

THE IMPACT OF AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM ON U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

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Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **THE IMPACT OF AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM ON U.S. FOREIGN POLICY**

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This thesis seeks to explain the impact of American exceptionalism on U.S. foreign policy. American exceptionalism reflects the belief in superiority, chosenness, mission of the United States. Since ideational variables are not considered as having an explanatory power in their analyses, neorealism and neoliberalism have fallen short of explaining American exceptionalism. This thesis, then, emphasizes that along with the power relations and the national interest, the ways in which U.S. foreign policy is conducted are influenced by the ideas held by both high-profile policymakers and the population. This thesis advocates that the promotion of U.S. leadership is the basic consequence of the belief in American exceptionalism and how to perform this task is depended on the tendency of the United States to maintain its freedom of action and to seek greater maneuverability in foreign affairs.

**Key Words:** U.S. foreign policy, American exceptionalism, American national identity, internationalism, unilateralism

## ÖZ

### AMERİKAN İSTİSNACILIĞININ BİRLEŞİK DEVLETLER DIŞ POLİTİKASI ÜZERİNE ETKİSİ

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Bu tez Amerikan istisnacılığının Birleşik Devletler dış politikası üzerine etkisini açıklamayı amaçlamaktadır. Amerikan istisnacılığı, Birleşik Devletler'in üstünlüğüne, seçilmişliğine ve görevine olan inancı yansıtır. Neorealizm ve neoliberalizm gibi geleneksel rasyonel Uluslararası İlişkiler teorileri fikirsel değişkenlere açıklama gücü atfetmedikleri için Amerikan istisnacılığını açıklamakta yetersiz kaldılar. Bu tez güç ilişkileri ve ulusal çıkar dışında, Birleşik Devletler dış politikasının yürütüldüğü yolların hem yüksek düzeyli politika yapıcılarının hem de halkın sahip olduğu fikirlerden de etkilendiğini vurgulamaktadır. Amerikan istisnacılığına olan inanın en temel sonucunun Birleşik Devletler liderliğinin teşviki olduğunu ve bu görevin nasıl icra edileceğinin Birleşik Devletler'in dış politikada eylem alanını koruyabilme ve manevra kabiliyetini daha fazla artırma eğilimine bağlı olduğunu savunmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Birleşik Devletler dış politikası, Amerikan istisnacılığı, Amerikan ulusal kimliği, uluslararasılık, tek taraflılık

To Hilda,

My lifelong friend, lover and my everything.

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Last but not least, I would like to greet my family with respect for believing in me and for creating an environment in which I prepared my thesis.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Why American Exceptionalism?

This thesis assesses the effect of the idea of *American exceptionalism* on U.S. foreign policy. Over the course of the last decade, the idea of American exceptionalism has been on the rise both in American politics and in academia.<sup>1</sup> As an ingrained idea dating back to the founding of the United States, American exceptionalism has been an intricate idea. At the basic level, the idea implies that the United States has had a unique history and founding, therefore, it is not only different from other countries, but also superior to them. The idea is generally associated with a unilateral foreign policy for the United States, and can be seen as the greatest reason for the rise of anti-Americanism anywhere in the world. American conservatives and particularly Grand Old Party (GOP) proponents and members such as Mike Pence, John McCain, Mitt Romney, Sarah Palin, Newt Gingrich, Marco Rubio largely believe this idea, making it the very core of their election campaigns more particularly in 2008 and again in 2012.<sup>2</sup> Some ardent adherents, as well as strong dissenters, to the idea of American exceptionalism have always existed in American politics, debating over the validity of the concept.

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<sup>1</sup> “American exceptionalism” appeared in national U.S. publications 457 times between 1980 and 2000, rising to 2,558 times in the 2000s and between 2010 and 2012 exactly 4,172 times. Terrence McCoy, “How Joseph Stalin Invented ‘American Exceptionalism’, ” *The Atlantic*, 2012. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2012/03/how-joseph-stalin-invented-american-exceptionalism/254534/>. (Accessed Date: 29.09.2017)

<sup>2</sup> Karen Tumulty, “American Exceptionalism: An Old Idea and a New Political Battle,” *Washington Post*, 2010. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/11/28/AR2010112804139>.

With a view to gaining an insight into this idea, for the past two years, I have been pondering upon persistent as well as intriguing ideas distinguishing the United States from other countries. For many times, I have stumbled upon some ideas praising the United States; “God bless the United States of America”, “the indispensable nation”, “City upon a Hill” and “the greatest country on earth”. Any idea about American exceptionalism tends to represent the uniqueness of the United States from one point of view. Not the term American exceptionalism, but such ideas constructing American exceptionalism have been used frequently in presidential discourse and in Hollywood films. That is the reason why I have wondered about the root cause of this idea. One day while reading a prominent study of International Relations (IR), without deliberate intention, I have realized that I read a sentence which immediately bolstered my existing interest in the United States.

In his foreword to the third edition of Australian IR scholar Hedley Bull’s magnum opus *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, Andrew Hurrell proclaimed; “All human societies rely on historical stories about themselves to legitimize the notions of where they are and where they might be going.”<sup>3</sup> The emphasis in this quote was the presence of national narratives thought to engender the sense of self in the first place. What this quote further implies is that national narratives which were in the form of historical stories might have been disseminated by policymakers and by ordinary men in any given nation to maintain the sense of collective self and of nationhood in the past. In fact, this might display the effectiveness of national narratives either in forming the sense of nationhood or in reflecting a spirited sense of collective self. Whether they were distorted or not, as Hurrell reminded us, it would be purported that virtually all nations might be in need of ideas which serve as national narratives supported by policymakers.

With this in mind, the significance of ideas policymakers and nations hold regarding themselves, in other words, who they think they are, has to be taken into consideration in making sense of the world around us. To understand a country, we need to

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<sup>3</sup> Andrew Hurrell, introduction to the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, by Hedley Bull, (New York: Palgrave, 2002) xiii.

understand how its people and policymakers think about their countries. In relation to this, as IR scholar Trevor McCrisken has reminded us; the ways in which American foreign policy is made are informed by the ideas held by both policymakers and the population.<sup>4</sup> Emphasizing ideas held by both policymakers and nations and showing the process of conceptualization of the American national identity by associating it with that kind of ideas are the main driving forces behind my undertaking of writing this thesis.

Over the years, the idea of American exceptionalism has been abused or praised excessively, leading to popularization and, to a lesser degree, to evisceration of the term in American political discourse. For the purposes of this thesis, the idea of American exceptionalism must be defined narrowly to allow my definition to be consistent throughout thesis. The version of the idea of American exceptionalism on which my arguments will rest, can be acknowledged to have embodied three distinct and persistent as well as much-heard ideas; the spatial distinctiveness and explicit advantages of the New World where the United States was founded, a unique role which was differentiated by a persistent devotion to a divine mission that would allow the United States to lead the world affairs and a superior as well as a unique path that would not bear any resemblance to other great powers' path in history which had also risen to great power status; nevertheless, fallen down ineluctably.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, it can be summarized, abstracted and operationalized as the belief in American superiority, chosenness and a God-favored mission.

With regard to the relationship between the idea of American exceptionalism and the American national identity, for analytical purposes it seems appropriate to abstract such characteristics as superiority, chosenness and mission. Specifically, the circulation of these ideas -be it as national narratives- in varying forms in the discourse of high-level policymakers will be analyzed.

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<sup>4</sup> Trevor B. McCrisken, "Exceptionalism," in *Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy E-N*, ed. Alexander DeConde, Richard Dean Burns, and Fredrick Logevall, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2002), 63.

<sup>5</sup> Hilde Eliassen Restad, *American Exceptionalism: An Idea That Made a Nation and Remade the World* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 3. McCrisken, "Exceptionalism," 64–65.

In relation to the role of ideas in the formation of identity, IR scholar Daniel Béland has argued that, a set of ideas “become politically influential” when they are advocated by high-profile policymakers.<sup>6</sup> Representations of the ideas constructing American exceptionalism in the discourse of high-profile policymakers such as presidents, vice presidents, secretary of states, can be observed throughout American history from the author of the Declaration of Independence –Thomas Jefferson- to the 21<sup>st</sup>-century presidents.<sup>7</sup> While defining and prioritizing the concept of identity in a constructivist manner, I choose to use the definition “as a shorthand label for varying constructions of nation and statehood” as it has been defined by IR scholar Peter J. Katzenstein.<sup>8</sup>

The formation of identity is of critical importance in terms of foreign policy. While peoples of every country are contemplating as to how to respond properly to a complicated world around them, continual maintenance and interpretations of national narratives may prove to be effective in this process. The formation of the identity is the process by which people have come to distinguish themselves from other people. In the case of the United States, as McCrisken has indicated that “God bless the United States”, the “Star Spangled Banner”, the “Pledge of Allegiance”, the “Statue of Liberty in New York”, the “Mount Rushmore” bearing the faces of four presidents and many other things are the “invented traditions” that emblemize the American national identity.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Daniel Béland, “Ideas, Institutions and Policy Change,” *Journal of European Public Policy* 16, no. 5 (2009): 707–8.

<sup>7</sup> The nation’s first president George Washington’s Farewell Address in 1796 and the third president Thomas Jefferson’s Inaugural Address in 1801 contain unique epithets and try to give the early republic a safe path by emphasising the avoidance of “permanent alliances” and the pursuit of “non-entangling alliances.”

<sup>8</sup> The identity framework which I have utilized in this thesis greatly relies upon the definitions and interpretations of Peter J. Katzenstein, Alexander Wendt and Ted Hopf. However, in order to render them more effective for the purposes of this thesis, certain modifications to these approaches may sometimes be applied. Peter Katzenstein, “Introduction: Alternative Perspectives on National Security,” in *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, ed. Peter J. Katzenstein (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 6.

<sup>9</sup> Trevor B. McCrisken, *American Exceptionalism and the Legacy of Vietnam* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2003). 8.

As it can be seen, national narratives and ideas about the self are an effective variable in the formation of national identity. To know what a nation is, related narratives and components of the identity of the nation must be known. In this respect, the ideas constructing American exceptionalism might have been seen as national narratives or myths upon which allegedly universal as well as benign values of Americans had been based.<sup>10</sup> In this regard, national narratives in the form of ideas are to be partially grappled with in this thesis, however; I do not have a propensity for offering a classical account of nationalism.

Consequently, I have chosen a somewhat different way to convey my arguments. I associate American exceptionalism with the American national identity. I define American exceptionalism as the constant belief in the superiority and chosenness of and in a God-favored mission for the United States. Then, I will seek to find out its influence upon American foreign policy. The principal influence of the idea of American exceptionalism on American foreign policy, I argue, by depending on many others, is that the promotion of American leadership in global affairs.<sup>11</sup> It is translated into foreign policy as the embracement and fulfillment of American leadership. Having made this argument, I must also acknowledge that identity may shape interests and state policy.<sup>12</sup> Ideas shape identity and identity shapes interests. This triangle of ideas, identities and interests will be the core of my theoretical framework.

## **1.2 Aims and Limitations**

This thesis aims to analyze how the idea of American exceptionalism influences American foreign policy. The research question of this thesis is how the ideas

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<sup>10</sup> Some prominent scholars have tended to see American exceptionalism as a myth. Stephen M. Walt, "The Myth of American Exceptionalism," *Foreign Policy*, 2011 <http://foreignpolicy.com/2011/10/11/the-myth-of-american-exceptionalism>; Godfrey Hodgson, *The Myth of American Exceptionalism* (Michigan: Yale University Press, 2009).

<sup>11</sup> Siobhán Mcevoy-levy, *American Exceptionalism and US Foreign Policy: Public Diplomacy at the End of the Cold War* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 23–24.

<sup>12</sup> Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (1992): 398.

constructing the American national identity affect American foreign policy. Therefore, this thesis adopts a constructivist perspective to explore the ways in which American foreign policy is influenced by the American national identity understood as the sustained belief in the idea of American exceptionalism. Describing the idea of American exceptionalism with its relation to American foreign policy is the main aim of this thesis. In operationalizing my terms, I take the idea of American exceptionalism as the American national identity. Then, I will analyze its isolationist or internationalist influences on American foreign policy, and then explain why it can be taken as the main cause of an assertive, unilateral American foreign policy, rather than an isolationist foreign policy.<sup>13</sup>

Thinking of America as an exceptional entity has been generally analyzed in terms of two identities in the literature; exemplary and missionary.<sup>14</sup> This distinction is primarily related to the founding process of the United States, because the ideas forming two identities are emerged during the founding process. On one hand, exemplary identity is about being a model for others and it advocates non-entangling affairs with the European countries. In this respect, the exemplary identity often led to the impression that the United States was pursuing an isolationism policy. Although, there were ideas informing exemplary identity, the United States did not isolate itself from the world, as we will see below. On the other hand, missionary identity advocates that the United States must actively engage with the world and spread its values which it thought to be universal. Therefore, it is held in the literature that missionary identity was the basis of an internationalist foreign policy.

The national identity is an important variable in foreign policy. With respect to this point, IR scholar Karl Schonberg has indicated that the ways in which a nation understands itself and in which leaders make sense of the international system are the basis of the making and conduct of foreign policy.<sup>15</sup> Throughout the thesis, I try to

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<sup>13</sup> Mcevoy-levy, American exceptionalism and US Foreign Policy, 23.

<sup>14</sup> McCrisken 2002, Restad 2015, McDougall 1996.

<sup>15</sup> Karl K. Schonberg, *Constructing 21st Century U.S. Foreign Policy: Identity, Ideology, and America's World Role in a New Era* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 2.



maintain and advance this relation between identity and foreign policy. Ideas in this respect, are to be taken as constitutive of identity.

The notion of identity has long been acknowledged as a fruitful variable when explaining American foreign policy throughout American history.<sup>16</sup> That being said, I neither aim to offer an alternative way of conceptualizing the notion of identity in general nor do I seek to profoundly review all aspects of American foreign policy of over 250 years. Instead, with a view to gaining an insight into the influence of American exceptionalism on American foreign policy, I believe that the American national identity must be taken into consideration. Because in the case of the United States, identity has a critical importance for the debate and conduct of foreign policy. Also, none of the parts of this thesis advocate that the entire foreign policies of the United States can be comprehended through analyzing American exceptionalism.

Accordingly, I have come to realize that somewhat persistent and widely influential idea of American exceptionalism must be analyzed to offer a better grasp of American foreign policy. Because the idea of American exceptionalism represents how Americans perceive themselves and how they decide the role of the United States in the world. Ingrained deep within the “American belief system”, the assumptions of the idea have been shared from Winthrop to Wilson, from Reagan to Obama.<sup>17</sup> In light of these assumptions, it would not be wrong to assume that American exceptionalism is simply a worldview for the Americans. Bearing in mind the consensus in the literature, I treat the idea of American exceptionalism as one of the main driving forces behind the creation of as well as of the maintenance of the American national identity.<sup>18</sup> In this respect, American national identity is one of the most efficient variables in

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<sup>16</sup> Some of the prominent studies dealing with the United States within a broad concept of identity; David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992); Walter A. McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter With the World Since 1776* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997); Trevor B McCrisken, *American Exceptionalism and the Legacy of Vietnam: US Foreign Policy Since 1974* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

<sup>17</sup> McCrisken “Exceptionalism,” 78.

<sup>18</sup> McCrisken, “Exceptionalism,” 63.

terms of having the explanatory power for the way in which American foreign policy has been grasped.<sup>19</sup>

As McCrisken has put it; “the belief in American exceptionalism is central to the formation of national identity, thus [.....] it provides [.....] a cultural and intellectual framework for the conduct of foreign policy”.<sup>20</sup> For that reason, the constant circulation of ideas constructing American exceptionalism establishes a framework within which American foreign policy is conducted.

American exceptionalism aims to promote American leadership. As I have argued earlier, it is the most apparent evidence of American exceptionalism’s influence on American foreign policy. In laying out the ideational framework of foreign policy, American exceptionalism benefits not merely from political origins, but from religious, spatial, social, historical origins. As has been emphasized, it can be a tough concept to deal with. Although it is sometimes seen as contradictory whether American leadership has been a burden or a fortune on the part of the United States, the need to American leadership and, therefore, an American mission to lead the world towards benevolence, have been ingrained as powerful and persistent ideas of both its high-profile policymakers and of the nation alike.<sup>21</sup> It is believed that America has had a mission to lead the world to betterment, to offer help to those in need. It can be associated with the missionary aspect of American exceptionalism.<sup>22</sup>

It can be advocated at least superficially that the idea of American exceptionalism has always been one of the rare bipartisan issues. However, that has not come to mean that

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<sup>19</sup> Hilde Eliassen Restad, “Old Paradigms in History Die Hard in Political Science: US Foreign Policy and American Exceptionalism,” *American Political Thought* 1, no. 1 (2012): 54–55.

<sup>20</sup> McCrisken, “Exceptionalism”, 63.

<sup>21</sup> “Eighty percent of US citizens, liberal or conservative, assent to the proposition; the United States has a unique character because of its history and Constitution that sets it apart from other nations as the greatest in the world.” David Hughes, “Unmaking an Exception: A Critical Genealogy of US Exceptionalism,” *Review of International Studies* 41, no. 3 (2015): 529.

<sup>22</sup> James W. Ceaser, “The Origins and Character of American Exceptionalism,” *American Political Thought* 1, no. 1 (2012): 11.

both parties have defined American exceptionalism in a similar context. In relation to this, the Democrats are sometimes accused of being anti-exceptionalists by their conservative rivals.<sup>23</sup> But, American exceptionalism represents such a wide belief that it cannot be associated with one political ideology or one party. Apart from being a bipartisan consensus, the belief in American exceptionalism is applied even to “measure” one’s patriotism. It basically works like this; if you have a strong belief in American exceptionalism, you are more patriotic than others.

### **1.3. Methodology**

Researches are generally divided into three branches in terms of applications, objectives and enquiry mode.<sup>24</sup> From the point view of applications, researches are either pure or applied research. Most of the researches undertaken within social science are applied. Also, from the point view of objectives, researches are categorized as descriptive, explanatory, exploratory and correlational researches.<sup>25</sup> Another branch is enquiry mode, which is divided into two general modes; quantitative and qualitative enquiry modes.<sup>26</sup>

On one hand, pure research is about testing theories and hypotheses. Theories and hypotheses which are used in pure research may not account for a practical application. That is the reason why it is pure research. On the other hand, applied research aims at enhancing the understanding of a phenomenon. In this thesis, I aim to enhance understanding of American foreign policy by analyzing it via the idea of American exceptionalism. There will be no policy formula about future conduct of foreign policy. So, this thesis is an applied research.

In terms of objectives to which researches are dedicated, restricting a research merely to one objective may be ineffective. Designating an approach which combines

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<sup>23</sup> Ceaser, “The Origins and Character of American Exceptionalism,” 2.

<sup>24</sup> Ranjit Kumar, *Research Methodology* (London: Sage Publications, 2011), 9.

<sup>25</sup> Kumar, *Research Methodology*, 9.

<sup>26</sup> Kumar, *Research Methodology*, 9.

objectives can have meaningful consequences. Correspondingly, adopting descriptive, explanatory and correlational objectives, my thesis aims at describing and introducing the significance of American exceptionalism, and then tries to associate it with American foreign policy. A genuine connection between American exceptionalism and American foreign policy will be present throughout my thesis. Harboring certain ideas within itself, the idea of American exceptionalism will be taken as part of a general understanding of the American national identity. Thus description, explanation and correlation are to be regarded as methodological objectives in this thesis.

From the point view of enquiry mode, I employ a qualitative one. However, qualitative features of this thesis are likely to predominate over quantitative enquiry mode. Since my research is about ideas, identity and foreign policy, it is natural for the qualitative enquiry mode to predominate. Operationalizing identity as the constant belief in the idea of American exceptionalism, I try to derive its connection to and its influence upon the conduct of American foreign policy.

Therefore, taking the American national identity as independent variable and American foreign policy as dependent variable, I insert American exceptionalism as intervening variable indicating the positive influence of exceptionalism on foreign policy. Another point is the resources I use. On this point, the main resources from which this thesis draw are official state documents and prominent interpretations of them; the founding documents of the United States such as the Constitution, Bill of Rights, Declaration of Independence, statements of presidents, speeches of presidents. Despite the fact that their numbers are relatively low when compared to official state documents, certain poll findings can draw attention to the prevalence and permanence of the belief in exceptional ideas in American society. Apart from them, prominent studies on American foreign policy traditions, on the American national identity and Barack Obama's statements and speeches are to be used extensively.

#### **1.4. Outline of Chapters**

Having concisely expressed the significance of American exceptionalism and revealed the aims, limitations, and methodology, here I outline the next chapters, giving a

complete overview of the thesis. In the second chapter, I will elaborate on theoretical framework. To ensure a proper grasp of the theoretical framework within which the thesis is conducted, the second chapter will pay careful attention to the characteristics that distinguish constructivist theory from conventional approaches of IR in terms of their respective approaches to the identity in general and to American exceptionalism in particular. Instead of presenting a thoroughgoing account of the entire constructivist literature, I will side with constructivist theorizing and explain why neorealist and neoliberal theories have been ineffective in understanding ideational factors shaping interests and affecting foreign policy. The articulation of American exceptional identity by high-profile policymakers has been a strong impetus for the formation of interests shaping somewhat persistent boundaries of the debate and conduct of American foreign policy.

In the third chapter, I will exhibit how the idea of American exceptionalism evolved out of religious, geographical-positional and political origins. Underpinned primarily by these origins, American exceptionalism dates even back to the colonial times of America. The origins of American exceptionalism provides insights on the link between American exceptionalism and American foreign policy. To name a few, Puritan religious origins are generally associated with a divinely-guided mission for the Puritans in particular and later for American foreign policy. In addition, the openness provided by the uncharted geography of early American continent affected the way Americans think about politics and government. As it can be seen, religious and spatial implications of exceptionalism are worthy of notice in terms of their permanency on American nation and American foreign policy.

In the fourth chapter, the relationship between the belief in American exceptionalism and American foreign policy will be dealt with. In the conventional literature on American exceptionalism, it is held that the belief in the idea of American exceptionalism manifests itself through different foreign policy traditions.<sup>27</sup> To differentiate my argument, I will present them as; a weak isolationist policy stemming

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<sup>27</sup> McCrisken, "Exceptionalism", 64.; Robert R. Tomes, "American Exceptionalism in the Twenty-First Century," *Survival* 56, no. 1 (2014): 27–50.

from the exemplary identity, and an internationalist policy tradition springing from the missionary identity.<sup>28</sup> As I have argued above, there were ideas informing the exemplary identity and the missionary identity. Although isolationism policy embodied the ideas forming exemplary identity, it did not become the actual policy, because it had a normative aspect, ignoring the environment in which it occurred. Rather than isolating itself, the United States has always sought to preserve its freedom of action, seeking greater maneuverability, thereby always had a unilateral thrust in conducting foreign policy. Therefore, I will emphasize the continuity in American foreign policy in terms of unilateralism and internationalism. Not isolationism but internationalism, meaning actively engaging with the world, voluntarily participating in international arena, dominated American foreign policy.<sup>29</sup>

In the last chapter, I look at the reflections of American exceptionalism on Barack Obama's presidency. Consistent with the continuity in its function, American exceptionalism as the American national identity served as the ideational framework of foreign policy during Obama's presidency as well.<sup>30</sup> His belief in the idea of American exceptionalism both personally and as president has been depicted many times by Barack Obama.<sup>31</sup> The former president has expressed his belief in the idea both in the United States soil while addressing the public and while being abroad in attending summits and meetings as the President of the United States (POTUS).<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> McCrisken 2013, Restad 2015, Tomes 2014.

<sup>29</sup> Robert Kagan, *Dangerous Nation: America's Foreign Policy from Its Earliest Days to the Dawn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 5–6.

<sup>30</sup> ... "when we say America is exceptional -- not that our nation has been flawless from the start, but that we have shown the capacity to change and make life better for those who follow"... Barack Obama, Presidential Farewell Address, January 10, 2017, McCormick Place, Chicago, Illinois. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2017/01/10/remarks-president-farewell-address> (Accessed date: 15.10.2017)

<sup>31</sup> "I believe in American exceptionalism with every fiber of my being". President Obama stated in May 28, 2014, in U.S. Military Academy- West Point, NY. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/05/28/remarks-president-united-states-military-academy-commencement-ceremony> (Accessed date: 15.10.2017)

<sup>32</sup> In his second presidential inauguration, President Barack Obama associated American exceptionalism with the ideas of Declaration of Independence. January 21, 2013, United States Capitol, Washington. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/01/21/inaugural-address-president-barack-obama> (Accessed date: 15.10.2017)

Therefore, it can be indicated that ideas constructing the American national identity understood as the belief in the idea of American exceptionalism have been present throughout Obama's presidency, in presidential discourse. When pursuing interests related to American identity, the articulation of American exceptionalism has been felt more than ever. Indeed, Barack Obama is the first president to use the term American exceptionalism in an address.<sup>33</sup> Other presidents of the United States, no doubt, made use of exceptionalist rhetoric in gathering people into a common cause, as IR scholar Siobhan McEvoy-levy has pointed out<sup>34</sup>, but what is unique on the part of Barack Obama is his explicitly using the term itself, along with its formative contents and associating his own story with American exceptionalism.

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<sup>33</sup> Jason Gilmore, Penelope Sheets, and Charles Rowling, "Make No Exception, Save One: American Exceptionalism, the American Presidency, and the Age of Obama," *Communication Monographs* 83, no. 4 (2016): 506.

<sup>34</sup> McEvoy-levy, *American Exceptionalism and US Foreign Policy*, 23.

