The G.W. Bush War on Terror and Wilsonianism

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Abstract

The US foreign policy driven by G.W Bush marked a deep shift in international relations. The concept of the « War on terror » and terrorism shaped the fight for global order since the attack of 9/11 and the military involvement of the USA in the Middle East. The purpose of this research paper is to analyze in what ways Wilsonian theory provides an explanation of the "War on Terror" led by G.W. Bush. It raises the question of Bush's motivations for US involvement in the Middle East. This research paper argues that the US decision to go to war against Saddam Hussein was part of a political program of Bush's administration in order not only to promote the USA's material and ideological interests, but because of the deeply rooted notion of American exceptionalism and the belief in a duty to spread democracy and peace. Indeed, the complex relation between realism and idealism characterizes US foreign policy. Through his policy, Bush emphasized the idea that democratization requires a military intervention which will be defined as an « armed Wilsonianism ». However, realist theory in the case of the War on Terror does not seem to provide strong enough evidence of Bush's motives in such a conflict. In order to understand the political opposition that the war on terror represents it is central to emphasize the principle of the "just war" that was used by the Bush administration.

Keywords: George W. Bush, Iraq, War on Terror

"The attack took place on American soil, but it was an attack on the heart and soul of the civilized world. And the world has come together to fight a new and different war, the first, and we hope the only one, of the 21st century."[1] Thirteen years after the United States faced their first major terrorist attack, the question raised by these new types of threats has still not been solved, and terrorism has even spread worldwide. Moreover, the decision of the American government to start a war against terror as an answer to terrorism is still present and analyzed by journalists and scholars. This continuous interest on understanding those events underlines the fact that 9/11 is a major event in the evolution of international relations. Indeed, 9/11 marked a radical turning point in international relations as it shaped not only American foreign policy, but also the other countries' foreign policy through the spectrum of terrorist threats. Moreover, the turning point explains the reasons why George W. Bush decided to invade Middle-Eastern countries. Scholars and public opinion argue mainly that this decision was motivated by economic interest because of the oil that this region retains, by a will of revenge after 9/11, or as a typical policy of American imperialism. For instance, Chomsky affirms that the U.S.' interests are the only motivation for the war on terror.[2] Through intimidation and the manipulation of information, the exponents of such warfare are reducing the entire world to silence. For the USA the only thing that matters is their own interest, and to protect those they will use every means at their disposal; even if this implies confiscating and militarizing the entire planet and outer space as well. Chomsky affirms that there is no sense of mission to diffuse human rights in U.S. foreign policy. This is only an excuse to justify violent means to fulfill American interests. On the other hand, other nations, particularly European ones, privilege the economical and imperialistic argument over any other explanation. But by analyzing U.S. background and culture another explanation can be shaped under ideological principles.

