

**GUIDE AND GUARDIAN,
EXEMPLAR AND EXEMPTION:
AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM IN
THE UNITED NATIONS**

Noortje Tilborghs

S4068769

MA Thesis

Advisor: Dr. Jorrit van den Berk

Faculty of Arts

Radboud University Nijmegen, August 2015



Abstract

Indicating the idea that the United States is a nation qualitatively different from the rest of the world, with a mission and responsibility to lead the world to democracy and freedom, American exceptionalism has been the focus of numerous studies within the fields of United States' history and domestic and foreign affairs, as well as international relations. While the body of work on American exceptionalism is extensive, the exact usages, purposes, and implications of the notion on U.S. policies, as well as its role in the United Nations, is unfortunately still unexplored. This thesis is a contribution to advance this interesting area of research, and will do so through examinations of the debate surrounding the notion of American exceptionalism, the United States-United Nations relationship, exceptionalist rhetoric, voting practices, personal experiences of UN representatives, and international responses to U.S. policies. It is argued that American exceptionalism, as exemplified in the United Nations, functions as an intricate framework that underlies, shapes, and guides United States' rhetoric, agenda setting, and voting in multilateral institutionalized cooperation, while it coincides and interlaces with numerous other foreign policy incentives.

Key words: American exceptionalism, American foreign policy, constructivism, diplomacy, General Assembly, international relations, neoliberalism, soft power, United Nations, voting practices.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Preface	iii.
	Introduction	1
I.	American Exceptionalism: Definition and Debate	4
II.	Theoretical and Historical Context	18
	i. Theoretical framework: neoliberalism and constructivism	18
	ii. American foreign diplomacy: style, substance, and soft power	20
	iii. United States-United Nations relationship: relevance and history	23
III.	American Exceptionalism in Rhetoric	31
	i. Analysis of UNGA addresses	32
IV.	American Exceptionalism in Practice, Part I: U.S. Policies and Behavior in the United Nations	44
	i. Noncompliance and ‘exemptionalism’	44
	ii. Voting practices in the UN	48
	iii. Analysis of “important votes”	52
V.	American Exceptionalism in Practice, Part II: Personal Experiences of UN- Representatives	69
VI.	Transnational Context	83
	i. Reactions to the American position	84
	a. UN responses	84
	b. Responses of other Western nations	85
	ii. Implications for the American relative power position	86
	Conclusion	89
	Appendix	94
	Works Cited	103
	Works Consulted	116

PREFACE

Whenever I tell people that I am a student of American Studies, I often hear something along the lines of “why would you like America? They always think they can interfere anywhere in the world!” or “what is interesting about the United States? Those Americans think they can do whatever they want anyway!” As a proud Americanist, this always disappointed and somewhat bothered me. Though I always had an answer ready – that it is really not that simple, that the United States has a certain responsibility, in its own eyes as well as in the eyes of the rest of the world, and that there are certain values of having a task or mission in the world to spread freedom and democracy that lay at the very root of American culture, politics, and foreign affairs – I actually felt that I could not fully answer the questions myself. Is it true that the United States interferes everywhere in the world, and if so, what are the motives and legitimizations? Does America really occasionally flout international law, and act however it may please?

When I was looking for a topic for my master’s thesis, I wanted to choose something that would be a worthy conclusion to four years of studying American Studies, something that was less of a niche topic than that of my bachelor thesis (on white women in the Civil Rights Movement) and, ideally, touched the core of American (political) culture. I also wanted it to fit my second area of interest – and coincidentally the master’s program that I will begin next year – of international relations. I am happy to have found a topic which, I believe, brings those aspirations together. In writing about American exceptionalism in the United Nations, I could combine research on American domestic culture, history, and politics, American foreign policy and international relations and organizations.

In the future, whenever someone might assert that the United States is just arrogant for believing it can intervene in any nation’s domestic affairs and not comply with the rules and institutions of international politics, I can sit them down, and kindly yet firmly explain to them the findings of this thesis.

INTRODUCTION

America marches to a different drummer. Its uniqueness is explained by any or all of a variety of reasons: history, size, geography, political institutions, and culture.

This statement by Richard Rose (92) captures the essence of the place of the United States in the world. The U.S. is an outlier in the world in numerous areas: it has the world's largest economy, the oldest constitution, the best universities, the largest military budget and greatest weapon force ("SIPRI"), and an unmatched cultural reach. On the other side of the spectrum, the United States also ranks highest in national debt, crime and incarceration rates, and failing national health care. Moreover, the United States has regularly taken a quite unique position in international relations: in today's increasingly interconnected world, the U.S. has proved a driving force behind multilateral cooperation, but has also regularly expressed its willingness – both in rhetoric and in practice – to act alone in foreign affairs. This thesis claims that explanations for these ambiguities can be found in the concept of American exceptionalism, as elaborated in the case of the United Nations.

Indicating the idea that the United States is qualitatively different from the rest of the world, American exceptionalism runs as a red thread through the history and culture of the United States. In American national history, it is reflected in the thought of the Puritans and the image of a City upon a Hill, and echoes through the rhetoric of the American Revolution, Washington's Farewell Address, Manifest Destiny and the frontier spirit, the Gettysburg Address, and innumerable executive speeches. In foreign policy, American exceptionalism denotes a sense of the United States seeing itself as destined to bring freedom and democracy to the world, but often keeping to its own standards and conditions regarding international relations when doing so.

While the concept of American exceptionalism has a long history in the academic debates on U.S. history, foreign policy, and American Studies as a field – as will be seen in chapter one – it is increasingly making its way into the popular discourse, too, appearing in newspaper headlines and political speeches. In 2010, a Gallup survey showed that eighty percent of Americans agree with the statement that the United States has a unique character making it the greatest country in the world (Jones). Although this might be a remarkably high rate of agreement for such a bluntly worded question, it does not matter that much whether it is true that the United States is actually the greatest nation in the world. What matters is that

the American exceptionalist attitude, in different forms and to various extents, plays a role in American thinking and politics, both nationally as well as internationally. It has policy implications and influences the position of the United States within the world and relationships with other nations.

After the unipolar, hegemonic position of the United States that directly followed the Cold War, today's international context, with the rise of China and developing countries, as well as recent problems in Iraq and Afghanistan, raises doubts about the leadership position of the United States in the world. As a matter at the heart of questions about the nature of the United States' culture, politics, society, and place in the world, evaluating the notion of American exceptionalism and its implications for international relations is therefore not merely a theoretical analysis, but also useful to the practical issues of today's global politics.

The body of works on American exceptionalism is large. While the concept has been applied to many different fields of study – including culture, politics, and economy, domestically as well as internationally – the link between American exceptionalism and the United Nations specifically has not yet been explicated. This leaves room for further research: as the world's largest multilateral forum, the United Nations is important for United States' strategic interests. Vice versa is American support – ideationally as well as materially – highly significant for the direction and capabilities of the UN. As will be further discussed in chapter four, when UN treaties or resolutions are included in studies on American exceptionalism and U.S. foreign policies, these are usually limited to pointing out the various expressions of exceptionalism. This thesis seeks to move beyond the questions of whether or not American exceptionalism exists in United States' policies, and in what ways it is expressed. After all, what matters here is not necessarily proving *that* these values and beliefs are present in American foreign policy, but rather *how* they are used and what their effects are. The aim here will therefore be to explicate the exact workings and dynamics of American exceptionalism in the United Nations and its implications.

These objectives can be merged into one research question: how do the different aspects of American exceptionalism shape and guide United States' behavior and policies in the United Nations, both in rhetoric and practice, and what are its implications for the American relative power position in international relations?

Methodology

Due to the limited scope of this thesis, the research here focuses on the years 2001-2015. This timeframe is narrow enough to enable in-depth analysis, but wide enough to

include two administrations. By including the – rather different – presidencies of both Bush and Obama, American exceptionalism can be taken as a continuous force within U.S. foreign policy, rather than an individual style. The years 2001-2015 also saw a number of long-term events that caused friction in the U.S.-UN relationship, most importantly the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which are particularly interesting to include when addressing the matter of American exceptionalism in the United Nations.

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter one lays the foundation for this research: it pulls together numerous studies on American exceptionalism specifically, but also literature on American history and U.S. foreign policy, to provide an overview of the different definitions, interpretations, and schools of thought within the notion of American exceptionalism in international relations.

The second chapter serves as a theoretical and historical framework, and addresses the matter of American exceptionalism in the United Nations from three approaches: a political theoretical discussion of neoliberalism and constructivism, a discussion of the style and substance of American foreign diplomacy, and finally, a historical examination of how the United States-United Nations relationship came to be the complex connection that it is today.

Having defined American exceptionalism and set out the context of the U.S.-UN relationship, chapter three will then begin to address the main issues at stake in this research. Through an analysis of presidential addresses to the United Nations General Assembly, compared to those of other Western nations, this chapter will examine how the American exceptionalist rhetoric comes to the fore in the UN, and its different usages, purposes, and implications.

Chapter four and five together supplement the rhetoric analysis of chapter three by exploring the practical component of the workings of American exceptionalism in the United Nations, respectively by analyzing American voting behavior in the UN and narrating the personal experiences of former UN representatives with American diplomats and their view on the role of the United States in the United Nations.

Chapter six, then, places this research in a broader transnational context, in examining the responses of both the UN and other nations to the American position, as well as the implications of that stance for the place of the United States in international politics.

Finally, the conclusion will present the key findings of this research, and provide several suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER I

AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM: DEFINITION AND DEBATE

American exceptionalism is an intricate concept. Not only can it be applied to different fields of study – both domestic and international affairs, and to culture as well as politics – it has also been interpreted in several different ways. When applying the notion of American exceptionalism, as will be conducted in this thesis, it is important to have the concept disentangled first. How and in what context did it emerge, and what are the most important views on the notion? This chapter therefore outlines the roots and history of the concept of American exceptionalism and, along the lines of two distinct schools of thought, presents its key aspects.

History

In 1840, French intellectual Alexis de Tocqueville wrote in his book *Democracy in America* that “the position of the Americans is quite exceptional, and it may be believed that no democratic people will ever be placed in a similar one” (de Tocqueville 36-37). While this passage made de Tocqueville the first to explicitly refer to America as exceptional, the general idea of American exceptionalism has its roots centuries earlier. It was reflected in the sermons of the Puritans, who spoke of the new American nation and its people as exemplary to the rest of the world and chosen by God. As early as in 1630, Puritan layman John Winthrop, on board of the ship travelling to the Massachusetts Bay Colony, wrote:

We must consider that we shall be as a City upon a Hill, the eyes of all people upon us. So that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken, and so cause Him to withdraw His present help from us, we shall be made a story and a byword through the world.
(Winthrop)

The Puritans considered their newfound home as a biblical promised land. The image of the City upon a Hill would be the basis of the strain of American exceptionalism in which the U.S. is seen as exemplary to the rest of the world – something which will be addressed further on in this chapter (Taussig 22).

The American Revolution and its forming years also echo with American exceptionalist sounds of liberty, independence, opportunities and potential. In his pamphlet

“Common Sense,” founding father Thomas Paine defined America to be the beacon of freedom (Friedman):

Every spot of the old world is overrun with oppression. Freedom hath been hunted round the globe. Asia, and Africa, have long expelled her – Europe regards her like a stranger, and England hath given her warning to depart. O! receive the fugitive, and prepare in time an asylum for mankind. (Paine)

When, in 1840, de Tocqueville labeled the American people as exceptional, he was referring to their political system being exceptionalist, comparing the democracy in America to his monarchical and revolution-ridden France (Paul 14). Soon, however, the phrase was disconnected from that original meaning and came to refer to the United States as a special nation and culture. It was decades after Alexis de Tocqueville first defined America as exceptional that the exact phrase ‘American exceptionalism’ came into use. Surprisingly, it was Joseph Stalin who first used the term. In 1929, Stalin accused Jay Lovestone’s faction of the American Communist Party to be too independent from the Marxist doctrine (Pease 10), and demanded that Lovestone ended the “heresy of American exceptionalism” (McCoy). Stalin’s comment resulted in a burst of articles on American exceptionalism in the 1920s and 1930s, though these were mostly in Russian, and heavily critical of the United States (Taussig 19). The term then went out of use again for several decades. In those years, James Ceaser, who conducted a database search for exceptionalism, found only one mention of the term in American historical literature, namely in Max Lerner’s 1957 book *America as a Civilization*, where he wrote about “the valid elements in the theory of exceptionalism [...] America represents the naked embodiment of the most dynamic elements of modern Western history” (Taussig 19-20).

The notion of American exceptionalism revived in the 1980s, when it came with a new overtone of national superiority. It was not until this time that the notion of American exceptionalism was purposefully employed to indicate the cultural and political uniqueness of the United States (Taussig 20). After Vietnam and Watergate, President Reagan, for example, gladly used the imagery of American exceptionalism to invigorate the spirit of the American people by affirming the beliefs and ideas that made America great (McCormick 202):

Somehow America has bred a kindliness into our people unmatched anywhere [...] We cannot escape our destiny, nor should we try to do so. The leadership of the free world was thrust

upon us two centuries ago in that little hall of Philadelphia. [...] We are indeed, and we are today, the last best hope of man on earth. (Reagan)

Still, it was not until the late 2000s that the notion of American exceptionalism became widely used outside of the academic debate too, by others besides social scientists and American Studies students (Ceaser 2). It became the subject of discussion and stirred up debate among world leaders in 2009, for example, when President Barack Obama was asked about his view on the concept of American exceptionalism. He answered: “I believe in American exceptionalism, just as I suspect that the Brits believe in British exceptionalism and the Greeks believe in Greek exceptionalism” (“News Conference”). Four years later, in his address on Syria, Obama again used the notion of American exceptionalism:

America is not the world’s policeman [...] But when, with modest effort and risk, we can stop children from being gassed to death, and thereby make our own children safer over the long run, I believe we should act. That’s what makes America different. That’s what makes us exceptional. With humility, but with resolve, let us never lose sight of that essential truth. (“Remarks”)

Russian President Putin responded to this by saying that “it is extremely dangerous to encourage people to see themselves as exceptional, whatever the motivation” (Mullen). Ecuadorian President Correa even took it a step further, asking: “Does not this remind you of the Nazis’ rhetoric before and during World War II? They considered themselves the chosen race, the superior race, etcetera. Such words and ideas pose extreme danger” (Chasmar).

While it can thus be said that American exceptionalism is now a fairly well-known notion, with a place in commonplace debates, defining the term is still not easy. American exceptionalism is a broad notion with multiple explanations, some neutral or leaning towards approval, others outright negative. Professor of political science Byron E. Shafer, for example, rather impartially defines American exceptionalism as “the notion that the United States was created differently, developed differently, and thus has to be *understood* differently – essentially on its own terms and within its own context [and] a sense of critical distinctiveness in political, economic, religious, or cultural life” (Shafer V). There are also definitions which glowingly affirm America’s greatness by stating, for example, that “America and Americans are special, exceptional, because they are charged with saving the world from itself and, at the same time, America and Americans must sustain a high level of

spiritual, political, and moral commitment to this exceptional destiny” (Madsen 2). At the complete other end of the spectrum, Hoogenboom defines American exceptionalism as “[encompassing] obnoxious superiority, irritating paternalism, ugly undertones of racism and imperialism, and [linked] to the excessive nationalism of a chosen people” (45). Similarly, Koh paints an image of American exceptionalism “[striking] the world as pushy, preachy, insensitive, self-righteous, and usually, anti-French” (Koh 1481).

As it thus appears that there is no clear definition of the notion of American exceptionalism and interpretations of the term strongly diverge, an approach that might help to better understand the meaning of the concept is to look at the key authors on the topic and in what ways they have used it. Moreover, an overview of the different perspectives within the debate on American exceptionalism can function as the theoretical context that frames the rest of this paper.

Debate

The notion of American exceptionalism has been addressed by countless scholars, in innumerable studies. As seen above, it has been interpreted in several different ways, and can also be applied to various fields of study. Political sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset, a key scholar on American exceptionalism, for example mainly uses the notion to examine domestic affairs. He regards American exceptionalism as a force within American society itself, and uses it to explain why the United States is the way it is. In *It Didn't Happen Here: Why Socialism Failed in the United States*, Lipset uses American exceptionalism as one of the reasons for the absence of socialism in the United States. In *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword*, he looks at the national decline and moral decay that he believes is taking place in American society. He argues that American exceptionalism is a double-edged sword: the virtuous values of “liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, populism, laissez-faire” (19) on the one hand, lead to economic and moral decline on the other (268). Also applying American exceptionalism to domestic affairs, Kim Voss used the notion with regards to labor studies in her book *The Making of American Exceptionalism: The Knights of Labor and Class Formation in the Nineteenth Century*, where she argues that American exceptionalism did not so much lead to the weak history of labor movements in the United States, but rather the other way around, stating that American exceptionalism was the consequence of the collapse of the American labor movement. John Agnew, as a final example, is one of the scholars to apply American exceptionalism to economy, and argues that it is a major barrier to seeing the United States as part of the world economy (Agnew 14).

However, considering the research area at stake here, the focus will be on the perspectives regarding American exceptionalism as an international and political issue. Even within this specific field of American exceptionalism, though, a myriad of voices and perspectives exists. While these views have a claim to uniqueness in common, they very much differ on whether this claim is just, and if so, what precisely is claimed to be unique, why this would be the case, and whether this is should be regarded as positive or negative. As these different interpretations and applications of the notion of American exceptionalism are still scattered throughout the literature on American history and U.S. foreign policy, as well as American Studies as a discipline itself, they will be pulled together here by framing the debate on American exceptionalism in terms of schools of thought.

Broadly speaking, two distinct schools of thought within American exceptionalism can be distinguished, which here will be called traditional and progressive American exceptionalism. Each of these variants can be further subdivided into different interpretations and applications of the notion of American exceptionalism, and different aspects that are highlighted as key characteristics of the concept.

Traditional American Exceptionalism

The first school of thought regarding the notion of American exceptionalism is the traditional one. It is the more conservative of the two variants, as it represents the interpretation of the concept when it first came into popular debate. It is also the more positive, even rather triumphant, pro-America one: while both schools of thought would agree on some form of uniqueness or distinctiveness to be the core of American exceptionalism, the traditional school interprets this as special or better – not simply different. Within the traditional camp, then, different scholars indicate different aspects of American exceptionalism to be its core characteristic.

First, there are those that define American exceptionalism primarily on the belief that the United States is a superior nation. While the notion of American exceptionalism does not in its original meaning indicate superiority to other nations, this is a twist that many (neo)conservatives have regularly given it, for different reasons. Historian and Republican politician Newt Gingrich, for example, emphasizes America's history – especially the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution – and values – what he calls America's "habits of liberty" – to be American exceptionalism's defining features (13). This sense of superiority can be regarded as an overarching idea within traditional American

exceptionalism, which is at the basis of the further subdivisions within the traditional notion of American exceptionalism.

