In the light of the “manned missile” attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon (DeLillo 38), and the crashing of United Airlines Flight 93 in Shanksville (PA) on September 11, 2001, prominent Republican politician Newt Gingrich publicly suggested: “We’ve had a Pearl Harbor. It’s called 9/11” (Hannity and Colmes). He repeated his analogy while the controversy over the construction of a mosque near “Ground Zero” heated up in the late summer of 2010: “We would never accept the Japanese putting up a site next to Pearl Harbor” (Thorsten and White). Such statements are in tune with the first media representations of the terrorist attacks. After September 11, 2001, several editorialists, news anchors, and politicians were quick to establish a direct link to the events of December 7, 1941. Dan Rather, CBS news anchor, referred to 9/11 as “the Pearl Harbor of Terrorism,” the September 12 issue of the New York Times featured thirteen articles mentioning Pearl Harbor, and the New Yorker re-published a December 1941 “Talk of the Town”-article to draw an analogy to the days after 9/11 (Rosenberg 175–7). In speeches during the presidential campaigns of 2003 and 2004, then President George W. Bush and former Vice President Dick Cheney repeatedly compared 9/11 to Pearl Harbor (cf. Connor). Similar analogies appear in current debates around the ongoing maintenance of the purpose-built prison at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba and the announced military trial of Khalid Sheikh Mohammad (cf. Hertzberg). Finally, the completion and expansion of the two memorial sites commemorating the victims of the Japanese strike on Pearl Harbor (the new and modernized 56 million U.S.-Dollar Pearl Harbor U.S.S. Arizona Memorial visitor center was opened in December 2010) and the victims of the 9/11 terrorist attacks (located at the site of the former World Trade Center complex, the 9/11 Memorial will be opened on September 11, 2011) will establish a permanent link between both events.

Ten years after 9/11, we are still living with the legacy of this hastily drawn analogy between “Pearl Harbor” and “9/11” and the subsequent global “War on Terror.” Both then President George W. Bush and the dominant media almost immediately conceived of the latter as a reissue of World War II in terms of what Stud Terkel once coined a “Good War” (1997 [1985]). With regard to stricter security measures at tourist destinations, hotels and on public transport the resultant global war permeated the various social spheres in the Western hemisphere. Germany, for example, still faces the consequences

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1 In May 2011, Gingrich announced his intention to run as a GOP presidential candidate in 2012.
of the terrorist attacks of September 11 on a daily basis. One may think of the various debates concerning the retention of communications traffic data, security checks at airports, the German involvement in Afghanistan, and continuing Islamophobia visible, for instance, in German reactions to France’s anti-burqa law of April 2011.

This ongoing Western anxiety about Muslim and Arab influences on our cultural life is largely rooted in two premises: the American superpower status as defined by U.S. military and political strength – recently apparent in the persistent demand for American drones in the 2011 Libyan civil war – and the widespread perception that the U.S. has the authority to use that strength to foil terrorist threats ever since the 9/11 attacks. Yet this authority is based on a rhetoric of danger that first became manifest in the American war against the Japanese and their German and Italian Axis allies in World War II. This political rhetoric continued to define American foreign policy throughout the Cold War. References to Pearl Harbor, the defining moment for the American Century, also rendered the initial public perception of 9/11 as a “second Day of Infamy.”

The following media and cultural-historical analysis will therefore reassess the link between the Pearl Harbor and 9/11 attacks in order to find out why the Pearl Harbor memory is the immediate event of choice to cope with the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. How do American mainstream discourses represent both events? Why are both events studied as national traumata? What significance does the Pearl Harbor memory have ten years after 9/11? To work on these questions, this paper first assesses this issue in a historical comparison of the initial reactions to both events. In a second step, it discusses media representations of the two attacks. Finally, this paper examines its findings in the broader light of current debates concerning cultural and national traumata. This paper holds that the popular cultural narrativization of Pearl Harbor heavily informs recent representations of 9/11 as a cultural trauma.

Where is Pearl Harbor?