1. American Exceptionalism And Its Relation To Foreign Policy

Nowadays, it is difficult to analyze U.S. foreign policy and the state of mind of U.S. policy makers, and of the American population, without taking into account the idea of a moral exceptionalism that is deeply rooted in American culture. Indeed, "aside from the former Soviet Union, the United States is uniquely distinguished from other nations by its ideological origins."[3] American exceptionalism is a concept that has been created by Tocqueville to define American culture in comparison to European culture.[4] American exceptionalism refers to the idea that there is something different and better about the American life. As Lipset defines it, "becoming American [is] a religious, that is, ideological act -The United States is a country organized around an ideology which includes a set of dogmas about the nature of a good society. Americanism (...) is an "ism" or ideology in the same way that communism or fascism or liberalism are -isms. In Europe, nationality is related to community, and thus one cannot become un-English or un-Swedish. Being an American, however, is an ideological commitment. It is not a matter of birth."[5] The values that define American political culture are collectively outlined. "America is the only nation in the world that is founded on a creed. That creed is set forth with dogmatic and even theological lucidity in the Declaration of Independence."[6] In other words, a constant characteristic of the American culture was already settled with the first immigrants that arrived in America: the idea of exceptionalism and manifest destiny. The immigrants saw themselves as the chosen ones that had the duty to create a better society in the new world as opposed to the European ones.[7] The idea of an American nation and the belief that this population was special had already started to spread during the period of independence. Indeed, the immigrants that left Europe to go to America saw themselves as the chosen population that had the mission to start a new and better civilization in this new world.[8] They believed God had made a covenant with their people and had chosen them to provide a model for the other nations of the world. The American culture is based on a deep feeling of being the object of a divine benediction, with a moral superiority, and a profoundly anchored idealism that is nearly messianic.[9] "The values that support an exceptionalist view marry Enlightenment ideals of individual reason and liberty with religious and moral views uprooted from their origins in Puritan piety. Collectively, these values define a political culture that promotes the idea of progress and takes the improvement of the human condition as a given."[10] For instance, Thomas Paine declared "we have it in our power to begin the world over again"[11], which underlines that right from the beginning Americans have believed that their policies represented a new beginning in human history a particularistic community of universal significance.[12] In other words, American culture has been rooted in a belief that the nation's principles are, in qualities and capacities, shared by all people, everywhere.[13] As a result, U.S. foreign policy is paradoxical in the sense that it assumes that national interest and the good of the rest of the world are the same. Moreover, Tocqueville defined American exceptionalism's basis as the nation's isolation from the rest of the world.[14] The U.S.A. was protected from any type of conflicts, so that they could freely develop democratic values built on freedom and rights. In other words, the U.S.A. is the very example of democratic institutions for the rest of the world.[15] This idea of American exceptionalism has always been present in political field. Indeed, the U.S.A. is the only nation that has developed a domestic, and later foreign, policy that is based on this concept. Moreover, the U.S.A. is the only country that used exceptionalism to promote two contradictory foreign policies of isolationism and interventionism at the same time.[16] However, the idea of America's mission was not translated into any kind of active foreign policy at the time of the first development of the U.S. as an independent state. First, foreign policy was used through manifest destiny in order for the American population to justify their western expansion. "The right of our manifest destiny to over spread and to possess the whole of the continent which Providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of liberty and federative development of self-government entrusted to us."[17] In other words, the U.S. has a God-given right to expand its borders and has an obligation to bring its civilizing influence to the West. Expansion will also strengthen the foundations of the Union, making it invulnerable, and is necessary to accommodate the increasing population of the U.S. The idea of exceptionalism was first used as a domestic policy. However, material forces and the way that leaders understand and represent the world determine foreign policies.[18] Leaders are shaped in a particular manner of justifying their actions because of their way of seeing themselves and the world.[19] In other words, the role of the U.S.A. in the world is largely defined from premises, beliefs, and values linked to an understanding that American leaders have of their history and the cultural values that they inherited. In other words, American exceptionalism originates from two key elements, which are a religious spirit and a strong nationalism. "Nonetheless, U.S. nationalism has historically been defined in terms of both an adherence to the set of universal political values that constitute the 'American Creed' and a perceived obligation to promote those values in its external relations."[20] Indeed, this main perception of the American culture, and its mission, was then renewed and turned towards international policy after World War One. Indeed, until the First World War, American foreign policy tended to be isolationist with absolutely no will to get engaged in European conflicts. Through President Wilson, the belief in a duty of peace toward the rest of the world was revived. Indeed, the U.S.A. sees itself as an example of economic, freedom and political achievement.[21] President Wilson was willing to create a new world order based on democracy to avoid the rise of another dictatorial power as had happened with Germany. President Wilson introduced, though his fourteen points,[22] the idea of morality in U.S.

