonetheless finds that key themes of British resilience, British values were expressed by both sides. British resilience was more prevalent in this

example than the example in chapter 6. There were reactions with stories of Londoners overcoming the odds in a fashion comparable to the Blitz featuring heavily. I conclude the chapter in section 5.4 with a reflection on the points discussed.

In chapter 6 I discuss the Murder of Fusilier Lee Rigby on 23rd May 2013. In the introductory section 6.1, I elaborate on the main differences between this and the events of 2005. While these differences between the 7th July London Bombings and the Murder of Lee Rigby were quite clear at first glance (notable because of the scale of the attack), the work on myth was still adapted into this context by political figures and newspaper columnists. In section 6.2 I analyse the responses of senior politicians, most notably the Prime Minister David Cameron and debates with MPs in parliament. This search was conducted with the same search terms and time period that I explained in chapter 3. The section demonstrates that David Cameron (much like Tony Blair in chapter 5) sought to find significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) in the events and encourage the (re)establishment of ontological security. While the notion of “British resilience” was still important in the rhetoric, my research reveals that greater attention was paid to the second core theme of the collective self-narrative in the work on myth: the importance of “British values”. Many also cited the heroism of Ingrid Loyau-Kennett, a member of the public who confronted the attackers while they still wielded blood-stained weapons. Loyau-Kennett and the “Angels of Woolwich” were often depicted by political figures as heroes at a time of grave tragedy, and an embodiment of values we should aspire to hold.

Section 6.3 analyses the responses from newspaper columnists to these events. It indicates that many of the key themes of the work on myth remained common to both left-leaning and right-leaning commentary (e.g., the conflict between Britain and a radical form of Islam and Muslims), but with other key differences. Left-leaning publications were once again more likely to attribute the blame of the attacks to British foreign policy. They would also cite the deficient mental faculties of the killers, claiming that this was perhaps the most significance factor causing the attacks. They would subsequently warn about the threat of Islamophobia, particularly in the context of the rise of the English Defence League (EDL). The right-leaning

publications continued to attribute the attacks to a weakness of governance, surrendering to political correctness, and for failing to understand the “true” nature of the enemy. There are examples of both sides emphasising the heroism of Loyau-Kennett and the “Angels of Woolwich” as well as condemning the attackers themselves. Both sides also emphasise the fundamental aspects of the work on myth: the irreconcilable conflict between the Britain and violent/radical form of Islam and Muslims who must ultimately be defeated. In section 6.4, I reflect on the issues discussed throughout chapter 6.

In the thesis conclusion I reflect on the issues discussed throughout the thesis. In particular, I pay close attention to the novel contribution that my thesis makes and the normative implications of some of my findings. Regarding the former, I point out that my thesis is the first to conduct an analysis of political myth and ontological security in rhetoric following terror attacks. I also argue that my thesis provides a theoretical toolkit that we can use to analyse other invocations of the work on myth in different contexts, and that this is particularly important given the incidences of terror attacks in Europe and North America between 2014 and 2016. With regards to the normative reflections in the conclusion, I point out that the phenomenon of political myths causes a dilemma for us. On the one hand, many of us need political myths in order to anchor a sense of stability in such moments of crisis. On the other, political myths tend to produce highly simplified accounts of social and political phenomena. While simplicity may be a necessary feature of finding ontological security, it could potentially run contrary to an open, pluralistic and “shades of grey” view of society, particularly in regards to identity. If a political myth encourages pre-conceptions about collective self/other identities, then this could encourage a simplistic view of other that could, at worst, encourage prejudices. While this is not inevitable, I argue that it is something to consider when conducting an analysis of a political myth which is concerned with conflict between peoples.

PART I: Conceptualising Political Myth

Chapter 1: An Existential Approach to Political Myth

1.1 Introduction

This chapter elaborates on my theory of political myth. There is no universally agreed-upon definition of myth, and this presents immediate challenges for the analysis. While my own definition will not satisfy everyone, I offer a defence of it with reference to a wide-array of literature. While this is drawn predominately from philosophy, some of it also comes from social psychology and sociology. The main objective is to establish the theoretical framework which will form the bedrock that enables my reading of the empirical material, making it a crucial aspect of the thesis. I demonstrate how myths are needed by pointing out the connections to the observations of a variety of existential philosophers, but particularly Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger. In the conclusion to this chapter, I reflect on the observations discussed throughout the chapter and propose that further research needs to be conducted (elsewhere) into how the work on myth can sustain ontological security in times of conflict and violence. While it will not be possible to cover the entire existentialist canon in this section (questions about who exactly falls within this tradition notwithstanding), this section covers core thinkers who elaborate on the question of *Angst* in most profoundly.

1.2 Defining Political Myth

I adopt what Christoffer Kølvråa and Jan Ifervsen have referred to as an existential approach to political myth.⁶⁶ This is heavily influenced by the works of Hans Blumenberg and Chiara Bottici. I posit the following definition of myth for this thesis:

Myths are dramatic and figurative narrative processes which construct bonds for social groups by collectively interpreting their shared conditions of existence, providing adherents with maps for behavior and certainty for action. Myths may incorporate (but are not limited to) themes such as founding moments of a social order, figures of heroism and villainy, and moments of tragedy

⁶⁶ Kølvråa and Ifervsen, "Myth and History Politics in European integration: The Myth of the Fathers," 5.

and joy. They can be invoked verbally by the literal discussion of their subject matter and in more extraordinary moments such as parades and ceremonies... In order for myths to remain important for a social group, they must always be interpreted to suit present circumstances and provide a sense of certainty in an otherwise uncertain world.⁶⁷

They make the intangible tangible, the distant near, and the complicated simple. They are also able to evoke powerful emotions within many of us and mobilise into political action. They can serve a variety of causes and can potentially be a cause of either emancipation or suppression. By the “work on myth”, I am referring to the fact that myths are told, retold, and invoked in different contexts all the time, albeit with the same general features. As Blumenberg puts it, “[M]yths are stories that are distinguished by a high degree of constancy in their narrative core and by an equally pronounced capacity for marginal variation.”⁶⁸ The two paradoxical features of myth, constancy and variation, also make them “transmissible by tradition”. This is because their “constancy produces the attraction of recognising them in artistic or ritual representation” and “their variability produces the attraction of trying out new and personal means of presenting them”. Put differently, the constancy of the subject matter of a myth, alongside the variable ways one can represent them, makes myths extremely attractive for people to invoke in a variety of contexts. This, Blumenberg argues, is particularly attractive for composers and listeners of music.⁶⁹ As I argue later in this section and throughout Part II, it can also be extremely attractive for politicians and media commentators. What this provides us with is an image of myths being told, retold, and continually adapted by different “composers”. This is, in essence, the “work on myth”. That is, myths have a constancy in their basic subject matter that is continually told, retold, and adapted depending upon the situation. Political myths are continuously “worked on” to address political needs. For this reason, as Bottici points out, political myths are always told from the standpoint of the present and:

⁶⁷ Kirke, "Violence and Political Myth: Radicalizing Believers in the Pages of Inspire Magazine."

⁶⁸ Blumenberg, *Work on Myth*, 34.

⁶⁹ As discussed in section 1.5, Blumenberg also argues that this variability to myth also separates a myth from a religious text.

...it is in light of the continual change in their present conditions that human beings are impelled to go back to their political narratives, revise them in light of their new needs and exigencies through their reception, or, when this is not possible, dismiss them.⁷⁰

There are three main features of political myth: the *cognitive*, the *integrative*, and the *mobilising*. The *cognitive* aspect of myths provides a way of condensing the complexity of reality into manageable pieces. Myths eschew complexity and contingency and replace both with simplicity and permanence. As Lance Bennett puts it:

Political myths are difficult to analyze because they are such basic components of everyday perception. They are likely the lenses in a pair of glasses in the sense that they are not the things people see when they look at the world, they are the things they see with. Myths are the truths about society that are taken for granted. These basic cultural principles are woven throughout everyday social discourse from dinner table conversation, to the morals of television programs, to the lofty policy debates of congress.⁷¹

Myths are collectively formed through “associative mechanisms that link private experience, ongoing reality, and public history into powerful frameworks of understanding.”⁷² As they become “lenses” through which we make sense of contemporary political events and experiences,⁷³ they are not only difficult to analyse, but also to critique. Indeed, we are reluctant to begin such critiques as Murray Edelman has argued. Edelman argued that publics tend to be reluctant to engage with the intricacies of politics.⁷⁴ This necessitates myths and other linguistic devices which provide the illusion of simplicity and coherence. Stories involving heroic leadership, struggle, and sacrifice are often embodied within particular metaphors which are continually repeated within political discourse, serving to “intensify some perceptions and screen others out of attention,” as well as providing mental

⁷⁰ Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth*, 187.

⁷¹ Bennett, "Myth, Ritual and Political Control," 167.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 169.

⁷³ *Ibid.*; Bottici and Challand, "Rethinking Political Myth : The Clash of Civilizations as a Self-Fulfilling Prophecy."; *The Myth of the Clash of Civilizations*, 2, 10.

⁷⁴ See more on this in: Kirke, "Violence and Political Myth: Radicalizing Believers in the Pages of Inspire Magazine," 286-87.

maps for individuals to make sense of the world around them.⁷⁵ Hence, there is a demand for myths and linguistic devices that reassure by portraying things as simple and coherent. Stories of heroic leadership, selfless struggle and sacrifice, etc, then become established in political discourse, where they “intensify some perceptions and screen others out of attention.”⁷⁶ All of this simplicity explains why they are so useful for explaining political events. As Edelman puts it:

“If a few classic themes are surefire vehicles for engaging the emotions of large numbers of people, leaders will predictably interpret events in these forms, and their audiences will eagerly cooperate in creating the world in the same configurations.”⁷⁷

It also means that myths do not have to be recounted in their entirety in order to function as elements of political discourse:

“Myths can be evoked by labels (“The Aryan myth”), watchwords and slogans (“Workers of the world, unite!”), metonymic allusions (“the Vietnam syndrome”), echoes or quotations (“I cannot tell a lie”), and other verbal forms as well as by nonverbal forms, including iconic and ritual representations.”⁷⁸

All of this is close to describing the notion of “cognitive schemata” which, as Christopher Flood explains, are “widely used to explain how discursive and other symbolic practices influence the ways in which members of social groups organize their perceptions on the basis of acquired cognitive frameworks.” Once established, they constitute an “organizing and filtering procedure for the reception of new information, be it the combination of sights and sounds into images of physical objects or the complex perception of social situations.”⁷⁹ Flood’s approach to schemas is borrowed from the discipline of social psychology. In this discipline, it is understood as a “cognitive structure that represents knowledge about a concept or type of stimulus, including its attributes and the relations among

⁷⁵ Murray Edelman, "Myths, Metaphors and Political Conformity," *Psychiatry* 30, no. 3 (1967): 217-23; *The Symbolic Uses of Politics* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 225-26.

⁷⁶ "Myths, Metaphors and Political Conformity," 218; Flood, *Political Myth: A Theoretical Introduction*, 80.

⁷⁷ Edelman, "Myths, Metaphors and Political Conformity," 223.

⁷⁸ Flood, *Political Myth: A Theoretical Introduction*, 85.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 81.

those attributes.”⁸⁰ Schemas are a set of interrelated cognitions, such as thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, which allow people to quickly make sense of other people, situations, events, or places on the basis of limited information. When schemas are invoked, they often facilitate top-down, concept and theory-driven processing as opposed to “bottom-up” or “data-driven” processing.⁸¹ In other-words, gaps are filled with prior knowledge and preconceptions rather than by seeking information directly from immediate contexts. Certain cues, (such as the appearance of another person) are likely to activate particular schema which then “fills in” the missing details in this manner.

There are close links between the cognitive and *integrative* aspect of myth. By referring to this aspect as “integrative”, I mean that political myths almost always place individuals into groups. The work on myth cannot occur in isolation, but is rather a collective endeavour. They often also enable people to position themselves in the world in relation to others. For instance, national foundation myths tell stories of the origins of the people we are supposedly associated with and often provide indications as to how we should act in the world today. Indeed, nationalist myths in particular allow people(s) to “construct their identities as individuals and simultaneously as members of a community.”⁸² The fact that they do not directly encounter everyone within this community means that they are, as Benedict Anderson famously described, fundamentally “imagined.”⁸³ Whether they are myths of origins, futures, or new ages, myths only arise, as Jean-Luc Nancy puts it, “from a community and for it: they engender one another, infinitely and immediately.”⁸⁴ Myths are, as Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy put it, “identificatory

⁸⁰ Susan T. Fiske and Shelley E. Taylor, *Social Cognition*, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1991), 98.

⁸¹ David E. Rumelhart and Andrew Ortony, "The representation of knowledge in memory," in *Schooling and the acquisition of knowledge*, ed. Richard Chase Anderson, Rand J. Spiro, and William Edward Montague (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1977).

⁸² Schöpflin, "The Functions and Taxonomy of Myths," 19-35.

⁸³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 2006).

⁸⁴ Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, 50.

machines” which remind people of their affiliation with a particular community.⁸⁵

The formation of collective “WE-identities” is therefore central to the work on myth⁸⁶, and indeed one can say the same about “THEY-identities”.⁸⁷ When we create or impose these identities we are in effect creating “groupings” for people which supersede their own individuality. This reflects another important phenomenon discussed in the social psychology literature: entitativity. Entitativity was first introduced to social psychology by D.T. Campbell to refer to “the degree of having nature of an entity, of having real existence.”⁸⁸ This refers to the perception of groups as possessing unity and coherence which is abstract from the individuals which constitute it. The concept was made to explain why certain groups were considered “real” while others were simply aggregates of individuals. Entitativity is substantially influenced by the (perceived) sharing of common fate, similarity, and proximity.⁸⁹ For example, spectators at a football game may seem to be a disorganised mass of individuals who happen to be in the same place at the same time, but the fact that they express similarly emotions, shout, and sing together, gives them entitativity.⁹⁰ People behave differently when they are members of a group that they feel is high in entitativity. Research has indicated that group members are more likely to identify with such groups⁹¹, and this tendency is even stronger when are uncertain about themselves and whether their beliefs are correct.⁹²

⁸⁵ Phillipe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, “‘The Nazi Myth’ ” *Critical Inquiry* 16, no. 2 (1990): 296. For more on these themes, see Xander Kirke, “Violence and Political Myth: Radicalizing Believers in the Pages of Inspire Magazine,” *International Political Sociology* 9, no. 4 (2015).

⁸⁶ Lothar Probst, “Founding Myths in Europe and the Role of the Holocaust,” *New German Critique*, no. 90 (2003): 45.

⁸⁷ Kirke, “Violence and Political Myth: Radicalizing Believers in the Pages of Inspire Magazine,” 287.

⁸⁸ Campbell, “Common fate, similarity, and other indices of the status of aggregates of persons as social entities,” 17.

⁸⁹ Ibid. Donelson R. Forsyth, *Group Dynamics*, 5th ed. (Wadsworth: Cengage Learning, 2010), 10.

⁹⁰ *Group Dynamics*.

⁹¹ Emanuele Castano et al., “I Belong Therefore I Exist: Ingroup Identification, Ingroup Entitativity, and Ingroup Bias,” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 28, no. 2 (2002).

⁹² Michael A. Hogg et al., “Uncertainty, entitativity, and group identification,” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 43, no. 1 (2005).

The *mobilising* aspect of myth is crucial to their effectiveness in political discourse. The theorist who elaborated on this most effectively was Georges Sorel. Sorel saw the creation of myths as necessary for any successful revolutionary movement. According to him, myths are not simply “descriptions of things”, but are “expressions of a determination to act.”⁹³ The human mind, for Sorel, cannot be content with merely observing facts and thereby cannot function simply with reason alone.⁹⁴ Indeed, Sorel argued that if we relied solely on reason, then we would have not be able to undertake great social changes, because such changes were always created through imaginative means. Myths operate against reason, and they enable us to capture the sentiments and passions of the masses who enter into decisive struggles against opposing forces.⁹⁵ Sorel’s interest in myth was politically motivated; he felt that the power of myth could be used to bring about a general strike far more effectively than any deep intellectual analysis would be able to. Indeed, Sorel was often scathingly critical of intellectuals like Ernst Renan whose usage of “syllogisms”, he contended, could never account for the passion of movements with religious or mythic qualities.⁹⁶ He was also critical of socialists and Marxists who were “afraid of revolution” and who, he claimed, sought to “shake the confidence felt by the workers in the preparations they are making for the revolution... they cast ridicule on the idea of the general strike – the only idea that could have value as a motivating force”.⁹⁷ Indeed so powerful is myth that Sorel believes those “living in the world of myths” that they become “secure from all refutation.”⁹⁸ Holding on to this promise of victory is core to this mobilising force.

Whereas Sorel saw myths and violence as being necessary and even desirable for social change, Ernst Cassirer would later be implacably opposed to this view – despite not mentioning Sorel directly. In his classic work *The Myth of the State*, Ernst Cassirer was horrified by what he saw as

⁹³ Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, 32.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 22-25.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 26-35.

the power of mythic thought to lead to barbaric and repressive politics.⁹⁹ Cassirer wrote during the rise of the Nazis and therefore witnessed myth in its most pernicious, insidious and highly volatile form – particularly with regards to the *myth of the Aryan race* which was a key part of Nazi politics. Myths turn the “passive state” of deep internal emotions into an “active process” which is openly displayed by many people simultaneously. It encouraged people into making radical political changes which were informed by this fundamentally regressive mode of thought. Such myths often surface when people are presented with a situation of insecurity, most notably when there is a challenge to the established political order. In a passage which is somewhat reminiscent of Giddens’ modern work on ontological security (more on this below), Cassirer referred to these situations as “critical moments” in which:

...the rational forces that resist the rise of the old mythical conceptions are no longer sure of themselves. In these moments the time for myth has come again. For myth has not really been banished or subjugated. It is always there, lurking in the dark, waiting for its hour and opportunity.¹⁰⁰

Myth is only suppressed by science and reason (see section 2.4 for more on this) but not eradicated by it and, therefore, we must always “be prepared for violent concussions that may shake our cultural world and our social order to its very foundations”.¹⁰¹ Cassirer provides us an image of myth as a caged beast within ourselves that breaks free when we let our guard down. Cassirer’s conclusions are understandable, since he had witnessed the rise of the Nazis and the consequences of the myth of the Aryan race. Indeed his entire theory of myth seems to be constructed around this particular example.

The mobilising aspect of myth has been visible in modern day Western liberal-democracies with violent consequences, as much social science research suggests. Joanne Esch’s study on political myth in the legitimisation of the War on Terror in 2001 is one example that is highly

⁹⁹ Cassirer, *The Myth of the State*.

¹⁰⁰ *An Essay on Man: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Human Culture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972), 280.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 297.

relevant to this thesis.¹⁰² Following the attacks of 9/11, the Bush administration employed myth as a way of establishing a new sense of significance and order where it had been shattered. Myths, such as “American exceptionalism” and “Civilization v barbarism”, were re-articulated in order to provide people with a new sense of significance by demonstrating that everyone was in conflict with a clearly defined, evil enemy.¹⁰³ Many of the speeches that Esch cites came in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 and, in such a moment of crisis, anxiety, and shock, they served to provide a concrete position from which Americans could identify themselves and their enemies. The openness of anxiety was replaced by the direct object of fear (al-Qaeda) which, while unpleasant and frightening, is able to provide a sense of security in being where it might otherwise not be.

I also explored the role of myth in “legitimising” violent political action in my recent paper in *International Political Sociology*. I drew particularly from Sorel to analyse how the mobilising aspect of myth is used in online violent *jihadist* magazine in order to inspire young Muslims into acts of violence. The case study of *Inspire* magazine represented one site for the work on a broader political myth that posits that all Muslims are in an epic, violent conflict with “crusaders” and treacherous false Muslims. It uses this broader political myth (which is generally central to most violent *jihadist* myths) for young Muslims in the West by utilizing a visual format which mimics mainstream Western magazines. The magazine contains familiar popular-cultural and political references throughout. Many articles are superimposed onto an image of a *Macbook* and some are presented in the style of rap music lyrics. Colloquial online terminologies such as “LOL” (laughing out loud) and “ROFL” (rolling on the floor laughing) appear regularly, and propaganda images often resemble film adverts.¹⁰⁴

The authors legitimise their claims by effectively bringing the conflict to the reader by showing how it has an impact in their daily lives;

¹⁰² Esch, "Legitimizing the "War on Terror": Political Myth in Official-Level Rhetoric."

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Kirke, "Violence and Political Myth: Radicalizing Believers in the Pages of *Inspire Magazine*," 289-90.

the “here and now.”¹⁰⁵ Many articles construct Western military invasions, particularly in Iraq and Afghanistan, as an attack on all Muslims, including (and especially) the reader.¹⁰⁶ Nothing is seen as historically contingent; it is as if each injustice is part of the process of violence with the equivalent actors and motives. As one contributor to the magazine puts it, the West has a “deeply rooted historic hatred for Islam and Muslims” which was previously led “in the name of Christianity” but is today “in the name of democracy.”¹⁰⁷ The magazine does this by making numerous references to Western foreign policies as the continuation of the eleventh to thirteenth century Crusades.¹⁰⁸ The only option it provides for the readers to mobilise, take up arms, and conduct terror attacks.

What the variety of examples I have outlined reveal is that myths can mobilise people for multitude of causes. All of them have their heroes and villains, themes of tragedy and joy, memories of glory, etc. They can be part of enforcing norms and rules but also part of dismantling them. They can be a means of overcoming oppression or enforcing it. They can breed chaos and order depending upon the social and material contexts in which they are worked on

1.3 The Existential Need for Political Myth

Myths transform ordinary political narratives into dramas that seek to answer fundamental existential questions. By existential questions, I am referring to those that give our lives a sense of meaning and purpose in the “here and now”. This means those questions that do not limit themselves to asking “do I exist”? or “will I exist”? but “*how* do I exist” or “what are the *qualities* or *meanings* of my existence”? More specifically, myths address questions about our existence in relation to others. The question may therefore best be asked as “*how* do I exist *in relation to others* in the social and political world”? Indeed this sense my theory of myth is not just existential, but also *phenomenological*. In this section, I elaborate on core

¹⁰⁵ Violent Jihadist Magazines: Exploiting a Human Need for Significance, (2015), <http://www.e-ir.info/2015/12/12/violent-jihadist-magazines-exploiting-a-human-need-for-significance/>.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ "Violence and Political Myth: Radicalizing Believers in the Pages of Inspire Magazine," 290.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.; *Violent Jihadist Magazines: Exploiting a Human Need for Significance*.

observations of our conditions of being made by existential and phenomenological philosophers, and connect this to the established literature on political myth. I argue that these insights provide us with an understanding of why political myths are so needed and so durable.

While there are numerous approaches to existential philosophy, there is at least one unifying feature. That is, existentialists tend to assert the “uniqueness” of the human situation in the world. This situation is one of ambiguity and estrangement, but also a sense of freedom and responsibility for finding and attributing meaning to our lives.¹⁰⁹ Existentialism is thereby not concerned with existence in the literal sense of the word, but how we conceive of ourselves, behave towards others, and live within a world in which we are paradoxically both embedded and estranged. Indeed, “estrangement” is a crucial feature of our existence which we experience in a sense as *ambiguity*. On the one hand, we are embodied creatures within the world, subject to the same laws and processes of everything else in the world, but we are also constituted by features that distinguish us from other beings. Chief among these features is our capacity to reflect on the very conditions of our being. As David E. Cooper puts it, our feeling of estrangement is rooted in the fact that, while we are “embodied occupants of the world” our “powers of reflection, self-interpretation, evaluation, and choice distinguishes us from all other occupants of the world.”¹¹⁰ However, this does *not* mean that there is no intimate relationship between human beings and the world. Any philosophical reflection about human beings in the world “reveals that neither is thinkable without the other” because “the world of things cannot be understood except by reference to the significance that these things have in relation to human purposes and practices.”¹¹¹ In other words, it is simply not possible to divorce ourselves from the world since our being is so intimately tied to it. Moreover, all “things” within the world are only understood by us with reference to our own purposes and practices. With this intimacy appreciated and estrangement understood, it becomes clearer that:

¹⁰⁹ Steven Crowell, "Existentialism and its legacy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Existentialism*, ed. Steven Crowell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 15.

¹¹⁰ David E. Cooper, "Existentialism as a Philosophical Movement," *ibid.*, 29.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

... each human being is possessed of a radical freedom and responsibility, not only to choose and to act, but to interpret and evaluate the world. Honest recognition by people of the disturbing degree of freedom that they possess requires cultivating moral comportment or stance towards themselves and others that honours the reciprocal interdependence of individual lives.¹¹²

Cooper stresses that is merely a sketch and notes that it omits many of the core terminologies of existentialism. However, we can see a common philosophical thread that characterises human beings as being embedded within yet paradoxically estranged from the world. What unites many of these perspectives is the question of how we exist, and “be/become” in a world not of our choosing, but in which we have to make choices. Human beings are unique in their capacity to reflect on the questions of their existence, but these questions can lead them into existential quagmires. This is because of a very simple yet troubling problem: the relative freedom we have to define ourselves and provide meaning to the world is also accompanied by the responsibility to do so. In times when our assumptions are challenged, and when grave existential (in many sense of the word) threats appear before us, this burden can increase substantially.

Søren Kierkegaard is often considered to be the founding father of existentialism. His reflection on the above issues remains one of the most profound in the existential canon. For Kierkegaard, the human being is “infinitely interested in existing”. This does not mean human beings are solely concerned with survival, but also the kind of lives they live and the kind of people they wish to be/become.¹¹³ He developed the now well-known notion that human beings are afflicted by the fundamental condition of *Angst*. However, before expanding on this, it is important to understand another key concept in Kierkegaard’s philosophy: the notion that the human “self” is a synthesis of the “finite” and the “infinite”,¹¹⁴ The “infinite” corresponds to “possibility”, or the capacity to envisage new ideas, bring new creations into existence, choose from innumerable potentialities and, ultimately, change oneself. The “finite” corresponds to “actuality” or

¹¹² Ibid., 29-30.

¹¹³ Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Howard Vincent Hong and Edna Haltestad Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 219.

¹¹⁴ *The Sickness Unto Death*.

“necessity”, understood as the concrete “here and now” and our reality as a definite “something” in the world. Many are tempted oneself in either the finite or infinite and so forsake the responsibility of being a self. To do this in the finite, one is trapped within an inescapable environment in the concrete “here and now”, believing that no alternatives exist. These individuals become depressed, and find safety and security by assimilating themselves into social and institutional networks. As Kierkegaard puts it, the individual finds it “too venturesome a thing to be himself, far easier and safer to be like the other, to become an imitation, a number, a cipher in the crowd”¹¹⁵. Losing oneself in the infinite, however, is to live as though life is a series of perpetual experiments, with different personalities and paths tried, but with no lasting commitment ever made. People who are lost in the infinite become obsessed about who they can potentially become but never actually become anything – and definitely not a “self”. As Kierkegaard warns, if “possibility [the infinite] outruns necessity [the finite], the self runs away from itself”.¹¹⁶ We must balance these tensions, and that means recognising that innumerable possibilities lie before us, but that we must nonetheless choose a definite course of action, appropriate to our “true” selves. This is an arduous task, but is central to the human condition.

This tension between the finite and infinite is a chief cause of what Kierkegaard refers to as *Angst* (anxiety).¹¹⁷ For Kierkegaard, anxiety has to be differentiated from fear, since fear refers to “something definite” whereas “anxiety [*Angst*] is freedom’s actuality as the possibility of possibility”.¹¹⁸ Kierkegaard provides an example of a man standing on the edge of a cliff. When he moves closer to the edge, he experiences a focused *fear* of falling, but, paradoxically, he feels a terrifying impulse to throw himself off the edge. For Kierkegaard, this experience is *Angst* because he has the possibility and complete freedom to decide whether to throw himself off the cliff or stay put, and it is this freedom and possibility to act that places such an immense burden on human beings. He refers to this as the “dizziness of

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 167.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ This is sometimes translated as “dread”. While my preference is for it to be translated as “anxiety”, I have opted to leave it untranslated when not quoting from a translation of Kierkegaard’s work.

¹¹⁸ Kierkegaard, “The Concept of Anxiety: The Simple Psychological Orientating Deliberation on the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin,” 139.

freedom”.¹¹⁹ For Kierkegaard, this is a purely human experience as (according to him) other animals do not have the capacity to reflect upon these issues, and are instead driven solely by their instincts.¹²⁰ Yet despite the burden of *Angst*, Kierkegaard is keen to stress that anxiety is not just a destructive force, but also a creative one. Indeed rather than being an emotion to be overcome and suppressed, Kierkegaard actively encourages us to embrace anxiety. As he put it:

“I will say that this is an adventure that every human being must go through – to learn to be anxious... whoever has learned to be anxious in the right way has learned the ultimate”¹²¹.

In anxiety, we feel the immense possibilities of being free and, if we can master that, we can use it for creative purposes. Nonetheless, few were more afflicted by anxiety than Kierkegaard himself. It is apparent throughout his work that he was compelled to believe that human beings themselves have an “eternal consciousness” that would transcend them after death. As he most revealingly puts it in *Fear and Trembling*:

If a human being did not have an eternal consciousness, if underlying everything there were only a wild, fermenting power that writhing in dark passions produced everything, be it significant or insignificant, if a vast, never appeased emptiness hid beneath everything, what would life be then but despair?¹²²

The opposite of this despair is *faith*, and it is faith that we must have. For Kierkegaard, there are always gaps and paradoxes within systems that one may never be able to truly resolve. What is required is a “qualitative leap” to overcome these gaps without necessarily having the empirical evidence to support your decision. This was, for him, especially so for Christianity, which he elaborates on in more depth in *Philosophical Fragments*.¹²³ He calls on Christians to make a “leap of faith” (or leap to faith) to overcome these paradoxes which is irreversible and, for him, the ultimate demonstration of freedom.¹²⁴ The alternative to this would be to remain in despair.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 139.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² *Fear and Trembling*, trans. Howard Vincent Hong and Edna Haltestad Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 15.

¹²³ *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Howard Vincent Hong and Edna Haltestad Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).

¹²⁴ *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*.

Friedrich Nietzsche shared many of Kierkegaard's observations about the existential problems faced by human beings, but came to very different conclusions as to how to deal with them. Rather than submit to a leap of faith in God, Nietzsche declared in an infamous passage of *The Gay Science* that "God is dead":

God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderer of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatest of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods to simply appear worthy of it?¹²⁵

What Nietzsche means by this is that God only exists because we believe him to exist. As God had become less important to people's lives, we had effectively "murdered" Him. He is also referring to the belief in true-world theories altogether, and the subsequent void that this would leave. With a series of metaphors, Nietzsche asks what is left for us and what we would have to invent to fill in this void, where we shall find salvation, forgiveness, and atonement. For, the answer is effectively nowhere but within the world with a continuous process of self-overcoming. It occurs in the place that Kierkegaard would have understood as the finite (see above). Nietzsche explicitly rejects those who seek salvation in other-worldliness, as those who followed the Abrahamic religions had done. People turn towards creating other-worldliness when they are dissatisfied with life within this world. Nietzsche seeks to create an alternative inner-worldliness that would not only anchor them to the world but overcome many of the weaknesses of humanity. He referred to this in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as the *Übermensch* (Overman or Superman).¹²⁶ The *Übermensch* is a goal for humanity in which we would substitute our need for divine figures in other-worldliness and for a love of what is within this world. Individuals would be overcoming the "herd mentality" and creating their own perspectives detached from any perceived objective system. In this sense, Nietzsche's philosophy is a radical embrace of subjective freedom and the anxiety that accompanies it. We can embrace the gaps and

¹²⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 120.

¹²⁶ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 1974).

paradoxes that Kierkegaard desperately sought to avoid, live solely within our concrete inner-worldly experiences, and maximise our chances of reaching the status of *Übermensch*.

While Kierkegaard and Nietzsche are considered key founding figures of the existentialist philosophical tradition, related themes have been developed by other scholars. *Angst* and the way we live and exercise freedom in the vastness of reality have been important in particular. Martin Heidegger warned that anxiety “can hold open the utter and constant threat to itself arising from *Dasein*’s ownmost individualized Being...”¹²⁷ For Heidegger, Anxiety represents the breakdown of our assumptions about reality, and reminds us of these fundamental features of “being-in-the-world” that we may have stopped questioning. It reminds us that we are responsible for choosing who we are and how we behave in the world. Like Kierkegaard, Heidegger sees the productive potential of *Angst*; while it fundamentally undermines its basic assumptions of the world and its place within it, *Angst* can also allow *Dasein* to re-assess its existence and see new possibilities.¹²⁸ We are ultimately free to do this, while of course being constrained by our “thrownness” into the world. That is, we are thrown (*geworfen*) into existence by the random forces of chance, and the place we end up in the world, and who we are, are limited by this chance. This “thrownness” means that there is a past and present that *Dasein* carries with it that is already given. This leaves us with a “burden” that he understands as our “facticity”.¹²⁹ At most, however, this represents some limitations on *Dasein*, who retains the potential to transform and become what it chooses. Jean-Paul Sartre similarly focused on the problems of *Angst* and recognised some limitations placed by facticity, but he far more optimistic about our capacity for freedom. An authentic existence required that people realise that they have radical freedom in terms of how they behave, with few constraints other than what we choose to impose upon ourselves.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1962), 69.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 310-15.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 173-74.

¹³⁰ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (London: Routledge, 2003), 65-67, 69-70.

With all this said, one may consider existential thought to be concerned solely with the subjective and entirely introspective conditions of an individual's being. At worst, it seems like an exceptionally individualistic mode of thought and this begs a question: what of other people? Surely subjectivity requires intersubjectivity at some stage? Fortunately, many in the existential tradition accept this and have argued that our relations with others are fundamental to our existence. We can only "be" in any genuine sense by participation within a community of beings who mutually recognize one another's existence.¹³¹ Heidegger makes clear in *Being and Time* that the world of *Dasein* is a "with-world", in which being means "*being-with* others". Consequently the condition of being within-the-world is *Dasein-with*, or, more simply, "being-with" (*Mitsein*).¹³² Heidegger suggests that we should investigate who we were before we began to reflect, when we were absorbed within our daily lives in the world. For him, this reflection leads us to conclude that in our "being-in-the-world" we always, necessarily, experience things in relation to other people.¹³³ Existing requires that we are involved in some way with others, as it would be near-enough impossible to "be-in-the-world" as *Dasein* without being reliant on shared communal norms at least to some degree. For Karl Jaspers, our freedom depends on others being free and this requires a reciprocal relationship in which others recognise our respective freedom.¹³⁴ Gabriel Marcel takes this one step further by arguing that it is not sufficient merely to "apprehend" the other as free, but also to "*collaborate* with his freedom [emphasis: mine]".¹³⁵ What seems to be widely accepted in the existentialist canon is that our experience of the world is intimately tied to our experience of and *with* others. *Angst* in particular (as discussed above) is not necessarily something that is experienced alone or, at least, it cannot be conceived of without at least some involvement other people, even if not always directly.

¹³¹ As discussed early in the chapter, I do not refer to "existence" in the sense of existing as an ontic category. Rather, it refers to the uniquely human mode of existence that is explained by Kierkegaard and Heidegger among others.

¹³² Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 154-55.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 153-54.

¹³⁴ Karl Jaspers, "Philosophical Autobiography," in *The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers*, ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp (LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 1957), 85.

¹³⁵ Gabriel Marcel, *Being and Having* (London: Dacre, 1949), 107.

How do many of these existentialist themes that have been elaborated on affect us in regards to our politics? Moreover, how do we overcome our feelings of estrangement and *Angst* in a political context? I argue that one way these tensions are addressed is through “political myth”, and the best articulation of this can be found in the works of Chiara Bottici.¹³⁶ Bottici has been heavily influenced by Hans Blumenberg, who saw myth (not *political* myth) as an important means through which we address many of the concerns outlined above. For Blumenberg, a sense of reality without significance (in the sense of *Bedeutsamkeit*) is a reality that is vast, total, and “naked”. In other words, it would consist of innumerable events occurring simultaneously, all of which are indifferent to us. This has the unfortunate potential to ultimately overwhelm us into believing that we have no control over our conditions of existence.¹³⁷ Such a situation must always be resolved in order to prevent extreme *Angst* which - as similarly conceived of above - is a state of “indefinite anticipation” or the paradoxical “intentionality of consciousness without an object” resulting in the “whole horizon” becoming the “totality of the directions from which “it can all come at once”. To avoid this, humans are constantly in a process of formulating a mental picture of this anxiety-inducing and “naked” world. This is exemplified by philosophy, science, and art, among other things.¹³⁸ Myth is one part of these processes; it reduces the uncertainty and absolutism of *Angst* into the something more definite and concrete (even fearful) which, while unpleasant, can be understood and addressed more easily.

As Chiara Bottici points out, it is likely that Blumenberg was influenced heavily by German philosophical anthropologists such as Arnold Gehlen who claimed that human beings, unlike other animals, are versatile due to being able to adapt to multiple environments, and are therefore *Weltoffen* or “open to the world.”¹³⁹ The fact that human beings are so *Weltoffen* means they are exposed to a great number of stimuli from the world and this, being so burdensome, is something that humans must seek

¹³⁶ Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth*.

¹³⁷ Blumenberg, *Work on Myth*, 3-4.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

¹³⁹ Arnold Gehlen, *Man, his Nature and his Place in the World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988). Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth*, 119.

relief (*Entlastung*) from.¹⁴⁰ For Gehlen (who borrows this expression from Nietzsche), human beings are “always not-yet determined animals” (*noch nicht festgestelltes Tier*).¹⁴¹ For Blumenberg, it is because of these problems that human beings need “significance” (*Bedeutsamkeit*). Significance is necessary to aid humanity with its constant struggle against the aforementioned “absolutism of reality.” Significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) accordingly provides “closure” by reducing the innumerable possibilities of being and existence within the labyrinth of the “absolutism of reality.” Significance *grounds* what is fundamentally a sense of certainty in the otherwise uncertain conditions of reality. Or, as Blumenberg puts it, it “makes possible a ‘density’ that excludes empty spaces and empty time, but it also makes possible an indefiniteness of dating and localization that is the equivalent of ubiquitousness.”¹⁴² It thus opposes the dearth of confidence which is caused for people by the general “unfathomability of time.”¹⁴³ Ultimately, the work on myth “converts numinous indefiniteness into nominal definiteness and... make[s] what is uncanny familiar and addressable”¹⁴⁴ Myths must therefore be more than mere narratives; they must, as Bottici argues borrowing from Karoly Kerényi, “ground” (*begründen*) significance.¹⁴⁵ This said, it is important to stress that myths do not attempt to describe the totality of the universe unless they are appropriated into wider narratives of creation. They are instead concerned with our sense of being within the world; or our reality as a definite thing within the vastness of the world that we inhabit. But they do not seek to provide answers for the ultimate meanings of being and existence within the world. As Bottici puts it, “significance answers the question of “why?” by raising the issue of “whence” and therefore:

“...it can limit itself to telling a story about *some* of the conditions of existence without necessarily aspiring to answer the question of the sense of life in general. Significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) situates itself precisely between two extremes: meaning on the one hand (the *Sinnfrage*: “What is this?”) and the sense of “Being” on the other (the *Seinsfrage*: “What is the sense of being?”).

¹⁴⁰ Ibid

¹⁴¹ Ibid

¹⁴² Blumenberg, *Work on Myth*, 96.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 99.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 25.

¹⁴⁵ Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth*, 123; Kerényi, "Prolegomena," 7.

Significance is not (just) meaning, because there is meaning every time that there is language. But significance is not necessarily the question about the sense of the being either, because some myths do not aim to provide explanations of the ultimate meaning of being.”¹⁴⁶

In other words, “something that is significant is something that situates itself between the two extremes of a simple meaning and the meaning of life and death.”¹⁴⁷ Significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) is required in order to “be-in-the-world” the world and mitigate the problems of existence *within* the world such as estrangement and *Angst*. While significance does not answer the totality of our needs, the fact that it gives our sense of being-with (*Mitsein*) greater purpose, and concretises otherwise disparate phenomena, highlights that it is of central importance addressing the inherent concerns we gain through our being. Myth is one way in which we may find significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) but this does not necessarily mean that this is universally the case for everybody at all times.

Nonetheless, others scholars have suggested that myths are crucial to addressing fundamental existential concerns in politics. Murray Edelman argued that the public were reluctant or incapable of engaging with the intricacies of politics, which creates a sense of ambiguity and anxiety. This necessitates myths and other linguistic devices which provide the illusion of simplicity and coherence. Stories involving heroic leadership, struggle, and sacrifice are often embodied within particular metaphors which are continually repeated within political discourse, serving to “intensify some perceptions and screen others out of attention,” as well as providing mental maps for individuals to make sense of the world around them¹⁴⁸ Carl J. Friedrich argued that any form of political community is inconceivable without myth. While he was mainly interested of foundational myths that provided communities with a sense of meaning, he also viewed myth in general as an emotional glue that keeps a community together and softens

¹⁴⁶ Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth*, 125.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 178.

¹⁴⁸ Edelman, "Myths, Metaphors and Political Conformity," 217-23; *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*, 225-26. Kirke, "Violence and Political Myth: Radicalizing Believers in the Pages of Inspire Magazine," 287.

“the cold rationality of reason of state.”¹⁴⁹ Indeed it is this softening and simplifying part of myth that can assuage the anxieties we have in the world, Anamaria Dutceac Segesten sees myth as a way of creating a “concentrated simplified and standardized view of reality” and an “instrument of chaos control, of introducing some regularity into the seeming randomness of the visible universe.”¹⁵⁰

It should be clear that what I am investigating in this thesis is not whether myths are true or false, but the role they have in our being-in-the-world and, in particular, how they address our existential needs in the face of anxiety. To borrow Heideggerian terminology, my research is less concerned with the “ontic” than it is the “ontological”. Our being is characterised by a complex relationship between ourselves as fluctuating and transformative beings and the world around us, which is also fluctuating and transformative. In this uncertainty, we continually seek (consciously or not) places where we can ground ourselves within the world, or at least *experience* this groundedness in the world, regardless of whether it is actually there or not. I therefore leave the question of the truthfulness or falseness of myth in parenthesis, and instead concentrate solely on what myths *do*. What is missing from the existential approaches to political myth is an engagement with more recent sociological and psychological research into the existential issues. While the concept of significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) is useful to explain a key function of myth, it does not reveal how political myth assuages anxiety in a key modern context. To elaborate on this, I argue in section 1.4 that the literature on political myth needs to engage with the literature on ontological security.

1.4 Political Myth and Ontological Security

The theory of myth and significance discussed by Hans Blumenberg and Chiara Bottici resonates closely with established psychological and sociological research into the concept of “Ontological Security”. In this section, I argue that the existentialist literature analysed in section 1.3

¹⁴⁹ Friedrich, *Man and his Government: An Empirical Theory of Politics*, 97.

¹⁵⁰ Anamaria Dutceac Segesten, *Myth, Identity, and Conflict: A Comparative Analysis of Romanian and Serbian Textbooks* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2011), 11.

overlaps with studies on ontological security. Furthermore, I argue that the existentialist approach to political myth in particular is substantially enhanced when the concept of significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) engages directly with ontological security. This is primarily because what Blumenberg and Bottici both discuss is reflected in decades of ontological security research, and it reveals just how important political myths are to our understanding of politics. I see the main point of interaction between political myth and ontological security as follows: the process of significance-making (*Bedeutsamkeit*) through the work on myth is also a process of ontologically securitising.¹⁵¹ The work on myth ensures that even when one's physical security is threatened, one's security of *being* can be re-assured. This is because myth does not answer questions of existence in the sense of survival, but also wider questions about who we are, what we might become

Traditional approaches to the study of security have tended to focus on peoples' physical/somatic survival or wellbeing. International Relations theories from the tradition of neo-realism in particular often reduced "security studies" to the security of the state.¹⁵² Others would later point out the fundamentally the socially constructed and contested nature of security and, in particular, how issues could be brought out of the realm of politics and "securitised".¹⁵³ Critical scholars who were influenced by the Frankfurt School began to see a more positive role of security as a potential source of "emancipation".¹⁵⁴ Yet the academic disciplines of Political Science and

¹⁵¹ This is not to be confused with the securitisation theory discussed in either Economics or International Relations.

¹⁵² Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*; Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*.

¹⁵³ Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998); Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, "Macrosecritisation and Security Constellations: Reconsidering Scale in Securitisation Theory," *Review of International Studies* 35 (2009); Thierry Balzacq, "The Three Faces of Securitization: Political agency, Audience and Context," *European Journal of International Relations* 11, no. 2 (2005); "A Theory of Securitization," in *Securitization Theory: How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve* (Oxford: Routledge, 2011); Michael C. Williams, "Words, Images, Enemies: Securitization and International Politics," *International Studies Quarterly* 47 (2003).