During the “American Century,”2 the United States managed to maintain its superpower status by means of economic and political isolation of enemy states and the nationwide evocation of a common enemy. In other words, the American global preeminence is based on an ongoing national and international restoration and reassessment of an eternal state of emergency. David Campbell regards a state of danger as a function of interpretation that is spread by rhetoric which by the same turn motivates national identifica-

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2 The term “American Century” describes the history of the United States since the beginnings of Modern America. It was prominently used by the TIME publisher Henry Luce in February 1941. He claims that an “authentic creation of the 20th century – [...] the first great American Century” (Luce 65) can only be achieved by American involvement in World War II.
tion. Therefore, he holds that “the boundaries of a state’s identity are secured by the representation of danger integral to foreign policy” (3). Hence, a compelling threat is needed to maintain this state of emergency. Formal commemoration such as national holidays and the repeated invocation of culturally and nationally established symbols and myths can be regarded as key elements in the rhetorical process of a national “reality” production. How is such a threat initially created and communicated, and what established symbols were used in the creation of the Pearl Harbor legacy? A closer look at the historical facts behind this event will help to answer these questions.

Ever since the forced opening of Japan by Commodore Matthew Perry’s Black Ships in July 1853, the relationship between the U.S. and the “Empire of the Sun” had been strained. In 1893, U.S. Navy Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan first wrote about a possible armed conflict between both countries in his essay “Hawaii and Our Future Sea Power” (Mahan 31–59; 175–217). In 1941, this conflict would become reality.

When World War II broke out in Europe in 1939, the U.S. was in a state of isolation. While the country suffered from a crisis-ridden economy, high inflation rates, and high rates of unemployment, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt promised that America would not enter the war. Yet the years between 1930 and 1941 had also been years of deteriorating relations between Japan and the United States. Political issues over the status of China and the security of Southeast Asia were triggered by the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 and Japan’s withdrawal from the League of Nations in 1934. Japan ignored American protests and continued their attacks on Chinese territory in 1937. Yet, neither the U.S. nor any other nation was willing to halt Japan by the use of military force. Instead, Great Britain, the Netherlands, and the United States sought to avert further Japanese expansion by means of economic restrictions. After Japanese troops occupied French Indo-China in 1940, Roosevelt ordered a freeze on all Japanese assets in the U.S. and simultaneously imposed oil and trade embargoes on Japan. In the meantime, Japanese and American ambassadors tried to resolve the conflict through negotiations. However, both sides’ conditions were unacceptable for the other side so that the negotiations were bound to fail.

3 For a closer study of the power relations between Japan and the United States see the historical studies of Feifer (2006), LaFeber (1998), and Schodt (1994). After World War II the idea of a “Hundred Year War with Japan” became very popular; according to former U.S. ambassador to Japan, Edwin O. Reischauer, “During the 20th century as a whole, no country has more consistently regarded itself as in essential conflict with the United States than has Japan, and no country has been more uniformly looked upon as a potential enemy by Americans” (qtd. in Friedman and Lebard vii).

4 Not every nation remembers World War II as the global conflict between the years 1939 and 1945, starting with the German invasion of Poland. China commemorates either a Chinese War of Resistance, starting with the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931, or a longer Sino-Japanese War, starting with an armed conflict over the control in Korea in 1894 (cf. Fujitani, White, and Yoneyama 3). Japan memorialized this conflict as Jugo’nen senso (Fifteen Year War), or as Dai toa senso, (Greater East Asia War) (cf. Shimizu 17).
This conflict heated up when Cordell Hull, then Secretary of State, sent a note containing a demand for the immediate withdrawal of all occupying Japanese forces from Indochina and China. The submission of the “Hull Note” culminated in a movement of the U.S. Navy’s largest Pacific fleet from San Diego to Pearl Harbor. Japan may have regarded both this document and the fleet movement as an ultimatum. Only hours later, the Japanese Navy left Tankan Bay en route to Hawaii. On December 7, 1941, Japan attacked the American naval base Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. “The Pearl Harbor attack killed 2403 people, destroyed or damaged 18 U.S. battleships, cruisers and destroyers and 188 airplanes” (Donald 41). Despite the foreign political tensions between Japan and the U.S., several historians and contemporary witnesses claim that “[t]he United States was in an easy, carefree mode, right up to the commencement of the Pearl Harbor attack” (McAdams 32). Hence this attack is remembered as a “sneaky act of war,” a “day of infamy.”

