

Rhetorical Alchemy: American Exceptionalism and the War on Terror

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The Bush administration's neoconservative foreign policy for the war on terror competes with two better known models of foreign policy. Detailed in the National Security Strategy of the United States, the policy draws on an eclectic amalgam of realist and liberal international relations theory to justify U.S. primacy at a time when majority mass public opinion favors international cooperation. To build public support for unilateral foreign policy, the administration used a number of appeals that projected an image of the United States as endowed with unique institutional and moral qualities that set it apart from the rest of the world. American exceptionalism proved to be a resonant moral catalyst for elite media support of unilateral U.S. military action. This article analyzes commentary and editorials in the New York Times and the Washington Post prior to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq to isolate the mechanism underlying the success of the administration's appeals and the implications of that success for media elites' support of post-9/11 U.S. foreign policy.

Keywords war on terror, American exceptionalism, neoconservative foreign policy, framing, editorial policy

The images of Iraqi prisoners being abused—more images keep dribbling out as the administration warns there is worse to come, but keeps further pictures under wraps—are so disturbing that they defy the usual scandal rules. You can tell from the nature of the commentary that these revelations are deeply wounding, that they are so fundamentally at odds with our picture of ourselves as Americans that even hardened journalistic veterans are struggling to come to grips with the situation. (Kurtz, 2004)

There's something about our venture into Iraq that is inspiring, painfully, embarrassingly and quintessentially American. No other nation would have been hopeful enough to try to evangelize for democracy across the Middle East. No other nation would have been naïve enough to do it this badly. No other nation would be adaptable enough to recover from its own innocence and muddle its way to success, as I suspect we are about to do. (Brooks, 2004, p. A23)

The Abu Ghraib prison scandal of May 2004 led to a series of congressional investigations, during which political and media elites made public pronouncements of revulsion

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and guilt. With the exception of the most partisan Republicans and conservative media commentators, most elites seemed genuinely shocked by images of Iraqi prisoners arranged in sexual poses or otherwise humiliated and threatened in order to “soften them up.” The photos were incompatible with an image of the United States as a somewhat naive but nevertheless well-intentioned moral exemplar to the world, the familiar frame used by *New York Times* columnist David Brooks in his apologia.

My claim in this article is that such reactions and explanations indicate the presence of a resonant theme in American political culture that strengthens support for the Bush administration’s policy of unilateralism, and thereby U.S. primacy, at a time when a majority of Americans favor international cooperation. I test this claim by analyzing commentary and editorials in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* prior to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. In so doing, I also identify the mechanism that explains the success of the administration’s appeals and explore the implications of that success for media elites’ support of post-9/11 U.S. foreign policy.

The argument begins with an analysis of the moral component of American political culture—American exceptionalism—and its role in rationalizing foreign policy, past and present. It then describes how post-9/11 neoconservative foreign policy selectively borrows from the more conventional models of realism and liberal internationalism to lend moral luster to foreign policy that advances U.S. primacy. The article then moves to an analysis of editorial content to show how the Bush administration used appeals to American exceptionalism to gain support for the wars with Afghanistan and Iraq. The article concludes with an analysis of the specific conditions under which foreign policy innovation such as neoconservatism might flourish and the risks entailed.

Liberal Internationalism and Globalization

Fukuyama’s *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992) proposed a new paradigm for mapping the post–Cold War world. According to Fukuyama, liberal democracy and science coupled to market capitalism had solved long-standing problems of human dignity and material security. The merging of the world into a cosmopolitan unity, a universal and homogenous state, was the logical end state of history’s fulfillment. Fukuyama’s thesis spawned a number of successful popularizations (e.g., Friedman, 2000; Mickelthwait & Wooldridge, 2000) that declared a new economic and political order—driven by globalization—an advance on Woodrow Wilson’s liberal internationalist vision. One version of this model set the foundations of stability on a shared desire among states to take part in increased prosperity and thus to reduce the incentives for war. Another claimed that the increased power of markets and capital flows would weaken states and enhance the prospects for world government.

Critics, most from the realist school of international relations theory, counterargued that multinational corporations remained tied to specific locations (e.g., Mann, 1997, pp. 481–482) and that strong states would continue to bend international law and markets to suit their interests (Barber, 1996). Others pointed out that an analogous state of economic interdependence among European states did little to prevent World War I (Mearsheimer, 2001). Indeed, from an international realist’s perspective, the sheer economic and military power of the United States (Brooks & Wohlforth, 2002) is an advantage to be safeguarded given the continued absence of a governing authority over the international political environment. The issue is not whether nations strive for power but whether the United States is advantaged in this effort by a political culture that provides moral cover for its policies.

American Exceptionalism and Its Critics

Aside from the former Soviet Union, the United States is uniquely distinguished from other nations by its ideological origins. The values that make up American political culture are not distinctive individually but collectively define what some scholars (e.g., Cherry, 1971; Lipset, 1996) have called American exceptionalism. The values that support an exceptionalist view marry Enlightenment ideals of individual reason and liberty with religious and moral views uprooted from their origins in Puritan piety. Collectively, these values define a political culture that promotes the idea of progress and takes the improvement of the human condition as a given. One notable example of the influence of these values and beliefs is in the practices of investigative journalism and how they render moral judgment as objective reporting (Ettema & Glasser, 1998). While liberty and moral judgment can be harnessed to domestic progressive politics, they can also be put in the service of other, sometimes less admirable goals.

Scholars theorize, for example, that the prominence of liberty and individual rights in American political culture leads to a deep suspicion of the state that impedes the solidarity necessary for achieving political goals (Ellis, 1993). The result is a favorable environment for the development of a polarizing “us and them” frame of reference that has often interacted with the moral dimension of American political culture to fuel religious movements that seek restoration of purity to the social order (Morone, 2004; cf. Lears, 2003). A post-9/11 Manichean shift in American foreign policy (“you’re with us or against us”) is not unexpected in a political culture inflected by unusually strong religious beliefs.

Thus, despite their faith in reason, Americans are more likely than citizens of other Western nations to believe in God, the soul, the devil, and life after death. They are also much more likely to assign great importance to the role of God in their lives (World Values Survey, 1995–1997). Notwithstanding the nonestablishment clause in the Constitution (Perry, 2003), studies of recent trends in public opinion data reveal that Americans are divided on the issue of the role of religion in government. For example, there is an approximately even split on the desirability of the influence of Judeo-Christian principles on political life and, in recent years, increased support for the expression of views on social issues by religious leaders (Servín-González & Torres-Reyna, 1999).

