

FROM LIBERTY TO LIBERATION:
THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM

Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy Capstone Project
by Torrey Taussig
January 15, 2014

© 2014 TORREY TAUSSIG

<http://fletcher.tufts.edu>



THE FLETCHER SCHOOL
TUFTS UNIVERSITY

CONTENTS

PART I

- 1 INTRODUCTION
- 2 THE FOUNDATIONS AND CENTRAL TENETS OF AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM
- 3 THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS OF AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM

PART II

- 4 CASE STUDY ON THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR: THE CONVERGENCE OF IDEOLOGY, POWER, AND INTEREST AT THE TURN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY
- 5 CASE STUDY ON MESSIANIC EXCEPTIONALISM: PRESIDENT WOODROW WILSON AND THE RISE OF THE AMERICAN CENTURY

PART III

- 6 CONCLUSION

Abstract:

'Exceptionalism' is a much used and often contested term in ongoing U.S. foreign policy debates. A central problem regarding American exceptionalism is the imprecision with which it is used, and its vague meaning in contemporary politics. Furthermore, the use of exceptionalism by policymakers across the political spectrum contributes not only to ambiguity surrounding the concept, but also to partisan purposes for specific party objectives. This thesis moves beyond the more political applications of exceptionalism to illuminate its origins, core principles, and evolution throughout American history. In so doing, this study seeks to shed light on the often-unarticulated role that exceptionalism and other ideals and beliefs play in the development of U.S. foreign policy. This paper also aims to provide clarity and depth to the study of exceptionalism by exploring the central theoretical frameworks behind the concept, as well as by using various case studies to highlight the practice of exceptionalism within American foreign policy.

This research outlines a few key findings on the role of exceptionalism as an intervening variable within the foreign policy decision-making process. One such finding is that exceptionalism remains, as it has since the country's founding, a central tenet of America's liberal ideology and national identity. Moving forward, exceptionalism will continue to be subject to intense debate – at home and abroad. In order for American policymakers to pursue effective foreign policies that gain domestic and international support, they must be more self-aware of the national biases, ideals, and principles that influence the debate, in order to better articulate America's diplomatic and military tactics and objectives in times of war and peace. Lastly, in the age of American hegemony – and the possible waning of that hegemony – questions of exceptionalism will only continue to become more relevant.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The notion of American exceptionalism is a constantly evolving theme throughout American history and foreign policy, and one whose origins can be traced to before the country's founding. From the time of the Puritans in Massachusetts Bay Colony to presidential candidates today, political leaders have stood for America's prerogative to fulfill its unique destiny and espouse its values and principles as those for all mankind.

Some say the concept of American exceptionalism is crucial to America's ability to protect its national interests around the world. Others say it has led the U.S. into military and diplomatic quagmires and "crusades." Regardless of the foreign policy outcomes, the question of how and when exceptionalism, as a central element of America's national identity, translates into foreign policy decisions is an interesting question that deserves further exploration. Indeed, nowhere has our belief in the uniqueness of American institutions had more important consequences than in the formulation of U.S. foreign policy.¹

Many scholars and social scientists approach the study exceptionalism by addressing the question of whether America is, in fact, demonstrably and qualitatively different from other advanced countries. In doing so, they focus on America's empirical abnormalities and distinct characteristics. This study concentrates on a different line of inquiry, exploring analytically the concept of exceptionalism as the enduring belief that there is something special about America and its mission in international relations. This

¹ Richard H. Ullman, "The 'Foreign World' and Ourselves: Washington, Wilson, and the Democrat's Dilemma," *Foreign Policy*, No. 21 (Winter, 1975-1976). Accessed July 7, 2013. Available from JSTOR.

assertion goes beyond empirical research and develops directly into a more normative claim, lending itself to develop various interpretations of exceptionalism.

U.S. and foreign policymakers, on many instances, form a broader definition of the national interest when making decisions that have diplomatic and military consequences. It is clearly evident that policymakers wrestle with a moral component as well; decision makers include their own sense of normative values and principles, often subconsciously, in their reasoning. As exceptionalism represents a distinct set of core values and principles within America's national identity, the key question becomes not a matter of whether exceptionalism influences the policy process, but a matter of how, when, and to what extent.

Chapter II of this thesis, titled, "The Foundations and Central Tenets of American Exceptionalism," first explores the ambiguity surrounding the contemporary debate on American exceptionalism, highlighting its current partisan and divisive purposes. It discusses the various definitions used by scholars and historians, followed by a review of the concept's surprising etymology. Chapter II then covers the evolving meaning and uses of American exceptionalism throughout the nation's history, including primary source texts and authors who discuss exceptionalism from different perspectives. From this historical exploration emerge several common themes throughout the literature.

Chapter II concludes by developing a two-fold model of the practice and application of exceptionalism, which incorporates its core principles and tenets, as discussed and debated by scholars. The first model is that of *exemplar* exceptionalism, which espouses values and beliefs central to what America stands for – particularly at the onset of the nation's independence and throughout its first century as a federation. The second model is one of *messianic* exceptionalism, which takes the same distinct

values and principles of the first model but promotes their universality to foster a more involved and engaged mission for America in the world.

Chapter III, "The Theoretical Frameworks of American Exceptionalism," seeks to formulate a more intellectual focus to the study of exceptionalism, by designing a theoretical framework to guide the deliberations of scholars and policymakers. Overall, this chapter explores classical theories of international relations to determine the extent to which various theories and approaches explain American exceptionalism as a intervening variable in the foreign policy decision-making process. The reality in which the study of exceptionalism is subjected to normative standards of interpretation, increases the need for scholars to develop theoretical frameworks that rest on a more precise and analytical approach.

Chapter III begins with a brief discussion of the levels of analysis in international relations theory, followed by an examination of the level(s) on which American exceptionalism operates. This research then applies classical theories of international relations to examine the core theories that explain how the domestic lens of American exceptionalism can be used to understand elements of U.S. foreign policy. Using theories such as neoclassical realism, *primat der innenpolitik* (the primacy of internal politics) school of thought, the democratic peace theory, and hegemonic stability theory, this chapter examines how the domestic political realm, and thereby the use of American exceptionalism as an ideology and nationalist sentiment, can help scholars and policymakers further understand the concept and its role in U.S. foreign policy.

The purpose of theory, as argued by theorist Hans Morgenthau, is for it to be "judged not by some preconceived abstract principle or concept unrelated to reality, but by its purpose: to bring order and meaning to a mass of phenomena without which it

would remain disconnected and unintelligible.”² Indeed, the purpose of theory in this paper is to create order out of the informational chaos surrounding the concept of exceptionalism. This becomes more challenging when it contains attributes of ideological and nationalist undertones, which in the case of exceptionalism, diminishes the empirical precision surrounding the term. Furthermore, due to its pervasive role and promotion in American politics and foreign policy, it is crucial that the scholarship on exceptionalism move beyond normative, ideological, and sentimental barriers to adopt a more rigorous and analytic approach.

This thesis then looks at two case studies: the Spanish-American War and Woodrow Wilson’s presidency in the era surrounding World War I. Both case studies illustrate instances where we can see the application of exceptionalism, to varying degrees, in the foreign policy decision-making process. These case studies are conducted through analysis of primary and secondary sources, including official policy statements and biographies and historical narratives. The objective of the case studies is to determine if the application of American exceptionalism by various presidential administrations fits the models developed by previous scholars and policymakers. Furthermore, the case studies are employed to build a more nuanced understanding of the concept’s role in foreign policy and how this theme, which remains central to America’s national identity, is used by policymakers to justify and explain foreign policy decisions.

The Spanish-American War serves as the culmination of a period referred to by historian Robert Beisner as a “paradigm shift.” For Beisner, a paradigm shift “is related to changes in both conditions and the perception of those conditions. Over a long

² Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 5th ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), 3. This quotation is an excerpt from: William C. Martel, *Victory in War: Foundations of Modern Strategy*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 31-32.

enough period of time, circumstances themselves usually change sufficiently to make an old paradigm obsolete.”³ In the context of this research, the Spanish-American War illustrates a shift in the manifestation of exceptionalism from that of the exemplar to the messianic model. “By the 1890s,” Beisner notes, “many articulate Americans were dissatisfied with the passive idea that the U.S. should provide a model, and nothing more for others. America’s moral and material superiority seemed no longer a goal but rather an established fact – the passivity of the old idea of mission struck many as both a dangerous luxury and a selfish abnegation of duty.”⁴

The chapter on Woodrow Wilson’s presidency serves as a case study of the messianic model of exceptionalism. It discusses specifically the ideals, beliefs, and principles that would eventually characterize Wilson’s worldview and foreign policies. Second, this case study highlights Wilson’s decision to bring America into WWI, and then his post-war attempts to build a new world order based on international law and institutions, primarily through the League of Nations. Throughout Wilson’s decisions, there are embedded qualities reminiscent of messianic exceptionalism, including the inherent belief in America’s larger purpose and mission, as rooted in morality and the promotion of democracy. Furthermore, Wilson’s presidency represents a period in which the U.S. became a major world power and American leaders began to seek international responsibilities commensurate with the nation’s growing military, economic, and political power. Wilson’s worldview and vision for America’s global role – as exemplified through his foreign policies leading up to and following the war – provide an exemplary case study in the development and execution of messianic exceptionalism.

³ Robert Beisner, *From the Old Diplomacy to the New, 1865-1900*. (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1975), 67.

⁴ Beisner, 76-77.

Overall, these three chapters develop a more nuanced understanding on how and when American exceptionalism influences the foreign policy decision-making process. Currently, in an era of American hegemony, U.S. policy makers espouse a certain degree of ease in explaining American supremacy in terms of the nation's exceptional qualities and purpose in the world. Policymakers also continue to use strong nationalistic rhetoric to gain domestic support for certain foreign policy endeavors.

Moving forward, this thesis asks how American policy makers can employ a greater understanding of the theory and practice of American exceptionalism, and its distinct role within the U.S. foreign policy decision-making process to potentially bolster America's global leadership role and avoid the of self-inflicted consequences that follow from hubris. Greater understanding and clarity about the concept will allow exceptionalism to move from serving as "a political football" to better defining the national interest and America's role in the world. This, in turn, could allow for the articulation and implementation of a more effective foreign policy, which inherently incorporates exceptionalism's central characteristics, in order to garner great public support, both at home and abroad.

CHAPTER II

THE FOUNDATIONS AND CENTRAL TENETS OF AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM

This chapter will explore the evolving meaning and uses of American exceptionalism throughout the nation's history. This will be done using primary source texts and authors who discuss exceptionalism from different perspectives, whether it is under the premise of nationalism, a purely moral prerogative, or merely as a rhetorical tool to gain support for policies already pursued for reasons national interest. This chapter first explores the current and prevalent use of exceptionalism for political purposes, as well as the inherent misunderstandings and ambiguity surrounding the contemporary "exceptionalism debate." This chapter then discusses various definitions of exceptionalism used by scholars and historians, followed by a review of the concept's surprising etymology. From this historical exploration emerge several common themes throughout the literature on exceptionalism. This chapter concludes by developing a two-fold model of the practice and application of American exceptionalism within U.S. foreign policy – and the paradox that arises from America's constant struggle to uphold its liberal values and principles while maintaining global hegemony.

Exceptionalism Today: Conflicting Perceptions on National Superiority

It was not until recently, over the last few decades, that many outside of the academic world ever encountered the term "exceptionalism." Beforehand, it was reserved almost exclusively to scholarly discourse, used mostly by social scientists and occasionally by historians. Today, the word is ubiquitous. American exceptionalism comes with the appraisal of national superiority, an air of enhanced moral righteousness, supreme values and an obligation to promote those values throughout

the world. The question then becomes, why have we seen such an intense surge in the political and scholarly debate on American exceptionalism?

The reasons for this are complex. There are a number of intervening variables that explain the intense use of this term in ways often associated with hyper-patriotism. It has also become a foreign policy “buzz word” that political candidates must advocate, to a certain degree, if they are to be successful with major factions of the American populace. Modern political terminology surrounding exceptionalism has brought only greater confusion to the idea. An idea that was once so closely connected with American ideology, the nation’s liberal creed and Lincoln’s depiction of America as “the last best hope of man on earth” has today been turned into a rallying cry to reaffirm the value of prove an enhanced sense of patriotism, almost to the point of dogmatic hubris.

The intellectual landscape surrounding the concept and practice of American exceptionalism is further complicated by a world dominated by American hegemony, and perhaps the waning of that hegemony. Despite claims of relative decline, demise, and a weakening of American power and influence, the U.S. is still the world’s super power and must protect its national interests through maintaining a liberal world order. Furthermore, there are no great powers behind America that are able or willing to pick up the mantle of global leadership and the numerous responsibilities that come with it.

If America chooses to reverse its influence by pulling back resources that are necessary for it to continue its position of global primacy and role as a provider of public goods, the world will be a largely leaderless place. There are no other powers with the resources, domestic capital or political will to carry the burden that comes with an increased global leadership role. Ian Bremmer and Nouriel Roubini in 2011 spoke to this point in *Foreign Affairs*: “We are now living in a G-Zero world... in which no single

country or bloc of countries has the political and economic leverage -- or the will -- to drive a truly international agenda.”⁵ While there is much fervor over the rise of China and the emergence of the “BRIC”⁶ nations, America remains in a position of considerable political, economic and military advantage.

In this reality, which will remain for the foreseeable future, American exceptionalism has adopted partisan tones within the United States. Today, far from representing a unifying ideology and liberal creed, exceptionalism increasingly serves more as a polarizing issue that effectively divides liberals from conservatives. Within the more liberal faction of American politics, there is a pervasive uneasiness around the sense of American exceptionalism as a justification for action, primarily military engagement. To this liberal, left-leaning group, exceptionalism has the potential to take on a frighteningly imperial character, given the strength of American military power and willingness to use it. As stated by Stephen Walt of Harvard University, liberals would proclaim “the myth of American exceptionalism,” pointing out that this ideology makes it “harder for Americans to understand why others are ... often alarmed by U.S. policies and frequently irritated by what they see as U.S. hypocrisy.” According to this perspective, U.S. foreign policy would be “more effective if Americans were less convinced of their own unique virtues and less eager to proclaim them.”⁷

President Obama appeared to embrace this mindset early in his presidency. When asked by reporter Ed Luce of the Financial Times in April, 2009, whether he subscribed, as his predecessors had, “to the school of American exceptionalism that sees

⁵ Ian Bremmer and Nouriel Roubini, “A G-Zero World,” *Foreign Affairs*, Mar/Apr2011, Vol. 90, Issue 2. Accessed July 10, 2014. Available from LexisNexis.

⁶ BRIC is a grouping acronym that refers to an economic bloc of emerging countries including Brazil, Russia, India, and China, which are all deemed to be at a similar stage of advanced economic development. In 2010, it was replaced by “BRICS” to include South Africa.

⁷ James W. Caesar, “The Origins and Character of American Exceptionalism” in *American Exceptionalism*, ed. Charles Dunn (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013) 7.

America as uniquely qualified to lead the world,” the president began by observing: “I believe in American exceptionalism, just as I suspect that the Brits believe in British exceptionalism and the Greeks believe in Greek exceptionalism.”⁸ While he did follow up by saying, “I’m enormously proud of my country and its role and history in the world,” he had already brandished himself as reluctant to support the idea of an American exceptional or more messianic role in international affairs. As President Obama then stated, “I think that we have a core set of values that are enshrined in our Constitution, in our body of law, in our democratic practices, in our belief in free speech and equality, that, though imperfect, are exceptional.” By these words, Obama appears to be of the mind that America’s special nature is what it stands for, rather than what it carries out as its mission in the world.

On the other side of the political spectrum, there have been strong efforts in recent years by conservative Republicans in the U.S to closely associate their party with the notion of exceptionalism. Conservatives take great pride in the belief that America is exceptional in the sense that it is fundamentally different from other great powers, including the advanced democracies. Several individuals within the Republican party, including Newt Gingrich, have written books clearly espousing a belief in the concept: Newt Gingrich’s most recent book is titled *A Nation Like No Other: Why American Exceptionalism Matters*. Furthermore, Senator Marco Rubio made “exceptionalism” a central theme of his 2010 senate campaign in Florida.⁹

The principle of exceptionalism was also a strong theme in Mitt Romney’s presidential campaign, primarily in its foreign policy statements: “I believe we are an exceptional country with a unique destiny and role in the world,” said Romney in South

⁸ Barack Obama, interview by Ed Luce, *Wall Street Journal*, April 4, 2009.

⁹ Caesar, 3.

Carolina in 2011. "...We are exceptional because we are a nation founded on a precious idea that was birthed in the American Revolution, and propounded by our greatest statesmen, in our fundamental documents...We are a people who, in the language of our Declaration of Independence, hold certain truths to be self-evident: namely, that all men are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights. It is our belief in the *universality* of these unalienable rights that leads us to our exceptional role on the world stage, that of a great champion of human dignity and human freedom."¹⁰ In this speech, Romney illustrated the marked differences between Obama's hesitancy to promote American ideals and principles abroad, and the Republican belief in the necessity of doing so.

The use of exceptionalism by policymakers across the political spectrum contributes not only to ambiguity surrounding the concept, but also to partisan purposes for specific party objectives. This paper seeks to move beyond the more political applications of exceptionalism to shed light on the origins and central principles of exceptionalism, and its evolution throughout American history. This paper also seeks to provide clarity and depth to the study exceptionalism by exploring the guiding theoretical frameworks behind the concept, as well as the practice of exceptionalism within American foreign policy. The first step is an examination of the various and competing definitions of exceptionalism, as promoted by several scholars and historians.

American Exceptionalism by Definition

American exceptionalism is a long used term with a complex history in the nation's evolution and in its changing role in the world. However, its meaning, purpose

¹⁰ Mitt Romney, Speech at The Citadel in Charleston, S.C., October 7, 2011.

and application to American national power are debatable, while its influence as one of the central themes in American foreign policy is worth exploring. From the nation's founding, Americans have generally agreed that their domestic institutions, federal republic and values system are unique and exceptional, and of greater significance, that this system should be a model to others. However, profound disagreement lies in *how* and *when* this ideological transmission should take place. The form of this transmission of values into ideology- and thus the foreign policies that emerge -- depends on how one defines exceptionalism, and how one takes those meanings and applies them to influencing the foreign policy debate.

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, to be *exceptional* means to be unusual or uncommon, or to deviate from the norm. While, by definition, exceptional means either differing from the norm in both positive and negative ways, the primary use of exceptional is to denote a condition or state of *superiority* and to be better than average.¹¹ Other dictionaries denote the positive, differentiating aspects even more so - citing the word to mean unusually good, outstanding, or extraordinary.¹² *Exceptionalism*, while remaining an ambiguous and inconclusive term, has taken on different meanings to different people. To many social scientists, adding the suffix - "ism" makes the term more abstract and less concrete. The broad consequence is that ideology¹³ has been perpetuated throughout American history to denote that there is something special about America that constitutes an exception to the general laws governing the historical development of great powers.

¹¹ Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary. 10th ed. (2000).

¹² New Oxford American Dictionary. 2nd ed. Edited by Erin McKean. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

¹³ On ideology, cf. Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties* (New York: Free Press, 1962); Hannah Arendt, "Ideology and Terror: A Novel Form of Government," *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Jul., 1953), pp. 303-327; Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1948).

American exceptionalism, according to Seymour Lipset, is the theory that the United States is “qualitatively different” from other nations. Its roots come from an ideology that is based upon liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, republicanism, populism and laissez-faire. Lipset also discusses how these traits make the United States not only a unique country, but also a *superior* nation to other state.¹⁴ Lipset has written at length on American exceptionalism, in part to understand why the United States is the only industrialized country that does not have a significant socialist movement or Labor party. A number of scholars also cite the philosopher John Locke’s ideas on liberalism during the enlightenment as implicitly shaping and contributing to various arguments about American exceptionalism. As Charles Hill writes, “Locke’s political philosophy provides a basis for American ‘exceptionalism,’ which is a theme that reappeared across American diplomacy from colonial times to the present: that America at once is, and is not, a part of the international state system.”¹⁵ Thus, liberalism, in the classical sense, is America’s secular creed, in which the principle of exceptionalism is deeply imbedded.

As it can be seen, the definition and usage of exceptionalism is an evolving and nuanced concept, used in competing ways by various people in different times to signify an approach to the conduct of American Foreign policy. By clarifying the various stages of its definition and application to policy, the principle of American exceptionalism can be a useful tool in understanding U.S. foreign policy. In a strict sense, exceptionalism is a lens through which to consider the conduct of foreign policy.

¹⁴ For a more in-depth read on Lipset’s views on exceptionalism, see Seymour Lipset, *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997).

¹⁵ Charles Hill, *Grand Strategies: Literature, Statecraft, and World Order* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 144: “The astonishing fact about America is that the state would be designed to protect the individual’s ‘metaphysical’ rights of life, freedom and property.” Cited in William C. Martel, *The Theory and Practice of Grand Strategy* – not yet published.

Lastly, there is a key assumption to be made before delving into the evolution of American exceptionalism, as it exists in various forms throughout American history. To study the interaction between American exceptionalism and the development of U.S. foreign policy, which is the central purpose of this paper, it is important to grasp the following point. It does not matter whether differing beliefs on exceptionalism are ill founded. While that may be an interesting topic to explore, the question of whether America is truly an exceptional nation – in history, traits or values – is largely irrelevant to this study. An analysis of exceptionalism along these lines would have to address the question of whether America is, in fact, demonstrably and qualitatively different from other advanced countries. There are many scholars and social scientists that have approached exceptionalism in this manner, focusing on America's empirical abnormalities and distinct characteristics.

This study, for several reasons, will leave the question of whether America is in fact exceptional to others, such as social scientists or polemicists. Rather, this paper explores analytically the concept of exceptionalism as the enduring belief that there is something special about America and its mission in international relations. This assertion goes beyond empirical research and develops directly into a more *normative claim*, lending itself to various perceptions and interpretations of exceptionalism. What matters here is that the beliefs – of superiority, morality, and universal value – *exist* among the American populace and its decision makers, and that these beliefs play a role in ongoing foreign policy debates. This is even more important when one takes into consideration that American exceptionalism, arguably, is a factor in shaping decisions about America's ability and obligation to exercise leadership around the world. Looking at exceptionalism in the more normative sense allows for the exploration of competing

interpretations of its meaning and application. When it comes to America being exceptional in the normatively “special” sense, one can view this as two distinct ideas. First, exceptionalism can mean the possession of a certain quality, or second, the embrace of a task or mission.¹⁶ This distinction leads to the creation of a two-fold model of exceptionalism, which is explored in-depth later.

To elaborate further, one of the foremost thinkers on this subject, Ian Tyrrell, refers to American exceptionalism as, “the special character of the United States as a uniquely free nation based on democratic ideals and personal liberty.”¹⁷ Tyrrell notes that exceptionalism when applied in the context of a specific country can be inherently synonymous with nationalism, which peoples in all states espouse to some degree through a sense of loyalty, devotion, and pride. Indeed, the exceptionalist tradition is notable for its propensity to concentrate on national differences, while “American exceptionalism presents a special case of the more general problem of history written from a national point of view.”¹⁸ The inherent problems of ignoring transnational history aside, exceptionalism is a concept often fervently evoked by policymakers, and has been a consistent and prominent theme in works interpreting of American history.

Etymology of Exceptionalism

At different points in American history, authors, policymakers and historians have promoted the concept of exceptionalism, to stand for a sense of American

¹⁶ Caesar, 7.

¹⁷ Ian Tyrrell, “American Exceptionalism and Anti-Americanism,” in Brendon O’Connor, ed., *Anti-Americanism: History, Causes, and Themes. Vol. 2: Historical Perspectives* (Oxford: Greenwood World Publishing, 2007), 99-117.

¹⁸ Ian Tyrrell, “Exceptionalism in an Age of International History,” *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 96, No. 4, October 1991, pp. 1031-1055, at p. 1034.

uniqueness and its distinct role in the world. Without using the exact words of *American exceptionalism*, these individuals assert or intimate that America and America alone, possesses a distinct ideology and power that permits it to take actions but does but burden or constrain it with the repercussions associated with earlier cases of fallen empires and great powers. However, although the scholarship on this concept extends to earlier generations, the lineage of this term was not developed until fairly recently. Therefore, while this is not the core focus of this paper, it is important briefly acknowledge the etymology of exceptionalism – that is, the study of the origin of the actual words and how their meaning has changed throughout history.

Alexis de Tocqueville, through his work *Democracy in America*, is often credited as the first to use the term *exceptional*, as it applied to America's distinct and unique story. Indeed, Tocqueville notes that America is "exceptional" for its powerful devotion to commerce and the material accumulation of goods over art or science. To this point, Tocqueville stated,

*The position of the Americans is therefore quite exceptional, and it may be believed that no democratic people will ever be placed in a similar one. Their strictly Puritanical origin, their exclusively commercial habits, even the country they inhabit, which seems to divert their minds from the pursuit of science, literature, and the arts, the proximity of Europe, which allows them to neglect these pursuits without relapsing into barbarism... have singularly concurred to fix the mind of the American upon purely practical objects... Let us cease, then, to view all democratic nations under the example of the American people, and attempt to survey them at length with their own features.*¹⁹

One can see here that the principle of exceptionalism, still nascent in its exact usage, is no more than a vague reference that through a closer study has little relation to any current, deeper and purposeful meaning of the concept. "In explaining why Americans do so little to cultivate the arts and sciences," for the scholar James W. Caesar,

¹⁹ Alexis de Tocqueville and J.P. Mayer, *Democracy in America*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1969).

“Tocqueville attributes the deficiency to the harsh physical conditions that originally deprived them of the time and leisure to develop a higher culture.” Contrary to popular belief, Tocqueville was doing little to highlight the intrinsically positive aspects of America.

The term then lay dormant for a number of decades until a surprising individual in the 1920’s used it to describe America’s acquiescence – or lack thereof – to the tide of socialism and communism sweeping the globe. This person was the head of the American Communist party, Jay Lovestone. Lovestone cited the concept of exceptionalism to explain how America’s deeply imbedded capitalist system diverted America’s “true” destiny toward communism. His thesis led Communist leader Josef Stalin to respond demanding that he end this “heresy of American exceptionalism,” which in turn led to a flurry of articles, mostly in Russian, on the concept of exceptionalism. The Great Depression led Communists to further attack with the fallacy of exceptionalism. "Exceptionalism was a disease, a chronic disease," wrote communist S. Milgrom of Chicago in 1930. "The storm of the economic crisis in the United States blew down the house of cards of American exceptionalism," the American Communist Party declared at its convention in April 1930.²⁰ Thus, it was communist leaders, in the midst of economically troubling period in America, who led the resurgence of the use of exceptionalism in the 1920s and 1930s.

