THE IMPERIAL TURN: ANALYZING POST-9/11 AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY THROUGH THE PRISM OF 1898

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INTRODUCTION

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (9/11), American foreign policy has become more aggressive. Due to the proclamation of the Bush Doctrine, the president's strong unilateralist leanings, and the invasion and occupation of Iraq, some commentators argue that contemporary American foreign policy is revolutionary and out of step with the nation's diplomatic history[1]. Other commentators have claimed that the United States has been pursuing an imperial policy, questioning the republican ideals that inspire the nation's constitutional system. The first perspective is widely acknowledged, while the second has created much controversy in academic and policy-making circles.

This article questions the idea that post-9/11 American foreign policy is revolutionary. As many international relations scholars and diplomatic historians have previously noted, the Bush administration's responses to international events are in line with past American foreign policies and strategies[2]. Using the American experience in the Caribbean in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as an example, this article argues that the Bush administration's foreign policy has abandoned its position of restraint for an expansionist strategy, influenced by imperial ambitions. Consequently, this article analyzes contemporary American foreign po-

licy through the prism of 1898, suggesting that President George W. Bush's foreign policy strategy is similar to President William McKinley's strategy.

Before showing the parallels between the post-1898 and post-9/11 periods, the article's first sections demonstrates that the debate between the isolationist and internationalist traditions in American foreign policy is for the most part inaccurate. The real debate is between the need for an expansionist foreign policy or a foreign policy based on restraint. Section two explains the factors that permitted McKinley to abandon the United States' policy of restraint for an imperial strategy. The third section presents a short review of post-Cold War foreign policy. It demonstrates that the Clinton administration's foreign policy's orientation was one of restraint. This analysis also shows that Bush's pre-9/11 foreign policy was largely based on restraint as well, though noting that expansionist interests were lurking in the background. The last section details the Bush Doctrine's evolution and how changing domestic conditions allowed the White House to make the case for the invasion of Iraq in March 2003. It also shows that the Middle East has become America's 'new Caribbean', even though the Bush administration has had difficulties establishing control over Iraq.

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[1] Daalder, I.; Lindsay, J., *American Unbound: The Bush Revolution in Foreign Policy*. Washington, DC, Brookings Institution Press, 2003, 2-3.

[2] Leffler, M. P., "9/11 and American Foreign Policy". *Diplomatic History*, XXIX-3 (2005); and Gaddis, J. L., *Surprise, Security, and the American Experience*. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2004.

1. EXPANSION VERSUS RESTRAINT

A historical review of American diplomatic history shows that foreign policy making has been shaped by two traditions: isolationism and internationalism[3]. Both traditions have been developed to explain the best way the United States can protect the "American way of life"[4]. Isolationism emphasizes that the United States should steer clear from international politics and concentrate its energies on domestic affairs. In contrast, proponents of internationalism argue that the United States must play a larger global role to shape its external environment in ways that would protect its interests and promote its political and economic values. According to diplomatic historians, American foreign policy was isolationist in orientation from the founding of the republic to the late 1890s and from 1920 to 1941. Internationalism has been influential since 1945, though isolationist views have gained influence since the Cold War's end.

However popular this debate may be, its influence in the making of foreign policy has been exaggerated. This conceptualization of American foreign policy is far too simplistic. As Robert Kagan's new history of American foreign policy in the nineteenth century suggests, the United States' continental expansion was not guided by the ideals of isolationism, but by a shrewd foreign policy built on internationalist principles[5]. James McCormick argues that isolationism was only influential when it came to America's dealings with European powers. "The Monroe Doctrine gave rise to the 'two spheres' concept in American foreign policy by emphasizing the differences between the Western and Eastern Hemispheres – the New World versus the Old World"[6]. In the Western Hemisphere, American foreign policy's orientation was not only consistent with the internationalist tradition, but in some cases it also was superseded by

imperial interests. Regarding other parts of the world the foreign policy orientation was more restrained; it avoided participation in great power politics out of fear that it would entangle the country in Europe's conflicts and threaten America's security and economic interests.

This article proposes that the nation's foreign policy has been shaped by two competing principles: expansion and restraint. Seeing American diplomatic history from this perspective implies that the United States' foreign policy orientation has been mostly internationalist and that the debate should be on which strategies the United States should employ to accomplish its aims. An expansionist foreign policy results when limits to American expansionist drives are weak, giving the executive branch the independence to shape the country's foreign policy strategy. In contrast, a foreign policy based on restraint results when American expansionist interests are kept in check by international forces or by internal restrictions on the president's foreign policy powers. Under these conditions, the United States has to work with other countries to attain its interests, while at home the president has to deal with an 'activist' Congress that wants to keep in check the executive's foreign policy powers[7] or an isolationist public that is critical of expansionist strategies.

Two types of expansionist foreign policy have been conducted since the nation's founding: the *integrative* and the *imperial*. The former acquires new territories and integrates them into the nation's constitutional system as federal states. In contrast, an imperial policy exerts "effective control" over other territories or countries, but without integrating them into the American constitutional system. By "effective control", it is meant a policy where the United States assumes informal or formal control over another country's domestic and foreign policies[8]. Ame-

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[3] Hastedt, G., *American Foreign Policy: Past, Present, Future*. Upper Saddle River, NJ, Prentice Hall, 2003, 32-33; and Jentlenson, B., *American Foreign Policy: The Dynamics of Choice in the 21st Century*. New York, NY, W.W. Norton, 2004, 75-79.

[4] Lind, M., *The American Way of Strategy: U.S. Foreign Policy and the American Way of Life*. Oxford, England, Oxford University Press, 2006, 4.

[5] Kagan, R., *Dangerous Nation: America's Place in the World from Its Earliest Days to the Dawn of the Twentieth Century*. New York, NY, Alfred Knopf, 2006.

[6] McCormick, J., *American Foreign Policy and Process*. Belmont, CA, Wadsworth, 2005, 14.

[7] The country's founders wanted to promote moderation in foreign policy by dividing these powers between the executive and legislature and forcing both branches to work together on foreign policy issues. For different reasons, the foreign policy making system has oscillated between an "imperial presidency" and domineering Congress.

[8] See Doyle, M., *Empires*. Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1986, 19.

rica's continental expansion, its purchase of Alaska in 1867, and its annexation of Hawaii in 1898 are clear examples of an integrative strategy. America's acquisition of Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines in 1898 and its informal empire in the Caribbean, established after the Spanish American War[9], are examples of expansionism of the second type.

Why did the United States abandon its integrative strategy for an imperial one? Americans were willing to incorporate territories settled by Americans or which were sparsely populated, as was the case with much of the southwest. However, it was reluctant to integrate lands populated with minority races in fear that it would "threaten the coherence of America as a nation"[10]. In 1901, the Supreme Court, in what has been referred to as the "Insular Cases", argued that domestically the United States had to behave like a republic, but that in the international system the nation had to play by different rules[11]. In a sense, the Supreme Court accepted a larger imperial role for the United States, if this could safeguard "America's way of life" at home[12]. How did the United States sustain this imperial policy, if it seemingly contradicted America's values? As it is explained below, President William McKinley went to great lengths to frame his imperial policy as a part of a "civilizational" mission, endowed by God, to eradicate oppression and expand liberty for all of mankind[13].

Since the Spanish-American War, the United States' expansionist foreign policies have been guided by the imperial model, though it has been carried out through informal mechanisms. The United States' foreign policy towards the Caribbean Basin is indicative of this type expansionism.