One in particular stands out in this regard, namely the idea of exemptionalism: the United States, as a superior nation, exempting itself from provisions of international legislation and treaties by explicit conditions, non-ratification, or simply noncompliance (Ignatieff 3). This attitude was clearly reflected in the presidency of George W. Bush, during which the notion of American exceptionalism was redefined to mean something as unilateralism, as the United States standing above international law, unilateralism, and bypassing the opinions of international organizations such as the European Union, United Nations, and NATO. Hughes writes that exemptionalism reflects exceptionalism in that it shows how the United States, due to its superior position in world affairs, regards international laws and regulations as not applying to its policies (65). Whether this is indeed the case, and what the implications of this position would be, will be returned to in chapter four.

Secondly, a central element in the more traditional view on American exceptionalism, one that also strongly ties in with the idea of the United States as a superior nation as mentioned above, is a strong religious component and the sense of the United States being God's chosen nation. This idea can be traced back to American exceptionalism's Puritan roots. Their idea of the United States as a City upon a Hill, above other nations, also ties in with the view that the U.S. functions as an example to the rest of the world. As historian Daniel Bell has noted, "the idea of exceptionalism [...] assumes not only that the United States has been unlike other nations, but that it is exceptional in the sense of being exemplary" (Shafer 50-51).

A third aspect that traditional American exceptionalism regularly highlights is the sense that the United States has a mission or special purpose in the world. This can for a large part be seen as an accumulation of both the aforementioned ideas of America as a superior nation and the religious component of traditional American exceptionalism. Combined, these two ideas lead to a sense of being special, which has often been translated into the idea that the United States has a certain task in the world. In this view, this mission is taken on not for gains or pleasure, but out of a sense of responsibility (Ceaser 7). This has come to the fore, for example, in one of Reagan's executive speeches, in which he stated that "the guiding hand of providence did not create this new nation of America for ourselves alone, but for a higher cause: the preservation and extension of the sacred fire of human liberty. This is America's solemn duty" (Patman 965). In his book *A Nation Like No Other: Why American*

Exceptionalism Matters, Newt Gingrich, too, has expressed this view, for example when he argued that the United States “fulfills its leadership duties by spreading freedom, democracy, and capitalism for the benefit of humankind, not for itself” (Edwards 365). While it should be absolutely clear that Gingrich’s book is not a scholarly analysis of American exceptionalism, but rather a brazenly enthusiastic, one-sided plea for the United States as the greatest nation to have ever existed, that also does not make it irrelevant or not to be taken seriously, as it represents a significant share of the debate on American exceptionalism and the voices and perspectives on the United States’ role in the world of many Americans.

Another proponent of this view is Tony Smith, Harvard Fellow and Professor of Political Science at Tufts University. In his book *America’s Mission*, Smith argues that, despite failures in the Philippines, Latin America, and Vietnam, the strength of democracy in the post-Cold War world has mainly been an American accomplishment, and that democracy probably would not have sustained if it were not for the United States. Although Smith does not explicitly mention the term American exceptionalism, the general spirit of the notion echoes throughout his book in statements such as “it is difficult to escape the conclusion that since World War I, the fortunes of democracy worldwide have largely depended on American power” (10) and “the case for assigning a pre-eminent importance to the United States in explaining the strength and prestige of democratic government at the end of the century is compelling” (307).

Overall, the traditional exceptionalist idea of having a mission in the world to spread democracy represents a rather Wilsonian view on foreign policy. It should also be noted, however, that this particular sense of a mission is a rather controversial one, as it is quite close to the ideas of nationalism, is often the cause for feelings of anti-Americanism (Ceaser 7).

Finally, there are those scholars who do not explicitly tie American exceptionalism to superiority, religion, or a special mission in the world, but who argue that the United States is simply genuinely committed to spreading of democracy and freedom in the world. Former Legal Adviser of the Department of State under Barack Obama and Yale law professor Harold Koh adheres to this view. Koh argues that since the 1980s, the debate on American exceptionalism has focused too much on the rather negative aspects of the concept. He therefore makes a point of addressing “the overlooked face of American exceptionalism,” namely that dimension in which the U.S. is genuinely exceptional:

Looking only at the half-empty part of the glass, I would argue, obscures the most important respect in which the U.S. has been genuinely exceptional, with regard to international affairs,

international law, and promotion of human rights: namely, in its exceptional global leadership and activism. To this day, the U.S. remains the only superpower capable, sustain, and drive an international system committed to international law, democracy, and the promotion of human rights. Experience teaches that when the U.S. leads on human rights, other countries follow. When the United States does not lead, often nothing happens, or worse yet, as in Rwanda and Bosnia, disasters occur because the U.S. does not get involved. (1487-1488)

Koh furthermore argues that continuously focusing on the negative aspects of American exceptionalism might even lead to a dangerous passivity of the U.S. in areas where American aid might be a practical and useful option (1494). Smith, too, argues that American international involvement is inspired by genuine motives, though for a different reason than Koh, as Smith states that the United States attempts to bring democracy to the world because that would be safer for America itself.

While Koh and Smith do not explicitly link this genuine commitment of the United States to religious motivations or a sense of superiority, it should be noted that this element is in a way underlying the rest: it would be unlikely for the United States to embark on an apparent mission in the world if it were not truly committed to the cause, no matter how superior or destined by God it may see itself. In fact, all the different aspects as mentioned above to some extent overlap and flow into each other. In addition, even within this traditional group, voices range from unabashedly enthusiastic – Gingrich, for example – to more critical and nuanced – like Koh. These qualifications again demonstrate the complexity of the notion of American exceptionalism.

The traditional interpretation of American exceptionalism has become less prevalent over the years. A more liberal, progressive understanding of the notion is increasingly taking its place in the center of the debate on American exceptionalism, which brings us to the second broad school of thought.

Progressive American Exceptionalism

The second major school of thought to be identified in American exceptionalism can be labeled as the progressive one. It largely represents those scholars who are significantly more critical of the notion of American exceptionalism than their more traditional counterparts. While the adherents of progressive American exceptionalism would also identify a certain uniqueness or distinctiveness to be the core of American exceptionalism, this is construed as

simply different, not necessarily better – quite in contrast to the traditional view. Within the progressive camp, further subdivisions can again be distinguished.

The main aspect of American exceptionalism that is highlighted by the progressive school is that of a sense of superiority. Indeed, traditional American exceptionalism emphasizes this element too, although as a more positive characteristic; used to justify American involvement abroad, in terms of the United States having a certain mission in the world or being an example of freedom and democracy for other nations to turn to. Progressive American exceptionalism is much more tempered and critical in this, and tends to frame this supposed superiority more in terms of arrogance or hypocrisy. The notion of supremacy, once again, can be regarded as an overarching idea, as different authors of the progressive school have used several different terms to denote this superiority, and have different views on its consequences.

Political scientist John McCormick, for example, fears that exceptionalism's suggestion that it is superior to other states can lead to arrogance (204). This concern was already expressed by de Tocqueville in 1831:

At the same time that the Anglo-Americans are united among themselves in this way by common ideas, they are separated from all other peoples by a sentiment of pride.

For fifty years it has been constantly repeated to the inhabitants of the United States that they form the only religious, enlightened, and free people. They see that up to now, democratic institutions have prospered among them, while they have failed in the rest of the world; they therefore have an immense opinion of themselves, and they are not far from believing that they form a species apart in the human race. (Sanders 20)

According to McCormick, this attitude might even result in a fracture between a nation's power and its ability to take resolute action. This might be recognized, he argues, in the American involvement in Vietnam and Iraq. In spite of the superiority of its military force, the U.S. was unable to win the war in Vietnam, or subdue the Iraqi insurrection (204-205). Professor of political science and former U.S. Army Colonel Andrew Bacevich also hints at arrogance when he argues that American exceptionalism is currently construed to mean that the U.S. should spread its freedom in the world, and can use any tactic it wishes to do so (Edwards 361). Bacevich states that it is not the White House, but rather the American civilians' collective appetite for resources such as oil, credit, and consumer goods that fuels the quest for American global dominance and an imperialistic attitude (9).

Another often-cited aspect by progressive American exceptionalism as a possible consequence of the sense of superiority, is the notion of exemptionalism. Also addressed by the traditional side, progressive American exceptionalism explains the concept of exemptionalism more in terms of hypocrisy or practicing double standards. McCormick, for example, suggests that the multiple instances of the United States exempting itself from international law illustrates how exceptionalism could stimulate the idea that the end justifies the means, hereby possibly endorsing hypocrisy (205). Similarly, he states that “to be an ‘exception’ can mean to be the one example that disproves the rule, but it can also mean ‘everyone should do it except us,’ or ‘the rule applies to everyone except us,’ and implies exclusion rather than inclusion” (203). This, he argues, could fuel an isolationist attitude (205). Indeed, a willingness to take action alone coupled with the belief that there are other options for pursuing one’s interest rather than only multilateral action, can result in the United States being relatively unwilling to compromise in international relations in order to uphold consensus (Luck, “American Exceptionalism and International Organization” 27). Whether this is indeed the case will be returned to in chapter four.

In the same vein, it has been argued that American exceptionalist behavior and a sense of superiority could lead to the U.S. practicing double standards. According to this line of thought, the United States, “convinced of its righteousness and the universality of its values, has often engaged in actions that it condemns when practiced by other states” (Hastedt 30-31). Michael Ignatieff, for example, argues that the United States judges itself and its allies by more lenient criteria than its adversaries (3). Harold Koh agrees with this argument, and though he states that Ignatieff “lumps together certain distinct forms of exceptionalism and misses others,” he argues that double standards are American exceptionalism’s biggest problem. According to Koh, they might lead to “horrid bedfellows,” could weaken the American ability to pursue a human rights agenda and the U.S. claim to moral authority, and undermine the legitimacy of international laws (1483-1487). Mertus, finally, has stated that the United States tends to place its own sovereignty above international human rights standards because it applies those norms in a “selective and self-serving manner,” both domestically and internationally (33).

Furthermore, where the traditional school is more likely to advocate the virtues and positive consequences and gains of American exceptionalism, the progressive school more often warns against the possible dangers of the exceptionalist attitude. Howard Zinn, for example, argues that it is especially the strong force of religion in American exceptionalism that makes it dangerous for international politics:

You have a government which assures us gets its power from God, and in the hands of the United States this is a dangerous doctrine, simply because of the power of the United States to do whatever they think is God's will. Ten thousand nuclear weapons, military bases in a hundred different countries, warships on every sea.. When you couple that power with the notion of divine sanction, the world is in danger.

Andrew Bacevich, then, states that an exceptionalist attitude renders the United States incapable to recognize the limits of its power, leading the nation into both a military and economic crisis (9).

Finally, within the progressive view on American exceptionalism, a subgroup can be distinguished of those scholars who – for a variety of reasons – deny the notion of American exceptionalism. Some have argued that the United States used to be an exceptional nation, but is not anymore because its power is in decline. Joseph Nye writes that “anti-Americanism has increased in recent years, and the United States’ soft power – its ability to attract others by the legitimacy of American policies and the values that underlie them – is in decline as a result” (“The Decline of America’s Soft Power”). British journalist Matthew Parris concurs with this notion, and also argues that with the decline of U.S. power, “America’s need for brute force as a substitute for moral suasion may be increasing.” This was not always the case, he continues: in the time of Kennedy, the United States had “the best arguments” and did not need to use force, as the idea of freedom “shone so brightly for America” (Parris). British journalist and historian Godfrey Hodgson argues something similar, stating that American foreign policy went from genuinely exceptional to overreaching and delusional of its own power (Cohen), and that the United States is now particularly exceptional in very negative aspects such as failing healthcare, social inequality, crime and punishment (Edwards 258). Hodgson, too, argues that the notion of American exceptionalism is dangerous considering the influence and power of the United States.

Others have argued that the United States was never worthy of the label ‘exceptionalist’ in the first place. America’s ethically flawed history, and the fact that racism and class-based discrimination is still visible today, is an often-cited argument for this complete dismissal of American exceptionalism. Lewis, for example, argues that since the very beginnings of American history, entire classes of Americans have been excluded from the political center – the “unacknowledged categories” of race, gender, class and empire. Others, including historian David Noble and William Spanos, have argued that a willingness to go to war is another moral fault that detracts from the exceptionalism of the United States.

Spanos focuses on the Vietnam War, arguing that “the consequence of America’s intervention and conduct in Vietnam was the self-destruction of the ontological, cultural, and political foundations on which America had perennially justified its “benign” self-image and global practice” (ix). Donald Pease has also challenged the notion of American exceptionalism, but for a different reason. He states that American exceptionalism is merely a “state fantasy”, functioning as “a two-tiered process dividing the manifest organization of the U.S. role in the world with the latent fantasy whereby U.S. citizens imagined themselves as practicing nationalism through the disavowal of imperialism” (Pease 23). In other words, according to Pease, American exceptionalism is merely an image constructed by the government to create a sense of a united national ethos that enables the public to ignore the fact that American foreign policy has surpassed the “condition of normal nationality” to expand its power (Pease 23). Finally, Stephen Walt, Harvard professor of international relations, also states that American exceptionalism does not exist, but that it is rather made up from a number of myths which he then debunks – including that the United States is simply imperialistic; that American success is due to luck rather than uniquely American virtues; and that the U.S. takes too much credit for global progress. Walt, too, argues that American exceptionalism poses a danger in international politics.

Conclusion

Rooted in early American history, woven throughout American culture in general, and addressed in a myriad of studies, American exceptionalism is a complex notion to say the least. Its usage and interpretations have changed over time, and still denote different ideas under the same term. It can be applied to domestic as well as international affairs; to culture, economy, and politics; be regarded as a rather positive or outright negative aspect of the United States; it can be touted as the defining feature of American culture and politics, or be completely denied existence in the first place – and all in between. Within the two main schools of thought on the notion, there are separate elements that different scholars highlight, but the two variants overlap and flow into each other as well. The concept of American exceptionalism also transcends political alignment: adherence to one of the schools of thought in American exceptionalism does not necessarily line up with one’s political associations – Harold Koh, outspoken Democrat and Legal Adviser under Obama, for example, can be regarded as a traditional American exceptionalist, while Andrew Bacevich, who identifies as politically conservative, can be placed in the progressive school of thought (Barlow). All in

all, it can be said that American exceptionalism describes not a single concept, but rather a family of thoughts, ideas, and theories.

Two further possible difficulties in the operationalization of American exceptionalism should be briefly noted before moving to the chapter two. First, as any nation or society has its own history, culture, and characteristics, the claim of being exceptional, as in unique, might not seem particularly special. As will be seen in chapter three, the French and British, for example, also regularly express their special history and culture, and commitment to the promotion of democracy and freedom. However, the particular set of characteristics as presented here, coupled with the reach and capabilities of U.S. power, sets American exceptionalism apart from the claim to uniqueness of other nations. Secondly, American exceptionalism is close to, and might be easily confused with the notions of nationalism, Wilsonianism, and Manifest Destiny. It also often borders on the debate between unilateralism and multilateralism as preferred U.S. foreign policy directions. What should be noted here is that one does not exclude the other. All these concepts have aspects that overlap and intertwine, yet there are also differences. Wilsonianism and American exceptionalism, for example, have the almost messianic idea of the United States having an obligation to spread its beliefs in the world in common (Kissinger 30), yet a difference is that American exceptionalism is more of a general phenomenon than a prescribing policy. Wilsonianism, Manifest Destiny, nationalism and unilateralism can thus be seen as variations, components, or expressions of the larger framework of American exceptionalism, rather than as completely separate concepts.

As these qualifications of American exceptionalism might make application difficult, it is useful to distinguish the aspects on which there appears to be general agreement in both schools of thought: the United States' having a special history and set of national values and beliefs that make it a nation qualitatively different from the rest of the world, and additionally, having a mission and responsibility to promote freedom, peace, and democracy throughout the globe, and to take on a leadership role in order to do so. To avoid superficiality and do justice to the concept's own terms, these – and not the school of thought-specific aspects, such as a sense of superiority or arrogance – will be taken as the key characteristics of American exceptionalism throughout this research.

With the historical context and composition of American exceptionalism now set out, the question emerges how this all comes forward in the realities of today's international politics. After all, American exceptionalism as applied to international relations is far from an isolated concept, as the United States is bound to numerous alliances, institutions, and

regulations. The following chapter will offer a first answer to these questions, and address the relationship between the United States and the United Nations.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Having explicated the meaning of American exceptionalism in itself, its application to foreign affairs can now be addressed. Before moving to the actual analysis of how the notion of American exceptionalism affects United States' policy in the United Nations, it is useful to first discuss the theoretical and historical framework of the question at stake. To clarify the relevance of the U.S.-UN relationship and the place of the United States in the United Nations, this chapter will expose and theorize the several assumptions underlying this research, address the style and content of American diplomacy, and finally, examine how the U.S.-UN relationship has developed over the years to arrive at the point where it is today.

2.1. Theoretical framework: neoliberalism and constructivism

When assessing the workings and effects of American exceptionalism in the United Nations, it is important to recognize that there are certain assumptions underlying those matters that imply both a neoliberalist and constructivist view on international relations.

Neoliberalism focuses on the role international institutions can play in facilitating cooperation between states and other actors. It concurs with the international relations theory of realism that states are the central actors in an anarchic, self-help international system, and that they are rational utility-maximizers. In such an environment, cooperation is difficult: there is a lack of information about the other's true intentions, fear of the other cheating or freeriding, and – as illustrated in the Prisoner's Dilemma – a collective action problem: while states can benefit from cooperation, they might gain relatively more by defecting. While realism argues that these barriers to cooperation are too great to overcome, neoliberalists assert that it is international institutions that can help states better to realize their self-interests. They do so in various ways: in collecting and distributing information, institutions decrease uncertainty and lower transaction costs. Furthermore, in providing standard operating procedures and rules for decision-making, institutions make it less costly for states to satisfy their interests. Moreover, in providing an environment with high interaction density in which states are sure to meet again, institutions not only allow nations to familiarize themselves with the preferences and interests of others, but also teach about the consequences of cheating or free-riding, and in this way make reputation valuable (Sterling-Folker 120-122). Because the long term can be taken into account in institutionalized cooperation, there is also an

opportunity for reciprocity: states have less to worry about relative gains of the other, because this is likely to balance out in the long term (Nye and Welch 72). Finally, international institutions have various ways to enforce compliance to their rules, including monitoring, issue-linkage, the creation of dispute resolution mechanisms, sanctions, or by acting as an ethical persuader or arbitrator in conflicts between states (Sterling-Folker 123).

These considerations are important in this context of the United States and the United Nations, because they help explain why the United States, as a super power, generally submits to UN regulations, even when this not in the American direct interest. Still, it should be noted that while states can thus benefit from effective institutional arrangements and therefore have an interest in their continued existence and further stabilization, it is nevertheless the case that states do not always wholly comply with the rules and decisions they have agreed to in their institutions – something that will be discussed with regards to the U.S. and the UN later in this research. International cooperation, after all, does not have a higher authority and institutions cannot enforce obligation. In addition, institutions do not change the fact that states are in the first place self-interested, and that polarity and differences in power still exist, something which also plays a role when addressing American policies in the UN. Institutions are also not neutral: they reflect power relations and can become the object of the struggle for power, for example when a state wants to have a seat in the UN Security Council. International institutions such as the UN should therefore be seen more as a technical devise for cooperation than as a normative, prescribing framework for international cooperation.

