

JEREMIAD FRAMES IN REAGAN'S INAUGURAL ADDRESSES

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menemukan eksistensi bingkai-bingkai dari tradisi jeremiad sebagai bagian dari nilai Amerika dalam pidato pelantikan presiden. Fungsi dan konteks dari bingkai-bingkai tersebut juga menjadi bahan penyelidikan. Tujuan ini dicapai dengan menerapkan Frame Analysis dari Ervin Goffman pada dua teks pidato pelantikan Ronald Reagan. Pidato Reagan dipilih karena Reagan dianggap sebagai presiden yang memengaruhi semua presiden sesudahnya; masa pemerintahannya diawali dengan krisis yang juga sempat dialami oleh beberapa presiden saat ini. Reagan juga dianggap sebagai salah satu orator terbaik di antara semua presiden Amerika. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pidato pelantikan Reagan menggunakan bingkai jeremiad kaum Puritan awal yang dikategorikan ke dalam tiga bentuk, yakni ratapan terhadap situasi masa kini, rujukan pada pengalaman dan nilai masa lalu, dan ajakan untuk pemulihan bangsa. Walaupun bingkai-bingkai ini diambil dari tradisi jeremiad kaum Puritan, penggunaannya dalam pidato pelantikan presiden Reagan mengalami kontekstualisasi dengan kekinian realitas Amerika.

Kata Kunci: *bingkai elemen, Goffman's Frame Analysis, Jeremiad, pidato pelantikan presiden, Reagan*

ABSTRACT

This research attempts to examine the existence of frames from jeremiad tradition as part of American values in an American president's inaugural address. The function and context of the frames are also investigated. These aims are achieved by applying Goffman's Frame Analysis on the text of Reagan's inaugural addresses. This inaugural addresses is chosen because Reagan's presidency is regarded to set the tone for the following presidencies; his presidency faced crises which other presidents following him have also faced; and he is viewed as one of the best orators among American presidents. The results show that Ronald Reagan's inaugural addresses use the jeremiad frames which are categorized into three forms, namely, the lamentation of the present, the evocation of the past and the calling for renewal. By using these frames in combination with the context of the inaugural address, Reagan presents American perspective and hopes for their situation and future.

Keywords: elements, Goffman's Frame Analysis, jeremiad, presidential inaugural address, Reagan,

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INTRODUCTION

An American president's inaugural address as an expression delivered by a leading figure in American political life is the first formal speech of the president before his public which is constructed in shadow of the values living in the country. Chyntia Toolin argues that through "Inaugural address, presidents give their official statement of how they view the national situation, frequently citing a cultural core or civil religion for the legitimation" (1983:40). This argument underlines that an American president's inaugural address contains and reveals socio-cultural values of the nation. Through an inaugural address, a president shares his identification with the people of America and seeks for an access and, later, obtains the people's recognition in this first moment of public audition by presenting the commonness of the national cultural values.

Based on this perspective, it can be assumed that the aroma of cultural life and perspectives of the American can be detected from the inaugural address. This implies that, by drawing one's eyes upon the text of the presidents' inaugural addresses and considering its tendency as well as momentum, the attempt to comprehend American values is on the way to find its goal. Rohler and Cook in their book *Great Speeches* propose that presidential inaugural addresses should be understood as follows.

"At moments like these, speakers address audiences about the values that both share as members of a common group, the speeches given in such moments are thus noncontroversial for a specific audiences. They do not urge adoption of new values or rejection of old values." (1986:18)

The proposition reaffirms the propensity of the inaugural address taking the existing values which are believed and upheld together by both the speaker and audience in the context of the nation. A president as the speaker of the address mindfully presents the socio-cultural and political issues confronting the current condition of the people. It adopts American people's situation and hope, and foreshadows the future of the nation.

The tendency to utilize American values and to respond to the current issues in the presidential inaugural address can also be realized by considering the position of the American president before his people. Woll in *American Government* (2004) wrote,

"The President is a symbolic leader, the one figure who draws together the people's hopes, and fears for the political culture...the president is seen as a "benevolent leader", one who nurtures, sustains, inspires the citizenry." (289)

This argument emphasizes that a president is seen as a symbol at which people look. The president stands before the nation as the figure for leaning on every problematic encounter. Thus when the president makes his speech, the speech is expected to represent his people's way of coping with the situation at hands. It will affect the way people view, behave and respond to the current national situation as well. The stance and the utterance coming out from the president are considered as symbolizing the model suggested for the nation. Through his addresses, the president is expected to lead his people to a right shelter at a time of confusion, dilemma and discouragement. Further, the president is also required to provide a vision directing the nation through his address. At this point, the president, through his address, should be able to manage the potentials of his country by evoking national socio-cultural values.