**TABLE 1: Theoretical Causal Mechanism**

**Sources:** Katzenstein 1996, Hopf 1998, Schonberg 2009, Campbell 1992

<b>IDEAS</b>	Ideas are, in essence, beliefs hold by individuals.
	Beliefs are expressed and disseminated through national narratives, historical stories, myths, sermons and etc.
	Those beliefs are held by high-profile policymakers and by ordinary people.
	Therefore, ideas create a basis for the formation of identity.
<b>IDENTITY</b>	Identity, within psychology, refers to "the images of individuality and distinctiveness." (Katzenstein)
	"Identities tell you who you are, they tell others who you are, and they tell you who others are." (Ted Hopf)
	Identity is a "shorthand label for varying constructions of nation and statehood." (Katzenstein)
	Identity is sum of the "national ideologies of collective distinctiveness and purpose." (Katzenstein)
	That is to say, identities reflect a distinctiveness, help construct statehood and offers a set of interests that can be adopted in relation to others.
<b>FOREIGN POLICY</b>	Ideas → Identity → Interests → Foreign Policy Tradition
	Ideas shape identities. Identity is a guide for the making and conduct of foreign policy.
	Schonberg argues "the ways in which a society understands itself and in which leaders come to comprehend international system create a basis for the discourse of foreign policy." (Schonberg)
	"Our foreign policy derives from the kind of people we are....." (Campbell)



**TABLE 2: Causal Mechanism in Practice**

**Sources:** Leggold and McKeown 1995, Holsti 2010, Restad 2015, McEvoy Levy 2001

<b>IDEAS</b>	Exemplar Nation	The greatest country on earth
	City upon a Hill	Leader of the free world
	Manifest Destiny	God bless the United States of America
	the Indispensable Nation	Benevolent Hegemon
	Fortress America	Promised Land & Chosen People
	The belief in such ideas makes up American exceptionalism. It is the manifestation and embodiment of the American national identity.	
<b>IDENTITY</b>	Therefore, American identity emphasizes belief in the superiority and chosenness of and a mission for the United States and the population.	
	American identity derives from the widely held ideas.	
	American identity is the cause of America's reticence towards international law and international agreements that can undermine its national sovereignty.	
	"American exceptionalism does not mean American foreign policy practices have always been so different from others." (Leggold and McKeown), (Holsti)	
<b>FOREIGN POLICY</b>	There are ideas indicating the superiority and chosenness of the United States and a belief in a mission, and they form the idea of American exceptionalism, which is the American national identity.	
	Since having an identity shapes interests with respect to foreign policy, American identity forms the context within which American foreign policy is conducted.	
	Historically, American identity is believed to have paved the way for an assertive and unilateral foreign policy. (Restad, McEvoy-Levy)	
	Therefore, American identity, when it is translated into foreign policy, can be seen as the main reason of claiming a need to American leadership in international relations.	

## CHAPTER 2

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

With a view to placing my arguments in a theoretical framework, in this chapter, I will analyze how interests and identity came to be taken into consideration in IR theory. Exploring why neorealist and neoliberal theories have fallen short of accounting for identity, I will look into strengths and weaknesses of these theories. Then, the constructivist theory is to be analyzed as a perspective that gives priority to ideational factors and to the conceptualization of identity. In neorealism subheading, I will focus on some theoretical presuppositions such as pre-given nature of interests and unchanging, stable and structural causes of state behavior. Then, I will introduce one of the recent efforts by neorealists led by Stephen Walt to criticize and even discard the influence of idea of American exceptionalism on American politics. Subsequently, I will discuss neoliberalism. First, theoretical issues that need attention and then a neoliberal perspective to American exceptionalism will fill this subheading. In all fairness, I believe neorealism and neoliberalism have their own ways of approaching to American exceptionalism. However, identifying American exceptionalism with the American national identity can be meaningfully done within a constructivist framework. Because the notion of identity is best conceptualized in the constructivist terms.

Therefore, in constructivism subheading, I explain the constructivist approach to ideas, identity and foreign policy, departing from rationalist theories. What I mean by rationalist is the neo-versions of traditional IR theories; neorealism and neoliberalism.<sup>35</sup> Ultimately, the triangle of ideas, identity and foreign policy will be

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<sup>35</sup> Robert O. Keohane, "International Institutions: Two Approaches", *International Studies Quarterly* 32, no 4. (1988), 382.

translated into practice under the subheading of American exceptionalism as the American national identity.

Within IR literature, it was not until the early 1990s that ideational factors shaping interests and identity came to be treated as having an independent explanatory power apart from material factors. Time and again, it has been highlighted within IR theory that conventional approaches have overlooked the role of ideas in the formation of interests.<sup>36</sup> Material considerations seemed to predominate over ideational considerations in their analyses. Those ideational considerations which I refer are ideas, identities, norms, culture, institutions, and values.<sup>37</sup> In this regard, it has been widely acknowledged that the problem of addressing these notions properly has necessitated a coherent theoretical inquiry to come about. The nature of issues to be addressed in a relatively new theory has intrinsically stemmed from a growing dissatisfaction with the existing notions whose missions of explaining the course of world politics were failing. That led to the arrival of constructivism.

Constructivism was a repudiation of and a reaction to the restricted research agendas of neorealism and neoliberalism. As of the late 1980s and the early 1990s, existing methodological frameworks of conventional IR theories as well as the ways these theories approached ideational factors were being innovatively challenged by constructivist IR theorizing. The challenge posed by constructivist theorizing did not seek to reform altogether the terminology of conventional IR theories. Over the past three decades, there has been a dramatic increase in studies dealing with the notions of culture and identity in IR, stemming from abrupt as well as unforeseen ending of the Cold War.<sup>38</sup> Prior to this development, markedly in the course of Cold War,

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<sup>36</sup> Andreas Bieler, "Questioning Cognitivism and Constructivism in IR Theory: Reflections on the Material Structure of Ideas," *Politics* 21, no. 2 (2001): 93.

<sup>37</sup> Ted Hopf, "The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory," *International Security* 23, no. 1 (1998): 172.

<sup>38</sup> Yosef Lapid, "Culture's Ship: Returns and Departures in International Relations Theory," in *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory*, ed. Yosef Lapid and Friedrich V. Kratochwil (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996), 3. Other prominent studies dealing with the concepts of culture and identity in post-Cold War world; Peter Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York:

international politics was understood as revolving around theories whose meta-theoretical bases were dependent on rationalist as well as positivist assumptions about the reality of the world. At their peak, fundamental principles of conventional IR theories remained widespread but proved partially ineffective on matters pertaining to ideational factors and explaining *change* in world politics. Unable to account for change in the international system, each conventional-rationalist IR theory has failed to exhibit a coherent set of precepts that meet the hardships of making sense of the whole picture regarding international relations. Although unlike neorealism, neoliberal theories might have had a fair grasp on the role of state preferences in the formation of interests, their analyses remained short-sighted owing to prioritizing material and economic interests of states.

## **2.1. Neorealism and Identity**

For quite some time, it has been a truism to explain inter-state relations by precepts of *realpolitik*. For instance, during the Cold War, both superpowers' behavior could have been analyzed according to *realpolitik* principles that give credit to military power and security interests of states. Neorealist principles of ensuring survival and security are an expression of overarching *realpolitik* view. Representing such stark principles, the tradition of *realpolitik* can be considered a more flamboyant version of classical realist theory in IR. However, today's world has evolved into a point whose first and foremost features are globalization and capitalism. Therefore, *realpolitik* may not be an overarching and prevailing principle of today's world, however, as a standpoint, it deserves respect. Realist thought, while dominating most of the Cold War, came to be interpreted theoretically and this interpretation gave rise to the emergence of neorealism, which was its structural form as well as its successor.

Certain fundamental tenets of a generalized theory of international politics, not a theory of foreign policy, were radically introduced by the publication of *Theory of*

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Columbia University Press, 1996); Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

*International Politics* in 1979 by Kenneth Neal Waltz.<sup>39</sup> Although it was quite often rigorously criticized<sup>40</sup>, that remained a masterpiece in IR. Drawing on precepts presented by Waltz, neorealists were primarily concerned with explaining the structure of the international system which they regarded as anarchical. Attaching states a central significance in their analyses, Neorealists assessed states as “self-interested security maximizers” whose foremost interest amounted to “survival” in a self-help system.<sup>41</sup> Structurally determined interests would lead all states to act in the same way, heading toward survival. In such a circumstance, states would not know the intentions of other states, therefore, they would feel insecure, leading to “security dilemma” and “struggle for power.”

Waltz and other prominent neorealists, centrally emphasized the “lack of order and of organization” in international politics, that is, the anarchical structure of the international system.<sup>42</sup> The obvious lack of an orderer in international politics would lead all states to be the protector of only themselves. ”Self-help system” principle is built on this assumption. To secure themselves from being invaded or being devoured by another state, states ought to be powerful enough to counteract such occurrences. Nonetheless, the problem of how much power is enough for a state to feel totally secure has not been agreed upon theoretically in realist spheres. Virtually all neorealists can be argued to have given a central importance particularly to “material power” in their analyses.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Kenneth Neal Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1977).

<sup>40</sup> For studies criticizing Waltz, and in general, neorealism; Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999) .Richard K. Ashley, “The Poverty of Neorealism,” *International Organization* 38, no. 2 (1984): 225–86. Robert O. Keohane, ed., *Neorealism and Its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

<sup>41</sup> John J. Mearshemier, “Structural Realism,” in *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, ed. Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith, 3<sup>rd</sup> (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 78.

<sup>42</sup> Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 89.

<sup>43</sup> When considered from this point of view neorealists are categorized as *Defensive neorealists* and *Offensive neorealists*. Defensive neorealists like Kenneth Waltz and Otto von Bismarck argue that an appropriate amount of power is enough and it is not reasonable for a state to pursue hegemony, because hegemony always incorporates the seeds of a possible counter-

The concepts of “power and survival” are integral to realist analyses. Pursuing power as an end or assuring the survival of the state are two main objectives for different branches of realist theories. Since neorealism is a structural theory, a notion like identity is disregarded. The structure of the international system and the causes of state behavior are the main themes in neorealist theory. Even so, a recognition of identity in neorealist analyses can be that of power maximizing state prototype. Thus, both utility and power maximization can be assessed as the characteristics of a stable identity. However, a concept of identity that does not allow state preferences and aims to be diversified would be inefficient, at best. Therefore, far from being attributed to an independent explanatory power, identity and interests were being shaped out of necessity imposed on states by the anarchical structure of the international system. State behavior was thought to be shaped by the distribution of capabilities across the international system, which was most of the time understood as military capability and stark economic productivity.

Waltz inferred that the “character of units” in the system was alike in terms of their function, not of their capabilities.<sup>44</sup> Therefore diversity of state identities, along with differentiated character of states, did not occupy a considerable place in neorealist arguments. Also, domestic regimes, international institutions and their role in the formation of state preferences were not taken into consideration. Because, irrespective of the domestic structures, all states would behave similarly when given the same amount of power in an anarchical environment. It is quite normal given that neorealism does not discriminate between regime types and domestic structures. Within this context, variables playing a role in the formation of interests were mainly the material ones like structural constraints and military capabilities in the case of neorealist analyses.

In fact, interests being defined in terms of power and the possibility of varying interests and identities were structurally constrained by anarchy. That means, we might not be

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balancing from other powers in the system who are not satisfied with one power pursuing hegemony and dominating others. Offensive neorealists, like John Mearsheimer, in turn, infer that for a great power to feel secure, it needs to pursue hegemony. It is appropriate to pursue hegemony. It is the best way to survive.

<sup>44</sup> Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 93-96.

talking about the formation of interests, because the same interests, irrespective of the differences in terms of the capability of pursuing them, were given and imposed on by the anarchical structure of the international system. That means ideational factors such as ideas, identity, culture, and values were practically ignored in neorealist analyses. Out of these drawbacks and selective perceptions, the relationship between ideas and interests cannot be realized by using neorealist IR theory in the case of American exceptionalism.

In this context, neither explaining American exceptionalism in a neorealist framework nor acknowledging it has been a critical concern for neorealists. Fundamentally, the core assumption of American exceptionalism, being exceptional in a world of difference, is at odds with a realist point of view.<sup>45</sup> The differences between states are argued to occur, in realist analyses, due to the changes that took place in the distribution of capabilities which result in the shifts of relative power relationships.<sup>46</sup> However, explaining change only with the distribution of material capabilities and undermining domestic structures that can cause changes in foreign policy are some of the most apparent flaws of neorealism. That is why neorealism could not account for the dissolution of the Soviet Union and subsequent developments.<sup>47</sup>

Enframing how most of neorealists see American exceptionalism, Walt has set out to make a critical assessment of American exceptionalism by claiming that “it is mostly a myth”.<sup>48</sup> Although Walt has appreciated “America’s values, political system and history are worthy of admiration”, he undermined the reliance on American exceptionalism in explaining American foreign policy.<sup>49</sup> Representing neorealist point of view, he continues to argue that American foreign policy needs to be conducted in

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<sup>45</sup> Stephen M. Walt, “American Exceptionalism: A Realist View,” *Foreign Policy*, 2010. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2010/12/06/american-exceptionalism-a-realist-view/>

<sup>46</sup> Walt, “American Exceptionalism: A Realist view”.

<sup>47</sup> Friedrich Kratochwil, “The Embarrassment of Changes: Neo-Realism as the Science of Realpolitik without Politics,” *Review of International Studies* 19, no. 1 (1993): 63.

<sup>48</sup> Walt, “The myth of American exceptionalism”.

<sup>49</sup> Walt, “The myth of American exceptionalism”.

accordance with the attentive assessments of “relative power and the competitive nature of international politics.”<sup>50</sup> Criticizing liberal internationalism championed primarily by the Democrats and neoconservatism advocated by neo-cons, Walt reemphasized that had realism been adopted by Barack Obama, G.W. Bush and Bill Clinton, decades-long foreign policy debacles of America would have been avoided.<sup>51</sup>

In neorealist spheres, some besetting consequences of American foreign policy arising from the “imperial overstretch” of the United States such as Filipino War, Nicaraguan War and Iraq War in 2003 are brought forward as excuses for undermining American exceptionalism. Walt indicated when confronted with scourge of war, the United States could not behave “exceptionally” better than the other nations do. However, American exceptionalism does not preach that American foreign policy is exceptional, as has been demonstrated by Leggold and McKeown.<sup>52</sup> Also, most of the themes of American exceptionalism are likened to the British and French imperial missions such as, respectively, “carrying white man’s burden” and “la mission civilisatrice”.<sup>53</sup> These resemblances are employed to render American exceptionalism as ineffective. Having given instances of misdeeds of American foreign policy and by putting the United States in a position which is in line with historical great powers, Stephen Walt approaches American exceptionalism not with chest-thumping but with caution. As a conclusion to normative aspects here, Walt complained about American exceptionalism and argued instead, realism must have been the guiding principle of American foreign policy for the last two decades.<sup>54</sup>

Above, I have not attempted to show that neorealism is an inappropriate guiding principle for American foreign policy. Rather, I have tried to show the unfavorableness

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<sup>50</sup> Walt, “The myth of American exceptionalism”.

<sup>51</sup> Stephen M. Walt, “What Would a Realist World Have Looked Like?,” *Foreign Policy*, 2016. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/01/08/what-would-a-realist-world-have-looked-like-iraq-syria-iran-obama-bush-clinton/>

<sup>52</sup> Joseph Leggold and Timothy McKeown, “Is American Foreign Policy Exceptional? An Empirical Analysis,” *Political Science Quarterly* 110, no. 3 (1995): 370.

<sup>53</sup> Walt, “The myth of American exceptionalism”.

<sup>54</sup> Walt, “What Would a Realist World Have Looked Like?”.



of neorealism in approaching to American exceptionalism. An apparent shortcoming of neorealism in approaching to American exceptionalism is its reliance on the consequences of action and on seeing states as being identical entities. What the United States did or does must not be analyzed by seeing it like any other great power in history. Making comparisons can yield fruitful indications, however; in the case of American exceptionalism, we must be looking into its persistence and prevalence in American history and in the nation's self-understanding. In the light of my arguments, American exceptionalism matters owing to its influence upon American foreign policy, formulating the promotion of American leadership. Neorealism does not regard the prevalent ideas, ideologies and beliefs as variables in international politics. Moreover, taking identity into consideration is not an analysis that can be performed within the confines of neorealism. American exceptionalism, to a great extent, shapes the American national identity. It is not an accumulation of discourses of bragging about how the United States has been so great. It has a depth and an influence accordingly.

Eventually, neorealists have failed to grasp the capacity of ideational factors to shape international politics as much as material factors. If we look from a neorealist perspective, the United States does not have any responsibility for, and hence, a mission for ensuring the betterment of humanity. While the belief in a God-favored mission has been apparent in political discourse and time to time in practice, neorealists would have strongly advised America to ensure its security and survival instead. However, social reality and the nature of foreign policy have never been only black and white, as neorealists generally assumed it to be. In conclusion, as it can be seen above, neorealism imagines a stable, undifferentiated and similar trajectories for states in international relations. Therefore, neorealism cannot offer a sufficient framework for understanding American exceptionalism. Now, neoliberalism's look into identity and American exceptionalism is below.

## **2.2. Neoliberalism and Identity**

Generally, widespread post-First World War peaceful sentiments of the 1920s are labeled as idealism in IR. What I discuss here is the 1970s neoliberal theory. In the

1970s, one influential form of liberalism came to be developed under favour of rising interactions of international inter-dependence and with the proliferation of capabilities of non-state actors. Neoliberal theory in IR concerned primarily with achieving cooperation in international system through international institutions.<sup>55</sup> Drawing on Enlightenment rationalism, neoliberals believe that human beings rationally pursue their interests and there can be a harmony of interests among people and states. Neoliberal IR theory, in defiance of neorealist theory, inferred that states could behave in different ways and they might prefer to cooperate with one another under the conditions of anarchy. At the heart of neoliberal understanding of cooperation is the necessity of international institutions.<sup>56</sup> To say that cooperation is possible via international institutions does not reflect that those institutions are always benevolent in nature. Aggressive alliances assembled for overcoming military and political conflicts have been many in number, however, as Keohane argues, even minimum “cooperation takes place within an institutional context.”<sup>57</sup>

Two eminent contributors of neoliberalism, Robert O. Keohane and Joseph Nye, challenged the stark precepts of realist theory and introduced the concept of “complex interdependence” in 1977, in a world where the manifestations of globalization were ever-increasing.<sup>58</sup> Complex interdependence indicates that the network of relations has evolved so much so that no actor can exert decisions without taking into consideration other actors. Indeed here, the recognition of non-state actors is one of the important features of neoliberal theory.

Main theoretical assumptions of neoliberal theory of international relations are the primacy of social actors, the significance of state preferences in shaping state behavior,

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<sup>55</sup> Jennifer Sterling-Folker, “Neoliberalism,” in *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, ed. Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 114.

<sup>56</sup> Keohane “International Institutions: Two Approaches”, 380.

<sup>57</sup> Keohane “International Institutions: Two Approaches”, 380.

<sup>58</sup> Robert O. Keohane and Joseph Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, 4th ed. (Stoughton: Longman, 2012), 20.

and the importance attached to interdependency among states.<sup>59</sup> From theoretical viewpoints, whereas neorealism stresses conflict, neoliberalism puts an emphasis on cooperation. Neorealists argued that state interests were formed by the international system through the distribution of capabilities. Whereas neoliberals have stated that “societal ideas, interests and institutions” affect state behavior “by shaping state preferences”.<sup>60</sup> They highlight state preferences as a determinant factor.

International cooperation facilitated by international regimes, institutions, and non-state actors have signified the differentiated state preferences. Neoliberals, in this regard, have thought that state behavior is primarily shaped by the distribution of state preferences rather than state capabilities, as in the case of neorealists. Domestic institutions, domestic ideas, and interest-groups try to interfere with state preferences in order to render their trajectories effective in the formation of interests. Stemming from interdependency features of globalization, neoliberal theory, in general, emphasized the roles undertaken by international institutions, transnational actors, and all these processes have come to be felt, to a great extent, in international affairs particularly since the 1970s onwards. Although neoliberal institutionalism may have been seen in a sharp contrast to neorealism, these two theories have shared some specific meta-theoretical assumptions. Neorealists, as well as neoliberals, have acknowledged the central importance of states in international arena, the anarchic nature of the structure of the international system, and the argument that states are unitary and rational actors.<sup>61</sup> This central importance is evident in neorealism as well as in neoliberalism. The facilitative function of international institutions in yielding results that can be turned into cooperation is dependent on the ability of sovereign

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<sup>59</sup> Andrew Moravcsik, “Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics,” *International Organization* 51, no. 4 (1997): 516-520.

<sup>60</sup> Moravcsik, “Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics,” 513.

<sup>61</sup> Sterling-Folker, “Neoliberalism”, 115-117., (Although neorealists and neoliberals acknowledge that the nature of the structure of international system is anarchic, what they understand from anarchy is different. Whereas neorealists consider anarchy a timeless condition, neoliberals seem to be more optimistic and see it as something which is being eroded with human process gradually.)

states that founded them in the first place.<sup>62</sup> On the part of neoliberals, norms, rules, and institutionalist restraint on state behavior were put forward as priorities in explaining international affairs.<sup>63</sup>

Neoliberals do believe in change. To them, as the time goes on humans can change, therefore, international institutions that are founded by states can change as well. In view of such an assumption, it can be argued that the concept of identity is not a stable one in neoliberal theory. Identities can change over time with respect to the changes in human action and international institutions. What is important here is the fact that neoliberal theory offers an identity concept that is “both unique and universal”, signifying the liberal fidelity to individuality.<sup>64</sup> It can be said that factors like religion, culture, political principles are not constitutive of neoliberal identity, because identity is an individual concept and every person has the same rights with anyone.<sup>65</sup> But, American identity is built on the idea that the United States is superior and chosen and has a mission, therefore, neoliberal identity understanding remains inconclusive in explaining American exceptionalism.

Neoliberal theory highlights the necessity of economic interdependence and the engagement in multilateral efforts aimed at establishing various international institutions. The United States, when analyzed within a neoliberal framework, during immediate postwar years, undertook the role of designing the world order in its own image. In terms of this point, the United States led the efforts to establish economic and security institutions both at regional and global levels. Postwar American engagement in world affairs resulted in introducing *Marshall Plan* to recover devastated European economies, in announcing *Truman Doctrine* aimed at preventing Greece and Turkey to enter into the Soviet sphere of influence, in the foundation of

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<sup>62</sup> Robert O. Keohane “International Institutions: Two Approaches”, 386.

<sup>63</sup> Stephen D. Krasner, “Structural Causes and Regime Consequences: Regimes as Intervening Variables,” in *International Regimes*, ed. Stephen D. Krasner (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), 1.

<sup>64</sup> Andrew Heywood, *Global Politics* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 184.

<sup>65</sup> Heywood, *Global Politics*, 184.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (*NATO*) to “keep the Soviets out, the Americans in and the Germans down” and in assembling *Bretton Woods* monetary system to take control of the international economy. In this regard, the United States took action in the postwar years to found a world order that depended on its vision. This point can have insightful implications on understanding American exceptionalism from a neoliberal perspective.

Neoliberalism advocates the role of state preferences in shaping state behavior and discusses the possibilities of multilateral cooperations with reference to a possible neoliberal perspective for American exceptionalism. In this respect, IR scholar John G. Ruggie argued; joining multilateral initiatives on the basis of “sustainable engagement” is the postwar vision committed to creating a world order devised by the United States.<sup>66</sup> That means, America’s understanding of its own founding and its sense of political identity are related to the vision of world order that the United States had in postwar years.<sup>67</sup> That is, ideas about what kind of a country the United States is have shaped the nation’s identity. Singling out these ideas as “inherent individual rights, as opposed to group rights, equality of opportunity, rule of law and being born out of a radical revolution”, Ruggie has associated these ideas with the American national identity.<sup>68</sup> Since they are all universal ideas that can and should be adopted to further human betterment, the United States takes aim at initiating visions for founding a world order that renders the leadership of the United States necessary. These initiatives can directly be harmonized with the mission of spreading the values of the United States and actively engaging with the world to realize this objective. The postwar world order can be associated with a multilateral world order, however, the United States did not create this order “multilaterally”.<sup>69</sup> Since the United States always sought to preserve its freedom of action, and sought greater maneuverability in foreign affairs, this cannot be argued as a multilaterally created order. Indeed, the

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<sup>66</sup> John Gerard Ruggie, “Interests, Identity and American Foreign Policy,” in *Constructing the World Polity: Essays on International Institutionalization*, ed. John Gerard Ruggie (London & New York: Routledge, 1998), 206.

<sup>67</sup> Ruggie, “Interests, Identity and American Foreign Policy”, 206.

<sup>68</sup> Ruggie, “Interests, Identity and American Foreign Policy”, 218.

<sup>69</sup> Restad, *American Exceptionalism: An Idea That Made a Nation and Remade the World*, 110.

United States has never conducted an authentic multilateral policy, due to the constraining effects of multilateral policies.<sup>70</sup>

Therefore, from a neoliberal perspective, American national identity which is American exceptionalism is to be associated with creating a world order whose leader is the United States. As argued earlier, the clearest outcome of the idea of American exceptionalism in relation to foreign policy is the promotion of American leadership and in neoliberal perspective it is seen evidently. This connection stems from the principles embedded in America's image of sense of self, a civic form of nationalism that has nothing to do with common bloodline. Being American is not about being born in the United States, it is about adopting the values, principles, origins that founded the nation in the first place. In the light of these arguments, we see that neoliberalism seemed to have more complicated strains when compared to rather parsimonious neorealist theory. Having revealed the lenses through which neorealism and neoliberalism look at certain issues, I proceed to constructivism.

### **2.3. Constructivism and Identity**

With the introduction of constructivist IR theory in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, neorealist and neoliberal theories came to be dramatically challenged in terms of the ways in which they approached the meaning of anarchy, the balance of power and particularly the relationship between identity and role of ideas in the formation of interests. Constructivist theory has not only signified an emerging base from which to profoundly criticize the rationalist and materialist assumptions of neorealism and of neoliberalism and their meta-theoretical bases, it has also come to represent one version of sociological approaches to IR discipline.<sup>71</sup>

Above, I have argued that neorealists had failed to explain the long-term changes in international system and had offered a worldview emphasizing the constant and

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<sup>70</sup> David Skidmore, "Understanding the Unilateralist Turn in U.S. Foreign Policy," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 1, no. 2 (2005): 224.

<sup>71</sup> Katzenstein, "Introduction: Alternative Perspectives on National Security," 2–3.

unchanging nature of relations amongst states. Also, I have continued to state that neoliberals had focused on cooperation through international institutions, however; they had remained rationalist as well. Constructivist theory has emphasized that the ideas and beliefs have structural characteristics as do material structures.<sup>72</sup> What shapes interests is the ideas and widespread beliefs of a population and their policymakers. In this thesis, I will use the notions of ideas, identity, and foreign policy in a constructivist manner.

The concept of identity has been constantly used and mostly benefited in constructivist theory. The most comprehensive and recognized conceptualization of identity consistent with ideas and foreign policy has been rendered possible by constructivist theory.<sup>73</sup> One of the main arguments of constructivist theory is that there is not merely “self-interested security maximizers” as neorealists suggested, rather, identities and the forms of perceiving them tend to change as the time progress. The same state may well be perceived as a friend by some and a foe by another. Certainly, the diversity of state identities has come to be acknowledged with the introduction of constructivist IR theory. Most of the primary assumptions of constructivist theory are against well-recognized principles of neorealism, in a wider context ranging from meta-theoretical issues to foreign policy. However, constructivism may be more about what can be achieved in world affairs, rather than how to achieve something. In short, it generally does not prescribe policy solutions. Constructivism indicated that material factors alone might remain incapable of shaping perceptions of states regarding other states.

