

**Ideational and Discursive Othering in US Foreign Policy: A Historical Survey in the Image of Post-Structuralism**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This paper examines the societal and ideational sources of United States foreign policy by emphasizing the role of values, beliefs, identity, and political culture in shaping public opinion and foreign policy decisions. It argues that American foreign policy is not driven solely by structural or material interests, but is discursively constructed through concepts such as American Exceptionalism, Manifest Destiny, liberal democracy, and the politics of “otherness.” Drawing on post-structuralist and constructivist perspectives, the paper explains how political elites and media employ identity-based discourses to securitize threats and legitimize wars. Through historical analysis ranging from the early republic to the post-9/11 era, the study demonstrates that U.S. foreign interventions have consistently been justified through moral narratives and perceived threats to American values and collective identity.*

**Keywords:** *US Foreign Policy, American Exceptionalism, Identity Politics, Constructivism, Securitization of Identity*

**INTRODUCTION**

*And from the Missouri to the Atlantic Ocean, the people are held to be the source of all legitimate power. The same notions are entertained respecting liberty and equality, the liberty of press, the rights of association, the jury, and the responsibility of the agents of government. (Alexis de Tocqueville 1835)*

This paper substantiates that the societal sources of US foreign policy like the role of values, and beliefs shape political culture and public opinion which not only represent public preferences in foreign policy behavior but also serve as basis for foreign policy decision making. In addition, it establishes that the foreign policy is constructed at the societal level through intelligent and persuasive employment of identity language as a continuous discursive process which plays the central role in the US foreign policy through securitization of identity by political and media discourses.

This paper is divided into two sections; first section deals with the societal sources of US foreign policy. It begins with problematizing the operational definition of national interest and ground the concept of national interest in identity discourse that serves as the ideational power-base to mobilize the public opinion in foreign policy. Moreover, it establishes how these values and beliefs also serve as power-base for the government to justify wars rather than the explanations promoted by the positivist tradition in the study of foreign policy analysis. Put differently, the US government mediates the foreign interventions by taking help from these discursive ideational structures.

The second section offers the basic understanding about the ways that help government mediate these values, beliefs and preferences through speech acts, and finally, it gives very brief review of the role identity has played in the US foreign policy history. It endeavors to substantiate the continuity of role political ideas and ideals have played to explain the US foreign policy since the birth of American republic. In sum, this paper offers the genealogy of post 9/11 US foreign policy, which discursively mediated the war on Afghanistan and Iraq on identity basis.

This article substantiates the role ideational factors has played in the foreign policy to mediate the legitimacy for war, for example, American creed, exceptionalism, manifest destiny, otherness, and consequent discourse of danger. Borrowing from post structuralists' take on identity, it substantiates that war is based upon insecurity from constructed 'otherness' to discursively internalized value-system of a given society. For example, the political ideas and ideals like liberty, equality, freedom of expression, constitutional democracy, and rule of law once owned by the public as 'their value-system' make part of their identity and political culture. These values-based identity becomes so dear that to imagine about any threat to the identity makes them feel highly threatened.

Along the same line, if a threat from 'politically constructed other' framed as survival threat to the collective political identity—the public not only supports appropriate action prescribed by the government but also demands immediate attention to secure their collective identity. Hence, public opinion in favor of war bases itself on the perceived threat to their values from the 'politically constructed other'. Furthermore, the association of threat to political values is discursively done by political elite and later reproduced and disseminate by the news media. For example, during the Cold War the US presidents presented communism as the greatest threat to American value-system and way of life which in turn give massive public support against the Soviets.

In the postwar US foreign policy discourse, states' foreign policy behavior is explained through national interests in the dominant realists' tradition based on rationalism. The rational choice theorists in positivists thread led by political realism link war to the rational calculation of a state's national interest by overemphasized the selfish human nature, and systemic anarchy that triggers the feelings of insecurity in the states being the organizing unit of international structure. Although their basic unit of analysis is state, but in their explanation they intelligently link it with threat to individual's life. In addition, arguably, the realist school grounds national interest explanations inappropriately to states' interest in their structural explanation of states' behavior in international relations.

Realists take into account the perpetual insecurity caused by anarchy in international system which continuously pushes states to ensure their survival either by maximization of power or balancing with other powers. Hence, the ultimate goal of a state is to protect its sovereignty and physical existence without any consideration of norms and values. In other words, norms, values, principles or ideational factors find no place in the realist approach to foreign policy.

Put differently, realists' explanations of national interest reduced the definition of interest to physical existence of the state and downplay the place of public on the one hand and the role of norms and values (ideational factors) on the other hand which in other words, imply that object of the security is state as unitary actor the international order not individuals. In addition, it also provides that national interest is objective phenomenon out there, predetermined, and identical for all states in the international system, hence, this their theory retains scientific claims to explain and predict the behavior of all states equally.

On the contrary, post-positivist tradition challenges the foregoing construction of structural realism, for example, Campbell challenges the assumptions of realist tradition when explains the foreign policy behavior of United States and highlights the reliance of US foreign policy on the discourses of

exceptionalism that discredits the equality portion of unitary actors in international system explained by the realist. Similarly he refers to the role identity discourse plays in foreign policy politics grounded in ‘boundary producing political performance’ (Campbell 1998).

