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IMPERIALISM VERSUS EXCEPTIONALISM.

THE SOURCES OF US FOREIGN POLICY

AT THE BEGINNING OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

Despite considerable research on the complexities of American foreign policy decisions at the beginning of the twenty-first century, controversy still remains relative to the potential forces driving these decisions. This study provides a critical assessment of the actuality of two possible paths of interpretation: either imperialism or exceptionalism as determinants of George W. Bush's foreign affairs strategy.

A predominant idea that emerges from the literature depicts the United States as not only a world leader, but one manifesting imperialist ambitions, understood essentially in terms of the desire to achieve economic global domination. In attempting to identify the sources of US foreign policy during George W. Bush's two presidential terms, my thesis challenges the imperialist scenario. Instead, by basing my assumptions primarily on the analysis of political discourse, I argue that US foreign policy-making in this period is a process informed more by ideological considerations that stem from the doctrine of American exceptionalism, as well as the ensuing sense of a global moral mission that America is to achieve. These findings, in turn, not only relate to the broader debate, but also might prove useful in explaining certain continuities and inconsistencies in the political behavior of the United States of America on the international scene.

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INTRODUCTION

The United States of America has constituted an inexhaustible source of scholarly attention ever since the early establishment of the first thirteen colonies on the North-American territory. Being the unique historical case that it is, the US has attracted a storm of unmasked interest relative to just about every domain of its existence, among which America's conduct on the international scene is perhaps the most intensely discussed and investigated. Relatively recent developments have had the effect of reopening and deepening the debate concerning American foreign policy, particularly under such circumstances that America's global prominence is becoming not only increasingly visible, but also highly unquestionable.

Numerous studies have focused upon American foreign policy in terms of changes and continuities throughout longer periods of time, the analyses being based primarily on strategic decisions and facts. When it comes to identifying the sources of American foreign policy discourse, however, most contributions to the scholarly literature have proved at best partially capable of pointing to what can be said to actually inform the decision-making process in the field of foreign affairs. The complex and controversial character of engaging in such discussions appears all the more evident when dealing with contemporary developments concerning and involving the US.

The main purpose of this study is to assess the degree to which the formulation of foreign policy objectives in the United States has been shaped by either imperialist tendencies or considerations stemming from the doctrine of American exceptionalism and the inherent belief in America's global mission. The period of time that is in focus is constituted by the first years of the twenty-first century, namely from roughly 2000-2001 to 2008.

My thesis thus aims at providing a timely analysis of the main incentives that inform and drive US foreign policy during the duration of George W. Bush's two presidential terms. I discuss two potential sources of American political discourse and the weight that can be attributed to both of them individually: on the one hand, a sort of post-imperialism understood in terms of an alleged desire on the part of the US to achieve economic global dominance, and, on the other hand, a sense of global responsibility on the part of America as a unique, exceptional international actor. The line of argumentation I follow points preponderantly to the latter.

As far as existing literature on the topic is concerned, one of the best known studies on American exceptionalism is Martin Seymour Lipset's *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword*[1]. Published in 1997, the book still offers considerable insight relative to the moralistic nature of US foreign policy, as viewed primarily in connection with religious considerations. One significant merit of Lipset's study is that it sets out to define both the complexities and boundaries of the political debate in the US as the immediate result of the doctrine of American exceptionalism. Considerable attention is attributed, however, to the American society at large or different groups within it, rather than on the political process of decision-making *per se*. My thesis is designed to devote greater attention to the latter aspect, while only to a limited extent building on the former.

At the same time, several scholars have dealt with the question regarding the actual existence – or (re-)emergence – of an American empire: Geir Lundestad, Andrew Bacevich, Noam Chomsky – to name just a few, whose works are more recent.[2] Bacevich, in particular,

[1] Seymour Martin Lipset, *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword*, New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1997.

[2] See also Charles A. Kupchan, *The End of the American Era. US Foreign Policy and the Geopolitics of the Twenty-First Century*, New York: Vintage Books, 2002, or Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence. American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World*, New York: Routledge, 2002.

dwells upon what he coins as "the myth of the reluctant superpower"[3] in reference to the US dealing with international affairs. Chomsky, on the other hand, suggests that there is such a thing as an American empire project, which draws specifically on a set of "imperial ambitions"[4] that appear to be *sine qua non* triggers for the US in the context of the post-September 11 world.

In terms of structure, the thesis consists of three main chapters, the order of which unfolds as follows. The first chapter dwells, in order, upon the notions of 'American exceptionalism', that of 'manifest destiny', and 'empire'. The manner in which these three concepts are presented and interpreted is meant to contribute to further establishing certain continuities between the initial understandings of the terms[5] and the meanings that have been assigned to them since the years 2000-2001 in the American context. In essence, the end result of this first chapter is not only to provide more or less comprehensible definitions of the three notions, but also to prepare the discussion concerning the present context.

Bearing on specific events that have impacted upon the United States after the year 2000, the second chapter focuses on various rhetorical devices made use of by American decision makers in terms of foreign affairs. The two main points of focus are the political rhetoric behind the war on terror, on the one hand, and the framing of US policies regarding worldwide health-related issues, on the other hand. Although apparently disconnected, the discussion of these particular issues will prove relevant for the analysis provided in the following chapter.

It is the aim of the third and last chapter of this thesis to assess both the actuality of claims to economically-informed imperial ambitions on the part of the US, and that of relating

[3] Andrew Bacevich, *American Empire. The Realities and Consequences of US Diplomacy*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002.
[4] Noam Chomsky, *Imperial Ambitions. Conversations of the Post-9/11 World*, New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2005.
[5] Especially those stemming from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the first two notions were first coined and came into usage.

American foreign policy to exceptionalist thinking. As stated previously, I argue more for the idea of US foreign affairs decisions being driven by the belief in America's manifest destiny to promote certain values and principles throughout the world.

In terms of methodology, as the first part of my study is centered primarily on the conceptualization of various terms, the principal method by means of which I go about dealing with it is, naturally enough, the examination and synthesized bringing together of certain illustrative accounts on the notions in focus. Consequently, this more theoretical section of my thesis draws extensively on existing literature clarifying the main concepts discussed. Additionally, the second and third chapters rely more on discourse analysis as a means of attempting to grasp the underlying message of the political rhetoric employed in the US in the specified time frame and in relation to specific issues.

Acknowledging the fact that "[p]rofound changes in the United States' outlook and behavior toward the world have taken place in the first years of the twenty-first century"[6], the thesis as a whole aims at contributing to a better understanding of developments in the formulation of the general contours and major objectives of contemporary American foreign policy. It is not, however, designed to constitute an exhaustive account, and it invites further investigation.

[6] Kurt M. Campbell and Derek Chollet, "The New Tribalism: Cliques and the Making of US Foreign Policy", *The Washington Quarterly*, Winter 2006-2007, Volume 30, No. 1, p. 193.

CHAPTER 1: CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

The first chapter is meant to provide certain conceptual clarifications that are paramount to the progressing of the thesis as a whole. It is my strong belief that a brief, yet synthetic discussion of concepts such as 'American exceptionalism', 'Manifest Destiny' and 'empire' is required in order to not only attempt to comprehend the potential implications of employing such terminology in general, but also provide a set of relevant and eloquent working definitions for each of the three phrases. This chapter consequently unfolds in the order mentioned above, with particular emphasis on the issues and aspects that bear considerable significance with regard to the topic of this thesis, which struggles to identify the sources of US foreign policy.

1.1 AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM

Numerous accounts depict the United States of America as an exceptional historical case[7] – at the very least. One of the main contentions put forth in such accounts is that the US not only is different from other developed nations around the world, but that this idea of irrefutable distinctiveness usually translates into some sort of categorical superiority, especially in terms of unique origins, historical evolution or what can be labeled as national creed. The doctrine of American exceptionalism can thus be said to stand at the very basis of the American society: the self-made man, the idea of a chosen people with a special mission, democratic guidelines for the political life and so on.

While this appears to be the case, formulating a coherent, all-encompassing definition of 'exceptionalism' may prove anything but a smooth process. Indeed, the idea of American

[7] See, for instance, Seymour Martin Lipset, *op. cit.*, or Walter Russell Mead, *op. cit.*, or Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1978 – to name just a few.

exceptionalism is a relatively old one, basically permeating American history, and this is precisely the reason for which the very meaning of the concept must be made as unambiguous as possible. Generally speaking, 'exceptional' is an adjective which suggests that "its determinant is qualitatively different from all other units of similar identity or composition"[8]. The term 'exceptionalism', on the other hand, bears a more ideological connotation in itself, if only because of its '-ism' ending. Essentially, it refers to the perception that its object is somehow unusual or out of the ordinary, thus not conforming to already existing patterns, general principles or rules.

The discourse on American exceptionalism goes back a long way, even to a period which precedes the actual birth of the United States as a nation-state *per se*.[9] The phrase itself has held a firm place in the American collective memory, and can further be exemplified by its more recent revival in American political discourse, in general, and in US presidential speeches, in particular. While the very notion of 'exceptionalism' has been used repeatedly with regard to the evolution of other territorial-administrative and political formations as well (such as the British Empire, Imperial Japan, Israel, Nazi Germany or, even before, Ancient Rome or China), *American* exceptionalism has received a level of attention that makes an inquiry limited to its potential influence on the formulation of US foreign policy a worthwhile enterprise.

Claims about American exceptionalism can be found throughout the scholarly literature of the past three centuries – more or less. Yet, oftentimes, commentators have diluted the concept so as to mean something close to mere distinctiveness and, implicitly, somewhat failing to pinpoint certain finer features that are truly unique to American politics, culture, economic strategies and social life. Formulated in such a manner, this would

[8] Harold Hongiu Koh, "On America's Double Standard: The Good and Bad Faces of Exceptionalism", *The American Prospect*, Volume 15, 2004, p. 189.
[9] The coining of the phrase, however, is attributed to the French scholar Alexis de Tocqueville, who, as early as the mid-1830s, noted that the United States already held a special place among the nations of the world, if only by being perhaps the first example of a modern functional democracy.

obviously have the immediate result of picturing the United States of America as an entity that indeed has something uniquely and specifically characteristic of it. But, then again, strictly from this perspective, so does almost any other nation or country in the world. So what is it that stirs up so much controversy concerning American exceptionalist thinking?