What has been innovative on the part of constructivism, which is in line with the purposes of this thesis, has been giving priority to and a genuine acknowledgment of the ideational factors shaping interests. In this regard, it seems that constructivism is a

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<sup>72</sup> K.M. Fierke, “Constructivism,” in *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, ed. Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 196.

<sup>73</sup> Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Wendt, “Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics.”; Alexander Wendt, “Identity and Structural Change in International Politics,” in *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory*, ed. Yosef Lapid and Friedrich V. Kratochwil (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996): 47-65.

theory which prioritizes *ideational variables* over *material variables* in making out international politics. Even though constructivist theorizing appears to be employing ideational variables primarily, however, this does not mean that material and objective reality is neglected. Inherent logic of constructivist theory does not recognize pre-given interests, rather, it discusses interests as something constructed.<sup>74</sup> Interests of actors are shaped by identities as a result of a relation with other actors. That means interests have the potential to change and be changed, signifying that they are not stable and unchanging. Indeed, it has been advocated by constructivism that interests are shaped by identity and identity is shaped by ideas and beliefs. A quite significant point to be noticed here is the fact that identity and interests are believed to be socially constructed, not structurally imposed on states as in the case of above conventional-rationalist instances.<sup>75</sup>

It can be understood that identity is integral to self-understanding. How a society understands itself and how leaders understand the international arena set the stage for the discourse and conduct of foreign policy.<sup>76</sup> Out of certain ideas that are held with regard to “the self”, identity is formed, identity in turn, shapes interests. Foreign policy is the ground on which nations can pursue, shape and affect their interests. It is the race for assuring a better positioning internationally. At the end, identity is integral to the process of formation of interests, and therefore, it is also central to conducting foreign policy. Having an identity implies what kind of interests and preferences would be appropriate with regard to foreign policy for the identity owner.<sup>77</sup> It is like a measure to which behaviors are managed accordingly. Hence, claiming identity to be a mainstay in the discourse and in the conduct of foreign policy is to do justice to the concept of identity.

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<sup>74</sup> Hopf, “The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory.”, 176.

<sup>75</sup> Christian Reus-Smit, “Constructivism,” in *Theories of International Relations*, ed. Scott Burchill, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.(New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 193.

<sup>76</sup> Schonberg, *Constructing 21st Century U.S. Foreign Policy: Identity, Ideology, and America’s World Role in a New Era*, 16.

<sup>77</sup> Hopf, “The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory.” 175.



Either at personal or national level, the formation of identity firstly corresponds to a constructed distinction or an articulation of existing distinction. Most of the time, this distinction serves to draw boundaries between who we think we are and those who are not like us. In this manner, there is an approach arguing that for an identity to be constructed there must be an ‘Other’ against which the identity is constructed.<sup>78</sup> While I am not completely ignoring or rejecting this dichotomous approach to identity, I intend to assert that blatantly using this form of identity approach might have dangerous consequences on our understanding of international politics.

What I attempt to do is far from positioning one identity against a particular and permanent Other. I claim that the ideas being held about the perceptions of self may create one’s own understanding of itself, which is identity. However, that kind of ideas which are supposed to form any identity might be generated in a context which contains not merely one permanent ‘Other’ but many ‘Others’. In the process of construction of the American national identity, the British, the Indians, the Spanish who settled in the American continent might be thought as others against which the American national identity was constructed.<sup>79</sup> As the history progresses, examples of such others might be proliferated as to include the adherents to Fascism, Nazism, Communism etc. Particularly in the Cold War, the articulation of the American national identity was dependent upon its diametrically opposed other; Soviet identity. From a postmodern/poststructural perspective, David Campbell thoroughly analyzed the discursive formation of the American national identity as opposed to Soviet identity in the course of Cold War.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> The discussion of the centrality of an Other in imagining “the self” has a long pedigree in social theory. French philosopher Jacques Derrida is known for his distinction between self and other in social theory. His key terms with respect to this distinction is *differance* and *binary oppositions*. Particularly, a binary opposition signifies the human inclination towards thinking with regard to oppositions. Within IR literature, David Campbell, *Writing Security*, contains useful insights regarding this point.

<sup>79</sup> Campbell, *Writing Security*, 97-109

<sup>80</sup> Campbell, *Writing Security*, 143-144. (“Whatever the figuration, the inscription of otherness was linked to the enframing of the American national identity, Americanism stands for law, Bolshevism disdains law, Americanism stands for hope, Bolshevism stands for despair etc.”)

Within this context, identity can be imagined as -most of the time the strongest- variable shaping a nation's interests. Putting an emphasis on ideational variables does not preclude the recognition of other factors shaping interests. Instead, what I attempt to do is to give ideational variables a priority in understanding how interests are defined, on the one hand by relying on policymakers' and nation's ideas and on the other hand, the Other's against which a particular identity is constructed.

As has been asserted above, ideational determinants of interests, such as ideas and identities, have come to play a pivotal role in addressing the issue of foreign policy as well as of national security in the post-Cold War period.<sup>81</sup> While having been applied to foreign policy analyses, constructivist frameworks have entailed a rethinking of many of the existing notions which have been used in IR. For the most part, foreign policy analyses from a constructivist perspective might be asserted to have paid profound regard to the ideas held by policymakers and nations concerning what kind of a country they have. In line with this argument, it may be inferred that identities and interests were not taken for granted within constructivist theorizing, by contrast, they were thought to be constructed within a socio-cognitive structure which would be formed by social and political practices.<sup>82</sup>

## **2.4 American Exceptionalism as the American National Identity**

Above, I have summarized the characteristics of American exceptionalism as the belief in superiority, chosenness and a mission. Simply, the belief in these characteristics is what American exceptionalism stands for. The implications of the phrase American exceptionalism are not limited to my summary. As the implications change, the ways of approaching to the idea of American exceptionalism has varied greatly over time.

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<sup>81</sup> In post-Cold War period a considerable number of studies have dealt with the conceptualizations of ideas and identity. Theoretically, mostly constructivist studies have been presented here. Peter Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*; Yosef Lapid and Friedrich V. Kratochwil, eds., *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996).

<sup>82</sup> Katzenstein, "Introduction: Alternative Perspectives on National Security," 2.

In the conventional literature on American exceptionalism, there have been two frames in which American exceptionalism has been perceived; as an “objective truth claim” and as a “subjective understanding of the American self.”<sup>83</sup> Hereafter, they are to be called “objective understanding” and “subjective understanding”. Within the boundaries of the first frame, scholars have tended to analyze the United States’ foundation, ideology and the form of government rules governing the conduct of

foreign policy and institutions, along with many other material and apparent characteristics which are thought to have caused the United States to be exceptional, in a comparative manner.<sup>84</sup> With reference to objective distinctions, American sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset analyzed American exceptionalism in terms of “ideology, politics, economics, religion, welfare, unionism, race relations and intellectualism.”<sup>85</sup> Since it is not possible to understand how a country is being different without a comparative understanding, analyses carried out within the context of objective understanding have inclined to comparing the countries.<sup>86</sup> For instance, the United States has incarcerated more people compared to other developed countries, is the most anti-statist country in the developed world and has been home to one of the most religious people in the developed world.<sup>87</sup> As it can be seen, the objective understanding represents the findings that have been attained scientifically, statistically and comparatively. Objective understanding of American exceptionalism and comparative approach to American exceptionalism represent same approach and hereafter can be used interchangeably.

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<sup>83</sup> Restad, *American Exceptionalism: An idea that made a nation and remade the world*, 17.

<sup>84</sup> This view of accounting for the idea of American exceptionalism has been prominently manifested by the following key figures and their often-quoted works; First published in 1835, Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Harvey Mansfield and Deborah Winthrop (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000); Seymour Martin Lipset, *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996); Byron E. Shafer, ed., *Is America Different? A New Look at American Exceptionalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

<sup>85</sup> McCrisken, *American Exceptionalism and the Legacy of Vietnam*, 3.

<sup>86</sup> Lipset, *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword*, 17.

<sup>87</sup> McCrisken, *American Exceptionalism and the Legacy of Vietnam*, 3.

The other way of approaching to the idea of American exceptionalism, in turn, frames the idea as a subjective understanding of the American self. What is worthy of notice is the belief in exceptionalism is persistent and has affected the debate and conduct of foreign policy, even if its assumptions cannot be validated.<sup>88</sup> It analyzes the centrality of the belief in American exceptionalism in Americans' self-understanding. The ideas that they believe in, national narratives, historical stories, myths that have been circulated in the discourse of high-profile policymakers and across the nation have been the main sources from which this subjective understanding has derived the American national identity. Rather than pointing out certain material differences which render America as the exceptional, the subjective understanding of the idea serves as a fertile ground to which the perception of the American self is heavily credited.<sup>89</sup> What is meant by this is that the belief in American exceptionalism matters irrespective of the validity of the ideas forming it.

The Americans are Americans because of the ideas that they believe in. Being an American is often identified with the adoption of American values, therefore, it is about an "ideological commitment", not about birth.<sup>90</sup> In relation to this, Samuel Huntington defined "the American Creed" as "liberty, equality, individualism, democracy and rule of law under a constitution."<sup>91</sup> The American Creed is a set of values signifying distinctive motifs of American politics and American national character. These are the nation's founding principles that maintain the country's national character and greatness. Therefore, to be an American, it can be imperative for you to have faith in these values and principles.<sup>92</sup>

With respect to this, refuting an argument of this subjective understanding by depending upon objective understanding does not set the stage for a healthy discussion of American exceptionalism. Although drawing upon both understandings, my

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<sup>88</sup> Restad, *American Exceptionalism: An idea that made a nation and remade the world*, 17.

<sup>89</sup> Restad, *American Exceptionalism: An idea that made a nation and remade the world*, 17.

<sup>90</sup> Lipset, *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword*, 31.

<sup>91</sup> McCrisken, *American Exceptionalism: The Legacy of Vietnam*, 7.

<sup>92</sup> McCrisken, "Exceptionalism", 65.

arguments mainly revolve around ideas, identity and foreign policy and therefore reflect an adherence to subjective understanding. Regarding subjective understanding, it can be held forth that in a world where all countries are different, claiming to be more different than others does not make sense. However, if American exceptionalism were to be easily discarded by depending upon that argument, as though it had not influenced American foreign policy, that would have meant ignoring ideational variables in foreign policy.<sup>93</sup> By the same token, all of the materially and apparently distinguishing characteristics of the United States might not be accounted for, nonetheless there have been such attempts on the part of many prominent figures of literature.<sup>94</sup>

Consequently, I have chosen to base my arguments upon the insights generated by the subjective understanding of American exceptionalism. Having an identity brings along a set of values and preferences in respect to how to imagine oneself and how to behave accordingly to it. The basis of the assumption that “identity shapes interests” hinges upon this argument. People’s beliefs, at the same time, are their ideas. The crudest and simplest stage on which the formation of the identity takes place can be the framework containing the ideas of people about themselves. The next would be the stage where the definition of the relations between self and Other is established. In this sense, American policymakers’ and the nation’s shared ideas about American superiority, chosenness, and mission have been basically their beliefs about what their country stands for. Whatever the motivation, a persistent belief in those ideas have affected the formation of the American national identity. Therefore, from this point forward, American exceptionalism –as the nation’s self-understanding- can be analyzed as a fundamental aspect of the American national identity.

To operationalize in this thesis, the American nation’s and its policymakers’ persistent belief in the idea of American exceptionalism is American identity. The belief in American exceptionalism has been articulated through policymakers’ discourse and

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<sup>93</sup> Ian Tyrrell, “American Exceptionalism in an Age of International History,” *The American Historical Review* 96, no. 4 (1991): 1038.

<sup>94</sup> Shafer 1991, Lipset 1996, Lockhart 2012, Ignatieff 2005.

their specific policies that depended on a framework of American exceptionalism. Both discourses and specific policies are related particularly to the American foreign and security policies that emphasize the need to American leadership in international relations.<sup>95</sup> The American national identity as American exceptionalism advocates American leadership in international affairs and is a set of value-based overarching ideas that guides the discourse and conduct of American foreign policy. In this way, American exceptionalism is believed to be reproduced both by beliefs in the idea of superiority, chosenness, mission and foreign and security policy practices that justify the idea of a world rendering the United States leadership indispensable. Such practices include unique interpretations of world order to be devised and led by the United States, as was suggested by John G. Ruggie.<sup>96</sup> Or a post-American hegemony to be sustained by burden-sharing, by cooperative engagement, by military restraint, as was introduced by George Löfflman.<sup>97</sup> Placing reliance on American primacy has been one of the rare discussions that have been agreed upon in American politics by major parties, the GOP and the Democratic Party. However, the debate over how to maintain that primacy remains unresolved.

Operationalizing the American national identity as the belief in American exceptionalism, I now need to infer that this is solely the one context in which American exceptionalism has been comprehended and studied in the literature. Reviewing the literature on American exceptionalism properly and having a grasp on how it has been differently conceptualized in the literature will be necessary to understand better my argument. Furthermore, the studies and policies that gave importance to the material factors in accounting for American foreign policy can be said to have predominated over studies and policies giving precedence to ideational factors explaining American foreign policy throughout history. American foreign policy is generally evaluated according to its consequences, wars, conflicts that could have been prevented. Nevertheless, this is another story with which I avoid involving. I believe American foreign policy needs to be analyzed using ideational variables as

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<sup>95</sup> Restad, *American Exceptionalism: An Idea that made a nation and remade the world*, 204-205.

<sup>96</sup> Ruggie, "Interests, Identity and American Foreign Policy."

<sup>97</sup> Georg Löfflmann, "Leading from Behind – American Exceptionalism and President Obama's Post-American Vision of Hegemony," *Geopolitics* 20, no. 2 (2015): 308–32.

well. Therefore, I aim to, partially if not seamlessly, fill this gap by taking on exceptional identity as a variable in American foreign policy in my thesis. Hereafter, I look at the evolution of the conceptualization of the idea of American exceptionalism. As we will see, there has not been only one contextualization of American exceptionalism, instead, there have been more than one.

Like almost every other aspect, the origins of the term seems complicated. Referring to the United States as “exceptional” and the coinage of “American exceptionalism” are different stories. In the case of referring to the values of the United States as exceptional, Alexis de Tocqueville, a French diplomat, judge, and philosopher has been known as the first to use the term exceptional. In his magnum opus, comprising of two volumes written consecutively in 1835 and 1840, *Democracy in America*, de Tocqueville argued; “The situation of the Americans is therefore entirely exceptional, and it is to be believed that no [other] democratic people will ever be placed in it.”<sup>98</sup> For his ideas concerning the values of the United States as exceptional, Tocqueville has been considered the “father of exceptionalism” literature ever since. In this context, Tocqueville’s use of the term signifies the extent to which the early 19<sup>th</sup> century Americans’ interest in science, literature and the arts were developed.<sup>99</sup> Referring only to this situation as *exceptional* does not circumscribe the inclusive purview that has been ascribed to American exceptionalism in *Democracy in America*.

Aside from where the term exceptional is mentioned, Tocqueville mainly reasserts his belief in the peculiarities and advantages arising out of the spatial traits of the uncharted American continent and emphasizes his confidence in the operation of

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<sup>98</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Deborah Winthrop (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), chap. How the example of the Americans does not prove that a democratic people can have no aptitude and taste for sciences, literature and the arts. 428.

<sup>99</sup> de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, chap. How the example of the Americans does not prove that a democratic people can have no aptitude and taste for sciences, literature and the arts. 428.

democracy in the United States, in a time when most of the European empires were associated with aristocracy.<sup>100</sup>

When it comes to the coinage of American exceptionalism, Russian-born American journalist Max Lerner comes to the forefront. It is recognized that not until 1957 the phrase American exceptionalism has come into use in the literature. Presenting the book *America as a Civilization: Life and Thought in the United States Today*, Lerner was recognized as the first to use the term American exceptionalism in 1957.<sup>101</sup> But, the debate over the varieties of the idea of American exceptionalism was not resolved with Tocqueville and Lerner. Representing one variety of American exceptionalism, American Marxists in the early 1930s saw the absence of major class conflict stemming from the classless society of the United States, a lack of dynamic conscience of working people, the anti-statist character of the United States, the absence of socialism in the United States, as American exceptionalism.<sup>102</sup> Within this context, Soviet leader Joseph Stalin had used the phrase American exceptionalism to decry the lack of socialist tendencies in both in American politics and in American society.<sup>103</sup>

Another variety of American exceptionalism is best represented by Michael Ignatieff in international law. Ignatieff has associated American exceptionalism with the concepts of “exemptionalism, double-standards, legal isolationism”.<sup>104</sup> These are signifying the American reticence towards conceding any interference with their sovereignty against the backdrop of international law and of international agreements. “Exemptionalism” conveys that the United States signs on international conventions and treaties and “then exempts itself from their provisions by explicit reservation,

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<sup>100</sup> de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, chap. How the example of the Americans does not prove that a democratic people can have no aptitude and taste for sciences, literature and the arts. 428.

<sup>101</sup> Hughes, “Unmaking an Exception: A Critical Genealogy of US Exceptionalism,” 246.

<sup>102</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset and Gary Wolf Marks, *It Didn't Happen Here: Why Socialism Failed in the United States* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2001), 9-12.

<sup>103</sup> Terrence McCoy, “How Joseph Stalin Invented ‘American Exceptionalism’ “.

<sup>104</sup> Michael Ignatieff, “Introduction: American Exceptionalism and Human Rights,” in *American Exceptionalism and Human Rights*, ed. Michael Ignatieff (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005), 3.



nonratification and noncompliance”.<sup>105</sup> A significant example was the negotiations of International Criminal Court in 1998. The United States had taken part in that negotiations but then secured certain guarantees as to its diplomats and politicians would not be summoned to the court and finally the United States is not a party.<sup>106</sup> As is seen, American exceptionalism can also provide insights on international law and international agreements.

Another variety of American exceptionalism is articulated in the context of comparative politics. As Seymour Martin Lipset has put it, being “the first new nation”<sup>107</sup>, the United States was the first colony to gain independence and had fought for a different form of government in its bid to become independent from Britain. Since the United States experienced a somewhat different developments in its history, and founded with the aim of governing differently than contemporary European aristocracies, the United States should be exempt from the laws of nature that accounts only for an expected journey for great powers; rising to power and falling prey to its own whims. These unique experiences allowed the United States to interpret its position against international organizations, agreements, and treaties in its own way.<sup>108</sup>

So far in this chapter, I have assembled the theoretical framework of my thesis, briefly explained why neorealist and neoliberal theories have remained inconclusive in explaining identity and revealed why I employ constructivist theory. Subsequently, I have looked at the varieties of American exceptionalism. What matters, in this respect, is the subjective understanding of American exceptionalism as the nation’s self-understanding gained through the ideas circulated by high-profile policymakers and by the population. In the next chapter, I will attempt to analyze in detail the origins from which American exceptionalism has benefited. I explain them as religious, geographical-positional and political origins.

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<sup>105</sup> Ignatieff, “Introduction, American Exceptionalism and Human Rights”, 3.

<sup>106</sup> Ignatieff, “Introduction, American Exceptionalism and Human Rights”, 4.

<sup>107</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset, *The First New Nation: The United States in Historical & Comparative Perspective* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1979).

<sup>108</sup> Ignatieff, “Introduction: American Exceptionalism and Human Rights,” 3.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE ORIGINS OF AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM

Having associated American exceptionalism with the nation's self-understanding, in this chapter, I will attempt to show the particular origins on which American exceptionalism drew. Being an umbrella term, American exceptionalism has historical, religious, geographical, political, philosophical and social origins. As is seen, it needs to be acknowledged that American exceptionalism has various origins. With regard to this point, one may look each of the contents of the origins separately, however, I prefer to use an inclusive approach for my purposes in this thesis. In an inclusive approach, origins can be taken as being interwoven. Within this chapter, I operationalize them as religious, geographical-positional and political origins for analytical utility. Since the boundaries between them cannot be drawn easily, trying to analyze them on an individual basis is likely to be inconclusive.

As I have detailed above chapters, American exceptionalism is the belief in the superiority and chosenness of and in a God-favored mission for the United States. Analyzing the religious origins first does not mean that the United States has lacked secular-intellectual origins that influenced its society and its founding. To the contrary, the United States was founded upon the ideals of the Enlightenment thought -reason and the belief in human progress- which were deemed, in the statements of various Founding Fathers, to be fundamental values.<sup>109</sup> There was no tension between religious origins and secular conditions of the founding. Nor religion is used as a way of governing. Religion continued to remain in its own right. Singling out the ideas constructing exceptionalism, primarily this chapter analyzes the religious origins that influenced the idea of American exceptionalism. I then proceed to geographical-

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<sup>109</sup> Mcevoy-levy, *American Exceptionalism and US Foreign Policy: Public Diplomacy at the End of the Cold War*, 24.

positional origins that facilitated the embracement of exceptionalist sentiments by Americans. Ultimately, in this chapter, certain political ideas that have a significant imprint on the shaping of American politics are to be analyzed and to be associated with American exceptionalism. Ingrained in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States, such political ideas are the core of American political culture and therefore affecting American exceptionalism. I will conclude this chapter by restating and reemphasizing main arguments and sources from which exceptionalism was derived.

### **3.1. Religious Origins**

Religious beliefs occupy an unwavering place in the United States. So much so that it has frequently been indicated that the United States has been one of the most religious countries among the Christian parts of the world.<sup>110</sup> Even in the national anthem of the United States – “the Star Spangled Banner”, there is a line representing the degree of Americans’ belief in God: “And this be our motto: In God is our Trust.”<sup>111</sup> No matter what form of religion in which Americans believe, it is necessary to acknowledge religion as a factor affecting the worldview, party-politics, ideologies of Americans. Therefore, it is crucial for us to understand how religious beliefs and practices have evolved in support of American superiority, chosenness, and a mission.

The representations of American superiority, chosenness and a sense of devotion to a divinely-ordained mission were also observed from a religious standpoint in early American history, along with the geographical-positional and political standpoints. Experiences of and a belief in superiority, chosenness and a mission are ingrained in religious ideas in early colonial America. To understand the environment in which the United States was founded, religious aspect of that environment must be taken into consideration. The influence of American exceptionalism upon American foreign policy and the ways in which the American continent was being imagined by its

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<sup>110</sup> Lipset, *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword*, 19.

<sup>111</sup> The United States National Anthem – Star Spangled Banner, written by Francis Scott Key in 1814.

settlers, even before the formal founding of the United States in 1783 (with the official recognition coming from Europeans), were inherently shaped by the experiences and beliefs of certain religious communities.

The classical historical account of the migration from Europe to the North American continent usually starts with underscoring the oppressive environment in Europe that bred this influx of migrants.<sup>112</sup> During the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards, corresponding to a culturally and religiously diverse land, the North American continent was becoming some kind of an asylum for the religiously-politically persecuted in many parts of the Europe. It has been argued that adventurers, oppressed communities, people seeking better living standards, decided to set out a journey towards the New World with the hope of having a better and happier life. Having become, by the mid-17<sup>th</sup>. century, a center of attraction, the North American continent diversified in terms of the religious affiliations of those settlers. The French, the Spanish and the British had already been there, seeking to enjoy apparently unlimited resources of the uncharted continent.

One of the most important observations of the early United States was undertaken by French aristocrat Alexis de Tocqueville in 1835.<sup>113</sup> Particularly his observations of the role of religion in the organization of public and political life and in the formation of American national character are worthy of notice. In relation to cultural and religious diversity, Tocqueville stated that virtually every religious community hold a political opinion according to it.<sup>114</sup> Even though the evaluation of this has not always been so clear, the political tendencies of any religious community might at least be speculated by observing the practices and way of life. Nonetheless, claiming that religious communities have their own political opinions does not show that there is a close connection between government and religion.

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<sup>112</sup> “Religion and the Founding of the American Republic,” The Library of Congress Exhibitions, January 17, 2018, <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/religion/rel01.html>

<sup>113</sup> Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*.

<sup>114</sup> Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Vol I. chap. On Religion Considered as A Political Institution: How it Serves Powerfully The Maintenance of a Democratic Republic Among the Americans. 275.

In this context, it is known that the differences relating to “the freedom of religion” of the New World from the Old World manifested itself distinctly, being one of the powerful reasons for oppressed people to come to the American continent in the first place.<sup>115</sup> In terms of religion, as Tocqueville shown, the New World was regarded as relatively freer than the Old World and he closely observed that religion and political authority were divided into separate spheres and people not resigning themselves imprudently to a religious authority had settled the American continent mostly for this attitude.<sup>116</sup> It is apparent that some ideas and beliefs adopted by certain religious communities have been more influential compared to the practices of other religious communities in understanding exceptionalist origins. Not only were arguments and beliefs seen as bearing lessons for the nation’s future conduct, but also the communities’ practices and way of life were being considered significant in realizing the religious origins of exceptionalism.

In that vein, a much-debated issue in the literature has been the degree to which religious communities can be associated with the senses of superiority, chosenness, and a mission.<sup>117</sup> Historically, there have been a considerable number of religious communities who settled in the American continent and later became one of the distinct parts of the United States society such as; Puritans, Latter-day Saints (Mormons), Evangelical Protestants, Latino Protestants, Jews, White Catholics, Black Protestants, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mainline Protestants, and so forth.<sup>118</sup> What is worthy of notice here is not each religious groups’ interest or disinterest in exceptionalism,

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<sup>115</sup> Chris Seiple, “The Essence of Exceptionalism: Roger Williams and the Birth of Religious Freedom in America,” *Review of Faith and International Affairs* 10, no. 2 (2012): 13.

<sup>116</sup> de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Vol I. Chap. On Religion Considered as A Political Institution. 275.

<sup>117</sup> Following works analyze the prominent religious communities’ belief or disbelief in American exceptionalism, mostly in a historical context; James L. Guth, “The Religious Roots of Foreign Policy Exceptionalism,” *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 10, no. 2 (2012): 77–85; Philip L. Barlow, “Chosen Land, Chosen People: Religious and American Exceptionalism Among the Mormons,” *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 10, no. 2 (2012): 51–58; E. A. Tirkayian, “American Religious Exceptionalism: A Reconsideration,” *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 527, no. 1 (1993): 40–54.

<sup>118</sup> Guth, “The Religious Roots of Foreign Policy Exceptionalism,” 79.

rather, the focus must be on the influences of the most remarkable religious community ( in terms of influencing American exceptionalism) which has influenced the way in which exceptionalist thought emerged and evolved; the Puritans.