These trends in public opinion have been accompanied by a rise in the visibility and political influence of the evangelical Christian movement (Domke, 2004), itself fueled by the increasing numbers of Americans who regard themselves as born-again (one third of Americans who attended religious services according to the 2000 NES). A numerical minority, the Christian right is highly organized and politically influential, but more significantly is a key constituency in the Bush coalition. The following excerpt from a 2004 press conference reveals the imprint of an evangelizing religious faith on Bush foreign policy:

So long as I’m the president, I will press for freedom. I believe so strongly in the power of freedom. . . . Freedom is the Almighty’s gift to every man and woman in this world. And as the greatest power on the face of the earth, we have an obligation to help the spread of freedom. . . . That’s our obligation. That is what we have been called to do, as far as I’m concerned. (George W. Bush, news conference, April 13, 2004)

Critics of the concept of American exceptionalism come from two directions. From a macro comparative view, some (e.g., Wilson, 1998) argue that Western European states

differ less ideologically from the U.S. today than they did when they embraced organic conservatism and social democracy. Whatever differences continue to distinguish the United States, they are insufficient to support an exceptionalist status for the nation. While this critique poses a valid objection to the pragmatic, institutional foundation for exceptionalism, it fails to address its moral, religious dimension.

At a micro analysis of domestic political attitudes, others contend that despite the claims of a stable values-based political identity, Americans themselves are becoming more cosmopolitan in their outlooks. Inglehart (1997), for example, hypothesizes the emergence of new, more pluralistic values that point to a potential for realignment of traditional right-left political cleavages (Clark & Hoffman-Martinet, 1998); others (e.g., Citrin et al., 1994) argue that popular consensus on values that define American identity is less stable today than during the Cold War. There is, however, little evidence that the core set of American political values has been displaced. For example, immigrants are as likely to adhere to core American values as native-born Americans (Garza, Falcon, & Garcia, 1996). Further, if the emergence of pluralist values is a growing phenomenon, it would predict increased cosmopolitanism among Americans. The limited empirical work done specifically on the emergence of a world identity among Americans indicates little evidence of such identification (Inglehart, 1997; Norris, 2000).

American Exceptionalism, Public Opinion, and Foreign Policy

The Cold War presidential administrations used a moralizing discourse to justify foreign policy during the Cold War, but that discourse supported a multilateral approach that reduced the cost of U.S. involvement (Gaddis, 2004). The Vietnam War fractured the veneer of what some have called the Cold War consensus (Hallin, 1992). Subsequent controversies emerged on the wisdom of the use of U.S. military force abroad and, if it were to be used, whether the U.S. should act unilaterally (Sobel, 2001; Wittkopf, 1994). Sobel's analysis of three post-Vietnam foreign policy debates (2001) found that public opinion constrained policymakers in their formulation of strategies that advocated the use of military force. But what of the period following 9/11?

A Chicago Council on Foreign Relations (2002) survey of attitudes on foreign policy found that after 9/11 Americans became more interested in foreign news, were much more supportive of increases in defense spending (44% vs. 30% in 1998, the highest increase in 30 years), and were nearly unanimous (more than 8 of 10) in their preference for the U.S. exerting "strong leadership" in world affairs. It would not be unreasonable to think that the 9/11 attacks also created support for a U.S.-centric, realist approach to foreign policy. On the contrary, Americans remained highly supportive of multilateral action: Nearly two thirds opposed the U.S. playing the role of world policeman, and more than half opposed U.S. intervention were the nation to "take the lead responsibility and supply most of the forces." And less than a third thought the U.S. should act alone in solving an international problem (though this represented a 10% increase over 1998). On the specific issue of Iraq, two thirds said that the U.S. should invade only with UN approval and the support of allies. If the Bush administration were to contemplate a unilateralist approach, it would need to craft a rhetorical appeal that tapped a deeper vein in U.S. political culture.

American Exceptionalism and Bush Foreign Policy

The phrase "axis of evil" first appeared in George W. Bush's State of the Union address in January 2002. Its significance went well beyond Reagan's neoconservative foreign policy

rhetoric. Rejecting the realpolitik policies of détente, key members of the Reagan foreign policy team cast the administration's foreign policy in a moralistic tone (the "evil empire"), yet Reagan maintained close ties with European allies despite mass demonstrations against U.S. deployment of nuclear missiles in Germany and Great Britain. By contrast, the European allies first learned of the axis of evil from news reports of Bush's speech (Mann, 2004, p. 320).

By the onset of the George W. Bush presidency, neoconservatives had evolved a muscular unilateralist approach to foreign policy. Unilateralism in and of itself was not, of course, a foreign policy innovation of the Bush administration, but its specific formulation represented a departure from past policy¹ and an anomaly to a conventional realist-liberal analytic scheme. To cite one familiar contrast, liberal internationalists claim that democratic states are much less likely to go to war with each other and that international cooperation with rules that govern state behavior enhances the prospects for peaceful coexistence (see, e.g., Brown, Lynn-Jones, & Miller, 1996). By contrast, realists are indifferent to the internal political systems of nation states (the "billiard ball" thesis) and have little faith in the efficacy of rules established by international institutions such as the UN. Realists argue that the absence of a leviathan ruling body at the global level makes it rational for states to act in their own interest (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 17–18). Post-9/11 U.S. foreign policy blurs these distinctions.

Well before 9/11, Bush's foreign policy team—"the Vulcans"—had developed the tenets of neoconservative foreign policy, whose central aim was to safeguard American primacy through military power.² The influence of Leo Strauss on this group has inspired some controversy, particularly on the gap between Straussian political philosophy and the specifics of the foreign policy crafted by neoconservatives (see, e.g., Norton, 2004). To cite one key example, Strauss was skeptical of democracy and of the compatibility of philosophy as a tool of skeptical inquiry with what he considered to be the necessity for shared beliefs (however illusory) needed to sustain political unity. This did not, however, prevent Strauss enthusiasts from extrapolating his philosophical condemnation of tyranny and moral relativism to a foreign policy aimed at toppling dictatorships perceived to threaten U.S. security. Thus, they also rejected a cosmopolitan, cooperative approach to international politics. Together with other programs for world government, Straussians considered the UN a misguided attempt at "universal homogenization of human beings" and an example of "our loss of confidence in our justice and power" (Blitz, 1999, p. 440).³

The morally inflected approach of Bush foreign policy pleased neither realists nor liberal internationalists. Realists found much to like in the Vulcans' disdain of international institutions but not their program for (selective) replacement of dictatorships with democracy. Liberal internationalists found themselves in the precisely opposite dilemma. Before appointment to her position as national security advisor, Condoleezza Rice (2000) previewed the administration's strategy for rallying support for its foreign policy:

