The Appropriation and Weaponisation of the Crusades in the Modern Era

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Abstract

The introductory article proposes the hypothesis, which informed the decision making and editorial work in the present volume, that appropriations and weaponisations of the crusades in the modern era rely on culturally embedded master narratives of the past that are often thought to encompass public or cultural memories. Crucially, medievalism, communicated through metonyms, metaphors, symbols and motifs frequently acts as a placeholder instead of the master narratives themselves. The article addresses differences between medievalists' and modernists' conceptions of crusades, especially highlighting how the very meaning of words – such as crusade – differ in the respective fields. But the matter at hand goes beyond semantics, for the notion that the act of crusading is a live and potent issue is hard to ignore. There exists a complex and multifaceted crusading present. That people can appeal to master narratives of the crusades via mutable medievalism, which embodies zero-sum, Manichaean-type "clash of civilisations" scenarios, helps explain the continued appeal of the crusades to those who seek to weaponise them. It is hoped that the contributions to the special issue, introduced towards the end of the article, further a better understanding of the ways this has happened in the modern era.

The ways that the medieval Christian holy wars known as the crusades were understood, contextualised, remembered and projected were – and still are – both fluid and flexible. Ever since the capture of Jerusalem in 1099 by an army of western Europeans, commentators have sought to understand, frame and sometimes manipulate perceptions of this spectacular event and the consequent series of holy wars. For contemporary Christians, the capture of Jerusalem was a miracle in the literal sense of the word. Many of the earliest historians of the crusades thought of them as wars between God and the Devil when the fate of the protagonists' soul was a stake. Proclaimed and sanctioned by the papacy, supported by the Church, incorporated into the Church's penitential system and powerfully associated with the ideals of Christian knighthood, crusading was soon exported to theatres of war in Iberia and the Baltic region and then elsewhere. The crusades became an assertion of Christian identity and were employed to provide focus and direction against the perceived enemies of the Church, faith and state, whether Muslim, Christian, schismatic, heretic or pagan.[1]

[1] Defining a crusade has vexed crusade historians, partly because there was no medieval Latin word for a crusade and, in English, the word crusade did not become common until the seventeenth century. Most modern crusade historians stress the devotional origins of the Christian holy wars known as crusades whilst not neglecting or negating the multifarious ways that people were attracted to them or the impacts of the crusades upon those

Although the crusades were essentially forgotten in the Islamicate, memories of them endured in Europe. The earlier ideas of the crusades as spiritual endeavours were largely rejected following the Reformation, yet commentators still sought to locate the development of nations, governmental institutions and commerce within their understanding of the history of the crusades. Enlightenment thinkers continued to challenge the religious features of crusading, although many of them saw in the supposed manners of its knightly protagonists the roots of European civilisation. Crusading then became a source of national pride, and cultural memories in western Europe fashioned individuals such as Richard I of England as chivalric heroes who now carried their countries' national flags as exemplars of cultural virtues and superiority over conquered peoples during the colonial era. Pseudo-crusading, as Jonathan Riley-Smith termed it, thus employed the imagery, terminology and contemporary constructions of the crusades to frame imperial ventures.[2] Importantly, the reinterpreted nineteenth-century memories of the crusades in western Europe, memories fashioned by contemporary scholars and popular culture and built on the sedimental layers of earlier intellectual interpretations and understandings, were revived in the twentieth century. They continue to help shape popular perceptions of the crusades today.[3] The historical crusades have

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targeted by the crusaders. There might not have been any crusades unless most of those who led their followers on them placed a premium on their spiritual well-being and above all on their chances of salvation by participating in them. We can appreciate that when people heard a papal bull read aloud along with an accompanying sermon in support of a proposed campaign during a formal stage-managed ceremony and then took the cross thereby becoming *crucesignati* (signed with the cross) and assuming the obligations that accompanied that status, they recognised that they had volunteered to undertake – what was often – a monumental task. When those people also understood that they would receive certain privileges of a temporal and, crucially, spiritual nature for embarking on the campaign, then those who responded to a papal call to arms in the above ways might have considered that their penitential undertaking would be different to other contemporaneous forms of righteous war, considered sacred or profane. For these reasons, it seems reasonable to mark out and define some campaigns – or crusades – as being different to others waged around the same time. See Jonathan Riley-Smith, *What were the Crusades*, Fourth Edition (Basingstoke, 2009), 1–5. Crusade historians will recognise that the brief definition given in the main text, provided as a starting point for this introductory article, resembles the most widely held, so-called "pluralist" definition of the crusades that has tended to dominate historiography in recent decades. A prescribed set of devotional and juridical formulae, some of which is mentioned in the above paragraph and that strict advocates of the pluralist approach to crusade history would like to see before defining a campaign as a crusade, is purposely absent here. It can be contended that strict pluralism, with its foci on identifying procedure and ritual in the textual record, is too restrictive due to one simple reason: the lamentable dearth of extant documents in some regions. See the discussion in Jason T. Roche, "The Second Crusade: Main Debates and New Horizons", in *The Second Crusade: Holy War on the Periphery of Latin Christendom*, eds. Jason T. Roche and Janus Moller Jensen (Turnhout, 2015) 1–32 (especially 25–32). Giles Constable was the first to identify four different definitions of a crusade. See his "The Historiography of the Crusades", in *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World*, eds. Angeliki E. Laiou and Roy Parviz Mattahedeh (Washington, DC, 2001), 1–22 (here 12–15). A revised and updated version can be found in Constable, *Crusaders and Crusading in the Twelfth Century* (Aldershot, 2008), 3–43. For an excellent detailed analysis of the approaches to defining a crusade see Norman Housley, *Contesting the Crusades* (Malden, MA, 2006), 1–23. Owing to the lack of a precise terminology before c. 1200, Christopher J. Tyerman argued that to define campaigns undertaken before the thirteenth century as crusades is anachronistic. See Tyerman, *The Invention of the Crusades* (Basingstoke, 1998). He has since described crusades in ways that resemble the pluralist definition; see, for example, Tyerman, *Fighting for Christendom: Holy War and the Crusades* (Oxford, 2004), 30–32.