In addition to looking at the United Nations, the major focus of this paper is the notion of American exceptionalism. As this is concerned with certain values and ideas on how the United States sees itself and the world, this research also assumes a constructivist framework. Like neoliberalism, constructivism also views states as the central actors of international politics, but differs in emphasizing the social dimensions of international relations. Constructivists view international relations as a social construction: international politics is not an objective reality, but only exists in the particular context and meaning that is given to it (Fierke 189). Constructivism highlights the importance of norms, values, and language in international relations, and how they shape identities as well as interests (Nye and Welch 76). As such, in contrast to neoliberalism and realism, constructivism views states' interests not as given, but as constituted by the structure of the international system. States are not isolated entities, rather, they are social, and are constituted by their interactions with other states and their environment. States' behavior is therefore also not purely utility-maximizing, but influenced by a logic of appropriateness.

While it may appear problematic to use two separate theories of international relations for the theoretical framework here, this is not necessarily the case. Unlike (neo-)liberalism or realism, constructivism does not make claims about human nature, or predicts how states will behave in international relations. It is not a substantive theory, but rather an angle from which to view international politics (Nye and Welch 76). As Nye and Welch write, it is “possible to ‘nest’ other paradigms’ explanations within a constructivist one” (77). In this sense, constructivism can be seen as more of a supplementary theory and would therefore not undermine a co-perspective of neoliberalism.

2.2. American foreign diplomacy: style, substance, and soft power

In this research, American exceptionalism is regarded as one of multiple forces within U.S. foreign policy. As seen in chapter one, it is not an isolated concept, but rather coexists and intertwines with notions such as isolationism as well as multilateralism. As such, it is useful to consider the larger context of American foreign diplomacy.

Certain characteristics of American domestic politics have their influence on U.S. foreign diplomacy. The United States has a history of a small government and political conservatism, which has implications for the nature of American global diplomacy. Geoffrey Wiseman has identified several distinctive characteristics of American diplomacy, including a long-held distrust and negative view of diplomats and diplomacy; an unusually high degree of domestic influence over foreign policy; a preference for bilateral over multilateral diplomacy; and a demonstrably strong cultural disposition towards a direct, low-context, negotiation style (Sharp and Wiseman 1-26). These characteristics also result in an ambivalent stance towards diplomacy. While on the one hand, diplomacy is valued as a means to peacefully resolve disputes between states and respected as a key element in liberal thinking about proper forums for conducting foreign relations, Americans on the other hand tend to be skeptical towards the product of diplomacy. As Hastedt writes: “if the United States position is the morally correct one, how can it compromise – something vital to the success of diplomacy – without rejecting its own sense of mission and the principles it stands for?” (30-31). In assessing the effects of American exceptionalism, it is important to keep in mind that these sort of influences and characteristics of U.S. diplomacy are simultaneously also at work.

Soft power

One particular force within American foreign diplomacy deserves special attention: the notion of soft power. Though the United States was a latecomer to the idea of using

American culture for the purpose of diplomacy (Nye, *Soft Power* 69), soft power is one of the most distinctive features of American foreign policy today.

Developed by Joseph Nye, the idea of soft power entails the skill to entice and attract; to co-opt rather than coerce; and the ability to set the political agenda in a way that shapes the preferences of others. If a country is successful in this, and can make its culture attractive to others, it will encounter less resistance to its wishes, and others are likely to willingly follow or even mimic its policies. As opposed to the hard power of military and economic strength, soft power is associated with less tangible power resources such as values, culture, ideology, and institutions. Soft power alone, however, is not sufficient to influence world affairs: a combination of hard and soft power is crucial, and according to Nye, “no country is better endowed than the United States in all three dimensions – military, economic, and soft power” (*The Paradox of American Power* 9-12). Balance is key, too:

The soft power that comes from being a shining ‘city upon a hill’ does not provide the coercive capability that hard power does. [...] Our leaders must make sure that they exercise our hard power in a manner that does not undercut our soft power. (Nye, *The Paradox of American Power* 141)

Even its critics recognize the United States’ dominance in soft power (De Lange and Howieson 1015): while criticizing the relative power of the U.S. in 1999, French Foreign Minister Védrine remarked that “United States’ supremacy today extends to the economy, currency, technology, military areas, lifestyle, language and the products of mass culture that inundate the world, forming thought and fascinating even the enemies of the United States” (Marlowe).

Soft power is especially important in the context of American exceptionalism, because the two loop back to each other. The connection between soft power and American exceptionalism is a dynamic, mutually constitutive process: one does not come before the other. In the words of Nye: “soft power helps promote democratic values, and at the same time, our belief in human rights and democracy helps increase our soft power” (*The Paradox of American Power* 153). On the one hand, soft power advances American exceptionalism: soft power can be used to pursue and implement American exceptionalist ideals and beliefs. It is a more cost-effective method than force: through attraction and appeal, others can accept the idea of American exceptionalism (Pardo 45). Soft power thus functions as a way to consolidate American exceptionalism, and this, in turn, increases the United States’ soft

power. On the other hand, American exceptionalism promotes soft power. As Nye writes, “foreign policies produce soft power when they promote broadly shared values such as democracy and human rights” (*Soft Power* 62). Indeed, as soft power is concerned with attraction and appeal “rather than force or payoffs”, it depends in part on how objectives are framed, and “the values that are expressed through the substance and style of foreign policy” (*Soft Power* 60). It is here that American exceptionalism comes forward again: by framing interests and objectives in the exceptionalist terms of leadership, greatness, and a mission to defend democracy, American soft power is increased. Consequentially, intervention under the banner of promotion of democracy can also weaken American soft power if it is conducted in the wrong way. In this vein, the idea of soft power has been used to criticize Bush’s intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq as undermining the American image in the world, and has more recently been pushed Obama to intervene in Syria with the reasoning that not rebuking Assad would tarnish the image of the United States as a defender of human rights (Chambres).

In the knot that is the dynamics of American exceptionalism and soft power, ideological and pragmatic interests are also intertwined. The American exceptionalist belief that the United States has a mission to promote and defend democracy in the world both increases American soft power and has the practical consequence that the U.S. itself benefits from this, too. After all, liberal democracies are less likely to fight each other. As President Clinton in his 1994 State of the Union Address stated, “ultimately the best strategy to ensure our security and to build a durable peace is to support the advance of democracy elsewhere” (Nye, *The Paradox of American Power* 153).

Finally, the United Nations is especially important in all of this, as it can be used to enhance American soft power, in that promotes American values by mirroring them in its organization. As Nye argues:

Britain in the nineteenth century and the United States in the second half of the twentieth century advanced their values by creating a structure of international rules and institutions that were consistent with the liberal and democratic nature of the British and American economic system: free trade and the gold standard in the case of Britain; the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations in the case of the United States [...] since the currency of soft power is attraction based on shared values and the justness and duty of others to contribute to policies consistent with those shared values, multilateral

consultations are more likely to generate soft power than mere unilateral assertion of the values. (*Soft Power* 64)

While military and economic power are achieved respectively through coercion, deterrence, protection; and inducement and coercion, Nye distinguishes two types of behavior to achieve and strengthen soft power: attraction and agenda setting (*Soft Power* 31). The influences and effects of American exceptionalism in this will be addressed throughout the following chapters.

2.3. United States-United Nations relationship

This paper focuses on American exceptionalism in U.S. foreign policy, and takes the United Nations as the case at stake. Why not NATO, for example, or survey presidential decisions? First, because the UN is important for American strategic interests. Whether the United States *needs* the UN is a debate which essentially centers around the question if the U.S. should pursue a multilateral or unilateral foreign policy. Nile Gardiner, for example, has argued that “without the presence of the world’s greatest power, the UN would be an impotent body, lacking in legitimacy, financially insecure, and doomed to go down the same path as [...] the League of Nations [...] the UN needs America more than America needs the UN.” Francis Fukuyama has emphasized the importance of multilateralism, but argues that the UN is not the right instrument as it is too weak to be legitimate (Crossley 60). Shashi Tharoor, then, has argued in favor of multilateralism, stating that the United Nations, as a forum for sovereign states and norm entrepreneur, is vital for the United States to pursue its interests. Whether the U.S. needs the UN to pursue its foreign policy interests is, however, a different discussion, and beyond the scope of the argument here. What probably can be agreed upon, however, is that the United Nations is a medium for consultation and communication, providing opportunities for cooperation and consensus, and a place to find allies and support. As the world’s largest forum for the international community, and therefore embodying the world’s opinion, the UN can provide legitimacy to actions or operations, all of which is certainly in the United States’ interest. Furthermore, more than other international organizations such as NATO or the WTO, the UN is involved with peacebuilding and peacekeeping, which are closely tied to the American exceptionalist notion of spreading freedom and democracy. Focusing on the UN also provides insight in American policies as compared to those of other nations, and in addition, can show the position of other nations toward those American strategies – this in contrast to, for example, looking only at executive

actions or legislature to determine to what extent American exceptionalism comes to the fore in American foreign policy.

Second, turning the question around, the United States is also important to the UN, as the position of the U.S. is crucial for the direction and competency of the United Nations. The U.S. is the largest contributor to the UN budget: in 2015, the United States provided 28.3 percent of the UN Peacekeeping budget, only followed by Japan at 10.8 percent (“Financing Peacekeeping”). Furthermore, as the U.S. has a permanent seat on the Security Council, UN peacekeeping operations are dependent on American support – or at least consent. In addition, as the UN lacks a substantial military force of its own to react to emerging security issues, it is dependent on the willingness of its members to provide their forces if it wants to take action. Where the United States stands on these issues, then, is likely to be crucial. As the world’s largest military power, it often provides the majority of the weapons and manpower used. In the same vein, considering the American share of contributions to the UN budget, the United States’ position and attitude towards it plays a significant role in the ability of the UN to respond to threats to the international peace and security (Foot, MacFarlane, and Mastanduno 14). Finally, as Luck has argued, the unsurpassed scope and reach of American power, combined with deeply ingrained ideology and idealism makes the relationship between the U.S. and the UN more problematic than that of other nations (“American Exceptionalism and International Organization” 26-28).

History

In addition to this explanation of the significance of the UN for the United States and vice versa, a brief history of the relations between the two is fitting for a better understanding of the place of the United States in the UN. The relationship between the U.S. and the United States as it is today is complex, and characterized by a paradoxical emphasis on both multilateralism and cooperation, as well as national sovereignty and strains of unilateralism. As Jan Nederveen Pieterse writes, “this puts the United States among the most avid supporters of multilateral institutions, and yet, in different circumstances, pits it against the members and administration of some of those same institutions” (314). Indeed, the United States can be seen to play a key part in promoting multilateral projects such as the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the Kyoto Protocol, for example, yet oftentimes not ratifying it in the end (Nye, *The Paradox of American Power* 156). The American attitude towards the United Nations and consequentially its position therein is thus multi-layered and oftentimes contradictory. How

did this current situation come about, and to what extent has American exceptionalism influenced this path?

For a major part of its history, the United States' took an isolationist position in international affairs. George Washington's Farewell Address and the Monroe Doctrine are famous the examples of explicit expressions of non-interventionist policies and warnings against "entangling alliances," in order to enable American domestic values and institutions to bloom (Mingst 84). Increasing global interdependence and the World Wars of the twentieth centuries eventually saw centuries of American isolationism come to an end, and in 1945, the United Nations became the first international organization to be supported by the United States.

The relationship between the United States and the United Nations started on a high note. The UN was very popular in the U.S. at the time of its establishment: according to a 1945 poll, 85 percent of Americans were in favor of joining the new organization, and the vote to ratify the Charter was passed in the Senate by a vote of 89 to 2 (Johnstone 208). This was not surprising, considering the major role the United States played in the founding of the UN. The United Nations has its roots in the U.S.- and U.K.-drafted Atlantic Charter, which was intended to create a replacement for the League of Nations, which in turn was largely an American initiative. The UN Charter was for a major part drafted by the United States, too: the conference leading to the Charter was initiated by President Roosevelt, took place in San Francisco – where the document was eventually also signed – and was chaired by the American representatives ("History of the UN"). The Charter as it was finally ratified was only slightly different from the plan for a postwar permanent international organization that the U.S. State Department had prepared in 1944 (Luard 24). While the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and China had also set out their views on a new system, those proposals were only in general terms, unlike the American skeleton plan for the entire organization (Luard 25). Finally, it was Roosevelt who coined the name for this new organization in 1942, and the UN permanent headquarters were established in New York ("The U.S. and the Founding of the UN").

Resulting from this close link between the United States and the United Nations, there seemed to be an assumption of a hegemonic association between the two in the UN's early days. Americans initially regarded the objectives of the United States and the UN to be practically the same, and expected that the United Nations would serve as a rather malleable instrument of American policies (Johnstone 208). Policy makers, too, saw it this way. As Ostrower writes: "Realists like Kennan, Marshall, and Acheson never thought for a minute

that the United Nations should be anything but another instrument for asserting U.S. interests abroad” (65).

The first tests of UN capability still affirmed this idea that the United Nations would serve as a channel for American national security interests: when North Korea invaded South Korea in 1950, the Soviet boycott of the Security Council – due to the Council’s refusal to seat communist Chinese representatives – enabled the United States to push the Security Council to approve military action against North Korean aggression (Johnstone 209; “The U.S. and the Founding of the UN”). However, the close U.S.-UN relationship hit its first bumps soon thereafter. When the Soviet Union ended its boycott, the Security Council quickly appeared a rather useless instrument, easily deadlocked by a veto. While the U.S. initially found a way around the Soviet vetoes by establishing the Uniting for Peace Resolution, which enabled the General Assembly to vote on security issues deadlocked in the Security Council, this effort to hold on to American control over the United Nations was quickly challenged in another way (Johnstone 209). As the UN expanded in membership, the United States increasingly found itself in the minority on UN issues, and the international community became decreasingly amenable to American control. The United States grew increasingly frustrated and dissatisfied with a UN moving more and more away from the American values upon which it was built, while at the same time, the relative power position of the United States in the General Assembly began to weaken, and the U.S.-UN relationship, that was so strong in the beginning, began to show cracks (Johnstone 210).

From the 1980s onwards, there were numerous instances of American noncompliance and obstruction in the United Nations. In 1984, the U.S. withdrew from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) because it did not agree with the direction the organization was taking. In 1996, the U.S. was the only power to effectively veto a second term for Boutros Boutros-Ghali as UN Secretary General (Turner). In 1995, the U.S. became the only UN member state to not ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child, besides Somalia and South Sudan (Attlah).

Domestic forces also came to play a role. President Reagan, for example, regularly expressed his dissatisfaction with the United Nations, seeing it as badly functioning and ineffective for peace and security keeping. In his autobiography, he articulated his opposition to “subordinating American interest to an organization so structurally unsound that a two-thirds majority can be mastered in the General Assembly among nations representing less than ten percent of the world population” (Reagan and Hubler 307). Furthermore, the 1980s saw

the emergence of strong anti-UN lobbies within the United States, such as the Heritage foundation (Mingst 87).

In the 1990s, as the complexities of more complicated post-Cold War peacekeeping and state-building became painfully clear, for example in Somalia, Rwanda, and Bosnia, and clouded successes in other areas, the United States grew increasingly discontented with the peace and security role of the United Nations (Mingst 86). This dissatisfaction with the UN's peace and security enforcement affected the United States-United Nations relationship in other areas, too. In 1985, Congress decided to halt payments of the American contribution to the UN, citing inefficiency, wastefulness, and opposition to American interests (Bernstein). In 1996, the United States agreed to partly pay off its UN arrears, but only under the condition that certain UN reforms regarding its efficiency would be implemented (Luck "American Exceptionalism and International Organization" 26, Mingst 87). The arrears issue is important to keep in mind when looking at the relationship between the United States and the UN: not only do financial matters, "although only a symptom of the underlying political malaise, serve as a barometer of the degree of American engagement" (Luck, *Mixed Messages* 1), the American approach of only paying its dues under the condition of UN reform also suggests a certain view of the UN, one in which it is seen as an instrument for American policies, and where the United States is in a position in which it can afford to make demands.

Relations between the UN and the U.S. worsened in the early 2000s, when George W. Bush carried out a rather aggressive American foreign policy that regularly bypassed the opinions and laws of international organizations, including the UN. As Nye writes, the early actions of the Bush administration were considered as arrogantly unilateral, even by America's allies (*The Paradox of American Power* 156). In 2003, the United States bypassed the UN veto to intervene in Iraq, and invaded the country with an American-led 'coalition of the willing' instead. This was poorly received by the rest of the world. Aside from the coalition of the willing, there was extensive opposition against the 2003 invasion of Iraq among American allies. Many Western nations, including France and Germany, argued that the UN Security Council inspection report should have been awaited before taking action (Bolton). In Europe, support for military action against Iraq, even with a UN mandate, did not exceed 51 percent in any country ("International Iraq Poll"). Even besides the worldwide controversy about the legality of the invasion without a UN mandate, opponents as well as supporters of the Iraq War widely critiqued the United States for its implementation, asserting that the number of troops and long-term programs for Iraq after the invasion were deficient (Scott and Ambler 80-83). In addition, suspicions that strategic considerations regarding

access to the region's oil reserves also influenced the decision to invade Iraq were widespread. After all, as Iraq's oil reserves are the world's second-largest, conquering Iraq would provide economic benefits to the United States (Pape 30). Indeed, it has been argued that despite numerous other publically expressed justifications, the United States expected to benefit from Iraq's oil supplies when it decided to invade the nation in 2003 (Duffield).

In 2002, the United States was for the first time not reelected to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (Nye, *The Paradox of American Power* 156), in part because of the American unilateralist tendencies, but also because of the United States repeatedly criticized the UNCHR for accepting states that are not exactly luminaries of human rights protection, such as Sierra Leone, Sudan, and Libya – the latter even being elected chair in 2003 (Davies 453).

Still, while the U.S. and the UN have repeatedly disagreed on foreign affairs matters, approval polls among American citizens regarding the efficiency and effectivity of the UN, and the importance of the organization for the United States have been up, and actually increased throughout the years (“United Nations”; “UN Retains Strong Global Image”), which points to another ambiguous aspect in the U.S.-UN relationship.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that the relationship between the United States and the United Nations has been difficult to say the least. The U.S. has regularly taken on a unilateralist stance within the UN, but has also often cooperated, as both bodies need each other after all. Characteristics of American political culture and diplomacy, domestic politics, and individual policy makers, all help to explain this inconsistent position. Congress especially has created tension in the U.S.-UN relationship and has been able to exert influence through its lawmaking and budgetary powers – as was seen in the 1980s debates around the UN contributions and the eventual refusal to pay the American dues. In addition, increasingly complex UN peace operations – in which the United States does not only provide financial aid, but also military power – further complicate the relationship (Mingst 83).