foreign policy. "In practice, American nationalism influences U.S. foreign policy by layering altruism on top of basic, self-interested power-seeking behavior while allowing Americans to believe that their good intentions lack a selfish dimension and are truly, in some objective way, good for others."[23] Indeed, President Wilson's ideology was that the U.S.A. has the responsibility of spreading democracy and economic prosperity throughout the world. Until Wilson, the tradition of American exceptionalism implied that the U.S.A. had to stay out of foreign engagements as their uniqueness came from their isolation: "it is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world."[24] Wilson however, proclaimed that the U.S.A. would bring security to the world by stopping all the wars. He defined American international intervention policy as a just cause for American exceptionalism, because by fighting against a tyrannical state the U.S.A. was only aiming to create a world based on democratic principles and universal liberties.[25] The U.S.A. did not have to fear corrupted European diplomatic influences anymore, as President Washington implied in his farewell. Wilson advocates the complete opposite and presented American institutions as unique and as a model for European political reconstruction. He believed that the U.S.A. was different from other states because of its reliance to unique values and principles. Indeed, the strength of the U.S. relied first in its morality, which is why America's mission was now to actively serve humanity through a strong interventionist foreign policy.[26] "By this argument, U.S. interest in the promotion of democracy originated not only in the instrumental maximization of some material interest, but in a moral commitment to the universal political values that define the United States as a self-contained political community."[27] The Cold War created a particular context that strongly reinforced this idea of American exceptionalism, and Wilson's idealist principles. However, even scholars do not agree if the Cold War was mainly driven by consideration of power or by ideologies. Indeed, Kenneth Waltz' theory of neorealism clearly defines ideological questions as irrelevant in the case of the Cold War. He relies instead on the idea of two structural features of international politics in order to explain state relations, particularly in the case of two superpowers. These two structural features are the anarchic nature of international relations and the unequal repartition of capabilities between the states.[28] For Waltz and realists scholars in general, these two features are the only origins of the policies put in place by the U.S. and USSR during the Cold War. However, with regards to the importance of ideological propaganda during the war and the evolution of U.S. foreign policy after the Cold war, it seems diminishing to only consider the struggle for power in this case. Moreover, an ideological vision of the Cold War has been reinforced since recently declassified materials and new analyses from both East and West have been published.[29] "The division in American society along racial, class, and gender lines threatened to weaken the society at home and damage its prestige in the world. In the propaganda battles that permeated the cold war era, American leaders promoted the American way of life as the triumph of capitalism, allegedly available to all who believed in its values."[30] During the Cold War, the government developed a clear language of the "good" versus "bad", defining communism as the enemy. "Propaganda was the means by which governments 'sold' their policies, portrayed in a certain way in order to preserve internal cohesion and to maximize domestic support for foreign policies. The demonization of what was now regarded as the enemy heightened the sense that this was a moral struggle – good versus evil – and strengthened the resolution of both sides to remain committed until victory was assured (and the other side vanquished)."[31] Moreover, the diverse policies put in place in Europe have as much of a realist side with the idea of USSR power containment as they are ideological. "The chief aim of the Marshall Plan and the Japanese reconstruction program was to ensure that the West European countries and Japan could quickly build prosperous, dynamic economies and stable, democratic systems, which collectively would be able to offset Soviet military power."[32] Indeed, the best way to contain Communism in Europe was to promote U.S. democratic principles and values through the introduction of major liberal institutions. For instance, the instauration of the Bretton Woods agreements and the Marshall plan represented U.S. capitalist ideals and introduced to Europe American ideals with regards to economic growth. Indeed, "the contrasting nature of the U.S. - and Soviet - led international economic systems derived from the superpowers' respective ideological orientations. Neither economic grouping could have arisen spontaneously. The reason the world economy became a liberal capitalist order is that the dominant member of the world community, the United States, subscribed to a liberal capitalist ideology."[33] This ideology-based explanation is important, but at the same time it is crucial to underline that these policies were also meant to push European countries to rebuild their own military to be able to regain power against the main opponent- the USSR. The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet block is the decisive turning point with regards to the idea of the supremacy of liberal ideology and American exceptionalism. Indeed, the end of the USSR was the proof that liberal values promoted by the U.S.A. were the only viable principles for a state.[34] American narratives affirmed that the U.S.A. fought and won against the great evil that represented Communism and the USSR and confer "upon the admiring world a benevolent great power."[35] In the same vein, Fukuyama saw the end of USSR as 'the end of history', the American political and economic values were now the wave of the future.[36] This exceptionalist interpretation of the end of the Cold War set the stage for further influence in U.S. foreign policy. Indeed, the world entered in a unipolar world dominated economically, and military by the American 'hyper power.' Moreover, the end of the Second World War, and particularly the Cold War and its aftermath, convinced the American population and representatives that the U.S.A. has a special destiny with a unique role to play in the history of humanity. In other words, the end of the

Cold War reinforced the idea that "the United States is entitled to interpret for other states their own best interests, which are inevitably found to be consistent with those of the United States. After all, in as much as the United States both implements God's purposes and leads the secular progress of mankind, other states logically cannot have legitimate interests that oppose America's" just as the fall of communism confirmed.[37]