In documenting American exceptionalism, appeal may be made to several sources or roots, among which: the Puritan legacy, the separation of church and state, the availability of natural resources, the timing and composition of the various waves of immigration to the North-American territories, free enterprise and self-reliance, individualism, freedom, political liberties, pluralism – to name perhaps the most significant. The impact of a framework so encompassing and pervading as American exceptionalism consequently seems unquestionable, and this is especially true of the political realm in the United States. The prolific literature that has developed prior to, but even more so in the post-9/11 period, proves the point.[10]

It is also important to note that America not only was, ever since the establishment of the first colonies, generally speaking "geographically fortunate"[11], but also benefited from a legal-political system that involved checks and balances, pluralism, republicanism and a high degree of respect for civil rights and liberties. Hence, the embracement and appropriation of a certain set of so-called "habits of the heart"[12] that shaped Americans' social, political and economic behavior.

A veritable milestone in the history of American exceptionalism is cited to have been the American Revolution of the late eighteenth century. Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*

[10] See, for instance, Siobhan McEvoy-Levy, *American Exceptionalism and US Foreign Policy. Public Diplomacy at the End of the Cold War*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001, or William V. Spanos, *American Exceptionalism in the Age of Globalization*, New York: State University of New York Press, 2008.

[11] Peirce Lewis, *America's Natural Landscapes* in Luther S. Luedtke (ed.), *Making America. The Society and Culture of the United States*, Washington DC: United States Information Agency, 1992, p. 44: "Two large oceans insulated the United States from political threats in Europe and Asia, and for most of the nation's history those oceanic buffers spared America the need to maintain expensive and potentially mischievous military machines."

[12] James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars. The Struggle to Define America*, New York: Harper Collins Publishers, Inc., 1991, p. 103.

expressed, as early as 1776, the belief that America was not just an extension of Europe, but a new land, a country of nearly unlimited potential and opportunity that had outgrown its mother country, advocating an immediate rupture with the British tradition.[13] Such were the sentiments that animated the revolutionaries in their pursuit for individualistic, egalitarian and anti-statist values.[14] The American Revolutionary War is, thus, widely recognized as the claimed ideological territory of exceptionalists. The intellectuals of the Revolution – figures such as Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson – arguably shaped America into a nation fundamentally different from its European ancestry, creating modern constitutional republicanism as it is known today.

Additionally, proponents of American exceptionalism also argue that the United States is beyond ordinary in that it was founded on a set of republican ideals, rather than on a common heritage, ethnicity or ruling elite – as was the case in the so-called Old World. In the words of former US President Abraham Lincoln in his Gettysburg Address, America is a nation "conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal"[15]. From this perspective, the development of America is inextricably linked with liberty and equality – two pivotal elements upon which American exceptionalism rests.

Indeed, despite the partial, yet undeniable influence of a formerly European culture upon the settlers, some argue that

> "[t]he fact that American culture and thought developed within an *American* environment influenced that heritage even as the new nation derived from it. What happened in America happened in a new, comparatively isolated, frontier nation with a brief history and shallow roots. […] The country began with an achieved liberation and a firm belief in progress."[16]

[13] In his *Democracy in America* (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2006), Alexis de Tocqueville stressed the advanced nature of democracy in America, arguing that it infused every aspect of society and culture, at a time (namely the 1830s) when democracy was not in fashion anywhere else in the world.
[14] According to H. G. Wells in Seymour Martin Lipset, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
[15] Abraham Lincoln, *Gettysburg Address*, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, November 19, 1863, cited in Garry Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words that Remade America*, Tampa: Touchstone Books, 1993, p. 93.
[16] Russel B. Nye, *This Almost Chosen People. Essays in the History of American Ideas*, East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1966, pp. 7-8.

The American colonists were building a new society from which all the flaws and inequalities of Europe could – theoretically at least – be erased. It is under such circumstances that "the doctrine of progress (…) took on revolutionary connotations"[17], encouraging a sort of "magnificent assurance"[18]. It is this initial optimism that can be said to have generated the formidable spirit of self-confidence that is still specific (and perhaps increasingly more so) to Americans at present. Hence,

> "an activist approach to life, (…) a progressive rather than traditionalist or static view on history, equality, high evaluation of individual personality, tolerance of diversity, efficiency and practicality, freedom, democracy, nationalism and patriotism, idealism and perfectionism, mobility and change"[19].

On the other hand, however, detractors of an America that is uniquely different from all other democratic states put forth the view according to which exceptionalism is just another way of saying ethnocentrism or propaganda.[20] Not only do such accounts bring arguments in terms of the morality of American exceptionalist justifications, but they also phrase their discourse in terms of America and other democratic nations on the world scene being "exceptionally alike"[21]. What such criticism does is once again point at the idea of the nature of differences, which has been discussed earlier in this chapter.

1.2 MANIFEST DESTINY

At this point, a further clarification is needed, one that is particularly relevant to the purposes of this thesis, although also relatively old, dating back to the 1800s: Manifest

[17] Russel B. Nye, *op. cit.*, p. 2.
[18] *Idem*, p. 11.
[19] *Idem*, p. 23.
[20] See, for instance, Wilber W. Caldwell, *American Narcissism: The Myth of National Superiority*, New York: Algora Publishing, 2006, or Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, *World Out of Balance. International Relations and the Challenge of American Primacy*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008.
[21] Michael Lind, "The American Creed: Does It Matter? Should It Change?", *Foreign Affairs*, March-April 1996, available at: http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/51853/michael-lind/the-american-creed-does-it-matter-should-it-change (accessed April 2009).

Destiny. The phrase itself was coined in the early 1840s, by John L. O'Sullivan.[22] Capturing the expansionist zeal manifested in those times, it quickly entered the language and has been repeatedly made use of, or reference to, ever since. Ironically enough, the term gained in popularity only after it received some harsh criticism aiming at highlighting that the rhetoric employed by proponents of such a policy referred to divine providence in order to support and justify their actions (territorial expansion, to be more precise). During the nineteenth century, when the entire Manifest Destiny discourse originated[23], it had more relevance to what can be called the domestic level, and less so in connection to the system of international affairs. In fact, initially, 'manifest destiny' made reference to the belief that the trajectory the United States was to follow involved territorial expansion that would range from the Atlantic seaboard to the Pacific Ocean and, consequently, cover most of the North-American continent. As the term itself suggests, this sort of expansionist thinking was not merely an option, but, rather, an obvious ('manifest') and unavoidable ('destiny') path. All this can be said to have engendered an inherent sense of mission. In fact, there has never been any substantiated doubt that the experience of gradually occupying "an accessible, sparsely populated, and richly endowed *continent* inculcated some of the Americans' commanding habits of thought and behavior"[24].

Whether the natural abundance of the New World was a blessing, a challenge or a combination of both was obviously less certain at the time. Nevertheless, one of the most complex and discussed themes of American history emerges from the settlers' momentous encounter and coming to terms with an extremely extended and mostly wild territory.

[22] John L. O'Sullivan, *Manifest Destiny*, 1839 (excerpts) in "The Great Nation of Futurity", *The United States Democratic Review*, Volume 6, Issue 23, pp. 426-430.
[23] According to most accounts, the phrase 'Manifest Destiny' is oftentimes associated strictly with the territorial expansion of the United States in the period ranging from approximately 1815 to the beginning of the Civil War in the early 1860s. This relatively short period of time even came to be known as 'the Age of Manifest Destiny', as it is the period during which the US more or less defined its borders as the continental nation that it is today.
[24] Luther S. Luedtke (ed.), *op. cit*., p. 37 (emphasis added).

Coupled with this "preference for the concrete"[25], however, the American sense of mission "has a sort of abstraction to it that makes it uniquely difficult and valuable: it is a devotion not to a specific physical place, gene pool, cuisine or cultural tradition, but to a political and social vision, a promise and the idea of freedom."[26]

At the same time, however, historically speaking, it can be asserted that the imperatives delineating Manifest Destiny were later employed (during the 1890s, for instance) as a sort of ideological justification for the expansion of the US even outside its present-day territorial borders. In other words, even at this relatively early stage, Manifest Destiny came to also stand behind American (political) actions abroad – or, put differently, behind decisions concerning the external relations of the United States relative to other international actors. This aspect will be dealt with and will become increasingly relevant as this thesis progresses towards examining the situation nowadays in the following chapters.

Although the ideas that stand behind the manifest destiny concept and, equally, behind the doctrine of American exceptionalism, may themselves not be considered uniquely American in origin, it is the manner in which such ideas have been redefined in the American case that is important. At the same time, mention should be made that "the American mind can never fully be explained by any thesis, or single dialectic, or school of thought, for it is far too vital and energetic to stand at rest long enough to develop consistency and compatibility"[27]. Indeed, "a vast complex of ideas, policies, and actions is comprehended under the phrase 'Manifest Destiny'. They are not […] all compatible, nor do they come from any one source"[28]. The truth behind these assertions – although somewhat problematic – not only brings new challenges to the discussion, but is also one that is believed to pervade all the

[25] Luther S. Luedtke (ed.), *op. cit*., p. 21.
[26] *Idem*, p. 29.
[27] *Ibidem*.
[28] Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968, p. 43.

periods of American history, including both incipient and later articulations of what is now generally labeled as Manifest Destiny thinking.

Of late, (and certainly in the post-9/11 period), numerous controversies have arisen relative to recent developments on the world scene, developments which clearly have been influenced – one way or another – by the involvement of the United States. Without a doubt, this is particularly true when it comes to the foreign policy making process, a process 'provoked' by occurrences on both the international and the national American scene, but which, at the same time, is informed to a great extent by ideological considerations that stem from the perception that the US holds a special role in the progressing of international affairs, in general. Determining what precisely informs and constitutes those considerations is less clear, however, and, for the purposes of this thesis, the focus will be on two main sources or directions, discussed in the subsequent two chapters.

Still, while the term itself is usually taken to refer to nothing more than mere expansionist tendencies, "manifest destiny' might also suggest another, broader meaning, if taken to express the belief in America's mission in the world. Under such circumstances, delineating the main themes correlated to the thesis of manifest destiny does not appear an easy task. Nevertheless, despite such inherent conceptual difficulties, three major elements can be identified. Firstly, there is the so-called "myth of national superiority"[29], which essentially emphasizes the virtues that are specific to Americans, as well as to the institutions they established. Secondly, there is the much discussed sense of mission that these institutions (most of them political in nature) are supposed to promote and spread, not only within the borders of the United States, but also with the goal of inspiring and even remodeling the institutional structures and functions in other states – in the image of the US. Thirdly, and

[29] Wilber W. Caldwell, *op. cit.*

perhaps most importantly, there is the obviousness and inevitability of the carrying out of this predestined path.