Explanations for the U.S.-UN relationship have focused primarily on the presumed American unilateralist stance, and arguments in this vary. Browne and Blanchfield have argued that reasons are simply practical: both considering the American tradition of small government, and the United States' role as the single largest contributor to the UN budget, the United States might have grown frustrated with the UN's efficiency – or lack thereof. Johnstone has explained American unilateralism in the UN as a consequence of the U.S.

oftentimes being outnumbered by member states with different beliefs and perspectives on several issues, combined with the United States generally being powerful enough to be able to disregard those views that could curb American action (215). The fact that there are many UN member states with a very different political nature, who do not aspire to the exceptional American values that seem so universal to American policymakers, and that the U.S. is often outnumbered by them, leads to frustration. The United States' values and sense of idealism, coupled with the American exceptionalist sense of superiority over other nations, could then lead to the U.S. more and more going it alone within the United Nations (Johnstone 215-216).

Truman's Secretary of State Dean Acheson adequately summarized the resulting ambivalence when he wrote in 1969:

Two contrary and equally unrealistic ideas about it [the world] competed for the national mind, both springing from our earlier history. From the American phases of the European wars of the eighteenth century – the dominant memory of the founders of this country – came the doctrine [...] called isolationism. From the experience of the long period of world peace and economic development in the nineteenth century [...] came the dream of universal law and internationally enforced peace, embodied and embalmed in the League of Nations and resurrected in the United Nations. (qtd. in Luck, *Mixed Messages* 18)

Acheson here also recognized the many and deep roots of each of the opposing strains: indeed, the ambiguity of the United States towards international organizations today is influenced by many factors, including “the nation's political culture, from the structure of its institutions of government, and from its place in the hierarchy of nations, as well as from the values and attitudes of its people” (Luck, *Mixed Messages* 280). While there are thus many factors that explain and influence the U.S.-UN relation, American exceptionalism can be seen as a recurring underlying motive, and as an explanation for both positions of isolationism and internationalism. Isolationism or unilateralism has its roots in the view that the U.S. should protect its exceptionalist beliefs from the interference of others, and the idea that the United States serves its values best through leading by example and acting as a beacon for the rest of the world. On the other hand, internationalism or multilateralism can be connected to the exceptionalist mandate for a U.S. foreign policy that reflects the “American self-image of an exceptional people who stand for freedom around the world” (Mertus 36). The idea that American conceptions of freedom and democracy should be aspired by all nations then works as a strong shaping factor in U.S. foreign policy: “America's values impose on it an obligation

to crusade for them around the world” (Kissinger 18). Aptly summarizing the issue, Kissinger wrote:

Thus the two approaches, the isolationist and the missionary, so contradictory on the surface, reflected a common underlying faith: that the U.S. possessed the world’s best system of government, and that the rest of mankind could attain peace and prosperity by abandoning traditional diplomacy and adopting America’s reverence for international law and democracy. (30)

American exceptionalism thus has a twofold, rather paradoxical outcome of isolationism – reflected in non-ratification and noncompliance – to protect the American exceptionalism values on the one hand, while a moral obligation to lead the world results in internationalism on the other hand. This has policy consequences: uncertainty about how to integrate American values with other interests, with the main views transcending party lines (Nye, *Soft Power* 62), makes it difficult to determine how policy should be implemented. The consequence, in the words of Luck, is that “tugged and hauled by these contradictory impulses [...] U.S. foreign policy has frequently looked ambivalent, if not simply rudderless” (*Mixed Messages* 18). Should freedom and democracy be actively promoted through foreign activism, or more passively through leading by example?

The next chapter will address these questions. As it is here demonstrated how American exceptionalism can explain the ambiguous and oftentimes problematic U.S.-UN relationship, chapter three will discuss how the concept is expressed and what its different purposes and effects are when it encounters the practices and realities of foreign affairs and the workings of the United Nations.

CHAPTER III

AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM IN RHETORIC

With the concept of American exceptionalism and the historical and theoretical framework of the U.S.-UN relationship explicated, it is now time to turn to the actual matter at stake in this research, namely the various expressions, functions, and implications of American exceptionalism in the United Nations. The previous chapter has explained that American exceptionalism has contributed to the problematic U.S.-UN relationship and the ambiguous American outlook on international organizations, resulting in uncertainty about policy implementation. The more fundamental issue, however, is not simply *that* American exceptionalism influences U.S. foreign policy and that this poses a problem when pursuing American interests, but *how* exactly this works. Where are those interests and policies situated, how and by whom are they defined, what strategies are employed to pursue them, how do they fit with those of other Western nations, and by extension, where does it place the U.S. in the broader picture of international politics? This chapter will be a first step in answering those questions, and will address exceptionalist rhetoric in the UN through an analysis of American presidential addresses to the UN General Assembly.

Each time the United States delivers a speech on a world stage, it has an opportunity to call attention to American interests, priorities, and in this way set the agenda of international politics. While specific political events and global conflicts determine the exact topic and focus of a speech, several underlying themes can be distinguished that return time and time again.

The United States is of course not the only nation to use its addresses to the UN General Assembly to express its national interests and set the agenda of international politics. The meaning of those American speeches and the relative position of the U.S. in the UN becomes more clear when comparing the American UNGA addresses to those of other Western nations. Taking nations that are close to the United States in their values and position in the UN to contrast the U.S. speeches with, helps further explicate how the American exceptionalist rhetoric works in the United Nations, as the differences in cultural beliefs and values, and the influence and relative power position in the UN can be largely excluded as intervening variables. France and the United Kingdom are suitable states to compare the American rhetoric with. They are co-P5 states and nations with similar values: like the United States, they too emphasize democracy and freedom as their main interests, highlight

cooperation and the importance of acting together, and often stress the preference for diplomatic means over military force, yet express a willingness to use force if necessary. However, there are some differences with the American rhetoric, which will be indicated throughout the analysis.

The basis for this discussion are the key characteristics of American exceptionalism as identified in chapter one: a sense of being qualitatively different from the rest of the world, the idea of having a mission or task to bring freedom and democracy to those without it, and the assumption of a leadership role in order to undertake that task. They come forward in several recurrent themes.

3.1. Analysis of United Nations General Assembly addresses

3.1.1. Responsibility to spread freedom and democracy.

The U.S. interest in global democracy and human rights is the most prominent theme articulated through practically all speeches of American presidents to the United Nations General Assembly. Examples are numerous, and include speaking of advancing the vision of freedom as America's highest ideal ("President Bush Addresses UN"), and stressing that the United States' only interest in Syria is "the well-being of its people" and that the U.S. "will continue to promote democracy and human rights and open markets because we believe these practices achieve peace and prosperity" ("Remarks" 2013). Obama's 2014 GA address in particular framed the primary interests of the United States in terms of democracy and freedom. "America is and will continue to be a Pacific power, promoting peace, stability, and the free flow of commerce among nations [...] The United States will never shy away from defending our interests" ("Remarks" 2014). This reflects the framework of American exceptionalism with its missionary implications (Stephanson 124), which is then used to shape American foreign policy by defining the American national interest to include the promotion of democracy (Forsythe 116).

This is closely connected to the American exceptionalist belief that the United States has a mission in the world to spread democracy and freedom. That this mission is also regarded as the truly right and just one, for example when Obama calls upon others "to join us at the right side of history" ("Remarks" 2014), reflects American exceptionalist thinking. As Hastedt writes, "U.S. involvement is typically put in terms of 'setting things right'. It is assumed that a right answer does exist and that it is the American answer" (28). Examples are many: in 2010, Obama stated that that "experience shows us that history is on the side of

liberty” (“Remarks” 2010). In 2014, he criticized Russia, this time for its policy towards Ukraine, “in which might makes right” and stating that America believes in “right makes might.” Later in the same speech, Obama asserts that “the ideology of ISIL or al Qaeda or Boko Haram will wilt and die if it is consistently exposed and confronted and refuted in the light of day” (“Remarks” 2014). In distinguishing between right and wrong, and linking United States to liberty, light, and righteousness, as opposed to the images of darkness of the authoritarian regimes mentioned here, it is subtly expressed that the American way is the right one, and the one the rest of the world should follow.

This rhetoric of good versus evil, of democracy and freedom as the ‘right’ that has to be defended in unison against the wrong of authoritarianism, is a theme that is often reiterated by other Western nations. Nick Clegg, for example, stated that

some argue that in a volatile region only an authoritarian strong man can maintain security and stability [...] what was heartening about the events of Tahrir Square was that the Egyptian people found their voice and rejected this false choice [...] they chose instead the road to a more open and fair society. The road is not easy – but it is the right one. (“Nick Clegg’s Speech”)

Besides an example of the recurrent theme of right versus wrong, this statement also demonstrates how UN speeches – for the United States, too – can be used to address multiple audiences: here, for example, the British view is explained to the audiences at home and the international community, while at the same time also expressing criticism towards the leaders of authoritarian regimes. Two years later, also using the good versus evil rhetoric, David Cameron spoke of Islamist extremism as a “poisonous ideology,” having a “warped world view” and advocating a “quasi-mediaeval state”, and expressed the need for “young people [seeing] the power of a different, *better*, more open democratic path.” Using a tone very similar to the American one, and familiar themes of leadership and a commitment to promote democracy and freedom, Cameron concluded his address stating that “we are facing an evil against which the world should unite. And, as ever in the case of freedom, democracy and justice, Britain will play its part” (“PM Speech at the UN”).

The United States also tends to attempt to transfer this sense of a task to other nations. In their addresses to the UN, American leaders like to remind other member states of their obligations in the world: Obama, in 2010, called on other nations when he said:

Don't stand idly by, don't be silent, when dissidents elsewhere are imprisoned and protesters are beaten. Recall your own history. Because part of the price of our own freedom is standing up for the freedom of others. That belief will guide America's leadership in this 21st century. ("Remarks" 2010)

Four years later, he again called on all nations, big or small, to meet their responsibility to observe and enforce international norms, as no nation can isolate itself in a globalized world ("Remarks" 2014). These efforts to install a sense of obligation or duty, similar to the American idea of being responsible for the defense of freedom and democracy, in other nations, can also be seen as the United States placing itself in a position of leadership.

3.1.2. Leadership role

The sense of having a special task and responsibility in the world, combined with the belief that the U.S. is a superior nation, or at least "qualitatively different," suggests that the United States should naturally want to take the lead in international policies (De Lange and Howieson 1026). This is often seen throughout speeches to the UN: the United States tends to place itself in a leadership role in the aforementioned mission to bring democracy and freedom to the world. This becomes clear when other nations are called on to *join* the American effort, for example when Obama states "I welcome the influence of all nations that can help bring about a peaceful resolution of Syria's civil war" ("Remarks" 2013) or "the USA will work on a broad coalition to dismantle [IS]" and "I ask the world to join this effort" ("Remarks" 2014). The significance of this becomes particularly noteworthy when comparing the U.S. rhetoric with that of the United Kingdom. In 2012 and 2013, David Cameron and Nick Clegg respectively spoke of "we in the United Nations," "Britain is determined to work with our allies," and "we stand ready to work with all others who will do the same." The difference might be subtle, but there seems to be less of an inclination for the U.K. to place itself in a leadership role for international cooperation, and leaning more towards actual multilateralism.

The leadership role can also take the form of leading by example. This reflects the idea of the United States a 'City upon a Hill':

The people of the world now look to us, here, to be as decent, and as dignified, and as courageous as they are trying to be in their daily lives. And at this crossroads, I can promise you that the United States of America will not be distracted or deterred from what must be

done. We are heirs to a proud legacy of freedom, and we're prepared to do what is necessary to secure that legacy for generations to come. ("Remarks" 2014)

While this idea of being an exemplary nation is usually regarded as a defining trait of American exceptionalism, the United States is not the only nation to see itself in this way. France, too, has frequently made use of a similar 'City upon a Hill'-theme, and in this appears to vie with the U.S. for a similar role in the world of an exemplary nation, with a mission to defend its values – that belong to the right side of international politics. In his 2012 address to the United Nations, François Hollande asserted that "France wants to set an example, not to teach others a lesson but because it is our history, our message. Setting an example in promoting fundamental freedoms is our battle and a matter of *honor* for us." Also using the theme of urgency and the need for concrete action, which will be seen the United States also tends to do, Hollande furthermore says:

What I want you to understand here is that we must take action. We must act to shoulder our responsibilities and to resolve urgent problems [...] We must act, act always, and act together. Let us live up to the *mission* with which we've been *entrusted* and *justify the hopes of the world's people*. ("Speech by Mr. François Hollande")

However, in a major difference with the United States, this exemplary role is then explicitly coupled to the necessity for a UN mandate: "for we make no mistake when we act; our actions always abide by the principles of the United Nations." While France thus also regards itself as having a certain responsibility as an exemplary nation that the world can count on, it more than the United States links this sense of responsibility to the context of international cooperation within the United Nations, and numerous times expresses that it will not act without a UN mandate or Security Council resolution.

3.1.3. Framing and claiming of values

Another recurrent theme that appears in the U.S. UNGA addresses is that rather universal values are presented as American ones. This becomes clear, for example, when the United States defines or frames the interests and values of the United Nations in its speeches, but does so with a focus on certain beliefs that are central to the American world view, namely human rights, democracy, peace, and freedom. UN progress is, for example, defined by the elections in the Arab world ("Opening Annual Debate"). Bush, in his 2008 address to

the General Assembly, also stated that the UN was founded on “faith in fundamental rights” and the joining together of “strength to maintain international peace and security.” Obama spoke in similar terms in 2011, when he defined the “heart of the work of the United Nations” to be “the pursuit of peace in an imperfect world,” and also referred to the UN’s founders, stating that they regarded “justice and opportunity, dignity and freedom” to be crucial for that peace. Obama in 2011 even explicitly stated the measure of success for the United Nations to be “whether people could live in sustained peace and security.” In addition, the United States regularly uses similar values to frame and define UN successes. Obama’s 2012 GA address listed examples of the progress of that year, which are without exception about Middle Eastern countries voting for new leaders, regime transitions, and “true democracy” as the ultimate goal. In framing and measuring the interests and successes of a multilateral body like the UN in terms of American values, the United States puts forward its own views and beliefs as being right and just, and even as representative for the rest of the world.

France has conducted something similar in its speeches to the General Assembly: it has pulled certain values, which are explicitly designated as being universal, towards itself and presented them as being inherent to the French culture:

I am here also to reaffirm values that do not belong to any one people, that are not the property of any one continent, that are not the privilege of any one fraction of the population. I am here to uphold the universal values that France has always proclaimed, the rights to which all human being should be entitled, wherever they live: freedom, safety and resistance to oppression. (“Speech by Mr. François Hollande”)

The United Kingdom, too, has emphasized the universality of certain values and tends to equate progress in the United Nations with its own values of freedom and democracy. Both in its 2012 and 2013 General Assembly addresses, elections and new constitutions in the Middle East are mentioned in the context of UN successes and progress.

Democracy, free speech, participation, equality before the law, the right to peaceful protest, the right to be educated, the chance to work – these are not Western values; they are the political and economic freedoms sought by citizens everywhere, and they are gaining force in every country around the globe. Governments who ignore them are fighting a losing battle. (“David Cameron’s Address to the UN”)

Yet, like France, there is the paradox of singling out certain values as not Western, but universal ones, yet on the other hand claiming those values as British and – as also seen earlier – placing those on the ‘right’ side of the world.

From these General Assembly speeches, there thus appears to be tension, almost a duel between Western nations about whose culture and history can truly lay claim to the values and principles of freedom and democracy, which are, remarkably enough, often explicitly recognized as being universal. Indeed, being able to claim ownership of these beliefs can be useful: presenting oneself as the true holder of certain values can legitimize and justify behavior, and hence get others to follow. This, then, would fit the strategies to increase soft power.

3.1.4. United Nations reform

Something else that stands out when examining the American addresses to the General Assembly are the frequent calls for UN reform. While this in itself is not necessarily an American trait, as UN reform is an issue of much debate within the organization and one that – considering the weight of Security Council veto power – especially non-P5 states call for, the specific focus of the United States’ call for UN reform is worth noting, namely the tendency of American presidents to emphasize the need for effectivity and efficiency to improve the UN’s performance. Bush did so in 2008, when he stated that “where there is inefficiency and corruption, it must be corrected. Where there are bloated bureaucracies, they must be streamlined. Where members fail to uphold their obligations, there must be strong action” (“President Bush Addresses UN”). Obama, in 2010, stressed the need for improvement of the accountability of the UN, and suggested that every member state should open its elections to international monitors. The American focus regarding UN reform seems to be closely connected to the aforementioned tendency to push for quick results and concrete action.

This is different with other states. States outside of the P5 circle generally call into question the veto system and expansion of the number of the permanent seats. But France and the United Kingdom, too, regularly address the topic of reorganization, but focus on “more room at the top table” (“Nick Clegg’s Speech at the UN”), meaning expansion and specifically including an African permanent representative. China even introduced a report stating that the priority of UN reform should be to increase the representation of developing countries. The United States, together with Russia, were the only states to favor “modest” expansion (“Calling for Security Council Reform”).

3.1.5. *Extent of intervention*

A next recurrent theme that is at the center of many American addresses to the United Nations, usually following the assertion that peaceful and diplomatic means are preferred, is making clear that, in the end, the United States is willing to move from passive to active intervention and undertake any means necessary in order to defend freedom and democracy. This is a familiar theme: it was a key aspect throughout George W. Bush's foreign policy, and Obama, too, addressed it in the UN. Addressing the ISIL terrorist group, Obama stated that "there can be no reasoning – no negotiation – with this brand of evil. The only language understood by killers like this is the language of force" ("Remarks" 2014). In 2009, speaking about Iran's nuclear program, he asserted that "America wants to resolve this issue through diplomacy [...] but time is not unlimited [...] that is why the United States *will do what we must* to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon" ("Remarks" 2012). The following year, Obama framed the issue of Syria's nuclear program by asking "how do we address the choice of standing callously by while children are subjected to nerve gas, or embroiling ourselves in someone else's civil war?" ("Remarks" 2013). The question seemed to imply that standing by" is not a realistic option, and that intervention is necessary. Obama here also addressed his willingness to order a strike against Syria because that would be "in the security interest of the United States and in the rest of the world" ("Remarks" 2013). In outlining the U.S. policy towards the Middle East and North Africa in general, he furthermore asserts that the United States is "prepared to use all elements of [its] power, including military force, to secure these core interests in the region"; ready to "confront external aggression against its allies and partners"; and, "when it's necessary to defend the United States against a terrorist attack," ready to "take direct action"; and that "yes, sometimes [...] the multilateral use of military force may be required to prevent the very worst from happening" ("Remarks" 2013). While the fact that Obama explicitly mentions in his UN speech the following year that he did not intend to send troops to counter terroristic forces in the Middle East, but instead opted for airstrikes and cutting off financing, this does not detract from the 'any means necessary'-rhetoric, as this does not mean that the U.S. is willing to intervene *at any cost*. While the readiness to conduct airstrikes shows that attack and active intervention are not being shied away from, the protection of American citizens and troops still comes first. This also comes to the fore in the 2013 speech, when Obama explains that troops have been brought home from Afghanistan and that drones are used to "target only those who pose a continuing, imminent threat to the United States" ("Remarks" 2013). Expressions of the commitment to these exceptionalist values of freedom and democracy can thus here be seen to shape American

policies by influencing the extent intervention. The fact that these intentions are so often explained also suggests that these are not self-evident policies, but apparently need a certain justification for the domestic and international audience.

