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# From Exceptionalism to Imperialism: Culture, Character, and American Foreign Policy

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# FROM EXCEPTIONALISM TO IMPERIALISM: CULTURE, CHARACTER, AND AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

Lauren Langman and Meghan A. Burke

"For all their freedom and democracy, Americans seem to be a very unhappy people"

Alexis De Tocqueville

"I have always believed that this anointed land was set apart in an uncommon way, that a divine placed this great continent here between the oceans to be found by people from every corner of the earth who had a special love of faith and freedom"

Ronald Reagan

## Introduction

Arthur Schlesinger (1983) suggested that the contradictions and paradoxes of American foreign policy reflected contradictions and paradoxes in the underlying character of the people. We would go further to suggest that the early years of colonial life, much like the early years of a person's life, had major consequences ever since. The intersection of Puritanism, available land, and eventually the rise of a commercial culture would forge a unique trajectory of what would be called "American Exceptionalism", reflecting an "American character", which itself is subject to three paradoxes or polarities, individualism VS. community, toughness vs. compassion, and moralism vs. pragmatism. The effect of this legacy and the dialectical aspect of American character were first evident when Winthrop proclaimed the city on the hill as the new Jerusalem. The legacy of that vision is taking place today in Iraq.

Close to 400 years ago, a small group of staunchly religious, persecuted "outcasts", Puritans, wandering through Holland and England, set sail aboard the Mayflower. They landed in New England and founded a number of small agricultural communities. The early years of those settlements were quite harsh given the topography and climate. Yet they survived, indeed they would prosper and grow. And in the course of history, the small isolated communities would become towns and cities, its rigid Calvinism would moderate, and eventually, New England would become a major center of commerce, secular learning, and anti-British sentiments that first led its elites to launch the Boston Tea Party, and eventually segments of the bourgeoisie, carries of the Enlightenment, often Freemasons, initiated the American revolution. Notwithstanding however, the legacy of the early colonial experiences, mediated through individual psyches and collective values, would not only become hegemonic, but endure, and continue to have a major impact and give that society a distinctive hue, it would be seen as "exceptional". It would have a historical trajectory that would be quite different than any other society. In the earliest observations and accounts of Hector St. John Crèvecoeur and Alexis De Tocqueville, it was noted that America, "the first new nation", was qualitatively unique; "American Exceptionalism" was clearly evident (Lipset, 1960, 1990). As shall be argued, Puritan religion

interacted with the material conditions of the New World, from its cash based farming to ship building, whaling, and shipping to shape "American character" in distinctive ways. A unique cluster of individualism, moralism, and valorized violence has long shaped and yet impacts our consciousness, our values, understandings, identities, and even our geopolitics. Illuminating this legacy can help us understand the basis of much of our recent and current foreign policies - and why so often they are failures.

Bellah (1975) argued that the Pilgrims on the Mayflower, united by a formal covenant, were closely bound together by faith and necessity; yet when their colony did eventually survive and prosper, the influx of wealth and possibilities of mobility, unleashed an individualism that while rooted in Puritan religion, shattered that covenant. In his oft-cited letter of 1630, John Winthrop proclaimed that in this new land, blessed by the Lord, we must be knit together, in this work, as one man. We must entertain each other in brotherly affection. We must be willing to abridge ourselves of our superfluities, for the supply of others' necessities. We must uphold a familiar commerce together in all meekness, gentleness, patience, and liberality. We must delight in each other; make others' conditions our own ... where all would work, rejoice and mourn together, people would see His wisdom and goodness, when 10 of us could resist 1,000 enemies, and we will be as a "city on the hill", with the eyes of everyone upon us, but if we turn away, we would surely perish. Therefore, let us choose life. And so the Puritan founders of New England escaping the religious intolerance of Europe proclaimed that the "city on the hill", the "new Jerusalem", would shine as a beacon of hope for the rest of the world. God had given America a special mission in the world. But what was the actual mission that would unfold? Little noted at that time, but the New England colonies were as much beacons for "unclaimed" land and natural resources like timber, as a place where the Puritans were free to practice their Puritanism. And while his exhortation included the importance of communal ties, instead, the emergence of individualism, tempered by Christian moralism, would impact the US till the present time.

In the course of the next few centuries, from these humble beginnings, the colonies of New England as well as the Southern colonies would become the most formidable Nation-State, if not Empire in the history of the world. And for reasons that shall be explicated, this ascent to world domination was seen as a sign of God blessing the "city on the hill".

From the Massachusetts Bay Colony in the 1600s through a young nation's westward expansion to the two world wars of the 20th century, the belief that American purposes reflect a divine will and blessing has served to inspire, sustain and, in the eyes of critics, to warp American views of the world.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, as we shall attempt to argue, this legacy of divine blessing has had a major impact on post WWII geo politics. The US has, like most nations, sought policies to secure its power and profits. But unlike most, it has also attempted to see the world as a Manichean stage where the US as the "good", as God's emissary, was impelled to eradicate "evil". When this moralism became intertwined with a valorization of "toughness" as masculinity, we have seen a long history of fool hardy policy decisions with adverse consequences ranging from the elimination of modernist, progressive forces in the Middle East, the odious war in Vietnam - including the

genocide of Pol Pot, the support for murderous South American dictators, and as this paper is being written, the war in Iraq.

How did what had been a rural backwater make the ascent to world domination in which its national formation and subsequent trajectory would radically diverge from its European roots. That difference would take many forms, for example why did 13 English colonies unite to form the "first new nation"? How and why did a new American type of person emerge? How did that new nation so rapidly become scientifically advanced and its technologies world dominant. While its history would begin with its revolution and the establishment of democracy, how come there have never been either "Tory" Or "socialist" parties. Why has the US been relatively Spartan in the allocation of welfare benefits such as health care, which is part of all other industrial societies? But for our purposes, the most important question concerns the persistence of religious values, mediated through character structure and hegemonic ideologies to inform social and political agendas.

More specifically, the early years of colonial New England consisted of small, highly cohesive communities, in which strict religious codes regulated social life - with harsh punishments for offenders, ranging from pillories and stocks to banishment. Yet the individualism within Protestantism, together with its stress on education that would open minds and expose them to European ideas, and the decentralized nature of its churches disposed the very democracy that Would rent communal bonds. Engeman (2004) argues:

Protestant thought had come to accept a more rational and less moralistic view of human nature .... Enlightenment rationalism persuaded New England's established leadership to shuck off Calvinism for the more prestigious and rational religions of the deists and Unitarians. Indeed, the utopian Calvinists had abandoned their hope that small communities of believers could find perfection in a "shining city on the Hill," and sought, according to Michael Zuckert, a "natural rights republic." But within fifty years the new natural rights republic increasingly understood itself in religious terms - as the Redeemer Nation. Speaking at Peoria, Abraham Lincoln compares the sanctity of the Founders' republic to the purity of Christ, warning that the once pure republic has fallen into sin .... Our republican robe is soiled, and trailed in the dust. Let us repurify it. Let us turn and wash it while, in the spirit, if not the blood, of the Revolution. Let us turn slavery from its claims of "moral right," back upon its existing legal rights, and its arguments of "necessity" .... If we do this, we shall not only have saved the Union; but we shall have so saved it, as to make, and to keep it, forever worthy of the saving.

But what has made the US "exceptional" has been the strong persistence of these religious values despite the Enlightenment that extolled Reason and legitimated its bourgeois revolution, its constitution, democracy, and its religious toleration. Further, despite industrialization, consumerism, and globalization, there has been a persistence of an individualistic religious moralism, combined with "toughness" as masculinity. This pattern was evident when religious-based values have legitimated economic actions fostering territorial expansion and displacement of native populations as early as the colonial era, it further informed the westward expansion from the Louisiana Purchase to the annexation of Texas, the conquest of what had been northern

Mexico and the Spanish American War. But not only has this combination legitimated economic action, but so too has it prompted a variety of interventions.

## **PART I: AMERICAN CHARACTER**

### ***American Exceptionalism***

There has been a waning of academic concerns with "national character". This reflects academic critiques of the concept as perhaps too far reaching in scope with too little explanatory power, changing academic fashions such as postmodernism with its valorization of multiculturalism and the pluralization of decentered identities and proliferations of free floating signifiers of subjectivity. While perhaps the concept was most closely tied to the "culture and personality" traditions of anthropology, it was a part of some of the early work of the Frankfurt School. Although authoritarianism is found in a number of cultures, it was said to be especially typical of the German lower middle classes in which there were strong sadomasochistic tendencies for submission to authority and domination from above, and domination and aggression to those lower in the social hierarchies (Smith, 2004). Furthermore, Fromm's work on "social character", e.g., the receptive, hoarding, marketing, and productive character types, suggests that each character type was more typical in certain eras. More recently, this concept has been applied to the ludic, carnivalesque character of the present age (Langman, 1998). Notwithstanding the empirical critiques of the validity of the concept and the waning of academic fashions, we would like to suggest that it remains a valuable hermeneutic for understanding politics in the present age?<sup>2</sup> For us, we would suggest that a national character be considered as an abstract social psychological pattern of clusters of certain motivations, defenses, identities, and frames of understanding, which if not "typical" of a group is at least highly over represented in some groups and quite rare in others. Thus for example, while individualism, first described by De Tocqueville, is especially typical of North Americans, it is less often found in Asian societies. Moreover, even within a society, it may be more typical of some classes than others and in America, it would be most typical in the haute bourgeoisie.

Character structure, from a psychoanalytic point of view, as the totality or a person is an expression of the ways s/he learned to adapt to his/her world. It is the organization of his/her motives and desires, modes of reflexive self-awareness - and forms of repressions and defenses against self-awareness, one's values and goals that both regulate desire and give one a moral aspect of identity, and finally, the patterns of interaction that express and gratify one's desires, both overt and covert. National character is an abstraction, an ideal typical formation in the Weberian sense that is more or less distinctive about a particular group. While individual character development looks at the person's adaptation to his/her unique family constellations and dynamics, a national character can be seen as adaptation to the historicity of the political economy and the social location of the person. Much as Mills saw biography located in history, so too is a national character formed within a historical context. But unlike an individual, a national character has the ability to persist for generations beyond the conditions of its origins. Furthermore, insofar as it becomes systematically reproduced, if not interpolated, by various ideological state apparatus, e.g., schools, mass media, work organizations, churches, etc., it can

in time become incorporated by other groups. Further, it can become a central element of hegemony and social reproduction, about which we shall say more later.