2. Questioning The Hegemonic Status Of The U.S.A.

Many scholars such as Vassilis Fouskas, and Bülent Gökay or C.P. David, consider Bush's offensive foreign policy as a political agenda that was planned before its official announcement in 2002. Indeed, the operation "Freedom Iraq" would have been a hidden agenda already decided either right after the terrorist attack, or according to some scholars even before the presidential elections. Iraq's fate would have been sealed during the days that followed the terrorist attacks of 9/11.[38] However, it is first important to nuance this argument by underlining how the U.S.A. became a super power after the war. First of all, it is important to remember that the American influence over the rest of the world has not always been equally as strong, but faced important variation. It was only in the nineties that the U.S.A. became the major power of the world.[39] Indeed, before the end of World War Two, the U.S.A. tended to have a minimized involvement in international affairs. The U.S.A. limited their international interaction and that is why, for instance, they only joined the war effort very late for both World War One and Two. Moreover, it is even possible to argue that it was world events that forced the U.S.A. to get involved in international relations. Indeed, it was only when the country had been directly attacked that the American government decided to help Europe. In other words, before these world conflicts that pushed the U.S.A. to be more involved internationally and to gain more global responsibilities, the U.S.A. did not want to endorse any hegemonic status. In addition, at the end of World War Two, Europe was completely broken on the human side as much as on the economical or even infrastructural side. "About twenty out of every one hundred residences in Germany were destroyed. Two and a quarter million homes were destroyed in Japan and 460,000 in Great Britain. Every fifth Greek was left homeless and 28,000 homes in Rotterdam were obliterated."[40] At the end of the war the balance of power shifted from Europe to the only powers that remained, which where the U.S.A. and USSR. Moreover, these conflicts have put Europe into a security dilemma where only the U.S.A. could provide any kind of stability thanks to its economy and institutions that had not been damaged by the wars. In other words, if the U.S.A. became the world's hegemon, it was reluctantly, because no other power was able to face the new threat represented by the USSR. Moreover, after the Cold War, Europe had not yet recovered from the multiple wars and the U.S.A. was the only strong power that remained. Keohane defines a hegemon in his theory of hegemonic stability as preponderance of material resources, especially control over raw materials, control over sources of capital, control over markets and competitive advantages in the production of highly valued goods. In addition, Keohane underlines the conception of ideological hegemony, for the continuance of international political economic regimes.[41] In the case of the aftermaths of World War Two, and the Cold War, the U.S.A. entered in this definition of hegemon because every former powerful state had been nearly destroyed by the war. Secondly, scholars judge Bush's foreign policy as a hidden agenda in favor of imperialism. Indeed, as underlined earlier the war against terrorism shaped the struggle for global order as the state that was the victim of the attacks also happened to be the first power in the world; the agenda seemed to be settled. However, by analyzing the U.S.A.'s foreign policy before 9/11 it is possible to notice that the tendency was far from interventionism. Bush's preferences with regard to foreign policy were already highlighted during the presidential campaign at the third debate. Indeed, Bush underlined that he was in favor of a diffusion of the tensions, particularly with regards to Middle East, however he added that U.S. military troops were over deployed around the world. Moreover, he is conscious that the U.S. cannot impose their vision of peace and freedom and he concludes by affirming that his aim would be to step out of the negotiation table and leave the countries in the Middle East to solve themselves their problems.[42] During the debate, Bush is advocating a foreign policy with limited international intervention. Moreover, the beginning of Bush's mandate is not highlighted by a strong interest in international affairs but rather by a strong emphasize on low politics. Indeed, the Bush administration focused more on a domestic dynamic, prioritizing education, economic, energetic and environmental challenges.[43] Bush was even laughed at by the media for his lack of international involvement, comparing his first trip to Europe to Neil Armstrong's landing on the moon.[44] In other words, the active foreign policy put in place by the Bush administration embodied through the war on terror seems to be more a reaction to the terrorist attack than a hidden agenda. Moreover, it is important to analyze the threat that the U.S.A. had to face, terrorism, was not something new. Acts of terrorism had been perpetuated before; however 9/11 pushed it to a wider and more dangerous scale. Indeed, terrorism in the form of the 9/11 attacks was highly moral, and this attack was beyond any known concepts of warfare. Terrorism has become a new form of war, an indirect war that does not target the military anymore but rather symbols of the nations.[45] In other words, the planes that destroyed the World Trade Center also attacked a major symbol of American power. Indeed, the Twin Towers represented the economic success of the country, which is the physical representation of the key idea in American culture of the self-made man. But the towers also