Woll (2004) states, "President has prerogative to speak the people's mind on the great issues of his time, to serve the spokesman for the real sentiment and purpose of the country" (277). This informs that a president's inaugural address, which can be regarded as the president's voice, might reflect the thought of the American people in responding to the situation as summarized by the president and guard the nation to arrive at the shared objective and dream. In other words, by assuming that symbolically a president stands for his people, the president's inaugural address seems to describe a situation being faced and the power or cultural capital to deal with the situation as well as offer successful end for all.

Apropos of such a view, the inaugural address stresses the response toward public issues. Moreover, the tendency of the president's inaugural addresses to cite the American culture cores makes a place for the inclusion of jeremiad as a part of shaping forces in American culture (Ahlstrom, 1967). Thus, researching the inaugural addresses and putting them in the context of American realities are significantly challenging and interesting. In light of it, this research focuses on Ronald Reagan's inaugural addresses. The choice of Reagan's addresses is based on the reasons that, first, Reagan was elected in a time of economic, social and political turmoil (Crothers and Lind, 2002) which implies the need for jeremiad frames to keep the nation in the way of optimism, and second, Reagan's presidency "sets the tone, general direction, and political characters of all the presidents following him" (Crothers and Lind, 2002:15) meaning that a study of Reagan's inaugural addresses will reveal the tendency of Puritan jeremiad in American presidents and society as well.

The theoretical approach used to guide the inquiry on the President's inaugural addresses is Goffman's Frame Analysis theory. Within this perspective, the nature of applying interdisciplinary approach is relevant since it is concerned with the type of interpretation that "more corresponds to complex life-forms and identities" as that of hermeneutics (Willems, 2004). This means that, in its interpretation, the inaugural address as the source of data is regarded as a complex form that may relate to multiple issues from which the meaning is constructed. The interpretation will be put in the scheme of context surrounding the phenomenon which, in this research, is actually assumed as the result of the presidents' interpretation of the multi-contexts and issues.

This Frame Analysis is applicable to study a text in relation to communicative aspect (Lemert and Branaman, 1997). It implies that a certain phenomenon or reality can be taken and given frames in accordance with the context subjectively given to it. One assigns the frames to

have the desired effect or "managed impression" (Lemert and Branaman, 1997:xv) whose meaning depends upon common understanding and shared presupposition as well as a stock of shared social knowledge. Kathy Elrick in her study on themes of Clinton's 1992 speeches using Goffman's Frame Analysis states that "the primary function of the idea of frame or the art, of frame is to determine a plane of reality". This suggests that frame can subjectively function to define what reality is being presented and focused; what is going on. Frame is significant in "choosing" to see as reality what we focus on, or what we deem to be important. Consequently, frame localizes a particular circumstance or reality in reference to what sort of knowledge that is commonly understood and shared as well as expected. Operationally, in this research, the Puritan-derived words, regarded as keying, are put into the schema of American perspective and, then, interpreted in the relevancy with the context surrounding the presidents and people, viewed as strips, for the purpose of framing from which the existence and significance of Puritan jeremiad in contemporary American society is synthesized and theorized.

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

According to Rohler and Cook (1986:17), a presidential inaugural address is "a unique form of public speech which falls under the broad definition of ceremonial speaking". This argument points out that the presidential inaugural address is defined under the category of public speech with its centrality of purpose lying on the presidential inauguration ceremony which indicates that its deliverance is uniquely attached to the ceremony and to the status of the presidency. It constitutes an exclusively presidential speeches even deserves to be considered being the most exclusive one seeing that it marks the first public appearance of the new elected president; once every four year, on January 20 at noon hour during the cold weather of winter.

David E. Sanger in his article in New York Times argued that presidential inaugural address can be viewed as

“A moment of singing oratory and crystal clear statement of national purpose, a fleeting few minutes to set the tone for the next four years, a delicate balance of humility and self assurance, a chance to reach out the tens of million who voted for someone else, and to reassure allies worried about the course of the world’s greatest power.” (*New York Times*, January 20, 2001)

Ranking an inaugural address among the rarest of challenges for a victorious politician, Sanger’s argument explains that the address shall be in the harmony with what people expect to hear; it has to be in the rhythm of the society’s mind; presenting the same song as American people, song of the moment. In addition, Sanger indicates that the address plays a role in giving a kind of opportunity for the newly elected president to ignite a design for the newly started administration which at the same time reflects the effort to convince people of his properness for the presidency to meet everyone’s need and hope. Through the inaugural address, a president gains a pulpit to voice the American’s view about ongoing circumstances as well as promises to the countries in alliance with America; mutual protection and support will be the color of the bond. These suggest the significance of carrying out a research on the inaugural address and its relation to American presidency.

