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"Present at the Destruction"? George Bush, the Neocons and the Traditions of U.S. Foreign Policy

As remarked in the title of his memoirs, Truman's second secretary of State, Dean Acheson (1948-52), was present at the creation of a new era. What was created then was an "international liberal order." The U.S. presided over an effort to achieve an "active 'ordering' of relations through sets of mechanisms and institutions that organize international relations and transactions." The process was U.S.-centered; its original universalism, in fact, rapidly faded once it became clear the Soviet Union could challenge the order then in construction or at least "affect the definition process." "Exclusionary elements" had therefore to be activated, while the USSR was transformed from "a threatening state into a full-fledged strategic opponent, wholly externalized from the liberal order."[1]

That order, and the establishment of the Atlantic *communitas* that followed it, were therefore based on exclusion and externalization. The negative but powerful glue was offered by the presence of an absolute and total enemy as the Soviet Union was. Absolute, because no compromise with it was possible: for American leaders "there could be no real peace in the world as such, unless the Soviet Union ceased being the Soviet Union and communism ended." Total, because it offered a potent counter-universalism to that projected by the United States and by the West.[2]

However, the post-war international liberal order and the Atlantic community were also based on a significant amount of compromise between the United States and its Western European partners. On several concessions made by Washington in order to assure the allegiance of its lesser allies, and their participation in the worldwide struggle against Moscow. Influence was not unidirectional, despite the power gap between the post-war flourishing

United States and the war-devastated Western Europe. The empire originally established by the United States in Europe was probably not an "empire by invitation," in Norwegian historian Geir Lundestad's immensely fortunate, as well as simplistic slogan. But it was a hegemony built upon a consistent amount of consensus on the part of the weaker side, which provided Western European countries with a considerable diplomatic leverage.[3]

According to many, critics and supporters alike, George Bush Jr. is now deliberately destroying and dismantling that order. We are present — it is claimed — at the destruction of that order so laboriously constructed.[4] Acheson's diplomacy, which played a crucial role in shaping and creating the post-war order, had been based first and foremost upon the "lawyerly instinct" of the Secretary of State. Such an instinct, historian John Harper reminds us, "was to take the particular interests and agendas of his various European *clients* as the starting point of action and to find a common formula."[5]

This "forensic diplomacy" — it is argued — is now replaced by an open disregard for the needs, the requests and the interests of the traditional allies of the U.S. By frequent and arrogant reminders of Europe's irrelevance in the new unipolar world. The multilateralism that had been so convenient for Washington during the Cold War is now rejected in favour of an approach that targets those very "self-imposed limits that had apparently been imposed upon America by the 'international community'" proper.[6]

According to this interpretation, the Bush administration is stepping outside the wise road defined by the tradition(s) of United States foreign policy; and, by doing so, it is destroying the set of arrangements, formal and informal, assembled during the Cold War. The recent "robust rebirth of American unilateralism" — historian James Chace argues — "reverses the American internationalist commitment that came out of the Second World War and that lasted throughout the 45 years of the Cold War." For political scientist Stanley Hoffmann, the "wrecking operation" undertaken by the United States in Iraq is determining "the destruction of some of the main schemes of cooperation that have been established since 1945" with the aim of introducing "some order and moderation into the jungle of traditional international

conflicts." The Bush administration — Hoffman claims — "may want to return to pre-1914 conditions."

Similarly, Clinton's second Secretary of State and ardent "humanitarian interventionist," Madeleine Albright, criticized Bush for his post 9/11 decision "to depart in fundamental ways, from the approach that has characterized U.S. foreign policy for more than half a century." Albright denounced how "reliance on alliance had been replaced by redemption through preemption; the shock of force trumped the hard work of diplomacy, and long-time relationships were redefined." Much of the world saw therefore the war in Iraq not as "a way to put muscle into accepted rules, but rather as the inauguration of a new set of rules, written and applied solely by the United States."

These arguments were incisively abridged by an icon of American liberalism, historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr., according to whom "President George W. Bush has made a fatal change in the foreign policy of the United States. He has repudiated the strategy that won the Cold War— the combination of containment and deterrence carried out through such multilateral agencies as the UN, NATO, and the Organization of American States."[7]

However, similar arguments (i.e.: the discontinuity between the foreign policy of George Bush and those of its predecessors, Bill Clinton's in particular) are also made by many supporters of the Bush administration. Some of them accused Clinton for the excessive prudence of his foreign policy and its disproportionate reliance (and faith) upon economic instruments. That, according to Clinton's critics, contributed to a passive and *status quo*-oriented policy, which was insufficiently ambitious, immoral and dangerous. Insufficiently ambitious, because it sacrificed, in the name of multilateralism and interdependence, the unique possibility the 1990s offered to create a U.S. empire. "What's the point of being the greatest, most powerful nation in the world and not having an imperial role?" — asked rhetorically neoconservative intellectual Irving Kristol, "It's unheard of in human history. The most powerful nation always had an imperial role."[8] Immoral, because it renounced the possibility to spread American vision and values abroad, "expand[ing] liberty" and the "benefits of freedom," as stated in Bush's National Security Strategy of

September 2002 [hereinafter NSS].[9] Dangerous, finally, because it permitted the continuation of a *status quo* where powerful anti-American forces were at loose. As neoconservative Kenneth Aldeman put it, "the starting point is that conservatives now are for radical change and the progressives — the establishment foreign policy makers — are for the status quo … the old conservative belief that stability is good doesn't apply to the Middle East. The status quo in the Middle East has been breeding terrorists."[10]

Clinton's supposedly apolitical (and a-moral) approach has thus been subjected to harsh rebukes. To many conservatives, it appeared at most as a form of limited and "economicistic … hegemonic rule." "Talk of the 'indispensable nation' notwithstanding" with Clinton "there was no attempt at messianic redemption of the world nor insistence on any absolute difference between the United States and the rest of the world. The United States was in the world, leading the world chiefly by market liberalization."[11] The U.S. had become an empire by default, more than by design, many critics of Clinton argued. By doing so, the United States was giving up its mission and its claim to moral superiority. Neoconservatives bitterly commented upon this state of affairs. "The world has never seen an *imperium*" such as the one represented by the U.S. after the demise of the Soviet Union, neoconservative founding father Irving Kristol maintained in the *Wall Street Journal.* "It lacks the brute coercion that characterized European imperialism. But it also lacks the authentic missionary spirit of that older imperialism, which aimed to establish the rule of law while spreading Christianity." Instead, Kristol argued, what America's post Cold War global dominance offers to the world is "a growth economy, a 'consumerist' society, popular elections and a dominant secular-hedonistic ethos. It is a combination that is hard to resist — and equally hard to respect in its populist vulgarity. It is an *imperium* with a minimum of moral substance."[12]