represented the benefits of modernity and progress, and even symbolized the power of the American government on its soil.[46] Moreover, the Pentagon represents the achievement of U.S. security services, and more importantly it represents U.S. military forces that were supposed to be untouchable at that time. The 9/11 terrorist attacks were also highly moral and traumatic because they purposely targeted the civilian population. Moreover, it reflected that the aim of the terrorist group was to achieve as many innocent casualties as possible. Indeed, the World Trade Center was one of the most important buildings of New York's business center, with fifty thousand people working there and two hundred thousand people passing by every day, and the flights that were hijacked were domestic flights full of passengers.[47] In addition, the terrorist attack happened in an international context that was relatively peaceful with no major tensions between countries. In other words, the violence and the suddenness of 9/11 were understood as a moral breach going against principles of justified wars.[48] Terrorism presents an asymmetric challenge as it uses the weapon of the weak against the power of the strong.[49] Indeed, terrorists do not follow the rules of warfare, neither state nor government, instead terrorism appears as an evasive and hidden enemy. The type of terrorism faced on 9/11 is freed from any nation-state concept; it is based on a transnational ideology and uses unconventional means to fight. Indeed, terrorist groups use vulnerability of developed society as a weapon.[50] As underlined earlier, the United States have always been protected from a direct-armed attacks, whether it be during the World Wars or during the Cold War, suddenly they became completely vulnerable to terrorist threats that the military power could not stop. It is possible for non-state actors to inflict as many damage as states, which clearly questions the role of states like the U.S. in this globalized world.[51] Indeed, the state-centered world dominated by American hegemony since the end of the Cold War is slowly fading thanks to the development of globalization. This new world is now characterized by the multiplication and the diversification of international actors, and the U.S.A. has violently been reminded of this reality through the 9/11 terrorist attack. In this multilateral world, states saw their power being diffused in favor of new types of institutions, which can be understood as a decline of state power on the international scene.[52] As this new type of threat, terrorism, underlines that territoriality is not relevant anymore for powers, states are defeated even in their most traditional security role by terrorist groups, challenged in its monopoly of legitimate use of violence.[53] 9/11 reinforced this idea of impotent states, particularly because it was able to hurt the most powerful state of the world. Indeed, terrorism pursues politics without using political means. In other words, the terrorist attack clearly questioned the U.S. position as the world leader. Indeed, these terrorist attacks first questioned American military supremacy. The U.S.A. is the biggest investors in terms of military and security budget, and has the most powerful army in the world.[54] However, a terrorist group that is not even related to a state managed to turn five domestic flights into weapons without being stopped. Moreover, Al-Qaida attacked with an ideological aim and not in order to conquer territories. Indeed, *The Future of Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula After the Fall of Baghdad*, a recent book by one of Osama bin Laden's closest associates, makes crystal clear that the source of Al-Qaida's war against the West is a fundamental rejection of liberal democracy and capitalism."[55] This means that beyond the military power, this group also questioned American values that have been seen as universal until this point. Terrorism takes advantage of a globalized world diminishing the signification of state power and dropping the status of the U.S.A. in the international community from hegemon to common country. In this way, 9/11 also questioned the U.S.'s ability to keep world peace. Indeed, the U.S.A. had this implicit role since the end of the Cold War thanks to their military and ideological dominance. The 9/11 attacks do not just question state power, they question a model of civilization and even a type of international relations dominated by inter-state relations.[56] Indeed, the thesis of the "end of history" claimed by Fukuyama, which the end of the Cold War confirmed, is then discredited by the terrorist attacks. Fukuyama affirmed that beyond liberalism and markets nothing else exists towards what human beings might hope to evolve, hence the end of history.[57] However, liberal optimism was swept away with 9/11, and an allegedly permanent liberal international system did not prove to be permanent after all.[58] The U.S.A.'s democratic values had already been tarnished after the Vietnam War, and the terrorist attacks reasserted the idea that American values might not be as perfect as American society tended to think. Indeed, if American values were superior, and represented a model for the world, terrorist groups should not have targeted the U.S.A. The idea of the U.S.A. as a political model was questioned, and at the same times its place among the international society was doubted. In other words, because of the 9/11 attacks, the U.S.A. lost part of its hegemonic incentive on international relations, and on other countries because of the vulnerability that it gained by not being able to prevent the terrorist attacks. For these reasons, "the war also seeks to reassert the authority of the U.S. state in the international system, to secure retribution, and to reassert the U.S. body politics' own identity to itself domestically."[59] After 9/11 the U.S.A. had a real need to reassert American dominance on the international scene. Indeed, it was crucial for the U.S. to prove to the world that its power was not altered and that they were capable to fight back anybody that would defy them.[60] President Bush himself recognized that the hegemonic power of the U.S. has been questioned: "America is no longer protected by vast oceans."[61] This emphasizes the idea that the war on terror can be understood as a warning to any hostile group or country that might have seen, through the traumatic consequences of 9/11, a hope for future defying the world's great power. In other words, the interventionist policy that the Bush administration chose can be seen as the application of a strength strategy, to show that nobody can hurt the U.S.A. without punishment.[62] The decision of the war on terror is then understood