The scholar James Caesar points out that a database search of the word “exceptional” in the social science indexes reveals that, with one notable exception, “exceptionalism” does not appear in any U.S. historical literature until the late 1950s. During the Cold War, former editor of *The Nation*, Max Lerner, applied it in his 1957

²⁰ Terrence McCoy, “How Joseph Stalin Invented ‘American Exceptionalism,’” *The Atlantic*, March 15, 2012.

book titled, *America as a Civilization*, which is known for its familiar quote: “Every man has two countries – his own and America.” In this study, Lerner rejects the “spread-eagle theorists seeking to depict America as immune from the forces of history and the laws of life.” However, he also states that, “these distortions should not blind us to the valid elements in the theory of exceptionalism.... America represents... the naked embodiment of the most dynamic elements of modern Western history.”²¹

It was not until the 1980s when the term suddenly reemerged, charged with a new connotation of national superiority. According to a Factiva survey, *The New York Times* was the first mainstream outlet to revive the use of the concept, when in 1980 Richard J. Tofel implored Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan to address what each believed were the core issues facing America at the time, one of which was American Exceptionalism.²² The excerpt from the NYT editorial dated June 24, 1980 reads as follows:

*If we can move beyond the daily headlines, we will encounter real issues, enabling us to choose a President in November who can govern by popular consent after January. The issues I see are the following: First, American exceptionalism. This is the most important, most spiritually troubling question before us: Is America different from other nations? Are we one among many (while stronger perhaps, or wealthier perhaps), or do we have a unique national purpose, ideal or mission? In the past, our leaders have unhesitatingly accepted an exceptional role; recently, others have derided this view as naive, imperialistic, or worse. As our unquestioned supremacy recedes, we need to decide what 'America' means to us, and what it will mean to the world.*²³

One could hypothesize that Tofel was teeing the issue up for Reagan, who was perceived to be the more optimistic candidate in the midst of difficult years for Carter. It is only starting around this time that we see the explicit use of exceptionalism by

²¹ Max Lerner, *America as a Civilization, Life and Thought in the United States Today*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957), 64-65.

²² Terrence McCoy, “How Joseph Stalin Invented ‘American Exceptionalism,’” *The Atlantic*, March 15, 2012.

²³ Richard Tofel, “The Real Issues,” *The New York Times*, June 24, 1980.

American politicians to describe America's cultural and political uniqueness. Over the following twenty years, exceptionalism appeared in national publications 457 times. The next decade had it 2,558 times. But since 2010, it has gone viral, leaping into print and online publications roughly 4,172 times. Therefore, although the scholarly study of the concept goes back to the seventeenth century, the lineage of the word *American exceptionalism* is relatively recent. Now let us turn to a historical exploration of the foundations of American exceptionalism by looking at key statesmen whose revolutionary ideas and principles articulate what many today associate with exceptionalism.

The Foundations of American Exceptionalism

Puritan Roots

Perhaps a stronger and more meaningful approach to studying the meaning of exceptionalism is to examine how generations of scholars have cited and used the term. Where most scholars begin is before the foundations of the nation, with the waves of immigrants seeking refuge in the early 1600s from religious persecution and the strictness imposed by the Church of England. The Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century severed the unity of European Christianity and led to the formation of numerous new religious sects, many of which began to face religious persecution by the government. One such sect was the Puritan movement, which sought to "purify" the existing Church of England whose Catholic "rights" they believed had no foundation in the Bible. By the early 1600's, the Puritans were facing religious persecution at the hands of Charles I, a strong believer in the notion of divine right, who persecuted religious

dissenters. Part of the *Great Migration* and among the waves of dissenters (20,000 Puritans between 1629 and 1642) was John Winthrop's Puritans, who migrated to New England in 1630 to seek religious freedom.

On board the *Arbella's* voyage to New England in 1630, John Winthrop wrote his most famous thesis, and one that would be often quoted by President Ronald Reagan centuries later. Titled, *A Model of Christian Charity*, the text lays forth an argument for the virtues of charity and decent human behavior in the community they were about to inhabit. It is steeped in biblical quotations, and intended to prepare the people for creating a new society in an otherwise dangerous and unpredictable community. The most often repeated by Presidents and policymakers alike, is the language that appears at the end of the text, when John Winthrop states:

*For we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us. So that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken, and so cause Him to withdraw His present help from us, we shall be made a story and a by-word through the world.*²⁴

While America was not considered a promised land in the biblical sense, the Puritan settlers saw it in this way. The *shining city on a hill* metaphor laid the foundation for America's early tradition of what this study calls *exemplar* exceptionalism, as discussed more in depth later on in the chapter. As it will be seen, the founding fathers espoused this type of rhetoric as a way to instill in the nation an identity of remaining aloof from European affairs. This national identity was proclaimed countless times by America's founding fathers, and featured prominently in George Washington's farewell address.

Revolutionary and Republican Ethos

²⁴ Governor John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity," Redacted and introduced by John Beardsley, Editor in Chief, the Winthrop Society Quarterly. Copyright 1997.

The proponents of American exceptionalism hold that the nation's uniqueness also comes from its foundation on a set of republican *ideals* rather than on a common ethnicity, heritage, or elite. Indeed, American revolutionaries sought to distance themselves from their only common people – the British. Therefore, in order to build a new nation and distance itself from its predecessors, the “New Americans had to look to the future, where nothing but ideas existed.”²⁵ American nationality became endowed with an instant ideology, which was forged in revolution as opposed to the secular development of a “community through history.”

Thomas Paine, in his 1775 pamphlet entitled, *Common Sense*, elaborated on America's sense of early greatness. He stated, “The cause of America is, in a great measure, the cause of all mankind.”²⁶ His pamphlet was intended to inspire the colonists to fight for independence from Great Britain. Paine connected independence with common and dissenting Protestant beliefs as a means to present a distinctly American political identity.²⁷ As seen in Paine's writings, the ideas that created the American Revolution were derived from a tradition of republicanism that repudiated its British heritage.

A number of historians have connected America's early republican ideals to a sense of American greatness and a destiny to carry out some larger purpose. To this point, historian Gordon Wood argues, “Our beliefs in liberty, equality, constitutionalism, and the well-being of ordinary people came out of the Revolutionary era. So too did our idea that we Americans are a special people with a special destiny to lead the world

²⁵ Hilde Eliassen Restad, “Old Paradigms in History Die Hard in Political Science: US Foreign Policy and American Exceptionalism,” *American Political Thought*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Spring 2012).

²⁶ Anthony J. Di Lorenzo, “Dissenting Protestantism as a Language of Revolution in Thomas Paine's, *Common Sense*” in *Eighteenth-Century Thought*, Vol. 4, 2009.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

toward liberty and democracy.”²⁸ The Revolutionary Era led to a distinct version of Republicanism, most ardently endorsed by early statesmen such as Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. As historian Thomas Kidd writes, “with the onset of the revolutionary crisis, a major conceptual shift convinced American’s across the theological spectrum that God was raising up America for some special purpose.”²⁹ The closely intertwined notions of republican ideals, liberty, and purpose – all central to exceptionalism – are further explored below.

The Empire of Liberty

According to historians Robert Tucker and David Hendrickson (1992), Thomas Jefferson believed America "was the bearer of a new diplomacy, founded on the confidence of a free and virtuous people, that would secure ends based on the natural and universal rights of man, by means that escaped war and its corruptions." Jefferson envisaged America becoming the world's great "empire of liberty"--that is, the model for democracy and republicanism. He identified this nation as a beacon to the world, and said on departing the presidency in 1809, that America was:

*Trusted with the destinies of this solitary republic of the world, the only monument of human rights, and the sole depository of the sacred fire of freedom and self-government, from hence it is to be lighted up in other regions of the earth, if other regions of the earth shall ever become susceptible of its benign influence.*³⁰

²⁸ Gordon S. Wood, *The Idea of America: Reflections on the Birth of the United States*. (New York: Penguin Press, 2011).

²⁹ Kidd, Thomas S. *God of Liberty: A Religious History of the American Revolution*. (New York: Basic Books) 2010. 9.

³⁰ Marilyn B. Young, "One Empire Under God", *European Contributions to American Studies*, May 2004, Vol. 55, p8-18.

Furthermore, to Thomas Jefferson, Americans had proven themselves to be “the chosen people of God, if ever he had a chosen people, whose breasts he had made his peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue.”³¹

The Hungarian patriot, Louis Kossuth, on a visit to America in 1852, devoted a few lines to this connection between liberty and America’s purported destiny in the world. It was “America’s destiny,” he noted, “to become the cornerstone of Liberty on earth... Should the Republic of America ever lose this consciousness of this destiny that moment would just as surely be the beginning of America’s decline as the 19th of April 1775 (the start of the battle of Lexington and Concord) was the beginning of the Republic of America.”³² Following Kossuth’s argument, it can be seen that as early as America’s first century, both Europeans and Americans recognized the connection between America’s destiny as a nation and its inherent belief in liberty.

There are, furthermore, numerous instances when America’s founding fathers spoke of the American empire of liberty in a messianic sense. In 1765, John Adams penned one such text. “I always consider the settlement of America with reverence and wonder,” the young lawyer wrote in his diary, “as the opening of a grand scene and design in Providence for the illumination of the ignorant and the emancipation of the slavish part of mankind all over the earth.”³³ Interestingly, while this sentence espouses American exceptionalism in a more expansionist form, Adams edited out this statement when he published his *Dissertation on Canon and Feudal Law*. America’s founding fathers may have believed in a greater purpose for America, but they were not ready to act upon this belief.

³¹ Steven W. Hook, *U.S. Foreign Policy: The Paradox of World Power*, (Washington DC: CQ Press, 2005), 13.

³² Caesar, 17.

³³ Walter McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company) 1997. 36.

Later in 1814, John Adams went on to write to his Southern adversary John Taylor of Caroline. In the course of defending his constitutional principles, Adams issued a warning: "We may boast that *we* are the chosen people; we may even thank God that we are not like other men; but, after all, it will be but flattery, and the delusion, the self-deceit of the Pharisee."³⁴ While America already started to expand westward at this point, Adams cautioned against the dangers of expansionist exceptionalism, illustrating that the dominant sentiment during the early eighteenth century was still one of remaining the standard bearer of democracy.

Manifest Destiny and the American Frontier

For many scholars, the concept of American exceptionalism connects directly with the ideas of manifest destiny and Frederick Jackson Turner's *frontier thesis*. The concept of manifest destiny, as discussed in the early nineteenth century, represented the belief that American expansionism was inevitable and providential, and that "Americans were a chosen people intended by Heaven to spread across the continent,"³⁵ writes scholar Arthur Ekirch, Jr. It was American columnist and editor John L. O'Sullivan who first used the concept of manifest destiny in an editorial for the *Democratic Review* in 1845. Under the title, "Annexation," O'Sullivan wrote that God marked out Oregon, Texas and the remaining continental territories for possession by the United States.

Annexation of Texas was justified by the intrusion of foreign nations, wrote O'Sullivan, who had the object of "thwarting our policy and hampering our power, limiting our greatness and checking the fulfillment of our manifest destiny to

³⁴ Ibid, 36.

³⁵ Arthur A. Ekirch, *The American Democratic Tradition: a History*, (New York: MacMillan, 1963), 43.

overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions.”³⁶ Manifest destiny came to represent America’s expansionist diplomacy of the 1840’s and the view that foreign powers, including Great Britain, were interfering with American territorial progress. Manifest destiny, as discussed in the early nineteenth century, represented an intense nationalism surrounding American foreign policy, which was geared toward expanding the nation’s democratic institutions across the continent. All Americans did not share this belief in expansionism at the time, however, and concepts such as manifest destiny proved to be fracturing and divisive terms.

Manifest destiny also connected the idea of progress into more specific measurements of territorial growth. Ekirch writes, “It gave a new dynamic and positive value to the older doctrines of isolationism and the American mission.” The idea of manifest destiny added new vigor to the notion of national greatness, and connected the ideal of American mission to more tangible territorial expansion across the continent. As the nation gained relative power, the concepts of American exceptionalism, grounded in the belief in a greater American mission and manifest destiny, would continue to influence American thinking on national greatness beyond its shores.

The Frontier Thesis, outlined by Turner in an 1893 scholarly paper titled *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*, held that American democracy was formed and advanced by the territorial boundaries of the American frontier. In this thesis, the American frontier established liberty because it physically and geographically released America from the Old World and the European mindsets. The idea of the New Frontier, Turner’s famous thesis, interpreted American history by accounting for what

³⁶ John O’Sullivan, *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, XVII (July-August, 1845,) 5. Cited in Arthur A. Ekirch, Jr. *Ideas, Ideals, and American Diplomacy; A History of their Growth and Interaction*. Meredith Publishing Company, 1966. New York), 40-41.

he saw as the distinctive American characteristics of mobility, strength, acuteness, individualism and democracy, in terms of a geographical frontier.³⁷ Turner defined the frontier as “the existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westwards.”³⁸ He believed the spirit of the United States and its success were directly tied to the country's westward expansion.

The West, according to Turner, not the East, was where the distinctively, quintessential American characteristics emerged. The forging of the unique American identity occurred at the juncture between the civilization of settlement and the savagery of wilderness. This produced a new type of citizen, one who has the power to tame the wild and one upon whom the wild conferred both strength and individuality. As each generation of pioneers moved 50 to 100 miles west, they abandoned useless European practices, institutions and ideas, and instead found new solutions to new problems created by their new environment. Over multiple generations, the frontier produced the characteristics of informality, violence, crudeness, democracy, initiative and ingenuity that the world recognized as "American."³⁹

European Perspectives: Emphasis on American Uniqueness

Authors and scholars on the topic of American exceptionalism commonly refer to European perspectives in developing their ideas on the origins and conception of exceptionalism. These prominent and historic Europeans include those who made the journey to America to see for themselves the alleged distinct and unique ways of life, ones vastly different from the “Old World.”

³⁷ Godfrey Hodgson, *The Myth of American Exceptionalism*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 468.

³⁸ Hodgson, 468-469.

³⁹ Alan Taylor, “The Old Frontiers,” *The New Republic*, May 7, 2008.

When de Tocqueville referred to American exceptionalism, he did so by discussing America's different treatment from Europe in the pursuance of the arts, sciences and literature. This is somewhat extraordinary given the credence many current politicians give to Tocqueville on the issue of exceptionalism, who (as discussed earlier) was describing the nation as exceptional for its devotion to practicality and material wealth over art and science. "The position of the Americans is therefore quite exceptional, and it may be believed that no democratic people will ever be placed in a similar one," says Tocqueville.

Before Tocqueville came Hector St. John Crèvecoeur, who wrote in his *Letter from an American Farmer*, first published in 1782, of "the most perfect society now existing in the world." He then asked, "What then is the American, this new man?" The American, he wrote, is "one who leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, received new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds."⁴⁰ For Crèvecoeur, there was something unique and distinct about Americans, something quite different from the Europeans, and perhaps a distinction that was formed by the new way of American life.

There is, however, a strong theme within American history that shows a clear connection between revolutionary America and its European roots. Several historians, including David Hackett Fischer, cite the transatlantic link as one stronger and more direct than many might think. Fischer in particular finds that cultures transmitted from Britain to colonial America led to the open, democratic and liberal society that eventually developed.⁴¹ One illustration of this link between the "Old World" and the "New World" can be found in John Locke's liberal principles, which are based on the

⁴⁰ McDougall, 19.

⁴¹ For more information on Britain and America's shared cultural patterns, see David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1989.)

ideas of the enlightenment originating in Europe. Despite claiming exceptional characteristics, perhaps we are not as different from the Old World as we thought. Nevertheless, key Europeans who visited America during its early years are often referred to as reinforcing America's tradition of seeing itself as exceptional.

Common Themes Throughout the Literature

Exceptionalism: A Central Tenet of America's Liberal Identity and Ideology

American exceptionalism, which is a core tenet of the American identity, is a powerful, persistent, and popular ideology throughout American history. Exceptionalism is not simply a set of ideals and beliefs that emerged when America became a super power, as many have come to believe. Significantly, exceptionalism was formulated and identified well before the world saw America's impressive increase in power and influence in the late nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century. Indeed, many authors, scholars, and policymakers refer to an emerging sense of exceptionalism in the years before America was even founded as a nation. This strongly suggests that an "exceptionalist" vision was not merely promoted as a rationale for gaining territory and influence. Instead, the notion evolved as America grew in relative power, and was used to help formulate arguments for more internationalist and expansionist foreign policies.

As we have seen, this chapter examines American exceptionalism as a principle that remains deeply imbedded in the nation's identity. National identity can be defined as the "maintenance and continual reinterpretation of the pattern of values, symbols, memories, myths and traditions that form the distinctive heritage of the nation, and the

identification of individuals with that heritage and its pattern.”⁴² Furthermore, national identity is not a constant, but rather a concept in constant motion.⁴³ Rather than using empirical examinations into the validity of America’s exceptional nature, this study uses case studies to look at examples of American exceptionalism in terms of its reliance on national identity and *ideology*. When it is regarded in strictly nationalist and ideological terms, one can better understand the evolving notion of exceptionalism as it influences the conduct American foreign policy.

The force holding together America’s evolving national identity – through shifting demographics and phases of urbanization and industrialization – is its liberal economic and social system based on freedom and civil liberties. Simply put, the bedrock of America’s evolving national identity is its enduring liberal ideology and creed. As America’s national identity changes over time to encapsulate new cultures, languages and traditions, liberalism remains a steadfast aspect of American life. Liberalism, in the classical sense, has always been America’s secular creed. Furthermore, American liberal ideology, according to sociologist Seymour Lipset, is based upon liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, republicanism, populism and *laissez-faire*.⁴⁴ These central tenets have been imbedded in the national identity since the early years of the America’s revolution, if not before.

It is important in exploring America’s liberal creed and ideology to refine what we mean by *ideology*. Ideology today is generally taken to mean not a science of ideas, but rather the system of ideas and ideals themselves. Ideology – and in this case American exceptionalism – serves as a frame of reference, which guides citizens and

⁴² Oxford Dictionary defines “national identity” as: a sense of a nation as a cohesive whole, as represented by distinctive traditions, culture, and language

⁴³ The entire course of American history “coincides with the rise of modern nationalism.” Cited in Restad, 55.

⁴⁴ Seymour Martin Lipset, *American Exceptionalism: A Double Edged Sword*. (New York: Norton, 1997).

rulers in the making of public policy.⁴⁵ Daniel Bell defines ideology as ‘an action-oriented system of beliefs.’⁴⁶ In his book, *The End of Ideology*, Bell also wrote about what he called “a total ideology.” It is, he says, “an all-inclusive system of comprehensive reality, it is a set of beliefs, infused with passion, and seeks to transform the whole of a way of life. This commitment to ideology – the yearning for a “cause,” or the satisfaction of deep moral feelings – is not necessarily the reflection of interests in the shape of ideas. Ideology, in this sense... is a secular religion.” While America’s ideology may contain a complicated and often contradictory set of assumptions, its liberal creed is deeply ingrained as a core concept in its national identity.

Bell’s definition of total ideology offers a strong endorsement of the notion that American exceptionalism may be akin to ideology – if not a total ideology – in American life. Clearly, Bell’s definition of total ideology strongly resonates with the ideas and beliefs espoused about those who adhere to the principle of American exceptionalism throughout the nation’s history. What could come closer to a total ideology than exceptionalism’s inherent sense of purpose, cause, and deep moral feelings to promote and defend liberty?

Scholars who study exceptionalism must consider the role of American identity and liberal ideology because a key element of the republican ethos is the centrality of an ideology, or creed. American historian Richard Hofstadter writes, “It has been our fate as a nation not to have an ideology, but to be one.” Americans initially sought to distance themselves from their only common heritage, the British. Proponents of American exceptionalism hold that the nation’s uniqueness comes from its foundation on a set of *ideals* rather than on a common ethnicity, religion, or heritage.

⁴⁵ William Theodore Bluhm, *Theories of the Political System; Classics of Political Thought & Modern Political Analysis*, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971), 5.

⁴⁶ Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology*, (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1962.)

Historian Robert Beisner also discusses America's evolving national identity when he writes, "Americans, partly because they lacked ancient racial or ethnic ties to one another, began early to look elsewhere for a definition of national identity. Instead, they forged their unity from the ore of shared beliefs and experiences. To be American was to advocate for liberty and freedom..."⁴⁷ According to this line of thinking, America's strongly held belief in the ideals and principles set forth in the Constitution is what binds the nation's myriad of ethnicities, nationalities, and heritages into a more unified national identity. Therefore, in order to build a new nation and distance itself from its predecessors, the "New Americans had to look to the future, where nothing but ideas existed." The American nationality became tightly connected to an ideology, which was forged or emerged in revolution rather than a secular development of a "community through the forces of history."⁴⁸

G.K. Chesterton, an English writer, theologian, poet, and journalist (among other professions), touches on the uniqueness of the American creed, which is articulated in such American founding documents as the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. It is these documents that "created" the American nation, rather than assure of a common heritage and history, writes Chesterton in his 1922 book, *What I Saw in America*. "America is the only nation in the world that is founded on a creed," wrote Chesterton, "That creed is set forth with dogmatic and even theological lucidity in the Declaration of Independence, perhaps the only piece of practical politics that is also theoretical politics and also great literature. It enunciates that all men are equal in their claim to justice, that governments exist to give them that justice, and that their authority

⁴⁷ Beisner, 9.

⁴⁸ Restad, 61.

is for that reason just.”⁴⁹ Chesterton’s writings exemplify that it is not Americans’ common past that creates their identity, but rather their supposed belief in a common creed.

It is this creed that lends itself to the concept of the uniqueness of *Americanization*, as Chesterton calls America’s desire to “nationalize” its citizens. “The Americans are very patriotic, and wish to make their new citizens patriotic Americans,” says Chesterton. “But it is the idea of making a new nation literally out of any old nation that comes along. In a word, what is unique is not America but what is called Americanisation. We understand nothing till we understand the amazing ambition to Americanise the Kamskatkan and the Hairy Ainu. We are not trying to Anglicise thousand of French cooks or Italian organ-grinders. France is not trying to Gallicise thousands of English trippers or German prisoners of war. America is the only place in the world where this process, healthy or unhealthy, possible or impossible, is going on.”⁵⁰ Here again is another European account of America’s belief in a distinct and unique creed, which exemplifies a strong departure from the Europe’s associations with historical and ethnic identities.

Exceptionalism: the Universality of America's Ideology and Creed

America’s early waves of immigration also directly contributed to the universality of the American identity. America’s nationalism was civic, not ethnic, as it was freed from the “shackles of history.” Relying on Daniel Bell’s words, America was “an exempt nation” that had been freed “from the laws of decadence or the laws of history. It did not have to shake off already existing socioeconomic and political

⁴⁹ G.K. Chesterton, *What I saw in America*, (New York: Dodd and Mead, 1922).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

structures to undergo the “wrenching transition to modernity.” Instead, America was “born modern.”⁵¹ In 1858, Abraham Lincoln spoke to this universality by stating that no matter the origins of the immigrants, by accepting the “moral sentiment” of the Declaration of Independence, they were as much Americans “as though they were the blood of the blood and the flesh of the flesh of the men who wrote that Declaration.”⁵² Therefore, according to President Lincoln, being American meant believing in a common future, not connection to a common past.

Furthermore, the Declaration of Independence promised democracy “not alone to the people of this country, but hope to the world for all future time.” This universal application of American values and principles will be espoused later on by such presidents as Woodrow Wilson, who captured this sentiment when he argued that the United States should enter WWI “for the ultimate peace of the world and for the liberation of its peoples.” The attempts at the universal application of exceptionalism, however, did not end with Wilson’s failure to bring America into the League of Nations, or with the collapse of the inter-war collective security structures. Rather, America over the following generations emerged from WWII more emboldened and powerful than ever, poised to spread its liberal ideology across the globe in opposition to the ideology of Marxism and Leninism.

Building a Model of American Exceptionalism

Out of the ideas of critical thinkers of American exceptionalism emerge two competing models or interpretations that help guide how scholars and policymakers

⁵¹ Restad 61

⁵² Abraham Lincoln, in reply to Senator Douglas. Delivered at Chicago, Saturday Evening, July 10, 1858.

tackle the theme of exceptionalism. These two models are the **exemplar**, which denotes that America possesses certain qualities and special values that it exemplifies to the world, and the **messianic**, which espouses the belief that America has a mission and task to rebuild the world in line with American values and principles, which leads to a more direct and activist role in shaping world affairs in accordance with American ideals. As will be shown, it was not always the case that America's "divine mission" set it apart or made it unique. The exemplar form of exceptionalism is "more about what America doesn't do than what it does, more about national self-restraint than national self-assertion."⁵³ Second, the messianic form embraces a special task and mission for America. Throughout American history, an ongoing debate has been waged over this very issue-- whether Americans should be compelled to fulfill the nation's original revolution by protecting its ideals and institutions from outsiders, or by extending its liberal ideology across the world to others. The debate continues to manifest itself in contemporary foreign policy circles and through more or less engaged and activist foreign policies, becoming even more consequential in the era of American hegemony.

America the Exemplar: Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Exceptionalism

Exemplar exceptionalism, as discussed by scholars and historians, refers to the sense that America is exceptional in what it stands for and represents. In this model, exceptionalism does not imply a strong translation into foreign policy. To put it simply, the philosophy of exceptionalism during America's early years was separate and distinct from the *conduct* of American foreign policy. The exemplar thread of American exceptionalism can be traced to the eighteenth century in American history, during the

⁵³ McDougall, 20.

initial stages of the federation. The exemplar tradition, moreover, constitutes an old paradigm of U.S. foreign relations – one in which the geopolitical landscape, U.S. relative power and Americans’ perception of their nation’s place in the world that inspired a more aloof and isolated foreign policy.

America’s founding fathers made clear that their unique geographic position gave them the benefit of having greater distance from the perpetual warfare of Europe and from “the Old World.” Following in John Winthrop’s tradition, America was meant to be a beacon to the rest of the world, but not one yet capable of exporting its values and its principles to far away lands. Instead, America’s leaders cautioned on the risks of international involvement and instead focused on building what in their minds could be the greatest federal republic the world had ever seen.

George Washington’s “Farewell Address” is perhaps the most consummate speech made in accordance with the principles of exemplar exceptionalism. As Washington stepped down from the presidency in 1796, he warned the nation of the dangers of European entanglements, stating that engagement should be limited to commercial relations:

The great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations is in extending our commercial relations, to have with [Europe] as little political connection as possible. So far as we have already formed engagements, let them be fulfilled with perfect good faith. Here let us stop. Europe has a set of primary interests which to us have none; or a very remote relation. Hence she must be engaged in frequent controversies, the causes of which are essentially foreign to our concerns. Hence, therefore, it must be unwise for us to implicate ourselves by artificial ties in the ordinary vicissitudes of her politics, or the ordinary combinations and collisions of her friendships or enmities.⁵⁴

Washington cautioned against foreign entanglements not only to avoid Europe’s controversies, but also to protect the distinctiveness of America’s situation: “Our

⁵⁴ George Washington, “Farewell Address.” Originally published in David Claypole’s, *American Daily Advertiser* on September 19, 1796.

detached and distant situation invites and enables us to pursue a different course....

Why forego the advantages of so peculiar a situation? Why quit our own to stand upon foreign ground? Why, by interweaving our destiny with that of any part of Europe, entangle our peace and prosperity in the toils of European ambition, rivalry, interest, humor or caprice?" Washington saw a distinct and separate destiny for America, but only if the nation managed to protect its liberty from outside forces.