¹⁵⁴ Robert Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory," *Journal of International Studies* 10, no. 2 (1981); Ken Booth, "Security and Emancipation," *Review of International Studies* 17, no. 4 (1991); *Theory of World Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); João

International Relations were comparatively slow to discuss *ontological* security, which had otherwise discussed in sociology and psychology over several decades¹⁵⁵. The main assertion of ontological security scholars is that ontologically secure individuals have the capacity to cope in a world changing around them. Such individuals are able to provide a sense of continuity and order to events.¹⁵⁶ Indeed, the psychiatrist R.D. Laing first coined the term “ontological security” to refer to a “continuous person” that enjoys a stable and whole existence in reality.¹⁵⁷ An ontologically secure person has:

... a sense of his presence in the world as a real, alive, whole, and, in a temporal sense, a continuous person. As such, he can live out into the world, and meet others: a world and others experienced as equally real, alive, whole and continuous. Such a basically *ontologically* secure person will encounter all the hazards of life, social, ethical, spiritual, biological from a centrally firm sense of his own and other people’s reality and identity.¹⁵⁸

By contrast, an ontologically insecure person would feel:

more unreal than real; in a literal sense, more dead than alive; precariously differentiated from the rest of the world, so that his identity and autonomy are always in question. He may lack the experience of his own temporal continuity.¹⁵⁹

The insecure person would effectively be threatened by the daily experiences of life, would lack a sense of self and agency, and would be subjected to fears, anxiety, and dread, in different forms and at different times.¹⁶⁰ The most prominent modern-day scholar of ontological security is the sociologist Anthony Giddens. Giddens accepted the psychological

Nunes, "Reclaiming the Political: Emancipation and Critique in Security Studies," *Security Dialogue* 43, no. 4 (2012).

¹⁵⁵ The literature on the ontological security in IR is now relatively rich. See: Huysmans, "Security! What Do You Mean? From Concept to Thick Signifier "; Croft, "Constructing Ontological Insecurity: The Insecuritization of Britain's Muslims."; Catarina Kinnvall, "Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security," *Political Psychology* 25, no. 5 (2004); Mitzen, "Ontological Security in World Politics: State Identity and the Security Dilemma."; Steele, *Ontological Security in International Relations*.

¹⁵⁶ Christopher S. Browning, "Nation Branding, National Self-Esteem, and the Constitution of Subjectivity in Late Modernity," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 11, no. 2 (2015): 198.

¹⁵⁷ Laing, *The Divided Self*.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁶⁰ Croft, "Constructing Ontological Insecurity: The Insecuritization of Britain's Muslims," 221.

foundation of Laing's ontological security theory, but concentrated more on the relational aspect. This is because Giddens was interested in the intersubjective nature of social existence, which he describes as the "mutuality of experience."¹⁶¹ For Giddens, ontological security refers to a "person's fundamental sense of safety in the world and includes a basic trust of other people" and obtaining this trust is "necessary in order for a person to maintain a sense of psychological well-being and avoid existential anxiety".¹⁶² Giddens emphasises the importance of a continuous narrative, or "sense of self" which can be found in the self's ability to "keep the narrative going". When we are ontologically secure, we feel whole and can act in comfort since we bracket out "questions about ourselves, others, and the object-world which have to be taken for granted in order to keep on with everyday activity".¹⁶³

Stuart Croft points that there seems to be three points of agreement in the accounts of Giddens and Laing about the key elements of a "normal" sense of ontological security.¹⁶⁴ The first is the need for biographical continuity, which is easily grasped reflexively and communicable, and can thereby be socially recognised. The narrative itself may be fragile as it is only one reading of events and could be subjected to "hostile" readings. However, it would be "robust" as it would "withstand (and thereby give meaning to) considerable changes in the social environment, allowing for "a sense of agency, that is the subject of reflexivity, of self-monitoring; and this self-identity is performed in, through, and by an everyday routine."¹⁶⁵ Secondly, there is a web of trust relations that enables individuals to operate within "cocoon" that protect and filter out dangers to the self in daily life. Ontologically secure individuals have trust in items, individuals, and do not worry about the collapse of that trust – even if it does require constant re-grounding.¹⁶⁶ Thirdly, there is what Croft identifies as a "self-integrity, an ability to be 'alive', that is, to act within the scope of those elements under

¹⁶¹ Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 92.

¹⁶² *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 37.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ Croft, "Constructing Ontological Insecurity: The Insecuritization of Britain's Muslims," 22.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 222.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

reflexive control.”¹⁶⁷ The social structure allows ontologically secure individuals to map their decisions on predictable bases, relative to their reading and construction of their own biography.¹⁶⁸

This description of security differs markedly from traditional understandings that have dominated the study of politics and international relations. In the latter literature, security is reduced to questions of survival and self-preservation in a purportedly natural condition of international anarchy.¹⁶⁹ Ontological security refers to the sense of security gained in the process of *being* rather than our immediate physical safety. Ontologically secure individuals will possess “answers to fundamental existential questions which all human life in some way addresses.”¹⁷⁰ Ontological security prevents “the fear of being overwhelmed by anxieties that reach to the very roots of our coherent sense of ‘being in the world’”.¹⁷¹ However, this is always under threat by what Giddens referred to as “critical situations”. These are “... circumstances of a radical disjuncture of an unpredictable kind which affect substantial numbers of individuals, situations that threaten to destroy the certitudes of institutionalized routines.”¹⁷² They are fundamental moments in time which require people to make choices about how to respond. As Croft elaborates:

Critical situations emphasize the fragility of ontologically secure entities: that established, everyday routines that allow a foundation to life can be interrupted; that trust structures – tokens, experts’ roles – may lose their centrality; that agency may be questioned, as the actor considers means of acting that conform to his/her self-identity; and that the sense of biography could suffer temporal dislocation.¹⁷³

These situations cause identity threats and produce *Angst* which is a “generalized state of the emotions of the given individual.” This differs from *fear*, which is “a response to a specific threat and therefore has a

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ This is particularly common in the structural realist/neorealist literature. See in particular: Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*; Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. See also: Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society* (Basingstoke/New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 55.

¹⁷⁰ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 47; Steele, *Ontological Security in International Relations*, 51.

¹⁷¹ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 37.

¹⁷² *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Cambridge: Polity, 1984), 61.

¹⁷³ Croft, *Securitizing Islam: Identity and the Search for Security*, 25.

definite object”.¹⁷⁴ In *Angst*, the meaning we have constructed for our “being-in-the-world” may be damaged, and it is in these moments we once again need to find significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*). Indeed, the literature on ontological security has deep connections to the existential tradition in general. Anthony Giddens in particular was influenced by Kierkegaard.¹⁷⁵ Yet while there are analytical similarities, it is possible that Sartre and Nietzsche in particular may have objected to the implication that we require stabilising routines in order to function within the world. Ontological security theories have little to say about using anxiety for a positive constructive purpose, whether it is to discover radical freedom or gain self-mastery as depicted by the *Übermensch*. There is an undercurrent to ontological security which appears to posit that human beings fear freedom and may even make active attempt to avoid it, as Erich Fromm would likely have argued were he to have come into contact with the concept.¹⁷⁶ There is a link here between this moderately conservative outlook and Blumenberg’s understanding of myth and his intellectual influences. As mentioned in section 1.3, Blumenberg was influenced by Arnold Gehlen and his view that human beings were vulnerable creatures who sought relief brought the burden of being open to the world (*weltoffen*).¹⁷⁷ Blumenberg saw avoiding the vastness of the absolutism of reality as a key precursor to developing culture and other phenomena, including myth. Significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) is needed to manage the numerous possibilities that the absolutism of reality produces, and myth is one important way of providing it. But significance is also an act of “naming the unknown”, thereby granting us the perception that our surroundings and objects within them have a level of ontic definiteness, or at least we no longer question their existence. This describes exactly the experience of an ontologically secure person; there is enough

¹⁷⁴ Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*, 61.

¹⁷⁵ Søren Landkildehus, "Anthony Giddens: Kierkegaard and the Risk of Existence," in *Kierkegaard's Influence on the Social Sciences*, ed. Jon Stewart (Farnham/Burlington: Ashgate, 2011).

¹⁷⁶ Erich Fromm, *The Fear of Freedom* (London/New York: Routledge, 2001).

¹⁷⁷ Gehlen, *Man, his Nature and his Place in the World*. However, Gehlen’s philosophy was often used to justify authoritarian state-structures, not least by Gehlen himself, who was a committed Nazi. Yet Gehlen’s conclusions are not the only way we can read the *weltoffen* condition of humanity. We can embrace a philosophy in which we hold being *weltoffen* as a positive aspect of our being and a productive force generated out of anxiety.

that can be “taken-for-granted”, clear roles to be understood, routines to follow, and at least the certainty that things are as they are. An ontologically secure person is placed

However, it would be easy to assume that ontological security refers only to creating a sense of stability in a somewhat banal and routinised manner. At first glance, the entire theory of ontological security seems to be premised on the idea that human beings answer the existential problems of “being” that they experience by seeking a sense of order, stability, and coherence in their lives. Yet conflict and violence – two major sources of instability – have been recurring features of human history, despite seemingly being counter-productive to these objectives. However, this has actually been accounted for in ontological security research. As Bahar Rumelili argues in her introduction to her 2015 edited volume *Conflict Resolution and Ontological Security: Peace Anxieties*:

They [conflicts] sustain the political and social production of definite objects of fear, systems of meaning that clearly differentiate friends from enemies, and unequivocal moral standards premised on the necessity for survival. At the individual, group, and state levels, they become embedded in habits and routinised practices, and enable state actors to maintain stable and consistent self-narratives that inform their actions. At the individual level, the fears and deprivations induced by conflict and the emotional behavioural responses developed to deal with them, no matter how costly and negative, generate a sense of stability and certainty, and enable actors to simultaneously bracket out existential questions and to know what they are doing and why they are doing it.¹⁷⁸

The paradox is that the mobilising aspect of political myth often constructs situations that are highly volatile, but losing them would mean losing the conditions that enable ontological security. What is missing in this research is how narratives about these conflicts can provide people with a sense of significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*), and how this in turn helps to intersubjectively construct (following Croft) ontological security. Myths often posit highly dramatic situations, with elites often constructing events as existentially threatening to the audience. Yet this very act does something exceptionally important: it *concretises* what may otherwise be abstract, disconnected, or indifferent to people. Put more specifically, who we are,

¹⁷⁸ Rumelili, "Introduction," 2.

who the enemy is, the threat they may pose, seem more concrete and certain, thereby making any overwhelming feeling of *Angst* highly unlikely. We may feel fear, anger, or hatred, but this is (following Kierkegaard and other existentialist philosophers) preferable to the aimlessness of *Angst*.

Although it is not the central focus of my thesis, it should be noted that the political myth literature provides a new way to link the dramatic and exceptional to the ontological security literature. This will require further exploration in future research. However, what does become clear in chapters 5 and 6 especially is that “critical situations” as Giddens put it provide moments in which the work on myth can be undertaken in order to re-establish a sense of ontological security. This thesis will take some of the earliest steps in bridging these literatures through the examples provided in those chapters.

1.5 Conclusion

This chapter has elaborated on an existential theory of political myth. It has built upon the works of Hans Blumenberg and Chiara Bottici in particular, but has sought to ground them within the wider existential philosophical tradition and subsequently connect them to the concept of ontological security. After introducing the discussion in section 1.1, I sought to provide a definition of political myth in section 1.2. Although the concept of political myth is controversial and no definition is flawless, I critically engaged with the existing literature as it has developed throughout the 20th and early 21st centuries. I noted that there seems to be three aspects of the work on myth: the cognitive, integrative and mobilising. In section 1.3 I elaborated on the insights of existentialist philosophy in order to provide the groundwork of an explanation for why we need political myth. I began my outlining the core themes of existential philosophy, focusing particularly on the ideas of estrangement and *Angst*. In section 1.4, I highlighted that political myth does more than provide significance in a political context: it also provides us with ontological security. The intention of this chapter was to provide a broader understanding of the philosophical framework that informs precedes my methodology and empirical chapters. It is perhaps the most important chapter for these very reasons. That said, it elaborates on an existential (in the philosophical sense) dimension to politics that is under-

emphasised in much of the humanities and social sciences literatures.

Although I analyse this through a theory of political myth, the questions of *Angst* in politics could be explored from other angles.

Chapter 2: Isolating Myth from Other Social Phenomena

2.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to differentiate myth from other important social and political phenomena. This is necessary as there is always a risk of conflating myth with concepts such as ideology and religion especially. This would be a crucial mistake because it means losing the specificity of each concept. Myth has the disadvantage of often being used pejoratively to describe a false claim or untrue story. It can also be used to describe primitive stories of origin which have since been overcome by modern-day science. This means it can simply be used as a tool of dismissal rather than being an interesting modern-day category to analyse in itself. Moreover, losing the specificity of myth means simultaneously losing other important occurrences that are related to ideology and religion but which are not explained by them. I begin this chapter by discussing the relationship between myth and ideology. Much of the literature in political science stresses that myth and ideology are closely linked¹⁷⁹. As Bottici has pointed out, the risk is that these studies often conflate the two phenomena and thereby miss the specificity of both, but myth in particular. Although I acknowledge that both myth and ideology often appear together in practice, I argue in section 2.2 that they should be distinguished in terms of their form. Myths are dramatic and figurative narratives designed to answer existential questions, whereas ideologies are fundamentally concerned with ideas, and often the construction of seemingly coherent political principles. Not all ideologies take narrative form, and not all myths advance grand ideas about human life and political governance. In section 2.3 I similarly argue that myth and religion should be separated. Both undeniably answer existential questions which underpin much of the human condition, but religions attempt to offer larger, more universalising and timeless answers to these questions. I make a similar distinction between political myths and

¹⁷⁹ Flood, *Political Myth: A Theoretical Introduction*; Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society: Comparative Studies of Myth, Ritual and Classification*; Ashraf, "Al Qaeda's Ideology Through Political Myth and Rhetoric."

political religions. In section 2.4 I argue that myth should not be understood as necessarily being in tension with reason and science. Instead, I posit that myths can answer different fundamental existential needs that reason and science may not necessarily address. I also critique the view that myths have been “overcome”, as was the popular view in 19th and early 20th century scholarship. Instead, I argue that myths remain core to our social experiences.

2.2 Myth and Ideology

This section seeks to separate political myth and ideology. This is important because many studies of political myth place them closely together and arguably conflate them.¹⁸⁰ This is not to diminish these studies, since they provide us with important examples of political myth that we would be poorer without. My argument is that political myths and political ideologies can influence one another and may appear together in practice, but that they should be kept analytically distinct. Ideologies are constituted by *ideas* which offer purportedly coherent systems of thought about a range of political issues, whereas political myths are dramatic *narrative* processes designed to provide a sense of significance and maintain ontological security. Even if ideologies were able to provide significance and ontological security, they still do not necessarily take on narrative form. In many respects it is unsurprising that myth and ideology are considered so closely-related. Both are essentially cognitive devices to make sense of the world. As the anthropologist Clifford Geertz once put it, human beings are “self-completing animals” and we require these maps to orient ourselves in the world.¹⁸¹

Ideology first entered the lexicon in the era of the French Revolution. The term was coined by Destutt du Tracy who, by combining

¹⁸⁰ Chiara Bottici is clear on this throughout her work. Examples of those who closely relate political myth and ideology are: Flood, *Political Myth: A Theoretical Introduction*; Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society: Comparative Studies of Myth, Ritual and Classification*; Ashraf, "Al Qaeda's Ideology Through Political Myth and Rhetoric."; Jonathan Charteris-Black, *Politicians and Rhetoric: The Persuasive Power of Metaphor*, 2nd ed. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

¹⁸¹ Clifford Geertz, "Ideology as a Cultural System," in *Ideology and Discontent*, ed. David Ernest Apter (London: Free Press of Glencoe, 1964); Bottici and Challand, *The Myth of the Clash of Civilizations*, 24.

the word “idea” with the suffix “logy”, sought to create a “science of ideas.” For du Tracy, ideas should be subject to the methodologies of the natural sciences in order to “apply reason to observed factors and eschew a priori deductions.”¹⁸² Scientists of ideas would attempt to expose and refute “false” ideas.¹⁸³ While this is rarely how ideology is understood today, the concept still suffers under a plurality of definitions (Terry Eagleton counts at least 16 of them).¹⁸⁴ That said, the different approaches to ideology tend to fall within two overarching categories: the *pejorative* and the *neutral*.¹⁸⁵ Among those influenced by Marxism and continental philosophical traditions such as poststructuralism, pejorative approaches are more popular. However, alongside Chiara Bottici, I will adopt a more neutral understanding of the concept. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, pejorative understandings of ideology themselves risk becoming ideological dismissals of alternative worldviews. Secondly, a pejorative understanding of ideology would necessitate a pejorative understanding of political myth, especially if the concepts are closely related. I begin this section by discussing important works on ideology before distinguishing the concept from myth. While there are overlaps between ideology and myth, there are key differences which would affect the analysis unless explicitly stated.

Pejorative understandings of ideology purportedly began when Napoleon Bonaparte denounced “*les ideologues*” as visionaries divorced from reality whose theories were “shadowy metaphysics” which search “for first causes on which to base legislation of peoples, rather than making use of laws known to the human heart and lessons of history.”¹⁸⁶ As Alan Cassels elaborates, when the term re-emerged with the writings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels it still retained a “Napoleonic stricture” as “unscientific” and this formed the basis for the development of the thesis of “false consciousness.”¹⁸⁷ For Marxists, ideology acts as an obscuring force

¹⁸² Du Tracy, Desutt, cited in: J.B. Bury, *The Idea of Progress: An Inquiry into its Origin and Growth* (The Floating Press, 2009), 142.

¹⁸³ Jorge Larrain, *The Concept of Ideology* (London: Hutchinson, 1979), 27.

¹⁸⁴ Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London: Verso, 1991), 1-2.

¹⁸⁵ Raymond Geuss, *The Idea of a Critical Theory: Habermas and the Frankfurt School* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

¹⁸⁶ Bonaparte, Napoleon, quoted in Alan Cassels, *Ideology and International Relations in the Modern World* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 2.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

which serves the interests of elites. As Marx and Engels put it in *The German Ideology*:

“The ideas of the ruling class in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling *material* force of society, is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force. The class which has the means of production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production... the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it... The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production.”¹⁸⁸

It is within the interests of the ruling classes to maintain this material and intellectual force. Ideology acts as a form of distortion, which makes the alienation of subordinate classes from their labour seem natural. This pacifies the masses and prevents the possibility for revolution and emancipation of the proletariat. This relationship of dominance and subservience is obscures and perpetuates the injustices of capitalism.¹⁸⁹

Various efforts have been made to develop and refine this interpretation of ideology. For instance, Louis Althusser attempted a deeper analysis of the power of the different forms of coercion exhibited by the state by distinguishing between “state power” and “state apparatus.” The latter was divided into two sub-fields: the “repressive state apparatus” (RSA) and the “*ideological* state apparatus” (ISA). The RSAs are effectively the violent wing of the state which encompasses institutions such as the Police, Army, Prisons and Courts etc. The ISAs are somewhat more subtle. Instead of functioning by repressive violence as the RSAs do, they impose ideology through public institutions such as the education system, trade unions, religions and other aspects of culture. Althusser claimed that the ruling classes utilise ISAs – the most dangerous of which is the “educational” – to sustain their positions of dominance.¹⁹⁰

Prior to Althusser, Karl Mannheim provided a more nuanced understanding of ideology. Mannheim argued for two concepts of ideology which he referred to as the “particular” and the “total.” Ideology begins with the former as an individual epistemological investigation into the world and eventually – through a dialectical process – forms the general worldview of

¹⁸⁸ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1998), 67.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 67-71.

¹⁹⁰ Louis Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, trans. G.M. Goshgarian (London and New York: Verso, 2014).

an entire group, or the “total.” The shifting between the “particular” and the “total” invariably causes a distortion and potentially the deliberate obscuration of facts since it begins to simultaneously reflect the worldviews of the individual and the whole group. Therefore, individual group knowledge is fundamentally inseparable from and formed by the social conditions within which they are situated.¹⁹¹

Mannheim’s understanding of ideology finds some similarities in the work of Hannah Arendt in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*¹⁹² - although it must be stressed that she does not mention Mannheim directly. Arendt wrote extensively on the nature of ideology with a particular emphasis on totalitarian movements, particularly the Nazis. She understood ideologies as “isms which to the satisfaction of their adherents can explain everything and every occurrence by deducing it from a single premise.”¹⁹³ Ideologies, according to her, attempt to fuse scientific approaches with philosophy and thus become a form of “scientific philosophy.” In reality, for Arendt, they have little in common with science:

“To an ideology, history does not appear in the light of an idea... but as something which can be calculated by it. What fits the “idea” into this new role is its own “logic,” that is a movement which is the consequence of the “idea” itself and needs no outside factor to set it into motion. Racism is the belief that there is a motion inherent in the very idea of race, just as deism is the belief that a motion is inherent in the very notion of god.”¹⁹⁴

This is in fact contrary to a more scientific approach which would examine historical and philosophical ideas from a supposedly objective and neutral perspective. It is therefore far removed from Du Tracy’s hope for a science of ideas. Ideologies (in a pejorative understanding) are anti-theoretical insofar as they do not tend to ask questions but instead have pre-given conclusions. As such, they can frame history according to singular premises which fit that ideological paradigm. Ideological thinking, for Arendt, both isolates peoples and ultimately “ruins all relationships with reality.”¹⁹⁵

¹⁹¹ Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (London: Routledge, 1972).

¹⁹² Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Cleveland, Ohio: Meridian, 1962).

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 468.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 469.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 474.

Chiara Bottici offers a critique of pejorative understandings of ideology, especially when they are linked so closely to political myth in much political science research. Myths imbue these ideologies with a sacral element, as “the term myth designates a story which has the status of a sacred truth.”¹⁹⁶ Bottici argues that pejorative ideological views lend themselves open to (ironically) being ideological and that they risk falling into the trap of distinguishing between “myth” versus “reality.” This is problematic because “by counterpoising myth and ideology with the ‘reality’ of facts, one is trapped once again in an approach to political myth in terms of its claim to truth.”¹⁹⁷ Furthermore, this would leave me in a position of adopting a pejorative understanding of myth as an inherently bad or undesirable social phenomenon. With pejorative understandings of both concepts, we risk reducing them to negative terms to criticise ideas and beliefs that we simply do not like or agree with. I therefore adopt the widely-used neutral understand of ideology that Bottici and Challand summarise as denoting “a set of ideas by which human beings posit, understand and justify their social action.”¹⁹⁸

Nonetheless, there are undeniable similarities between political myth and ideology regardless of whether one takes a “pejorative” or “neutral” understanding of the term:

... an ideology is a set of ideas by which human beings posit, understand and justify ends and means of a more or less organised social action. The intersection with the concept of political myth is clear: a political myth also entails a set of ideas by which human beings posit and represent the ends and mean of social action. Both political myth and ideology are mapping devices that orient in the social and political world.¹⁹⁹

Despite the incorporation of “ideas” within this understanding, not all ideas can be understood as a political myth. For Bottici, further conditions must be met. Firstly, these set of ideas “must take the form of a narrative, that is, of a series of events cast in a dramatic form” and, of course, not all ideologies have a narrative form. Secondly, on the basis of

¹⁹⁶ Flood, *Political Myth: A Theoretical Introduction*, 32.

¹⁹⁷ Bottici and Challand, *The Myth of the Clash of Civilizations*, 23.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. This is also the understanding of ideology which is most commonly taught and discussed in the UK. The seminal text for teaching this version is: Andrew Heywood, *Political Ideologies: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

¹⁹⁹ Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth*, 196.

this narrative form, it must be able to ground (*begründen*) or “coagulate and reproduce” significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*). As Bottici summarises, it is this emotive, narrative form that distinguishes myth from ideology:

To put it plainly, political myths are narratives that put a drama on stage. And it is from the impression of being part of such a drama that the typically strong pathos of a political myth derives. I can theoretically share an ideology which leaves me completely indifferent on the emotional level, but no political myth can be shared and at the same time remain emotionally indifferent. In this case, it is simply not a political myth for me. And this, I think, is ultimately the reason why the concept of political myth and that of ideology should be kept separated.²⁰⁰

Separating the two concepts does not deny that political myths and ideologies are closely related in practice. Liberalism, conservatism, fascism, environmentalism, and many other ideologies, can all be enhanced in discourse by making reference to myths. For instance, the myth of the General Strike is closely linked to socialist revolutionary and Marxist ideologies, and myths about the foundation of the USA are heavily linked to liberal ideology. Nonetheless, they are analytically distinct. Political myths are dramatic and figurative narrative processes, which may contain themes of heroism, villainy, tragedy, and joy, whereas ideologies are a body of purportedly coherent ideas which comment on an array of political and economic issues which myths do not. They can also underpin the entire political programmes of political leaders.

2.3 Myth and Religion

In this section I argue that political myths and religions should also be understood separately even if, as with ideologies, they can appear similar in practice. Both undeniably answer existential questions which underpin much of the human condition, but religions attempt to offer larger, more universalising and timeless answers to these questions, whereas political myths are characterised by being more particular and context-bound. I also distinguish political myth from political religion, as discussed by Eric Voegelin and Emilio Gentile. I argue that political religions claim to hold answers to the fundamental existential concerns that political myths do, but in a far more absolutist and totalising manner. This has been most vividly

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

seen in the totalitarianism of the 20th century which, as Hannah Arendt pointed out, was qualitatively different to all previous forms of government.²⁰¹ Most myths do not posit absolute claims of the world and rarely discuss ultimate meanings of existence. By contrast, this is precisely what religions (especially Abrahamic ones) do. As discussed in section 1.3, Blumenberg explains that myths are “distinguished by a high degree of constancy in their narrative core” but also “by an equally pronounced capacity for marginal variation.”²⁰² The potential for “themes and variations” distinguishes myths from “holy texts” which “cannot be altered by one iota.”²⁰³ Blumenberg has Christianity in mind when he makes this argument. Christians advanced immutable claims to universal truths which were designed to replace other mythologies and be applicable to everyone, everywhere, regardless of context.²⁰⁴ This meant that Christianity could avoid, as Blumenberg rather bluntly puts it, avoid “the annoyance of the contingency of saving its events in space and time, by making them representable everywhere through its cult.”²⁰⁵

The distinction between myth and religion can also similarly be made in the political sphere. This means that political myths differ quite clearly from “political religions”. One of the most well-known authors on political religions is Eric Voegelin.²⁰⁶ Voegelin noted the rise of “Gnosticism” in politics in the twentieth century as a result of the demise of traditional forms of religious belief and the resulting existential uncertainty this creates. In the 20th century, this led people to a period of “*Gnostic speculation*” in search of alternate sources of faith. People tried to reconstruct a sense of divine purpose, which they did by “substituting more massive modes of participation in divinity for faith in the Christian sense”,²⁰⁷ and this was central to the success of Nazism and Communism, both of which, for Voegelin, became political religions. To understand this argument, it is important to note that Voegelin distinguished between two

²⁰¹ Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism; On Violence* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt Books, 1970).

²⁰² Blumenberg, *Work on Myth*, 34.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 96-97.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 96.

²⁰⁶ Voegelin, "Modernity Without Restraint; The Political Religions, The New Science of Politics; Science, Politics and Gnosticism;"

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 189.

overarching forms of religion: *Überweltliche Religionen* (transworldly religions) and *Innerweltliche Religionen* (inner-worldly religions).²⁰⁸ The former can be described in the traditional sense and the latter could be understood as a form of religion *within the world* which, Voegelin argues, occurred as a reaction to the Enlightenment. Voegelin was most concerned with the power of these inner-worldly religions and the dangers they cause. People can adhere so strongly to inner-worldly religions that their “revelations” simply “do not break apart under the attack of scientific criticism” and “the concept of truth is transformed instead”.²⁰⁹

Voegelin’s observation identifies something qualitatively different about totalitarianism to other forms of political order seen throughout human history. Hannah Arendt best explains this in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, when she argues that Nazi and Soviet Communist regimes are new forms of government and not merely modern versions of other tyrannies. Arendt explains that these ideologies were able to a single, universal, comforting answer to the mysteries of the past, present and future. For Communism, this was the history of the class struggle and for Nazism it was race struggle. If adherents accept these premises, then such actions are simply inevitable or natural parts of society and history. This then justifies authoritarian state structures and tools for government.²¹⁰ The ideology becomes so totalising that it permeates all aspects of the adherent’s social existence. It provides answers to all concerns across the inner-worldly cosmos in the same way that traditional trans-worldly religions do. Some scholars have taken the concept of political religion and applied it to other forms of political. For instance, Emilio Gentile argues that liberal democracies can become political religions. In an extensive passage, he opens his book *Politics as Religion* by making the bold case to consider the USA as a “civil religion”:

The American civil religion has its own “holy scriptures,” the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, which are treasured and venerated like the Tables of the Law. It has its own prophets, such as the Pilgrim Fathers. It celebrates its own sacred heroes such as George Washington, the “American Moses” who freed the “new people of Israel!” from slavery

²⁰⁸ Paul, "Religion and Politics: In Search of Resemblances."

²⁰⁹ Voegelin, "Modernity Without Restraint; The Political Religions, The New Science of Politics; Science, Politics and Gnosticism;," 62-63.

²¹⁰ Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.

under the English and led them to the Promised Land of freedom, independence, and democracy. It venerates its martyrs, such as Abraham Lincoln, the sacrificial victim assassinated on Good Friday of 1865, after the American nation has been subjected to the purifying fires of a cruel civil war to expiate its guilt and re-establish the hallowed nature of its unity and mission. John Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. then became further examples of martyrdom for this civil religion, alongside the figure of Lincoln. Like all religions, this civil religion has its own temples for the veneration of its leading figures, such as the monument to Washington, the Lincoln Memorial, and Arlington Cemetery, where the tomb of the Unknown Soldier is revered as a symbol for the citizens who fell to save their nation. Finally, the civil religion has its sermons and liturgy; the presidential inaugural speeches, Independence Day on 4 July, Thanks giving Day, Memorial Day when the war dead are commemorated, and other collective ceremonies that celebrate personalities and events in American history turned by a myth into a “sacred history” of a nation elected by God to fulfil its particular mission in the world.”²¹¹

While Gentile’s argument is interesting, it does raise the question as to whether any nation-state with similar political structures could be considered a religion. It may be better to understand these phenomena as a series of myths, symbols, ideologies, and historical memories that altogether inform an overall political creed. The qualitative difference between totalitarian government and other forms seems, to me, to offer a far more convincing case for them to be considered political religions. What Gentile does identify, in my view, is how a series of political myths have come to guide political action and imbue liberal ideology in the US.

To sum up, the observations in this section provide for us a clear distinction between an inner-worldly political religion and political myth. Firstly, political myth can be distinguished from transworldly religions (to use Voegelin’s categories) since political myths answer inner-worldly concerns. Secondly, while political myths can inform and empower political religions, the former does not construct the totalising coherency nor command the obedience and submission that the latter does. This, I have argued, is a feature that is best understood as being part of totalitarian regimes.

²¹¹ Emilio Gentile, *Politics as Religion*, trans. George Staunton (Princeton, NJ and Woodstock, Oxfordshire: Princeton University Press, 2006), xiii. For more on his understanding of America as a political religion see also: *American Religion After September 11* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2008).

2.4 Myth and Science

In this section I argue that myth should not be understood as being in tension with reason and science. Instead, I posit that myths can answer the fundamental existential needs discussed in chapter 1 that reason and science do not necessarily fulfil. Political myths do not answer questions that are “ontic” or necessarily independently existing “things-in-themselves”. Instead, they are concerned with ensuring that people generate a sense of significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*). It does not matter whether a myth is able to accurately reflect truth or falseness, but whether it can answer the existential issues discussed in section 1.3. My argument is that the objectives of myth and science are different and should not be assumed to be always opposed.²¹² However, the most important point to take from section 2.4 is that myths are not narratives from a bygone era that have been overcome, but are part of the very fabric of our social experiences. The idea that myth was exclusive to “primitive” societies and cultures underpinned much 19th century anthropological research. In a seminal study, Bronislaw Malinowski described what he viewed as the function of myth:

Myth fulfils in *primitive culture* an indispensable function: it expresses, enhances and codified belief; it safeguards and enforces morality; it vouches for the efficiency of ritual and contains practical rules for the guidance of man. Myth is thus a vital ingredient of human civilization; it is not an idle tale, but a hard-worked active force; it is not an intellectual explanation or an artistic imagery, but a pragmatic charter of *primitive faith* and moral wisdom.²¹³

Malinowski was a man of his time in attributing it to primitive cultures. He seems to view myth as only functional for those cultures and something which - he and European societies in general - had overcome. This view of linear development is further emphasised in James George Frazer’s wide-ranging study *The Golden Bough*. In this work, Frazer discusses the importance of magic and ritual in the formation of myth. According to him, beliefs about magic and ritual were central to myth, and that magic was in fact primitive method for trying to learn about the world.

²¹² One could imagine a Sorelian-type myth being created in which scientific enquiry is seen as the route for ultimate human progress.

²¹³ Malinowski, *Myth in Primitive Psychology*, 19.

Indeed, in an oft-cited passage, Frazer referred to magic as “the bastard-sister of science.”²¹⁴ When a civilisation realises that magic does not work, they progress away from it and instead adopt more scientific approaches. Lucien Lévy-Bruhl drew sharp distinctions between “primitive” and “western” minds throughout his oeuvre. Western minds were reasonable and logical, whereas the primitive mind could not distinguish the supernatural from reality. He, like many others at the time, believed that there was a historical and evolutionary teleology leading from the primitive to the Western mind.²¹⁵ Myths were in a sense pre-logical, and a prior stage of development towards Western civilisation, which was held as an ideal progressive outcome – or perhaps the only legitimate outcome.²¹⁶

These claims are not generally shared by researchers of myth today. Even though many scholars accept that myths exist in contemporary societies, some scholars still see them as a hindrance to scientific progress. Ernst Cassirer viewed myth as inferior to scientific thought, because the latter is founded upon “a progressive analysis of the elements of experience” whereas the former “lives entirely in the presence of its object – by the intensity with which it seizes and takes possession of consciousness in specific moments.”²¹⁷ This means that scientific thought is grounded in progress and continually moves forward, whereas myth is entirely concerned with the present. Consequently, if myth supersedes science and rationality, the progress of humanity is frozen and this may, in certain circumstances, lead to regression. Cassirer’s cites the “myth of the Aryan race” as the main example of this regression, and his entire theory of myth is heavily tied to this particular example.

For Cassirer, myths are an expression of deep human emotions. However, in modern society they are generally suppressed by science and reason, although not eradicated by it. Therefore, Cassirer warns that we must always be prepared for “violent concussions” that can “shake our

²¹⁴ Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, 220.

²¹⁵ Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, *How Natives Think*, trans. Lilian A. Clare (Eastford, CT: Martino Fine Books, 2015).

²¹⁶ These themes are also discussed in his other works. See: Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, *Primitive Mentality* (General Books LLC, 2010); Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, *Primitive Mythology: The Mythic World of the Australian and Papuan Natives*, trans. Brian Elliott (St Lucia: University of Queensland, 1982).

²¹⁷ Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, vol. 2 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), 34-35.

cultural world and our social order to its very foundations”.²¹⁸ They are often at their most stark when there is a rapid disruption to the established social and political order. Cassirer understood these moments as “critical moments” in which:

...the rational forces that resist the rise of the old mythical conceptions are no longer sure of themselves. In these moments the time for myth has come again. For myth has not really been banished or subjugated. It is always there, lurking in the dark, waiting for its hour and opportunity.²¹⁹

Myth is only suppressed by science and reason but not eradicated by it and, therefore, we must always “be prepared for violent concussions that may shake our cultural world and our social order to its very foundations.”²²⁰ Mary Midgley takes the opposite position to Cassirer. She argues that modern science is not the opposite of myth or even incompatible with it. Science is, in fact, *dependent* upon it. For her, myths are “not lies” or “detached stories” but “imaginative patterns, networks of powerful symbols that suggest particular ways of interpreting the world.”²²¹ She claims science is underpinned by (among other things) a myth of its own omnipotence, meaning that it is the only way to answer “every kind of question... and that must naturally include questions about value.”²²² Midgley has made similar accusations against evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins and Jacques Monod.²²³ She argues that their works perpetuated a dramatic image which “showed heroic, isolated individuals contending, like space warriors, alone against an alien and meaningless cosmos” which “established the books as a kind of bible of individualism, most congenial to the Reaganite and Thatcherite ethos of the 80s.”²²⁴

²¹⁸ *An Essay on Man: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Human Culture*, 297.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 280.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 297.

²²¹ Mary Midgley, *The Myths We Live By* (London: Routledge, 2003), 1.

²²² *Ibid.*

²²³ Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, 30th Anniversary ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2006); Jacques Monod, *Chance and Necessity: An Essay on the Natural Philosophy of Modern Biology*, trans. Austryn Wainhouse (New York: Knopf, 1971).

²²⁴ Mary Midgley, ""What Darwin Got Wrong by Jerry Fodor and Massimo Piattelli Palmarini"," *The Guardian* (2010), <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2010/feb/06/what-darwin-got-wrong>. See also "Hobbes Leviathan Part 3: What is Selfishness?," *The Guardian* 20 April 2009.

The issue is that, rather than being hindrances to “progress”, humans adapt myths to the new conditions created during times of progress.²²⁵ Vincent Mosco persuasively argues that many people are currently influenced by the “myth of cyberspace” which promises the creation of a “new world” through the development of increased interconnectedness that results from advances in digital technology.²²⁶ Even the most technical and scientific endeavours can be mythologised and, for some, this may even provide them with the sense of significance and ontological security they require.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has worked to distinguish myth from other phenomena. This is important to ensure that the specificity of myth is not lost, and that what I analyse in the empirical material using my theoretical framework is clearly understood. While I may not resolve every tension, I believe this section summarises the key differences that justifies myth being considered a separate analytical category. In section 2.2 I analysed the concept of ideology, from its initial understanding as the “science of ideas”, to its later distinction between its pejorative and neutral variants. I argued that, although myth and ideology may often appear together in practice, they should be conceptualised differently. In section 2.3 I distinguished myth from religion. In particular, I focused on the role that myth - and especially political myth - plays in answering finite or “inner-worldly” questions, whereas religion tends to answer questions about the totality of the universe which myth - and certainly political myth - does not. While there are certainly more similarities here, political religions attempt to explain the totality of the “inner-worldly” cosmos that political myths normally do not - an example of this being totalitarianism. Finally, in section 2.4 I discussed the relation between myth, science, and reason. I explained that myths do not answer questions that are “ontic” or necessarily independently existing “things-in-themselves” but, rather, they are concerned with ensuring that people generate a sense of significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*). I argued that myth

Midgley’s point here does raise questions about the distinction between myth and ideology. I discuss this further in Chapter II.

²²⁵ Karen Armstrong, *A Short History of Myth* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2005), 11.

²²⁶ Mosco, *The Digital Sublime: Myth, Power, and Cyberspace*.

is not a phenomenon exclusive to “primitive” societies, but still remains essential to Western politics today. Although this chapter cannot resolve every debate about the differences between myth and ideology, religion, and science respectively, it is likely that any remaining ambiguities will be addressed in the empirical analysis of myth in chapters 5 and 6. This is because it will enable us to see how the work on myth operates in practice.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodological approach I take when analysing the empirical material. These approaches are grounded in an interpretivist epistemology that pays particular attention to the usage of language in the work on myth. The objective is to try to find the specific aspect of speech and text (in the sense of written words) that indicate that the work on myth is present. Most fundamentally, what qualifies as myth are those statements that construct a dramatic and figurative narrative that is designed to answer existential needs for significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) and ontological security. Nonetheless, there are normally linguistic cues that indicate when the work on myth is present. I identify these as deixis (person, place and time) and the linguistic tropes of metonymy and synecdoche. The chapter also elaborates on how I select and analyse my source material. This raises a series of questions about source selection and the strengths and limitations of interpretivist methodologies more broadly. I am careful to point out that I do not comprehensively resolve these issues, but I do nonetheless provide a determined defence of my approach. I also stress that my examples in chapters 5 and 6 should not be read as comprehensive, empirical “case-studies” that reflect traditional approaches in social science research. Rather, they should be seen as a discussion about a particular empirical example and as illustrations of the theoretical argument and analytical framework. This is a qualitative approach that scrutinises the work on myth in uniquely individual sources.

3.2 Locating the Work on Myth Linguistic Tropes and Deixis

This section discusses two important features of language which often form a key part of the work on myth: tropes and deixis. A *trope* is a figure of speech where “words are used with senses that differ (or ‘turn away’) from their literal senses, so the sense of words in metaphors, metonyms, allusion, irony, hyperbole and so on diverge from their normal,

literal senses.”²²⁷ Tropes are especially useful when a political speech or newspaper column hopes to appeal to emotion. When directed towards the speaker, they evoke positive emotions and values, such as pride, honour, courage and solidarity. By contrast, when used against opponents, they evoke negative emotions such as fear, shame, estrangement, and ostracism.²²⁸ There are several important tropes in modern political discourse and language more generally. The most relevant for this analysis are metaphor, metonymy, and a specific type of metonymy known as synecdoche. Deixis effectively refers to the act of “pointing” via language, and any such linguistic form which accomplishes this “pointing” is called a deictic expression. The speaker is as the “deictic centre”, and others are positioned in relation to *who* and *where* the speaker is, and *when* he or she is speaking. As renown linguist Charles J. Fillmore put it:

Deixis is the name given to those aspects of language whose interpretation is relative to the occasion of utterance: to the time of utterance, and to times before and after the utterance; to the location of the speaker at the time of the utterance; and to the identity of the speaker and the intended audience.²²⁹

Elsewhere, I have made usage of deictic theories to make arguments about the mobilising potential of political myth.²³⁰ I did this by referring to Piotr Cap’s work on legitimisation via proximation. This strategy seeks to grant legitimacy to a speaker’s claims but persuading the audience that the referent object being discussed, such as a threatening entity, is literally “closing in” on them.²³¹ Joanne Esch similarly did this with an analysis of the legitimising rhetoric of the Bush administration’s declaration of the “war on terror.”²³² While this also features at times in the empirical material in chapter 5 and 6, it is not alone sufficient to capture the work on myth in this

²²⁷ Jonathan Charteris-Black, *Analysing Political Speeches: Rhetoric, Discourse and Metaphor* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 39.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 45.

²²⁹ Charles J. Fillmore, "Deictic Categories in the Semantics of 'Come'," *Foundations of Language* 2, no. 3 (1966): 220.

²³⁰ Kirke, "Violence and Political Myth: Radicalizing Believers in the Pages of Inspire Magazine."

²³¹ Cap, "Proximation in the Discourse of Politics: Legitimizing the War on Terror."; "Towards the Proximation Model of the Analysis of Legitimation in Political Discourse."; Kirke, "Violence and Political Myth: Radicalizing Believers in the Pages of Inspire Magazine."

²³² Esch, "Legitimizing the "War on Terror": Political Myth in Official-Level Rhetoric."

context. I focus on three forms of deixis that are important for the analysis in this thesis. They are *person* deixis, *place* deixis, and *time* deixis, which are often understood as the major grammatical types of deixis.²³³ *Person* deixis refers to “human participants” which will typically be the speaker him/herself, supporters and allies, enemies and opponents, or other members of the audience. This therefore means that person deixis is seen in pronouns that “encode the identity of participants in the speech” by pointing to individuals (such as a president) or a group (such as a nation), the latter of which are, incidentally, often referred to by a metonym. The pronoun “we” is crucial to person deixis. It is often unclear as to who it refers to exactly and, indeed, it gains power precisely through this imposition as it invites the audience to ally themselves with the speaker.²³⁴

Place deixis is concerned with spatial relations discussed in a speech, and shown with demonstrative adjectives such as “here” and “there”, or “this (way)” or that (direction).²³⁵ It “encode(s) spatial relations relative to the location of the speaker” but can also be words or expressions that point to a specific location.²³⁶ The difference between “this” and “that” is important to bear in mind when analysing place deixis. “This” would refer to an object in a pragmatically given area *close to the speaker’s location*. By contrast, “that” would refer to objects *beyond* the pragmatically given area close to the speaker’s location. This subtle difference is important in an analysis of myth because often “that” can be used to refer to entities that are separated from the speaker by a significant distance. This could be used in a negative context when referring to an undesirable out-group. Motion verbs are also particularly important in place deixis. Verbs like “coming” “going” and “travelling” represent movement towards and away from the deictic centre.