2. THE PRISM OF 1898

How did the McKinley administration break with his predecessors' foreign policy, which was based on restraint? Why did it establish an informal empire in the Caribbean Basin? Was this one of the objectives of the Spanish-American War or was this an expansion of the original war aims? This section examines the domestic and international factors that allowed the McKinley administration craft an expansionist foreign policy. In addition, it investigates why the United States acquired most of Spain's colonial possessions after the war and why it established an informal empire in the Caribbean.

2.1. Towards an Expansionist Foreign Policy

From the end of the American Civil War to the end of the 1890s, the United States' foreign policy orientation was one of "imperial understretch". Even though most post-Civil War presidents supported expansionist aims, Congress blocked the executive's foreign policy ambitions. According to Fareed Zakaria's study, the U.S. was able to expand its influence in five out of 22 opportunities between 1865 and 1889[14], while in the period between 1889 and 1908 expansion took place in 25 out of 32 opportunities[15]. What factors permitted President McKinley to change the prevailing foreign policy orientation to an imperial policy. A review of the literature suggests that five factors are the most important.

The first factor was the growing economic power of the United States and the subsequent expansion of the Navy. In the late 1860s, the engine of economic growth was the country's internal market; by the end of the century exports had tripled[16], creating a small, but influential industrial elite interested in securing access to overseas mar-

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[9] This article refers to the war as the Spanish-American War of 1898, though other texts have labeled it: The Spanish-Cuba-Philippines-American War, emphasizing the different facets of this confrontation.

[10] Kaplan, A., *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2003, 6.

[11] Ibid., 5.

[12] Lind, M., *The American Way of Strategy…*, op. cit., 87-88.

[13] Ninkovich, F., *The United States and Imperialism*. New York, NY, Blackwell Publishing, 2001, 34-35.

[14] Zakaria, F., *From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America's World Role*. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1998, 88.

[15] Ibid, 175.

[16] Zimmerman, W., *First Great Triumph: How Five Americans Made Their Country a World Power*. New York, NY, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2002, 25.

kets[17]. Not surprisingly, in the mid-1880s, Congress decided to modernize and expand the size of the Navy[18]. At the time, funding for the "New Navy" was not a reaction to international threats, but by the late 1890s, the new ships allowed the United States to protect and expand its economic interests in the Caribbean and the Far East, two regions the European powers had not been able to successfully integrate into their imperial systems[19].

The second factor was Americans' willingness to enforce the Monroe Doctrine and to prevent European powers from interfering in Latin American affairs. In 1895, the Cleveland administration intervened in a boundary dispute between Venezuela and the British colony of Guyana. President Grover Cleveland ordered Richard Olney, the Secretary of State, to ask the parties to submit their dispute to arbitration. To force Britain to acquiesce to America's demands, Olney stated that "the United States is practically sovereign on this continent and its fiat is law upon the subjects to which it confines its interposition". He added that America's "infinite resources combined with its isolated position render it master of the situation and practically invulnerable as against any or all other powers"[20]. Angered by Olney's statement, the British government responded by informing Cleveland that it did not recognize the Monroe Doctrine or the United States' claims in the region. Infuriated by the British response, Cleveland declared his willingness to go to war to back up America's regional interests. In the end, given the challenges the expanding German military posed on the European balance of power and the growing challenges Britain faced in southern Africa, London backed down and it agreed to submit the dispute to arbitration[21].

This crisis was important because it demonstrated to American officials that European powers were taking seriously their country's growing economic and military capabilities. More importantly, Cleveland's readiness to go to war enjoyed widespread public support[22]. Consequently, the nation was expressing an interest in taking its place in the great powers club. Given that a great power needed imperial holdings, Americans "began to call for a greater American role in international affairs"[23], while many more people called on the annexation of territories in the Caribbean.

The third factor was the changing dynamics of the international system in the late 1890s. While most European powers were searching for opportunities to expand their imperial holdings, Spain was trying to keep hold of its small empire in the Caribbean and the Far East. Spain's overall decline was seen by some American officials as an opportunity to reclaim control over the Caribbean and to play a larger role in the Pacific Rim. In Washington, the main fear was not that these colonies could achieve independence, but that these could be annexed or informally controlled by a European power. The Spanish-American War was a product of these changes in the international system. Spain's decline offered the United States an opportunity to expand its interests and to secure access to overseas markets. In fact, the Spanish-American war was actually a war of choice, initiated for offensive reasons; Spain was not a serious threat to America's security. Hence, McKinley's decision to go to war was more strategic, than ideological, as his foreign policy was influenced by a need to undermine external restrictions to America's ability to expand its power and protect its interests[24].

The fourth factor was the emergence of the modern presidency and the declining influence of Congress in foreign policy making. Lewis Gould notes that McKinley's primary goal, prior to winning the presidential election in 1896, was to res-

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[17] Ferguson, N., *Colossus: The Price of America's Empire*. New York, NY, Penguin Press, 2004, 43-45.

[18] Seager, R., "Ten Years Before Mahan: The Unofficial Case for the New Navy, 1880-1890". *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XL-3 (1953), 493.

[19] Healey, D., *Drive to Hegemony: The United States in the Caribbean, 1898-1917*. Madison, WI, University of Wisconsin Press, 1988, 35.

[20] Cited in Zakaria, F., *From Wealth to Power…*, op. cit., 149.

[21] Ninkovich, F., *The United States and Imperialism…*, op. cit., 13-14.

[22] Ibid., 13.

[23] Healy, D., *Drive to Hegemony…*, op. cit., 35.

[24] LaFeber, W., "The 'Lion in the Path': The U.S. Emergence as a World Power". *Political Science Quarterly*, CI-5 (1986), 712.

tore the power of the presidency[25]. Although he attempted to prevent a war with Spain after the explosion of the USS *Maine*, his advisors' hawkish attitudes and growing public calls for military action left McKinley with little options. Elihu Root, an influential Republican who became McKinley's Secretary of War shortly after the end of the war, captured the president's dilemma: "Fruitless attempts to retard or hold back the enormous momentum of the people bent upon war would result in the destruction of the President's power and influence, in depriving the county of its natural leader, in the destruction of the President's party"[26].

While pushed into the war, McKinley made sure that it served the nation's interests and his own political agenda[27]. With strong public backing, Congress allowed McKinley to frame the rationale for the war and cement his control over the foreign policy-making process. Rather than going to war to avenge the lives of the sailors that died in the explosion of the USS *Maine*, McKinley used humanitarian ideals, influenced by strong Christian Evangelical notions and in line with the objectives of the *mission civilisatrice*, to make the case for war. By appealing to the nation's sense of righteousness and its exceptionalism, the war became a vehicle to spread American values and to promote liberty in key regions of the world; thus setting the ideological foundations for an imperial policy not based on oppression, but on emancipation.

The last factor was the role of public opinion, following the explosion of the USS *Maine* in Havana harbor. Before this explosion, the American public had paid close attention to the Cuban rebellion. Newspapers across the country had reported on Spanish forces' abuses. Journalists also documented how the conflict was destroying American property in the island and affecting Cuban-American trade. Consequently, a growing number of Americans wanted their government to intervene in the conflict, though the public was divided about how to resolve it. Piero Gleijeses's study of

newspaper editorials before the explosion of the USS *Maine* captures the public's divisions[28]; the majority of Americans wanted a diplomatic solution, while a vocal minority wanted the United States to declare war on Spain and help the Cuban rebels establish a republican government, model on the American political system. After the explosion, a clear majority of Americans started to call for war, forcing Congress and members of the Republican Party to pressure McKinley to declare war on Spain[29].