Among the earliest commentators on American character was Henri de Crèvecoeur (1798) who noted the conditions of equality among a nation where most were farm owners, there were no titles of rank and deference. Regardless where they came from, they were animated by a spirit of unfettered industry, because each person worked for himself. The laws were mild and just.

*He is an American, who leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds .... Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labours and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world .... The American is a new man, who acts upon new principles; he must therefore entertain new ideas, and form new opinions. From involuntary idleness, servile dependence, penury, and useless labour, he has passed to toils of a very different nature, rewarded by ample subsistence - This is an American.*<sup>3</sup>

Crèvecoeur also noted the toleration for religious diversity and the number of faiths that were practiced in close proximity.<sup>4</sup>

About 30 years later, another Frenchman, Alexis de Tocqueville (1845) came to America and scripted what may well be the most insightful analysis of American Character. He was the first to use the term individualism, which he saw as one of the primary characteristics of the people living in the new democracy. His analysis noted a number of polarities, not the least of which was between equality and freedom. On the one hand, given the abundance of land, at least after the native populations were removed and displaced, there was an equality of rank unknown in Europe. But at the same time, there was an unprecedented amount of freedom, at least economic freedom, which in turn promoted inequality and class differences. Thus, on the one hand, this atmosphere was highly conducive for the ambitious and there was a great deal of social mobility. There seemed to be a casual ease between a boss and a worker, since one day they might be partners or equals in civil organizations. But indeed due to the ease of social ties, this freedom did not extend to the realm of ideas, Americans were very conformist and what would later be called "other directed", they were quite fearful to stand out intellectually and perhaps disrupt fragile social bonds. They much preferred the practical to the theoretical, "hardly anyone in the United States devotes himself to the essentially theoretical and abstract portion of human knowledge" (Book II, Chapter 1). This anti-intellectualism would remain an enduring part of American character (see below p. 209).

Many feared that without a state religion, e.g., mandated by the state, people would not voluntarily choose to be members in a church, nor would they maintain religious zeal. But Comte had noted how religion was not only about State power, but social solidarity. And thus De Tocqueville noted that religion like marriage held more allure when it was voluntary, thus church membership remained robust, even if denominational choice was free and could be changed. In the vast land of the socially mobile, this membership was often the primary basis of social networks and community organization. Moreover, as De Tocqueville noted, Americans, despite their democracy, freedom, and wealth, were a sad and anxious people. But he could not explain why. That would be the role of psychoanalysis and critical sociology.

There were other aspects of American character he noted that would become relevant. Perhaps one of the most noteworthy patterns was the extent to which Americans, generally remote from a strong, central government, organized themselves for community projects from building roads, bridges, or maintaining law and order. This "civic activism", in lieu of governmental programs, was quite unprecedented in the European world. That people could both influence their government, and do for themselves what had been the functions of government, would gradually meld into one of the unique aspects of American politics, populism, and distrust of government. While the power of individualism was so ingrained a part of American society that socialism could never develop, seeing social conflicts as 'the' "elites" vs. the "people", has at times been a progressive force, at other times a regressive force, but at all times it has been a hegemonic quality mystifying the actual operations of class.

The founders, given both participation in government, many had served in many colonial parliaments and distrust of government, did not want a strong central government, in part for fear that such a government might be prone to get involved in European wars. De Tocqueville felt America had been blessed by geography and insulated from the religions and political conflicts of Europe. Echoing Jefferson, he feared that industrialization might foster a new "aristocracy" of industry, a stronger central government, and tendencies to go to war. This would establish a fundamental dilemma of a "peaceful" country, Unwilling to go to war, yet one that has a long history of aggressive foreign policies backed by military power (see below). To resolve this contradiction, we would cloak our policies with a *moral* justification, fighting evil in the name of a higher good, if not God, and a psychological defense consisting of *projection* of aggression to a demonized enemy, a *rationalization* of an aggressive response coupled with massive denial of unstated, if not unconscious intent.<sup>5</sup> Thus Americans see themselves as a "peaceful" people neither as Spartans nor Prussians.

But the other side of this contradiction is the toleration, if not active encouragement, of violence, hatred, brutality, and cruelty and indeed war. These wars began in 1622 with an Indian attack on Jamestown, then came the Pequot War, King Phillips War, four imperial wars between 1689 and 1693, major rebellions, then the war for Independence, the War of 1812, conflicts with Mexico over Texas and much of the West, the civil war, Spanish American War, etc. There have been hundreds of directed military actions and military interventions throughout the Caribbean.<sup>6</sup> and this does not even include the "covert" interventions. The German attack on the Lusitania was based on its military cargo. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor came after FDR had threatened to embargo oil and other materials to Japan. And meanwhile, America had been arming and sustaining the British in their fight against Hitler.<sup>7</sup>

The various factors that came together in the New World would result in a very unique combination that would become the American character, and in turn shape what would be considered, American Exceptionalism. For De Tocqueville, there were five aspects of American society that he saw as distinctive: (1) its freedom, the liberty of its people, and mildness of its laws; (2) it was highly egalitarian, there were few differences of rank between people; (3) the people prized their "individualism", they were self-reliant; (4) the people became engaged in government, what would become known as populism; and finally (5) its laissez-faire economy

was conducive to economic growth. Thus, he described America as "exceptional" following a course quite different than other European countries, he foretold America's greatness in the future. But that Exceptionalism would have two central moments. On the one hand America provides for equality of opportunity in that anyone can become rich or president, or at least governor for the foreign born, if they work hard enough and long enough. Individual rights, in a laissez-faire economy, allow various people to "get ahead" in America; there are opportunities unknown in many of their home countries. Thus, we find many small businesses are owned by immigrants who have succeeded in ways not possible in their own countries.

### *The Polarities of "American Character"*

Psychoanalysis, as a critical depth psychology, has provided us with a dialectical theory of character structure shaped by a need to adapt to a society whose social demands, for work, community and cultural attainments, beauty, cleanliness, and orderliness stood in marked contrast to the "natural" tendency of the person to seek his/her self-interested forms of pleasurable gratifications. Freud argued that civilization demanded repression of desire for the sake of civilization's needs for people to cooperate with each other and to work, it was a zero sum game. In the course of individual development, a part of the character, the superego, as the parentally mediated, leads to a double contradiction, internal conflicts over the choices of action or inaction, and a fundamentally contentious relationship between the individual and the society. If the potential relationship between the person and his/her society was variable, character, as a compromise formation stood as a tentative resolution between conflicting desires, and between the desire and the social demands or conditions. As will be noted, we regard American character in terms of three polarities, ambivalent tendencies, but what is most important is to know that polarities of character, reflecting underlying desire, can easily shift from one pole of the equation to the other. Moreover, for the sake of our argument, the most important determinant of which aspect of the polarity is most salient is anxiety.

### *Individualism/ Collectivism*

One of the most fundamental dualisms of human life is the tendency to assert and develop one's self, to differentiate one's self from the group (Bakan, 1966). But at the same time, people want connections with others, membership in groups of people that provide warmth, comfort, and connection. The cultural origins of individualism can be seen in the 11th century when the Church institutionalized confession making the person responsible for his/her own sin and salvation. In many European societies, as well as other traditional societies, responsibility as well as justice had been collective. A family was seen as a juridical unit, the theft by one member meant others were equally guilty.

It might be noted that along with the Crusades and the expansion of trade, we would see changing material conditions that would prove fertile to the growth of urban commercial centers, where in turn, an emergent market economy would be conducive to the pursuit of economic self-interest. This was evident with the rise of the Italian city states, the emergence of humanism in philosophy, Pico Della Mirandola, and perspective in art, which individualized the gaze of the view and in turn the view itself.<sup>8</sup> The Renaissance marked the beginning of the end of the



hegemony of the Church over Western Thought, more specifically, it would mark the emergence of a trading class whose very existence was a product of as well as critique of the feudal class system and the relative isolation of its manors. Moreover, with the rebirth of Greco-Roman culture, including its sciences, as well as the exposure to the far more advanced Islamic sciences, we would see the very beginnings of the conflicts between science and religion. Thus, Galileo and Copernicus were less heartily embraced by the Church.

As the bourgeois class of traders began to grow, the contradictions between their economic interests and that of the Church grew more and more evident. At the time of the Avignon papacy, we might note the emergence of theological challenges to the Church, as well as perhaps more important, critiques of its corruption, e.g., Jan Huss and John Wyclif. Huss, with few followers and little power were indeed burned at the stake. But 100 years later a Dominican monk named Luther, in his critique of the commercialization of grace by the church, posted his 95 theses on the door of the Wittenberg Church. But meanwhile with the invention of the printing press, and growth of a literate population, there were large numbers of people who would embrace Luther. In 1517, the Reformation began and given the nature of the population, it quickly spread wide and far.

The media explosion brought on by the printing press spread his message much further than it otherwise might have gone, and made him the focus for all sorts of religious, spiritual, political, and economic discontent. The right to read and interpret scripture led to the throwing off of the chains of papal and ecclesiastical authority; and taking this to mean political and economic freedom as well, there were widespread revolts among the German peasantry.<sup>9</sup>

And this was soon followed by John Calvin's critiques in France and Switzerland, his *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* was published in 1536. The Reformation would radically change Christendom in many ways, not the least of which was creating the very conditions for challenges to religion on the basis of science.

It was in this context that there was a great deal of religious ferment and various movements emerged. Most important for our purposes, there were two major consequences. Firstly, Protestantism encouraged literacy and in turn the individual could read scripture on his/her own, without the mediation of the Church. Thus, Protestants founded public schools and even universities - and this took place in the New World as well. This individualism, and ideological expression of an emergent market society, needed legitimation, and Protestantism would not only provide it, but once emergent, would further act as a motive, a "calling" as Weber put it. Those likely to embrace Protestantism were typically peasant land owners or artisans and learned professionals living in the towns rather than in the countryside including workers in new fields like printing, bookselling, and new manufacturing technologies like silk making. Thus, given the occupation-based "elective affinities" of those more likely to embrace Protestantism that legitimated and motivated work, we would see the growth of new, commercial classes. And given the asceticism of early Protestantism, the economic fruits of labor were not seen as the goals or rewards, but perhaps, and only perhaps, a subtle hint at salvation. Work itself served as a counter-phobic mechanism suppressing anxiety, while "success" further lessened anxiety.