Critical approaches like critical constructivism and post-structuralism find problem with the realists’ explanation of states’ behavior as objective phenomenon, and their definition of national interest limited to state-survival under permanent anarchy which leaves no room for perpetual peace but war. As Rowley and Weldes put “threat and problems facing states are products of interpretations. Interests are also products of interpretation” (2012: 180). The main objection of the critical theorists bank on the difficulty they find with the ‘objectivity of political’ as Rowley and Weldes assert:

The “objects and events do not present themselves transparently to observers, however ‘realistic they may be. Rather than self-evident, threats, states’ interests, and possibilities for action are fundamentally matters of interpretation.

For example, it is not the physical fact that nuclear weapons can pulverize whole cities that makes them threat to the US security. The US and British nuclear weapons are not seen as threats. Only when such weapons are interpreted dangerous—e.g. because they are wielded by ‘communists’ or ‘rouge states’—do they become threats, and only then does it become in the US ‘interest’ to prevent their development or seek their removal.

Therefore, critical social constructivists and post-structuralists take national interests and states’ actions to protect them in their foreign relations are discursively constructed on the basis of collective political identity which bases itself on shared social and political values. Hence, these theorists offers an alternative approach to understand the realists’ approach to national interest based foreign policy analysis.

This approach has three central elements; first, “reality is socially constructed; second, construction entails naturalized power relations; and third, naturalized power relations can and should be denaturalized” (Rowley and Weldes 2012: 180). Likewise, on security, as opposed to realists’, Weldes maintain that:

(In)securities, rather than being natural facts, are social and cultural productions...insecurity is itself the production of processes of identity construction in which the self and the other, or multiple others, are constituted ...the constitution of identity is often a reciprocal process. As such subject seeks to perform its identity, it threatens others, whose identities are consolidated in response (Weldes 1999: 10-11).

In addition, critical theorists like critical constructivists and post structuralist all social and political reality is socially constructed which can be comprehended under three steps: first, “things only have meaning through the signifiers used to represent them”; second, this process of signification is done through discourses which itself are “system of meaning production which both constrain and enable what can be said and imagined”; third, this process includes articulation which “produces meaning by discursively linking symbols and ideas already present within a culture. Articulations are neither natural nor permanent, but dynamic and constantly in need of rearticulation and reinforcement; other articulations are always possible” (Rowley and Weldes 2012: 182).

The post-structuralists add the element of power in the whole discursive construction of social and political reality which is summarized by Rowley and Welds in a very comprehensive way:

Construction entail naturalized power relations. Construction successfully become common sense when treated as transparently reflecting reality. Elite play privileged role in the (re)production of discursive constructions. When there is little or no challenge to dominant discourses, they become hegemonic.

Individuals and states are embedded in many identities; the notion of a singular ‘core identity’ makes a complex interplay of multiple subject positions. Identities are constituted in/through discourse (Rowley and Weldes 2012: 185).

The post-positivist tradition asserts that the discourse produce power, hence, power relations in a society and international politics alike. Discourses not only define but also constitute our perceptions about the world. These constructions when repeated overtime, become reality and acquire the status of common sense without going into their social or discursive origin, hence, naturalized in a given time and space. Moreover, these discursive realities once naturalized as common sense, anything outside of the ‘common-sense’ gets socially rejected being false, unintelligible and ‘implausible’.

For example, in the postwar period, once the Bolsheviks were constructed and articulated as evil comparable to Nazis, hence irrational fanatics and immoral who simply hate American values created a situation in which the use of violence became morally and legally appropriate and necessary.

Likewise, during the campaign against the Saddam regime in Iraq Bush administration articulated or recontextualized the Saddam Hussain with al-Qaeda, the global radical Islamic organization that hate America, created the situation in which use of force become moral. This construction against the al-Qaeda becomes irrelevant if we look into the construction of bin Laden against the US which was well summarized by Scott and Barkawi quote in Rowley and Weldes:

In contrast, articulating them as rational Arab militants who use ‘weapons of weak’ (Scott 1987) in order to oppose US foreign policy and make intelligible political demands—e.g. withdrawal of US military forces from Iraq and Saudi Arabia, and of Israeli forces and settlers from Palestinian territory in the West Bank (Barkwi 2004)—would configure them as political actors with whom one could and should potentially negotiate (2012: 183).

In addition, critical theorists and post-structuralists assert that discourse work as power productive but they also become hegemonic once backed by power elites through ‘institutional push’ with their privileged position in the production, reproduction and dissemination of ‘social and discursively reality’. The best example of elites’ role in constructing reality is the states’ foreign policy discourse where political leaders and officials enjoy the dominant position in the construction of otherness and threat from political other on number of identity based discursive constructions as Rowley and Weldes sum it up in the following construction:

State officials’ representations have immediate prima facie plausibility because these officials are themselves constructed as speaking for ‘us’ and ‘our state’. They have legitimacy, especially in the construction of foreign policy, because the national interest is understood to be quintessentially the business of the state and the identification of threats to state interests is thus a task rightly belonging to its officials. US presidents are, in this sense, the US’s interpreters-in-chief (Stuckey 1991).

Dominant discourses, like those of the state, become and remain dominant because of the power elations sustaining them when there is little or no challenge to dominant discourses, they become hegemonic – that is, they receive (sometimes passive) assent from most, if not all, of the public (2012: 183).