Many Americans received the news of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor while they were listening to their favorite radio programs. When the news about the raid hit the radio stations, many Americans first checked their atlases: “Where’s Pearl Harbor?” [...] was a common question“ (McConnaughey). Not only did many Americans not know where Pearl Harbor was; most did not even know of the naval station’s existence (Zinsser 73; McAdams 30). In view of this, raising political and locational awareness was then the highest priority in government press releases, public statements, and President Roosevelt’s initial address to the nation of December 8, 1941.

In his speech, Roosevelt chooses a rhetorically well-versed geographic short cut by emphasizing that the Japanese bombs hit “the USA” (Freeman, Schamel, and West 468). He neither mentions details about the political background, nor does he give the exact geographical position of Pearl Harbor nor even name the naval station. The coinciding Japanese attacks on the Philippines, a former American colony, only receive a scant treatment in the President’s message. Rather he emphasizes that “the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan” (ibid.). In a rhetorically remarkable speech Roosevelt turns the complex backgrounds concerning the United States’ interest in Hawaii and the past negotiations with Japan into a simple message of a war-mongering Empire at the gates of fortress America. Even though Pearl Harbor is located 2,500 miles off the West Coast, the presidential address manages to evoke a temporal and local proximity of the event and thereby stresses the necessity of the proposed declaration of war. He declares December 7th as “a date which will live in infamy” (ibid. 470).

President Roosevelt’s speech can thus be regarded as a key moment in the creation of the Pearl Harbor narrative. In commenting on Roosevelt’s rhetoric, the historian Emily Rosenberg argues:

The infamy trope worked better if the attack was positioned clearly on American soil. A persuasive speech [...] is meant to mobilize. It necessarily aims to simplify, to flatten complexity and reduce ambivalence. If the story it tells is already famil-
Devoid of any complexity, Roosevelt’s talk of “infamy,” “deliberate attacks,” and “treachery” therefore functions as a jeremiad that stirs nation-wide anxiety, a feeling of lost security, and vulnerability.

Broadcast on the radio, the dominant medium of that time (cf. Daniels 50), the presidential message was received in every American living room. On the following day, long queues were formed in front of the recruitment offices of the U.S. Army, Navy, and Marine Corps. Newspaper front pages announced impossible news of Japanese “Enemy Planes near N.Y. from Atlantic!”, and for lack of photos printed paintings of then renowned painters such as Ted Kautzky. According to William Zinsser, an immediate collective Japan angst took hold of the nation:

Surely an attack as cunningly planned as the Pearl Harbor raid was only a prelude. Hawaii was about to be invaded! California was about to be invaded! If hundreds of Japanese planes could materialize out of nowhere, so could some Japanese divisions. Spies were imagined everywhere (80).

This national fear of Japanese enemies did not only arise from verbal, intellectual and cognitive discourse, e.g. Roosevelt’s speech, but also from visual sources such as paintings, cartoons, films, and photographs, which trigger emotions and address the national unconscious. In commenting on enemy representations in the World War II Combat Film, Jeanine Basinger concludes: “[W]e viewed the war with the Japanese as a race war, and the war with the Germans as an ideological war. When we disliked Germans, it was the Nazis we meant. When we disliked the Japanese, it was all of them” (26). Common stereotypes that were employed in this “race war” were referring to the Japanese as “no tail baboons,” “yellow-skinned, slanty-eyed bastards,” “nips,” “Japs,” or “apes in khaki” (cf. Dower 77-93). Films like *Bataan* (Tay Garnett 1943), *The Purple Heart* (Lewis Milestone 1944), or Frank Capra’s *Why We Fight* series (1942-1945) made strong use of these stereotypes. Together with Roosevelt’s “infamy” trope they created the narrative of a righteous American revenge.

In February 1942, first pictures of the attack were published in *Life* under the headline “Pictures of the Nation’s Worst Naval Disaster Show Pearl Harbor Hell.” Those pictures should only confirm what a whole nation had been fantasizing about for weeks. That is why, despite the media images, the radio remained the most important news source. It broadcast patriotic music, Roosevelt’s “Fireside Chats,” and played Sammy Kaye’s song “Remember Pearl Harbor” in heavy rotation. Furthermore, the American public sphere was immediately put under military control. Daily news, interviews, and any other broadcast material was regulated by the newly established Office of

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5 Hollywood vilified Japanese people in several War films. See Dower (1986), Eckert (1999), and Moeller (1996) for more details about the patterns of this race war.
War Information (OWI). This institution monitored mass entertainment on
a national scale. Robert E. May and Randy Roberts insist that not only radio,
but cinema, too, was under strict surveillance of the OWI:

[T]he United States government was quite interested in the content of movies. The
average ticket sales in America each week during World War II ranged between
eighty and ninety million, or two-third of the country’s population. Movies [...] exer-
ted an awesome power to influence and mold public opinion (19).

