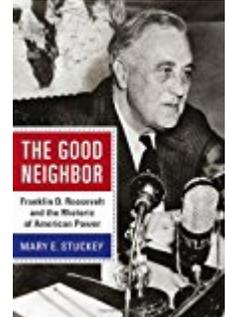


Mary E. Stuckey. *The Good Neighbor: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Rhetoric of American Power.* Rhetoric and Public Affairs Series. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2013. 376 pp. \$59.95, cloth, ISBN 978-1-61186-099-3.



Reviewed by Monica A. Rankin

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Commissioned by Seth Offenbach (Bronx Community College, The City University of New York)

Franklin D. Roosevelt's list of accomplishments is nothing short of impressive: guiding the United States through recovery from the worst economic depression in its history; mobilizing a military and civilian effort to confront the threat of antidemocratic forces in a violent and appalling world war; transforming foreign policy approaches to win allies abroad while positioning the United States as a major global leader; setting new precedents for the role of executive authority in American politics; capitalizing on new and expanding media to appeal to and unite a previously disparate public audience; and winning election to the U.S. presidency an unprecedented four times. Few would argue that Roosevelt was not a compelling, beloved, and transformative president. During his twelve years in office, Roosevelt effectively spearheaded a reshaping of the United States from a relatively isolated nation into a dominant global power. Domestically his administration witnessed a disjointed population far removed from most aspects of the national government become united in new and important ways

as the reach of the federal government expanded in ways never seen before.

In *The Good Neighbor: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Rhetoric of American Power*, Mary E. Stuckey brings together the vast array of these transformative experiences overseen by Roosevelt and she presents them under the label most typically associated with the president's diplomatic strategies in Latin America. Stuckey argues that the Good Neighbor Policy should be understood not only as a diplomatic approach in Latin America aimed at diminishing U.S. hegemonic influence, but also as a discursive tool that encompassed the aggregate of Roosevelt's efforts to transform American power--both at home and abroad. Relying largely on political speeches, fireside chats, and other public addresses, Stuckey analyzes what she calls the "entire corpus of his political rhetoric." She finds that his administration as a whole "can be best understood through the metaphor of the 'good neighbor'" (p. 2). She illustrates that the concept of good neighborliness not only shaped Roosevelt's foreign policy in the

Western Hemisphere, but also guided his domestic policies and the way he positioned the United States in the world.

Stuckey identifies the elements of the good neighbor in five distinct characteristics: first, believing in the notion that right thinking people embraced a set of universally shared values; second, shaping the nation as a political community united by rhetoric that emphasized shared hardship, sacrifice, and interdependence; third, employing various types of political rhetoric, such as educative, invective, and performative speech; fourth, defining friends and enemies according to a specific set of values that coincided with the concept of “good neighbor” and “bad neighbor”; and fifth, emphasizing equality and mass participation under a strong executive as vital components of a strong neighborhood. The five subsequent body chapters follow these characteristics and delve more deeply into how these qualities constituted the Roosevelt administration’s concept of the national and global neighborhood.

Stuckey sets up the book by explicating the way that Roosevelt understood the nation’s shared values, and how he framed the national neighborhood as a foundation for the global neighborhood. For Roosevelt, the nation was held together by a set of Judeo-Christian values, such as privileging spiritualism over materialism and committing to social justice. Social justice, for Roosevelt, was defined broadly as access to a decent home, the ability to work, and a safeguard against misfortune. Stuckey points out that Roosevelt tied Judeo-Christian values to the benefits that liberal capitalism could provide but that he also aimed to protect the vulnerable from the dangers and inconsistencies inherent within the liberal capitalist system. Such a framework allowed him to make compelling arguments about the nature of the economic crisis brought about by the Great Depression and, significantly, allowed him to offer a specific prescription for recovery that blamed his political enemies while simultaneously maintain-

ing the greatness of American traditions. Stuckey’s analysis of shared Judeo-Christian values is also vital for understanding how Roosevelt’s move to significantly strengthen the role of the executive fit within the metaphor of the good neighbor. She points out that many Americans viewed the president with an almost religious fervor and that Roosevelt subtly employed rhetoric that encouraged comparison of him with celestial beings that became increasingly common and accepted during his administration. To counter concerns over his expanding executive authority, Roosevelt employed a religious discourse that portrayed his presidential role as one of service rather than of ruler. He also portrayed the expansion of executive power as a helpful and effective way to enact the will of God for the good of the American people. Furthermore, his rhetoric conflated notions of religion, nation, and democracy as vital and inter-related points of a strong civilization. This association allowed him to privilege national identity over the local and to position himself as the natural and benevolent leader driven by service to the spiritual needs of the community.