The origin of these themes is generally traced back to the Puritan legacy, and, even more precisely, to John Winthrop's heavily cited 'city-upon-a-hill' sermon of 1630, which called for the establishment of a virtuous community under divine providence, a community that would provide an example worthy of imitation to the states of the world.[30] Another conviction soon came to fruition, namely the idea that the United States was, indeed, a country whose inhabitants had embarked on a special kind of experiment, one that involved efforts in the direction of the promotion and maintenance of freedom and democratic rule especially.

At this point, another term may prove highly relevant in this attempt to provide some conceptual clarifications: the idea of the American jeremiad.[31] According to Sacvan Bercovitch, the term usually refers to a sort of sermon that seeks to unify a people, especially by means of creating a certain tension between an ideal type of existence and its real social manifestation. Borrowed from the biblical context, the term might attract criticism for its emphasizing a dimension that bears an imprint that is perhaps too much connected with religion. Other than that, however, the American jeremiad fits quite well within the entire discourse centered around the implications of American exceptionalism, in general, and of Manifest Destiny, in particular. The reason for which the jeremiad eventually came to be utilized in relation to the world mission of the US (as well) points to the paramount relevance attributed to the ideas that helped construct this sort of argumentation. More specifically, far from narrowing the understanding of the American sense of mission – as the ideology perhaps the most interconnected with the doctrine of American exceptionalism – to strictly religious terminology, the jeremiad in its American form adds the dimension of progress to its more

[30] John Winthrop, *A Model of Christian Charity* in *Norton Anthology of American Literature. Shorter Fourth Edition*, New York: W.W. Norton, 1995.
[31] Sacvan Bercovitch, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

static European counterpart.[32] In this respect, certain aspects are often seen as being symptomatic of the movement from colonial to national identity in the case of the United States. One such aspect refers to the fact that this early New England rhetoric provided the framework for the enunciation and implementation of certain values with which America later came to be identified, values such as human perfectibility, technological progress or democracy.[33]

Nonetheless, a grimmer view would underline that "even when they are most optimistic, the jeremiads express a profound disquiet. Not infrequently, their affirmations betray an underlying desperation – a refusal to confront the present, a fear of the future."[34] It is precisely this anxiety that instills the acute sense of an errand[35] that is to be accomplished, and it is in this respect that the American jeremiad sustains a paradoxical rhetoric of both hope and fear[36]. Consequently, the attempt to simultaneously understand the intellectual and the practical mechanisms animating the jeremiad might shed light upon an aspect that proves problematic even nowadays. This refers to viewing the jeremiad from the perspective of its role in – paradoxically enough – both the construction and the critique of public life, two processes that relate to the framing of political discourse especially in terms of getting popular approval for issues that are bound to stir controversy.

According to Bercovitch's account, it was this early, eighteenth-century jeremiad that established the typology of America's mission and has also contributed to its perpetuation up

[32] Sacvan Bercovitch, *op. cit.*, p. xiv.
[33] *Ibidem*.
[34] *Ibidem*.
[35] Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956. Perry Miller points to the ambiguity that may be associated to the very concept of 'errand': on the one hand, it may denote a venture on another's behalf; on the other hand, it may well represent a venture of one's own. (p. 4) According to the same view, the Puritans' tragedy was that their errand shifted from one meaning to the other in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Nowadays, the errand undoubtedly takes on new meanings, as the US progresses into an increasingly visible position as world leader.
[36] Sacvan Bercovitch, *op. cit.*, p. 28: "The Puritan concept of *errand* appears to be well-suited to the process of Americanization: progress through consensus, a system of sacred-secular symbols for a *laissez-faire* creed, a civil religion for a people chosen to spring fully formed into the modern world – America, the first begotten daughter of democratic capitalism."

to the present moment. The Puritans had been particularly careful to incorporate biblical lessons into the American experience, the settlers' 'errand' thus taking "the implications of manifest destiny"[37].

It can now be asserted that the perception of a chosen people with a national mission – manifest destiny – has been derived in large part from the Puritan vision. It eventually came to be included in the same category of national myths – as was the case of exceptionalism. In fact, the former of the terms was, to some extent, gradually incorporated into the latter in the attempt to present and maintain a specific image of America as not only unique, but also fundamentally different from European states, on the one hand, and the rest of the world, on the other – thus empowering the American people to manifest destiny.[38]

This begs the following question: To what extent can the policy-making process in present-day America be considered a coherent one, consistent with a specific set of values and principles that have endured since the first days of the American republic? Furthermore, in what way can relatively recent international events or developments be said to have either altered or reinforced the ideological framework comprised of beliefs in both American exceptionalism and Manifest Destiny?

Formulating comprehensive, all-encompassing and unequivocal answers to such questions may be not only difficult, but altogether only to some extent feasible, especially relative to the topic of this thesis. In this respect, special mention should be made, that, although the beginning of the twentieth century witnessed the decline in usage of the phrase 'Manifest Destiny'[39], later interpretations of the doctrine[40] proposed sometimes even more restrictive perspectives on the concept.

[37] Sacvan Bercovitch, *op. cit.*, p. 160.
[38] *Idem*, p. 161.
[39] This decline was due especially to the fact that territorial expansion ceased to be promoted as an intrinsic part of America's destiny, as the continent had, roughly speaking, already been settled from coast to coast.
[40] For instance, according to Walter A. McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World since 1776*, New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997, p. 45, Woodrow Wilson was the first and only

This more or less brings the discussion to the present time – although, for the purposes of this introductory, more conceptual first chapter, this discussion can only be a very brief one. Nowadays, 'Manifest Destiny' is usually employed in order to describe a past era in American history, but, at the same time, reference is increasingly made to the concept with the view of justifying or simply analyzing the driving factor behind certain foreign policy decisions on the part of the United States – particularly relatively recent of military intervention.

1.3 EMPIRE

The third subsection of this chapter aims primarily at articulating a working definition for the term "empire" and its implicit derivative, "imperialism". The relevance of discussing these two concepts is immediately visible to the topic of the thesis as a whole, and the range of scholarly interpretations brought for purposes of illustration is aimed to be general and anything but exhaustive. The presentation of such theoretical accounts is designed to contribute to the clarification and the exploring of the extent to which imperialist tendencies can be associated with the contemporary international behavior of the United States. This issue will be discussed in the subsequent chapters of the thesis (primarily the last one).

Let us then start this more or less theoretical analysis of 'empire' by asserting that there is no one single definition that has been generally accepted to fully grasp the array of its potential meanings. The narrative surrounding 'empire' is usually constructed in sharp contrast to the nation-state as another form of social, political, territorial and administrative organization. In fact, defining either of the two concepts eventually ends up employing terminology that is, one way or another, related to the other.

president to ever use the phrase in his annual address, the view promoted by him remaining more or less unchanged even in the aftermath of the Second World War.

While this appears to be the case, no consensus has yet been reached among scholars as to why exactly imperial formations tend to be perceived in primarily negative terms – as opposed, perhaps, to the more homogenous and cohesive understanding of an usually unitary nation-state. As mentioned before, this last part of the chapter aims at providing at least an informed account of several interpretations of empire, put forth by various social scientists, and it concludes by underlining once more the difficulty inherent in any attempt to theoretically frame even the most rudimentary of definitions when it comes to the idea of empire.

Indeed, there is an inherent ambiguity in trying to come up with a clear-cut definition of 'empire', and this is especially true regarding the contemporary meaning assigned to the term, more than its initial more geographically-determined understanding. In fact, certain scholars even go so far as to claim that, in fact, "the concept of empire is so universal and all-encompassing that it appears to have no particular meaning at all"[41]. This might not always be the case, however. Any endeavor to pinpoint or, at least, synthesize the approaches that can be utilized to understand 'empire' needs to, first of all, rid itself of any misconception that might stem from adopting a strictly historical perspective on empires – essentially as entities that are bound to eventually collapse.[42] What such an interpretation basically requires is the ability to look at empires from a historical perspective and what it indirectly suggests is that empires (as a broad denominator) are a thing of the past and can be examined accordingly. This, in turn, would imply that more recent manifestations of imperialism cannot but be attributed at least a

[41] Ilya Gerasimov, Serguei Glebov, Alexander Kaplunovskii, Marina Mogilner, Alexander Semyonov, "In Search of New Imperial History", *Ab Imperio*, 2005/1, p. 33.
[42] See, for instance, Jeremy Adelman, "An Age of Imperial Revolutions", *Ab Imperio*, 2008/1, p. 320, or Zygmunt Bauman, "In the Court Where Multi-Ethnic Polities Are on Trial the Jury is Still Out", *Ab Imperio*, 2008/1, p. 6.

different name. Hence, concepts such as 'post-imperialism'[43], 'neo-imperialism'[44] or the more recent 'trans-imperialism'[45].

Returning to the more or less easily identifiable features of imperial formations, it can safely be asserted that some consensus has been reached concerning their inherent structure. What is usually emphasized is the obvious and reinforced power relationship between a center and the periphery, whether it is in terms of the rhetoric employed in legitimizing imperial control[46] or in more pragmatic, physically-based terms of describing the relationship of the center with its colonies[47].

In trying to situate and define empire, another aspect of utmost importance needs to be kept in consideration, and this refers to what can be labeled as the meta-language surrounding the term. Put differently, the rhetoric justifying or, at least, accounting for the existence of imperial formations. Indeed, the "language of empire is of critical significance"[48], as it turns out that "empire is in part a claim", but "not solely a claim, for claims of empire without effective practices of control to back them up are not convincing performance"[49]. This interpretation of empire offered by Beissinger seems to combine an abstract interpretation of empire with a more empirical or, rather, practical one, but runs the risk of covering neither of the two dimensions to a full extent. What it manages to do, however, is provide even more food for thought relative to what can be understood by the concept itself, as well as in connection with the possible implications of utilizing such a perspective in the examination of

[43] See, for instance, David G. Becker and Richard L. Sklar (eds.), *Postimperialism and World Politics*, New York: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1999, or Emmanuel Todd, *After the Empire. The Breakdown of the American Order*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.
[44] See, for instance, Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins, *Post-Colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics*, London: Routledge, 1996.
[45] See, for instance, Celeste A. Wallander, "Russian Transimperialism and Its Implications", *The Washington Quarterly*, Spring 2007, pp. 107-122.
[46] Mark R. Beissinger, "Situating Empire", *Ab Imperio*, 2005/1, p. 89.
[47] Ann Laura Stoler, Carole McGranahan, "Refiguring Imperial Terrains", *Ab Imperio*, 2006/1, p. 1.
[48] Mark R. Beissinger, *op. cit.*, p. 90.
[49] *Ibidem*.

potentially imperialistic ambitions on the part of the United States – as illustrated especially in the political discourse of foreign affairs.