as a way to reaffirm American hegemonic position in the world. This explanation of Bush's policy is sustained by the government's decision to intervene in Afghanistan. Indeed, even though terrorism takes advantage of globalization and fades the importance of state sovereignty it does not completely erases the importance of territory, as trans-nationalist theorists tend to believe. Indeed, terrorism cannot act without logistic headquarters and the use of weak states.[63] Afghanistan was the perfect example of these principles, as it became a terrorist sponsored state because of the Taliban state's complicity, obliged or tolerated, with the terrorist group.[64] In this way, transnational actors such as terrorist groups at first glance questioned state power, but the consequences of 9/11 seems to be a reinforcement of state power particularly through the American policy put in place. Moreover, the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan is a direct answer to the security threat that the U.S.A. encountered with 9/11. Indeed, as underlined the Taliban state was complicit of Al-Qaida, and the international community agreed on a multilateral intervention as an answer to the terrorist attacks. Indeed, "From the ashes of September 11 arose a coalition of the world's most powerful nations. With twenty countries providing military troops…"[65] Indeed, the U.S. did not interfere in Afghan internal policy alone, but as part of an international action through NATO with other countries such as France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. The United Nations Security Council authorized an international action to overthrow the Taliban government through Resolution 1368 and to set up an International Assistance Force to provide military support to the newly established democracy.[66] However, the United States did not stop after Afghanistan; instead they decided to launch the mission "Freedom Iraq" and created a whole doctrine based on the "Axis of Evil" that is ideologically menacing the world. This decision shows that beyond the question of security and military reassertion of their power, the aim of the United States was wider and tended to be more ideological.

3. Bush's Motives Beyond The Question Of Security

The combination of a new feeling of vulnerability, a moral indignation with regards to a gratuitous act of hostility from one part of the world, and a feeling of infallible power unequaled unit today American leaders, ideologists and people that had before no will of external adventures.[67] 9/11 was an ideological attack against American values, but as underlined in the first part, those American values are seen as universal. In other words, by attacking the U.S.A. terrorism is a universal threat to values that are shared by most countries in the world. "Heightened threat perception elevated the focus on ideals and submerged the careful calculation of interest. The overall goal of U.S. foreign policy, said the Bush strategy statement of September 2002, is to configure a balance of power favoring freedom."[68] Bush's foreign policy strategy after 9/11 is revolutionary in the sense that it not only implies a revolution on the strategic stage, but mainly on the political and moral stage. Indeed, as developed throughout the previous parts, 9/11 opened to a new kind of war highly moral with an enemy that has no face. Moreover, this world danger, because of its strong moral connotation, reinforced the idea of American exceptionalism among American society and leaders. Indeed, "the promotion of democracy is central to the George U.S.A. Bush administration's prosecution of both the war on terrorism and its overall grand strategy, in which it is assumed that U.S. political and security interests are advanced by the spread of liberal political institutions and values abroad."[69] In order to sustain the moral justification of the decision to invade Iraq, the Bush administration created a complete new grand strategy: the Bush doctrine. The neo-conservative movement only became known after 9/11 through Bush's foreign policy shaping most of the government's decisions. However, this political orientation already existed before and was actually initiated in 1997 by William Kristol and Robert Kagan through the think tank Project for the New American Century. The organization advocated the view that "American leadership is good both for America and for the world," and sought to build support for a Reaganite policy of military strength and moral clarity.[70] "For its opponents, [neo-conservatism] is a distinct political movement that emphasizes the blending of military power with Wilsonian idealism, yet for its supporters it is more of a 'persuasion' that individuals of many types drift into and out of. Regardless of which paradigm is more correct, it is now widely accepted that the neoconservative impulse has been visible in modern American foreign policy, particularly within the George U.S.A. Bush administration."[71] The neo-conservative ideology was shaped through three main ideas: a strong idea of patriotism, a round rejection of anything resembling or pointing towards a world government, and the view that statesmen should clearly distinguish friends from enemies.[72] These pillars holding the theory of neo-conservatism are then fused with a strong sense of morality that compels America to use its power for the common good rather than reserve it, and reinforces American values such as American exceptionalism. Moreover, the early neoconservatives sought to reorient domestic American politics by incorporating the ready-made moral foundations that religion provided, without necessarily being religious themselves.[73] This religious explanation provided a clear distinction between good and wrong that also reinforced their third pillar of identifying ones enemies from ones friends. Neoconservatives believed that they were the only ones in possession of the moral and ideological foundations to successfully shaped international relations for the benefit of all and that the U.S.A. was the only ones blessed with the ability to fulfill such an enterprise.[74] "Americans should understand that their support for American pre-eminence is as much a strike for international