The belief that the United States is exercising power legitimately only when it is doing so on behalf of someone or something else was deeply rooted in Wilsonian thought, and there are some echoes of it in the Clinton administration. To be sure, there is nothing wrong with doing something that benefits all humanity, but that is, in a sense, a second-order effect. America's pursuit of the national interest will create conditions that promote freedom, markets, and peace. (p. 47)

The central role of American exceptionalism as the moral justification for neoconservative foreign policy is evident in the analysis of Charles Krauthammer, a conservative

columnist for the *Washington Post*. In this speech to the American Enterprise Institute (2004), Krauthammer made his case for what he calls “democratic globalism,” his preferred term for neoconservative foreign policy:

Beyond power. Beyond interest. Beyond interest defined as power. That is the credo of democratic globalism. Which explains its political appeal: America is a nation uniquely built not on blood, race or consanguinity, but on a proposition—to which its sacred honor has been pledged for two centuries. This American exceptionalism explains why non-Americans find this foreign policy so difficult to credit; why Blair has had more difficulty garnering support for it in his country; and why Europe, in particular, finds this kind of value-driven foreign policy hopelessly and irritatingly moralistic.

The George W. Bush administration formalized unilateralism as a keystone of its foreign policy in the National Security Strategy of the United States (2002). The document argued for a right to preemptive war in parallel with a promotion of democratic values, “a balance of power that favors human freedom” (p. 2). One historian of foreign policy summed up the approach as “Fukuyama plus force” (Gaddis, 2004, pp. 90, 107). To clarify, the “balance of power” relies on a convention of amoral realist theory, but the phrase “favors human freedom” invokes the liberal internationalist assumption that expansion of democracy leads to a more peaceful world. In short, neoconservative foreign policy imbues the strategic goal of U.S. primacy and security with an aura of moral purpose even as its formulation creates a strategic ambiguity that widens foreign policy options.

The ambiguity of the formulation would rationalize the Bush administration’s variable approaches to the promotion of democracy in the Middle East—vigorous in hostile states such as Iraq and Iran, halfhearted or absent in allied states with dictatorial regimes such as Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. It would also legitimate concepts that lent moral ballast to foreign policy that favored U.S. self-interest—hence Donald Rumsfeld’s characterization of France and Germany as “Old Europe” after their UN ambassadors rejected a U.S.-sponsored resolution to invade Iraq and popularization of the “coalition of the willing,”⁴ a redundantly qualified concept that made virtue of necessity. The U.S. would henceforth pursue what it saw as its vital interests—with allies if possible—but would not hesitate to act alone “if necessary” (National Security Strategy, 2002). After 9/11, the moral tone of the administration’s foreign policy rhetoric became steeped in resolve and righteous indignation (Mann, 2004, p. 297). Post-9/11 foreign policy returned U.S. foreign policy to the familiarity of Cold War manichaeism but also to the less familiar doctrines of preemption and unilateralism last used by the Monroe and Polk administrations.

The Bush administration used the largely emotional appeals of American exceptionalism to rally support for a foreign policy not widely accepted among media elites, let alone understood by the general public. Once the emotion and patriotism faded, the strategy was open to two risks: (a) Adopting key assumptions from more widely known theories of international relations, neoconservative foreign policy lacked intuitively clear guidelines for gauging its success, and (b) were the policy to fail, it could only rely on the support of a relatively small group of neoconservative policy intellectuals, not traditional elite foreign policy constituencies or the wider American public. To what extent would the exceptionalist appeals of the Bush foreign policy team help promote a policy that melded what appeared to be divergent goals?

Method and Data

In this study, I use frame analysis to diagnose media elites' analysis of post-9/11 U.S. foreign policy. As numerous researchers have pointed out, there is little consistency in the way scholars define and detect frames (D'Angelo, 2002; Entman, 2004; Reese, 2001). Others (e.g., Carragee & Roefs, 2004) criticize those studies that fail to acknowledge how the distribution of social and political power influences the choice and power of frames. The inconsistencies and varying approaches are due partly to the varying goals of those who seek the origins, uses, or consequences of the frames but, more importantly, to the absence of a unified theory of framing effects.

For this study I define a frame as a structure in text that organizes and creates a meaningful and coherent picture of an unfolding series of events (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987). More specifically, I seek to identify themes that identify the presence of frames that guide analysis of international events and thereby help justify policy. Foreign policy elites draw upon theories of international relations to make sense of events, to predict their course, and to formulate and promote policy that responds effectively to those events. In addition, elites may regard the United States as endowed with unique qualities that would justify a special role for the nation in the international order. To put these processes into the conceptual rubric of a framing model, elites use these structures to define problems, suggest diagnoses, make moral judgments, and prescribe solutions (Entman, 1993).

The data for this article come from the editorial and op-ed pages of two of the nation's most influential newspapers, whose columnists are syndicated in papers across the country, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. I selected these two sources because they are widely regarded as newspapers with preferences for policy likely to be critical of a conservative administration. As such, they would be expected to represent the most skeptical audience for neoconservative foreign policy. I selected the opinion pieces because they represent an influential sample of conventional elite opinion *intended* to lead mass opinion (Hunt, 1997, p. 52). The ideas, positions, and arguments articulated by these writers represent a set of ideas that have the potential to structure the thoughts of a wider public.

As to method, coders noted whether a particular theme appeared in a column or editorial.⁵ Presence of a theme was simply coded as a 1. The themes indicated the presence of one or more frames of reference, two focused on foreign policy and one on the qualities of the United States that distinguish it from other nations: The first frame was liberal internationalism. Premised upon the effectiveness of collective action among democratic states for solving problems, the theory emphasizes cooperation with international institutions such as the UN. Two themes indicated the presence of this frame: (a) The U.S. should engage with other nations to solve common problems and/or (b) work through the UN for international approval of its policy. The second frame was realism: The United States is an actor on the international stage with security interests no different from any other power. Themes indicating presence of this frame included (a) approval of alliances of convenience with nations with no regard as to their internal political institutions and (b) punishment of states that harbor terrorists and thereby threaten American security. The third frame was American exceptionalism: The United States is endowed with a unique moral vision and the economic and political institutions that are its reward. Four themes indicated presence of this frame. Three invoked moral judgment: (a) assertion of unique American moral virtue, (b) condemnation of evil enemies, and (c) judgment of uncooperative allies as corrupt and morally bankrupt. The fourth (d) praised the exemplary nature of U.S. political and economic institutions.