It should be noted, too, that the United States is not the only nation to express a willingness to actively intervene in order to defend its interests and values. French president Hollande, for example, spoke in very similar terms about the terrorist groups in the Middle East at the 2014 UN General Assembly: “France is fully engaged in this battle,” “France engages whenever there is a risk,” and “we want to weaken [Daesh]. We want to quash it” (“French President Addresses UN General Assembly”). However, while the U.S. followed up its battle cry with promises of air strikes and drone attacks, France adds the qualification that intervention to any extent cannot happen without a UN resolution:

France knows that it upholds values, that it has a role to play and will never abandon it, and that the fight against terrorism will be continued and expanded as much as [...] for we make no mistake when we act; our actions always abide by the principles of the United Nations. (“French President Addresses UN General Assembly”)

The United Kingdom, too, makes use of a similar, ‘all means necessary’-rhetoric as the United States and France. A difference, however, is that the specific actions that are mentioned to comprise those means are less concrete and invasive than those proposed by the United States. In his 2012 speech to the General Assembly, for example, David Cameron does not suggest any concrete action, and instead lingers at the more indefinite statement of “we in the United Nations must do everything we can to support [the people in the Arab Spring]”. The following year, the policies proposed by Nick Clegg are more concrete – including training officials and journalists, and officially recognizing the opposition to authoritarian regimes – but still far from the more active intervention in the form of air strikes the air strikes that the U.S. coupled to its ‘all means necessary’-rhetoric. This is seen again the following year, when Cameron refers to seizing passports, stripping people of their British identity, and no-fly lists when speaking of the UK’s “uncompromising approach.” In addition, similar to France, every instance of the U.K. referring to concrete measures is accompanied with an explicit reference to the need for a UN mandate or Security Council resolution. In 2014, following Obama, Cameron expresses to the United Nations his willingness to participate in air strikes against ISIL in Iraq, but only after having asserted that “the UN

Security Council has now received a clear request from the Iraqi government to support it in its military actions against ISIL. So we now have a clear basis in international law for action.”

Furthermore, it is striking how often a sense of urgency is expressed in the executive speeches to the General Assembly. Bush, for example, asserted in his 2008 GA address that “passing resolutions decrying terrorist attacks” is not enough; rather, “we must actively challenge the conditions of tyranny and despair that allow terror and extremism to thrive” (“President Bush Addresses UN”). In Obama’s 2014 address, in which he calls for actual action against the threats in the Middle East, there is a sense of urgency woven throughout, for example when he speaks of “problems [demanding] urgent attention” and the “need to take concrete steps” (“Remarks” 2014). A sense that an American push is needed ties in with the previously mentioned theme of the U.S. seeing itself in a leadership role. Indeed, American exceptionalism and the belief that the U.S. values are the right and just ones, and its policies the best to achieve, can result in impatience. As Hastedt writes: “optimistic at the start of an undertaking and convinced of the correctness of its position in both a moral and technical sense, Americans tend to want quick results” (30-31). Consequentially, the United States also tends to focus on taking concrete steps and seeking measurable results. Bush, for example, emphasized this in his 2008 speech to the UN, arguing that “the success of these efforts must be measured by more than intentions – they must be measured by results,” and “multilateral institutions [...] must work towards measurable goals” (“President Bush Addresses UN”). This can also be seen in Obama’s statements, such as “resolutions must be followed by tangible commitments,” and instructing other member states to “be prepared [next year] to announce the concrete steps [they] have taken to counter extremist ideologies” (“Remarks” 2014). Consequentially, the United States also criticizes the UN for not enforcing its policies or not acting quickly enough. In 2012, Obama urged the Security Council to take direct action if Syria would not keep to its nuclear commitments. Not doing this “will show that the UN is incapable of enforcing the most basic of international laws” (“Remarks” 2012). In expressing a sense of urgency, continually calling for concrete steps and the “all means necessary”-rhetoric as mentioned earlier, American exceptionalism is visible in that it shapes foreign policy regarding the degree of intervention. This would fit Richard Lebow’s argument that “the relationship between constitution and causation is reciprocal and fluid.” Lebow argues that identities and their consequences can be placed on a continuum. Identities that only slightly influence actions and policies, but may be used to justify goals and mobilize support, would place low on the continuum. At the middle range identities would be seen that make certain kinds of behavior more or less likely. Identities that require a certain type of

behavior and exclude others would place at the high end of the continuum (Pardo 43). Following this reasoning, American exceptionalism would place high on the continuum, as American policy makers speak in exceptionalist terms, and the concept has policy implications in that it guides behavior and influences the degree of involvement (Lebow 219).

3.1.6. *Different audiences*

Finally, at multiple points throughout the U.S. UNGA speeches, multiple audiences appear to be addressed, namely those who have criticized American foreign policies and accused it of being too intrusive, unilateral, or practicing double standards. Obama's 2009 address to the General Assembly, for example, spoke of "misperceptions" about the United States, "many around the world [having] come to view America with skepticism and mistrust", and a belief that "America has acted unilaterally, without regard for the interests of others" on certain issues. In the same vein, also demonstrating to the American sense of leadership and de facto power capabilities, he stated that "those who used to *chastise* America for acting alone in the world cannot now stand by and wait for America to solve the world's problems alone" ("Remarks" 2009). In 2013, Obama clearly seemed to address his Republican critics at home – demonstrating how domestic politics, too, is one of the many factors to influence U.S. foreign policy – when he stated that "I know there are those who have been frustrated by our unwillingness to use our military might to depose Assad and believe that a failure to do so indicates a weakening of American resolve in the region." When he then adds that, on the other hand, his willingness to direct a military strike has been interpreted by others as the start of being dragged into a new Iraq-war, he arrives at the conclusion that

the situation in Syria mirrors a contradiction that has persisted in the region for decades: the United States is chastised for meddling in the region, accused of having a hand in all manner of conspiracy; at the same time, the United States is blamed for failing to do enough to solve the region's problems and for showing indifference toward suffering Muslim populations. ("Remarks" 2013)

Obama here clearly addresses the paradoxical nature of American foreign policy, which, as argued in chapter two, can be regarded as influenced by American exceptionalism: driven by a sense of a mission to defend democracy and freedom there is the tendency to intervene in other nation's affairs – and this is also, Obama recognizes, to a certain extent expected by the

rest of the world – which is squarely opposed to the conviction that America should stay out of other nation’s affairs to protect its own interests. His 2014 speech, then, reflects a similar position. Hinting at those who accuse the United States of practicing double standards in its policies, and possibly the many UN reprimands concerning American domestic issues, as further explained in chapter four, Obama said:

I realize that America’s critics will be quick to point out that at times *we too have failed to live up to our ideals*; that America has plenty of problems within its own borders [...] yes, we have our own racial and ethnic tensions. And like every country, we continually wrestle with how to reconcile the vast changes wrought by globalization and greater diversity with the *traditions* that we hold dear. But we welcome the scrutiny of the world – because what you see in America is a country that has steadily worked to address our problems, to *make our union more perfect* [...] because we *fight for our ideals*, and we are willing to criticize ourselves we fall short. (“Remarks” 2014)

While Obama thus certainly does not ignore criticism and acknowledges that his nation is not perfect, he does seem to emphasize that in the end, it is precisely America’s values, beliefs, and capabilities that make it great:

While we recognize that our influence will, at times, be limited, although we will be wary of efforts to impose democracy through military force, and although we will, at times, be accused of hypocrisy and inconsistency, we will be engaged in the region for the long haul, *for the hard work of forging freedom and democracy* is the task of a generation. (“Remarks” 2013)

In a way, he seems to accept the criticism as a burden that comes with being an exceptional nation; as a cross it has to carry for the sake of a better world.

Conclusion

This analysis of executive speeches to the UNGA shows the intricate workings of American exceptionalism in the United Nations. The American leadership role, responsibility to spread freedom and democracy, and the rhetoric of good versus evil all come forward in these addresses. The exceptionalist theme is then used in different ways: it can be seen here as advocating the American national interests and values as universal ones, calling on other nations to also commit to the promotion of human rights, being employed as justifications for behavior and actions, and functioning as a force to increase soft power, both through agenda-

setting, legitimizing policies, and leading by example. It does these things on different levels, too: domestic audiences, as well as allies and adversary nations in international politics are addressed. Finally, the exceptionalist framework can be seen to guide policy in that it defines the U.S. national interest to include the defense of freedom and democracy, and influences the choices regarding the strategies to pursue that interest, in terms of choosing between different degrees of active or passive intervention (Nye, *Soft Power* 60).

Bush and Obama, though very different in their style, interests, and partisan politics, are seen here to not be very dissimilar in their approach to the UN. Both express their willingness to participate in multinational cooperation, while also making clear the importance of the separate American interests. Indeed, while it should be kept in mind that many factors, such as presidential preference, congressional mood, events in international politics, and economic factors that have their influence on American foreign policies, American exceptionalism is nevertheless visible as a red thread.

CHAPTER IV

AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM IN PRACTICE,

PART I: U.S. POLICIES AND BEHAVIOR IN THE UN

The previous chapter examined American rhetoric in the United Nations, and found that the American exceptionalist theme can be seen as a recurrent underlying motive, though it coexists alongside other factors that influence foreign policy decision-making, such as domestic forces and specific geopolitical circumstances. Yet in order to see to what extent American exceptionalism actually influences U.S. actions and operations in the United Nations, it is necessary to delve deeper into the American policies in the UN, and look at the more practical side of things. How does the United States behave in the United Nations, in policies and voting, how does this differ from other nations, and what is the place of American exceptionalism in this? To answer these questions, this chapter will examine more closely the American position and voting practices in UN resolutions and actions, while chapter five will set out the personal experiences of five former UN-delegates with American diplomats and the American role in the UN in general.

4.1. Noncompliance and exemptionalism

As briefly mentioned in chapter one, there are few studies that apply American exceptionalism to the actual U.S. policies and behavior in international relations, and not at all to American UN policies specifically. The limited number of works that operationalize American exceptionalism with regards to foreign affairs tend to focus on instances of noncompliance, obstruction, and exemption. In resonance with the progressive school of thought within American exceptionalism, these instances are then taken as indications of an American sense of superiority, arrogance, or unilateralism. As also mentioned in chapter one, Luck and Ignatieff are among those who set out the numerous examples of the United States not ratifying or complying with an international treaty or ruling, or only doing so with various demands or conditions, to argue that exemptionalism is a defining trait of American exceptionalism and American foreign policy in general. They argue that the United States' de facto power position, together with the exceptionalist belief of being qualitatively different from other nations, enables the U.S. to excuse itself from certain international regulations (Ignatieff 12, 24). Indeed, as was seen in the discussion of the complicated United States-

United Nations relationship in chapter two, the U.S. has a history of exemption and non-ratification towards UN treaties and laws. Four different arguments are used to demonstrate how these instances are connected to American exceptionalism: noncompliance and exemptionalism to protect American superior values and culture, to avoid legal interference from the international community, to remove potential obstacles in fulfilling the mission to spread American values, and harboring double standards.

First, it is argued that American noncompliance or exemptionalism is motivated by a sense of superiority, or at a least feeling of being qualitatively different from the rest of the world, which is then expressed in an attempt to protect the exceptional American values and culture. The American withdrawal from UNESCO and the arrears issue, as discussed in chapter two, are often-cited examples of the United States acting as if it were a superior nation, and obstructing or non-complying when a divergence between UN policies and U.S. interests appeared. Luck, for example, presents the argument that noncompliance and exemption are ways to protect national values, in that it avoids open-ended international commitments: “the US, in other words, is strong and independent enough to stand above and apart from international organization, exercising its unparalleled power at times and places of its choosing instead of frittering it away on other nations’ agendas” (*Mixed Messages* 19-20). Luck also notes a counterargument against noncompliance and exemption in the context of American exceptionalism when he mentions that some have argued that the United States should actively commit itself to international institutions, precisely due to its alleged responsibility to lead the world and promote peace and democracy (*Mixed Messages* 20).

Others have taken the instances where the United States signed a treaty, but did not follow through with ratification, as an example of exceptionalist policies. Hughes has argued that this form of American non-ratification shows an unwillingness to be judged by the international community: as signing a treaty provides initial endorsement, but does not create a binding legal obligation, the American values and culture would be protected (Hughes 75).

Thirdly, some have argued that American non-ratification or exemptionalism can sometimes be explained by the exceptionalist belief that the United States has a mission to spread democracy and freedom in the world, and therefore needs and deserves special exemptions. The American invasion of Iraq without approval of the UN Security Council could be argued to be an example of the U.S. exempting itself from the international rules in order to be able to fulfill its task of spreading freedom and democracy. Another example is the United States’ refusal to ratify the Rome Statute, which established the International Criminal Court. To ensure being able to participate in ICC decision-making, the United States did sign

the Statute in 2000; however, the Bush administration ‘unsigned’ it in 2002 – a historical first (Shah). Mingst has offered the following explanation:

The U.S. and the American military have 'exceptional' responsibilities in international relations, therefore they must be exempt from jurisdiction. To sign the treaty would inhibit military officers from carrying out their missions and make them responsible to and answerable to-an undemocratic international body. (85)

In addition, as argued by Hughes, the domestic debates on the possible ICC jurisdiction over American citizens centered around the United States’ exceptional position in the world, and its high levels of humanitarian military intervention, arguing that to maintain the levels of American military aid deployed throughout the world, the U.S. has a need for special exemption from international jurisdiction. The statement of Yale Law Professor Ruth Wedgwood in the Congressional hearing on the ICC exemplifies the American exceptionalist sentiments in this:

As Americans, we do have unique concerns. The United States has global security obligations that no other country will undertake [...] We pull the heavy load in peace enforcement and anti-terrorist actions, as well as participating in peacekeeping and freedom of navigation exercises. Each time the United Nations has called for nation states to use force against an aggressor, the United States has been at the center of the coalition. We are the only nation capable of sustained transcontinental operations, able to make unique contributions in airlift, logistics, and intelligence. The deterrent power of American military force provided the backbone of the free world during the Cold War, and is still the spine of post-Cold-War security. But the unique nature of American power, and its long reliability, means that at times, even our friends take us for granted. (Hughes 66-67)

Besides the argument that binding itself to the ICC would limit the U.S. ability to spread freedom and democracy in the world, the refusal to ratify the Rome Statute could also be linked to the previously mentioned explanation of an unwillingness to be judged by the international community.

Finally, it has been those critical towards the notion of American exceptionalism who have argued that instances of U.S. exemption and noncompliance can be explained simply by hypocrisy and double standards. Proponents of this view tend to focus especially on the consequences of American noncompliance, because these actions often have the result of a

less smoothly functioning and more costly UN. Both in non-ratification of treaties and demanding certain provisions, such as in the arrears issue, the United States to a certain extent undermines the ideals and goals of UN treaties and laws (Hughes 76). An almost comic example is the 1998 refusal to grant chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization Yasser Arafat a visa, which prevented him from speaking in the United Nations. Not only was the U.S. widely accused of misusing its power as a host country, it also went against the United States' tendency to ever emphasize effectivity and efficiency in the UN: as Arafat was effectively barred from addressing the UNGA in Washington, the entire General Assembly packed up and decamped from New York to Switzerland. The costs of moving the GA and its entire staff were colossal, and this was at a time when the United States was criticizing the UN's wastefulness of funds and budgetary expansion (Bennis 217).

While these arguments and examples address important points about the effects and consequences of American exceptionalism on U.S. policies and behavior in the United Nations, something is lacking still. Presenting the instances of noncompliance and exemption to indicate American exceptionalism seems to be an incomplete argument. First, because these examples only show *that* American exceptionalism exists in American foreign policies, but do not answer the question of *how* it then exactly works. Those actions are much more complicated than simply their final verdict of noncompliance: different motives, substantiations, and effects lie behind each case, and it is important to take these into account when explicating the workings of American exceptionalism. Secondly, when only looking at cases of noncompliance and non-ratification to examine how American exceptionalism works in U.S. foreign policies, the case selection is biased. To argue that American policies are influenced by exceptionalism because of a sense of superiority and exemption regarding international rules, but then only select cases based on this specific type of behavior, and thus excluding the majority of cases where the United States did fully comply with a ruling or treaty, would be a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Rather than only looking at those resolutions or treaties that the U.S. did not ratify or comply with to examine the workings of American exceptionalism, it is more useful to analyze the behavior of the United States in the UN in general. To fully expose the dynamics of the link between American exceptionalism in U.S. foreign policy in the United Nations, the following analysis will therefore add to the research that focuses on the instances of noncompliance, non-ratification, and exemption, by examining American actions and voting in the UN in general.

4.2. Voting practices in the United Nations

A brief discussion of the voting practices in the UN is in place first. The General Assembly has a voting system of simple majority rule, in which each member state has one vote. Resolutions adopted by the General Assembly are generally not considered to be binding. Voting in the UNGA is therefore considered more of a position-taking statement, as the resolutions themselves cannot change the status quo (Voeten 734). Security Council resolutions, in contrast, are usually considered to be binding. The Security Council uses a more complicated voting method, which combines a supermajority system with a veto system. A resolution is then approved when no permanent member vetoes it, and at least nine members out of the total fifteen vote in favor of it. A Security Council resolution thus has to be supported by all P5 members and at least four non-permanent members for it to be adopted (Posner and Sykes 204). The deficiencies of the voting systems of both the General Assembly and the Security Council are very much recognized, and proposals for reforms are therefore plentiful. Reform of the imperfect UN voting systems is not the focus here, however. The following section will discuss the United States' voting practices in the UN.

As for the Security Council, figure I shows that United States regularly used its veto in the Cold War years – although not more than the Soviet Union – but that it has not used it significantly more than other P5 nations since.