Therefore, the concept of American exceptionalism was not intended to dictate or directly shape an activist and interventionist foreign policy.⁵⁵ Rather, American exceptionalism as our founders conceived it was defined by what America was and stood for at home. Foreign policy existed to defend, not define what America embodied abroad.⁵⁶ Furthermore, the practical expression of exceptionalism was liberty at home and the rise of democratic institutions. Even the case of Jefferson's *Empire of Liberty* speaks to this theme. Although Jefferson sought to build an America as the "solitary republic of the world" and "sole depository of the sacred fire of freedom and self-government"⁵⁷ that would serve as a beacon and light for the rest of the world, he did not state his desire for America to spread this characteristic around the world.

Indeed, Jefferson takes precisely the opposite approach, following in the tradition of Washington's earlier warnings. In a letter to James Monroe in 1823, Jefferson wrote:

I have ever deemed it fundamental for the United States, never to take active part in the quarrels of Europe. Their political interests are entirely distinct from ours. Their mutual jealousies, their balance of power, their complicated alliances, their forms and principles of government, are all foreign to us. They are nations of eternal war. All their energies are expended in the destruction of the labor, property and lives of their people. On our part, never had a people so favorable a

⁵⁵ McDougall, 32.

⁵⁶ McDougall, 37.

⁵⁷ Quoted from a letter from Thomas Jefferson to the New York State Legislature, 1809. Accessed from http://www.sullivan-county.com/identity/jeff_letters.htm on December 1, 2013.

*chance of trying the opposite system, of peace and fraternity with mankind, and the direction of all our means and faculties to the purposes of improvement instead of destruction.*⁵⁸

Through Jefferson's countless speeches and writings, we can see that he acknowledges America's distinct mindset from that of Europe's, and that seeks to protect this uniqueness through remaining aloof from European affairs. Again, this model of exemplar exceptionalism most closely refers to what America stands for and practices at home – through perfecting its own political system. It did not imply a strong translation into foreign policy because to statesmen like Jefferson, the philosophy and policy of exceptionalism were separate, distinct concepts.

Another such statesman that abhorred deep involvement with Europe was John Quincy Adams. His now famous dictum stating that America should not “go in search of monsters to destroy,” came from a speech he gave as Secretary of State on July 4, 1821. After reading the full text of the Declaration of Independence, he continued:

*America does not go abroad in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion only of her own. She will recommend the general cause by the countenance of her voice, and the benignant sympathy of her example. She well knows that by once enlisting under other banners than her own, were they even the banners of foreign independence, she would involve herself beyond the power of extrication, in all the wars of interest and intrigue, of individual avarice, envy and ambition, which assumed the colors and usurped the standards of freedom... she might become the dictatress of the world. She would be no longer the ruler of her own spirit.*⁵⁹

Therefore, according to Adams, exceptionalism meant liberty at home, not crusades through which to shape the world; exceptionalism was meant to be embodied in character, not through practice.

Overall, this first model of exemplar exceptionalism refers to the nation's early years, when it was still developing its democratic institutions and expanding them

⁵⁸ Quoted from a letter from Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, 1823. Accessed from: <http://famguardian.org/Subjects/Politics/ThomasJefferson/jeff1400.htm>

⁵⁹ John Quincy Adams, Speech on Independence Day. United States House of Representatives, July 4, 1821.

westward across the continent. This model, whose characteristics were espoused by America's founding fathers and early statesmen including George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and John Quincy Adams, promotes a cautionary and isolated foreign policy in order to protect America's distinct (exceptional) democratic society. Furthermore, the concept of exemplar exceptionalism is defined by the nation's refrainment from European entanglements, rather than by a higher purpose and mission in the world. This second and more international form will be further explored in the philosophy and practice of messianic exceptionalism.

America the Messianic: Twentieth and Twenty-First Century Exceptionalism

The second and contrasting model describes a form of exceptionalism that conveys a special mission and task for the United States in its relationships with other states. Rather than give rise to isolationism and withdrawal, this second model of American exceptionalism, based on the uniqueness of American constitutional democratic institutions, dictates a more interventionist role for the U.S. in the world. Where the first model sought to protect America's revolution by insulating it from corrupting external influences, this model seeks to promote it by further propagating the democratic ideal. Furthermore, according to this model, America has a mission to undertake and a responsibility to fulfill a larger purpose. America's belief in a special task or mission, according to Caesar, refers to "something Americans think this country is called on to do, be it by a command or by a free embrace of responsibility. This is not undertaken for enjoyment or profit, but to fulfill a larger purpose on the stage of world

history.”⁶⁰ It is in America’s embrace of a larger purpose and international mission that we can best see the principles of messianic exceptionalism at work.

As America rose to the status of a global power, American exceptionalism entailed not just American uniqueness and its distinctiveness to the European continent from which its founders came (exemplar exceptionalism), but also the belief in the special role the United States is meant to play in the world, and its resistance to the history of other great powers who saw the sun set on their own distinct and powerful republics.⁶¹ While America has been inherently expansionist since its origins – first on its own continent, and hemisphere, and then internationally – vast amounts of literature relate America’s increased role in the world with a stronger sense of engagement in conflicts with the great powers of Europe. In other words, as America increased in relative power vis-à-vis the great European powers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the nation’s leaders began to espouse a more activist and engaged foreign policy that embodies the principles of messianic exceptionalism.

America’s involvement in the Spanish-American war over Cuba in 1898 can be seen as the major point of departure from the American *exemplar* tradition to a new *messianic* tradition in U.S. foreign policy. To note, the paradigm shift represented by America’s intervention in Cuba will be explored in greater detail in a later case study. Walter LaFeber, in *The American Search for Opportunity*, explores this critical period in American history from the perspective of the nation’s military and economic advancements leading up to this departure point. LaFeber writes, “the central theme of post-1865 U.S. history is that the nation developed into a great world power, one of the

⁶⁰ Caesar, 22.

⁶¹ Restad, Hilde Eliassen, “Old Paradigms in History Die Hard in Political Science: US Foreign Policy and American Exceptionalism,” *American Political Thought*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Spring 2012): 55. Accessed from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/664586> on October 15, 2013.

four greatest military and the greatest of all economically.”⁶² One could argue that as America’s economic and military capabilities grew stronger, the nation made decisions and took on challenges commensurate with its growing economic and military power, in order to pursue national interests beyond its territorial boundaries. Engagement in Central America and the Caribbean made logical sense particularly as U.S. power increased in military and economic capabilities, which enhanced its relative power to states in the region and in Europe. Concurrently, the country’s statesmen also demonstrated the will and the mindset to think more globally. As McKinley stated in 1898, “the greatest destiny the world ever knew is ours.”

Referring to the same historical period, Foster Rhea Dulles in, *Prelude to World Power, American Diplomatic History, 1860-1900*, writes: “Americans had always believed not only that they were destined to be an example for all other peoples in their commitment to liberty, but that they were further called upon to spread abroad the concepts of freedom and democracy for which the New World stood in contrast with the Old World’s tyranny and despotism.”⁶³ In this sense, the end of the nineteenth century culminating in the Spanish-American War does not represent a sudden shift in U.S. foreign policy and international engagement, but rather the next step in a progression of increased U.S. involvement in the world, which tracks closely with the increase in America’s relative power. In line with both LaFeber and Dulles’s perspectives, one could argue that as America’s economic and military capabilities grew stronger, the nation began to pursue a more activist foreign policy, incorporating the principles of messianic exceptionalism.

⁶² LaFeber, Walter, *The American Search for Opportunity, 1865-1913*. The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations: Vol. 2. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 234.

⁶³ Dulles, Foster Rhea, *Prelude to World Power, American Diplomatic History, 1860-1900*. (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1965), 154.

In the messianic model, the U.S. as an “exceptional nation,” should pursue the interests of the international system as well as its own because the U.S. sees its interests as tightly coupled with the interests of the international system. The idea that America has a certain mission in the world is controversial; while many view it as a means to spread liberty and democracy, others see it as justification for imperialism. Additionally others view it as an obligation on the part of the U.S. to exercise leadership and to build a better world. Indeed, the “American mission” can incorporate various impulses, or as scholar John Ikenberry writes, “its foreign policy ideology may wax and wane between multilateral and imperial impulses.”⁶⁴ However, America’s embrace of a larger and moral purpose within its foreign policy represents messianic exceptionalism’s most central principles. This model of American exceptionalism leads to a paradox in U.S. foreign policy, where the U.S. remains caught between two worlds, one that relates to the liberal tradition of U.S. moral exceptionalism and to the nation’s self-image as an inspiring “city upon a hill,” and another world in which the U.S. must make moral compromises in order to pursue its national interests and maintain its supremacy within the world order that it created.

The Paradox of U.S. Foreign Policy

Today, one might say that America is caught between these two worlds that can never be reconciled.⁶⁵ The first world (translated into the exemplar model) relates to the liberal tradition of U.S. moral exceptionalism and to the nation’s self-image as an inspiring “city upon a hill.” Beyond serving as the exemplar of human rights, the United

⁶⁴ John Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 332.

⁶⁵ Hook, 382.

States in the second world (the messianic model) attempts to commit its vast resources to the cause of global reform. George W. Bush captured this crusading spirit in his first inaugural address by referring to the Biblical scripture: “when we see that wounded traveler on the road to Jericho, we will not pass to the other side.”⁶⁶ The paradox emerges when America, as a global superpower, must make moral compromises in a world where it must also act on its own interests, allying itself with dictators and foreign monarchs whose interests align with U.S. national security and economic concerns.

While this dilemma cannot be easily solved, one can begin to unwrap this paradox by further exploring the deeply ingrained sense of national exceptionalism and the unarticulated role it has played throughout America’s foreign policy debates. In doing so, the inherent conflict in attempting to enforce America’s political culture and national identity – both of which are defined by a strong sense of liberal ideology and exceptionalism – becomes more clear. Further understanding lends itself to addressing the chronic ambivalence in America regarding the nation’s global roles and responsibilities. America today attempts to take the nation’s early traditions of seeking to detach itself from the outside world, while applying the messianic model of transforming the world in its own image.⁶⁷ Both impulses may coexist, but when one dominates the other, the result can be strongly diverging foreign policies. Furthermore, seeking a middle ground between the two, cooperating with other states on the basis of sovereign equality, seems to be ruled out by an ingrained sense of American exceptionalism and sense of uniqueness and superiority.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 383.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 392.

Moving Toward a Theoretical Framework of American Exceptionalism

This chapter has explored the several definitions, historical foundations, and evolving meanings of American exceptionalism, including competing arguments put forward by scholars, historians, and policymakers. The sheer volume of perspectives surrounding the concept illustrate that exceptionalism has never been a neatly defined term with one distinct purpose within U.S. foreign policy debates. Proponents of exceptionalism, as well as challengers, have historically discussed the concept from different angles, promoting different policies – from isolation to engagement – and supporting their policies with various moral principles in order to justify their claims. This chapter has sought to provide more clarity and depth surrounding the often-discussed yet highly ambiguous topic by delving into its origins, central principles and highlighting several common themes throughout the literature. Now that we have built a two-dimensional model of exceptionalism, let us turn to the theoretical frameworks that further guide the study of exceptionalism and its role in U.S. foreign policy.

CHAPTER III

THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS OF AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM

This chapter explores contending theoretical frameworks that provide the basis for studying the concept of American exceptionalism and its role in U.S. foreign policy. To commence the discussion on theoretical frameworks, this chapter looks at the levels of analysis in international relations theory, and the importance, for the purpose of studying exceptionalism, of interaction between the individual and unit levels of analysis. This chapter will then examine various classical theories of international relations in order to better explain how the domestic lens of American exceptionalism can be used to understand elements of U.S. foreign policy. Using realism theory (specifically neoclassical realism), the primat der innenpolitik school of thought, the democratic peace theory, and hegemonic stability theory, this chapter explores how the domestic political realm and the involvement American exceptionalism can help to understand alternative factors that influence America's foreign policy and the nation's role in the world.

Initial Assumptions and Questions

Before framing the several questions that this chapter on theoretical frameworks seeks to answer, the first step is to mention the premises on which exceptionalism rests.

Exceptionalism operates as a very powerful ideology within the U.S. political system.

Given its deep ideological roots, an analytic approach to the following theories is to use ideology as a surrogate for exceptionalism and as a framework within which to discuss the concept as an "intervening variable" and factor in the foreign policy decision-making process.

Building from this premise, this chapter seeks to identify the contending ideas and theories that allow for the intervening factor of American exceptionalism to influence the foreign policy decision-making process. There are several key questions to be addressed in this research. First, what contending theories best explain the role of American exceptionalism in U.S. foreign policy? Second, what are the conditions that give rise to the inclusion of the principle of American exceptionalism in a particular decision-making system? Lastly, what theories help to explain U.S. international action as being based on or incorporating components of exceptionalism?

The Purpose of International Relations Theory

Since most theorists and practitioners agree that the world can be an uncertain, dangerous and unforgiving place, it demands the constant ability to defend one's survival and interests. In this anarchic world, individuals and groups throughout human history have joined in the quest for security. Like the sailor who looks to the north star for guidance at sea, or the adventurer who points a compass to guide himself through the unending wilderness, so too does the statesman seek guidance and a foundation on which to make his decisions and chart a course for the nation. In the realm of international affairs, political theory provides one such critical foundation. As stated in the *Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, "An inquiry into the field of international relations ought, first and foremost, to be an inquiry into the ideas that animate it."⁶⁸ Indeed, without these ideas, international relations would have neither

⁶⁸ This quote and next from: Christian Reus-Smit, and Duncan Snidal, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 5.

“identity, skeleton, nor pulse.” International relations, therefore, provides states with a framework from which to build principles and policies.

The world in which we live is also filled with considerable amounts of informational chaos; but it is precisely out of this chaos that scholars and policymakers must generate ideas that provide intellectual order. Political theory helps these actors to separate the important from the trivial, to reflect on phenomena and see how they are structured and how they relate in order to create meaning. To think theoretically, one might ask questions such as: when, how, and where does expansionism cause war? Or, are there patterns throughout history that explain movements from peace to war? This chapter seeks to answer an intellectually similar question: when and how does American exceptionalism act as an intervening variable to influence the conduct of U.S. foreign policy?

It is in asking questions such as these that the theorist seeks to explain observed phenomena and to learn how specific events and decisions may be interconnected in efforts to form more general understandings. Furthermore, statesmen look to theories to stimulate more successful outcomes in policy and to have foundations on which to base their decisions. However, the fundamental problem in seeking theories to build more general frameworks lies in the study of social science itself, and its inherent differences to the natural sciences. Whereas in the natural sciences, such as mathematics of physics, a true “if, then” logic exists, the social sciences allow for no such causality. Correlations between certain phenomena can be made, such as the correlates of war, but it is close to impossible to establish causal truisms.

The central element of all theory is the idiosyncratic individual, which reacts differently when presented with similar stimuli. Perceptions differ, cognitions alter, and

thus decisions made by the idiosyncratic individual can be based on information that does not align with what is revealed to be reality. Furthermore, there are innumerable intervening variables that influence decisions, and thus separate the independent from dependent variables. Such intervening variables include the effects of culture, values, religion and background, each of which can also be adduced to explain phenomena. Despite the inherent imperfections, all theory is revisionist because it aims to reach a higher truth, and it is a journey on which theorists can never be truly satisfied.

Key Differentiations Between Ideology and Theory

In studying political theory, it is important to distinguish between theory and the closely related notion of political ideology. While theory is a tool for guiding and evaluating political choices, ideologies offer a set of beliefs, values and ideals that form the basis for such theory. Ideology – and in this case American exceptionalism – serves as a *frame of reference*, which guides citizens and rulers making choices about public policy. To reiterate, American exceptionalism will be addressed throughout this chapter as an ideology, which allows us to look at theories that account for the role of ideology in foreign policy.

According to scholar William T. Bluhm, political theories differ from the commonplace of ideology “in their greater elaborateness and sophistication, sometimes in their greater consistency.”⁶⁹ Bluhm succinctly notes that political theory tends to “contain a more accurate picture of the political world than the beliefs that the average man carries around in his head.” As noted previously, political theory serves as a guide to the systematic collection and analysis of data. While ideology can also guide analysis,

⁶⁹ William Theodore Bluhm. *Theories of the Political System; Classics of Political Thought & Modern Political Analysis*, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971), 5.

it operates on a different level in ways that make it less tentative and objective. In other words, ideology has a subjective and interpretive quality.

To theorists, data should be collected and analyzed through a process that is guided by detached and objective measures. While the ideologist believes his basic assumptions to have an intrinsically theological quality, theory should maintain a dispassionate and objective stance toward the subject. Moreover, objectivity is required if political theorists are to critically learn the typical motives, goals, and values of people who are politically engaged. Key questions for the theorist include: are these values universal, or do they vary from culture to culture? If they vary, what are the influences, both physical and social, which condition them?

There are a variety of theoretical frameworks that should be used in answering these questions. This chapter introduces key theories of international relations that allow us to examine in greater depth the impact of the concept and ideology of exceptionalism on foreign policy. Before we examine these theories more closely, the first step is to consider the various *levels of analysis*, which we can use to analyze historical events and ongoing trends in international politics. This concept of “levels of analysis” is also a principle tool for explaining historical events because it offers contending perspectives on the origins and nature of behavior in the realm of making policy decisions.

Levels of Analysis in International Affairs

The concept of levels of analysis helps to orient our questions because it fundamentally suggests the appropriate type of evidence that must be explored in theoretical lines of inquiry. Most importantly, it enables us to avoid illogical

conceptions, such as seeking to infer how system-level characteristics directly influence individual behavior. Similarly, structural chance cannot be reduced to or explained solely in terms of individual behavior.⁷⁰ In the field of international politics, Kenneth Waltz first contributed the idea of three levels of analysis, or images, in his book, *Man, State and War*, written in 1959. As a means of categorizing international relations theory within and among contending levels of analysis, Waltz classified three different sources of explanations: the international/system level, the unit level, and the individual level.

The individual level focuses on personality, perceptions, and biographical history of individual decision makers. Psychological tools are often needed in order to fully examine the individual level of analysis, in which cognition, imaging and perception strongly influence an individual's understanding of a situation and purpose in managing it. Thus, individual participants are the primary focus for explaining policy behavior. If the unit level, or domestic level of analysis, is the focus of inquiry, then the explanation for state behavior is based on character of the state (democracy vs. authoritarian regimes), the economic system (capitalism vs. socialism), political culture, ideology, interest groups, and the state's national interest. The third level of analysis corresponds to a focus on the anarchic nature of the international system and different distributions of power within this system, including unipolar, bipolar or multipolar world orders.

It is among these three levels that we can locate the origin of the behavior of states. Levels of analysis are also useful tools to use in categorizing theories because all theories of international relations focus primarily one level or another, and several theories seek to explain interaction between levels. For example, certain schools of realist

⁷⁰Karen Mingst. "Contending Perspectives: How to Think About International Relations Theoretically" in *Essentials of International Relations*, chap. 3. (New York: Norton, 2004), 66.

theory operate primarily on the international level by discussing the explanatory power of the anarchical system, which imposes constraints on unit behavior. Democratic peace theory, on the other hand, with its origins in international liberalism and the work of Emmanuel Kant, finds that foreign policy is shaped by unit level characteristics, including institutions and modes of governance. Lastly, the U.N. Organization for Education, Science, and Culture (UNESCO) Constitution, written in 1945 at the end of WWII, speaks to the individual level of analysis as explanatory of nation behavior when it states, "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed."⁷¹

Interaction Among Levels

One constraint in studying international relations theory is to understand that levels of analysis do not operate entirely independent of one another. Robert Putnam's, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games," is illustrative of how the domestic and the foreign realms of international politics are often entangled. It becomes fruitless to determine whether the domestic or the international influences the other, as the answer will always be: sometimes, or both. It then becomes a question of *when* and *how* the domestic influences the international, and vice-versa, which will only become clear once we identify themes with which to explore specific situations. If we take exceptionalism to be a domestic sentiment with nationalist overtones, then theories that use unit-level analysis will be most enlightening for the purpose of understanding the theoretical foundations on which exceptionalism rests.

⁷¹ Excerpt from UNESCO Constitution. Accessed from: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/about-us/who-we-are/history/constitution/> on November 5, 2013.

As previously mentioned, this chapter will examine exceptionalism on the unit and individual levels of analysis and will use a domestic lens to study international action. This approach is appropriate because interactions between the individual and the unit levels permit for a more detailed study of exceptionalism as an ideological, intervening variable in foreign policy decision-making. Another way to discuss this approach is to include *reductionist* theories that explain state behavior as originating within the units themselves. Scholars and practitioners using a reductionist approach ask questions such as: how do values, history, geography and resources shape foreign policy? Or, how do institutions – including such institutions as totalitarianism, republicanism – and concepts such as nationalism, strategic culture and ideology shape foreign policy? Theories that seek answers to these questions take a reductionist approach to exploring the origins of behavior.

Contrary to a systemic and holistic approach, the goal of such reductionist exploration is to illuminate the importance of national mentality and culture in the foreign policy making process. Theory is reductionist when it probes further than the international level to examine how structural change might emanate from the domestic and unit level. For example, the difference between systemic and reductionist theories can be seen through asking questions such as: what are the conditions under which states choose to arm or disarm against an opponent? Systemic theories will seek to determine whether the cause for action originates due to changes in relative power *between* units at the international level, whereas reductionist theories examine structural change starting *within* the state.

Political scientist and scholar James Rosenau speaks to the importance of looking at interaction between levels in his book, *Turbulence in World Politics: A Theory of Change*

and Continuity. He writes, "Complex systems encompass both wholes and parts. We can begin to understand them only if we employ a method that allows us to move our analytic eyes back and forth between systems and subsystems and thus between collectivities, their subgroups and the individuals who comprise them."⁷² Rosenau concludes that scholars of theory must focus on interactions between actors on all levels in order to more conclusively examine the origins of behavior. Scholar Seyom Brown in "Explaining the Transformation of World Politics" also discusses the importance of interaction among levels of analysis. "For if we insist," writes Brown, "on neat, impenetrable analytical boundaries, and levels of analysis that must never be fused, we will fail, once again, not only in our attempts at retrospective explanations of past transformations but also in our ability to anticipate profound change in the future."⁷³ Thus, theoretical study is never clean-cut; explanatory power lies at the individual, unit *and* international levels of analysis.

Overall, it is important to discuss the interaction between the individual and unit levels of analysis in examining American exceptionalism. In the case of the United States, the unit level is critical in identifying domestic or internal characteristics that help to explain foreign-policy decisions. Key analytical questions include: who holds power within the national security decision-making process? What are the political, societal and economic conditions that shape the environment in which policymakers operate and decisions are made? The individual level is important because, as historian Thomas Paterson states, "Individuals make decisions... Individual leaders decide whether or not

⁷² James N. Rosenau, *Turbulence in World Politics: A Theory of Change and Continuity*. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990).

⁷³ Seyom Brown, "Explaining the Transformation of World Politics." *International Journal*, Vol. 46, N. 2, Understanding Global Change (Spring, 1991,) 207-219.

to negotiate; they decide who whispers in their ear with advice; they manage or mismanage the foreign-policy process; they do or do not have the political expertise to handle Congress; and their different styles of diplomacy shape results."⁷⁴

Furthermore, the interaction between the unit and individual levels is important because ideologies, beliefs, traditions, values and cultures exist among individuals, groups and throughout societies. Individuals are shaped by their environments, and in turn, individuals form groups of elite policymaking circles and have the capacity to shape domestic circumstances. To note, this allows for a constructivist approach in studying exceptionalism, which promotes that social settings help decision makers to understand their interests. Contrary to realist theory, proponents of constructivism argue that national interests are not defined entirely by power, but rather by a confluence of societal factors that form national identity and interests.

Exceptionalism, as an idea deeply ingrained in America's liberal tradition, infiltrates American society, particularly in foreign policy making circles. Individuals in the upper echelons of the national security realm often promote elements of America's "secular creed" by espousing values of "liberty" and "freedom" as constant rallying cries in military and diplomatic engagements. Those individuals are shaped by a confluence of societal factors in their own environments, and then promote their systems of beliefs among their own groups and potentially policy-making spheres. Thus, exceptionalism operates interchangeably throughout the individual and unit levels of analysis – both providing contexts in which to look at foreign policy decision making processes.

⁷⁴ Thomas Paterson, "United States Intervention in Cuba, 1898: Interpretations of the Spanish-American-Cuban-Filipino War." *The History Teacher*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (May, 1996), 355.

Application to American Exceptionalism

Although the value of using levels of analysis is widely accepted, scholars who focus on different theories differ on *how many* levels are useful. Numerous theories, such as structural realism, focus on the dominance of the anarchic system, while other theories, including neoclassical realism theory and democratic peace theory, find it crucial to examine both the unit and systemic levels in order to determine the origin of state behavior in international relations. For the purposes of this chapter, which is an attempt to conduct an in-depth exploration into the nature of American exceptionalism and its role in foreign policy, it is necessary to pay closer attention to certain levels of analysis over others.

Moreover, given that exceptionalism often takes on strong ideological undertones and has attributes of nationalist sentiment, it is apt for the purposes of this research to use ideology as a surrogate for exceptionalism, so that we can better formulate the concept as an intervening variable and factor in the foreign policy decision-making process. Ideologies exist within states and among groups of individuals operating under certain conditions and throughout different societies. Therefore, this research examines contending theories that argue that state behavior originates at the individual and unit levels.

The study of American exceptionalism also spans several paradigm shifts in American history. In the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries, American exceptionalism operated as an individual and unit level phenomenon; it existed within the beliefs and values of American leaders and policymakers, including Thomas Jefferson. However, it was not fully manifested in U.S. foreign policy when America was still a relatively weak and isolated nation. However, as America grew in relative power compared to

European empires of the early twentieth-century, the nation began taking the actions required of and expected by a great power and the notion of exceptionalism began to have a more apparent influence on the nation's foreign policy. The principles and values upon which American society is built, such as liberty, freedom, and capitalism, became the basis of the world order that America sought to build after WWI and then again after WWII. It was at this point when exceptionalism, as an individual and unit level phenomenon, became a driving factor in international change.

Proceeding from this brief explanation of the three levels of analysis as a framework for studying American exceptionalism, let us turn to several classical theories of international relations.

Classical Theories of International Relations

"It is only a slight exaggeration..." says scholar William C. Wohlforth, "that the academic study of international relations is a debate about realism.... Take realism out of the picture and the identities of these other schools as well as the significance of their arguments become much less clear."⁷⁵ All explicable theory, according to Wohlforth, is grounded in realism. Due to the centrality of realism in debates about international politics, it is necessary to begin the discussion on contending theories here. Not all aspects of realist theory, however, are applicable to the study of American exceptionalism, and in certain instances, a strong critique of realist theory is necessary if scholars are to look at exceptionalism as an intervening variable in foreign policy. Nor is realism a single theory; there are many schools within realism – including neorealism,

⁷⁵ William C. Wohlforth, "Realism," in *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations* ed. Reus-Smit, Christian and Snidal, Duncan, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), Chapter 7, 131.

neoclassical realism (both of which will be explained in-depth), and specific realist theories such as the balance of power, the security dilemma, and hegemonic stability theory.