[2] Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Crusades, Christianity, and Islam* (New York, 2008), 45–61; Christopher J. Tyerman, *The Debate on the Crusades* (Manchester, 2011), especially 37–154.

[3] See Kristin Skotkki, "The Other at Home? On the Entanglement of Medievalism, Orientalism and Occidentalism in Modern Crusade Historiography", *Eckert Dossiers* 4 (2011): accessed 24 June 2021, http://repository.gei.de/bitstream/handle/11428/129/ED_2011_04_08_Skott.ki_The_Other_at_Home.pdf?sequence=11&isAllowed=y; and Skottki, "The Dead, the Revived and the Recreated Pasts: 'Structural Amnesia' in Representations of Crusade History", in *Perceptions of the Crusades from the Nineteenth to the Twenty-First Century: Engaging the Crusades, eds. Mike Horswell and Jonathan Phillips* (Abingdon, 2018), 107–32.

clearly meant many different things to many people, and what they were or were supposed to be, and what they may or may not have represented remains woolly and ‑ as this special issue will demonstrate ‑ still very ripe for appropriation and, more problematically, weaponisation.

Crusade historians and other medievalists may find it surprising that scholars of modern culture and forms of conflict, conflict that bore almost no resemblance to the papally-sanctioned, penitential holy wars waged against the believed enemies of Christ, might mention the supposed redemptive and salvific properties of the warfare that protagonists and other contemporaries chose to call crusades.[4] It must be stressed straight away that modernists are not intentionally weaponising the crusades when employing such language nor are they necessarily playing fast and loose with terms and phrases of weighty significance to historians of penitential warfare. For many modernists, terms such as redemption and salvation are not understood in theological terms even if there are frequent nods in their discourse to theology. Their subjects, who appropriated the crusades at points during the twentieth century, casually shifted between secular and religious connotations to their words. Seeking to imbue their work with a sense of what their subjects were trying to do, many writers found ‑ and continue to find themselves invoking the same ideas and terminology as their subjects in reflections of semantic shifts. For example, scholars of modern history might write that soldiers fought evil in God's name and that their actions were redemptive. But evil men and sinners had not succumbed to fallen angels or demons as would have been the case in the European Middle Ages; they had succumbed to immoral, secular ideologies. Warfare might be considered salvific, but the actions of modern soldiers are not understood to earn them an eternal reward as the historical crusaders may have understood them; rather, their actions save oppressed peoples and nations from the errors of their ways or the tyranny of others. This is the redemption of Exodus.

It is not always clear whether those employing such language in the twentieth century to describe their modern wars were fully aware of its theological connotations. Indeed, beyond recognising that they were drawing on collective and cultural memories, we know too little about how the crusades were remembered by those appropriating them. It seems that the promoters of modern "crusades" hoped to imbue secular, contemporary meanings of words with religious overtones to help convey a sense of common mission, perhaps in both the secular and religious senses of the word "mission". As Mercedes Penalba-Sotorrio notes in her contribution to the special issue, religion can act as a "rallying point" for individuals and groups who share a faith but otherwise are not natural bedfellows. Of course, the fact that promoters of modern warfare, seeking support and legitimisation for their wars, may use such language does not necessarily deny their beliefs and religiosity. Nonetheless, we should recognise that many commentators on modern conflict tend to avoid theology and seek explanations for policies and actions in familiar secular spheres.[5]

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[4] See, for example, the following books on the First World War: David Traxel, *Crusader Nation – The United States in Peace and the Great War, 1898–1920* (New York, 2006); Anthony Bruce, *The Last Crusade – The Palestine Campaign in the First World War* (London, 2002); Richard S. Faulkner, *Pershing's Crusaders – The American Soldier in World War I* (Lawrence, KS, 2017). Compare with Philip Jenkins, *The Great and Holy War – How World War I Changed Religion For Ever* (Oxford, 2014); Jonathan H. Ebel, *Faith in the Fight – Religion and the American Soldier in the Great War* (Princeton, NJ, 2010). See also Mike Horswell, The *Rise and Fall of British Crusader Medievalism, c. 1825–1945* (Abingdon, 2018).

[5] Matthew Gabriele, "Debating the 'Crusade' in Contemporary America", *The Mediaeval Journal* 6 (2016): 73–92 (here 82). The present author would like to thank Susanna A. Throop for making him aware of Gabriele's article.

A similar issue arises with the use of the term "crusade". Crusade historians are fully aware of problems with the historical meaning of this word. There is no need here to repeat the broad historiography of the crusades and the problems with defining a historical crusade as noted at the top of this introductory article. The word took on its current meaning in popular discourse by the end of the nineteenth century, most conspicuously in the anglophone world in the US. As Graham Cross and Sam Edwards point out in their contributions to the special issue, the modern use of the term to refer to righteous campaigns for domestic social, moral and political reforms became popular with US progressives. There were short and gradual steps for politicians and writers, both popular and academic, to take such ideas, and the terms used to express them, on to the international stage. Since Woodrow Wilson's "crusade" to protect democracy examined by Cross and Franklin D. Roosevelt's and Dwight D. Eisenhower's "crusade" against fascism examined by Edwards, there have been, for example, Harry S. Truman's, Lyndon B. Johnson's and Ronald Regan's "crusades" against communism, and George W. Bush's coding of the war on terror as a "crusade" as noted below.[6] One can identify many disconnections and continuities in American foreign policy between these internationalist so-called "crusades". Nonetheless, US presidents, following earlier American precedents that framed the conquest of the American frontier, the Mexican War and American Civil War as righteous violence, repeatedly overlaid their rhetoric concerning their "crusades" with overtly religious and, at least since the 1950s, sometimes explicitly apocalyptic overtones. Moreover, the notion that US foreign interventions could banish a tyranny that posed an existential threat to American values is common to all the above so-called crusades.[7]

The above modern "crusades" were against regimes, ideologies and concepts hardly conceivable in the medieval world. It is little wonder then that when scholars of modern affairs refer to say, the employment of a "crusading language" in the context of such "crusades", the meanings of words employed in such language would be unfamiliar to the historical crusaders and their contemporaries. Hence, the words might carry entirely different connotations for crusade historians and other medievalists.