Along the same line, post-structuralists substantiate that all political discourses are based in identity. In the US case there are multiple ideational structures of liberal idealism e.g. individualism, constitutionalism, pluralism, puritanism, and national self-perception as people with Manifest Destiny, a chosen race with divine duties, and so on. These ideational structures have got the status of common sense in the US society and made the collective identity called American or Americanism. But the ‘American’ as identity has

become so as opposed to ‘non-American’ because the identities are only relevant when they diverge or constructed different from other identity. In sum, the discursive construction of ‘difference’ once becomes ‘natural’ in a society, serves as the breeding ground of political otherness rather than the structural factors explained by realists.

Grounded in ideological otherness, all political ‘others’ becomes vulnerable for marginalization and denial as well as potential legitimate target of political violence. It can be done domestically where majority dominates minority or internationally where state identity is drawn against the identity of other state. At both domestic and international level dominant identity discourse works ruthlessly. For example, since the birth of modern nation state, a dominant ideological rhetoric remained ‘love it or leave it’ which gave birth to forced internalization of ‘patriotism’ or ‘we-group’ against ‘they-group’.

Similarly, dissidence from state’s foreign policy and hegemonic construction of national enemy at war is translated as aiding and abetting the national enemy, and discouraging our-troops fighting for ‘moral war to save us’. These identity-based foreign policy construction keeps on changing depends upon need, context, time and space. In addition, there are multiples ways to represent the identity of one state as opposed to other through discursive encounters

The symbolization process includes pictures, models, signs, words, and so on which helps to generalize superior ‘us’ and inferior ‘other’. The discursive representations are intertwined into narratives. The narratives are basically stories: fairy tales, history, the good versus evil, failed versus prosperous state, rouge state versus champion of liberty, sign of darkness versus the last hope, savage versus savior and so on. The discursive process in political identity relies on the juxtaposition or the logic of opposition that develops binary relations producing identities. Likewise, these narratives heavily rely on linguistic devices such as metaphors, analogies and figure of speech.

The following section is based on the historical discursive construction of ‘us versus them’ categories in the United States that was based upon exceptional/superior, civilized and moral ‘us’ versus inferior, uncivilized and immoral ‘other’. It substantiates that in the American case, ideational factors like American Exceptionalism and Manifest Destiny had played and continue to play the central role in the US foreign policy rather than structural factors explained by systemic theories.

In addition, it concludes that the identity-based discursive securitization, on the one hand, has produced the superior-inferior dyads, and on the other hand, ignited or served the politics of fear that promoted and paved the public opinion in favor of war to eliminate the moral inferior and uncivilized ‘other’. The said discursive practice can be noticed in the study of US foreign policy politics first in the American Continent, and then all over the world.

It is interesting to note that the source of danger in the identity based foreign policy politics has never been fixed because of the continuity of writing and rewriting security based on politics of identity, the only difference remains the replacement of enemy name. Likewise, the following section substantiates the ways politics of fear brought solidarity among the Americans, sense of nationhood based on collective identity against the external fear.

### **American Political Ideas, Ideals and Grand Strategy**

There are at least four enduring but transitory interests in the US foreign policy literature named as power, prosperity, peace, and principles/democratic promotion (Bruce W. Jentleson 2012). In other words, foreign policy makers consider security, economic, world order, and political ideals as their goals which they try to pursue with multiple means ranging from military, economic, diplomacy, and public diplomacy or

propaganda and so on. However, the US promoted its three main interests i.e. power, prosperity, and world order under the ideological umbrella of ‘ideas and ideals’ to explain its foreign relations inside and outside of the US.

Historically, the US has followed the grand strategy to pursue these foreign policy goals named as isolationism and internationalism. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the notions of politically and religiously motivated ideas of democratic promotion were limited to the American continent but idea dominated the US foreign policy throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The difference between the US behavior to promote democracy in both centuries can be explained on the basis of grand strategy i.e. isolationism versus internationalism or lack of required power.

Isolationism mostly explains the US foreign policy behavior during the 19<sup>th</sup> century when American leadership thought that outside of the Western Hemisphere it should stay passive and only offer itself as a successful example or beacon of liberty and let the world follow it. As Secretary of the State John Quincy Adams explained the Americans’ love for their ideas and ideals and the way they would promote them:

Whenever the standard of freedom and independence has been or shall be unfurled, there will [America’s] heart, her benedictions, and her prayers be. But she goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator of her own. She will recommend the general cause by the countenance of her voice, and by the benignant sympathy of her example. . . . [Otherwise] she might become the dictatress of the world. She would no longer be the ruler of her own spirit (Kegley and Wittkopf 2007: 37).

Whereas, internationalism explains that America should play active role to promote its ideas and ideals all over the world and proponents of this school suggest active use of all sources including violence to promote liberal democracy abroad termed as vindicationists. The US foreign policy in the 20<sup>th</sup> century onward with some exceptions followed the grand strategy of internationalism. Nevertheless, the following portion of this chapter illustrates from the US foreign policy literature and policy doctrines that whatsoever the goals foreign policy decision makers set in front of them were explained either with moral pretext or national discourse of danger to the collective identity of Americans

Before going into historical survey of American foreign relations and their discursive moral construction this section offers brief overview of American political culture based on moral discursive structures. Undoubtedly, the American society is weaved by liberal-democratic political ideals that also shape its political culture. The American nation is unique in a sense that it has inculcated an amalgam of high-sounding political ideals as its formation principles. Liberal political tradition is evolved through the set of ideational factors and skillful use of language over time. Likewise, the US foreign policy engagements are explained through these political values or liberal tradition by speech acts that prevail at mass level in the United States of America.