Although colonial America differed in terms of religious groups, Christianity is the primary religion in the process of American founding. Puritanism was basically one of the many sects of Protestantism. Puritans were a religious group originated in England in sixteenth and seventeenth centuries who strove to purify the Church of England from its Catholic positions.<sup>119</sup> Having become weary from the constraints imposed on them by the British Crown and the Church of England, the Puritans, particularly after the 1600s decided to depart for New England, where religious restrictions did not seem to exist.<sup>120</sup> The mid-1630s signified their most active years and also represented the founding years of Massachusetts Bay Colony. A chain of migration started with the “The Great Migration of 1630”, consisting of various peoples believing the New World, whose order was grounded on reason and freedom.<sup>121</sup>

It was during one of these “sacred journeys” –often referred to as pilgrimages- that we encountered with one of the oldest expressions of American exceptionalism articulating superiority, chosenness, and a mission. The Puritan Lawyer (and later Massachusetts Bay Colony Governor) John Winthrop’s famous sermon -*A Model of Christian Charity*- preached aboard the flagship *Arabella* of the Winthrop Fleet in 1630, was the first event in which an articulation of exceptionalism arose in American history.<sup>122</sup> The Puritan pilgrimages aboard the Winthrop Fleet considered themselves “Chosen People” destined for “Promised Land”. The Promised Land, obviously, was the North American continent. In accordance with their religious belief, Puritans believed that they had a God-favored divine mission to pursue God’s work on the

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<sup>119</sup> Sanford Kessler, “Tocqueville’s Puritans: Christianity and the American Founding,” *The Journal of Politics* 54, no. 3 (1992): 779.

<sup>120</sup> In today’s United States of America, New England region covers the easternmost states of; Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island.

<sup>121</sup> McEvoy-Levy, *American Exceptionalism and US Foreign Policy*, 24

<sup>122</sup> Ceaser, “The Origins and Character of American Exceptionalism”, 5.

earth.<sup>123</sup> Therefore, the place toward which they were heading must have been the chosen land in their own images to further their cause.

Within this context, this trait of having been chosen by God to pursue His work on earth has been a religious idea that can be originated in Abrahamic Covenant of the Jewish tradition. Revitalizing this form of interpretation of religion, particularly John Winthrop and generally the Puritans, made use of the discourse of promised land and chosen people in order to reflect on the sanctity of their pilgrimage. Here, it is understood that the origins of the beliefs of the Puritans date back to the Old Testament. This, in turn, shows that Puritanism was an essential and deep-seated religious interpretation. Since the Puritans applied this discourse to their tedious journey to America and consider themselves chosen people destined for the promised land, Tocqueville argued that these historical events laid the theological groundwork for them.<sup>124</sup>

Prior to their journey toward North America, the Puritans had been barred from reforming the Church of England at their option and been prohibited from duly practicing their interpretation of Protestant belief. For that reason, they had undertaken this journey toward this tedious environment. At the time of their journey, European countries were crumbling away due to the ecclesiastic-sectarian conflicts, for that reason, the Puritans sought to refrain from an adherence to the structures of religious authority.<sup>125</sup> This avoidance stemmed from the thinking that the Church was corrupt.

It has been speculated that John Winthrop needed to boost a sense of chosenness, togetherness, and brotherhood with a view to establishing a society in a strange and never-before-seen environment.<sup>126</sup> It was believed that he would call on his pilgrims;

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<sup>123</sup> Ceaser, "The Origins and Character of American Exceptionalism," 8.

<sup>124</sup> Kessler, "Tocqueville's Puritans: "Christianity and the American Founding," 781.

<sup>125</sup> Henry Kissinger, *World Order: Reflections on the Character of Nations and the Course of History* (United Kingdom: Penguin Books, 2015), 6.

<sup>126</sup> John Winthrop, *A Modell of Christian Charity*, 1630.  
<https://history.hanover.edu/texts/winthmod.html> (Accessed Date 29.10.2017) (Winthrop's

“we must be knit together as one man, we must entertain each other in a brotherly affection”.<sup>127</sup> These identity-affirming words, implying solidarity of the Puritans, were carefully laid down by John Winthrop in his sermon.

Accordingly, Winthrop eloquently articulated that the Puritan settlement (into Massachusetts Bay Colony) would be as “a city upon a hill”, purporting both the superiority of its people who are capable of building a city upon a hill, and the peculiar nature of the land upon which they were going to build their city.<sup>128</sup> The idea of building a city that would be on the hill stemmed from Jesus’s *Sermon on the Mountain*, reflecting the intent to be a model for future pilgrims.<sup>129</sup> Having pridefully declared the settlement as a city upon a hill, the Puritan lawyer Winthrop went on to state that “the eyes of all people are upon us”, trying to extend the reach and sanctity of this pilgrimage in the eyes of the pilgrims.<sup>130</sup> Winthrop tried to inspire his followers and the world through the purity and justness of these principles.<sup>131</sup> It is acknowledged that city upon a hill and the eyes of all people are upon us sentences were constructed to unite and to maintain the Puritan settlement on the American continent. In this sermon, we come across a strong sense and an eloquent articulation of superiority, chosenness, and a divine-mission.

Even after three centuries, the influence of this event remained visible in American politics. Even though American exceptionalism is not a roadmap that has always offered policy choices, American exceptionalism as the American national identity has served as the ideational framework of American foreign policy. That means, a continuity in the characteristics of American exceptionalism that shape foreign policy debate remained consistent. The ideas constructing American exceptionalism are

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main aim was to establish a society based on Puritan belief, therefore he may have maintained these arguments)

<sup>127</sup> Winthrop, *A Modell of Christian Charity*.

<sup>128</sup> Ceaser, “The Origins and Character of American Exceptionalism,” 5.

<sup>129</sup> Tomes, “American Exceptionalism in the Twenty-First Century,” 32.

<sup>130</sup> Ceaser, “The Origins and Character of American Exceptionalism,” 5.

<sup>131</sup> Kissinger, *World Order: Reflections on the Character of Nations and the Course of History*, 6.



always recalled by high-profile policymakers, in this respect, one of the most important was John F. Kennedy's recalling of John Winthrop and of Puritans.

For instance, in this context, on 9 January 1961, President-Elect John Fitzgerald Kennedy addressed Massachusetts General Court and reminded the audience that unique experiences of Governor John Winthrop and his fellows. With this reference to early American exceptionalism, John F. Kennedy (JFK) paved the way for the utilization of this identity-affirming theme of Puritan legacy by his successors as well. As we will see in the next chapters, the same references were also made by subsequent presidents Ronald Reagan, George W. Bush, Barack Obama in their public addresses and statements.

When JFK was elected president in 1960, international challenges facing the United States and responsibilities he was supposed to meet were daunting. Establishing a connection between the stark Cold War realities and the tedious environment in which John Winthrop had found himself, JFK argued in a speech that;

“For we are setting out upon a voyage in 1961 no less hazardous than that undertaken by the *Arabella* in 1630. We are committing ourselves to tasks of statecraft no less awesome than that of governing the Massachusetts Bay Colony, beset as it was then by terror without and disorder within.”<sup>132</sup>

As it can be seen JFK likened the tasks facing his country to the hazardous tasks of John Winthrop. In doing so, JFK continued a long-standing tradition in American politics and references to this even continued to proliferate in an ever-mounting manner. JFK's association of his duties with those of Winthrop shows the extent to which American exceptionalism is influential in foreign policy. American exceptionalism has been the ideational framework of American foreign policy and this shows that those various ideas forming this ideational framework are utilized by high-profile policymakers. The ideas of superiority, chosenness and mission may be lurking in the background, however, policymakers did not always refer to the phrase

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<sup>132</sup> John F. Kennedy, “City upon a Hill” speech given on 9 January 1961, in Massachusetts (accessed 6 December, 2017) <https://www.jfklibrary.org/AssetViewer/ohJztSnpV06qFJUT9etUZQ.aspx>

“American exceptionalism” when formulating policies containing such ideas. In that respect, during the Cold War, JFK was the first to employ John Winthrop’s statements. Adherents to American exceptionalism applied this form of Puritan thinking to identify American history with a God-favored divine-mission, acting in the cause of humanity’s sake rather than the ill-fated pursuit of self-interest.<sup>133</sup>

The significance of the ideas and beliefs of the Puritan community stems from two main themes. On the one hand, the Puritans, considering themselves chosen people and considering New England a New Israel, were the first community to flame such exceptionalist tendencies.<sup>134</sup> On the other hand, since the practices carried out by the Puritans in the formation of the national character of the United States -bringing equal freedom to America- the Puritans were regarded as the founders of the United States by Tocqueville.<sup>135</sup> To Tocqueville, the Puritans were the founders of the United States owing to their “exceptionalist” religious and political practices that had a significant influence on American national character. Principles adopted by the Puritans had long-standing, if not permanent, influences on American national character. They helped facilitate the process of the evolution of American national character toward an exceptionalist vision. In the province of New England founded by the Puritans, religious and political principles which later came to dominate the way the United States was organized were practically introduced by the Puritans; “limited government”, “delegated power” and “popular sovereignty”.<sup>136</sup>

These democratic principles were later adopted, as is known, across the United States. However, a genuine appreciation of the Puritans does not mean that they were the only source of democracy in America. The issue is a timing issue. The adoption of these principles in the province of New England represented a milestone in American history. The reason for this is its newness at the time. When assessing the environment

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<sup>133</sup> Tomes, “American Exceptionalism in the Twenty-First Century,” 30.

<sup>134</sup> Philip S. Gorski and William McMillan, “Barack Obama and American Exceptionalisms,” *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 10, no. 2 (2012): 41–50.

<sup>135</sup> Kessler, “Tocqueville’s Puritans: Christianity and the American Founding,” 777–78.

<sup>136</sup> Kessler, “Tocqueville’s Puritans: Christianity and the American Founding,” 779.

in which the Puritans decided to set out a journey toward the American continent, we should not forget the fact that the European countries were being ruled by absolute monarchs and the people's participation in political life seemed restricted to a certain extent.<sup>137</sup> It is these circumstances that made the embracement of these principles and broadly of democracy in New England exceptional. Placed in a comparative context, New England Puritans showed a greater propensity towards democratic practices than the European aristocracies did. Therefore, it can be advocated that the Puritans made a favorable contribution to American's self-understanding, to ideas they believe in, to the governing principles of the United States. Despite the exceptionalist influences that the Puritans had upon American national character, the Puritan influence failed to remain a lasting contribution in American politics. Even during Tocqueville's times –the early 1830s- the Puritan influence started to be taken over by materialism, commercialism and individualism.<sup>138</sup> Characterised by these interests defined in terms of economic principles, American liberal ideology vitiated the Puritan's way of life. Towards the early 1830s, self-interest and "spirit of freedom" replaced the virtues of Christianity advocated by the Puritans, in American life.<sup>139</sup>

The short and long run influences of Puritans on American founding and on American foreign policy, therefore, on American exceptionalism can sometimes be exaggerated or undermined.<sup>140</sup> Claiming that the Puritans help build the American national character and contributed the organizing of the United States can be tenable owing to the arguments above. However, what we need to acknowledge is not the degree to which the Puritans influenced the certain codes of conduct, rather, the exceptionalist tendency regarding Puritans was the widespread religious belief of chosenness and identity-affirming discourse promoted by Winthrop. The idea of American exceptionalism, therefore, has a religious background.

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<sup>137</sup> Kessler, "Tocqueville's Puritans: Christianity and the American Founding," 783.

<sup>138</sup> Kagan, *Dangerous Nation: America's Foreign Policy from Its Earliest Days to the Dawn of the Twentieth Century*. 10.

<sup>139</sup> Kessler, "Tocqueville's Puritans: Christianity and the American Founding," 787.

<sup>140</sup> Kagan, *Dangerous Nation*, 10.

### 3.2. Geographical-Positional Origins

A great number of factors affect the ways in which nations make sense of themselves. For a proper sense of self, historical, religious, geographical, political, philosophical and social origins need to be combined. If merely one of those origins is taken into consideration, this would lead to a restricted point of view, undermining the whole. To understand how an idea evolved and how it has been configured historically, one needs to pay attention to the components affecting it. However, by saying this I do not claim that my arguments will account for every origin, instead, I need to emphasize that the imperative indivisibility of origins will haunt us if we do not give a place to them.

Hence, as I have frequently indicated, I operationalize American exceptionalism as the belief in America's superiority, chosenness, and a mission. These are the senses that lead to the formation of American national identity. Also, these senses are derived from many ideas which I divide into three categories above. In this regard, I will show that geographical-positional origins have helped the formation of these beliefs, to a certain extent, as did religious origins. It is clear that both of them need to be placed in a historical context to further and to strengthen my arguments about American exceptionalism. For that matter, I have attempted to clarify religious origins of the idea of American exceptionalism above, now I attempt to elaborate on the geographical-positional origins of the idea of American exceptionalism in a historical context.

I mainly argue that geographical-positional origins of the land on which the United States came to be founded has affected how the Americans think about themselves. The influence of geography upon the fates of countries has been recognized throughout history. In this context, Aaron David Miller has argued that if there was a "central organizing principle" in relation to the United States, which means an overarching-guiding set of rules that would guide the conduct of foreign policy, that would be the geographical location of the United States.<sup>141</sup> As it can be seen, so much importance has been attached to the location when explaining American foreign policy. Likewise,

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<sup>141</sup> Aaron David Miller, "How Geography Explains the United States," *Foreign Policy*, 2013. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/04/16/how-geography-explains-the-united-states/> (Accessed Date: 15.04.2018)

most of foreign policy analyses take geographical conditions seriously. In order to address the issue more generally, I will analyze these conditions as spatial origins. As I have shown earlier, within the literature, one of the most significant arguments of American exceptionalism is the New World's distinctive features from the Old World.<sup>142</sup> This is a geographical-positional origin affecting the construction of American exceptionalism. The New World was uncharted enough for the settlers to think that they were somehow at least “different” than others.

In this respect, it is known that the geographical environment in which the United States arose was quite different than that of other great powers. First and foremost, almost throughout two hundred and fifty years, the United States has had the pleasure of having two vast oceans to its west and east. This condition came to be called “free security”. This distinguishing feature of the New World has served the United States well in terms of two objectives. One of them is security-related. Since the United States has had two vast oceans and two non-aggressive neighbors, Canada and Mexico, it has enjoyed this situation stemming from geographical uniqueness.<sup>143</sup> Thanks mostly to this situation, the United States since its very founding years, has not had an existential as well as an exogenous threat to its security. Of course, this should not be considered as if there were not any entities, peoples and as if the United States became a great power without feeling insecure even one moment and without firing a bullet.<sup>144</sup> There were fierce encroachments on British territories by the French and by the Native Americans that aimed to encircle the colonies and threatened their security and scant livelihood.<sup>145</sup>

Also, there were wars stemming from land hunger and fierce confrontations between the newly born the United States and Mexico especially in the mid-1840s, however, Mexico has posed no existential threat to the United States. Threats coming from

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<sup>142</sup> Restad, *American Exceptionalism: An idea that made a nation and remade the world*, 3.

<sup>143</sup> Miller, “How Geography Explains the United States,”.

<sup>144</sup> McCrisken, “Exceptionalism”, 64.

<sup>145</sup> Jeremi Suri, “Revolution,” *Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy Volume 3 O-W* (Charles Scribner's Sons, 2002), 425.

inland did not refrain from raising difficulties. Land issues with Native Americans, wars with the Britain and Spain colonies kept the United States at bay for a while.

The other objective resulting from the distinguishing features of the New World was that it allowed the United States to become a hegemon first on the North American and then on the whole American continent. The putative lack of an existential threat to its security gave rise to the claim that the whole continent must be owned by the United States. More and more land acquisition and this land hunger can also be associated with many reasons. The nineteenth century continental expansion and continuous unilateral internationalist policy were eloquently embodied in the Monroe Doctrine and the Manifest Destiny.

In 1823, President James Monroe declared the *Monroe Doctrine*, proclaiming that no longer the colonization of the American continent would be welcomed and further, would be aggressively opposed.<sup>146</sup> By extension, it would not be in the interest of the United States to participate in the European games of power, therefore, since the United States would not participate in them, the European countries, especially whose imperial forces tend to take advantage of America, were advised not to regard America, any longer, as a continent to be colonized. The Monroe Doctrine not only embodied the already ingrained sense of separateness with Europe stemming from geographical position, but also the quest for westward expansion propounded by the Monroe Doctrine was in the interests of the United States emboldened by American identity.<sup>147</sup>

After the proclamation of the Monroe Doctrine, this time in the early 1840s, the idea of *Manifest Destiny* which is in line with the Monroe Doctrine, came about. The Manifest Destiny embodied the interest regarding the westward expansion in the nineteenth century, just like the Monroe Doctrine did.<sup>148</sup> As to the annexation of Texas in 1845, an editor from New York's *Democratic Review* -John O'Sullivan- argued;

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<sup>146</sup> James Monroe White House - <https://www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/presidents/james-monroe/> (Access date: 12.12.2017)

<sup>147</sup> McEvoy-leyv, *American Exceptionalism and US Foreign Policy*, 25.

<sup>148</sup> McCrisken, "Exceptionalism", 68.

“She (Texas) comes within the dear and sacred designation of Our Country.... Other nations have undertaken to intrude themselves.....in a spirit of hostile interference against us, for the avowed object of thwarting our policy and hampering our power, limiting our greatness and checking the fulfillment of our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions.”<sup>149</sup>

This statement was the clearest definition and figuration of the nineteenth-century’s westward expansion which was the policy of Manifest Destiny. It can be argued that the Manifest Destiny policy came to light with that quotation. Many authors rightfully equated Manifest Destiny with the nineteenth-century form of American exceptionalism, signifying the American identity affected American foreign policy.<sup>150</sup> Historically, it is known that many land acquisitions by various empires were justified by religious claims. The land hunger here can be seen as a classical feature of an empire, but the ways of legitimizing the act of annexation were purely exceptional. The Monroe Doctrine and the policy of Manifest Destiny, both maintained the unilateral internationalist foreign policy for the United States. In addition to their similar trajectories, the Monroe Doctrine was developed by pragmatic reasons and the Manifest destiny with religious reasons. Both foreign policies were produced within the ideational framework provided by the idea of American exceptionalism. As it can be seen, American exceptionalism depends, to a certain extent, on religious commitments, however, the idea has not completely evolved out of religious commitments and religious motivated claims. This is a point that we need to understand purely.

### **3.3. Political Origins**

Like religious and geographical-positional origins, political origins of American exceptionalism are many as well. The ideas that compose political origins were adopted as the foundational principles by high-profile policymakers as well as by

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<sup>149</sup> John O’Sullivan, “Annexation”, *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* 17, no 1. (1845): 2.

<sup>150</sup> Restad, *American Exceptionalism: An idea that made a nation and remade the world*, 38.

significant figures of the time of founding. From founding documents and from events that led to the ratification of those documents, it is understood that there were distinctive ideas which contained desires and impressions about what kind of a country would the United States be. That is to say, the influence of the ideas that Founding Fathers hold was significant in terms of the future conduct of the nation. Because they were permanent and resonated with the way of organizing American government.

Political origins of the idea of American exceptionalism are inherently related to the political culture of the United States. As a matter of fact, understanding the distinctiveness of any political culture is only possible in a comparative context. In imagining the political culture of the United States, we have to appeal to the situation in European countries at that time. In this regard, the founding documents and the very event of founding surely affected the ways in which the United States is organized. Also, the ideas enshrined in those documents are today the fundamentals both for the political culture and for the worldview of Americans. That means certain ideas reflected in the founding have made their imprint visible on the formation of American national character. A national character, after all, is best visible through the eyes of people that constructed it. With these in mind, I attempt to associate the founding ideas with the American national identity.

The widely shared political ideas, beliefs, and ideals are the political culture that form the national identity. In other words, as political scientist Thomas E. Patterson has put it, “Americans’ beliefs are the foundations of their national identity.”<sup>151</sup> This means that American national identity is not derived from a “common ancestry”, but it is tied to the adoption of a set of distinct values that have in time formed the political culture of the United States. Liberty, individualism, equality, self-government, separation of powers, constitutionalism, limited government, representative government, private property are the core American values that are ingrained both in American national identity and the political culture.<sup>152</sup> The core American values arose from certain

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<sup>151</sup> Thomas E. Patterson, *We The People: An Introduction to American Government*, 11th ed. (New York: McGraw Hill Education, 2015), 8.

<sup>152</sup> Patterson, *We The People: An Introduction to American Government*, 9.



events in history. To understand the American political culture and its relation to American national identity, we have to know the implications of the ratification of both the Declaration of Independence in 1776 and the U.S. Constitution in 1787. Furthermore, The American War of Independence contained significant insights in relation to political culture. Below I analyze the political origins of American exceptionalism with an understanding of American national identity.

One of the most influential reasons for an American identity apart from the British was carefully laid down by a radical immigrant Thomas Paine. In his revolutionary pamphlet, *Common Sense*, pressed and distributed prior to Declaration of Independence in 1776, Paine masterfully justified the reasons for an American separation from Britain; arguing that submission to and being contingent upon Britain would cause this continent to be a part of European wars in which the continent would not have any interest.<sup>153</sup> It is in the interest of America to stand clear from the struggles in Europe. Paine went on to argue that there is no example in the universe that shows the satellite is bigger than the planet around which it is orbiting. These arguments of Paine drew much attention and the influences of this revolutionary pamphlet can be found in Declaration of Independence.

First and foremost, in American History, there are a few events that have affected the course of American history as much as Declaration of Independence of 1776 did. The official title of the document was “The unanimous Declaration of thirteen united States of America”.<sup>154</sup> It is the thirteen colonies’ proclamation of their independence from Britain. The Declaration of Independence is known for its famous article proclaiming “that all men are created equal”<sup>155</sup> and by extension is acknowledged as advocating equality, liberty, and liberal political values. The Declaration of Independence embodied the characteristics of American national identity. Standing up to tyranny, seeking freedom and sealing its fate with their own hands, the authors of the Declaration of Independence powerfully influenced the development of the political

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<sup>153</sup> Patterson, *We the People: An Introduction to American Government*, 316.

<sup>154</sup> Declaration of Independence (1776). [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/declare.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/declare.asp)

<sup>155</sup> Declaration of Independence, 1776.

origins of American exceptionalism.<sup>156</sup> When considering the year in which it was written and it was undertaken in the midst of the political, social, military turmoils of that time, it was a radical way, affecting other peoples around the world. Eloquently organized by Thomas Jefferson, the articles of the Declaration of Independence expressed the reasons that were meticulously articulated for this decision of separation from Britain.

Further, it was these reasons in which certain political ideas and related ideals were embedded. First and foremost, it is understood from its most famous paragraph that Founding Fathers had faith both in the principle of equality and in fundamental rights and freedoms. That famous paragraph asserts;

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain Unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.”<sup>157</sup>

The claims that “all men are created equal” and “certain unalienable rights” were derived from theories of John Locke, a contemporary British philosopher. Locke, whom Jefferson considered one of three greatest men who has ever lived, had argued before the declaration that all men ought to be able to have certain rights by virtue of being humans; “Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness.”<sup>158</sup>

Apart from this famous paragraph, Declaration of Independence singled out the arrogant practices of the British Crown, among these are; his disavowal of the rule of law and his arbitrary regime, the abusive nature of centralization, the failure of the realisation of representative practices, creating tensions by raising difficulties for legislative bodies in the American continent, “constant abuse of individual rights”, his

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<sup>156</sup> Declaration of Independence, 1776.

<sup>157</sup> Declaration of Independence, 1776.

<sup>158</sup> Patterson, *We the People: An Introduction to American Government*, 32.

“obstructionist and interventionist” attempts to the colonies in their own governments, “harassing the officials”, cutting of trade with all parts of the world but the Britain.<sup>159</sup>

Relying on these, the American colonists declared their independence from Britain. Appealed as a last resort, the independence was not earned easily and immediately. Fierce encounters came about, as the Americans were fighting for a different form of government, one that dependent on people, deriving its power from the consent of the governed, not governed according to the whims of a king.<sup>160</sup> From the American Revolution and the Declaration of Independence, grow out of a need to forge the American identity. Because in the time of the writing of the Declaration of Independence Americans and the British were brothers, there was no need to break free from them.

Nonetheless, after the aforementioned practices and especially tax issues that became a burden to the colonists’ already fragile economy, brotherhood came to an end. In this respect, a strong need to forge American identity by differentiating it from its British origins appeared. As I have stated earlier, American identity does not depend on a common ancestry and common history. Since its this nature, the American identity had to be formed from ideas that allow the United States to separate from the Britain. As Restad has eloquently put it; “the United States had to look to the future for a national identity, where nothing but ideas existed.”<sup>161</sup> With the successes of the Revolution and winning the subsequent battles, the Americans were provided with a strong event for their claims of superiority and chosenness. Ideas of the policymakers and of the then very small population of the United States, therefore, created the basis for their identity, and the Revolution, in turn, came to serve as an evidence for their claims of superiority and chosenness.

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<sup>159</sup> An abstract summary of the articles of Declaration of Independence, 1776.

<sup>160</sup> Patterson, *We the People: An Introduction to American Government*, 32.

<sup>161</sup> Restad, *American Exceptionalism: An idea that made a nation and remade the world*, 47.

In this respect, if we define identity as the “national ideologies of distinctiveness“ by taking inspiration from Katzenstein<sup>162</sup>, the formation of American identity in the period of the American Revolution and its immediate afterwards makes even more sense. The Americans had to depend on American exceptionalism as the basis for the formation of their identity. Because American exceptionalism, as is it seen, was the underlying basis on which ideas of superiority and chosenness were built. But this process of formation did not start at a clear point and has not ended yet. It has been a process of construction that best defines the American identity. The American identity was forged in the revolution, and then continued to be reinforced as the Republic grew stronger and expanded at an increasing rate.<sup>163</sup>

As it can be seen, the American Revolution and Declaration of Independence contained ideas that are significant in the formation of American identity. Also, the Constitution of the United States relied on these ideas and introduced how to govern the United States differently from European countries. The key importance of the Constitution of the United States lays here;

“We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”<sup>164</sup>

It is clear that Founding Fathers tried to “form a more perfect union”, meaning forging and maintaining their national identity. But while forging this national identity, they did not avoid from “insuring domestic Tranquility”. This had to be made carefully since there were no common ancestry and common bloodline that united the Americans together. Instead, there were a set of distinct ideas such as; liberty, individualism, equality, self-government, constitutionalism, limited government, representative government, private property from which American identity was

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<sup>162</sup> Katzenstein, “Introduction: Alternative Perspectives on National Security.” 6.

<sup>163</sup> Restad, *American Exceptionalism: An idea that made a nation and remade the world*, 46.