Fair enough. Right or wrong, the new and grand strategy of Bush seems indeed to be new and grand. But, as historian Melvin Leffler has recently emphasized, "all the elements of the strategy have antecedents, some of which are old, some of more recent vintage."[13]

Humanitarian interventionism is certainly of recent vintage. A post-Cold War, and indeed acerbic, wine *nouveau,* much appreciated by Clintonites, liberal hawks, and neoconservatives. It is based on what the pro-democrat political magazine *The New Republic* (TNR) has called "faith in the moral potential of U.S. power." No less a person than TNR's senior editor and Bush-basher Jonathan Chait, a man who declared he hated even the "way" the current president "walks" ("shoulders flexed, elbows splayed out from his sides like a teenage boy feigning machismo"), urged liberals to support the wars in Iraq and against global terrorism. "The case for war in Iraq was most clearly made not by Republican President George W. Bush but by Democratic President Bill Clinton," Chait argued more than one year ago. According to Chait, the war in Iraq should "promote liberal foreign policy principles," not least because "American global dominance cannot last unless it operates on behalf of the broader good and on the basis of principles more elevated than 'might makes right.'" Harvard human rights' scholar, Michael Ignatieff, made this connection even broader: "to see what is really unfolding in Iraq," he argued "we need to place it in the long history of American overseas interventions." For all the risks, "Americans by and large, still think of intervening as a noble act in which the new world comes to the rescue of the old." Many liberals followed suit, doubts and second thoughts surfacing only in the troubled aftermath of the war.[14]

A comparison between Bush's much discussed National Security Strategy and similar documents from the Clinton era reveal indeed striking rhetorical similarities. Clinton's strategy of engagement and enlargement, first laid out by National Security Adviser Anthony Lake, referred to imperatives and defined interests in a way not so dissimilar from Bush's 2002 NSS. Clinton's 1995 NSS, for instance, made an explicit connection between the defense of human rights, the expansion of democracy and the promotion of free market values: "Thus, working with new democratic states to help preserve them as democracies committed to free markets and respect for human rights"— the 1995 NSS proclaimed — "is a key part of our national security strategy." For radical political scientist James Der Derian that shows that when it comes to so-called

"nonnegotiable" rights and the possibility to resort to war "President Bush's NSS is a continuation rather than a repudiation" of Clinton's strategy.[15]

Many scholars, pro and anti-Clinton, have agreed. Liberal International Relations scholar David Calleo finds much to condemn in Bush's unilateralism, but is willing to admit that when compared to Bush's triumphalism, Clinton's "merely took a more economic than a military form." The Clinton administration was therefore "no less 'unipolar' than either Bush administration." Others stress instead Bush's idealism, which is leading him to pursue "institutionalist and liberal ends in a manner more aggressive and, at times, more unilateral than foreign policy liberals can support." In purely Wilsonian (or, if you prefer, Clintonian) terms, democracy has become again the primary "security tool" of Washington's global strategy.[16]

But even from opposite perspectives — realist, neo-materialist, post-Marxist, you can often choose the brand — continuity between Clinton and Bush is heavily emphasized. According to some, Bill Clinton presided over an era of "rhetorical and institutional consolidation of the imperatives of nation-state acquiescence to the needs of global capital." It was during this era that "the inevitability and morality of global open doors to trade, and attendant globalization" was finally articulated. Historian Perry Anderson, in particular, has excoriated those in Europe who are now "in mourning" for Clinton, stressing how the "execration of Bush in wide swathes of West European media and public opinion bears no relation to the actual differences between the two parties in the United States." Both — Bush Jr. and Clinton — adhere, just like their predecessors, to a "comprehensive doctrine, linking free markets (the ark of neoliberalism since the Reagan-Thatcher period) to free elections (the leitmotif of liberation in Central-Eastern Europe) to human rights (the battle-cry in Kurdistan and the Balkans.)" The latter — human rights — soon proved to be "the jemmy in the door of national sovereignty": the premise of what Anderson calls a new "military humanism," which came again to the fore when a pretext for removing Saddam was needed.[17]

In a scathing and widely praised denunciation of Clinton's foreign policy, somehow artificially prolonged to include also the era of George Bush Jr.,

conservative scholar Andrew Bacevich also detected a continuum in U.S. post-Cold War behaviour: current America's policy — Bacevich claims — is "a coherent grand strategy conceived many decades earlier and now adapted to the" new "circumstances." This strategy combined global interventionism, U.S. unchallenged military primacy, economic liberalism and a commitment to what Bacevich calls "global openness." Its "ultimate objective is the creation of an open and integrated international order based on the principles of democratic capitalism, with the United States as the ultimate guarantor of order and enforcer of norms." Not only, then, is Bush Jr. not proceeding to the dismantlement of the international order America contributed to shape and build after World War II. He is on the contrary vigorously implementing principles and practices elaborated during the Cold War. "Rather than marking the culmination of U.S. strategy"— Bacevich stresses — "the collapse of the Berlin Wall simply inaugurates its latest phase." U.S. global interventionism does not stem out of philanthropy or compassion; nor out of concern for human rights or messianic belief in Americas redemptive role. "The creation of an open world was not in the first instance a program of global uplift," Bacevich states bluntly. "Globalization is not social work. The pursuit of openness is first of all about Americans' doing well; that an open world might also benefit others qualifies at best as incidental. An open global order in which American enterprise enjoys free rein and in which American values, tastes, and lifestyle enjoy pride of place is a world in which the United States remains preeminent." Realist Italian scholar Marco Cesa's analysis is not very dissimilar. "In reality" — Cesa states in a recent article — "the 'war on terrorism' is just the last chapter of a process already begun in the previous years, a process which finds its origin in the position of unchallenged dominion of the United States in the unipolar system.[8]

Much refused by Hoffmann, Schlesinger Jr., Ikenberry and others, the connection between U.S. Cold War strategy, Clinton's foreign policy and Bush's aggressive unilateralism is thus vigorously affirmed by Bacevich and Cesa.