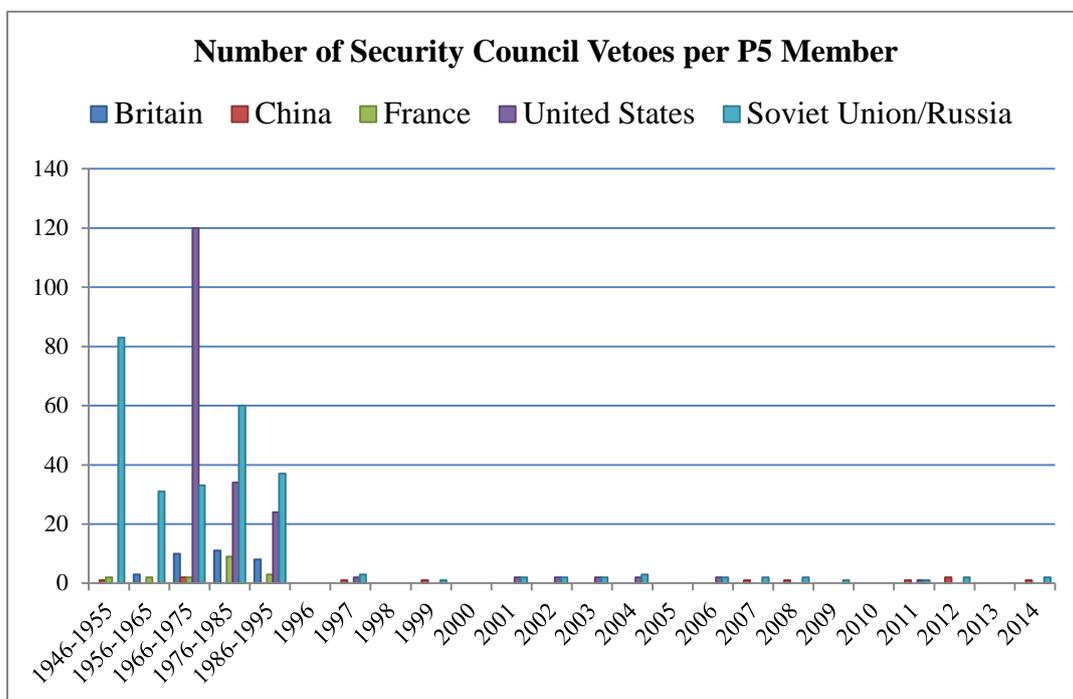


Figure I (“Changing Patterns in the Use of Veto,” “Voting Systems and Records”)

The last time the U.S. used its veto was in February 2011, on a resolution regarding the Middle East situation, including the Palestinian question. Russia and China vetoed five resolutions after that (“Voting Systems and Records”). The United States thus does not act significantly different from other P5 member states in its voting behavior in the Security Council.

Regarding the General Assembly, the patterns are more complicated. There is, after all, a major difference between the United States voting in the Security Council and the General Assembly. As one of five permanent members, the U.S. has an influential role in the Security Council, and a veto can sweep a resolution off the table. In the General Assembly, however, the American vote has an equal weight to that of other nations, and a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ from the U.S. does not make much of a difference when other states are in the majority.

The State Department’s annual reports on the United States participation in the United Nations can help gain an insight here. These reports include a comparison of the U.S. vote with the overall voting of all other UN member states. This is presented in coincidence percentages, which are calculated as the ratio of the total sum of two member states’ votes matching to the number of resolutions with a roll call vote in the same year (Pincin 5). In other words, it measures the active agreement of the United States with the rest of the world on non-consensus issues. The percentages are presented both by each country individually, as well as grouped by geographical location and political association.

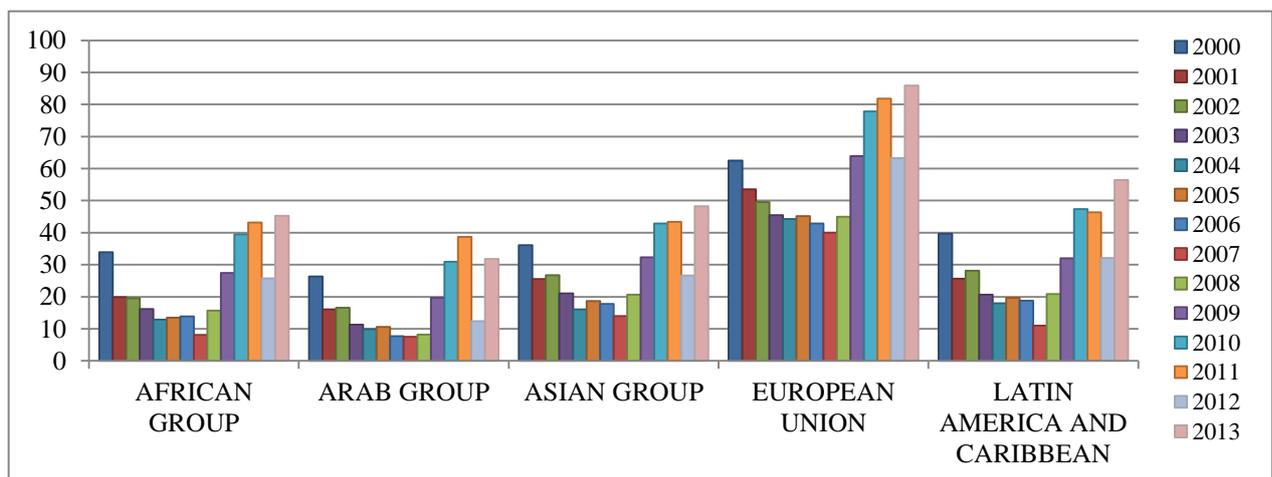


Figure II – Voting Coincidence Percentages

Figure II shows the total coincidence percentage of the five major regional groups for each year since 2001, as compiled from the yearly State Department reports on United States

participation in the UN. The graph demonstrates three things: that voting coincidence with the United States for all regional groups has been increasing since approximately 2008, that there was a clear drop in worldwide agreement between 2002 and 2007 – possibly explained by the American invasion of Iraq without a UN mandate – and thirdly, that the voting coincidence of the United States with the rest of the world in general is rather low. While it might be unsurprising that the Arab Group, for example, is very low with an average of 17.7 voting coincidence, it might be less expected that even the European Union – after all, mostly Western nations with values and policies similar to the United States – is only at an average of 57.2 percent in agreement with the United States. Moreover, when taking all General Assembly member states together, American voting coincidence since 2000 is on average 33.6 percent, and has surpassed 50 percent only once, in 2011 (Schaefer and Kim). How can this be explained? On what sort of issues does the U.S. diverge in its voting from the rest of the world, and does American exceptionalism play a role in this? To answer these questions, a closer look at the voting practices of the United States than these mere quantitative insights is required.

Case selection

It was argued previously that only looking at instances of noncompliance when examining U.S. behavior in the UN in relation to American exceptionalism leads to an incomplete argument, because this excludes a majority of cases where the United States does comply, and that a study of a different sample of UN resolution and treaties will therefore be conducted here. There is still the problem of how, then, to select the cases. The 2001-2015 timeframe of this research saw approximately a thousand Security Council resolutions. For the General Assembly, this number is nearing five thousand as of July 2015 (“General Assembly Resolutions”). Analyzing the U.S. position in thousands of UN resolutions is unfortunately beyond the scope of this research. A solution to this problem of case selection would be to choose the resolutions by undertaking a qualitative evaluation based on State Department policies. Since 1984, as a result of U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Jeane Kirkpatrick’s several recommendations to make the UN more efficient, the State Department has published an annual report to Congress on the U.S. participation in the United Nations. These reports include the identification of several “important votes” and “important consensus actions” within the General Assembly. These are usually between ten and twenty each year, and are identified based on their direct effect on the American interests and their consistency with State Department’s Strategic Goals. These are also the issues that tend to be emphasized in

the President's State of the Union speech and the annual address to the General Assembly. As they also include actions of the General Assembly and not only resolutions – which, as explained before, are more formal, position-taking statements – examining these votes can contribute to a more complete account of United States' practices in the UN and the role of American exceptionalism therein.

When examining the issues designated as important by the State Department, six main topics can be identified since 2001, namely the embargo against Cuba, the Israel-Palestine conflict, human rights, security, trade and development, and UN reforms and internal workings. These will be the issues to be analyzed here.

In order to not bypass the scope of these topics, and include the specific sub-issues comprising each of them, a complete overview of the important votes and consensus actions as identified by the State Department between 2001 and 2013 – the latest available report as of July 2015 – has been included in Appendix I. This overview shows that the human rights topic, for example, taken here as one category, is actually made up of resolutions on children's- and women's rights, religious freedom, the workings and results of the Human Rights Committee etcetera. Furthermore, the overview includes the result of every vote, with the number of member states voting in favor, against, or abstaining, and the U.S. position indicated. Including the total division of votes, and thus at quick glance whether the United States is in the minority or majority on an issue, gives a first insight in the relative position of the U.S. on the particular issue. The indication with asterisks when the United States sponsored (*) or cosponsored (**) a resolution or consensus action provides further insight in the significance of a certain issue to the United States: having (co-)authored a draft resolution can be taken to indicate particular concern for the topic.

In the selection of cases, it is then the expectation that if a resolution, decision, or treaty is not in line with the American exceptionalist framework, the U.S. will vote against it or not ratify it. According to the argument presented in this thesis, any vote in the UN fits the American exceptionalist framework, and both the yes's and no's can be legitimized in those American exceptionalist terms.

A final note before turning to the discussion of the voting practices: for the sake of readability, the parenthetical references to the annual "Voting Practices in the United Nations"-reports from the State Department have been shortened to "VP [year]." All can be found in the primary sources-section of the bibliography.

4.3. Analysis of “important votes”

4.3.1. Cuba embargo

In 1960, a full trade embargo by the United States was imposed on then-Communist Cuba in response to the nationalization of more than a billion dollars in American assets by the newly installed Castro regime. In terms far from fitting to the U.S. in its role as the bringer of democracy and freedom, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Lester Mallory initiated the embargo in an internal memo to Assistant Secretary of State Roy Rubottom in 1960:

If the [considerations about Cuba] are accepted or cannot be successfully countered, it follows that every possible means should be undertaken promptly to weaken the economic life of Cuba. If such a policy is adopted, it should be the result of a positive decision which would call forth a line of action which, while as adroit and inconspicuous as possible, makes the greatest inroads in denying money and supplies to Cuba, to decrease monetary and real wages, to bring about hunger, desperation and overthrow of government. (*Memorandum*)

Diplomatic ties between the U.S. and Cuba broke the following year, as Cold War tensions heightened, and remained cut-off (Donath and Charbonneau). The embargo is currently manifested in the 1996 Helms-Burton Act, officially the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act, which has the goal of creating free markets and representative democracy in Cuba by means of economic sanctions, restricting travel, and legal penalties (Hanson, Batten, and Ealey). The act states that the Cuba embargo cannot be terminated until the country has democratic elections and a democratic government without the Castros (Renwick and Lee).

Every year since 1992, the UN General Assembly has passed a resolution criticizing the American trade embargo against Cuba and publicly called on the U.S. to end it. The United States, in turn, has systematically voted against this resolution, which makes the State Department’s “important votes”-list every year. While the U.S. found some support for its position in Albania, Paraguay, and Uzbekistan in the 1990s, it has been practically alone on the issue for the last fifteen years. Only Israel now accompanies the U.S. in its vote, with the islands of Palau, Micronesia, and the Marshall Islands usually abstaining. This makes the Cuba Embargo one of the very few issues where the American vote consistently diverges from other Western nations.

Looking at the explanations of the American vote regarding the Cuba embargo, it appears that the U.S. position is continuously framed in terms of American support for the Cubans' rights to democracy and freedom. The substantiation of the vote is repeated almost word for word each year, and has several parts. The U.S. first and foremost emphasizes that it is the Cuban government that is at fault in continuing to deprive its people of their aspiration to freely determine their own future and disallowing its citizens political and economic freedoms, and that the Cuba-sponsored UN resolution "[constitutes] an attempt by Cuba to divert attention from its government's failings" (Godard 2013). The United States, then, has only put the embargo in place to pressure the Cuban regime to promote democracy and human rights in Cuba, and to support the Cuban people's desire to live in freedom: "the United States is in fact a deep and abiding friend of the Cuban people" (Godard 2013). In the State Department reports of 2003, 2005, 2006, and 2007, it was added that that

the United States has offered to make changes in the embargo if thoroughgoing reforms take place, but the Cuban Government has shown no interest in carrying out practical economic or political reforms. Cuban President Fidel Castro remains closed to any political opening and continues to deny his people the most basic human rights.

Moreover, since 2008, the U.S. has each year backed its claim of being Cuba's friend with facts and numbers about American humanitarian aid to Cuba: "the United States is one of Cuba's largest suppliers of food and one of Cuba's largest trading partners. In fact, the American people are the largest providers of humanitarian aid to the Cuban people in the entire world" (VP 2008). Similarly, in 2013, American Ambassador to the UN Ronald Godard stated in the General Assembly that

[in] 2012, the Cuban people received more than \$2 billion in remittances and other private support from the United States. [...] Far from restricting aid to the Cuban people, we are proud that the American people and U.S. companies are among the *leading* providers of humanitarian assistance to Cuba. All of this trade and assistance is conducted in conformity with our sanctions program, which is carefully calibrated to allow and encourage the provision of support to the Cuban people. (Godard 2013)

All in all, it is made very clear that the embargo is only in place due to the priority assigned to the freedom of the Cubans. In addition, the U.S. has explained its opposition against the Cuba resolution with reference to its own sovereignty. It has continuously stated that the embargo is

an American domestic policy that the United Nations has no place interfering with, both because it is simply a bilateral issue that does not fall under the UN competences, and because – it is argued – the measures imposed by the U.S. do not affect Cuba’s trade with other nations, it does not constitute a blockade. The U.S. therefore regards the resolution as “highly inappropriate for the Assembly to consider” (VP 2008), and instead, “the focus of the international community should be on Cuba’s failure to respect internationally recognized human rights rather than on criticizing U.S. bilateral efforts that are aimed at encouraging a peaceful transition to democracy” (VP 2001). This view is not only stated in the explanation of the vote in the State Department reports, but also reiterated in the General Assembly. The official explanation of the vote by Ambassador Ronald Godard in 2013, for example, reads:

As do all Member States, the United States conducts its economic relationships with other countries in accordance with its national interests and principles. Our sanctions policy toward Cuba is just one of the tools in our overall effort to encourage respect for the civil and human rights consistent with the Universal Declaration, to which the United Nations itself is committed. (Godard 2013)

In line with this view, the U.S. also each year calls all other nations to support the embargo and thus vote against the UN resolution condemning it. In 2012, Godard stated in the General Assembly:

The international community cannot in good conscience ignore the ease and frequency with which the Cuban regime silences critics, disrupts peaceful assembly, and impedes independent journalism. [...] This resolution only serves to distract from the real problems facing the Cuban people, and therefore my delegation will oppose it. We encourage this body to support the desires of the Cuban people to determine their own future freely. By doing so, it would truly advance the principles of the United Nations Charter and the purposes for which the United Nations was created. (Godard 2012)

Besides making a point of national sovereignty, it is also noteworthy that the matter of protecting freedom and democracy, and even the principles and purposes of the UN itself, is framed in the political and particularly Western values of free speech – something which was also seen multiple times in the UNGA addresses as discussed in chapter three. In this sense, the U.S. vote against the Cuba resolution would fit the American exceptionalist framework.

It should be acknowledged, however, that recent developments regarding the issue increasingly undermine this point. Relations between Cuba and the U.S. are thawing under Obama's presidency. In December 2014, President Obama announced plans to normalize relations with Cuba, stating that

America chooses to cut loose the shackles of the past, so as to reach for a better future for the Cuban people, for the American people, for our entire hemisphere and for the world [...] Through a policy of engagement, we can more effectively stand up for our values, and help the Cuban people help themselves as they move into the 21st century. (Jaffe and Labott)

While the rhetoric of protecting American values and aiding the Cuban people in promoting human rights still predominates the explanation of the relationship with Cuba, it should be noted that other reasons might play a part here, too: the embargo has annually cost the U.S. more than Cuba, and this gap is widening. In 2013, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce estimated the yearly costs of the sanctions to the American economy to be between \$1.2 and \$3.6 billion in missed opportunities in agriculture, tourism, machinery, and oil (Hanson, Batten, and Ealey). It can definitely be argued that lifting the embargo would precisely help Cuba in progressing towards being a more democratic state, and ideological reasons would then remain the predominant argument, and the imminent change in the United States' position towards the Cuba embargo would still follow exceptionalist lines. However, this was also the case in 1960, and would therefore not explain the current policy turn. In addition, it can also be argued that the trade embargo is not exactly efficient to promote human rights, both because all other nations do not have a trade embargo with Cuba, and because the American sanctions might actually drive Cuba in the arms of other nations, less favorable to the American interest, to trade and cooperate with – Venezuela, for example (Hanson, Batten, and Ealey). Still, these arguments, too, cannot explain the recent policy change because these circumstances existed ever since the embargo was put in place. The only thing that has changed are the economic costs and benefits of the embargo, which demonstrates both the multiplicity of factors guiding American foreign policy decisions, as well as the limits of the reach of the exceptionalist framework.

4.3.2. Israel-Palestine conflict

The American position in the Israel-Palestine conflict is a complicated issue, and has frequently been the source of tension between the United States and the UN. It has often been

argued that the U.S. is biased towards Israel in international relations, for example by Mearsheimer and Walt in *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*. While the exact meaning of the U.S.-Israel relationship is not the issue at stake here, the fact is that the U.S. has consistently voted in support of Israel in the United Nations.

The overview in Appendix I shows that the U.S. has opposed a majority of the Israel-Palestine related resolutions it designated as important. Since 2001, among these issues, only the 2003 “Assistance to Palestine Refugees and Support for the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for Palestine Refugees in the Near East” was supported by the United States. The substantiation of this vote read:

A key U.S. goal at the 2003 General Assembly was to reduce the number of one-sided Middle East resolutions. The United States was pleased with the Assembly’s adoption of this resolution, which reflected strong support for UNRWA’s work, among donors and the world community, in providing humanitarian assistance to Palestinian refugees. Adoption also affirmed the U.S. Government promotion of consolidating resolutions related to Israel. (VP 2003)

This still indicates support for Israel. Every single other issue in the important votes regarding Israel and Palestine was opposed by the United States. The comparison of the votes with other countries, which is also included in every State Department report, shows that these voting practices set the U.S. far apart from other Western nations, who usually take on a more neutral position towards these issues. Only Israel, the Pacific Islands, and occasionally Canada and Australia have voted in concurrence with the United States. All of this is especially striking in the light of American exceptionalism: given the previously mentioned American tendency to claim values related to freedom, human rights, and democracy as inherent to its own culture and beliefs, one would expect the U.S. to vote in favor of resolutions such as “Work of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People” and the “Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People” – but this is apparently not the case.

The resolutions that the U.S. opposed differ in their specific topic, and range from land and settlement issues and refugee rights to the UN role in the peace process and the status of Palestine in the UN. Yet the substantiation of the American vote has generally been the same: the UN embodies “institutional discrimination against Israel” (VP 2004). According to the United States, the United Nations takes sides in the Israel-Palestine conflict, favoring the

Palestinians and isolating the Israelis, hereby worsening the conflict. In explaining the American opposition towards the annually returning UN resolution concerned with Israeli actions in the occupied territories, it was stated, for example, that “the resolution never mentioned the acts of terrorism against Israelis or those responsible for them” (VP 2001) or that “the Special Committee was given a one-sided mandate to investigate only Israeli practices and not human rights abuses committed by the Palestinian Authority or the acts of terror perpetrated by Palestinian militant groups” (VP 2002). These statements were repeated every following year. About the resolution “Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine,” it was said that the UN Human Rights Committee, “by its very nature, fails to properly demand actions from both sides; instead it focuses only on Israel, thus serving more to undermine than to advance ongoing negotiations” (VP 2008).