Time deixis encodes time relations relative to when utterances are made. Words such as “now”, “then”, “ago”, “today”, and “yesterday” point

²³³ Charles J. Fillmore, *Santa Cruz Lectures on Deixis* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Linguistics Club, 1975).

²³⁴ Charteris-Black, *Analysing Political Speeches: Rhetoric, Discourse and Metaphor*, 61.

²³⁵ Stephen C. Levinson, *Pragmatics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 62.

²³⁶ Charteris-Black, *Analysing Political Speeches: Rhetoric, Discourse and Metaphor*, 61.

to a specific time in relation to the point at which a particular utterance is made. Time deixis is often crucial the work on myth. For instance, the myth of the General Strike requires orators to construct a temporal link between the present conditions of existence and a time of future struggle and, ultimately, liberation. Founding myths similarly require drawing a link between the conditions of the present and those of the past. The myths about the foundation of the EU speak of the tragedies of war and the journey towards pacification of the continent that the EU has pioneered up to today. These utterances are often linked to place deixis. For instance, the expansion of the EU with the 2004 enlargement was often referred to as the culmination of a journey towards the “reunification of Europe”.²³⁷ This is a reference to a purported time when Europe was unified, separated through the tragedies of war and genocide, and has now finally been reunited. Place deixis, time deixis, and in some respects person deixis, are all represented as a coherent yet emotive narrative that provides a sense of significance to the European project. As the empirical examples demonstrate in Part II of the thesis, these three forms of deixis often appear in quick succession as part of constructing the work on myth.

Deixis would not be useful as a standalone indicator for the presence of myth. What deixis does is to reinforce the position of speaker and listener in relation to these existing contexts. For instance, a political speech may refer to “British values” and contrast these with “un-British” values, such as those found represented by more radically conservative aspects of Islam. If the speaker uses pronouns such as “we”, and associates that “we” with signifiers for British values, which itself serves as a metonym to describe all people in the geographical space designated as “Britain”, then the audience can be persuaded that they are part of this “we.” By referring to characteristics of “they” such as Sharia Law - which often works as a metonym for illiberal practices of justice such as amputation and capital punishment - the audience is able to comprehend how distant they are (as in “we”) from the “they.” The ideas which formed these differences in the

²³⁷ Anneli Albi, *EU Enlargement and the Constitutions of Central and Eastern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Marise Cremona, *The Enlargement of the European Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 2.

first place, however, are *not* constructed through deixis, but through other social and psychological means learnt over time.

Metaphors are also an important aspect of the work on myth and. In political myth, these metaphors often exist to construct dramas and evoke strong emotions. As the Roman rhetorician Quintilian put it, metaphors are “designed to move the feelings, give special distinction to things and place them vividly before the eye...”²³⁸ Charteris-Black argues that metaphors are not used randomly in rhetoric, and that they regularly contain an underlying pattern that often signal the speakers’ intentions. He offers the term “purposeful metaphor” to explain how and why these metaphors provide “coherent representations” of story being actively told by the speaker.²³⁹ Charteris-Black argues that this use of metaphor turns a speech into a narrative, rather than an independent set of non-associated metaphors. He understands these as “myths”, or a “narrative-based representation of powerful, intense, often unconsciously driven, emotions such as grief, fear, happiness and enjoy” which are “purposeful but their origin is in the unconscious.”²⁴⁰ He provides an array of examples, but places particular emphasises the importance of heroic “journey metaphors” that appeared in the speeches of Martin Luther King and how these were adapted by Barack Obama. In his analysis of one the following speech by Obama during his presidential campaign in 2007 is particularly interesting:

“And if you will join *me in this improbable question, if you feel destiny calling, and as I see, a future of endless possibility stretching before us; if you sense, as I sense, that the time is now to shake off our slumber, and slough off our fear, and make good on the debt we owe past and future generations, then I’m ready to take up the cause, and march with you, and work with you. Together, starting today, let us finish the work that needs to be done, and usher in a new birth of freedom on this Earth* [Italics in original].”²⁴¹

Charteris-Black points out that these metaphors draw from the domains of war, sleep and journeys, and personifications of “destiny” and “freedom”. The dense usage of metaphor contributes to creating an elevated

²³⁸ Quintilian, *Book VIII* (London: Heineman, 1969), VI. 19-20.

²³⁹ Charteris-Black, *Analysing Political Speeches: Rhetoric, Discourse and Metaphor*, 196.

²⁴⁰ *ibid.* This differs slightly from my usage of the concept. However, there are enough overlaps to make it useful methodologically.

²⁴¹ Barack Obama, cited in *ibid.*, 216.

style which intends to motivate the audience to carry out the necessary actions to bring about the changes. “War” as metaphor implies struggle and effort whereas “sleeping” equates to inaction. In this example, metaphors are crucial in creating the emotions necessary for inspiring political purpose and social action.²⁴² While Charteris-Black’s elaboration of myth does not go into the same depth that mine does (he draws predominately from the political science approaches of Flood and Edelman)²⁴³, he accurately outlines the emotive aspect of the process. Most usefully, however, he offers an approach that allows researchers to see how myth is *expressed* in rhetoric through metaphors. For practical methodological purposes, his approach is useful and can be expanded upon with reference to the theory of myth I have constructed in this thesis. This means I view metaphors as part of the process of answering the existential needs for significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*). This is especially true in times of crisis and tragedy, where metaphors aid myth by substituting the literal, hard, “absolutism of reality” with more simplified, parsimonious and purposeful understanding of social reality. What types of metaphors are important for this thesis? Mainly metaphors that invoke some of the core themes of myth: good and evil, tragedy and joy, origins and futures. Metaphors that speak of conflict, journey, and particularly those which construct self-other dichotomies such as “Britishness vs Islam”, “good vs evil”, “freedom vs terrorism.” Even more relevant are those metaphors that “position” people in relation to the speaker, as we see in person, place, and time deixis (see section 4.2). The next section discusses two other tropes that relate closely to metaphor: metonymy and synecdoche.

Other important tropes (although to a much lesser extent) in the work on myth include metonymy and synecdoche. Metonymy occurs when the “name of a referent (or thing referred to) is replaced by the name of an attribute, or entity related in some semantic way, or by spatial proximity...”²⁴⁴ This substitution is not based on similarity as it is in the

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid., 197; Flood, *Political Myth: A Theoretical Introduction*. Murray Edelman, *Constructing the Political Spectacle* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988).

²⁴⁴ Joanna Thornborrow and Shân Wareing, *Patterns in Language: An introduction to language and literary style* (London/New York: Routledge, 1998), 109. Francisca Snoeck Henkemans, What's in a Name? The Use of the Stylistic Device

case of metaphor, but *association*. For instance, Number 10, or 10 Downing Street, would be a metonymical expression referring to the UK Government. The same would be the case for the White House in the US. “The City” is often used as a metonym for the City of London, and thereby to describe major parts of the banking and financial sectors in the UK. Finally, the “Crown” is often a metonym that represents the monarch. *Synecdoche* is a specific type of metonymy which a part of something is used to refer to the whole or something, or the whole is used for a part. For instance, some may refer to their cars as “wheels.” In this case, the part of the car referred to (the wheels) represents the entirety of the car. In the phrase “all hands on deck”, meaning all people are required to help or participate with something, the word “hands” is a synecdoche representing the entirety of a person.

For Lakoff and Johnson, metonymy and metaphor are related but are ultimately “different *kinds* of processes [*italics in original*]”; metonyms have a “primarily referential function” which “allows us to use one entity to *stand for* another”, whereas metaphors are principally “a way of conceiving one thing in terms of another, and its primary function is understanding.”²⁴⁵ While metaphors create a relation of similarity between objects from different domains, this is not the case with metonymy.²⁴⁶ That said, metonymy can at times also serve the purpose of providing understanding. For example, in the case of a synecdoche which refers to the “part for the whole”, there could be many parts that can stand for the whole, but the part we pick determines which *aspect* of the whole we are focusing on. Lakoff and Johnson use the example of the expression “good heads” to demonstrate this:

When we say we need some *good heads* on the project, we are using “good heads” to refer to “intelligent people.” The point is not just to use a part (head) to stand for a whole (person) but rather to pick out a particular characteristic of the person, namely, intelligence, which is associated with the head.²⁴⁷

Metonymy as a Strategic Manoeuvre in the Confrontation and Argumentation Stages of a Discussion, (OSSA Conference Archive, June 1 2005), 434.

²⁴⁵ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors we live by* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 36.

²⁴⁶ Henkemans, "What's in a Name? The Use of the Stylistic Device Metonymy as a Strategic Manoeuvre in the Confrontation and Argumentation Stages of a Discussion," 434.

²⁴⁷ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors we live by*, 36.

There are at least two common instances where metonymy, particularly as synecdoche, interacts with the work on myth (although Lakoff and Johnson do not discuss myth). These are, the “controller for the controlled” and “the place for the object.”²⁴⁸ For the former, statements like “*Nixon* bombed Hanoi” and “*Napoleon* lost at Waterloo” make a prominent individual come to represent the entirety of the military personnel involved in those conflicts. Regarding the place for the object, statements like “Let’s not let Thailand become another *Vietnam*” and “*Pearl Harbor* still has an effect on our foreign policy”, places come to represent the entirety of the historical event.²⁴⁹ Yet this is far more than just a curious use of language; it draws on the imaginations that people have about these events, and both of those examples are also invoked in statements designed to guide action *in the present*. It also relates strongly to time, place, and person deixis (above) All of this is crucial in political myth, which may recall key historical events (or interpretations of them) that people are aware of. The analysis of part II shows that metonyms for core historical events (or, at least, interpretations of these events) such as “the Blitz”.

Bottici and Challand have both discussed the importance of synecdoche in political myth. They emphasise that political myths are often condensed into “icons” that, through synecdoche, are “able to recall the whole work on myth that lies behind them.”²⁵⁰ In order to answer the question of where such narratives actually lie, Bottici and Challand subsequently draw from Sigmund Freud, Ernst Cassirer, and Erich Fromm, to construct a working hypothesis for the existence of a “social unconscious.”²⁵¹ A particular icon or utterance that represents only one part of the work on myth can, by means of synecdoche, recall the rest of it. Naming historical events, cultural references, monuments, etc., in specific circumstances may all represent and contribute to the work on myth. For instance, the July 7th London bombings (incidentally referred to by the metonym “7/7”) were often compared to an attack on London that resembled the Blitz (see Chapter 5). This allowed the public to recall a whole series of stories with associated symbols, like the calm, resilient

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 39-40.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 39.

²⁵⁰ Bottici and Challand, *The Myth of the Clash of Civilizations*, 26.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 28.

community spirit shown by Londoners, images of the underground (often known as the Tube) and air-raid shelters occupied by families, which altogether provided a powerfully emotive way of interpreting the attacks.

3.3 Selecting and Interpreting Sources

This section serves two purposes. Firstly, it outlines each of the types of source material I draw from and how I analyse them. Secondly, it discusses how I justify my approach and the methodological limitations that arise from it. Rather than proceed with the traditional “case-study” model that most social science studies do, I decided to analyse two key events in the work on myth from multiple perspectives. Those are, the London bombings of 7th July 2005 (chapter 5) and the murder of Lee Rigby on 23rd May 2013 (chapter 6). I select source material from within a month of the two events, as this is the immediate time period where the work on myth becomes most prominent, largely because of the existential issues outlined in chapter one. I draw from two main sources. The first are political speeches from the Prime Minister and House of Commons debate following the events. The second are columns from Newspapers, two of which are generally understood as being “left-leaning” and two that are “right-leaning”. I select one tabloid and one broadsheet from each category. For the left, I selected the *Daily Mirror* as a tabloid and *The Guardian* as the broadsheet. For the right, I selected the *Daily Mail* as a tabloid and *The Telegraph* as a broadsheet.

Political speeches are a crucial in any analysis of the work on political myth. They are often made by individuals with substantial symbolic and social capital. Speeches are carefully orchestrated to appeal to public needs and sentiments and, where possible, to persuade them towards a particular view. My analysis of political speeches is informed by the methodological approach outlined in section 3.2. I apply many of the methodological insights offered by Jonathan Charteris-Black because he is (to my knowledge) the only scholar to offer a comprehensive analysis of figurative language and political myth in modern political speeches.²⁵² This unique approach which is grounded in the discipline of linguistics, and it

²⁵² Charteris-Black, *Analysing Political Speeches: Rhetoric, Discourse and Metaphor*; *Politicians and Rhetoric: The Persuasive Power of Metaphor*.

provides a useful supplement to my existing theoretical framework. Charteris-Black's approach is particularly useful for understanding the structure and syntax of political speeches. His critical analysis of metaphors and myths in particular shows how rhetorical devices are deliberately deployed for maximum emotive impact. I selected government speeches for the period 2010-2015 coalition and the present Conservative government primarily from www.gov.uk. Unfortunately, speeches from previous governments were not attainable on that website. I therefore also used the British Political Speech Archive, located at www.britishpoliticalspeech.org. This website allows users to narrow their searches by selecting speeches from influential politicians. I also searched news websites to locate particular speeches and speakers who were not recorded on each of these websites. My search terms in all instances were: "Islam", "Islamic extremism", "Terror", "Terrorism" "British values" and "Britishness". Furthermore, I conducted searches based on particular time periods. For instance, I searched for speeches in the month following the 7th July 2005 bombings to see if evidence of the work on myth could be found. In addition to this, I cited some speeches which I encountered through secondary literature, and have credited the authors where this has occurred. Context is also vitally important. Where it is made clear, I consider the timing of the speech, other events occurring at the same time, the place it is made, and who the audience are. This ensures that I can embed the speech within wider discourses and, in fact, this often strengthened the arguments for my theoretical framework.

I also analyse political speeches in the House of Commons. Primarily, this is because a great majority of UK political speeches are made in the House of Commons, and there are often subsequently debates about them. Parliamentary debates also allow for direct responses to speakers and, crucially, this is where influential non-government MPs are able to have their say. This includes those who are in positions of greater power such as ministers and shadow ministers, but also back-bench MPs who may, at times, also hold other prominent positions in society (symbolically or otherwise). Parliamentary debates occur under very fixed and formal rules. There are often limitations on speech time and the style of language that can be used, which could easily be deemed "unparliamentary." Falling foul of

these rules can result in suspension from the chamber, and this is something that MPs are likely to be careful to avoid. Secondly, parliamentary debates can result in the passing of bills which later become laws, or to begin a military campaign. This gives parliament a clear sense of immediate power that is not present in a political speech or interview. The debates that occur prior to a parliamentary vote can persuade MPs to vote one way or another if they are undecided, and this is especially the case in a free (non-whipped) vote. UK Parliamentary debates are available in the Parliament database known as Hansard, which can be reached at www.hansard.parliament.uk. This website has records of all recorded parliamentary debates and bills adopted.²⁵³

Newspaper columnists are also important contributors to the work on myth. Newspapers are circulated to millions of people every day, and even more people now read articles online. Columnists respond to events normally in line with the editorial opinion of the newspaper they write for. They are important mouth-pieces of the media and thereby must be included in an analysis of the work on myth. Determining which newspaper outlet and which columnist to discuss is challenging. I found that I had to make far more subjective judgements than I did with a clear ready-to-hand database that was available for political speeches and parliamentary debates. I try to justify each selection based on measures of their influence and sometimes raw numbers can be good indicators for this. For instance, I spend some time analysing the articles of Melanie Phillips, who works for the *Daily Mail*, which is now the most visited online newspaper website in the world. Furthermore, she has more appearances on shows such as BBC's *Question Time* than any other non-politician.²⁵⁴ Although these indicators are not perfect, they are at least defensible indicators for source selection in qualitative research.

The rationale behind my source selection was as follows. Firstly I tried to find some balance in the political affiliation of the newspapers in

²⁵³ Archived debates are found at <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/hansard/commons/by-date/commons-hansard-bound-volumes/>

²⁵⁴ George Arnett, "Which Politician is on Question Time the Most? It's not Nigel Farage," *The Guardian* (19 March 2005), <http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2015/mar/19/politician-question-time-nigel-farage-labour>.

question. While mainstream UK newspapers are more likely to be right-wing, I try to balance this by giving as much attention to left-wing publications as possible. This meant that my analysis of right-wing publications comes mostly from the *Daily Mail* and the *Telegraph*, and my left-wing analysis is from the *Guardian* and the *Daily Mirror*.

Unfortunately, a significant challenge has been obtaining the electronic records of many of these papers. *The Sun* and *The Times* could both have been selected, but both require subscriptions, and even the *Telegraph* has a limit to how many articles can be read online until a subscription has to be paid. This meant that some material was obtained via secondary sources, and credit has been given when this occurred.

I judged the importance of sources through Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital. Symbolic capital is "the acquisition of a reputation for competence and an image of respectability and honourability."²⁵⁵ This means that senior political figures, while often derided in the media, are individuals with a sense of respectability and importance in the public sphere. Similarly, Newspapers such as the *Daily Mirror*, *The Guardian*, *Daily Mail*, and *The Telegraph* also have an element of symbolic capital that makes them more likely to be trusted than other sources. This still opens me up to another significant flaw in qualitative interpretivist research: the temptation to "cherry-pick" data. This means constructing an argument based on parts of the data that suit the overall argument while ignoring evidence that contradicts it. While some have claimed cherry-picking is often done deliberately by qualitative researchers,²⁵⁶ Ema Ushioda points out that many may do it inadvertently "through a lack of skill or experience in handling qualitative datasets, or though lack of critical reflection".²⁵⁷ David Silverman argues that qualitative researchers should be able to "convince themselves" that their

²⁵⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* trans. Richard Nice (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 285.

²⁵⁶ Janice Morse, "'Cherry picking': Writing from thin data," *Qualitative Health Research* 20, no. 3 (2010).

²⁵⁷ Ema Ushioda, cited in: Steve Mann, *The Research Interview: Reflective Practice and Reflexivity in Research Processes* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

conclusions are based upon a critical and systemic analysis of their data.²⁵⁸

If authors are unable to do this sincerely, it may indicate that the data has not been analysed critically and reflexively.

Regardless of the intentions of authors, it is inescapable that they are likely to read data (or “text”) differently depending upon the social and material context in which both data/text and author are situated. This observation has been made by philosophers of hermeneutics for decades, all of whom have emphasised that there are no detached or objective and detached readings of texts.²⁵⁹ The social world is constituted by layers of interpretation and it would be extremely difficult – perhaps even impossible – to detach ourselves from our position in society and take an impartial, “objective” view of events. As a consequence, I cannot claim an entirely neutral and impartial reading of my source material and it is likely that others would read the same material differently. However, I have attempted to be as reflexive and critical as possible. This is demonstrated on some occasions in chapter 5 and 6, when I engage with material that may at first seem to contradict my main argument. However, I offer a defence of my theory against these examples even if, of course, it remains my own subjective reading of the material. However, if everybody took the hermeneutic position to an extreme, the humanities and social sciences would be significantly impoverished. This is the case for at least two reasons. Firstly, we risk using our subjectivity as an excuse to take an “anything goes” mentality to methodology and social science more broadly. Secondly, social science needs the capacity to make comparisons between cultures, ideas, and even eras. As Richard Ned Lebow warns, if the hermeneutic approach is taken to its extreme, it would “all but cripple social science” as it would “restrict comparison to cultures and eras bounded by shared concepts.” Incidentally, this would also be a hard condition to meet, as “concepts are continually evolving and are usually not understood or used

²⁵⁸ David Silverman, *Doing Qualitative Research* 3rd ed. (London: Sage, 2005), 275. Mann, *The Research Interview: Reflective Practice and Reflexivity in Research Processes*.

²⁵⁹ See especially: Gadamer, *Truth and Method*. Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writings*; Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).

the same way by actors within the same discourse.”²⁶⁰ If we accept our interpretations are not timeless, universally applied, but may still be widely shared and relevant across different times and spaces, we can avoid submitting to the naïve claim that we are able to be entirely objective, neutral, and impartial.

Despite this, I will not retreat from the responsibility of being critically reflexive and explicit about my own position in relation to my research. Indeed, this latter point is crucial in the case of this particular thesis. The subject-matter of this thesis has been part of real-life experiences for me growing up in the United Kingdom and being involved in political activism in party politics and human rights organisations. Throughout my teenage years and into early adulthood, I noticed the gradual worsening of tensions between communities, increasingly inflammatory media rhetoric, more authoritarian and occasionally violent counter-terrorism measures, and, overall, the incremental polarisation of society. My interest in researching political violence, terrorism, narratives, and emotions all stems from world-experiences. Undoubtedly, this has influenced my source selection and the theoretical framework of this thesis.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has offered a methodology that synthesises approaches in linguistics with my theoretical framework of political myth outlined in Chapters 1 and 2. Section 3.2 identified two essential components to language that indicates the presence of the work on myth. These are *deixis and tropes*. Tropes are a figure of speech where words are used in ways that differ from their literal senses. I identified metaphor as being an important trope that is often invoked in the work on myth in order to dramatise and evoke powerful emotions. Although they are less prevalent, metonymy and its subtype known as synecdoche are also often present in the work on myth. The discussion in 3.2 began with explaining “deixis”. Deixis is the act of “pointing” via language and is crucial for the work on myth as it allows speakers and listeners to position themselves in relation to the subject matter of the myth. In moments of crisis, in which people’s ontological security has

²⁶⁰ Richard Ned Lebow, *A Cultural Theory of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 40.

been challenged, deixis can contribute to re-orientating people towards a more solidified sense of being-in-the-world. This orientation effectively supersedes the *Angst* since it provides a sense of groundedness that is required for significance. Deixis is thereby crucial in the subsequent empirical analysis of chapters 5 and 6. Of secondary importance are metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche, the latter being a subtype of metonymy.

In section 3.3 I elaborated on the empirical material that I intend to use in chapters 5 and 6. I explained that my analysis from political speeches and parliamentary debates draws heavily from the works of Jonathan Charteris-Black, who has written extensively on political rhetoric, including the use of metaphor and myth by speakers.²⁶¹ Finally I outlined the general limitations that come with qualitative research grounded in interpretivism and how this may affect my thesis. The biggest drawback is the temptation that researchers have to “cherry-pick” their data. I explained that my reading of the empirical material is from my own perspective and is based on my own social, historical, and temporal contingencies, what Hans J. Morgenthau would have called *Standortgebundenheit*.²⁶² I am reading the material from a specific philosophical perspective and with a particular theory of political myth in mind. It is therefore entirely possible that others would read the same empirical material differently and may ultimately come to different conclusions to me. I thereby do not claim to be providing an objective or neutral reading of the text, but I do claim to offer one that is theoretically well-grounded and aware of its limitations. This methodological chapter has also made a new contribution to the way we analyse political myth. It provides a methodology with particular linguistic cues through which we can analyse the work on myth in a moment of political crisis. It has drawn links between the role of deixis in linguistic utterances and the existentialist dimensions of political myth. The role of positioning and “pointing” in the work on myth is crucial for addressing the

²⁶¹ Charteris-Black, *Analysing Political Speeches: Rhetoric, Discourse and Metaphor; Politicians and Rhetoric: The Persuasive Power of Metaphor*.

²⁶² The concept refers to something being bound in a particular location at a given moment, and would therefore roughly translate as “contingency”. See: Hans J. Morgenthau, “Truth and Power,” in *Truth and Power: Essays of a Decade, 1960-1970*, ed. Hans J. Morgenthau (New York: Praeger, 1970). Morgenthau borrowed this term from Karl Mannheim. See Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*.

vacuity that *Angst* may create. This linkage of linguistics and existential philosophy can be a productive way through which we can interpret political myth during times of crises, as is demonstrated in chapters 5 and 6.

This concludes part I of the thesis where my analytical framework was outlined. Part II interweaves this framework into my empirical material to discuss the issue of Britain's perceived conflict with radical, violent Muslims.

PART II: Britain's Conflict with Radical Violent Muslims

Chapter 4: An Outline of the Work on Myth

4.1 Introduction

This chapter identifies the core features of the work on myth that can be seen in Chapters 5 and 6. The political myth that I argue is highly dominant in British discourse tells a story that Britain is in an existential conflict with a violent, radical form of Islam and Muslims. This enemy, it is claimed, must ultimately be overcome and defeated, or British people will face grave consequences. This is **not** a political myth in the more mainstream usage of the term as a false narrative, story, or argument. Rather, it is a dramatic and figurative narrative process that responds to a need for significance and, constructing ontological security is an important part of this process. There are two broad sides who are embroiled in this struggle in political myth.²⁶³ On the one hand, I point out two features of the collective self that are often invoked in the work on myth. The first is the notion that Britain is an exceptionally resilient country. This narrative often draws from memories of the British stoicism in the face of the Blitz during the World War II. The second narrative I highlight indicates that there are particular British values, and these often intersect with tolerance and liberalism. The work on myth indicates that the values of these violent, radical Muslims are utterly incompatible with those of Britain owing primarily due to their barbaric practices. These include terrorism, the suppression of women, and a general hatred of British values.

I distinguish between two variations to the work on myth that appear in the media especially. Although myths retain a consistent narrative core, they often have developed variants in order to be relevant to a particular context. This balance between constancy and variation is important to the work on myth, as Hans Blumenberg himself pointed out. The variations in the myth are split between the “left-leaning” and “right-leaning” interpretations. The former is more forgiving of “good” Muslims and makes more effort to distinguish them from “bad Muslims”, and is also more likely

²⁶³ It must once again be emphasised that I am not using the concept of myth to describe a necessarily false narrative or claim.

to defend multiculturalism. The right-wing variant is more likely to be hostile to multiculturalism, and may even cite fundamental issues within Islam itself as being responsible. It also argues that British response to these issues has not been strong enough.

4.2 Britain's Existential Conflict with Islamic Extremism: The Triumph of *British Resilience* and *British Values*

My argument is that narratives about Britain facing an existential conflict with a pernicious violent radical form of Islam have become a political myth. It must be once again stressed that I do not refer to these as a political myth because I believe they are false, but because they have taken on a dramatic and figurative form that serves to provide people with a sense of significance and ontological security. The myth posits that Britain is facing an existential threat from this radical other and that it must ultimately triumph and resolutely destroy this threat. This is essentially a story of good and evil, the former being legitimate and the latter being illegitimate. At the point of legitimacy, are those who are identifiable as British. There are two main features to this. The first is the notion that Britain is an exceptionally resilient country. This narrative often draws from memories of the British stoicism in the face of the Blitz during the World War II. The second narrative posits that there are particular British values, and these often heavily overlap with liberalism. The myth posits these values will ultimately be victorious, but that this success will depend upon Muslims adopting these values in order to not be drawn into terrorism. Opposing Britain (the point of legitimacy) is the violent radical Islamic other (the point of illegitimacy). Those associated with this identificatory pole are barbaric with values that are irreconcilable with Britain. These barbaric practices involve acts of grotesque violence through terrorism, the continuous subjugation of women, and a hatred of British values. However, there is also a tension within British understandings of this Other. That is, there are "good" Muslims who are amenable and able to be subsumed within Britishness, and the "bad" Muslims who are irreconcilable with them. Good Muslims must do more to prevent people becoming "radicalised", or, transition from "good" to "bad".

I refer to myth in line with my theoretical framework in chapter one in which it was defined as a dramatic and figurative narrative process that

responds to a need for significance, and constructing ontological security is an important part of this process. It makes the threatening other less distant and unknowable to us, thereby eradicating *Angst*. In most cases, it will also reduce our sense of fear and even if it does not, fear is instinctively easier to manage than *Angst*, as a range of existential philosophers have argued (see section 1.3). Terrorist attacks are crucial moments in which political myth is most needed. Borrowing from Ernst Cassirer, myth may indeed always be “lurking in the dark, waiting for its hour and opportunity”²⁶⁴ even if the argument in this thesis (unlike Cassirer’s) would not refer to myth as necessarily a regression to a prior stage of humanity (see section 2.4). In the aftermath of terrorist attack, political myths can serve as a uniting force at a time of grief. For these reasons politicians and media commentators seek to provide this sense of certainty for the audience with powerful and dramatic rhetoric that removes all ambiguity for these events (although maybe not consciously so).

I am not arguing that this political myth exists solely in Britain, or that it was created following 9/11²⁶⁵ – although that was an important moment. Instead, this is a myth that is closely related to the the idea of the “clash of civilizations”, which Bottici and Challand have persuasively argued is also a political myth.²⁶⁶ Far from being just a name and theory created by Samuel Huntington,²⁶⁷ it has become a global political myth that has permeated societies, and is seen in books, arts, media, comics, films. It has become a cognitive scheme through which people look at the world and

²⁶⁴ Cassirer, *An Essay on Man: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Human Culture*, 280.

²⁶⁵ 9/11 was indeed an important event in the work on myth. An analysis done in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 by Elizabeth Poole shows how important the subject of Islam had become in UK discourse following the attacks. Between 12 September and 25 October 2001, there were over 700 articles on Islam in *The Times* and 1058 in the *Guardian*. These topics varied from Muslim fears about discrimination to whether Muslims are doing enough to prevent young people being drawn to terrorism, to Britain being the “world’s terrorist haven”. See: Elizabeth Poole, *Reporting Islam: Media Representations of British Muslims* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002), 7-10.

²⁶⁶ Bottici and Challand, "Rethinking Political Myth : The Clash of Civilizations as a Self-Fulfilling Prophecy."; *The Myth of the Clash of Civilizations*.

²⁶⁷ Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?," *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1993); *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2011).

a drama which mobilises people's passions and emotions. The myth has appeared on numerous occasions throughout global media and has often been directly referred to as the "Clash of Civilisations".²⁶⁸ Perhaps one of the most pertinent features of this clash has been the controversy of the cartoon crisis in Denmark, where offensive pictures of the Prophet Muhammed were drawn, causing riots across much of the Middle-East.²⁶⁹ This would later tragically resurface with an attack on the offices of French satirical magazine, Charlie Hebdo, on 7th January 2015, which killed 12 people.²⁷⁰ While there have been numerous studies that indicate British people have begun to develop far more negative attitudes towards Muslims, and that there has been a longitudinal increase in the amount of people who believe Islam and the West are incompatible,²⁷¹ this is not always made immediately obvious in political and media discourses in times of crisis. Rather, the debate in the UK makes a distinction between "good" and "bad" forms of Islam and Muslims. The former are compatible with Britishness, or at least they can be tolerated within the country. This is often made manifest in times of crisis, particularly terror attacks, when political and media elites continually seek to make a distinction between good Muslims who would utterly condemn such actions, and bad Muslims who would actively condone or do little to prevent such occurrences.

As previously indicated, it is important to note that the clash of civilisations myth (as Bottici and Challand also point out) was not manufactured in the 1990s, but has been a product of orientalist discourses

²⁶⁸ Bottici and Challand, *The Myth of the Clash of Civilizations*, 102-07. Other articles preceding Bottici and Challand noted the role of Huntington's thesis in media discourse. See especially: Ervand Abrahamian, "The US Media, Huntington and September 11," *Third World Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (2003).

²⁶⁹ This has been analysed regularly in the academic literature. See especially: Shawn Powers, "Examining the Danish Cartoon Affair: Mediatized Cross-Cultural Tensions?," *Media, War and Conflict* 1, no. 3 (2008). For analysis of visual methodology in relation to this crisis, see: Lene Hansen, "Theorizing the image for Security Studies: Visual securitization and the Muhammad Cartoon Crisis," *European Journal of International Relations* 17, no. 1 (2011).

²⁷⁰ BBC News, "Charlie Hebdo: Gun attack on French magazine kills 12," *BBC News* (7 January 2015), <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-30710883>.

²⁷¹ The Great Divide: How Westerners and Muslims View Each Other, (Pew Global Attitudes Project: PewResearchCenter, 2006), 3. Joel Faulkner Rogers, The majority of voters doubt that Islam is compatible with British values, in *YouGov UK* (30 March 2015). Clive D. Field, "Islamophobia in Contemporary Britain: The Evidence of the Opinion Polls," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 18, no. 4 (2007).

discussed most prominently by Edward Said.²⁷² Some of the hostility has been grounded in theology and, as Ivan Kalmar has demonstrated, this developed particularly during the period of the Renaissance and Enlightenment. At this time, people had begun to question there was a debate in Europe about the nature of the divine and also human power. From this, a perception that Islam allegedly requires submission to a merciless God and despotic government (oriental despotism) has helped to ground Christian debates (even today) about divine power, which ultimately augments perceptions of Islam as being unduly authoritarian.²⁷³ Beyond theological debates, Jonathan Lyons has noted that a thousand years of Western imaginations of the Muslim world have produced grand totalising narratives about it.²⁷⁴ These often contribute to shaping perceptions and, by implication, fuel the political myth of the clash of civilizations. Many modern-day discourses emphasise the perceived socially conservative trends of Muslims within Western societies and in Islamic countries,²⁷⁵ and we see indications of this throughout the empirical examples in chapters 5 and 6.

In a UK-specific context, both media and political elites have constructed the violent, radical Islamic enemy as the latest incarnation of a long line of enemies. This was especially the case following the London Bombings of July 7th 2005 (7/7). Darren Kelsey notes that the Blitz, IRA bombings, and 7/7 were often mentioned “in a diachronic sequence to project the repetition of attacks, endurance and defiance in London.” He points to an article in *The Sun* which states:

Adolf Hitler’s Blitz and his doodlebug rockets never once broke London’s spirit. Years later, the capital was bloodied but unbowed by two decades of deadly attacks by the mad bombers of the IRA. So yesterday’s outrage by the fanatics of al-Qaeda – Britain’s 9/11 – will achieve only one end... To make this nation ever more

²⁷² Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, vol. 25th Anniversary Edition (New York: Random House, 2014).

²⁷³ Ivan Kalmar, *Early Orientalism: Imagined Islam and the Notion of Sublime Power* (Abingdon/New York: Routledge, 2012).

²⁷⁴ Jonathan Lyons, *Islam Through Western Eyes: From the Crusades to the War on Terror* (Chichester/New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

²⁷⁵ An excellent summary of a variety of case studies where this occurs, including in the Balkans, the UK and the US, can be found in: Maleiha Malik, *Anti-Muslim Prejudice: Past and Present* (Abingdon/New York: Routledge, 2010).

determined that those who violate our way of life must never win.²⁷⁶

...

After 9/11, Americans made a huge song and dance of their defiance against terrorism. The worst attack in their history was a shocking wake-up call. There was none of that in London after Thursday's atrocities; just a grim determination to resist, to carry on as normal. To call it the Blitz spirit is an easy shorthand that rightly credits what Americans call the 'greatest generation'. But it does not fully do justice to the stiff-jawed stoicism in the face of evil that has been our lot on this tiny Island for centuries.²⁷⁷

The above quote typifies a core aspect of the Britain/Britishness identificatory pole that is demonstrated in the empirical material. That is the notion there is a specific form of *British resilience* that has overcome enemies in the past and will continue to do so. Crises such as the London bombings of 2005 and the murder of Lee Rigby put the notion of British resilience to the test, and it is in these moments that politician and mass media commentators strove to reassure the public that Britain would remain strong, secure, and steadfast in its opposition to terror. The notion of British resilience directly appeals to people's sense of security not just in the physical and somatic terms, but also and perhaps primarily in their security of *being*. When this particular aspect of the work on myth is invoked by government and media elites, it is designed to provide a sense of significance which ontologically securitises and persuades the audience that they can carry on with their lives. They can rest assured that they will overcome their enemy, just prior generations of Britons did. This is a powerful collective self-narrative that is likely invoked in many idiosyncratic variants by many people(s) across the globe.

As pointed above, this aspect of the work on myth appears quite commonly in the UK with reference to the 1940s and the Blitz spirit, and this is especially the case following the July 7th bombings in London, since they occurred only a few days before Britain celebrated 60 years since the end of the Second World War. Given the importance of the Blitz in British

²⁷⁶ *The Sun* quoted in: Darren Kelsey, *Media, Myth and Terrorism: A Discourse-Mythological Analysis of the 'Blitz Spirit' in British Newspaper Responses to the July 7th Bombings* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 79.

²⁷⁷ Tim Shipman for *The Times*, quoted in *ibid.*, 87.

identity (as discussed in section 4.3), this left an opportunity for political figures and media commentators to draw parallels between the two events. While they were different in terms of their scale and the number of casualties, Londoners were often urged to draw from the so-called “Blitz spirit” to overcome this latest insidious threat. Darren Kelsey has conducted an extensive study that revealed how prevalent the Blitz spirit was in Newspaper articles in particular. This was aptly reflected in an editorial in the most popular UK paper, *The Sun*, on the Saturday following the attack:

Sixty years ago tomorrow, Britain finally beat Nazism. Men, women and children from every walk of life – not just the military – worked fearlessly and tirelessly to crush Hitler’s tyranny. Gritty Londoners proved to be unbeatable. Many brave people sacrificed THEIR lives so that we may enjoy OURS in freedom today. **Each was a hero in their own way.** The nation stood firm and the nation won. Today Britain calls upon a new generation of heroes to fight an enemy every bit as sinister [bold: mine].²⁷⁸

The Sun article is a clear articulation of the work on myth theorised in Chapter 1. The article venerates the behaviour of all Britons (particularly Londoners) during the Blitz and utilises this as an example for how contemporary Britons should respond to the 7th July bombings. It vividly describes how Britons united to overcome substantial adversity against a tyrannical other, and an enemy “every bit as sinister” now threatens the UK, necessitating the same response. All three aspects of deixis (chapter 3) are at play here. Firstly, person deixis is present in the article when each individual in the Blitz period is referred to as a “hero” and “unbeatable” and, more importantly, modern-day Britons are called to replicate their behaviours. Secondly, by directly linking otherwise contingent situations that occurred at different moments of time, the article evokes time deixis in a manner that constructs a sense of common heritage for British people. Finally, these are all linked together via place deixis, wherein the geographical space and imaginations of “Britain” in the Blitz period represents all Britons today. It is vital to not underplay the importance of

²⁷⁸ *The Sun*, quoted in John Tulloch, *One Day in July: Experiencing 7/7* (London: Little Brown, 2006), 43. Kelsey, *Media, Myth and Terrorism: A Discourse-Mythological Analysis of the 'Blitz Spirit' in British Newspaper Responses to the July 7th Bombings*, 98.

the “Blitz” in British identity discourses (see section 4.3). To many British people, the word “Blitz” is a metonym that represents a whole series of images. From bomb shelters and Air-Raid Wardens, to the symbol of St Paul’s cathedral enduring against a backdrop of devastation and ruin, to a resilient public going about their business and carrying on despite these horrific conditions.

So why are the 1940s so important to contemporary Britishness? I would argue that much of it comes down to the ease at which the audience can comprehend that plot and its consequent malleability. As Mark Connelly describes:

It [The Blitz] has a great script: a small gang of fiercely independent people refuse to cave in to the bad guys. The bad guys decide to punish the wilful defiance in an appalling show of might. Despite the hardships, the small gang becomes more tightly bound, laughs in the face of terror, takes everything the forces of evil can dish out and sends them packing.²⁷⁹

This is a highly dramatic story that evokes powerful imagery and, as such, is ripe to be incorporated in the work on myth. As outlined in section 1.2, myths are dramatic and figurative narratives that reflect our needs for significance. They often contain themes of tragedy and joy, heroism and villainy, among many others. The Blitz is a grandiose story of success at a time of great difficulty, and one that is seen to embody core characteristics of Britishness. Many stories of British resilience are often mentioned as a way of sustaining this image. A widely-cited American witness reported that “... by every test and measure I am able to apply, these people won’t quit... the British are stronger and in a better position than they were at its [the Blitz] beginning.” Apparently, people referred to the raids as if they were the weather (the variability of which is another British identity-trope). A day or night of heavy raids would mean that the weather had become “very blitzy.”²⁸⁰ Many claim that mental health did not become a major concern despite the bombs.²⁸¹ Photographs of individuals taking shelter in the

²⁷⁹ Mark Connelly, *We can take it: Britain and the memory of the Second World War* (London: Pearson Longman, 2005), 131.

²⁸⁰ Robert Mackay, *Half the Battle: Civilian Morale in Britain during the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 75, 261.

²⁸¹ Geoffrey Field, "Nights Underground in Darkest London," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 62, no. Fall (2002): 15. It should be noted that this

London Underground are iconic, particularly one taken by Bill Brandt at Elephant and Castle Underground Station in 1940.²⁸² Old, established symbols like the Underground had become symbols of a contemporary struggle. As Croft points out, St Paul's Cathedral was prominent among these symbols. Its survival provided hope for Londoners, and it has since become, as also indicated by the website of the Monarchy puts it, a symbol of "the victory of the British spirit during the war of 1939-45, in that, although badly damaged and shaken, it survived the ordeal by battle in an almost miraculous way."²⁸³ In recent years, a bizarre cultural phenomenon has taken hold embodied in the phrase "Keep calm and carry on". The origin of this phrase was a motivational poster produced by the British government in 1939 in preparation for World War II. The purpose was to increase the morale of the British public in the face of forthcoming air attacks on cities. Despite this, it was rarely displayed in public at the time and was only re-discovered at a second-hand bookshop in Alnwick, Northumberland in 2000.²⁸⁴ The poster has since been appropriated commercially. It has been reproduced on T-shirts, mugs, wallets, mobile phone covers, and has even been used as the title for several self-help and motivational books.²⁸⁵

One critical aspect of the Blitz period is often invoked today is Winston Churchill and the speeches he made during the 1940s.²⁸⁶ The most know of these was "We Will Fight them on the Beaches". The core passage of this speech is as follows:

We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with

could also be due to societal taboos and people having less knowledge about mental illness more generally.

²⁸² Bill Brandt, "Civilians sheltering in Elephant and Castle London Underground Station during an Air Raid in November 1940," (1940), <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205194638>.

²⁸³ Quoted in Croft, *Securitizing Islam: Identity and the Search for Security*, 131.

²⁸⁴ Stephanie Barczewski et al., *Britain Since 1688: A Nation in the World* (Abingdon/New York: Routledge, 2015), 256.

²⁸⁵ Examples include: Mark A. Reinecke, *Little Ways to Keep Calm and Carry On: Twenty Lessons for Managing Worry, Anxiety and Fear* (Oakland, CA: Raincoast Books). Jonathan Forrest and Andrew Hughes-Hallett, *Keep Calm and Carry on: A Handbook to Choose your Emotions and Change Your Attitude* (lulu.com, 2006). Ebury Press, *Keep Calm and Carry on: Good Advice for Hard Times* (London: Ebury Publishing 2009). Most of these make reference to speeches from Churchill and the difficulties endured during the Blitz.

²⁸⁶ Croft, *Securitizing Islam: Identity and the Search for Security*, 126-29.

growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills, we shall never surrender, and even if, which I do not for a moment believe, this Island or a large part of it were subjugated and starving, then our Empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British Fleet, would carry on the struggle, until, in God's good time, the New World, with all its power and might, steps forth to the rescue and the liberation of the old.²⁸⁷

While few would be able to recite this speech in its entirety, the call to “fight them on the beaches” and that we shall “never surrender” are likely to be known to the vast majority of Britons. Churchill’s speech powerfully evokes the integrative aspect of myth through deploying person deixis (we), place deixis (Britain, British Empire) and time deixis through the prophecy that Britain would endure and liberate the “new world” could liberate the “old world” in the future if necessary. Churchill’s usage of parallelism and repetition makes the speech seem poetic and memorable. The whole speech conjures up images of determination, strength, and the centrality of Britain’s place in the world. It also embodies many themes that are crucial in the work on myth: the struggle between the forces of good and evil, the need for victory and the cost of defeat, the scale of the threat posed, are all central characteristics and themes of heroism and resilience, are all present. It was a time of profound fear, in which the ontological and, indeed, somatic/physical future of Britain and Britons were in serious doubt. The fear would at least be placated temporarily by invoking unity, and a clear, underlying objective was articulated. Churchill’s call for Britons to brace themselves to their duties, and the division between the “broad, sunlit uplands” and the “abyss of a new Dark Age,” are all constitutive of a Sorelian strategy to incite a determination to act. The promise of glory in victory which would be remembered across historical epochs placed imbued the audience with a sense of empowerment and responsibility. The simplifying aspect of the work on myth also rendered Churchill an almost infallible, heroic figure. His misdemeanours, such as the deployment of troops in south Wales, the campaign in Gallipoli, and the return to the Gold

²⁸⁷ Winston Churchill, quoted in *ibid.*, 128.

Standard, and the controversy over the bombing of Dresden, have all been broadly forgotten.