A closer look at Bush's 2002 NSS seems to confirm this interpretation. The Cold War nuclear stalemate — it is often argued — constrained the superpowers'

military sovereignty. Nuclear deterrence, upon which the post-World War II "long peace" between the superpowers rested, imposed strategic restraint; it forced U.S. and USSR Strangeloves to limit their fantasies to war games and to the convenient creation of new academic disciplines. For historian John Gaddis, "the development of nuclear weapons has had, on balance, a stabilizing effect on the postwar international system," obliging "national leaders, every day, to confront the reality of what war is really like, indeed to confront the prospect of their own mortality.[19]

Pre-emptive war, vigorously affirmed by Bush's NSS, and the recent popular re-infatuation with U.S. military action — past, present and future— seem to signal the end of deterrence as we have known it. Dreams of immortality appear to be on the rise again. In the Cold War the U.S. "faced a generally status-quo risk-averse adversary," the 2002 NSS claims (in a laudable act of historical revisionism and self-criticism, that reverses what neoconservative intellectuals and cold warriors have always maintained.) During the Cold War deterrence was therefore "an effective defense." Now, however, "deterrence based only upon the threat of retaliation is less likely to work against leaders of rogue states more willing to take risks, gambling with the lives of their people, and the wealth of their nations".[20]

But Cold War deterrence was indeed based upon the very willingness to promote war (nuclear if necessary) unilaterally and pre-emptively. Washington never renounced the possibility to strike first. Doing otherwise would have been strategically suicidal: how could you deter your enemy (and protect your non-nuclear allies) without showing credible intention to act pre-emptively if threatened? The notion of risk-taking was therefore "inherent" to the "logic" of deterrence and containment. For Leffler "Eisenhower's deployment of forces to Lebanon, Johnson's military intervention in the Dominican republic and Reagan's attack on Lybia, as well as Kennedy's blockade of Cuba and Nixon's bombing of Cambodia and Laos, all possessed unilateral, pre-emptive qualities." The frequent travels of Rand corporation experts into the cuckoo's nest of nuclear war planning, and the Warsaw Pact's plan to nuke and erase the city of Romeo and Juliet, responded both to this logic. Pre-emption as a form of

"anticipatory self-defense" is therefore nothing new, having on the contrary a "long tradition in American history."[21]

Just as there is little new in the explicit quest of 2002 NSS for military superiority. During the Cold War, American statesmen never derogated from the objective to create, preserve and expand a situation of "preponderance of power." Cold War bipolarism was from its inception imperfect and asymmetrical, militarily and not. American superiority vis-à-vis the Soviet Union was never in question. Despite Khruschev's bravados, Brezhnev's intense rearmament, and Russians' privations, Moscow was able to achieve a fictitious and useless strategic parity only for a short span of time in the 1970s. Up to the early 1960s, the U.S. disposed almost of a first-strike capability (i.e.: the capability to destroy in a first, decisive hit the entire nuclear arsenal of the enemy, thus zeroing its capacity to retaliate.)[22] Neoconservative current calls for military primacy build upon solid historic foundations, or so it appears. An "ideology of national preparedness" long predates Bush's calls to get ready for a "new condition of life" where the U.S.'s "vulnerability will persist long after" those responsible for the 9/11 attacks have been brought to justice. A willingness to achieve full-spectrum dominance anticipated recent neoconservative calls to preserve American primacy and institutionalize unipolarity.[23]

For Washington, unilateralism, pre-emption and the search for unchallenged military superiority are not new goals. 9/11 and the response of the Bush administration only intensify the quest for absolute security and invulnerability that has characterized United States history from its inception. Such a quest has, among other things, contributed to give form to "a politics dominated by the rhetoric, symbols, and issues of national security."[24]

But continuities between the Cold War and the post-September 11 period can be found also in the rhetorical and discursive realm. Cold War Manichean discourse is experiencing a second youth nowadays, and many born-again cold warriors are undergoing a rejuvenating experience. This "Cold War Redux" has found its paradigmatic manifestation in the return of "totalitarianism" as the dominating catchall analytical and historical category. As a conceptual (and in many ways geo-political) tool, offering a old/new "agonizing script

and defining drama" for international affairs. As an instrument used once more to depluralize and homogenize "global space."[25] Not by accident, liberal pro-war journalist Paul Berman continues to justify the war in Iraq as a struggle against a new totalitarianism. In a recent roundtable organized by the on-line magazine, *Slate,* Berman used repeatedly the words totalitarianism and totalitarian. The war in Iraq was therefore justified by the necessity to "discourage and defeat" the "mass totalitarian movement of the Muslim world"; "the totalitarian movement that, in its radical Islamist and Baathist wings, had fostered a cult of indiscriminate killing and suicide." Defeating "totalitarianism" was (and is) a necessary step to promote the global cause of "liberalism," because, in a purely Cold War discursive frame, "the opposite of totalitarianism is liberalism." "In Iraq as in Afghanistan, a liberal war is going on" — Berman stated — "liberal in the philosophical sense, meaning liberty." This historical connection is made even more explicit by Berman's reference to the brave Polish division fighting in Iraq alongside the U.S. army. A fact that, in Berman's eyes, is "hugely inspiring," since "no country on Earth has fought harder over the decades against totalitarianism than Poland." They, the captive people hold hostage behind the Iron Curtain during the Cold War, are now again the first "enemies of totalitarianism."[26]

Totalitarianism, historian Abbot Gleason reminds us, was "the great mobilizing and unifying concept of the Cold War." It "provide[d] a plausible and frightening vision of a Manichean, radically bifurcated world, in which the leaders of the free world would have to struggle (until victory was won) or perish." Totalitarianism, a term that by the 1950s had "become coin of the realm for official government publications," was highly prized for its ubiquity and transferability: a portable label, greatly simplifying reality, stickable to different phenomena, according to necessities and convenience. Adapted to the current situation, it can even provide, as in Berman's analysis, the missing link between Islamists and Baathists, Saddam and Bin Laden, Al Qaeda and Arab nationalism.[27]

According to historian Nikhil Pal Singh *"Terrorism* now occupies the place and function that *fascism* held in World War II and that *communism*

held within the discourse of the cold war." *Totalitarianism* is, now as then, the catchall, a-historical concept which makes it possible to reduce complexity. To mesh enemies into one single (and horrific) category: the total (and totalitarian) enemy. To de-historicize, de-contextualize and de-humanize the adversary. The "theoretical anchor" of the Cold War (and of the liberal historical reading of the 20th century) is resurrected once again, proving how supposedly epochal changes fit instead into traditional and immutable patterns.[28]

George Bush himself repeatedly tried to connect his strategy to those of some of the most celebrated and popular U.S. presidents. His plans to extend democracy and freedom in the Middle East have been often accompanied by historical references to the American historical "mission to promote liberty around the world." By doing so he lumped together Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan, in a quite incongruous combination.[29] But before dismissing out of hand Bush's distortions of American political traditions, one should pay more attention again to the effective elements of continuity between Bush's current foreign policy and those traditions.