<sup>164</sup> The preamble of the Constitution of the United States.  
[http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/usconst.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/usconst.asp)

derived. All of these ideas served to the advancement of American exceptionalism, along religious and geographical-positional origins.

One of the prominent figures analyzing American exceptionalism comparatively, Byron E. Shafer, argues that “the array of American national institutions of government qualifies as exceptional.”<sup>165</sup> Beliefs and ideals that formed American political culture are also inherently reflected in American institutions of government. Basically, liberty refers to the fact that individuals have rights that go beyond the reach of the majority. Self-government amounts to the right of the majority to rule which can sometimes contradict with the rights of the minority. Equality stands for two meanings; one is everyone ought to be equal in terms of opportunities, which is equality of opportunity. The second one is the equality before the law. Limited Government is a government of restricted power.<sup>166</sup> As has been frequently quoted, Thomas Jefferson advised; “That government is best which governs least”.<sup>167</sup> Successors of Jefferson intended to sustain the implications of that dictum in American politics.

Another principle which positively influenced American political culture has been the separation of powers. It basically means the separation of three government branches; Judicial, Legislative and Executive.<sup>168</sup> In American government, these three branches cannot interfere in the issues that are outside of their authorities. Judicial authority is shared by the Supreme Court and the Senate, legislative authority is shared by the Congress, the President, and the Supreme Court, executive authority is for the President and the Congress.<sup>169</sup>

The principle of separation of power is the most certain way of assuring the liberty of the people. It prevents the government from becoming a tyranny, a regime type

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<sup>165</sup> Byron E. Shafer, “‘Exceptionalism’ in American Politics?,” *Political Science and Politics* 22, no. 3 (2014): 588.

<sup>166</sup> Patterson, *We the People: An Introduction to American Government*, 29.

<sup>167</sup> Patterson, *We the People: An Introduction to American Government*, 35.

<sup>168</sup> Patterson, *We The People: An Introduction to American Government*, 48.

<sup>169</sup> Patterson, *We The People: An Introduction to American Government*, 48.

Founding Fathers detested. Thereby it also serves to the peaceful transition of power, which would be a vital value for a democracy to be maintained and respected. Thus, it needs to be stated when there is a separation of power, there cannot be absolute tyranny, as in the case of the United States. Unless tyranny is in effect, liberty can have the best possible guardians to protect it. Liberty, in this sense, signifies the right to be free of repressive government and to be free of foreign domination. Both of its meaning can be assured through the concept of the separation of powers. The mode of American government affected American exceptionalism as a political origin by providing the embodiment of certain ideas. The mode of American government was so new when it was first introduced, it influenced the American claim to be a model for other to emulate, as the saying goes; “Democracy had found its champion”. As we have seen, the idea of American exceptionalism has distinct as well as deep-seated political origins. In that vein, ideas that are incidental to the Americans or the ideas that have proved exceptional usage in American politics are many. As Byron Shafer puts it, “political culture is a set of values about how politics ought to be conducted.”<sup>170</sup> Therefore, these core American values such as liberty, individualism, equality, self-government, separation of powers, constitutionalism, limited government, representative government, private property, to a certain extent, left a significant impression upon American identity.<sup>171</sup>

Also, these ideas and the ways of defining them, embracing them, documenting them, distinguished the American political culture from its contemporaries, and therefore, distinguished the American identity as well. When the Declaration of Independence was written in the eighteenth century, in European countries the power was vested in a small few, people’s participation in government was too little. In most countries, the rule was what king and a small few said it was. In the United States, the Constitution carefully articulated the laws according to which states and the union were going to be governed.

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<sup>170</sup> Shafer, “Exceptionalism in American Politics,” 592.

<sup>171</sup> Patterson, *We The People: An Introduction to American Government*, 9.

In conclusion, I have so far attempted to show the religious, geographical-positional and political origins out of which American exceptionalism evolved. The idea is so complex that it has many origins, apart from religious, geographical-positional and political standpoints.

In religious origins, I have emphasized the roles played by the Puritans and John Winthrop in the formation of American identity as exceptional. In geographical-positional origins, I have stated that the idea of being settled in an uncharted continent changed the American's thinking about government in comparison to the Europeans who were struggling in a smaller geography. Also, I have added that the lack of existential threats to the United States from inland gave the United States a position that is steady. The Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution and as a whole American political culture, have affected the American national identity. In the next chapter, I will show the relation between the idea of American exceptionalism and American foreign policy. An exemplary strand of American exceptionalism is thought to have caused an isolationist foreign policy, and a missionary strand of American exceptionalism is thought to have caused an internationalist foreign policy. However, I will argue that the idea of American exceptionalism has advocated American leadership in world affairs.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE BELIEF IN AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM AND U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

Thus far in this thesis, I have focused on the theoretical framework of American exceptionalism, which I have analyzed it in terms of its relation to the American national identity. Also, I have analyzed the religious, geographical-positional and political origins of American exceptionalism within a historical context. In this chapter, the relationship between the belief in American exceptionalism and American foreign policy is to be articulated. To convey this relation, the terms will be chosen appropriately. To do so, I need to define the terms appropriately and also in conformity with their meaning gained in the context of American foreign policy. Redefining *isolationism*, *internationalism* and correspondingly, *unilateralism* and *multilateralism*, I seek to avoid the misunderstandings of those terms. In this chapter, isolationism, internationalism, unilateralism and multilateralism refer to following understandings.

*Isolationism* will signify not partaking in an area of international affairs, even if a state could have the means to that end. Isolation policy can be carried out in terms of politically, militarily and economically. On the other hand, *internationalism* is quintessentially the opposite of isolationism and it means actively engaging in international affairs, taking part in international affairs politically, militarily, economically.<sup>172</sup> Apparently, isolationism and internationalism is about whether or not one would engage with the world. Whereas isolationism advocates no, internationalism ardently argues yes. Isolationism and internationalism need to be understood in this respect.

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<sup>172</sup> William F. Kuehl and Gary B. Ostrower, "Internationalism," in *Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy*, ed. Alexander DeConde, Richard Dean Burns, and Fredrick Logevall, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2002), 241.



But, the other terms, unilateralism and multilateralism are an answer to the question of *how* to engage with the world, either on your own or with and through the other countries. *Unilateralism* means that the United States has always sought to preserve its freedom of action, seeking greater maneuverability while engaging in international affairs. It does not account for an idle and a disoriented method of foreign policy. *Multilateralism*, on the other hand, means that coordinating policies with other actors, following the rules and submitting to multilateral decisions in some policy areas, thereby reducing the limit of one's maneuverability in policy.<sup>173</sup>

My argument is that the United States has always pursued an internationalist foreign policy, actively engaging with the world since its founding and at the same time, the United States, always sought to create a greater maneuverability for itself, tried to ardently preserve its freedom of action in the event of a subordination of its sovereignty to multilateral ventures, even if it helped to establish. I also argue that unilateralism and internationalism have far more analytical utility for understanding American foreign policy and that we should get rid of the policy isolationism.<sup>174</sup> Isolationism as a subject exists in the literature, however, the policy of isolationism does not have an explanatory power. Also, the word isolationism was only developed in the twentieth century.<sup>175</sup> Within this context, I argue that unilateralism is a consequence of the belief in American exceptionalism, which is American identity.<sup>176</sup> Seeing that the United States is chosen and superior and has a God-favored mission, it can be understood that

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<sup>173</sup> James A. Caporaso, "International Relations Theory and Multilateralism: The Search for Foundations", *International Organization* 46, no (3), 1992, 603.

<sup>174</sup> Restad, *American Exceptionalism: An Idea That Made a Nation and Remade the World*, 234–35. Lane Crothers, "The Cultural Roots of Isolationism and Internationalism in American Foreign Policy," *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 9, no. 1 (2011): 32. Skidmore, "Understanding the Unilateralist Turn in U.S. Foreign Policy," 224. Andrew Johnstone, "Isolationism and Internationalism in American Foreign Relations," *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 9, no. 1 (2011): 12. Thomas Mane Kane, *Theoretical Roots of US Foreign Policy: Machiavelli and American Unilateralism* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 3. McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter With the World Since 1776*, 39.

<sup>175</sup> Manfred Jonas, "Isolationism," in *Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy E-N*, ed. Alexander DeConde, Richard Dean Burns, and Fredrick Logevall, 2<sup>nd</sup> edi (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2002), 337.

<sup>176</sup> Johnstone, "Isolationism and Internationalism in American Foreign Relations," 12. Restad, *American Exceptionalism: An Idea That Made a Nation and Remade the World*, 234.

the United States is not supposed to restrain its freedom of action. Consequently, it must defend its constitution and sovereignty in the face of attempts to subordinate them to any other international rule.

While I argue that isolationism was not a valid policy and unilateralism offered a more proper analytical tool for American foreign policy, I will be explaining why it is the case. As I have shown above, the literature points out that American exceptionalism is related to two identities; exemplary-isolationist and missionary-internationalist. While showing the case in the literature, I do not agree with isolationism being a foreign policy tradition. Isolationism exists in the literature somehow, however, I will explain that American identity is not divided into two parts and it is a stable one, informing the continuous unilateral internationalist foreign policy.

The most apparent indication of American exceptionalism is the promotion of American leadership through the application of Americans' ideas. With this in mind, it can be indicated that the promotion of American leadership abroad has primarily been necessitated by American identity, meaning that because of the American principles, the United States must lead. Either by leading as an example or by actively engaging in the world affairs, American exceptionalism has promoted American leadership.

In terms of divided identities and foreign policy, Hilde Restad has eloquently put forward that scholars have denoted American identity as exemplary and missionary by linking; the former to the sermon preached by John Winthrop, "City Upon a Hill" in the seventeenth century and the latter to Woodrow Wilson's early twentieth century statement in which he proclaimed that the mission of the United States is to "make the world safe for democracy".<sup>177</sup> Along these lines, Trevor McCrisken has also pointed out that exemplary identity is reflected in ideas such as "non-entangling alliances", "anti-imperialism", "non-interventionism" and that missionary identity is reflected in

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<sup>177</sup> Restad, *American Exceptionalism: An idea that made a nation and remade the world*, 7.

ideas such as “imperialism”, “leader of the free world”, “new world order”.<sup>178</sup> Exemplary identity and missionary identity are constructed by these various ideas.

Here, I need to focus on implications of “exemplary” and “missionary” identities discussed in the context of American foreign policy. As is normally known, an example is expected to have a potential for leading the others toward something benevolent. An example has the best and brightest capabilities for doing something important. Moreover, this condition implies having certain characteristics to which the others aspire to have. For that reason, it is natural that the exemplary one leads, while the others tend to follow. In the context of American foreign policy, exemplary identity was relying on the differences between the New World and the Old World.<sup>179</sup> In this respect, only in doing so could the New World maintain its assumed superiority over the Old. As we will see, that fledgling sentiment in America was depicted on several occasions by high-profile policymakers and figures of the newly-emerging United States, thereby informing the exemplary identity.<sup>180</sup> However, the United States did not isolate itself from the Old World, neither Puritans nor Founding Fathers wanted to cut off the relations with Europe, meaning that isolationism did not become a policy.

The United States even in the early years of the Republic, could not have been isolated from the international affairs for following reasons. Building a merchant fleet immediately after the independence, the United States was engaging in international trade, forming -temporary- alliances with France against the British, and struggling to solve continental issues.<sup>181</sup> It is clear that a policy of isolationism would not include this form of activities. Far from being isolated, the United States pursued an internationalist foreign policy, thereby engaging with other countries even since its founding. A disdain for the European continent’s great power struggles lead to the United States to maintain its unity and preserve its capabilities to do that, but in no

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<sup>178</sup> McCrisken, “Exceptionalism,” 63.

<sup>179</sup> McCrisken, “Exceptionalism”, 65.

<sup>180</sup> George Washington’s Farewell Address in 1796, Thomas Jefferson’s Inaugural Address in 1801, James Monroe’s Monroe Doctrine outlined in 1823, can be given as examples.

<sup>181</sup> Crothers, “The Cultural Roots of Isolationism and Internationalism in American Foreign Policy,” 23.

way it led the United States to isolate itself from the world. Apart from early years of the Republic, post-First World War years, especially the 1930s, were also identified with isolationist foreign policy.<sup>182</sup> Most of the reasons for the existence of isolationism in the literature stemmed from the fact that the United States' interest in the First World War did not justify the killing of American soldiers and that the United States did not have a just cause or a direct national interest.<sup>183</sup> Nevertheless, just as its early years, the United States never isolated itself from the world in the 1930s. There were neutrality acts to be used to claim that isolationism was the actual policy, however, the United States in the 1930s was engaged with the world to the extent that such isolationism would not have been possible.

The other identity, which is missionary identity, has been a much-debated concept as well. I argue that missionary identity informs the internationalist foreign policy and the divided identities must be ended in the literature in favor of missionary identity and isolationism ought to be refuted because it did not become actual policy and it had no explanatory power.<sup>184</sup> At the basic level, the word missionary amounts to the person who spreads his religion in accordance with requisites of his beliefs. In general, it can cover an ambit that is not confined merely to proselytizing. Therefore, missionary identity is tied to spreading values that are thought to be universal. These are principles, values, and ideas that have informed the idea of American exceptionalism. The missionary identity advises that the adoption of these principles would lead to a more benevolent, more peaceful and more harmonious world.<sup>185</sup> In a sense, missionary identity advocates that American principles are universal principles. In practice, this meant ardently fulfilling a mission of disseminating the American principles.<sup>186</sup> In this

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<sup>182</sup> American Isolationism in the 1930s, "Office of the Historian", <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1937-1945/american-isolationism> (Accessed Date: 31.01.2018)

<sup>183</sup> American Isolationism in the 1930s, "Office of the Historian".

<sup>184</sup> Restad, "Old Paradigms in History Die Hard in Political Science: US Foreign Policy and American Exceptionalism," 71.

<sup>185</sup> Restad, *American Exceptionalism: An Idea That Made a Nation and Remade the World*, 38.

<sup>186</sup> Restad, *American Exceptionalism: An idea that made a nation and remade the world*, 7.

respect, it has been indicated that the missionary identity is inherently tied to actively promoting the American leadership abroad.<sup>187</sup> Occasionally, it has required the use of force in the realization of this task.

In that vein, what I emphasize is that the relationship between the idea of American exceptionalism and American foreign policy in the literature is framed within two identities and within their respective foreign policies. I do not agree with this and argue that isolationism needs to be refuted. But, to better state my argument, both isolationism and internationalism need to be reinvestigated. One has to know their pure origins with a view to understanding their broader implications for foreign policy. Isolationism remained at the level of ideas, and hence it did not become a policy. The continuous policy of the United States informed by the American identity has been unilateral internationalism, as I will show below. American foreign policy is often explained with foreign policy traditions. So, there are various American foreign policy traditions. Given the span of years in which American foreign policy has been practiced, the increasing plurality of such various traditions is appropriate. These foreign policy traditions are so ingrained in American political discourse that some historians have suggested that American foreign policy has swung like a pendulum between isolationism and internationalism/interventionism. But, I do not agree with this.

Likewise, William McDougall outlines what was arguably the “American Bible of Foreign Affairs” as; Old Testament and New Testament.<sup>188</sup> According to McDougall, the former includes Liberty or Exceptionalism (so-called), Unilateralism or Isolationism (so-called), The American system or Monroe Doctrine (so-called), Expansionism and Manifest Destiny (so-called). The latter comprises of Progressive Imperialism, Wilsonianism or Liberal Internationalism (so-called), Containment and Global Meliorism.<sup>189</sup> Global Meliorism, according to Dougall, represents the American

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<sup>187</sup> Tomes, “American Exceptionalism in the Twenty-First Century”, 28.

<sup>188</sup> McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter With the World Since 1776*, 10.

<sup>189</sup> McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter With the World Since 1776*, 10.

mission to make the world a better place.<sup>190</sup> Dougall's overall point is that in explaining American foreign policy the Old Testament yields its validity to the New Testament, and the appendage "so-called" means that he challenges the conventional usages of those terms in the literature.<sup>191</sup>

Most approaches like Dougall's has tended to draw periods between distinctive foreign policy traditions. Still, dividing American foreign policy into cycles of isolationism and internationalism/interventionism is seen by some as a futile endeavor.<sup>192</sup> This point has merit in relation to my argument. I, also, do not divide American foreign policy into cycles. Rather than trying to divide, observing the patterns that allow us to proclaim continuity in foreign policy would be useful in terms of understanding American exceptionalism. Because, as an idea, American exceptionalism goes as far-back as the early 1600s and American exceptionalism has been the ideational basis American foreign policy.

To understand the existing distinction between identities, we have to look for recurring patterns in the debate and conduct of American foreign policy through high-profile policymakers' ideas and statements. A gentle reminder would imply that by recurring patterns, I do not, in any sense, refer to a positivist understanding of the term. What I mean by recurring patterns is the abundance of the same sentiments in high-profile policymakers' and prominent figures' discourses that derive their origin from the idea of American exceptionalism to influence American foreign policy.

#### **4.1. Exemplary Identity and Isolationism Policy**

If isolationism was to be called a tradition, it would be a false tradition at best. Isolationism, meaning that not taking part in and becoming aloof from international

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<sup>190</sup> McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter With the World Since 1776*, 173.

<sup>191</sup> McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter With the World Since 1776*, 10.

<sup>192</sup> Restad, *American Exceptionalism: An idea that made a nation and remade the world*, 8.

affairs could not offer a proper analytical tool for American foreign policy because it could not reflect on the nature of foreign policy. If there was an isolation situation, it was the geographical isolation of American continent compared to Europe.<sup>193</sup> In terms of foreign policy, the United States, rather than being isolated, was internationalist. To find out what isolationism was about, we have to know the exemplary identity that is related with.

It can be argued that the exemplary identity emanates from the promised land & chosen people belief of the Puritans and of the early colonists.<sup>194</sup> As was mentioned in the third chapter, the Puritans had considered themselves as the God's "selected agent" to pursue His work on the earth, therefore, they constructed a belief revolving around the chosenness of themselves.<sup>195</sup> Certainly, a driving force was the nature of religious beliefs of the Puritans that ignited the ideas of chosenness. Also, the successes of the American revolution against the British both endorsed and bolstered the wide-spread chosenness beliefs. Since the revolution was accomplished, they must have been right about their war and their beliefs about chosenness. In a way, it can be argued that the belief in chosenness turned into a sentiment of being an exemplary nation whose features would have to be emulated by others. Such thinking led to the idea of leading by example, not through engaging with the world, in a sense by being a "city upon a hill". American historian Emily Rosenberg has called this form of thinking "liberal-developmentalism", meaning that the other countries should follow the American experiment of development.<sup>196</sup>

The exemplary identity mainly constructed by the Puritan beliefs, by the visions of Founding Fathers and therefore had a religious basis.<sup>197</sup> Because according to this idea, America was a "promised land", it was a "city upon a hill" settled by the Puritans and

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<sup>193</sup> McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter With the World Since 1776*, 39.

<sup>194</sup> Caesar, "The Origins and Character of American Exceptionalism", 12.

<sup>195</sup> Caesar, "The Origins and Character of American Exceptionalism", 12.

<sup>196</sup> Suri, "Revolution," 435.

<sup>197</sup> McCrisken, "Exceptionalism," 63.

developed in conformity with Puritan precepts. Particularly after the American and the French Revolutions, the wind that blew from the behind of Americans emboldened the sentiment that the United States was an exemplar for the world. Because the government system, the way they organized their life and their political ideals were fraught with virtues and this should be emulated by others. No wonder there have been dissenters to this idea, it is still crucial to know how high-profile policymakers regarded their country and how the nation imagined itself.<sup>198</sup>

Having briefly revealed what the exemplary identity meant, here we need to dwell on the so called isolationism. In short, to understand foreign policy, we have to look for the conceptualization of the American national identity and then think about the implications that has on American foreign policy. It needs to be suggested that the American national identity is intimately related to the idea of American exceptionalism.

As I have operationalized it, isolationism means not partaking in an area of international affairs, even if a state could have the means to that end. Isolation can vary in terms of politically, militarily and economically. In its political usage, it refers to “the avoidance of political and military engagements with foreign powers”.<sup>199</sup> Isolationism, aloofness, separateness, non-interventionism concepts have been used interchangeably in the context of American reticence toward any foreign political or military entanglements.

Indeed, there have been reasons as to why ideas forming exemplary identity emerged. First and foremost, Henry Kissinger indicated that “America’s favorable geography” made possible for the United States foreign policy could be an “optional activity”.<sup>200</sup> This refers solely to geographical isolation of American continent in the context of its distance particularly to European continent. Since the United States was protected by

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<sup>198</sup> American exceptionalism is seen as a myth by some scholars like Stephen Walt, Godfrey Hodgson.

<sup>199</sup> Jonas, “Isolationism,” 337.

<sup>200</sup> Kissinger, *World Order: Reflections on the Character of Nations and the Course of History*, 237.



two oceans and the fact that there was no great power adjoining it, foreign policy and its manipulative dealings did not create a trouble that required immediate attention in the early years of the Republic. Therefore, given spatial peculiarities in which the United States had found itself, there was no need to be involved in long-termed and complicated foreign entanglements. However, this does not mean that by virtue of the advantages provided by its geography the United States totally isolated itself from the world. We know that an internationalist foreign policy was ardently pursued even during the process of gaining independence and immediately after it.<sup>201</sup> Instead, what is meant by geographical isolation is that the United States might not be dragged into European power politics unless it wanted to do so.

The ideas leading to the formation of exemplary identity in the early years of the Republic can be best understood from the statements of contemporary high-profile policymakers and of prominent figures. Washington's, Jefferson's, John Q. Adams' and Thomas Paine's arguments with reference to a need for an American separation from foreign entanglements are important. As we will see below, even if statements of high-profile policymakers could have been perceived to signify an isolationist policy, the issue was the protection of freedom of action and seeking greater maneuverability. For the proper understanding of the interpretations of those ideas, we have to look for high-profile policymakers' ideas. Immediately after the foundation of the United States, a senior former general who led the nation to its independence from Britain, George Washington, started to serve as the President of the United States on 30 April 1789.<sup>202</sup> His guidance continued to serve as the fundamentals of the nation's conduct even after his presidency and lifetime ended.

Since the United States was a nascent and, therefore, a weak nation in the closing years of the eighteenth century, it is a fact that Washington tried to avoid from partaking in great power politics whose dealings might get the United States involved with consequences he long feared. Within this context, one of the most daunting tasks of

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<sup>201</sup> Crothers, "The Cultural Roots of Isolationism and Internationalism in American Foreign Policy," 32.

<sup>202</sup> George Washington Profile <https://www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/presidents/george-washington/>

his administration was the determination of how to respond to the war which had broken out between France and England, following the French Revolution in 1789. Washington's Secretary of State, Thomas Jefferson, was in favor of France and the administration's Secretary of Treasury, Alexander Hamilton was representing the pro-England side.<sup>203</sup> Although it was rumored that Washington was also pro-England, he attempted to pursue a neutral policy, without supporting neither of them straightforwardly. Washington wisely held that establishing prolonged relations could have been dangerous for a new nation. His presidential Farewell Address attested to this vision. Under no circumstance was the aim of this policy to isolate the United States from the world. The aim was to protect American freedom of action.

In the American tradition, presidential farewell addresses generally appeared to have contained significant insights into foreign policies of the presidents. In this respect, George Washington's Farewell Address of 1796 was no exception. In his speech, Washington revealed certain issues regarding the isolationist sentiments;

“It is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world [.....] I hold the maxim no less applicable to public than to private affairs, that honesty is always the best policy, I repeat it, therefore, let those engagements be observed in their genuine sense. But, in my opinion, it is unnecessary and would be unwise to extend them. Taking care always to keep ourselves by suitable establishments on a respectable defensive posture, we may safely trust to temporary alliances for extraordinary emergencies.”<sup>204</sup>

As is seen, Washington warned the nation and its future conduct against establishing “permanent alliances” and counseled his fellow citizens to “trust to temporary alliances”.<sup>205</sup> Washington indeed had its own motives for declaring such a decisive

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<sup>203</sup> Frank Freidel, *The Presidents of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: White House Historical Association, 1964) 8.

<sup>204</sup> Washington's Farewell Address 1796.  
[http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/washing.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/washing.asp) (Access Date: 04.01.2018)

<sup>205</sup> Washington's Farewell Address 1796.  
[http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/washing.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/washing.asp) (Access Date: 04.01.2018)

policy. After five years of Washington's Farewell Address, while announcing "the essential principles of the Government", the third President of the United States Thomas Jefferson (1801-1809) emphasized the same ideas in his first presidential inaugural address in 1801;

"Equal and exact justice to all men, of whatever state or persuasion, religious or political; peace, commerce and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none [...]"<sup>206</sup>

Jefferson, after five years the famous advice of Washington, also emphasized the avoidance of "entangling alliances", representing much the same message of Washington. From their context, permanent alliances and entangling alliances represented the type of alliances that would constrain and jeopardize the capability of United States to maintain its unity. The ideas of exemplary identity stemmed from these visions and admonitions of the Founding Fathers. Even though the policy of isolationism could not have a proper explanatory power for foreign policy<sup>207</sup>, the ideas forming exemplary identity have been used by American policymakers. Below, I analyze why unilateral internationalism, but not isolationism was the core of these ideas.

First and foremost, although they emphasized the avoidance of establishing alliances that were permanent and entangling, "neither Washington nor Jefferson" considered themselves an advocate of the policy of isolation.<sup>208</sup> Both Washington and Jefferson worked to maintain the newly gained independence of the nation and did not want to squander the successes of the American Revolution by involving in military and political commitments with major powers.<sup>209</sup> Washington's and Jefferson's statements may have been taken as the necessary impetus for so-called isolationism, however,

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<sup>206</sup> Jefferson's First Inaugural Address 1801.  
[http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th\\_century/jefinau1.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/jefinau1.asp) (Access Date: 04.01.2018)

<sup>207</sup> Restad, "Old Paradigms Die Hard in Political Science", 71.

<sup>208</sup> Jonas, "Isolationism", 338.

<sup>209</sup> Jonas, "Isolationism", 339.

isolationism was never a real phenomenon, many historians stated.<sup>210</sup> In fact, what can be inferred from the discourses of early presidents that they sought to extend their fragile country's border and by considering themselves a chosen people they thought that they were leading the way through benevolence. The freedom of action of the United States maintained by avoiding permanent and entangling alliances.