The political culture of the United States defines the basic political values, cognition, ideas and ideals of American nation about their society and politics. As Huntington maintains the Myrdal’s analogy of American Creed by referring to ‘certain basic political values and ideas that are supported by most elements in American society with no or little change since late eighteenth century which continues to play a central role in shaping American political identity’ (Huntington 1981). These core political values are taken from Roman ideas of natural law, medieval ideas of fundamental law, seventeenth century Protestantism, eighteenth century Lockean thoughts and finally enlightenment ideas of natural right. Monten substantiates that historically deep rooted value-system plays crucial role in the US foreign policy:

Nonetheless, because of ideational – as opposed to organic – origins of U.S. political identity, U.S. nationalism has historically been defined in terms of both an adherence to the set of universal political values that constitute the “American Creed” – in the most accounts, constitutionalism, individualism, democracy, and egalitarianism – and a perceived obligation to promote those values in its external relations.

By this argument, U.S. interest in democracy promotion originated not only in the instrumental maximization of some material interest, but in a moral commitment to the universal political values that define the United States as a self-contained political community. This core, nationalist belief in a special mandate to promote liberal-democratic values and institutions abroad largely derives from these sources: Calvinism, the Enlightenment, and most important, functional or historical necessity (Monten 2005: 120).

In nutshell, the core political values in the American society are; liberty, equality, private ownership, individualism, free trade and rule of law under constitution. These values are widely shared and deep seated which, overtime; have constructed the American political culture. Since most Americans are socialized by the same cultural influences, these values have become quintessential domestic source or power-base of American foreign policy under the umbrella term ‘democratic promotion abroad’.

Social construction of these values has clearly drawn an imagined line of opposition between "us and otherness" which consequently provided the idea of opposition, forming unique, superior, manifested and exceptional national self-image. The political leadership in the US no matter whether republican or democrat, interprets American interests abroad by employing liberal cultural analogy. Lockean liberalism has become the social power-base of American foreign policy working to mobilize public support for the US engagements abroad under the cloak of liberal and moral values, and exceptional American experience as oppose to 'otherness'.

American political leaders have often employed Lockean liberal ideals and ideas of free enterprise, self-determination, freedom, liberty, constitutional democracy and democratic capitalism to promote and justify their foreign policy actions for ‘democratic promotion abroad’. As President Ronald Reagan (1983) has rightly put that; “our democracy encompasses many freedoms...these are rights that should be shared by all mankind.”

The American society is also rooted in the puritan ideas of Exceptionalism and Manifest Destiny are taken from the American political culture or liberal tradition prevailing in the American Society. In addition to liberal tradition, American society is overwhelmingly churchgoing Christian society and profess that religion is an important part of their life. Therefore, in every war America’s side is God’s side (Lipset 1997).

Religion has contributed in American social and political life as an important consolidating agent within political ideational milieu. Americans have often thought of themselves collectively as a people whose endeavors are favored by God. In 1630, Puritan leader John Winthrop said, “We shall be as a city on a hill; the eyes of all people are upon us” (Lafeber 2003: 551). Puritanism holds that the United States was a chosen mechanism, divinely appointed by to introduce a government and society on the American continent.

Early Puritan settlers like Winthrop and others widely believed that they are especially chosen for the Divine work on the earth. It is said that; "by the eighteenth century the role of New England had become the role of America: God had led this people to establish a new social order, a light to the nations...under the auspices of Divine Providence” (Lafeber 2003: 551). In his First Inaugural Address, George Washington saw an ‘invisible hand’ directing the people of the United States. “Every step they have taken seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency” (Bailey 1975: 241-318, 669).

The presence of God in the American foreign policy was self-evidence when at the time of annexation of the Philippines, President McKinley was reported very confused about annexation or not, it was divine revelation to McKinley when God ordered him to educate and civilize Filipinos (Bailey 1975: 626). The presence of ethical and religious ideals was also there to justify the American foreign policy behavior in throughout the 20th century as well. Abraham Lincoln in his various speeches called Americans as “God’s almost chosen people” (Kegley and Wittkopf: 2007).

In 1936, Franklin Roosevelt told American generation of his time that they had “rendezvous with destiny.” John F. Kennedy proclaimed that “God’s work must truly be our own” (Bailey 1975: 626) Martin Luther King’s dream was identified with the God-given promises of America. Ronald Reagan rephrased Winthrop’s city on a hill into “shining city on a hill” (Bailey 1975: 626). Almost all of the Cold War US presidents gave socially acceptable biblical colors to the American-Soviet rivalry; a tussle between “forces of virtue and forces of evil” (Kegley and Wittkopf: 2007).

In 1979, during his speech, US Secretary of State Cyrus Vance reasserted two of the themes America holds for foreign affairs: “the American society believe in progress and beneficial change,’ and its related conviction that the American democracy has “a mission” to transform the nature of the international political system. Puritan influence can be regarded as one of the important sources in US self –perception of mission. Puritanism contributed the US nationalism with the belief that the United States was chosen instrument of God, divinely appointed to introduce a government and society on the American continent, and to spread it everywhere. Puritans believed that Americans are an elect people, more immediate to God than others (Lafeber 2003: 551-56).