Some of the themes that emerged during the coding did not always strictly adhere to the tenets of these frames. For example, punishment of states that harbor terrorists need not be a strictly realist theme. In fact, a number of realist international relations theorists signed and published a letter in the *New York Times* advising against an invasion of Iraq because the regime was already contained and did not pose a threat to U.S. security interests (see, e.g., Mearsheimer & Walt, 2003). The theme was coded as a realist theme, nonetheless, because of an editorialist's or commentator's claim that Iraq posed a threat to U.S. security. A detailed coding protocol appears in the Appendix.

The selection criteria for the Nexis database included all op-eds and editorials containing the term Afghanistan for the 2-month period that began September 12, 2001, and ended October 17, 2001, the run-up to the war to topple the Taliban regime. Similarly for Iraq, the time period began January 1, 2003, and ended on February 28, 2003, 2 weeks prior to the start of the invasion. The latter range includes a key date, February 5, 2003, the day on which Colin Powell addressed the UN on "what the United States knows about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, as well as Iraq's involvement in terrorism." Articles on the Afghanistan and Iraq crises numbered 92 and 133, respectively. Of the 225 total, 140 came from the *Times* and 85 from the *Post*.

Findings

An overview of the sourcing patterns in the two papers reveals a superficial similarity, but a closer look turns up small but ultimately significant differences. For both papers, the ratio of signed columns—regular and invited—to unsigned editorials is approximately the same, but the *Post* and *Times* differed in the sources they tapped for signed columns. Table 1 shows that the *Times* opened its pages more often to invited experts from think tanks and universities, about 20% compared to less than 10% in the *Post*. Notwithstanding the narrow range of think tank expertise given voice in both papers (all from center or center-right institutions such as the Center for Strategic and International Studies and none from left-leaning or progressive institutions), it nevertheless differed significantly from the opinion of regular columnists on an important dimension of the analysis. The greater presence of expert opinion in the *Times* (as well as its editorial policy) thus led to an important difference between the two newspapers. I analyze this difference and its implications below.

Table 1
Opinion sources (%)

	New York Times (N = 133)	Washington Post (N = 92)	Total (N = 225)
Unsigned editorials	29	26	28
Regular columnists	44	55	48
Academics	9	4	7
Think tank experts	8	2	6
Politicians	2	6	4
Journalists	3	2	3
Foreign sources	4	4	3
Administration officials	1	1	1

Analysis of the broader patterns of elite media commentary and opinion shows that the Bush administration's efforts at building support for its policy succeeded over time, first by appealing to security concerns and later to moral judgment of its opponents. The way the events unfolded suggested a pragmatic, situational approach by the Bush administration to short-term political realities. A close examination of the foreign policy announced (but formulated well before its publication) in the National Security Strategy reveals its unswerving influence on the Bush administration's rhetorical approach over the course of the two wars. Along the way, the administration crafted approaches and coined concepts that anticipated or reacted to media elites' foreign policy orthodoxy and took advantage of their acceptance of the values and beliefs defining American exceptionalism, while the Bush team's adherence to the policy remained unshaken.

As Table 2 shows the two crises elicited two different frames of analyses in the opinion pages, realism for Afghanistan and liberal internationalism for Iraq. Both frames were equally accompanied by appeals to American exceptionalism.

Media elites' general approach to the Afghanistan crisis echoed the security considerations of the NSS and thereby justified a realist approach to foreign policy. The document declared state-sponsored terrorism a threat that justified unilateral preemption as well as politically expedient alliances:

We must be prepared to stop rogue states and their terrorist clients before they are able to threaten or use weapons of mass destruction against the United States and our allies and friends. Our response must take full advantage of strengthened alliances, the establishment of new partnerships with former adversaries. (National Security Strategy, 2002, p. 5)

Table 3 shows that media elites favored multilateral cooperation for the Afghanistan crisis—the most frequently used theme—but justification of alliances of convenience and punishment of state-sponsored terrorism were tied for a close second. Commentators said little, for example, about the U.S. alliance with the dictatorial regime in Uzbekistan and even brushed aside Pakistan's support of the Taliban:

Keeping Pakistan from plunging over the precipice will be a difficult task, complicated by the fact that the Pakistani intelligence service itself has supported jihadists in Kashmir and Afghanistan. But despite such complexities, the United States needs to work with Gen. Pervez Musharraf—whose concern about radicalism appears genuine—to bring his country back into America's orbit by lifting some sanctions, extending economic assistance and even providing limited military cooperation. (Benjamin & Simon, 2001, p. A37)

Table 2
Rank order of frames by crisis (%)

	Combined (<i>N</i> = 225)	Afghanistan (<i>N</i> = 92)	Iraq (<i>N</i> = 133)
Exceptionalism	55	54	55
Liberal internationalism	51	32	65
Realism	28	46	26

Table 3
Rank order of themes by crisis (%; Ns in parentheses; rank order in brackets)

	Combined (<i>N</i> = 225)	Afghanistan (<i>N</i> = 92)	Iraq (<i>N</i> = 133)
Multilateralism (lib. intl.)	33 (75)	25 [1] (23)	39 [1] (52)
Evil enemies (exceptionalism)	19 (43)	23 [2] (21)	16 [3] (22)
U.S. virtue (exceptionalism)	18 (41)	23 [2] (21)	15 [5] (20)
UN approval (lib. intl.)	18 (40)	6 [4] (6)	26 [2] (34)
Alliances of convenience (realism)	16 (37)	23 [2] (21)	12 [6] (16)
U.S. as model of success (exceptionalism)	12 (26)	5 [5] (5)	16 [4] (21)
Punish state-sponsored terrorism (realism)	11 (25)	23 [2] (21)	3.0 [8] (4)
Corrupt European allies (exceptionalism)	6 (13)	3 [6] (3)	8 [7] (10)

Media elites accepted the concept of state-sponsored terrorism at the onset of the Afghanistan crisis: "The objective of this war must be to make it impossible or intolerable for any state to harbor, protect or aid and abet terrorists" (Krauthammer, 2001, p. A39). But such was not the case for Iraq, where the theme of punishment of state-sponsored terrorism was nearly a non-issue. It appeared in just a few op-ed pieces written by William Safire (2001, 2003), who tried to establish a connection between an al-Qaeda operative and an Iraqi diplomat. The case for an invasion of Iraq would ultimately rest on the Bush administration's claims of WMD in Iraq, a claim whose credibility would be underpinned by undermining the moral authority of dissenting states.

The diminished presence of liberal internationalist frames for Afghanistan may have resulted from the relatively short period of time during which the crisis unfolded and because the U.S. did not consult with the UN. Bush rejected Kofi Anan's requests for Security Council approval for an attack on the Taliban regime, and U.S. diplomats quietly negotiated basing arrangements in countries such as Oman, Turkey, and Uzbekistan so as not to arouse the presumed ire of their populations (Sciolino & Myers, 2001).