With respect to the Farewell Address of Washington, it can be argued that its main message was unilateralism when it comes to foreign affairs. This sentiment of unilateralism was explicit in the address and its afterwards. Because the United States would pursue its "internal" continental expansion and would go on to trust to temporary alliances and the merchant fleet was not build to isolate the United States from the world. In the light of these, if the main policy tradition was isolationism, why did the United States declare Monroe Doctrine in 1823 and continue to purchase land from Mexico and sometimes wage war against Spain and Mexico to gain control over its southern border? If the United States was pursuing isolationism since Washington and Jefferson allegedly advised so, why did the United States continue to expand westward by depending on Manifest Destiny? If the main policy was isolationism why did the United States intervene in Latin American countries at the turn of the century; Mexico, Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Haiti?

These questions are indeed confounding. However, there is a well-supported answer for them. From its early times to the turn of the nineteenth century, the United States, one way or another, sought to give shape its country by expanding westward, by intervening -when necessary- in its near abroad countries and justifying these actions through the ideational framework served by American exceptionalism.

When we look at the contents of two remarkable policies of the United States, namely 1823 Monroe Doctrine and 1845 Manifest Destiny, we see the essence of "unilateralism internationalism."<sup>211</sup> Unilateralism, not in the sense of pursuing policies

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<sup>210</sup> Restad, "Old Paradigms in History Die Hard in Political Science," 71. McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter With the World Since 1776*, 39.

<sup>211</sup> Johnstone, "Isolationism and Internationalism in American Foreign Relations," 11.

without taking anyone into account, but in the sense of seeking greater maneuverability and the preservation of freedom of action, was the case. Even though Washington and Jefferson advised the nation against involving in alliances, it was the support of France to the United States, to the detriment of Britain, that helped the United States to become independent at the first place. The help of France did not deter the United States from conducting a unilateral foreign policy, nor did it turn this relation into a multilateral venture, it served as a “temporary alliance” at best. In this respect, internationalist foreign policy of the United States was a necessary trajectory. With respect to this point, Robert Kagan has excellently put it, the United States had to perform foreign policy, had to form alliances, even before the founding, to get independent at the first place.<sup>212</sup>

Furthermore, it was the British navy’s dominance and their alliance with the United States that realized the 1823 Monroe Doctrine. Again, this does not harm the unilateral course of the United States. Because again, it served at best as a temporary alliance, not a constraining foreign entanglement that would peril the development of the United States. It can be argued that the Founding Fathers were pragmatic enough to use alliances to their benefit. The famous doctrine announced in 1823 cut down the possibilities of European colonization of the continent. Besides that the United States would not poke about the European affairs. However, Monroe Doctrine turned out to be a great cloak for the United States’ westward expansion and its Latin American policies.<sup>213</sup>

Likewise, the policy of Manifest Destiny in 1845, introduced that it was the God-favored right of the United States to expand westward. As it can be seen, the policy of Manifest Destiny was justified by an adherence to religious origins of American exceptionalism. Ultimately, emboldened by the Royal Navy’s assistance to protect its eastward, the United States could finally focus on the continental expansion. The nineteenth century continental expansion, struggling against Mexico, the Spanish and

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<sup>212</sup> Kagan, *Dangerous Nation: America’s Foreign Policy from Its Earliest Days to the Dawn of the Twentieth Century*, 42.

<sup>213</sup> Marco Mariano, “Isolationism, Internationalism and the Monroe Doctrine,” *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 9, no. 1 (2011): 42.

the Native Americans were part of a policy that required America's engaging with the other actors.

Both American exceptionalism and its religious origins served as an ideational basis of expansion propounded by the policy of Manifest Destiny which united the country from end to end, from east to west. It was evident that the United States was not performing foreign policy to isolate itself from the world. The thing is that the continental expansion, Monroe Doctrine and Manifest Destiny may have been considered "domestic policy" by the policymakers of the United States. Because, as reasserted by Manifest Destiny, it was their god-given right to expand westward.<sup>214</sup> Monroe Doctrine was later reevaluated by the President James K. Polk in 1845 and was widened in context by the President Theodore Roosevelt's "Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine".<sup>215</sup>

Driven by the idea of chosenness and by a belief in a mission for the United States, these policies can hardly be isolationist. The policies, instead, clearly represented the unilateral internationalism. Therefore, American foreign policy continued to be carried out against the backdrop of unilateral internationalism. As is seen, the late eighteenth century and nineteenth century continental expansion, Washington's Farewell Address, Jefferson's First Inaugural Address, Monroe Doctrine, Manifest Destiny showed that isolationism was never a real phenomenon. However, that does not mean that the ideas forming exemplary identity existed. The policy of so-called isolationism will continue to be discussed, but it is clear that the United States never adopted "a policy of isolation".

#### **4.2. Missionary Identity and Internationalism Policy**

Above, I have defined missionary identity and internationalism tradition. In this respect, I have showed that Monroe Doctrine and Manifest Destiny were inherently

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<sup>214</sup> O' Sullivan, "Annexation," 2.

<sup>215</sup> Kissinger, *World Order: Reflections on the Character of Nations and the Course of History*, 250.

related to an “unilateral internationalist” foreign policy.<sup>216</sup> The thing that compelled high-profile policymakers and figures to devise and introduce such policies was their belief in the superiority, chosenness of and in a mission for the United States, which is American exceptionalism. This demonstrates that American exceptionalism as the American identity affects American foreign policy. In relation to the mission of the United States, Abraham Lincoln famously stated that “Americans have a duty to ensure -government of the people, for the people, by the people- shall not perish from the earth”.<sup>217</sup> This was the famous Gettysburg Address and it showed that the belief in a mission fraught with higher ideals.

In terms of their political ideals consistent with American exceptionalism, Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson will be analyzed below. My argument is that missionary identity and unilateral internationalism have a clear analytical utility. Internationalist foreign policy means actively engaging in the world affairs, economically, diplomatically, militarily. It is clear that internationalism harbors an interventionist stance. However, that does not mean it has always required the intervention in other countries. Pursuing an internationalist foreign policy that might occasionally include interventions means that American political ideals are universal and they should be expanded into the world.<sup>218</sup>

Americans believed that their principles which formed American exceptionalism were universal, and through their application to the world, the United States was not practicing foreign policy but was spreading its values to be emulated and benefited by other countries.<sup>219</sup> In the same way, American westward expansion was also the

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<sup>216</sup> Kuehl and Ostrower, “Internationalism,” 241.

<sup>217</sup> Gettysburg Address by Abraham Lincoln, 1863.  
[http://rnc.library.cornell.edu/gettysburg/good\\_cause/transcript.htm](http://rnc.library.cornell.edu/gettysburg/good_cause/transcript.htm)

<sup>218</sup> Lawrence S. Kaplan, “Nationalism,” in *Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy E-N*, ed. Alexander DeConde, Richard Dean Burns, and Fredrick Logevall, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 2002), 495.

<sup>219</sup> Kissinger, *World Order: Reflections on the Character of Nations and the Course of History*, 235.

extension of freedom and democracy.<sup>220</sup> Depending on their belief in American superiority, chosenness and in a mission for the United States, adherents of the internationalist strategy tended to advise the United States to project its power to help countries in need.<sup>221</sup> This sustained belief has not only appeared in the discourses of the adherents of missionary identity, but also appeared in high-profile policy makers' discourses. As we will see, Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson mostly embraced internationalist policies. These internationalist, expansionist and -when necessary- interventionist ideas came to dominate the nineteenth century and were also observed in a much-larger scale in the twentieth century.

At the turn of the twentieth century, President Theodore Roosevelt (1901-1909) was the first to embody the ideas of American exceptionalism so distinctly. He came to power following the assassination of President McKinley. Even though many of his considerations about American foreign policy grew in terms of geopolitical calculations, T. Roosevelt admired America's special character and tried to devise policies, according to it.<sup>222</sup>

As I have argued above, with the introduction of Monroe Doctrine and Manifest Destiny in the nineteenth century, American foreign policy appeared to show indications of continuity in terms of unilateral internationalism. This internationalist foreign policy pattern made possible by unilateral course of action propounded by American exceptionalism surely continued with the policies of T. Roosevelt. After T. Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson also tried to extend the international reach of the United States. His grand strategy originating from American exceptionalism will also be discussed below.

T. Roosevelt often emphasized that the United States did not pursue imperial visions over other countries. In his arguments, the United States had intentions which were

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<sup>220</sup> McCrisken, "Exceptionalism," 68.

<sup>221</sup> Tony Smith, "Wilsonianism," *Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy O-W* (Charles Scribner's Sons, 2002), 618.

<sup>222</sup> Kissinger, *World Order: Reflections on the Character of Nations and the Course of History*, 248.



not harmful for any country. According to Kissinger, during his tenure the United States might be argued to have entered the world stage so vigorously and decisively.<sup>223</sup> Since the United States was the “chosen nation”, it has a “manifest duty” to guard the rights abroad which were promulgated by itself, argued T. Roosevelt.<sup>224</sup> Therefore, emboldened by the belief in the superiority, chosenness and in a mission for the United States, T. Roosevelt justified the right to intervene in countries when America’s interests – the promotion of its values – were seriously threatened.<sup>225</sup> In this context, the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine represented the actual intervention in Latin American countries, thereby preventing European powers from taking part in the region and also from directly interfering with Latin American countries. Certainly, this endeavor propelled the already strong reasons of the declaration of the Monroe Doctrine, which served to consolidate unilateral internationalist foreign policy for the United States. As it has been seen, actual foreign policy was a clear reflection of American identity. The logic was that because America was the chosen nation, it must behave accordingly. The ideas about the United States continued to shape the American identity during T.Roosevelt’s era.

Beyond any doubt, this concern with a mission for the United States was at the core of the missionary identity. As I have outlined, the belief in a mission is one of three crucial pillars of American exceptionalism. Hence, the sharpest point from which an understanding of unilateralism can be captured is the belief in a mission for the United States. This mission, as it has been revealed many times, advocated the promotion of American principles and values that have formed American exceptionalism. Burdened by a moral obligation, the mission initially served to justify the promotion of American leadership. In terms of having a mission, K.J. Holsti stated that it is one of the important traits of “exceptionalist syndrome” to have a responsibility, obligation and mission to liberate others.<sup>226</sup> Likewise, in the case of American exceptionalism,

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<sup>223</sup> Kissinger, *World Order: Reflections on the Character of Nations and the Course of History*, 248.

<sup>224</sup> McCrisken, “Exceptionalism,” 71.

<sup>225</sup> Kissinger, *World Order: Reflections on the Character of Nations and the Course of History*, 251.

<sup>226</sup> K. J. Holsti, “Exceptionalism in American Foreign Policy: Is It Exceptional?,” *European Journal of International Relations* 17, no. 3 (2010): 384.

liberating others was seen as part of a staunch belief in a mission. Indeed, the American mission might have been rung hollow initially, however, American troops served to liberate peoples in Europe both in the First World War and in the Second World War. To save and liberate peoples in Europe from the destructive and degenerative effects of the ideologies of Nazism and of Fascism, the United States depending on its self-sufficient warpower was willing to give casualties and fought these ideologies' proponents. These experiences and sacrifices alone suggest that the American mission was not just an illusory legitimization force. The reasons for the entry both into World War I and World War II were framed in the context of American exceptionalism, arguing that the higher ideals of the United States, democracy, freedom were at stake.<sup>227</sup> Although Holsti does not appreciate the validity of American exceptionalism, he maintained that the thing that made American exceptionalism so popular is its "longevity".<sup>228</sup> Indeed, this longevity argument is right.

The lines of internationalist policies stemming from the missionary identity strand of American exceptionalism was also maintained in Woodrow Wilson's tenure as president from 1913 to 1921. Wilson, believing that Americans "are chosen and prominently chosen" to lead the nations in their way to freedom<sup>229</sup>, argued that the United States must project its values abroad and must promote democracy to other nations. Therefore, it needs to be noted that the belief in superiority and chosenness of and in a mission for the United States was the guiding principle of Wilsonian foreign policy. Also, the most important foreign policy implication of American exceptionalism –which is the promotion of American leadership abroad- was the bedrock of Wilsonian foreign policy.<sup>230</sup> For the facilitation of the American leadership, the American principles must be the principles that the world is willing and quick to

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<sup>227</sup> Crothers, "The Cultural Roots of Isolationism and Internationalism in American Foreign Policy."25.

<sup>228</sup> Holsti, "Exceptionalism in American Foreign Policy: Is It Exceptional?," 402.

<sup>229</sup> John McCormick, "American Exceptionalism: The Implications for Europe," *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 3, no. 2 (2005): 202.

<sup>230</sup> Smith, "Wilsonianism," 618.

adopt. In this way, the United States would not have a difficulty in leading the world. Wilson, in this sense, pursued a genuinely internationalist foreign policy.

On several counts, it has been indicated that Woodrow Wilson embodied the belief in the idea of American exceptionalism with his unique visions for the United States.<sup>231</sup> His presidency record can be associated with concepts of idealism, morality and universalism. Helping countries to adopt democratic governments and assuring the maintenance of the principle of self-determination were some of Wilson's ideals. The formation of the League of Nations, the Fourteen Points and peace without victory were the cornerstone ideals of President Woodrow Wilson. Consistent with the considerations of his predecessors regarding foreign policy, Wilson's ideals were rendered as the "globalization of the Monroe Doctrine".<sup>232</sup> This alone suggests that internationalist policies were also adopted by Woodrow Wilson and that there was a continuity in American foreign policy in terms of internationalism stemming from the belief in American exceptionalism.

Woodrow Wilson was a firm believer in America's special character as was T. Roosevelt who started to serve as President twelve years before him. Justified by a combination of ideational values and religious origins, his belief in the idea of American exceptionalism was persistent throughout his tenure in office. He believed that America was a different kind of nation. A religious dispensation was what made the American nation a different nation according to his beliefs.<sup>233</sup> As Tony Smith has put it, in terms of policies prioritizing democratization efforts and human rights, Wilson's foreign policy would continue to affect his successors enormously, especially his emphasis on moral obligations and on serving for higher ideals.<sup>234</sup>

In that respect, the guiding foreign policy principles of Woodrow Wilson are often called Wilsonianism. At the heart of Wilsonianism is a firm allegiance to America's

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<sup>231</sup> McCrisken, "Exceptionalism," 71.

<sup>232</sup> Smith, "Wilsonianism," 617.

<sup>233</sup> Kissinger, *World Order: Reflections on the Character of Nations and the Course of History*, 257.

<sup>234</sup> Smith, "Wilsonianism", 618

special character and to American national identity. Since it seeks to promote American leadership and to disseminate American values, Wilsonianism, as a guiding foreign policy principle, fits with the missionary identity strand of American exceptionalism, thereby advocates actively engaging with the world. Most of the practices of Wilsonian foreign policy were the pursuit of interests shaped by American exceptionalism by an adherence to the idea of American exceptionalism, arguing that since the American values are universal, the United States must promote them to the world.<sup>235</sup> However, this internationalist vision was not free of problems. In some cases, the United States, to protect the exercise of the values that it promoted, felt obliged to intervene in some countries. To that end, Wilson was desperate enough to send troops into America's near abroad on many occasions. Mexico, Nicaragua, Dominican Republic, Haiti, were the countries to be exposed to the negative effects of missionary diplomacy, which caused to a prolonged hostility between Latin American countries and the United States.<sup>236</sup> As we have seen, Wilson and T. Roosevelt's foreign policies were rather internationalist. T. Roosevelt extended the scope of the Monroe Doctrine and Wilson gave a priority to the promotion of democracy to the world.

The continuity of actively engaging with the world was reemphasized by T. Roosevelt and Wilson. Although Woodrow Wilson wanted to bring international peace through international organizations and tried to stabilize it by collective security, the United States did not stray away from its continuity to preserve and increase freedom of security. My argument is that there is a continuity in American foreign policy in terms of particularly defined unilateralism, but this does not mean that the United States has never participated multilateral ventures or has never had presidents having multilateral visions. In this respect, it is known that Wilson created the League of Nations, however, the Covenant of the League was not ratified by the U.S. Senate. This gives

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<sup>235</sup> Smith, "Wilsonianism," 623.

<sup>236</sup> Roger R. Trask, "Wilsonian Missionary Diplomacy," in *Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy*, ed. Alexander DeConde, Richard Dean Burns, and Fredrik Logevall, 2nd ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2002), 628.

us a hint bolstering the validity of David Skidmore's assumption that "the United States was never genuinely multilateralist."<sup>237</sup>

As a conclusion to this chapter, the idea of American exceptionalism powerfully informs the American national identity in terms of two identities into which it is divided. I have so far attempted to show the origins of isolationism and internationalism and then argued that isolationism was not a real phenomenon. By virtue of American exceptionalism, American foreign policy appears to show continuity in terms of always trying to increase unilateral capability of action and the reach of internationalism. However, this tendency does not preclude the existence of multilateral ventures. What I have attempted to show is that this tendency of unilateralism has far greater implications for American foreign policy than multilateralism. The material superior power of the United States has not been the most powerful reason for the adoption of unilateral internationalist foreign policy. The most powerful reason has been the idea of American exceptionalism, which is the ideational framework of American foreign policy. The reason for why American exceptionalism, but not the material superpower of the United States was the basis of unilateral internationalism is that because the United States started to pursue an internationalist foreign policy from its very founding, it did not wait its material power to be assembled for pursuing an internationalist foreign policy. Therefore, the reason is the ideational framework, not the material power of the United States.

This continuing line of unilateral internationalism can be observed throughout Washington and Jefferson addresses, Monroe Doctrine, Manifest Destiny, Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine and global application of the Monroe Doctrine. Woodrow Wilson, in this sense, remained one of the most influential presidents of the United States. His vision was later taken up by Cold War presidents. Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Harry Truman administrations also made use of Wilsonianism to ground their world order strategies.<sup>238</sup> Post-1945 democratization efforts undertaken by the United States toward Germany and Japan seemed to confirm this point.

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<sup>237</sup> Skidmore, "Understanding the Unilateralist Turn in U.S. Foreign Policy," 224.

<sup>238</sup> Smith, "Wilsonianism," 618.

In the last chapter, I will try to show the continuity of the belief in the idea of American exceptionalism in American politics as the American identity. I will first briefly attempt to show the political environment of Obama presidency, then dwell on the policy of promotion of the American leadership under President Obama, informed by American exceptionalism.

## CHAPTER 5

### BARACK OBAMA AND AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM

In this chapter, I will remind what I have so far done in this thesis and then I will lay the groundwork for the proper understanding of American exceptionalism in twenty-first century. I have argued that American exceptionalism has been central to the formation of American national identity. One of the most important interests in relation to American exceptionalism has been the promotion of American leadership abroad. Also, I have shown that because of its lack of explanatory power the policy of isolationism could not account for American foreign policy and instead, “unilateral internationalism” is much more promising than isolationism in explaining the continuity in American foreign policy.

My argument in this chapter is that during the Obama presidency, both the idea of American exceptionalism and American leadership have been reaffirmed by depending on unique ideas of the United States.<sup>239</sup> As the ideational framework in which American foreign policy is debated and conducted, the belief in American exceptionalism has been apparent during Obama presidency. Along with its function of serving as the ideational framework of American foreign policy, American exceptionalism continued to function as the American identity.

In this chapter, I will show that the idea of American exceptionalism informs American identity and the American leadership is promoted as one of the critical interests by the American identity. As I will demonstrate, the idea of American exceptionalism has

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<sup>239</sup> Robert G. Patman and Laura Southgate, “Globalization, the Obama Administration and the Refashioning of US Exceptionalism,” *International Politics* 53, no. 2 (2016): 235.

become a widely-spoken idea during 2008 and 2012 presidential elections. It has come to be debated at an increasing rate.<sup>240</sup>

As has been defined in this thesis, American exceptionalism is a set of ideas, engrained in the experiences of the nation in history and has been one of the crucial parts of the formation of the American national identity. It has had a so unique place that it can be seen as the American national identity itself. The idea of superiority was rooted in the nation's history, signifying the belief that the Old World was inferior compared to the New one. Another aspect of American exceptionalism, chosenness stemmed from the beliefs of the Puritans and of the early American colonists that they were chosen by God to pursue works that were admired by him. Given the legacy of the Puritans, it can be said that chosenness was mostly articulated by religious origins. The other aspect, a mission, is the idea that history has burdened a special mission for the United States.

As has been discussed, American exceptionalism with its advocacy for the promotion of American leadership in international affairs always contain a longing for creating a world order blessed with the ideals and virtues of the United States. This has been apparent in the discourses of high-profile policymakers. In line with this argument, George H.W. Bush reiterated this by announcing “a new world order”, reflecting on the responsibilities that the United States would have during the early post-Cold War period.<sup>241</sup> Wanting to call attention to the unique position of the United States after the Cold War, Bill Clinton remarked that “America stands alone as the world's indispensable nation”.<sup>242</sup> As is seen, Bill Clinton also emphasized the need for American leadership in ways that reflected the unique American national character. Bill Clinton's Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, had coined the phrase ‘the indispensable nation’, arguing that regarding possible intervention of the United States into Yugoslav War in the early 1990s, “if we have to use force, it is because we are

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<sup>240</sup> Patman and Southgate, “Globalization, the Obama Administration and the Refashioning of US Exceptionalism,” 231.

<sup>241</sup> McCrisken, *American Exceptionalism and the Legacy of Vietnam*, 155.

<sup>242</sup> Quoted in Restad, *American Exceptionalism: An Idea That Made a Nation and Remade the World*, 201.



America, we are the indispensable nation.”<sup>243</sup> As it can be seen, the belief in the values that formed American identity are the ideational framework of American foreign policy.

The idea of the indispensability of the United States has been one of many ideas that form American exceptionalism. As the abovementioned ideas have demonstrated, post-Cold War presidents shared a commitment to the promotion of American leadership and to preserving American freedom of action in international affairs. Indeed, in terms of a commitment to unilateralism, there was not a substantial degree of differences between Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, meaning that the pattern of unilateralism did not break with the transitions of power.<sup>244</sup> That means rather than classifying Clinton as a multilateralist and Bush a unilateralist, it needs to be understood that both were unilateralist, however, they may have differed in the degree of unilateralism.<sup>245</sup> This pattern prioritizing the preservation of freedom of action can be extended as to include comparisons in terms of unilateralism and internationalism between George W. Bush and Barack Obama. Both presidents shared a conviction regarding the need for the promotion of American leadership and they were both internationalists, wanting the United States to engage in the world.<sup>246</sup>

As is seen, the belief in American exceptionalism represents the American national identity. As in the case of the ideas “new world order”, “the indispensable nation”, high-profile policymakers seemed to define their interests by depending on their belief in the ideas about who Americans are, in other words, by depending on American exceptionalism. Also, the need for the promotion of American leadership is always implicated when American exceptionalism is at play, laying the ideational ground for the debate and conduct of foreign policy.

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<sup>243</sup> Madeleine Albright Statement, <https://1997-2001.state.gov/statements/1998/980219a.html>

<sup>244</sup> Skidmore, “Understanding the Unilateralist Turn in U.S. Foreign Policy,” 224.

<sup>245</sup> Skidmore, “Understanding the Unilateralist Turn in U.S. Foreign Policy,” 224.

<sup>246</sup> James M Lindsay, “George W. Bush, Barack Obama and the Future of US Global Leadership,” *International Affairs* 87, no. 4 (2011): 765.

### **5.1. Obama's American Exceptionalism as the American national identity**

It is clear that ideas about the self certainly affect the debate and the conduct of foreign policy. American exceptionalism, in this sense, does not explain all the aspects of American foreign policy, nor has it determined the entire policy choices.<sup>247</sup> Indeed, the ones searching for such a concept will be disappointed, at the very least. However, American exceptionalism sets stage for the debate and the conduct of foreign policy by establishing the ideational framework of foreign policy. American exceptionalism shapes the American national identity.

To assess American exceptionalism during the Obama's presidency, the political environment of 2008 and 2012 need to be understood. As most of his predecessors have done, President Barack Obama has also made use of exceptionalist rhetoric to rally support for the policies. The years in which then Democratic candidate, for the Senate from the state of Illinois, Obama made his nationwide political debut at the Democratic National Convention (DNC) were going to be the firsthand witnesses of the rise of American exceptionalism in contemporary American political discourse in an ever-increasing manner. It was the last fifteen years, starting from his 2004 DNC speech in the presidential campaign of John Kerry against George W. Bush.

That day, Obama made an eloquent speech saturated with the passages emphasizing national identity and national unity. Briefly talking about his background as an "outsider", Obama was making the case for the American Dream which means by employing hard work anyone can do things of great importance.<sup>248</sup> Even this short speech repleted with the sentiments of brotherhood, unity, American dream and certainly, American exceptionalism.<sup>249</sup> Arguing that being given a chance to make a speech at such a high-level gathering was unexpected, Obama argued that "in no other

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<sup>247</sup> Andrew Butfoy, "American Exceptionalism and President Obama's Call for Abolition of Nuclear Weapons," *Contemporary Security Policy* 33, no. 3 (2012): 466.

<sup>248</sup> Transcript: Senate Candidate Barack Obama, at DNC in 2004.  
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A19751-2004Jul27.html>

<sup>249</sup> Transcript: Senate Candidate Barack Obama, at DNC in 2004.  
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A19751-2004Jul27.html>

country on earth is my story even possible, echoing American dream.<sup>250</sup> Even though John Kerry lost the presidency against George W. Bush that year, Barack Obama succeed in leaving a significant impression on the nation.

In 2007, Barack Obama announced that he was running for President. With that decision, the political significance of American exceptionalism came to be increased frequently in daily political debates. As U. Friedman has reportedly demonstrated; campaign trails of those years became a platform for bragging about “who loves America more?”.<sup>251</sup> It can be argued that between those years, American exceptionalism had become a political football. Since Obama’s understanding of exceptionalism sort of differs from that of his GOP rivals’, both understandings of must be mentioned. Regarding the reflection of American exceptionalism on American foreign policy one thing was clear. The idea of American exceptionalism has generally been associated with an internationalist foreign policy for the United States, emphasizing the promotion of American leadership as one of the crucial goals to be achieved, as I have argued.

It seems that here the point of difference between the GOP and Obama was how to exercise that leadership. That is why their understandings of exceptionalism have become different. As one of the vital components of the construction of the American national identity, the idea of American exceptionalism has been supported by a great majority of the population.<sup>252</sup> As I have shown, the population and its high-profile policymakers believed that American identity was superior, thereby making the United States the greatest country in the world.<sup>253</sup> This profound belief in American exceptionalism by the population has suggested that by living up to that virtuos ideas embedded in the national character, the American national identity is further cemented

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<sup>250</sup> Transcript: Senate Candidate Barack Obama, at DNC in 2004.  
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A19751-2004Jul27.html>

<sup>251</sup> Uri Friedman, “‘American Exceptionalism’: A Short History,” *Foreign Policy*, 2012.  
<http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/06/18/american-exceptionalism-a-short-history/> (Accessed date: 15.04.2018)

<sup>252</sup> Friedman, “‘American Exceptionalism’: A Short History.”