In the radio, newspapers, and cinema, the story of a surprise attack became
the narrative frame of the “Pearl Harbor attacks,” everyone agreed on who
was to blame for this event: the “sneaky” and “backstabbing” Imperial Japa-
nese Army.

In 1942, the Pearl Harbor legacy rested on two pillars: (i) the reissue of
“Remember the Alamo”-slogans in the new war motto “Remember Pearl

Harbor” and (ii) the iconographic reproduction of the burning U.S. Arizona
on war bonds advertisements, in cinema ads, and in movies like Remember
Pearl Harbor (1942). When Roosevelt announced that “no matter how long it
may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion, the American people in
their righteous might will win through to absolute victory” (Freeman, Scham-
el, and West 470), he first employed the Alamo trope by pointing out the
“righteous might” of the American people in this war against Japan. Sammy

Kaye’s song adapted this reference to the battle of the Alamo when he sung
“Let’s remember Pearl Harbor/ As we go to meet the foe/ Let’s remember
Pearl Harbor/ As we did the Alamo” (Kaye). The Alamo trope thus became
a meaningful narrative device to address and motivate the American nation
to support the war.

A closer look at the most famous iconographic representation of the burn-
ing U.S. Arizona reveals yet another historical continuity. First published
in February 1942, the above picture was taken during the Japanese attack. It
immediately added a visual frame to Roosevelt’s “infamy trope” (cf. Rosen-
berg). Visible in the center of the photo is the major mast of the U.S. Arizona
shrouded in smoke and ash. No victims can be seen in the picture, the action

Fig. 1: U.S.S. Arizona burning on December 7, 1941. <http://bit.ly/nG1X2g>.
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is frozen in time, the ship has not yet sunk. In other words, in this picture the event outranks the victims, the spectacle is more important than the actual loss. This act of destruction became the most important symbol of the Pearl Harbor attack, a burning warship thus turned into the icon of the American revenge. It is remarkable that this photo served as a stand-in for the 1,177 crew members who died on board of the U.S.S. *Arizona*. In fact, dying American soldiers were missing in all of the photos published three months after the actual attack. Those pictures may be regarded as a place holder for a collective imaginary, in which the ships become containers, sinking caskets, carrying Americans that are unmarked in means of their gender, social class, and ethnic background. In showing how this vessel is about to explode, this picture thus marks a national rupture and addresses a multiethnic American nation. It thereby implies a chance to reverse the shown event by fulfilling the iconic marker’s purpose as a visual reminder for a righteous war against whoever is responsible for this explosion.

A similar representation was well known in 1942 and could easily be linked to the burning U.S.S. *Arizona* – the explosion of the U.S.S. *Maine* in Havana Harbor, Cuba. The ship became the symbol for the Spanish American War of 1898. In both cases, the iconographic representation renders the human toll invisible and, by the same token, elevates a burning war machine as the symbol of each attack. Structured along the lines of the battle of the Alamo, the Hearst Press first propagated the battle cry “Remember the Maine.” In this regard, the visual representation of the attack on the U.S.S. *Arizona* is presented in similar terms and can therefore be regarded as an event in a national historical continuum.