Particularly with Roosevelt, the search for absolute security I previously mentioned, acquired a new meaning. A meaning Bush is now taking to its extreme consequences. It was in fact the "slippery" and often contradictory Roosevelt who "established in a Wilsonian vein that security for the United States could only be achieved when the world accepted its progressive values." Roosevelt's "manner of preparing and executing the U.S. entry into the Second World War" created a "formidable legacy for his followers." One that even post 9/11 America could not entirely set itself free of. Various elements form this legacy. One of them, Bush rightly claims, is the inescapable connection established from then on between the security of the United States and the course of global history. Or, better, between the survival of the United States as it is and the spread and diffusion of its core values and beliefs. As Stephanson noticed, it was Roosevelt who most clearly articulated a notion of "real peace" that justified, then as now, wars promoted in the name of "regime change." Such peace was based first and foremost upon a "maximalistic concept of liberal, positive values," which "paid no respect to classical sovereignty or state

borders," thus making the "domestic structure and behaviour" of other states "the central criterion of legitimacy." Consequently, "what any given regime was actually doing by way of foreign policy was not decisive." "Legitimacy was a matter of domestic adherence to the timeless values of humankind." There could be no real peace with a certain power (whatever its size and capacity to inflict damage), because of specific "qualities in [its] domestic makeup." These qualities could make such power illegitimate, and therefore threatening and dangerous to the United States (and by extension to the world.)[30]

Roosevelt thus crucially contributed to the "globalization" and "totalization" of the concept of national security. From World War II onwards the world (and the United States) could only "be either free or slave"; and that was a "prescription for limitless war, indeed the reinvention of war as civil war on a global scale in the name of total victory and the principle of universal right." The wartime division of the globe "into free and enslaved worlds" (totalitarianism again) was destined to last, sedimenting in the cultural and political collective consciousness of the U.S. FDR's successors moved further in this direction. When appealing to the expansion of freedom, democracy and free markets as the best safeguards for American security, Bush Jr. is walking within wide and deep historical footprints. As political scientist Edward Rhodes has argued, "in the Bush's administration's thinking, a global house divided against itself cannot stand. A world order cannot endure permanently half illiberal and half free … the absence of freedom, even in places as remote as Mghanistan, poses a danger to the rest of humanity."[31]

The messianic vision of America's role in the world Bush is embracing is directly connected to this. A missionary belief in the special and providential role history has assigned to the United States. Whatever one might think of current U.S. foreign policy, it is difficult not to see in it another powerful expression of America's ideology of "Manifest Destiny." "America is a nation with a mission and that mission comes from our most basic beliefs … this great republic will lead the cause of freedom," George Bush proclaimed in his 2004 State of the Union Speech. Mission and leadership are the two intertwined elements that form the idea the U.S. has a manifest destiny: to create an "ex-

emplary" and separate state, a "promised land," which could be emulated by others, in a modest and minimalistic approach; to "push the world along by means of regenerative intervention," leading it to "new and better things," in a more aggressive and maximalistic understanding, which has often transformed the U.S. into a "crusader state." In the latter sense, Manifest destiny has always provided ideological ammunition and powerful rationalization for American global interventionism. Bush's belief in Americas mission proves once again the *long durée* and the political sacredness of the idea the United States has a manifest destiny to fulfil. An historical assignment to accomplish.[32]

Historians Anders Stephanson and Walter McDougall, while differing radically in their interpretations, concur on one point: that the ideology of Manifest Destiny is somehow connected to the nature of the "sacred-secular project" the U.S. was. To the "particular (and particularly powerful) nationalism" of the United States, based on an idea of "providential and historical chosenness" and on "claims to prophecy, messianism, and historical transcendence," according to Stephanson. To America's unique "liberty" and to her political, geographic and religious "exceptionalism," for Mc Dougall.[33]

The peculiar nationalism that originated the ideology of Manifest Destiny has a distinctive religious overtone; it is a "Christian nationalism," that — from John Winthrop to Thomas Jefferson, from John O'Sullivan to Josiah Strong, from Woodrow Wilson to Ronald Reagan (and now George Bush Jr.) — has qualified America's uniqueness and validated her claims to expansion and intervention.[34] Again, it is hard not to see a powerful strand of "Christian nationalism" in the attitude to world problems of the current administration. And again, this connects even more the policy of the Bush administration to the history and the traditions of United States foreign policy, providing a compelling rebuttal to those who argue otherwise. The current President is often prone to express his strong religious beliefs, to adopt policies supported by the Christian Right of the Republican Party, and to express in religious terms his "Manichean-messianic world view." Bush's reaction to the capture of Saddam Hussein was in this regard emblematic: "I truly believe — Bush stated — that freedom is the Almighty's gift to every person — every man and

woman who lives in the world. That's what I believe. And the arrest of Saddam Hussein changed the equation in Iraq. Justice was being delivered to a man who defied that gift from the Almighty to the people of Iraq." "Which — according to *New Yorker* journalist Mark Singer — was to say that the formalities and codified procedures of the new Iraq's criminal-justice system might be all well and good, but Old Testament justice, through the agency of an American prosecuted preemptive war, was far more satisfying."[35] Some members of Bush's cabinet went even further, unearthing their belief there is a divine design in America's ascendancy to global power and in Bush's aggressive unilateralism. Vice-president Dick Cheney and Attorney General Richard Ashcroft gave vent to these convictions in a way that would have been un-thinkable a few years ago. The former by quoting (and misinterpreting) in a Christmas card a phrase of a speech given by Benjamin Franklin at the constitutional convention in 1787 ("And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid?") The latter, the most important representative of the Christian Right in the Bush administration and a member of the Congressional Singing Quartet, by going public with a "gutsy rendition" of the song *Let the Eagle Soar,* a tribute to America's virtues and imperial destiny.[36] As *New York Times* editorialist Nicholas Kristof argued "it's hard not to see" all of this "as a boast that the u.S. has become the global superpower because God is on our side.[37]

In short, it is possible to find a cultural, political, ideological, if you like religious, lineage to Bush's unilateral, ambitious and visionary agenda. Bush's foreign policy is peculiarly (and Christianly) nationalist. It adheres to the conviction the United States has a manifest destiny (to lead the world) and a special mission (to redeem and reshape the globe, this time beginning from the Middle East.) It defines national security in a maximalist way, linking it to the global expansion of American values, Western freedom and free markets. It employs the Manichean category of totalitarianism to divide the world into friends (freedom-loving countries) and enemies (countries run by freedom-hating, *totalitarian* dictators who subdue their freedom-loving people.) Just like during the Cold War, it relies upon military supremacy and

aims at consolidating and extending a strategic superiority nobody will ever be willing to challenge. Just as in the Clinton era, it adheres to the new doctrine of military humanism, which justifies interventions and violations of national sovereignty to defend and protect non-negotiable (i.e.: human) rights. Again, just as in the Clinton era it pursues a strategy of "global openness," which, incidentally, guarantees the commercial and economic opening of new and previously inaccessible regions. The Bush administration is certainly not presiding over the destruction of the traditions of foreign policy it has inherited. It is instead trying to keep them all together. We are currently present not at the destruction of American internationalism, as Chace argued. Nor are we present at the demolition of venerable U.S. diplomatic traditions, particularly containment, as Schlesinger claimed, What we are present at is the attempted (and impossible) re-composition of those traditions. Which is not less dangerous or less problematic, for the U.S. and for the world.