PURITAN JEREMIAD

Etymologically, the term ‘jeremiad’ was taken mainly from the concept of the book of Jeremiah which voiced regret over the Israel condition at his time. Andrew R Murphy in his *Prodigal Nation: Moral Decline and Divine Punishment from New England to 9/11* (2009) argued that Jeremiah was “only one in long line of prophets who, driven by a sense of crisis and a deep anxiety about their community, lamented Israel’s violation of its covenant with God as a story of decline that invited God’s punishment” (p.6). In this respect, a jeremiad applied the message of the prophet on affirming the remonstrance and expectation. It

beginning by identifying the community condition at hands which did not correspond to the way of divine will that potentially brings the peril of life and regretted over it, the jeremiad urged the return to the covenant with God through the repentance from which the community would regain the promise of better life.

This made jeremiad, a type of American Puritan literary genre and rhetoric (Miller, 1953; Bellah, 1992; Madsen, 1998; Smith and Smith, 1994). Emory Elliot perfectly outlines the core idea of American puritan jeremiad tradition as “a rhetoric formula that included recalling the courage and piety of the founders, lamenting recent and present ills, and crying out for a return to the original conduct and zeal” (Elliot, 2002:102). This explanation depicts a jeremiad as an integrated expression that cross-borders the tenses such as past by referring to the values of the founders, present by defining the contemporary pathetic circumstance, future by proposing proper acts and predicting a success. This time frame is tied by the enactment of mission under the covenant.

Madsen in her *American Exceptionalism* (1998) expounded that jeremiad became familiar in the second generation of the Puritan in the New World. It turned to be “a conventional form in which the terms, condition, and duties of the covenant were outlined and the success or failure of the community in keeping to the covenant was measured”. It could be stated that the jeremiad filled the Puritan tradition in its role to preserve the value of the community and to guide them to arrive at the shared-dream. The Puritan leaders and preachers viewed this logic of jeremiad kept the trace of the people’s will to enact the mission imposed upon them in the umbrella of the duty to the chosen people in the covenant. A jeremiad became the important rhetorical mechanism by which the early Puritans gave shape to their “errand in the wilderness” (Khan, 2009). The words of the jeremiad kept the Puritan community to their own path of covenant. The sense of mission and duty imposed by the consequence as the chosen people and protected by the divine

providence could be underlined through the deliverance of the jeremiad. The leaders seemed to find the effective language to manage the existence of the Puritan community and the values they believed.

In light of this, Madsen further argued that, “frequently an exhortation to renew faith and dedication to the Puritan mission, the jeremiad became increasingly important within a society facing challenges from all sides” (Madsen, 1998:11). This argument emphasizes the answer for the question why the jeremiad continued to echo in the American society. It voices the renewal and responsibility which are not only crucial in terms of religious life but also fundamental in the other aspect of life especially for the leaders’ rhetoric. It forms a kind of a political sermon which is directed to address the sense of order and responsibility in the community. Later, in the context of America, the jeremiad holds out the present circumstance is at problem, the past principle is worth to learn, and the redemption is essential in achieving a promise of a better future. In other words, in its juxtaposition of lament of a crisis and celebration of promise, a jeremiad is addressed to more comprehensive issues in the community by connecting them to the divine scheme and worked at the span of past, present, and future.

A jeremiad rises as the response and comment toward the ongoing America’s circumstance; it requires the identification of the circumstance whether it signs for neglecting the covenant or for gaining opportunities to grow as a nation. According to Smith and Smith (1994), such questions give a way to the emergence of a political discourse leadership. The leader takes the role to respond the situation at hands and identifies the necessary reaction as well as voices the expectation. Smith and Smith further argue, “because jeremiadic logic presumes divine interest in the lives of Americans without presuming that each American receives direct, personal divine guidance, that logic demands prophetic leaders” (1994:139-140). This means that the logic of a jeremiad in its response toward people’ situation

gives a place for a leader to play roles for guiding and directing the people. In the context of a nation, the jeremiad formula provides a political leader to assume his existence in leadership and his expectation in managing the nation.

CONNECTING JEREMIAD TO THE INAUGURAL ADDRESS

At this point, a political leader, in this case, a president of America as the figure who is expected to have the capacity to address the national problem and to present its solution in order to reach the American dream finds the channel to tap into public discourse. It means that a president may claim the cause of the nation tribulation to the previous administration, not to people, and underline the urgency of the new presidency to guide people to their American dream in the path of covenant of government and the people.