Even though the United States was able to expand its influences in the period between 1865 and 1898, the Spanish-American War was an important turning point in America's foreign policy history. After the war, the United States expanded its influence by acquiring Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. Cuba, while occupied until 1902, became an American protectorate and the cornerstone of the United States' informal empire in the Caribbean. Taken together, these five factors suggest that the 'Caribbenization' of United States foreign policy takes place when internal and external limits to American power are weakened, allowing the executive to craft an expansionist foreign policy.

2.2. The Rationale for an Informal Empire in the Caribbean

The McKinley administration went to war in order to strengthen the power of the presidency and to increase the nation's influence in the international system. Access to new markets and protection of a possible isthmian canal in Central American strongly influenced American strategists at the time. Some influential figures, often meeting in Henry Adam's residence in Lafayette Square, urged McKinley to establish an overseas empire. They argued that the United States should join the great powers club and use its power to shape the world according to its interests. It is difficult to say whether McKinley supported these views. As noted above, the Spanish-American War was a product of

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[25] Gould, L., *The Modern American Presidency*. Lawrence, KS, University Press of Kansas, 2003, 7.

[26] Zimmerman, W., *First Great Triumph…*, op. cit., 259.

[27] Healy, D., *Drive to Hegemony…*, op. cit., 44.

[28] Gleijesse, P., "1898: The Opposition to the Spanish-American War". *Journal of Latin American Studies*, XXXV-4 (2003), 681-719.

[29] Judis, J., *The Folly of Empire: What George W. Bush Could Learn from Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson*. New York, NY, Scribner, 2004, 38-39.

the explosion of the USS *Maine*, which was sent to Havana harbor as a show of force to pressure Cuban rebels and Spanish officials to settle the conflict. Before the war, McKinley's main objective was to persuade Spain to end its control over the island, but he did not publicly support Cuba's independence or recognized the rebels and their cause.

The McKinley administration did not originally plan to annex Spain's possessions once the war ended. According to the Teller Amendment[30], which was included in Congress's resolution supporting McKinley's decision to go to war, the United States had to guarantee Cuba's independence once the United States' military pacified the island and it could transfer authority to a Cuban government. Regarding the other territories, Congress had not set any instructions, thus McKinley could decide their fate. While the fighting between American and Spanish forces ceased in August 1898, the Treaty of Paris, which formally ended the war, was signed on December 10, 1898. Except for Cuba, the Treaty transferred Spain's possessions to the United States[31]. Why did the McKinley administration pressure Spain to transfer authority over their imperial holdings to the United States?

The best explanation maintains that American imperialism was actually influenced by anti-imperialism[32] or by what Frank Ninkovich describes as "pre-emptive imperialism"[33]. According to a report written by the US Navy's General Board shortly after the Spanish-American War and in line with Alfred T. Mahan's thinking, the Caribbean Basin was of strategic necessity[34]. This report influenced the McKinley's administration decision to annex Puerto Rico and to turn Cuba into an American protectorate. Economic interests and the expansion of American values also informed this imperial strategy, but the main reason was to prevent the region from falling under the influence of European powers, which could use these territories

to challenge America's hegemony in the region and use one of these islands to mount an attack on the United States[35]. The same logic applied to McKinley's decision to annex the Philippines once Germany made it known that they would try to assume control of the islands once American forces left the archipelago[36].

While economic and strategic interests influenced McKinley's turn to empire, it created a lot of controversy in the United States Senate. The acquisition of new lands came as a surprise to many senators, who had supported the war, but not an imperial foreign policy. Indeed, their support for the war was to liberate people that had suffered at the hands of the Spanish, not to colonize them. The Senate was in a position to block the ratification of the Treaty of Paris and thwart McKinley's plans, as it had done when President Ulysses Grant presented a treaty to annex the Dominican Republic in the early 1870s. The Treaty received the necessary two-thirds ratification approval by a single vote in February 1899. McKinley invested much of the political capital earned after the war to rally Republican support for the treaty. It was a sign that the president had dwarfed the once powerful Senate. However, while this body worked with McKinley to promote America's interests in the Caribbean, it also challenged his successor's policies numerous times throughout their presidencies.

Although Puerto Rico became an American colony, the United States' relations with most countries in the Caribbean Basin were more informal. According to Ninkovich's "pre-emptive imperialism" thesis, America's main drive was to weaken European influence and by building stronger economic and political ties between these Latin American countries and the United States. Thus, American imperialism was influenced by a need to transform these countries' political and economic systems. At the time, instability was an invitation

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[30] For a copy of the Teller Amendment, see <http://www.loc.gov/rr/hispanic/1898/teller.html > (accessed on August 22, 2006).

[31] In case of the Philippines, the United States paid $20 million for the archipelago. For a text of the Treaty of Paris of 1898, see <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/diplomacy/spain/sp1898.htm>.

[32] Ferguson, N., *Colossus...*, op. cit., 65.

[33] Ninkovich, F., *The United States and Imperialism...*, op. cit., 91.

[34] Healy, D., *Drive to Hegemony...*, op. cit., 97-98.

[35] Ninkovich, F., *The United States and Imperialism...*, op. cit., 92.

[36] Lind, M., *The American Way of Strategy...*, op. cit., 83.

for foreign intervention and the United States intervened in these societies to modernize them, so they could rule their societies according to democratic and capitalist values. While this was consistent with America's self-proclaimed mission to civilize the world, it is important to note that more selfish interests were at play[37]. The United States supported democracy, but only if the right people got elected, and while it wanted to establish economic relations with these countries, the relations were often one-sided favoring American business and strategic interests. Ironically, revolutionary ideals, even if influenced by democratic values, were seen in Washington as a threat to its regional interests. Social change was possible, but only if it met America's prior approval. Consistent with informal definitions of empire, Americans would not directly rule these countries, but American diplomats, military officers, or businessmen would closely worked with the elite to make sure that these countries' domestic and foreign policies were in line with American interests.

Using this logic, the United States used the occupation of Cuba to turn it into a protectorate. In line with the Teller Amendment, Cuba received its independence, but this independence was contingent on its ability to meet the Platt Amendment's requirements, which Cubans had to write into their constitution. As Louis Perez argues, "By its terms, the Cuban republic was denied precisely those attributes of sovereignty deemed most likely to jeopardize U.S. interests"[38]. For instance, Cuba was prohibited from assuming or contracting "any public debt in excess of the capacity of the ordinary revenues of the island after defraying the current expenses of government to pay the interest." Similarly, it could not enter any treaty with a foreign power without the United States' prior approval. In addition, the United States reserved the right to intervene in Cuba's affairs to safeguard its independence and to preserve "a stable government adequately protecting life, property, and individual liberty". In order to protect the island's sovereignty,

the United States could "acquire and hold" lands to establish a naval installation[39]. Why did Cubans agree to incorporate the Platt Amendment to their constitution? The Department of War, which was responsible for post-war Cuba, made it clear that the occupation would not end until Cubans accepted these terms[40].

Cuba became the centerpiece of America's informal empire in the Caribbean. However, due to different circumstances, the United States also turned other countries in the region into protectorates. These included the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Haiti, and Panama. Without any checks on America's power in the Caribbean, the United States assumed control over the region. Opposition from Congress sometimes created problems for McKinley's successors. However, presidential authority was so great that presidents, such as Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, disregarded Congressional criticism, emphasizing that America's security and its economic well-being were dependent on the United States' capacity to shape events in the Caribbean Basin[41].

The United States' turn to empire was an important period in American history that receives little attention in current debates on the nature of contemporary foreign policy. The trend has been to compare post-9/11 foreign policy with the strategies developed during the Cold War or during the post-Cold War era. It is important to broaden the historical picture, as the experience of 1898 demonstrates that the United States has practiced an expansionist foreign policy influenced by imperial interests. Does this experience help us make sense of the Bush administration's foreign policy?