This speech is exceptionally important to British identity, and direct invocations of it or at least allusions to it are seen throughout chapters 5 and 6. Many speeches, debates, and Newspaper articles in the immediate aftermath of 7/7 made reference to the “Blitz spirit” against a new, equivalent enemy. Churchill is often seen as the antithesis of Neville Chamberlain, who adopted the policy of “appeasement” towards the Nazis in the 1930s. One month after the 7/7 attacks David Cameron, who was then a candidate for leadership of the Conservative party, warned not to repeat the errors of the policies of appeasement in the 1930s with “jihadists.”²⁸⁸ More recently, this rhetoric resurfaced when the government sought to justify extending British air strikes in Syria in December 2015. Senior government figures compared ISIL to the Nazis, and asked encouraged MPs to vote in favour of military action by asking them whether they were “Churchill or Chamberlain?”²⁸⁹ Indeed, Britain has internalised the narratives of resilience in the Blitz (and World War II more widely) so strongly that they have arguably become the most important contributing factor to constructing a sense of Britishness. As Stuart Croft points out, this is because prior claims about Britishness lack legitimacy owing to many of the more unsavoury aspects of the British empire:

“There can be no universal claim to the greatness of the British Empire at a time when freedom and self-determination seem to be such universal values. There can be no claim to the strength of rule of the country (and empire) when claims to meritocracy are stronger than those of the class system... And in any case, Britain’s imperial past is littered with invasions, killings and mistreatment of local populations (as in the repression of the Mau Mau rebellion), unfortunate inventions (such as the concentration camp in South African), slavery and exploitation.”²⁹⁰

None of these negative aspects of the British Empire could possibly be incorporated into any narrative of self that could be deployed in moments

²⁸⁸ Ben Russell, "Cameron: Don't repeat errors of 1930s with 'jihadists'," *The Independent* 24 August 2005.

²⁸⁹ Matt Chorley and Martin Robinson, "Britain could be bombing by midnight: Cameron on course to win crunch vote on airstrikes against ISIS in Syria with a majority of up to 100," *Daily Mail* 3 December 2015.

²⁹⁰ Croft, *Securitizing Islam: Identity and the Search for Security*, 126.

of perceived crisis. The reason for this is it would likely encourage audiences into further self-doubt when significance, certainty, and security are required. In the more existential terminology discussed by Kierkegaard (section 1.3), this may create a tension within the infinite and subsequently, for those who adhere strongly to these narratives, it could create issues for behaviour in the finite. These narratives may not always be at the forefront of people's minds during their daily lives (despite occasional references to keep calm and carry on), just as other features of our lives that give us ontological security are not. However, they can become extremely powerful tropes to provide us with a sense of significance, incites mobilisation, and ontologically re-securitises wherever the fundamental trust relations and collective self-narrative may have been undermined.

The second self-narrative that appears throughout the empirical material is the importance of *British values*. Whereas British resilience tells grand stories of resistance to previous tyrannies and generates promises of future successes, British values are seen as a constant feature of the collective-self. They are useful signifiers to identify who conforms to Britishness and, crucially, who does not. This rhetoric became increasingly prominent following the election of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government in 2010. Prime Minister David Cameron in particular discussed British values both prior to and following the murder of Lee Rigby, as is discussed further in Chapter 6. So what are these values? Primarily, that Britain is a liberal and tolerant country that values traits such as freedom and democracy. Unlike the narrative of British resilience (see above), the idea of British values has a much more direct impact upon a more generalised sense of self or, the way one functions "in-the-world" on a daily basis. However, these values can be challenged and called into question in moments of crisis. In chapter 5 and 6, there are numerous examples of political and media elites invoking the notion of British values in order to (consciously or not) ontologically securitise by evoking a sense of significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*). This normally appears in conjunction with the mobilising aspect of myth; the British public is asked to "mobilise" to defend these values that constitute a large part of their collective sense of self.

David Cameron in particular has been determined to promote the ideas of “British values”. On the 799th anniversary of the Magna Carta, David Cameron wrote an article in the *Mail on Sunday* which defined British values as “a belief in freedom, tolerance of others, accepting personal and social responsibility, respecting and upholding the rule of law.”²⁹¹ He describes these values as “British as the Union flag, as football, as fish and chips.” While other countries have similar values:

... what sets Britain apart are the traditions and history that anchors them and allows them to flourish and develop. Our freedom doesn't come from thin air. It is rooted in our parliamentary democracy and free press. Our sense of responsibility and the rule of law is attached to our courts and independent judiciary. Our belief in tolerance was won through struggle and is linked to the various churches and faith groups that have come to call Britain home. These are the institutions that help to enforce our values, keep them in check and make sure they apply to everyone equally. And taken together, I believe this combination – our values and our respect for the history that helped deliver them and the institutions that uphold them – forms the bedrock of Britishness. Without it, we wouldn't be able to walk down the street freely, to say what we think, to be who we are, or do what we want. Newspapers like this wouldn't exist. MPs like me would not have been democratically elected. And our property wouldn't be our own.²⁹²

Cameron here incorporates core tenets of liberalism with Britishness, and evokes the integrative aspect of myth through person deixis (we and our) and, just as with Churchill above, uses repetition and parallelism to make this point. By writing about the origins of British values in the Magna Carta, he is also evoking time deixis. He draws a direct link in time from the creation of the Magna Carta to the present position of Britain. Furthermore, Cameron evokes the mobilising aspect of myth by repeating his frequent call for “muscular liberalism” to promote British values. This was to be all-the-more pertinent, particularly as Britain has been too “squeamish” about promoting its national identity, and passively tolerant of extremism.²⁹³

²⁹¹ David Cameron, "British values aren't optional, they're vital. That's why I will promote them in EVERY school: As row rages over 'Trojan Horse' takeover of our classrooms, the Prime Minister delivers this uncompromising pledge..." *Daily Mail* 15 June 2014.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Ibid. Cameron makes it clear that a narrative about Britain needs to be constructed for young people at school. Yet, when asked by US presenter David Letterman what *Magna Carta* actually translated to in English, he admitted that he did not know. He was subsequently informed by Letterman that it meant “great

Indeed, Cameron has often made it clear that British values must be invoked specifically *against* the enemy, radical, extreme, violent (although not exclusively so) Islamic other. This was most explicitly demonstrated in 2011 when David Cameron gave a speech at a security conference in Munich. In this speech he outlines, in no uncertain terms, the fault lines of the existential conflict between liberal Britain and its enemy:

We have got to get to the root of the problem, and we need to be absolutely clear on where the origins of where these terrorist attacks lie. That is the existence of an ideology, Islamist extremism. **We should be equally clear what we mean by this term, and we must distinguish it from Islam.** Islam is a religion observed peacefully and devoutly by over a billion people. Islamist extremism is a political ideology supported by a minority. **At the furthest end are those who back terrorism to promote their ultimate goal: an entire Islamist realm, governed by an interpretation of Sharia. Move along the spectrum, and you find people who may reject violence, but who accept various parts of the extremist worldview, including real hostility towards Western democracy and liberal values** [bold: mine].

With this opening section of his speech, Cameron draws clear demarcations between legitimate and illegitimate understandings of Islam and Muslims. Islam is a peaceful religion followed by over a billion people, and an illegitimate understanding constituted by those who hold hostility to “Western” values of democracy and liberalism. At the most extreme points of illegitimacy are those who advocate violence in pursuit of their goals. However, Cameron articulates a view that extends the enemies of Britain from those who participate in violence to those who may argue for the extremist view but still condemned violence. In other words, those who articulate values that are contrary to those held by Britons are still the enemy. This has two effects that have implications for the work on myth. First, Cameron provides a clear cognitive map that allows the audience to recognise both the violent and non-violent radical understandings of Islam as illegitimate. No distinction is required in any analytical or normative sense. Returning to the terminology outlined in chapter 1 and especially

charter.” He also appeared to be unaware that the treaty was signed at Runnymede. Christopher Hope, "David Cameron's ignorance over Magna Carta and Rule Britannia exposed," *The Telegraph* 27 September 2012.

section 1.3, this represents an attempt to concretise the enemy and override any potentially *Angst*-inducing ambiguity. The enemy is no longer indifferent or distant from the audience. Rather, they are a concretely recognisable “other” with definitive features and who, crucially, oppose all that the audience holds dear.

Cameron subsequently addresses the need that young British Muslims have for significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) and ontological security, but which he feels they currently lack. He laments what he perceives as the confusion that many young Muslim *men* feel between their Muslim identity and their British one. Indeed the “traditional Islam” of their parents has customs that can “seem staid when transplanted to modern Western countries.” However, these same people also find it difficult to “identify with Britain” as well, because “we have allowed the weakening of our collective identity.” Due to the “doctrine of state multiculturalism”, Britain has “encouraged different cultures to live separate lives, apart from each other and apart from the mainstream” and has “even tolerated these segregated communities behaving in ways that run completely counter to our values.”²⁹⁴ What Cameron decides here is *Angst*: young British Muslims have nothing to ground them in the vastness of the absolutism of reality. They do not feel they can affiliate themselves with traditional understandings of Britishness, and are therefore ontologically insecure. This *Angst* (or at least estrangement) can have serious consequences, insofar as some seek to fill the void by turning to violence. The answer, for Cameron, is to homogenise these competing identities into collective Britishness that would supersede other divisions that have been allowed to exist through “state multiculturalism”. This would enable individuals and communities to construct consistent self-narratives that resolve these existential uncertainties, and give people the significance they need in life to resist the lure of violent *jihad*.

Cameron appears to express the loss of his own ontological security. He displays immense frustration at what he perceives as Britain being weak in its defence of its values and the breakdown of its common identity. State multiculturalism has allowed the erosion of this solid sense of identity. His

²⁹⁴ David Cameron, PM's speech at Munich Security Conference, ed. Cabinet Office (5 February 2011).

concerns in this regard are shared by many on the right of the political spectrum, as section 4.3 explains and sections 5.3 and 6.3 further demonstrate. Cameron laments the inconsistency between our criticisms of “white” people and “non-white” people:

So, when a white person holds objectionable views, racist views for instance, we rightly condemn them. But when equally unacceptable views or practices come from someone who isn't white, we've been too cautious frankly - frankly, even fearful - to stand up to them. The failure, for instance, of some to confront the horrors of forced marriage, the practice where some young girls are bullied and sometimes taken abroad to marry someone when they don't want to, is a case in point. This hands-off tolerance has only served to reinforce the sense that not enough is shared. **And this all leaves some young Muslims feeling rootless. And the search for something to belong to and something to believe in can lead them** [bold: mine].²⁹⁵

What Cameron expresses here is a sense of frustration at a perceived loss of control. Cameron also transposes this position onto young Muslims who, by feeling “rootless” are experiencing the exact problem that Kierkegaard may have seen as (in part) an expression of *Angst* and perhaps Blumenberg would have identified with the chaos of the absolutism of reality. For Cameron, the answers to this are simply the liberal values that the rest of the country enjoys. Cameron describes how liberal-minded people have been too afraid to confront the barbaric practices of some Muslims. In this case, the barbaric practice of young girls being entered into forced marriages is mentioned. However, all of this has been aided and abetted by the “passive tolerance” that has contributed to people believing not much is shared in common. The only solution that Cameron envisages is to do what is core to the entirety of the political myth: promote “our” values to ensure that young Muslims do not feel rootless and also to ensure that radicalisation does not happen. However, not only does he ask for the re-establishment of a consistent identity, but he evokes the mobilising aspect of myth by asking people to actively confront the unacceptability of radical Muslims and vacuousness of young Muslim rootlessness with decisive action. Put more simply, he asks people to confront these issues with a more

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

vigorous and aggressive form of liberalism, which he calls “muscular liberalism”:

...we must build stronger societies and stronger identities at home. Frankly, **we need a lot less of the passive tolerance of recent years and a much more active, muscular liberalism.** A passively tolerant society says to its citizens, as long as you obey the law we will just leave you alone. It stands neutral between different values. **But I believe a genuinely liberal country does much more; it believes in certain values and actively promotes them.** Freedom of speech, freedom of worship, democracy, the rule of law, equal rights regardless of race, sex or sexuality. **It says to its citizens, this is what defines us as a society: to belong here is to believe in these things.** Now, each of us in our own countries, I believe, must be unambiguous and hard-nosed about this defence of our liberty [bold: mine].²⁹⁶

All of this must be confronted with “confidence” and with a willingness to tackle the “ideas that warp so many young minds at their root.” It is a problem that affects “all continents,” and is a threat not just to “our lives” but to “our way of life.” Cameron works specifically on the mobilising aspect of political myth. He seeks to ground significance and ontologically securitise by convincing the audience that this is a struggle in which they are all embroiled. Cameron is also effectively calling for is a united, high entitativity-group who fall under the banner of British liberalism. There is no scope for “rootless” Muslims to carve out a sense of identity independent of either the “good/bad” categorisations. Cameron also posits what is an ontological crisis for Britain itself. Its own tolerant values have resulted in a state multi-culturalism that has had a negative impact upon Britain’s ability to deal with these difficult issues. He seeks to transcend this uncertainty by drawing clear fault-lines and boundaries, and uniting people in an attempt to defeat this illegitimate understanding of Islam. Not only is this a strategy to challenge uncertainty, but it is also fundamentally Sorelian. He is calling for effective multilateral action across society to challenge these ideas and promote what he perceives as Britishness. In doing this, he also makes “Britishness” seem like a clearly definable, unitary identity that can be tangibly and uniformly promoted.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

It is not just in speeches that we see the work on myth reflected. The government project known as *CHANNEL* is the main guiding process for “de-radicalisation.” It is a referral-based programme that works with local authorities and other organisations to locate and address “risk factors” in individuals. Between 2007 and 2013, over 2,500 individuals were referred by the police and others to *CHANNEL*. Over 500 young people were among those who “received support” from the programme.²⁹⁷ The number of referrals has increased dramatically in 2015. Between June and August 2015, 796 people were referred to *CHANNEL*, with 312 of them being under the age of 18. Currently, over 8 “potential extremists” are being identified in Britain every day.²⁹⁸ As Jose Liht *et al* usefully summarise, the signs of extremism which can lead to referral include, but are not limited to or determined by:

(a) Expressed opinions, including support for violence and terrorism; (b) possession of violent extremist literature or imagery, membership or contribution to violent extremist websites and/or chat rooms, or literature on weapons or bomb-making; (c) behaviour or behavioural changes including withdrawal from family and peers, hostility or association with extremist organisations; and finally (d) aspects of personal history including involvement in organisations espousing the use of violence or overseas military/terrorist training.²⁹⁹

The language within the main *CHANNEL* documents depicts the person who is potentially radicalised as the vulnerable victim of an insidious Other. It is a programme which “focuses on providing support at an early stage to people who are identified as being vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism.”³⁰⁰ It aims to provide support before their “vulnerabilities are exploited by those who would want them to embrace terrorism, and before

²⁹⁷ Alan Travis, “Hundreds of young people have received anti-radicalisation support,” *The Guardian* 26 March 2013.

²⁹⁸ Serina Sandhu, “8 Potential extremists are being detected in Britain every day - and almost half are teenagers,” *The Independent* 8 October 2015.

²⁹⁹ Jose Liht, Sara Savage, and Ryan J. Williams, “Being Muslim, Being British: A Multimedia Educational Resource for Young Muslims,” in *Islamist Radicalisation in Europe and the Middle East: Reassessing the Cause of Terrorism* ed. George Joffé (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 40.

³⁰⁰ HM Government, *Channel Duty Guidance: Protecting vulnerable people from being drawn into terrorism: Statutory guidance for Channel panel members and partners of local panels*, (2015), 5.

they become involved in criminal terrorist related activity.”³⁰¹ Although it claims there is no simple profile of those who are likely to be radicalised, the document lists the following as the causes of radicalisation:

- Exposure to an *ideology* that seems to sanction, legitimise, or require violence, often by providing a *compelling but fabricated narrative of contemporary politics and recent history* [Emphasis: mine]
- Exposure to *people or groups* who can directly and persuasively articulate that ideology and then relate it to aspects of a person’s own background and life history
- A crisis of *identity and, often, uncertainty* about belonging which might be triggered by a range of further personal issues, including experiences of racism, discrimination, deprivation and other criminality (as victim or perpetrator); family breakdown or separation
- A range of perceived *grievances*, some real and some imagined, to which there may seem to be no credible and effective non violent response.³⁰²

The third bullet-point indicates why the government has attempted to challenge uncertainties about belonging by promoting “Britishness.” However, it is the threat of those who distort, or indeed “fabricate” reality, who we must be most cautious about. Those people – who would fall within the “bad” Muslim identificatory pole – must ultimately be kept away from the vulnerable people that channel aims to promote. This means that those who are able to deliver a *CHANNEL* programme are heavily regulated. For instance, those who hold “extremist views” or support “terrorist-related activity of any kind”, are not allowed to receive funding to deliver *CHANNEL*. Such people may be non-violent, but their views would nonetheless poison the minds of the vulnerable and could lead to them becoming terrorists.

The role of women is also seen as a key determinate of the conflict between Britain/Britishness and the threat posed by the “Other”. The position of women is used to describe the comparative freedom of women in the UK and other Western countries compared to many Islamic states. Historically, the appearance of Muslim women has been an object of

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Channel: supporting individuals vulnerable to recruitment by violent extremists: a guide for local partnerships, (London: Home Office, 2010), 10.

fascination and desire, but also of disgust, pity and fear.³⁰³ In modern Western the overwhelming focus has been on wearing of the *Niqab*, which some see as anathema to a post-Enlightenment age where individual choice, liberty, and freedom are paramount, and questions of nationhood, citizenship and identity are at the fore.³⁰⁴ The “veil”, as it is commonly referred to, is often viewed solely as a symbol of gender inequality. Many instinctively assume that women who wear the “veil” are being oppressed, especially they are not playing a role of perceived freedom that other, non-Muslim women display. This effectively grants Muslims who wear these items of clothing as being granted a level of entitativity; a consistent, pure group entity, that is oppressed and not integrated. *Niqab*, *Hijab*, and *Burqa*-wearers are stereotyped as subservient and their Muslim identity is assumed to be unmistakable, undeniable and unable to be concealed. As Neil Chakraborti and Irene Zempi argue, it is often seen in the public sphere as a powerful symbol of “otherness” and even “*the* symbol of Islam.”³⁰⁵ One of the most controversial expressions of opposition to the “veil” was made by former Foreign Secretary Jack Straw in 2006. Straw stated that he asked women wearing the veil to remove it in his constituency surgeries and that he preferred speaking to non-veiled women as he could see their faces. He also expressed concern that the veil is a “visible statement of separation and difference” and that “wearing the full veil was bound to make better, positive relations between the two communities more difficult.”³⁰⁶ His comments were echoed by other politicians, most notably those with the highest symbolic capital: Prime Minister Tony Blair, who called it a “mark

³⁰³ Meyda Yeğenoğlu, *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

³⁰⁴ Nasar Meer, Claire Dwyer, and Tariq Modood, "Embodying Nationhood? Conceptions of British national identity, citizenship, and Gender in the 'Veil Affair'," *The Sociological Review* 58, no. 1 (2010).

³⁰⁵ Neil Chakraborti and Irene Zempi, "The veil under attack: Gendered dimensions of Islamophobic victimization," *International Review of Victimology* 18, no. 3 (2012): 280.

³⁰⁶ Quoted in David Bartlett, "Straw in plea to Muslim women: Take off your veils," *Lancashire Telegraph* 5 October 2006. It should be noted that Straw apologised for his remarks in a public meeting in 2010, to much derision from the right-wing press. See: Kirsty Walker, "Jack Straw says sorry over Muslim veil comment sparking accusations of political opportunism," *Daily Mail* 27 April 2010.

of separation”³⁰⁷ and Chancellor Gordon Brown, who said it would be “better for Britain” if fewer women wore the veil.³⁰⁸

All of these indicate that these forms of clothing are associated with the “bad” form of Islam that is deemed incompatible with either good forms, or Britishness in general. Perceptions of those wearing either *Hijab*, *Burqa*, or *Niqab*, is critical to the cognitive and integrative aspects of the political myth. The integrative aspect is reinforced by the social construction of the veil as a symbol of the barbaric practices of the enemy, namely the subordination of Muslim women by Muslim men. This has been reflected in government approaches to these issues. As Katherine Brown argues, the Government takes an implied view that:

Muslim women are by their nature not radical and by their circumstances most likely to support ‘mainstream’ Islam. If their dress or behaviour appears radical (such as wearing a niqab or jilbab) then it is because of undue pressure from male relatives and community ‘culture.’³⁰⁹

This provides those on the perceived points of legitimacy with cognitive boundaries through which to interpret women wearing the veil publicly. It is a socially-learned view of Muslim women that informs people’s perceptions and which is reproduced in practices across fields and social spaces. It is also a simplistic view that misses the variegated meanings that these items of clothing have and the different motivations that women have for wearing it. As such, the idea that some women opt to wear them as an expression of freedom, independence or religious identity, seems inconceivable to Western liberal non-Muslims.³¹⁰ What results is continual tension, division, and a lack of understanding. The “veil” is associated within the “bad” form of Islam as an identificatory pole because it is seen as

³⁰⁷ Quoted in George Jones, "Veil seen as mark of separation, Blair tells Muslims," *The Telegraph* (18 October 2006), <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1531730/Veil-seen-as-mark-of-separation-Blair-tells-Muslims.html>.

³⁰⁸ Quoted in Graeme Wilson, "Brown breaks ranks to back Straw over lifting Muslim veils," *Daily Telegraph* 11 October 2006.

³⁰⁹ Katherine Brown, "The Promise and Peril's of Women's Participation in UK Mosques: The Impact of Securitisation Agendas on Identity, Gender and Community," *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 10, no. 3 (2008): 481.

³¹⁰ Sonya Fernandez, "The crusade over the bodies of women," *Patterns of Prejudice* 43, no. 3-4 (2009): 275-76.

simply incompatible with a core aspect of the British self: human rights, liberalism, and, ironically, tolerance.

Government responses have generally been to try and replace multiculturalism with “monoculturalism.”³¹¹ This rhetoric is often informed by assumptions about Islam and Muslims that are grounded in very partial understandings that are saturated with essentialisms. As Milly Williamson and Gholam Khiabany point out, Islam and the “Islamic world” are often detached by people from the material and historical conditions – which include diversity in geography, history, politics, language etc - and are presented as an “exceptional case” in government circles and the mass media, resulting in Muslims being “racialised and essentialised.”³¹² Citing Aziz Al-Azmeh, they claim that this ignores that there are “as many Islams as situations that sustain it.”³¹³ The trouble is that all these different Islams, and indeed different Muslims, are often conflated and simplified in the work on myth. The heterogeneity of Muslim communities in the UK, in terms of class, age, gender, etc., often goes unrecognized in policy and practice.³¹⁴ Despite claims to tolerance the possibility of Muslims to become “liberal,” Muslims in the UK are increasingly viewed with suspicion, cast as “aliens” and permanently vulnerable to “radicalisation.”³¹⁵ Indeed a negative depiction of Muslims has been longstanding. As Strawson argues, the “fanatical Muslim warrior threatening civilization has been an enduring image in the West since the crusades.”³¹⁶ The period after 9/11 saw media

³¹¹ Liz Fenteke, "Anti-Muslim racism and the European security state," *Race and Class* 46, no. 1 (2004): 18.

³¹² Milly Williamson and Gholam Khiabany, "UK: the veil and the politics of racism," *ibid.* 52, no. 2 (2010): 86.

³¹³ *Ibid.*; Aziz Al-Amzeh, *Islams and Modernities* (London: Verso, 1993), 1.

³¹⁴ The problems that this causes in social work have been well discussed. See especially: Ahencaen Crabtree, Fatima Husain, and Basia Spalek, *Islam and Social Work: Debating Values, Transforming Practice* (Bristol: The Policy Press, 2008).

³¹⁵ Katherine E. Brown and Tania Saeed, "Radicalization and counter-radicalization at British universities: Muslim encounters and alternatives," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 38, no. 11 (2015): 1952. Bob McDonald and Yaser Mir, "Al-Qaida Influenced violent extremism, UK government prevention policy and community engagement," *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research* 3, no. 1 (2011); Stephen Vertigans, "British Muslims and the UK government's 'war on terror' within: evidence of a clash of civilizations or emergent de-civilizing process?," *The British Journal of Sociology* 61, no. 1 (2010).

³¹⁶ John Strawson, "Holy War in the Media: Images of Jihad," in *Media Representations of 9/11*, ed. Chermak Steven, Frank Y. Bailey, and Michelle Brown (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 18.

depictions of this enemy not just as a threat to “Our Christian” and “social democratic values” but that they are also committed to our eradication.³¹⁷

As Liz Fentke observed in 2004, Islam is often portrayed across Europe as the “enemy within” with norms and values that threaten “the whole notion of Europeanness itself.”³¹⁸

4.3 The Work on Myth: Between Left and Right

As Blumenberg observed, “[M]yths are stories that are distinguished by a high degree of constancy in their narrative core and by an equally pronounced capacity for marginal variation”.³¹⁹ The variation in myth is absolutely crucial for its ultimate survivability. While the narrative core of an existential conflict between Britain and violent radical Islam remains constant, there is variation in how the content of the work on myth is expressed. As will be shown in chapters 5 and 6, the empirical cases show two distinguishing variants to the myth.. One is more typically expressed by those on the right of the political spectrum, and another is expressed more generally on the left. While both accept the fundamental premise that there is an existential threat posed by a radical, violent, Islamic other, the way they express this view differs. The right-wing (particularly the press) are more likely to blame tolerance of multiculturalism and an unwillingness to defend “our values” for fear of upsetting minorities. This same demographic is also far more likely to blame Muslims or Islam itself for failure to prevent any terrorist attacks. By contrast, left wing analysis also tends to defend multi-culturalism and will often remind people that the attackers are a small minority of Muslims and, occasionally, that the attackers themselves had “nothing to do with Islam”. Left-wing media commentators in particular often refer to the mental deficiencies of the bombers. They are often presented as insane, deluded, or otherwise mentally challenged.

Right-wing journalists frequently argue that “good” Muslims must do more to tackle “bad” Muslims. Indeed, questions of trust and integration are often raised if they do not do this. An example of this is an article for

³¹⁷ Phil Scraton, *Beyond September 11: An Anthology of Dissent* (London: Pluto Press, 2002).

³¹⁸ Fentke, "Anti-Muslim racism and the European security state," 4.

³¹⁹ Blumenberg, *Work on Myth*, 34.

The Spectator by Theo Hobson, who asks whether “British Muslims affirm British values” or whether they have “outsiders to our way of life” and even “can we trust them?” Hobson urges us to answer this question with nuance, and not in “a self-righteous and simplistic way.”³²⁰ He argues for a “dialectical” strategy he calls “tough trust” which would be intended to “nudge British Muslims in an even more liberal direction” or, as he puts it, we would say “we trust that you are perfectly good liberals at heart.” On one side of the dialectical strategy, it would raise the question of whether British Muslim do enough to tackle extremism. On other, non-Muslims display a sense of “trust” to Muslims:

Because we fundamentally trust you, we must say, we reject the notion that Islam is essentially anti-liberal, theocratic, incompatible with individual rights, with freedom of religion, with equality between the sexes, with acceptance of homosexuality. You disprove this, by being Muslims who affirm British values. We trust that it is only a tiny minority among you who advocate a purist, reactionary form of Islam that calls for violent jihad. In other words, we must assume that the vast majority of British Muslims are, in effect, liberal Muslims. By this I mean Muslims who reject the conservative Muslim view that society needs religious unity, that nonbelievers do not deserve equal treatment, that secularism is a bad thing. There has recently been much talk of whether Islam can reform itself – whether it can reject its violent theocratic tendency and explicitly affirm liberal values. Well, in a sense we must dismiss such a debate as redundant. For we must assume that British Muslims already espouse a reformed, or liberal, form of Islam – one that is compatible with British values. The alternative would be to regard Muslims as an alien presence in our midst, a fifth column. This we must refuse to do.³²¹

The only way for Muslims to demonstrate the compatibility of their religion with support of individual rights, freedom of religion, gender and sexual equality, is if they can be shown to affirm British values. If Muslims do not affirm “British values” then the alternative would be to regard them as an “alien presence in our midst” or a “fifth column.”³²² There is, however, no necessary reason why Muslims cannot be understood as British as long as they espouse these values.

³²⁰ Theo Hobson, "We assume British Muslims support British values. Do they?," *The Spectator* (29 June 2015), <http://blogs.new.spectator.co.uk/2015/06/we-assume-british-muslims-support-british-values-do-they/>.

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² Ibid.

Similar views tend to be most rigorously expressed by the right-wing media following terror attacks. An editorial on the 9th of July 2005, two days after the 7/7 attacks, entitled “No Tempered Messages about This Atrocity”, describes the appropriate and inappropriate responses of Muslims.³²³ It praises the responses of the Muslim Council of Britain and the Muslim Association of Britain for condemning the bombers, whilst not trying to blame their actions on UK Foreign Policy. As the editorial puts it, these organisations were not so tasteless as to add a “but.” The editorial then makes some blunt assertions as to the nature of Islam and human in-group and out-group relations. Firstly, it claims that the Qu’ran and Hadiths have “little to say about peace” but “a good deal to say about justice,” citing one passage from the Qu’ran to emphasise this point.³²⁴ Since this is the case, the article asks what encourages Muslims to “repudiate both their faith and their nation and turn to the bomb?” Whilst, “no one can ever really know precisely what is going on in the head of a fanatic,” the article argues that it is gained from sympathies within their communities and so should be understood as “in-group identification.” This makes individuals either blind to, or tolerant of, those who may transgress the boundaries of acceptable conduct within the group. According to the bombings changed the attitudes of “some British Muslims” who had, until now, sought to “temper their repudiation” with understanding. However the bombings in London have now left “Muslim Londoners in no doubt as to who their “in-group is.”

The position of women is also a key focus of right-wing media attention. Opinion polls in the UK generally show support for banning the *Burqa*. A YouGov poll of 1792 adults for *The Sun* in 2013 showed that 61% support a ban, but that overall levels of support vary between age groups. Of those between the ages of 18-39, 46% agreed that it should be banned and 44% disagreed. Of those above age 40, 69% agreed and 23% disagreed.³²⁵ Allison Pearson of the *Daily Mail* argued that the veil, which she referred to as people wearing “nose-bags over their faces,” was “downright

³²³ The Telegraph, “No Tempered Messages about this Atrocity,” *Daily Telegraph* (9 July 2005), <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/telegraph-view/3618240/No-tempered-messages-about-this-atrocity.html>.

³²⁴ The passage is: “Whoever kills a human being, except in retaliation for murder or other villainy in the land, shall be regarded as having killed all mankind.”

³²⁵ YouGov poll for *The Sun*, (16-17 September 2013).

intimidating” as it “implies a submission that is upsetting when women here fought so hard to be free.”³²⁶ On 18th October 2006, the British tabloid newspaper the *Daily Star* had the front-page headline “BBC PUT MUSLIMS BEFORE YOU!”, accompanied by a picture of a woman in a face-covering Niqab making a two-fingered gesture.³²⁷ The more right-wing variant of the political myth is more directly concerned with filling the void that may be left with *Angst* by concretising the self and other. In particular they intend to evoke the mobilising and integrative aspects of myth by emphasising the barbarism of the enemy and the need of Britons to take on and defeat them. In response to 7/7 (chapter 5), there are many examples of the right-wing press comparing contemporary Britons to previous generations who had fought and overcome other heinous enemies, most notably the Nazis. There is much condemnation of those who would seek to dilute their imaginations of collective Britishness, and this outrage is chiefly targeted at those who propagate multiculturalism. Right-wingers also tend to challenge Muslims who are believed to not extol British values or, worse still, not condemn or actively condone the terrorism that many of their peers commit. As is demonstrated in both chapters 5 and 6, the right-wing press makes this case often, and in particular with resentment towards perceived establishment failings to defeat the enemy. This goes beyond traditional preoccupations with physical/somatic security, but the security of *being* of the audience. One prominent example of this that we see following 7/7 is evoked by Melanie Phillips. She warns that London threatens to become “Londonistan”, replete with barbaric values, without a more concerted and vigorous defence of Britain and Britishness.³²⁸ What Phillips and other right-wing commentators and politicians do is attempt to evoke concrete emotions with direct tangible objects such as fear and anger. As unpleasant or undesirable as these emotions would be they are preferable to be allowing anxiety and estrangement to proliferate, as Kierkegaard and

³²⁶ Allison Pearson, "Here's why the veil offends me," *Daily Mail* 2006.

³²⁷ Quoted in: Paul Baker, Costas Gabrielatos, and Tony McEnery, *Discourse Analysis and Media Attitudes: The Representations of Islam in the British Press* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 1.

³²⁸ Melanie Phillips, "No Surrender: Stop Appeasing this Terror or Suffer Total Defeat," *Daily Mail* (11 July 2005), <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/columnists/article-355395/No-surrender-Stop-appeasing-terror-suffer-total-defeat.html>; *Londonistan: How Britain is Creating a Terror State Within* (London: Gibson Square, 2006).

other existentialists would have pointed out (see section 1.3). This means reminding the audience of a variety of identity themes, and this is often expressed in themes from the *Blitz* (British Resilience) and British values, all of which are starkly defined against the perceived threat to the audience's ontological and physical/somatic security.

Left-wing commentators share many of the concerns of right-wing commentators. However, the examples throughout chapter 5 and 6 demonstrate that they are substantially more likely to attribute the blame to the failings of British foreign policy. Following 7/7, both politicians and some media comments blamed the invasion of Iraq in 2003 for the attack. The *Daily Mirror* was keen to stress that the attack was an example of the carnage in Iraq reaching London and that the invasion would also be “in the dock” along with the killers.³²⁹ Nonetheless, the *Daily Mirror* also frequently evoked the narrative of British resilience following the attacks just as the right-wing press did, and it was also keen to offer a commentary of the apparent demands of the attackers.³³⁰ We therefore see many of the same attempts to evoke the integrative aspect of myth and the same attempts to ground significance and ontological security. While the 7/7 showed only minor divisions between the left and right, the work on myth appeared to differ following the murder of Lee Rigby. The right tended to continue criticising the weakness of the response to terror and the threat of radical Islam, whereas the left took aim at the recent emergence of the far-right group the English Defence League (EDL). Left-wingers were in general concerned with the dangers of Islamophobia, and would often emphasise the role of British foreign policy in inciting attacks such as the murder of Rigby.³³¹ As chapter 6 elaborates further, the rise of the EDL and increase in popularity of other far-right movements added a new imperative to tackle right-wing extremism at the same time or, at least, that was the perception among left-wing politicians and commentators. The variant of the work on myth discussed by left-wing commentators and politicians also

³²⁹ Daily Mirror, "Terrible Price for Iraq War," *Daily Mirror* (8 July 2005), <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/terrible-price-for-iraq-war-549509>.

³³⁰ "So What do they Want?," *Daily Mirror* (9 July 2005), <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/so-what-do-they-want-549658>.

³³¹ Seumas Milne, "Britain's Wars Fuel Terror. Denying It Only Feeds Islamophobia," *The Guardian* 29 May 2013

demonstrates an attempt to find significance and assuage *Angst* at a time of great pressure. The left often goes further than the right in making absolute distinctions between “good” and “bad” Muslims, the latter of which are often completely disassociated from the former. In response to the murder of Lee Rigby in particular, left-wing commentators attempt to portray the attackers as an insignificant and often mentally deranged minority who have little to no connection to good Muslims. The “cause” is therefore the failings of British foreign policy and entrenched Islamophobia within British society.

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I summarised the core features of the work on myth which will be discussed for the remainder of this thesis. The political myth can be summarised as a perceived existential conflict between Britain and a radical, violent form of Islam and Muslims, with victory of the former over the latter being the essential outcome. I explained that there are two identificatory poles: one that represents Britain and the side of “good”, which includes the subthemes of “British resilience” and “British values”. The former makes numerous references to the Second World War and the “Blitz spirit”, and the latter is concerned with “British values” and Britain’s self-perception as a tolerant society. I also argued that there is a distinction between left-wing and right-wing variation of the work on myth. Although myths retain a consistent narrative core, they often have develop variants in order to be relevant to a particular context. I pointed out that this expresses Blumenberg’s observation that constancy and variation are both important to the work on myth. I noted that the right-wing variation of the work on myth tends towards attacking multiculturalism and Islam. The left-wing variation of the work on myth is more likely to defend Muslims and multiculturalism, and also more likely to make emphasise the distinction between “good” and “bad” Muslims.

I would like to stress that this chapter has not discussed British identity in its entirety and, indeed, it would be beyond the scope of the thesis to do so. One of the reasons for this is that there are numerous ways that one can discuss British identity, many of which have nothing to do with

this political myth.³³² The chapter has focused on the construction of Britishness in relation to the rhetoric found in chapters 5 and 6, although it is not only in this context that we see these themes appear. By this I mean that narratives about Blitz and British resilience (often manifesting as the “stiff upper-lip”) are generally important narratives of Britishness. The next two chapters are more empirically grounded and focus on two moments of perceived crisis in which the work on myth became particularly prominent. These indicate the importance of the work on myth in significance-making (*Bedeutsamkeit*) and in (re)establishing ontological security.

³³² Some informative sources on this include: Mike Storry and Peter Childs, *British Cultural Identities*, Fourth ed. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013). Christina Julios, *Contemporary British Identity: English Language, Migrants and Public Discourse* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012). Ian Bradley, *Believing in Britain: The Spiritual Identity of Britishness* (London/New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007).

Chapter 5: The London Bombings of July 7th 2005

5.1 Introduction

On 7th July 2005, the London Underground and London Buses were attacked by suicide bombers, killing 57 people. The 7th July bombings were far more than a savage violent attack on civilians that ended lives and maimed the bodies of others. It evoked an existential crisis of *being* and its relation to the world in multiple ways. Symbols London like the Underground and the buses had moved from places of familiarity and mobility to being places of vulnerability. The assumed trust-relations and networks that are so central to establishing ontological security had been challenged. In order to placate the *Angst* that this rupture in ontological security had created, political and media figures evoked the work on myth as part of an attempt to (re)ground significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*), consciously or not. The work on myth posited all Britons as being involved in an existential conflict with a violent, radical, Islamic other, who must ultimately be overcome. While this may evoke a sense of fear in some people, this is, as Kierkegaard would also have surmised, more manageable than the chaos found in raw anxiety. This process of significance-making also results in people ontologically (re)securitising themselves in the world where anxiety may otherwise dominate. More specifically, people can feel ontologically secure (if not always physically/somatically secure) in the knowledge of where they are situated in relation to these events. Namely, that they are at the point of legitimacy among clearly identifiable “friends” against the similarly definite “enemies” at the point of illegitimacy (section 4.2)

What follows in this chapter is an engagement with two important sources that played an important part in the work on myth in the immediate aftermath of the attack. These are politicians and newspaper commentators. In section 5.2, I analyse political speeches using the methodological framework outlined in chapter 3 and the theoretical framework discussed in chapter 1. I demonstrate that politicians continually sought to interpret

events along the core themes of the political myth. My emphasis is primarily on Prime Minister Tony Blair, but I also demonstrate that this occurred in debates in the Houses of Parliament, where members of opposition parties also contributed to the work on myth. In section 5.3 I conduct a similar analysis of the work on myth in response to the 7/7 attacks in left-leaning and right-leaning Newspapers. I note that both sides accept the fundamental narrative core of the work on myth: that Britain is in an existential conflict with a radical and violent form of Islam and Muslims. However, there are differences between the left-leaning and right-leaning variants of the work on myth as elaborated on further in section 4.3. However, all approaches serve the same purpose: to ground a sense of significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) in order to ontologically (re)-securitise at a time of perceived crisis. While their interpretations may differ slightly, the fundamental narrative core of the myth is broadly consistent. There is no ambiguity as to the nature of the conflict: it is existential, there are concrete threats, and it must be overcome.

5.2 Politicians After the July 7th London Bombings

On the day of the attacks, Blair gave two speeches, one at Gleneagles where a G8 international summit was taking place, and one later in the day at Downing Street. Blair opted to temporarily leave the summit for face-to-face meetings with the police and other emergency services. The gathering of the G8 at the summit in Gleneagles had gathered major media attention, not just because of the world leaders who would be present, but because it met to address poverty in Africa and climate change. Blair states that this made the timings of the attacks all the more barbaric. However, he sends a warning to terrorists and their sympathisers:

It's important however that those engaged in terrorism realise that **our determination to defend our values and our way of life** is greater than their determination to cause death and destruction to innocent people in a desire to impose extremism on the world. **Whatever they do, it is our determination that they will never succeed in destroying what we hold dear in this country and in**

other civilised nations throughout the world [bold:
mine].³³³

At this point, news of the attacks was still breaking any many people were still missing and unaccounted for. Yet even in this moment, Blair invokes person deixis by aligning the audience with “our values and our way of life”. He concludes with the mobilising aspect of myth by re-stating their “our determination” that the terrorists will “never succeed” in destroying “what we hold dear in this country and in other civilised nations throughout the world.” Intriguingly, the promise that they will not destroy “what we hold dear” serves as a metonym to represent qualities which are important to the “being-in-the-world” of people across the country. This extends beyond merely their physical safety but their values and ideals. These core facets of Britain’s self-narrative, and which contribute to our ontological security, were otherwise placed under threat by the attacks. Blair seeks to avert the uncertainty of *Angst* by reminding people of the values that are familiar, but with a heavier sense of dramatic purchase that simultaneously makes the both friend and enemy seem more concrete.

Later that evening, Blair gave a speech at Downing Street where he paid tribute to the “stoicism and resilience of London who have responded in a way typical of them”, an implication of the narratives about resilience discussed in section 4.2. Blair sets out clearly, unambiguously, and with a sense of passion, what the terrorists were trying to do and how British people would respond to it. He states that they were trying to “cow us”, and “frighten us” out of doing what we would normally do. However, he dramatically portrays the resilience that the British people would respond with:

When **they** try to intimidate **us**, **we will not be intimidated**, when **they** seek to change our country, **our way of life** by these methods, **we will not be changed**. When they try to divide our people or weaken our resolve, **we will not be divided and our resolve will hold firm. We will show by our spirit and dignity and by a quiet and true strength that there is in the British people, that our values will long outlast theirs.** The purpose of terrorism is just that, it is to terrorise people and **we will not be terrorised**... This is a very sad day

³³³ Tony Blair, "In full: Blair on Bombs Blast," *BBC News* (7 July 2005), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4659953.stm>.

for the British people but we will **hold true to the British way of life** [bold: mine].³³⁴

In both these speeches, Blair makes extensive use of the rhetorical schemes of “antithesis” by contrasting the thoughts of the terrorists with the reality. He dramatically enhances this through the rhetorical scheme of “epiphora”; a series of repetitions of phrases, mostly beginning with the words “we will”. Blair strengthens this dramatically by using person deixis to sharply distinguish between “we/us” and “they/them” and by connecting this to an emotionally-charged understanding of Britishness and the British “way of life”. Altogether, the speech was constructed with the intention of providing a sense of reassurance and to mobilise people at a time of substantial difficulty. It is at such a time that the integrative aspect of myth becomes so important (see section 1.4). When Blair reminds people that “we” are strong and resilient, overrides the self-doubt and uncertainty that the attacks were designed to create.³³⁵ He makes it clear that this was a threat not merely to physical security as one might expect, but the qualities of that very “self” - represented with the metonym of “British way of life”. However, Blair provides the assurance which will allow people to carry on and display the resilience of these values (implicitly referring to those discussed in section 4.2).

Blair’s speeches exemplify how narratives about conflict can become sources of ontological security. Without key figures of interpretation (whether politicians or media elites) such events would seem to be meaningless acts of violence, existing only to serve as another event in Blumenberg’s “absolutism of reality.” Yet Blair does not reassure people on the basis that there is no threat. Rather than leaving people, as Blumenberg put it, in a state of “indefinite anticipation” wherein we have the “intentionality of consciousness without an object”,³³⁶ Blair makes it clear

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Ibid. Darren Kelsey also analyses this particular speech as a form of political myth, although he does so differently to me. See Darren Kelsey, "The Myth of the "Blitz Spirit" in British Newspaper Responses to the July 7th Bombings," in *If It Was Not For Terrorism: Crisis, Compromise, and Elite Discourse in the Age of "War on Terror"*, ed. Banu Baybar-Hawks and Lemi Baruh (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars 2011), 55. *Media, Myth and Terrorism: A Discourse-Mythological Analysis of the 'Blitz Spirit' in British Newspaper Responses to the July 7th Bombings*, 87.