Therefore, Smith and Smith (1994:138), later, explained that, not surprisingly, jeremiads abound in the corpus of presidential address putting the notion of the emergence of the true prophet “unifies his chosen people around their sacred missions of wresting power from the false prophets and then enabling America to live up to the promise of the American dream”. The president-elect is viewed as the true prophet born out of the long process of election. He comes out from the people to whom he is required to lead them to pursue the American dream. The newly elected leader is expected to voice the identity and destination of the country. His words become significantly inspiring people to realize and to act as prescribed attitude to bring opportunities and prosperity.

In respect to this proposition, Herbert Stein postulated that the construct of a jeremiad seems to gain its place in the deliverance of the president’s inaugural address particularly the contemporary presidents is in terms of the attempt to inspire public behavior, not merely to describe the government policy. The inaugurated presidents recognize that the country had problems they ought to deal with and require the collaborative

effort of both government and people. The president acts as a leader-preacher. Here, the presidents act similarly to what Jeremiah as prophet did in his time; warning people of public action for renewal and evoking people with values in framing the effort to arrive at the American purpose of better life.

DETERMINING JEREMIAD FRAMES IN REAGAN'S INAUGURAL ADDRESSES

American presidents, according to Rohler and Cook (1986:18), have used their inaugural addresses to reinforce the value and tradition they commonly share, and to inspire commitment and enthusiasm of the people. Establishing the relation of the inaugural ceremony to the long tradition of the past, presidents bring the meaning of the past to the present. In connection with it, a president frames an inaugural address with the elements such as the present problems confronting the country, recalls the connected past, and states the promise of the future in the new administration.

Applying these elemental frames, a president takes back the structural elements of the Puritan jeremiad tradition. Craig Allen Smith and Kathy Smith (1994:147) argued, "Inaugurals are opportune moments for jeremiads". Structurally, the jeremiads progressively highlight "a lament of the over the present condition and looks to the past for solution" (Murphy, 2009:114). This suggests that a jeremiad covers the identification of the present circumstances; crisis beheld by the nation, the evocation of the past which is relevant and significant to efforts facing the present challenges from which the solution is later gained through action of returning to the founding values of the nation and a sort of calling for renewal. These make the jeremiad frames alive in the crafting of the inaugural addresses. The traces of Puritan jeremiad frame in the inaugural addresses can be elaborated into the three structural elements namely lamenting the present condition, evoking the past, and calling for renewal which are detected and found in Reagan's inaugural addresses.

Deborah L. Madsen (1998:25) synthesizes that jeremiad is attached to the myth of the chosenness which signals that the covenant of God with people in order to bring them to salvation. It indicates that the chosen people may undergo the afflictions or crises in the journey of their existence. The emergence of these perils could have come from the acts of people which are no longer in the frame of obedience as prescribed in the covenantal relationship. Whenever the chosen people turn their focus from the divine path, they would behold the coming of afflictions which are intended to drive them back to the right path. In other words, a jeremiad appears to function in enforcing the covenant for the goodness of a nation within which the chosen people exist.

At this point, a jeremiad defines its importance in the presidential inaugural address. The need for a president as the emergent political leader to address the present problem, crisis and challenge of the nation shares the claim of jeremiads that people of the present have gone wrong and need to acknowledge his lamentable state before making redemption for recovery (Murphy, 2009:7). A newly elected American president firstly shows his capability to guide the nation by being able to address the contemporary problem confronting America. It is the problem that must be identified and faced as what Reagan does.

President Ronald Reagan in his first inaugural address exhibited a jeremiad element by saying,

"The business of our nation goes forward. These United States are confronted with an economic affliction of great proportions. We suffer from the longest and one of the worst sustained inflations in our national history. It distorts our economic decisions, penalizes thrift, and crushes the struggling young and the fixed-income elderly alike. It threatens to shatter the lives of millions of our people." (line 3)

The lines establish Ronald Reagan's use of the Jeremiad frame of lamenting the present condition of the people as marked by a frame of

descent through the inclusion of terminology such as 'affliction, suffering, misery, indignity, and burden'. Martin J Medhurst (2010:42-43) explain that the jeremiadic form manifests itself in the presidential address in the use of the terms of fall which are presented in images of descent and decline among others "valley, desert, shadow, uncertainty, drift, tragedy, failure, decay, torment, crisis, disgrace, chaos, struggle, calamity, suffer, abandoned, despair". In his first inaugural address, Reagan identifies and voices the economic crisis faced by America. He expresses his lament over the situation which he assumes as "the longest and worst sustained inflation" in the history of the nation. He presents the image of the fall and recalling people's awareness of this situation. Likewise the Puritan jeremiad, Reagan raises the economic affliction and shows his concern with the effect caused by the economic fall of the country. America beholds the uncertainty and needs direction of "new prophet" in order to get back to the right path to the pursuit of happiness. The threats of low income, unemployment and tax burden become the anxieties that the nation share and lament as well as fight for.