But the matter goes beyond semantics. The first four contributions to this special issue demonstrate how political, military and religious leaders of states and would-be states weaponised the crusades during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries by drawing on culturally embedded, although by no means fixed master narratives of the past that are often thought to encompass public or cultural memories. Master narratives and cultural memories, frequently drawn from popular culture as well as scholarly discourse, help people make sense of the present by framing current events and circumstances in a continuum with significant and defining moments in history that people readily identify with and from which they often hope to find direction and meaning. Master narratives of the crusades are often so culturally entrenched that people rarely question the stories they purport to tell and the evolving messages they convey. Indeed, a stripped-down form of medievalism frequently acts as a placeholder instead of the familiar narratives themselves. The medievalism (that is, the re-workings and reinventions of the European Middle Ages in post-medieval contexts and constructs) is

[6] See, for example, James I. Matray, "America's Reluctant Crusade: Truman's Commitment of Combat Troops in the Korean War", *The Historian* 42 (1980): 437–55; Michael H. Hunt, *Lyndon Johnson's War: America's Cold War Crusade in Vietnam, 1945–1968* (New York, 1997); Paul Kengor, *The Crusader: Ronald Reagan and the Fall of Communism* (New York, 2007).

[7] See also Robert Jewett and John Shelton Lawrence, *Captain America and the Crusade Against Evil: The Dilemma of Zealous Nationalism* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2004).

communicated through readily identifiable metonyms, loaded metaphors, visual symbols and textual motifs, which are understood to capture, summarise and store master narratives of the historical crusades even while they efface those narratives of complexity. Whilst moments of semantic change happen when medievalism occurs in these ways, the contributions to the special issue demonstrate that, crucially, Manichean constructions of "crusades" as zero-sum conflicts between the forces of good and evil in which only one side can and must be victorious, endure.

Scholars have noted elsewhere the appropriation and particularly the weaponization of symbols and motifs associated with the crusades in recent years.[8] But to illuminate this vexing issue, it is appropriate to sketch some significant and illustrative moments of appropriation and weaponisation, especially in the first years of the 2000s, which seem to have set the tone for what followed. As Jason T. Roche examines in his contribution to the special issue, Osama bin Laden, leader of al-Qāʿida radical Islamist group, built on Arab nationalist and militant Islamist traditions that labelled westerners as "crusaders" when referring to his enemies as such both before and after the al-Qāʿida terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001. In a news conference the day later, President George W. Bush, who became a born again Christian after a conversation with a friend of the family and famous Protestant evangelist and fundamentalist, Reverend Billy Graham, in 1985, intimated to reporters that the US was now at war, ending his speech with the words: "This will be a monumental struggle of good versus evil, but good will prevail."[9] This language invokes the Huntingtonian "clash of civilisations" dichotomy discussed below; the alert may recognise its Manichean-type, cosmic overtones. The president stood on the lawn of the Rose Garden in front of the world's media four days later, again described the perpetrators of the attacks as "a new kind of evil" before he declared ‑ in almost his next breath ‑ that "this crusade, this war on terrorism, is gonna [*sic*] take a while."[10]

Bush was building on the presidential tradition that keyed US foreign interventions as crusades and that overlaid war rhetoric with explicitly religious overtones. There was also medievalism at work here. Edwards wonders whether the president, searching for an unscripted word or phrase to help him declare the "war on terrorism", had "D-Day" and General Dwight D. Eisenhower's celebrated and much memorialised "Great Crusade" in mind. Bush's invocation of theology and the clash of civilisations, Manichaean-type dichotomy, and his choice of the single term, "crusade", to convey meaning to a war that would involve western forces fighting in the Near East against peoples who overtly identified as Islamic, and against a group that had frequently referred to Americans as "crusaders", was almost immediately condemned in newspapers, magazines and opinion pieces, especially in Europe.[11] The White

[8] See, for example, Gabriele, "Debating the 'Crusade'", 73–92; Akil N. Awan, "Weaponising the Crusades: Justifying Terrorism and Political Violence", in *The Crusades in the Modern World*, eds. Mike Horswell and Akil N. Awan (Abingdon, 2020), 4–24; Tiago Joao Queimada e Silva, "The Reconquista Revisited: Mobilising Medieval Iberian History in Spain, Portugal and Beyond", in *The Crusades in the Modern World*, eds. Mike Horswell and Akil N. Awan (Abingdon, 2020), 57–74.

[9] George W, Bush, "How Billy Graham Changed My Life", *The Wall Street Journal*, 23 February 2018, accessed 24 June 2021, https://www.wsj.com/articles/how-billy-graham-changed-mylife-1519427900; "Text of Bush's Act of War Statement", *news.bbc.co.uk*, 12 September 2001, accessed 24 June 2021, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/1540544.stm.

[10] George W. Bush, Speech of September 16, 2001, accessed 28 February 2020, https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010916-2.html.