³³⁶ Blumenberg, *Work on Myth*, 4-5.

via person deixis who the villains are and how “we” will respond to them. Although person deixis is normally analysed purely as a lexical trigger, in moments of crisis such as this it has profound implications for answering existential concerns, particularly when we need to position ourselves in relation to events which may not have directly affected us. As discussed in section 3.2, this has the function of making these events seem directly relevant to us. In more Kierkegaardian language, this brings events beyond our immediate control towards the *finite*, insofar as they may ground our actions in the immediate. We may, for instance, discuss these events with others, or change our behaviours to be more watchful of those we may perceive as a threat. For some (and certainly some more than others), this may guide the way in which our “being” relates with other “beings”, and this is a point emphasised by Heidegger when he stated that *Dasein* is always “being-with” others.³³⁷

On the afternoon of the attack, Home Secretary Charles Clarke MP briefed the House of Commons on what had occurred and the emergency measures that were being put in place. The Shadow Home Secretary David Davis MP responding by expressing his view that the morning’s attacks were “of almost unspeakable depravity and wickedness” that was an “assault on our society” and an “attack not just on our capital city, but on our country and our way of life as a whole”.³³⁸ He called for unity in response to these attacks as:

A prime aim of terrorists is to demoralise and divide our communities. It is right that we should be angry at today's atrocities, but it is no less essential that we should remain both clear-headed and united. We say to the terrorists that they will not succeed in setting us against one another. **Britain has a long history of dealing with terrorism. We have joined together to fight it in the past; today we do so again.** For now, the terrorism that walks the streets of **London has no face**, but whatever its origin, whatever its motive, our response will be the same—the British people will not be cowed and the terrorists will not win [bold: mine].³³⁹

Davis effectively utilises time, place, and person deixis in order to evoke the mobilising aspect of the work on myth (see section 1.2). He uses time deixis to draw direct connections between previous incidences of

³³⁷ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 153-54.

³³⁸ David Davis MP in HC Deb 7 July 2005, vol 607, col 465.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, cols 465-66.

terrorism, and reminds Brits that they have a “long history of dealing with terrorism” and that they have joined together to fight it in the past, and must do so again. This is an implicit reference to the “troubles” in Northern Ireland - and this reference is also made explicitly by Ian Paisley MP later in the debate.³⁴⁰ Davis thereby activates a cognitive schema that reads this particular incident of terrorism as if it were the same or similar to those British people have already experienced. This is effective because it means that despite the present terrorist threat having “no face” – a metonym used to personify the attributes of the terrorists - the response to the attack can simply be the same. In this statement, one is able to provide a name to the unknown and effectively ground (*begründen*) significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) by providing a “name” to this unknown threat. Despite the clear and real physical threats that were being faced by the British public at that time, such statements allow the public to reclaim a semblance of ontological security by being assured about how to respond to this threat.

The time deixis used by Davis in the above quote (in bold) is also important. Time can be a vital part of the work on myth, as it can often provide a narrative of origins and a clear direction for the future. This also serves the purpose of ontological security, particularly since it allows the audience to provide a consistent collective self-narrative for themselves that endures across different contexts. Davis provides a cognitive map that can be applied to interpret historical conflicts with the IRA to the present situation. By linking them temporally, Davis finds a way of turning the anxiety that could result from expressing the contingency of the situation (e.g., different enemies, different people, different ideas), into a familiar one which we know how to respond to. This is also an example of myths about conflict being a source of ontological security. Despite the clear drama of the situation (reflected in the dramatic nature of the language), and the potential dangers it poses, myth allows the audience to make the unknown known, and thereby prevents the anxiety that violence without meaning could generate. These themes continued throughout the rest of the debate. In particular, MPs continued to praise the resilience of Londoners at that moment, comparing to it to that of previous generations. In response to a

³⁴⁰ Rev. Ian Paisley MP in *ibid.*, col 468.

question by Andrew Dismore MP about continuing transport arrangements throughout the day, the Home Secretary Charles Clarke MP reminded people that it was a “truism” that “for generations the people of London have shown resilience in the face of appalling difficulties” and that Londoners would continue to “demonstrate the same courage.”³⁴¹ Time deixis and integrative strategies in the work on myth are at play here. As Davis did earlier in the debate, Clarke draws direct connections between all Londoners in the present to preceding generations. For most Londoners, this would call to mind the threat of IRA bombings and memories of the Blitz and the Blitz spirit, the latter of which is a crucial part of modern British identity, as section 4.3 elaborates. Yet the more fundamental thing the remainder of the debate offered was to replace the chaos of the situation, which could be anxiety-inducing, to offering more concrete arrangements. While the debate was predominately about the practical measures being taken (e.g., public transport, police operations), there was also an attempt to re-articulate the sense of collective ontological security for people. By reminding people that they have a shared heritage of resilience, sourced from surviving the Blitz and the IRA, it allows Britons (and Londoners in particular) to fill what otherwise might be a void of meaning with something that is familiar. Although the present situation may be challenging and threatening, the audience can be assured that there are clear maps to interpret it. The other is transformed into a familiar evil, be it the IRA or the Nazis, and the self is transformed into a modern-day expression of Britons surviving and enduring under the Blitz and IRA attacks. Contingency, ambiguity, and the rather tenuous links drawn between these groups is effaced in order to articulate a sense of certainty at a time of crisis.

Blair’s statement to parliament the following week was a particularly influential moment in the work on myth. Tony Blair began the discussion by making a statement to the house which sought to contextualise the events and provide a clear path for action. The issues were remained highly sensitive, yet Blair to make significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) of events by invoking core themes of heroism, villainy, and the dramatic conflict between good and evil that 7/7 represented. He began by praising the

³⁴¹ Charles Clarke MP in *ibid.*, col 470.

heroism of the emergency service and the “stoicism, resilience and undaunted spirit of Londoners... At the moment of terror striking, when the eyes of the world were upon them, they responded, and continue to respond, with a defiance and strength that are universally admitted.³⁴² Blair goes on to liken this response to the acts of heroism found in World War II

Yesterday we celebrated the heroism of world war two, **including the civilian heroes of London's blitz**. Today, what a different city London is—a city of many cultures, faiths and races, hardly recognisable from the London of 1945. **It is so different and yet, in the face of this attack, there is something wonderfully familiar in the confident spirit that moves throughout the city, enabling it to take the blow but still not flinch from reasserting its will to triumph over adversity.** Britain may be different today, but the coming together and the character are still the same [bolt: mine].³⁴³

This is a powerful example of the British resilience aspect of the work on myth (4.2) through the metonym of the “Blitz”. Blair subsequently combines the integrative aspect of myth alongside time deixis by positing that, although there were differences between London in 1945 and in 2005, there were still familiar features. He re-asserts a core part of London’s identity, the metaphor of a “confident spirit”, to re-assure that once again London will not “flinch” (personification) from its will to triumph over adversity. This portion of Blair’s speech is highly dependent upon time deixis. It draws temporal connections between memories of the Blitz as a defining moment of Britishness or (or at least “Londonness”) and seeks to invoke these memories as a cognitive map to interpret the response to the recent attacks in London. He deploys a powerful metaphorical expression which claims that London has a “confident spirit that moves throughout the city” in order to emphasise a certain positive, inter-subjectively felt essence that prevents it from “taking blows” and “not flinching”. This is ultimately a way of re-assuring Londoners of their ontological security via the work on myth in two senses. Firstly, it concretises London’s identity away from a disparate collection of individuals into a solid, high-entitative category. Put more simply, all Londoners are defined in common as being part of this confident spirit that is able to withstand these blows. Far from needing to

³⁴² Tony Blair MP in HC Deb 11 July 2005, vol 545.

³⁴³ Ibid., col 567.

submit to *Angst*, Londoners can remain confident that they will not be deterred and will continue as normal. The enemy figure in the work on myth will not be able to break their resolve and will consequently be denied victory.

Blair goes on to invoke the mobilising aspect of the work on myth. Via a form of *pathos*, Blair attempts to inspire a determination to act (in the Sorelian sense) by positing an epic conflict between the representatives of a way of life that we “share and value” against an insidious force that seeks to destroy it:

Together, we will ensure that, though terrorists can kill, they will never destroy the way of life that we share and value, which we will defend with such strength of belief and conviction that it will be to us and not to the terrorists that victory will belong.³⁴⁴

The work on myth here in this passage is important because Blair distinguishes between physical security and ontological security – although not explicitly. Although the terrorists can “kill” (a threat to physical security) they cannot destroy “the way of life that we share and value”, or, that which brings it into the realms of “being” in the Heideggerian or “existing” in the Kierkegaardian sense. In other words, the very mode of “being/existing” (in these philosophical senses) becomes heavily constituted by defending the very conditions of “being/existing” (e.g., “our way of life”) against the perceived threat. Blair then couples this with the mobilising aspect of myth (section 4.2) by making a Sorelian promise of victory for those values. While a tragedy may have befallen “us” (person deixis), we a renewed sense of significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) can be found in defending these values and defeating the enemy.

In his reply to Blair’s statement, The Conservative Party leader Michael Howard condemned, via metaphor, the “faceless killers” who “tried with the fires of hate to destroy the bonds of love.”³⁴⁵ Howard made a highly dramatic and figurative opening statement that embodied that made creative use of person deixis: the separation between the “other” (faceless killers) and all of “us”, who are metaphorically bound together through the “bonds of love”. Throughout his reply, Howard repeats the themes of tragedy, resilience and heroism by placing the conflict with violent, radical

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Michael Howard MP in *ibid.*, col 568.

Islam as the latest episode in Britain's continuous resolve shown in the face of evil.

We all have cause to feel pride in the response of our fellow citizens. **Any who doubted that, 60 years on, this generation of Britons had retained the resolve to stand united against the threats we face have found their answer...** They failed to cause panic in our capital city. Instead, we **went about our business, determined to show that we would not be defeated. They failed to undermine the institutions, the democracy and the values of which we are all so justly proud. Instead, our Government, our citizens and our way of life proved once again resilient in the face of evil...** In our great capital city and beyond, **the terrorists have united Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Jews, those of all faiths and those of none in our contempt for those who want to destroy that diversity and our democratic and liberal way of life** [bold: mine].³⁴⁶

Howard, like Blair, answers the existential questions raised by the bombings by contextualising them via time deixis alongside the VE celebrations which occurred on the preceding weekend – thereby invoking the British resilience narrative outlined in section 4.2. Britain was “once again resilient in the face of evil”, meaning that this was the latest occurrence in a long-line of conflicts against evil. Moreover, the bombings are seen as part of an ongoing story about a sustained assault by actors who oppose the virtuous forces of democracy and liberalism both of which, as section 4.2 showed, are core to the British sense of self. Via person, time, and place deixis, Howard positions the audience against the attackers, excluding them from the deictic centre. At the same time, a variety of different groups are united in his speech by person deixis *against* these enemies. Furthermore, this conflict is occurring not just within London, but across the world. This is an exceptionally strong invocation of the integrative aspect of the work on myth, insofar as it unifies at an extraordinary level. Finally, Blair, Howard and other MPs also invoke the “Good Muslim” and “Bad Muslim” dichotomy whilst making a call for mobilisation of the former against the latter. Blair’s calls for the “moderate and true voice of Islam” to be heard is backed by Mark Field MP, who was the representative of a constituency where two of the bombs exploded. Field asked Blair what steps he was taking to make sure that “all the UK’s

³⁴⁶ Ibid., 568.

Muslim religious and community leaders take the initiative now to prevent any backlash by making public statements in their home towns unequivocally condemning the perpetrators of last Thursday's atrocities."³⁴⁷ Blair's response was to remind the House that the "vast majority of the Muslim community are completely condemnatory of those attacks and regard them as a betrayal of the true faith of Islam, and I am sure that is right."³⁴⁸ In their exchange, both Field and Blair evoke the good/bad Muslim dichotomy discussed in section 4.2. The claim made by Field is that good Muslims must mobilise to unequivocally condemn bad Muslims, and Blair reinforces this by attempting to ensure the audience is aware of the separation between good and bad Muslims, rather than ensuring the entire community is "othered".

MPs from across the different political parties in the Commons re-asserted all of the above themes in a question and answer format with Blair. Of these questions, David Winnick MP's question is notable:

Is it not of interest that some of the people who blame Government policies for what the murderous psychopaths did last Thursday are, in some instances, the very people who opposed military action in Kosovo to stop the ethnic cleansing of Muslims and, even more so, the liberation of Kuwait, which was 85 per cent Muslim, from enemy occupation 14 years ago? Is it not rather important that the people to whom I am referring—we know that there are one or two in the House from a speech made last Thursday—should stop **making excuses for the mass murderers**, whose hatred of humanity **is no less than the Nazis?** [bold: mine].³⁴⁹

Winnick is referring to several left-wing MPs who had blamed Government invasion of Iraq for the 7/7 bombings. For him, this was grossly offensive as Britain had a history of intervening to save the lives of Muslims as they had done in Kosovo and Kuwait. He utilises time deixis and an externalised version of the integrative aspect of myth, to argue that the bombers were so barbaric (section 4.2) that their "hatred of humanity is no less than the Nazis." The place of Nazism in the work on myth here remains familiar and, as has been shown throughout this section, is a shorthand to describe the evil that Britain has previously overcome elsewhere. What Winnick evokes here is a schema that places the radical

³⁴⁷ Frank Field MP in *ibid.*, 572.

³⁴⁸ Tony Blair MP in *ibid.*

³⁴⁹ David Winnick MP *ibid.*, cols 573-74.

violent Muslim as being so distant and one-dimensional as to harbour a hatred for the entirety of humanity, and thereby a special, exceptional case which can by implication only be defeated the way the Nazis were. Tony Wright MP goes similarly expresses support for this view. Indeed, despite his opposition to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, he argues that those who draw links between that invasion and 7/7 are “not only talking nonsense, but dangerous nonsense.” He warns that “we are dealing with a group of **Islamo-fascists** who are against any form of democratic politics, and on that we should all be united [bold: mine].”³⁵⁰ Winnick and Wright both draw connections between the bombers and their beliefs with fascism, with the latter using the term “Islamo-fascism” as a metonym to represent this comparison, a convenient way to combine all the negatives associated with “fascism” with the current predicament. All of them strenuously refute the claim that the bombings only occurred as a response to the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Winnick draws links between these people and those who argued against previous missions to defend Muslims. Duncan-Smith and Wright further accuse people of those views of inciting division at a time where unity is required. The former endorses Winnick and asks the Prime Minister:

May I also join with the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), who pointed out that those who have spent the past three days trying to divide us by blaming everyone for the reasons behind this were not only wrong, but shameful? The best answer to them was to be found in constituencies such as mine on Saturday and Sunday. There were wonderful crowds who gathered on Sunday to show the terrorists what they thought of them. They do not care about the terrorists; they care about peace. I and my constituents promise the Prime Minister and the Government that we will do our level best to back him in whatever he does to find these people.³⁵¹

This an extra statement of support for the Prime Minister, and a call from an opposition politician for unity and mobilisation. The crowds of people showed defiance and togetherness, which those who attempt to create blurry lines – such as by blaming the attacks on the Iraq war – are seen as being against this process of unity. This is an example of the simplification of politics that can be caused by the work on myth. It

³⁵⁰ Tony Wright MP in *ibid.*, 573.

³⁵¹ Iain Duncan-Smith MP in *ibid.*, 574-75.

encourages a certain rigid and narrow logic that cannot be challenged without causing great offence.

In a series of conference speeches throughout 2005, Blair more clearly and dramatically evokes the mobilising aspect of political myth. This is especially the case in his 16th July 2005 conference speech, in which he articulates the core parameters of the epic conflict between good and evil:

What we are confronting here is an evil ideology. It is not a clash of civilisations - **all civilised people, Muslim or other, feel revulsion at it.** But it is a **global struggle and it is a battle of ideas, hearts and minds, both within Islam and outside it.** This is the battle that must be won, a battle not just about the terrorist methods but their views. Not just their barbaric acts, but their barbaric ideas. Not only what they do but what they think and the thinking they would impose on others [bold: mine].³⁵²

Blair represents the conflict as a clash between identities, values, an ideas, core to the audiences' being-in-the-world, and not just the acts of physical violence that cause somatic harm. Blair evokes the core of the work on myth (i.e., that there is a conflict) by referring not just to the physical threat but also explaining that this threat would seek to replace our values and ideas. It is a threat not just to our physical safety, but our ideas and values that make "us" (person deixis). While Blair mentions the civilisations myth, he specifically refutes that this is a clash of civilisations but, rather, a clash between civilised and uncivilised. In doing so, he in fact simplifies the myth further by removing any potential detached view of the situation. While a clash of civilisations could be read merely as a conflict between civilisations, with neither necessarily being preferred, a clash between "civilized" and "uncivilized" has unambiguous normative connotations. Via person deixis, Blair places the "we" within the realm of the civilised (the good), and "them/they" in the realm of the uncivilized (the bad). He then articulates the relation between the two as one of irreconcilable hostility, and which can only be resolve by the triumph of the civilised. By referring to this as a battle that "must be won", Blair concretises the situation and directs all attention towards the enemy who we may fear and/or revile, yet these feelings are preferable to the overwhelming nature of *Angst* as

³⁵² Tony Blair, "Full Text: Blair Speech on Terror," *BBC News* (16 July 2005), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4689363.stm>.

conceived by Kierkegaard and others (chapter 1). Similarly, Blair grounds (in the sense of *Begründen*) significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) where the absolutism of reality may otherwise come to dominate. The next stage in Blair's work on myth centres around time deixis and place deixis. He begins by contextualizing the themes discussed above by referencing other purportedly familiar situations in British history:

The 20th century showed how powerful political ideologies could be. This is a religious ideology, a strain within the world-wide religion of Islam, as far removed from its essential decency and truth as Protestant gunmen who kill Catholics or vice versa, are from Christianity.³⁵³

By referring to two parts of familiar history to people in the Cold War and the "Troubles" in Northern Ireland, he is able to demonstrate (via time deixis) the clear links between the present moment in which he and the audience are situated, and a past with enemies who were overcome. The scale of the challenge can be compared to overcoming the powerful ideologies of the twentieth century, and the violence that had been such a feature of Northern Ireland's recent history. This is typical rhetorical strategy that links time deixis with the work on myth, insofar as the past and present are combined to determine the action to be taken in the future. Blair elides the contingencies and differences between the situations (different actors, motives and scales of violence etc.), for the sake of simplicity. He also solidifies the concrete nature of good/bad by claiming that terrorists who act in the name of these religions no longer represent the peaceful teachings of these religions. Blair goes on to warn that this ideology is global and cannot be beaten except by confronting it "head-on" and "without compromise and without delusion".

The extremist propaganda is cleverly aimed at their target audience. It **plays on our tolerance and good nature**. It exploits the tendency to guilt of the developed world, as **if it is our behaviour that should change, that if we only tried to work out and act on their grievances, we could lift this evil, that if we changed our behaviour, they would change theirs**. This is a misunderstanding of a catastrophic order. **Their cause is not founded on an injustice. It is founded on a belief, one whose fanaticism is such it can't be moderated. It can't be remedied. It has to be stood up to [bold: mine]**.³⁵⁴

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

Blair makes it clear that we are in an existential conflict with the other and, despite our good and tolerant nature, any expectation that we can “lift this evil” by changing behaviour is fanciful. This is because he effectively deploys person deixis to remove the enemy from the deictic center, ensuring that the public unambiguously sees the enemy as a fanatical fringe that must be defeat due to how irreconcilable they are with Britain and its values. Blair warns with a violent metaphor that we must pull the extremism “up by its roots” and that “we must join up with our Muslim communities to take on the extremists” and “worldwide, we should confront it everywhere it exists.”³⁵⁵ He also warns that our “tolerance” (as explained in section 4.2) and “our good nature” could be potential sources of weakness to be exploited by the terrorists. We must thereby accept the inevitability of conflict and opt not to compromise against an enemy that cannot be reasoned with. Blair moves on to outline the course of action that the collective “we” will achieve victory in the struggle:

We must be clear about how we win this struggle. We should take what security measures we can. But let us not kid ourselves. **In the end, it is by the power of argument, debate, true religious faith and true legitimate politics that we will defeat this threat.** That means not just arguing against their terrorism, but their politics and their **perversion of religious faith...** It means **championing our values of freedom, tolerance and respect for others** [bold: mine].³⁵⁶

With this particularly dramatic statement, Blair combines the mobilising aspect of myth by prophesising victory in the struggle, but also does so by bringing core aspects of the audience’s ontological security to the fore. More directly, this means Blair argues that victory would be achieved from the success of our familiar values, such as “freedom” and “tolerance”, and their expression in “true legitimate politics.” He effectively asks for the audience to concretise these self-narratives that contribute to their inter-subjectively constructed ontological security. This means actively promoting these self-narratives as a means to defeat the terrorists. Blair answers a call for grounding at a time of heightened drama by replacing the nihilistic meaninglessness of violence with the concrete certainty that,

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Ibid., 4-5.

ultimately, the good (as embodied in the values discussed in section 4.2) will prevail over evil. Although people may be afraid, their fear would be made more manageable by the assurance of who they are, who the enemy is, and how one responds to them. The speech reduces the “indefinite anticipation”,³⁵⁷ as Blumenberg would put it”, that characterises *Angst*. Again, more concretely-focused emotions such as anger, fear, and hate that have a direct object are preferable to *Angst*, as discussed in chapter one.

Blair also adapted many of these themes to his monthly press conferences. The most notable of these was held on On 5th August 2005, where he signaled the government’s intent to introduce new anti-terrorism legislation. Blair opened by acknowledging the existence of anxiety reminded the audience that Britain’s values would not ultimately be defeated by the evil it faces:

Since the 7th of July the response of the British people has been unified and dignified and remarkable. **Of course there is anxiety and worry, but the country knows the purpose of terrorism is to intimidate, and it’s not inclined to be intimidated.** Of course too, there have been isolated and unacceptable acts of racial or religious hatred. But they have been isolated, by and large **Britain knows it is a tolerant and good natured nation, it’s rather proud of it, and it’s responded to this terrorism with tolerance and good nature in a way that’s won the admiration of people and nations the world over.** However, **I’m acutely aware that alongside these feelings is also a determination that this very tolerance and good nature should not be abused by a small but fanatical minority, and an anger that it has been** [bold: mine].³⁵⁸

Once again, Blair opts to emphasise the values of tolerance and goodness as being part of the British self, and one that Britain is aware of. Yet he makes us aware that the enemy is so insidious, so cruel, that it would seek to undermine this very positive aspect of the self that underpins our collective “being-with” (*Mitsein*). The only option was to defend these positive values of the self *against* the enemy that threatens to not only destroy them, but first *exploit* them. Consequently, Blair outlined a series of counter-terrorism measures that would be put through parliament later in the

³⁵⁷ Blumenberg, *Work on Myth*.

³⁵⁸ Tony Blair, "Full text: The Prime Minister's Statement on Anti-Terror Measures," *The Guardian* (5 August 2005), <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2005/aug/05/uksecurity.terrorism1>.

year. However, Blair stressed that none of these measures were “aimed at the decent, law-abiding Muslim community of Britain. He acknowledges that “this [extremist] fringe does not truly represent Islam” and that “British Muslims in general abhor the actions of extremism” However, Blair offers this warning:

But, coming to Britain is not a right. And even when people have come here, staying here carries with it a duty. **That duty is to share and support the values that sustain the British way of life.** Those that break that duty and try to incite hatred or engage in violence against our country and its people, have no place here. Over the coming months... we will work to turn those sentiments into reality. That is my duty as Prime Minister [bold: mine].³⁵⁹

Blair here attempts to strengthen and concretise the demarcated lines between self and other, good and bad Muslim. He wishes to effectively legally distinguish between “decent law-abiding Muslims” who represent “true” Islam and those (who seem to predominately be foreign nationals) who promote violence and extremism as the opposite. Those who glorify violence or who do not fulfil their “duties” would be othered to the extent that they would not only be ostracised within Britain, but would be legally stripped of the right to be associated with it. Blair also augments the integrative aspect of myth by doing this, insofar as he reassures the public that these values that denote Britishness would no longer be exploited by this pernicious enemy. What this speech and the subsequent policy proposals did was strengthen the strength of intention towards the other. Put differently, Blair’s outlined in far more detail who the other was, how they are being enabled, and how they undermine our collective values. He asks the audience to be aware that we must mobilise against this very specific and detailed enemy. Blair established that the relation between the collective self and this more concretely defined other is one of perpetual conflict in which there can be only one valid outcome: the collective good triumphing over evil.

5.3 July 7th Bombings: Newspaper Reaction

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

This section demonstrates how newspaper commentators contributed to the work on myth following the 7th July 2005 bombings. I begin first with the left-leaning media in the *Daily Mirror* and *The Guardian*. As discussed in section 4.3, left-leaning publications tend to invoke the same features of the work on myth as described throughout chapter 4. In particular, the left makes many of the same references to the Blitz spirit and is particularly keen to talk of British resilience (section 4.2). There are, however, some crucial differences. Most notably, publications on the left are far more likely to cite UK foreign policy as a major contributor to the 7th July 2005 bombings. They are also less likely to directly condemn Islam and Muslims in the way that right-wing publications are. The *Daily Mirror* is among the first Newspapers to consider the role of the Iraq war in inspiring the London Bombings.

WAS it because of the war in Iraq? That's the question on everyone's lips. Why here? Why now? Who would commit such a cowardly, gruesome crime? The answers are likely to make uncomfortable reading for Tony Blair and for supporters of the Iraq and Afghanistan invasions. The timing of the blasts, as Blair hosted George Bush in Gleneagles, is unlikely to be coincidence. Intelligence services warned of a heightened terror risk after the Government committed troops to the conflict in Iraq. Spain paid a terrible price for its support with last year's Madrid train bombings. Yesterday that carnage came to London.³⁶⁰

While the article concedes that the ultimate responsibility of the attacks lies “firmly with the butchers who mercilessly killed and maimed... when the inquest starts, the Iraq war will also be in the dock.”³⁶¹ With this, the *Daily Mirror* seeks to fill a void for interpretation that makes the “cause” of the attacks more certain. Whereas right-wing publications (and politicians) were more likely to resist attempts to link the attacks to British foreign policy, the *Daily Mirror* attempts to provide a cognitive map that links places the cause of the attacks more firmly with British foreign policy. They interpret the motives of the attackers link the cause, via place and person deixis, to the 2003 invasion of Iraq. The equivalent of the attacks in Madrid was perpetrated in London, with the same antecedent conditions.

³⁶⁰ Daily Mirror, "Terrible Price for Iraq War".

³⁶¹ Ibid.

While the source of blame in left-leaning publications is often different to those on the right, the left nonetheless still approaches many of the core themes of the work on myth in the same way. For example, on the 9th of July, *The Mirror* printed another piece that read as a narrative of Londoner's experiences the following day of the attack. Entitled "Business as usual", the article describes in detail how individuals responded with the standard of British resilience to the attacks. It remarks how tens of thousands of people carried on as normal, where people displayed "strong-hearted shared smile of encouragement and determination."³⁶² Most notably, there was an old soldier wearing medals earned in the Second World War. The article describes how his "lined, world-weary face said it all: "Hold firm. Have courage. Never surrender." The article describes how the bombs may have "rocked London" and "disrupted the rhythm of our daily lives" but, crucially, not "our spirit." It quotes a series of people who had commented on the events during the day:

Those who travelled spoke defiantly and in one voice. "You cannot give into this kind of thing," said electrical worker Thomas Carr. "They're mistaken if they ever think that people would"... These were sentiments echoed in a tribute left at Tavistock Square - where the bus was ripped apart. It reads: "Yesterday we fled this great city but today we are walking back into an even stronger, greater city...London will go on"... City worker William Austin from Royston, Herts, said. "You have to carry on. I have meetings to go to today and there's work to be done." Opposite the station, the flag of St George fluttered. Someone had written on it: "Burning with fear? My a***!"³⁶³

The article concludes with a powerful, rallying statement: "The eyes of the world are on us and we will be inspiring. Hold firm. Have courage. Never surrender."³⁶⁴ This article invokes the British resilience aspect of the work on myth (section 4.2) in much the way that right-wing articles do. It makes heavy usage of metaphor, in particular by describing how the bombs "rocked London" but did not defeat "our spirit". It also uses, in almost poetic fashion, a synecdoche that reveals how the lines on the face of an elderly gentleman "said it all": that one must hold firm, not surrender and

³⁶² "Business as Usual," *Daily Mirror* (9 July 2005), <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/business-as-usual-549655>.

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

have courage. This synecdoche recalls countless images of the Blitz spirit component of the “British resilience” narrative discussed in section 4.2. The article describes numerous examples of Britons rallying in defiance of the enemy by carrying on despite such adversity. Indeed, this article represents an attempt to re-orientate people with a sense of significance in a time of potential *Angst* by inviting the audience to engage with the subjective experiences of its author. What the author describes is a series of encounters with others, or specific moments of “being-with” (*Mitsein*)³⁶⁵ in which people re-assert their ontological security, by assuring themselves and others that London will continue as normal, and that they are resilient against any attempts to challenge or undermine this. The article concludes by evoking the mobilising aspect of myth (section 1.2 and 1.4) when it asks people to emulate those quoted, and “inspire” the world, who have their “eyes on us”.³⁶⁶

The British resilience theme is continued in another opinion piece published on the same day as the above article. It points out that, while the death toll continued to rise, “so does our determination not to be cowed or beaten by terror” – a powerful metaphor that reveals how the strength of British resilience and (by implication) its ontological security will only increase despite the horror of deaths. The article further discusses the theme of heroism, by praising the “remarkable” stories of heroics from members of the public and emergency services. It then boldly claims that “no other country would have reacted as we did to such an atrocity.”³⁶⁷ While the article had up to this point referred to the narrative of British resilience, it also followed right-wing publications in describing the dichotomy between the values of the bombers and those of Britons:

The fanatics who slaughtered **indiscriminately stand for everything most Britons hate. Intolerance, bigotry and contempt for life.** The response to their attacks has been the best possible reply to them. Politicians, emergency services, police and, most of all, ordinary people have united in compassion and determination not to be beaten. July 7, 2005, was a terrible day. But so

³⁶⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 154-55.

³⁶⁶ Daily Mirror, "Business as Usual".

³⁶⁷ Daily Mirror Opinion, "Pride out of Horror," *ibid.*, <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/pride-out-of-horror-549651>.

much good has come out of it that we shall remember it
with pride as well as sorrow [bold: mine].³⁶⁸

Intolerance and bigotry are irreconcilable with the values that Britain has, and the calm, measured, yet determined response has been the best way to stand up for these values. This had been so inspiring that despite the tragedy and grief “so much good” had out of it that Britons can take pride in. Via person deixis, the reader is incorporated within a nexus of people who have stood together to resist and provide the best reply to the attacks, and this is a positive thing despite July 7th 2005 being etched into the memory as a terrible day (time deixis). Together, people have constructed a sense of significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) by making the attacks a potent event that is directly connected to the reader, and not some indifferent event that occurred at a geographic distance which is of little interest to them. By constructing this sense of collective self, the article provides a cognitive lens that reduces any sense of estrangement from the events, and allows the audience to incorporate it as part of a consistent collective self-narrative – a vital pre-requisite for ontological security.³⁶⁹ The article also continues the general trend of assessing leaders in such times of crisis (the same occurs with David Cameron in Chapter 6). While most had focused on the performance of Tony Blair, this article assesses London Mayor Ken Livingstone. According to the editorial many people had doubts, including the *Daily Mirror* about Livingstone’s “fitness for office”. However, there were “no doubts now” as he had successfully “articulated the finest qualities of the people of the capital and their spirit of defiance.”³⁷⁰ Altogether, this article represents a powerful invocation of the work on myth; Britons have suffered a grave injustice at the hands of an enemy “other” who is an implacable antithesis of Britishness, but have displayed extraordinary resilience and unity and will continue to do so. It contributes to an unfolding dramatic and figurative narrative process which exists to construct a sense of significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) at a time of crisis.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ For more on the cognitive aspect of myth, see Flood, *Political Myth: A Theoretical Introduction*. Bennett, "Myth, Ritual and Political Control."

³⁷⁰ Daily Mirror Opinion, "Pride out of Horror".

The *Daily Mirror* continued with another opinion piece on the same day entitled “So what do they want?” tries to provide an insight into the mindset of the enemy. This piece attempts to solidify the audience’s conception of the enemy other as fundamentally barbaric by presenting a dystopian scenario in which they are victorious in the conflict. The article claims that if the bombers ever achieved their aims, “Britain would become an Iranian-style Islamic Republic” which would mean a ban on contact between sexes and anywhere they might meet, including discos, bars and public swimming pools (which would all be closed down in any case). It would be a crime for women to be in public with their hair uncovered, and all women, and even girls as young as four, would be forced to wear a *hijab*, described as “an all-encompassing headscarf and baggy clothes to disguise her body shape even in the height of summer”.³⁷¹ The article lists a range of other draconian laws, all of which would be enforced in every British city by patrolling “special religious police who would enforce this Islamic dress code and arrest any suspected ‘courting couples’”.³⁷² Any adulterers would be “hanged or stoned to death in public at the new Wembley stadium”, the British Royal family would be “driven into exile”, and an “Islamic Britain” would declare war on the USA.³⁷³

Presenting an enemy victory in a dystopian future is a powerful way to mobilise via a myth that has conflict at its heart. The victory of violent radical Islamic other would have disastrous consequences that would compromise all the things the reader holds dear. Despite this, and unlike in many right-wing articles no immediate blame is attributed to British Islamic communities themselves. The insanity and evil of the bombers is heavily stressed, however. To “normal people” the demand that Britain would become an Islamic Republic “seems insane”. The article finishes with a warning and rallying call:

The men who planted bombs on London's Tube and a bus to kill and maim did so because they see everything about the West as corrupt and evil. Killing the innocent was just part of their greater crusade. They think they are fighting

³⁷¹ Daily Mirror, "So What do they Want?," *ibid.*,
<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/so-what-do-they-want-549658>.

³⁷² *Ibid.*

³⁷³ *Ibid.*

for the future of the entire world, for a universal Islamic state that will rule every human life. **We must do all in our power to destroy them before they try again to destroy our way of life** [bold: mine].³⁷⁴

The article dramatically portrays a dystopian future of being governed by the other. The article makes clear use of person and place *deixis* to separate us; the barbaric values associated with them (person *deixis*) and which are discussed in section 4.4 and which belong in “Iran” rather than the UK (place *deixis*). This is a clear attempt to distance the point of legitimacy from the point of legitimacy in terms of geographical location. It reinforces a cognitive schema that associated the barbaric practices with other places in the world. It sends a feeling of disgust and horror when imagining Wembley stadium and being used to enforce these horrific values. The article thereby uses the integrative aspect of myth put together with mobilising aspect for a rallying call: a need to destroy them before they destroy our way of life. This is not just a literal existential conflict in the physical sense, but on our ideas, values, and identities. Furthermore, it would not just be an assault on the individual being (in the sense of *Dasein*) of the reader, but also on their relations with others (being-with/*Mitsein*), and the fundamental trust-networks the reader has established throughout their lives. In other words, it would not just place their physical security into question, but also their *ontological* security. All that would seem familiar and learned would be replaced by at best fear and, at worst, *Angst*.

As is more typical of the left, the attackers and their kin are portrayed as “insane” (see also section 4.3 and 6.3). This was a feature of an article on 13 July 2005, following the discovery that the bombers were British.³⁷⁵ It argues that the communities need to be engaged to “ensure that a **tiny lunatic fringe** are not driven into **the arms of evil**” but also that “it is impossible for anyone with a shred of humanity to imagine how **these maniacs** could bring themselves to commit such dreadful deeds” [bold:mine]. Indeed, the article argues that this enemy is completely unreasonable as, unlike IRA bombers, “there seems to be no possible

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ "They're Here - British Suicide Bombers are Blair's Worst Nightmare," *Daily Mirror* (13 July 2005), <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/theyre-here---british-suicide-549996>.

compromise nor [sic] solution that any government or the people of Britain can offer” Instead, they just want us to all “submit to the perverted values and way of life they espouse.” This “fanaticism” is not a “state of religion” but a “state of mind”, and an “ugly psychosis”. It seems that the “only light at the end of this dark and twisted tunnel is the realisation that these four **demented** men will be unable to take any more lives” [bold: mine]. The article here uses time deixis to link the present conflict with terrorism to incidents of the IRA. Indeed while the IRA were comparatively reasonable, this radical Islamic other cannot be negotiated with and is, indeed, insane. This allows them to differ from much of the right-wing press by not laying the blame predominately on Muslim communities. Instead, it launches an attack on those who display bigotry and intolerance towards Muslims. Intriguingly, it continues with the theme of the attackers having mental deficiencies

Britain became the great country it is today on the backs of successive waves of migrants who brought fresh energy, enthusiasm and talent to these shores. We must never forget that as the enormity of what has taken place sinks in... Yet throughout the country there have **already been numerous brainless acts of violence against Muslim and even Sikh communities and institutions.** The **boneheads** lashing out fail to understand the overwhelming majority of Muslims are no more responsible for the fanatics than ordinary football fans are for hooligans. The men behind the bombings abhor Muslims who live and work in Britain and refuse to follow **their twisted logic** [bold: mine].

The article goes on to refer to the far-right British National Party as “maggots” for their stirring up of hatred. Instead, we should “stay calm, carry on with our lives, sign a book of condolence” and join the vigil which was to be held the following day. What we find is that presenting the killers as “insane” serves to provide an absolutist, resolute distinction between normal Britons and Muslim Britons and this tiny, maniacal violent fringe group. This distinction between sane and insane cannot be bridged or overcome: they must simply be defeated. However, the left-wing variant of the work on myth continues to posit the reaction from right-wing extremists as part of the problem. The “maggots” of the BNP are also fundamentally deficient and mentally challenged and so they must also be defeated. One of the most potent effects this has is to simplify how the enemy is understood.

By referring to them as simply insane, one delegitimises any cause they may have or, at least, any attempt they have to justify themselves is deemed the product of unreasonable insanity.³⁷⁶ All of this exemplifies the integrative aspect of myth; by reducing the other to a singular category of insanity, it becomes easier to concretise the enemy into a high-entitative group defined by this very category. Consequently, the dialogue is impossible and the enemy will go to any length to win since they are not constrained by reason. Britain must therefore triumph over this enemy, and that also includes defeating the perceived stupidity of the far-right.

As with other newspapers from the left and right of the political spectrum, the *Mirror* focuses on the importance of the Prime Minister. In an opinion piece entitled “At Last, a Grown-Up Response to Terror”, Paul Routledge praises Blair and New Labour’s response to the crisis. He argues that the government’s response has been “mature, proportion and wise” and that he could “for the first time in years... hand on heart, support the politicians I did my bit to put into power in 1997”.³⁷⁷ He praises the Prime Minister’s multifaceted approach to the crisis, but also acknowledges that this resurgent public support that crosses political party boundaries is not surprising as, “at times of trial, we Brits gravitate naturally to our institutions”.³⁷⁸ However, this support for Blair and many of the senior politicians wavers in an article on July 27 2005 entitled “Terror won’t take a Break”, after key government figures had decided to go on holiday. It warns that Britain is facing its “greatest crisis since the Second World War” and, consequently, that “the British people are entitled to expect their leaders to remain at work in such a time of crisis”.³⁷⁹ These two articles are intriguing because they exemplify the close attention paid to leaders, most notably the Prime Minister (this is repeated in Chapter 6). However, the second article in demonstrates its frustration at the Prime Minister for going

³⁷⁶ Perhaps one of the most iconic texts on how “madness” can shape how human beings relate to others and how the concept has developed in Western civilisation is Michel Foucault’s *Madness and Civilization*. See: Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).

³⁷⁷ Paul Routledge, "At Last, a Grown-Up Response to Terror," *Daily Mirror* (15 July 2005), <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/at-last-a-grown-up-response-to-terror-550283>.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁹ *Daily Mirror* Opinion, "Terror won't take a Break," *ibid.* (27 July 2005), <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/terror-wont-take-a-break-551523>.

away by evoking the Second World War. The act of comparing these two contingent events to justify a present-day interpretation of leadership indicates the importance of the Second World War in British memories, as discussed in section 4.2. The dichotomy between the content of the two articles also indicates how central the role of leadership figures are in re-establishing a sense of security in times of crisis.

The themes discussed above in the *Daily Mirror* were also repeated in *The Guardian*, albeit with some difference. Ian McEwan elaborates in emotive detail how terror had caught people off guard following the jubilation at the successful bid for the Olympics.

But **terror's war on us** opened another front on Thursday morning. **It announced itself with a howl of sirens from every quarter, and the oppressive drone of police helicopters.** Along the Euston Road, by the new UCH - a green building rising above us like a giant surgeon in scrubs - thousands of people stood around watching ambulances filing nose to tail through the stalled traffic into the casualty department [bold: mine].³⁸⁰

McEwan here uses metaphor to personify terror as if it were a solid, personified entity which is detached from people who use it as a tactic. The “howl of sirens” represented the announcement of a “new front” (place deixis) that terror had established in its continuous struggle with Britain. Yet despite the shock of the attacks, British people behaved calmly:

The mood on the streets was of numb acceptance, or strange calm. People obediently shuffled this way and that, directed round road blocks by a whole new citizens' army of "support" officials - **like air raid wardens from the last war.** A man in a suit pulled a Day-Glo jacket out of his briefcase and began directing traffic with snappy expertise. A woman, with blood covering her face and neck, who had come from Russell Square tube station, briskly refused offers of help and said she had to get to work [bold: mine].³⁸¹

The British resilience aspect of the work on myth is used by McEwan here. This is explicitly so when he refers to equipment used “from

³⁸⁰ Ian McEwan, "How could we have forgotten that this was always going to happen?," *The Guardian* (8 July 2005), <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/jul/08/terrorism.july74>.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

the last war” and mentions Air Raid Wardens. The symbol of the Air Raid Warden is a synecdoche that represents one part of the entire conflict in World War II, and is etched in British consciousness as an important feature of that war. Throughout the article, McEwan uses time deixis to link the audience with the present situation to past wars with a reference to the “last war” in which the Air-Raid Wardens had a prominent role. This implies that this is the latest episode of Britain’s conflicts with its enemies. The resilience that Britons demonstrated during this last war was, for McEwan, replicated on the day of the attacks, with the woman carrying on and going to work with blood on her insisting she had to get to work being particularly notable. This perception of Britain as resilient is particularly important for generating ontological security. While there is a definite concreteness of the enemy that one may fear, the knowledge that Britons are resilient and carry on despite such horror is a key identifier of Britishness that helps prevent *Angst*. Put differently, the knowledge of how Britons respond against these threats, however intimidating and fear-inducing they are, are at least have a direct and concrete object for people to focus on (self, other, fear, etc.), rather than being lost within the nothingness of *Angst*.

Polly Toynbee similarly stresses the horror of the events and the fact it was expected to happen at some point. She claims many Londoners had imagined this over and over again, in “every rush-hour train and crowded bus” people would be “glancing warily at one another, eyeing packages and bags.” It was, as Toynbee says, “only a matter of time”:

The minds of those who did it seem too remote to understand, too unknowable a twister to summon up much rage or thirst for revenge. A thousand questions about fanaticism will go for ever unanswered. Of course we must detect, prevent and expunge it as best we can - but it is a **monstrous force of unreason beyond arguing with** [bold: mine].³⁸²

The sanity of the bombers is once again brought into the discussion by a left-leaning commentator, and this is consistent with the analysis in the *Daily Mirror* and in left-wing responses to the murder of Lee Rigby (6.3). She uses person *deixis* to distance the attackers from everybody else, since

³⁸² Polly Toynbee, "Let the Olympics be a Memorial," *ibid.*, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2005/jul/08/london.july7>.

their minds are “too remote to understand” and “too unknowable a twister”. All that can happen – and as is core to the work on myth – is for us to “expunge” it. Toynbee’s article seems to be concerned with establishing a cognitive map to view the events and to augment high levels of entitativity for the enemy other. By questioning their mental faculties and describing their barbarism, Toynbee reinforces the distance between the readers and the attackers. This is a classic example of the integrative aspect of myth, as the other is concretely grounded as exceptional to the collective self, and the relation between them is thereby one of conflict, where good succeeds over evil. As fear and anger-inducing as this may be, this concrete relation at least provides a cognitive framework to interpret the situation in such unprecedented circumstances. The alternative would be estrangement or, at worst, *Angst*, as Kierkegaard would have viewed it.