Building on her discussion of Roosevelt’s portrayal of shared values, Stuckey goes on to examine the ways the president used rhetorical tools to shape and mobilize his audience. Roosevelt took office at a time of national crisis and understood the need to promote a sense of national unity behind his programs for relief, recovery, and reform. Beginning with his discourse around the Great Depression and continuing in his discussions of World War II, the president referred to the nation using martial metaphors to instill a sense of duty, loyalty, and purpose among the population. The nation-as-army concept implied inherent unity, obedience, and discipline that Roosevelt felt was necessary to guide the country out of crisis. Stuckey argues that the president’s metaphorical tools based on martial language served him well as he mobilized support for participation in his New Deal programs. She describes this rhetorical tool as playing a fundamen-

tal role in Roosevelt's ability to build a political coalition at home. Stuckey also points out that the discourse of military unity and discipline that took root in the national consciousness as part of domestic recovery and reform programs in the 1930s easily translated into a discussion of the nation's moral duties on a global scale as Axis hostilities later escalated overseas. Roosevelt's martial metaphors combined with his religious portrayal of shared U.S. values provided a compelling framework from which the American public could understand the Nazi threat.

In Stuckey's discussion of argument in Roosevelt's neighborhood, the strengths of her training as a rhetorician are particularly evident. She outlines three specific types of political argument used by Roosevelt in constructing and mobilizing his neighborhood--that of educative, invective, and performative rhetoric. Her description of his educative style complements her assertions about his strategies for justifying his expanding executive power. She states that he positioned himself "as the adult in the room," remaining calm in a crisis, demanding rationality, and explaining his positions to the general public in a simple, cogent, and evocative manner (p. 99). The use of educative rhetoric allowed the president to sway public opinion in effective ways, even as he initiated major changes in domestic and foreign policy. Stuckey describes his use of invective as both subtle and deliberate. He rarely referred to his political enemies by name, but the subjects of much of his castigations were often obvious in context. He used rhetorical tools that portrayed his opponents as unrealistic, illogical, and absurd--whose systems of values ran contrary to the one he had set out for his good neighborhood. A well-known and telling example presented by Stuckey is Roosevelt's use of his dog, Fala, in the 1944 presidential campaign, which served to make the pet famous while belittling the president's political adversaries. A final rhetorical tool was Roosevelt's use of performative rhetoric. Stuckey describes this as a strategy of "performing democracy,"

whereby the president demonstrated the strengths and benefits of the democratic system through analogy and example. Taken together these three rhetorical styles help us to understand more fully the nature of Roosevelt's persuasive power.

Having outlined the various components of Roosevelt's good neighbor strategy, the author then provides a thorough analysis of how the president used dissent from his political opponents to strengthen what she refers to as the "neighborhood hierarchy" (p. 135). Stuckey argues that with the president's guidance, the characteristics of those who did not belong in the neighborhood became clear--specifically greed, unscrupulousness, and opposition to democracy. But under Roosevelt's vision of good neighborliness, it was the neighbors, rather than their leader, who were responsible for protecting the community from undesirable and inadmissible constituents. He employed this model both in managing domestic opposition to his political programs as well as in dealing with the nation's enemies abroad. It is in this context that Stuckey includes a brief discussion of the Japanese internment program. She describes the president as "almost silent on the Japanese" (p. 156). Nevertheless, this arguably non-neighborly policy proves problematic to her good neighbor metaphor in the opinion of this reviewer and deserves more thorough analysis.

Stuckey concludes the book by applying her framework of a national neighborhood to the global arena. The notions of equality, Judeo-Christian values, and general respect for others applied to Roosevelt's vision of the global neighborhood as well as the national one. But he also envisioned that global community as an inherently hierarchical one--one in which the United States served as the most suitable model for others to follow. Fittingly, she gives attention to Roosevelt's policies in Latin America, the area of the world that was the actual workshop for the Good Neighbor Policy as a diplomatic tool. But here Stuckey misses an op-

portunity to delve further into the intricacies of the Good Neighbor Policy in the Western Hemisphere. She focuses her comments on Roosevelt's policies of nonintervention without acknowledging the cultural and economic applications of his diplomatic strategies in Latin America. Certainly such an analysis would have strengthened her overall argument of the good neighbor as a more broadly constructed metaphor. She also does not consider why Roosevelt's foreign policy that was specifically crafted for the proximate geographical neighbors of the United States became such a suitable trope for his administration's domestic and global policies more broadly. It is clear that Latin America held a special significance for the Roosevelt administration, even as global crises unfolded elsewhere in the form of economic depression and world war. Considering the Americas as a special area in the broader context of the good neighbor metaphor would prove useful.

Overall Stuckey has provided a cogent, well-organized, and convincingly argued study of the rhetorical tools employed by Roosevelt. *The Good Neighbor* offers new and innovative ways to consider the popularity and persuasive abilities of a president whose power and appeal were unmatched in American history.

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