The Puritan tradition regarded the United States as involved in a test case which would determine whether men could live on Earth according to the will of God. Hence, US perceived its moral obligation to spread all those goodness God has gifted to her. Geographical isolation or physical fact of separation from the Old World (European World) was the second important factor that played a vital role in US self-perception of mission (Lafebar 2003: 551-56). The following four sections offer the discursive construction of US foreign policy based upon morality and securitization discourses. President Abraham Lincoln concluded the exceptional feature of American self-image by putting it “the last best hope of mankind” (Deudney and Meiser 2012: 22).

The debate about the role of values in the US foreign policy can be divided in two groups. One perspective holds that values are and should work as guiding force in foreign policy behavior of the US with honest commitment to the liberal values most dear to American people, and attractive to the rest of the world. If the US hold these values tightly, it may function as an example for the world. Another current within this group of values promotion in the US foreign relations take into account the efficacy of American power and its benevolent character to promote the values abroad using unmatched power the US enjoys.

The second group in the values and US foreign policy debate considers the realist version. Realists insist that values should not play any role in the foreign policy decision making process because the process must be led by realistic appreciation of national interest. However, it is worth noting the possible extent to which exceptionalism and Manifest destiny converge with realism. Can American exceptionalism serve the core interests of the US like security and power as instrumental to national interest? The best answer can be borrowed from the critical constructivists and post-structuralists camps; for them, ideas and identity help to shape both interest and threats when mobilized through public opinion which bases itself in these high sounding ideals.

However, realists also sound plausible when they assert that the way every state behaves to seek security, power and interest in the same way US behaves in its foreign policy, and identity may serve as trajectory

to mobilize the force against any revisionist state. But realist ground national interest to material and existential requirement of a state and exclude the independent role of ideas individual. Likewise they take the promotion of pure ideational and normative matters dangerous and pursuit of nothingness.

Ample evidence which can easily be traced in the history of US foreign policy discourse is divided into four periods to substantiate the forgoing arguments; first phase from 1776 to 1941, second phase from 1941-1989, third phase from 1989 to 2001, and finally post 9/11 phase. These four phases illustrate the making of discursive structures which constructed the US national identity on the one hand and the moral and security politics to base interventions on the other hand.

### **First Phase: 1776-1941**

Apparently, the first phase was divided amongst isolationists and internationalist on the best way to secure American identity and interests. Arguably, the United States has never been isolationist, the rhetoric of isolationism versus internationalism was based on the competitive power but dubbed in moral language of idealism to construct national identity based upon moral principles. For example, John Adams, urged that “we should separate ourselves, as soon as possible and as long as possible, from all European politics and wars” (Kegley and Wittkopf 2007: 31). Likewise, George Washington in his farewell address to the nation said:

By interweaving our destiny with that of any part of Europe, entangle our peace and prosperity in the toils of European ambitions, rival-ship, interest, humor, or caprice? Participation in balance of power politics with untrustworthy and despotic European governments would lead to danger abroad and the loss of democratic freedom at home. If the country interacted with the corrupt governments it would become like them: Lie down with dogs, get up with fleas” (Kegley and Wittkopf 2007: 31).

The first phase of the republic was full of challenges to construct new collective identity for the citizens of new state as opposed to the mother England and rest of the Europe. Once it was done the citizens would have lived along with their own identity. The discursive construction of American identity was done on the basis of moral superior versus inferior categories where Americans were constructed as moral and British and all European powers as immoral hence, inferior.

It is interestingly to note that on the one hand George Washington and his revolutionary companions sought an alliance with France in their revolution against England, and on the other hand, they were using the rhetoric of opposition against them to construct their identity discourse. Moreover, despite of all their political rhetoric, soon after independence the United States got involved with other imperial powers in the continent and Europe in one way or other.

For example, Hamilton, the first Secretary of Treasury came up with his own construction of power-based foreign relations. His conception of human nature and inevitability of foreign relations was completely different to what Washington had said in his farewell address. Hamilton concluded his vision for the US foreign relations in the following words, “conflict was the law of life. States no less than men were bound to collide over those ancient objects ambition: wealth and glory” (Kegley and Wittkopf 2007: 31). Hence, for Hamilton, isolation was not an option at all. He was determined to develop capabilities required to the US to “dictate the terms of the connection between the old world and the new world.

Thomas Jefferson, Washington’s Secretary of States and the third president of the US was apparently isolationist, but strong proponent of foreign trade relations. He was the one who negotiated the commercial treaties with ‘others’, and favored diplomatic relations and small navy to protect ships. Moreover, he “threatened an alliance with Britain to counter France’s reacquisition of the Louisiana territory ceded to

Spain in the 1763 Treaty of Paris”. Soon the United States annexed great territories like New Orleans, Florida, portion of Canada, Texas, California, Pacific Northwest and southwestern side of present United States.

The earliest manifestation of the Manifest Destiny and American Exceptional was seen in the event of ruthless extermination of the Native Americans in the West. They were either systematically exterminated or subdued. They Native Americans were behaved in the said fashion because “they were ‘non-state nations’ and the Americans were a nation a part, one with a special role and mission in the world politics” (Kegley and Wittkopf 2007: 36).