[11] See, for example, Peter Ford, "Europe Cringes as Bush 'Crusade' Against Terrorists", *The Christian Science Monitor*, 19 September 2001, accessed 14 June 2021, https://www.csmonitor.com/2001/0919/p12s2-woeu.html.

House moved quickly to dissociate the president from the inflammatory implications of the word.[12] However, the proverbial horse had bolted the stable.

As noted by Roche, Osama bin Laden expressed outrage at the attempts to distance the president from his ill-judged use of the "crusade" motif during the al-Qāʿida leader's eagerly anticipated and widely viewed televised interview with the al-Jazeera correspondent, Tayseer Allouni, the month following the press conference on 16 September. Osama bin Laden seized on Bush's unscripted quip as proof that western interventions in the Near East constituted a crusade. According to the al-Qāʿida leader, the war on terror was no less than the latest crusade in a centuries-long clash of civilisations between "Islam and the West".[13]

Others were thinking along similar lines. As John Cotts points out in his contribution to the special issue, exponents of Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilisations" paradigm, who see the crusades as epitomising the supposed "clash", all but saw their ideas manifest with 9/11 and the ensuing war on terror. For many people, here was incontrovertible proof that supposed pre-modern/hyper-religious eastern and modern/enlightened-secular western societies were intractable, and here then was the latest bout of warfare between, in Huntington's words, "Western and Islamic civilisations". The war on terror was interpreted as the latest attempt to stem a feared Islamisation of the West, an attempt many claimed began with Charles Martel at the battle of Tours-Poitiers in 732 ce and then continued with the historical crusaders.[14] Racist, Islamophobic rhetoric may have proliferated. For example, some Protestant evangelists, exhibiting a clear fundamentalist strain and close to the administration in the White House, seemingly denounced Muslims and Islam immediately after 9/11.[15]

In the ensuing years, voices on both sides of the political spectrum in the US would refer to the war on terror as a "crusade", and political commentators were not alone here. Numerous journalists and scholars likewise referred to the so-called Bush Doctrine and its foreign policy, which included plans for regime change in the Near East, as a crusade.[16] Many

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[12] Ari Fleischer, White House Press Briefing, 18 September 2001, accessed on 24 June 2021, https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010918-5.html.

[13] See also Andrew B. R. Elliott, *Medievalism, Politics and Mass Media: Appropriating the Middle Ages in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, 2017), 106–31.

[14] Bernard Lewis coined the phrase "clash of civilisations" in his "The Roots of Muslim Rage", *The Atlantic*, September 1990. Samuel P. Huntington bolstered and made famous Lewis's theory in his "The Clash of Civilisations?", *Foreign Affairs* 72 (1993): 22–49 and Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York, 1996). Well-known exponents of the "clash" paradigm include Robert Spencer, *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam (and the Crusades)* (Washington, DC, 2005); Rodney Stark, *God's Battalions: The Case for the Crusades* (San Francisco, CA, 2009). See also Selwyn Duke, "The Crusades: When Christendom Pushed Back", *The New American*, 5 February 2010, accessed 24 June 2021, https://www.thenewamerican.com/culture/history/item/4698-the-crusades-whenchristendom-pushed-back.
Academic and popular discourse on whether the crusades should be considered defensive wars that put a stop to the expansion of Islamic powers in the European Middle Ages and beyond flourished again in the wake of President Barack Obama's National Prayer Breakfast address on 5 February 2015. See John Cotts's contribution to the present volume.

[15] Esther Kaplan, *With God on Their Side: George W. Bush and the Christian Right* (New York, 2004), 13. See also *Elliott, Medievalism, Politics and Mass Media*, 94–95.

[16] See, for example, William Marina, "Empires as Ages of Religious Ignorance: George W. Bush's Crusade and American Fundamentalism", *Independent Institute*, 12 November 2004, accessed 24 June 2021, https://www.independent.org/news/article.asp?id=1418; Jewett and Lawrence, *Captain America and the Crusade Against Evil*; Mel Gurtov, *Superpower on Crusade: The Bush Doctrine in US Foreign Policy* (Boulder, CO, 2006); Kaplan, *With God on Their Side*, 12–20; Andrew Fiala, "Crusades, Just Wars, and The Bush Doctrine", *Peace*

people, even within the Bush administration that moved quickly to dissociate the president from the implications of the crusade motif, continued to appeal to medievalism that invoked cultural memories of the crusades and the "clash of civilisations", Manichaean-type dichotomies.[17]

All the while, certain Protestant evangelists, many of whom believe in an imminent apocalypse and the Second Coming of Christ, appear to have become increasingly influential amongst members of the Bush administration. Some members of the administration, like many of the Protestant evangelists and fundamentalists themselves, seemingly believed that God ordained Bush's presidency and that the war on terror constituted a zero-sum, Manichean holy war of some kind. At the same time, the Christian Zionist cause appears to have been increasingly advocated in Washington and elsewhere and the popularity and impact of apocalyptic theology, championed most famously by Protestant television evangelists who prepared viewers for the approach of Armageddon, remained undiminished.[18] As Roche explores, a very similar scenario developed in parts of the Islamicate.

Certain Protestant evangelical groups, exhibiting fundamentalist views, were also becoming increasingly vociferous in the US military.[19] By tradition, the American military was a devout institution and the influence of Protestant fundamentalists at the highest echelons of the regime in the 2000s is yet unclear.[20] Interestingly, in the summer of 2003, not long after the invasion of Iraq, Donald Rumsfeld, the US Secretary of State, oversaw the preparation of PowerPoint presentations for leaders at the Pentagon, as well as President Bush, a man who never shied from the fact that his faith influenced his policies and who was widely reported to have said that "God told me to end the tyranny in Iraq."[21] The cover slides depicted events in Iraq on the previous day overlaid with biblical quotations, including Ephesians 6.13: "Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand." The passage is well known to crusade historians and other medievalists. Abbot Bernard of Clairvaux, the foremost spiritual leader of his time, composed a missive in praise of the newly-formed military order of the Templars in c.1130 when he too re-fashioned St Paul's spiritual metaphors for fighting for Christ against the present threat of evil, that is, Satan, in the material world.[22] Around the same

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Review 19 (2007): 165–72 and Fiala, "The Crusade for Freedom: A Just War Critique of The Bush Doctrine", *The Journal of Political Theology* 9 (2008): 47–60. See also Gabriele, "Debating the 'Crusade'", 75.