Among the many Protestant denominations would emerge the “Puritans”, the name given in the 16th century to the more extreme Protestants within the Church of England who thought the English Reformation had not gone far enough in reforming the doctrines and structure of the church; *they wanted to purify their national church by eliminating every shred of Catholic influence*. In the 17th century many Puritans emigrated to the New World, where they sought to find a holy Commonwealth in New England. Puritanism remained the dominant cultural force in that area into the 19th century.<sup>10</sup>

Given an individualist religion, a land in which there was no existing social structure or institutions of government, and instilled with a powerful work ethic (undergirded by "salvation anxiety"), and expectations of literacy, they would eventually prosper in commerce. And while the early years of the, community were characterized by strong community ties and covenants of mutual aid and obligation, as they prospered and grew, and expanded to the West, the covenants of communal obligation waned, indeed were broken (Bellah, 1975). Within 200 year of landing at Plymouth Rock, a highly motivated, highly individualistic "American character" had been forged -that would be little change for the next 200 years.

The valorization of the self-made, independent person is one of the staples of American society seen in its meritocratic evaluations of people, and its literature, its high culture (Transcendentalism), its social policies, and its popular culture. America has been the place where individualism has thrived and complex social issues are personalized. Psychoanalysis found its greatest support, academic psychology is the most popular social science, and the myriad of self-help books or programs. For example, the self-made man, and now even woman, is one of the highly valued character types and mythologies of success. Notwithstanding their inherited class privileges, men like Bill Gates, Donald Trump, or Michael Eisner are lionized as self-made men. Films like *It's a Wonderful Life*, *High Noon*, *the Western in General*, a character like Clint Eastwood's Dirty Harry, John Wayne throughout his career, Rick in *Casablanca* all speak in terms of the individual alone meeting the odds and conquering them. Pushed to an extreme individualism becomes a character like Dirty Harry, Gecko in *Wall Street*, or at a more disturbing level members of a militia.

But American individualism has always had a problematic, ambivalent relation to community as both something to be desired, yet feared. It is rooted in the most basic fear of abandonment or being swallowed up by someone more powerful (Salerno, 2004). The community would give us social support and connections, yet always threaten to engulf, limit freedom, stifle individuality, and swallow up the person. The Puritans seemed most aware of this problem, before setting foot on land, they signed a covenant that would bind them together. Yet within a few generations, between prosperity and ever-new horizons to the west, or the cities, the covenant was rent asunder (Bellah, 1975). Yet there endures that desire and fear of isolation. Communitarianism was seen as a solution to the retreat to lifestyle enclaves and/or exaltation of self (Bellah et al., 1985), or the demise of civil groups that might leave one "bowling alone" (Putnam, 2000). Salerno captured that paradox:

A history of the American community is the story of escape and hope. It is a tale of leaving home and starting anew. It is a story of fear and bloodshed, slavery and war. But

it is also a quest for regaining something that had been lost- the pastoral ideal .... They want to be engaged with their physical and social environment but also want considerable independence from it. Working against the building of viable communities was their fear of losing themselves in sameness - becoming; nothing. While the desire for community is expressed in the arts, theater, cinema and novels, individuals pursue loneliness and privacy in their personal lives: private homes, gardens, separate rooms, and separate schools. There is a desire to be free from commitment to others, a quest for isolation, yet a simultaneous unconscious yearning to be a part of something bigger than oneself: Again, it is the self-other borderline that is most relevant in the struggle for both community and identity (Salerno; 2004).

For Marx, one of the central moments of modern alienation was the break down of community and loss of species being, people were inherently social. But indeed, as Fromm showed, insofar as capitalism created demands for individualism and individual freedom, but at the same time, people felt anxiety and loneliness, they sought to escape from their freedom and solitude. As Slater (1970) argued over 40 years ago, people yearned for community, engagement, and dependency, yet they had come to be defined as weak, passive, and indeed, feminine. He suggested that the lure of communalism with stable social ties, together with the resentment over sexual freedom, bred a powerful reaction formation against such groups as communists, socialists, and hippies. [And today we would add, the Orientalist constructions of Muslims as communal-as Said (1986) has argued.]

One resolution to this paradox has been to create homogenous, Utopian communities and so 100+ years after Thomas More imagined such a place, the Puritans constructed their utopias, replete with the suppression of individualism and a distrust of others that indeed would characterize the Puritan communities. It was not by chance that the main victims accused of witchcraft were outsiders like Tituba, a woman of color.

The Puritan settlement became the quintessential narrative of American community. It was a place wherein rugged individuals confronted the ravages of untamed nature, where the mass slaughter of indigenous peoples gave testimony to Puritan religiosity. It was a place of fence building and church going, a place of repressed sexuality and intolerance of difference. It was a place of sacred covenants between settler and settler and settlers and God. The Puritan community placed the church at the center of social life and the patriarchal family as the first locus of control. Without the church and without the family, there was no community. The early New England settlement was an outpost: a bastion of God in a godforsaken land (Salerno, 2004).

But as we noted, with land to the West and growing cities, the Puritan communities waned and in their place a "new" form of community emerged - the frontier town. While these may seem opposites, the chaos, freedom, and sexuality of the frontier town is the realization of the order, control, and repression of the Puritan community.

Frontier communities were structurally diverse; many were short-lived, others continued and prospered. Compared to the early Puritans, many of whom had been college educated abroad, these new western settlers were unrefined, mostly uneducated and illiterate. Still, there was an emphasis on the elimination of otherness.... There were no covenants holding people together.

The early history of the American frontier is in part a history of daily violence and vanishing ghost towns: the exploitation of resources until the land no longer provided a basis for livelihood - the bleeding dry of mines and oil fields - the raping of earth - a kind of slash and burn rampage. Christopher Lasch (1979) has noted: "Whereas the pioneer gave vent to his violence and murderous cruelty, he saw the result as a goal of community - a safe place for his wife and children (39)." The loner-bandit was romanticized in the tabloids as the true heroic man. Jesse James and Billy the Kid, murderous and heartless as they were, became romantic icons. The range cowboy was the rugged individualist - the non-reflective, quick shooting, hard drinking, untamed individual. Separated from the laws of the land, proudly alienated from his own humanity, he was reckless and wild (Salerno, 2004).

Following upon the insights of Davis (1990) and Sennett (1970) on the city, Salerno goes on to say "that Americans as considerably paranoid, feeling menaced by strangers and needing to be both protected and insulated. Security becomes a central political theme. However, the failure to understand otherness intensifies the sense of personal vulnerability which in turn leads to a need for guns, high fences, barbed-wire, and more police." Thus much like From observed 60 years ago, there is a fundamental conflict between seeking close, intimate relationships and ties to communities, and at the same time, a desire and social rewards for freedom and independence. All too often, if faced by stress and anxiety, we fear being alone and would escape our freedom and seek solace in ambivalent attachments to groups. But all too often that escape from freedom leads us to further fear freedom and we submerge ourselves into a group where we do lose individuality, freedom, and creativity. Instead we fall prey to groupthink and paranoia.

### *Moralism/ Pragmatism*

One of the factors leading to "American Exceptionalism" was the fact that Puritans founded the "new nation". More specifically, a group of "separatists", rejected the Church of England, seen as incapable of being reformed. Instead, they chose total separation and formation of their own, autonomous congregations. They came to be known as Pilgrims. In 1608 they went to Holland, in 1620 they arrived in Massachusetts and as they say, the rest is history. Puritanism, which came out of the English Reformation, rested on four basic convictions: (1) that personal salvation was entirely dependent on God, (2) that the Bible provided the indispensable guide to life, (3) the church should reflect the express teaching of Scripture, and (4) that society was one unified whole.

Most of these [Puritan] men [Richard Mather, Thomas Hooker Roger Williams and John Cotton] held ideas in the mainstream of Calvinistic thought. *In addition to believing in the absolute sovereignty of God, the total depravity of man, and tile complete dependence of human beings on divine grace for salvation, they stressed the importance of personal religious experience.* These Puritans insisted that they, as God's elect, had the duty to direct national affairs according to God's will as revealed in the Bible. This union of church and state to form a holy commonwealth gave Puritanism direct and exclusive control over most colonial activity until commercial and political changes forced them to relinquish it at the end of the 17th century. <sup>11</sup>

People were seen as wicked, evil, and corrupt, one could little change that except by Divine grace. Yet people were duty bound to do God's will as revealed in scripture, the very word of

God, which explained creation, and gave laws and meanings to life. Further, as a result of this theology, their child-rearing practices tended to be harsh and intolerant, they were a "spare the rod, spoil the child-rearing philosophy" (Greven, 1991). The child was seen as possessed of "will" that needed to be broken, and physical punishment was seen as the means to "beat the devil out the child". (This would have important consequences.)

During the colonial period Puritanism had direct impact on both religious thought and cultural patterns in America.<sup>12</sup> It provided a Christian vision for America. From John Winthrop's vision of the new land as the "city on the hill", to Cotton Mather's exhortations, there has been an element of Manichean thinking in America, typically concerned with notions of salvation, sin, and redemption, that are often tied to purity and danger (Douglas, 1984). Their isolation, the harshness of survival, and their sense of being a chosen people, made their religious convictions especially severe and intolerant of either criticism or sin. There is no doubt that the moralism of the Puritans, together with their worldviews, and zeal to realize those views, would have great impact on the subsequent course of the nation, long after its waning and demise. For example, from the time of Hester Prynne to the recent affairs Nipple-gate or Stern mouth, part and parcel of this Puritanical moralism has been concerned with the control and repression of desire in general, and sexuality in particular.<sup>13</sup>

Dialectically understood, the Puritan emphasis on individualism, however suppressed by the need for solidarity in the early years, its value of literacy, education, and hard work would interact with the material conditions and available raw materials of New England, and the colonies would survive, grow, and grow prosperous. As this happened, the religious fervor waned, the covenant would be broken and by the 18th century a new kind of elite, the businessmen scholars, more likely Deists or Freemasons, students of the Enlightenment, would become the dominant social force - while the puritanical moralism waned in some places or migrated to rural areas when it changed labels from Congregationalism to Baptism. "In the 19th century its influence was indirect, but it can still be seen at work stressing the importance of education in religious leadership and demanding that religious motivations be tested by applying them to practical situations". Yet in face of social change and crisis, we would often see religious awakenings and/or the proliferation of religious such as Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Science, and Mormonism. As shall be argued, a conservative Christian moralism remains an undercurrent in contemporary understanding, and domestic and foreign policy. Much like individualism and violence, it would endure long beyond the conditions of emergence.