Just like the *Daily Mirror*, *The Guardian* does discuss the role of the Prime Minister Tony Blair. However, it does so in a far more critical light. Decca Aitkenhead was scathing of the way the news media used Blair’s moments of “hammy trademark declaration,” which were essentially performances and not information:

News channels can’t get enough of them: on the day of the bombings, they kept interrupting coverage to repeat his tremulous broadcast from Gleneagles, and a few hours later he was back again with a new one, possibly worried that Ken Livingstone had outdone him. Both men’s performances were debated by pundits as though the primary importance of the bombs was the race they had triggered to coin the best soundbite.³⁸³

While it may be critical of the role of the leaders, this article still nonetheless implicitly refers to their role as important. Even the most viscerally articles of the role of the leader do this. For instance, another article in *The Guardian* criticises other newspapers for continually repeating Blair’s rhetoric without critique. These newspapers had “allowed a combination of hubris and naivety to get the better of rational judgment. And they have been reluctant to allow difficult truths to get in the way of simplistic explanations and invocations to the Blitz spirit.”³⁸⁴ It further

³⁸³ Kelsey, *Media, Myth and Terrorism: A Discourse-Mythological Analysis of the 'Blitz Spirit' in British Newspaper Responses to the July 7th Bombings*, 126.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

attacked previous critics of Blair who were now rallying behind our apparent “latter-day Churchill”, despite him being responsible for the disaster of the Iraq war, was “now being feted as a great “wartime” statesman.”³⁸⁵ Yet even though the article is critical of those who make comparisons to Churchill, it still holds him as an important figure and a great war-time statesman. The fact that *The Guardian* claims Blair seeks to emulate him in these circumstances still ultimately shows that British media figures were still keen to make comparisons to the events on July 7th with those of the Blitz.

Like much of the left-wing, *The Guardian* also focuses on the victimisation of Muslims, the importance of diversity, and how good and bad Muslims must be distinguished from one another. It reports that the Muslim Council of Britain had received 30,000 messages of hate following the attacks, ultimately crashing their internet servers. Yet Muslims had been victims of the attacks and also were part of the doctors and nurses who treated the injured. The article comments that London contains “300 languages, 50 non-indigenous communities with populations of 10,000 or more, and virtually every race, nation and culture represented”.³⁸⁶ What makes London unique is that, unlike “other parts of Britain” all of these communities “overlap, allowing meaningful exchanges, and helping **fear, distrust and division** to be contained [bold: mine].” Ultimately this places London at the “front line” in the “battle to prevent a backlash.”³⁸⁷ This article invokes the sense that Britain is tolerant and diversity, a core purported part of “British Values” (section 4.2) even if this is not explicitly stated. It is also vital to the mobilising aspect of the work on myth. Not only is the country threatened by the barbarism of the violent radical Islamic attackers, but also by the hatred of those who would incite a backlash against Muslim communities. It falls upon the audience, and particularly those in London, to challenge such a backlash. This is because it poses a direct threat to the diversity which is core to London, and thereby to the way one relates to other Londoners in the sense of “being-with”. These relations could become tainted with distrust and division and, adopting the existential

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ The Guardian, "Containment Strategy," *The Guardian* (9 July 2005), <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2005/jul/09/july7.guardianleaders>.

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

terminology, this could lead to a period of *Angst* and estrangement from the world.

Max Hastings creatively invoked the “British resilience” aspect of the work on myth. He discusses this by referencing memories of World War II and the Blitz Spirit (see section 4.2), as is commonly done by right-wing publications:

When 34 dancers were killed and 80 injured by a Luftwaffe bomb on London's Café de Paris nightclub on March 8 1941, people were dismayed, but not surprised. More than 4,000 British people died like this that month. Today, by contrast, one of the strongest objections to George Bush's grotesquely misnamed "war on terror" is that, if we took all measures associated with a state of hostilities, we would concede to terrorists the victory they must be denied. At the risk of sounding facetious, we must keep dancing.³⁸⁸

Hastings utilises time deixis to connect the events of the present with the past, as has been consistent with most other discussions about these issues. It invokes the core themes of British resilience as discussed in section 4.2 and does so through a dancing metaphor, by asking people to keep “dancing” as was done previously during the Blitz. Hastings calls for the public to resist the panic that times of exceptionality would cause, and to concentrate on re-establishing ontological security at a time of profound difficulty. The extent to which the *Guardian* was willing to use metaphors of the Blitz was further revealed when it devoted an entire article to Phone Boxes in London, known as the Gilbert Box. John Sutherland provides a short history of the Gilbert Box, referring to them as part of Britain’s heritage and “object of beauty.” However, they were not *just* objects of beauty, but had a far greater practical and symbolic purpose.

They were designed to be tough enough to withstand the elements and (1924 being just six years after the Zeppelin raids on London) to withstand bomb-blast (hence the small panes, and the underground cables). **In the second world war, they would be found standing (and usable) amid a wilderness of Blitz wreckage.** The hardiness was no accident... They were an emergency service. That's why they were painted pillar-box red. So

³⁸⁸ Max Hastings, "We have to keep dancing," *ibid.*, <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2005/jul/09/july7.uk>.

that they could be easily seen, in a crisis by someone still in shock... [bold: mine].³⁸⁹

In the immediate aftermath of the attack, phone networks went down due to people trying to call friends and relatives. Sutherland therefore advocates that if London is targeted again, then the Gilbert boxes should be refurbished “not as lovable antiques for tourists, but as *weapons* [emphasis: mine]”. The dramatic rhetoric represents the situation in a war-like fashion, but does so by building on a feature of British identity that is associated with reassurance, communication, and continuity. However, it does this by asking them to metaphorically be turned into weapons of war. In other words, something positive and seemingly innocent must be mobilised as a weapon in order to defeat the enemy.

Despite many of the differences between right-wing and left-wing approaches to the work on myth as outlined in section 4.3, one article in *The Guardian* by Norman Geras entitled “There are Apologists among us” follows a style more reminiscent of right-wing publications. Geras lambasts those he perceives as “apologists” who could express “dismay” or “grief” without accompanying it with “we told you so” as part of “an exercise in blaming someone other than the perpetrator. Geras argues there were “apologists for what the killers do” among us who “make more difficult the fight to defeat them [the bombers]”. These are individuals who will cite Iraq as the only plausible cause. What these individuals fail to accept is that it is a “fanatical, fundamentalist belief system which teaches hatred and justifies these acts of murder” but, sadly, this fact “somehow gets a free pass from the hunters-out of causes.” Geras finishes with a rallying call:

There are apologists among us, and they have to be fought intellectually and politically. **They do not help to strengthen the democratic culture and institutions whose benefits we all share.** Because we believe in and value these, we have to contend with what such people say. But contend with is precisely it. We have to challenge their excuses without let-up [bold: mine].³⁹⁰

Geras attempts to present those who “make excuses” for these attackers as being a significant obstacle to tackling extremism, so much so

³⁸⁹ John Sutherland, "When Phone Boxes come into their Own," *ibid.* (11 July 2005).

³⁹⁰ Norman Geras, "There are Apologists amongst us," *ibid.* (21 July 2005), <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2005/jul/21/july7.iraq>.

that Geras attempts to mobilise people against them as well. Geras implicitly evokes the idea of “British values” (e.g. democratic culture and institutions) that must be defended and, in this case, these values must be defended not only against the attackers and those who follow them, but also those who would offer “excuses” for them. This is representative of both the integrative and mobilising aspects of the work on myth. First, the audience is reminded of the nature of the existential conflict between Britain and a violent, radical form of Islam. The former is defined by a certain “democratic culture” from which we all benefit, and the latter is defined by a fundamentalist belief system that stands in diametric opposition to Britain and its values. Secondly, it seeks to strengthen these bonds by narrowing down who counts as part of the legitimate banner of the collective self. Those who offer “excuses” or attempt to offer alternative explanations must be resisted in order to maintain the integrity of “our values” and draw attention towards the evilness of “theirs”. This serves to ground a sense of significance for people and ontologically secure them by providing a clear, consistent understanding of the collective-self, the other, and the relation between them. Mobilisation is a powerful way to ensure that this succeeds, as discussed further in section 1.2. As discussed in section 4.3, right-leaning commentaries in the work on myth tend to attribute much of the responsibility to Muslim communities themselves or the weakness of government responses. They also express outrage at what they perceive as a culture of “political correctness.” Left leaning commentaries similarly accept the work on myth, but are more likely to question whether UK foreign policy may play a role in fueling terror. They are also more likely to warn against the dangers of Islamophobia and stress the minority of Muslims who would even consider participating in such attacks.

My analysis of right-leaning media consists of the *Daily Mail* and *The Telegraph*, beginning with the former. On the 8th July, the day after the attacks, *Daily Mail* columnist Melanie Phillips blames the “failure to secure our borders” as a major contributing factor to the violence. She further laments the “obsession” with the diversity agenda and an over-focus on “human rights.” She also makes several references to the timid responses of the UK to the threat, most notably the Government’s attempt to bring in ID cards which only enables ministers to:

... give the impression that they are doing something – while at the same time they do little to stop Islamist ideologues from using **what has come to be known as “Londonistan”** to promulgate their inflammatory diatribes against the West and thus swell the **ideological sea in which terrorism swims** [bold: mine].³⁹¹

Clearly, the usage of “Londonistan” is deliberately orchestrated to provide the reader with the image that London has been transformed into a city that embodies Islam by incorporating the suffix “stan”. The metonym “Londonistan” serves to replace the traditional signifier of the British capital city of London in a manner that is intended to incite a sense of outrage. The security of individuals both in their physical/somatic and ontological sense had been compromised. This is expressed in the integrative aspect of the political myth by revealing a critical blow that the enemy has inflicted upon the collective self. That is, the enemy has begun to undermine the freedom of the West and has begun to transform the city within their image, swelling the metaphorical “sea in which terrorism swims”. With this dramatic language, Phillips seeks to dispel any sense of *Angst* or estrangement by concretising the enemy and the situation Britons are in. Whereas *Angst* is categorised “intentionality of consciousness without an object”,³⁹² anger and fear are both directed against a particular object. In this case, this anger is against the attackers themselves and the weakness of the responses of government. Phillips further laments what she perceives as the police being hamstrung by the “diversity agenda” and fears of being accused of “Islamophobia,” which means that even advice from “law abiding and patriotic Muslims” (thereby invoking the good/bad Muslim dichotomy discussed in section 4.2) is often ignored. She mocks the Deputy Assistant Commissioner Brian Paddick’s claim that “Islam and terrorists are two words that do not go together”, asking him, rhetorically, what he thinks Al-Qaeda is – thereby representing the tendency of right-wing commentators to link them to Islam more broadly. Ultimately concludes that, compared to the US Homeland Security Response to the terrorist threat:

³⁹¹ Melanie Phillips, "Failure to Secure our Borders Defies Belief," *Daily Mail* (8 July 2005), <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/columnists/article-355097/Failure-secure-borders-defies-belief.html>.

³⁹² Blumenberg, *Work on Myth*, 4-5.

“[Britain], by contrast, **has pussy-footed around**. Terrified of being accused of Islamophobia and wrapping itself in the mantle of the “diversity” agenda, it **has allowed the human rights culture and a lethal political correctness to frustrate elementary and commonsense measures to protect the people of this country. The nation has been sleepwalking into disaster**. Yesterday, it paid the ultimate and terrible price [bold: mine].”³⁹³

Phillips here makes use of metaphor and personification to describe Britain “sleepwalking” into disaster. She further emphasises her perception that political correctness has weakened Britain, and encourages the country to mobilise against the violent other. Phillips hopes to further concretise the threat posed by the enemy other and leave the audience in no doubt as to who has enabled them to proliferate. Phillips’ subsequent column on 11th July 2005 entitled “No Surrender: Stop Appeasing this Terror or Suffer Total Defeat”, Phillips draws links between Britain’s conflict with the Nazis and the threat posed by terrorism. She draws comparison between the enemies of “then” and “now”:

We now face an enemy which as no country, no uniform, and no visible shape but is instead a loose and shifting affiliation of groups across the world, bound only by their unifying cause... Unlike 60 years ago, our leaders shy away from giving this menace its proper name. They call it “terrorism”. But, in fact, **it is nothing less than a world war being waged in the name of religion – with terror its weapon of attack – whose aim is to emasculate the power and reach of western culture and replace it by the hegemony of Islam** [bold: mine].³⁹⁴

Phillips here merges time and place deixis with the integrative aspect of the work on myth. She also invokes the British resilience (4.2) aspect of the collective-self narrative in order to draw direct comparison between the present situation and the Blitz. She unambiguously states the core aspect of the work on myth by referring to the conflict as fundamentally existential: an attempt to replace “emasculate the power and reach of Western culture” and replace it with the “hegemony of Islam”. The threat is therefore not merely to the physical/somatic security of Britons, but also their ontological security. That is, the established framework of familiarity experienced by

³⁹³ Phillips, "Failure to Secure our Borders Defies Belief".

³⁹⁴ "No Surrender: Stop Appeasing this Terror or Suffer Total Defeat".

most Britons, including their culture, identities, and trust-networks, are all being directly undermined by this threat. Worse still, unlike the British government that fought the Nazis, the resistance to these attacks by the present government have been weak. Elsewhere in the article, Phillips argues that the commonly held belief that fighting al-Qaeda is futile as it will only turn people against the West is flawed. She claims this is “like complaining that the only reason London endured the Blitz was because Britain had declared war on Germany.”³⁹⁵ Like then, appeasing such aggression means “cultural suicide.” Instead, the collective “we” must accept that it is “in for the long haul” and can “no longer flinch from the truth, and from the means we must use to defeat the horror that we all face.” Phillips explicitly posits that this is a conflict which can only be won or lost, with severe existential threats resulting from defeat:

“... the choice is this: **we take action which may increase the immediate problem or, in the long term, we suffer total defeat. Given such a choice, the only morally viable position is to fight terror with all the means at our disposal...** [bold: added]³⁹⁶

This invokes the key features of the work on myth: that Britain is existentially threatened by an “other” that cannot be reasoned with and must ultimately be defeated. Moreover, the final sentence is a clear expression of the mobilising aspect of the work on myth. She utilises person deixis by referring to “we”, implicating all concerned as being embroiled in this particular conflict. There are only two options: victory or defeat. Phillips presents a highly dramatic scenario in which the country must take on terrorism with all means at its disposal. She seeks to ensure that the public are not indifferent and disconnected from these events, as they would be in the absolutism of reality. In other words, she presents the situation as such that many in the public are able to find a sense of significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) within it. She acknowledges that this may cause short-term damage, but exceptional measures were required to attain victory in the long-run. Curiously, other columnists from the *Daily Mail* take a different approach., as demonstrated by Suzanne Moore. She vividly describes how London effectively carried on as normal despite the tragedy:

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

But when friends and relatives called from all over the place, the one thing that was hard to convey was how normal everything very quickly became. Rolling news now relies on some deeply perverse impulse that makes us somehow want bad things to be even more horrifying than they already are. So I switched off the TV and picked up my daughter and took her to the park to feed the ducks. As usual, the park was full of all kinds of people from all kinds of backgrounds doing all kinds of stuff - t'ai-chi, smoking spliffs, pushing kids on swings, skateboarding. The Turkish-Cypriots where I live were ensconced in their men-only cafes as ever. The Somalian shop was flogging its impossibly cheap SIM cards. The schoolkids were necking down chicken and chips. I had watched the hospitals' spokespeople calmly telling us that they were doing their best.³⁹⁷

She then goes on to remark that the events overall reminded of her why she loves London. It was not the “buildings” sights “or villages” but “its people”:

our political leaders should understand this: the war on terror cannot be won by your macho posturing. Terrorism will be defeated by those who refuse to be terrorised, by the sheer bloomin' awkwardness that Londoners showed last week. **The dead will be mourned, the injured taken care of and, yes, we have been hurt.** But we have not been terrorised. It is clear that the terrorists not only will fail, they did fail on July 7 [bold: mine].³⁹⁸

In a different way to Phillips', Moore's article answers a need for significance in this situation by hardening the integrative aspect of the work on myth and attributing naturally-resilient characteristics to Londoners. This ability to carry on and endure under substantial pressure was part of the ontological security of Londoners and emphasises their collective sense of being (which would be “being-with”). While she challenges those who invoke the comparisons to the Blitz (and thereby goes against one aspect of the narrative in section 4.2), she nonetheless invokes the general sense that Londoners cope under substantial pressure. They refused to be “terrorised” due to their “sheer bloomin' awkwardness” which means that the terrorists ultimately failed on 7 July. Londoners picked stability continuity and stability over the *Angst* that the terrorists had wished to create. Put

³⁹⁷ Suzanne Moore, "London Burning in Fear? Not at my Pub it wasn't," *ibid.* (10 July 2005), <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/columnists/article-355311/London-burning-fear-Not-pub-wasnt.html>.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

differently, Londoners chose to sustain the very modes of being that reflect their ontological security. Indeed, this continuity is also the way to defeat terrorists, rather than the “macho posturing” of political leaders. The fundamental core of the work on myth – that Britain faces an existential conflict with violent, radical, Muslim others, remains central to the article. This will ensure that the terrorists continue to “fail in future”. Indeed, this final sentence is Sorelian insofar as it prophesies victory in the face of the enemy, albeit in a less grandiose and certainly less violent manner.

This said, the revelation that the bombers were British provoked a severe challenge to the ontological security of Britons.³⁹⁹ The *Daily Mail* reacts to this most strongly, with one editorial describes as “frightening and profoundly depressing” that the bombers were British-born and “educated in our schools”, drawing “upon all our civilising benefits.” It argues that the Muslim community should:

... take a long hard look at itself... abandon the ‘myth’ that Islam has nothing to do with the atrocities and reject Islamic infallibility... The Muslim community, such a positive and dynamic addition to our national life, faces hard choices. Does it wish to integrate itself into our community, to play a full, unequivocal part in the Britain of today, a country characterised by the live-and-let-live values of tolerance, good humour, and fair play? Or does it wish to allow sections of the community to turn in on themselves, embracing the kind of fundamentalist extremism that breeds hatred of the West and ultimately martyrs?⁴⁰⁰

This article follows the general trend of right-leaning publications in laying some blame on Muslims for fact that there are people within their

³⁹⁹ As Sanz Sabido highlights, the immediate post 7/7 discourses often emphasised the “‘foreign’ nature of ‘terrorism’ and [made] its perpetrators look “foreign”. See: Rut M. Sanz Sabido, "When the "Other" Becomes "Us": Mediated Representations of "Terrorism" and the "War on Terror"," *PLATFORM: Journal of Media and Communication* 1 (2009): 78. This This assumption was made in the *Sunday Telegraph* and other newspapers that the bombers were part of a “foreign based Islamic-terrorist cell” before it emerged that they were British. See: Nick Davies, *Flat Earth News* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2008), 34. This was also a topic discussed in a well-known speech by Gordon Brown where he calls for a national day of Britishness in order to construct an “essential common purpose”. See: BBC News, "Brown speech promotes Britishness," (14 January 2006), http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/4611682.stm.

⁴⁰⁰ Daily Mail, "Fundamental Challenges Lie Ahead," (13 July 2005), <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-355635/Fundamental-challenges-ahead.html#ixzz3QEJSqVJG>.

communities who wish to commit acts of terror. Muslims are asked to make a choice, and one that reflects the good/bad Muslim dichotomy that features heavily in the work on myth and is discussed further in section 4.2. Namely, would Muslims prefer to be associated with a core part of the British self in terms of (although not explicitly stated) British values such as tolerance, good humour, and fair play? Or would it allow certain sections to “turn in on themselves”, and enable them to breed the extremism that causes such violence. This is a question asked of Muslims with the intention of showing the incompatibility with the perceived two understandings of Islam: the good and the bad. However, Muslims can find a sense of significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) by playing a “full, unequivocal part” in British society and gain a sense of ontological security by taking part in this conflict, siding with the good against the evil. Yet, as another editorial suggests, many Muslims are refusing to do this and are, in fact, in denial:

Item after item on radio and television has dwelt upon the need to avoid blaming Muslims for what happened, rather than addressing the hard questions to the community that cry out to be asked. In doing so, it has been taking its cue from the Muslim community itself, which seems to be in the deepest denial. Yes, it has certainly condemned the atrocity in the strongest terms. But in the very next breath, its leaders have effectively washed their hands of it by repeating like a mantra that anyone claiming to be a Muslim who commits such an act is not a proper Muslim, because Islam is a religion of peace.⁴⁰¹

The remainder of the article then suggests that (erroneously) that *Jihad* translates to “holy war”, and that this understanding of *Jihad* is central to Islam. This, the editorial claims, shows claims by the Muslim community that the terror attacks committed by the individuals from Leeds were disconnected from Islam, “turns both logic and morality on their heads.” It is also a “moral inversion” which results from “the cultural brainwashing that has been in Britain for years in pursuit of the disastrous doctrine of Multiculturalism.” This doctrine has:

“refused to teach young Muslims – along with other minorities – the core of British culture and values.” Instead, it has promoted a lethally divisive culture of separateness, in which minority cultures are held to be

⁴⁰¹ "A grotesque attack on Britain's values," (24 May 2013), <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2330000/DAILY-MAIL-COMMENT-A-grotesque-attack-Britains-values.html#ixzz3cewqs5OE>.

equal if not superior to the values and traditions of the indigenous majority.”⁴⁰²

This article explicitly evokes the idea of “British values” and the fact that they have not been sufficiently promoted to Muslims, thereby fostering a condition of separateness. The consequence is that all cultures are seen as equal, and there is no overarching consistent self-narrative. This represents a statement of ontological insecurity about a collective sense of Britishness. Without the overarching consistency, and with contradictory interpretations of the collective self operating within close proximity, there is no way of concretising who “we are”. The article therefore advocates an end to the politically correct culture that hampers any attempt at victory within the work on myth. This is further emphasised in a subsequent article which criticises the weakness of the response by Muslim communities to the attacks. While the article declares that the *Daily Mail* is proud of its “ever-growing Muslim Asian readership”, it questions whether Muslim leaders were providing the needed leadership.⁴⁰³ While nobody could the “revulsion” felt by the majority of Muslims, there has been a “deeply worrying equivocation when it comes to challenging the evil forces behind the London atrocities”. This is disastrous as it is ultimately “only the Muslim community itself that can stamp out Islamic extremism”. It makes a call to action for Muslims:

The great majority of decent Muslims must confront the factors which breed in a minority of zealots a loathing of the West so great they are prepared to die - provided they also kill the hated 'infidel'. This will mean silencing the imams who preach their bigotry, closing the mosques that give them a platform, cleansing the websites that pump out hatred. To do this will require great maturity by the Muslim leadership which needs to worry less about a Muslim-as-victim mindset and concentrate more on providing strong direction for their communities [bold: mine].⁴⁰⁴

This is the mobilising aspect of the work on myth directed squarely at Muslim communities or, more specifically, those who fall within the

⁴⁰² "This Lethal Moral Madness ", *Daily Mail* 14 July 2005.

⁴⁰³ "A Crying Need for Leadership," *ibid.*,
<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-355757/A-crying-need-leadership.html#ixzz3QEK2LGh7>.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

“good Muslim” category (see section 4.2). It calls for Muslims to take action in multiple fields that they are familiar with, such as in mosques on the internet. Their present weakness is only fuelling the terror that Muslims would ultimately wish to see defeated, just as the majority of law-abiding people would also wish. Good Muslims, whether they like it or not, are embroiled within this conflict, and their own ontological security has been challenged. Others with inimical values to “good” Muslims have disrupted their “being-with” (*Mitsein*) others, and the established relations that constitute places they are familiar with are currently being commandeered by those with inimical values to Britons and good Muslims alike. These arguments are designed to efface the impotence that occurs in times of *Angst*, and instead draw the attention of Muslims to the enemy within who must ultimately be defeated. It effectively asks Muslims to mobilise themselves within the framework of the work on myth in order to reclaim their own sense of collective self away from those who have betrayed them. The *Telegraph* repeats many of the themes that the *Daily Mail* discusses, albeit in a different tone, and with far more emphasis on the “British resilience” narrative. Stephen Robinson urges Londoners to “remain at their posts” and praises those who are “doing their duty in their own way by going to work, meeting friends for lunch, or going shopping.” He warns that fear of terrorism can be more dangerous than terrorism itself, citing the example of Americans substituting planes for cars following 9/11, and increasing the amount of road accidents in the process. Robinson concludes that it is similarly the responsibility of the British Government to ensure that fear does not allow “the terrorists to change our way of life.”⁴⁰⁵ Niall Ferguson ties this temporal connection with the “British resilience” theme (section 4.2):

London took it from the Luftwaffe. London took it from the IRA. And London can take it from al-Qaeda, or whichever wretched gang of fanatics was responsible. I happened to be in Berlin when the bombs went off in London, and that prompted a further angry thought. **London can take it. And London can bloody well dish it out, too. Our capital has been bombed before.** But those responsible lived - though generally not for very

⁴⁰⁵ Stephen Robinson, "Remain at Your Post to Maintain the Day-to-Day Life of this Country," *The Daily Telegraph* 9 July 2005.

long - to regret it. **The Germans were made to pay - tenfold - for the Blitz** [bold: mine].⁴⁰⁶

Like others, Ferguson provides significance to events by contextualising them as part of a long time-line of conflicts in which Britain has triumphed. He uses time and place deixis to position the attacks on London as if they were occurred in succession to a series of previous attacks from London's enemies that it has ultimately overcome. His take conjures up images of a similar fate befalling the perpetrators of 7/7 bombings as experienced by the Nazis. Since the conflict is equivocated by implication, one can be in no doubt that the enemy will ultimately be defeated. He reminds Londoners that they are also able to "dish it out" re-asserts a sense of self-esteem and solidified the integrative aspect of myth by reminding the audience of the fundamental strength of London and Londoners. By directly connecting the events to the Blitz, the Ferguson is able to present the present attacks on London through a framework that is already important to British self-identity, as explained more in section 4.2. This gives the conflict, and Britons themselves, a renewed sense of significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) that allows them to contextualise the events. This is particularly important for feelings of ontological security. Although the audience may be in a state of fear or anger, the construction of such events with reference to previous conflicts (i.e., Britain defeated the Germans so will defeat the terrorists) serves as a useful cognitive schemata that enables people to present events in a manner that would be familiar to them.

Similarly, Patrick Bishop opts to remind people that resilience is best expressed in the form of normality. In an article entitled "Remember that normality is the only civilised response to terror," he makes clear that while there is an existential threat facing the public that must be dealt with, people must continue with the steadfast determination to continue with their lives as they usually would. Nonetheless, "Realism," Bishop argues, demands an acceptance that the attack was not a "one-off" but was "an action in an open-ended war in which innocent city-dwellers all over the world are very

⁴⁰⁶ Niall Ferguson, "Here's a challenge: link the al-Qaeda booms to povert and global warming," *The Telegraph* 10 July 2005.

much in the front line.”⁴⁰⁷ A similar approach is taken by Stephen Robinson. Robinson urges Londoners to “remain at their posts” – a metaphor of war - and praises those who are “doing their duty in their own way by going to work, meeting friends for lunch, or going shopping.” He warns that fear of terrorism can be more dangerous than terrorism itself, citing the example of Americans substituting planes for cars following 9/11, and increasing the amount of road accidents in the process. Robinson concludes that it is similarly the responsibility of the British Government to ensure that fear does not allow “the terrorists to change our way of life.”⁴⁰⁸ All of these articles evoke the “British resilience” aspect of the political myth, in which Britain has an exceptional characteristic of resilience, as demonstrated in historical epochs such as the Blitz. The authors attempt to imbue the events with significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) recalling these narratives in order to provide inspiration for the public to maintain their sense of ontological security; to carry on as normal but with the awareness that there are concrete threats to be aware of. However, in Robinson’s article, there is also the mention that terrorists would seek to “change our way of life”. Using the terminology outlined in chapter 1, Robinson effectively warns that the terrorists hope for Britons to change how they relate to one another, or alter their “being-in-the-world” and especially their “being-with” (*Mitsein*). A plea to sustain normality is fundamentally a plea to sustain the same grounding (in the sense of *begründen*) which enabled them to find a sense of significance more broadly and ontological security in particular.

With this theme in mind, one writer for *The Telegraph* expresses frustration at Tony Blair’s reaction to 7/7 at the G8 summit for being inappropriate. Blair was, according to Utley, “fighting back tears” and “feeling the nation’s pain.” Utley finds this frustrating:

Yes, of course he was right to express his deep sympathy with the victims and their families, which all of us feel. But this was also a time for defiance and cold, measured anger. **Imagine if Winston Churchill had delivered his famous speech "We shall fight on the beaches.... We**

⁴⁰⁷ Patrick Bishop, "Remember That Normality is the Only Civilised Response to Terror," *ibid.* (8 July 2005), <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/personal-view/3618225/Remember-that-normality-is-the-only-civilised-response-to-terror.html>.

⁴⁰⁸ Robinson, "Remain at Your Post to Maintain the Day-to-Day Life of this Country."

shall never surrender" with a lump in his throat. How much more effective and stirring that speech was for being delivered in a steady, unemotional, matter-of-fact way. And Churchill was speaking at a time when rather more than half a dozen bombs were exploding in the capital [bold: mine].⁴⁰⁹

This refers directly to Churchill's "We shall fight on the beaches" speech, discussed in section 4.2. Utley utilises time and person *deixis* to draw unambiguous comparisons between 7/7 and the Blitz. In particular, he attempts to draw links between Tony Blair and Winston Churchill, claiming that the former's response was fundamentally deficient in comparison to the latter. This typifies the importance of the role of the leader in the work on myth (see section 4.2) but, in this particular case, Utley is clear that Blair's emotion was not a desirable mode of response. Indeed, Blair's behaviour appears to contradict the calls for normality but resoluteness that other articles in *The Telegraph* have expressed. Nonetheless, emotion was not completely absent even from *The Telegraph*. Nigel Farndale describes the "five stages of grief" which he and other Londoners experienced following the bombings. These were denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. The denial phase occurred when people opted to attribute the incident to a "power surge" rather than terrorist activity, or that a suicide bomber had been shot by security forces while attempting to blow up Canary Wharf. The anger phase constituted resentment towards the fact this was "our town those bastards were bombing." He even claims that the heat of the anger phase would have made people receptive to the idea of internment for all terror suspects, bulldozing Mosques which preach "hatred of the West," and even bringing back "hanging, drawing and quartering" for terrorists. In the "bargaining" phase, people began to question whether there was any point in "threatening fanatics," and whether they had "brought this on themselves" due to UK Foreign Policy. In the depression phase, people realised that it could have been "any of us" on that Tube, and that close family and friends had almost been caught up in it. Finally, in the acceptance phase, Farndale claims it was inevitable as after 9/11, "we all became Americans, and that is what everyone in the West still is."⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁹ Tom Utley, "Accept that the Terrorist Threat is Here to Stay," *ibid.* (8 July 2005).

⁴¹⁰ Nigel Farndale, "We're Still New Yorkers," *The Telegraph* 10 July 2005.

Farndale's article is powerful because of its personalised nature. He makes a series of assertions about how people would feel, and vividly describes the shattering of the ontological security that many people would have felt in the immediate aftermath of the attack. Yet, ultimately, the only conclusion was to accept the core premise of the work on myth: that Britain was embroiled in an existential conflict with a violent, radical form of Islam and Muslims. Furthermore, we must also accept that we are all a part of this conflict, and that this has been the case since we all "became Americans" following the attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001. This article may describe the shattering of ontological security, as stated above, but it also describes the way in which it re-emerges. It is this call to resilience that remains important, and *The Telegraph* continues to emphasise this call elsewhere by reminding the audience of the importance of British resilience with other values associated with Britishness. Liberal values such as tolerance as viewed as central to Britishness (as discussed section 4.2), and these values are made clear in an editorial entitled "A Dark Day from Which We Will Emerge Stronger," the *Telegraph* comments:

Yet it is in the nature of a great city that it can ride such ups and downs, if not with equanimity, then with a determination that violence shall not prevail... Through a combination of vigilance, tolerance of religious diversity and sheer grit, the rest of us must.

While the city is able to withstand various "ups and down", but not necessarily always with equanimity, the city utilises its values of tolerance to sustain its collective-self narrative at a time of substantial difficulty. *The Telegraph* often describes the process of this happening via individual narrative accounts. These accounts tend to invoke the themes of *resilience* along with the public mobilising effect of myth. Andrew Martin's article, entitled "Travelling by Tube is what Defines Londoners – it makes them Different", describes his own personal experiences of the Tube, capturing many of the familiar sights and sounds of those who frequent it. Martin expresses his fondness for the system, describing it as the "most complicated and beautiful system of urban transport in the world, full of lacunae, which seems to be encapsulated in the famous warning "Mind the

gap.” Martin subsequently relates these affections for the Tube to the recent bombings in London:

... Tube travel in general represents such a high level of imagination and civilisation that an attack upon it by the fundamentally jealous was inevitable. Every Tube user knew this, and yet continued to ride the trains. Was it because they had no choice? I'd rather say that the mysterious arteries of the system have become analogous to those within their own bodies. The underground runs through the bloodstream of Londoners, and the terrorists will need to do more than they did on Thursday to change this.⁴¹¹

Martin's article appears to be an attempt to project a sense of significance for Londoners by emphasising their own unique position within the world. He does this firstly by describing the high standards of “imagination and civilisation” which they are part of. This self-esteem is reinforced by reducing the bombers to people who “jealous” of these things. Finally, Martin invokes the British resilience theme by describing the futility of the efforts of the bombers to dissuade Londoners from normality. By metaphorically comparing the railway lines of the tube the arteries within their own bodies, Londoners are intimately connected to the Tube itself. Martin reminds Londoners of the symbolic value of the Tube and the fortitude it ultimately gives them. It strengthens the position of Londoners who, despite being victims of a tragedy perpetrated by barbarism, could not be deterred by the weakness of bomber's efforts.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have analysed the rhetoric of senior politicians and newspaper columnists following the 7th July 2005 bombings in London. I noted that the work on myth was highly prevalent in the immediate aftermath of the attack, with most of the emphasis being given to the British resilience narratives, and particularly those of the Blitz. I began by looking at key political speeches and debates in the House of Commons. Most notably, the rhetoric meant frequent inferences of time, place, and person deixis, and continuous attempts to remind the audience that they, and generations before them, have overcome previous challenges and will

⁴¹¹ Andrew Martin, "Travelling by Tube is what defines Londoners - it makes them different," *The Daily Telegraph* 10 July 2005.

ultimately be successful. This would have the effect of ontologically securitising in a moment of crisis. Without the event being interpreted in such a manner and related directly to the audience, it risked the attacks either becoming an indifferent event within the absolutism of reality, inciting potential *Angst*. This would be the antithesis to the ontological security that scholars have argued is imperative to our “being-in-the-world” (see section 1.4).

I subsequently analysed responses in Newspaper articles from both right-leaning and left-leaning publication. I noted that both publications worked on the fundamentals of the political myth in that there was broad agreement that Britain was facing an existential conflict with radical and violent Muslims. Both left-leaning and right-leaning publications also drew from identity-narratives, and especially those of the “Blitz spirit” (section 4.2). Just as with the rhetoric of politicians (section 5.2), the analysis showed that left-leaning and right-leaning Newspaper commentators sought to inspire a sense of significance and ontologically securitising at a time of crisis. That said, the main difference appears to be who the left and right attribute blame to. Right-wing publications tended towards blaming Muslim communities themselves and the weakness of the government who were accused of being in thrall to political correctness. Left-wing publications were shown to be more likely to blame UK foreign policy and the 2003 invasion of Iraq in particular.

The purpose of this section was not to provide a comprehensive empirical analysis of the work on myth across the entirety of society. Rather, it was concerned with how the work on myth in political and media rhetoric addresses the existential needs many experience during these times of perceived crisis. It follows the theoretical framework grounded in Chapter 1, which is grounded in the philosophical points made by numerous existential philosophers that *Angst* and estrangement are crucial to our experiences of being-in-the-world. We constantly need to ground (*begründen*) a sense of significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*), and we may do this in many ways.⁴¹² However, in such moments of crisis, political myth is one crucial way in which politicians and media elites seek to fill the void.

⁴¹² Kerényi, "Prolegomena."; Blumenberg, *Work on Myth*. Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth*.

Significance grants us a sense of security in our mode of being, how we relate to the world, our trust networks, and our routines (as pointed out by ontological security scholars).⁴¹³ I note that 7/7 is one example of these trust networks being breached.

The chapter has been the first demonstration of how a deixis and tropes can be utilised to analyse political and media rhetoric following a terror attack. This in itself is a unique contribution to the literature, although it should be made clear that there may also be other ways the texts could be read. By this I mean that my reading is not the only legitimate one and, indeed, alterations to my theory of political myth would also produce a different reading of the text. However, what this chapter has provided is a clear and highly methodical interrogation of the work on myth in this particular context, and I would that it can also apply elsewhere.

⁴¹³ Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration; Modernity and Self-Identity*; Kinnvall, "Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security."

Chapter 6: The Murder of Fusilier Lee Rigby on May 23rd 2013

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I analyse the subsequent rhetoric by political and media elites following the murder of Fusilier Lee Rigby on 22nd May 2013. I adopt the same methodological approach in outlined in chapter 3 and deployed in chapter 5. Rigby's murder at the hands of Michael Adebolajo and Michael Adebowale shocked many people across the country. Rigby was a soldier who had been deployed to Afghanistan and returned unscathed, only to be killed on a London street near his barracks. Furthermore, the attackers themselves were recorded on a mobile phone camera blaming UK Foreign policy for the murder while holding meat cleavers with blood-stained hands. Much of the subsequent rhetoric from politicians and media elites was more personalised than it was following the 7/7. Rigby was portrayed as a hero killed in a brutal, savage and cowardly attack, his killers were brutal villains, and some members of the public such as Ingrid Loyau-Kennett were kind, selfless, and brave people who were subsequently venerated. Many newspaper articles praised the so-called "Angels of Woolwich" who tried to protect Rigby,⁴¹⁴ and particularly Ingrid Loyau-Kennett who confronted one of the attackers directly.⁴¹⁵ The fact that Rigby was a soldier was also extremely important, with many politicians and media commentators remarking on the special tragedy that this brought. Many remarked on the savagery and even the idiocy of Adebolajo and Adebowale.⁴¹⁶ Altogether, this was an episode of extreme and graphic drama which was highly personal and unexpected.

The attack incited many other important social phenomena in the country, most notably a largescale increase of intolerance towards Muslims.

⁴¹⁴ Daily Mail, "Two more Angels of Woolwich revealed: Mother and daughter comforted murdered soldier in his final moments because 'no man should die alone'," *Daily Mail* (24 May 2013), <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2329458/The-Angels-Woolwich-Three-womens-outstanding-courage-confront-killers-pray-slaughtered-soldier.html>.

⁴¹⁵ Telegraph View, "We Must Have the Courage to Confront the Preachers of Hate," *The Telegraph* (25 May 2013), <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/telegraph-view/10080026/We-must-have-the-courage-to-confront-the-preachers-of-hate.html>.

⁴¹⁶ Fraser Nelson, "We shouldn't bother looking for any logic in attacks like these. There is none to be found," *ibid.* 23 May 2013.

This was most vividly manifest in the upsurge in popularity of the extreme right-wing group known as the English Defence League (EDL). On the evening after the attack, EDL supporters were encouraged to “take to the streets”, leading to approximately 250 EDL members clashing with police, throwing bottles and engaging in various skirmishes across the public square. A 43 year-old man was arrested on suspicion of arson after entering a mosque in Braintree wielding a knife and an “incendiary device.”⁴¹⁷ Over 1,200 police officers were deployed in the vicinity the following night.⁴¹⁸ The overall popularity of the EDL on Social Media significantly increased in the first 24 hours following the attack on Lee Rigby. Prior to the event, the EDL was posted about on *Twitter* approximately 500 times per day. However, on the day of the attack it was mentioned 15,700 times and its messages were seen by an estimated 1.5 million people.⁴¹⁹ Another 1,500 EDL supporters opted to attend a pre-arranged demonstration in Newcastle upon Tyne on the Saturday following the attack.⁴²⁰ While there were incidents of violence and harassment following the July 7th attacks, the scale of the response of the far-right following the murder of Lee Rigby was much larger.

The chapter begins with an analysis of the rhetoric of politicians following the attacks (section 6.2). It subsequently moves on to discuss the reaction of *The Guardian*, *Daily Mirror*, *The Telegraph*, and *Daily Mail* columnists. It demonstrates that the same process of the work on myth that was seen following 7/7 also occurred in this case, but with contextual differences.

⁴¹⁷ "Woolwich killing: plea for calm as mosques are targeted and English Defence League clash with police," *Evening Standard* 22 May 2013.

⁴¹⁸ Martin Evans, "Woolwich attack: 1,200 police on guard against revenge attacks against Muslim Community," *The Telegraph* (23 May 2013), <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/10077305/Woolwich-attack-1200-police-on-guard-against-revenge-attacks-against-Muslim-community.html>.

⁴¹⁹ Caitlin Dewey, "London knife attack boosts British far-right groups on social media," *The Washington Post* (May 23 2013), http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2013/05/23/london-knife-attack-boosts-british-far-right-groups-on-social-media/?wprss=rss_world

⁴²⁰ Sara Nichol, "EDL march Newcastle: thousands of protesters march in rival parades," *Chronicle* (25 May 2013), <http://www.chroniclive.co.uk/news/north-east-news/edl-march-newcastle-thousands-protesters-4015897>.

6.2 Politicians after the Murder of Lee Rigby

The evening after the attack, the Prime Minister David Cameron gave a speech outside Downing Street which, according to *Telegraph* columnist Matthew d'Ancona, went through several drafts.⁴²¹ Cameron began by outlining his feelings about what had happened the preceding day:

What happened yesterday in Woolwich has sickened us all. On our televisions last night – and in our newspapers this morning – we have all seen images that are deeply shocking. **The people who did this were trying to divide us. They should know: something like this will only bring us together and make us stronger.** Today our thoughts are with the victim – and with his family. They are grieving for a loved one... And we have lost a brave soldier [bold: mine].⁴²²

Cameron seeks to make significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) in a situation of crisis in order to ontologically securitise the perceived collective British-self. In particular, Cameron uses person *deixis* to reinforce the distinctions between the collective self and other. He reminds the audience that the barbaric displays of the enemy that occurred in Woolwich affected everybody. Much of the discussion about the event had centred on the personal qualities of the victim, and the fact that he was a young man with a wife and child. Many people across the country have spouses and children, the thought of this loss is understandably grief-inducing. Cameron appeals to these feelings by merging person *deixis* with place *deixis*, thereby connecting the events in Woolwich directly to the audience. However, this does not necessarily need to be *Angst*-inducing because it ultimately serves to concretise the self and other; it strengthens and unites all Britons against a clearly definable other. The need for ontological security was particularly important for those who lived in London and/or are members of the Armed Forces and their families. Armed Forces personnel are often held in high regard in many countries, and Britain is no exception. Yet the brazen

⁴²¹ Matthew d'Ancona, "Woolwich attack: How far is Britain willing to go to prevent modern jihadis?," *The Telegraph* (25 May 2013), <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/10080028/Woolwich-attack-How-far-is-Britain-willing-to-go-to-prevent-modern-jihadis.html>.

⁴²² David Cameron, Statement on Woolwich Incident, ed. Cabinet Office (Prime Minister's Office, 10 Downing Street 23 May 2013).

disregard and butchery demonstrated by Rigby's attackers shattered these assumptions. Hence, a void was created that extended beyond the immediate physical threat posed by the attackers. This void was, however, aptly filled by David Cameron by referring to other familiar, unifying tropes. He refers to the attack as being an attack "on Britain" and "on our British way of life". This was not an attack by the Britons the Armed Forces personnel seek to defend (i.e. non-Muslims and "good" Muslims), but those who adopt a warped interpretation of Islam and who, by implication, are enemies of Britain:

It was also a betrayal of Islam – and of the Muslim communities who are give [sic] so much to our country. There is nothing in Islam that justifies this truly dreadful act [bold: mine].⁴²³

Cameron here evokes the clear distinctions between good and bad Muslims in order to erase any doubt about the nature of the killers as a detached "other". Not only does this reassure Armed Forces people that this was simply an attack by an enemy they are already familiar with, but it reassures good Muslims that they retain their place within Britain, but that they are starkly distinguished from "bad" Muslims. This evokes the nexus of relations that constitute the work on myth: the distinction between legitimate Britons on the one hand and the irredeemable enemy on the other (section 4.2). This provides also provides a template for the mobilising aspect of myth, as Cameron reminds the audience that we all have the responsibility to confront extremism. One of the most unique features of this speech is the emphasis he places on one particular heroic figure, Ingrid Loyau-Kennett, a cub pack leader who confronted the attackers while they were still wielding their blood-soaked weapons. While the theme of heroism is often a feature of political myth, the direct, personal reference to an extant person is unusual, especially when this person is a civilian. As Cameron states:

Confronting extremism is a job for us all. And the fact that our communities will unite in doing this was vividly demonstrated by the **brave cub pack leader – Ingrid Loyau-Kennett** – who confronted one of the attackers on the streets of Woolwich yesterday afternoon. **When told by the attacker that he wanted to start a war in**

⁴²³ Ibid.