3. A FOREIGN POLICY BASED ON RESTRAINT, 1945-2001

With the end of the Cold War, the United States faced a dilemma: Should it continue to pursue its interests via the policies prior administrations employed during the Cold War or should it

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[37]　Ninkovich, F., *The United States and Imperialism…*, op. cit., 91-93.

[38]　Perez, L., "Incurring a Debt of Gratitude: 1898 and the Moral Sources of United States Hegemony in Cuba". *American Historical Review*, CIV-2 (1999), 371.

[39]　Cited in Editorial Comment, "The Origin and Purpose of the Platt Amendment". *American Journal of International Law*, VIII-3 (1914), 588-589.

[40]　Perez, L., "Incurring a Debt…", op. cit., 371.

[41]　LaFeber, W., "The 'Lion in the Path'…", op. cit., 718.

re-write them according to new realities? Cold War foreign policy was shaped by limits ingrained in the superpower rivalry. Some officials in the Truman administration, as Anders Stephanson notes, wanted to use the country's military power and economic resources to create an informal empire based on American political and economic values. George Kennan, however, disagreed with this view. He believed that the United States should develop regional power centers that would contain Soviet expansionism and ignore the temptation of using American power to transform the world. Kennan emphasized the "'particularity'" of the American experience, rather than its exceptionality[42]. As a realist, Kennan also opposed America's willingness to pursue its foreign policy interests via international institutions. Instead, he favored bilateral commitments that were short-term in nature and specific to a particular issue and contingent on "discrete exigencies"[43]. He argued that a foreign policy empty of moral claims, without commitments to international institutions, and committed to balance of power politics would give the United States the flexibility to contain the Soviet Union.

In the end, Kennan's containment policy served as a foundation for America's post-war foreign policy, but the US did not abandon its exceptionalism or its willingness to transform the world according to its ideals. NSC-68, which became the blueprint for the United States' Cold War strategy, was as bold in its pronouncements as the Bush administration's *National Security Strategy* is today. This is not the place to review NSC-68, but as Stephanson notes the document established that freedom is "the natural state of humankind", that Soviet ideals contravened this reality, and the US was the "protector of the survival of true humankind as well as its true embodiment"[44]. But, the realities of the early Cold War, Americans' fatigue with military engagements after the Second World War and the Soviet Union's growing nuclear arse-

nal, convinced American officials to follow a more pragmatic foreign policy that closely worked with its allies in Western Europe and East Asia to secure the United States' position of power and keep in check Soviet expansionism[45]. Clear limitations to American power pressured American officials to devise a less ambitious foreign policy based on restraint. While some became quite critical of containment, the strategy succeeded because the United States worked closely with secondary states, via bilateral and multilateral mechanisms, to maintain international stability. Consequently, a policy of restraint may have not allowed the United States to freely expand its influence or construct a world in line with its political and economic values, but it was successful at eliciting international cooperation and keeping America from overextending itself.

The key element of post-Cold War foreign policy strategy was America's willingness to practice "self-restraint" and moderation[46]. G. John Ikenberry argues that the United States could have attempted to dominate other countries, but it wisely decided to deepen existing multilateral structures, giving a greater voice to secondary nations in the making of the post-Cold War international order. This legitimized the Clinton administration's economic policies and democratization efforts, which were engines of economic and political openness. This policy of "strategic restraint" also supported the Clinton White House's desire to reform Cold War security arrangements in ways that would safeguard American influence and military predominance in key regions of the world, but without directly challenging its allies' interests.

Even though Clinton understood the benefits of practicing "self-restraint", it is important to emphasize that pursuing an expansionist foreign policy would have been very difficult. Under Republican control, Congress actively challenged

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[42] Stephanson, A., "A Most Interesting Empire", in L. Gardner; M. Young (eds.), *The New American Empire: A 21st Century Teach-in on U.S. Foreign Policy*. New York, NY, The New Press, 2005, 268.

[43] Ruggie, J. G., "International Regimes, Transactions, and Change: Embedded Liberalism in the Postwar Economic Order". *International Organization,* XXXVI-2 (1995), 66.

[44] Stephanson, A., "A Most Interesting Empire…", op. cit., 270.

[45] Ibid., 270-271; and Lieber, R., "The Folly of Containment". *Commentary*, CXV-4 (2003), 19.

[46] Ikenberry, G. J., "Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Persistence of American Postwar Order". *International Security*, XXIII-3 (1998/99), 62-71.

the president's foreign policy powers[47]. More importantly, the American public would not have supported an expansionist policy. Lacking a well-defined enemy, Americans were mostly interested in economic and domestic issues; foreign policy issues were not very high in the agenda[48]. When the Clinton administration wanted to accomplish an important foreign policy objective, it was forced to enter multilateral mechanisms in hopes that the international community would pressure Congress and the American people to back the White House's aims. This meant that the president would have to moderate American interests, so these would accord with the international community's interests. Ironically, even though the end of the Cold War had removed the United States' external limits, the internal limits kept in check the president's foreign policy powers, making it very difficult for Clinton to craft an expansionist strategy.

Before George W. Bush earned the Republican Party's nomination for the 2000 presidential elections, he delivered a speech, titled "A Distinctly American Internationalism", at the Ronald Reagan Library explaining his approach to foreign policy. Describing the Clinton administration's foreign policy strategy as "random" and "reactive", Bush promised to construct policies that would turn "American influence into generations of democratic peace". These policies were to be influenced by an approach that embraced: "idealism, without illusions"; "confidence, without conceit"; and "realism, in the service of American ideals". Although the promotion of democracy was a dominant theme in the speech, Bush also expressed concerns about: the spread of weapons of mass destructions and their delivery systems; relations with the great powers; rogue states' foreign policies; and developments in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East[49].

Bush's speech did not make any references to multilateralism or unilateralism. Aware of other countries' questions concerning the future of American foreign policy, Bush firmly stated that his foreign policy would not be imperial: "America has never been an empire. We may be the only great power in history that had the chance, and refused – preferring greatness to power and justice to glory"[50]. His foreign policy vision, built on Reagan's experience, echoed his predecessors' foreign policy statements: "We are guided, not by an ambition, but by a vision. A vision in which no great power, or coalition of great powers, dominates or endangers our friends. In which America encourages stability from a position of strength. A vision in which people and capital and information can move freely, creating bonds of progress, ties of culture and momentum toward democracy"[51].

While this statement demonstrated his belief in moderation and restraint, his speeches during the campaign seemed to challenge this orientation.

For instance, Bush did not explicitly refer to his willingness to use American coercive instruments to pursue key national interests in this speech. However, Bush and his advisors emphasized during the campaign that they would transform the United States' military so it could keep its technological edge and deter competitors from building-up their forces. They feared the emergence of a great power that could challenge American influence in East Asia, the Middle East, and Europe[52]. While the speech at the Regan Library was silent on how to address the challenge of regime change in Iraq, Bush stated during the campaign that Iraq would face "'great consequences'" if Saddam Hussein showed any willingness to develop weapons of mass destruction[53] (cited in Payne, 2001: 306). It is important to not to overstate this view, as Condoleezza Rice made it clear that the American military

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[47] Mott, J.; Rae, N., "The Republican House and Foreign Policy in the 104th Congress and Beyond", in C. Campbell; N. Rae and J. Stack (eds.), *Congress and the Politics of Foreign Policy*. Upper Saddle River, NJ, 2003, 142-145.