In jeremiadic form, Reagan also recognizes that the cause of the crisis is not part from the tendency of the government to pile "deficit upon deficit" and exchange "the temporary convenience of the present" with future of the country. This warns people of the mismanagement of the country due to the unawareness of elite group of government to the impact of neglecting the lives of most Americans; "professionals, industrialist, shopkeepers, clerks, cabbies, and truck drivers" (line 11). Reagan follows the jeremiadic form of presuming the situation "whenever the chosen people have violated the spirit of their covenant, in this case including the covenant of government and people, they have been beset by social, economic or political crises" (Smith and Smith, 1994:136). America particularly the elite group has broken the covenant with the people in terms of bringing the dream of prosperity and opportunity for all. In sermonic way, Reagan perceives the previous government has abandoned

the commitment of providing better lives for all Americans. This is what brings America into its economic tribulation. The broken covenant of government and the people due to the greediness for the present convenience of the few fills the lamentation of Reagan as the new president, 'the new prophet' to lead and to change the nation.

However, out of this reflection, the inaugural address also displays slight difference from the Puritan jeremiad in terms of the detail of the lamentation's root. The political contexts of the inaugural address supply the modification of the lamentation. If the Puritan jeremiad affirms a crisis as the sign of the divine punishment as the consequence of individual or community misbehavior before the law of God which means the breaking of the Covenant with God, the element of lamentation in the inaugural address proposes that the peril of the nation can be derived from the misbehavior of the previous government mismanagement of the nation resources which means the breaking of the covenant between government and people; government provides prosperity, people enacts an obedience.

For an inaugural address, the other cause of a crisis is synthesized to deal with the general character of human being while for the Puritan jeremiad, theoretically a crisis is attached to the violation of the Biblical precepts. The presidents' inaugural address prescribes a crisis the consequence of general human tendency to be greedy, ambitious, and less committed to the common interest. This appears to be a sort of modification of the crisis root that implies the socio-political dimension of an inaugural address that tries to avoid to blame the people who are actually the general voters and supporters. Presidents tend to accuse the previous presidency for the crisis. It indicates the presidents' attempt to create a political capital to rise as a new prophet who will bring restoration and to gain support for his new administration. In so doing, the lamentation serves as the way to invite people's attention to their situation and participation as well.

Another fundamental frame of the Puritan jeremiads is the inclination to evoke the past values or principle. This element relates to the first element or even a response to the lamentation of the present crisis. As the society recognized their crisis, they also realize that they could make a turning point by returning to their values. Murphy (2009:6) synthesizes, "Jeremiads usually propose a specific time in the past when destructive ideas or practices first appeared, and trace their effect over subsequent years". It means that the past could be a reference when the present decline emerges. Jeremiad preachers claim the needs to reconcile the past with the present situation for the possible resolution. Murphy (2009:114) further elaborates that a jeremiad "look to the American past, particularly to the founding period, as the source of emancipator ideals and fundamental principles". This signifies that, for a jeremiad, "the past serves as model and a limiting condition, a sort of checklist to guide a political agenda for the future" (Murphy, 2009:111). The past evocation is viewed as the inspiration for the society particularly "to emulate the behavior (and principle) of godly founders by upholding, with coercive measures if necessary...". This means that the evocation is tied to the model what is regarded to be a godly model. It further refers to the role of the preacher to invite a return to the divine values of the past as the solution for the ongoing challenge. This provides a space for a leader to emphasize a role as a bringer of change to the situation just like a new prophet who is ready to lead his people out the hard times.

Such frame of a jeremiad comes to fill the lines of an inaugural address when a president as the emergent political leader is expected to offer the solution when ills come. As the new elected leader, the president would be the focused people's eyes looking for the way out. In times of crisis, Gould (2003) wrote that people turn the president as the manager (viii) which means people hope to have a president who can be relied on managing the confronting situation. A president, after lamenting the crisis and prophesying the 'sins' that assume to be the causes, is hoped to voice the

possibility of redeeming through reclaiming the commonly shared values of the nation. At this point, jeremiadic form of speech becomes applicable. Rachella E. Friedman (2001:48) explains, "Jeremiad continued to be an appealing rhetorical strategy to politicians to stir listener". Friedman's proposition connects the adoption of the Puritan jeremiad with the inaugural address of the American president as a political leader who intends to stir his listeners in his first public audition. As in Jeremiads, a president refers to calamities as the effect of being 'sinful'; breaking the covenant through elites' act, and recalls the past for the model for solution; a renewal

In light of such jeremiad frame, President Ronald Reagan in his first inaugural address serves American audience with the reference to American past in the attempt to call for the reflection upon the nation values. He asserted, "So, as we begin, let us take inventory." (line 13). By using "the telltale of the leader-preacher inaugural that is the phrase 'let us'" (Stein, 1997:29), which suggest the meaning of "you do as I say", Reagan commands his people to look at the treasure of their history within which lies the values to learn from. He leads people of America to the remembrance of their power taught by their experience as a nation. President Reagan prescribes the review upon the American self as passing through the history. In so doing, he promotes the reflection and identification American values. The outcome of that reflection shall be the realization that America is actually potentially powerful and strong to tackle any hindrance coming to the pursuit of the happiness.