<sup>253</sup> Friedman, “‘American Exceptionalism’: A Short History.”

and therefore, foreign policy is debated and conducted in the framework laid down by American exceptionalism.

In line with the constructivist theoretical framework I argued ideas shape identity. This relation has been evident as George Löfflman has convincingly argued, “genealogical prevalence of American exceptionalism was a critical component of American national identity construction.”<sup>254</sup> It is critical to understand that American exceptionalism has been continuing to shape American identity in the twentieth century with the ideas of “we the people”, “united we stand”, “yes, we can”.<sup>255</sup> Obama had this identity-affirming ideas, and as it can be seen, these were signifying the unity of the nation.

As it can be seen, the indispensability of linking American identity to the debate and conduct of American foreign policy has been unremittingly articulated by many high-profile policy makers. In short, Obama’s exceptionalism has profoundly reflected on this existing relation between the American national identity and American foreign policy. In this respect, Obama wanted to bolster the validity of claims of American primacy in international relations by counting upon a vision of American moral leadership.<sup>256</sup> In this sense, Obama tried to renew the American leadership, as the title of his piece has suggested<sup>257</sup>, by returning to the founding ideas in which the United States was seen as superior, chosen and as having a mission for the betterment of all.<sup>258</sup> American exceptionalism as the American national identity has always been a respond to the external world. As Holsti has pointed out, exceptionalism is more meaningful

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<sup>254</sup> Löfflmann, “Leading from Behind – American Exceptionalism and President Obama’s Post-American Vision of Hegemony,” 310.

<sup>255</sup> Ron Fournier, “Obama’s New American Exceptionalism,” *The Atlantic*, 2016. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/07/obamas-new-american-exceptionalism/493415/> (Accessed Date: 15.04.2018)

<sup>256</sup> Butfoy, “American Exceptionalism and President Obama’s Call for Abolition of Nuclear Weapons,” 462.

<sup>257</sup> Barack Obama, “Renewing American Leadership,” *Foreign Affairs* 86, no. 4 (2007): 2–16.

<sup>258</sup> R. L. Ivie and O Giner, “American Exceptionalism in a Democratic Idiom: Transacting the Mythos of Change in the 2008 Presidential Campaign,” *Communication Studies* 60, no. 4 (2009): 361.

when it is portrayed as being in a world which is hostile to the exception.<sup>259</sup> Because the nature of identity, whose defining element is binary oppositions, has processed like this. To believe in the virtues of being superior and chosen has required the existence of other countries and nations. Also, the God-favored mission of the United States has been the betterment of peoples yearning to be liberated or peoples in need of guidance, assistance to find their way through benevolence.<sup>260</sup> Therefore, it seems clear that the process of maintaining American identity requires the adoption of the assumption of an international environment that the United States must lead. For that reason, American identity has to be “under constant construction” as Ron Fournier has excellently claimed.<sup>261</sup> Yes we can, united we stand, we the people, ideas basically serve to the maintenance of the construction of the American identity.

One of the clearest indications on the prevalence of American exceptionalism over the political debates is the fact that Barack Obama has been the first incumbent president to publicly employ the term “American exceptionalism” itself.<sup>262</sup> However, this does not mean that former presidents have not employed the ideas constructing American exceptionalism, what is important is that they have not used the exact term and Obama was the first to do so. As I will discuss below, the reason for this embracement of American exceptionalism and the need for publicly discussing it might have been sparked by the experiences Obama has had. Barack Obama was the first non-white person to be the President of the United States. He was born in Hawaii, to a father from Kenya and a mother from the state of Kansas, the United States. It would appear that his background was one of the reasons for the suspicion of even his nationality and religious affiliation by his rivals.

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<sup>259</sup> Holsti, “Exceptionalism in American Foreign Policy: Is It Exceptional?,” 384.

<sup>260</sup> Holsti, “Exceptionalism in American Foreign Policy: Is It Exceptional?,” 384.

<sup>261</sup> Fournier, “Obama’s New American Exceptionalism.”

<sup>262</sup> Robert Schlesinger, “Obama Has Mentioned ‘American Exceptionalism’ More Than Bush,” *U.S. News*, 2011. <https://www.usnews.com/opinion/blogs/robert-schlesinger/2011/01/31/obama-has-mentioned-american-exceptionalism-more-than-bush> (Accessed Date: 16. 04.2018)

In 2009, as President, when asked by a reporter at a G20 conference in France if he believes in American exceptionalism, President Obama said “I believe in American exceptionalism”, however Obama went on to argue that “just as the British do in British exceptionalism and the Greeks do in Greek exceptionalism”.<sup>263</sup> Although Obama proceeded to his remarks by assuring that the importance of American exceptionalism in relation to the United States’ role in the world, his remarks sparked and fueled a set of flurry criticisms. Having seemingly vulgarised American exceptionalism with his first argument, Obama later in that statement, eloquently argued that “we have a core set of values that are enshrined in our Constitution, [.....], in our belief in free speech and equality that are exceptional.”<sup>264</sup> However, this did not stop critics from coming like running water.

Most of the criticisms directed against Obama’s putative lack of belief in American exceptionalism flamed by his statements in Strasbourg designated the campaign mottos of mainly his GOP rivals. The GOP presidential candidate to run against Barack Obama in his second election in 2012, Mitt Romney was leading the way on this point. Romney severely criticised Barack Obama by arguing that the president does not believe in American exceptionalism and seemed to be trying to banalize it.<sup>265</sup> Also Romney wrote a book criticising the first term of Obama and explaining his own visions.<sup>266</sup> Mitt Romney derived his understanding of American exceptionalism from military and economic might of the United States, along with the “strongest values” of the United States.<sup>267</sup> Whereas Obama’s American exceptionalism depended on an

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<sup>263</sup> Restad, *American Exceptionalism: An Idea That Made a Nation and Remade the World*, 1–2.

<sup>264</sup> Quoted in Restad, *American Exceptionalism: An Idea That Made a Nation and Remade the World*, 2.

<sup>265</sup> Uri Friedman, “Obama Fires Back at Putin: ‘I Believe America Is Exceptional,’” *Foreign Policy*, 2013. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/09/24/obama-fires-back-at-putin-i-believe-america-is-exceptional/> (Accessed Date: 17.04.2018)

<sup>266</sup> Mitt Romney, *No Apology: The Case For American Greatness* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2011).

<sup>267</sup> Barlow, “Chosen Land, Chosen People: Religious And American Exceptionalism Among the Mormons,” 56.

allegiance to the nation's founding values such as democracy and freedom, not merely on the United States' military and economic might.<sup>268</sup> These differences between Romney and Obama basically refer to above argument claiming that the GOP and Obama have understood American exceptionalism differently. If there is a need to link them with "exemplar" and "missionary" notions, it can be said that the GOP's members' understanding is similar to missionary notion.

It can be said that Romney's version of American exceptionalism includes material components like the military and economic might. Also, Romney's American exceptionalism represents a more assertive and hard-hitting version. Apart from Romney, 2012 presidential candidate and former House Speaker Newt Gingrich targeted the President's assumed lack of belief in American exceptionalism in his book.<sup>269</sup> From Romney and Gingrich, it can be understood that American exceptionalism has become a complex component of daily political debates. However, it should be noted finally that their criticisms against Obama were politically driven, and did not account for a scholarly analysis of the idea of American exceptionalism. In other words, Romney and Gingrich founded their visions based on the ideas they thought Obama did not have or at least did not live up to. Basically, Romney and Gingrich were saying that because we believed in American exceptionalism much more than Obama did, we were more patriotic. Nevertheless, these foundationless and politically driven criticisms helped neither of them to win the White House, Obama secured a second term in 2012 presidential elections against Republican nominee Mitt Romney.

As has been demonstrated, even though he was accused of not believing in American exceptionalism, Obama has rigorously stated that he believed in American exceptionalism. His understanding of the idea was fraught with personal experiences. Giving a response to his criticisms directed from conservative leaning GOP members, during a White House press conference, Obama even argued that "my career has been

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<sup>268</sup> Barlow, "Chosen Land, Chosen People: Religious And American Exceptionalism Among the Mormons," 57.

<sup>269</sup> Newt Gingrich, *A Nation Like No Other: Why American Exceptionalism Matters* (Washington, D.C.: Ragnery Publishing, 2011).

a testimony to American exceptionalism”.<sup>270</sup> Also, Obama said that it is the primary reason for the Republican Party, so this smear campaigns are understandable from a political standpoint.

There is no need to exclude the GOP members or Obama for failing to satisfy one another. Accusations by the GOP proponents have not diminished Obama’s belief in American exceptionalism and his publicly embracing the concept. In this respect, Philip S. Gorski and William MacMillan came up with an explanation that can be related to this separation between the GOP and Obama. Gorski and MacMillan have argued that the GOP depended on a “crusader exceptionalism” and, in turn, Obama counted on a “prophetic exceptionalism”.<sup>271</sup> The question of what makes America exceptional is answered differently by two perspectives, the former links it with the hard power, religious character and economic power of the United States and the latter reveals that because of its founding values America is exceptional.<sup>272</sup> What this study can offer is that harsh criticisms against Obama might have emanated from the GOP’s radical understanding of American exceptionalism, at least

I have so far explained why American exceptionalism has become a political football over the past decade and I have stated Barack Obama’s understanding of American exceptionalism in its relation to American foreign policy. Now, I look at the foreign policy record of Barack Obama presidency particularly with its relation to the idea of American exceptionalism. In this respect, the contribution that this chapter makes to the literature analyzing the idea of American exceptionalism during Obama presidency would be the enhancement of the importance of the ideas held by high-profile policymakers. What I mean is that by analyzing American exceptionalism during Obama presidency, I have realized that the persistent belief in American exceptionalism continues with Barack Obama. Rather than denigrating his visions, a scholarly analysis ought to focus on how American exceptionalism is viable with Obama as it can be understood from his abovementioned statements.

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<sup>270</sup> Friedman, “‘American Exceptionalism’: A Short History.”

<sup>271</sup> Gorski and McMillan, “Barack Obama and American Exceptionalisms,” 41.

<sup>272</sup> Gorski and McMillan, “Barack Obama and American Exceptionalisms,” 45–46.



In this thesis, it has been argued that the most critical interest shaped by American exceptionalism is the promotion of American leadership. Indeed, Americans have craved for a liberty of maneuverability. American policymakers have had certain reservations as to the creations that would upset this liberty of maneuverability, like the rejection of the ratification of the Covenant of the League of Nations. Yet still, Americans have met the requirements of their sacred mission to lead the world through benevolence. I have provided the examples of this sacrifices. Emboldened by a strong a belief in the founding virtues embedded in founding documents of the United States, Barack Obama's term, the most important American interest was the promotion of American leadership.

Looking at Obama's record, we come across five issues; health care, climate and energy, economic progress, equality and social progress and, American leadership.<sup>273</sup> The landmark achievements of the Obama administration were the international agreement on reducing Iran's nuclear capability and diplomatic opening to Cuba.<sup>274</sup> For Obama, nuclear disarmament and preventing nuclear proliferation issues were of critical importance and he set out to use diplomacy and dialogue to that end. Diplomacy and dialogue were the means not only used toward Iran, but also toward Cuba and North Korea. Also, departing from the long-standing and hostile point of view toward Cuba in American foreign policy, Obama after over fifty years later reestablished diplomatic relations with Cuba. Also, Obama led the global effort on climate change, resulting in Paris agreement with the participation of 196 countries.<sup>275</sup>

But, there have been issues which Obama failed to respond strategically and succesfully. Obama wanted to "pivot to Asia", meaning that the strategic interests of the United States truly involved not any other region but in Asia, however, with its

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<sup>273</sup> Barack Obama's Foreign Policy Record, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/>. (Accessed 20.04.2018)

<sup>274</sup> David Unger, "The Foreign Policy Legacy of Barack Obama," *The International Spectator* 51, no. 4 (2016): 1.

<sup>275</sup> Barack Obama's Foreign Policy Record, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/>.

besetting network of relations the Middle East mostly engaged Obama's attention.<sup>276</sup> Obama assessed Afghanistan as having central importance in terms of the involvement of American interests, rather than Iraq or Libya or Syria.<sup>277</sup> However, when assessing these policies as flawed or incoherent, it needs to be remembered that Obama inherited such conflicts from his predecessor's policies.

Regarding the American involvement in Libya in 2011, Barack Obama reminded the world that the United States is different and therefore cannot pretend not to see the atrocities being committed in Libya by Moammar Gaddafi. Establishing and leading an International Coalition aiming to remove Gaddafi from power, Obama articulated the responsibility of the United States in keeping with the belief in American exceptionalism. When people yearn to be free, they will have a friend in the United States, Obama argued, meaning that it is America's mission to do good in the world, to lead the world to a more benevolent state of affairs.<sup>278</sup> In this political climate, drawing on American exceptionalism, Barack Obama has put it, "To ignore America's responsibility as a leader, [.....] would have been a betrayal of who we are."<sup>279</sup> The argument of Obama echoed that because the United States is different, it must act and it must act because of who Americans are. Therefore, the United States lead an international coalition against Gaddafi but did not totally claim responsibility for the requirements of the intervention, causing this policy to be called "leading from behind."<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> Unger, "The Foreign Policy Legacy of Barack Obama," 6.

<sup>277</sup> Unger, "The Foreign Policy Legacy of Barack Obama," 2.

<sup>278</sup> Obama's Remarks on Libya, *The New York Times*, 2011, <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/29/us/politics/29prexy-text.html> (Accessed Date: 20.04.2018)

<sup>279</sup> Butfoy, "American Exceptionalism and President Obama's Call for Abolition of Nuclear Weapons," 468.

<sup>280</sup> Löfflmann, "Leading from Behind – American Exceptionalism and President Obama's Post-American Vision of Hegemony," 320–21.

In 2013, when Civil War in Syria escalated, Obama again attempted to advocate a possible military intervention by depending on the idea of American exceptionalism.<sup>281</sup> Likewise in the Libya case, Obama made an argument interconnecting the need for American leadership to the idea of American exceptionalism. Upon suspicions of a chemical attack being committed in Syria, Obama said that “ I believe we should act, that is what makes America different, that is what makes America exceptional.”<sup>282</sup> As it is clear, the logic of American exceptionalism suggests that American policymakers must pursue the goal of American leadership because of who they are, because of their identity as exceptional. The promotion of American leadership, if not the only one, has been an important American interest during Obama’s presidency. In this sense, this interest is shaped by the American national identity, by the fact of who Americans are and by the ideas which Americans live up to. In this respect, indeed, Barack Obama’s presidency has been an attempt to renew and reshape the promises of American exceptionalism by placing the nations founding virtues and ideas at the core of his understanding of what makes the American identity, American identity. Having explained why American exceptionalism has become a political football over the last decade, and having explained how Obama understood the idea of American exceptionalism, I now show the continuity in American foreign policy that is informed by the belief in the idea of American exceptionalism.

In keeping with the consensus in the literature, I have argued that American exceptionalism as the American identity sets stage for the debate and conduct of American foreign policy by creating the necessary ideational framework of it.<sup>283</sup> To put it crudely, I have stated that the clearest interest shaped by American exceptionalism is the promotion of American leadership abroad. The leadership claims are supported by high-profile policymakers. In this respect, the United States engaged with the world, promoted its values, mediated peace efforts of prolonged conflicts,

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<sup>281</sup> Hughes, “Unmaking an Exception: A Critical Genealogy of US Exceptionalism,” 528.

<sup>282</sup> Remarks by the President in Adress to the Nation on Syria, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/09/10/remarks-president-address-nation-syria>. (Accessed 22.04.2018)

<sup>283</sup> McCrisken 2002, 2003, Restad 2012, 2015, Löfflman 2015.

became a party to bilateral and multilateral agreements without losing sight of its unilateral course of action, signifying an internationalist foreign policy.

Obama's predecessor George W. Bush was harshly criticized for unilateral foreign policies. However, this was not a new precedent for American foreign policy. After all, American freedom of action and the seeking larger maneuverability have been one of the vital concerns of American foreign policy. Indeed, Bill Clinton who allegedly trumpeted a multilateralist turn in American foreign policy after George H.W. Bush but turned to be unilateralist as well.<sup>284</sup> Likewise, when Barack Obama came to office, however Obama did not explicitly herald it, there were expectations about a multilateralist turn in American foreign policy as well. But expectations remained unfulfilled again with the United States was unwilling to involve in international agreements that would risk American national interests and American sovereignty. International Criminal Court's decisions, Ottawa Treaty to ban land mines, Convention on Biological Diversity were some of the international agreements and regimes that were not participated or embraced by the United States during Obama administration.<sup>285</sup> It can be said that this form of unilateralism whose driving force is the seeking of freedom of action not constrained by multilateral initiatives had public support. In 2009, %44 of respondents argue that the United States is the greatest country in the world, therefore it can go its own way in international affairs.<sup>286</sup>

The belief in American exceptionalism by the population and by its high-profile policymakers is obvious in Barack Obama presidency. Turning to the founding ideas of the United States, Obama wanted to restore the American primacy. Before becoming president, Obama emphasized that the mission of the United States "is to provide global leadership" and that included military, diplomatic and moral

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<sup>284</sup> David Skidmore, "The Obama Presidency and US Foreign Policy: Where's the Multilateralism?," *International Studies Perspectives* 13, no. 1 (2012): 45.

<sup>285</sup> Skidmore, "The Obama Presidency and US Foreign Policy: Where's the Multilateralism?," 49.

<sup>286</sup> Skidmore, "The Obama Presidency and US Foreign Policy: Where's the Multilateralism?," 51.

leadership.<sup>287</sup> Underscoring that both “the world needs the American leadership and America needs the world”, Obama clearly showed an allegiance to the idea of the indispensable nation, which is one of the ideas constructing American exceptionalism.<sup>288</sup> In this context, it might be put forward that the early 2010s have been the heyday of American exceptionalism. One reason for this is that Barack Obama’s understanding of American exceptionalism. As the first president to voice the term American exceptionalism, Obama embraced the superior American identity and American exceptionalism. That has been understood from the importance given to the promotion of American leadership in international affairs. Also, the strong link between American national identity and American exceptionalism has been maintained during Obama presidency. It can be said that American exceptionalism continues to serve as the ideational basis of American foreign policy.

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<sup>287</sup> Obama, “Renewing American Leadership,”.

<sup>288</sup> Obama, “Renewing American Leadership,”.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSION**

In this thesis, I have attempted to explain how the idea of American exceptionalism affected U.S. foreign policy without undermining the effects of power relations and the pursuit of national interest. I have defined American exceptionalism as the belief in superiority and chosenness of and in a mission for the United States. As I have previously discussed, the idea of American exceptionalism has been a vital concept for Americans. Americans have expressed the idea of American exceptionalism through a variety of ways, including historical narratives, myths, beliefs.

If there is one thing to know about the concept of American exceptionalism is that it is a widely-shared belief in the superiority and chosenness of and in a mission for the United States. To American nation and its high-profile policymakers, the United States has a uniquely blessed founding, development and therefore, should have a unique course. The United States has become what it is today because of the persistence of living up to the founding ideals and virtues of the nation. Regrettably, it has not been free of misdeeds, nor has it experienced a impeccable history on its part. What makes American exceptionalism a vital idea is the persistent belief in the mission of leading to benevolence. Although the United States has not conducted an exceptional foreign policy as Leggold and McKeown has shown, Americans and the policymakers believed that the U.S. has committed itself to do good in the world. American exceptionalism advocates that since the United States is superior and chosen, it must lead, otherwise someone else will fulfill their destiny.

Emboldened by such ideas, the idea of American exceptionalism is embedded in the the national character. Therefore, relying on the consensus in the literature, I have argued that American exceptionalism is one of the components in the formation of the American national identity. It is so much of a vital component that American exceptionalism defines the American national identity. Throughout the thesis, I have

explained how American exceptionalism affects American foreign policy by drawing on a relationship between ideas, identity and foreign policy. The long-standing ideas in a nation depending on the features of the national character create a basis for the formation of identity. The notion of identity can be defined as the “varying constructions of state and nationhood“ and as “the sum of the national ideologies of collective distinctiveness and purpose.”<sup>289</sup> The ideas constructing American exceptionalism has an influence on U.S. foreign policy through the identity. Other than the calculations of power and national interest, such ideational factors as identity also has an influence on U.S. foreign policy. I have focused on the ideational aspects of U.S. foreign policy.

It can be said that identity is a guide for the making and conduct of foreign policy. Karl Schonberg has argued the fact that how a society understands itself and how the leaders assess the environment create the basis of foreign policy.<sup>290</sup> The triangle relations of ideas, identity and interests can be best carried out by a framework offered by constructivism. My main theoretical position is using constructivist theory for its prioritization of the identity.

Then, I have applied this theoretical framework to the case of American exceptionalism. The greatest nation, benevolent hegemon, indispensable nation, promised land, chosen people, such ideas create a basis through their utilization by high-profile policymakers for the formation of the idea of American exceptionalism, likewise, the American national identity. In this respect, I have argued that American identity establishes the framework within which the debate and conduct of U.S. foreign policy is taken place.<sup>291</sup> This does not mean the American identity explains everything about U.S. foreign policy, nor does it imply that U.S. foreign policy lacks material and structural driving forces when deciding foreign policy.

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<sup>289</sup> Katzenstein, “Introduction: Alternative Perspectives on National Security,” 6.

<sup>290</sup> Schonberg, *Constructing 21st Century U.S. Foreign Policy: Identity, Ideology, and America’s World Role in a New Era*, 2.

<sup>291</sup> McCrisken, *American Exceptionalism and the Legacy of Vietnam: US Foreign Policy Since 1974*, 8.

American identity seems to be divided into two identities and related foreign policies in the literature, which I do not agree with. Exemplary identity, in fact, could not lead to a stable policy of isolation. I have argued that due its lack of explanatory power, isolationism should be discarded. Instead, bolstered by the missionary identity, a tendency toward unilateral internationalism came to dominate U.S. foreign policy. Because the United States has often inclined to create spheres of influences, to expand and to promote its values that it thought to be universal. The most important political outcome of American exceptionalism is the need for promoting American leadership abroad. According to exceptionalism, the United States must lead, otherwise, it will be an ordinary nation, not an exceptional nation.

This often persistent policies of seeking greater maneuverability and freedom of action were driven by American exceptionalism. The fact that who Americans are have affected, if not wholly defined, the ways they pursue their interests. That does not mean, however, the United States has not participated any multilateral enterprise, but it does mean that preserving the idea of American exceptionalism and American sovereignty, American policymakers often inclined to safeguard unilateral maneuverability.<sup>292</sup> Early postwar multilateral initiatives created a world order that would allow for the United States to exert its influence unilaterally. In other words, the United States did not experience an ideational transformation from isolationism to multilateralism. As Skidmore has put it; the United States was seldom a multilateralist country.<sup>293</sup>

The framework proposed by American exceptionalism has been the ideational framework of U.S foreign policy throughout the years. As an idea, American exceptionalism has various origins. Analytically, I have categorized them as religious origins, geographical-positional origins and political origins. In religious origins, I have mainly argued that the ideas and way of life of the Puritans affected how future

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<sup>292</sup> Restad, *American Exceptionalism: An Idea That Made a Nation and Remade the World*, 110.

<sup>293</sup> Skidmore, "Understanding the Unilateralist Turn in U.S. Foreign Policy," 224.



Americans believe in things and organize their society. Although the effects of the Puritans were not as great as suggested by some, their effect on the American national character remains visible. In geographical-positional origins, I have explained the conditions within which the United States was founded. The position “free security” and untamed land have served as the concepts that changed the political ideas of Americans. The king was far away, at least an ocean away. And freedom was so close. That is why the unique geograhly in which the United States founded was important. In political origins, I have argued that the political ideas constructing American exceptionalism were embedded in the founding documents of the United States. The Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States, the Bill of Rights, all contained radical political ideas differing markedly in comparison to the contemporary aristocracies of Europe. These are the ideas that mostly influenced the U.S. foreign policy.

Then, I have shown that George Washington’s Farewell Address, Thomas Jefferson’s First Inaugural Address, Monroe Doctrine, Manifest Destiny, Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, Wilsonian foreign policy, all stated that the need for preserving the internationalist foreign policy of the United States. American exceptionalism led to a foreign policy that is both unilateral and international. Unilateralism should be understood in the sense of seeking freedom of action and greater maneuverability. What I try to express is that this is a tendency derived from American exceptionalism. Hence, this does not, in any way, mean that the United States did not participate any multilateral enterprise. It means the United States has had a tendency to unilateral internationalist policy.

I have attempted to show the situation of the concept in 21st century. Focusing on the understanding of the term by President Obama, I have argued that the idea of American exceptionalism has risen to its zenith during Obama’s presidency. I have chosen to analyze Obama’s presidency because it is the latest and the current one. Obama has defined American exceptionalism in relation to the founding documents of the nation. Also, Obama was prescient enough to stand out against criticisms accusing him of not being American enough by explicitly embracing the idea of American exceptionalism.

As I have expressed in the beginning, American exceptionalism is a complex concept. From Stephen Walt, Gofrey Hodgson to other scholars and pundits have claimed that American exceptionalism is a myth and does not reflect the reality. In this thesis, I have given a place to such concerns and argued that what is important is the belief of the Americans to the ideas constructing American exceptionalism. The validity of the ideas is not important. Because it is a subjective concept. Nonetheless, this does not, in any way, mean that American exceptionalism has no influence on U.S. foreign policy. Maybe American exceptionalism does not have the coherence of a stable roadmap, still the idea establishes the ideational framework of U.S. foreign policy. Of course, U.S. foreign policy is guided by the calculations of power relations, rational analyses and the pursuit of national interest, the ideational factors such as ideas and identities have also a profound influence on U.S. foreign policy as I have shown. I have focused here on the ideational factors of U.S. foreign policy, however, I do not ignore neorealist and neoliberal concerns about American foreign policy. What I have attempted to say is that these theories failed to take into account the influence of such ideational factors on U.S. foreign policy. Other than that, neorealism and neoliberalism can greatly explain the parts of U.S. foreign policy to which they are suited.