It is dangerous because it leads to contradictions and conceptual short-circuits, as shown by Bush's diplomatic zigzagging of the past few months. And it is problematic because it pretends to deal with an objective novel situation — the post 9/11, but also the post Soviet era — through very antiquated and inadequate conceptual (totalitarianism) and operational (preponderance of power, preemption) instruments.

How did we get to this? What are the origins of this "Wilsonianism with a vengeance" that aims, quite contradictorily, at a "transformation of world politics, domestic as well as international, using American power— military as well as economic and political— to build liberal societies and polities"?[38]

I believe and have argued elsewhere that much has to do with those intellectuals, mainly neoconservatives, who influence (though not entirely shape) Bush's approach to world affairs.[39] Neoconservatism, as an intellectual and political movement, aimed originally at reaffirming the validity of the precepts of Cold War liberalism. It constituted a reaction to the crisis the U.S. underwent in the late 1960s /early 1970s. Which was a political, diplomatic, economic and even cultural crisis, but most of all a crisis of identity. To many disaffected liberals it seemed to shake the very foundations of America's de-

mocracy. Neoconservatives were thus liberal cold warriors, who longed for the relaunching of the dichotomies of Cold War discourse and for the moral clarity they provided.[40]

However, during the process neoconservatives came to construct an identity and a political project of their own. An oppositional project and identity, though, negatively defined by the outright rejection of the other powerful political and intellectual trends of the period; of the other attempts to find a response to the "American malaise" of the late 1960s. Cold War liberalism transformed into something new — i.e.: neoconservatism — by opposing: a) Nixon's and Kissinger's realism, and its main diplomatic achievement: detente with the Soviet Union; b) New Left radicalism and its infatuation with "third-worldism": c) Old liberalism's fascination for theories of interdependence, emphasizing the objective limitations — economic, strategic, and political — the international system now posed to national sovereignty (a consequence of the end of the "age of territoriality," in Charles Maier's brilliant analysis.)[41]

Neoconservatives denounced the immorality of the *realpolitik* ardently advocated and practiced by Kissinger, but also of the unjustifiably critical self-introspection undertaken by U.S. mainstream liberalism. Against these useless and self-defeating diplomatic and intellectual exercises, they reaffirmed the validity of Cold War liberal precepts and goals. But they also attacked the utopianism and lack of realism of those who believed the nation-state (and the importance of power) was on the wane. Consequently, neoconservatives brandished morality and liberal values against Kissinger, arch-realists, and "interdependentists." But they also brandished realism and anti-utopianism against liberals and radicals who had fallen prey to a new appeasement syndrome, which underplayed the importance and transformational capacity of America's power.

What connected these dual, and contradictory, criticisms (which were simultaneously realist and anti-realist, messianic and anti-utopian) was a nationalist belief in America's uniqueness. That is to say, a belief in America's exceptionalism; in the special mission Providence and history has assigned to her; in her Manifest Destiny. Such a belief was explicitly rejected: by Kissinger's

realism (all countries are equal and have to respect the perpetual laws of international politics); by theories of interdependence (all countries are systemically interdependent, and nobody, not even the exceptional nations can escape the constraints imposed by this situation); finally, by anti-imperialist radicalism (all countries are unequal and the United States bear much responsibility for the injustice such inequality determines.)

The neoconservative identity and political project were thus constructed in oppositional terms. The result was inevitably contradictory. The very syncretism of the neoconservative message was what qualified it. It was its main strength, as we have seen with Bush, but also its main weakness. Neoconservatism, in fact, tried to recompose the traditional ideological pair of U.S. foreign policy — power and freedom— that Cold War mistakes, military interventionism, covert meddling in other countries' affairs, and domestic turmoil had finally dissociated. Power and freedom had instead to be reunited. Power for freedom (America's goal.) And power through freedom (America's innate and unique strength.)

What distinguished (and distinguishes) neoconservatism was (and is) this faith in America's power as the catalyst of a transformation of the world for the better. Current American primacy and unchallenged superiority can and must be used, because the U.S. had not been provided with them by chance ("if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice….") As Rhodes emphasizes, "the achievement of a peaceful, liberal world order requires not simply American power, and not simply American military power, but a global military hegemony … It is America's unchallengeable military power that provides the aegis under which peace and freedom can be built."[42]

The rejection of deterrence — explicitly affirmed in the 2002 NSS — follows logically: U.S. power must not be deterrable, otherwise it will lose its effectiveness; its transformational capacity. Nationalist exceptionalism requires the liberation of the country from the ultimate, unacceptable form of (inter)dependence: the strategic one. Deterrence, in fact, guaranteed America's destruction in the case of war, thus potentially pre-empting preemption. Overwhelming power and anti-nuclear defense should set the country free once more. Hence the relaunching, albeit in a much more modest form, of

Reagan's most ambitious and expensive chimera: to create a shield, protecting the country from ballistic missiles (then Soviet, now rogue states'.) The now experimented National Missile Defense promises therefore to re-liberate the country. To re-make it exceptional.

Power and freedom, then. The apparently incongruous duo which, combined, gives form to the most potent (and again contradictory) rhetorical formula of the 2002 NSS. A formula frequently reiterated by Bush and his collaborators in the past few months: America's desire and interest to "create a balance of power that favors human freedom."[43]

Can the cause of freedom be advanced through power? Can peace be achieved through war? Can bombs spread liberty? History say yes, many Bushites claim, citing the cases of post-world war II Japan and Germany (other credible historical references being not available as of today.) It is hard, however, not to see in this combination of power and freedom a not so updated replica of late 19th century Britain's liberal imperialism. And references to empire abound not only in writings criticizing Bush's foreign policy, but also in those of scholars and political thinkers who support it. Witness the recent apologias of American (and Western) benevolent imperialism of Blair's foreign policy adviser, Robert Cooper, and of immensely popular, "civilized American neoconservative,"Robert Kagan".[44]

The logical and conceptual problem resides however in this association and juxtaposition of power and freedom. Or, rather, of balances of power and freedom. That is to say the association of a realistic quintessential model— a situation in which overwhelming power cannot last, because power balancing is the inevitable (and intrinsic) fate of the international system— and of a typically messianic and idealistic goal— spreading a preponderant and universal freedom, which by itself cannot be balanced. The former envisions equilibrium, the latter aspires instead to hegemony. The temptation to mock the inconsistency of this bizarre slogan is frankly too hard to resist. Leffler rightly stresses how a "balance of power favouring freedom is a confused" and "even meaningless concept." The "balance of power vocabulary … trivializes the very dilemmas" brought about by 9/11. As Der Derian underlined, "the classical sense of the

balance of power is effectively inverted in principle by the NSS document and in practice by the go-it-alone statecraft of the United States. Balance of power is global suzerainty, and war is peace.... The *NSS* leaves the world with two options: peace on U.S. terms, or the perpetual peace of the grave. The evangelical seeps through the prose of global realpolitik and mitigates its harshest pronouncements with the solace of a better life to come."[45]