This is especially vivid in the leadership of the United States. Howard Zinn (2005) has documented instances of American Exceptionalism and the legacy of divine ordination, especially by recalling the racist era of Manifest Destiny, the colonization of the Philippines, and more recently the war in Iraq. Zinn cautions:

Divine ordination is a very dangerous idea, especially when combined with military power (the United States has World War II nuclear weapons, with military bases in a hundred different countries and warships on every sea). With God's approval, you need no human standard of morality. Anyone today who claims the support of God might be

embarrassed to recall that the Nazi storm troopers had inscribed on their belts, 'Gott mit U/IS' ('God with us').

Not every American leader claimed divine sanction, but the idea persisted that the United States was uniquely justified in using its power to expand throughout the world. In 1945, at the end of World War II, Henry Luce, the owner of a vast chain of media enterprises - Time, Life, Fortune - declared that this would be 'the American Century,' that victory in the war gave the United States the right 'to exert upon the world the full impact of our influence, for such purposes as we see fit and by such means as we see fit.'

Zinn goes on to caution that thinking about this aspect of American culture in terms of partisan politics is a dangerous thing. Like the Puritan asceticism, its legacy endures even when the historical context has changed.

As has been noted, between the legacy of scriptural literalism, the ecology of its rural life, and fear of articulating "lofty" ideas, America was the fertile ground for pragmatism. Long before Pierce, James, Dewey, or Mead scribed its foundational texts, "Yankee ingenuity" had become a part of its culture, the inventor or tinkerer or manufacturer came up with brilliant inventions and or solutions to problems. Ben Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Eli Whitney, Oliver Winchester (repeating rifle), Sam Colt (revolver), Dr. Richard Jordan Gatling (machine gun), Cyrus McCormick, Alexander Bell, and Louis Armour. In the 20th century Orville and Wilbur Wright, Henry Ford, Ray Kroc, and Bill Gates are as much a part of America as its Puritan founders.<sup>14</sup>

The major American contribution to ideas has been pragmatism, which has generally been a secular philosophy. Pragmatism is not easily defined, but one might start by noting its rejection of abstract and absolute truth whether religious, scientific, or humanistic. It sees usefulness or practical consequences as the basis of truth claim. It clearly opposes any kind of supernatural, authoritarian set of absolute and enduring truths values and ideas, affirming instead, various kinds of individualism, empiricism, or temporalism (constant change so that the "truth" of one time is likely to be replaced by another). At one extreme James saw personal experience as the basis of truth, while Pierce, anticipating Habermas, argued that a community of minds that held a belief over time, established a truth. Eventually, we could see how Rorty, flirting, if not in bed with postmodernism, at least Lyotard's version, would reject all grand narratives in favor of local knowledges and personal experiences.

Common to this substantial core of pragmatism is an opposition to the absolute separation of thought from action, of pure from applied science, of intuition or revelation from experience or experimental verification, of private interests from public concern concrete applications of older philosophical problems concerning the relation of universals to particulars. It will also be evident that each alleged historical example of pragmatism shows a wide variety of individual ways of resolving these problems, especially when we include the outer fringe of those calling their very personal effusions pragmatics.

While the roots of pragmatism might include the Greeks, Comte, Kant, and even Hegel via Dewey, what is important to note that it would most flourish on American soil, and by American philosophers and social scientists like James and Mead. James (1898) defined pragmatism as:

The whole function of philosophy ought to be to find out what definite difference it will make to you and me, at definite instants of our lives, if this world-formula or that world formula be the true one (1898, p. 50). Thus, when one is confronted with the evidence in favor of the formula "the human soul is immortal", and then turns to the considerations put forward by the skeptic in favor of the formula "the human soul is not immortal", what is he to do? If he is a Pragmatist, he will not be content to weigh the evidence, to compare the case for with the case against immortality; he will not attempt to fit the affirmative or the negative into a "closed system" of thought; he will work out the consequences, the definite differences, that follow from each alternative, and decide in that way which of the two "works" better. The alternative, which works better, is true. The attitude of the Pragmatist is "the attitude of looking away from first things, principles, categories, supposed necessities; and of looking towards last things, fruits, consequences, facts" (1898, p. 55).

At the personal level, this polarity of character reflects a fundamental conflict between a repressive, punitive superego fearing aggression, and a more relaxed, open ego ideal based on hope. In the former case, there are moral absolutes that are fixed and unchangeable, in the latter case, there are no permanent absolutes.

#### *Toughness/ Compassion.*

One consequence of the Puritan emphasis on sexual repression, Indeed the general repression of erotic desire, has disposed a great deal aggression that has long been a part of American character, though often disavowed, denied, and Projected to the Other. This can be seen in such diverse forms as the high American crime rates, the popularity of violent games - football as its most Popular sport, and as noted above (p. 5), a long history of war and conflict. In his classical analysis of "American Tough", Wilkinson (1984) argued that toughness, a combination of masculine strength and bravery, if not bravado is a very American quality. Compare Dirty Harry to Sherlock Holmes or Hercule Poirot.

This toughness is not simply an aggressive predisposition, but a resolute form of strength as much based on self-assurance and conviction as on physical power. It suggests that the person can not only express aggression, but endure pain at the hand of a brutal enemy, he can take it like a real man (but the enemy's aggression will be avenged). This toughness is associated with individualism, the tough guy can handle himself, he does not need anyone to tell him what to do. Conversely, nobody can push him around, nobody tells Fred C. Dobbs what to do. "You can't catch me sleepin' ... Don't you ever believe that. I'm not that dumb. The day you try to put anything over on me will be a costly one for both of you . . . Any more lip out of ya and I'll pull off and let ya have it. If ya know what's good for ya, ya won't monkey around with Fred C. Dobbs!"

Toughness was an essential quality for survival in the early years of colonial life and westward expansion. It was as essential for the Puritan village as the frontier town. And of course it was essential for the frequent military actions that were earlier noted. Whenever power was threatened or challenged the response was likely to toughen, standing tall in face of adversity. In the course of history, whenever America was challenged, its response was to hang tough, stand tall.

An interesting example of this was the emergence of football as a college sport. It grew at a time in the 19th century when the toughness of elite males was problematic in face of the changing economy and slight entry of women into universities and the work force (Langman, 2003a). Stephen Ducat has explored this insecurity and its tie to political and cultural life in his (2004) "The Wimp Factor: Gender Gaps, Holy Wars, & the Politics of Anxious Masculinity". He has found, in the tradition of Adorno and Altemeyer, that the need for security and the perception of strength is central to both modern consciousness and political leanings. In particular, he states: "Since the U.S. national election of 1980, right-wing political propagandists have relentlessly, and with great success, linked liberalism to weakness, dependency, and helplessness - qualities seen by most male-dominant societies as feminine" (p. 6). His argument is similar to Arlie Hochschild's (2004) when exposing the ironic support of the Republican party among white working class men, whose economic vitality is directly threatened by right-wing policies. Where Hochschild wonders about the class element of this support, Ducat probes further to ask: "Why men? Why are males particularly susceptible to this manipulation?" (p. 171). Ducat's analysis documents the ways that the left has been equated to weakness, femininity, and ultimately a lack of security. This security is precisely what Ducat argues many men seek in a time when their male dominance and economic security are being undermined. He notes: "Conservative talk shows are filled with denunciations of 'latte-liberals' and the 'Volvo-driving, New-York-Times-reading liberal elite'. This rhetoric, combined with the regular-guy persona of George W. Bush - his inarticulateness and anti-intellectual presentation - has successfully disguised the president's own partisan roots" (p. 172). He is tough on the economy, but at least he is tough.

One of the most salient ways this toughness has been expressed in family drama that contrasts the strict father with the warm, nurturing mother.

Lakoff (2002) suggests, because we tend to match our view of good politics with our image of a good family. The appeal of any political leader, he believes, lies in the way he matches our images of the father in the ideal family. There are two main pictures of such an ideal American family, Lakoff argues. According to a "strict father family" model, dad should provide for the family, control mom, and use discipline to teach his children how to survive in a competitive and hostile world. Those who advocate the strict father model, Lakoff reasons, favor a "strict father" kind of government. If an administration fits this model, it supports the family (by maximizing overall wealth). It protects the family from harm (by building up the military). It raises the children to be self-reliant and obedient (by fostering citizens who ask for little and speak when spoken to). The match-up here is, of course, to Bush Republicans. Then there is the "nurturing parent family" model in which parents don't simply control their children but encourage their development. The government equivalent would be offering services to the citizenry, funding education, health, and welfare, and emphasizing diplomacy on a global stage. The core values here are empathy and responsibility, not control and discipline, and the matchup is to the pre-public sector J. Jean Kucinich Democrats. Studies have shown that blue-collar ideals, are closer to the strict father than to the nurturing parent model. But that's been true for a very long time, while the blue-collar vote sometimes goes left as in the 1930s, and sometimes goes right as it's doing now. So we can't simply pin the pro-Bush Nascar Dad vote on a sudden change in blue-collar family ideals. Appealing to the "forgotten American" Maybe, however, something deeper



is going on, which has so far permitted Bush's flag-waving and cowboy-boot-strutting to trump issues of job security, wages, safety, and health - and even, in the case of Bush's threats of further war - life itself. In an essay, "The White Man Unburdened," in a recent New York Review of Books, Norman Mailer (2003) recently argued that the war in Iraq returned to white males a lost sense of mastery, offering them a feeling of revenge for imagined wrongs, and a sense of psychic rejuvenation. In the last thirty years, white men have taken a drubbing, he notes, especially the three quarters of them who lack college degrees. Between 1979 and 1999, for example, real wages for male high-school graduates dropped 24 percent. In addition, Mailer notes, white working-class men have lost white champs in football, basketball, and boxing. (A lot of white men cheer black athletes, of course, whomever they vote for.) But the war in Iraq, Mailer notes, gave white men white heroes. By climbing into his jumpsuit, stepping out of an S-3B Viking jet onto the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln, Bush posed as - one could say impersonated - such a hero. Mailer is talking here about white men and support for the war in Iraq. But we're talking about something that cuts deeper into emotional life, and stretches farther back into the twin histories of American labor and Republican presidencies. For Republicans have been capturing blue-collar hearts for some time now. In the summer of 1971, Jefferson Cowie (2002) tells us in a recent essay, Richard Nixon worked out a semi-clandestine "blue-collar strategy." Nixon instructed Jerome Rosow of the Department of Labor to draw up a confidential report, only 25 copies of which were circulated. One of them got into the hands of a Wall Street Journal reporter who exposed it under the banner, "Secret Report Tells Nixon How to Help White Workingmen and Win Their Votes".