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## APPENDICES

### A. TURKISH SUMMARY/TÜRKÇE ÖZET

#### AMERİKAN İSTİSNACILIĞI DÜŞÜNÇESİNİN BİRLEŞİK DEVLETLER DIŞ POLİTİKASINA ETKİSİ

Bu tez, Amerikan istisnacılığı fikrinin Birleşik Devletler dış politikası üzerine etkilerinin ne olduğunu açıklamayı amaçlamaktadır. Amerikan istisnacılığı, Birleşik Devletler dış politikasını etkileyen, yüksek-düzeyle politika yapıcılar ve aynı zamanda halk tarafından da geçerli olarak kabul edilen bir fikirdir. Bu fikir, basitçe Birleşik Devletler'in diğerlerinden farklı ve üstün olduğu önkabulüne dayanır. Analitik olarak, Birleşik Devletler'in üstünlüğüne, seçilmişliğine ve Birleşik Devletler'in bir görevi olduğuna olan inancı yansıtmaktadır. Üstünlük ön kabulü, 18. Yüzyılda Yeni Dünya'nın, Eski Dünya'dan farklı olduğu, daha iyi hayat şartları sunduğu ve dini özgürlüklerin Yeni Dünya'da ortaya çıktığı düşüncesini yansıtır. Seçilmişlik düşüncesi, Birleşik Devletler'in diğerlerinden farklı bir role sahip olduğu ve bu görevi icraa etmek zorunda olduğu düşüncesine dayanır. Bu görevin tanrı tarafından kendilerine bahşedildiğinin ve tanrının yardımı sayesinde başarıya ulaşacağı fikri yaygındır. Kısacası seçilmiş olma düşüncesi ve bir görevi haiz olma düşüncesi birbirine içkindir.

Geleneksel rasyonel Uluslararası İlişkiler teorileri çerçevesinde bakıldığında, neorealizm ve neoliberalizm teorileri, her ne kadar farklı anlayışları temsil etselerde, önemli meta-teorik varsayımları kabul etmektedirler. Her iki geleneksel rasyonel teori de fikirsel-düşünsel (*ideational*) değişikliklere açıklama gücü atfetmedikleri için Amerikan istisnacılığı fikrini açıklamakta yetersiz kalmaktadır. Bu sebepten bu tez, Amerikan istisnacılığı fikrini Birleşik Devletler dış politikasını etkisini, güç ilişkilerini ve ulusal çıkarın korunmasını da göz ardı etmeyerek, inşacı bir çerçevede ele almıştır. Birleşik Devletler dış politikasının yürütüldüğü yolların hem yüksek düzeyli politika yapıcılarının hem de halkın sahip olduğu fikirlerden etkilendiğini vurgulamaktadır. Temel argüman Amerikan istisnacılığına olan inanın en temel sonucunun Birleşik

Devletler liderliğinin teşviki olduğunu ve bu görevin nasıl icra edileceğini Birleşik Devletler'in dış politikasında eylem alanını koruyabilme ve manevra kabiliyetini daha fazla artırma eğilimine bağlı olduğunu savunmaktadır.

Son on yılda, Amerikan istisnacılığı düşüncesi Amerikan politik yaşamı ve akademisinde büyük oranda yükselişe geçti. Düşünce genellikle Birleşik Devletler'in tek-tarafli uluslararası ve kendinden emin dış politikasının bir altyapısı gibi görüldü ya da anti-Amerikanizm düşüncesinin temel nedeni oldu. Bunun yanında, özellikle muhafazakar kesimi temsil eden Cumhuriyetçi Parti'nin temsilcileri ve destekçileri, Mike Pence, John McCain, Mitt Romney, Sarah Palin, Newt Gingrich, Marco Rubio gibi figürler, düşünceye inandıklarını belirterek, bu düşünceyi seçim kampanyalarının temel odak noktası haline getirdiler.

Amerikan istisnacılığı düşüncesi bir çok fikirden beslenerek meydana gelmiştir. Bu fikirlere; “Tanrı Amerika’yı Korusun”, “Vazgeçilmez Ulus”, “Tepedeki Şehir”, “Dünyadaki en iyi ülke”, örnek verilebilir. Bu bağlamda bir şekilde Birleşik Devletler'in üstünlüğünü yahut farklılığını işaret eden fikirler yukarıdaki örnekler ile sınırlı değildir. Aynı doğrultudaki fikirler ve bu fikirlere olan inanış kimlik faktörünün oluşumunda büyük bir rol oynamaktadır. Bu fikirler gerek başkanlık söyleminde ve gerekse filmlerde, hayatın her alanında kullanılmaktadır.

McCracken, Birleşik Devletler dış politikasının yürütüldüğü yolların hem yüksek düzeyli politika yapıcılarının hem de halkın kendilerine dair fikirlerinden etkilendiğini yazmaktadır. Genel olarak bu tez de, yukarıdaki fikirlerin hem yüksek-düzeyle politika yapıcılarının hem de halkın fikirlerinin Amerikan ulusal kimliğinin oluşumunda büyük rol oynadığını vurgulamaktadır. Kısacası, bu fikirlere olan inanışın oluşturduğu Amerikan istisnacılığı fikri, Amerikan ulusal kimliğinin oluşumunda kritik bir önemi haizdir.

Beland, toplumdaki ve devlet yönetimindeki bir takım fikirler dizisi, yüksek düzeyli politika yapıcılarını tarafından desteklendiğinde politik olarak önem kazanır diye yazmaktadır. Bu argüman da bu tez ile birlikte desteklenmektedir. Amerikan istisnacılığını oluşturan fikirler, Birleşik Devletler bağımsızlık bildirgesinin yazarı

Thomas Jefferson'dan, 21 yüzyıl içerisinde görev yapan başkanlara kadar kendisini göstermektedir. Sadece “Amerikan istisnacılığı” fikri değil, kendisini oluşturan bir .ok fikir başkanlar, yüksek düzeyli politika yapımcılar ve halk tarafından büyük oranda destek bulmuştur.

Kimlik kavramının öncellenmesine verdiği önem sebebiyle inşacı yaklaşımdan hareketle, bu tezde kimlik kavramı Peter Katzenstein'in tanımladığı gibi, “ulus ve devlet olmanın değişen inşalarının bir etiketi” ve “kolektif farklılığın ulusal ideolojileri” olarak kabul edilmiştir.

Buradan hareketle, Amerikan istisnacılığı, Amerikan ulusal kimliği ile bu şekilde ilişkilendirilmektedir. Amerikan istisnacılığının genel analitik çerçevesi ise, Birleşik Devletler'in, üstünlüğüne, seçilmişliğine ve bir göree sahip olduğuna olan inanıştır. Bu fikre olan inancın dış politikada yansımaları ise Amerikan liderleri ve halkı tarafından uluslararası alanda Amerikan liderliğinin sağlanması politikasıdır. Amerikan istisnacılığı Amerikan liderliğinin benimsenmesini ve bunun sağlanmasını savunmaktadır.

Literatürde Amerikan ulusal kimliğinin Birleşik Devletler dış politikasına olan etkisi iki şekilde ele alınmıştır. Birincisi “örnek kimlik (exemplary identity) ve izolasyonist dış politika”, bir ikincisi ise “misyoner kimlik (missionary identity) ve uluslararası dış politika” kavramlarıdır. Bu tezin argümanı ise, bu ikili ayırımın gerçeği yansıtmadığı ve Birleşik Devletler'in Amerikan istisnacılığına olan inaniştan ötürü uluslararası alanda sıklıkla “tek-tarafli uluslararasıcı” (unilateral internationalist) bir dış politika tarzını benimsediğini göstermektedir. Amerikan istisnacılığı fikrinin tek tarafli uluslararasıcı bir dış politika tarzına sebep olması, Birleşik Devletler'in hiçbir zaman çok-tarafli girişimlere katılmadığı anlamına gelmemektedir.

Örnek kimlik, Birleşik Devletler'in diğerleri için bir model olduğu ve bu sebepten diğerler ülkeler ile olabildiğince az ilişki kurması gerektiğini savunmaktadır. Bu sebepten, literatürde örnek kimlik anlayışı çoğu zaman Birleşik Devletler'in izolasyonist bir dış politika geleneği olduğu izlenimini vermiştir. Misyoner kimlik anlayışı ise, Birleşik Devletler'in kendi değerlerini ve fikirlerini aktif olarak yayması

gerektiđi ve uluslararası alanda aktif katılımı gerektiđinin altını çizmektedir. Misyoner kimliđe göre Birleşik Devletler bu yolla Amerikan liderliğini sağlayacaktır.

Bu tez, Amerikan kimliğinin, örnek kimlik ve misyoner kimlik olarak ikiye ayrılmasına karşı çıkar. Birleşik Devletler'in bir model olduđu ve bu sebepten diđer ülkelerle ilişkiye girmemesi gerektiđi fikrini savunan örnek kimlik, izolasyonist bir dış politika geleneđine sebep olmamış, fakat fikir düzeyinde kalmıştır. İzolasyonizm ve ona sebep olduđu düşünölen örnek kimlik anlayışı Birleşik Devletler dış politikasını normatif bir pencereden görmökle yetinmişlerdir. Kısacası izolasyonist bir dış politika geleneđi olan deđil, olması gerektiđi düşünölen bir anlayış olarak kalmıştır.

İkinci bölümde, Amerikan istisnacılıđının teorik çerçevesi çizilmiştir. Geleneksel rasyonel uluslararası ilişkiler teorileri olan neorealizm ve neoliberalizm, Amerikan istisnacılıđı fikrine teorik bir çerçeve çizilememekte yetersiz kalırlar. Kimlik kavramının kavramsallaştırılmasına verdiđi önem ve fikirsel deđişkenlerin dış politikadaki rolü konularında öne çıkan inşacı teori bu sebepten tezin teorik çerçevesini oluşturmaktadır.

Neorealistler, uluslararası sistemin anarşik olduđunu düşündükleri doğasını, bunun sebep olduđu kendi-çıkarını düşünölen ve güvenliđini maksimize etemeye çalışan devlet davranışlarını, güvenlik ikilemini ve güç için verilen mücadeleyi kendilerine konu edinirler. Kenneth Waltz'ın önderliğinde, neorealist teoride bütün devlet davranışlarının işlev bakımından aynı olduđu kabul edilmektedir. Devletler bu işlevleri kullanabilme kapasiteleri tarafından farklılaşabilir. Bu da uluslararası alandaki güç dağılımının farklılaştığı oranda gerçekleşecektir.

Önemli bir neorealist figür olan Stephen Walt, bir dizi yazıda Amerikan istisnacılıđının Birleşik Devletler dış politikası üzerindeki etkisini neorealist bir perspektiften eleştirmiştir. Walt, dış politika yapımında, Amerikan istisnacılıđının aksine, güç ilişkileri hesaplamalarının ve uluslararası politikanın rekabetçi doğasının dikkate alınması gerektiđini savunmuştur. Birleşik Devletler'in güvenliđini ve varlığını koruması gerektiđini savunarak, Amerikan istisnacılıđının bir mit olduđunu belirtmiştir. Önemli bir nokta, bu tezde Birleşik Devletler dış politikasının neorealist

analizleri ve neorealizm ile açıklanan alanları değil, neorealist teorinin, politika yapıcılarının fikirleri, ulusal kimlik gibi fikirsel değişkenleri dikkate almaması eleştirilmiştir.

Robert Keohane, Andrew Moravcsik, John Gerrard Ruggie gibi, neoliberaler ise, uluslararası işbirliğinin olanaklarını ve buna ulaşmada uluslararası örgütlerin rolüne değinmişlerdir. Neoliberalere göre devlet davranışları devlet tercihlerinin dağılımı sayesinde şekillenmektedir. Neoliberal teorinin sunduğu kimlik anlayışı ise bireysel ve özgün bir kimlik anlayışıdır. Herkesin aynı haklara sahip olabileceği gibi fikirler neoliberalerin kimlik anlayışının evrensel olduğunu göstermektedir. Fakat, bu tezde tanımlandığı üzere Amerikan ulusal kimliği, Birleşik Devletler'in seçilmiş ve üstün olduğu inancıyla oluşturulduğu için neoliberal teori teorik bir çerçeve sunamamaktadır.

Peter Katzenstein, Ted Hopf, Alexander Wendt gibi inşacılar, kimliklerin fikirler tarafından ve çıkarların da kimlikler tarafından şekillendirildiğini ortaya attılar. Bu teoriye göre kimlik gerek çıkarların şekillenmesinde ve gerekse de dış politikada bu çıkarların gözetilmesinde merkez bir önemdedir. İnşacılar, neorealistlerin aksine, farklılaşmış kimliklerden kaynaklanan farklılaşmış devlet davranışlarının olduğunu vurguladılar. İnşacılara göre, materyal faktörler çıkarların şekillenmesinde tek başlarına etkisiz kaldı. Bir kimlik ile kendini eşleştirmek, takip edilecek ve ona göre davranılacak bir değerler bütünü sağlamaktadır. Bu teorik çerçeve dahilinde, Amerikan ulusal kimliğinin Amerikan istisnacılığına olan inanış ile tanımlandığı söylenmelidir.

Amerikan istisnacılığı kavramı literatürde farklı anlamlar kazanmıştır. Tocqueville 1835, Lipset 1996, Shafer 1991, Lockhart 1992 gibi isimler, Birleşik Devletler'in ideolojisini, kuruluşunu, devlet yapısını, refahını, sendikalarının durumunu diğer ülkeler ile karşılaştırmalı bir şekilde incelemişlerdir. Burada istisnacılık karşılaştırmalı ve materyal farklılıklara dayalı veriler sayesinde tanımlanmaktadır. Bu anlayış tezde objektif anlayış bağlamında anlatılmaktadır.



McCracken 2003, Schonberg 2009, Restad 2015, Löffman 2015 gibi çalışmalar da Amerikan istisnacılığının Amerikan ulusal kimliğinin tanımlanmasındaki merkezi rolüne işaret eder. Bu anlayış ise tezde sübjektif anlayış olarak belirtilmiştir.

Amerikan istisnacılığı fikrinden ilk kez akademik anlamda bahseden kişi 19. Yüzyılda Birleşik Devletlere bir görev için gelen Fransız yargıç ve gezgin Alexis de Tocqueville'dir. Gezisinden sonra kaleme aldığı iki ciltlik Amerika'da Demokrasi isimli kitabında Tocqueville, Amerikalıların bu bakımdan pozisyonu tamamen istisnaidir ve başka bir demokratik devletin bu pozisyonda olabileceği düşünülmemektedir". Amerikan istisnacılığı kavramının bir başka şekilde gündeme gelmesi Joseph Stalin sebebiyledir. Sovyet lider, Birleşik Devletlerin sosyalist düşünceler tarafından nüfuz edilemez bir yapıda olduğu gerçeğini "bu Amerikan istisnacılığı aykırılığdır" diyerek ifade etmiştir.

Amerikan istisnacılığı kavramı bugün literatürde anlaşıldığı şekliyle ise ilk defa 1957 yılında Rusya doğumlu Amerikalı gazeteci Max Lerner tarafından gündeme getirilmiştir. Amerikan istisnacılığı fikrinin bir diğer ve son türü kendisini uluslararası hukuk alanında göstermektedir. Michael Ignatieff, uluslararası anlaşmaların ve rejimlerin Amerikan egemenliğini ihlal edecek şekildeki doğalarına olan Amerikan çekincesini Amerikan istisnacılığı kavramıyla açıklamıştır. Ignatieff'e göre bu Amerikan çekincesi, "muafiyetçilik" (exemptionalism), "çifte-standartlar" (double-standards) ve "hukuki izolasyonizm" (legal isolationism) ile açıklanabilir. Muafiyetçilik kavramı ise kendi içinde "açıkça ön koşul belirtme" (explicit reservation), "icazet-etmeme" (non-ratification) ve "riyetsizlik" (non-compliance) kavramlarına ayrılmaktadır.

Amerikan istisnacılığı fikri, bir çok fikirden yararlanmaktadır. Bu fikirlerin kaynakları analitik fayda sağlaması açısından dinsel kökenler, coğrafi-konumsal kökenler ve politik kökenler olarak üçe ayrılmıştır. Bütün bu kökenler, Amerikan istisnacılığını oluşturan fikirleri barındırırlar. Dini kökenlerden olan en önemli fikirler Püritenler ve John Winthrop'un düşünceleridir. John Winthrop 17. Yüzyılda yaşamış Püriten bir avukat ve Britanya'dan Kuzey Amerika'ya 1630'lu yıllarda yapılan göçler ile Kuzey Amerika kıtasına diğer Püritenlerin başı olarak gelmiştir.

Kuzey Amerika'ya yapılacak olan yerleşimi Püriten tayfasına anlatırken, Winthrop filusunun bayrak gemisi Arabella'da John Winthrop, “yerleşimimiz tepedeki şehir gibi olacak, bütün gözler bizim üzerimizde olacak” sözleriyle ilk istisnacı eğilimlere hayat vermiştir.

Bu tabii ki daha sonraki yıllarda şekillenecek olan “vaadedilmiş toprak ve seçilmiş halk” fikrini de yansıtmaktadır. Winthrop'un söylevinin tam metninden de anlaşılabilceği gibi bu düşüncelerin amacı Püritenlerin kardeşliğini, birlikteliğini ve yeni yerleşimi korumaktır.

Püritenler bu düşünceleri dolayısıyla, Tocqueville tarafından Birleşik Devletler'in gerçek kurucuları olarak nitelendirilmiştir. Fakat Tocqueville'in aksine, muhafazakar figürlerden Robert Kagan, Püritenlerin Amerikan ulusal kimliğine katkılarının 1830'lardan sonra materyalizm, ticari tutum ve bireysellik anlayışları sebebiyle kaybolmaya yüz tuttuğunu belirtmektedir.

Coğrafi-konumsal kökenlerde ise Birleşik Devletler'in kurulduğu coğrafyanın olumluluğu ve bu geniş coğrafyanın halkın yönetim konusunda düşüncelerini şekillendirdiği üzerinde durulmaktadır. Birleşik Devletler'in doğusunda ve batısında okyanusların olması ve bu bölgelerden yaşamsal güvenlik çıkarlarına tehdit algılamaması “serbest güvenlik” diye nitelendirilmiştir.

Bu serbest güvenlik anlayışı ve dini, coğrafi ve politik kökenlerden oluşan fikirlerinde etkisiyle bütün kıtanın Birleşik Devletler'e ait olması gerektiği düşüncesi politika yapıcılar ve halk nezdinde ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu düşüncelerin en temel izlenimine 1823 Monroe Doktrine ve 1845 Açık Yazgı (Manifest Destiny) politikalarında rastlanır Monroe Doktrini tarafından önü açılan 19 yüzyıl kıtasal ve doğuya doğru genişleme Amerikan kimliği tarafından tanımlanan bir çıkardı. Açık Yazgı politikası ise, kimilerine göre Amerikan istisnacılığı düşüncesinin 19. Yüzyıl Birleşik Devletler dış politikası üzerindeki en önemli etkisini yansıtmaktadır.

Politik kökenlerde, Amerikalıların fikirlerinin ve inanışlarının kimliklerinin temeli olduğu konusundan bahsedilmektedir. Kurulduğunda ortak bir soy yahut ortak bir atası bulunmadığından, Amerikalılar bir kimlik inşası için sadece fikirlerin olduğu geleceğe bakmaktan başka şansa sahip değillerdi. Özgürlük, bireysellik, eşitlik, kendi-kendini yönetme, güçler ayrılığı, anayasacılık, sınırlı hükümet, özel mülk gibi fikirler politik çerçeveler tarafından korunan Amerikan değerlerinin merkezinde yer almaktadırlar.

Dördüncü bölümde, Birleşik Devletler dış politikası ile ilgili dört temel konsept yeniden tanımlanmaktadır: İzolasyonizm, uluslararasılık, tek-tarafılık ve çok-tarafılık. İzolasyonizm ve uluslararasılık, uluslararası politika ile iletişime geçilip geçilmeyeceği üzerinedir. İzolasyonizm uluslararası alanın herhangi bir kısmına veya tamamına katılmamak, ilişki içine girmemek anlamına gelmektedir. Uluslararasılık ise, tam tersine, uluslararası alan ile politik, askeri ve ekonomik olarak ilişki içine girme durumunu temsil eder.

Tek-tarafılık, bu tezde tanımlandığı şekliyle, Birleşik Devletler'in kurulduğundan itibaren, uluslararası alanda aktif olurken eylem alanını korumaya çalışma ve manevra kabiliyetini daha fazla artırma eğilimine işaret eder. Çok-tarafılık ise izlenecek politikaların üye olunan çok taraflı kurumların kararları dahilinde eşgüdümlü hale ve dolayısıyla dış politikada kısıtlayıcı bir hale getirilmesi anlamına gelmektedir.

Bu tezin en temel argümanı, Birleşik Devletler'in kurulduğundan beri uluslararası bir politika izlemeye, uluslararası alan ile içiçe olmaya ve bütün bunları yaparken kendi manevra kabiliyetini ve eylem alanını korumaya, kendini dünyadan izole etmekten daha fazla eğilimli olduğu fikridir. İzolasyonizm düşüncesi Birleşik Devletler dış politikasına ilişkin gerçeği yansıtmaz. Çünkü sözde bir izolasyonist dış politikaya sebep olduğu düşünülen örnek kimlik ile ilgili fikirler bir politika oluşturamamış, fikir düzeyinde kalmıştır. Bu sebepten izolasyonizm açıklayıcı bir güce sahip değildir ve bu düşüncenin analitik bir faydaları çok düşük düzeydedir.

Birleşik devletler hiçbir zaman kendisini uluslararası alandan izole etmek istememiştir. Washington'ın vurguladığı “kalıcı ittifaklar” ve Jefferson'ın vurguladığı

“dolaşık ittifaklar” uyarıları, daha sonra iki başkanında gözettiği politikalar hesaba katıldığında, izolasyonizmi savunmamaktadır.

Washington’un 1796 yılındaki Veda Konuşması, Jefferson’ın 1801 yılındaki başkanlık töreni açılış konuşması, 1823 yılındaki Monroe Doktrini, 1845 yılındaki Açık Yazgı politikası, 1900’lü yılların başında Monroe Doktrini’ne Roosevelt Ekleme’sinin yapılması ve 1920’li yıllarda Woodrow Wilson’ın Monroe Doktrini’nin küreselleştirilmesi olarak adlandırılabilir fikirler ve politikalar, Birleşik Devletler’in tek-tarafli uluslararası dış politikaya olan eğilimini göstermektedir.

Birleşik Devletler dış politikasında tektarafli uluslararasılık dahilinde bir devamlılık olduğu argümanı, Birleşik Devletler’in hiçbir zaman çok-tarafli girişimlere katılmadığı anlamına gelmemelidir.

Beşinci bölümde, Obama’nın başkanlık döneminin en temel amaçlarının Amerikan istisnacılığını ve küresel anlamda Amerikan liderliğini yeniden doğrulamak olduğu söylenebilir. Amerikan istisnacılığının Amerikan liderliğini teşvik ettiği düşünüldüğünde, aynı zamanda Birleşik Devletler değerleri çerçevesinde bir dünya düzeni kurulması düşüncesini de içerdiği vurgulanmıştır. 41. Başkan George H.W. Bush’un “yeni dünya düzeni” fikri, 42. Başkan Bill Clinton’un “vazgeçilmez ulus” fikri, bu argümanı desteklemektedir.

Obama’nın Amerikan istisnacılığı anlayışı Cumhuriyetçi Parti üyeleri ve destekçilerinin anlayışlarından farklılaşmaktadır. Demokrat ve Cumhuriyetçi partilerin Amerikan liderliğinin devamı konusunda genel olarak fikirbirliğinde olduğu fakat Amerikan liderliğini hangi yollardan sağlayacakları konusunda fikir ayrılığına düştükleri söylenmelidir. Bu tez, iki büyük partinin Amerikan istisnacılığı anlayışlarının farklılaşmasının sebebinin bu olduğunu vurgulamaktadır.

Obama’nın Amerikan istisnacılığı anlayışı Amerikan kurucu belgelerinin hayat verdiği fikirlerin tekrar doğrulanması gerektiğidir. Ayrıca, Obama birden çok hususta, Amerikan istisnacılığı kavramının kendisini de kullanarak, bu fikre inandığını ve kendi hayatının Amerikan istisnacılığının bir özeti olduğunu dahi vurgulamıştır. Obama’nın 2012 Başkanlık Seçimleri rakibi Mitt Romney, Amerikan istisnacılığın temelini

Birleşik Devletler'in ekonomik ve askeri gücünün benzersizliğinden kaynaklandığını düşünür. Kısacası Obama'nın anlayışı daha çok fikirsel temellere vurgu yaparken, Romney ve Gingrich gibi isimlerin temsil ettiği Cumhuriyetçi Parti'nin anlayışı ise daha çok materyal faktörler ile temellenir.

Obama'nın dış politikasına bakıldığında P5+1 ülkeleri ile ortak olarak, varolan yaptırımların aşamalı bir şekilde kaldırılması karşılığında İran'ın nükleer yeteneklerinin kısıtlanması konusunda yapılan Kapsamlı Ortak Eylem Planı (JCPOA) göze çarpmaktadır. Ayrıca, Obama döneminde Küba ile tekrar diplomatik ilişkilerin kurulması, düşman olarak kabul edilen rejimlere diplomasi ve diyalog ile yaklaşılabileceğinin de bir göstergesi olmuştur. Bunun dışında, Obama, Irak, Suriye ya da Libya'nın değil, Afganistan'ın daha büyük bir çatışma bölgesi olduğunu düşünmekteydi. Obama döneminde, Libya lideri Muammer Kaddafi'nin görevden alınması amacıyla kurulan Uluslararası Koalisyonuna destek verilmesinde ve 2013 yılında Suriye İç Savaşında kullanılan kimyasal silahların bir Amerikan müdahalesine sebep olup olmayacağı ile ilgili olarak, Obama Amerikan çıkarlarına Amerikan istisnacılığı ile tanımlanan Amerikan ulusal kimliği çerçevesinde tanımlamıştır. "Harekete geçmemiz gerekiyor, çünkü Birleşik Devletleri farklı kılan, Amerikayı istisnai yapan şey budur." Bu da demektir ki, Amerikan politikayapıcıları Amerikan liderliğini, kim oldukları sebebiyle, Amerikan ulusal kimliği sebebiyle desteklemektedirler.

Birleşik Devletler dış politikasında devamlılığın işareti olarak, Obama'da Birleşik Devletler'in görevinin küresel liderlik sağlamak olduğunu fakat Birleşik Devletler'in diğer devletlere de ihtiyacı olduğunu vurgulamıştır. Bu sebepten, son olarak diyebiliriz ki Birleşik Devletler, dünya ile içiçe olmaya, değerlerini kendi ülkesi dışında da desteklemeye çalışmış, fakat bütün bunları yaparken de, manevra kabiliyetini ve eylem alanını da korumaya eğilimli olmuştur.

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