[48] Holsti, O., "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy", in R. Lieber (ed.), *Eagle Rules? Foreign Policy and American Primacy in the Twenty-First Century*. Upper Saddle River, NJ, 2002, 40-43.

[49] Bush, G. W. 19 November 1999. "A Distinctly American Internationalism" [document on line] Available from Internet at: <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/bush/wspeech.htm>.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Rice, C., "Promoting the National Interest". *Foreign Affairs* LXXIX-1 (2000), 51-52; and Zoellick, R., "A Republican Foreign Policy". *Foreign Affairs*, LXXIX-1 (2000), 76-77.

[53] Cited in Payne, R., "Bush the Sequel". *International Studies Perspective*, II-3 (2001), 306.

would not be used to unseat these rogue states. She argued that these regimes were "living on borrowed time" and that "the first line of defense should be a clear and classical statement of deterrence – if they do acquire WMDs, their weapons will be unusable because any attempt to use them will bring national obliteration"[54]. Similar to his predecessors' policies, Bush's approach, though interested in maintaining American primacy, was largely based on moderation and restraint.

Bush's pre-9/11 foreign policy was in line with these views, even though his decisions to pull the United States from the Kyoto Protocol, to support a national missile defense system, and to question the authority of the International Criminal Court, angered the international community and raised serious questions about the nature of the Bush administration's foreign policy strategy[55]. While many of these criticisms dissipated shortly after the 9/11 attacks, Bush's handling of the international effort to oust the Taliban from power made the Europeans weary of the future. Their main criticism was the Bush administration's decision to plan and execute Operation Enduring Freedom outside NATO mechanisms, even though the allies had invoked, for the first time in history, the self-defense clause in the organization's charter. Instead, the United States assembled a "coalition of the willing", as it felt that this approach would keep the allies from dictating the terms of the war. The Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld captured this perspective in the following statement: "'the mission needs to define the coalition and we ought not to think that a coalition should define the mission'"[56]. Although Rumsfeld's view was informed by America's frustrations with its allies during the

1999 Kosovo air campaign[57], Javier Solana, the then NATO General Secretary, captured the European reaction to America's foreign policy approach after the 9/11 attacks: "'the alliance should determine the mission and not vice versa'"[58]. It was not clear at the time, but the Bush administration's planning and execution of Operation of Enduring Freedom would shape the future of American foreign policy and put the United States in a collision course with its European allies.

Indeed, the American-led coalition's quick victory over the Taliban was used by some members of the Bush administration to highlight how *ad hoc* diplomatic mechanisms, rather than established international institutions, could best secure American interests. These senior officials, often associated with the neo-conservative movement, had questioned the relevance of international institutions and international laws, as these tend to contradict America's exceptionalism and its 'God-given' role to spread democratic and liberal economic ideals[59]. Neo-conservatives believed that the international community would follow the United States, if the president took a principled stance on tough issues and executed these policies "regardless of the opposition they generate"[60]. Neo-conservatives' growing influence were a problem for "nationalists" in the Bush administration, who campaigned for a more prudent and pragmatic approach that used international institutions to legitimate America's foreign policy goals. As result, the 9/11 attacks and the fall of the Taliban discredited these "nationalists" views[61], opening the door for a more robust policy that used American military power to transform the world according to US interests and ideals[62].

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[54] Rice, C., "Promoting…", op. cit., 61.

[55] Daalder, Lindsay, *American Unbound…*, op. cit., 73-74.

[56] Gordon, P.; Shapiro, J., *Allies at War: America, Europe, and the Crisis over Iraq*. New York, NY, McGraw Hill, 2004, 61.

[57] Mann, J., *The Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet*. New York, NY, Penguin Books, 2004, 304; and Halper, S; Clarke, J., *America Alone: The Neo-Conservatives and the Global Order*. Cambridge, England, Cambridge University Press, 2004, 95.

[58] Cited in Gordon, P.; Shapiro, J., *Allies at War…*, op. cit., 62.

[59] Mead, W. R., *Power, Terror, Peace, and War: America's Grand Strategy in a World at Risk*. New York, NY, Alfred Knopf, 2004, 90-96; and Dunn, D., "Myths, Motivations, and 'Misundestimations': The Bush Administration in Iraq". *International Affairs*, LXXIX-2 (2003), 291.

[60] Gordon, P.; Shapiro, J., *Allies at War…*, op. cit., 50.

[61] The reference to "nationalists" as opposed to neo-conservatives is developed in Judis, J., *The Folly of Empire…*, op. cit., 170.

[62] Harries, O. 21 June 2004. "The Perils of Hegemony: Washington Learns that Democracy is Not Made for Export". *The American Conservative* [article on line] Available from Internet at: <http://www.amconmag.com/2004_06_21/article.html#>.

4. THE IMPERIAL TURN IN THE POST-9/11 PERIOD

The 9/11 terrorist attacks had little impact on the distribution of power in the international system, but they offered Bush an opportunity to craft a more expansionist policy. Congress succumbed to the president's foreign policy powers, while public opinion, angered by the attacks, supported a more aggressive foreign policy. The emerging political environment lifted the domestic limits to American power and, like McKinley, Bush used the aftermath of the attacks to expand the nation's influence in key geo-strategic regions and to attain his own personal goals. Shortly after the election, Bush promised to rehabilitate presidential power[63]. This was also one of Vice President Richard Cheney's main aims.

In this new political setting, the Bush administration started to develop a new foreign policy doctrine. As noted below, this new doctrine legitimized Bush's decision to invade and transform Iraq. If the post-Cold War foreign policy's orientation of moderation and restraint emerged during the 1990-1991 Persian Gulf crisis, the second Bush's decision to invade Iraq in March 2003 without the United Nations' approval demonstrated the influence of expansionist interests. Was this policy similar to McKinley's expansionist strategy? What interests and values shaped post-9/11 foreign policy?

4.1. In Search of a New Doctrine

From January to September 2002, the Bush administration worked hard to device this new strategy. The first step was to expand the global war on terror's reach; pursuing al Qaeda, while important, would not make America secure. In the 2002 State of the Union Address, Bush explained that the new dangers were rogue regimes pursuing weapons of mass destruction and their possible connections with terrorist groups. The president singled out Iran, Iraq, and North Korea as part of an "axis of evil" and even though he did not explain how he was going to prevent these states from developing these weapons, he explained that American security would be best assured by replacing these regimes with democratic systems[64]. What was interesting was not necessarily what was said, but the fact that Bush did not mention the United Nations or any other international organization in his speech, though the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization played an important role in Afghanistan's liberation. While references to American allies were made, the emphasis was on America's willingness to utilize its capabilities to transform the world according to its ideals and interests. The speech also signaled the Bush administration's interest to oust Saddam Hussein's regime from power and to transform the Middle East.

On June 1, 2002, Bush addressed the graduating class at the United States Military Academy at West Point. Highlighting the many threats the America faced, Bush explained the why the nation needed for a new strategy: "For much of the last century, America's defense relied on the Cold War doctrines of deterrence and containment. In some cases, those strategies still apply. But new threats also require new thinking. Deterrence –the promise of massive retaliation against nations– means nothing against shadowy terrorist networks with no nations and no citizens to defend. Containment is not possible when unbalanced dictators with weapons of mass destructions can deliver those missiles or secretly provide them to terrorist allies"[65].

Consequently, he argued that the war on terror could not be won on the defensive, stating: "We must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans, and confront the worst threats before they emerge. In the world, we have entered the only path to safety is a path of action". The president also reminded the graduating cadets that: "The 20th century ended with a single surviving model of human progress, based on non-negotiable demands of human dignity, the rule of law, limits on the power of the state, respect for women and private property and free speech and equal justice and religious tolerance"[66]. Bush maintained that

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[63]　Gould, L., *The Modern American Presidency…*, op. cit., 231.