What is being suggested is that to grow up in a strict father household, what used to be called authoritarian, means having an elective affinity for certain kinds of perception. More specifically, there is likely to be an intolerant authoritarian logic of black and white, the tendency to projection of aggression outward, and hyper conformity. More recently, Ducat (2004) has argued that American politics has valued the phallic aggressive male Dirty Harry, Dirtier Ronnie, The Gropinator, and now Bush the lesser as "real men" who can wield a big stick- their own to stick it to others. When it was obvious that president Billy Bub was doing what real men gotta do, his popularity swelled and kept going up and up.

### *Anti-Intellectualism*

Anti-intellectualism connotes a disdain, mistrust, if not hatred of ideas, intellectuals, and those with such pretensions that would stand out from "ordinary" folks. On the one hand, as we noted, for De Tocqueville, it was based on a fear of standing out, being different from others. But we feel it has deeper roots. Culturally, anti-intellectualism is rooted in (1) religion, (2) populism, and (3) a commercial culture. In 1642, Puritan writer John Cotton wrote "The more learned and witty you bee, the more fit to act for Satan will you bee". The puritans, many of whom were highly educated in England, soon created schools and even religious colleges, Harvard being one of them. But the dominance of theological literalism limited scholarship to largely religious commentary. While that would change over time as intellectual and literary classes would flourish in cities and university towns, it would not so much disappear as it migrated away from commercial cities and centers of learning and cosmopolitanism, to more rural, less educated

locales. (This is not to suggest that cities are without major enclaves of anti-intellectualization.). In more recent times, perhaps especially since the Cold ' War and more recent rise of religious conservatism, utilized by the economic elites to secure political power, we have seen a number of religious based expressions of anti-intellectualism especially the growing power of literalism. This includes the televangelists stressing faith and emotion over logic and asking folks to close their minds, open their hearts to Jesus, and open their wallets to them. The "prominence" of fundamentalists, greatly exaggerated by the media, has aided and abetted anti-intellectualism as a political agenda, in which conservative political elites encourage populist sentiments that serve to nevertheless sustain their power.

Anatol Lieven (2004) has explored these traditions in "America Right or Wrong: An Anatomy of American Nationalism". In particular he highlights two legacies of American culture. One is the rhetoric and ideals of American democracy, liberty, equality, and justice. Alongside this rhetoric comes the propensity toward imperialism and domination that we explore in this paper. This couples with the second legacy discussed by Lieven - a Jacksonian nationalism centered on almost pathological defensiveness and insecurity. Lieven argues that understanding how these legacies work in tandem is vital to understanding our national character, and as this paper attempts, our foreign policy.

The legacies of popular democracy and "civic activism" resulted in a common belief that ordinary folks did not need the aid of fancy "experts" who "knew it all". In 1843, Bayard R. Hall wrote of frontier Indiana, that "(w)e always preferred an ignorant bad man to a talented one, and hence attempts were usually made to ruin the moral character of a smart candidate; since unhappily smartness and wickedness were supposed to be generally coupled, and incompetence and goodness." Over a 150 years later, this sentiment endures - now often a staple of mass media. Mark Crispin Miller has been one of the strongest critics of contemporary anti-intellectualism. He has argued that, as: Fox chief Roger Ailes concedes:

"There's a whole country that elitists will never acknowledge. What people deeply resent out there are those in the 'blue' [Democratic] states thinking they're smarter. There's a touch of that in our news." The same seething "touch" pervades every offering from the GOP's immense semi-official agitprop machine, from multi-millionaire Big Liars like Rush Limbaugh down to all the local yokels fulminating on the air from sea to shining sea.<sup>16</sup>

The anti-intellectuals are finally on the side of power at its most unforgiving and voracious. And so they give a pass to those professors who are at the service of such power, while jeering anyone - inside or outside the Academy - who thinks to raise a fuss about how wrong it is. For them, this isn't something to discuss, because discussion is itself suspicious, even dangerous - the sport of jerk-offs and Prevaricators. Thus there is no point in arguing with them - and yet no wisdom in attempting to ignore them. And such is true not only of the Bush regime's most unrestrained supporters, but of the Bush regime itself - a fact that now requires a lot of careful thought, and something more.<sup>17</sup>

Intellectuals are often disdained as not only arrogant, but prone to trick and hoodwink ordinary, decent folks with their fancy words and high falutin ideas. Bill Clinton was often condemned for being "too smart by a half". Moreover, they are likely to embrace critical if not subversive foreign

ideas like communism that could bring harm to the ordinary folks. For example there is a great deal of suspicion about folks who want to understand the causes of nationalism, communism, or jihad, rather than fight them. From the condemnations of "muttering nabobs of negativity" attacked by Spiro Agnew (before going to jail), to the denigrations of Gore as "high-school teacher" and more recently the impending critiques of John Kerry as an effete snob who dares to speak French and write poetry, anti-intellectualism has shown itself to be alive, well and an enduring legacy of early Puritanism.

We would finally note, again following De Tocqueville, the critique by commercial interests, largely concerned with making money, that regard classical education, and indeed sociology or political science would be included, as expensive wastes of money, self-indulgent pursuits of the "ivory tower" without any practical import - that is make money.<sup>18</sup> There is a hidden agenda in that those with commercial interest do not want to see people with critical capacities.

### *Paranoid Style*

One of my favorite items from the F-Scale warns of secret plots and sex orgies taking place in high places. One of the central elements of authoritarianism is the projection of either sexuality or aggression; endless accusations "evil of the enemy", often combined with his/her devil and wonton sexuality, are a staple of authoritarian thought. Hitler, its best exemplar, saw the world filled with enemies, Jews, Communists, Poles, Homosexuals, etc. Psychologically, we know that the greater the repression the greater the aggression and/or sexual desire and the more likely it will be projected away from the in-group to a malevolent out-group. In some cases this out-group is often so well disguised and hidden, as to be invisible to most. In Hofstadter's (1965) classical analysis, there has long been a "Paranoid style" in which complex events, or often expectations of events that are quite unlikely, are explained by conspiracies, of which the worst kinds consist of "traitors" or "imposters" from within.

The legacy of equality and democracy, in face of achievement based inequality and the emergence of power elites, has given the US a legacy of populism, in which the "ordinary people" face oppression and duress at the hands of a "greedy" conspiracy of secretive elites and subversive elements come to personalize events and offer explanations for these events. But while many populist mobilizations ranging from Huey Long to George Wallace and more recently even Pat Buchanan have muted religion appear secular, and typically aimed at political elites, the central role of religion in America has often given populist movements a messianic hue and framed the contestation of people and elites as a Manichean battle of good and evil. In the course of time, the evil cabals have included Catholics and the Pope, Jews and the Elders of Zion, Nazis, Communists, and today, the evil cabal of choice is the Muslims. While populism in general, and especially its apocalyptic, millenarian versions are typically marginal within the larger society, their presence helps transform a geopolitics of conflicting interests into conflicts of theologically based good and evil.

### *The Reproduction of Character and Ideology*

How does a national character persist over time? How could the legacies of small group Puritan New England colonies, founded almost 400 years ago, both wane and endure. One of the ways in

which individual character, psychologically understood, is reproduced over time, might be called the psychosocial mediation of culture. At the same time cultures and cultural values are in shared narratives those that are systematically transmitted from one generation to the next. While certain more overt aspects of narrative will change over time, its underlying themes are often remarkably Persistent. De Tocqueville's portrait of America has been remarkably stable over time. Indeed perhaps the only fundamental change has been the liberalization of values over sexuality.

### *Psychosocial Mediation*

The earliest hints on the psychosocial mediation of culture came from Freud Who argued that the resolution of the [boy's] Oedipal complex concluded With the identification with the father, which in turn laid the groundwork for the emergence of the superego, the internalized voice of social norms and demands. But Freud carefully noted that the child's identification was actually with the father's superego, suggesting an unconscious mediation of values. The understanding of the superego became the foundation for Wilhelm Reich's attempt to integrate psychoanalysis and Marxism in order to understand the lure of fascism for the working classes of German. Two aspects of his analysis are salient. Firstly, much anticipating what would be central to the "authoritarian character" research, he argued that the repressive superego, as mediator of bourgeois ideology, by suppressing sexual freedom and behavior, fostered the docility and passivity of the working classes to their oppressors. Arguing that early sexual liberation would lead to later political emancipation, he started his Sex-Pol movements encouraging teenagers to have sexual relations. Further, he argued that the formation of the superego revealed how ideology became a material force.

In their classical analysis of the family and authority, Horkheimer and Adorno first noted that the family, and its structure, and patterns of authority were historically variable. The primary determinants of the superego they claimed were the authority relations in the family. But these relations were historically variable and related to the material conditions. Now it is crucial they note that given what Freud said, the material conditions and authority relations that may give rise to a certain characterological pattern can often endure long after those material conditions have changed. Thus, as character endures while metamorphosing its appearance, so too will cultural themes endure over time.

### *The American "Monomyth"*

The basic elements of American character that have been described, individualist, tough, yet moral, are clearly embodied in the American Monomyth. For Northrop Frye, the hero, on a quest to realize a vision of a free society with desire fulfilled and/or virtue restored, is of the mental human archetypes. Surely found in the Bible, perhaps Moses or Jesus best qualify as examples of loss, the recovery of identity and redeeming the people. In Greek Mythology, Perseus, Jason, or Theseus are its exemplars. Joseph Campbell found this theme so often, he refers to it as the monomyth.

Campbell's description is an enlargement on the basic formulae represented in the rites of passage: separation-initiation-discovery-return. The quest of the hero is an extended search for

something that has been lost or taken away from him, something that ought to have been his birthright. He encounters fabulous forces and wins a decisive victory. The successful completion of this search reveals to the hero the secret of his true identity and enables him to return from his mysterious adventure and take his rightful position in society.<sup>19</sup>

In its American versions, the lone hero, who ventures forth into the wilderness, the frontier, or even the seas, alone to face adversity in a struggle of good and evil and seek redemption and restoration, has long been a staple of literature from the time of James Fennimore Cooper's *Deerslayer*. In Hawthorne and Melville, the hero faces a darker universe, for example as Ahab seeks his personal revenge against the "great white one". That same theme echoes through Thoreau, Emerson, and Whitman. Hemmingway, Faulkner, Stienbeck Wright, and Updike describe that hero in the 20th century.