Today, on the one hand, the above-discussed representation of the burning U.S.S. *Arizona* remains the symbol of the Pearl Harbor attack. This photo is reproduced on leaflet covers at the Pearl Harbor Memorial and every year it serves as accompanying photo in American news coverage on National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day. On the other hand, it has also become a discrete symbol for Japanese war mongering and has been used as additional news footage whenever a supposedly new Japanese threat emerged, e.g. after the *Ehime Maru* incident on February 9, 2001, or during the 1990s economic boom of the Japanese economy. Both the “Remember”-slogans and the iconographic representations thus form a simple, nationalist reenactment of past events in the present. Therefore the Pearl Harbor memory is marked by a temporal and local proximity to a national history that employs similar “infamy tropes” (cf. Rosenberg 15). Moreover, the Pearl Harbor narrative serves as a memory medium of a mythic history (cf. White 1997) about a wounded American nation that overcomes the wound and rises like a phoenix from the ashes in order to strike back. According to Geoffrey M. White,

> [b]oth history and myth are narrative genres that work to locate the self in relation to a culturally constructed social environment […]. [N]arrative is designed as much for purposes of sharing and communication of memory as for individual storage and retrieval (1997: 66).
This narrative is shared not only in innumerable war movies of the past and the present, amongst them classics such as *Flying Tigers* (David Miller 1942), *Destination Tokyo* (Delmer Daves 1943), or *Gung Ho* (Ray Enright 1943), but also in public and political rhetoric during and after World War II. Therefore, the term “Pearl Harbor” today no longer serves as a designated name for a location in the Pacific, rather it stands for the attack itself. Coordinates of time and place turn into a symbolic frame of reference in the very term “Pearl Harbor”. Therefore, the term itself could easily become shorthand for the events of 9/11. Not least because of the iconic template of the Pearl Harbor narrative (including the Remember-slogans and the visual representations), the layout of the most popular shots of the burning Twin Towers of September 11 bear a striking resemblance to the pictures of the burning U.S.S. *Arizona* (cf. White 2004).

In sum, the Pearl Harbor memory consists of both (i) the traumatic memory resulting from a national Japan angst, and (ii) a mythologic reenactment of what Richard Slotkin calls a “regeneration through violence” (5). Widely published pictures of the attack and eye-witness reports constitute the ‘perceived reality’ of the attack on Pearl Harbor and thereby turn the event into a specific form of reality experience. Eye-witness reports, in particular, structure a certain narrative around the logical nature of this event (i.e. the “day of infamy” as the starting point of what is now commonly understood as a “good war”), and make possible a clear-cut distinction between the attacked and the attackers (“us” and “them”). Therefore, “December 7” is structured along the lines of American Exceptionalism and confirms the national myth of an “American people [that] in their righteous might will win through to absolute victory” by the American entry into World War II for reasons of a supposedly defensive war (Freeman, Schamel, and West 470).

It comes as no surprise that popular culture adopted this topos and embraced the Pearl-Harbor-Memory in various forms. Only three months before the 9/11 attacks, Disney’s *Pearl Harbor*, a 140 million Dollar blockbuster made with extensive Pentagon support, hit the multiplexes. The marketing for the film created a hype during the spring and summer of 2001. Rosenberg comments on the film’s aggressive advertising campaign, “Pearl Harbor memories had become so prominent and ubiquitous in American culture by the summer of 2001 that a stranger to the planet might have imagined that the bombs had just been dropped” (173).


After the September 11 attacks, the renaissance of the Pearl Harbor memory, as mentioned previously, served as a shorthand to justify the American battle against a vaguely defined enemy. We know today that the talk of a “War on Terror” was not a rhetorical trope. It led to the American invasion of Afghanistan and then of Iraq. And yet, this war was first and foremost understood as a re-issue of what Stud Terkel (1985) called the last “good war”: World War
II. This analogy was a recurring rhetoric in the presidential speeches of then President George W. Bush. It comes as no surprise that the iconic images of the Japanese attacks and the Pacific War were appropriated in the dominant representations of 9/11. Appeals to the historical precedent of the Japanese attacks on Pearl Harbor are prominent in the iconic photographs of the burning Twin Towers that were to shape the 9/11 memory for years. Even though those pictures may show a burning civil target, they appear to resemble the photographic compositions of the above discussed representations of the U.S.S. Maine and the U.S.S. Arizona. But why should the World Trade Center rather than the Pentagon or the crash site of United Airlines Flight 93 become the symbol for the attacks?