If we look at other definitions, however, we notice that other authors also pick up on this idea of a power relationship inherent to imperial structures. Stoler and McGranahan, for instance, formulate their interpretation of 'imperial terrains' building especially on the center-colon dichotomy, consequently coming to an understanding of empires less in geographical terms and more in terms of their being veritable "states of becoming, macropolities in states of solution and constant formation"[50], often becoming and nurturing "polities of dislocation, processes of dispersion, appropriation, and displacement"[51]. While the latter part of this definition appears less relevant when dealing with the specific case of the US, the former part is suggestive of a sort of dynamics that makes the conceptualization of a potential American empire more accessible. Of course, nowadays, it is no longer a debate framed in terms of conquest and implicit territorial expansion, but rather in terms of exerting influence or control, and this becomes especially obvious when coined as 'neo-imperialism', for example.

All things considered – and, at the same time, bearing in mind that future reference to certain conceptual specifications will be made in the following chapters – let us now consider a rather simplistic, yet hopefully satisfactorily encompassing definition of 'empire' as a working definition. This would be framed in terms of power relations between a dominant center and several peripheral, subordinated structures. Under such circumstances, one of the essential definitions of 'empire' would be diversity (whether of ethnicities, interests, aspirations and so on), but, added to that, a certain ideological framework would be dictated by the necessity to exercise dominance on the part of the hegemon. This is where the connection with the previous two sections of this chapter becomes clearer, in a way, as the ideological dimension is brought to the fore, hopefully also managing to account for the more

[50] Ann Laura Stoler, Carole McGranahan, *op. cit.*, p. 4.
[51] *Idem*, p. 3.

general perspective adopted in discussing the concept of 'empire' in this chapter. Indeed, perhaps nowadays we can talk of "imperial ambitions"[52] more than of actual imperial formations, but it is crucial to have this sort of a preliminary understanding of empire before moving on to analyzing the rhetoric behind the framing of US foreign policy during George W. Bush's two presidential terms.

[52] Noam Chomsky, *op. cit*.

CHAPTER 2: US FOREIGN POLICY DISCOURSE BETWEEN 2000 AND 2008

> "The US occupies a unique position in world affairs. Never in history has a country dominated the international scene to the extent that the US does today. No matter what the indicator – military power, economic strength, political influence, technological prowess, cultural model – the US is in a league of its own."[53]

This is no less true of the overall political realm characteristic of the US. The above-quoted assertion justifies – even though only partially – my motivation for choosing to deal with the sources of foreign policy discourse in the United States, with particular emphasis on George W. Bush's two presidential terms. Thus, the complexities of delineating what exactly is meant by foreign policy appear particularly relevant to the topic. For the purposes of this thesis, let us consider the rather broad and simplistic, yet encompassing, definition provided by Fraser Cameron:

> "Stated simply, foreign policy refers to a consistent course of actions followed by one nation to deal with another nation or region, or international issue. A country's foreign policy is usually based on values, interests, and may reflect broad national objectives or be a very specific response to a particular situation. […] A country's foreign policy is usually aimed at preserving or promoting its economic and political interests abroad and its position in the world."[54]

Bearing this in consideration, Deibel identifies the characteristics of foreign affairs strategy as follows[55]: first of all, this kind of strategy needs to be comprehensive, as it "tries to look at the whole picture, to be inclusive rather than exclusive, structured and systematic rather than random"[56]; secondly, it is bound to be long-ranging, being applicable not only

[53] Fraser Cameron, *US Foreign Policy After the Cold War. Global Hegemon or Reluctant Sheriff?*, Second edition, New York: Routledge, 2005, p. xvi.
[54] *Idem*, p. xvii.
[55] Terry L. Deibel, *Foreign Affairs Strategy. Logic for American Statecraft*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 13-23.
[56] *Idem*, p. 13.

"across subjects, but also over time"[57]; thirdly, it is usually means-sensitive; fourthly, such strategy needs to be purposeful, in the sense of following the accomplishment of certain objectives; fifthly, the author points to the importance of the relationship between ends and means, which leads to the idea of the coherence of foreign affairs strategy; and lastly, such strategy needs to be interactive, as policy makers have to deal not only with perceived enemies, but also allies and partners.

This second chapter will unfold against this more theoretical background information, although most reference will be made to the potential meaning and implications of American political discourse in the specified time frame. This will contribute both to a better understanding of the mechanisms and instruments that are employed in the foreign-policy making process in the US, and to providing an analytical insight as to what drives foreign policy decisions in America. The focus is on two timely issues, namely: the war against Iraq, and health-related policies adopted and implemented by the Bush administration in its relations with other states throughout the world. The second large section of this chapter is divided into two main subsections, the first of which deals with US HIV/AIDS policy under Bush, while the second one focuses on issues related to the former president's decision to cut funding for abortion clinics abroad.

The search for underlying messages behind the actual wording of relevant documents and public speeches may not be categorized as a traditional type of analysis of foreign policy, as the latter is probably concerned more with government actions[58], rather than rhetoric. Yet the American case is an interesting one, the analysis of which may combine both approaches, especially when it comes to the afore-mentioned issues. Indeed, given the importance attributed to the US in world affairs, it is crucial to understand not only how decisions

[57] Terry L. Deibel, *op. cit.*, p. 14.
[58] Fraser Cameron, *op. cit.*, p. xvii.

regarding foreign policy are made and what represent US priorities, but also what all this might mean in the present-day international context.

2.1 THE RHETORIC BEHIND THE WAR ON TERROR

As expected, "[a]t the start of the new millennium, with a new administration taking over in Washington, there were many debates on the future direction of American foreign policy."[59] Generally speaking, "George W. Bush came to office determined to set aside the frivolities of Clinton's humanitarian endeavors and focus his administration's energies on core national interests."[60] Renouncing certain prior policies, the Bush administration managed, in the first months in office, to map out a unilateralist approach that meant the articulation of foreign policy in terms that seemed (or so critics argue) particularly inconsiderate of the international community at large. Thus, the administration "rejected a host of international treaties"[61] (such as the Kyoto environmental accords or the ABM Treaty), as well as denounced various international organizations, such as the United Nations or the International Criminal Court, "much to the consternation of the rest of the world"[62].

This isolationist behavior changed profoundly after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, DC. In the aftermath of these events, America's foreign affairs priorities and objectives took a somewhat different turn and, "while 9/11 did not erase these initial predilections, it established a new central organizing threat at the heart of American statecraft and stimulated the production of a new foreign affairs strategy"[63]. "The attacks of 9/11 refocused Americans' attention on international affairs"[64], and, at the same

[59] Fraser Cameron, *op. cit.*, p. 3.
[60] According to Condoleezza Rice, cited in Terry L. Deibel, *op. cit.*, p. 365.
[61] Terry L. Deibel, *op.cit.*, p. 365.
[62] *Ibidem*.
[63] *Ibidem*.
[64] Marshall M. Bouton and Benjamin I. Page, "Refocused Internationalism after 9/11", in *Worldviews 2002: American Public Opinion and Foreign Policy*, Chicago: Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, 2002, pp. 10-14.

time, offered American statesmen the possibility to tackle certain strategic problems in terms of "reconfiguring the relations between the American state and its external and internal environment"[65], in such a way that the primacy of the 'American way' would be achieved.

In fact, the concept of 'primacy' has received considerable scholarly attention and has been emphasized accordingly, including (or, perhaps, especially) in the context of dealing with US foreign policy rhetoric in the first eight years of the twenty-first century.[66]

One telling illustration is offered, for instance, by a series of journalistic accounts elaborated by *Washington Post* writers Bob Woodward and Dan Balz.[67] The journalists show that, immediately after the September 11 events, the Bush administration came to view the happenings "as an opportunity for reshaping American relations with the rest of the world via a big strategic turn"[68]. The reshaping of relationships throughout the world[69] was, thus, seen as an "opportunity in the field of grand strategy"[70], as, in the words of Donald Rumsfeld[71], in the first 36 hours after the attacks, it was vital to "think of concepts and strategic action"[72] not only relative to the campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq, but also with regard to broader global goals. "US power was needed to help discipline the world."[73]

Rumsfeld's assertion, coupled, for instance, with Dick Cheney's[74] statement that "the world is in our hands"[75], has been taken to stand for the desire of achieving American global

[65] Peter Gowan, "The Bush Turn and the Drive for Primacy", in Alejandro Colás and Richard Saull (eds.), *The War on terrorism and the American Empire After the Cold War"*, New York: Routledge, 2006, p. 131.
[66] See, for instance, Peter Gowan, *op. cit.*, or Nicholas Kerton-Johnson, "Justifying the Use of Force in a Post-9/11 World: Striving for Hierarchy in International Society, *International Affairs*, Volume 84, No. 5, September 2008, pp. 991-1007, or Robert Jervis, "The Remaking of a Unipolar World", *The Washington Quarterly*, Summer 2006, Volume 29, No. 3, pp. 7-20. At the same time, discussions also center on the idea of an American 'grand strategy'. See, for instance, Michael J. Boyle, "The War on Terror in American Grand Strategy", *International Affairs*, Volume 84, No. 2, March 2008, pp. 191-209.
[67] Peter Gowan, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-133.
[68] *Idem*, p. 133.
[69] D. Balz and B. Woodward, 'A Day of Anger and Grief', *Washington Post*, 30 January 2002, p. A1.
[70] Peter Gowan, *op. cit.*, p. 132.
[71] Donald Henry Rumsfeld – 21st US Secretary of Defense from 2001 to 2006.
[72] B. Woodward, "We Will Rally the World", *Washington Post*, 28 January 2002, p. A1.
[73] Donald Rumsfeld, cited in D. Balz and B. Woodward, *op. cit.*
[74] Richard Bruce Cheney – 46th Vice President of the United States from 2001 to 2009.
[75] Dick Cheney, 2003, cited in Peter Gowan, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

primacy. In addition, Condoleezza Rice[76] – then National Security Adviser – was raising the question of capitalizing "on these opportunities to fundamentally change American doctrine, and the shape of the world, in the wake of September 11"[77].

Put differently, the events of September 11, 2001 may be said to have constituted a sort of transformative moment in American foreign policy thinking. It is beyond the focus of this thesis to investigate whether the roots of this transformation rested directly on these events, or whether the happenings provided a pretext for action (or, rather, reaction), enabling political beliefs that were lying dormant and only waiting for assertion. Either way, this strategic turn advocated and implemented by George W. Bush marked nothing less than a veritable revolution in dealing with foreign affairs in America.