From what has been said about the polarities of American character, we would suggest that there are three important dimensions of American character, rooted in its early colonial history, that inform the present reality. While the mythical hero is a staple in every culture, it is the particular elements of each exemplar that represents on the ideal level, the real. In the American version of the monomyth, the hero, as avatar of cultural values, embodies and realizes individualism.

In their discussion of the *American Monomyth*, Jewett and Lawrence (1988), the tale begins with

A community in a harmonious paradise is threatened by evil; normal institutions fail to contend with this threat; a selfless superhero emerges to renounce temptations and carry out the redemptive task; aided by fate, his decisive victory restores the community to its paradisiacal condition; the superhero then recedes into obscurity.

This is the archetypical theme of heroic redemption as a religious allegory rooted in the Bible. The hero is typically innocent (virginal), America was seen as the new Eden and second chance for humanity after Europe screwed it up. He is independent, self-reliant. The fundamental theme is that a stable, peaceful, moral community is beset with a problem they cannot solve, typically an evil person or group of persons. The people are rendered helpless in the face of this adversity. From out of nowhere, comes forth a special hero, unusually talented in the use of violence to restore harmony, the bliss of Eden having been ripped asunder. Whether the characters of John Wayne, Clint Eastwood, or Mel Gibson, or fictional characters like Lone Ranger, Superman, Shane, Travis Bickel, or Captain James Kirk, the hero uses his skills in dealing with violence, to annihilate or otherwise rid the community of its malevolent evil doers, and restore its pristine, Edenic harmony. Despite exhortations to remain, and often promises of erotic love, social esteem, and/or political power, he dashes off into the wilderness at sunset, perhaps with his trusty companion Tonto, Lt. Spack, or Captain Renault. For Biryal:

Heroes in their own quests, took them into garden-like places where they sought to preserve the vision of America's destiny. Soon, however, time and space brought an end to the vision of innocence and newness. America was moving west, and conflict inevitably arose at the point where the advancing frontier and the wilderness collided. It is from the opposition of city and country, of civilization and the wilderness, of the restraint of custom and the freedom of the Western expanses that the American hero-

quester emerges. What the hero did when he could no longer retreat into the womb-like world of Thoreau's Pond, but had to step into the breach between the new and the old set the pattern for the American literary experience to the present day.... If Perseus is the prototypical hero-quester of Classical heroic literature, Superman certainly fulfills that role in modern society. He is the perfect "middle class" hero. His history closely duplicates that of Perseus. Not only is his birth special, but he updates the tradition by coming from outer space. Like Perseus, Superman was orphaned shortly after his birth, and brought up in obscurity. When he reaches his majority he sets out on his journey to recover his rightful inheritance. For Superman, this takes the form of knowledge of his true identity and purpose on earth, which he gains before taking his place in the world. Like Perseus, Superman undergoes trials, battles powerful opponents, and rescues maidens in distress. Both Perseus and Superman are model heroes; their goals are noble, and their values, at least for Superman, are not complex. Superman is always on the side of goodness; his enemies are always evil, monsters in the sense that their malignant motives have rendered them inhuman. The one important difference that exists between the two is the matter of romance. One of Perseus' triumphs was to win Andromeda, after slaying the dragon. Superman, on the other hand, for all his conquests, never wins Lois Lane. His sexual purity remains intact, with all his energies directed toward his single-minded purpose of preserving the American way.<sup>20</sup>

It is most troubling that despite the Enlightenment notions of law, the heroes of the monomyth, vigilante's, often clearly break the laws and standards to save the otherwise impotent community. Dirty Harry finds Miranda laws too confining to save the moral order, he bids the evil doers to "make his day", meaning he becoming judge, jury, and executioner. This notion of frontier justice has informed American foreign policy long before George W. Bush asked "to bring them on".

There have been some few changes to the monomyth over time, but the basic theme remains intact. Under pressure from feminists, we now have women such as Janice Starling (Jodie Foster) or Lt. Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) who also master the use of violence to rid the community of serial killers or aliens, but these heroines, like their male counterparts, never become part of the community restored. Further, in deference to contemporary mores, sometimes the monomythic hero/heroine can get laid, but s/he can never marry, settle down, and become a part of the community that s/he saved from evil.

## **PART II: AMERICAN CHARACTER AND POSTWAR GEOPOLITICS**

For the most part, nations act on the basis of furthering their material and political interests. They seek resources from other nations; they see other nations and markets. They seek safety and security; they enter into political and/or military alliances with other countries. They may compete over status and honor. Surely they may go to War to enhance their economic interests. Thus for example, in WWII, Germany claimed to need room for its people, *lebensraum* and oil for its industries. Japan needed raw materials for its growing industrial power. But while geopolitics has also informed much of US policy, as a result of American character, *religious*

*themes of fighting to defend and preserve good against evil and redeem the world have often been insinuated within foreign policy.*

Notwithstanding the formal separation of Church and State, the State has often acted as the vehicle for the realization of the religious vision of the early colonies. The characterological factors that we have earlier noted found an "elective affinity" with theologically based ideological positions resting on populist sentiments in which the political was intertwined with the religious. Moreover, given its role as "Chosen People II" who would do God's will, we would see implicit religious justifications for certain policies - **THAT DATE FROM THE VERY FOUNDING OF THE NATION.** More specifically, from the Monroe Doctrine to invasion of Spanish Florida, peremptory attack, unilateralism, and the desire for hegemony have been parts of American history (Gaddis, 2004).<sup>21</sup> Moreover, these positions have been justified by a religious undertone. As Schlesinger put it:

The Calvinist cast of mind saw America as the Redeemer nation. It expressed itself in the 18th C in Jonathan Edwards theology of providence, in the 19th C as Calhoun's theology of slavery, in the 20th in Woodrow Wilson's vision of a world order and in John Foster Dulles summons to a holy war against Godless Communism. (1983, p. 2)

To this litany we would update his analysis and add the "war" against Islamic terrorism and the invasion of Iraq. In both cases, the US was not only engaged in defending its "interests" - namely hegemonic control of the world economy, but as we shall argue, defending God against evil.

Thus by 1898 and the Spanish American War, the growth of economic power, and eventually the most powerful military in the world, confirmed the messianism of those who believed in America's divine appointment (Schlesinger, 1983). Wilson saw the US as the only idealistic nation in the world, endowed with the infinite privilege of fulfilling her destiny, and saving the world. The United States, as a happy empire of perfect wisdom and perfect virtue, was commissioned to save all mankind (Schlesinger, 1983). The overt religious message of Christian redemption is often disguised as "universal" or "higher" values as the implicit telos of existence.

When foreign policies are guided by moral ideologies they are not only dangerous, but however gratifying an ideology might be, it gets things wrong, it typically distorts reality and leads to ill advised strategies and hence outcomes ... Ideology summons the true believer to a jihad, a crusade of extermination against the infidel (Schlesinger, 1983). While this has often been self-serving, it has quite often been at the cost of inflicting great pain, misery, and death upon vast populations.<sup>22</sup> A long tradition of anticommunism in this country has indicated the role of character and ideology, in shaping "interests" - and in many cases these "interests" to seemingly resolve an immediate problem would lead to long-term disasters, if not for the US, for many people affected by the pursuits of American interests. Thus the attempt to "contain" the "evil" USSR by military means served the interests of their hawks and prolonged the decay of their empire, it was almost as if the general at the Pentagon and Soviet Defense Ministry colluded with each other to get more money. Moreover, a foreign policy shaped by ideology, and a religiously informed one at that, often becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. (The attempts to stem

Islamic extremists, typically through military means, often through support of repressive governments, has more often than not fostered greater resentment and fueled *jihadis*.)

American character, despite freedom and prosperity, was described as "sad and anxious" by De Tocqueville and thus found solace in Christian salvation religion that provided a veneer of moral certitude overlaying a character structure rendered anxious by fragile social ties, insecurities over status in an achievement oriented society without a stable and recognized class system, and the fear of aggression from the Other. Further, as a nation of immigrants and highly mobile people, religion played a very important role in American life, giving it community solidarity and legitimacy of purpose- when both were problematic. Thus a key element of American national culture has been its sacralization of itself as what Bellah (1975) has called American "civil religion". But at the same time, the sacralization has depended on differentiation from the profane and impure doing battle against unholy enemies - sinners of various stripes from witches to Native Americans to African Americans. As was earlier noted, America has had an affinity to war and violence even before the colonials declared their independence. With its ascendant power as actor on the world stage in the 20th century various external "Others" have been constructed as enemy, from the Axis to the Communists and today, Islamic terrorists.

The Puritan founders saw themselves at the beginning of a new history. God's chosen people, whose city on the hill beamed throughout the world, would become the savior Nation and redeem the corrupted world. In this way, America thinks itself as the "end of history", and that it has achieved the endpoint to which other nations strive - democratic government, free markets, material abundance, human rights, and personal freedom. Not overtly stated, but these values are seen as both desirable and "universal", everyone should have them, whether they want them or not. The overt religious message of Christian redemption is often disguised as "universal" or "higher" values as the implicit telos of existence. This has been recently theorized as the "clash of civilizations" (Huntington, 1996), in which the good guys won, their values universal, and we have reached the "end of history" (Fukuyama, 1992).

### *In the Name of God*

With entry into WWII, fighting genuinely evil, fascist enemies, genocidal monsters, a dear moral purpose that united the country. But following the war, with victory as a sign of God, and with its huge arsenal and unprecedented economic power, there was a belief of divine appointment and America having a messianic role in shaping the destiny of the world (Schlessinger, 1983), a friend turned foe and a demonized communist Russia took center stage as the designated enemy<sup>23</sup> That together with its God appointed mission has long been an underlying theme in the cultural policies that had secured hegemony for its post-Breton Woods globalized capitalism in which the 'communist enemy; not only threatened capitalism, freedom, democracy, and God, but its decadent atheism supposed sexual freedom threatened "proper morality". And when that system imploded, within a short time, a new enemy was needed. And while to a large extent Cold War policies of support for "friendly" states with repressive governments paid for the US, and support for Mujahadeen created "Islamic fundamentalism", the new enemy on the block to promise a cohesive community, the *umma*, replete with harems, polygamy, and instant, "short-term marriages" was constructed as the new enemy to not only serve psychological functions,



new justifications for imperialism, and bloated defense budgets, and most of all, continue the religious struggle between good and evil.