If there were to be a “grand strategy of realism,” it would incorporate all three levels of analysis, but each school of realist theory places a different emphasis on individual levels of analysis. Furthermore, the various schools can also be referred to as “movements” or “waves” within realist theory that best align with specific historical periods. While there is a great degree of diversity within realist school of thought, let us begin this exploration of realist theory with a brief overview of the assumptions that underlie classical realism. This overview aspires not to outline all that is known on the foundations of realist theory. However, it will provide the basis on which to explore those threads of realist theory that are most applicable to the study of American exceptionalism and its role in foreign policy.

Classical Realism

The core claims of classical realism are best exemplified by Hans Morgenthau’s seminal work, *Politics Among Nations*, written in 1954. In recent years, scholars have widened the term to include all realist works from Thucydides to Morgenthau, making classical realism not a separate school, but rather *the* original realist tradition.⁷⁶ In this long line of thinkers who contributed to classical realist theory, the central and unifying point is the concept of the anarchical system; all units or nation states exist in this anarchic international system. This is the assumption on which all realist theory stands and it is the departure point from which various schools diverge to develop their

⁷⁶ Wohlforth, 136.

separate analyses. A concept central to realism is the key intervening variable of power. Human affairs are marked by great inequalities in power, exemplified in asymmetrical or uneven capabilities, which reduce international politics to a competition over scarce resources. As states compete over resources, realist theory finds that there is little room for the statesman to pursue moral objectives, and therefore realism expresses strong skepticism about the role of moralism in international affairs.⁷⁷

As we consider the origins of realist theory, Thucydides', *History of the Peloponnesian War*, offers four essential assumptions. The first is that the state is the *principle actor* in war and in politics. Second, the state is assumed to be a *unitary actor* speaking and acting with one voice. Under this assumption, there are no dissenting voices attempting the overturn the decisions of the government or undertake actions apart from what is in the interest of the state. Third, decision-makers acting in the name of the state are assumed to be rational actors with the objective to pursue and advance the national interest. Fourth, Thucydides, like all modern realists, was concerned with security and survival in an anarchic system.⁷⁸ This concern leads the state to take actions – such as increasing military capacities, and forming alliances – all in the name of security and survival. These assumptions return us to realism's original assumption, which holds that international politics rests on power, and states take actions as part of a never-ending struggle to maintain or increase their power.

Neorealism

A modern interpretation of realist theory, which emerged with Kenneth Waltz's, *Theory of International Politics*, written in 1979, was undertaken in order to revive realist

⁷⁷ Ibid, 133.

⁷⁸ Mingst, 71-72.

thinking by translating several core realist ideas into a deductive, top-down theoretical framework.⁷⁹ Overall, neorealist theory claims that the interactions among sovereign states can be explained by the pressures and constraints exerted on them by the anarchic structure of the international system. Waltz refers to three levels of analysis, or three images, of the causes of war: the individual, the unit and the international, which he does in order to determine the origins of state behavior. While Waltz examines all three levels, he ultimately rejects the first two images in favor of a more persuasive third image. This third image posits that the cause of war is found at the international level, and that the anarchic structure of the international system is the overriding and root cause of war. Furthermore, the international system, or what Waltz calls the systemic level, is crucial to shaping actor options at other levels. In other terms, the anarchic system constrains the actions that states can take in relation to one another. In this context, anarchy is not defined as a condition of chaos but rather one in which there is no sovereign body that governs the interactions between autonomous nation-states.

Waltz's work can be said to incorporate a *holistic* approach because it assigns primary importance to the international systemic level as opposed to the unit level. In seeking to differentiate between the holistic and the reductionist, Waltz separates *system* level phenomena from *unit* level phenomena in developing a top-down approach, which depicts an international system that is composed of interactive units. These interactive units behave differently when placed under the constraints of alternative international structures, including ones that are horizontally organized (multipolarity) and ones that are more hierarchically organized (bipolarity and unipolarity). These structures then shape the options available to the units and thereby define their behavior.

⁷⁹ Wohlforth, 137.

What we find here is a structurationist ontology that places the highest degree of emphasis on the international system. However, if we attempt an in-depth study of the concept of American exceptionalism and its role in foreign policy, the international system is not fully explanatory, because it does not allow us to focus as much on such unit-level variables as strategic culture, ideology, and political systems. Therefore, we need to incorporate the third movement of realism, known as neoclassical realism. This discourse permits more rigorous analysis of the individual and unit level factors that produce certain foreign policy outcomes. Furthermore, this school of thought in international relations theory will also show the importance that *relative power* plays in explaining why states take certain actions. As previously discussed, exceptionalism (as a key element of America's liberal ideology) operates through interactions between the individual and unit levels of analysis, which neorealism with its emphasis on the international system, does not allow us to explore fully.

Neoclassical Realism

Neoclassical realism is a school of thought within realism that embraces rather than denies realism's diversity. It incorporates elements of classical realism and neorealism and postulates that state action can be explained by both systemic variables as well as domestic variables. Similar to neorealism's focus on the systems level of analysis, neoclassical realism finds that the distribution of power capabilities among states influences the actions of decision-makers in foreign policy. However, neoclassical realism distinguishes itself from neorealism by taking into account domestic variables such as state institutions, societal actors and political cultures in explaining state behavior.

This theory offers insights and helps form hypotheses from specific events and issues and by illuminating various puzzles. One such question is: what is the extent to which foreign policy is the product of external factors or a response to internally generated pressures? In answering this question, neoclassical realists apply assumptions from classical realist theory and apply them to the domestic level so that both domestic and international factors are seen as intervening variables. Furthermore, neoclassical realist theory is an effort to set forth conditions under which a nation's foreign policy may deviate from the systemic conditions set forth by classical realists, such as Morgenthau, and structural realists, such as Waltz.

As Wohlforth states, "[Neoclassical realists] seek to recapture the grounding in the gritty details of foreign policy that marked classical realism while also benefiting from the rigorous theorizing that typified neorealism."⁸⁰ According to neoclassical realists, of which author and scholar Gideon Rose is a key exemplar, there are intervening variables that exist on the unit level that could explain why the state and its decision makers respond to issues on the systemic level. It is the existence of intervening variables that might explain why actors have different responses to the same external stimuli, such as the threat of war or aggression, depending on international conditions, or various forms of government.

Neoclassical realism also provides a nexus between the domestic and foreign realms to include a combination of both *primat der innenpolitik* (the primacy of internal politics) school of thought and structural realism's focus on systemic and international system of anarchy. Furthermore, neoclassical realists discuss the importance of both unit level factors and relative power in order to explain why states take certain actions. In

⁸⁰ Wohlforth, 141.

exploring neoclassical realism's ability to embrace different threads of realism, let us first begin with a discussion of *innenpolitik*.

Primat der Innenpolitik (Primacy of Internal Politics)

The *innenpolitik* school of thought stresses the influence of domestic factors on foreign policy, including political and economic ideology, national character, partisan politics, and socioeconomic structure in determining how countries behave among others. While there are variants of *innenpolitik*, the theories coalesce on the idea that foreign policy is best understood as the product of a country's internal dynamics. Thus, in order to understand state behavior, one needs to look at preferences of and the configurations among key domestic actors.

In neoclassical realism's focus on both structural realism and *innenpolitik* (which translates to internal politics), it does not reject the primacy of the international systemic level. Rather, it asserts or reaffirms the primacy of the international system. Neoclassical realist theory, however, is based on the assumption that inputs from the international system level are influenced by differing domestic lenses – such that perspectives may differ from Washington to London, or from Baghdad to Tehran. Furthermore, according to neoclassical realism, structural change begins at the *unit level*. This makes neoclassical realist theory a *reductionist* theory because it looks deeper than the holistic level at structures internal to states in order to determine why states take certain actions in international affairs.

These ideas allow for the integration of democratic peace theory, as discussed below, because both theories deal with such causal factors at the unit level as the existence of a democratic political system and liberal economic practices, which clearly

have international ramifications. The combination of both structural realism and innenpolitik leads to several basic questions that can be addressed by neoclassical realist theory. First, how do states assess international threats and opportunities? Second, who are the relevant actors within the state with respect to assessing these international threats? Third, how are disagreements within the state over the nature of international threats and the appropriate remedies ultimately resolved? And lastly, how do external threats and challenges shape domestic institutions?

In seeking answers to these questions, neoclassical realist theory employs arguments from different schools of thought within realism, including structural realism and innenpolitik. Innenpolitik's incorporation of a domestic lens (which in this study can be perceived as American exceptionalism) influences how one might answer the question: to what extent is foreign policy the product of external factors or it is a response to internally generated pressures? In contemporary U.S. politics, the use of exceptionalism by political candidates and policymakers as a way to demonstrate a certain degree of national pride and belief in America's leadership position in the world make their policy suggestions more favorable to the electorate. When this favorability achieves certain election results, exceptionalism can be deemed to have an impact on domestic politics, and thus on the foreign policies pursued by those candidates and policy makers – as prescribed by neoclassical realist theory.

The Security Dilemma: Offensive and Defensive Realism

Neoclassical realist theory also incorporates variants of realism that highlight the influence of the international system on state behavior. Structural realism, or neorealism, includes the concepts of both offensive and defensive realism. Scholar and theorist

Robert Jervis provides the conceptual basis for offensive and defensive realism in, "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma." Jervis explains the security dilemma as a situation in which states are distrustful of other states' intentions, and as a consequence attempt to maximize their own security. Tension between states can either rise or fall depending on whether offensive or defensive capabilities of each side dominate, and on whether states are perceived as either revisionist or status quo.⁸¹

Offensive realism reverses the principles of innenpolitik to argue that systemic and international factors are always dominant in determining state behavior. Offensive realists see the security dilemma as an inescapable element of the anarchic system. According to this theory, mutual security is close to impossible because states are perpetually in conflict and seeking to gain power in the system. Defensive realism, on the other hand, argues that in practice, systemic factors influence some elements of state behavior, but not conclusively, thus leaving room for domestic and internal factors to drive the foreign policy decisions of the state. Furthermore, defensive realists find that there is more room for cooperation among states, and that increasing understanding and communication between states can diminish the security dilemma.

In practice, neoclassical realism incorporates elements of defensive realism and both external and internal independent variables, thereby updating and systematizing certain insights drawn from Morgenthau's work in classical realist thought. Therefore, according to neoclassical realism, the scope and ambition of a country's foreign policy is

⁸¹ Robert Jervis, "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma." *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (1978), 167-214. Within the context of international relations, revisionist states are classified as nations whose actions are likely to be threatening to other states and to the stability of the international system. Conversely, status quo states are nations whose actions seek to maintain the stability of the international system, and their place in the current world order.

driven first and foremost by its place in the international system and specifically by its relative power, which is itself a realist concept.

Neoclassical realism, however, takes the classical realist argument a step further when it argues that the impact of such power on foreign policy is indirect and complex. The reason is that systemic pressures must be processed through intervening variables at the unit level, thus stressing the role of both independent and intervening variables including exceptionalism and ideology. Figure C below is a diagram that describes the importance of unit level intervening variables including economy, culture, geography, ideology, and political regime. This level of analysis connects the individual to the international, and it is the domestic lens through which all actions are filtered. The individual is shaped by unit level perceptions, which is in turn affected by the anarchic structure and distribution of power in the international system. The unit, the nation state, is then the primary actor that determines international change.

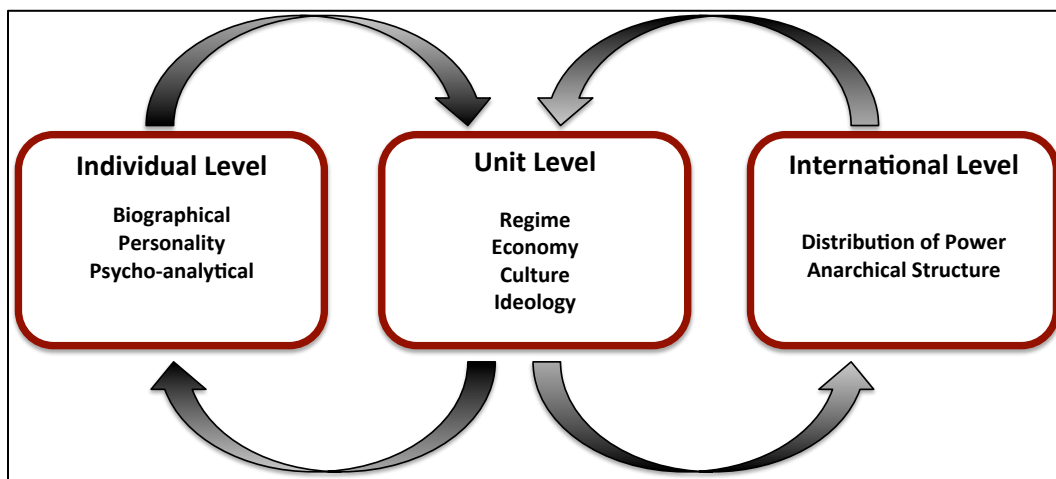


Figure C: International and Individual Action Filtered Through the Unit Level

To look at this theory from another perspective, the scholar Douglas Stuart discusses in "Foreign Policy Decision Making," in the Oxford Handbook on International Relations, how neoclassical realists combine "realist assumptions about the causal influence of the international system with in-depth analysis of the beliefs and preferences of the individuals and groups involved in foreign policy decision making."⁸² Furthermore, Gideon Rose in his work, *Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy*, asserts that systemic pressures are always important, but that these pressures are "neither Hobbesian nor benign but murky and difficult to read."⁸³ Under these circumstances, neoclassical realists recognize the need to shift their focus to the individuals and groups involved in the decisional apparatus in order to determine their specific views on the international situation.⁸⁴

Neoclassical Realism's Application to American Exceptionalism

Neoclassical realism not only provides explanatory power to unit level intervening variables, including ideology, culture and concepts such as exceptionalism, but it also seeks to differentiate between the two models of exceptionalism – the exemplar and the messianic – as discussed earlier. Using language very similar to scholars who write specifically on the topic of exceptionalism, Gideon Rose states that "'exemplars' have believed that the nation should rest content with setting an example for the world, while [missionaries] have believed the nation should take a more direct and activist role in shaping political developments abroad in accordance with American

⁸² Douglas T. Stuart, "Foreign Policy Decision Making," in *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations* ed. Reus-Smit, Christian and Snidal, Duncan, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), Chapter 33, 583.

⁸³ Gideon Rose, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy." *World Politics*, Vol. 51. No. 1 (Oct., 1998), 149.

⁸⁴ For more information on decision making theory as it pertains to U.S foreign policy, see Douglas T. Stuart, "Foreign Policy Decision Making," in *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations* ed. Christian Reus-Smit, and Duncan Snidal, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), Chapter 33, 576-594.

ideals.”⁸⁵ The difference between the two models corresponds to different periods throughout American history, as scholars of exceptionalism point out. First, there is nineteenth-century exceptionalism, as espoused by statesmen such as John Quincy Adams, who believed that the country “should not go abroad in search of monsters to destroy.” Second, there is twentieth-century exceptionalism, as illustrated by statesmen such as Woodrow Wilson who made the case that America should help to make the world “safe for democracy” in the wake of World War I.

Gideon Rose discusses the importance of changes in relative power and ideology in describing the shift from the exemplar to the messianic forms of exceptionalism. “From a neoclassical perspective,” writes Rose, “the first place to look in explaining such a shift would not be intellectual history or presidential psychology, but the massive increase in relative power the country had experienced between Adams and Wilson.” Rose then alludes to the ideological dimension of exceptionalism when he writes that, “One might still need to know the content of American political ideology, however, in order to understand the specific policy choices officials made in either era.”⁸⁶ This statement concretely describes the shifting nature of American exceptionalism, which overtime began to define the national interest more expansively than the basic pursuit of security.

The problem for neoclassical realists is to answer the question: why didn’t the U.S. seek to expand its national interests earlier in its history, when its ideals and institutions were the same? The answer, according to the proponents of this theory,

⁸⁵ Rose, Gideon. “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy.” *World Politics*, Vol. 51. No. 1 (Oct., 1998), 169. For context on Adams quote, it can be found in his “Address of July 4, 1821,” in Walter LaFeber, ed, John Quincy Adams and American Continental Empire (Chicago: Times Books, 1965), 45; the Wilson quotation can be found in his “Address Recommending the Declaration of a State of War,” April 2, 1917, *President Wilson’s Foreign Policy: Messages, Addresses, Papers*, ed. James B. Scott (New York: Oxford University Press, 1918), 287.

⁸⁶ Rose, 170.

would be that its geopolitical position was different. Fareed Zakaria speaks to this point in his book, *From Wealth to Power*. “Why as states grow increasingly wealthy,” asks Zakaria, “do they build large armies entangle themselves in politics beyond their borders, and seek international influence?”⁸⁷ Zakaria observes that historians note the expansion of U.S. foreign policy in the years before WWI and wonder why it occurred. Zakaria, however, asks the opposite. For a while, even after the U.S. had become perhaps the richest country in the world, most opportunities to expand American influence abroad were rejected – and even when it did become active later on, the U.S. lagged behind its European counterparts. Therefore, why didn’t America seek to expand its ideals and interests more and sooner? This illuminates a central question in the intellectual debate about exceptionalism.

Zakaria attempts to answer this question, in America’s case, by referring to the nation’s relative power compared with that of the great powers of the day: “The 1880s and 1890s mark the beginnings of the modern American state, which emerged primarily to cope with the domestic pressures generated by industrialization,” writes Zakaria. “This transformation of state structure complemented the continuing growth of national power, and by the mid-1890s, the executive branch was able to bypass Congress or coerce it into expanding American interests abroad. America’s resounding victory in the Spanish-American War crystallized the perception of increasing American power ... and America expanded dramatically in the years that followed.”⁸⁸ Through this language, Zakaria emphasizes the importance that neoclassical theorists place on the explanatory power of “relative power” in international politics.

⁸⁷ Zakaria, Fareed. *From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America's World Role*. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998), 3.

⁸⁸ Zakaria, 10-11.

Furthermore, in illustrating how the individual affects the unit and the international levels, and vice versa, Zakaria discusses why it is essential to regard relative power as an explanatory variable. The central questions in this study are: how does the ideology of exceptionalism influence U.S. foreign policy, and how does America's relative power in the world influence the ability of statesmen to implement "exceptional" policies? For example, both Thomas Jefferson and Woodrow Wilson espoused notions of American exceptionalism in fundamentally different ways: Jefferson, through his "empire of liberty" versus Wilson through his "making the world safe for democracy." But did America's relative power and the nation's geopolitical position influence the extent to which these statesmen could act on this ideology? One argument is that Jefferson did not allow his philosophy on this subject to infiltrate his foreign policies (he preached disengagement and maintaining a "safe" distance from European affairs), whereas Wilson saw American national interests and principles and universal values and sought to make these the basis for a new world order. One differentiating factor was America's relative power vis-à-vis other great powers of their times.

At the end of his examination of neoclassical realism, Rose states that there is still work to be done in understanding this school of realism. He says, "precise theoretical development in this area would be helpful, explicating just how various psychological, ideational, and cultural factors may affect how political actors perceive their own and others' capabilities and how such perceptions are translated into foreign policy."⁸⁹ This chapter on the role of American exceptionalism, as an ideology and a strong national sentiment, expresses more fully how to describe this failure in neoclassical realism's

⁸⁹ Rose, 168.

explanatory power. To put it simply, this chapter seeks to explore the various theoretical frameworks in which intervening unit-level variables, specifically that of exceptionalism, can sway foreign policy from what pure structural realist theories might predict.

Defining the National Interest

There is, in this discussion on realism, a need to explore and further define the concept of the national interest. Since different schools of realism approach the national interest in different ways, it is important to see what threads of realism, if any, might allow for the inclusion of exceptionalism in its promotion of the national interest and thus increase the probability that exceptionalism will be incorporated into a state's foreign policy. When defined narrowly, the concept of the national interest promotes the state's basic need for survival, which according to realist theory helps policymakers to avoid the pitfalls of "ideological crusades." When defined more broadly, the concept of the national interest can include the promotion of domestic values, principles and morals.⁹⁰

Morgenthau's view is that political relations among states are governed by objective rules that apply to human nature, which take concrete form when political leaders act on the basis of interest and exercise power accordingly. Morgenthau's view can also be seen as a defensive realist position on the formulation of the national interest, which is most closely defined as a security concept. In effect, power is not accumulated merely for its own sake, but for what is necessary for the state to achieve security. Offensive realists similarly reject the notion of ideological crusades, but also stress that

⁹⁰ Morgenthau remains the theorist who most succinctly provides classical realist's narrow definition of the national interest.

states should seek to maximize their power and capabilities when they fear a future potential threat.

Michael Smith contributes a critique of realist theory's handling of the national interest when he writes, "although, and perhaps because, they minimize the relevance of ethics to international relations, they appear not to recognize that 'their judgment of morality and their definition of the national interest rested on their own hierarchy of values.'"⁹¹ National interest depends on national identity, which is "a construct in our minds describing and prescribing how we should think, feel, evaluate, and ultimately behave in group-relevant situations."⁹² Therefore, according to Smith, realists incorporate value-laden aspects into their definition of the national interest, without acknowledging that they do so. Despite this counterargument, all realist theorists see a great danger in acting upon principles, values or ideology, or promoting the idea of a universal interest, because these types of factors can lead to instability and to actions that are not based on rational and narrow self-interest.

Scholar Donald Nuechterlein puts forward a useful framework for considering national interests in, "Defining National Interests: An Analytic Framework." "It is more reasonable to conclude," Nuechterlein writes, "that policymakers are influenced by geographical, cultural, political and economic factors that are deeply embedded in the national experience and in the particular ideology of the American people."⁹³ In the case of the United States, Nuechterlein finds that the nation's fundamental interest is predictably in "the defense and well-being of its citizens, its territory, and the U.S. constitutional system." Second, America has strategic interests that are second-order to

⁹¹ Dougherty, James E., and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr. *Contending Theories of International Relations*, 5th ed. (Addison, Wesley, Longman, 2001) 95.

⁹² *Ibid*, 95.

⁹³ This quote and the next are from Donald Nuechterlein, "Defining National Interests: An Analytic Framework," *America Recommitted* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1991), 15.

those of its fundamental and vital concerns. For Nuechterlein, these focus on “political, economic and military means of protecting the country against military threats.”

Furthermore, he finds that the United States, like most major powers, has both changing and unchanging national interests, which are the product of evolving world conditions and the nature of domestic political environments. Lastly, he lists America’s enduring national interests as: the defense of the U.S. and its constitutional system, enhancement of the nation’s economic well-being, creation of a favorable world order and security environment, and finally, the promotion abroad of U.S. democratic values and the free market system. To Nuechterlein’s point, while these interests have received varying degrees of attention throughout America’s history, they maintain an enduring influence on America’s foreign policy, and on the concept and conduct of American exceptionalism.

U.S. policymakers’ definition of the national interest became broader as the country’s military and economic capabilities increased in relative power. For example, during the Cold War, Americans focused not only on vital national interests such as safeguarding the homeland, but also with potential *future* challenges to America’s broader environment. As Fareed Zakaria points out, “only great powers have the luxury of viewing their national interests so expansively – the U.S. did not do so earlier in its history, when its ideals and institutions were the same, but its geopolitical position was different.”⁹⁴ Applying this principle to the study of American exceptionalism, America’s increase in relative power is one reason why exceptionalism gained a stronger role in U.S. foreign policy after WWI and WWII. It also provides one explanation for why Jefferson espoused exceptional ideals but implemented a more isolationist and moderate

⁹⁴ Zakaria, 12.

foreign policy, and why modern administrations (in an age of American hegemony) tend to discuss exceptionalism in more “messianic” ways. This also leads us into a discussion of the concepts of international liberalism, idealism, and the foundations of democratic peace theory; which promote acting in the name of universal interests, in contrast with Morgenthau’s carefully identified and much narrower definition of the national interests.

International Liberalism and Democratic Peace Theory

Democratic peace theory (DPT) represents a *domestic lens* through which to view state behavior. It incorporates unit level analysis to determine the impact that regime structures have on state behavior, and ultimately on structural change. Specifically, democratic peace theory promotes the idea that liberal democracies are more likely to conduct liberal practices with other liberal democracies. To put it simply, democracies are less likely to go to war with one another. Although the democratic peace theory was not rigorously studied until the 1960s, the basic principles have its foundations in liberalist theory, whose first true scholar was Immanuel Kant, an eighteenth century philosopher in the age of enlightenment. For Kant, the central tenets of liberalism revolve around the freedom of the individual, specifically the right to be free from “arbitrary authority,” of those rights necessary to protect and promote the capacity and opportunity for freedom and the right of democratic participation or representation.⁹⁵ One could say that Kant foreshadowed the democratic peace theory in his essay “Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch,” written in 1795. In this essay he claims, among other things, that republics are more pacific than other forms of government.

⁹⁵ Michael E. Brown, Sean M. Lynn-Jones, and Steven Miller, eds. *Debating the Democratic Peace* (Cambridge, Ma.: The MIT Press, 1996), 4. Kant, furthermore, was a firm adherent to the central tenets of the Enlightenment and much of his philosophy grew out of a reaction against the empiricism of David Hume.

Scholar Michael E. Brown in, *Debating the Democratic Peace*, elaborates on Kant's role in the foundations of democratic peace theory, which will be explored below.

For Kant, there are three main characteristics of republics (or liberal democracies) that produce a "Pacific Union" of states, all of which are built along liberal lines and based on the freedom of the individual. First, individuals do not inherently gravitate toward war. Mankind is inherently peaceful and prefers to avoid war since it is the individual who will have to bear the costs of war using their own resources. Democracy in its true form aggregates the preferences of individuals, and therefore according to Kant, states will also be averse to war.⁹⁶ Second, throughout liberal democracies, which are based on similar political values, Brown argues that, "an understanding of the legitimate rights of all citizens and of all republics comes into play." There is now a "moral foundation" for peace among democracies since they have a respect for one another.⁹⁷ Third, liberal democracies are fundamentally characterized by a basic commitment to liberal economic principles, which makes international trade between these countries nearly unavoidable and a source itself of peace and prosperity. Furthermore, trade amongst liberal democracies will lead to greater interdependence and economic ties, making war more costly between nations of the "Pacific Union."⁹⁸ Thus, if all nations embody Kant's characteristics of republics, there would be little aggression amongst them.

Using Kant's central tenets of liberalism as a foundation for understanding exceptionalism, we begin our discussion on democratic peace theory, and the inherent

⁹⁶ Brown, 24-5.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 25-6.

⁹⁸ Ibid, 26-8.

connections it shares with the concept of American exceptionalism.⁹⁹ Building on the foundations established by Kant's international liberalism, democratic peace theory makes the claim that countries sharing values and organized to protect and promote individual freedom will not – or at least are very hesitant to – fight wars with one another. While, several different approaches exist, the following factors of democratic peace are widely agreed upon by proponents. First, democratically elected leaders must answer the public at the ballot box for any wars in which they engage; second, leaders answerable to the public are more likely to support diplomatic institutions to resolve international tensions; third, democracies look favorably upon countries with similar values; and lastly, economic integration due to “liberal” economic policies makes war less desirable for liberal democracies.