justice as any people is capable of making."[75] "The events of September 11th provided the opportunity for those with a neoconservative persuasion to gain prominence in the Bush administration as they were able to offer a ready-made logic with which to view the new post 9/11 era and point to a legacy of literature and ignored warnings of a dangerous future."[76] In this sense, the Bush doctrine, which has been inspired by the neo-conservative ideas, can be seen as a deconstruction of Wilsonian principles. Indeed, the neo-conservative movement created a new ideology out of principles that were deeply embedded in U.S. policy. The Bush doctrine clearly follows Wilson's moral principle, in the sense that it is the duty of the U.S.A. to be an example that will bring peace in a world threatened by a new enemy. Indeed, the terrorist threat is a threat to all countries, which reinforces Wilson's principle of the necessity of an international order through a collective security. The international posture that the Bush administration decided to promote after 9/11 with an emphasis on the projection of American power abroad is a clear reminder of Wilson's position with regards to foreign policy. Moreover, the belief in the democratic system as the only solution to achieve world peace is also a direct reference to Wilson. "The terrorists know. They know that a vibrant, successful democracy at the heart of the Middle East will discredit their radical ideology of hate."[77] Finally, the differentiation between state and people is also characteristic of Wilson's doctrine. "The United States has no quarrel with the Iraqi people; they've suffered too long in silent captivity. Liberty for the Iraqi people is a great moral cause, and a great strategic goal."[78] Indeed, Wilson promoted the idea of liberal democracy through individual rights and national self-determination. Primarily, the deconstruction of President's Wilson doctrine takes place through the highly military perspective of the Bush doctrine. However, it is important to underline that Wilson was not a pacifist. Indeed, Wilson did not completely reject the use of the military power, but rather he shaped it as the ultimate means to enforce peace, as was the case with Nazi Germany. Wilson stated that while other nations used force to oppress "mankind and their own aggrandizement", the U.S.A. used it only "for the elevation of the spirit of the human race."[79] In this sense, the argument that the Bush doctrine has deconstructed Wilsonian principles seems irrelevant. However, the way the Bush administration transformed this idea of military intervention is actually a complete deconstruction of Wilsonianism as it transformed military actions as a preemptive necessity. Indeed, in this doctrine, the Bush administration follows the idea of H.W. Brands that it must actively use its power to vindicate the right of actively spreading its universal values.[80] The attack of 9/11 showed that being a passive example to the world is not enough, and Al-Qaida represents a perpetual danger, which can be only stop through an active and preemptive policy. "If the United States could have preempted 9/11, we would have no question. Should we be able to prevent another, much more devastating attacks, we will, no question."[81] In other words, vindicationism, the idea that the U.S. has to actively spread democracy abroad, has been combined with a necessary preemptive action because of the global threat through Bush's doctrine. In addition, to reinforce the moral perspective of the doctrine, the Bush administration underlined the just cause of their policy by relying on the theory of just and unjust wars developed by Michael Walzer.[82] The government presented S. Hussein's regime as destabilizing for the Middle East, but mostly as inhuman towards its own population. "The first to benefit from a free Iraq would be the Iraqi people, themselves. Today they live in scarcity and fear, under a dictator who has brought them nothing but war, and misery, and torture."[83] Moreover, President Bush claimed, through his speech at the State of the Union Address to the 107th Congress January 29th 2002 that this war could only be considered just since it aims to re-establish peace through the diffusion of democratic principles. Walzer defines a war as being just through its 'Jus ad Bellum' the reasons for engaging in a war, and its 'Jus in Bello', the means used for the purpose of warfare.[84] In the case of the Bush doctrine the Jus ad Bellum is the attack by terrorist groups onto democratic principles and values, and the Jus in Bello is the diffusion of democracy. In this way, the aggression justifies the attack, and the means are morally sustained by liberal principles. Moreover, the Bush administration added to these principles the neo-conservator morality through the complete criminalization and demonization of S. Hussein identified as the enemy. Thanks to its direct link with moral and ethical the principle of just war reinforced the moral aspect that international relations already had through international law and institutions, but it also reinforced the idea of the moral duty of the U.S.A. to take action against the world threat that terrorism represents. Today, this notion of morality and ethics is even more important that the concept of adapted warfare because of the new threat that terrorism represents, as we already underlined earlier, and its professionalization. "According to American nationalist doctrine, in short, the United States can justifiably increase its power and prestige on the world stage, consistently with its mission, because, unlike any other nation-state, it embodies and promulgates values that all people share, even if they do not know it yet."[85] The idea of promulgating American values is particularly controversial as it leads to a colonial interpretation of Bush's policy. Salter argues that the War on Terror represents a re-articulation of an American "civilizing" mission, when the discourse of American foreign policy is being debated and disseminated.[86] Salter affirms that the administration of George W. Bush has accepted the logic of Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" thesis and is acting so to prevent a coalition of the "rest" against the West. However, the analyses of a selection of Bush's key speeches[87] show that the idea of a moral obligation for the U.S. was central to its foreign policy, underlining that the concept of the clash of civilization is not the initiator of his strategy. Indeed, there are major leitmotifs in Bush's rhetoric. First of all, the division between good, represented by the U.S.A., and evil represented by the terrorists: "we are in conflict between good and evil."[88] This simplistic dichotomy