Slavoj Žižek rightly points to the process of virtualization inherent in the terrorist attacks and maintains that “the terrorists did not do it primarily to provoke real material damage, but for the spectacular effect of it” (11). In fact, most contemporary witnesses received the news of September 11 on their TV screens. There was only a relatively small number of New Yorkers who actually experienced what is now the dominant memory of 9/11: the two planes crashing into the World Trade Center, people falling from its upper floors, the tumbling towers, the vast clouds of smoke and ash. Considered a “global symbol instantly recognized to stand for America” (Gillespie 5), the destruction of the WTC came close to what Americans had been anxious about ever since King Kong first climbed the Twin Towers on cinema screens in 1976. That is why the collision was first understood in terms of an overwhelming spectacle. Yet, after the “reality” of this attack sank in, the burning Towers were read in terms of a tremendous civil catastrophe; they instantly became a symbol for the ruthless brutality of the attacks. The “horror” of 9/11 stems from (i) the unexpected nature of the event, (ii) the symbolic erasure of an icon from New York’s skyline, (iii) the use of civil aircrafts including all their passengers as missiles, and (iv) the almost 3,000 civilian casualties.

And yet, there was something “unreal” about the media representations of the events. Žižek criticizes the “derealization” of the WTC collapse: “while the number of victims – 3000 – is repeated all the time, it is surprising how little of the actual carnage we see – no dismembered bodies, no blood, no desperate faces of dying people” (13). This “ideological censorship” highlights the symbolic character of the burning towers. Therefore, it is safe to say that due to their unexpected nature, the terrorist attacks and especially the symbolically charged images that surrounded them are indelible. As a result, the media representations evoke emotional effects such as shock, surprise, or distress. Today, nobody is merely referring to a date when using the phrases “September 11” or “9/11.” Instead, the numeric descriptors function as symbolic reminders of the images of the attack – they are entangled with each other. Furthermore, as they are not showing any ethnically identifiable

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victims, the burning Twin Towers can serve as meaningful reminders to a multicultural society and thus can stand as the sole, easily identifiable national symbol for the various attacks of September 11.

Announced as a “New Day of Infamy,” the terrorist attacks immediately entered the realm of a national historical continuum that was first established with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Not only did the iconic images of 9/11 – the burning Twin Towers – resemble the burning U.S.S. Arizona. Also, both “Pearl Harbor” and “9/11” are similar in their narrative structure. Both are air attacks, caused by an “alien” enemy which disrupted the normalcy of everyday life and propelled a change in the social order of the attacked country; both are regarded as threatening to American existence (cf. Neal). Yet, it is not to be denied that the differences between Pearl Harbor and 9/11 are obvious: the former is a military operation in the Pacific, almost 2,500 miles off the mainland. The latter is a set of terrorist attacks on American military and financial control centers causing nearly 3000 civilian casualties. Nevertheless, it is the psychological effect, the nation-wide anxiety of an alien enemy that links both events. Both attacks are framed as infamous and insidious acts of war – a narrative that closes the divide between Pearl Harbor and 9/11. Therefore, Cultural Studies discusses both events as cultural, national or collective traumata. World War II and the so-called global “War on Terror” can thus both be regarded as symptoms of an eternal state of emergency and an affirmation of a national trauma, or as Elizabeth Goren has put it: “As history has repeatedly shown, societies go to war to redress and redeem injury and trauma and as a culturally sanctioned means of mourning, especially when in a state of continuing fear” (52).

This state of emergency was again maintained by the creation of national fear of an ethnic Other. When Bush announced the year 2002 as a “year of war,” the attacks had already been embedded in rhetorics of cultural essentialism. They were a realization of what Samuel P. Huntington recognized as the central issue in global politics in his Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order (1996): an armed conflict between the two different cultural blocks of the Western civilization and the Islamic civilization. In the U.S., this new Manichean mindset became visible in the opportunistic naming of “enemies of the moment” by adding potential war mongers to the “Axis of Evil” (a modern-day version of the World War II “Axis Alliance”), a demand for strong retaliation in American foreign policy, and “a demonizing [media] coverage of bin Laden and his al-Qaeda network of terrorists” (Kellner 165). In cultural, media, and political discourses, terrorist acts and the terrorists themselves were represented in ways that imply a simple, metonymic relationship between religious practice and ideological beliefs. In other words, greater parts of the Arab world were accused of practicing Islamic fundamentalism and therefore of supporting terrorist acts against a supposedly morally and ethically superior West.