As we will see in the case study section, Woodrow Wilson is a key example of an American statesman who promoted directly the democratic peace theory through his actions on the world stage. When addressing Congress in 1917 with his now famous “War Message,” Wilson stated, “Our object now, as then, is to vindicate the principles of peace and justice in the life of the world as against selfish and autocratic power and to set up amongst the really free and self-governed peoples of the world such a concert of purpose and of action as will henceforth ensure the observance of those principles.”¹⁰⁰ This passage speaks directly to the central principles of democratic peace theory, as it articulates the a concert of democratic nations striving for more peaceful relations between one another.

⁹⁹ Immanuel Kant defines democracy as a representative government, elected by free citizens who are equal before the law.

¹⁰⁰ Woodrow Wilson, Message to Congress. April 2, 1917. Accessed from: http://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Wilson's_War_Message_to_Congress on November 10, 2013

Democratic Peace Theory's Application to American Exceptionalism

It is in the study of the democratic peace theory that we begin to see the *application* of American exceptionalism in U.S. foreign policy. It is a theory that can also, in a sense, be integrated into neoclassical realism. Just as neoclassical realism allows for the exploration of unit level variables when seeking to understand the origin of state behavior, so too does democratic peace theory deal with factors at the unit level that have international consequences. Democratic peace theory, moreover, allows us to focus on unit level variables (i.e., the form of the government) in explaining why America implements certain foreign policies.

When America takes action to promote a world order based upon the maintenance or spread of liberal democracies, this speaks to the messianic, and more activist model of exceptionalism. As previously mentioned, this messianic form embraces a special task and mission for America, in which the nation has a responsibility to fulfill a larger purpose. Furthermore, this model seeks to protect American liberalism by further propagating the democratic ideal. In this model, and in accordance with the principles of the democratic peace theory, the United States should pursue the interests of the international system as well as its own national interests because as a liberal hegemon, it sees its interests as tightly coupled with the interests of the international system.

No country lives strictly according to its political ideology and few liberal states are as “hegemonically liberal” as the United States.¹⁰¹ While Brown notes that domestic actors derive their sense of legitimacy from sources other than liberalism, in the United States, “public policy derives its legitimacy from its concordance with liberal

¹⁰¹ Brown, 25. Originally quoted in Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America; An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution*. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1955.)

principles.”¹⁰² The reason is that policies not rooted in liberal principles generally fail to sustain long-term public support. As Brown argues, these principles provide a firm anchor for the “most successful zone of international peace yet established” among liberal nations. Returning to our discussion of the national interest, Brown finds that the U.S. national security bureaucracy tends to fall into the realist, national interest frame of reference, while he notes that there is a liberalist perspective urging the U.S. to ensure that its interests are consistent with its liberal principles.

While the democratic peace theory does not allow liberal democracies to escape the security dilemma caused by anarchy in the world political system, this theory shows how relations among states of a similarly liberal character can mitigate the dangers of the anarchic system. For this reason, the decline of U.S. hegemonic leadership may pose dangers for the liberal world. In this case, liberal societies will no longer be able to provide the mutual assistance they might require to sustain their liberal domestic orders in the face of mounting economic crises. Thus, as the need for them to cooperate and to accommodate disappears, dangers in the world will become more significant as “countries might fall prey to a corrosive rivalry that destroys the pacific union.”¹⁰³

America: The Liberal Hegemon

This leads us into our final discussion of classical theories, hegemonic stability theory. Exploring this theory in greater depth also returns this chapter to its initial focus on international realism. When reduced to its core principles, hegemonic stability theory builds on the observation that powerful states tend to seek dominance over all or parts of an international system, which fosters a hierarchical distribution of power within the

¹⁰² Brown, 26.

¹⁰³ Brown, 28 .

overall anarchic international system. The theory's core prediction is that any international order is stable only to the degree that the relations of authority within it are sustained by an underlying distribution of power.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, hegemonic stability theory indicates that the international system is more likely to remain stable when a single nation-state or in other words, the hegemon, is in the position of the dominant world power. Thus, the fall of the existing world hegemon or an international order void of hegemony diminishes the stability of the system. This theory also seeks to explain how cooperation can emerge among major powers, and how international orders, rules, norms, and institutions emerge and are sustained.

The essential argument of hegemonic stability theory, as in realist theory, is that states seek security in a self-help system. From this premise, threats to security diminish to the extent that the interests and values of units within the international system are compatible with one another. Furthermore, where the hegemon's interests and values are compatible with those of lesser entities, there is a greater willingness by smaller states to entrust their security to the more powerful entity. Reasons for the lack of hard balancing, or lack of attempts to upset the current world order and hegemonic hierarchy may differ. Lesser powers may also be prepared to entrust their security because they have no viable alternatives. Since the hegemon, if it wished to do so, could enforce its will over lesser units, there exists a symbiotic relationship between consensus and coercion. This in turn builds conditions in which an imbalance of capabilities (or a hierarchical international structure) may be considered stabilizing.

¹⁰⁴ For a more complete study of hegemonic stability theory, see: William C. Wohlforth, "Realism," in Christian Reus-Smith and Duncan Snidal, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations* (Oxford University Press, 2008), chapter 7.

While hegemonic stability theory finds that international order and stability are best achieved through the maintenance of the status quo, there are both neoliberal and neorealist interpretations that regard the hegemon as capable of creating either more or less stability. The determinant question dealt with in the competing interpretations is: does the hegemon pose a threat to the international system or does it provide security and stability to all other units? The neorealist interpretation, as exemplified by John J. Mearsheimer's, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, outlines how the anarchic system creates power hungry states that attempt to install themselves as regional and global hegemonies. The system is created, shaped, and maintained by coercion. When the system and its institutions no longer serve the hegemon's interests, the nation-state then begins to undermine the system. With the decline of a hegemon, the system will descend into instability.¹⁰⁵

The neoliberal interpretation, on the other hand, provides a less confrontational image by arguing that the hegemon provides global public goods through institutions, which work to secure the best interests of all, or the majority, of the other units. Motivated by "enlightened self-interest," the hegemon takes on the costs because it is good for all actors and creates stability in the system, which also serves the interests of all actors. With the decline of the hegemon, institutions do not automatically die; instead, they take on a life of their own. This perspective can be found in Andrew Moravcsik's, *New Liberalism*, which states that "the greater the concentration of relative power capabilities, the greater the pressure on recalcitrant governments and the more likely is an international regime to form and prosper."¹⁰⁶ Overall, two points

¹⁰⁵ John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. (New York: Norton, 2001).

¹⁰⁶ Andrew Moravcsik, "The New Liberalism," in Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations* (Oxford University Press, 2008), chapter 13.

differentiate between the neoliberal and neorealist interpretations: first, neoliberals see a far greater scope for international cooperation, and second, institutions play an important role in facilitating this cooperation. Thus from the liberal perspective, democracy, economic interdependence, and international institutions largely obviate the need for states to engage in balancing behavior, and extend stability to the international system.

Hegemonic Stability Theory's Application to American Exceptionalism

There are certain historical epochs when a hegemonic power shapes the international system. The post-WWII era represents one such time. Just as the world experienced eras of Pax-Romana and Pax-Brittanica, so too does it witness an era of Pax-Americana, which is upheld through America's active maintenance of the status quo. The strength of American hegemony is based upon both hard power and soft power, including widespread acceptance of its democratic values, cultures, and norms. Furthermore, the world since 1945 has seen relative peace and stability as well as extended deterrence due to American security guarantees. U.S. preponderance has led not only to security alliances, but also to a world order reinforced regimes based on explicit rules as codified by institutions and organizations.

Thus it can be said that America is the global hegemon. Many see this American hegemony as liberal, benevolent, and benign, which provides global public goods and brings stability to the world order. American exceptionalism not only shapes the role that the United States has played and currently plays as a global hegemon, but the reverse also takes place. The United States as a benign hegemon bases its principles and actions on the ideology and practice of American exceptionalism, which provides a filter

through which the United States views the outside world and responds to external stimuli. Building on its embrace of the democratic peace theory, the United States continues to see itself as an exceptional nation whose destiny includes sharing its democratic and republican values with other societies as a basis for building a peaceful, prosperous, and stable world order.

As the scholar Robert Kagan wrote in a 2012 article in *The New Republic*, “The present world order—characterized by an unprecedented number of democratic nations; a greater global prosperity, even with the current crisis, than the world has ever known; and a long peace among great powers—reflects American principles and preferences, and was built and preserved by American power in all its political, economic, and military dimensions.” This world order, as Kagan writes, is upheld by American ideals, and the values of liberty, freedom, and liberalism – and thus embodies the very principles underlying American exceptionalism – which in turn contribute to greater stability and peace. “If American power declines,” Kagan continues, “this world order will decline with it.”¹⁰⁷ While American exceptionalism is deemed by some to be a dangerous insertion of ideology into foreign policy, others view a world order imbued with American exceptionalism as central to maintaining peace and stability within the anarchic system in which states reside.

For now, it is unclear whether the United States will begin to experience hard balancing against its interests. The greater the power of the hegemon, the less likely that the actions of other powers will damage the hegemon to the state where it is seriously weakened. The paradox is that even states greatly benefiting from such American hegemony may have a propensity to challenge the hegemon. This leads to common

¹⁰⁷ Robert Kagan, “Against the Myth of American Decline.” *The New Republic*, January 11, 2012. Accessed on November 17, 2013.

questions such as, when will American hegemony decline? Are we currently witnessing America's decline? What will happen to the stability of the international system without American leadership and hegemony? All of these questions carry implicitly in them an undertone of American exceptionalism, which as we have discussed rests on a number of theories, including that of the democratic peace theory and hegemonic stability theory. Without American exceptionalism in its more engaged and activist form, will the world be a more stable place? What potential alternatives exist? Furthermore, how can we fashion a revised and renewed sense of exceptionalism that does not extend into militaristic overreach but maintains American engagement that the current world-order so heavily relies upon? These questions, while numerous, also pose significant challenges to current and future American policymakers, and must be addressed with unbridled clarity if America is to remain the world's hegemon that contributes to international peace and security.

Conclusion

The objective of this chapter is to build an integrative theoretical foundation for the concept of exceptionalism. By increasing our understanding of the theoretical foundations on which exceptionalism rests, we can better evaluate how political choices are made and how scholars and practitioners determine the origins of state behavior. Most importantly, the formulation of a theoretical narrative of exceptionalism will enable scholars and policymakers to clarify the reasons behind using exceptionalism to describe and promote U.S. foreign policy decisions, specifically in times of military engagement. This study is also necessary for scholars and policymakers who seek

greater precision when promoting exceptionalism and translating the concept into policies that govern the conduct of U.S. foreign policy.

A central challenge for American exceptionalism is the imprecision with which it is used, and the complex evolution of its meaning throughout American history. The reality that the study of exceptionalism is subjected to normative standards of interpretation increases the need for scholars to develop theoretical frameworks that depict a more precise and analytical approach. To this point, the real test of theory, as argued by Morgenthau, is for it to be “judged not by some preconceived abstract principle or concept unrelated to reality, but by its purpose: to bring order and meaning to a mass of phenomena without which it would remain disconnected and unintelligible.”¹⁰⁸ Indeed, the purpose of theory is to create order out of informational chaos. This becomes more challenging when the subject of focus contains attributes of ideological and nationalist undertones, which in the case of exceptionalism, diminishes the empirical precision surrounding the term. Furthermore, due to the pervasive promotion of exceptionalism throughout American politics and foreign policy, it is crucial that the scholarship on exceptionalism move beyond normative, ideological and sentimental barriers to adopt a more rigorous and analytic approach.

One finding from this in-depth study on the theoretical frameworks of exceptionalism is the difficulty of building an integrative approach. There is no singular or encompassing theory that best explains the role of exceptionalism in the development and conduct of U.S. foreign policy. Rather, what we see is a confluence of worldviews and frameworks that when incorporated can help us to illustrate how exceptionalism can be used to understand elements of America’s foreign policy. Another outcome of

¹⁰⁸ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 5th ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), p.3 This quotation is an excerpt from: William C Martel, *Victory in War: Foundations of Modern Strategy*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 31-32.

this research is the importance of using a domestic lens to view the presence and influence of exceptionalism in U.S. foreign policy. Using realism theory as a foundation, it is only through continuous refinement of its core tenets that we can better determine the influence of exceptionalism on U.S. foreign policy. Furthermore, theories that emphasize the unit and individual levels of analysis, including neoclassical realism, the innenpolitik school of thought, and the democratic peace theory, are essential to understanding exceptionalism. These levels provide the domestic lens through which to study intervening variables of ideology, nationalism, political culture and values within states.

Overtime, international relations theory has evolved to embrace new concepts, different hypotheses and contrasting worldviews. If there is any consistent aspect of theory, it is that theory is *revisionist*; it aims at reaching higher truths, but is never entirely conclusive. The objective for future research on exceptionalism must be to develop precise theoretical and historical frameworks around the concept in order to clarify just how various ideational, ideological and cultural factors may affect foreign policy at the individual and unit levels, and how such perceptions are translated into foreign policy.

The next step is to analyze the concept of exceptionalism from historical contexts in which it is perceived that exceptionalism, in its various forms, served as an intervening variable in the development of U.S. foreign policy.

CHAPTER IV

CASE STUDY ON THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR: THE CONVERGENCE OF IDEOLOGY, POWER, AND INTEREST AT THE TURN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

This chapter explores U.S. foreign policy debates surrounding the question of whether to intervene in Cuba and engage in what would later become known as the Spanish-American War. This war presents the culmination of an epoch in American history when the nation's increase in relative power began to manifest itself in more expansionist policies outside of its territorial borders. This military engagement with Spain over the liberation of Cuba also represents a "paradigm shift" from the exemplar model of exceptionalism to the messianic model of exceptionalism. Throughout William McKinley's presidency, and among many of his advisors, there existed a belief in America's larger mission in the world. Furthermore, by the 1890s, many influential Americans were dissatisfied with the passive idea that the U.S. should provide a model, and nothing more for others around the world. American statesmen in the latter half of the nineteenth-century began to issue statements not of the traditional isolationist nature, but instead aligned with a more active and engaged foreign policy. This new articulation took on imperialistic undertones that helped to shape America's new course in international affairs; a course that would lead not only to intervention in Cuba, but also to a new era of international engagement and expansion.

Introduction

Throughout American history, there have been periods that reveal clear and evident shifts in the nation's foreign policy. These pivot points rarely happen suddenly, but rather through measured and gradual changes in thinking, policy, and ultimately institutions. One such period in U.S. history emerged in the latter half of the nineteenth-

century, when American policymakers began to see foreign affairs and the nation's role in the world differently. The apogee of this shift occurred with America's decision to intervene in Cuba and wage what would become known as the Spanish-American War. This war commenced an era of American expansionism from which the nation has never retreated.

The Spanish-American War of 1898 also serves as the culmination of a period that historian Robert Beisner calls a *paradigm shift*. "A paradigm change," for Beisner, "is related to changes in both conditions and the perception of those conditions. Over a long enough period of time circumstances themselves usually change sufficiently to make an old paradigm obsolete."¹⁰⁹ It can be argued, moreover, that in the case of Cuba, one of the major changes that occurred from the 1870s to the 1890s was the way in which Americans *perceived* ongoing conditions on the island and in the context of its relations with Spain. Indeed, Spanish suppression of Cuban rebellions was a constant theme following the Ten Years War in 1878, with uprisings taking place in 1879, 1883, 1885, 1892, and 1893. Yet it was not until 1895 that the Cuban rebellions seemed to stir America's moral conscience enough to take action. The question then becomes, what caused Americans to look at ongoing circumstances in Cuba and perceive them differently? What confluence of factors influenced America to intervene in Cuba and challenge a European empire, an action that the nation had previously so vehemently opposed?

The factors that drove Americans to war are so numerous and complex in detail that this brief study does not seek to capture them all. Insofar as America's intervention in Cuba represents the culmination of a *paradigm shift*, this paper focuses on the role of

¹⁰⁹ Robert Beisner, *From the Old Diplomacy to the New, 1865-1900*. (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company) 1975. 67.

what Beisner calls, “the circumstantial givens” – circumstances, conditions, institutions, beliefs, and attitudes that guide a nation’s diplomacy toward certain goals and away from others, and that when combined, define the parameters of policy.¹¹⁰ Specifically, this study postulates that American exceptionalism is an enduring characteristic of American society throughout the nation’s history, which underwent a series of subtle changes in the latter half of the nineteenth century that produced a shift in the manifestation of exemplar and messianic exceptionalism. These shifts in the articulation of and willingness to act upon that ideology shaped, in part, the circumstances and conditions present in America on the eve of the Spanish-American War.

Another way of viewing these “circumstantial givens” is through the national level of analysis. Thomas Paterson’s historiography titled, “United States Intervention in Cuba, 1898: Interpretations of the Spanish-American-Cuban-Filipino War,” offers four levels of analysis (reminiscent of Waltz’s three images) from which to study the factors leading America to declare war on Spain: the international, the regional, the national and the individual. As Paterson asks about the national level of analysis: What were “the conditions within the U.S. of the late nineteenth century that shaped the environment in which decisions were made and elevated to national authority leaders committed to empire?”¹¹¹ Essentially, what domestic factors caused this paradigm shift? Using this framework, this chapter will focus on the national level of analysis to investigate the ideological underpinnings that help explain America’s foreign policy decision to intervene in Cuba.

Using this national-level of analysis approach is not to say that international and regional factors did not play a role in America’s decision to go to war. Indeed, the

¹¹⁰ Beisner, 3.

¹¹¹ Thomas Paterson, “United States Intervention in Cuba, 1898: Interpretations of the Spanish-American-Cuban-Filipino War.” *The History Teacher*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (May, 1996), 350.

international balance of power and regional characteristics of the Western hemisphere are critical in explaining why America intervened in Cuba. However, the domestic context, as conditioned by certain ideological impulses, provides an interesting angle through which to study the causes of the Spanish-American War. This approach is also applicable to contemporary studies of foreign policy, as many current theorists and practitioners spend too little time understanding the role of domestic politics and culture. However, regarding nations as “black boxes” or “billiard balls” driven by changes in the international system and relative power leads not only to a lack of nuance, but also to misunderstandings about America’s foreign policy decision-making process. Furthermore, it is important when looking at paradigm shifts to investigate what really changed and what beliefs were, in fact, traditional and longstanding throughout American history.

America’s Enduring Belief in Exceptionalism

“Specific directions of American foreign policy are determined,” states Beisner, “by beliefs and traditions that require little conscious thought or reflection...”¹¹²As discussed earlier, thoughts on exceptionalism existed within the American mentality and national identity long before the onset of the Spanish-American War. This ever-present belief in exceptionalism throughout American history signifies that the nation has a special inherent quality that sets it apart from other developed or advanced nations, as presented in the exemplar model of exceptionalism. As Beisner notes, “Americans viewed themselves as destined not merely to inhabit the earth, but to create

¹¹² Beisner, 12.

a free nation and develop a way of life never before achieved in history.”¹¹³ Yet throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, American statesmen did not formulate foreign policy based on this belief.

Furthermore, America’s superior strength, large army and navy, and tremendous economic power did not bring about this belief. Rather, these thoughts existed well before America maintained any sort of supremacy – either regional or international. “Woodrow Wilson would eventually define this mission as the positive obligation to spread American principles and institutions to the rest of the world...” says Beisner, “but beforehand, the post-Civil War generation was content to interpret it in passive terms, holding that America’s duty was only to provide an example that the rest of the world would do well to emulate.”¹¹⁴ This, in other terms, speaks to the exemplar model of exceptionalism. The question then becomes a matter of *when* and *how* American statesmen articulated and subsequently acted upon the ideology of American exceptionalism in more missionary and messianic ways. In looking at these questions, we can see a shift in thinking emerge during the latter half of the nineteenth century.

John Winthrop’s *shining city on a hill* metaphor, first stated in the 1630’s, laid the foundation for America’s early notions of an American mission to reform or better the world. However, the early founding fathers over a century later would espouse this type of rhetoric not as a way to promote international involvement, but rather as a way to instill the nation with a sense of aloofness from European affairs. In other words, statesmen practiced the exemplar model of exceptionalism – a more latent form of American exceptionalism.

Moreover, several historians connect America’s early republican ideals to a sense

¹¹³ Beisner, 14.

¹¹⁴ Beisner, 9.

of American greatness and the nation's destiny to carry out some larger purpose. The nation's early beliefs in liberty, constitutionalism and freedom coalesced to create the idea that Americans were a special people with a special destiny to be the forbearer of democracy in the modern world. The Revolutionary Era led to a distinct version of exemplar exceptionalism, most ardently endorsed by early statesmen and the nation's founding fathers. Historian Thomas Kidd writes, "with the onset of the revolutionary crisis, a major conceptual shift convinced Americans across the theological spectrum that God was raising up America for some special purpose."¹¹⁵

One such proponent of America's special purpose was Thomas Jefferson. According to historians Robert Tucker and David Hendrickson, Thomas Jefferson believed America "was the bearer of a new diplomacy, founded on the confidence of a free and virtuous people, that would secure ends based on the natural and universal rights of man, by means that escaped war and its corruptions."¹¹⁶ Jefferson envisaged America becoming a model for democracy and republicanism. While one wonders how widespread such beliefs were, it is statements such as these that point to an early belief among policy elites in American exceptionalism.

Jefferson's strong belief in America's universal mission, however, was rarely acted upon in U.S. foreign policy. Rather, American leaders from the time of George Washington to Grover Cleveland more or less expressed a policy of isolationism. When Cleveland gave his inaugural address on March 4, 1885, he endorsed the familiar foreign policy themes of independence, avoidance of overseas conflicts, and defense of the American system against European encroachment, very much aligned with the model of

¹¹⁵ Kidd, Thomas S. *God of Liberty: A Religious History of the American Revolution*. (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 9.

¹¹⁶ Robert Tucker and David Hendrickson, *The Imperial Temptation: The New World Order and America's Purpose*. (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1992).

exemplar exceptionalism. In his first message to Congress he added: "Maintaining, as I do, the entangling alliances with foreign states, I do not favor a policy of acquisition of new and distant territory or the incorporation of remote interests with our own."¹¹⁷

Cleveland's aversion to colonialism and imperialism was also exemplified when he rejected America's opportunity to annex Hawaii in 1893. While a number of economic and political factors dating back to the 1850s influenced Cleveland's decision, so too did his principles. As Secretary of State Walter Q. Gresham said, Cleveland was not opposed to expansion, but could not stomach the idea of "stealing territory, or annexing a people against their consent."¹¹⁸

Through these accounts, it can be seen that the belief in American exceptionalism was present long before America's founding and existed throughout the nation's early years and first century. In this sense, America's traditions, culture, and beliefs did not undergo any drastic shift in the 1890s. Rather, the last decade of the nineteenth century represented a different articulation of what were deeply held beliefs, traditions, and values. In other words, we see a shift from the exemplar model to the messianic model of exceptionalism. This new articulation took on imperialistic undertones that helped to shape America's new course in international affairs, a course that would lead not only to intervention in Cuba, but also to a new era of international engagement and expansion.

The New American Mission: Progressive Imperialism

Americans' adherence to a belief in the nation's mission to spread liberty and

¹¹⁷ Foster Rhea Dulles, *The Imperial Years* (New York: Thomas Crowell, 1956), pp. 16-17. Cited in McDougall, 101.

¹¹⁸ Walter McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company) 1997. 109

freedom throughout the world became an argument, in addition to commercial and strategic factors, in defining a new era of progressive imperialism. The term progressive is apt because American imperialism did not take the form of traditional colonialism. Rather, it was a means of creating favorable conditions elsewhere in the world for the promotion of American interests and values, particularly commercial. Early targets included the small nations of the Western hemisphere, particularly islands close to American territory. "By the 1890s," Beisner notes, "many articulate Americans were dissatisfied with the passive idea that the U.S. should provide a model, and nothing more for others. America's moral and material superiority seemed no longer a goal but rather an established fact – the passivity of the old idea of mission struck many as both a dangerous luxury and a selfish abnegation of duty."¹¹⁹

Keeping in line with Beisner's thinking, American statesmen in the latter half of the nineteenth-century began to issue statements not of the traditional isolationist nature, but instead aligned with a more active and engaged foreign policy. "The mission of this country," former Secretary of State Richard Olney wrote in 1898, "is not merely to pose but to act... to forego no fitting opportunity to further the progress of civilization."¹²⁰ The Wilsonian vision of making the world safe for democracy was just around the corner, while in the meantime, American ideology had already taken a step that echoed or resonated with an expansionist theme. Thus, the 1890s became a time in which these statesmen articulated and subsequently acted upon the divine right and privilege given to America to be the light of liberty, and to *bring* that light to others.

Another such statesman was Senator Albert Beveridge, a proponent of the Spanish-American War and of the annexation of the Philippines. In 1900, Beveridge gave

¹¹⁹ Beisner, 76-77.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

a speech that spoke of America's mission to liberate other parts of the world. "Fellow citizens..." boasted Beveridge, "It is a noble land that God has given us; a land that can feed and clothe the world... a greater England with a nobler destiny... have we no mission to perform, no duty to discharge to our fellowman?"¹²¹ It is clear from statements such as these and in contrast with those of earlier statesmen, such as John Quincy Adams, that at least some influential Americans had also come to view their world, and even those parts that had not changed, from a transformed perspective. The new paradigm, as exemplified in the Spanish-American War, was the product of a combination of an altered geopolitical landscape and novel perspective.

Two elements of this novel perspective were a new appreciation among American elites for the notion of manifest destiny and the recently adapted concept of social Darwinism. The infusion of these values into America's ideology of universal mission contributed to changing perceptions within elite foreign policy circles at the end of the nineteenth century. The first element was a new appreciation for American manifest destiny. Manifest destiny, as it was espoused during the nineteenth century, was the belief that the expansion of the U.S. across the continent was both justified and inevitable. Historian Frederick Merk maintains, "The primary goal in that period was to fill out the continent rather than extend American rule overseas."¹²² But the country had long since reached its national boundaries when a new manifest destiny spirit arose in the 1880s and 1890s.

Adding to Americans' changing perceptions was Frederick Jackson Turner, a Harvard professor and original architect of *the frontier thesis*. In 1893, Turner published the influential work, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," which

¹²¹ McDougall, 101.

¹²² Frederick Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History*. (New York: Knopf, 1963), 256-257.

proposed that the spirit and success of the United States was directly tied to the country's westward expansion. Turner then sounded an alarming note to American imperialists when he proclaimed that “the end of an epoch with the supposed disappearance of the American frontier”¹²³ occurred when the Bureau of the Census in 1890 announced that “the frontier line had finally closed after four hundred years.”¹²⁴ This supposition landed in the midst of an economic depression, and on an already unnerved population that previously believed in America’s constant ability to move onward and upward.