The "Bush Revolution"[78] – as it has been termed – centers around two main beliefs. The first is the idea that the security of the United States can best be achieved by means of unilateral action, while the second, building on the former, is that "America unbound should use its strength to change the status quo in the world"[79]. I will return to this idea in the next and last chapter of the thesis, where a more detailed assessment of general trends and sources of US foreign policy will be weighed against each other and presented accordingly.

When he first took office in January 2001, George W. Bush's foreign policy was generally regarded as "uninspired and unsurprising"[80]. In the immediate aftermath of the attacks, however, the population and the political elite alike turned to the president, in the hope that he would be the one to find viable solutions in a time of national crisis. As a response, Bush made his position clear:

[76] Condoleezza Rice – 20th US National Security Adviser from 2001 to 2006, 66th US Secretary of State from 2005 to 2009.
[77] Nicholas Lemann, 'The Next World Order', *The New Yorker*, April 2002.
[78] Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay, *America Unbound. The Bush Revolution in Foreign Policy*, Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2005.
[79] *Idem*, p. 13.
[80] Fraser Cameron, *op. cit.,* p. 218.

> "The advance of human freedom… now depends on us. Our nation – this generation – will lift a dark threat of violence from our people and our future. We will rally the world to this cause by our efforts, by our courage. We will not tire, we will not falter, and we will not fail."[81]

Until this historical moment, the United States had attempted to tackle international terrorism by means of instruments and mechanisms ranging from diplomatic means fostering international cooperation to the imposition of economic sanctions or protective security measures. "The gravity of the terrorist attacks on September 11 left no question that the United States would respond"[82] and would do so militarily. Indeed, Bush gradually came to assert the importance of promoting certain principles and values such as democracy and freedom as key elements in reducing the probability of threats to the US – apparently at all costs: "The reason why I am so strong on democracy is democracies don't go to war with each other. I've got great faith in democracies to promote peace."[83]

A war council was formed within hours of the attacks.[84] The aim was to make up a strategy to effectively deal with terrorism by means of arms, and the attention was focused particularly upon Afghanistan as a state not only ruled undemocratically by the Taliban regime, but also allegedly providing support for the terrorist organization Al Qaeda. The discussion then moved to the need for deploying military forces beyond Afghanistan, against Iraq, under the pretext that Saddam Hussein's regime was in possession of weapons of mass destruction that could potentially bring harm to the United States.

Although the military operations in Afghanistan proved to be successful, in the short term, a broader view inevitably raised the question of the efficacy of militarily ousting the

[81] Fraser Cameron, *op. cit.,* p. 117.
[82] Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay, *op. cit.*, p. 97.
[83] George W. Bush, 2004, cited in Ralph G. Carter (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 110. Nevertheless, as Joseph Nye highlighted in Fraser Cameron, *op. cit.*, p. 204, military power alone is not always able to lead to acceptable outcomes in terms of maintaining national security, nor is it unproblematic when it comes to the overall stability of the international system.
[84] Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay, *op. cit.*, p. 97. It was comprised of President George W. Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, Colin Powell, Donald Rumsfeld, Condoleezza Rice, Andrew Card, George Tenet and General Hugh Shelton.

Taliban regime in connection with subsequent efforts in the direction of stabilizing the country and also securing the US from a future terrorist attack.

"The full extent of Bush's war on terror became apparent when he delivered his first State of the Union address in January 2002"[85]: "States like these [i.e.: Iran, Iraq, North Korea], and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil"[86], Bush argued. He continued: "By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. […] The price of indifference would be catastrophic."[87]

This speech signaled the emergence of a new kind of strategy in framing foreign relations objectives, one that would refer equally to terrorism and weapons of mass destruction and, consequently, establish a sort of connection between the two. The war on terror was taking on new meanings and was expanding its scope. The highly debated Bush revolution in foreign policy, the so-called grand strategy, thus represented "a profound strategic innovation – less in its goals than in the way proposed to achieve them"[88].

Bearing this in consideration, let us now return to the idea of American primacy, which impacted greatly on the international level and, equally – if not more – on the domestic level. This is especially true when it comes to political rhetoric, the final recipients of which are American citizens. In this respect, certain issues related to public opinion in the US come to the fore, issues which shed light upon what was perceived as Bush's task to find "a way of generating a domestic politics for primacy"[89]. After the war in Vietnam and the end of the Cold War, the American public had been reluctant to the employment of military force abroad. For some, "9/11 offered the opportunity for surmounting that problem and building

[85] Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay, *op. cit.*, p. 118.
[86] George W. Bush, "State of the Union Address", Washington, DC, January 29, 2002, available at: http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/bush/stateoftheunion.htm (accessed May 2009).
[87] *Ibidem*.
[88] Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay, *op. cit.*, p. 124.
[89] Alejandro Colás and Richard Saull (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 10.

the necessary strong domestic political base for an activist, forward strategy to build a new world order."[90]

Despite the initial consent on the part of Americans, however, another question arose: Why was the US, allegedly the most powerful state in the world, "unable to exercise its grand strategy without provocation"[91] and only capable of displaying a reactive kind of behavior instead of a more historically accurate "proactive, forward leaning"[92] attitude? In this respect, a partial answer or, rather, rethinking of this question, was provided by Vice President Dick Cheney who, as early as August 2002, stated that "the risks of inaction are far greater than the risk of action"[93], thus providing some kind of a justification to the prospect of a war against Iraq.

Now turning to what can be termed as documentary evidence, it may be asserted that it was perhaps a combination of the input of all these foreign policy decision-makers that led to the elaboration of the *National Security Strategy of the United States* document of September 2002[94]. The first sentence of the document reads: "The United States possesses unprecedented – and unequalled – strength and influence in the world."[95] Framing it in these terms, the underlying message conveyed from the very beginning is one that more or less equates power with worldwide influence, placing the two on the same level and, to some extent, suggesting the righteousness of the decision to start a war against terrorism and, implicitly, to invade Iraq.

The National Security Strategy depicted the world exclusively in white and black terms, accentuating the American state's position (or, rather, task) of being "the guardian not

[90] Peter Gowan, *op. cit.*, p. 135.
[91] Alejandro Colás and Richard Saull (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 10.
[92] *Ibidem*.
[93] Speech to Nashville, Tennessee, cited in Dana Milbank, "Cheney Says Iraqi Strike Is Justified", *Washington Post*, August 27, 2002, p. A1. It was then Secretary of State Colin Powell that specifically set forth the case for war against Iraq in February 2003. See "The Powell Presentation: 'A Policy of Evasion and Deception'", *Washington Post*, February 6, 2003, pp. A24-27.
[94] *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, Washington DC, September 2002, available at: http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html (accessed April 2009).
[95] *Idem*, p. 1.

only of American security, but of global security"[96] itself. The world would, consequently, be divided into friends and enemies, and the US would lead the fight against the latter, doing so "on its own, if necessary, but with friends, if possible"[97]. As it were, "[t]he language of the National Security Strategy did not so much lock the US into further action as insinuate the broader project into terms the public might relate to."[98]

However, it also becomes evident that the exceptional principles and values America stands (and was determined to fight) for are, in fact, universal: "the United States must defend liberty and justice because these principles are right and true for all people everywhere. No nation owns these aspirations, and no nation is exempt from them."[99] The advocated path of action, then, would be, paradoxically enough, the active universalization of these already universal principles, by "the American, distinct yet universal Self, (…) the agent of freedom and justice"[100].

Such powerful rhetorical devices, coupled with an insecure population, led to the more or less immediate acceptance of "a morally degenerate enemy"[101], who needed to be combated by means of asserting American exceptionalist ideas as timeless principles, thus aiming to maintain the perspective of national greatness both at home and in the world view. It was in this context that Bush eventually "adopted the language and tactics of total warfare"[102], an approach which did not, however, fall short of religious and moral terminology in terms of justification.

[96] Alejandro Colás and Richard Saull (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 134.
[97] *Ibidem*.
[98] *Idem*, p. 108.
[99] *The National Security Strategy*, p. 3.
[100] Alejandro Colás and Richard Saull (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 106.
[101] *Idem*, p. 108.
[102] Thomas M. Magstadt, *An Empire If You Can Keep It. Power and Principle in American Foreign Policy*, Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2004, p. 32.

"In depicting the war on terrorism as a struggle between good and evil, Bush frequently alluded to God's support for his efforts."[103] These quite frequent references to providence appealed to the American citizenry to a great extent, especially in the immediate aftermath of the tragic events, even though, later on, they provoked some resistance on the part of the more secularly inclined.

The course taken by US foreign policy did not come unchallenged, though, as time passed and the effects of the war made themselves felt. Initially, 9/11 not only provided America with a reason to act abroad, but it also allowed Bush to do so without too much fear of meeting any serious challenges on the national level. Therefore, in the context of the 2004 re-election campaign, foreign policy goals were no longer a matter of secondary importance. The idea promoted at this point was that of a steady and strong leadership, with the implicit promise "to continue with a similar assertive foreign policy"[104]. As would be expected, not only did this presidential election feature the war on terrorism high on the political agenda, but the campaign was also designed in such a manner as to present Bush as "a wartime commander-in-chief best suited to defend America from terrorist threats and to stay the course in Iraq"[105]. At the same time, while, in the first phases of the war on terror, then Secretary of State Colin Powell[106] was one Bush's main advisers, the second presidential term brought Powell's replacement with Condoleezza Rice. As the two had quite different views on the entire spectrum of conducting foreign policy, this change in decision-making actors also meant that, essentially, there was not going to be any major change in foreign policy framing in the United States.

[103] Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay, *op. cit.*, p. 86. See, for instance, George W. Bush, "Address on the Iraqi Threat", Cincinnati, October 7, 2002.
[104] Alejandro Colás and Richard Saull (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 204.
[105] Fraser Cameron, *op. cit.*, p. 32.
[106] Colin Luther Powell – 65th US Secretary of State, from 2001 to 2005.

2.2 US INVOLVEMENT IN WORLDWIDE HEALTH-RELATED ISSUES

While the war on terrorism has received the most attention thus far, another issue of significant relevance may be discussed in order to assess the underlying messages of formulating foreign policy objectives in the United States during the Bush administrations: worldwide health matters and the role of the United States in framing the discourse surrounding international issues such as HIV/AIDS or abortion. Generally speaking, the two seem quite related, yet political decision-making and the subsequent rhetoric behind the discussion of such concerns can, at least for the purposes of this chapter, be analyzed separately.

This second section of the chapter, although slightly less lengthy than the previous one, is nonetheless aimed at providing a better understanding of the motivations and roots of American foreign policy under Bush. The analysis is based both on facts and on the actual discourse surrounding and justifying the decisions made.