Terrorists were regarded as savages and the war against them became a civilizing mission, as was visible e.g. in the humanitarianist appeal and moral rigor in the names of the American military operations such as “Iraqi Free-
dom” and “Enduring Freedom.” According to Inderpal Grewal, “The Muslim as terrorist and the racialized figure of the person who ‘looks like a Muslim’ as a racial figure of the terrorist thus emerge [...] as those who are believed to provide the highest risk to the nation” (540). This new enemy was widely advertised in mugshots of the terrorist hijackers and thus clearly marked by gender and ethnic features: dark-skinned men with black hair, bushy eyebrows and beards. The simplicity of such enemy pictures is striking. They resemble the first WWII-awareness campaigns in the media concerning the physical appearance of the Japanese after “Pearl Harbor”.

Such representations of a hostile racial Other transformed the various multicultural spaces in the U.S. While the war against the aggressors happened outside the national realm, there was a certain need to emphasize national belonging and American patriotism on the inside. Whereas the multicultural community may be regarded as a conglomerate of “racialised and gendered subjects who see themselves as ‘American’ at some points and as different kinds of Americans at other times and places” (ibid. 538), a heterogeneous attitude towards individual contributions to the national community may be taken for granted. Such an attitude is marked in the ethnic belonging of the hyphenated American subject (e.g. Arab-American, Japanese-American, etc.). Grewal emphasizes that in any state of emergency there is the need to dissolve the ethnic marker in order to tell Americans from the aggressors (540). According to Heinz Ickstadt, in such a state of crisis there is always a pressure for consensus inside the community with regard to an explicit patriotic commitment to the U.S. (259). After 9/11, Grewal observes a shift from hyphenated to singular American identities:

Figs. 2, 3 (left, middle): “How to Tell Your Friends from the Japs,” published in TIME on December 22, 1941.

Fig. 4 (right): Widely circulated mugshots of the hijackers of Flights 11, 175, 77, and 93. FBI Press Release, September 27, 2001. <1usa.gov/p0jbzk>.
America had claimed, finally, even the multicultural spaces that many believed would be able to resist national belonging to the U.S. Sikh temples posted signs that said ‘God Bless America’, assuming that religiosity attached to nationalism might provide protection against this new racism, and that distinction between Sikhs and Muslims could be clarified (549).

This commitment can also be seen in the numerous American flags people of various ethnic backgrounds wore on their shirts or waved out their windows. N.R. Kleinfield comments: “People wore their patriotism and defiance openly. A new cohesiveness, a oneness, was going to remold the character of American citizenry” (2009: A1).

After “Pearl Harbor,” many Japanese-Americans were not able to save themselves by raising the American flag. Irrespective of their individual sense of national belonging and political attitude, about 110,000 Japanese Americans from the Pacific coast were assigned numbers and relocated to one of ten internment camps: Amache (Colorado), Gila River and Poston (Arizona), Heart Mountain (Wyoming), Jerome and Rowher (Arkansas), Minidoka (Idaho), Topaz (Utah), Manzanar, and Tule Lake (California). As the hostile Other was publicly propagated in a similar vein as after 9/11, several Chinese-Americans were afraid of being affected by anti-Japanese racism and violence. TIME (1941) and several other magazines published pictures showing physical differences between Chinese and Japanese men under the headline “How to Tell Your Friends from the Japs” [see figs. 3 and 4]. Furthermore, Chinese-Americans expressed their patriotic commitment by wearing buttons and posting signs that indicated both their actual ethnic background and their love for America. The detained Japanese-Americans could only show a similar American allegiance by voluntarily entering the war. Most of the detained Japanese-Americans joined the 442nd Regimental Combat Team – a yet unseen form of forced recruitment in the U.S. (Renov 111).

Ten years after 9/11, an end of this new race war is not in sight. After bin Laden’s death, the above discussed patriotism reemerged in forms of victory dances and marches in New York and Washington, D.C. The May 20 TIME featured a special report on Osama bin Laden’s death analyzing the “seeds of evil” in the “doomsday sheik’s” past. The former president George W. Bush is quoted with a statement that has to be read against the backdrop of WWII-rhetorics and Franklin Delany Roosevelt’s “Day of Infamy” speech: “The fight against terror goes on, but tonight America has sent an unmistakable message: No matter how long it takes, justice will be done” (Drehle). As this statement shows, the current state of emergency in the U.S. still rests on the fear of an ethnic Other and the possibility of sudden terrorist attacks. Accordingly, the cover of the mentioned issue of TIME aesthetically renders bin Laden’s death as part of a historical continuum that originated with WWII and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.
On September 11, 2001, Osama bin Laden, who was by then considered a leading figure of the “New Terrorism,” became the face of the terrorist attacks. After his death, the “War on Terror” will not end. Despite the removal of an ideological leader, terrorists remain a vaguely defined group of enemies that will continue to be marked first and foremost by their ethnic features.