Inconsistent and illogical as it is, Bush's foreign policy has many explanations. The attempted, impossible reconciliation I referred to is electorally very convenient. It offers an effective amalgamator of the very different positions present within the heterogeneous and multifaceted U.S. conservative archipelago. Furthermore, the *model* of the "balance of power that favors freedom" represents an attempt, albeit inescapably flawed and unsound, to deal with the objectively (and dramatically) novel situation produced by 9/11. That manifestation of vulnerability has generated in the u.S. an existential sense of insecurity and precariousness, and a consequent request to do something; to find an answer (and Europeans, whatever their rights in complaining of Bush's behaviour are, could and should have shown more sympathy and understanding for such feeling.) The "present at re-composition" concept of the United States foreign policy can thus be interpreted as a new form of what historian Frank Ninkovich has called "crisis internationalism." The need, frequently felt by America in the twentieth century, "to develop new rules for navigating through a turbulent and unpredictable modern international environment," when the "traditional system collapse[d], rendering the old rules of the game and foreign policy traditions out of date."[46]

Such a re-composition is, however, logically and practically impossible. Bush's "crisis internationalism" in not just unfit to deal with this epochal crisis. It is, in itself, a catalyst of the crisis; a multiplier of its original magnitude. In particular, the Bush administration has not just undermined the set of rules, norms and practices created over the years to discipline and regulate, albeit in a limited and selective fashion, the international system. Those rules and those practices were often antiquated, witness the fate of "Atlanticism," the *lingua franca* of U.S-Western European relations during the Cold War. What Bush

has really damaged is the idea that interdependence requires rules, norms and institutions even the only superpower left must abide by. Here, the destructive nature of Bush's foreign policy has revealed its full strength. Institutionalized interdependence has been dealt a series of blows, which began well before 9/11 (the Kyoto Protocol, the abandonment of the ABM treaty and the decision to create an antiballistic defense system, the rejection of the International Criminal Court, etc.)

This deliberate attack on interdependence has produced a realistic revival in the anti-Bush camp. Many, particularly in Europe, wish now what realistic scholars tend to consider inevitable: the emergence of an alternative power, able to challenge, balance, or at least resist Americas supremacy. Some see the coming "balancer" in China, currently engaged in a fast-fast-forward rush to capitalist modernity. Others still believe that Europe, or at least its Carolingian core, will rise up, not least because of the multidimensional (i.e.: economic, cultural, and in prospect even military) nature of European power, current and future. Some neo-Marxian visions, not particularly interested in irrelevant intra-capitalist quarrels, see in a loosely defined "multitude" the "political subject" able to "live and organize its political space against Empire."[47]

Interdependence, as a concept and as a political project, appears indeed to be on the defensive. Recent events, and the Iraq imbroglio over all, seem to demonstrate however that even the benevolent, exceptional, unique superpower of this unprecedented unipolar world is, in the end, constrainable by the inescapable web of mutual and global dependencies that has come to characterize the international system. Even the United States, even this United States, cannot go alone. The point, thus, is not to embrace "multipolar fantasies" that pertained to a different age, and search for a "balancer" which is not on the horizon. The objective must now be to collect the bits and pieces of the international institutions left by Bush's cyclone and to try to get them together again; to recompose the institutions that have managed and disciplined interdependence in the past; to reform them, making them more just and fair, in order to stop the reprehensible common behavior the United States and the European Union often assume when dealing with third world problems,

as shown by the recent WTO summit in Cancun. In other words there is a new recomposition we will have to be present at. The recomposition and the necessary updating of what Bush really destroyed.

NOTES

1. Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department,* New York, Norton, 1969; Robert Latham, *The Liberal Moment. Modernity, Security, and the Making of Postwar International Order,* New York, Columbia University Press, 1997, p. 34 ("active ordering"), 104 ("affect … process"), 128 ("exclusionary elements"), and 131 ("threatening state.") See also Simon Dalby, *Geopolitical discourse: the Soviet Union as other,* "Alternatives," n. 4, October 1988, pp. 415-442.

2. Anders Stephanson, *Fourteen Notes on the very Concept of the Cold War,* in Gearoid O Tuathail and Simon Dalby (eds.), *Rethinking Geopolitics,* London, Routledge, 1998, p. 82 ["..no real peace…"]; Susan Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe. The Coming of Mass Utopia in East and West,* Cambridge, MIT Press, 2000.

3. Geir Lundestad, *Empire by Invitation? The United States and Western Europe, 1945-52,* "Journal of Peace Research," 23, 2 (1986), pp. 263-277; Ivi, *The American Empire,* Oslo/Oxford, Oxford University Press/Norwegian University Press, 1990. "Consensual Hegemony" is instead the definition used by Charles Maier in *Alliance and Autonomy: European Identity and United States Foreign Policy Objectives in the Truman years,* in Michael J. Lacey (ed.), *The Truman Presidency,* New York/Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 273-298.

4. James Chace, *Present at the Destruction: the Death of American Internationalism,* "World Policy Journal," 20, 1 (Spring 2003), pp. 1-5.

5. John L. Harper, *American Visions of Europe: Franklin D. Roosevelt, George E Kennan, and Dean G. Acheson,* Cambridge/New York, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 280. See also James Chace, *Acheson: the Secretary of State who created the American World,* New York, Simon & Schuster, 1998.

6. Michael Cox, *Martians and venusians in the New World Order,* "International Affairs," 79, 3 (2003), p. 526.

7. James Chace, *Present at the Destruction,* cir., p. 1; Stanley Hoffmann, *America Goes Backward,* "The New York Review of Books," 50, 10 (June 12, 2003) and Ivi, *America Alone in the World,* "The American Prospect," September 23, 2002; Arthur Schlesinger Jr., *Eyeless in Iraq,* "The New York Review of Books," 50, 16 (October 23, 2003); Madeleine K. Albright, *Bridges, Bombs, or Bluster?* "Foreign Affairs," 82, 5 (September/October 2003), pp. 2-18. Of the same tone are the considerations in John Ikenberry, *America's Imperial Ambition,* "Foreign Affairs," 81, 5 (September/October 2002), pp. 44-60.

8. Quoted in Corey Robin, *Remembrance of the Empires Past: 9/11 and the End of the Cold War,* International Center for Advanced Studies (ICAS), Working Paper, April 2002, p. 1 (http://www. nyu.edu/gsas/dept/leas). A revised and updated version of this essay is to be published in Ellen Schrecker (ed.), *Cold War Triumphalism,* New York, New Press, forthcoming. I wish to thank Corey Robin for allowing me to quote his yet unpublished paper.

9. *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America,* September 2002, p. 3 ("liberty) and p. 4 ("freedom") (http://www.whitehouse.gov).