Likewise, to end the War of 1812, John Quincy Adams and other American diplomats negotiated the Treaty of Ghent in 1814 with Britain, Americans rejected the British proposal to set up an Indian state for the Native Americans in U.S. territory in south of the Great Lakes. They explained the reason for their decline to British plan based on their ideas of ‘otherness’ about the Native Americans:

The United States, while intending never to acquire lands from the Indians otherwise than peaceably, and with their free consent, are fully determined, in that manner, progressively, and in proportion as their growing population may require, to reclaim from the state of nature, and to bring into cultivation every portion of the territory contained within their acknowledged boundaries;

In thus providing for the support of millions of “civilized beings”, they will not violate any dictate of justice or of humanity; for they will not only give to the few thousand savages scattered over that territory an ample equivalent for any right they may surrender, but will always leave them the possession of lands more than they can cultivate, and more than adequate to their subsistence, comfort, and enjoyment, by cultivation (Charles Gates 1940: 499-510).

In the event of War with Mexico, the US expanded its territory to Northwest and purchased Alaska from Russia in 1860s. And soon the expansionist spirit in the US led Secretary of States William H. Seward in 1846 to assure the Americans that “I will engage to give you the possession of the American continent and control of the world” (Kegley and Wittkopf 2007: 31).

Nonetheless, all these expansions, annexations, settlements, purchase of territory was grounded in the religious notion of Manifest Destiny—a belief that the US continental territorial expansion was to serve the higher purposes so it was part of its destiny and the US must not allow immoral European powers to move in the Western Hemisphere as asserted in the language of Monroe Doctrine in 1823.

Since its independence to the mid of 19<sup>th</sup> century, US moved towards more and more territorial expansion to serve its Manifest Destiny. However, it was halted by the four years long civil war on the issue of slavery. After this little pause the US continued its moral journey because the US had become champion of moralism in the West as described by the revolutionary writer Thomas Paine in his famous work *Common Sense*: “The New World had had become ‘the asylum for the persecuted lovers of civil and religious liberty’; while in England ‘a corrupt and faithless court’ abused liberty, and elsewhere in the Old World liberty simply denied”.

Kegley and Wittkopf maintain Paine’s assertion that, “Manifest Destiny embodied the conviction that American Americans had a higher purpose to serve in the world than others. Theirs was not only a special privilege but also a special charge: to protect liberty, to protect freedom”. They conclude the notion of Manifest Destiny in the three points: first, the special virtues of the American people and their institutions; second, America's mission to redeem and remake the world in the image of America; third, a divine destiny

under God's direction to accomplish this wonderful task; a sense of divine mission (Kegley and Wittkopf 2007: 36). Similarly, John Quincy Adam shared his belief on the American expansionism in these words:

The whole continent of North America appears to be destined by Divine Providence to be peopled by one nation, speaking one language, professing one general system of religious and political principles, and accustomed to one general tenor of social usages and customs. For the common happiness of them all, for their peace and prosperity, I believe it is indispensable that they should be associated in one federal Union (John Quincy Adam 1811).

The most interesting episode of Manifest destiny was seen President William McKinley was interested in the port at Manila to govern Filipinos, he decided to colonize the Philippines but the way he explained his decision to occupy Philippine shows the unparalleled moral superiority of American leadership. McKinley share his experience of divine revelation to church leaders in these words:

I walked the floor of the White House night after night until midnight; and I am not ashamed to tell you...that I went down on my knees and prayed Almighty God for light and guidance more than one night. And one night it came to me ... [T]here was nothing left to do but take them all, and educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize them as our fellow-men... And then I went to bed, and...slept soundly” (Kegley and Wittkopf 2007: 31).

After McKinley, his successor in the White House Theodore Roosevelt, under the notion of Manifest Destiny continued the series of invasions in Latin American and takes the charge of policeman of Latin America or Hemispheric affairs. America would use military power to bring economic affairs of Latin America under its tutelage and it would not tolerate Latin American revolutions also called Roosevelt Corollary. Roosevelt interventionist tactics were continued by his successor, William Howard Taft. (Kegley and Wittkopf 2007: 40-45).

Likewise, little changed with Wilson’s election. Until the outbreak of war in Europe, Wilson was consumed by foreign policy challenges in Mexico, the Caribbean and China, often resorting to military intervention to achieve his ends. Wilson became the greatest military interventionist in the US history – by time he left office in 1921 he had ordered troops into Russia and half a dozen Latin American upheaval. (Kegley and Wittkopf 2007: 40-45).

The US moral expansions had to move outside of the continent to spread the light of higher moral standards all over the world. The WWI and WWII made universal applicability of moral discourse possible in the event of American participation against the racist Hitler regime. To the end of WWI, Wilson called for a new collective security system to replace the war from balance of power and for other fundamental reforms in international relations for the promotion of democracy and open door enterprise. (Kegley and Wittkopf 2007: 40-45).

### **Second Phase: 1945-1989**

The identity based moral politics also continued during the Cold War. The role of ideological threat from the communism was mediated by the US government at domestic and global level both. By extension, in 1947 president Truman declared that: “the free people of the world look to us for support in maintaining their freedoms....if we falter in our leadership, we may endanger the peace of the world – and we shall surely endanger the welfare of our own nation” (Kegley and Wittkopf 2007: 48).

Similarly, President Kennedy and Reagan maintain the moral rhetoric of their successor in during their term in the Oval Office, for example, Kennedy once said that, “our nation, was commissioned by history to be

either an observer of freedoms, failure or the cause of its success”. Likewise, President Reagan maintained that “we in this country, in this generation, are, by destiny rather than choice, the watchmen on the walls of world’s freedom ... our democracy encompasses many freedoms ... these are rights that should be shared by all mankind (Kegley and Wittkopf 2007: 48-50).