[64]　The White House. 29 January 2002. "President Delivers the State of the Union Address" [document on line] Available from Internet at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html>.

[65]　The White House. 1 June 2002. "President Delivers Graduation Speech at West Point" [document on line] Available from Internet at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020601-3.html>.

[66]　Ibid.

America is the "embodiment of this model"[67] and while the president stated that the United States should not enforce this model on other societies, he stressed the need to call attention to "lawless regimes" and "to support and reward governments that make the right choices for their own people"[68].

This speech set the tone for the Bush administration's 2002 *National Security Strategy* (NSS). Building on these ideas and Bush's pre-9/11 objectives, the NSS was composed of five critical elements: the maintenance and expansion of American primacy; the importance of Donald Rumsfeld's program to "transform" the military; the dangers posed by rogue regimes and their desire to build and proliferate weapons of mass destruction; the right to engage in preventive war; and the importance of spreading democratic and liberal economic values as a way to foster a democratic peace[69]. The NSS signaled the Bush administration's faith in military power and its ability to transform the world according to American interests[70]. Rather than explaining how the United Nations or other intergovernmental organizations could help the United States achieve its interests, the document mentioned the importance of building coalitions of the willing[71]. In essence, the NSS painted a dangerous world and America as its savior. Thus, the Bush administration "deemphasize[d] diplomacy, arms control, and negotiation, turning instead to the use of force because it assume[d] there is little or not time for these measures"[72].

The NSS was more than a call for action; it was a strategy informed by imperial interests. The United States disregarded international law by claiming a right to engage in pre-emptive attacks. Consequently, the United States did not accept any limits to its power. While the president repeatedly stated that America did not have an imperial ambition[73], his belief that America's political and economic ideals needed to be adopted by all countries to foster a "balance of power" that favored freedom indicated that the United States was as concerned about other countries foreign policies, as their domestic affairs[74]. The NSS did not call for the colonization of other lands. But, a close reading suggests otherwise. While the NSS stated that the America would respect the opinions and the traditions of other states, it strongly argued that the United States' version of "human dignity", freedom, democracy, and market capitalism must be adopted as the standards all countries in the world must emulate[75]. These standards were not a result of international negotiations, but an outcome of America's own experience. Thus, the NSS made the case for the creation of an informal empire, where government officials in other parts were required to re-organize their societies according to American interests

The release of the NSS indicated an ideological turn towards empire, but not an imperial policy. The conflict in Afghanistan demonstrated the value of a strategy based on moderation and restraint, as the United States relied on other countries' military resources and on the legitimacy provided by international institutions to hunt al Qaeda, stabilize the country, and set up a new representative government. Rather than disregarding diplomacy or international law altogether, Bush used his address at the United Nations General Assembly to talk about the organization's future and to call attention to Iraq's continued defiance of Security Council resolutions. The decision to work with other states via the United Nations was proposed by the then Secretary of State, Colin Powell, who

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[67] Falk, R., "The New Bush Doctrine". *The Nation*, CCLXXV-3 (2002), 10.

[68] "President Delivers Graduation Speech at West Point…", op. cit.

[69] Yordan, C. L., "America's Quest for Global Hegemony: Offensive Realism, the Bush Doctrine, and the 2003 Iraq War". *Theoria: A Journal of Social and Political Theory*, 50 (2006), 143-147.

[70] Rhodes, E., "Onward Liberal Soldiers?: The Crusading Logic of Bush's Grand Strategy and What is Wrong With It", in L. Gardner; M. Young (eds.), *The New American Empire…*, op. cit., 237.

[71] *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. Washington, DC, The White House, 2002, 14 and 25.

[72] Crawford, N., "Principia Leviathan: The Moral Duties of American Hegemony". *Naval War College Review*, LVII-3/4 (2004), 85.

[73] "President Delivers Graduation Speech at West Point…", op. cit.

[74] Rhodes, E., "Onward Liberal Studies?....", op. cit., 228.

[75] *The National Security Strategy…*, op. cit. 31.

disagreed with neo-conservative ideals and with aspects of the NSS. In August 2002, Powell told the president that he could bring the Security Council's members on board, but he warned him that if the United Nations diffused the crisis, Saddam Hussein may stay in power. In addition, Powell warned the president that the United States could not invade and transform Iraq unilaterally, so he should be cautious about his decision[76]. While Powell's views were strongly opposed by Cheney and senior civilian officials at the Pentagon, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who shared the president's concerns, also asked Bush to make his case at the United Nations[77].

Why did Bush go to the United Nations, if his administration's approach saw the multilateral organizations and international law as a limitation to American power? Powell's concerns that the United States did not have the capabilities to unilaterally execute a policy of regime change in Iraq or Blair's pleas for an international approach may have been important pieces of this puzzle. However, one problem the Bush administration had at the time was that opinion polls showed that a majority of Americans supported a war against Iraq if the United States went to war with its allies[78]. Seen from this perspective the speech at the United Nations was used to internationalize the debate on Iraq and to rally support for the war at home[79]. Consequently, the president went to the United Nations not to make a case for why Saddam Hussein's regime had to be disarmed, but why it should be replaced with a democratic government. Bush's speech also warned the United Nations that if it decided not to support America's objectives, the United States would pursue its interests unilaterally, making the world body "irrelevant" in the post-9/11 world[80].

Bush's harsh words were in line with the NSS's logic. However, his decision to make his case to the international community was a way of restraining his administration's imperial ambitions, giving a chance to its allies to support American foreign policy interests, as they had done during the invasion of Afghanistan. Going to the United Nations was in line with Americans' expectations, it reduced opposition in Congress for a war against Iraq, and it was an attempt to reassure the international community of America's benign intentions.

Most of the world's great powers were not convinced by the Bush administration's approach. While they did not support Saddam Hussein's regime, Russia, France, and Germany strongly opposed Bush's desire for regime change. They welcomed the president's interest to disarm Iraq and bring it into compliance with the Security Council resolutions, but they were worried that a war would further destabilize the Middle East, detract resources from the war against al Qaeda, and inspire more terrorist attacks. After months of diplomatic negotiations, Bush made the decision to go to war, without the United Nations blessings, though Powell tried to convince the Security Council on February 5, 2003 to support the president's strategy.

On February 26, 2003, Bush delivered a key speech at an event hosted by the American Enterprise Institute, a think-tank with strong ties to neo-conservatives officials in the administration. The international community expected that the United States would restrain its interests and negotiate a solution to the crisis. However, it had little power to check the United States' interests. Bush knew that the Security Council was not going to produce the resolution authorizing the use of force; the speech was a perfect opportunity to reassure the American public, its coalition partners, and other secondary nations that the United States would not use its power to advance imperial aims: "After defeating enemies, we did not leave behind occupying armies, we left constitutions and parliaments. We established an atmosphere of safety, in which

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[76] Woodward, B., *Plan of Attack*, New York, NY, Simon and Schuster, 2004, 150.

[77] Mann, J., *The Rise of the Vulcans…*, op. cit., 341-342.

[78] The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. 20 February 2003. "Post-Blix: Public Favors Force in Iraq, But U.S. Needs More International Backing" [document on line] Available from Internet at: <http://www.pewtrusts.com/pdf/vf_pew_research_international_backing.pdf>.

[79] Ibid, 343-344.

[80] The White House. 12 September 2002. "President's Remarks at the United Nations General Assembly" [document on line] Available from Internet at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/09/20020912-1.html>.

responsible, reform-minded local leaders could build lasting institutions of freedom. In societies that once bred fascism and militarism, liberty found a permanent home"[81].