[17] Bruce Holsinger, *Neomedievalism, Neoconservatism, and the War on Terror* (Chicago, IL, 2007), esp. 6–16, 43–54; Elliott, *Medievalism, Politics and Mass Media*, 78–105.

[18] Kaplan, *With God on Their Side*, 10–11, 13, 23–29; Jewett and Lawrence, *Captain America and the Crusade Against Evil*, 131–44. See also Clifford Kiracofe, *Dark Crusade: Christian Zionism and US Foreign Policy* (New York, 2009); David C. Barker, Jon Hurwitz and Traci L. Nelson, "Of Crusades and Culture Wars: 'Messianic' Militarism and Political Conflict in the United States", *The Journal of Politics* 70 (2008): 307–22.

[19] Gabriele, "Debating the 'Crusade'", 79–82.

[20] Michael Snape, *God and Uncle Sam: Religion and America's Armed Forces in World War II* (Woodbridge, 2015).

[21] See, for example, "George Bush: 'God told me to end the tyranny in Iraq'", *The Guardian*, 7 October 2005, accessed 24 June 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/oct/07/iraq.usa. On Bush's faith-based presidency, see Stephen Mansfield, *The Faith of George W. Bush* (New York, 2004); Kaplan, *With God on Their Side*. See also Jewett and Lawrence, *Captain America and the Crusade Against Evil*; Joan Didion, "Mr. Bush & the Divine", *The New York Review*, 6 November 2003, accessed 24 June 2021, https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2003/11/06/mr-bush-the-divine/.

[22] Robert Draper, "And he shall be judged", *gq*, June 2009, accessed 21 June 2021, https://www.gq.com/story/donald-rumsfeld-administration-peers-detractors; Bernard of Clairvaux, "De laude

time as Rumsfeld was giving his presentations, American Lieutenant General 'Jerry' Boykin, newly promoted by the Secretary of State to the position of Deputy Undersecretary of Defence for Intelligence, was touring and preaching in American Churches. The congregations listened to him frame the war on terror as a form of holy war as he stood at the pulpits in full uniform. At the Good Shepherd Community Church in Sandy, Oregon, in July 2003, for example, he told the congregation that special forces were victorious in Iraq because of their faith in God. More tellingly, he added that "the enemy is not a physical one…The enemy is a spiritual enemy. It's called the principality of darkness. We…are in a spiritual battle, not a physical battle…And the enemy is a guy called Satan…Satan wants to destroy this nation." When Boykin's invocation of cosmic war caused a stir in the popular press and elsewhere, the prominent Christian fundamentalist and evangelist, the former presidential candidate Gary Bauer, came to his defence. Likewise invoking the "clash of civilisations" paradigm, Bauer declared that America was "engaged not only in a war against radical Jihadists, whose sole aim is our complete destruction…but a cultural war over traditional values and common sense."[23] The frequent evocating of the supposed "clash" dichotomy, the framing of the war on terror in religious terms, when coupled with Bush's faith-based policies and his seeming belief that he was God's instrument on earth, has led some commentators to believe that the Bush administration was purposely keying the war on terror as some kind of zero-sum holy war, which those commentators often label a "crusade".[24]

That similar ideas are not the preserve of Boykin and his ilk has had devasting effects in recent years, which is not to say that those effects are solely attributable to the similar ideas. The Islamic State (IS) militant Islamists, following the example of Osama bin Laden, likewise see the world in binary terms. Theirs is a world divided between members of IS on one side and all others on the opposite side, and the group set out to extinguish the so-called "grayzone" in between.[25] Moreover, as Roche examines, the group's propagandists also projected the war on terror as a "crusade" between good (Muslims) and evil (Christians) and as a cosmic harbinger of the apocalypse. And we are all familiar with the IS group claiming responsibility via a "cyber jihad" for the type of terrorist attacks on so-called "crusaders" as noted in Cotts's contribution. Cotts also notes how modern white supremacists, fascists, neo-Nazis and other elements of the extreme far-right in North America, Europe and, more recently, Australasia, following the medievalism of the Ku Klux Klan and the Nazi party, have weaponised the crusades with alarming regularity and tragic consequences. White, extreme far-right individuals and groups are not necessarily religious, nor do they inevitably share their ideologies, but they often feel threatened by what they see as the Islamisation of their societies and the racist tone of much of their Islamophobia is unmistakable. Importantly, they often imagine the European Middle Ages as some sort of homogenous "white", "pure" "Christian" space, a space organised around military resistance to outside, non-white, non-Christian forces.[26] Medievalism, especially derived from cultural memories of the crusades but now

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novae militia", in *Sancti Bernardi Opera*, eds. Jean Leclercq and Henri Rochais (Rome, 1957–77), 3: 212–39. See also Gabriele, "Debating the 'Crusade'", 81.

[23] William M. Arkin, "The Pentagon Unleashes a Holy Warrior", *Los Angeles Times*, 16 October 2003; Kaplan, *With God on Their Side*, 20–22. See also Gabriele, "Debating the 'Crusade'", 80.

[24] See, for example, James Carroll, *Crusade: Chronicles of an Unjust War (American Empire Project)* (New York, 2013); Elliott, *Medievalism, Politics and Mass Media*, 84–87.