The threat of communism served the same discourse of danger and politics of fear which once served by the fear from England, and European power which justified the American military spending, wars, annexations, and expansions. Similarly, the Cuban Missile Crisis promoted the culture of insecurity and fed the politics of fear during the Cold War (Jutta Weldes and Mark Laffey 1999).

Fear of communism was based upon the popular belief that it was complete antithesis of American way of life which revitalized the ‘us versus them’ category in the US public (David Campbell 1998). The US public perceived the communism as ‘real threat to freedom, liberty, and prosperity. It was mediated by the various US presidents, for example, President Harry S. Truman said in 1949 that:

The actions resulting from the Communist philosophy are a threat. We face a hostile ideology—global in scope, atheistic in character, ruthless in purpose, and insidious in method...the danger it poses promises to be of indefinite duration” (Kegley and Wittkopf 2007: 51).

The threat of communism soon got the currency of fear inside and outside of the US that consequently served the ulterior motives of the US all over the world being leader of the non-communist world against the vicious designs of the Soviet “evil empire” (Kegley and Wittkopf 2007: 52). The war of competing narratives led the both superpowers to engage in almost forty-four years long war between immoral ‘other’. The Cold war discourse was heavily based upon historical analogies based upon morality genre to save the world from the evil empire and to protect democratic values and liberal ideal all over the world.

Throughout the Cold War the US is constructed as benign and defensive and the only hope for the free world under its umbrella leadership with responsibility to save the world from immoral and dangerous communist threat. The presidential speeches during the Cold War reinstated the US commitment, courage, and determination to sacrifice all its resources to secure the world from the global communist threat. Rowley and Weldes summarizes the Cold War episodes in the following construction:

Constructing the US as strong, benign, determined, and defending freedom, in contrast to the USSR defined as a ‘slave state, duplicitous and secretive, despotic and aggressive, creates a warrant for action in US foreign policy. It makes some policies and actions possible, legitimate, and necessary, while rendering other unlikely or even unthinkable (2012: 188).

### **Third Phase 1989-2001**

Soon after the end of Cold War, the US being sole superpower and custodian of free world launched Operation Desert Storm against the totalitarian Saddam regime who not only violated the international law in the event of its aggression and annexation of against Kuwait but also threatened the future of Saudis people. At the conclusion of the Persian Gulf War President George H. Bush proclaimed his version of New World Order in the following words:

“We can see a new world coming into view ... In the words of Winston Churchill, a world order in which ‘the principles of justice and fair play protect the weak against the strong ... A world where the United Nations—free from Cold War stale mate—is poised to fulfill the historic vision of its founders. A world in which freedom and respect for human rights find a home among all nations. In a world where we are the

only remaining superpower, it is the role of the United States to marshal its moral and material resources to promote a democratic peace.

As the traditional security threat of communism vanished suddenly in the even to volunteer Soviet withdrawal, the Clinton administration left with no demon to slay. Hence, it searched new one based on the American liberal values, It focused on non-traditional security threats like violation of human rights, ethnic cleansing in various parts of the world, ecological security, nuclear proliferation, hunger, poverty, diseases, drug and human trafficking, global free trade, democratic promotion and so on. Based on liberal values, Clinton administration favored humanitarian interventions and regime change to promote American liberal values all over the world also called as liberal internationalism.

### **Third Phase: Post 9/11**

Immediately after the 9/11 incident the President Bush start representing the terrorists as the new demon comparable to communism, and discursively constructed their supporters, allies, state and non-state sponsors as evil, rouge, immoral, and survival threat to the US values and collective national identity. He repeatedly referred to the problem of evil, and the novel threats to the US and the world at large. He also constructed the solutions along with problems by referring to the US hegemony, efficacy of the US power, and democratic promotion as the last resort to solve all these problems.

In his presidential discourse, President Bush refereed to the Manichaeian idea held that we live in a dualist world of good and evil, with little room for political nuance or moral subtly (Flibbert 2012: 85). It underpinned the moralizing rhetoric common in administration discourse, echoing Cold War construction of the Soviet Union as ‘evil empire’ (Frum 2003: 234-38). A longstanding propensity in American encounters with international adversaries, Manichaeian primordialism defined the threats facing the United States after 9/11 and provided the moral discourse as well as inflation of danger to justify the Afghanistan and Iraq War.

Manichaeian thinking resonated with many Americans after 9/11 performed multiple tasks for the Bush administration; opening a discursive space for a form of ‘rhetorical coercion’ (Kerbs 2005: 200) and facilitating the mobilization of support for a military response to the attacks, eliminate the political middle ground, arouse wartime patriotism, and to construct the ultimate war-hype in foreign countries. Using the moral discourse, President Bush shortly after 9/11 declared that ‘we will rid the world of evil-doers in this crusade, this war on terrorism’ (AP 2001).

Shortly after 9/11, President Bush defined the underlying social purpose of the American power as benevolent hegemony and associated it with global responsibilities, obligations and opportunities (White house 2002). President Bush expressed his long-term commitment to use force to save the US and rest of the world from the menace of terrorism as he said that, “America will act against such emerging threats before they are fully formed (White House 2002: 1, as quoted in Flibbert 2012: 84). The idea of benevolent hegemony appealed to a wide segment of the American public after 9/11, promising both moral righteousness and physical security (Flibbert 2012: 84) Soon after 9/11, the administration held that force was to be used without undue hesitation, because no other means could take its place in a dangerous world (Flibbert 2012: 89).