As has been long noted, American anticommunism of the postwar era, from the elitist position of containment crafted by Kennan in 1947, to the McCarthyist populism of the 1950s, the support for unilateral, naked aggression against communist States such as North Korea or Viet Nam, has been not only a matter of geopolitical competition, but a moral crusade against Godless atheism. A favorite propaganda theme shown to millions of school children had Russian soldiers invading an Orthodox Church and smashing icons.<sup>24</sup> A central premise of America's theologically inspired populist tinged anticommunism is that if and when that bastion of evil was conquered, then goodness should prevail. But after 1989, it was soon obvious that the demise of communism would not usher the Promised Land. Indeed many military interventions have ill served what would be regarded as national interests.

The period after WWII was a period of rapid change and realignments. Many former colonies began to seek independence, India of course being the largest such country. In many cases, nationalist and/or peasant struggles for independence and self-determination were often couched in a Marxist rhetoric that leaders typically learned in the mother country. The actual struggles were not between the relatively few people that might have been members of bourgeois or proletarian classes. Rather, as Eisenstadt suggested, in traditional societies characterized by communal organization, the Marxian language of class struggle against domination had more appeal to traditional peoples than might the lure of self-interested gain. Furthermore, given the geopolitical struggle between East and West, communism-capitalism, the USSR was more likely to support independence struggles with material and moral support, and further, provide a great deal of aid to newly independent, new allies. Thus the Soviet support of Nasser's pan Arab socialism, or Castro's Cuba was not simply a matter of *realpolitik*, but given the ways American character interpreted the world, part of a greater cosmic struggle between good and evil, the US as God's chosen redeemer of the world, was locked in holy struggle against the USSR, the very embodiment of evil. Indeed according to Reagan "the focus of evil" in the world. "The world struggle is between right and wrong and good and evil". When there is evil loose in the world, "We are enjoined by scripture and the Lord Jesus to oppose it with all our might".<sup>25</sup> Moreover, the USSR was seen as the root of all the problems of the world, as if there were no indigenous, local factors that might cause discontent and discord- for example the many corrupt and repressive dictators supported by the United States.

This included the support of the anticommunist coups in places like Honduras, or support for, if not the creation of the anticommunist forces in Nicaragua, Afghanistan, etc. When the USSR collapsed in 1989, the messianic role of American virtue was confirmed, at least in the eyes of the true believers. Just as the divinity of Jesus is fundamental for Christians, the fall of the USSR as a result of the American policies is gospel for both the religious and political right. They claim that between Reagan's arm budget that they could not match, the defeat in Afghanistan by the Thomas Jeffersons of Islam (Mujahadeen), and Reagan's alliance with the Pope to support Solidarity's struggle against communism, that American and the American way of life were blessed by God as the major force for good in the world.

### *The Rise of the Christian Taliban*

In 1964, Barry Goldwater, the conservative candidate lost his presidential bid, But a new political realignment was in the offing, it was evident that his style of principled conservatism, laissez-faire trade, minimal government, either isolation in foreign affairs, minimal concern with welfare and/or entitlement programs, and noninvolvement in personal life, yet fiercely anticommunist and supporting a strong military, had little appeal outside business or managerial classes.

It should be noted that the country was at "war" at the time, in large part due to the factors noted, the fear of communism. At that time, many "experts", more driven by ideology than facts or logic, proposed the "domino theory", if Viet Nam became communist, then so too would Mexico become the next Cuba, (As has been reiterated, one danger of ideology is that it "gets it wrong".) That said, there was nevertheless a wide spread fear of communism and a nuclear war, Goldwater was painted as "reckless", a mad bomber who might believe a nuclear war winnable and likely to start one.

In the larger world, not really evident at that time, the impact of the globalization started becoming evident as many main line, heavy industries faced decline if not demise. These changes, the growth of a rust belt across the Midwest was seen as the "de-industrialization of America" and in its stead, a vast "industrial wasteland" was growing.

Finally, in face of the war in Viet Nam and the early indications of a world historical political economic change, there was a growing counterculture of hedonistic youth whose "hippie" life styles rejected work, propriety, and acceptable standards of demeanor, and instead seemed to be solely concerned with drugs and sex and rock and roll. They clearly rejected the demands of "civilization" for the repression that enabled work, as well as beauty, order, and cleanliness. They were excoriated by Phillip Reiff who lamented the erosion of religious based constraints on impulse expression (Langman, 2003b). At the same time, their life styles were celebrated by Slater (1970) who saw them as expressing not only the repressed erotic, but the desire for community (see above p. 197).

These various factors, seemingly unrelated, acted as a perfect storm for cultural and political realignment. More specifically, we could not see the resurgence of religious sentiments as with the first signs of a worldwide movement toward fundamentalism. In this country, angry, yet dedicated, charismatic, telegenic televangelists moved from marginal obscurity to center stage and indeed began to influence political leadership. Thus for example, we began to see the beginnings of the popularity of "ends of days" theologies, apocalyptic warnings of impending doom. A number of Protestant evangelicals became active politically hoping that with the right laws, they could stop people from having sex, and perhaps even bathe.

In 1968, Richard Nixon was able to create and mobilize his "Southern strategy" that would yield a new coalition of mainstream conservatives, disgruntled blue-collar men, often angry at the "unpatriotic" unwashed, drug using youth, and Southerners who had been incensed at the Democrats attempt to integrate their schools and ruin their ways of life. Thus a number of factors that were nascent were summoned forth by fear and anxiety. The only forces for love and

salvation were to be seen in the masses of the great unwashed. The underlying economic fears, the uncertainty of the geopolitical situation vis-a.-vis confrontation with the USSR, and the challenges from the counterculture, had a major impact - shifting the polarities of national character toward individualism, toughness, and moralism.

### *The Current Great Awakening*

We have argued that despite the ebbs and flows throughout its history, religion has played a major role shaping American character and political policy. Moreover, the massive changes due to globalization have fostered a more religious moment. consider for example, Mel Gibson's movie, the Passion of the Christ, oft described as the Jesus Chainsaw Massacre, has become one of the most profitable movies of all times. It is estimated that half of all Americans would have seen it. (Stay tuned for the sequel, Resurrection: Return of the Jesus.) At the same time, Rev Tom LeHaye's books, the Left Behind series, by and large novels concerning the Last Days and the impending Rapture, have become among the best selling books in the nation.

In a recent Alternet piece, Steven Pizzo (2004), described the Bush Administration as Christian Taliban, stern, uncompromising, and desiring to control all aspects of people's lives, including how, when, and why they screw:

But even as President George W. Bush denounced the brutal Islamic fundamentalist regime in Kabul, he was quietly laying the foundations for his own fundamentalist regime at home. For the first time far right Christian fundamentalists had one of their own in the White House and the opportunity to begin rolling back decades of health and family planning programs they saw as un-Christian, if not downright sinful ... Since 2001 dozens of far-right Christian fundamentalists have been quietly installed in key positions within the Department of Health and Human Services, the Federal Drug Administration and on commissions and advisory committees where they have made serious progress. Three years later this administration has established one of the most rigid sexual health agendas in the Western world.<sup>26</sup>

In a number of agencies, commissions, etc., Bush has installed Christian Taliban in positions where their values, held by only a minority of Americans, many of whom are known hypocrites, impact not only the lives of American, but aid a number of international health and family organizations throughout the world. A number of people in important policy positions believe that sex should be reserved solely for reproduction, "I would like to outlaw contraception ... contraception is disgusting - people using each other for pleasure." Joseph Scheidler, Pro-Life Action League.

### *Bush, God, and Iraq*

In the very recent past, we have seen how the legacies of character weigh down upon the present. People on the left often wonder whether or not G. W. Bush is a cynic who knowingly deceives people as to his genuine motives, or sincerely believes that he is carrying out a greater purpose than swelling corporate coffers and extending political influence. We are reasonably convinced that while many of the people in his government are quite cynical, but that he himself is really quite sincere in his convictions. That is surely more dangerous since if he feels that he is on a religious quest to God's will and to bring virtue to the world, he is not capable of rational

discussion and compromise with his view of "evil". (Cynicism requires intelligence for the sake of duplicity.)

The President told Bob Woodward in "Bush at War" that Kim Jong II's massive prison complex "appalls me". He added: "It is visceral. Maybe it's my religion, maybe it's my - but I feel passionate about this". Toying with the idea of toppling Kim, Bush said, "I just don't buy" the argument that we need to worry about the financial burdens South Korea might have to assume if North Korea collapses. "Either you believe in freedom, and want to - and Worry about the human condition, or you don't," he said.

"Yet I know that liberty is not America's gift to the world - liberty and freedom are God's gift to every man and woman who lives in this world".

God is calling America to free the world, and Bush himself is heeding that call. "America is a nation with a mission," Bush said, not afraid, in this crowd, to connote the crusade he is on. "We're called to fight terrorism around the world".

A number of "spokespersons" have seen the current war in Iraq a war of good Christian warrior against evil Muslims working with Satan. John Ashcroft declared that "Islam is a religion in which God requires you to send your son to die for him. Christianity is a faith, in which God sends his son to die for you." Franklin Graham, Billy Graham's son called Islam an "evil religion ... I think it's {terrorism} more mainstream. And it is not just a handful of extremists. If you buy the Quran, read it for yourself, and it's in there. The violence it preaches is there". Jerry Falwell said he thought Prophet Muhammad was a terrorist. Televangelist Jimmy Swaggart in a November 10, 2002 interview with the Toronto-based station CFMT referred to Prophet Muhammad as a "sex deviant and pervert.... We ought to tell every other Moslem (sic) living in this nation that if you say one word, you are gone." (Recall that Swaggart was arrested for paying prostitutes to masturbate while he photographed them.) General Boykin is often quoted as telling the Muslim captive that his God Christ was a real god unlike the phony god of Islam. "I knew my god was bigger than his. I knew that my god was a real god and his was an idol." Our good general has further said.<sup>27</sup>

Why do they hate us so much? I will tell you this. This is my own personal belief. One of the most fundamental reasons they hate us is (a) because we are a nation of believers, and (b) because we support Israel. Now, if you don't believe that this nation was founded on Christian beliefs, Christian values, then go back and read the writings and the orations of the founders of this nation, read what they said. Every man that signed the Constitution of the United States was of the Christian faith .... We as Americans, we as Christians, need to understand that that's not the enemy that America's up against. In fact, the enemy that we're up against IS called the principality of darkness, he's called Satan. We are in fact in a spiritual battle, ladies and gentlemen, more than we are in a physical battle.... But why is George W. Bush in the White House? ... You must recognize that we as Americans saw a miracle unfold with the election of George W. Bush. Whether you voted for him or not is irrelevant. The fact is he is there today not only to lead America, but to lead the world, and that is what he is doing. Where does he start his day? He starts his day in the Oval Office at 4:30 with a Bible in his hand.