[25] See, for example, "The Extinction of the Greyzone", *Dabiq 7*, Rabi Al-Akhar 1436: 54–66.

[26] David M. Perry, "What to do when Nazis are Obsessed with your Field", *Pacific Standard*, 6 September 2017, accessed 24 June 2021, https://psmag.com/education/nazis-love-taylor-swift-and-also-the-crusades.

often regurgitated via online social media platforms through memes, slogans and so on with no reference to context, affords a framework of easily identifiable symbols and motifs that provide statements on cultural ethnicity and continuity, nationalism, patriotism and identity. Memes depicting supposed crusaders wearing great helms and the simple words and phrases "crusader", "Templar" and "*Deus Vult*" appear to be particularly popular. The notion that white, far-right extremists are participants in the imagined "clash of civilisations" in the form of some sort of "counter-jihad" or "crusade" to preserve what they understand to be white, Christian, western culture and values seems to inspire, motivate and empower them.[27]

Very recent evidence suggests that some white, far-right extremists and some white Protestant evangelists holding fundamentalist and Christian Zionist views have become inextricable. And during Donald Trump's presidency, Protestant evangelists seemed to have more influence in Washington than ever before.[28] In January 2020, Donald Trump Jr. showed off his new assault rifle dubbed the "Crusader". The sellers initially marketed the rifle on their website as a weapon to be used by American citizens against "Muslim terrorists". The model was "inspired by some of the most fierce warriors who fought in nearly 200 years of epic conflicts known as the Crusades." Trump Jr.'s rifle is replete with various texts and symbols derived from modern cultural and collective memories of the crusades. The magazine-well, for example, is shaped like a great helm, the same type of helm sported on the aforementioned memes and employed with the same winks to the white supremacists as the *Deus vult* and Templar medievalism. When one considers the Protestant fundamentalist and Christian Zionist influence in Washington and the messianic militarism of much of Trump's electoral base, the rifle appears even more troubling. As Matthew Gabriele and David Perry point out, the rifle's medievalism will suggest "to some on the right that Trump understands ongoing confrontations in the Middle East in the correct terms; for white evangelicals as a prelude to apocalypse, while for white supremacists a chance to avenge the crusaders and 'win' this time."[29]

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[27] See, for example, Daniel Wollenberg, "The New Knighthood: Terrorism and the Medieval", *Postmedieval: A Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies* 4 (2014): 21–33; Gillian Brockwell, "The accused New Zealand shooter and an all-white Europe that never existed", *The Washington Post*, 16 March 2019, accessed 23 June 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2019/03/16/accused-new-zealand-shooter-an-all-white-europe-that-never-existed/; David M. Perry, "How to Fight 8Chan Medievalism – And Why We Must", *Pacific Standard*, 27 June 2019, accessed 24 June 20201, https://psmag.com/ideas/how-to-fight-8chanmedievalism-and-why-we-must-notre-dame-christchurch; Amy S. Kaufman, "To Russia With Love: Courting A New Crusade", *publicmedievalist.com*, 28 February 2017, accessed 24 June 2021, https://www.publicmedievalist.com/russia-love/. See also Elliott, *Medievalism, Politics and Mass Media*, 132–81.

[28] See, for example, Thomas Lecaque, "The apocalyptic myth that helps explain evangelical support for Trump", *The Washington Post*, 26 November 2019, accessed 14 June 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2019/11/26/apocalyptic-myth-that-helps-explain-evangelical-support-trump/; Matthew Teague, "'He Wears the Armor of God': Evangelicals Hail Trump's Church Photo Op", *The Guardian*, 3 June 2020, accessed 24 June 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/jun/03/donald-trump-church-photo-op-evangelicals; Alex Morris, "Donald Trump: the End-Times President", *Rolling Stone*, 20 October 2020, accessed 24 June 2021, https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-features/donald-trump-christians-fundamentalists-end-timesrapture-1083131/; Elizabeth Dias and Ruth Graham, "How White Evangelical Christians Fused With Trump Extremism", *The New York Times*, 12 January 2021, accessed 24 June 2021,https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/11/us/how-white-evangelical-christians-fused-with-trump-extremism.html.

[29] Matthew Gabriele and David Perry, "Donald Trump Jr.'s rifle shows how obsessed the right still is with the Crusades", *The Washington Post*, 7 January 2020, accessed 24 June 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2020/01/07/donald-trump-jrs-rifle-showshow-obsessed-right-still-is-with-crusades/.