In the Iraqi case, Bush first asked the UN Security Council to enforce Iraq's commitment to dismantle its weapons of mass destruction and then sought approval for a U.S.-led invasion. Perhaps because of Bush's appeals to the UN, liberal internationalist themes dominated analyses of the Iraq crisis—nearly two thirds of the opinion pieces compared to slightly less than one third of those on Afghanistan. Elite media discourse cautioned against hasty, unilateral action. One thread of the coverage expressed a preference for the UN inspections regime; a second noted that UN inspectors had failed to find weapons of mass destruction and, thus, undermined the Bush administration's principal reason for going to war. A *New York Times* editorial included both themes: "There can be no wavering from the goal of disarming Iraq, but all chances of doing so peacefully should be explored before the world is asked to decide on war. Before that point is reached, Washington should share its evidence with the public" ("Iraq Dossier," 2003). Realist-focused concerns by themselves would be insufficient to make the administration's case, not only because of media elite preferences for a liberal internationalist approach to the Iraq crisis but also because of the multilateral preferences of the mass public (Kull & Destler, 1999). The appeal would be made through moral judgment and elevation of the U.S. as an exemplar to the world.

Over the course of the two crises, American exceptionalist themes made up a constant background presence in elite commentary and opinion. There were, however, subtle differences in the use of specific exceptionalist themes and, more significantly, in telling source differences between the two papers. I will turn to the latter at the end of this section of the analysis.

For Afghanistan, the most common manifestation of exceptionalism reasoning was moral judgment—proclamation of U.S. virtue or condemnation of evil enemies. Using such terms such as evil, corruption, perversion, darkness, and backwardness, media elites provided clear demarcation of a virtuous us from an evil them: “There is no way to reason with people who think they will go directly to heaven if they kill Americans. . . . But here on earth, as President Kennedy suggested, we human beings are responsible—and must act to prevent evil” (Lewis, 2001a, p. A23). Condemnation of evil enemies was somewhat less conspicuous in the Iraq crisis but notably present as well:

[The] Christian Gospel is not only about “the law of love,” as war opponents like to put it. It’s also about the fact that people violate that law. That’s why Jesus talked a great deal about punishment, and the moral obligation to oppose evil with a strong and swift hand. Human evil must be confronted, he said, not merely contained. Depending on the threat, a kind of “pre-emptive strike” or judgment against evil might even be required: “Be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell.” (Laconte, 2003, p. A21)

More so for Iraq than Afghanistan, media elites offered justification of military action on the promise of democratic and economic reform following regime change and of the model the U.S. provided for such reform. Thomas Friedman of the *New York Times*, a strong supporter of economic globalization, invoked this theme on a regular basis: “It pits us—the world’s only superpower and quintessential symbol of liberal, free-market, Western values — against all the super-empowered angry men and women out there. . . . [M]any in this part of the world crave the best of America, and we cannot forget that we are their ray of hope” (2001, p. A27). Reform of Arab societies using a U.S. model might help relieve the anger that fed terrorism:

I am convinced that much of the anger over U.S. policy is really a cry of help from people who know what they have to do—to democratize, liberalize their economies—and who know that they will be lost for another 50 years if they don’t, but can’t do it because these ideas are promoted by a power they feel is indifferent to their deepest hurt. (Friedman, 2003, p. A15).

Commentators used another version of the same frame to caution against an excessively violent response that might arouse a backlash in the Islamic world but that would also tarnish American principles:

“I ask you to uphold the values of America,” President Bush said to Congress and the nation. That will be a fair test of his policy for dealing with terrorism as the policy unfolds: Does it uphold the values of America? . . . But right now we need to make sure that we do not forget ourselves in our immediate response to the terrorists’ criminal assault. President Bush used three words repeatedly in his speech: “freedom,” “patience,” “justice.” They are the right words. (Lewis, 2001b, p. A25).

Adherence to moral principles served double duty in the discourse: It held the U.S. to higher standards, but it also facilitated moral judgment of those nations that thwarted U.S. will. Although one cannot show a causal connection, Colin Powell's February 5, 2003, speech to the UN on evidence for the existence of weapons of destruction marked an important moment in the debate on Iraq. Powell's perceived moderation⁶ coupled with what proved to be dubious intelligence on Iraqi WMD seemed to change media elites' perceptions on the case for invasion.

Table 4 shows that although Powell's speech came three fifths of the way through the time period studied, it neatly divided the number of published commentaries and op-eds on the issue. Media elites continued their pleas for a multilateral approach, the most frequent theme before and after the speech, but they reduced their calls for UN approval of a U.S. invasion. Meanwhile, they significantly increased the use of moral judgment, both of Saddam Hussein and of nations that insisted upon continued weapons inspections. Commentaries and editorials that called for deference to UN inspections or the Security Council's approval of a U.S. invasion fell by nearly 40%. Simultaneously, references to evil enemies doubled while those to corrupt European allies quadrupled. The failure of once allies to grant approval of a U.S. invasion following Powell's speech revealed their corrupt motives:

France and Russia insist on U.N. inspections. But in the 1990s, France and Russia weakened the economic sanctions designed to make inspections work. China and Russia urge multilateralism—but when the United States asks for their help in dealing with North Korea's nuclear threat, it's absent. Germany is entitled to oppose U.S. military action. But Gerhard Schroeder didn't have to resort to anti-Americanism to rescue his faltering election campaign. He and French President Jacques Chirac have not merely disagreed with U.S. policy; they have stoked anti-Americanism. (Samuelson, 2003, p. A23)

Even the skeptical editorial board at the *Times* began to use exceptionalist themes after Powell's speech. Nearly half of the editorials included these themes as contrasted with zero usage prior to the speech.

Differences in outlook between the two papers shed light on the sources of the exceptionalist discourse in foreign policy. Across both crises, the editorial board at the

Table 4

Rank order of Iraq themes by crisis before and after Powell speech (%; Ns in parentheses; rank order in brackets)

	Before (N = 66)	After (N = 67)	Difference (%)
Multilateralism (lib. intl.)	36 [1] (24)	42 [1] (28)	+ 15
UN approval (lib. intl.)	32 [2] (21)	19 [3] (13)	-39
Evil enemies (exceptionalism)	11 [5] (7)	22 [2] (15)	+ 111
U.S. as model of success (exceptionalism)	17 [3] (11)	15 [4] (10)	-11
U.S. virtue (exceptionalism)	15 [4] (10)	15 [4] (10)	-2
Alliances of convenience (realism)	11 [5] (7)	13 [5] (9)	+ 26
Corrupt European allies (exceptionalism)	3 [7] (2)	12 [6] (8)	+ 297

Notes. Variables with less than 5 cases were dropped from the analysis.