Still, the American commitment to the human rights of the Palestinian people and the full support “for the creation of a viable, democratic Palestinian state, with secure and recognized borders, living in peace and security along the state of Israel” (VP 2003) is regularly emphasized. In an apparent rebuttal of allegations of being partial towards Israel, the U.S. regularly makes a point of mentioning its financial assistance to Palestine, stating for example in its 2010 explanation for its opposition to the “Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat” resolution that

the United States sees no contradiction whatsoever between support for the Palestinian people and support for Israel. The United States recently announced an additional \$150 million in direct assistance to the Palestinian Authority, bringing our total direct budget support for the year to \$225 million. In addition, the United States remains the largest single donor to UNRWA, having contributed \$237.8 million to date in 2010.

Nevertheless, because these resolutions in the U.S. view do not further the goal of promoting peace and security between the parties but only serve to sustain the climate of distrust, they are structurally opposed (VP 2003). The continuous emphasis on the commitment to the human rights of the Palestinian people and the constant highlighting of the American financial contributions to that cause then only seem to be used as justifications of a policy that is rather unusual, both considering the claim to American exceptionalist values and the lonely position of the United States on these issues in the UN as compared to the voting of other nations.

Outspoken criticism towards the UN itself is also clear: according to the United States, this institutional bias towards Palestine even undermines the credibility of the United Nations

as “an honest broker in facilitating a resolution of the Middle East conflict” (VP 2008). The U.S. also calls on other nation to actively follow its opposition: in 2004, regarding the resolution “Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine,” the explanation of the vote read: “the United States believes this Committee should be abolished and actively lobbies other countries to withdraw their support for the annual resolution renewing the Committee’s mandate” (VP 2004).

Though the alleged UN bias towards Palestine is the overarching motive for the U.S. opposing the UN resolutions on this issue, other arguments are occasionally added. In 2002, explaining the American opposition against the resolution concerned with investigating Israeli practices in the occupied territories, the argument of UN-bias was supplemented with the statement that

[although] the United States is acutely aware of the suffering of the Palestinian people, supporting resolutions so detached from reality cannot help alleviate that suffering or contribute to a solution of the problem. Also, the funds expended on the work of the Special Committee would be better spent to provide direct assistance to needy. (VP 2002)

In addition to the familiar argument of U.S. commitment to the wellbeing of the Palestinian people, this also shows a concern for UN efficiency. A similar argument about effectivity also appeared in the substantiation of the American vote on the same resolution the following year, in stating that the Special Committee is excessive because there is also a Geneva-based rapporteur with the same mandate, and therefore not conforming to proper UN management of its resources: “the United States also found it regrettable that this Committee would spend its time and energy reflexively endorsing the same set of resolutions year after year for some thirty-five years, but do nothing to improve the situation on the ground” (VP 2003). Also in 2003, the U.S. emphasized the costs of \$3 million a year of a committee which is allegedly biased towards Palestine in substantiating its opposition. This concern with UN efficiency and effectivity was also seen in chapter three, and can be linked to the fact that the United States is the provides the largest part of the UN budget, and might therefore be easily frustrated by a lack of efficiency.

More recently, the argument that the Israel-Palestine conflict is a bilateral issue that should be solved through direct negotiations between the two states, without UN involvement, has also been added to the argument of institutional bias, for example in 2010 substantiation

of the vote on the division for Palestinian rights of the secretariat, or in 2012, on the resolution regarding the status of Palestine in the UN:

The United States believes the only way to establish a Palestinian state is through direct negotiations between the parties to resolve all permanent-status issues. Moreover, Israel and the Palestinians repeatedly have affirmed their obligation to resolve all issues through direct negotiations. The United States continues to oppose unilateral actions in international bodies or treaties to circumvent or prejudge the outcome of permanent-status issues, including Palestinian statehood.

In this argument, however, there seems to be a double standard: on the one hand, there is an emphasis on sovereignty and bilateral negotiations, yet on the other hand a willingness of the U.S. to be a part of those negotiations is expressed.

The United States has not been alone in its allegations of institutional discrimination against Israel in the UN. In 2006, Secretary General Kofi Annan expressed his worries for the Human Rights Council's "disproportionate focus on violations by Israel. Not that Israel should be given a free pass. Absolutely not. But the Council should give the same attention to grave violations committed by other states as well" ("Secretary-General Urges Human Rights Activists"). The following year, Annan's successor Ban Ki-moon also voiced his disappointment with the Council "[singling] out Israel as the only specific regional item on its agenda, given the range and scope of allegations of human rights violations throughout the world" ("Secretary-General Welcomes Agreement"). Furthermore, in its 2007 report, Human Rights Watch stated that the UNHCR focused disproportionately on Israel – it has, for example, only for Israel's human rights record a permanent agenda item – and failed to act against other states violating human rights ("The UN Human Rights Council").

With this in mind, the American opposition to practically any UN-resolution concerning the Israeli-Palestinian issue seems somewhat fair. Yet this does not explain why the U.S. is so lonely in this position, and that this issue presents a major divergence between the American vote and those of almost all other nations. It would be unlikely to state that the majority of the world simply does not recognize or acknowledge this problem of institutional bias. Rather, the special relationship between the United States and Israel, as briefly mentioned at the beginning of this paragraph, might come into play here. Without going into the complex American-Israeli relationship too far, the fact is that there is a strong bond between the two nations, one in which there is an influential pro-Israel lobby in the United

States, and in which Israel is the number one recipient of American foreign aid (Sharp 26). The strategic importance of having Israel as an ally in the region could also play a part in opposing certain UN human rights resolutions concerning Palestine. Indeed, it has been argued that geopolitical costs and benefits calculations play a major part in the United States' support of Israel, and that the material costs of foreign aid as well as the more intangible price of damage to the relationship with other Arab nations are exceeded by the military, economic, and political benefits of the American-Israeli relationship (Eisenstadt and Pollock). To some extent, this can be seen as one of the very few instances where the influence of American exceptionalism is limited: the bond with Israel leads the U.S. to vote against human rights issues when they favor Palestine. On the other hand, however, the American exceptionalist framework can still be recognized in the cultural and political commonalities and religious beliefs that are at the root of the U.S.-Israel relationship: in supporting Israel, the United States is in a way protecting its own values and beliefs. While many factors thus possibly influence the United States' votes on UN issues regarding Israel and Palestine, the red thread of American exceptionalism is still visible.

4.3.3. Trade and development

On the UN resolutions designated by the State Department as important to the U.S. that are related to trade and development, a brief discussion suffices. Like most UN member states, the United States supports the majority of resolutions in this area. The explanations of the American positions in this sphere are mostly rather non-surprising statements such as being committed to the mobilization of domestic resources for development (VP 2001), an Africa-led agenda to solve the problems of that continent (VP 2002) or “efforts to increase technology and innovation of all types, and its potential in developing countries to increase rural incomes while reducing hunger and poverty” (VP 2009).

A noteworthy exception is the resolution on International Trade and Development, which made the important votes list each year between 2004 and 2007, and which the U.S. was one of the very few nations to vote against each year – only in 2007 was the vote more divided, with 126-48(US)-7 as the result. The substantiation of the American position was also roughly the same every year, and held that “although the United States endorses many of the principles enunciated in the resolution [...] it strongly believes that the United Nations should not pronounce on issues under negotiation in the World Trade Organization” (VP 2004). In 2005, it was added that “although the United States endorses trade liberalization and economic development throughout the world, it views good governance as the foundation

upon which trade can work to build economic prosperity.” As this resolution enabled the UN Conference on Trade and Development to monitor and assess the WTO, the issue at stake here for the U.S. might be possible UN interference in its domestic affairs. This apparently weighed heavily enough to oppose the resolution, despite the pronounced commitment to free trade and economic development.

Similarly, in 2005, the United States opposed the resolution “Unilateral Economic Measures as a Means of Political and Economic Coercion Against Developing Countries” on grounds of sovereignty and UN interference in domestic affairs, stating that the resolution “serves as a direct challenge to the prerogative of sovereign states to conduct freely their commercial relations.” A similar argument was used a year earlier, then as a side note in the explanation of support for a resolution on the International Conference on Financing for Development, stating that “the United States opposes global taxes as a means for financing development, that each country must decide how to raise funds for official development assistance.” It can be argued that these votes show the priority assigned to the protection of American sovereignty and domestic values: while the importance of free global trade is recognized, the former takes priority when the two collide.

4.3.4. United Nations’ internal workings

Fourthly, a smaller part of the issues designated by the State Department as important are concerned with the workings of the UN itself. Most of these were consensus actions regarding UN budgets that the U.S. supported. When the American position was further expanded on, this generally had a bearing on concerns and arguments about the efficiency and effectivity of the UN and a focus on measurable results. In 2003, for example, the U.S. voted against the Provisional Program of Work for the Second Committee, citing ineffectiveness as a reason: “the Program of Work rearranged but did nothing to reform the Second Committee Agenda.” In the consensus actions, the 2001 Program Budget was supported precisely because the budget “for the first time, reflected a results-based budgeting format, which should enhance program evaluation and monitoring efforts” and “requests for comprehensive reviews of UN activities” (VP 2001). The 2003 “Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly” resolution was supported by the United States, though the explanation of the position emphasized the American disappointment about the efforts and commitments of other member states to improve the effectiveness of the General Assembly: “While the United States joined consensus on this resolution [...] The United States believed member states

should have accepted bolder initiatives to revitalize its work, or risk the Assembly sliding into irrelevancy.”

In 2001, the U.S. expressed its support for the Scale of Assessments resolution, but for a reason different than efficiency or effectivity: “The United States was able to join consensus on this resolution because, in the end, it did not introduce ways to tighten the application of Article 19, such as by more frequent calculation of arrears, and did not adopt other sanctions, such as interest charges, to press countries to pay their assessed contributions.” By now a familiar motive, the most important concern here was sovereignty and checking UN interference in domestic affairs.

The 2007 resolution “Questions Relating to the Proposed Program Budget for the Biennium 2008-2009” was opposed – only – by the United States, but also for a different reason than most other decisions regarding UN internal affairs. The resolution, reaffirming budgetary procedures and methodologies, was too open-ended in the American view, and the U.S. feared that it would allow funding the Durban Review Conference – which according to the United States is anti-Israel – out of the UN regular budget. The American position towards the Israel-Palestine issue, as discussed before, thus also affects the U.S. policies in other UN areas.

4.3.5. *Security*

On the fifth major topic that can be distinguished within the important votes, that of security, American positions and voting practices have differed strongly. The overview in appendix I shows a near perfect balance between yes and no votes, and it is difficult to find a pattern in the U.S. votes on security-related UN issues.

Regarding nuclear weapons, the United States has voted in favor of the resolutions “Renewed Determination Toward the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons” and “Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty” for several consecutive years. The substantiations of the position are unsurprising, and mainly express the United States’ general commitment to the goal of a world without nuclear weapons is always underscored (VP 2009). One explanation specifically is worth noting in the context of American exceptionalism: the substantiation of the yes-vote on the 2010 “Hague Code of Conduct vs. Ballistic Missile Proliferation” resolution, which stressed the United States’ “active participation and *leading* role in the organization.” Still, there are several other UN resolutions concerned with nonproliferation that were opposed by the United States. When examining the American position and explanations of the votes more closely, it appears that the reason for opposition is

often to some extent concerned with sovereignty and an effort to limit UN interference. The 2001 “Compliance with the Anti-Ballistic Missile” treaty, for example, was opposed because, in the U.S. view, “issues related to bilateral treaties like the ABM Treaty are best resolved between the treaty parties themselves.” Similarly, the United States voted against the 2001 nuclear disarmament resolution, because it called for negotiations that would “risk interfering with promising initiatives in other forums.” The “Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons” resolution of 2002, then, was opposed because “such negotiations would risk interfering with the U.S. nuclear reductions policy,” indicating an effort to keep the United Nations from interfering in American domestic policies. An exception on this theme are the 2001 and 2002 “Risk of Nuclear Proliferation in the Middle East” resolutions, which the United States opposed due to an unfair and unbalanced focus on the activities of Israel, “while omitting any reference to other issues relating to the problem of nuclear weapons proliferation in the region” (VP 2001). Here, again, the special relationship with Israel pops up.

The argument of sovereignty and keeping the UN out of American domestic affairs can be recognized also in the topic of international arms trade. The United States opposed the 2006 “Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons” resolution, because this would implement mandatory review conferences. According to the United States, these have never “produced tangible results, therefore, the United States refuses to commit to another review conference”. It appears that this line of reasoning disappeared after the early 2000s. In 2009 and 2011, the United States voted in favor of the “Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons” resolutions, for example, without a clear explanation on the change in position, but only addressing the American commitment to a safe and secure world without nuclear weapons (VP 2011).

4.3.6. Human rights

Finally, a majority of the issues designated as important by the State Department is concerned with human rights. Although the resolutions and decisions differ widely in the specific topic at stake – they include the promotion of democracy, education, racism, women- and children’s rights, human trafficking and torture, and people with disabilities – human rights can be seen as the central theme.

In the light of American exceptionalism and the United States’ claim of being the major defender of human rights, one might expect it to vote in favor of these resolutions in the UN, but this is not always the case: as can be seen in Appendix I, the U.S. vote in the General

Assembly on human rights issues appears rather inconsistent. Nevertheless, at closer examination, a number of patterns can be distinguished.

Each year, several resolutions regarding the human rights situation in a specific country are introduced in the General Assembly, for example the “Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar” resolution. The U.S. has always voted in favor of these resolutions, and also (co)-sponsored a considerable share. The substantiations of these votes reflect the American commitment to the promotion of freedom, democracy, and peace, in fairly general statements such as “the Iranian Government’s repeated violations of Iranians’ human rights – as exemplified by the imprisoning of parliamentarians, journalists, and students – continued to be a matter of concern for the United States” (VP 2001). Or, on Burma:

In supporting and cosponsoring this resolution, the United States continued to call on the junta to release [...] all political prisoners immediately and unconditionally; to allow the National League for Democracy to re-open its offices nationwide; to engage the democratic opposition in a meaningful dialogue leading to genuine national reconciliation and the establishment of democracy; and to respect and ensure the free exercise of the fundamental human rights of the people of Burma. (VP 2005)

Again, it can be seen here, as well as in the case of Iran, that the United States classifies human rights to the UN in terms of its own exceptionalist framework of democracy and freedom of speech, which then gives guidance to policies by indicating the conditions and circumstances for active intervention.

The U.S. did oppose the no action motions regarding the human rights situation in Sudan in 2004 and 2005, Uzbekistan in 2006, and Iran in 2007 and 2008. If passed, these motions block resolutions in which the GA expresses its concern and criticism of the human rights violation in a certain nation from consideration. On the resolution regarding Uzbekistan, for example, the American explanation of the vote read:

The citizens of Uzbekistan do not enjoy the basic freedoms of expression, association, and peaceful assembly, among other things. The United States believes that it is the responsibility of UN member states to speak out for the citizens of these countries and against the violations of their human rights, and human rights resolutions should get a substantive vote. (VP 2006)

Similarly, regarding the no action motion on the human rights situation in Iran, the U.S. stated that “the Human Rights Council, which should be the world’s premier human rights body, has

failed to hold states accountable for their human rights violations” (VP 2007). The U.S. opposition on these resolutions thus still fits the American exceptionalist framework: in expressing its disagreement while also criticizing the UNHRC and those member states who do support these no action motions, it is used by the U.S. to posit itself as a major defender of human rights.

On other UN human rights resolutions, ones that do not appear on the agenda each year and are more scattered in their specific topic, the American vote is less constant. On some issues, the exceptionalist framework can quite clearly be recognized, for example in votes on resolutions regarding the promoting and consolidating of democracy. The substantiations again and again explain the U.S. commitment to defending democracy abroad, but also indicate a willingness to actively pursue this pledge, for example in asserting that “the United States believes that increasing the number of democracies worldwide and strengthening fragile democracies will promote the observance of internationally accepted human rights standards and democratic principles and send strong signals to those who violate these standards” (VP 2004). An element of democracy being a fundamentally good value or condition for progress is also often included, for example in the explanation of the vote in favor of the 2001 “Promoting and Consolidating New or Restored Democracies” consensus action resolution:

In the U.S. view, a profound democratic revolution, grounded in the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, has reshaped the world political order and helped secure global economic prosperity during the past quarter-century. Democracy ranks high among the fundamental values that have helped to create this freer, more stable, and more prosperous global arena. It is the U.S. view that this growth and consolidation of democracy can become one of the greatest achievements and most important legacies of the United Nations.

By expressing its commitment to the promotion of human rights, while simultaneously presenting them in particularly American terms, the exceptionalist framework thus not only shapes policies but also increases their legitimacy to the rest of the Western world.

Similarly in line with American exceptionalist expectations, the U.S. voted in favor of the “Elimination of All Forms of Religious Intolerance” resolution. References to the value of American history and beliefs, and suggestions to the idea of the United States being an example to the rest of the world, are used explain the position on this resolution: “Religious

freedom is a principal cornerstone for the United States. Immigrants settled in the United States seeking freedom from religious discrimination; freedom to practice religion is the first amendment to the U.S. Constitution” (VP 2004). Yet from 2006 to 2010, the United States voted in opposition of the “Combating Defamation of Religions” resolution. While the explanation of the vote again highlighted commitment to religious freedom and the United States’ history of being built by immigrants seeking religious freedom, the resolution was consistently opposed. In 2006, the reason was an alleged focus on Islam:

[by] drawing attention to only one religion [Islam], the United States believed that this resolution performed a disservice to the whole concept of religious tolerance and pluralism, and it failed to take sufficient account of freedom of expression short of that inciting violence.

The following years, the same resolution was opposed on other grounds, namely that efforts to prohibit “defamation of religions” have been used to declare legitimate expression as illegal and punishable, and that the resolution therefore prohibits free speech (VP 2008):

While appearing in name to promote tolerance, implementation of this concept actually fosters intolerance and has served to justify restrictions on human rights and fundamental freedoms such as the freedoms of religion and expression. The United States is deeply committed to addressing concerns of intolerance and discrimination and is eager to work with the cosponsors and the rest of the UNGA to address the root concerns behind the resolution in the spirit of consensus. (VP 2009)

More U.S. votes in UN human rights resolutions seem to go against American exceptionalist beliefs. In a number of these cases, American opposition is on the grounds of protecting national sovereignty. The 2002 and 2003 UNGA resolution on the Rights of the Child, for example, were opposed due to the assertions in the resolution that the Convention should be the standard for defining a nation’s children’s rights, and this “raises concerns under the U.S. system of federalism” (VP 2003). Furthermore, the danger of the resolution’s proposal to abolish juvenile death penalty for the American system of capital punishment was also recognized in the no-vote. It can be argued that in voting against a resolution that would enable more UN interference in domestic affairs, the United States tries to protect its own values and culture. A similar argument on national sovereignty was used on the resolutions “Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities” and the “Rights to Food,” although then to substantiate American support on the issues. Though joining consensus on the

resolution regarding disabled people, the U.S. position on the issue was explicated with the assertion that “the best way for countries to protect the rights of their citizens with disabilities is to focus on strengthening their national legislative frameworks” (VP 2006). It thus appears that on these human rights issues, whether voting for or against, numerous considerations other than the promotion of peace, democracy, and freedom influence the American voting practices and are at times prioritized.