Reagan frames American people to remember and reflect their power in the founding of the nation as he listed the heroic deeds of the American heroes as he quoted Dr. Joseph Warren, one of the founding fathers, for his memorable sayings,

"Our country is in danger, but not to be despaired of On you depend the fortunes of America. You are to decide the important question upon which rests the happiness and liberty of millions yet unborn. Act worthy of yourselves." (line 23)

Reagan revives this expression to suggest the return to the spirit that built America; the optimism toward liberty out of despair. It is worthy act in times of crisis. Reagan here reconstructs the value of the founders in bringing America into its birth that is to do all things necessary for the rise of the country. He shows the “worthy” deed of the founders by dedicating themselves to the interest of many people. It is the value that the heroic figures. Reagan reconstructs the value of the founders in bringing into its birth through doing all things necessary for the rise of the country.

In this respect, Reagan refers to George Washington for leading “America out of revolutionary victory into infant nationhood” (line 32), Thomas Jefferson for his eloquent contribution in the drafting of The Declaration of Independence (line 32), Abraham Lincoln for his giving “the meaning of America” (line 33) and retells the heroic sacrifice of Martin Treptow as represented with his famous diary entitled *My Pledge* avows,

“America must win this war. Therefore, I will work, I will save, I will sacrifice, I will endure, I will fight cheerfully and do my utmost, as if the issues of the whole struggle depended upon me alone.” (line 37)

By mentioning these great figures, Reagan underlines the importance of looking back to the past from which people might be reminded of the spirit and value of America. The dedication and sacrifice of the founding father such as Jefferson and Washington are evoked to frame the need of the contemporary Americans to emulate. How Washington gives his life to bring the victory to American Revolution and how Jefferson, another founding father, devotes the thought and time to draft the fundamental document to the establishment of America; the Declaration of Independence, provides a lesson and inspiration for public in facing the present situation. The dedication to the country has also be shown be the later generation as represented by Martin Treptow who sacrifices his life to open the path for the victory and brings his fellow warriors out of

pressures in battle front. It is such dedication and sacrifice which are expected from the American people to win over the ongoing crisis that is by dedicating their commitment to participate in the president to bring the country out of the hard times as what their founders and heroes have given the examples.

It can be stated that the return to the spirit of the founders’ magnificent work and Treptow’s patriotic deed is Reagan’s jeremiadic attempts to take back his people to the past in reflecting required act for the present. Being like Washington, Warren, Jefferson, “these virtuous founders are crucial to the narrative power of jeremiads” since “they provide concrete examples of individuals for whom religious or civic virtue trumped (or at least moderated) self-interest and they represent a standing reproach to degenerate present-day Americans” (Murphy, 2009:9). It is obvious that Reagan laments the present condition and compares it to the past values in the purpose of reminding people to revisit the examples from the past for strengthening the nation to come out from crisis by a stronger dedication and sacrifice of the whole people.

It can also be inferred that Reagan through the lines of his inaugural address applies this essential element of the Puritan jeremiad as he put the contrast which adopts what Murphy (2009:9) defined in jeremiad as a contrast between “the present ills versus the past glories or values”. Reagan constructs the ongoing American crisis as a reality that contradicts to the American victories claimed in the past. It leads to the contemplation and question of what the lesson is suggested by the past that makes it worth to return. In this context, Reagan seems to assert that the past has shown the victories over crisis and challenge although it might pay price in the form of sacrifice and dedication which are required from the present Americans. On the other side, the victories also speak for America’s ability to cope with challenge. It is a capacity and endurance of America which may further underline the re-institutionalization of American value as the chosen people who are believed to enjoy the divine Providence.