There are other very recent, less well-known, but equally troublesome appropriations of the crusades and invocations of the "clash of civilisations" paradigm. In the wake of the European Union's ruling on the wearing of headscarves in March 2017, Turkey's President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, accused the EU in a televised speech of commencing a "crusade" against Islam and declared that "a battle has started between the cross and the half moon." Turkey's Foreign Minister, Mevlut Cavusoğlu, had earlier predicted that "religious wars" will start in Europe due to the rise of the far-right.[30] Erdoğan has repeatedly compared the actions of German and Dutch politicians to that of "Nazis" and has accused Europe of hosting the "spirit of fascism". In June 2017, after European monitors criticised a referendum in which Erdoğan won sweeping new powers, he denounced the West's "crusader mentality" during his victory speech. Just as was the case with the arms's dealer depicting the great helm image on Trump Jr.'s "Crusader" rifle, Erdoğan did not need to inform his listeners why he used the crusader motif as it stored and carried all the resonance he needed.[31] A year later, following a decision in Austria to shut down seven mosques and expel 40 imams, Erdoğan warned that the steps "would bring the world closer to a crusader-crescent war." Positioning himself as the Islamic leader in the region, he added that Turkey would "respond" in due course to the decision. Again, he did not need to expound on the crusader motif.[32] At a campaign rally in March 2019 on the 104th anniversary of the Gallipoli campaign during the First World War, Erdoğan went much further than pointing out the rise of the far-right in Europe. He played video footage taken by the white supremacist Brenton Tarrant of his attacks on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, before the president advised his audience that "remnants of the crusaders cannot prevent Turkey's rise." He also responded to Tarrant's threat contained in his so-called manifesto that "we are coming for Constantinople and we will destroy every mosque and minaret in the city." Erdoğan, directing his speech at the "crusaders", took the opportunity to evoke eschatology and invoke the "clash of civilisations" paradigm by declaring that Turks "have been here for 1,000 years [*sic*] and God willing we will be until doomsday". He added, "you will not be able to make Istanbul, Constantinople. Your ancestors came and saw that we were here. Some of them returned on foot and some returned in coffins. If you come with the same intent, we will be waiting for you too." *Turkiye*, a pro-government media outlet, noted that "fascism in western countries is spreading wave after wave. Everywhere is full of 'terrorist Tarrants'".[33] In July 2020, a chief advisor to the president wrote an opinion piece on EU support for Greece in *Yeni Şafak*, another pro-government media outlet, entitled "Merkel calls the Crusaders to solidarity in the Mediterranean". "Crusader solidarity" evidently stemmed from "Crusader motivation", and just as with his president before him, the advisor did not need to

[30] "Erdogan accuses EU of 'crusade' against Islam", *dw.com*, 13 March 2017, accessed 24 June 2021, https://www.dw.com/en/erdogan-accuses-eu-of-crusade-against-islam/a-37979126.

[31] Gulsen Solaker, Tuvan Gumrukcu, Daren Butler, "Triumphant Erdogan swats away Western criticism of referendum", *Reuters*, 17 April 2017, accessed 24 June 2021, https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-turkey-politics-idUKKBN17J0PU.

[32] "Erdoğan warns of 'crusader-crescent war' after Austria's", *Hürriyet Daily News*, 10 June 2018, accessed 24 June 2021, https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/erdogan-warns-of-crusader-crescent-war-after-austrias-shutting-of-mosques-133058.

[33] Borzou Daragahi, "How the New Zealand terror attack has become a key factor in Turkey's upcoming elections", *Independent*, 18 March 2019, accessed 24 June 2021, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/new-zealand-terror-attack-turkey-electionserdogan-christchurch-mosques-islam-crusades-a8828396.html.

explain his choice of motif.[34] Following President Emmanuel Marcon of France's decision to allow the publication of cartoons insulting the Prophet Muhammad two months later, Erdoğan accused western countries of wishing to "relaunch the crusades". And with troublesome echoes of Sayyid Qutb's *Milestones* (see the contribution by Roche), he added that "European countries do not even feel the need to cover up their hatred toward Islam anymore."[35]

Master narratives and cultural memories of the historical crusades, distilled, stored and expressed by way of multivalent, easily recognisable symbols, motifs, metonyms and metaphors are so manipulable as to make the resonances of terms such as "crusade" dangerous. The imprecision of the terminology and imagery employed when weaponising the crusades in these ways, where words, phrases and symbols reverberate with both secular and religious connotations, enables those who appropriate the crusades to become living actors in evolving master narratives. The actors present actions with overtly righteous and occasionally cosmic overtones of battles between the forces of good and evil where there can, and must, be only one outcome: the destruction of the enemy. That people can appeal to abstractions of the crusades via mutable medievalism, which embodies zero-sum, Manichaean-type "clash of civilisations" scenarios, helps explain the continued appeal of the crusades to those who seek to weaponise them.

The notion that crusading is a live and potent issue is hard to ignore, although not all those who appropriate the crusades do so with the explicit intention of weaponising them or partaking in medievalism. Popular and scholarly commentators on modern US foreign policy do not necessarily attempt to re-work and reinvent the European Middle Ages, nor do they inevitably imagine a temporal continuum between the crusading past and what is - for those commentators - a crusading present. Their subject matter constitutes yet another version of crusading that has no professed relationship with the historical crusades. This version intends to save, at least ostensibly, modern democracy from tyranny in its many guises.

However, we have noted that George W. Bush's evangelical faith informed his policies. And we have tried to convey a sense of the messy commingling of Christian fundamentalist and Christian Zionist influences in Washington. Others have suggested that orchestraters of foreign policy during Bush's presidency stoked the "messianic militarism" of much of the president's electoral base to invoke the "clash of civilisations" dichotomies and present the war on terror in the Near East as a Manichaean-type cosmic "crusade".[36]

For militant Islamists and white supremacists, the crusades were not phenomena that ceased to have relevance with the onset of modernity. That crusade historians might object to these convictions is understandable. But whether, for example, we argue that extremists do not understand the historical crusades, which have no temporal bearing on events in the modern Near East or elsewhere for that matter, does not yet alter extremist opinions. Pointing out that

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[34] Yashin Aktay, "Merkel calls the Crusaders to solidarity in the Mediterranean", *Yeni Şafak*, 31 August 2020, accessed 24 June 2021, https://www.yenisafak.com/en/columns/yasinaktay/merkel-calls-the-crusaders-to-solidarity-in-the-mediterranean-2047575.

[35] "Erdoğan: Macron targets our values, wants to launch crusade against Islam", *Daily Sabah*, 28 October 2020, accessed 24 June 2021, https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/eu-affairs/erdogan-macron-targets-our-values-wants-to-launch-crusadeagainst-islam; "Countries attacking Islam want to relaunch Crusades: Erdogan", *Reuters*, 28 October 2020, accessed 24 June 2021, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-security-turkey-erdogan-idUSKBN27D1HU.