The second element, social Darwinism, is a term used to describe various social theories that emerged in England and the U.S. in the 1870s. Social Darwinism sought to apply Darwin’s concept of “survival of the fittest” to social and political circumstances. In America and in the context of the Spanish-American War, social Darwinism took the form of superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race over that of “tropical people.” In 1885, Reverend Josiah Strong in his bestselling book, *Our Country*, identified Americans as a “race of unequaled energy... the representative, let us hope, of the largest liberty, the purest Christianity, the highest civilization.”¹²⁵ U.S. General Leonard Wood also evoked such ideas in remarking about the Cubans. “We are dealing with a race that has been steadily going down for a hundred years... We have got to infuse new life [into them].”¹²⁶ According to this theory, just as God had singled out certain individuals for great achievements, status, and wealth, so too had He selected some nations to excel and dominate others. Lastly, “Social Darwinism,” says historian and Woodrow Wilson biographer Arthur Link, “was probably the most important economic and social

¹²³ Beisner, 18.

¹²⁴ LaFeber, 28.

¹²⁵ McDougall, 104.

¹²⁶ Paterson, 354.

philosophy in the last third of the nineteenth century.”¹²⁷

President McKinley also believed in General Wood’s zealous embrace of the “White Man’s Burden” and despite McKinley’s ambivalence toward war with Spain, he too envisioned offshore territories as model communities based upon the principles of American civilization and government. Consequently, his speeches, rhetoric, and reasoning for intervention included a strong dose of missionary zeal. “This missionary nationalism at first produced little more than swaggering diplomatic posture,” says Beisner, “but as the nation grew in real power, Americans grew more confident of their superiority over others and the profoundly imperialistic implications of the American Mission began to emerge...”¹²⁸ From this perspective, America’s enhanced relative power and stronger international position – both militarily and economically – permitted a stronger expression of Americans’ “missionary zeal.”

Aside from a sense of superiority over the Cuban people, American domestic pressures grew to intervene for moral and humanitarian concerns. Before McKinley came to power, “the inevitable popular demand had arisen for American intervention in the name of peace and humanity,” says Dulles. Furthermore, Dulles states, “the interests of the American people were deeply engaged because of the age-old convictions as to the right of every people to liberty and freedom. The shocking spectacle of a colonial government starving and killing men, women, and children who were bravely struggling for their national rights, on an island only one hundred miles off the American coast, awoke every idealistic impulse for the underdog and for fair play.”¹²⁹ Again we see familiar themes within American ideology, but with a greater sense of

¹²⁷ Arthur S. Link, *American Epoch, A History of the United States Since the 1890s*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf) 1955. 14.

¹²⁸ Beisner, 9.

¹²⁹ Dulles, 168.

urgency to act upon them.

Americans' conviction of the excellence of their institutions, values, traditions and culture grew stronger as the influence and power of some of the world's monarchies eroded in the 19th century. "Individuals who might care very little about economic or political expansionism," says historian John Dobson, "could therefore convince themselves that the U.S. had a duty- a sort of secular mission - to teach democracy and republicanism to others less fortunate than they."¹³⁰ Indeed, in the 1890s, many Americans could be swayed by strong humanitarian and moral sentiments, and U.S. statesmen were more likely to take actions that espoused such sentiments. McKinley, seeking to connect with the American populace, used similar rhetoric in explaining and justifying his own actions.

Imperialistic Insiders & McKinley's Party Loyalism

Calls for the U.S. to take active steps to assume its rightful place as a world power became a constant theme among influential Americans in the 1890s. Historian Ernest May identifies what he calls the foreign policy elite in the 1890s as consisting of gentlemen who held more "cosmopolitan views" than did their fellow Americans. This group, says May, was "a comparatively well-to-do, well-educated, well-read, and politically active public, numbering less than 3 million and living mostly in cities."¹³¹ Thus, small factions of elites in a few metropolitan areas of the country dominated the foreign-policy opinions of thousands of followers. It was not the influential business leaders surrounding McKinley that ardently pressed for war; they strenuously opposed

¹³⁰ John Dobson, *Reticent Expansionism* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press) 1988. 12.

¹³¹ Ernest R May, *American Imperialism* (New York: Atheneum) 1968. 24.

intervention in Cuba. Furthermore, historian Julius Pratt argues that McKinley's business acquaintances felt a war could unsettle global market arrangements or derail the economic recovery of the United States that had finally begun in 1897. Rather, Pratt finds that "McKinley had given in to the expansionists in his party, these cosmopolitan elites, for political reasons rather than economic or business motivations."¹³²

While McKinley's focus had always been more domestic than foreign, he responded to the demands of this foreign policy elite because prominent individuals within his own political party belonged to it. The inner circle of this group included politicians such as Henry Cabot Lodge, Theodore Roosevelt, strategists like Alfred Thayer Mahan, and intellectuals like Brook Adams. "Measuring the United States against a global standard," says Dobson, "they found their nation wanting and therefore urged it to adopt what came to be known as 'the large policy.'"¹³³ Furthermore, Dulles discusses Republican war fervor when he states, "Even if the United States did not actually add Cuba to the national domain, it should at least seize the opportunity to establish unquestioned American supremacy in the Caribbean... They welcomed possible war."¹³⁴ They would have the United States extend its influence until it won full recognition as one of the great world powers.

Among Republicans party insiders such as Roosevelt and Lodge, antagonism to Spain gained a fresh impetus. Foreign policy elites within McKinley's administration exhibited a growing appeal to drive Spain, a decaying and weak empire, out of the New World once and for all. Among the American population, there was increasing demand for decisive action. After three years of pressure culminating in an ultimatum toward

¹³² Julius Pratt, *Expansionists of 1898: The Acquisition of Hawaii and the Spanish Islands* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press) 1936.

¹³³ Dobson, 7.

¹³⁴ Dulles, 167.

Spain, the U.S. declared war on April 11, 1898. McKinley requested authorization from Congress to use force to protect U.S. interests and end the war in the cause of humanity, specifically stating, "In the name of humanity, in the name of civilization, on behalf of endangered American interests which give us the right and the duty to speak and to act, the war in Cuba must stop."¹³⁵ The generally avowed objectives, according to historian William Appleman Williams, "...were to free Cuba from Spanish tyranny, to establish and underwrite the independence of the island, and to initiate and sustain its development toward political democracy and economic welfare."¹³⁶ Subsequent policy, however, would dictate that the U.S. exercise continuous influence over all aspects of Cuban affairs – with increasing disparity between reality and America's "missionary" and liberating rhetoric.

Conclusion

This study has focused on one major category of factors influencing the direction of American foreign policy in the late nineteenth century. This category is comprised of ideological factors including the mainstream belief in American exceptionalism, – including a shift from exemplar to messianic exceptionalism – the emergence of social Darwinism, and the reemergence of manifest destiny. It goes without saying that ideology is not the sole factor in determining why America, or any nation for that matter, takes certain actions in foreign affairs. Reasons for going to war are never simple, and rarely can be boiled down to one or two determining factors. Rather, it is a confluence of several factors that drives a nation to turn to the last resort of warfare.

¹³⁵ William McKinley, "War Message to Congress." Accessed at <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/mkinly2.htm>

¹³⁶ William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, (New York: Norton, 1959) 1.

While this study has focused on the domestic and internal factors of American traditions, values and beliefs as circumstantial givens that influenced intervention in Cuba, this is but one set of influences. The goal of such reductionist exploration is to illuminate the importance of national mentality and culture in foreign policy decisions. Certainly, changing perceptions are factors that must be included in any study of foreign policy decision-making, as these shape the conditions, circumstances, and environments within which foreign policy elites operate.

Furthermore, when presented with what many historians refer to as a paradigm shift to American imperialism (which can be seen as one form of messianic exceptionalism), it is important to investigate whether changes in thinking occurred suddenly or gradually. In the case of the Spanish-American War, there was not a sudden shift in thinking, but rather the gradual progression of age-old ideals and beliefs in exceptionalism. As evidence has shown, the ideology of American exceptionalism had been present in America for over a century. Yet when combined with a growing appreciation for social Darwinism, manifest destiny, and humanitarian and moral necessity, a stronger sense of urgency to act in Cuba was created among the American populace and elites.

This call to action did not resonate with all Americans and there was a strong anti-Imperial sentiment among the public and key business and congressional leaders. Furthermore, not all Americans supported the ideas and characteristics that this study associates with messianic exceptionalism. However, an economic depression, social unrest, and the opportunity to swiftly defeat a decaying empire and “liberate” a small, near-defenseless island nearby, allowed for ideological influences to become part of a potent cry for action. At the turn of the century, therefore, Americans were both in an

exuberant and an uncertain mood. "The venture into imperialism," says Link, "raised grave misgivings for the future of American democracy. Although a majority would probably have denied it, their long isolation was now shattered and their government would have to play an active role in world affairs in the years to come."¹³⁷ Imperialism, which was once designated as a European practice, began to take shape as America's newest foreign policy tradition. It is in the Spanish-American War that we begin to see the practice of messianic exceptionalism – as America joined the pursuit of overseas expansion.

¹³⁷ Link, 16.

CHAPTER V

CASE STUDY ON MESSIANIC EXCEPTIONALISM: PRESIDENT WOODROW WILSON AND THE RISE OF THE AMERICAN CENTURY

In the early twentieth century, President Woodrow Wilson led the U.S. through a time of great transition, as World War I threatened from across the Atlantic. This chapter examines Wilson's presidency as a case study of the messianic model of American exceptionalism. It discusses specifically the ideals, beliefs, and principles that would eventually characterize Wilson's worldview and foreign policies. Second, this study examines Wilson's decision to bring America into the war, and then his post-war attempts to build a new world order based on international law and institutions, primarily through the League of Nations. Throughout Wilson's decisions, there are embedded qualities reminiscent of messianic exceptionalism, including the inherent belief in America's larger purpose and mission—rooted in morality and the promotion of democracy. Indeed, Wilson's presidency represents a period in which the U.S. became a major world power and American leaders began to seek international responsibilities commensurate with the nation's growing military, economic and political power. By the end of Wilson's presidency, America had returned to an era of isolation after rejecting Wilson's calls to join the League of Nations and commit the nation to a structure based on collective security. However, Wilson's worldview and vision for America's global role – as exemplified through his foreign policies leading up to and following the war – provide an exemplary case study in the development and execution of messianic exceptionalism.

President Woodrow Wilson

As the twenty-eighth president of the United States, Thomas Woodrow Wilson emerged at the helm of American leadership at a pivotal time in the nation's evolution

to become a major world power. Wilson, who was President from 1913 to 1921, had a decisive impact on America's role in the world as he developed a foreign policy that would eventually represent its own tradition of U.S. foreign policy known as "Wilsonianism." Wilson's foreign policy evolved over the course of his presidency, from traditional isolationism, to massive engagement in World War I, and finally to a commitment toward building a new world order in the aftermath of the war. Furthermore, throughout Wilson's presidency, and particularly after America's engagement in the war, he expressed the ideals, principles, and beliefs that closely align with the characteristics of messianic exceptionalism.

Messianic exceptionalism, as previously discussed, entails the universal application of American principles and ideals – primarily through America's liberal ideology. As such, foreign policies built on the traditions of messianic exceptionalism tend to be more interventionist, international and activist in outlook -- leading America to play a stronger role in shaping world affairs as guided by American ideals. Rather than give rise to withdrawal and isolation, as dictated by the exemplar model of exceptionalism, this second model of messianic exceptionalism, based on the uniqueness of American constitutional democratic institutions, dictates a more interventionist role for the U.S. Moreover, the concept of messianic exceptionalism holds that there is a special mission and task for the United States to pursue in its relationships with other states. This mission has taken several forms throughout American history, incorporating imperialist and unilateral undertones, as well as support multilateralism and collective security. Wilson's role in exceptionalism's long narrative is more in accord with the latter, as he embraced the importance of international law and institutions through the League of Nations.

Wilson's presidency and his worldview also express a key theme of messianic exceptionalism – that of seeing U.S. national interests as intertwined with those of the international system as whole. According to scholar Walter Russell Mead, Wilson's foreign policy was rooted in "the belief that the United States has both a moral obligation and an important national interest in spreading American democratic and social values throughout the world, creating a peaceful international community that accepts the rule of law."¹³⁸ Indeed, according to the messianic model, the U.S. as an "exceptional nation," should pursue a democratic and economically liberal agenda in politics because the U.S. sees its interests as tightly coupled with the interests of the international system.

Wilson's foreign policies as they evolved before and after World War I ultimately represent a version of messianic exceptionalism pursued by a strategy of democratic peace through a collective security regime and based on the principles of liberal internationalism.¹³⁹ "He envisioned a world in which all states would forfeit their sovereignty, at least in part, to the League of Nations," writes scholar William Martel, "which would serve as a forum for international dialogue and an institution for enforcing global peace and prosperity."¹⁴⁰ On the basis of these ideas, Wilson's foreign policy embraced the concept of messianic exceptionalism centered on using international institutions to foster and sustain a peaceful world order, which remains deeply imbedded within America's liberal ideology. Despite Wilson's devotion to the League of Nations, America eventually rejected calls to join the League, returning America to a period of isolationism. The reasons for this retreat, as well as Wilson's role

¹³⁸ Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World* (New York: Knopf, 2001), pp. iv, 88-97.

¹³⁹ Charles A. Kupchan and Clifford A. Kupchan, "The Promise of Collective Security," *International Security*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Summer 1995), 52-61.

¹⁴⁰ Cited from William C. Martel, *The Theory and Practice of Grand Strategy*, yet to be published.

in the nation's failure to join the League, are varied and will be discussed in detail. Today, Wilson's presidency is viewed by many as the preeminent era of idealism in American foreign policy, and as a time in which moral values were intertwined with the national interest through policies that sought to promote democracy abroad.

Wilson's Personal Beliefs and Principles

America's engagement in distant parts of the world spans the breadth of the nation's history. However, it was not until World War I that America was propelled onto the world stage and into European politics in a role that, as historian David Lesch states, "it had neither sought nor experienced before."¹⁴¹ It was Woodrow Wilson who led America during this time of tumultuous change, bringing with him a worldview that he arduously shaped over the course of his career. Wilson's perceptions of America's role in building an international system following the war are seen by many scholars as having greatly influenced his interaction with American audiences, European leaders and foreign peoples alike. Moreover, Wilson's ideals remain highly relevant and contested within policymaking and academic circles today. Before proceeding to a discussion of Wilson's foreign policies leading up to and following WWI, an important step is to explore Woodrow Wilson's personal beliefs and principles.

Wilson, unlike any American president before or since, spent the majority of his career cloistered in the academic world, first as a college professor and then as the President of Princeton University. Notably, Wilson was the first President of the United States to receive a doctoral degree, which he received from Johns Hopkins University

¹⁴¹ David W. Lesch, *The Middle East and the United States: A Historical and Political Reassessment*. Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1996. 1.

after completing his dissertation on congressional governance and American politics. Regarding his views on domestic politics, Wilson did not fear the concentration of power in the executive branch as long as America's political leadership could "retain their leadership by defending their policies in the light of critical debate,"¹⁴² and as long as their ideas could withstand public scrutiny. Wilson also insisted that the primary purpose of legislative discussion was "the instruction and elevation of public opinion."¹⁴³ Wilson's longstanding belief in informed public opinion would serve as the foundation for many of his foreign policies, and particularly for the responsibilities of the League of Nations following World War I.¹⁴⁴

Also significant is the fact that Wilson grew up in the American south, feeling first hand the visceral feelings of defeat and anti-colonialism that stained the South after the American Civil War. Coming of age in the immediate years following the war, Wilson grew up primarily in Virginia, South Carolina, and Georgia under the heavy tutelage of his father, a Presbyterian minister with strong sympathies for the South's cause. Perhaps Wilson carried with him a sense of connection to those who longed for self-determination and the chance to rule over their land independent from their victors. Internationally, these ideas of democracy and self-rule carried weight as well. "Wilson taught that, in its posture toward the rest of the world, America must stand for something more than its own security and prosperity," says Historian Harry Clor, "and he taught that democracy cannot be safe in an anti-democratic world."¹⁴⁵ These teachings came to mean that America would act in the service and with the consent of a

¹⁴² Harry Clor, "Woodrow Wilson," eds. Morton J. Frisch and Richard G. Stevens, *American Political Thought: The Philosophic Dimension of American Statesmanship*. New York: Scribner, 1971. 194.

¹⁴³ Clor, 195.

¹⁴⁴ James Gelvin. "The Ironic Legacy of the King-Crane Commission," David W. Lesch, *The Middle East and the United States: A Historical and Political Reassessment*. Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1996. 17.

¹⁴⁵ Clor, 217.

world majority, and that as a democratic country, America would be committed to the use of democratic means in its foreign relations.

Wilson and Christian Progressivism

Many scholars also see Wilson's Christian faith as having a profound impact on his political career. As the son of a Presbyterian minister, young Woodrow Wilson would "attend his father's lectures at the seminary, dissecting both the substance and the style of his discourse,"¹⁴⁶ writes biographer Scott Berg. For Tommy Wilson growing up, embracing religion was his first step toward self-realization. Years later, Woodrow Wilson would write an essay titled, "When a Man Comes to Himself" in which he says, "Christianity gave us, in the fullness of time, the perfect image of right living, the secret of social and of individual well-being... the man who receives and verifies that secret in his own living has discovered not only the best and only way to serve the world, but also the one happy way to satisfy himself... Then, indeed, he has come to himself."¹⁴⁷

Wilson would go on to attend both Davidson College and Princeton University, schools that were founded by members of the Presbyterian Church and were devoted in their early years to the training students in ministerial studies, as well as other professions. With increasing frequency, Woodrow would spend his summers in his father's First Presbyterian Church in Columbia, South Carolina, where he climbed to the pulpit to practice his oratory. However, Tommy "was not rehearsing sermons in the empty church... he delivered the great speeches of Webster and Gladstone and Burke

¹⁴⁶ Scott Berg, *Wilson*, (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2013), 43.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 43.

and Bright.”¹⁴⁸ Always passionate about a political career, Wilson took his early religious teachings and channeled them towards his views on statecraft.

Prior to 1917, Wilson’s foreign policies were largely dedicated to American neutrality and keeping the U.S. out of the great European conflict. Once America was engaged, however, Wilson sought to transform the old balance of power system in Europe into a new world order, in which the U.S. would provide hegemonic leadership through a system of collective security. According to some scholars, this objective had strong religious connotations, as Wilson’s vision for a new world order would “in religious terms of progressive Christianity, turn the Great War into ‘the war for righteousness’ as the United States fulfilled its role as the ‘messianic nation’ to create the kingdom of God on earth.”¹⁴⁹ Sigmund Freud holds one of the more caustic perspectives on Wilson and his religious beliefs, seeing him as “an arrogant, ignorant idealist, whose public activity produced ‘the impression of the method of Christian Science applied to politics.’”¹⁵⁰

Others find that Wilson viewed the League of Nations from the vantage of his Christian faith. The British Foreign Office went as far as to use for a time the term “Christian Science” as a code word for a league of nations.¹⁵¹ Moreover, Wilson had chosen the word “covenant” – which carries a stronger religious meaning – as the League of Nation’s founding document, instead of “charter,” which is more often used to describe founding documents of international or national politics.

¹⁴⁸ Berg, 62.

¹⁴⁹ Lloyd E. Ambrosius, “Woodrow Wilson, Alliances, and the League of Nations, *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Apr., 2006), 142.

¹⁵⁰ Sigmund Freud and William C. Bullitt, *Thomas Woodrow Wilson: A Psychological Study* (London, 1966), pp. xi, xii. Cited in Thompson, 326.

¹⁵¹ Arthur Walworth, *America’s Moment: 1918: American Diplomacy at the End of World War I* (New York, 197), p. 65. Cited in J.A. Thompson, “Woodrow Wilson and World War I: A Reappraisal,” *Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Dec., 1985), pp. 325-348.

In discussing the role of Wilson's religion in his international policies, historian Lloyd E. Ambrosius writes, "The president also determined that the new League's headquarters would be located in Geneva, Switzerland, which had been John Calvin's home."¹⁵² This is significant because Wilson closely identified with the Calvinist and Social Gospel traditions. One of the leading theologians of the Social Gospel movement, George Herron, wrote in 1917 that Wilson aimed "to bring it about that America, awake at last to her selfhood and calling, shall become as a colossal Christian apostle, shepherding the world into the kingdom of God." After reading this, Wilson praised Herron for his "singular insight... into my own motives and purposes."¹⁵³ Taking into account numerous interpretations of the impact of Wilson's religious beliefs, there is no demonstrative way to prove that Wilson's strong Christian faith influenced his views on America's messianic post-war role, but it should be noted that there is a strong relationship between the two.

This study holds that Wilson's foreign policies leading to the U.S. entrance into the war and afterwards at the Paris Peace Talks cannot be understood simply through his personal beliefs, religion, or worldview. Yet, ideas and ideals shape the options presented to and developed by policymakers, as competing ideologies define the parameters and lenses through which individuals and groups view world events. Whether ideologies have a causal impact on the foreign policies ultimately developed and enacted is not the objective of this study. However, ideological beliefs within a political system, their interaction with foreign policy, and their evolving influence in the policymaking world is important to ascertain. In examining Woodrow Wilson's presidency, the interaction between ideals and America's national interests promoted a

¹⁵² Ambrosius, 146.

¹⁵³ Lloyd E. Ambrosius, *Wilsonian Statecraft: Theory and Practice of Liberal Internationalism during World War I* (Wilmington, DE, 1991), 11-12.

tradition of international liberalism that sought to place America at the center of a new world order.

Wilson's Reluctant Path to War: 1914-1917

Historians offer several competing interpretations of the driving factors behind America's increased engagement in World War I. One such body of literature focuses heavily on the extent to which Wilson's commitment to the League of Nations as a post-war collective security institution was the product of personal beliefs about America's role in the world. By this interpretation, Wilson's peace program had the same objectives as subsequent American foreign policy. According to historians who influenced the "New Left"¹⁵⁴ movement in the 1960s, Wilson's peace program was designed "to achieve an 'open-door world' into which American capitalism could freely and safely expand, and to contain the threat of communism."¹⁵⁵ From this perspective, we again see the combination of political economy and ideological characteristics that are present in American exceptionalism.

As historian N. Gordon Levin finds, "the ultimate Wilsonian goal may be defined as the attainment of a peaceful liberal capitalist world order under international law, safe both from traditional imperialism and revolutionary socialism, within whose stable liberal confines a missionary America could find moral and economic pre-

¹⁵⁴ New Left historians can be defined as historians that have "searched for a vision of the past that would enable them to remake the present and the future." They write with the assumption that certain universal values that are basic to human life and proclaimed in the dominant ideologies of our time have been repressed, ignored, or distorted. In their view, history becomes a key to reshaping programs and actions in the present. For more information on the "New Left" historians, see: Howard Schonberger, "Purposes and Ends in History: Presentism and the New Left," which can be accessed here: <http://www.history.ucsb.edu/faculty/marcuse/classes/201/articles/74SchoenbergerPresentismHistTeach er.pdf>

¹⁵⁵ Thompson, 327.

eminence.”¹⁵⁶ By this perspective, Wilson emerges as a more rigid and dogmatic individual who at the onset of WWI had already well-established intentions for guiding America’s role in a post-war order. Furthermore, Ambrosius writes, “In Wilson’s view, a new, universal league of nations under American leadership – or actually hegemony – should thus replace old style alliances, and it should render obsolete the traditional military balances among Europe’s great powers... Wilson used this vision of a new world order to justify American entry into the war against Imperial Germany.” Whether this exceptionalism narrative can be used as justification for Wilson’s decision to bring the nation into World War I is a matter open to intense debate.

According to Martel, in line with the ideas of many political thinkers in the early 20th century, Wilson sought to guide “American intervention [using the principles of] ideological significance and purpose.” For historian John Milton Cooper, Jr., Wilson “did not say that Americans must make the world safe for democracy; he did not believe that they could [but] they could only do their part, join with other like-minded nations, and take steps toward that promised land.”¹⁵⁷ According to this perspective, as well as that of scholar Jan Willem Schulte Nordholt, Wilson with these principles in mind entered World War I, “not out of economic interest, not because of the violation of neutral rights of the United States, although these played a part, but in order to bring about genuine peace.”¹⁵⁸ These arguments reaffirm that Wilson’s intentions laid less with national interests such as maintaining freedom of the seas for American ships, but rather to bring about an urgent and peaceful conclusion to the war and make the world safe for democracy.

¹⁵⁶ N Gordon Levin, Jr. *Woodrow Wilson and World Politics: America’s Response to War and Revolution* (New York, 1968).

¹⁵⁷ John Milton Cooper, Jr., *Woodrow Wilson: A Biography* (New York: Knopf, 2009), 387.

¹⁵⁸ Jan Willem Schulte Nordholt, *Woodrow Wilson: A Life for World Peace* (University of California Press: Berkeley, 1991), p. 225. Cited in Martel C. Martel, *The Theory and Practice of Grand Strategy*.

To scholars such as J.A. Thompson, this revisionist (and perhaps, exceptionalist) interpretation may under-estimate the extent to which Wilson's foreign policies from the onset of WWI in 1914 to the time of America's engagement in 1917 were both responsive and flexible. Instead, Thompson finds that Wilson's peace program was more a response to the First World War, rather than the "presumed need to promote American overseas economic expansion"¹⁵⁹ or "the expression of a personal commitment to an idealist vision." Historian Edward Buehrig writes, "When Wilson assumed the presidency, collective security was not a goal already formed in his mind, waiting for occasion to be born."¹⁶⁰ Another, more orthodox interpretation cites less the impact of Wilson's ideals and beliefs, and more the driving influence of "realist" factors. Indeed, Wilson's policies prior to World War I can best be characterized by a genuine effort to keep America out of the war.

Early in Wilson's political career, it was clear that his penchant was for domestic politics. Later as President, Wilson's administration maintained a heavy focus on domestic affairs and had less relative experience in matters of foreign policy. Coupled with a pro-allied bias toward France, Britain and Russia, America's policy of neutrality in the early years of WWI was already moving America toward inevitable involvement in the war. To this point, scholar Kendrick Clements writes, "Wilson and his advisers' inexperience with foreign policy, their concentration on domestic rather than foreign issues, and even their pro-Allied biases were all inescapable results of the political process that brought them to office, and these limitations in turn account for the increasing pro-Allied tilt of the American neutrality policy during the autumn of

¹⁵⁹ Thompson, 328.

¹⁶⁰ Cited in Thompson, 328.

1914.”¹⁶¹ Despite these inherent weaknesses and biases within the Wilson administration, the president maintained a strict policy of neutrality, attempting to maintain several decades of the traditional form of isolationism that existed within American foreign policy.