Washington Post consistently used exceptionalist themes more often than did the *Times*: four times more often during the Afghanistan crisis and twice more often during the Iraq crisis. The editorial board at the *Times*, conversely, was much more likely than the *Post* to use a liberal internationalist perspective, twice more for Afghanistan and three times more for Iraq. Thus, the editorial board of the *Times* was skeptical of the administration's case for war with Iraq because of what it regarded as the Bush administration's reluctance to enlarge the coalition of the willing and for its failure to gain UN approval for a military invasion.

Differences between the two papers were also attributable to the mix of opinion sources given voice on the op-ed pages. Where the *Times* relied more on academics and experts from think tanks, the *Post* relied more on columnists. Academic and expert opinion at the *Times* was much more likely to favor liberal internationalist solutions to both crises (just over half of the pieces), and these commentaries, like the unsigned editorials, were much less likely to include appeals to American exceptionalism (analysis reveals a $-.4$ correlation). Columnists in both papers were equally likely to use exceptionalist themes. A reasonable conclusion from this analysis is that neoconservative foreign policy relied on moralizing and emotional appeals for persuasive power, at least in part to overcome the inertial advantage enjoyed by the settled, widely known foreign policy discourses of liberal internationalism and realism. The hortatory rhetoric of American exceptionalism was more normatively acceptable for editorial writers and columnists than for academics and think tank analysts; the latter groups may have felt bound by the constraints of a scientific discourse that is inimical to emotional appeal. If so, foreign policy innovations that rely on American exceptionalism are more likely to find sympathetic reception among media elites who enjoy greater access to modes of persuasive rhetoric.

Dimensions Underlying the Themes and Their Compatibility

Factor analysis permits an analysis of the components underlying the themes and thereby an indirect test of whether they are derived from the same frame. More importantly, the analysis also reveals the role played by appeals to U.S. primacy in steering the Bush administration's foreign policy through the conventions of elite media opinion.

To preview the findings, media elites reflected majority opinion preference for internationalism but also regarded the United States as endowed with qualities that distinguished it from other nation-states. Expressed pragmatically, these qualities set the nation apart as a political and economic model for emulation; in moral terms, the values perceived to animate U.S. foreign policy were regarded as an expression of the nation's founding virtues. The latter restrained a frank declaration of realist-based preferences on the one hand but facilitated moral judgment of enemies and those states that disagreed with U.S. policy. The discourse thus exposed the futility of appeals to multilateral cooperation and UN approval, prerequisites for a moral critique that would simultaneously justify unilateral U.S. action and preserve the nation's standing as first among equals.

Using varimax rotation, analysis of the two cases combined yielded a three-factor solution that explained a relatively low 47% of the variance. This is not unexpected given the dominance of a realist frame for Afghanistan and a liberal internationalist frame for Iraq. The difference between the two crises warrants separate analyses.

Factor analysis of the thematic discourse on Afghanistan yields a four-component solution that explains 62% of the variance. The first component cleanly captures the two most prominent exceptionalist themes—the U.S. as a model to the world (.81) and as a

Table 5
Factor analysis of themes, Afghanistan: Rotated component matrix

Theme	Component			
	1	2	3	4
1. Multilateralism	.022	.751	-.001	.007
2. Alliances of convenience	-.226	.552	.004	-.534
2. Evil	.164	-.356	.684	.042
2. Punish state-sponsored terrorism	.248	.518	.035	.435
2. U.S. virtue	.761	.066	.064	.018
6. UN approval ^a	.022	-.263	-.813	-.034
7. U.S. as a model ^a	.810	-.041	.036	-.038
8. Corrupt European allies ^a	-.137	.047	.054	.796

Notes. Themes are arranged in order of frequency (four tied for second).

^a $N \leq 6$.

paragon of virtue (.76). In effect, this factor embodies the prominent exceptionalist justification for the war on the Taliban and acts as an independent test of the frame's validity.

The second component loads the realist themes of alliances of convenience (.55) and punishment of states that harbor terrorists (.52), but more importantly also loads multilateral action (.75). In short, this component establishes the discursive foundations for the Bush administration's eclectic foreign policy that would later draw support from media elites during the Iraq crisis. Specifically, the component melds liberal internationalism with realism and thereby confers rhetorical legitimacy for the concept of the coalition of the willing, even as it draws attention away from the absence of international approval.

The third component establishes the tensions between moralist thinking and internationalism as it pits cooperation with the UN (–.81) against moral judgment of an implacable enemy (.68). Although there were few stories advocating cooperation with the UN, we begin to see the origins of the success of the Bush administration's argument for a policy

Table 6
Factor analysis of themes, Iraq: Rotated component matrix

Theme	Component			
	1	2	3	4
1. Multilateralism	–.495	–.095	–.446	–.071
2. UN approval	–.259	–.458	.002	–.631
3. Evil	.652	.290	.140	–.122
4. U.S. as a model	–.167	–.204	.044	.852
5. U.S. virtue	.019	.612	.345	–.065
6. Alliances of convenience	–.007	.675	–.406	.010
7. Corrupt European allies	–.012	–.014	.794	.022
8. Punish state-sponsored terrorism ^a	.778	–.301	–.223	.043

Note. Themes are arranged in order of frequency.

^a $N=4$ cases

of unilateralism predicated upon moral condemnation of the enemy, a strategy that would facilitate dismissal of arguments by allies who might oppose U.S. action.

The fourth component is logically related to the third. It establishes a moral predicate for the realist policy of establishing alliances of convenience in the face of the moral bankruptcy of allies. The latter theme is comparatively rare, however, appearing in less than 4% of the coverage.

Factor analysis of the Iraqi crisis discourse also yields a four component solution and once again explains 62% of the variance. The first two components establish a moral rationale for unilateralism and U.S. primacy.

The first component taps the moral dimension of American exceptionalism and its sanction of unilateralism. Moral judgment of evil enemies loads strongly and positively on this component (.83), while multilateralism loads strongly and negatively (-.61). The second component is significant because it captures a predicate for U.S. primacy, first by linking U.S. virtue (.61) with approval of alliances of convenience (.68) and second by its negative relationship with appeals for cooperation with the UN (-.46). This component echoes and reinforces the Bush administration's eclectic rhetorical appeal established during the Afghanistan crisis. Here, too, it legitimates the coalition of the willing by its linkage with American exceptionalism, but it now adds rejection of cooperation with the UN as a bolstering theme for U.S. primacy.