2.2.1 HIV/AIDS

Let us now turn to the specificities of the process of dealing with the worldwide problem of HIV/AIDS in the American context. Before Bush's taking office, "[t]he Clinton administration was instrumental in moving HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases on to the international agenda"[107]. Further attempts in this direction were made as early as January 2000, when problems caused by the spread of HIV/AIDS in Africa were brought to the attention of the UN Security Council.[108]

The general belief was that the disease constituted "not just a humanitarian crisis", but "a security crisis", as it threatened "not just individual citizens, but the very institutions that

[107] Fraser Cameron, *op. cit.*, p. 176.
[108] This marked the first time when a health-related issue and its potential risks on the course of international development and interaction had been considered among the members of the respective international organism.

define and defend the character of a society."[109] The "devastation caused by the epidemic posed a clear and direct challenge to long-term US economic and security interests"[110], especially under such circumstances that HIV/AIDS was literally destroying whole communities, including their economies, at the same time "depriving countries of the educated and skilled individuals required to build democratic governments, professional militaries, and free market economies"[111].

Naturally enough, passivity would not be a solution, so, in order to meet this challenge, the United States was required to elaborate and implement, in collaboration to other countries that had the capability and willingness, some sort of a long-term strategy. The US thus found itself in the position to act. Along with other donor nations, the US highlighted the importance of having trained military contingents in the African states (the most affected by the pandemic), so that the peace-keeping capabilities would not suffer too much at the expense of HIV/AIDS. With a view to both regional and world stability, it seemed to be "in the interest of the United States, as well as of the African nations to have healthy, professional militaries ready to carry out these roles."[112] HIV/AIDS posed a serious challenge to such interests, which, coupled with the impact of the disease on economic development, formed a solid enough basis for the US to adopt a pro-active approach.

It is under such circumstances that Bush came to increasingly acknowledge the importance of tackling the implications of HIV/AIDS particularly in Africa. The administration thus decided on the commitment of resources to the long-term struggle against the spread of the disease. One of the first steps taken in this respect was the announcement made by Bush in September 2003 that the US would contribute large sums of money to the United Nations AIDS campaign, at the same time re-engaging the US as an active force in

[109] Al Gore, cited in Fraser Cameron, *op. cit.*, p. 176.
[110] Fraser Cameron, *op. cit.*, p.176.
[111] *Ibidem.*
[112] *Idem,* p. 177.

combating HIV/AIDS internationally.[113] Bush also reinforced America's commitment to the fruitful search for a curing vaccine.

The 9/11-events would change the focus in American foreign policy discourse and shift the emphasis almost exclusively upon issues related to the combat of international terrorism, as well as worldwide and homeland security. Consequently, "attention was diverted away from Africa, apart from countries such as Sudan that were charged with complicity to terrorism"[114], and focused predominantly on the situation in the Middle East.

2.2.2 US FUNDING AND ABORTION CLINICS ABROAD

As early as January 2001, news was out that "[t]he new US President, George W. Bush, has signed an executive order cutting off federal funding to international agencies which support women seeking an abortion."[115] Perhaps the most cited reason for such a decision was that Bush rejected the idea of American taxpayers' money to be used in order to fund abortion operations.[116] What this implied was that US governmental aid or funding was prohibited "to any institution or non-government organization that provides abortion services or provides information to the public about the availability of abortion"[117].

Naturally enough, national and international "family planning groups" alike "reacted with dismay to Bush's decision"[118]. However, the administration argued that the funding cuts meant that "the US Government will no longer be using taxpayer dollars to try to legalize

[113] Fraser Cameron, *op. cit.*, p.177.
[114] Yifat Susskind, "African Women Confront Bush's AIDS Policy", *Foreign Policy in Focus*, December 2, 2005, available at: http://www.fpif.org/fpiftxt/2969 (accessed May 2009).
[115] BBC News, "Bush Blocks Abortion Funding", January 23, 2001, available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/1131329.stm (accessed May 2009).
[116] Trish Reimers, "Bush Imperils Third World Women's Lives", *Green Left Weekly*, October 22, 2003, available at: http://www.greenleft.org.au/2003/558/29383 (accessed May 2009). What Bush did in January 2001 was to reinstate "the 'global gag' rule on international family planning assistance that the US administration of Ronald Reagan had announced at the UN-sponsored Second International Conference on Population in Mexico City in 1984".
[117] *Ibidem*.
[118] BBC News, "Bush Blocks Abortion Funding".

abortion in countries in Latin America, Africa and Muslim countries in which the people are strongly opposed to abortion"[119] anyway, and that national efforts in this direction contributed to shifting the focus on a series of steps that could "make abortion rare"[120]. But what is still less clear is where such rhetoric stemmed from. Was it the result of pure mathematical calculations or more of a way of signaling alternative ways of dealing with the issue?

Either way, in making this decision, America was not only assuming the role of a great power[121], but it was also doing this at the expense of its popularity and the support coming from the countries the abortion policy was allegedly harming. The decision was also seen as a strike against the women of the poorest countries in the world, and feminist activists were the first to point in this direction.[122] At the same time, criticism was also aimed at highlighting the undemocratic composition of this particular decision, as well as the US applying double standards in this regard.[123]

Furthermore, the rule was thus viewed as "fundamentally undemocratic and also imperialist"[124] by some. Critics argued heatedly that it was, in fact, "a law of political convenience"[125], in that it constituted a response to anti-abortion religious groups in the US at the expense of the population of Third World countries. Moreover, as time passed, it was also suggested that America's decision to cut funding for abortion clinics in these countries not only did not prove successful, but, in fact, raised the probability of unsafe abortions taking place and, consequently, more lives being lost or altered.

[119] Douglas Johnson, then legislative director for the National Right to Life Committee, cited in BBC News, "Bush Blocks Abortion Funding".
[120] BBC News, "Bush Blocks Abortion Funding".
[121] Trish Reimers, *op. cit.* In fact, this "global gag rule is only one example of how the US brings its immense wealth to bear in pressuring the Third World to conform to US government policies".
[122] See, for instance, Kira Cochrane, "Bush's War on Women", AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power, Bangkok AIDS, Conference, January 29, 2007, available at: http://www.actupny.org/reports/Bangkok/bush_gagrule.html (accessed May 2009).
[123] Laura Katzive in Kira Cochrane, *op. cit.*
[124] Kira Cochrane, *op. cit.*
[125] *Ibidem*.

The September 11 events again shifted the attention from such global health care matters – as was the case with the HIV/AIDS policy discussed in the previous subsection. In 2003, however, the discussion was once again brought to resume financial contributions to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).[126] Despite intense and continued criticism, as well as in light of the foreign policy changes that were taking place relative to combating terrorism, the "abstinence-only"[127] policy proposed by Bush continued throughout the rest of his first term and into his second one. Not much changed, though, in terms of formulating policy, and the issue remained at least as controversial as it had been previously.

All things considered, though, "the US government remains by far the largest single source of funding for international reproductive health programs"[128], and Bush's legacy is bound to depict him as a veritable "pro-life president"[129]. On the other hand, it also seems that, as was the case with most policy areas – and foreign policy issues, in particular – George W. Bush was set until the end of his presidential terms to not only initiate, but carry out an almost complete rethinking of the parameters of the decision-making process. This further begs the question of what exactly determined such a policy revolution. The following chapter of this thesis deals exclusively with examining the potential sources of the American foreign policy discourse from roughly the years 2000-2001 to 2008.

[126] "House to Consider UNFPA Funding; US Support for Key International Family Planning Agency at Risk", *Population Action International*, June 12, 2003, available at: http://www.populationaction.org/Press_Room/Viewpoints_and_Statements/2003/House_to_Consider_UNFPA_Funding_U.S._Support_for_Key_International_Family_Planning_Agency_at_Risk.shtml (accessed May 2009).
[127] "Bush Puts Anti-Abortion/ Anti-Birth Control Doctor in Charge of Funding for Family Planning", *Revolution*, No. 71, December 3, 2006, available at: http://revcom.us/a/071/keroack-en.html (accessed May 2009).
[128] Office of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator, U.S. Department of State, "Action Today, A Foundation For Tomorrow: Second Annual Report to Congress on PEPFAR", February, 2006, available at: http://www.state.gov/s/gac/rl/c16742.htm (accessed May 2009).
[129] Jacob Goldstein, "Activists Push Bush to Cut Funds for Abortion Clinics", *The Wall Street Journal Blogs*, available at: http://blogs.wsj.com/health/2008/05/23/activists-push-bush-to-cut-funds-for-abortion-clinics/ (accessed May 2009).

CHAPTER 3: IMPERIALISM VERSUS EXCEPTIONALISM

The "dawn of the new millennium"[130] found the United States in the position of not only a great world power, but also a dominant one. Indeed, "[o]ne of the defining features of international relations at the beginning of the twenty-first century is the simple fact of America's material preponderance."[131] While it is this material aspect that appears more dominant, it is not the only one that seems to secure the United States' preeminence, as "[f]rom weaponry to entrepreneurship, from science to technology, from higher education to popular culture, America exercises an unparalleled ascendancy around the globe."[132] This, of course, comes with accentuated implications regarding the system of international relations, including the manner in which American foreign policy is formulated, justified and implemented.

This last chapter of the thesis is aimed at providing a critical assessment of the sources of US foreign policy in the specified period of time. By means of analysis and interpretation, two possible alternatives are weighed against each other in order to address the question 'What informs US foreign policy at the beginning of the twenty-first century?'. These alternatives are imperialism – understood in terms of economic global dominance, on the one hand, and exceptionalism – seen as the conceptualization of certain moral imperatives that lead to the idea of a worldwide mission America needs to accomplish.

[130] Henry Kissinger, *Does America Need A Foreign Policy? Toward A Diplomacy for the Twenty-First Century*, London: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 2002, p. 17.
[131] Christian Reus-Smit, *American Power and World Order*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004, p. 1.
[132] Henry Kissinger, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

3.1 AMERICA, THE EMPIRE?

Let us begin this section by making reference to the conceptual clarifications regarding the term 'empire' provided in the first chapter, and add to that the following brief specifications. For the purposes of this study, in the context of discussing the worldwide position of the United States, the term 'imperialism' – as a direct derivative of 'empire' – rests primarily on economic considerations. More precisely, I employ it to designate what interpreters view as American imperial ambitions to dominate the world – economically.