London she replied “You’re going to lose. It’s only you versus many.” She spoke for us all [bold: mine].⁴²⁴

By using person *deixis*, he begins by evoking the mobilising aspect of myth by declaring that confronting extremism is a job for “us all”. He turns the words of Loyau-Kennett into a metaphor that represents the position of himself and the audience as being against the extremist enemy. As already established, this audience also includes Muslims who are not associated with such extremism. Cameron turns Loyau-Kennett into a metaphor that represents the deictic centre as being embroiled within an epic conflict with the extremist enemy. Being a cub pack leader as well, she symbolises a figure of everyday “goodness” and decency in society which stood in the face of an insidious evil. Moreover, her bravery is even more profound given the physical danger she placed herself in. Many images exist of Loyau-Kennett standing face-to-face with the attacker, whose hands are covered in blood and is still holding the weapon he used to murder Lee Rigby. Loyau-Kennett’s role in this confrontation is also unique insofar as she directly evoked the mobilising aspect of myth herself, prior to this being interpreted by others. She accepted the attacker’s statement that there will be a war, and declares that the “many” (meaning those opposed to extremism) will ultimately be victorious (a fundamentally Sorelian promise).

The killers’ intent to “start a war in London” was countered with the reassurance that the collective “we” would win. Not only does this provide the promise of victory in the Sorelian sense, but it also reassures that they can assume their inevitable victory, thus filling any potential void of anxiety. Moreover, it may not assuage people of fear (which, unlike anxiety, has a concrete and direct focus), but it at least makes more direct, concrete, and certain, a situation that may otherwise make us regress to *Angst*. What we have is a variant of the fundamental theme in the political myth: a struggle between good and evil. The myth makes these boundaries more simple and concrete, thereby allowing the audience to provide significance to the attack and their relation to it. It therefore cannot be an event that is indifferent to them within the vast “absolutism of reality”, despite the likelihood that the audience would not have known Rigby or his family

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

directly. The concreteness of the relation between audience and event also eliminates the potential for *Angst* as it no longer appears to be a random and meaningless occurrence of violence, but part of a larger conflict between Britain its enemies. While it may cause more definite emotions such as fear and anger which have a direct object this is (as Kierkegaard would have surmised) preferable to the directionless condition of *Angst*. In sum, the work on myth was evoked in order to enable the audience to ground a sense of significance to the events which allowed them to maintain collective self-narrative consistency that typifies a state of ontological security.

The day after the murder of Lee Rigby, Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg gave a speech to a multi-faith audience at the *Hugh Cubitt Peabody Centre* in Islington. As the Deputy Prime Minister and leader of a party in a coalition government, it is important that Clegg's speeches are also analysed. The event was organised hastily in an attempt to display unity following the attack. Clegg praised all the people for attending, not least because it brought people together at a time of severe anxiety in which people were asking themselves "searching questions in London and across the country today."⁴²⁵ Due to the nature of this event, Clegg was keen to separate what he perceived as a "perverted" version of Islam that was used to justify these murders:

Because let's be clear. People who inflict such random, savage violence in the name of some entirely warped ideology or some entirely perverted concept of religion in the way that we have seen on our television screens... As the Prime Minister quite rightly said, what we heard from these two individuals was a total unqualified betrayal of Islam, a religion of peace was being distorted, turned upside down and inside out, perverted in the cause of an abhorrent and violent set of intentions from those individuals.⁴²⁶

Clegg subsequently quotes from the verse 32 chapter 5 of the Qur'an, which says "If anyone kills a human being it shall be as though he killed all mankind whereas if anyone saves a life it shall be as though he saved the whole of mankind".⁴²⁷ This interpretation, read literally, renders the actions of Rigby's attackers to be contrary to the teachings of Islam. Indeed, in Clegg's words, it is a "betrayal" of Islam, so much so that it

⁴²⁵ Nick Clegg, Deputy Prime Minister's Speech at a Community Event in London, (Cabinet Office, Deputy Prime Minister's Office 24 May 2013).

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

⁴²⁷ Ibid.

turned the religion “upside down and inside out”, in such a fashion as to make it unrecognisable to its adherents. In doing this, Clegg separates this perverted form of Islam away from the legitimate and good form of Islam followed by people in the room he gave the speech to. This aspect of the speech was to shift the perverted form of Islam as far away from the deictic centre – which encompasses good Muslims and others – as possible.

Clegg’s speech also discusses the affront to the ontological security of Londoners that the attack has caused. While Cameron also touches on this (see above), Clegg is far more direct when he points out that the attack had been “all the more unsettling... because the individuals concerned dressed, spoke, appeared to all intents and purposes like so many other young Londoners that we might come across every day of the week.”⁴²⁸ As section 1.4 elaborates further, a crucial part of ontological security is having clear established routines, and that one can make certain assumptions about ourselves, others, and our places in the world. The fact that the attackers were dressed in hoodies, jeans, and spoke with south London accents was constructed as an affront to these basic assumptions. As all research into ontological security would surmise, when these basic assumptions are shattered it can be deeply distressing and anxiety-inducing for individuals. Finally, Clegg addresses the fear that people were feeling at the time, and makes a plea for carrying on:

We have a choice to either allow that powerful **corrosive feeling of fear** [*this may be understood as anxiety in the existential literature*] to seep into every second and minute and hour of our lives or we can make a choice that we’re not going to change our behaviour. We’re not going to disrupt normal life. **We’re going to** continue our life as before. **We’re going to** continue to reach out to each other. **We’re going to** continue to look people in the eye. **We’re going to** continue to be the diverse community that we are, and you have made that choice by coming to this event [bold: mine].⁴²⁹

Clegg begins four consecutive sentences with either “we’re not going” or “we’re going” in a commanding tone. This use of repetition and parallelism was strategically similar to Churchill’s “we will fight them on the beaches” in its repetition and intention to charter a clear and unambiguous course of action. Clegg uses drama in his speech in order to

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

ironically mobilise people towards normality. This also has undertones of the “stiff-upper lip” narrative (for more on this, see section 4.3). This means Clegg does much of what is discussed in the theoretical framework outlined in chapter 1. In his appeal for calmness, normality, and resilience, Clegg seeks to reduce the acuteness of perceived threats, whether in terms of worry about somatic harm resulting from similar attacks or in the loss of a sense of collective self and established routines. This is a classic example of invoking the work on myth as a way of ontologically securitising. Indeed, in this case, the act of ontologically securitising is a way of finding significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*). Clegg’s speech is also far more directly concerned with the phenomenological experiences of the audience themselves. In other words, he is concerned directly with their “being-in-the-world” and how “being” (in the sense of *Dasein*) functions as “being-with” (*Mitsein*). Via the work on myth, Clegg hopes to use the conflict with the violent radical Islamic other to strengthen *Dasein*’s relation with others. This may translate into concrete actions such as openness, tolerance, friendship, all of which were displayed in the room in which Clegg delivered his speech.

In the first full Commons Debate on the attack on 3rd June 2013, David Cameron gave a statement on the murder of Lee Rigby and the security measures that would take place following it. He began first by condemning the attacks unreservedly:

What happened on the streets of Woolwich shocked and sickened us all. **It was a despicable attack on a British soldier who stood for our country and our way of life, and it was a betrayal of Islam and of the Muslim communities who give so much to our country.** There is nothing in Islam that justifies acts of terror, and **I welcome the spontaneous condemnation of the attack from mosques and Muslim community organisations across our country.** We will not be cowed by terror, and **terrorists who seek to divide us will only make us stronger and more united in our resolve to defeat them** [bold: mine].⁴³⁰

Cameron uses person *deixis* and metonymy to argue that the attack on Rigby was an attack on our values and way of life, which Rigby himself represented. Rigby came to symbolise more than just a person or even a

⁴³⁰ David Cameron in HC Deb 3 June 2013, vol 563, col 1234.

soldier, but a representation of “our way of life”. The statement “our way of life” invokes the integrative aspect of myth by person *deixis* first (our), and also implies all images of familiarity, from our politics, society, friends, family and activities we may enjoy doing. In other words, those conditions that orientate us towards finding significance for our being-in-the-world were challenged by this attack on Rigby, no matter if we were directly connected to him or not. A similar situation is the case for Islam and Muslims (who seem to also be separated from other Britons by implication), who have seen their faith, and the things that make their “being-in-the-world” (and beyond it) betrayed. Yet despite these grave transgressions against us which are intended to cause divisions, Cameron reminds the audience that we will remain united and steadfast against the enemy, thereby invoking the integrative aspect of myth by appealing to its mobilising aspect. The events in Woolwich are therefore not an event that occurred somewhere “out there” in the “absolutism of reality”, but were part of the core aspect of the work on myth: the irreconcilable conflict between good and evil in which we are all involved.

Cameron moves on to condemn the “callous and abhorrent” crime which the attackers had tried to justify by an “extremist ideology that **perverts and warps Islam** to create a culture of victimhood and justify violence [bold: mine].”⁴³¹ “Pervert” and “Warp” tend to be the verbs chosen by Cameron to decry and condemn those who interpret Islam in this way and use it to justify violence. Cameron also argues that “we”(person *deixis*) must tackle extremism in all its forms, and not just violent extremism As Cameron puts it with usage of metaphor, “it is as if there is a **conveyor belt to radicalisation** that has **poisoned their minds with sick and perverted ideas** [bold: mine].”⁴³² The response is to work together to defeat it: “we need to dismantle this process at every stage – in schools, colleges and universities, on the internet, in our prisons and wherever it takes place.”⁴³³ Cameron subsequently reinforced this point by announcing a newly created taskforce on tackling extremism and radicalisation would investigate whether rules on charities were too lax, allowing extremists to “prosper”,

⁴³¹ Ibid.

⁴³² Ibid., col 1235.

⁴³³ Ibid.

whether enough was being done to disrupt groups inciting hatred and violence, whether enough was being done to tackle radicalisation on university campuses, the internet, and in prisons. He also questioned whether enough was being done in informal education centres to prevent radicalisation, and whether they are doing enough to help mosques expel extremists and recruit imams “who understand Britain”.⁴³⁴ Cameron makes it clear that, while the responsibility of the murder lies with those who committed it, all of us have a responsibility to “do all we can to tackle the poisonous ideology that is perverting young minds.”⁴³⁵ With these statements, Cameron directly evokes the mobilising and integrative aspects of the work on myth: everybody all over society is embroiled within this conflict and all have a responsibility to take action to ensure victory. Cameron extends the deictic centre (i.e., from the legitimate position in which he is speaking) to the entirety of society. He makes the threat appear more real, concrete, and one which should guide our relation to one another. This iteration of place deixis expands the deictic centre to encompass the entire country, thereby reducing any sense of geographical or spatial distance that they may perceive exists between them and the issues described by Cameron. Put more simply, Cameron ensures that this conflict affects everyone wherever they are and that it is their duty to act.

Cameron’s statement was well received by the House of Commons. The leader of the Labour party opposition, Ed Miliband, praised the response of the Government and indicated his support for the measures. Miliband in particular reserved praise for members of the public, and especially Ingrid Loyau-Kennett, who had intervened to try and protect Lee Rigby. Loyau-Kennett, and other local residents in Woolwich, were the “**true face** of our country [bold: mine]”⁴³⁶ – face being a metaphor to represent the fundamental values of the country. He also resolutely condemned those who had tried to stoke up division in the community and justify their “own-hate filled agenda and attempt to ignite violence by pitting community against community”. He finishes with a rallying call for unity:

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

⁴³⁶ Ed Miliband MP in *ibid.*, col 1236.

Whatever the origin and motive of terrorists, our response will be the same—the **British people will never be intimidated**. Across every faith and every community, every part of the **country is united, not divided**, in its abhorrence of the murder of Lee Rigby. **We have seen people try to divide us with such acts before. They have failed, and they will always fail** [bold: mine].⁴³⁷

Ed Miliband is consistent with other left-leaning commentators in emphasising the need to similarly condemn extremist movements seeking to exploit these divisions, most notably the English Defence League (EDL). Miliband also seeks to evoke the cognitive aspect of the work on myth by comparing the recent attacks to those who have also attempted to divide by “such acts” before. This means that this attack is the latest episode in a struggle that Britons have endured for generations. Miliband here expresses the cognitive aspect of the work on myth via time deixis. He tries to persuade the audience that the attack can be interpreted within an established cognitive framework that associates terrorist attacks as part of a long-line of occurrences continually resisted by Britons. Via person deixis, Miliband simultaneously evokes the integrative aspect of myth by referring to the invariable distinction between “they” and the British people, who will not be intimidated (perhaps also evoking British resilience, see section 4.2). Adebolajo and Adebowale were by implication disassociated from Britain and Britishness and were instead equivocated with the perpetrators of previous attacks. Miliband attempts to portray an inspiring image of all united together in resilience to and condemnation of the grotesque act of violence perpetrated against Rigby. He does this via the mobilising aspect of myth which, while not necessarily explicitly promising victory, does promise that the enemy will “fail” to divide Britons. This aspect of myth thereby simultaneously ontologically (re)secures people and their relations to other groups, where there may otherwise have been the threat of division. Put in more existential terminology, “being-with” is not estranged from others, but can remain content in the knowledge/assumption that their established trust-relations are intact, rather than subject to the randomness that occurs in the feeling of *Angst*.

⁴³⁷ Ed Miliband MP in *ibid.*, col 1237.

After the initial exchange, Cameron responded to a series of questions about the attack. He stressed the importance of cross-party unity and attracting the best experts to deal with these issues, and he even responded to Labour's Hazel Blears MP by offering to invite her onto the newly established taskforce.⁴³⁸ Labour MP Simon Danczuk spoke of the solidarity felt by his constituents with the Armed Forces and Rigby's family and friends, and Cameron responded with agreement, warning that the "terrorists who think that they will be able to divide us or scare us actually just bring us together."⁴³⁹ Liberal Democrat MP Simon Hughes asked the Prime Minister to be careful to avoid "kneejerk" responses to the crisis, and to ensure that the Muslim community is supported in denouncing the behaviour of the extremists and also to support those who attack in the Muslim community.⁴⁴⁰ While Cameron acknowledges the need to avoid "kneejerk responses" he makes some caveats

We do not want immediate legislative responses, but on the other hand, I think that we must ask ourselves some pretty searching questions. All of us in the House condemn this **poisonous narrative**, condemn this **perversion of Islam** and condemn this extremist narrative, but **are we doing enough to ensure that we snuff it out in our prisons, colleges or university campuses? Are we doing enough to confront it and defeat it, online and elsewhere? I think that the answer to that is no.** I think that there is more work to be done, and that we should do it in good order [bold: mine].⁴⁴¹

What Cameron does here - with some rather casual yet dramatic language - is mobilise *place* deixis. He places the battlefield in which this conflict is being engaged in multiple locations, including prisons, colleges, universities, and even online. He acknowledges that "we"⁴⁴² (person deixis) are not doing enough, and must thereby mobilise ourselves together in order to defeat this perceived enemy. Bob Stewart MP asked whether the task force for tackling extremism will tackle terrorists who "come from and are sustained by people around them", to which Cameron starkly responded:

⁴³⁸ David Cameron MP in *ibid.*, col 1240.

⁴³⁹ Simon Danczuk MP in *ibid.*, col 1244.

⁴⁴⁰ Simon Hughes MP in *ibid.*

⁴⁴¹ David Cameron MP in *ibid.*

⁴⁴² David Cameron MP in *ibid.*

It is not enough to target and go after violent extremists after they have become violent. We have to **drain the swamp which they inhabit**. That means looking at the process of radicalisation on our campuses. It means looking at Islamic centres that have been taken over by extremists and gone wrong. It means looking at those mosques that are struggling to throw out the extremists and helping them in the work that they are doing. It means going through all the elements of the **conveyor belt to radicalisation** and ensuring that we deal with them. That is what is important. That is the work that needs to be done [bold: mine].⁴⁴³

Cameron's usage of metaphors is often creative, and metaphor is certainly an important indicator of the figurative language of myth (see section 3.2). Cameron's use of the metaphor "draining the swamp" is powerful because it signifies via place *deixis* an undesirable and ultimately disgusting place in which terrorists and their sympathisers dwell. Furthermore, the place *deixis* indicates that these swamps exist in places that are often familiar to most Britons, including university campuses and mosques. Draining these swamps would reveal the identities of these terrorists and their sympathisers, and allow for alternative arrangements to be developed where the "swamp" once was. Finally, Cameron repeats his "conveyor belt" metaphor to imply that there is a systemic, almost dehumanising and one-track process in which people exit "true" Islam towards "false" Islam, and normally violence.

These exchanges between Cameron and his MPs reveal Cameron's determination to interpret events as part of the established political myth of Britain's existential conflict with a violent form of radical Islam and Muslims. This is because it allows him to explicitly, concretely and simply dispel any ambiguity about the causes of these attacks and how the perpetrators and their like should be judged. He seeks to construct a sense of significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) for the public by making it clear that these events are not indifferent or unconnected to them, but are occurring around them in familiar and seemingly harmless places. Campuses, schools, collages, religious institutions, are all places where this threat may thrive, and since many people are closely associated to these places, it is their responsibility to contribute to tackling the menace.

⁴⁴³ David Cameron MP in *ibid.*, col 1245.

Finally, in response to a question by Conservative MP Andrew Bridgen, who quotes the line “Kill one, intimidate a nation” from Chairman Mao’s Little Red Book – which he refers to as a “terrorist handbook”. Bridgen asks whether he agreed that “our nation” will “never be intimidated by acts of extremists, be they from the Muslim Community, the English Defence League, or anybody else?”⁴⁴⁴ Cameron responds in the affirmative, by invoking the past struggles against terrorist invoked by Britain:

Regrettably, **this country has suffered from terrorists over many years**. We suffered dreadfully at the hands of the IRA, but I think that taught us a lesson that if we stand true to **our principles**, we stand up for freedom and democracy and the terrorists can never win [bold: mine].⁴⁴⁵

Cameron here evokes the “British resilience” narrative discussed in section 4.3. He does this via time deixis, person deixis and the integrative aspect of myth. “We”, meaning everyone who is British, suffered historically from terrorists, most dreadfully at the hands of the IRA. Cameron here draws a direct comparison between the incidents of terrorism from past and present. Whether intentionally or not, David Cameron here evokes time deixis and provides high levels of entitativity to “terrorists”. He categorises the IRA and the terrorists who murdered Lee Rigby as if they are one and the same, thereby necessitating the previous successful responses. This simplification can satisfy the existential questions that uncertainty raises. Where there is uncertainty, Cameron not only provides the sense of significance that myth necessitates, but a clear cognitive schema which provides the audience the formula to defeat the enemy. That is, standing up for “our principles” of “freedom and democracy” which, are absolutely core to the integrative aspect of this political myth, and are outlined in section 4.3.

6.3 Newspaper Reaction

In this section I analyse how newspapers responded to the attacks. I begin first with the right-leaning papers of the *Daily Mail* and *The*

⁴⁴⁴ David Cameron MP in *ibid.*

⁴⁴⁵ David Cameron MP in *ibid.*

Telegraph. Beginning with the former, we find many references to the murder as an assault on British values. Referring to the incident as a “grotesque attack on Britain’s values,” one article refers to the “terrible irony” that Lee Rigby had survived Afghanistan where 444 of his “heroic colleagues” had perished, only to be murdered while wearing a *Help for Heroes* t-shirt in a London suburban street. He was targeted for the one reason alone: “his devotion to the Army and protecting the British public.” The article goes on to lament the fact that “we give succor to those who hate us and our values.” In a repeat of the kinds of questions asked following 7/7, the article reads: “Why, when police, so in thrall to political correctness, are so quick to pounce on ‘hate crimes’ by indigenous Britons, are they so loath to prosecute the zealots who wish to see our freedoms destroyed?”⁴⁴⁶ This repeats the narrative that was prevalent in the *Daily Mail* in response to the 7/7 attacks (as section 5.3 reveals): that we are not being tough enough to defeat the enemy in this existential conflict. We allow these enemies to attack “our values” and, in this case, it has resulted in the death of an individual who is the embodiment of British values, who had served his country with distinction against the enemy. Instead of standing up for his rights and those like him, the police are in “thrall to political correctness” and are more concerned with “hate crimes”. Some of these themes were repeated in an article on the subsequent day, but in a more positive tone as it praises David Cameron’s initiative to set up an “extremism taskforce” as an “important first step” to “rid the country of the scourge of radicalisation.”⁴⁴⁷ These comments from the *Daily Mail* are representative of the general tendency (also seen in chapter 5) to exemplify the stark binary nature of the conflict. For the *Daily Mail*, and Melanie Phillips in particular, Britons must be resolute in defence of their values. The attack was a gross assault on British values, which (as the previous article also indicated) are embodied by Rigby and what he and his peers in the Armed Forces stood for. Yet, as it stands, Britain is currently displaying severe weaknesses brought about by being in thrall to political correctness. “Indigenous” Britons are condemned and punished for “hate crimes” yet the enemy, who ultimately wish to

⁴⁴⁶ *Daily Mail*, “A grotesque attack on Britain’s values,” *Daily Mail* 24 May 2013.

⁴⁴⁷ *Daily Mail* Comment, “The first step in tackling this twisted hate,” *ibid.* (25 May 2013), <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2331039/DAILY-MAIL-COMMENT-The-step-tackling-twisted-hate.html#ixzz3cfK8IMYF>.

destroy Britain and its good values, is not given the same treatment. This is an example of the mobilising aspect of political myth being invoked by person deixis. Person deixis is present when the articles reinforce caricatures of the terrorist who hates “our values” and weak police force (externally influenced in most cases) being unable to act, allowing the terrorists free reign.

These articles make heavy usage of metaphor and synecdoche to draw connections between the Rigby and the broader work on myth. Rigby is the personification of British values, and his name and constitutive features (i.e., being a soldier, being a hero) can be used to recall the entirety of narratives surrounding Britain’s existential conflict with radical Islam. These positive connotations which are associated with Rigby are invoked in order to draw ire against a currently weak political order that has still failed - even 8 years after 7/7 – to overcome its obsession with political correctness, ultimately preventing Britain from defeating its insidious enemy. Yet, according to many in the *Daily Mail*, we must acknowledge what is not politically correct in order to achieve victory. Melanie Phillips argues that this extremism is “religious in nature” and arises from a literal interpretation of the Qur’an. While most British Muslims “want to live peacefully and enjoy the **benefits of Western culture**” [bold: mine], there is a “fundamentalist interpretation of the Koran” which is “being spouted by hate preachers in Britain and on the internet, and is steadily radicalizing thousands of young British Muslims.” She castigates those who claim that the violence had little or nothing to do with Islam, pointing out that the killers cited parts of the Qur’an to justify their actions. According to her, saying that they are not linked is like saying that the “medieval Inquisition, for example. Had nothing to do with the Catholic Church, but was just the product of a few warped and deluded individuals.” Indeed, government officials always refused to admit that this was a “religious” war, which indicates that they do not understand the power of religious fanaticism. While she acknowledges that all religions can have fanatics, she believes Islam is particularly vulnerable to it as it did not have a “reformation” like Christianity did, although many “enlightened” Muslims in Britain would like to see their religion “reformed.”

As is common Phillips' articles, she blames the "failure to understand all this" on the "widespread terror of being thought 'Islamophobic' or 'racist.'" Finally, "the paralysis caused by the excesses of the human rights culture" may prevent legislative changes as people are afraid of "doing the terrorists job for them" by "undermining our own hard-won liberties," claims which Phillips decries as "vacuous and lethal nonsense" and that "those who refuse to acknowledge the true nature of this threat are doing the terrorists' jobs for them." Unless Britain awakes from its "self-destructive torpor" then "all those who love civilised values, - Muslim and non-Muslim alike – will be the losers."⁴⁴⁸ Phillips evokes the drama of the work on myth by reminding the reader of the existential nature of the conflict, but also how we are inadvertently hurting ourselves as much (if not more) than our enemies. This is the case to the extent that opposition to proposed legislative changes was "vacuous and lethal nonsense" and, more strikingly, those who are opposed them are in fact helping the terrorists. She expresses a cognitive schema which simplifies the situation via person deixis into "good and bad Muslims", with the former enjoying "western civilization" while the latter irrevocably seeks to destroy it, alongside strong and legitimate or weak and illegitimate responses. Phillips' dramatic language attempts to evoke a sense of anger in the audience at this sense of injustice, and warn the audience that failure to act threatens not just the physical safety of Britons, but the values that they, and most Muslims, share. This is about the collective self-narrative that exists and which, for many, grants a sense of ontological security. This example of the work on myth seeks to inspire a sense of significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) in order to mobilise people in defence of these conditions which otherwise enable people to be ontologically secure. It does this by constructing significance in the form of a conflict which, while threatening, also gives the audience the opportunity to uphold and defend their values. These are values that commonly unite Britons and, in principle, nobody is exempt from the responsibility of defending them.

⁴⁴⁸ Melanie Phillips, "Until our leaders admit the true nature of Islamic extremism, we will never defeat it," *ibid.* (26 May 2013), <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2331368/Until-leaders-admit-true-nature-Islamic-extremism-defeat-it.html>.

Peter McKay also follows the *Daily Mail* theme of lamenting the passive tolerance that the country has towards Islamic extremists. He condemns the *BBC* for allowing giving Abu Nusaybah a platform on its show *Newsnight*, who he claims was an associate of Rigby's killers. McKay reports that Nusaybah was arrested following the interview, which civil rights expert Professor Anthony Glees had referred to as "disturbing". However, McKay asks whether "our tendency to blame ourselves for crimes committed against us – and paralysis in the face of our enemies – even more disturbing?"⁴⁴⁹ McKay calls for more serious action, such as the detention of preacher Anjem Choudary, who he refers to as "another BBC performer". He lambasts Cameron for setting up a "catchy-sounding new Government body", but questions whether we need "another silly acronym". Indeed setting up a new body "looks like a way of avoiding decisions – or spreading responsibility if the decisions you do take prove to be counter-productive".⁴⁵⁰ McKay goes on to lambast how Britain "pathetically" supports the prosecution of "hate crimes" if it is rude about the Welsh or Goths, but not "if it's lethal hatred expressed against being British". McKay warns that the present failure to "confront and punish evildoers tears at the fabric of society, diminishing us all" and that "telling ourselves we are civilised is a poor response". The only hope for the future is that "new generations of Muslims will come to treasure the freedoms they enjoy here, if not elsewhere, and rise against those who defile with them with violence and hate propaganda".⁴⁵¹

McKay and Phillips both strongly advocate a resolute defence of British values (section 4.3) against the threat of the other. Both accept the fundamental narrative core of the work on myth: that there is an existential threat posed to Britain by violent radical Muslims and that this threat must ultimately be defeated. Both attempt to concretise the sense of Britishness and the threat posed to it and the various injustices that the former is experiences owing to the weakness of the government and a culture of political correctness. Both articles also aim to re-affirm the distinction

⁴⁴⁹ Peter McKay, "Why Are we So Paralysed in the Face of our Enemy?," *ibid.*, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2331297/Why-paralysed-face-enemy.html>.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*

between the “good” and “bad” Muslim (section 4.2) in an attempt to convince the audience that the former must actively embody British values and, more importantly, contribute to defeating the threats that oppose it. McKay in particular emphasises this by invoking the mobilising aspect of myth through time deixis when he expresses hope that future generations of Muslims will rise up in defence of British values against “those who defile them with hate propaganda”.⁴⁵² The overarching point of agreement among many journalists of the *Daily Mail* is that not enough is being done, and that action must be taken swiftly and decisively.

Surprisingly, this narrative is also repeated in an article by Liberal Democrat Lord Alex Carlile. On 24th May 2013, Carlile wrote in the *Daily Mail* with a staunch criticism of the hostility of Nick Clegg and other Lib Dems to much of the Government’s counter-terrorism legislation. Carlile begins with a metaphor-laden description of the horror of the murder and its significance in British history:

I am certain the name of Drummer Rigby and the method of his cruel assassination will become **ingrained in British history**. That brave young man was **the essence of the Army and other soldiery that protects us all and our country** – strong, lion-hearted, disciplined yet full of life. The cruelty he endured in death will not quell the drums of his famous regimental band. Soldiers rightly will remain proud of their craft and calling. **Nor will the sound of his own drum be silenced**, as the background and consequences of the case are examined [bold: mine].⁴⁵³

The “sound of his own drum” metaphorically represents the background of policy responses to these issues, and it is from this metaphor that Carlile launches his attack on the Clegg and other Liberal Democrats. Carlile cites the reluctance of the Liberal Democrats to adopt the Government’s Communications Data Bill, which some critics have “casually and incautiously labelled as a “Snoopers’ Charter””.⁴⁵⁴ The bill would have given extensive powers to the government to monitor the online

⁴⁵² McKay, “Why Are we So Paralysed in the Face of our Enemy?”.

⁴⁵³ Lord Alex Carlile, “Why Drummer Rigby’s slaughter should haunt Clegg – by top Lib Dem Lord Carlile,” *ibid.* (24 May 2013), <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2331011/Why-Drummer-Rigby-s-slaughter-haunt-Clegg--Lib-Dem-Lord-Carlile.html>.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

communications of suspected terrorists. Clegg, however, vetoed it following its announcement in the 2013 Queen's Speech. Carlile argues that the police and prosecuting authorities should be given the right to take "close looks at websites that encourage violent Islamism", which is "a heresy that disgusts every honourable British Muslim."⁴⁵⁵ Carlile asks Government's to "not duck" the challenge of implementing this legislation for the memory of Rigby who, as the beginning of the article surmises, represents the bravery and heroism of the armed forces. Doing otherwise would also betray good Muslims (he uses the word "honourable") who, by implication, cannot be reconciled with bad Muslims and would thereby support this legislation.

Another editorial in the *Daily Mail* calls for more measures to be taken to tackle radicalisation in the UK, and praises David Cameron's announcement that he would create a task force to tackle extremism. It highlights that this is necessary to defeat the "scourge of radicalisation", and that not enough had been done up to that point. In particular, it criticises universities as being places where radicalisation is not challenged. The problem is that Britain treasures freedom of speech, and so "our only powers against them are if they break any laws, such as committing public order offences or inciting racial hatreds". As such, this means that more must be done across society to challenge radicalisation in the first place. It praises the Muslim Council of Britain in particular for its unqualified condemnation of these attacks, and "continuing its commendable record of distancing the Muslim population from extremists."⁴⁵⁶ What we see here is the *Daily Mail*, perhaps uncharacteristically calmly, providing a sense of reassurance by praising Cameron's leadership, but also clear call for action to tackling radicalisation in what is an otherwise highly uncertain and anxiety-inducing time. However, it still does this by invoking the core aspects of the work on myth (the existential conflict) and merging it more specifically with place deixis, by representing universities as places in which radicalisation is allowed to proliferate. This article also takes the first steps towards assessing the role of the Prime Minister and his

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁶ Daily Mail Comment, "The first step in tackling this twisted hate," *ibid.* (25 May 2013), <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2331039/DAILY-MAIL-COMMENT-The-step-tackling-twisted-hate.html#ixzz3cfK8IMYF>.

leadership following the attacks. This theme is developed further by James Forsyth, who offered praise to the Prime Minister for his leadership:

What happened in Woolwich has, for now, changed the tone of our politics and, the intra-Tory arguments about the EU and gay marriage seem rather small in the light of what has happened there. **In these moments of national crisis, Cameron rises above his rivals, both internal and external.** Partly this is a consequence of the office: he is Prime Minister, they are not. **But it is also the man. One of his weaknesses as a Conservative leader – the fact he is surprisingly un-political – is a strength in moments like this.** It means he finds it easier to strike the right, national note. One of those who sees him at close quarters observes that ‘it is in these kind of situations that he really kicks in’ [bold: mine].⁴⁵⁷

At the time of the attack, David Cameron was under pressure to clarify whether there would be a referendum on Britain’s membership of the European Union and a bill to introduce same-sex marriage in the UK was in the process of being passed. Just as in the case of Tony Blair’s response to 7/7 (section 5.2), Forsyth’s article demonstrates the perceived importance of a leader showing leadership in these moments of crisis. Although Forsyth points out that Cameron “rising above his rivals” is partly because he is Prime Minister – which we may understand as an example of Cameron having symbolic capital – but mainly his own personal characteristics. The fact that he is supposedly non-political in these situations means he knows how to “strike the right, national note”. This is crucial as, in a time of crisis and uncertainty, where the collective sense of ontological security has been damaged, Cameron is able to provide this re-assurance in a calm and effective manner.

Nonetheless, the praise for Cameron’s leadership is not universally accepted in the *Daily Mail*. On 27th May, In an article entitled “When they said Fight them on the Beaches, Dave...” - a clear reference to Winston Churchill’s speeches in the British resilience narrative discussed in section 4.3 - Richard Littlejohn slammed Cameron’s decision to go on holiday.⁴⁵⁸ He begins by reminding readers of the “Crisis, what crisis?” headline in *The*

⁴⁵⁷ James Forsyth, "Why Cameron told MI5: 'I know you are not to blame'," *ibid.* (26 May 2013), <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2330959/JAMES-FORSYTH--Why-Cameron-told-MI5--I-know-blame.html>.

⁴⁵⁸ Richard Littlejohn, "When they said fight them on the beaches, Dave..." *Ibid.* 29 May 2013.

Sun when Labour Prime Minister Jim Callaghan returned from Guadeloupe during the 1979 “Winter of Discontent”. Although he had not actually said those words, Callaghan “might as well have done” as “they encapsulated the public perception and were to prove his epitaph”. The perception at the time was that Callaghan had left his country during a time of crisis, and this had now been repeated by David Cameron. Littlejohn asks what to make of pictures of “Call Me Dave ‘chillaxing’” in Ibiza in the wake of the murder of Lee Rigby?” Indeed, while “Dave and Sam Cam [referring to his wife Samantha Cameron] are photographed sipping coffee on a Mediterranean terrace, the family of Lee Rigby are laying flowers at the spot where he was slain”.⁴⁵⁹ Despite the crisis at home, which had involved the Bomber Command Memorial being desecrated and Mosques being attacked, the Prime Minister was “swanning round a Mediterranean island famous for hedonism and drug-fuelled races”. For Littlejohn, it’s as if “Churchill had issued his ‘We will fight them on the beaches’ speech from a sun-lounger in Barbados... Everybody back on the landing craft”.

With this, Littlejohn directly and unflatteringly compares the performances of Cameron to those of Churchill during the Blitz, just as the same comparison was made for Tony Blair in the aftermath of the 7/7 attacks (section 5.2). The comparison evokes the British resilience narrative images of the Blitz in particular, and emphasises the importance that they still have in British identity today (section 4.2). Despite the contingencies of both events, the article mobilises time and person deixis to imply that they are equivalent or, at least, the roles of the people involved are equivalent. Churchill’s example became a framework through which to read the present situation; a source of pride for many Britons at a time where significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) was needed in order for people to (re-)establish a sense of ontological security, preventing a lapse into *Angst*. The *Daily Mail* thereby at some stages touches upon all the main themes of the work on myth. The underpinning myth of all the articles is that Britain is facing an existential conflict with the violent radical Islam. The variant of the myth espoused in the *Daily Mail* in both the case of the Murder of Lee Rigby and 7/7 is a belief that we are being too soft on our enemies and in thrall to political

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid.

correctness. This is broadly consistent among other right-wing papers, but the *Daily Mail* is particularly vociferous on it.

Similar themes also appear in *The Telegraph*. The day after the murder of Lee Rigby, “hearts were back in mouths” when a Plane travelling from Pakistan was diverted to London Stansted Airport following a disturbance on board.⁴⁶⁰ Despite the fears the incident was resolved without harm, and *The Telegraph* view was for us to be “thankful” and even “optimistic”. This was “not just because of what the tragedy in Woolwich said about Britain’s strengths”, but because “we appear to have come to terms with the latest terrorist threat to this country, and to have devised broadly the right response.”⁴⁶¹ This was after the failures of the previous Labour government and the “philosophical tug-of-war” that followed which resulted in many on the Left coming “to accept that their multiculturalist orthodoxy was actually setting community against community”. Under the coalition, there was a “Prime Minister determined to end the conciliation – via Prevent – of those most hostile to our values.”⁴⁶² It also meant that the government restored civil liberties, and trusted the “free press” that was so important to this country. Indeed it is our open and tolerant nature that leads our society to be “attractive enough that others want to be part of it.” All this said, there is no cause for complacency:

Islamist networks remain in place, and their propagandists have infiltrated charities, prisons and most especially universities. **Eradicating their influence will take years, if not decades**, as will opening up the closed communities whose links to their homelands (fostered via satellite television) are far stronger than to the society around them. But again, it is better – **and more British** – to do this via persuasion than coercion [bold: mine].⁴⁶³

This article attempts to find significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) at a time of insecurity by re-articulating narratives of British values (section 4.2). By reminding the audience of British values that are in fact so attractive to others that they also “want to be a part of it”, the article hopes to lift people into they are unambiguously on the side of good. Nonetheless, the article

⁴⁶⁰ The Telegraph, “Woolwich Attack: the Right Response to Terrorism in Britain,” *The Telegraph* (24 May 2013), <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/telegraph-view/10078712/Woolwich-attack-The-right-response-to-terrorism-in-Britain.html>.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid.

⁴⁶² Ibid.

⁴⁶³ Ibid.

still evokes the mobilising aspect of myth through place and time deixis when it describes how close the enemy to the audience. Familiar places such as universities and charities are places where the enemy is located, (place deixis) and it will take a substantial period of time to ultimately overcome them (time deixis). While this may induce fear and concern, it also provides a direct means through which one can be “in-relation-to” the enemy and our allies. Put more specifically, the integrative aspect of myth is augmented in this article through concretising the “being” of self/other and, particularly, the places in which the other can be located and defeated. Despite the gravity of this conflict, the article reassures the reader that Britain has pragmatically learned how to confront the threat and has re-established its values, for which we can feel “a certain amount of quiet pride.”⁴⁶⁴

In another article, Frazer Nelson paraphrased the political philosopher Hannah Arendt by referring to the Woolwich attacks as “case study in the banality – and idiocy – of evil”.⁴⁶⁵ Nelson discredits the Woolwich attackers, who had entered an extensive rant recorded on camera by passers-by, as having “no discernible agenda” and being “deranged”. Indeed who hoped to find “some demonic logic would have been disappointed: none of it made sense”. Nelson believes it is so bad that the authorities should have no concern if people wish to view it. All it has done is “hardened the outrage of thousands of British Muslims”. Nelson claims that the theme of Hannah Arendt’s *Banality of Evil*, which he understands as the “strange relationship between idiocy and evil”, is reflected in the current actions of violent jihadist attacks. Nelson cites Arendt’s view that Adolf Eichmann was just a near-robotic creation of Nazi bureaucracy who communicated in jargon. She was, according to him “a clown” but because the world wanted to see him as a monster, “his worst clowneries were hardly noticed and almost never reported.”⁴⁶⁶ Nelson argues that modern violent jihadist have also reveal this relationship between idiocy and evil. Richard Reid, a Muslim convert from London, who was arrested after failing to light fuse in a shoes bomb, is one example. He also mentions Umar Abdulmutallab, who set his underwear alight on a flight while trying

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁵ Fraser Nelson, "We shouldn't bother looking for any logic in attacks like these. There is none to be found," *ibid.* 23 May 2013.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid.

to detonate a bomb. Finally, he mentions Abdullah al-Asiri, who hid a bomb in his anus in an attempt to assassinate a Saudi minister, but only succeeded in blowing himself up while the minister “looked on, amazed and unhurt.”⁴⁶⁷ Nelson’s contribution evokes both the cognitive and integrative aspects of myth. He seeks to represent Adebolajo and Adebowale as representatives a generally stupid or mentally deficient grouping that have little to no connection with the audience. It is a way to further de-legitimise their cause, and this is often a feature of left-leaning responses (as discussed above).

The mobilising aspect of myth was developed further in an editorial in the *Telegraph* the following day. The general argument in the article is that we must all (but politicians and civil servants in particular) show courage in confronting extremism, We have often failed to do so due to “cultural anxieties” that have led to mosques, prisons and universities becoming “recruiting grounds for extremism”.⁴⁶⁸ The authorities need to be “bold enough to call religious extremism by its proper name” and this involves practical steps to stop preachers of hate being given platforms. This is similar to other articles, but the way its arguments are made is different since it bases them on the need to imitate the heroism of the Ingrid Loyau-Kennett and the “Angels of Woolwich”:

But have also witnessed inspirational scenes of courage. We should remember Cub Scout leader Ingrid Loyau-Kennett, who jumped off a bus passing the carnage to see if she could use her first-aid skills to help. **When she realised that the death was not an accident but deliberate, she confronted the perpetrators and talked to them in the hope of preventing them from attacking anyone else.** Equally admirable were the “Angels of Woolwich”, Amanda Donnelly and her daughter Gemini Donnelly-Martin, who stayed with Drummer Rigby while he lay dying. Mrs Donnelly’s son later said: “She only wanted to help the poor guy – she’s a mum. That’s what mums do [bold: mine].”⁴⁶⁹

And:

A lesson that we can all take from the Woolwich attack is to imitate the bravery of the women **who faced down**

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁸ Telegraph View, "We Must Have the Courage to Confront the Preachers of Hate," *ibid.* (25 May 2013), <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/telegraph-view/10080026/We-must-have-the-courage-to-confront-the-preachers-of-hate.html>.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid.

savagery in order to defend the innocent. If one good thing comes out of this horrific incident, let it be **that we all finally have the courage to confront the preachers of hate in our midst** [bold: mine].⁴⁷⁰

These women are effectively heralded as heroes, defending what is fundamentally good (innocence) against the fundamentally evil (savagery) and we should use their example to inspire us to defeat the enemy. This dramatic statement is of particular importance to the mobilising aspect of the work on myth, which often requires figures of heroism and villainy. Their heroism is actually enhanced by quotes which display their humility and normality particularly from Gemini Donnelly-Martin's son. The courage it took for these people to attend to Rigby and confront the terrorists is, however, inspiring for the rest of us. The article taps into the human need for significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) by firstly providing a "proper name" for the extremism and then positing ourselves as needing the courage to defeat it. It gives us a sense of purpose in what would otherwise be chaos of the unknown and a clear, solid guide for action. That is we follow the examples of the "Angels of Woolwich" and confront the "preachers of hate".⁴⁷¹ These ladies represent

The Telegraph continues its focus Matthew d'Ancona praised David Cameron's speech in the immediate aftermath of the attack, which was analysed in section 6.2. As d'Ancona states:

... we have grown used to Cameron stepping up to the plate on such occasions, and expressing national solidarity at moments of high emotion. Hillsborough, Bloody Sunday, the Algerian siege, the death of Margaret Thatcher... time and again, the PM has displayed a sureness of touch, neither hamming it up nor ignoring the passions and pains of the moment. "The people who did this were trying to divide us," he declared. "They should know something like this will only bring us closer together and make us stronger." It is easy to take Cameron's abilities in this respect for granted. But it is hard work getting the tone, content and delivery right. The speech, I am told, went through many drafts until the PM was satisfied.⁴⁷²

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid.

⁴⁷² Matthew d'Ancona, "Woolwich attack: How far is Britain willing to go to prevent modern jihadis?," *ibid.*, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/10080028/Woolwich-attack-How-far-is-Britain-willing-to-go-to-prevent-modern-jihadis.html>.

This praise is evidence that the role and tone of the leader in these moments of crisis is important. Unlike the criticisms offered of Cameron in the *Daily Mail* (above), this article expresses satisfaction at Cameron's leadership in this situation, and the specific, contingent response he offered to a highly delicate situation. The fact that he is so capable of "stepping up to the plate" in situations of high emotion and capture the overall mood of the country demonstrates that he embodies the strong leadership required in such situations.

Michael Burleigh criticised what he perceived as being a weak response from the government, who are too worried about the "mealy-mouthed talk of community sensitivities" and argues that we must "try to do a few things more robustly than has been the case so far".⁴⁷³ This involves clamping down on university free speech and prisons where gang cultures are allowed to thrive. He outlined three ways to tackle the threat. First, the problem needs a "laser-like focus on the overriding safety and security of the general public" and this means taking action regardless of the "vested interests" and "huff and puff" of universities, as "we have the whip hand in the form of the money we pay them." Secondly, and perhaps most strikingly, Burleigh argues that we need to "revisit the Cold War notion of subversion, so that there are legal penalties for those who destroy our way of life, but who know how to stop short of incitement to murder".⁴⁷⁴ Finally, he calls for a multi-agency enforcement of zero tolerance for "swaggering thugs" who "one can see on many London streets". Their jail time "should be somewhere as far removed from their usual habitat as possible, so that they experience the alienation that many law-abiding people feel in their own environments."⁴⁷⁵ This commentary from Burleigh evokes a core variant of the work on myth that tends to be predominately the concern of right-wing publications: a perceived culture of fear of offending people. He evokes the mobilising aspect of the work on myth with person deixis by arguing that "we" must take action against those who destroy "our way of life", and this includes concrete enemies found within universities and

⁴⁷³ Michael Burleigh, "Woolwich Attack: Our Strategy is a Sad Shambles," *ibid.* (26 May 2013), <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/10080852/Woolwich-attack-our-strategy-on-terror-is-a-sad-shambles.html>.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

others who have “vested interest.” Indeed, Burleigh takes this so far as to suggest that we need to return to the notion of subversion. At the time of writing, the website of MI5 claims that the threat of subversion has “diminished sharply following the end of the Cold War” and so they “no longer undertake counter-subversion work” but would “resume doing so if our monitoring of emerging threats suggested an increase in the subversive threat”.⁴⁷⁶ What Burleigh is calling for these practices to be brought back in order to find those who are undermining “our way of life”. This would merely reflect the nature of the core fundamental point of the work on myth: that Britain is an existential conflict with a radical, violent, Muslim other.