Although the U.S. did not formally join the war as a belligerent until 1917, U.S. policy toward the First World War took shape in late 1914 and early 1915. “By the end of 1914 and the beginning of 1915, German-American relations were deteriorating in direct proportion to the development of closer economic links between the United States and the Allies,”¹⁶² writes Clements. It would be nearly two years before every hope for compromise between Germany and the U.S. would be exhausted, and Congress would finally vote for war, “but the die was cast in the spring of 1915.” At the time, Americans generally endorsed a foreign policy of “traditional isolationism” which encapsulated the following principles: first, abstention from intervention in European diplomacy or politics; second, avoidance of the “entangling alliances” that early American presidents cautioned against; and third, preservation of the Western Hemisphere from European imperialism under the auspices of the Monroe Doctrine.¹⁶³

By the end of 1914, Wilson was still reluctant to heed the calls of many, including former President Theodore Roosevelt, to build naval and military capacities to make a greater show of “preparedness.” In this sense, Wilson continued to re-affirm America’s traditional foreign policy of avoiding European wars – and at this time he still was not, despite competing opinions, looking to enter the war on the basis of exceptionalism and desire to promote American “universal principles.” Wilson took seriously the risks of

¹⁶¹ Kendrick A. Clements, Woodrow Wilson and World War I. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 1, Going to War (Mar., 2004), p 80.

¹⁶² Clements, 80.

¹⁶³ Thompson, 329.

warfare to American blood and treasure, knowing that commitment to the war could mean countless American lives lost.

America's mixed population and ethnic heterogeneity also contributed to Wilson's early neutral stance. The German ambassador, Johann Heinrich von Bernstorff, reported in early 1915 that Wilson reported to him: "We definitely have to remain neutral, since otherwise our mixed populations would wage war on one another."¹⁶⁴ Indeed, as scholar Maldwyn Jones has pointed out, "the first World War brought to the American people a belated realization of what it meant to be a nation of immigrants" as "millions of American citizens sided with the countries from which they or their ancestors had come."¹⁶⁵ Most middle and upper class American citizens were of British background, and generally favored the allied cause. However, there was also a strong American community of German dissent, as well as smaller communities of Irish-Americans and Jewish-Americans who resented the allied cause out of hostility to Britain and Czarist Russia, respectively. Furthermore, "There seems to be little doubt," writes Thompson, "that Wilson shared, particularly in the early part of the war, the pro-Allied feelings common to men of his background."¹⁶⁶ After six months of war, "the most salient recent development appeared to be the increased awareness of the implications of America's ethnic heterogeneity, whose net effect ... had been to reinforce the traditional pattern."¹⁶⁷ Thus, both ethnic heterogeneity, as well as inherent allied biases, contributed to early U.S. policy toward the War, as Wilson feared pursuing policies that might create ethnic tensions and partisan divisions at home.

¹⁶⁴ Link, *Wilson: The Struggle for Neutrality, 1914-1915* (Princeton, N.J. 1960), 31.

¹⁶⁵ Maldwyn A. Jones, *The Old World Ties of American Ethnic Groups* (University College, London, 1974), 4. Cited in Thompson, 330.

¹⁶⁶ Thompson, 331. For more commentary of America's early response to World War I and Wilson's attempts to keep America a neutral party, see Arthur Link, *Wilson: the Struggle for Neutrality*.

¹⁶⁷ Thompson, 333.

The domestic situation changed when external events, largely driven by German unrestricted submarine warfare, had “dramatic internal repercussions.”¹⁶⁸ The German torpedoing and sinking of the British merchant ship and ocean liner, *RMS Lusitania* on May 7, 1915 profoundly shifted U.S. public opinion and shocked domestic audiences. While the *Lusitania* was officially listed as an auxiliary war ship and was carrying armaments at the time of its sinking, the drowning of 1200 civilian passengers, including 128 American citizens, caused American outrage. Following the German U-Boat attack, a still hesitant Wilson promoted a “double wish,” stating in response to Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan’s calls to maintain genuine neutrality: “I wish with all my heart that I saw a way to carry out the double wish of our people, to maintain a firm front in respect of what we demand of Germany and yet do nothing that might by any possibility involve us in the war.”¹⁶⁹

Unable to maintain this “double wish,” Wilson began to “prepare” the nation for war, making plans to increase the size of both the Army and the Navy. The *Lusitania* crisis of 1915 and Germany’s growing submarine warfare against merchant vessels also increased Wilson’s urgency to bring the war to an end. However, it was not until Wilson addressed the “League to Enforce Peace” on May 27, 1916 that he first outlined his “peace without victory” and publically committed himself to the idea of U.S. participation in a post-war League of Nations. According to Thompson, “this was the only secure and lasting way in which [Wilson] could avoid the risk of having to choose between humiliation and an unpopular war.”¹⁷⁰ It was also during this speech that Wilson called for “a universal association of the nations to maintain the inviolate security of the highway of the seas ... and to prevent any war begun either contrary to

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Wilson to W.J. Bryan, June 7, 1915, *Wilson Papers*, 33, 349. Cited in Thompson, 334.

¹⁷⁰ Thompson, 335.

treaty covenants or without warning and full submission of the causes to the opinion of the world.” Despite his call for a post-war collective security institution, Wilson also insisted that the United States would not be involved in the actual peace settlement, stating: “we... are quite aware that we are in no sense or degree parties to the present quarrel.”

Wilson’s verbal commitment was meant to persuade European warring factions to bring the war to a more immediate end. It also inherently challenged America’s traditional isolationist tendencies, which had been in place for over a century. In seeking to maintain George Washington’s eternal caution toward entangling European alliances, and personally eschewing traditional European diplomacy that relied on a balance of power and alliances, Wilson instead sought to portray a post-war settlement after WWI as a “disentangling alliance.” Notwithstanding Wilson’s appeal, the European warring factions seemed committed to a total victory in their pursuit of extreme war aims, while Wilson subsequently continued his neutral peace initiative, particularly leading into and after his re-election in 1916.

In early 1917, after numerous attempts at a peace conference, Wilson addressed the Senate on January 22, 1917, again conveying his ambition of “peace without victory.” Wilson articulated his perception of a “disentangling alliance” and its ability to maintain lasting peace in his message to congress:

I am proposing that all nations henceforth avoid entangling alliances which would draw them into competitions of power; catch them in a net of intrigue and selfish rivalry, and disturb their own affairs with influences intruded from without... there is no entangling alliance in a concert of power... these are American principles, American policies. We could stand for no others. And they are also the principles and policies of forward-looking men and women everywhere, of every modern nation, of every enlightened community. These are the principles of mankind and must prevail.¹⁷¹

¹⁷¹ Woodrow Wilson, Message to the Senate, January 22, 1917.

Following Wilson's address to Congress, there are different interpretations as to whether Wilson brought the nation closer to war due to a goal-oriented, exceptionalist pursuit of an ideal – or due to a new German campaign of unrestricted submarine warfare launched on February 1, 1917.

Lord Devlin is one such scholar who finds that the reason Wilson brought the U.S. into the war – as he did in April of 1917 – is because the war was “the only remaining way in which he could secure the new world order to which he was dedicated.”¹⁷² Furthermore, Devlin writes that, “it would be idle for Wilson to go to the Peace Conference without a seat in the Cabinet of Nations. The price of the seat was now war. Wilson himself had no doubt of that. As he put it to the Emergency Peace Federation on February 28, 1917, ‘If America stayed neutral, the best she could hope for was to ‘call through the crack in the door.’”¹⁷³ If America was going to have a meaningful role in the post-war peace talks, and influence the post-war order, it was going to have to engage in and win the war.

On the other hand, scholars such as Thompson find this interpretation to be incomplete, as Wilson remained hesitant to enter the war even after the German announcement of submarine warfare, showing that Wilson was not acting in defense of an ideal or to give America the opportunity to reshape world affairs. Instead, it was the consistent attacks on American security and commercial interests that made war inevitable. “Eventually,” writes Thompson, “after the Germans had torpedoed some American ships and sent the Zimmerman Telegram,¹⁷⁴ Wilson decided that the had no

¹⁷² Thompson, 338.

¹⁷³ Lord Devlin, *Too Proud to Fight: Woodrow Wilson's Neutrality*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), 678, 679-81.

¹⁷⁴ The Zimmerman Telegram was a coded message sent from the German Empire to Mexico proposing that Mexico enter the war on the side of the Central Powers, if America joined on the side of the Entente Powers.

alternative but to ask for a declaration of war.”¹⁷⁵ The interpretation in this research is that both factors must be taken into account, as ideals and ideas rarely act independent from reality. To separate the two would be to neglect the several levels of analysis that should be incorporated when studying the foreign policy decision-making process.

Overall, this analysis depicts an evolution in Wilson’s thinking and in the nature of American policy leading to engagement in World War I. A consistent theme present in Wilson’s leadership was his hesitancy to bring the nation into war and his firm adherence to neutrality, even under likely biases toward the allied cause. It was only after the U.S. entered that war that we can see less equivocally the influence of American exceptionalism, as defined by a larger sense of American purpose and mission to reshape the post-war order using the nation’s principles and ideals.

Wilson’s Wartime Policies: 1917-1918

Once America entered the war on the side of the Allied Powers, Wilson was determined to maintain a stance more high-minded than that of European balance of power tactics and warring alliances. Furthermore, according to Martel, “while initially reluctant to go to war in Europe, once the decision was made to fight, Wilson used all the resources at his disposal.”¹⁷⁶ In line with the classic American approach to warfare, the American strategy was to commit the full material resources of the United States to

In return, Mexico was promised territories in Texas, New Mexico and Arizona that had been lost in previous wars with the United States. The Message was intercepted and decoded by the British Navy and released to the Americans. Although it was subsequently ignored and rejected by Mexico, it caused U.S. public outrage against Germany.

¹⁷⁵ Link, *Wilson: Campaigns for Progressivism and Peace* (Princeton, NJ), p. 398. Cited in Thompson, 339.

¹⁷⁶ William C. Martel, *Victory in War: Foundations of Modern Strategy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 148-154; John Milton Cooper, Jr., *Woodrow Wilson: A Biography* (New York: Knopf, 2009), 385.

the war.¹⁷⁷ Concurrently, Wilson depicted the war as one motivated by moral aims, while America's role in the fighting was more high minded than typical European military and political balance of power alliances. Moreover, Wilson attempted to portray America's engagement, as a "crusade" on some level. Furthermore, "He was careful to describe the United States as an 'associated' and not an 'allied' power," writes historian Walter McDougall, "by which he meant that he did not recognize the Allies' war aims as codified in their secret treaties."¹⁷⁸ This desire would create the basis for Wilson's vision of liberal internationalism, which placed American values at the center of a new world order based on open treaties, self-determination, free trade, and democracy.

It was only after America's engagement in the war that President Wilson outlined his post-war aims in the now famous "Fourteen Points" speech delivered to a Joint Session of Congress on January 8, 1918. This address was meant to enunciate to Congress that World War I was a war being fought for a moral cause, as well as for post-war peace throughout the world. The fourteen points speech would ultimately be the only open declaration of post-war aims by any of the belligerent nations, as the other warring factions preferred to keep their post-war objectives private, and carried out discussions through secret treaties. One such secret treaty (which would later be revealed by Bolshevik Russia) was the now infamous Sykes-Picot agreement between France and Britain, outlining their territorial ambitions in the fallen Ottoman Empire, even as they sought military aid from the Arab nationalists. In response to such secret treaties that Wilson so despised, as well as to Lenin's own call for peace, Wilson openly outlined his goals for post-war objectives, ideals and principles.

¹⁷⁷ On the American way of war, see Russell F. Weigley, *American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (New York: Macmillan, 1973).

¹⁷⁸ McDougall, 137.

Point fourteen of Wilson's long list of post-war principles called for a new league of nations: "A general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike."¹⁷⁹ This league would enable the United States to participate in an international structure of collective security, but also allow the United States as a new global power to wield power in a new world order. Indeed, "The United States was in a historically unique position to pursue a milieu-based grand strategy," writes scholar John Ikenberry, because "the collapse of the old order and its newly acquired global power position gave it an opening to do what few states are ever able to do: shape the global frameworks – rules, institutions, relationships – within which post-war states would operate."¹⁸⁰ In Wilson's mind, America's best opportunity to shape global affairs was through the League of Nations.

Wilson's Devotion to a New American Tradition: Liberal Internationalism

Wilson's worldview epitomized in his "Fourteen Points" was deeply rooted in his interpretation of the American experience and purpose. His internationalism was inseparable from his conception of the American nation, and as Clor states, Wilson believed that America was "founded for the benefit of humanity."¹⁸¹ Wilson saw the United States as a unique country, primarily in two respects – in its origins and in its historic experience. "America, for Wilson, is unique, but what is unique about it is its concern with and embodiment of general human interests... the United States is distinguished because it represents, not one small and separate segment of the human

¹⁷⁹ Woodrow Wilson, Speech to Congress, the "Fourteen Points Speech," January 8, 1918.

¹⁸⁰ Ikenberry, 267.

¹⁸¹ *The Public Papers of President: Woodrow Wilson*, III, 318.

race, but mankind. America is the universal nation.”¹⁸² Wilson did not regard this interpretation of America as a fleeting fact or accident that could be assigned to national interests of the moment. Rather, he regarded America’s uniqueness as “a providential fact, imposing upon us a duty or mission.”¹⁸³

America’s mission, Wilson stated, was to unite mankind by “breaking down barriers and promoting that equality which is the foundation of human solidarity or brotherhood.”¹⁸⁴ It follows that in dealing with other great powers and newly independent people alike, the United States was “not at liberty to act simply with a view to the advantage of those living within its borders,” nor “to regard our national interest as something distinct from and possibly opposed to the interests of others peoples.”¹⁸⁵ Therefore, America’s national interest consisted of the advancement of certain democratic values that Wilson viewed as identical to the common good of all humanity. In Wilson’s *War Message to Congress* on February 11, 1918, he stated: “what we are striving for is a new international order based upon broad and universal principles of right and justice – no mere peace of shreds and patches.”¹⁸⁶ The universal principles to which he referred were the principles deeply imbedded in America’s liberal ideology. America would no longer be the isolated beacon of liberty and freedom that Jefferson envisioned in a classic image of exemplar exceptionalism. Instead, according to Wilson’s many publicly stated ideals, America would be the provider of salvation to a war-torn Europe, and the creator of a new world order based on higher moral principles – closely aligned with the principles of messianic exceptionalism.

¹⁸² Clor, 208.

¹⁸³ Clor, 209.

¹⁸⁴ *The Public Papers of President: Woodrow Wilson*, III, 67.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹⁸⁶ Woodrow Wilson, *Message to Congress*, February 11, 1918.

Interestingly, Wilson's commitment to a system of collective security incorporated elements multilateralism *and* unilateralism. Wilson emphasized this point in a major wartime address on September 27, 1918, "in which Wilson reconciled," writes Ambrosius, "his proposal for a new league of nations with traditional American avoidance of entanglements in Europe."¹⁸⁷ Wilson denied that he was leading Americans away from their avowed devotion to traditional avoidance of entanglements in Europe. "We still read Washington's immortal warning against 'entangling alliances,'" said Wilson "...But only special and limited alliances entangle; and we recognize and accept the duty of a new day in which we are permitted to hope for a general alliance which will avoid entanglements and clear the air of the world for common understandings and the maintenance of common rights."¹⁸⁸ Thus Wilson reconciled traditional American avoidance of European alliances with his own vision of new internationalism. "In other words," writes Ambrosius, "Wilson promised a new diplomacy of multilateral cooperation to implement American - and presumably universal - principles, but without sacrificing traditional American unilateral decision-making."¹⁸⁹ In this sense, once America engaged in the war, Wilson saw that the renewed purpose of American messianic exceptionalism was to light the nation's path toward global hegemony.

It is with this vision and with these principles that Wilson approached peace talks following the conclusion of World War I, particularly with respect to the territories of the fallen Austria-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires. As it will be seen, he would be fighting an uphill battle against the entrenched, imperial, and realpolitik interests of the European powers, as well divided public opinion at home.

¹⁸⁷ Ambrosius, 143.

¹⁸⁸ Woodrow Wilson, Address at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York, September 27, 1918.

¹⁸⁹ Ambrosius, 144.

President Wilson Goes to Paris: The Battle for the Treaty of Versailles – 1919-1920

In January of 1919, representatives from twenty-seven nations gathered in Paris to construct a peace settlement that they hoped would eliminate the possibility of future wars. When Wilson arrived at the Paris Peace Conference, he was received by a crowd that, as French President Poincare declared, “stood alone among the welcomes given to any previous visitor to Paris.”¹⁹⁰ Later on, future President Herbert Hoover was to say of Wilson: “No such man of moral and political power and no such an evangel of peace had appeared since Christ preached the Sermon on the Mount. Everywhere men believed that a new era had come to all mankind. It was the star of Bethlehem rising again.”¹⁹¹ While this quotation does not foreshadow the eventual failure of Wilson’s efforts to build an enduring international institution through the League of Nations, it does highlight the hope, inspiration, and vision that the world placed in Wilson at Paris. As one might expect, he was also a man doomed with insurmountable expectations that no human being could aspire to achieve completely. Nevertheless, with a reception in Paris unrivaled by many who came before, he must have felt that he had the mandate to try.

Once America committed to taking part in the war and to the post-war negotiations, Wilson “developed a formula for legitimating departures from the traditional policy of isolation in terms of the values central to American nationalism.”¹⁹² According to Martel, following WWI, Wilson stood for ideals that have reshaped American grand strategy “to inextricably link moral values and national interest in

¹⁹⁰ Berg, 18.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 19.

¹⁹² Thompson, 347.

promoting democracy abroad.”¹⁹³ Thus, by incorporating moral objectives into the nation’s post-war goals and by more broadly defining the U.S. national interest to include ideals and beliefs, Wilson’s post-war attempts to sustain a more peaceful world order can be seen as embodying characteristics of messianic exceptionalism.

Furthermore, Ikenberry writes, “Woodrow Wilson sought to justify American post-war internationalism on the basis of American exceptionalism and a duty to lead the world to democratic salvation.”¹⁹⁴ Both Martel’s and Ikenberry’s perspectives allow for further exploration of Wilson’s post-war policies through the lens of messianic exceptionalism.

In Wilson’s thoughts on self-determination, we see a familiar term prevalent in Wilson’s earlier writings – justice. According to Wilson, the “alleviation of the world’s moral ills and the solution of its practical problems require one and the same remedy – the establishment of justice. This and only this is a real resolution of international conflict.”¹⁹⁵ Furthermore, Wilson viewed the democratic community as a nursery of certain moral virtues and qualities of mind and character, which could then provide a solid foundation for international justice and cooperation. In other words, Wilson intertwined the concepts of justice and democracy in his vision for a post-war order. Following in the messianic exceptionalist tradition, Wilson saw the concepts of justice, democracy and morality as key *American* principles that the nation was meant to shepherd throughout the world.

It should be noted, however, that despite Wilson’s belief in “making the world safe for democracy,” he did not fully embrace the notion of equality among nations. It can be seen in Wilson’s earlier writings that he carried with him a sense of superiority for those who govern over the governed, and for America over “smaller nations.” In

¹⁹³ Martel, *Theory and Practice of Grand Strategy*.

¹⁹⁴ Ikenberry, 328.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 212.

1889, Wilson stated, "We must govern as those who learn; and they must obey as those who are in tutelage. They are children and we are men in these deep matters of government and justice."¹⁹⁶ Wilson's primary objective, we cannot forget, was to make WWI the "war to end all wars." In developing a world order of collective security that met the approval of the people, even if it meant continued strains of colonialism in some regions, Wilson believed that the chance for the future outbreak of war would be less likely. It was at the Paris Peace Conference where his belief in justice and democracy would inevitably collide with the demands of newly independent peoples and the imperial interests of the European victors.

Wilson would meet with delegates of the League of Nations Supreme Council¹⁹⁷ more than one hundred times over the course the Paris Peace Conference, making a number of major decisions and resolutions that would then be adopted by the other delegations. The main decisions adopted by the "Big Four" were the creation of the League of Nations, the Treaty of Versailles – which laid guilt on Germany and set the stage for very high reparations – and the awarding of mandates to France and Britain for control over former Ottoman territories. Throughout much of the negotiations, Britain's Prime Minister Lloyd George and France's President Georges Clemenceau paid lip service to many of Wilson's ideals and principles, but they continued to pursue their own national interests through more secretive discussions and decisions.

Overall, the Paris Peace Conference consisted of considerable power brokering and high politics among the European and American victors. With time, the results of

¹⁹⁶ Quoted in Tony Smith, *America's Mission: The United States and the World-wide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century*. Princeton, 1994. 63.

¹⁹⁷ When the Paris Peace Conference commenced in January 1919, the Supreme Council consisted of ten parties -- two delegates each from Britain, France, the United States, and Italy. By March 1919, the Supreme Council was reduced to a Council of Four, when the Japan plenipotentiary decided to abstain from matters of no interest to Japan. For more information, see the Encyclopedia Britannica entry on the Supreme Council, which can be found here: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/214861/Council-of-Four>

America and Europe's post-war actions would prove futile on nearly all accounts. The world would be engulfed by a second global conflict only two decades later. In the fallen Ottoman territories, the Arab people would be placed under a mandate system that offered little more than imperialism under different terms. The fate of the Arabs would be decided quickly by European imperial interests, which saw the region not as a bastion of newly created independence, but rather as acquired territory in which the European states could expand their empires and strategic interests -- placing history on the opposite side of Wilson's beliefs on self-determination.

Wilson is often praised and sometimes criticized for his universal idealism. Many of his beliefs have become synonymous with utopian or unrealistic. Yet even Wilson recognized that ideals and principles could not gain ascendancy without the support of "power, ambition, and practical institutional arrangement."¹⁹⁸ Wilson's writings reflect the conviction that, "there is an ultimate or underlying agreement among men... All men desire and need peace, freedom, and justice."¹⁹⁹ His pervasive idea was one of the unity of mankind but, as Clor states, "he did not conceive of a unification of men achieved at the expense of their variety or autonomy."²⁰⁰ Even Wilson recognized that ideals and principles could not gain ascendancy without the support of "power, ambition, and practical institutional arrangement."²⁰¹ The world as he wished it to be was a world of independent nations and peoples in full possession of their rights and powers of self-determination. However, as we have seen in the case of conflicting American and European aspirations, the basic interests of differing peoples did not unite in closer harmony until after World War II.

¹⁹⁸ Clor., 216.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 215.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 215.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 216.

After returning home, Wilson faced an equally challenging battle to bring the U.S. into the League of Nations. When talking with American audiences, Wilson reiterated his themes on post-war morality in attempt to secure passage of the Treaty of Versailles and the membership to the League of Nations. During his time in Paris, Wilson concluded that the United States had been established as a world superpower and preeminent leader. "Wilson welcomed this hegemonic role," writes Ambrosius, "although he never explicitly acknowledged it as such. He used moral rhetoric rather than the candid language of power. The League, he believed, would enable this nation to provide global leadership largely through its influence over public opinion and thus fulfill its God-given destiny."²⁰²

On July 10, 1919, Wilson submitted the Versailles Treaty to the Senate for its approval, stating: "The stage is set, the destiny disclosed... It has come about by no plan of our conceiving, but by the hand of god who led us into this way. We cannot turn back. We can only go forward, with lifted eyes and freshened spirit, to follow the vision. It was of this that we dreamed at our birth. America shall in truth show the way."²⁰³ While Wilson clearly espouses a belief in America's universal mission, Republican senators, including Henry Cabot Lodge and William Borah were not as convinced.

The Republican Party, led by Lodge, controlled the U.S. Senate after the elections of 1918, but the Senators were divided in their opinions on and positions toward the League. As such, it proved difficult to maintain enough votes for the necessary two-thirds majority for its passage. Furthermore, opposition leaders put forward a number of reservations to be attached to any treaty that may obtain passage through the Senate. These reservations attempted to ensure complete autonomy over U.S. foreign policy,

²⁰² Ambrosius, 148.

²⁰³ Ambrosius, 148-149.

essentially stripping the League of Nation's of its authority and obligatory power over the United States. Lodge's Republicans had significant concerns in particular with Article Ten in the League of Nation's covenant, which dictated Members of the League to preserve the peace against external aggression – essentially requiring that the United States Congress relinquish its authority over whether the United States commits itself to war. The closest the treaty came to passage was in November of 1919, when Lodge's Republicans joined with pro-treaty Democrats to support a treaty with reservations. As Wilson, however, refused to compromise on the numerous reservations, the U.S. failed to ratify any of the peace treaties and never joined the League.

Due to these failures, it is a difficult task to argue that America's objectives and actions following WWI were not the result of a naïve perception of the world, or were unrealistic for this time. Wilson has often been criticized for these failures, but they were less the failure of individual beliefs and ideals, as opposed to the evolving character of the challenges that confronted the nation. Furthermore, the failure to engage America in the League of Nation's is often viewed as a debate between President Wilson and the isolationist and obstructionist members of Congress. However, painting the debate as strictly between Wilsonian idealism and Republican isolationism is overly simplistic and misleading. Republican leaders strongly favored a bilateral security agreement with France in attempt to maintain a coalition against Germany. "In other words," writes Ambrosius, "preferring a different kind of multilateralism, Lodge and his Republican colleagues reversed Wilson's priorities: They favored the French security treaty... while they also rejected his vision of universal collective security."²⁰⁴ Wilson, on the other hand, abhorred this type of arrangement because it espoused entangling alliances

²⁰⁴ Ambrosius 152.

between France and the United Kingdom, as well as the subordination of the League to other power arrangements.

Wilson's actions and inability to compromise were also a part of the treaty's eventual failure. By taking into account Wilson's own misgivings and weaknesses in articulating his post-war objectives, it is essential to view international liberalism outside the confines of an internal American debate and Wilson's own ideology. Indeed, by emphasizing his internationalism, a framework that looks at Wilson through a strict exceptionalist lens obscures his reluctance to entangle the United States in the "Old World." Ambrosius makes this point clear when he states, "Wilson's insistence on unilateral decision-making in the League and his antipathy toward the French security treaty, as well as the willingness of Lodge and other Republicans to make a multilateral American commitment to help defend France against future German aggression, did not fit that traditional Wilsonian interpretation of the treaty fight in 1919-1920."²⁰⁵ However, while this study highlights the interactions between messianic exceptionalism and Wilson's own foreign policies, it does not fall into the traditional trap of exceptionalist narratives, as highlighted by Ambrosius.

Instead, this research takes into account numerous vantage points, including those of foreign audiences and scholars. Furthermore, it does not attempt to depict Wilson's policies (if implemented) as capable of saving the world from the destruction it faced in WWII. What this study does attempt to show, however, is that these beliefs existed within Wilson's own mindset (as evident in his numerous public remarks) as well as part of a long-standing tradition within American foreign policy.

²⁰⁵ Ambrosius, 154. This approach has also been upheld and promoted by historian Walter McDougall and scholar John Ikenberry.

Wilson's Legacy in the American Century

Wilson's personal legacy is open to as many interpretations as were his original war aims and degree of commitment to the League of Nations. Wilson's critics, many of whom fall within a realist school of thought, accuse Wilson of neglecting the central realities of power politics. Scholars and policymakers including E.H. Carr, George Kennan, and Hans Morgenthau generally agree that Wilson "was responsible for miseducating American public opinion by his emphasis on universal moral principles, his condemnation of such traditional concepts as the balance of power and spheres of influence, and his habit of justifying his policies in terms of ideals rather than a frank avowal of the national interest."²⁰⁶ This unsympathetic view of Wilson has also persisted throughout Europe. One biographer of President Wilson, Arthur Link, concluded that the "European image" of Wilson was "one of a well-intentioned idealist, a man good by ordinary Christian standards, but essentially a destructive force in modern history because he was visionary, unrealistic, provincial, and ignorant of European problems, and zealous and messianic in conceit..."²⁰⁷ This remains the general conservative view of Wilson as well.