[36] On the "messianic militarism" see Barker, Hurwitz and Nelson, "Of Crusades and Culture Wars", 307–22.

medievalism expressed by single words, phrases and symbols effaces the complexity of the crusading past, or challenging the "clash of civilisations" paradigm that renders the past dangerously reductive, does not yet dent the convictions of those who currently appropriate and weaponise the crusades. This presentist certainty is their crusading present.

There are under-appreciated concurrences between the crusading presents. Militant Islamists also frame modern US interventions in the Near East as crusades. They are fully aware that President Bush, whom they consider a Christian Zionist, keyed the war on terror as a crusade, and they also converge temporalities and evoke an imagined "clash of civilisations" dichotomy while they too portray conflict with their enemies in cosmic terms. As Roche argues, militant Islamists also look forward to the imminent Second Coming of Christ while they draw inspiration from radical apocalyptic literature created partly in response to the popularity of Christian Zionism in the US. It may be too early to tell whether the medievalism of the extreme far-right provides stimuli to militant Islamists. But surely memes such as those portraying President Trump as a Templar knight and others depicting supposed medieval knights and rendering Ephesians 6.13 would resonate amongst militant Islamists just as they do, although in different ways, with elements of the white, extreme far right.[37] And as has just been noted, these elements also envisage themselves as "crusaders" in a "counter-jihad" and players in the supposed "clash of civilisations". One wonders whether and to what extent the concurrences inform each other.

The crusading present is complex and multifaceted, but it has precedents. In this special issue, Cross first explores the meaning of the "crusading imagery" attached to American soldiers in 1917 and their "righteous crusade" against German tyranny and for the cause of world democracy during the First World War. He spotlights the "protean nature" of a "crusading metaphor" shaped in a dialogue between the state and vernacular culture during the following decades that evoked memories of the American Civil War and the European scramble for empire during the colonial era and the language of righteous progressive reformers in the early twentieth century. Importantly, he then traces the alterable nature of the crusading metaphor in American political discourse during the eras of the Great Depression, the New Deal and the Second World War. In so doing, he problematises the notion of an ideologically cohesive American "crusade" in the world during the twentieth century.

Edwards picks up the discussion and likewise notes the shifting nature of "crusading" metaphors while he examines how General Dwight D. Eisenhower and others framed "D-Day" in 1944 as a "Great Crusade", that is, a "righteous and redemptive mission undertaken in the name of God to deliver the oppressed peoples of Europe from the darkness and evil of Nazi rule." He traces the subsequent employment of Eisenhower's narrative framing in commemorations and other expressions of cultural memory of D-Day through to the end of the twentieth century and George W. Bush's press conference outside the White House on 16 September 2001.

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[37] Ephesians 6.13 is the same biblical passage employed on a PowerPoint presentation delivered by the US Secretary of State in 2003 and by Bernard of Clairvaux in his apologia for the Knights Templar composed in c.1130 (which incidentally, the ethno-nationalist, Anders Breivik, referenced on the title page of his so-called manifesto that he distributed on-line on the day he launched his devastating attacks in Norway). On the memes, see https:// patriotminear.com/mememe/trump-knight-templar-american-flag/ and https://wiirocku.tumblr.com/post/158602752317/ephesians-613-nkjv-therefore-take-up-the. On Anders Breivik's "manifesto", see Wollenberg, "The New knighthood", 21–33.

Penalba-Sotorrio examines the adoption of a "crusading rhetoric" by the leaders and supporters of the Nationalist rebel army during the Spanish Civil War. She explains how and why the rebels projected their roles as the defenders of Catholicism in Spain against what was considered to be an international Bolshevik threat to western civilisation in the 1930s. By building on an existing "mythologised national past", the Francoist regime had forged a master narrative of a new "Spanish Crusade" against the "anti-Spain" other by 1939.

Roche also examines the mutable nature of a "crusader master narrative" in the fourth contribution. Here we see how proponents of "crusading" narratives and medievalism, both captured, stored and presented in the form of emotive metonyms, can employ cultural memories of the crusades against, rather than in support of supposed crusaders. Roche establishes that between 2014 and 2017, the IS group manipulated and combined a culturally embedded awareness of the crusading past with a heady, potent mixture of classical and radical apocalyptic in a brand-new attempt to portray modern so-called "crusaders" and their "crusade" against the group as integral to Islamic sacred history. The group foresaw Armageddon, the ultimate zero-sum conflict between good and evil.

For the fifth and final contribution to the special issue, the guest editor asked Cotts to reflect on the continued appropriation of the crusades in the twenty-first century. In so doing, Cotts advocates adding academic nuance to political, journalistic and other popular (particularly white-supremacist) reductive representations of "religiously articulated violence" in what is, increasingly, presented as a racialised, binary, twenty-first-century world of intractable eastern and western societies. As Cotts points outs, such representations of the crusades and the zero-sum "clash of civilisations" dichotomies they have come to epitomise for many efface the complexity of the historical crusades and the intercultural richness of the pre-modern Mediterranean basin. At the same time, Cotts and others recognise the challenge of injecting nuance into popular discourses on the crusades and suggest ways to achieve it.[38]

Characters who imagine themselves as players in an invented, perpetual "clash of civilisations" are currently shaping crusader master narratives and moulding cultural memories of the crusades. One hopes this special issue contributes to a better understanding of the ways this has happened in the modern era.

[38] See, for example, Geraldine Heng, "Holy War Redux: The Crusades, Futures of the Past, and Strategic Logic in the 'Clash' of Religions", *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association* 126 (2011), 422–31; Gabriele, "Debating the 'Crusade'", 73–92; Perry, "How to Fight 8Chan Medievalism"; Susanna A. Throop, "Engaging the Crusades in Context. Reflections on the Ethics of Historical Work", in *The Crusades in the Modern World*, eds. Mike Horswell and Akil N. Awan (Abingdon, 2020), 129–45.