**Pearl Harbor and 9/11 as National Traumata**

As this article has shown, the legacy of World War II and the attack on Pearl Harbor have significantly infiltrated the trauma narrative of the 9/11 attacks. On September 12, the then Republican Senator of Nebraska, Charles Hagel, fittingly commented on the attacks: “This is the second Pearl Harbor. I don’t think that I overstate it” (qtd. in Rosenberg 175). Yet, it was not only the Pearl Harbor memory that dominated media discourses and political rhetoric. Also the naming of the WTC site as a “Ground Zero,” possibly resulting from initial news reports that compared the clouds of ash and smoke to a “mushroom cloud,” rudely ignores the American decision to use atomic bombs in World War II. Instead the naming of the site of the former WTC complex hints at a national effort to repress U.S. military involvement in the so-called “atomic holocaust” in Japan in favor of the production of an own national trauma. After 9/11, Manhattan’s “Ground Zero” became a substitute term for the original name of the hypocenter of the atomic bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki of August 1945 – despite the fact that the bombs were developed in the New York-based “Manhattan Project” (cf. Asada 174-206).

Both events have to be regarded as essential to narrative discourses about an American national identity. “Pearl Harbor” in “9/11” therefore continues the narrative of “the American century” to maintain the national identity of the U.S. as an international superpower. Thus any cultural representation that makes use of the above discussed names and rhetorics can be said to positively support the political need for a “War on Terror.”

Arthur G. Neal claims that any event which disrupts the normalcy of everyday life, propels a change in the social order of a nation, or is threatening to a nation, can be regarded as a national trauma. Regarding the anxiety of
possible Japanese spies in the U.S. after the Pearl Harbor attack, possible sightings of the Japanese fleet or planes near San Francisco or even New York, the censorship of the OWI, the internment of about 110,000 Japanese-Americans, and the vilification of Japanese enemies, Neal’s term can be applied to the Pearl Harbor attacks. “September 11” caused a similar stir of emotions and the still ongoing “War on Terror.” Today, the PATRIOT Act of October 2001 still influences decisions on national security issues and Homeland Security, established in 2002, continues to function as the driving force in realizing security efforts to protect the United States against terrorist activities. Both the war and the national security measures intruded and altered American society by revealing “the fragility of social order” (Neal 197). According to Neal, both events can thus be regarded as national traumata.

However, the term “national trauma” also emphasizes the national character of the events and therefore makes obvious the need for nationally relevant histories to tell about the event. This need to dress the “national trauma” of 9/11 in WWII rhetorics may also be read as the required repetition of a “good war” and the need to insist on the morally and ethically superior American nation to maintain a national identity that once was formed after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. This process was first and foremost furthered by the dominant media and political discourses. On the one hand, the examples discussed in this paper exemplify a media-based constructedness of “Pearl Harbor” and “9/11” as national traumata. They also offer working models of the national self and the enemy. On the other hand, by enforcing emotionally charged pictures that address a multiethnic community, the same examples make tangible the American national space and time. In short, they represent the past as part of a mythologically charged historical continuum that as such has never been a present.

That said, “Pearl Harbor” and “9/11” cannot be regarded as traumatic \textit{per se}; rather, they are constructed retrospectively in a media-based and therefore social and political process as traumatic. Furthermore, the dominant media pictures of the events constitute a mutual frame of reference in their mode of meaning production. They further assign a compulsive repetition of those pictures and their narratives. While the politics of WWII and the “War on Terror” enter the lived-in world of their audiences via media representations, the dominant pictures of the initial reasons for both wars offer the symbols and the vocabulary that are necessary to tell about, to feel, and to experience this memory. It is exactly this procedure that assigns the compulsively repeated Pearl Harbor memory to an immovable place in the American national time.
Works Cited


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