10. Quoted in Elizabeth Drew, *The Neocons in Power,* "The New York Review of Books," 50, 10 (june 12, 2003).

11. Anders Stephanson, *Tales of the Transatlantic,* unpublished paper [courtesy of the author].

12. Irving Kristol, *The Emerging American Imperium,* "The Wall Street Journal," August 18, 1997.

13. Melvin Leffler, 9/11 *and the Past and Future of American Foreign Policy,* "International Affairs," 79, 5 (2003), pp. 1045-1063.

14. John Margolis, *Center Stage. Party Infighting and Why 2004 is very Different from 1972*, "The American Prospect," January 13, 2004 ["…moral potential"]; Jonathan Chait, *Mad About You. The Case for Bush Hatred,* "The New Republic," September 29, 2003["…walk…"]: Ivi, *False Alarm. Why Liberals Should Support the War,* "The New Republic," October 21, 2002; ["case for war… Clinton"]; Michael Ignatieff, *Why We Are in Iraq,* "The New York Times Magazine," September 7, 2003; *Liberal Hawks Reconsider the Iraq War.* Paul Berman, Thomas Friedman, Christopher Hitchens, Fred Kaplan, George Packer, Kenneth M. Pollack, Jacob Weisberg, and Fareed Zakaria, "Slate" (www.slate.msn.com), January 13, 2004.

15. Anthony Lake, *From Containment to Enlargement,* Speech at The Johns Hopkins University, September 21 1993 (text available at: http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/lakedoc.html); *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement,* February 1995 (text available at: http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/research_pubs/nss.pdf); James Der Derian, *Decoding the National Security Strategy of the United States of America,* "Boundary," 30, 3 (2003), p. 22.

16. David P Calleo, *Power, Wealth and Wisdom: the United States and Europe after Iraq,* "The National Interest," Summer 2003, p. 9 ["triumphalism"]; Michael J. Mazarr, *George W. Bush, Idealist,* "International Affairs," 79, 3 (2003), p. 508 [".. .institutionalist …ends"] and p. 511 ["security tool"].

17. Perry Anderson, *Casuistries of Peace and war,* "London Review of Books," March 6, 2003 ("execration … United States"); Ivi, *Force and Consent,* "New Left Review," 17, 5 (September/ October 2002), p. 9 ("free markets … sovereignty") and p. 10 ("military humanism.") On human rights and the international system see, however, the compelling argument made by Michael Ignatieff, *Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry,* Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2001.

18. John D. Kelly, *U.S. Power, After 9/11 and Before It: If Not an Empire Then What?,* "Public Culture," 15, 2 (2003), p. 361 ["rhetorical and institutional consolidation"]; Andrew J. Bacevich, *American Empire. The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy,* Cambridge, Harvard

University Press, 2002, p. ix ["coherent… strategy"], p. 3 ["…global openness… Berlin Wall"] , and p. 102 [" **...** globalization… preminent"]: Marco Cesa, *Gli Stati Uniti nel Sistema Unipolare,* "Rlvista Italiana di Scienza Politica," 10, 2 (2003), p. 232 ["war on terrorism"]; Ivi, *Le Vecchie Novità della Globalizzazione,* "Rivista Italiana di Scienza Politica," 9, 3 (2002), pp. 389-423.

19. John L. Gaddis, *The Long Peace. Inquiries into the History of the Cold War,* Oxford/New York, Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 231; on the Cold War and military sovereignty see also the considerations in John Ikenberry, *After Victory, Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars,* Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2001.

20. *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America,* p. 19. As historian Michael S. Sherry underlined "Imagining future wars, Americans also continue[d] to plumb the meaning of past ones." Michael S. Sherry, *In the Shadow of War. The United States since the 1930s,* New Haven/London, Yale University Press, 1995, p. 3.

21. Melvin P Leffler, 9/11 *and the Past and Future of American Foreign Policy,* cit., p. 1052-53. A 1965 nuclear offensive plan of the Warsaw Pact included the city of Verona among its principal targets. The document is available on the web site of the Zurich - based *Parallel History Project on NATO and the Warsaw Pact (PHP)* (http://www.isn.ethz.ch/php). On U.S. (and Rand's) nuclear strategy see Marc Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy,* Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1991.

22. Melvin P Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power. National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War,* Stanford University Press, 1991; Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace. The Making of the European Settlement,* 1945-1963, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999; Raymond L. Garthoff, *Detente and confrontation: American-Soviet relations from Nixon to Reagan,* Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1994, II ed.; John Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982.

23. *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America,* p. 35 ["new condition of life… vulnerability]; Michael S. Sherry, *In the Shadow of War,* cit., p. 142 ["ideology of national preparedness"]; Thomas Donnelly, *Preserving American Primacy, Institutionalizing Unipolarity,* On-Line publication of the *American Enterprise Institute* (http://www.aei.org/publications). May 1, 2003.

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25. Geraroid O Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics. The Politics of Writing Global Space,* London, Routledge, 1996, p. 225 ["…agonizing script"] and p. 245 ["global space"].

26. *Liberal Hawks Reconsider the Iraq War,* cit.

27. Abbot Gleason, *Totalitarianism. The Inner History of the Coldwar,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 1 ["…mobilizing concept"] and p. 87 ["…coin of the realm"]; Thomas Paterson e Les Adler, *RedFascism. The Merger of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia in the American Image of Totalitarianism, 1930s-1950s,* "American Historical Review," 75, 2 (April 1970), pp. 1046-1064; Mario Del Pero, *L'Antifascismo nella Politica Estera Statunitense,* in Alberto De Bernardi e Paolo Ferrari (a cura di), *L'Antifascismo nella costruzione dell'Europa,* Roma, Carocci, 2004.

28. Nikhil Pal Singh, *Coldwar Redux: on the "New Totalitarianism,"* "Radical History Review," 85, 1 (Winter 2003), p. 173.

29. Paul Starr, *The President's New Crusade,* "The American Prospect," December 1, 2003; *Remarks by the President at the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy,* speech at the United States Chamber of Commerce, Washington, DC, November 6, 2003 (http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/11/20031106-2.html) ["mission… world"]. Thomas Donnelly, *Iraqi Freedom and American History,* January 1, 2004, On-Line publication of the *American Enterprise Institute* (http://www.aei.org/publications).

30. Anders Stephanson, *Law and Messianic Counterwar from FDR to George W Bush,* unpublished paper [courtesy of the Author] ["maximalistic… legitimacy"]; Ivi, *Liberty or Death: the Cold war as U.S. ideology,* in Odd Arne Westad (ed.), *Reviewing the ColdWar: Approaches, Interpretations, Theory,* London, Frank Cass, 2000, pp. 82-100 ["qualities in [its] domestic makeup"]. On the connection established by Wilson between U.S. security and a specific course of global (and modern) history see Frank Ninkovich, *Modernity and Power. A History of the Domino Theory in the Twentieth Century,* Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1994, and Ivi, *The Wilsonian Century. U.S. Foreign Policy since 1900,* Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1998.