From the American perspective, Woodrow Wilson represents, for better or worse, the preeminent era of idealism in American foreign policy, as well as the early stages of an era of American hegemony and liberal internationalism. Lloyd Ambrosius persuasively argues that Wilson's assumptions and goals have influenced a broad range of seemingly disparate political leaders, ostensibly *unlike* Wilson, including Herbert

²⁰⁶ Thompson, 327. This viewpoint is espoused in such realist works including E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939* (London, 1939); George Kennan, *American Diplomacy 1900-1950* (Chicago, 1951); Hans Morgenthau, *In Defense of the National Interest* (New York, 1951).

²⁰⁷ Arthur S. Link, *The Higher Realism of Woodrow Wilson and Other Essays* (Nashville, 1971), 128.

Hoover, Henry Kissinger, Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush. Given Wilson's far-reaching intellectual and operational influence and the persistent invocation of his principles and Fourteen Points, it is imperative to understand Wilsonianism for both a proper reading of the twenty-eighth president's era and the ensuing American Century – from both domestic and international perspectives.

In America's path to become the world's most powerful and liberal nation, Wilson's presidency represents a time in which Americans looked to export their ideas beyond their shores. Furthermore, by linking moral values and national interest in policies that seek to promote democracy abroad, Wilson's principles can be said to be an incubus of sorts for the ideas behind George W. Bush's freedom agenda. "But what distinguished Bush from Wilson," writes Ikenberry, "is that in the new conception the United States would stand above other countries within the global power structure, aggregating and deploying unipolar military power to maintain order. Unlike Wilson's, the Bush vision did not involve efforts to strengthen the rule-based character of international order."²⁰⁸ While the Bush Administration pursued United Nations Security Council resolutions in the lead-up to the Iraq War, and launched the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), which garnered the support of over seventy nations, President Bush did not view multilateral organizations as a main forum for American power in the ways that Wilson did.

Today, Wilson's foreign policies and worldview are encapsulated in the foreign policy tradition of *Wilsonianism*. As previously mentioned, scholar Walter Russell Mead defines this tradition as rooted in the belief "that the United States has both a moral obligation and an important national interest in spreading American democratic and

²⁰⁸ Ikenberry, 257.

social values throughout the world, creating a peaceful international community that accepts the rule of law.”²⁰⁹ Recalling chapter III of this study on theoretical frameworks, *Wilsonianism* also represents a variant of the democratic peace theory, which promotes democracy as a means to decrease the likelihood of war. The Wilsonian tradition, however, has undergone its own evolution. Wilson’s presidency represents but one impulse within American messianic exceptionalism, including a strong commitment to collective security, multilateralism, and international law.

According to Mead, the original Wilsonians believed that “international institutions provide a necessary legitimacy and objectivity for exercises of American power in the service of human rights and international values.”²¹⁰ Conversely, today’s “Revival Wilsonians believe that traditional American values are so compelling, so demonstrably superior, and so widely popular that they can sweep and reshape the world.” However, both traditions can be said to fit the principles and characteristics of messianic exceptionalism in that American foreign policy depicts a larger purpose and mission throughout the world – attempting to conflate national interests with international interests. Therefore, it is important to show the various impulses that an activist, engaged U.S. foreign policy can incorporate... from institutional commitments to more imperial, or unilateral impulses.

Wilsonianism and American Messianic Exceptionalism

One critique of this study on Woodrow Wilson is that it overemphasizes the role that ideology and worldview played in Wilson’s statecraft and foreign policy. The

²⁰⁹ Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World* (New York: Knopf, 2001), pp. iv, 88-97.

²¹⁰ This quote and the next are from Mead, 89.

strength of this type of study, however, is the ability to isolate the concept of American exceptionalism and then study its impact on and interaction with the foreign policy decision-making process. Indeed, individual ideology, beliefs, and principles never solely depict why a nation takes certain actions toward war or peace. Yet ideology limits the options presented to decision makers, just as international relations theory does. For example, a cabinet of liberal-internationalist advisors will inevitably constrain the perspectives that decision makers have on viable options in ways different than a cabinet made of realist advisors.

The challenge of studying President Wilson through the lens of American exceptionalism is that, as Ambrosius states, “Wilson assumed that other peoples shared his own perspective and would readily adopt his conception of American nationalism as a viable model.”²¹¹ Thus, while Americans offered their progressive and liberal ideals for a more peaceful world, Wilson did not understand why other nations might not welcome their singular definition of multilateralism, and America’s commanding role within the new system. This problem continues to plague the American public and policymakers. Principles espoused, discussed, and debated at home are often believed to receive universal acceptance abroad. Therefore, in future studies of messianic exceptionalism, maintaining both domestic and international frameworks will provide a broader transnational context to what is typically a hyper-nationalistic debate.

²¹¹ Lloyd Ambrosius, *Wilsonianism: Woodrow Wilson and His Legacy in American Foreign Relations*. (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 33.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis is to provide greater definitional clarity and understanding of the theory and practice of American exceptionalism. The central challenge within the current debate is the ambiguity and misunderstanding that surround its core characteristics and principles. Furthermore, political and partisan debates tend to dominate discussions about exceptionalism. These debates, however, obscure the far more important issue of the concept's complexity and evolving meaning and role in the conduct of U.S. foreign policy.

To develop clearer language on exceptionalism, this thesis examines analytically the competing definitions, meanings, and uses of the concept, in both theory and practice. Furthermore, each of the statesmen, policymakers, historians, and scholars explored in this study has contributed in significant ways to the development and evolution of exceptionalism throughout various eras in American history. Definitional precision remains essential if policymakers are to better understand and apply the concept's central characteristics in order to implement effective foreign policy.

Contrary to many studies on exceptionalism, which focus on America's empirical abnormalities and distinct characteristics, this thesis explores the concept of exceptionalism as the enduring belief that there is something special about America and its mission in international relations. This assertion develops directly into a more normative claim, lending itself to advance various interpretations of exceptionalism. Indeed, what matters for the purposes of this research is that beliefs about exceptionalism exist among the American populace and its decision-makers, and that these beliefs influence U.S. policy. This is even more important when one considers that

American exceptionalism has become a factor in shaping decisions about America's ability and obligation to exercise leadership around the world.

Lastly, this study advances the intellectual debate on the concept, particularly as policymakers promote notions of exceptionalism, while scholars study its influence on the foreign policy decision-making process. It does so by promoting self-awareness among the policy making elite of the national biases, ideals, and principles that influence U.S. foreign policy, so that they may better articulate America's diplomatic and military objectives in times of war and peace. In the age of American hegemony – and the possible waning of that hegemony – questions of exceptionalism will only continue to become more relevant.

Main Findings

The Ideological Foundations of American Exceptionalism

The ideological foundations of exceptionalism emerge as an analytic product of this thesis. Moreover, this research advances the argument that ideology, ideals, and beliefs are closely intertwined with foreign policy objectives throughout the decision-making process. One central finding is that exceptionalism manifests itself as an ideology and must be treated as an ideational intervening variable within the foreign policy making process. As an ideology, exceptionalism is prone to convoluted and obscure language. Broadly, the notion of ideology as a complex structure has potentially far-reaching implications for foreign policy, just as exceptionalism, as a belief in the uniqueness of American institutions, has important consequences for the formulation of

U.S. foreign policy. This reality makes it even more important to approach the concept using sophisticated, analytic reasoning.

“Ideology forces us, as no other approach does,” says scholar Michael Hunt, “to focus on the consciousness of policy makers and the cultural values and patterns of privilege that shape that consciousness.”²¹² Yet it is only through revisionist forms of historical analysis that the underlying beliefs, fears, and hopes that drive policy makers are fully explored. This study adds to the literature on ideology and its role in foreign policy, as ideals and ideas rarely act or exist independently from reality. To separate the two would be to neglect the several levels of analysis that should be incorporated when studying the foreign policy decision-making process.

Ideology also serves as the crucial link between nationalism and expansionist foreign policies, as fostered by messianic exceptionalism. Nationalism is defined by scholar and theorist Hans Kohn as collective or group egoism that “does not necessarily evolve around the notion of ethnicity or nationality.”²¹³ Indeed, in America’s case, nationalism is defined according to political ideals and ideological values, instead of by ancestry, land, or ethnicity. America’s strong national identity and ideological leanings subsequently affect policymakers’ perceptions and actions towards the international community.

The concept of ideology, and in this case exceptionalism, is employed by policymakers and scholars to explain the priorities and predispositions of U.S. foreign policy. In contemporary debate, exceptionalism serves multiple purposes, as it is used both as a value-based guide, and as a rhetorical device for promoting particular policies.

²¹² Michael Hunt, “Ideology,” *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 77, No. 1 (Jun., 1990), 108-115.

²¹³ Hans Kohn, *The Age of Nationalism: the First Era of Global History*. (New York: Harper and Brother Publication, 1962).

The application of ideological foundations to the study of exceptionalism allows future scholars to shed light on core arguments about exceptionalism, and it will remain an increasingly important, if unresolvable dispute.

It is nearly impossible to deny that American foreign policy is driven, in large part, by economic and security interests, coupled with a strong, enduring, and pervasive ideology. Throughout American society, exceptionalism remains a central tenet of America's liberal ideology. Moreover, exceptionalism incorporates the nation's unending aspirations of freedom, liberation, and universal mission, while supporting a foreign policy that seeks to secure American economic and security interests abroad. Debates on exceptionalism produce visceral and instinctive reactions of national pride among the American populace, which is why the term is so often used within the political realm. Policymakers on both sides of the aisle must take into consideration the influence of this national ideology, political culture, and mindset in order to safeguard the nation against ideological crusades, as well as to identify the full range of forces that are slowly – and sometimes swiftly – leading a nation to act.

Exceptionalism, Morality, and Value Based Components of the National Interest

Throughout the research and writing of this thesis, there emerged close connections between the concept of exceptionalism and the role of morality in foreign policy. Essentially, morality is the cornerstone of the debate surrounding American exceptionalism. In the foreign policy context, morality is a value-based component that becomes incorporated in the policy debate when policymakers operate outside of a strict realist framework. In these instances, exceptionalism can and often does serve as a

value-laden reasoning behind foreign policies, which are often pursued for reasons of vital national interest.

This is particularly true in democracies, where decision makers are constrained in their actions by society. Therefore, they must often make their arguments for pursuing specific policies using both interest and value-based principles. As we see from the Wilsonian case study, a value-based component can incorporate ideals such as “making the world safe for democracy.” In order for policymakers to take into account such components as exceptionalism, they must have a broader interpretation of the national interest. When defined narrowly, the concept of the national interest promotes the state’s basic need for survival, which according to realist theory helps policymakers to avoid the pitfalls of “ideological crusades.” When defined more broadly, the concept of the national interest can include the promotion of domestic values, principles, and morals.²¹⁴

U.S. policymakers’ definition of the national interest became broader as the country’s military and economic capabilities increased in relative power. Today, Americans focus not only on vital national interests such as safeguarding the homeland, but also on potential challenges to America’s broader environment, and the receptivity of such an environment to American values, legal norms, and commercial interests.²¹⁵ This broad interpretation allows for the inclusion of exceptionalism, which conveys a special mission to spread democratic and liberal ideals.

²¹⁴ In Hans Morgenthau’s, *In Defense of the National Interest*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1951) the central thesis is that one cannot choose between moral principles and power politics, but that the two must be connected to one another in any ethical political system. Morgenthau writes: “the choice is not between moral principles and the national interest, devoid of moral dignity, but between one set of moral principles divorced from political reality, and another set of moral principles derived from political reality.” For more information on Morgenthau’s realist method, see: William T. Bluhm, *Theories of the Political System*, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1978), pp. 151-159.

²¹⁵ As Fareed Zakaria points out in “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy,” only great powers have the luxury of viewing their national interests so expansively.

Theoretical Frameworks: Toward a More Integrative Approach

One central finding from the study of exceptionalism's various theoretical frameworks (chapter III) is the difficulty of designing an integrative approach. There is no singular or all-encompassing theory that conclusively explains the role of exceptionalism in the conduct of U.S. foreign policy. Rather, what we see is a confluence of worldviews and frameworks that when incorporated can bring about better understanding of the concept as an intervening variable in U.S foreign policy.

Furthermore, the theories that prove most useful are those that emphasize the unit and individual levels of analysis, including neoclassical realism, the innenpolitik school of thought, and democratic peace theory. These theories are essential to understanding exceptionalism. Furthermore, they provide the domestic lens through which to study such intervening variables as ideology, nationalism, political culture, and values within states.

One objective for future research on exceptionalism must be to develop precise theoretical and historical frameworks on exceptionalism in order to clarify just how various ideational, ideological, and cultural factors may affect foreign policy at the individual and unit levels, and importantly, how such perceptions are translated into foreign policy.

The Evolving Nature of American Exceptionalism

The current understanding of exceptionalism treats the idea of mission as a single doctrine. However, Americans throughout different eras have chosen to exemplify their "special nation" using different tactics, and with an increasingly strong

leadership role in the world. Indeed, by looking specifically at the messianic model of exceptionalism, one can see that America's specific "mission" has changed, while its underlying ideology has not. From the early nineteenth century strands of imperialism, to the Wilsonian era of idealism and focus on the League of Nations, to George W. Bush's "freedom agenda" pursued through more unilateral means, America has always been, so to speak, on the verge of a crusade.

All of these foreign policy traditions can be said to fit the principles and characteristics of messianic exceptionalism. U.S. foreign policy when influenced by this form of exceptionalism consistently promotes a larger purpose and mission throughout the world, while espousing the universality of U.S. national interests. Therefore, it is important to recognize the complex nature of messianic exceptionalism and to highlight the various impulses that an activist, engaged U.S. foreign policy can incorporate, which ranges from institutional commitments to more imperial, or unilateral tendencies.

Implications for Scholarship

The Challenges of Scholarship on Exceptionalism: The Limitations of a Nationalist Framework

The main caution for future studies on exceptionalism is to avoid overly nationalist interpretations. Research on foreign policy decisions that operate within a domestic framework tends to ignore transnational factors, which can limit the scope and value of the analysis. Furthermore, in attempting to universalize the nation's liberal ideology of freedom and free markets, policymakers may fall victim to the propensity to overlook foreign opinion. In looking at historical events from a domestic and individual viewpoint, historians are susceptible to ignoring comparative and international

perspectives. American exceptionalism can thus define the *parameters* that influence historical narratives, rather than remain one of many variables of inquiry. This problem continues to shape scholarship on U.S. foreign policy in world history.

One argument in this thesis is the relationship within the U.S. foreign policy decision-making process between ideas, ideologies, and interests. One critique of this type of study is that it overemphasizes the role that ideology and worldview play in the conduct of statecraft. The strength of the line of inquiry in this study, however, is to isolate the concept of American exceptionalism and then study its impact on the foreign policy decision-making process. Furthermore, the purpose of isolating elements of exceptionalism is not to argue that international factors are less important in the policymaking process. The purpose, rather, is to show that there are powerful ideas and ideologies that underlie traditions within U.S. foreign policy, and that these ideologies have at various times found their way to the surface of U.S. military and diplomatic actions. Yet, there are still limitations present in this nationalist framework, and while exceptionalism is an important intervening variable to explore, it does not singularly define the parameters of how we study the forces that shape foreign policy.

It goes without saying that ideology is not the sole factor in determining why America, or any nation for that matter, takes certain actions in foreign affairs. Indeed, individual ideologies, beliefs, and principles never conclusively portray why a nation takes actions toward war or peace. Rather, it is a confluence of factors that drives a nation to turn to the last resort of warfare. While this study has focused on the domestic and internal factors of American traditions, values, and beliefs, these constitute only one set of influences.

Whether ideologies have a *causal* impact on foreign policy is not the objective of this study. However, ideological beliefs within a political system, and their evolving influence in the policymaking world are important considerations. To put it simply, ideology and worldview inherently define and limit the options presented to and developed by decision makers. In examining Woodrow Wilson's presidency, for example, the interaction between American ideals and its national interests promoted a tradition of international liberalism that sought to place America at the center of a new world order.

Lastly, it must be noted that while Americans continuously offer their own interpretations of the nation's higher mission and purpose, other nations might not welcome America's commanding role within the international system. This problem continues to plague the American public and policymakers. Principles espoused and debated at home are often believed to receive universal acceptance abroad. Therefore, in future studies of messianic exceptionalism, focusing on both domestic and international frameworks will provide a broader transnational context to what is typically a hyper-nationalistic debate.

Implications for Policymakers

An enticing question to ask is: does exceptionalism help America pursue its global leadership commitments or does it lead to detrimental foreign policy decisions? The answer, predictably, is not simple or easily understood. In reality, there are both positive and negative aspects of American exceptionalism and its role in U.S. foreign policy. Speaking to the positive aspects, the concept of exceptionalism can be viewed as

an ideal that holds the nation to higher standards. Throughout America's recent history, the nation has served as a liberal hegemon that generally provides global public goods for the benefit of humanity. Even before the U.S. saw a tremendous increase in its relative power, the nation stood as a beacon of hope and liberty for the rest of the world. Irrefutably, America's role in the world is a force for good.

There are, however, negative consequences of American exceptionalism. The belief among American policymakers that the nation can take diplomatic and military actions that belie our principles and overstretch our resources without meeting the fate of previous global hegemonies is naïve and shortsighted. The United States currently maintains international primacy in political, economic, and military terms, but this advantageous position will not continue unchallenged. Too often, exceptionalism, and its role in America's ensuing hegemony, is used as a vague and ambiguous term to score political points rather than to convey a meaningful sense of purpose in U.S. foreign policy. Policymakers and scholars must make a stronger effort to understand the origins and evolution of exceptionalism if it is to remain a compelling, coherent, and relevant component of how the U.S. exercises global leadership.

A central lesson for policymakers is that they must develop policies that will gain the support of the American people but also act as a pragmatic and thoughtful filter for ideological beliefs. While most Americans do not subscribe to Wilsonian or neoconservative ideals, there is often an underwritten impatience to act upon principles. This is met with an increasing ability of the executive branch to readily use force without checks on its power. Both of these trends mean that policymakers must recognize the enthusiastic, if sometimes rash, temperament with which policy can be made, as they strike the right balance between the tides of public sentiment and judicious use of fore-

thought that is required of policymakers. To put this warning in terms of exceptionalism, policymakers must strike a delicate balance between the excesses of messianic exceptionalism and the aloofness of the exemplar model.

American Exceptionalism for the Twenty-First Century:

In closing, in the era of American hegemony, the United States does not have the luxury of retuning to such a model of exemplar exceptionalism, just as the nation cannot return to an isolated and withdrawn position in international relations. Moving forward, the way in which the liberal order evolves will hinge in important respects on the United States. In other words, the durability of the American-led international system is closely interconnected with the durability of American exceptionalism and the nation's embrace of the messianic tradition.

America cannot liberate all peoples from the shackles of authoritarianism, oppression, poverty, and defeat. Nevertheless, just as the United States strives to create a more perfect union within its territories, it too must strive to maintain a higher purpose in its international relations. There are those who say that American exceptionalism is dangerous, and when we consider its excesses, this is true. Yet when better-understood and more clearly articulated, exceptionalism can be one force that holds decision-makers to a higher standard of balancing the nation's ideals and interests. This is the only way that America can continue to lead the current world order that it created, while remaining a liberal hegemon that contributes to international peace, security, and prosperity.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ambrosius, Lloyd E. "Woodrow Wilson, Alliances, and the League of Nations, *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, Vol. 5, No. 2. Apr., 2006.
- Bell, Daniel. *The End of Ideology*, Boston: Harvard University Press, 1962.
- Beisner, Robert L. *From the Old Diplomacy to the New, 1865-1900*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1975.
- Berg, Scott. *Wilson*, New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2013.
- Bluhm, William Theodore. *Theories of the Political System; Classics of Political Thought & Modern Political Analysis*, 3rd ed. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971.
- Bremmer, Ian and Roubini, Nouriel, "A G-Zero World," *Foreign Affairs*, Mar/ Apr2011, Vol. 90, Issue 2. Accessed July 10, 2014. Available from LexisNexis.
- Brown, Michael E., Sean M. Lynn-Jones, and Steven E. Miller. *Debating the Democratic Peace*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1996.
- Caesar, James W. "The Origins and Character of American Exceptionalism" in *American Exceptionalism*, ed. Charles Dunn. Plymouth, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2013.
- Chesterton, G. K. *What I Saw in America*. New York: Dodd and Mead, 1922.
- Clements, Kendrick A. Woodrow Wilson and World War I. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 1, Mar., 2004.
- Clor, Harry. "Woodrow Wilson," eds. Morton J. Frisch and Richard G. Stevens, *American Political Thought: The Philosophic Dimension of American Statesmanship*. New York: Scribner, 1971.

- Cooper, John Milton Jr. *Woodrow Wilson: A Biography*, New York: Knopf, 2009.
- Devlin, Lord. *Too Proud to Fight: Woodrow Wilson's Neutrality*, London: Oxford University Press, 1974.
- Dobson, John M. *Reticent Expansionism: The Foreign Policy of William McKinley*. Pittsburgh, Pa: Duquesne University Press, 1988.
- Dougherty, James E., and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr. *Contending Theories of International Relations*, 5th ed. Addison, Wesley, Longman, 2001.
- Dulles, Foster Rhea. *Prelude to World Power, American Diplomatic History, 1860-1900*. New York: The MacMillan Company, 1965.
- Dulles, Foster Rhea. *The Imperial Years*. New York: Crowell, 1966.
- Ekirch, Arthur A. *The American Democratic Tradition: a History*, New York: MacMillan, 1963.
- Freud, Sigmund and Bullitt, William C. *Thomas Woodrow Wilson: A Psychological Study* London, 1966.
- Gelvin, James. "The Ironic Legacy of the King-Crane Commission," ed. David W Lesch, *The Middle East and the United States: A Historical and Political Reassessment*. Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1996.
- Hartz, Louis. *The Liberal Tradition in America; An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1955.
- Hodgson, Godfrey. *The Myth of American Exceptionalism*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.

Hook, Steven W. *U.S. Foreign Policy: The Paradox of World Power*, Washington DC: CQ Press, 2005.

Hunt, Michael. "Ideology," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 77, No. 1, Jun., 1990.

Ikenberry, John G. *Liberal Leviathan*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011.

Jervis, R. "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma." *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (1978): 167-214.

Kidd, Thomas S. *God of Liberty: A Religious History of the American Revolution*. New York: Basic Books, 2010.

Kohn, Hans. *The Age of Nationalism: the First Era of Global History*. New York: Harper and Brother Publication, 1962.

Kupchan, Charles A. and Kupchan, Clifford A. "The Promise of Collective Security," *International Security*, Vol. 20, No. 1, Summer 1995.

LaFeber, Walter. *The American Search for Opportunity, 1865-1913*. The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Lesch, David W. *The Middle East and the United States: A Historical and Political Reassessment*. Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1996.

Levin, N. Gordon Jr. *Woodrow Wilson and World Politics: America's Response to War and Revolution*. New York, 1968.

Link, Arthur S. *American Epoch; A History of the United States Since the 1890's*. New York: Knopf, 1955.

Link, Arthur S. *Wilson: The Struggle for Neutrality, 1914-1915*. Princeton, N.J. 1960.

Link, Arthur S. *The Higher Realism of Woodrow Wilson and Other Essays*. Nashville, TN, 1971.

Lipset, Seymour Martin. *American Exceptionalism: A Double Edged Sword*. New York: Norton, 1997.

Martel, William C. *Victory in War: Foundations of Modern Strategy*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

May, Ernest R. *American Imperialism; A Speculative Essay*. New York: Atheneum, 1968.

McCoy, Terrence. "How Joseph Stalin Invented 'American Exceptionalism,'" *The Atlantic*, March 15, 2012.

McDougall, Walter A. *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World Since 1776*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997.

Mead, Walter Russell. *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World*. New York: Knopf, 2001.

Mearsheimer, John J. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York: Norton, 2001.

Merk, Frederick, and Lois Bannister Merk. *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History: A Reinterpretation*. New York: Knopf, 1963.

Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary. 10th ed. 2000

Mingst, Karen A. *Essentials of International Relations*. New York: Norton, 2004.

Moravscik, Andrew, "The New Liberalism," in Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, Oxford University Press, 2008, chapter 13.

Morgenthau, Hans J., *Politics Among Nations; The Struggle for Power and Peace*. New York: Knopf, 1967.

New Oxford American Dictionary. 2nd ed. Edited by Erin McKean. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Nuechterlein, Donald, "Defining National Interests: An Analytic Framework," *America Recommitted* Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1991.

Paterson, Thomas, "United States Intervention in Cuba, 1898: Interpretations of the Spanish-American-Cuban-Filipino War." *The History Teacher*, Vol. 29, No. 3, May, 1996.

Pratt, Julius William. *Expansionists of 1898: The Acquisition of Hawaii and the Spanish Islands*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1936.

Restad, Hilde Eliassen, "Old Paradigms in History Die Hard in Political Science: US Foreign Policy and American Exceptionalism," *American Political Thought*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Spring 2012.

Reus-Smit, Christian and Snidal, Duncan, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Rose, Gideon. "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy." *World Politics*, Vol. 51. No. 1. Oct., 1998.

Rosenau, James N. *Turbulence in World Politics: A Theory of Change and Continuity*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990.

Stuart, Douglas T. "Foreign Policy Decision Making," in *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations* ed. Reus-Smit, Christian and Snidal, Duncan, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008, Chapter 33.

Thompson, J.A. "Woodrow Wilson and World War I: A Reappraisal," *Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 3, Dec., 1985.

- Tofel, Richard. "The Real Issues," *The New York Times*, June 24, 1980.
- Tocqueville, Alexis de and Mayer, J.P. *Democracy in America*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1969.
- Tucker, Robert W., and David C. Hendrickson. *The Imperial Temptation: The New World Order and America's Purpose*. New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1992.
- Tyrrell, Ian. "American Exceptionalism and Anti-Americanism," in Brendon O'Connor, ed., *Anti-Americanism: History, Causes, and Themes. Vol. 2: Historical Perspectives*, Oxford: Greenwood World Publishing, 2007.
- Tyrrell, Ian. "Exceptionalism in an Age of International History," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 96, No. 4, October 1991.
- Ullman, Richard H. "The 'Foreign World' and Ourselves: Washington, Wilson, and the Democrat's Dilemma," *Foreign Policy*, no. 21 (Winter, 1975-1976). Accessed July 7, 2013. Available from JSTOR.
- Williams, William Appleman. *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, New York: Norton, 1959.
- Wohlforth, William C., "Realism," in Christian Reus-Smith and Duncan Snidal, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations* Oxford University Press, 2008, chapter 7.
- Wood, Gordon S. *The Idea of America: Reflections on the Birth of the United States*. New York: Penguin Press, 2011.
- You, Marilyn B. "One Empire Under God", *European Contributions to American Studies*, May 2004, Vol. 55, p8-18.
- Zakaria, Fareed. *From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America's World Role*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998.