The debate centered on America's allegedly displaying such imperial tendencies has been – and continues to be – controversial, as well as apparently unsettled. Hence, a plethora of articles and books dealing with this topic, as well as my interest in researching it. Andrew J. Bacevich is perhaps one of the most prolific commentators of the idea of an American empire.[133] Although clearly and rightly stating that "[t]he United States of America was born in opposition to empire"[134], Bacevich argues heatedly in support of the before-mentioned idea. Some of the arguments he brings, though, rest not so much on essentially economic considerations, as on the language utilized by exceptionalists. For instance, Bacevich points out to the following when suggesting the unfolding of America as an imperialist power[135]: firstly, the author mentions America's mission to transform and dominate global order; secondly, there is "the imperative of openness and integration, given impetus by globalization but guided by the United States"[136]; thirdly, the US is bound to express its leadership and actually maintain it at a global level; lastly, American military supremacy is also one of the factors that lead to the global projection of America as an empire.

Stemming from such a line of argumentation is an inherent skepticism regarding the very language used by Bacevich, which eventually comes down to the afore-mentioned

[133] See, for instance, *American Empire…* (2002), or *The Imperial Tense. Prospects and Problems of American Empire*, Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2003.
[134] Andrew J. Bacevich, *The Imperial Tense*…, p. ix.
[135] Andrew J. Bacevich, *American Empire…*, pp. 215-223.
[136] *Idem*, p. 217.

American primacy. From this point of view, the arguments do not necessarily stand, especially if we are to be persuaded that "today's colonialism takes place in the age of neoliberal economics"[137]. What is undeniable, however, is that America's "project of hegemonic renewal is being pursued in an international environment more complex and challenging than at any other point in international history"[138].

Bearing this in consideration, as well as the accusations brought by critics onto US foreign relations decision-makers as to the sole driving force of foreign policy being the promotion of national economic interest abroad[139], let us now turn to more specific details relative to decisions made by the Bush administration since the year 2000.

The previous chapter discussed US involvement in global health-related issues, more precisely the situation created by HIV/AIDS, and the more or less related problems concerning US funding for foreign abortion clinics (or, rather, lack of it) – both of which particularly related to countries on the African continent. The problem was framed, at that point, in terms of the US exerting its hegemonic powers in a perceivably negative manner. To be more precise, the decision to cut funding for abortion clinics abroad – despite suggesting a pro-life attitude on the part of the administration – was taken not only to signal America's (self-)perception as world hegemon, but also to reinforce older concerns regarding the role of American national interest in figuring out foreign policy strategies.

For some, indeed, "[t]he basic test for judging any foreign policy decision is easy to state but hard to apply: Does it serve the American national interest?"[140] In fact, the implications of pursuing national interest have "long been denigrated by those who find policies based on it to be necessarily realist in nature, often characterized by an excessive

[137] Tariq Ali and David Barsamian, *Speaking of Empire and Resistance. Conversations with Tariq Ali*, New York, London: The New Press, 2005, p. 54.
[138] Christian Reus-Smit, *op. cit.*, p. 106.
[139] See, for instance, Mihael J. Boyle, "America in Denial", *International Affairs*, Vol. 83, No. 1, January 2007, pp. 147-159, or Michael H. Hunt, "Conquest American Style", Diplomatic History, Vol. 31, No. 2, April 2007, pp. 325-334.
[140] Lee H. Hamilton, "Defining the National Interest", *Christian Science Monitor*, March 30, 1998, p. 11.

concern for power relations and a lamentable disdain for moral considerations"[141]. If this were entirely and irrevocably true, however, Bush's essentially pro-life attitude with regard to abortion policies would, paradoxically enough, fall short of any sense of morality.

Moreover, let us remember the specific context which led to the reinforcement of this particular foreign policy decision. Despite its being on the national political agenda since 2000, the withdrawal of US funding for abortion services in Africa came in a time of national crisis, after the attacks of September 11. It was only natural that priorities would change along with the disturbing nature of the events. I will return to this in the second section of the chapter.

Apart from arguments such as this one, however, it is important to further investigate allegations regarding an American imperialist project in the context created precisely by the 9/11-events.[142] By making "faith in the superiority of American power, especially military power"[143], Bush was accused of adopting a sort of "maximalist approach that assumed other nations would follow the United States simply because America's overwhelming power left them no other choice"[144]. Unilateralism was deemed as preferred over accommodating other nations' interests. While there is some truth in this approach, how, then, would the appeal to other nations to contribute in the fight against terrorism be explained? Would such an appeal not be based more on the conviction that America was following the imperatives of a manifest worldwide mission to promote democracy, rather than pursuing pure national interests and global economic dominance?

The revival of the term 'empire' in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11-events makes it useful to further note that "[e]mpires, understood as hierarchical and exploitative forms of rule over diverse territories and peoples from and for a metropolitan center, […] are not

[141] Terry L. Deibel, *op. cit.*, pp. 123-124.
[142] Another promoter of this idea is Noam Chomsky. See, for instance, *Imperial Ambitions…* (2005).
[143] Terry L. Deibel, *op. cit.*, p. 202.
[144] *Ibidem*.

simply forms of governments, nor do they appear and reappear with shifts in foreign policy"[145]. Consequently, the argument that, in the post-9/11 period, the foreign policy of the United States was transformed in order to accommodate imperialist incentives does not necessarily stand. "If we are to speak of an American empire today, we must first unearth the historical sources and genealogy of such imperialism."[146] And, as will become clearer in the following section, the existence of such historical sources is somewhat improbable.

The importance of investigating tactical shifts in US foreign policy thus becomes increasingly visible. As expected, the debate gives rise to two main lines of reasoning, fundamentally distinct from one another. On the one hand, there are those who argue for the idea of an American empire in light of what they perceive as a "violent imposition of American interests and values on those populations unwilling to peacefully and consensually accept such a benevolent hegemony"[147]. This view contests the very universalizing mission the US has been claiming from its creation, yet, on a closer look, it only comes to shed even more light upon the very idea it aims at deconstructing. Again, judging by the language made use of in political discourse, the guiding principles and values of American foreign policy have remained unchanged from the beginning: freedom, tolerance, democracy. Even when it comes to accusations brought on America that its goals relate more to the export of capitalism in search for its own economic well-being, American global domination is one that is achieved not only "*through* rather than *over* states and peoples"[148], but also under the conviction that it is for the common good of all the states and peoples of the world to enjoy free, open market systems, guided by general democratic tenets.

This brings us to the other group of interpreters, who emphasize the unique position of the US as world hegemon, but in the sense of it coordinating, rather than dictating in an

[145] Alejandro Colás and Richard Saull, *op. cit.*, p. 2.
[146] *Ibidem*.
[147] *Ibidem*.
[148] *Idem*, p. 6. Hence, a perceived non-territorial character of (the American) empire.

imperialist fashion, global order. One of the first contentions put forth by adherents to this group is that "[u]nlike previous empires, the US neither controls not administers foreign territories and peoples for its own benefit."[149] Moreover, Bush's foreign policy showed consistency with the initial political program, announced during the 1999 campaign: "Let us reject the blinders of isolationism, just as we refuse the crown of empire. Let us not dominate others with our power – or betray them with our indifference. And let us have an American foreign policy that reflects American character."[150]

Perhaps the most significant change in political rhetoric that did come in the aftermath of September 11 was a renunciation to "the modesty of true strength, the humility of real greatness"[151], in that the US once again assumed the role of world leader, this time in a common fight against the powers of evil. But discursive indicators show that the primary incentive for undertaking such a demanding position lay more in the desire to combat terrorism and regain both national and international security and stability, and less in America's alleged attempt to achieve global economic dominance by means of taking over the oil and gas resources of either Afghanistan or Iraq.

Indeed, as the rules of a realist assessment of the international environment (as well as common sense) dictate, the US has always, to a lesser or greater extent, "acted in defense of its national interest"[152] – it would have been surprising if it had not. Yet, "a continuous thread of idealism has also found a place in American foreign policy"[153]. The second part of this chapter dwells upon such propensities that hint at American exceptionalist thinking, the analysis being based more on the rhetoric supporting and justifying the United States' initiation of, and engagement in, a global war on terror.

[149] Alejandro Colás and Richard Saull, *op. cit.*, p. 5.
[150] G. W. Bush, "A Distinctly American Internationalism", speech at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, Simi Valley, California, November 19, 1999, available at: http://www.lcrga.com/archive/199911190000.shtml (accessed May 2009).
[151] Alejandro Colás and Richard Saull, *op. cit.*, p. 121.
[152] Fraser Cameron, *op. cit.*, p. 3.
[153] *Ibidem*.

3.2 CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM

Seymour Martin Lipset has pondered American exceptionalism in a number of articles and books[154]. For this particular scholar, American exceptionalism has come to have two distinct meanings – it is both a term of praise (the United States, compared to other countries, is 'unusually good') and one that designates a problem (essentially related to the 'dark', 'conveniently forgetful' side of the doctrine). Consequently, Lipset's main claim is that American exceptionalism reveals America to be exceptional both in a positive sense and in a negative one; hence, "American exceptionalism – a double-edged sword"[155].

Although written in the late 1990s, Lipset's book is still revealing and relevant to the discussion of the present-day situation, as it tackles American exceptionalism in such a way that suggests a sort of unnatural dichotomy: on the one hand, America, the exceptional, is reputed for valuing meritocracy and promoting an egalitarian lifestyle, while, on the other, it shows a grimmer side when becoming a promoter of violence and brutality.[156]

This conflict between freedom and equality, and an aggressive type of foreign policy both becomes evident and, to a certain degree, lessens when considering the rhetoric behind the war against terror. Bush justified intervention in Iraq by means of emphasizing the potential consequences of inaction[157]. Indeed, after the events of 9/11, not only foreign policy objectives changed in America. Public discourse was also being framed differently. "US officials no longer sought euphemisms for the word 'war', as they had"[158] previously. In this new context, war was designed to be an instrument of the struggle for freedom. In consequence, "after September 11, the conventional wisdom was that globalization was

[154] See, for instance, *The First New Nation: The United States in Historical and Comparative Perspective*, Edison: Transaction Publishers, 1963.
[155] Seymour Martin Lipset, *American Exceptionalism...* (1997).
[156] *Idem*, p. 238.
[157] George W. Bush, "State of the Union Address", January 20, 2002, cited in Fraser Cameron, *op. cit.*, p. 207.
[158] Andrew J. Bacevich, *American Empire…*, p. 225. This is especially relevant under such circumstances that America, as the foremost promoter of freedom and prosperity, would until then employ terminology that accentuated the spread of universal virtues and principles as the driving force of most of its actions in external relations.

making war an all but permanent and inescapable part of life in the twenty-first century"[159], and by no means an obsolete thing of the past.