The president also argued that Iraq's democratization would serve as a catalyst for the Middle East's liberalization and it will help the international community bring the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to an end. Ousting the Iraqi regime from power would not only increase America's security, but it would also benefit the international community.

For all its eloquence, the speech had little impact on the international opinion. France, Germany and Russia refused to support any resolution that would grant Washington and its coalition partners the authority to forcefully bring Iraq into compliance with existent resolutions. In the end, the United States had no choice, but to continue with its plans. On March 17, 2003, the Bush administration delivered an ultimatum to the Iraqi government. Two days later, coalition forces invaded Iraq.

From January 2002 to March 2003, the Bush administration's foreign policy was charting a new path. Expansionist aims influenced the search for a new doctrine, but initially Bush was unwilling to implement a foreign policy that abandoned America's tradition of moderation and restraint. In some ways, the Bush administration was internally divided between officials in the Office of Vice President and the Department of Defense, who advocated for an expansionist strategy, and by officials at the Department of State, who campaigned for a more pragmatic approach. The perils of an expansionist foreign policy were clear to the president, but the White House's case for the war left Bush with little options. Having made Saddam Hussein a bigger threat than Osama Bin Laden, Bush could not back down once France made it clear that it would veto any resolution that called for military action against Iraq. Submitting American interests to the whims of the international community contradicted Bush's new doctrine, calling into question the powers of the presidency. As Powell's concerns dissipated, the advocates of an expansionist foreign policy convinced the president that invading Iraq was necessary to secure America's long-term interests.

4.2. Is the Middle East the New Caribbean?

During the Cold War, the United States' foreign policy towards the Middle East was influenced by balance of power politics. The main aims were to keep in check Soviet expansionist interests, to protect Israel's independence, and to closely work with different Persian Gulf countries to secure the flow of oil[82]. Rather than supporting the liberalization of these countries' economies and political systems, the United States arduously worked to promote stability by keeping at bay forces of social change. During this period, the United States avoided deploying troops in the region, often relying on its regional allies' militaries (i.e. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Iran until 1979). At times, the United States' would deploy naval warships and its aircraft carriers as a show of force, but the main inclination was to keep a low military profile in the region[83].

The 1991 Persian Gulf War forced the United States to reconsider this policy. The fact that Saddam Hussein stayed in power after the war forced Washington to design a strategy to contain Iraq, disarm its weapons of mass destruction, and dismantle these weapons programs. The United States kept a significant military presence in the region to force Saddam Hussein to comply with the United Nations' resolutions and to patrol the no-fly zones over northern and southern Iraq. The Persian Gulf War had not really ended; it continued as "an open-ended quasi war"[84]. These ongoing military operations allowed the American military commanders to campaign for a more expansionist foreign policy, though civilian officials in Washington repeatedly undermined their efforts. General Anthony Zinni, who headed the United States Central Command from 1997-2000, compared his work to the one performed by mili-

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[81] The White House. 26 February 2003. "President Discusses the Future of Iraq" [document on line] Available from Internet at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/02/20030226-11.html>.

[82] Lind, M., *The American Way of Strategy…*, op. cit., 138.

[83] Bacevich, A., *The New American Militarism: How American Are Seduced by War*, Oxford, England, Oxford University Press, 2005, 180-181.

[84] Ibid, 195.

tary commanders in the Caribbean in the early twentieth century[85]. The objective was to strengthen key allies in order to secure America's interests in the region. Even though one of the Clinton administration's main goals was the enlargement of democratic and capitalist values, it stop short from pushing these in the Middle East. The fear was that promoting social change in these societies could lead to instability, which could also hurt America's economic well-being, one of Clinton's main concerns.

The 9/11 terrorist attacks were symptomatic of a wider civil war taking place in the Middle East. And, while the United States had not directly engaged in this conflict, it had taken sides, hindering radical Islamic movements from overthrowing the regimes that were supporting American regional interests[86]. As a result, the United States was faced with a dilemma: pull out from the Middle East or assume control over the region. Noticing that America's influence in the Persian Gulf was limited, the Bush administration decided to use its hard power to transform the Middle East according to American interests and to secure access to the region's oil reserves[87].

This policy orientation was influenced by neoconservative thinking. As noted above, the Bush administration argued that the only way to win the 'global war on terror' was by building democracies in the Middle East and integrating their economies into the evolving global economic system. By promoting economic and political openness in this strategic region, the Bush administration hoped that American businesses, military personnel, diplomats and non-governmental organizations could penetrate Iraq and its neighboring countries and force these to reform their political and economic systems according to American interests. Bush's rhetoric painted a picture of a peaceful, democratic Middle East, but his critics pointed to an underlying vision of an American informal empire in the region.

While the Bush administration's confidence that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction was used as the main justification for the war, it is also important to note that Saddam's regime was an attractive target for at least three more reasons. First, the Iraqi regime had been weakened by economic sanctions and its military was no match to American forces. Thus, the United States was assured a quick and easy victory. Second, Iraq's educated middle class and experienced technocratic class were seen by many senior officials in the Pentagon as potential collaborators in the country's transformation. The Bush administration had closely worked with Iraqi exiles and the expectation was that a new government headed by these exiled leaders would help the United States achieve its post-war interests. Third, Iraq was to become a key ally in America's 'global war on terror', working closely with Washington to check Syrian and Iranian interests. Before the start of the war, defense officials argued that the United States was going to establish fourteen "enduring bases" in Iraq[88]. These bases would serve a dual purpose. It would allow the Bush administration to transfer American troops from Saudi Arabia to Iraq, while their presence would make sure that Iraqis carried through the needed reforms to integrate the country into America's sphere of influence.

America's geo-strategic interests dictated that post-Saddam Iraq was to become an American protectorate, similar to the one the United States set up in Cuba after the Spanish-American War of 1898. Of course, the American post-war experience in Iraq looked more like the United States' experience in the Philippines, but this was not the original intention. The Bush administration had not foreseen the Sunni-led insurgency, the unpopularity of exiled Iraqi leaders, or the massive looting that destroyed Iraq's economy. Iraq's liberation proved problematic for the Bush administration. Its post-war strategy was overly simplistic[89], forcing the United States to occupy the country until the

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[85] Cited in id., *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy*. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2002, 177.

[86] Doran, M. S., "Somebody Else's Civil War". *Foreign Affairs*, LXXXI-1 (2002), 22-42.

[87] Agnew, J., "American Hegemony into American Empire?: Lessons from the Invasion of Iraq". *Antipode: A Radical Journal of Geography*, XXXV-5 (2003), 877; and Yordan, C. L., "America's…", op. cit., 148-149.

[88] Spolar, C., "14 'Enduring Bases' in Iraq". *Chicago Tribune*, 23 March 2004.

[89] For a review of this strategy, see Yordan, C. L., "Failing to Meet Expectations in Iraq: A Review of the Original U.S. Post-War Strategy". *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, VIII-1 (2004), 52-68.

Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) could stabilize Iraq and transform it according to American interests. This is not the place to analyze the many problems the CPA faced, but American officials successfully established a set of mechanisms that allowed the CPA to transfer power to Iraqi institutions, but without compromising American influence.