31. Anders Stephanson, *Fourteen Notes,* cit., pp. 78 ["either free or slave"]; Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom,* New York, Norton, 1998, p. 253 ["free and enslaved worlds"]; Edward Rhodes, *The Imperial Logic of Bush's Liberal Agenda,* "Survival," 45, 1 (Spring 2003), p. 136 ["…global house divided …"].

32. Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny. American Expansion and the Empire of Right,* New York, Hill & Wang, 1995, p. xii ["push the world… better things"]; Walter Mc Dougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State. The American Encounter with the World since* 1776, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1997. See also the brilliant study of Albert K. Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny: a Study of Nationalist Expansionism in American History,* Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1935. An explicit, though quite superficial, connection between manifest destiny and the Bush doctrine is made in John A. Wickam, *September* 11 *and America's War on Terrorism. A New Manifest Destiny?,* "American Indian Quarterly," 26, 1 (Winter 2002), pp. 116-144.

33. Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny,* cit, p. 28 ["sacred-secular project"] and p. xii ["providential… and historical trascendence"], Walter Me Dougall, *Promised Land, Crusader,* cit., Ch. 1: "Liberty or Exceptionalism," pp. 15-38. On United States' exceptionalism see Ian Tyrrel, *American Exceptionalism in the Age of International History,* "American Historical Review," 96, 4 (October 1991), pp. 1031-1055; Daniel Rodgers, *Exceptionalism,* in Anthony Molho e Gordon Woods (eds.), *Imagined Histories. American Historians Interpret the Past,* Princeton, Princeton

University Press, 1998, pp. 21-40. In 1997, neoconservative journalists William Kristol and David Brooks denounced the absence in 1990s U.S. conservatism of an "appeal to American greatness," willing to embrace "a neo-Reaganite foreign policy of national strength and moral assertiveness abroad." William Kristol and David Brooks, *What Ails Conservatism,* "The Wall Street Journal," September 15, 1997.

34. Here I'm obviously simplifying a much more complex and differentiated historical process. My point is that a religious component has always qualified U.S. nationalism, and often explained its peculiarity.

35. Mark Singer, *Running on Instinct,* "The New Yorker," January 12, 2004. Bush's quote is also taken from this article.

36. "Let the eagle soar, Like she's never soared before. From rocky coast to golden shore, Let the mighty eagle soar. Soar with healing in her wings, As the land beneath her sings: "Only God, no other kings." This country's far too young to die. We've still got a lot of climbing to do, And we can make it if we try. Built by toils and struggles God has led us through." Katty Kay, *Ashcroft rallies troops with song,* BBC News, March 4, 2002 (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/1854922.stm). ["gutsy rendition"].

37. Nicholas D. Kristof, *The God Gulf,* "The New York Times," January 7, 2004.

38. Edward Rhodes, *The Imperial Logic,* cit. p. 133.

39. Mario Del Pero, "I neoconservatori e l'Europa in prospettiva storica" in Giuseppe Vacca (ed.), *L'Unità dell'Europa. Rapporto 2004 sull'integrazione europea,* Bari, Dedalo, forthcoming and Ivi, *"A Balance of Power that Favors Freedom": The Influence of Neoconservative Discourse on Current U.S. Foreign Policy,* paper presented at the seminar *Debating the Unipolar World. American Power and Anti-Americanism,* Scuola di Studi Internazionali, Università di Trento, June 16 2003.

40. John Ehrmann, *The Rise of Neoconservatism. Intellectual and Foreign Affairs,* New Haven/London, Yale University Press, 1995; Irving Kristol and Arving Kristol, *Neoconservatism: the Autobiography of an Idea,* New York, Free Press, 1999; William C. Berman, *America's Right Turn. From Nixon to Bush,* Baltimora, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994; Alan Brinkley, *The Problem of American Conservatism,* "American Historical Review," 99, 2 (April 1994), pp. 409-429.

41. Dana H. Allin, *Cold War Illusions. America, Europe, and Soviet Power,* 1969-1989, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995; Charles Maier, *Consigning the Twentieth Century to History: Alternative Narratives for the Modern Era,* "American Historical Review," 105, 3 (June 2000), pp. 807-831; On the relations between U.S. identity and national security see David Campbell, *Writing Security. United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity,* Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1998, II ed.; Ido Oren, *Is Culture Independent of National Security? How America's National Security Shaped "Political Culture" Research,* "European Journal of International Relations," 6, 4 (2000), pp. 543-573.

42. Edward Rhodes, *The Imperial Logic,* cit. p. 134. A partially different analysis is that of sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein, one of the most ardent and sophisticated believers in America's inevitable decline. Wallerstein identifies in Bush's foreign policy not a drive to military hegemony per se, but the expression of an illusory belief the use of force will restore U.S. unquestioned hegemony. See Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Decline of Power. The U.S. in a Chaotic World,* New York, New Press, 2003.

43. The phrase recurs five times in the 2002 NSS. See *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America,* cit., p. 3, 5, 7, 28, 32. See also Condoleeza Rice, *A Balance of Power that Favors Freedom,* October 1, 2002 (www.manhattan-lnstitute.org).

44. Robert Cooper, *The Breaking of Nations. Order and Chaos in the Twenty-first Century,* London, Atlantic Books, 2003; Ivi, *The Postmodern State and the World Order,* London, Demos, The Foreign Policy Centre, 2000, II ed.: Ivi, *The New Liberal Imperialism,* "The Observer," April 7, 2002; Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order,* New York, Knopf, 2003; David Calleo, *Power, Wealth and Wisdom,* cit., p. 5 ["civilized neoconservative"].

45. James Der Derian, *Decoding the National Security Strategy of the United States of America,* p. 21 ["classical sense of balance of power"] and p. 24 ["…perpetual peace …"]. Melvin Leffler, *9/11 and the Past and Future of American Foreign Policy,* cir., p. 1057 ["confused… meaningless"] and p. 1063 ["trivializes"].

46. Frank Ninkovich, *The Wilsonian Century,* cit., p. 10.

47. On China as a future superpower competing with the United States see John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics;* New York: Norton, 2001; on Europe see Charles A. Kupchan, *The End of the American Era: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Geopolitics of the Twenty-First Century,* Knopf, New York, 2002, but also, from different perspectives, David Calleo, *Power, Wealth and Wisdom,* cit.; Ivi, *Rethinking Europe's future;* Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2001; Will Hutton, *The World We're In,* Londra, Abacus, 2003, II ed: Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power.* On the power of the "multitude," see the immensely popular but historically very weak analysis of Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, *Empire,* Cambridge/London, Harvard University Press, 2000.