The third component is a variation of the second as it reestablishes the tensions between internationalism and moral judgment. A claim of the moral bankruptcy of European allies loads positively on this component (.79), while multilateralism loads negatively (-.45). Revealingly, alliances of convenience also load negatively on this component (-.41), suggesting the success of the Bush administration in investing unilateral necessity with virtue.

Like the third, the fourth component reveals the role of American exceptionalism in supporting U.S. primacy. Here the elevation of the U.S. to exemplar status (.85) is inimical to engagement with the UN (-.63).

To summarize, the themes of American exceptionalism provided a potent rhetorical tool for unilateralism and U.S. primacy in both cases.

Discussion and Conclusion

The deep anxieties and the swell of patriotic feeling created by the 9/11 attacks played an important role in building popular and elite support for the policies outlined in the National Security Strategy. Media elites supported the swift decision to attack the Taliban using arguments and justifications drawn from a realist framework focused almost exclusively on national security. These were accompanied by a heavy dose of moralist opinion that condemned evil enemies and touted American virtue. The latter would remain unblemished despite alliances with strategically located allies with dictatorial regimes. The Bush administration gained the support of elite media opinion by linking security and moral indignation for the unilateral U.S. military invasion of Afghanistan and, later, the largely unilateral invasion of Iraq.

The success was especially impressive for the Iraq War because of the much longer time frame during which the crisis unfolded and its distance from the shock and disorientation of the 9/11 attacks. The longer time period permitted opinion elites to study the Bush administration's case for war at an unhurried pace. Provided that such an analysis did not subscribe to the innovations of neoconservative foreign policy, it would inevitably turn up dilemmas: A liberal internationalist view might welcome the spread of democracy

but would recoil from the use of unilateral military power to achieve that goal. A realist view would seek evidence of an imminent security threat that could not otherwise be contained. The keys to the administration's success thus lay in making a convincing case that Iraq posed such a threat and to delegitimize the moral authority of those nations that opposed U.S. intentions.

The transmutation of Germany and France from allies to "Old Europe"—a reference to the power struggles of the two nations and their role in starting World Wars I and II—was achieved by a relentless, disciplined White House effort to discredit its critics. Few writers went so far as the conservative *New York Post* when it superimposed the heads of weasels on the French and German representatives to the UN (Orin & Blomquist, 2003), but media elites nonetheless became sharply critical of the two nations after Colin Powell's speech. Tendencies to corruption rather than principle were at the bottom of France and Germany's skepticism of Powell's WMD evidence. Only a tacit assumption among media elites of exemplary American moral vision could support this reasoning. That assumption, demonstrated by the analysis here, swung elite media opinion in favor of U.S. military action.

More importantly, the evidence from this study is that elite opinion may have contributed to the development of a false consensus among Americans. In an analysis of a survey of public opinion conducted just after Colin Powell's speech to the UN, Todorov and Mandisodza (2004) found that Americans overestimated the levels of public support for unilateral foreign policy. Moreover, those who incorrectly perceived the unilateral view as the majority view were nearly twice as likely to support U.S. invasion of Iraq without UN Security Council approval. In effect, misperception of a majority unilateral preference legitimated Bush foreign policy. The authors surmise that the Bush administration offered the most salient cues for the majority's misperceptions of its own preferences. That surely would have been insufficient without the analytical work, and the moral certitude underpinning it, offered by a range of elite opinion from sources traditionally skeptical of conservative administrations. Further, if political elites dismiss or misperceive the multilateral preferences of the mass public (Kull & Destler, 1999), absence of serious skepticism among liberal media elites may have reduced the costs of a pro-war vote among Democratic political elites.

The Bush administration crafted a foreign policy whose justification was that globalization had effectively eliminated geographic isolation of the United States as its unique strategic advantage. In effect, neoconservative foreign policy extended the Monroe doctrine to the remainder of the globe. Once the administration had judged that enemies abroad posed a security threat to the United States, it set in motion a dynamic that obliged the nation to act, not only to counter a "grave, imminent threat" but also to maintain the authority of its global leadership:

The president [cannot] turn back politically. He began the march on Iraq with his State of the Union address a year ago. He identified the axis of evil as the single greatest threat to America and the world. To now admit that he can and will do nothing to meet that very threat would not just leave him without a foreign policy, it would destroy his credibility as a leader. (Krauthammer, 2003, p. A27)

It is notable and revealing that realism was the least frequent media frame brought to bear on post-9/11 U.S. foreign policy. This is not entirely unexpected. As proponents of realist international relations theory point out, the moral and optimistic components of

American political culture are either inimical to the ostensibly cynical self-interested components of realism (Mearsheimer, 2001) or that moralism in international relations is a mere veneer that conceals a more authentic (and sensible) self-interest at the core (Kaplan, 2000). What is curious, of course, about the lesser position of discourse acknowledging the cause of American primacy is that it forms the core of neoconservative foreign policy. Linkage by media elites to American exceptionalist themes has obscured its self-interested dimension.

Lewis (1999) notes that the discourse of American exceptionalism denatures or simply ignores alternative sources of opinion (e.g., dissent from abroad). The absence of credible alternatives to received wisdom and analysis makes it “difficult to imagine how else things could be” and thereby naturalizes what might otherwise come under greater rational scrutiny. The findings in this analysis suggest that appeals to American exceptionalism may also rely upon a visceral, emotional reaction necessary to overcome the cognitive inertia enjoyed by established policy. It must be noted, however, that the appeals to American exceptionalism may have been multiplied in their effectiveness by a lingering background of unsettled emotion that resulted from the shock of 9/11. It is difficult to imagine the success of the administration in linking that event in the public mind with Iraq under less fraught circumstances.

It is too early to assess whether Bush foreign policy will gain a stable base of popular support in the long run. It is already clear, however, that the absence of a broad-based constituency for neoconservative foreign policy eroded support for the war in Iraq. The seemingly contradictory components of the policy do not offer clear guidance to those who may not share the administration’s view of a world changed by 9/11. The result has been a critique of the shifting justifications for the war—first elimination of weapons of mass destruction, then democratic reform—even though they are consistent with neoconservative foreign policy enunciated in the NSS. One notable critique, written by two realist theorists on the eve of the invasion of Iraq, presciently anticipated problems to come:

If the United States is, or soon will be, at war with Iraq, Americans should understand that a compelling strategic rationale is absent. This war would be one the Bush administration chose to fight but did not have to fight. Even if such a war goes well and has positive long-range consequences, it will still have been unnecessary. And if it goes badly—whether in the form of high U.S. casualties, significant civilian deaths, a heightened risk of terrorism, or increased hatred of the United States in the Arab and Islamic world—then its architects will have even more to answer for. (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2003, p. 59).