aims to explain international relations through the moral frame created by neo-conservators and inspired by the U.S.' religious background. Moreover, as we already underlined, S. Hussein is depicted as evil, however the adjective is never directed associated to his name.[89] It is rather the proximity of the terms in the speeches that leads the listener to realize the association. Moreover, the terms 'Iraqi regime' or 'S. Hussein' are more often used than only Iraq, as it is easier to give the enemy the face of a leader defined as a tyrant than to consider a whole country an enemy. This reminds listeners of the Wilsonian principles and the idea that the people are not responsible for the horror perpetrated by its government. Another major theme is the idea that this fight is a noble cause of liberating oppressed population by bringing liberal principles. "The United Nations helping to build a government that represents all Iraqis – a government based on respect for human rights, economic liberty, and internationally supervised elections."[90] Moreover, the words "just" or "justice" are repeated in an average rate of eight times per speech. This repetitive motive aims to underline that U.S. engagement is not about national interest but rather for the interest of the world community as the threat is on every country that believes in democratic values: "An attack is one attack on all."[91] "By conceptually merging the U.S. national interest with the improvement of other countries in this way, the idea of American mission allows the United States to enhance its own power on the world stage not by "conquering" other states, but by "liberating" them."[92] Through this rhetoric, the Bush administration is emphasizing that the U.S.A. is, similarly to the after World War I period, the savor of the world as it will bring democracy to the rest of the world, which will push the terrorist threat to an end. Moreover, the rhetoric and the vocabulary used by Bush shows the reinforcement of the belief that it is the duty of the U.S.A. to fulfill this endeavor: "in our grief and anger we have found our mission and our moment."[93] This idea of an American mission goes back to the idea of American exceptionalism rooted in American culture that has been developed throughout the first part of this paper. Indeed, "no modern idea holds greater sway in the minds of educated Americans than the belief that it is possible to democratize governments anytime, anywhere, and under any circumstances."[94] In addition, the idea of the American exceptionalism also implies that the U.S.A. is the only country able to protect the world. First of all, on the military side, the U.S.A. is the only ones with the military capacity to enforce world order. Indeed, "the United States, which remained both an economic and a military giant, far outstripped Europe in the total power it could bring to bear on the international scene."[95] Moreover, being the only superpower with these means, it is their moral duty to defend those who cannot defend themselves. "America's fate is tied inextricably to the fates of states and societies around the world," as the world's superpower, the U.S.A. carries the burden to guarantee world stability.[96] However, beyond the question of the military capacity of the country, the U.S.A. also has this democratic mission as "American power is less likely to be misused or corrupted than that of any other government, both because American leaders are generally committed to liberal-democratic values and because of the constraints impose by the American political system's institutional dispersion of power."[97] In this sense, the belief in American culture shared by American society and its leaders, particularly G.W. Bush as seen through the analysis of his speeches, and deep belief in the exceptionalism of U.S.A. that leads to the burden of diffusion democratic principles to the world in order to achieve world peace. To conclude this research paper shows that the decision of Bush to invade Iraq had no economical or military interest, but the strategy was fuelled by Bush's belief in the moral burden of the United States to diffuse and protect freedom. This belief is rooted in his cultural background based on American exceptionalism. This conclusion raises further questions: with the failed result of the War on Terror, and the invasion of Iraq, it is possible to question if idealistic policies are not actually more dangerous, particularly for civilians, than realist policies. "The search for perfection does seem to be a recipe for bloodshed, no better even if it is demanded by the sincerest of idealist, the purest heart. […] To force people into the neat uniforms demanded by dogmatically believed schemes is almost always the road to inhumanity."[98]

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