These images of the existential conflict with the radical, violent, Muslim other were further developed in another article by Alan Judd in *The Telegraph*, entitled “How to spot a terrorist living in your neighbourhood”. The article was accompanied by a picture of a man wearing binoculars looking into the distance, and was written with the intention of offering people practical help to identify radicalised Muslims. The article responded to a call by the former director general of MI5, Dame Stella Rimington, for people to inform on neighbours they suspect of extremism. Clues to someone being radicalised are:

A sudden ostentatious insistence on religious ritual, especially in a secular context (demands for prayer rooms where no other religion has them); a withdrawal from social interaction with women and disapproval of feminine dress. There may be a sudden obsession with physical fitness, more via outdoor adventure activities than team games. Someone may adopt traditional Arab dress or abruptly abandon it (so as not to attract attention). They might forbid or avoid music, collect jihadi material, withdraw from contact with non-Muslims or Muslims who are not extremist; there may be single-issue conversation, vociferous hatred of the West and Israel, and perhaps attempted travel to troubled regions or misleading vagueness as to where they’ve been.⁴⁷⁷

Judd also outlines the profile of those likely to be radicalised. He states that it is mostly Muslim males aged 16-24, a third of whom were

⁴⁷⁶ Military Intelligence 5 of the United Kingdom, “What We Do,” <https://www.mi5.gov.uk/what-we-do>.

⁴⁷⁷ Alan Judd, “How to spot a terrorist living in your neighbourhood,” *The Telegraph* (28 May 2013), <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/10084172/How-to-spot-a-terrorist-living-in-your-neighbourhood.html>.

unemployed, many were unmarried, and sometimes supported by women. British “home-grown terrorists” are less educated, of lower socio-economic status, with only a 31% attending higher education. Other statistics he mentions are that a quarter have criminal records, and a fifth were immigrants. These people had only a “superficial knowledge of Islam, using it as a veneer of justification for cultural and racial self-assertion.” It is there for an ideological rather than a religious process, and “you have to be just clever enough to do it and just stupid enough to believe in it.”⁴⁷⁸ Judd’s article evokes several core themes of the work on myth. First of all, it is intentionally designed to incite the mobilising aspect of myth; all of the public have a responsibility to get involved in the conflict and all are given direct guidelines for action. This satisfies the cognitive aspect of myth, but also develops the integrative aspect by attaching core, universal features to the perceived enemy “other”. By concretising the enemy in this manner, Judd hopes to (consciously or not) ensure that they become a high-entitative group with clear distinguishing features that allow people to readily identify them. Via place deixis, Judd ensures that the threat is not perceived as being concentrated to a distant location which bears little relevance to the reader, but that these individuals can be spotted by anyone (especially Muslim communities). This places the events away from the realms of indifference and towards significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*), and Judd ensures that this is augmented by a direct call for action in the work on myth.

There are fewer articles about the murder of Lee Rigby in left-leaning publications than there are on the right. For this reason, I draw from fewer sources than I did in my analysis of right-leaning articles. Beginning with the *Daily Mirror*, a commentator who is referred to as “Fleet Street Fox” returns to the theme of mental deficiency that features prominently in left-wing analyses of 7/7 (Section 5.3). Rather than deriding the actions as “evil” or glorifying it as “terrorism”, we should instead look at it as the actions of a small mentally challenged minority.

The issue here is that the **naturally troubled** gravitate towards extreme causes. **They already dislike authority, they feel misunderstood, and they already want to kill people.** The cause doesn’t matter to them; it’s just their excuse. When the cause is based on a

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid.

twisted interpretation of religion **the crazies** have a headstart, because they're harder to spot among a body of people who all have the same invisible friend [bold: mine].⁴⁷⁹

For Fleet Street Fox, these things cannot be solved by a political process as they would “just be rambling about” another problem next week. While they want to be “seen as terrorists”, this label flatters them, and they could just as easily be people “shouting at cars.” Mental health is a theme explored by numerous articles in left-leaning publications, and these include those that responded to the 7/7 attacks (section 5.3). By attributing mental deficiencies to the attackers, the author is able to remove any potential underlying semblance of legitimacy to their arguments and their cause. Via person deixis, the speaker situates him/herself within the deictic centre that incorporates the audience, and uses the poor mental health to distinguish everybody from “the crazies”. The article overall expresses and contributes to the integrative aspect of the work on myth by concretising the enemy attackers into a collective whole defined by mental deficiencies. This simultaneously ensures that they remain a high-entitative group that is a clearly and easily identifiable enemy to be overcome. Richard Kemp continues this strategy of delegitimisation with a strategy that is less-concerned with the left-wing variants of the work on myth, but more towards the fundamental claims: that British values (section 4.2) are under threat by these radical fanatics:

Extremists in Britain will continue to attempt killings like this, and mass attacks like the one on the Boston marathon. Islamist extremists are at war with us for the long term. Whatever they say in their phoney propaganda this is not about Iraq or Afghanistan. They hate our liberal, democratic society and wish to destroy it from within. British soldiers should not have to face a 360 degree threat in Afghanistan only to come home and be slaughtered on their own streets. **The Government must pump cash into the police and intelligence services and insist on an increasingly hard line on sentencing terrorists** [bold: mine].⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁹ Fleet Street Fox, "Woolwich attackers are criminally deluded, whatever their motives," *Daily Mirror* (23 May 2013), <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/woolwich-attackers-criminally-deluded-whatever-1906562>.

⁴⁸⁰ Richard Kemp, "Woolwich attack: Murder of British soldier appears to be part of a sickening pattern of Islamist terrorism," *ibid.*,

Kemp wishes to simplify the conflict by effacing any doubt about the potential legitimacy of the killers' claims – which FleetStreetFox also does by referring to them as having mental deficiencies. Iraq and Afghanistan are irrelevant, for Kemp, as it is a hatred of the British values (4.2) of liberal democracy that motivates them. Kemp clearly evokes the fundamental narrative core of the work on myth: that Britain faces an existential conflict with a radical, violent form of Muslim, and that this must be overcome with collective action, much of which should be led by the government. Kemp evokes time deixis and person deixis to make clear that the attackers will strike again against “us”, and that this is because, fundamentally, they detest our values such as liberal democracy.

Elsewhere, the *Daily Mirror* evokes the mobilising aspect of the work on myth to make it clear that “good” Muslims (see 4.2) can also play a crucial role in securing victory against the enemy. In an article entitled “Real Muslims can Draw out Poison”,⁴⁸¹ Paul Routledge argues that this was “not a Muslim atrocity”, but a “terrorist atrocity committed by men with twisted ideas” that are “not representative of the faith”.⁴⁸² That said, Routledge does argue that the Muslims community has to do “much more” to “identify and inform the authorities of those in their midst who are showing clear signs of falling under the jihadist spell”. While he is also critical of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, they “are not and can never be an excuse – much less a justification – for killing unarmed unsuspecting British servicemen on the streets of our capital city”. Routledge draws the distinction between good and bad Islam in the context of the threat posed by the English Defence League who, at the time, were growing in popularity alongside an increase in anti-Muslim hate crimes. He stresses that “it is not about hating Muslims” but about “the hatred of a fanatical minority for our way of life.” Routledge’s strategy to present these differences occurs through a strategy of person deixis, whereby good Muslims and the wider

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/woolwich-attack-murder-british-soldier-1905756>.

⁴⁸¹ Paul Routledge, "Woolwich Attack Opinion: Real Muslims can Draw out Poison," (24 May 2013), <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/paul-routledge-woolwich-attack-real-1907504>.

⁴⁸² Ibid.

British public are separated from these fanatics who are, in any case, not representative of Islam. Nonetheless, he asks Muslims to mobilise in order to weed out those who have fallen under the “jihadist spell”, as they “must know better than any MI5 officer sitting behind a desk in Millbank”.⁴⁸³ At a time of substantial fear and anxiety, where uncertainty of belonging may be felt by many Muslims and non-Muslims, Routledge’s words (intentionally or not) re-construct the consistency that ontologically secure individuals require, and also gives them a new sense of significance in the quest to defeat violent radical Islam (which is not representative of Muslims in any case).

Nick Cohen in *The Guardian* attempts to equate the killers of Lee Rigby with the English Defence League. As he puts it: “So entwined have the English Defence League and radical Islam become, they might as well be married”. He argues that the attacks by “radical Islamists” are not very different from the attacks on mosques that followed the murder of Rigby. However, the similarities do not stop there, as Cohen points out:

The founders of the English Defence League were inspired by Islamists who disparaged British troops. The EDL has in turn produced the Muslim Defence League. David Anderson, Britain's independent reviewer of terrorist legislation, is so concerned by the reciprocal relationship between certain religious groups and the white far right, he is thinking of investigating whether the police are treating both partners in **this ugly waltz** equally [bold: mine].⁴⁸⁴

Cohen deploys a metaphor referring to the two groups as part of an “ugly waltz” in order to concretise the integrative aspect of myth. For those who adhere to the more left-leaning variant of this work on myth, this allow the audience to equate the moral deficiencies of both the EDL and radical Islamists to the point where they are viewed as the equivalent of one another. This provides a framework that the authors can model to evoke an important sense of significance for those who may hold feelings of revulsion for both extremes of the ideological spectrum. Cohen’s discussion of the EDL also finds support in David Lammy MP’s article in *The Guardian*,

⁴⁸³ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁴ Nick Cohen, "Terrorism: Life-Denying Ideologies have no place in this country," *The Guardian* (26 May 2013), <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/may/26/woolwich-damn-life-denying-ideologies>.

which sought to blame wider societal problems and pressures facing young men, who are overwhelmingly the perpetrators of such attacks. They are “isolated from society, fixated by a binary world view where there is only faith and infidelity.” However, Lammy is one of the few politicians to explicitly state that this is not a problem exclusive to Muslims. Rather, “vulnerable males looking to fill a vacuum in a life absent of camaraderie and purpose are common to all ethnicities” and “it is not uncommon for fringe groups of all ideological persuasions to systemically target these men by manipulating their sense of hopelessness and lack of belonging.”⁴⁸⁵ He points specifically to the English Defence League, who had increased in popularity following the attacks, as a specific example. They had “radicalised the anger of disillusioned young white men and channelled it towards immigrant communities they believe are destroying their way of lives.” Similarly, another culture that “idolises guns, knives and nihilism has drawn predominately young black men into the world of street gangs.” However, Lammy also points out that there is something qualitatively worse about “radical Islamism” as it is a dangerous distortion that “masquerades as an all-consuming faith.” Whereas membership of the EDL or an inner-city gang fosters a type of lifestyle or livelihood, radical Islam “imposes a warped moral code and a polluted understanding of their purpose on earth.” Both 7/7 and Lee Rigby’s murder are the “products of marrying young men already drowning in their own grievances with a moral code that provides simple justifications for employing the worst excesses of human capacity.”⁴⁸⁶

Cohen’s criticism of the Islamists in relation to the EDL is also picked up by other authors in *The Guardian*. Brian Reade is highly critical of the English Defence League for their bigotry and discrimination. However, an unusual event had occurred in the meantime. EDL protestors outside a Mosque in Yorkshire were invited in for a cup of tea by the Muslims to discuss their concerns. After the cup of tea, they had an impromptu game of football. Reade remarks about how “British” these things were (drinking tea and playing football being seen as important

⁴⁸⁵ David Lammy, "Islamists, gangs, the EDL - all target alienated young men," *ibid.* 24 May 2013.

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

British pass-times), and how the isolationist, and racist worldviews of most EDL members were not reflective of the multiculturalism that had won London plaudits in the 2012 Olympics. Indeed, those who see multiculturalism as the antithesis of what being English is about lost the argument in London last summer".⁴⁸⁷ Subsequently, Reade finishes with a powerful claim: "the only thing the English need a League to defend them from is extremist bigots of every colour".⁴⁸⁸ Reade utilises this example in a manner that appeals to ontological security. The attacks on Lee Rigby had the potential to be represented as a shattering of relations between communities, thereby damaging the established trust relations required for "being" to be ontologically secure. Reade hopes to re-ground ontological security by evoking a sense of significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) in the form of a concretising a consistent self-other narrative that reinforces the positions of all people within the work on myth. This reinforcement has three features: first, "good" Muslims are presented definitively as friends of Britons. Furthermore, these "good" Muslims also have the agency to draw the enemy out and ensure that they are ultimately defeated. Secondly, that the EDL are also part of the enemy that threatens Britain and its values. They too must therefore be overcome by the appropriate means, such as the example of the tea incident in Yorkshire. The fundamental purpose is to assure the audience that they are embroiled within the narratives of the work on myth and that they can contribute to securing victory.

As with the core variant on the left-wing variant of the work on myth (section 4.5), many turned the blame to UK foreign policy. Seumas Milne of *The Guardian* criticises those such as London Mayor Boris Johnson who had claimed there was "no question of blaming British foreign policy" or "what British troops do in operations abroad." Milne points out that the perpetrators of almost every terror attack have cited "the vastly larger scale [of] US and British killing in the Muslim world." Furthermore, denying the role of US-British "wars, occupations and interventions" in the Muslim world as a catalyst for terror attacks at home "helps to get politicians off the hook." It also "plays into the hands of those blaming multiculturalism and

⁴⁸⁷ Brian Reade, "The EDL don't speak for modern England," *Daily Mirror* (30 May 2013), <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/brian-reade-edl-dont-speak-1920380>.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid.

migration, feeding racism and Islamophobia in the process.”⁴⁸⁹ Milne’s positions is supported in another article by Joe Glenton who argued that British foreign policy was chiefly responsible for the attack. Glenton warns that “before the rising tide of prejudice and patriotism fully encloses us”, we must be clear that: “while nothing can justify the savage killing in Woolwich yesterday of a man since confirmed to have been a serving British soldier, it should not be hard to explain why the murder happened.” Glenton argues that the attacks showed it was “self-evident” that “attacking Muslims overseas will spawn twisted and... even murderous hatred at home”. We consequently need to recognise that the role Britain continues to play in the “US imperial project in the Middle East” causes this, and that we are lucky such attacks are fewer and far between.” Instead, what has happened is that Muslims have suffered at home:

For 12 years British Muslims have been set upon, pilloried and alienated by successive governments and by the media for things that they did not do. **We must say clearly that the alleged actions of these two men are theirs alone**, regardless of being informed by the wars, and we should not descend into yet another round of collective responsibility peddling [bold: mine].

Despite Glenton’s warning that we should not start “collective responsibility peddling” he subsequently seeks attribute collective responsibility elsewhere:

Indeed, **if there is collective responsibility for the killings, it belongs to the hawks whose policies have caused bloodbaths** – directly, as in Afghanistan and indirectly as far apart and Woolwich and Boston, which in turn have created political space for the far-right to peddle their hatred, as we saw in the immediate aftermath of the Woolwich attack [bold: mine].⁴⁹⁰

While both Milne and Glenton acknowledges the threat posed, they are keen not ensure that Muslims are not blamed unjustifiably for the attacks and that, instead, we look to British foreign policy. Both opt to propagate a strongly left-leaning variant of the work on myth that challenges Islamophobia, the far-right, and squares blame most commonly on the

⁴⁸⁹ Seumas Milne, "Britain's wars fuel terror. Denying it only feeds Islamophobia," *The Guardian* 29 May 2013.

⁴⁹⁰ Joe Glenton, "Woolwich attack: of course British foreign policy had a role," *The Guardian* (23 May 2013), <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/may/23/woolwich-attack-british-foreign-policy-role>.

government. The fundamental of the work on myth remains that the enemy must be defeated but, for both of these contributors, what enables this enemy to proliferate is Britain's own flawed foreign policy and. Glenton's position represents the cognitive aspect of the work on myth; he provides a schema that squares the blame on UK policy rather than, as the right tends to, on Muslim communities themselves or perceived issues within Islam.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the work on myth by politicians and media elites following the murder of Fusilier Lee Rigby on 23rd May 2013. The attack differed rather substantially from the events of 7/7 (chapter 5) insofar as the scale of the attack was smaller and because figures of heroism and villainy were far more personalised. The image of Adebajo speaking into a camera, covered with blood-stained hands, delivering a rant in "justification" sparked shock. On the other hand, the bravery that Ingrid Loyau-Kennett confronted the attacker and the "Angels of Woolwich" helped attend to Rigby as he died was also inspiring. The incident may have raised questions about the physical/somatic safety of individuals (and especially Armed-Forces personnel), but it also raised more fundamental questions about the "being" of Britons. In particular, many politicians and media outlets began to raise questions about "British values" and what could inspire people to commit such grotesque acts of violence against them.

Just as with chapter 5, I began by reviewing the rhetoric from political leaders before moving on to discussing the content of newspaper columns. Both left and right-leaning commentators repeated the general varying themes in the work on myth that distinguishes the left and right, but the differences between left and right were much more noticeable than they were following 7/7.. Left-leaning publications often attempt to distinguish the attackers from other "good" Muslims or the religion of Islam itself. Many articles did this by emphasising the mental deficiencies of the attackers. This makes them appear as a distinctive minority of people who cannot be negotiated with and who must, ultimately, be defeated. Right-leaning articles tended to view the attack as an example of the diluting of British values, something which our government is complicit in due to its insistence in upholding political correctness. Unlike left-leaning

publications, it is more likely to consider insufficient response to extremism within the Muslim community as a key determiner in tragic events such as these.

Overall, the chapter indicated that the core themes in the work on myth remained consistent despite contingencies of the two events. They were different attacks, yet the political myth proved to be adaptable to each circumstance. The findings here should serve as a catalyst for analysing rhetoric following other terror attacks. One would likely find a similar outcome with other attacks that have occurred in other Western countries since 2013. While work on myth is invoked in a particular context in Britain, similar contexts are, I would contend, likely to have been constructed elsewhere. Whatever the content, the work on myth answers a human need for significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) so powerfully in moments where *Angst* and ontological insecurity threaten to dominate. This has both positive and negative consequences, as I reflect upon further in the thesis conclusion.

Thesis Conclusion

The thesis has enhanced the existentialist approaches to political myth outlined by Hans Blumenberg and Chiara Bottici. It did this by revealing how the work on myth is also an act of (re)establishing ontological security at a time of political crisis, thereby bridging the literatures on political myth and ontological security. It also filled two further important gaps in the political myth literature specifically. Firstly, it has conducted an in-depth linguistic analysis of the work on myth following terror attacks, something that is almost completely absent in the literature.⁴⁹¹ Such crises can often cause political instability and create a generalised emotional shock across a nation. It is a time in which the work on myth is most active, making it somewhat surprising that more research has not been done on political myth following terror attacks. Secondly, rhetoric in these periods tends to oscillate between constructing unity and division and, in almost all cases, seems to lead us towards rather simplistic assertions (see more on this later in the conclusion). In the examples of terror attacks discussed in my thesis, we saw rhetoric about the compatibility of Muslims/Non-Muslims in the UK, selective constructions of “Britishness”, and attempts to harden and redouble political positions in response to such attacks. What responses to terror tend to do is attempt to make certain and simple that which is otherwise ambiguous and complex. If policy-making occurs with such rhetoric as a backdrop, then this could potentially inform rather simplistic policy responses. While I cannot claim based on the research of this thesis that simplistic policy responses are *caused* by this rhetoric, I can claim that the rhetoric is a reflection of a human need for significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) that is particularly acute in times of crisis. As shown in the examples above, the process of significance-finding is also a

⁴⁹¹ An exception to this is Joanne Esch’s paper on legitimising the war on terror, but this refers to the more instrumental deployment of myth to justify military action. While she analyses lexical triggers, she pays less attention to political myth answering existential needs in such crisis periods. See: Esch, "Legitimizing the "War on Terror": Political Myth in Official-Level Rhetoric."

process of ontologically (re)securitising at a time when ontological security is under threat. I explained this in chapter 1, where I drew from existentialist philosophy to explain how myths ground themselves within the “the absolutism of reality”, a condition in which, as Blumenberg puts it, “man comes close to not having control of the conditions of his existence and, what is more important, believes that he simply lacks control of them.”⁴⁹² This is reflective of wider discussions in existentialist philosophy about the unique human experience of ambiguity and estrangement within the world, and our similarly unique freedom and responsibility for attributing meaning to our lives.

I argued that these issues of *Angst* are an important reason why we require the work on myth. Myth is of course only one way through which we find significance, but it is a narrative-based phenomenon that reduces the uncertainty and absolutism of *Angst* into the something more definite and concrete (even fearful) which, while unpleasant, can be understood as preferable to the meaninglessness of *Angst*. Following Blumenberg, it is because of these existential frailties that human beings need “significance” (*Bedeutsamkeit*). Significance provides “closure” by reducing the innumerable possibilities of being and existence within the labyrinth of the “absolutism of reality.” There are many in which we find significance, and political myth is highly likely to hold less of an appeal to some than to others. However, it appears to occur frequently in the aftermath of terror attacks. In addition to the evidence provided in my thesis, it seems to be an increasingly important aspect for how many understand politics today. Since beginning this thesis, we have seen several terror attacks in France, including the *Charlie Hebdo* shootings (2015),⁴⁹³ the attacks on the *Bataclan* theatre, *Stade de France*, and several cafes (2015),⁴⁹⁴ and an attack on the streets of Nice during *Bastille Day* (2016).⁴⁹⁵ We have also seen the

⁴⁹² Blumenberg, *Work on Myth*, 3-4.

⁴⁹³ BBC News, "Charlie Hebdo: Gun attack on French magazine kills 12," (7 January 2015), <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-30710883>.

⁴⁹⁴ Following this event, several notable buildings across the world were lit with the French flag. See examples of this at: "Paris attacks: Buildings lit in solidarity with France," (14 November 2015), <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-34820041>.

⁴⁹⁵ "Nice attack: At least 84 killed by lorry at Bastille Day celebrations," (15 July 2016), <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-36800730>.

massacre of LGBT+ people at a night-club in Orlando, Florida (2016).⁴⁹⁶ Britain has not suffered a terror attack on its mainland, but many British tourists (and other nationalities) were massacred at a holiday resort in Tunisia in 2015.⁴⁹⁷ On each occasion, we have seen local variants of the overall political myth that pits individual western countries as in an existential conflict with the radical, violent, Muslim other. Each event represented a rupture of people's ontological security, and opened up a gap through which significance-making became plausible and, indeed, necessary. Each event incorporated themes such as heroism, villainy and tragedy, and were invoked in a variety of ways, including verbally by the literal discussion of their subject matter and in more extraordinary moments such as ceremonies. While Britain has its own unique way of discussing these themes, (e.g., the Blitz and British values) as discussed in chapter 4, it seems that we are frequently seeing variants of this political myth and it should consequently be analysed closely.

Why do we turn to myth following terror attacks? My argument has been that such moments risk us relapsing into a state of *Angst* by undermining the fundamental assumptions we make about our social realities. As Martin Heidegger warned, *Angst* represents the breakdown reminds us of the fundamental features of "being-in-the-world" that we may have stopped questioning throughout our lives. Terror attacks can undermine established trust-relations about perceived knowledge of key features of our "being-in-the-world", including our own identities and those of others.⁴⁹⁸ As I noted, the importance of these trust networks has been discussed by scholars conducting research into ontological security. Although the concept originated with R.D. Laing, it was popularised across the humanities and social sciences by Anthony Giddens.⁴⁹⁹ For Giddens, ontological security refers to a "person's fundamental sense of safety in the world and includes a basic trust of other people" and obtaining this trust is "necessary in order for a person to maintain a sense of psychological well-

⁴⁹⁶ Al Jazeera, "Orlando: Scores dead in gay nightclub shooting," (13 June 2016), <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/06/florida-shooting-attack-orlando-nightclub-160612080037582.html>.

⁴⁹⁷ Jessica Elgot and Chris Johnston, "Tunisia attack: Foreign Office says 15 Britons killed and death toll may rise," *The Guardian* (28 June 2015).

⁴⁹⁸ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 310-15.

⁴⁹⁹ Laing, *The Divided Self*. Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*.

being and avoid existential anxiety”.⁵⁰⁰ A state of ontological security would be one in which people feel whole and can act in comfort, as they are able to bracket out questions about themselves, others, and the “object-world”, all of which must be taken for granted to undertake daily activities.⁵⁰¹ By making this connection between ontological security, *Angst*, and the work on myth I made what I believe to be an important observation: that the work on myth is a process of ontologically (re)-securitising, and that this is a crucial aspect of rhetoric following such crises. The construction of ontological security in these situations may even be based on fear and conflict but, perhaps counter-intuitively, conflict and fear can be generators of ontological security. Yet, as Bahar Rumelili argues, conflicts “sustain the political and social production of definite objects of fear, systems of meaning that clearly differentiate friends from enemies, and unequivocal moral standards premised on the necessity for survival”.⁵⁰² The cognitive, integrative, and especially the mobilising aspect of the work on myth have a tendency to establish this sense of certainty in a dramatic manner. The two examples discussed in chapters 5 and 6 demonstrate this in a UK-specific context, but I believe the theory could also apply in other contexts.

What do we gain from knowing all this? More specifically, what is the original contribution of this thesis and what are we able to do now that we were not able to do prior to this research? The main contribution is that we now have a new theoretical toolkit through which to analyse the rhetoric following political crises (particularly terror attacks) that concentrates specifically on how political language is deployed in order to answer existential concerns in these crucial moments. This is important for two reasons. Firstly, these crises tend to dominate media and political discourses in their immediate aftermath and may form the backdrop for legitimising radical policy changes, normally in the form of new counter-terrorism legislation. Secondly, these crises can often have substantial social impacts and, in recent years, this has taken the form of empowering the far-right. Finally, in terms of the contribution to the political myth literature more specifically, it is (to my knowledge) the first piece of work to link

⁵⁰⁰ *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 37.

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰² Rumelili, "Introduction," 2.

existential theories of political myth to linguistic constructions of political crises and terror attacks in particular. This provides a currently absent framework for understanding the relation between political rhetoric and answering the human problems discussed by existentialist philosophy. Given present discourses about terrorism, extremism, and a rise of political populism during 2016, such analysis is likely to become more importance.

However, the thesis continually encountered the problematic issue of exactly how we distinguish political myth from other important socio-political phenomena. I began by distinguishing myth and ideology often placed too closely together in studies, even if those studies themselves have enriched the discipline as a whole. Myths are dramatic and figurative narratives, whereas ideologies are concerned with coherent systems of ideas. Ideologies are constituted by *ideas* which offer purportedly coherent systems of thought about a range of political issues, whereas political myths are dramatic *narrative* processes designed to provide a sense of significance and ontological security. Even if ideologies were able to provide significance and ontological security, they still do not necessarily take on narrative form. While we often find myth and ideology interacting closely in practice (which may reflect why they are often studied together), we must keep them analytically separate in order to avoid losing the specificity of either. I subsequently distinguished between myth and religion. I acknowledge that they have many overlaps, especially since both answer existential questions about the human condition. However, religions attempt to offer larger, more universalising and timeless answers to these questions, whereas political myths are more “inner-worldly” and context-bound. Political religions are rarer, but were most vividly seen in the totalitarianism of the 20th century which, as Hannah Arendt pointed out, was qualitatively different to all previous forms of government.⁵⁰³ I acknowledged that many political religions will be founded upon and sustained by a variety of political myths, but the all-encompassing and totalising nature of political religions is hard to equivocate with the variation that exists in the work on myth. My final distinction was between myth and science science. In modern parlance, one assumes that science exists solely to counter myths

⁵⁰³ Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism; On Violence*.

and establish truth. Instead, I posit that myths can answer different fundamental existential needs that reason and science do not necessarily fulfil. That is, myth is not concerned so much with “ontic” entities or what can be said to exist, but is rather concerned with our experience of *being*. This need for significance is not necessarily answered by the deployment of “facts” or “truth”, but by resolving the fundamental existential concerns discussed in chapter 1. Nonetheless, I elaborated on how traditional studies into myth have sought to consider it a product of primitive civilisations, and that it will ultimately be overcome by scientific thought.⁵⁰⁴ Ernst Cassirer considered myth a form of social regression that was demonstrably inferior to scientific thought.⁵⁰⁵ Yet studies by scholars such as Vincent Mosco and Mary Midgley have indicated that myths remain very prevalent in modern society, and the Mosco’s study into the myth of cyberspace indicates that it may even strengthen motivations towards scientific and technological enquiry.⁵⁰⁶ My position was that existential approaches to myth are not inherently in tension with science, but that they answer different questions. More specifically, the work on myth is concerned with answering existential needs for significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) and avoiding *Angst*.

Despite this, the question of the importance of truthness or falseness of myth was an initial obstacle in the research which, I believe, was more or less resolved by a deeper engagement with the existentialist literature. This is because my concern was the existential needs that the work on myth answers and how it addresses the conditions of *Angst* outlined initially by Kierkegaard. What matters therefore is the process of significance-making, and this can often be indifferent to the question of truth. This was also important to stress because of the fundamentally pejorative connotations that may accompany initial understandings of the concept of “myth”. The political myth discussed in this thesis is also highly controversial; a cursory glance may give the impression that I am arguing that there is either no genuine threat from individuals and groups who intend to kill and maim, or

⁵⁰⁴ Malinowski, *Myth in Primitive Psychology*; Levy-Bruhl, *Primitive Mentality*; Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, *The Notebooks on Primitive Mentality*, trans. Peter Riviere (New York: Harper and Row, 1978); *Primitive Mythology: The Mythic World of the Australian and Papuan Natives; How Natives Think*.

⁵⁰⁵ Cassirer, *The Myth of the State*.

⁵⁰⁶ Mosco, *The Digital Sublime: Myth, Power, and Cyberspace*; Midgley, *The Myths We Live By*.

that the subsequent comments from media and political figures made claims that were necessarily untrue. As I have explained on multiple occasions, this is not my argument. Indeed, even if I had explicitly stated whether it was true or false, it would not have changed the outcomes of the research as I was concerned with the existentialist problems, not on whether these representations of reality were accurate.

With my theoretical framework established, the question then became how we can observe myth in language. In chapter 3, my methodology chapter, I noted that my focus would be on the dramatic and figurative language that sought to find significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) at a time of crisis. I identified two features of language that tend to be present in the work on myth. The first was deixis, which refers to the act of “pointing” via language, and this tends to be analysed in the form of “person”, “place” and “time” deixis. These are important because political myths tend to have narratives of people, places, and times when they are invoked. Myths may tell stories of heroic individuals, of places with great symbolic value, and important times in history (i.e., the founding of a social order) or prophesise about future times (a promise of victory). I noted that deixis is often made apparent through highly dramatic language often contains metaphor, metonymy, and synecdoche. Metaphor allows the speaker to dramatise narratives and represent them beyond their literal subject-matter. Metonymy and synecdoche allow the speaker to construct shorthand representations of particular important events – one of the most important being the “Blitz.” To my knowledge, my thesis is the first piece of work to combine deixis and tropes to analyse myth in the existentialist sense, although Jonathan Charteris-Black has deployed his linguistic theories to analysing alternative approaches to political myth.⁵⁰⁷

The remainder of chapter 3 was dedicated to discussing the selection of my source material and the issues that face qualitative research more generally. There were challenges in deciding what types of material I should select, how much of it I should analyse, and how to ensure that my research was reflexive. I explained that my interpretation of my empirical material was neither nor detached from the context in which I read it.

⁵⁰⁷ Charteris-Black, *Analysing Political Speeches: Rhetoric, Discourse and Metaphor*.

Centuries of hermeneutic philosophy indicates that subjective readings (even if they are intersubjectively grounded) of texts are inevitable due to the contextual differences in which they are read.⁵⁰⁸ I justified my choice of selecting the London bombings of July 7th 2005 and the murder of Lee Rigby in 2013 as two key moments in the work on myth in a British context. Newspaper articles and political speeches were selected from the immediate aftermath of such attacks. This was important because such moments represent the height of a crisis, and one in which the threat of *Angst* can re-occur. It is a time in which the work on myth is at its most stark, and where the theoretical observations made in chapters 1 and 2 are most clear. My approach was clearly interpretivist and qualitative, and I would be unconvinced by attempts to adopt a foundationalist or positivist approach to political myth, most notably because it may leave the researcher compelled to analyse myth in terms of whether it is true or false. That said, some quantitative approaches that assess the frequency of myth based on certain utterances (deixis, tropes, etc) would make sense if they are predicated on an understanding that these are still subjective interpretations that may be read differently depending upon context. Quantitative approaches may be useful when the researcher is dealing with a large volume of empirical material but, in my view, this will always be less preferable to qualitative approaches that can provide more detailed and context-specific analyses of the work on myth. This is even more crucial since the work on myth is characterised not just by constancy in content, but also variance. This would make it difficult to construct all-encompassing, cross-contextual (e.g. concerning socio-cultural and historical differences) theories about the content of a political myth that would apply in all circumstances. The political myth I discussed in this thesis may have a constancy in subject-matter that makes it adaptable to a multitude of contexts, but the way it is invoked in particular places depends on factors that may not be universally present, such as a shared history, cultural norms, different political events, etc. I would argue that this ultimately justifies my approach to select examples within a time period that emphasises the work on myth at key moments in a UK-based context.

⁵⁰⁸ Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writings*; Gadamer, *Truth and Method*.

Building from these insights, I explained the core features of the work on a political myth in a UK context. I argued that narratives about Britain facing an existential conflict with a pernicious violent radical form of Islam have taken the form of a political myth. This is a story of good and evil, wherein Britain is threatened by an insidious other who must ultimately be destroyed. Although there are multitudes of ways in which British identity can be conceived, it took two important forms in the empirical material. There are two main features to this: the first is the notion that Britain is an exceptionally resilient country, which is sourced from its heroic displays during the Blitz. The second extols the virtues of British values that should be adopted by the other. Indeed a key determiner of whether Britain will be victorious or not depends on whether these values can be mobilised to convert radical and potentially violent Muslims. This chapter set the groundwork for the empirical analysis in chapters 5 and 6. In many respects, it served as a prelude to these chapters insofar as the majority of the content of the political myth was made most visible in them.

Chapter 5 discussed the London bombings of 7th July 2005 (which came to be known as 7/7) and the subsequent work on myth that took place between political elites and newspaper columnists. This is not the first work to look at the role of political myth following 7/7. That accolade belongs to Darren Kelsey, who analysed what he identified as the “myth of the Blitz” around this time period.⁵⁰⁹ It is also not the first to study the concept of ontological security, as this has formed one part of Stuart Croft’s work.⁵¹⁰ However, my thesis is (to my knowledge) the first to apply existentialist theories of political myth into a linguistic analysis of political rhetoric. It enables us to more deeply interrogate the rhetoric that occurs in the immediate aftermath of these attacks. I began with an analysis of the responses from politicians, and I paid particular attention to Tony Blair’s reaction to the events following the attack. I noted that the “British resilience” narrative theme discussed in section 4.2 was strongly present in this period and, in particular, many comparisons were made between the

⁵⁰⁹ Kelsey, "The Myth of the 'Blitz Spirit' in British Newspaper Responses to the July 7th Bombings."; *Media, Myth and Terrorism: A Discourse-Mythological Analysis of the 'Blitz Spirit' in British Newspaper Responses to the July 7th Bombings*.

⁵¹⁰ Croft, *Securitizing Islam: Identity and the Search for Security*.

resilience of Britons and Londoners especially and those who resisted the Nazis during the Blitz. I argued that the events represented a shattering of ontological security and a potential return to a state of *Angst*. Blair's rhetoric was deployed (consciously or not) to prevent this, find significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) and re-establish ontological security.

I moved on to discuss the reaction of newspaper columnists from left-leaning and right-leaning sources. Just as with the political speeches, many continued to make references to the Blitz, with claims that Britain would endure against the enemy other and would ultimately be victorious. While both the left-leaning and right-leaning publications evoked the core themes of the work on myth (i.e., that there was a conflict with a radical and violent Muslim other), there were some differences the responses they advocated. Right-leaning publications were more likely to express outrage at the failure to confront the enemy sooner, which they attribute to weak governance as because they were in thrall to political correctness. Left-leaning publications were more likely to discuss the perceived failures of British foreign policy and warn against the dangers of Islamophobia and the rise of the far-right. While both British resilience and British values were important in these cases, the former took on greater prominence following the attack. Many comments discussed stories of Londoners overcoming the odds in a fashion comparable to the Blitz - theme that featured heavily. This situation was broadly reversed with the example of the murder of Lee Rigby in Chapter 6. While British resilience" remained important at times in the rhetoric, I showed that more attention was paid to the second core theme of the collective self-narrative in the work on myth: the importance of "British values". This was often invoked in a much more personalising manner. Themes of heroism and villainy were particular important, owing primarily due to Rigby's work as a soldier. However, much was also made of the heroism of Ingrid Loyau-Kennett, a member of the public who confronted the attackers while they still wielded blood-stained weapons. Loyau-Kennett and the "Angels of Woolwich" were depicted as heroic figures at a time of grave tragedy, and an embodiment of values we should aspire to hold.

Both of these chapters highlighted overarching themes that continued to repeat themselves in different forms. A terror attack would occur that would be subsequently constructed as a crisis instigated by an

insidious enemy. In the immediate aftermath of the event, politicians and media figures would seek to offer public interpretations of what had happened. More often than not, they would make statements that described the importance of the situation, and invoke dramatic and figurative language in the process of this. Much of the rhetoric would make reference to the heinousness of the enemy, and the promise that in unity the collective self would triumph. We often saw references to past historic victories, prophecies of future victories, along with other references to identity tropes of the self and other. What seems to link these examples is the attempt to provide some form of “grounding” where it may otherwise be absent. The speeches and newspaper columns give the audience a platform from which they can situate themselves in relation to each event. They can (re)learn about the core features of the work on myth: who they are, who the enemy is, and the nature of the conflict. In such a moment of where there may otherwise be *Angst*, the speeches offer an opportunity for clarity and concrete meaning where numerous other contradictory interpretations may be available. I would argue that represents precisely what Blumenberg referred to when he discussed the idea that myth is a way through which we construct significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) within the absolutism of reality. Put in less grandiose terms, at a time of disruption to our sense of security, we will often seek ways to feel secure once again. This can be distinguished from physical safety insofar as it refers to a certain security of our being, in which we can understand our place within the world, including our relations with others.

All of this raises normative concerns that should serve as a catalyst for future research. The empirical material in chapters 5 and 6 seems to indicate that political myth often ends up simplifying our social and political experiences, and this simplicity may be a necessary part of constructing significance and ontological security. However, this could have important social and political consequences; political myth might radically simplify highly sensitive and complex situations into dramatic absolutes and, more worryingly, could encourage simplified perceptions about people and potentially create the conditions of possibility for prejudice. As Johan Galtung points out, the most important part of the word “prejudice” is the particle “pre”, meaning “a judgement made in advance, independent of

experience”.⁵¹¹ A study by Knowles and Effron concludes that high-entitativity can grant an element of legitimacy to prejudice and disinhibit its expression, especially when it is linked to a group’s pursuit of collective interests. Prejudice was seen by third parties as more legitimate when expressed by participants of high-entitativity groups who were defending their collective interests, and people were more willing to express private prejudices about others when they perceived themselves as belonging to a high entitative group.⁵¹² Moreover, there is some evidence to suggest that imaginations about Muslims continue to be influenced by the perception that they are an existential threat. A poll carried about by the charity *Islamic Relief* asked 6,640 people which three words and phrases they most associate with the world “Muslim”. Of these, 12% said terror, terrorist, or terrorist, which was the most frequently given phrase. This was ahead of faith (11%), mosque (9%), Qu’ran (8%), religious (8%), Muhammed (5%), Allah (5%) and prayer (5%). A further 5% of people said “extremist or misogynist”.⁵¹³ The media has influence on many of these perceptions.⁵¹⁴ In 2007, a report commissioned by the Greater London Authority which examined press material from 2006, found that prevailing view in the press was that “there is no common ground between the West and Islam, and that conflict between them is accordingly inevitable.”⁵¹⁵ Islam is portrayed in the media as “profoundly different from, and a serious threat to, the West, and that within Britain Muslims are different from and threat to ‘Us’” and a group challenges “‘our’ culture, values, institutions and way of life.”⁵¹⁶ There were several themes to this narrative including: the failure of Muslims to integrate, their obscurantism, the incompatibility of their values and

⁵¹¹ Johan Galtung et al, *The Muslim Diaspora in Europe and the USA*, (TRANSCEND, 2012), 1.

⁵¹² DA Effron and ED Knowles, "Entitativity and intergroup bias: How belonging to a cohesive group allows people to express their prejudices.," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 108, no. 2 (2015).

⁵¹³ The Telegraph, "Muslims most Associated with Terrorism, Poll Reveals," *The Telegraph* (16 June 2015), <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/11677409/Muslims-most-associated-with-terrorism-poll-reveals.html>.

⁵¹⁴ Elizabeth Poole’s research shows close correspondence between representations of Islam in the press and public opinion. See: Poole, *Reporting Islam: Media Representations of British Muslims*, 240, 50.

⁵¹⁵ Greater London Authority, *The search for Common Ground: Muslims, Non-Muslims and the UK Media*, (London2007).

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.*, xiii.

interests with the rest of British society, their unreasonable demands and their support of extremism and their mixed loyalties.⁵¹⁷ We have seen many examples of this by media commentators on both left and right-leaning sources discussed throughout chapters 5 and 6. However, none of this has been cited to claim that all people who are influenced by the political myth discussed in the thesis are prejudiced against all Muslims. What I am trying to point out is that simplification of how we perceive people risks encouraging generalisations that could, ultimately, become prejudicial.

This presents a serious challenge: how do we reconcile our existential needs in such times of perceived crisis – which simplification helps us to achieve – with a desire to sustain an open, transformative, and non-essentialised understanding of ourselves and others? I would suggest that this is an important avenue for further philosophical enquiry. If political myth encourages simplicity where it may best be viewed through a “shades of grey” lens, then we may perhaps risk reckless and inappropriate responses. Despite this, it is also crucial that do not discount the positive aspects of the work on myth. It seems that there is much to be said in favour of the work on myth in times of crisis. Perhaps any rhetoric that can bring people together at such difficult times is a positive thing?

There is some merit to this point in the sense that it acknowledges our need for a sense of collective solidarity. Although this would require further philosophical investigation, my sense is that we should take a consequentialist approach to political myths as we analyse them. Rather than assuming that political myths are always good or bad, we should consider what they *do*. We should ask several questions, such as: who do they exclude? Who do they include? Do they encourage prejudices? Can they incite violence? However, this may not satisfy some scholars in the existentialist tradition of philosophy, who may see political myth as essentially a process of suppressing *Angst* rather than engaging with its productive potential. Karl Jaspers may have argued that political myth would represent a failure to present a strong “inner resistance” to the “social

⁵¹⁷ Ibid., 18, 30, 103.

configurations” that are consistently imposed upon us.⁵¹⁸ Furthermore, Kierkegaard actively encouraged us to embrace *Angst*:

“I will say that this is an adventure that every human being must go through – to learn to be anxious... whoever has learned to be anxious in the right way has learned the ultimate”.⁵¹⁹

By implication, this would mean that political myth is a sign of weakness and non-authentic living. If we were to hold it to that standard, then we would ultimately argue that it must be suppressed and overcome. Not only does this seem highly improbable and impractical, it also strikes me as somewhat normatively dubious. Surely much of “being-with” requires sympathy and empathy for the position of others, and striving to construct a sense of unity only represents to support people in times of emotional hardship? To me, it would be bizarre to critique *all* myths. Rather, we should consider whether they are built out of already pre-conceived essentialist notions of self/other, or in a society in which prejudice and discrimination flourish. I believe this question could provide a catalyst for exciting philosophically grounded work that takes this question seriously. It should opt to critique situations where political myth may be contributing to conditions that create profound suffering. This will require much reflection and careful investigation into often deeply sensitive issues.

⁵¹⁸ Karl Jaspers, *Philosophy*, trans. E.B. Ashton, vol. II (University of Chicago Press, 1969), 30.

⁵¹⁹ Kierkegaard, "The Concept of Anxiety: The Simple Psychological Orientating Deliberation on the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin."

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