If the National Security Strategy succeeds in establishing a rationale for a new foreign policy—a formidable task given the resistance to U.S. occupation in Iraq and the changing definitions of terrorism used by the Bush administration to anchor its policy for preemptive war—it may lead to a paradigm shift in the frameworks used to analyze U.S. foreign policy. Such a shift will depend greatly on whether media elites concur with a world picture in which all states, even failed states in remote locations, have the potential to threaten U.S. military security. The weakening of states represents one of the most intractable dilemmas and paradoxes created by globalization. The same technical advances that have permitted the expansion of material security have been leveraged by non-state actors to threaten the security of the most powerful nations on earth. The first U.S. presidential administration to deal with these unique circumstances has reconceptualized the world picture to put great weight on the asymmetry of power exerted by groups such as al-Qaeda. Future studies will gauge the stability and persuasiveness of this picture.

Notes

1. George Washington warned of “passionate attachments” to other nations and, as secretary of state for James Monroe, John Quincy Adams formulated a policy designed to prevent foreign encroachment upon the Western Hemisphere. The two world wars ended U.S. isolation and, eventually, unilateralist foreign policy. Franklin D. Roosevelt revived Woodrow Wilson’s failed dream of a peaceful world founded on the spread of democracy and capitalism by his support of principles that led to the founding of the UN and the Bretton Woods system (Gaddis, 2004).

2. Self-named the “Vulcans” (Mann, 2004), the Bush foreign policy team emerged from the Project for a New America (PNAC), a conservative Washington think tank. Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld (both founders), Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Armitage, and 12 other members were appointed to key positions within the Bush administration.

3. Strauss’s political philosophy has inspired a lively debate on his presumptive justification of an elite-led state (see, e.g., Drury, 1997; Smith, 1997). Strauss was a friendly but vigorous intellectual opponent of Alexandre Kojève, who shifted Hegelian analysis from one based on a teleological view of the course of history to one of active human agency. Strauss (1991) argued that a homogeneous cosmopolitan state—the telos of Kojève’s analysis—would yield a fatally flawed society: an inherent incapacity to provide the deeply felt human need for individual recognition, inevitably leading to an oppressive state led by a universal tyrant. Fukuyama adapted Kojève’s analysis for his end-of-history thesis and similarly concluded that such a state would deny human nature its Nietzschean will to power. Fukuyama later became associated with the neconservatives in the Bush cabinet but became disenchanted after the invasion of Iraq (see, e.g., Fukuyama, 2006).

4. The 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington crystallized a unilateralist tendency that had begun to steer Clinton foreign policy: Clinton opposed an international treaty banning land mines, refused to put U.S. troops under UN command, and did not join the International Criminal Court (Woollacott, 2000).

5. A separate coder examined 20% of the coding and found over 90% agreement on the detection of the themes.

6. According to Mann (2004), Colin Powell’s moderate views were confined to social issues, not defense policy. Powell shared Caspar Weinberger hawkish views on foreign policy—a strong U.S. military and avoidance of conflict unless based on overwhelming force and clear political objectives (p. 350).

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Appendix: Coding Protocol

- A. Newspaper name
- B. Publication date
- C. Article type
 - 1. Editorial
 - 2. Commentary or op-ed
- D. Author (specify name unless unsigned)
- E. Affiliation
 - 1. Unsigned editorial
 - 2. Columnist
 - 3. Politician

- a. Bush administration official
- b. Republican officeholder
- c. Democratic officeholder
- 4. Expert (if academic and think tank, use think tank affiliation)
 - a. Conservative think tank
 - b. Conservative-libertarian
 - c. Centrist-right think tank
 - d. Centrist think tank
 - e. Centrist-left think tank
 - f. Progressive think tank
 - g. Academic
 - h. Military
 - i. Former administration official (specify Republican, Democrat)
- 5. Foreign source
 - a. Arab
 - b. European
 - c. Israeli
 - d. other
- 6. Other
- 7. Frames and themes (Frame Indicators)

These are assertions by the author (not merely reports of claims by others, unless these are strongly supported) that reflect on the role of the United States in the world post-9/11. The assertions fall into four main categories: (a) the U.S. as an exemplar to the world as a model for others to emulate to gain the prosperity and freedom that are the keys to solving the problems that led to terrorism. The U.S. as a moral exemplar to the world, its system and political philosophy having exceptional status that distinguishes it from other nation-states. This outlook obliges the U.S. to act in a selfless way. It also facilitates moral judgments made upon others and casts them into the role of evil actors who deserve condemnation rather than a hearing. (b) The U.S. as part of an interdependent system of nations. It should cooperate with other nations to advance a solution for a problem that affects others. It should work through the UN to gain its sanction or to rely on its help for solving a problem. (c) The U.S. is one of many unexceptional actors on the international stage who are susceptible to the same forces and self-interests as others. (d) The U.S. bears responsibility for terrorism and other world problems because of its sheer power. The category also includes other unrelated themes.

Exceptionalist Themes

- 1) U.S. as a model for others
 - a) Solution to political and economic injustice is to emulate the United States. United States self-interest seen as coextensive with the interests of a global greater good (e.g., assumption that because it is the most successful the U.S. model is good for others to emulate)
 - b) Progress (e.g., in human rights, prosperity) inevitable with democracy and free market capitalism (may also be equated with the US as its symbolic representation)
- 2) U.S. as virtuous
 - a) U.S. as endowed with special moral qualities that distinguish it from other states
 - b) Moral language used to judge enemies of the U.S. (use of terms such as evil, corruption, perversion, darkness, backwardness)

- c) Others may not be capable of acting in this way (e.g., corrupt Europeans) or receiving the exceptional benefits of such treatment (e.g., the states of the Middle East are retarded by tradition, history, and resentment)
- d) With us or against us in the war on terror

Liberal Internationalist Themes

- 3) U.S. must engage with the world in a multilateral way
- 4) U.S. should work through the UN either for its sanction or for its help

Realist Themes

- 5) U.S. must punish states that harbor terrorists and retaliate to protect its security interests
- 6) U.S. seeks alliances of convenience with states

Other

- 7) U.S. seeks world hegemony
- 8) U.S. responsible for conditions that led to terror
- 9) Bias of U.S. against Arabs, Palestinians (pro-Israel bias)
- 10. U.S. is a self-serving state (e.g., profits by war)

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