According to Murphy (2009:134) jeremiad features “a special people chosen by God who can grow from their adversity and attain of better future simply by conducting themselves in accordance with the covenant and the dream”. This argument suggests the conviction toward Americans as the chosen people who are tied to the Covenant which guarantee to achieve the American dreams despite the presence of challenges. This means that looking at the past frames Americans to their experiences of successfully passing through crises and affliction which are not possible without the divine providence and prove their chosen-ness. Reagan makes it clear by claiming, “We are nation under God, and I believe God intended us to be free” (line 30), and “this makes us special among the nations of the earth” (line 13). Reagan touches the accompaniment of the divine providence for their journey as the Chosen people; only “with God’s help” (line 38). Reagan repeats the same formula as in his second inaugural said, “One People under God determined that our future shall be worthy of our past” (line 19). This claims at same time both the privilege as people chosen by God and the reflection of the past model for the present challenges. This conceives and relates what Reagan asserted strongly finds its root in the tradition of Puritan jeremiad in terms of reaffirming the exceptional attached to American existence due to their status as the nation that is “special among other nations of the earth”. It is the same message that Reagan repeated in his second inaugural address, “our nation is poised for greatness”. It rhetorically signals that America is placed to be special among other nations. In other words, the recalling of the past values in Reagan’s inaugural address is conducted in the intention to regain the power out of the past and to show America’s status as the chosen nation.

This leads to the synthesis that the flourish of jeremiad evocation of the past has given a spot for a president like Reagan to frame the dedication and sacrifice required to overcome national problems and as the commitment to the covenant with the nation. Reagan also contextualizes the success story of the past to deal with the ongoing

situation and the divine Providence for the chosen people from which Americans enjoy the privilege of accompaniment. The success of the American heroes and the founding fathers as the parts of the reflection toward return to the past values seems to be convincing for most Americans in viewing their ability to get a long with the new presidency in handling crisis and in pursuing the promise of prosperity and opportunity.

Following the lamentation of crisis or affliction and the looking back to the past, the call for renewal constitutes the other element of jeremiad (Murphy, 2009:9). As jeremiads delineated the awareness of what crisis has been befalling upon the society, what brings it to happen and what had been taught by the past for overcoming it, the question of what should be done comes to be crucial. The answer to this question compliments the frame of jeremiads in terms of the divine providence for the chosen people after tribulations. It elaborates the element of bringing back people to the path of promise after hardship which is assumed as a divine warning for being reckless. “If jeremiads are needed to redeem people” as written by Khan (2009) then the call for renewal or repentance or reform are obligatory. The return to the past model such as Scripture citations and founding values as well as heroic figures would be meaningless without the action of renewing the present for the future betterment.

Within the umbrella of this jeremiad, inaugural addresses seem to be employed by presidents to call for people’s awareness to renew the condition of the nation after the identification of crisis or peril and the reflection of the valuable past of the nation. The inaugural addresses, then, develops in the way of a jeremiad that inserts the presentation of crisis and the promise of achieving American dream after the repentance. If people turn back to the path of righteousness immediately subsequent to interpreting the signals of warning through affliction, then, the prosperity as the work of providence will be at hands. Therefore, as a new emergent leader, a president on whom people rely their dreams is required to voice the importance of

renewal and to call for enacting it in order to gain equal opportunity and prosperity as promised in the founding of the nation. Medhurst (2010:43) argues that, in the presidential speeches, the idea of renewal as that of jeremiad frame is generally marked by the use of the words such as “renew, reform, rebirth, recover, redeem, recapture, restore, recall, reconstruct, resume, reconstitute, reawaken, deconsecrate, rediscover, reignite, remold, rebuild and revitalize”. These words imply the call for action for people; to follow the direction of a deliverer, a president, to guide people to proper response to the contemporary challenges. Sometimes, they become rhetorically stronger with use of the phrase “let us” which refers “the preacher-leader” words (Stein, 1997). Thus, the presence of these words hint the cure for the present affliction, besides the reflection of the past value, can also be carried out by answer the call for renewal whose result will be the attainment of American promise of better life.

Ronald Reagan in his first inaugural adopts such jeremiad frame as he expected to summon up the participation of American people to face the challenges that slowdown their economic progress. Being inaugurated at time of economic crisis (Smith and Smith, 1994), Reagan promised to resolve the national problems and restore the achievement of the American dream of prosperity. For Reagan, the crisis can only be handled if Americans return to the their determination as he claimed,

“The crisis we are facing today does not require of us the kind of sacrifice that Martin Treptow and so many thousands of others were called upon to make. It does require, however, our best effort, and our willingness to believe in ourselves and to believe in our capacity to perform great deeds; to believe that together, with God’s help, we can resolve the problems which now confront us.” (line 38)