In Cuba's case, the occupation ended once Cubans accepted the Platt Amendment. In Iraq, the United States was forced to abandon its plan to occupy Iraq for two years. It decided to transfer sovereignty to local institutions, but only if Iraqis met three conditions. First, the CPA established a transitional government that administered Iraq from July 1, 2004 to January 30, 2005. Apart from stabilizing Iraq and addressing its domestic problems, the transitional government's main responsibility was to organize elections for an interim parliamentary assembly. Members of parliament subsequently formed an interim government, appointed members of a constitutional writing committee, organized a national referendum to ratify the constitution, and held elections for a permanent parliament, completing the entire process by late 2005[90]. Second, the transitional and interim governments were forced to continue with the economic and political reforms started by the CPA. Iraqi leaders worked with the CPA to write a Transitional Administrative Law (TAL) that would spell out the responsibilities of these institutions and lay the foundations of the permanent constitution. While many Iraqis were unhappy with the TAL's provisions, they embraced the document because it was the only way to end the occupation[91]. Third, Iraqis had to acknowledge the American-led Multinational Force's authority in the country, which meant that Iraqi security forces had to follow the orders of American military commanders[92].

Has the United States turned post-Saddam Iraq into an American protectorate? One view argues that it has not. The fact that the insurgency has not abated, that terrorist attacks inspired by radical Islamist groups continue, and that a growing number of Americans want the Bush administration to pull out the troops from Iraq supports this perspective. Given that Iraqis have held two national elections, wrote and ratified a constitution, and continued the economic reforms started by the CPA confirms the overall influence of American interests. However, it is important to not exaggerate this last claim. The main problem is still the lack of security. Although Iraqi leaders have worked with the American troops to stabilize the country, one sticking point is the growing influence of religious political parties and how their values are shaping Iraq's nascent legal system. Even though this contradicts the United States' long-term interests and its ability to control Iraq's political system, the main problem is the growing sectarian violence in Iraq's main cities. If this process continues, the Bush administration will either have to accept failure and withdraw its troops or reoccupy Iraq, as it did in Cuba in 1906 once an insurgency led by General Faustino Guerra threatened the pro-American government presided by Tomas Estrada Palma[93].

What is clear is that strategic considerations forced the United States to invade Iraq and that these same considerations impelled the Bush administration to abandon its strategy of restraint for an expansionist foreign policy, influenced by imperial ambitions. As in the Caribbean in the early twentieth century, the imperial strategy was more strategic than ideological. Of course, American leaders used the promotion of democracy and capitalism as a reason to intervene in Iraq, but ultimately the decision was influenced by geo-strategic interests. The Middle East is the 'new Caribbean'; the United States' strategy is to prevent anti-American forces from gaining control over the region. America's long-term security, at least in the eyes of most Americans, will be dependent on events in the Middle East. If the United States wants to achieve its imperial designs, it has to invest more resources

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[90] Diamond, L., *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq*. New York, NY, Times Book, 2005, 154-155.

[91] Rasan, D., "Sunni Town Split Over Constitution". *Iraqi Crisis Report*, 52 (March 15, 2004); and id., "Shia Parties Questioned Over Constitution". *Iraqi Crisis Report*, 54 (March 22, 2004).

[92] Diamond, L., *Squandered…*, op. cit., 264-265.

[93] Minger, R., "William H. Taft and the United States Intervention in Cuba in 1906". *Hispanic American Historical Review*, XLI-1 (1961), 75-89.

in order to stabilize and secure its transformation. Noting that the American public has become dissatisfied with the Bush administration's foreign policy strategy, is there another way the United States can accomplish its interests in the Middle East? Can a new foreign policy based on restraint solve America's problems?

CONCLUSION

The United States' victory over Spain in 1898 "transformed the Caribbean into an American lake, so too victory in 1989 brought the entire globe within the purview of the United States; henceforth American interests knew no bounds"[94]. But, the first Bush and Clinton decided against an expansionist foreign policy, favoring a policy based on moderation and restrain. The lack of an enemy meant that Americans were less interested in world events and more concerned about the nation's domestic problems. Congress also tried to expand its foreign policy powers and keep in check the executive's interests. The 9/11 attacks, while not affecting America's capabilities, transformed this political environment, allowing the second Bush to develop a new foreign policy strategy based on expansionist interests.

Critics of Bush's foreign policy argue that it is revolutionary and out of step with America's diplomatic tradition. As this article argues, this is hardly the case. While the general inclination is to compare contemporary foreign policy with the strategies created during the Cold War or the 1990s, analyzing Bush's foreign policy through the prism of 1898 reveals some important parallels between these two time periods. In fact, the international and domestic changes that allowed the McKinley administration to break with the nation's inclination to restrain its interests are similar to the changes that permitted Bush to craft an expansionist foreign policy, influenced by imperial ideals.

In both cases, the lack of international checks on America's power allowed the United States to go to war. Correspondingly, the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the explosion of the USS *Maine* weakened the domestic restrictions that tend to block the execution of expansionist strategies, giving the White House the power to mobilize the country for war.

Similarly, the United States used its superior military capabilities to defeat weaker enemies. Indeed, the Spanish-American War and the invasion of Iraq were wars of choice. In other words, they were offensive engagements, initiated by American forces to increase its influence over key regions of the world. Finally, while both wars produced quick victories, the uncertainties created by post-war conditions convinced both presidents that an imperial strategy was the only way it could secure its long-term interests.

The Bush administration's turn to empire was similar to McKinley's decision to establish an informal empire in the Caribbean. One important difference is the fact that the United States has been unable to stabilize Iraq and transform it according to its interests. This was not the case with Cuba and other countries in the Caribbean Basin, although the United States was forced to intervene in the island in 1906 after a rebellion threatened its economic and security interests. It is possible that Iraq will need to be reoccupied if the Bush administration wants to make sure that Iraq will be a key partner in the 'global war on terror'. Regardless of whether the United States will be able to turn Iraq into a protectorate in the near future, the same strategic interests that encouraged McKinley to take control over the Caribbean have been influencing Bush's decision to integrate the Middle East into America's sphere of influence. Both presidents used American ideals to legitimize their expansionist strategies, but in the end the chief motivation was the realization that these two regions could not be controlled by anti-American forces because they could challenge the United States' security and economic welfare. The logic of "pre-emptive imperialism" was in this sense similar to the Bush administration's rationale for the legality of pre-emptive strikes.

Given this examination, what is the future of American foreign policy? In the 2006 State of the Union Address, Bush warned Americans of "the false comfort of isolationism" and he emphasized the importance of staying involved in international affairs and of continuing nation-building efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan[95]. For the president, these isolationists are critics of his administration's

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[94]　Bacevich, A., *American Empire…*, op. cit., 177.

[95]　The White House. 31 January 2006. "President Bush Delivers State of the Union Address" [document on line] Available from Internet at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/01/20060131-10.html>.

foreign policy strategy. However, Bush is wrong to lump all his critics under a single label. Most of them are not isolationist, but internationalists that favor a return to a foreign policy based on moderation and restraint. With public opinion turning against the president and with Republicans loosing the majority of Congress, the president will face internal limits to his powers. While some may be disappointed with the turn in events, restrictions to American power can be beneficial because it will force the White House to create a new strategy, which success will be dependent on convincing the international community to work with the United States to stabilize Iraq and to transform the Middle East. Of course, Bush may decide against this strategy, but an expansionist foreign policy will only be detrimental to the United States' military and economy. Overextension, as Paul Kennedy argued in *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, suggests will decrease the United States' power, inviting other powers to challenge America's preponderance[96]. Only time will tell what the Bush administration's next move will be and how it will impact America's future and that of the Middle East.

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[96] Kennedy, P., *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*. New York, NY, Random House, 1987. For a similar, but more recent argument, see Layne, C., "The Unipolar Illusion Revisited: The Coming End of the United States' Unipolar Moment". *International Security*, XXXI-2 (2006), 7-41.