Yet this would be a war against an abstract adversary, terror, and it would not be America's alone: "Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists"[160], Bush warned. Indirectly, this fostered an even acuter sense of mission on the part of Americans, in that the world was, in fact, facing a struggle between essentially good and evil forces. What, if not a strong belief in the universal principles the US stands for, could have provoked such straightforward language? "Casting the US response to the attacks not simply in terms of justifiable retaliation for an act of mass murder but as a necessity to preserve freedom itself imbued Bush's speech with added salience."[161] Defining the war in such a manner also signaled a re-affirmation of America's benign hegemony. "Why do they hate us? They hate our freedoms."[162]

Indeed, it appears that, despite various – even continuous – waves of contestation, freedom can be considered "the ultimate American value"[163], functioning as a sort of key word in the framing of political discourse. But freedom does not stand alone, nor does it stem from an ideological vacuum. Quite on the contrary, it is, by virtue of its perceived universality, a component element of exceptionalist thinking. It is in this way that it relates to America's worldwide mission and translates into action.

Under such circumstances, "[w]ith the United States vulnerable as never before, with globalization breeding nefarious new threats, with security taking on added dimensions, it was perhaps unsurprising that American attitudes regarding the role of military power also

[159] Andrew J. Bacevich, *American Empire…*, p. 225.
[160] George W. Bush, "President Bush's Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People", September 20, 2001, cited in Fraser Cameron, *op. cit.*, p. 209.
[161] Andrew J. Bacevich, *op. cit.*, p. 229.
[162] George W. Bush in Andrew J. Bacevich, *op. cit.*, p. 229.
[163] Andrew J. Bacevich, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

changed profoundly"[164]. No longer was the US constrained by the remnants of the Cold War ideological conflict; new circumstances called for new solutions, and Americans chose war in the name of freedom, or, in other words, the active pursuit of those national interests that they had always held dear and the realization of which now required the use of physical force.

Needless to say that the decision to engage in armed conflict remains a controversial one to the present moment. However, "[t]he American soldier is different from all other soldiers of all other countries since the world began… he is the advance guard of liberty and justice, of law and order, and of peace and happiness."[165] The America this soldier fights for is the home of a "people motivated by a potent combination of pragmatism and religious passion. Such a people can stand uncomprehending in the face of putative evil, blind to the lessons of mere national interest, certain of its own goodness."[166] Military technology thus transforms into a means to protect the virtuous from the corrupted, at the same time suggesting and engendering a strong appeal to "America's exceptionalist core"[167].

This being the case, the war on terror appears as a direct manifestation of the United States' self-perception as being not only an exceptional historical case, but also of its unique global mission to be an agent of freedom and democracy. Few, if any, of the other countries that, throughout time, have claimed manifest destiny have been in the actual position to fulfill their messianic vision by promoting their values outside their own territorial boundaries. At least not to the extent that the US has managed to do it.

Of late, debates concerning US foreign policy decisions have witnessed a rise in exceptionalist arguments being used in relation to the international system. Conservative and liberal thinkers alike have rekindled the ideal of America as "a providential nation, set apart

[164] Andrew J. Bacevich, *op. cit.*, p. 122.
[165] Elihu Root, 1899, cited in Andrew J. Bacevich, *op. cit.*, p. 167.
[166] Benjamin R. Barber, *Fear's Empire. War, Terrorism, and Democracy*, New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003, p. 84.
[167] *Ibidem*.

from the rest of the world as a bastion of freedom"[168]. The image of America as a shining "city upon a hill"[169], standing virtually outside of history, still retains a powerful cultural appeal. Furthermore, the doctrine of American exceptionalism has even been taken so far so as to stand for the conviction that the world needs to adapt itself to American ways rather than vice versa[170]. This becomes especially relevant in the context created by the aftermath of 9/11.

"American hegemony is obviously not in question."[171] Nor should Bush's missionary zeal be, as, although it resorted to war, "America loves peace. America will always work and sacrifice for the expansion of freedom. The advance of freedom is more than an interest we pursue. It is a calling we follow. […] America seeks to expand, not the borders of our country, but the realm of liberty."[172]

This self-righteousness projected by America may appear either appalling or exaggerated to critics and allies alike. "But for those who know America and its moralizing literature and have witnessed the impact of American morals on American politics, its tone is Puritan, exceptionalist, and moralizing in a familiar – if exasperating – American fashion."[173]

Following such a rhetorical path also proved quite useful (and, at least initially, successful) in gaining support from the American population relative to "foreign wars for which they otherwise may have [had] little stomach"[174]. Yet the mobilization and acceptance provided by the masses was not the only outcome of the missionary discourse in the post-9/11 period. In fact, with hindsight, it can be asserted that, under the heading 'The ends justify the means', America's emphasis on virtue and freedom also proved "more satisfying, and

[168] Benjamin R. Barber, *op. cit.*, p. 84.
[169] John Winthrop, *A Model of Christian Charity*, 1630, cited in Seymour Martin Lipset, *American Exceptionalism…*, p. 72.
[170] The phrase 'American exceptionalism' can also lead, however, to a line of criticism directed toward America's perceived tendency to remain separate from the others. A telling illustration would be the reluctance of the US government to join various international treaties, which is sometimes called exceptionalist.
[171] Benjamin R. Barber, *op. cit.*, p. 37.
[172] George W. Bush, "Remarks by the President in Commencement Address to United States Coast Guard Academy", New London, Connecticut, May 21, 2003, in Benjamin R. Barber, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-60.
[173] Benjamin R. Barber, *op. cit.*, p. 79.
[174] *Idem*, p. 80.

sometimes even more appropriate, than the skepticist language of mere national interest"[175]. It is in such a context that, "in the name of benign ends, American power" was to be deployed, and only to emphasize even more that, "in the exceptionalist spirit, this rare union of values and interests defines a distinctly American internationalism."[176]

All things considered, in trying to answer the question 'What drives American foreign policy at the beginning of the twenty-first century?', a certain balance between the two viewpoints presented in this chapter is necessary. While this particular study is aimed at identifying the sources of Bush's foreign affairs strategy with certain guiding moral incentives that find formulation preponderantly in the doctrine of American exceptionalism and the inherent sense of mission stemming from it, some consideration is also due to the hypothesis according to which America's relations with other states is increasingly adapting to the conditions of post-colonial imperialism. Hopefully, the examples provided and the arguments put forth in both this chapter and the previous one are illustrative of the perspective adopted. The next section is meant to finalize the study in American foreign affairs policy and provide conclusive remarks about the findings presented throughout the thesis.

[175] Benjamin R. Barber, *op. cit.*, p. 80. Again, despite inconveniences created by critical approaches based, for instance, on moral considerations regarding the justification of war.
[176] *Idem*, pp. 97-98.

CONCLUSION

"The meteoric rise of America from a collection of rebel colonies to its present prominence on the world stage is no accident. America is unique, strong, and successful" not just because "the ubiquity of exceptionalist arguments"[177] is outstanding, but also because the distinctiveness that has constituted a fundamental characteristic of America since its very beginning is once more becoming increasingly visible.

Following a similar line of reasoning, my thesis aimed at identifying the sources of US foreign policy discourse in the first years of the twenty-first century. To this end, two hypotheses have been presented. The first was that according to which George W. Bush's formulation of foreign affairs priorities and objectives was informed by the desire to achieve global economic dominance through the exclusive pursuit of national interests abroad. The second hypothesis pointed to the belief in American exceptionalism as the driving force behind foreign policy decisions. The arguments and examples I have provided throughout the thesis were devised to argue primarily in favor of the latter interpretation.

In this view, the overall structure of the study also contributed to articulating my stance on the topic. Thus, the first of the chapters provided conceptual clarifications regarding three concepts of indispensable significance to the discussion: 'American exceptionalism', 'Manifest Destiny' and 'empire'. Such specifications have been designed to prepare the subsequent presentation and analysis of foreign policy discourse during George W. Bush's two administrations, at the same time constituting the more theoretical background against which the thesis as a whole unfolded.

[177] Johannes Thimm, "American Exceptionalism – Conceptual Thoughts and Empirical Evidence", available at: http://www.politikwissenschaft.tu-darmstadt.de/fileadmin/pg/Sektionstagung_IB/Thimm-American_exceptionalism.pdf (accessed May 2009).

"At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the foreign policy pendulum [in the United States] completed a historic swing – from passive and isolationist to active and hegemonic."[178] Building on this statement, the second chapter focused on specific foreign policy issues and the inherent rhetoric supporting decisions made by American officials in connection to, on the one hand, the war against terrorism, and, on the other hand, worldwide health-related issues affecting and being influenced by the involvement of the US. The primary method utilized here was discourse analysis, to the greatest extent possible under the specific constraints of space applicable to this thesis.

The third and last chapter constituted perhaps the most immediately noticeable element of personal contribution on my part. Its main purpose was to, first of all, illustrate the debate centered on the potential sources of Bush's foreign policy decisions. Secondly, it aimed at delineating the actuality of two major claims: either economic imperialism, or the more ideological argument of American exceptionalism, together with the almost implicit sense of a global moral mission, as the main driving factor for decision-making in the US, starting with the year 2000.

In this respect, while some argue that "[c]ertain terms locked the US into a democratic imperialist course of action"[179] or that "[m]any Bush policies happen to fit democratic imperialist positions"[180], I argue that, although it is generally difficult to situate American foreign policy discourse into a single ideological or theoretical framework, the so-called Bush era was predominantly characterized by political decisions stemming from exceptionalist thinking. In turn, this conviction rests upon considerations such as that according to which, despite various rational imperatives, policy-making is also a process subjected to certain "ideological and normative commitments"[181] that tend to dictate the course of action in

[178] Fraser Cameron, *op. cit.*, p. 219.
[179] Alejandro Colás and Richard Saull (eds.). *op. cit.*, p. 105.
[180] *Ibidem*.
[181] Christian Reus-Smit, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

particular settings. Additionally, as "Americans have always considered themselves a nation with a mission"[182], and, at the same time, "[i]mperialism is not a word often used in polite discourse in the United States"[183], the present attempt into finding the determinants of American foreign policy in the period ranging from 2000 to 2008 appears justified and all the more interesting.

Perhaps it is, indeed, "too soon to pass final judgment on the Bush administration's foreign policy"[184], and it remains to the current administration of Barack Obama to highlight both the limits and the successes of Bush's foreign policy revolution. All things considered, however, this thesis has dealt less with the achievements and failures, and more with the controversies related to the sources of foreign policy discourse during George W. Bush's two presidential terms.

[182] Fraser Cameron, *op. cit.*, p. 199.
[183] Tariq Ali and David Barsamian, *op. cit.*, p. 13.
[184] Fraser Cameron, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

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