In these lines, Reagan prescribes the logic of repentance which asks for people to focus their action on the required deeds in order to obtain the solution for their affliction. Reagan calls for

his people to take part in the actions of solving the situation of the country; sacrifices if necessary. However, what is demanded from people not merely is not that of heroic sacrifice in battle front, the contemporary circumstance necessitates the renewal of the heart in self-determination under the divine auspice. The determination will bring Americans to the path of resolution which offers “a healthy, vigorous, growing economy that provides equal opportunity for all Americans” (line 12). The response to the call for renewing the confidence on the capacity to resolve the challenge of the country ends up at the attainment of the ancient promise of better life. In addition, by mentioning “with God’s help”, Reagan interpretively reawakens the story of jeremiad, according to Andrew R Murphy (2009:11), is “a story of Americans’ faith in God’s providential oversight human affair”. The president frames his people’s confidence that they will be able to overcome the crisis since they are not working alone. The history of America the nation teaches that they are relatively under divine Providence from whom America gains the strength to handle problems and attain the promise of better life.

It is apparently for similar reasoning that Reagan in his second inaugural address uttered, “Let us stand as one today: One people under God determined that our future shall be worthy of our past. As we do, we must not repeat the well-intentioned errors of our past.” (line 19). He continues to warn his people, as the Puritan jeremiad preacher, of their dependence for God and repentance for the misbehavior in the past. Americans need to fix the faults of the past and optimistically look at the future. Yet, the abundant future could only be reached by repenting; not repeating the errors of the past, and determination in the faith within God accompaniment. Reagan further voiced,

“Let us resolve there will be no turning back or hesitation on the road to an America rich in dignity and abundant with opportunity for all our citizens.

Let us that we the people will build an American opportunity society in which all

of us-white and black, rich and poor, young and old-will go forward together arm in arm. Again, let us remember that though our heritage is one of blood lines from every corner of the Earth, we are all Americans pledged to carry on this last, best hope of man on Earth.” (line 27-28)

The key to American prosperity, in Reagan view, is to build up the confidence of the path that they are walking forward; no hesitation. For Reagan, Americans shall realize that they are carrying out the mission of embodying the promise of better life for all people despite their race, status, and age. It is the American mission at present since they are “pledged to carry on the last best hope of man on Earth”. Coming to this point, Reagan’s adoption of jeremiad is getting clear. He reemphasizes what the Puritan Jeremiads normally recommend on the everlasting mission of the chosen people to be “a beacon of hope” for all people (Madsen, 1998:13). In other words, Reagan contextualizes the jeremiad element into his inaugural address in framing the call for his people action to deal with the present challenge of his nation. The suggestion to renew the determination and conviction to resolve crisis and to stick on the American mission seem to be facilitated by Reagan’s use of the jeremiad element.

CONCLUSION

The analysis conducted in this study reveals that the frames of jeremiad such as the lamentation of the present condition, the evocation of the past, and the calling for renewal are found in the construction of the inaugural address. The social political conditions faced by a newly-elected president drives him to recall jeremiad elements within the presidential address which frame contemporary social realities and solidify the president’s role in dealing with them. In his address, he identifies the problem of the country and affirms his difference from president comes to the pulpit of the White House. The curiosity of what a president will offer to the nation fills the people’s mind. Therefore, voicing difference

from the previous presidency and stating promise of betterment in the coming administration can be good entry points for a new president. It apparently puts the president to the circumstances of the waiting people. If a president fails to present a better proposal for the American people, it then will discourage the enthusiasm toward the new presidency and might later fail to invite public support. The previous administration as well as their solution and promise before American public.

In connection with this, the frame of lamentation of the present becomes crucial for President Ronald Reagan to show that something went wrong to the nation due to the fault of the previous government. It allows the inclusion of the other two frames to follow the assertion of the first one to frame the portrait of the total need for the restoration under the guidance of the new leader of the nation. From the analysis, it is also necessary to be stated that the adoption of the jeremiad elements are not independent from the context that the inaugural address has its sense to meet people’s expectation and support. Reagan adopts and contextualizes the jeremiad frame particularly in the part of the lamentation which originally voiced the blame for cause of the crisis or society’s illness upon the people’s misbehavior into the blame placed upon the previous presidency. By doing so, Reagan as a president avoids the antipathy from the public and welcomes the support for his new administration as well as foreshadows the promise of better future for America.

This conclusion leads to a theoretical perspective that Puritanism remains detectable in modern American president as indicated by the inclusion of the Puritan jeremiad tradition in the lines of presidential inaugural addresses. The Puritan mind seems to be meaningful and powerful to respond to America’s circumstances. It also displays a kind of prophetic nuance to the condition of America through the promise of renewal. This functional existence of Puritanism leaves questions whether other presidents apply similar frames in their inaugural address or not

and whether presidents of different parties from Reagan also adopt the Puritan mind in their inaugural addresses or not. The answer for these questions may inspire the conduction of other researches for other cultural studies scholars.

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