### *John Winthrop in the War Room*

In a compendium of revelations, much like the Pentagon Papers, following her working back to sentence in the secretary of Defense Office for Near East Affairs, Karen Kwiatkowski (2004) wrote:

The education I would receive there was like an M. Night Shyamalan movie - intense, fascinating and frightening. While the people were very much alive, I saw a dead philosophy - Cold War anti-communism and neo-imperialism - walking the corridors of the Pentagon. It wore the clothing of counterterrorism and spoke the language of a holy war between good and evil. The evil was recognized by the leadership to be resident mainly in the Middle East and articulated by Islamic clerics and radicals. But there were other enemies within, anyone who dared voice any skepticism about their grand plans, including Secretary of State Colin Powell and Gen. Anthony Zinni ... I observed firsthand the formation of the Pentagon's Office of Special Plans and watched the latter stages of the neo-conservative capture of the policy-intelligence nexus in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq. This seizure of the reins of U.S. Middle East policy was directly visible to many of us working in the Near East South Asia policy office, and yet there seemed to be little any of us could do about it.... I saw a narrow and deeply flawed policy favored by some executive appointees in the Pentagon used to manipulate and pressurize the traditional relationship between policymakers in the Pentagon and U.S. intelligence agencies.... I witnessed neoconservative agenda bearers within OSP usurp measured and carefully considered assessments, and through suppression and distortion of intelligence analysis promulgate what were in fact falsehoods to both Congress and the executive office of the president.<sup>28</sup>

### *In God We Trust*

The presence of US soldiers in Iraq further exemplifies the extent to which a dichotomized world view fostered the American Exceptionalism. A cover piece to the pop-news weekly "USA WEEKEND" on March 12-14 highlighted the case of five soldiers serving in the US military in Iraq whose faith had deepened as a result of their work there.<sup>29</sup> The five soldiers profiled, of which one is Jewish and four are Christian, all espouse the view that "the war has made them better, more enlightened people". Yet this enlightenment does not come with a deepened perspective on world affairs, intellectualism, balance of perspectives, or even ambivalence. Instead, we see a strengthened, toughened-up belief that the US's mission in Iraq is unquestionably pure, and that indeed, they are not only protected by God's grace, but doing his very work.

One theme that emerges from this profile piece is the resolve of those Soldiers who embrace their faith and beliefs as indeed tough, rather than soft and compassionate. Says Sgt. Edward Parker Gyokeres, "I'm no longer ashamed to say my strength comes directly from God" (p. 7). Another Soldier, Cpl. Damian Luten, who had ministered to a fellow soldier prior to his death, "It fills my heart with pride that I did what I could for him, to help him find his way. I know he's in heaven now" (p. 7). What these tales seem to indicate is a defensive statement about the toughness connected to faith in the service, a pre-emptive strike against the claim that espousing this perspective is somehow weak, compromising, or too nurturing.

Yet what is perhaps most telling is that all five soldiers profiled embraced an unquestioning belief that their mission was inextricably tied to goodness, righteousness, salvation, and purity. It is indeed the notion of Manifest Destiny on a global scale. All of the soldiers profiled, and by extension the masses of people who read and cherished this article when it was published, clarified that their work was indeed God's work, and that they were serving not only the United States, but also directly serving God. Some excerpts:

"It helped redefine my trust in God, whom I was struggling to understand because of the things I had seen."

"It was no mystery to me: God healed my leg."

"He was meant to stay alive for a reason .... That's what it's all about: serving your God and your country."

"It's through this experience that I realize, with a deeper understanding than ever, that I'm intensely involved in God's work. At our Sunday services, there are Iraqis just beginning to know Christ. I consider myself more blessed than ever. ... I know God is keeping us safe."

"On April 10, we went to Baghdad for what would become the war's most decisive battle. Ambushes came from everywhere. Thousands of bullets pierced the air. Our truck was hit by one blast that should have killed or wounded us all... We barely got scratched. After the long day of fighting, only one of the 1,500 Marines in the battalion was killed. 'How could that be?' I wondered. It could only be that God had decided that, for all but one of us, it wasn't our time."

We see here, in the only five examples presented to this audience, a pervasive belief that the soldiers are doing God's will, combined with an anti-intellectualism that sustains it. It couldn't be an ill-equipped army of Iraqi soldiers, rallying in isolation to resist an occupying force with different views of liberation! It is clearly God's will that the US soldiers prevailed.

We argue, again, that this fosters a clear relationship to the identity of the soldiers and their mission in the Middle East. Searching for meaning amidst the complications of war, falling back on the "hand of God" mentality provides for a clearly defined set of answers, as well as a secure post to tie identity to. Some, as would be expected, were seeking these answers and secured identities before the invasion of Iraq: "Training in Bridgeport, Calif., I watched on TV as the World Trade Center went down on Sept. 11, 2001 and realized I needed more spirituality in my life to help me make sense of this world" (p. 10). Attempting to understand the world events, as we could come to see all too clearly, was un-American. What is American, as we argue in this paper, is to shut up, be tough, and serve God.

### *Toward an Epilogue of Hope*

Is there any hope? Schlessinger (1983) argued that ideologies, typically constructed and/or promulgated by elites to legitimate their economic, political, or cultural power are fundamentally antidemocratic. It is clear that the Christian Taliban of today does not command the loyalties of

more than perhaps 20-25% of the population. We previously argued that the rise of fundamentalism was in part due to the rapidly changing world of today. Yet as that world has changed, one of these changes has been a number of democratic and democratizing trends. When the USSR imploded, the US had achieved its triumphalist moment. But in only a brief time, the contradictions of its ideologically driven foreign policies, supported by its particular character structure had led it to imperial overreach with a quagmire in Iraq and a weak economy that portends attenuation of its power and ability to shape the world. Let us hope.

## NOTES

1.  
[http://www.edifyingspectacle.org/gullibility/blog/archives/christian\\_fundamentalism/american\\_exceptionalism.php](http://www.edifyingspectacle.org/gullibility/blog/archives/christian_fundamentalism/american_exceptionalism.php)
2. There have been questions as to its uniqueness in a distinct population, its class specificities, frequencies, and distribution in a population. As we will argue, we do not believe that a particular character type is the *most* frequently found in a society, but that rather certain constellations of the polarities of character are especially typical of certain class locations.
3. From Letter III of What is an American. .
4. Of course he was writing in 1798, long after the religious intolerance of the New England colonies had waned.
5. We don't necessarily mean intent in simply a psychologically based volition. Indeed more often than not, certain policies and actions, cloaked in the most lofty moral guise, serve material ends. Consider abolition, the movement to universalize wage labor and maintain a large market for growing, Northern Industry.
6. Leonard, Ira. *Violence is the American Way*, <http://alternet.org/print.html?StoryID=15665>. April 16, 2003.
7. We are not trying to suggest that somehow America was the aggressor in these conflicts, only that it had in fact engaged in acts that were clearly aggressive in the eyes of the people who were objects of these actions.
8. Masaccio, Giotto and Cimabue were among the earliest to initiate the move from 2 dimensional Byzantine representations to 3 dimensions, leading to a distant point. Thus each viewer would have a different perspective.
9. <http://www.lepg.org/religion.htm>
10. <http://mb-soft.com/believe/txc/puritani.htm>
11. <http://mb-soft.com/believe/txc/puritani.htm>
12. <http://mb-soft.com/believe/txc/puritani.htm>

13. This was perhaps most evident in the Monicagate episode, where the conservative right, misjudging the actual support they had from American, thought that they could impeach Clinton, the Christian Taliban's worst fear.

14. It is not by accident that we see American inventors developing some of the essential weapons of modern war.

15. [http://www.pragmatism.org/companion/pragmatism\\_wiener.htm](http://www.pragmatism.org/companion/pragmatism_wiener.htm)

16. Mark Crispin Miller, <http://www.centerforbookculture.org/context/no9/miller.html>

17. Mark Crispin Miller, <http://www.centerforbookculture.org/context/no9/miller.html>

18. Sociology might aid consumer research and marketing to niche audiences, but too much of it is critical of big business.

19. Robert Lyman Biral, *The American Hero-Quester*.

<http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1979/1/79.01.01.x.html#d>

20. Robert Lyman Biral, *The American Hero-Quester*.

<http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1979/1/79.01.01.x.html#d>

21. Anytime the US has sought alliances or multi-lateral agreements, it has simply been that it did not have the power to act alone, eg WWII or Cold war.

22. Perhaps 2 million Cambodian died after we destabilized Sihanouk's fragile coalition, perhaps as many Vietnamese, as well as many being wounded or tortured. Then our support of Suharto in Indonesia, and Marcos in the Philippines probably led to another million deaths, and then of course the small change numbers of Latin and Central Americans that died in Argentina, Brazil, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala at the hands of American supported and often trained good Christians fighting the evil communists-proxies for the USSR designs on world domination. Or is that a projection of the US. From Exceptionalism to Imperialism

23. It should be recalled that the wartime alliance with Russia was purely strategic, the US has after all sent an expeditionary force to Russia to fight against the Bolsheviks.

24. We also got instructions on surviving nuclear bombs, go to wall furthest from window, lie down, cover your head and kiss your ass good bye.

25. Cited by Schlessinger, (p. 5).

26. <http://www.alternet.org/story.html?StoryID=18259> March 28, 2004

27. Quotations from CBS news. <http://www.cbn.com/CBNNews/News/031030b.asp>

28. [http://www.salon.com/opinion/featre/2004/03/10/osp\\_moveon/print.html](http://www.salon.com/opinion/featre/2004/03/10/osp_moveon/print.html)

29. The article presupposes that their views stand in contrast to most of the other troops, but we could argue that this is an example of making the case to the American Public of the merit of such a view, rather than the exceptionalism of the views themselves.



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