Along the same line, the Bush administration also construct upon the liberal idealism that promote the discourse of perpetual peace through democracy. Historically, Americans have firm belief on democracy as system of government which can serve the enduring human interest e.g. peace, security, personal freedom and liberal way of life everywhere in the world. According to this understanding, democracies produce

generally benevolent behavior, on the other hand, authoritarian regimes act malevolently (Flibbert 2012:87).

In foreign policy sphere, the US policy circles has long been stressing the idea that internal state attributes govern external state actions. After 9/11, regime change became highly consequential idea which was later operationalized in Afghanistan and Iraq by ousting the Taliban and Saddam regimes respectively. In this sense, the Bush administration committed itself to a generalized idea of the ‘democratic peace’ as director of the policy planning at State Department, Richard Hass (2002) writes that “a democratic world is more peaceful world”.

Democratic promotion abroad has been considered as the complete package to spread the US value-system to other states and it has been justified on the number of reasons, for example, the best sold thesis of democratic promotion abroad is called as democratic peace theory. It asserts that democracies do not fight with each other hence, as the number of democratic states will increase the chances of perpetual peace will also increase. Hence, the various administrations have tried both route to democratic promotion; soft as well as hard power.

Likewise, G. W. Bush administration justified the war on Iraq on the same logic. Being ideological other, totalitarian Saddam regime with his link with the top US enemy al-Qaeda posed serious threat to the US as repeatedly explained by the Bush administration in post the 9/11 period. Therefore, circles in the Bush administration purposed that “a democratic Iraq would remove the alleged threat Saddam Hussein posed to the United States and help jump start democratic transitions throughout the Middle East” (Schmidt 2012: 12).

The study of societal sources of American foreign policy like American’s values, beliefs, and political culture challenges the realists’ tradition to understand the causes of war. The United States of America has fought almost all its wars either in the name of Manifest Destiny, Exceptionalism, republican liberalism, moralism, and threat to its values and ideals or to secure and promote its value-system in the form of democratic promotion abroad. Hence, the US never used ‘naked military power’ to maximize its power by referring to the structural or systemic factors or material aspiration but to secure and promotes its values or threat to its existence from the ideological ‘other’.

Since the postwar period, US fought numerous direct and proxy wars in the name of ‘making world safe for democracy’. None of its wars was explained to the American public on the structural or material reasons but on ideological grounds because there is general agreement in their political culture that American foreign policy should be a demonstration of its domestic political values. However, there prevails disagreement on the best way to promote American values abroad or democratic promotion abroad as those who are called Wilsonianists they believe on the efficacy of international institutions like the UN whereas others like neo-conservatives and liberal internationalists propound the need to use the unequal American power to promote democracy by hard power.

Nevertheless, beyond the idealism and realism debate, the post-positivist tradition introduces the role of identity language in production of discursive otherness which once articulated and naturalized in a society by political and media discourses becomes performative hence, produce power relations. Therefore, it conceptualizes to view the role of ideas as instrumental or “in other words, values are a means of achieving a goal. For example, some international relations theorists argue that the American people will only support an internationalist foreign policy if they feel it is consistent with American values (Deudney and Meiser 2012: 32).

Therefore, the US foreign policy is not based on structural factors as propounded by systemic theories but on the basis of discursive ideational factors. The identity politics makes securitization possible for the foreign policy elites to when discursively linked to existential threat of the collective identity of the state through political discourse. Once threat is inflated successfully at mass level, it produce support for war, which in turn, foreign policy elites exploit further to promote their ulterior political motives in foreign affairs in the name of public opinion.

## **CONCLUSION**

This paper has endeavored to answer the thorniest question about the actual route leading to justify the US foreign policy behavior and causes of war it has waged and identify how these wars were discursively mediated on the name of ideology rather than structural factors through political discourses. Ideas like American Exceptionalism and Manifest Destiny, Manichaeism, benevolent hegemony, and liberal democracy has run throughout American history to justify the continental expansions and global interventions and wars against the ‘ideological other’ whether it was period liberal exemplarism or liberal internationalism (Monten 2005).

Arguably, the US foreign policy and its course to war can best be understood by employing the societal level, the US discursively legitimized its foreign policy actions on moral basis derived from their self-acclaimed liberal value system and discursive construction of moral-self and immoral other. The study of American foreign policy illustrates that America fought most of the wars either on the name of its high-sounding liberal ideals or threat it made felt from ideologically revisionist states by the decision making elite through political discourse. And the most contemporary historical examples in this regard are American wars against ideologically motivated communism, and terrorism.

The paper has illustrated that discursive otherness and the consequent politics of fear is what makes the US a national security state, based on the discursive politics of otherness. Identity based politics of fear is evident in the study of US foreign policy where one can easily find the moral space of identity since the independence of the liberal republic (David Campbell 1998). In addition, a pattern of war on the basis of danger from ‘otherness’ has been constructed in the US history on the basis of liberal identity, moral superiority, and exceptionalism versus immoral, inferior, evil, and dangerous ‘other’.

Similarly, the US has fought numerous wars justified on identity-based constructed ‘otherness’ which subsequently led the US fought against the Britishers, Indians, Latinos, Blacks, Nazis, Communists, totalitarians, and finally, Islamic terrorists. In sum, historically, the US foreign policy, war is mediated and justified on discursive securitization of identity that further produces discourse of danger to American value-system, which in turn, demands security for ‘us’ and punishment for the evildoers and immoral ‘other’.

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