Conclusion

From the American voting practices in the UN as discussed here, several conclusions can be drawn. First, that it cannot be said, like many critics of American exceptionalism have, that the U.S. usually goes it alone in the UN or regularly obstructs: it does not vote against resolutions significantly more than other Western countries, it ratifies treaties and resolution more than it does not and it often joins consensus, indicating multilateralism and cooperation.

Secondly, that the American exceptionalist framework can be seen underlying U.S. policies in the UN in general – and not just those instances of American noncompliance or non-ratification. The various aspects of the exceptionalist notion appear all throughout the substantiations of the United States’ voting, even in the cases where the U.S. voted differently than one might expect from a country that prides itself on being a defender of human rights. The Cuba embargo for the sake of defending the rights to freedom and democracy of the Cubans; the emphasis on the need for bilateral negotiations to achieve a just and durable peace between Israel and Palestine; the pressing for more efficiency and direct results in the internal workings of the UN itself; allusions to the United States’ own great history and culture; the many references to national sovereignty and the protection of the own domestic values and beliefs; and the constant mentions of the value of democracy for progress throughout all of the six themes, all fit the American exceptionalist framework. It works in different extents, though: it is very clear in the U.S. support for a majority of UN resolutions on peace, freedom, and human rights, and more subtle when it underlies opposition against resolution that one would expect the U.S. to be in favor of. It also has multiple purposes: it is here seen to explain and justify certain policy choices, but it is also used to promote the universality of American national interests, and can be seen as a strategy to increase the legitimacy of certain policy choices, and thus as a means to increase United States’ soft power. Again, there is also the political framing of human rights: the focus tends to be on matters such as freedom of press, elections, and democracy. This is striking, considering that other countries tend to use different frames. The United Kingdom, for example, as seen in

chapter three, tends to address the social-economic aspects of human rights, such as poverty and education.

While these explanations of the U.S. position sound fair and seem to perfectly justify the American position, still, something seems off, something that becomes clear when noting the fact that the United State is so often alone or in heavy minority in its position. If the objections are apparently so significant and weighty that they lead the U.S. to vote against issues of human rights, why do other nations, and especially Western countries, not do the same? How effective are the American policies, then? The Cuba embargo, for example, is framed as a policy to promote democracy, but it is very much the question if freezing all trade and travel is a productive means to do so – the fact that the rest of the world does not have an embargo in place suggests otherwise.

It would be unconvincing to argue that the U.S. is apparently simply the only nation to recognize the faults in these resolutions. While it has been suggested that certain costs and benefits calculations might serve as a limitation to the guiding effects of American exceptionalism – for example regarding the costs of the Cuba embargo or the strategic benefits of supporting Israel in the UN – it is difficult to argue how voting against the resolution on Rights of the Child or the advancement of women, for example, would be beneficial in terms of economic or military gains. Considering also the continuous iterations of the U.S. commitment to freedom and democracy in the substantiations of the American positions, are the arguments seen here maybe only an attempt to justify a policy that is not quite in line with the image of the United States as the global defender of human rights? Consequentially, is American exceptionalism then only a rhetorical justification, a means to legitimize certain policies and behavior that is actually motivated by very different reasons, and not much else?

The contrary is argued here: the complications sketched can be said to exactly show the strength of American exceptionalism in U.S. policies in the UN. For the United States, the explanations as mentioned above are apparently reason enough to oppose those resolutions. Rather than arguing that the cases of American opposition towards human rights-related resolutions show that American exceptionalism does not always play a role in United States' UN policies, it could also be stated that it does so in a specific way: it assigns priority to certain exceptionalist beliefs in a plurality stimuli and considerations in U.S. foreign policy, and hereby gives guidance to American voting behavior in the UN.

CHAPTER V

AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM IN PRACTICE,

PART II: PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OF UN-REPRESENTATIVES

The sources studied so far – UN records, news reports, presidential addresses, and substantiations of voting – remain very formal. After all, they are primarily concerned with a nation's official and final diplomatic position on a particular issue, and do not reflect the different considerations and motivations. In addition, they do not tell anything about the practices of negotiations and of the style and priorities of American officials therein. Therefore, to give a more complete image of the practices in the UN, the role and position of the United States therein, and the dynamics of American exceptionalism in this, interviews with five former Dutch UN representatives were conducted about their experiences negotiating with American diplomats in the United Nations. They all have several years of experience working in the United Nations, speaking in the General Assembly, participating in UN negotiations and hereby directly encountering American diplomats. For this reason, they are able to provide a direct account of the practices and proceedings of the United Nations, and the role of the United States therein, in addition to the rather static information as presented in voting substantiations and official UN and State Department records. It is not the purpose here to present the official view of Dutch UN-representatives on American behavior and policies in the United Nations: the interviewees have been explicitly asked about their own views and individual experiences. In this way, their accounts add a more personal element to the otherwise strictly anonymous primary sources.

The process was as follows. In the “UN Member States On the Record”-archive, the index of the UNGA proceedings for speakers representing the Netherlands was searched. Those delegates speaking on behalf of the European Union, for example, were thus excluded. Then, in order to only include the more experienced representatives, the results were narrowed down to those officials who had spoken at the UN at least two times, between 2001 and 2015 – as this is the time period of this research. Out of the resulting list of names, the contact information of fifteen people could be obtained through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They were contacted through e-mail, and requested for an interview about their personal experiences in the United Nations. Out of those fifteen, ten officials responded positively, although five eventually replied to follow-up messages to schedule an interview.

Those are the five former UN representatives whose contributions are included here. Due to possible attribution of personal answers to the official position to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Netherlands in the United Nations, one official requested to remain anonymous in this study.

The interviews are purposely presented in one piece: scattering the different contributions throughout this research as confirmations or refutations of the literature and primary sources might have weakened the unison of the different accounts, and the nuances in the different statements might have been overshadowed.

The interviews as presented here have been translated from Dutch to English.

The Interviewees

Eran Nagan was part of the Human Rights Department at the Dutch Foreign Ministry between 2006 and 2009. In that period, he was part of the negotiations in the UNGA Third Committee three times. His contributions focused on human rights. In addition, Mr. Nagan was part of the Dutch delegation negotiating the UN Arms Trade Treaty between 2011 and 2014. As of June 2015, he will be part of the Dutch Permanent Representation in New York, as official for humanitarian affairs, protection of civilians, and the Dutch contact for UNICEF.

Ceta Noland was the legal advisor for the Dutch UN delegation between 2008 and 2011. Having represented the European Union in the UN the three years before, in this capacity, she spoke in the Sixth Committee of the General Assembly seven times, on issues ranging from measures to eliminate international terrorism to international trade law and the application of the principle of universal jurisdiction. During her employment in New York, she was involved in bilateral negotiations with American diplomats almost daily.

Dirk Jan Nieuwenhuis was the First Secretary of the Permanent Mission of the Netherlands to the United Nations between 2003 and 2007. With a focus on development, humanitarian assistance, and human rights, he contributed to the work in the Second and Third Committee. Mr. Nieuwenhuis is currently the Deputy Chief of Mission for the Dutch embassy in Madrid.

Jeroen Steeghs was the Head of Economic and Social Section for the Dutch Permanent Representation to the UN. He was active in the UN Economic and Social Council, Second and Third Committee, between 2006 and 2009.

The anonymous interviewee, who henceforth will be designated as official X, was part of the Dutch delegation to the United Nations between in 2011 and 2012. She took part in the

negotiations of the General Assembly's Fifth Committee, which is concerned with the UN budget and finances.

On the tension between idealism and realism

When asked about the possible tension between a foreign policy for a significant part based on idealistic principles and realist policy interests, official X answered that she recognizes the idealism in the American rhetoric, but notes that it is important to take into consideration the audience. She states that a rhetoric of American exceptionalism might be effective to convince a U.S. domestic audience, but that it is probably not an effective way to defend U.S. interests in international politics. In her experience, once it comes to negotiations and the defending of American interests, the U.S. acts very realistically, and is not different in this than other nations. "There certainly is a particular American mentality in their policies, but one that is very much driven by the underlying interests." An idealistic rhetoric does not change that. Although, she states, interests can certainly be motivated by idealistic considerations, once important interests are on the line, a realistic, no-nonsense stance will be taken on in internal actions. Diplomats try to pursue their interests in the most effective way, and official X believes that a rhetoric of American exceptionalism would not always be the most successful for this. In fact, she believes that when it comes to human rights, Europeans are actually much more idealistically minded than the United States: "We are always the ones to go on about human rights dialogues – we highly value those beliefs."

Ceta Noland agreed, and states that she did not believe American foreign policy to be largely based on idealism: "Just like for any other nation, moral deliberations play a role, but geopolitical and economic considerations are usually decisive." Eran Nagan, too, argued that "as a diplomat, you are first and foremost concerned with representing the interests of your government. That is the case for Americans as much as for a Russian or Senegalese diplomat. Sure, those interests might sometimes coincide with the spreading of democracy, defending human rights – all those wonderful ideals that are certainly a basis for American foreign policy. But honestly, there have been moments in the American history of friction there. Everyone who looks at the history of the United States and American foreign policy would have to conclude that it has not always been a case of peace, safety, and prosperity, or the spreading of democracy and human rights. There have been moments of strong idealism from the United States, and times when other interests were more important."

Dirk Jan Nieuwenhuis also concurred. When asked about the idealism in American foreign policy, he says that he did sometimes recognize the idea of a God-given mission to

spread freedom and democracy in the American stance towards the United Nations, but doubts whether the U.S. is more idealistic in their policies than other nations. He sees ideology, just like realism, as one of the factors influencing a nation's policies, and not just for the United States: "In the Netherlands, we are also idealistic regarding human rights, international law, development, and so are a lot of other nations. Then there are also states that have an ideology that is very much the opposite. China, for example, is very fundamental about non-intervention. The question of Tibet, the refusal to recognize Kosovo – in a way, that is also idealism. Egypt, for example, is always very active in representing the interests of the Arabic world in the UN, which it also partly does out of idealistic motives originating in its own history, religion, and politics."

Jeroen Steeghs, however, has a different opinion. When asked whether he recognized the alleged strains of idealism in American foreign policy, he says that this is very much the case: "They have an own vision and carry out a message of 'our way is the best way'." He states that other P5 members also do this, but to a much lesser extent than the United States: "In the Security Council, Russia and China especially tend to focus on protecting their sovereignty, something the U.S. is less concerned with. The United States is much more focused on carrying out its norms and values, and distinguishes itself from other P5 members in this."

On the United States-United Nations relationship

Regarding the question if it can be argued that the United States uses the United Nations merely as an instrument for its own foreign policy, as is often asserted by critics of American exceptionalism, the answers were alike: this happens, but the U.S. is certainly not the only nation to do so. As Noland says, "practically all nations see the UN as an instrument for their foreign policies. It is true that the United States, in some cases, does not necessarily need the UN to pursue its goals, but in my experience, it almost always tried to use the UN-instrument, partly because that can increase the legitimacy, and thus the global acceptance, and therefore the impact of a certain action." Dirk Jan Nieuwenhuis agrees, and says that it has absolutely been the case that the U.S. has used the UN as an instrument, but thinks that this has more to do with political realities and the size of the United States as a world power, than ideology. Official X, too, concedes with this point. "Our 'enlightened' Netherlands might put its short term interests aside and make a sacrifice for the sake of maintaining the UN as the key multilateral body per se, but the U.S. would not do that, and is not unique in that. Many other major nations, France and Great Britain, too, use the UN strategically. They use it

when they can. Working on keeping the multilateral system healthy and investing in its institutions is typically something that Scandinavian nations and the Netherlands do, because it is in our interest to make sure that organizations and institutions exist that effectively enforce the rules. Whereas it is our principle – although self-interested – to work on a healthy UN, many large countries do not have the strength of multilateral systems as their prime interest, they merely use them to achieve their objectives.” Jeroen Steeghs makes a very similar point, when he states that “while we see the UN much more as a global public good, as something valuable, independently of our own national interests, the United States sees the UN – and I think all international organizations – as an instrument for their foreign policy. You see this in international treaties – the U.S. always has had difficulties with ratifying and signing international treaties, they only do so when it suits them. For the past twenty years, as to the environment and climate change, for example, they have barely signed anything. I think it is Congress rather than the administration that is greatly opposed to these kinds of international treaties. I think a fear prevails of the U.S. binding itself to all kinds of matters, leading to less space of maneuver internationally.” Still, Dirk Jan Nieuwenhuis says, Western nations are much inclined to join the Americans and do business with them: “despite the fact that they use their power politics like that, their ideals are usually closer to what is important to us, too.”

From questions on the position of the United States in the UN and the American attitude towards the UN, a complex and rather paradoxical image emerged, similar to the findings in chapter two about the U.S.-UN relationship. Cooperation and multilateralism appear to intertwine and clash with isolationism and putting American interests above all others. On the one hand, all interviewees state that the U.S. is very cooperative in its negotiations. Official X says that in the committees in which she negotiated, the United States took a middle ground position, and did not try to push its way through or ignore the UN. Still, she says, while the U.S. will first consult the United Nations if it wants to get a policy through, “if this does not succeed, they will put their interests before those of the UN. But to be honest, when push comes to shove, I think that is the case for most nations.” Eran Nagan adds to this that the United States also benefits from regulations and cooperation: “they of course understand that once the U.S. goes it alone in the UN, it is going to be difficult to call another nation to order when it does something similar.” On the other hand, then, it appears that the U.S. is less willing to compromise than other nations. Dirk Jan Nieuwenhuis says that a smaller, or more pragmatic country, would make concessions for the sake of consensus, but due to its ideological and political stakes, and the fact that it is the main world power, the

United States would be less willing to compromise. Besides, he says, there is a number of themes on which the Americans do not want to compromise in any case, and then they just use their veto power or withdraw. He cites the example of the treaty on the Rights of the Child, which the United States fundamentally opposes: “They say, ‘if we want to recruit someone for the American army straight out of college, we do not want them characterized as child soldiers by international law.’ They are very fundamental in that.” This position was also extended in the American opposition towards the International Criminal Court, Nieuwenhuis says. “That has much more to do with on the one hand, a practical consequence for the operational freedom of the American army, and on the other hand, a sense of being a major power with certain principles, and no one can do anything about it.” Touching on a similar issue of paradoxical attitudes towards the UN, Nieuwenhuis notes the arrears issue. He says that he thinks that not paying the contribution is more of a practical means of pressure than an expression of a sense of superiority: “They want to see certain things done – less waste; spending more money on priorities, and then use their contribution as a practical means to pressure the UN to spend its money in a certain way. It is not that they believe that they are too big and important to pay their dues.” Still, he says, there is something behind this, something that is connected to the idea that U.S. sees itself as a founding father of the UN: “You see that the UN, especially during the Cold War, developed into a place where it is not always the American interests that are of paramount importance. If you then on the one hand pretend to establish a global institute of values and cooperation – *liberté, égalité, fraternité* – and then on the other hand, when you cannot get it your way in that institution, you start criticizing it and do not pay your contribution anymore, or decide to organize things in a different way if you cannot get a Security Council mandate... then that is of course very paradoxical. But that is also the failure of the United Nations itself. The United States is just as guilty of this as Russia, but the fact that the UN did not succeed in preventing violence in Syria’s civil war, or solving the Middle East conflict between Israel and Palestine.. That is as much the blame of the UN as a community, as it is of the major member states.”

The position of the United States towards the United Nations is also linked to how the U.S. views the UN, and international organizations in general. Jeroen Steeghs states that for many Europeans, the United Nations is a very self-evident institution: “There is a sense that if you want to arrange things on a global level, you need a United Nations and you cannot get around that. That is not the case with the United States. It surprised me, sometimes, how such a nation can believe that it can do everything by itself and does not need others.”

The interviewees also regularly stress the importance of making a clear distinction between diplomats and politicians in evaluating the American stance towards the UN. Eran Nagan says that he thinks that the U.S. State Department is more likely to see the added value of taking action through the United Nations and the efforts to forge a broad coalition. “But the Pentagon could view it very differently. They may be more focused on results, but not necessarily on the long term. If they think they can do something, and it is in the direct American interest, they might do it, without thinking about the long-term, or relationships, the effect on coalitions and alliances, and the rest of the world.” Dirk Jan Nieuwenhuis, too, speaks of the differences between diplomats and politicians: “The American diplomats accredited at the UN take their job very seriously, and work very hard to pursue the American political interests. They are like the oilers of the UN machine: they aim at compromise and focus on how to move forward. They are not concerned with ‘let’s use our superpower-veto as much as possible!’ American politicians, however, sometimes express an attitude of ‘the UN is nice and all, but if it does not do what I say and what I want, I will get my way somewhere else.’” Jeroen Steeghs concedes with this point. He thinks that it is not necessarily American diplomats or the administration that defines the U.S. position towards the UN, but especially Congress. It was Congress that blocked contributions to the UN in the past, something he thinks has to do with the attitude towards the UN in general. “You know, certain Republicans who think that the UN is on the brink of attacking America. It is more a domestic policy problem than the administration would like it to be. It is the skepticism *there* about the UN, a sense of ‘why do we, as a big nation, have to consider the UN, are we not the strongest, the most powerful, can we not do whatever we want?’, which certainly plays a part.” Eran Nagan, too, argues that if anything, the skepticism towards the UN and an image of the UN as an instrument for U.S. foreign policy comes for a large part from the Republican and right-wing side of American domestic politics. “They just see the UN as a money gobbling, bureaucratic monster, that only obstructs the United States.” Nagan recalls his experiences when negotiating the UN Arms Trade Treaty: “FOX News, for example, was eager to provide a podium for the National Rifle Association, who were incredibly fiercely opposing that treaty. They had a campaign based on complete nonsense, stating that the UN treaty would affect Americans’ individual gun ownership, which it did not. They started a smear campaign against the treaty in the media, and were able to put a lot of pressure on the government. So American diplomats really had to compromise – after all, Obama also does not want to completely antagonize the NRA. The treaty was eventually established, but still has not been ratified by the United States, and probably will not be any time soon. So yes, there are

elements in the American political spectrum that are very hostile towards the UN, indeed, for American exceptionalist reasons, and maybe also because they feel they are being hindered, and they want to protect their values against something so strange and alien.”

While Congress and domestic politics especially are seen to exert strong influence on the U.S. position towards the UN, it appears that an administration can also do so, in its appointments of representatives. Official X notes that George W. Bush appointed some not specifically remarkable people as UN ambassadors, and then John Bolton, who was very anti-UN and seemed to be placed there to throw the cat among the pigeons. Obama, however, has chosen some of his own advisors for this job, most notably Susan Rice and Samantha Power. The fact that he choose people who are close to him sends a clear signal about the role he sees for the United Nations, according to X , as they are the ones who have to ensure maximum implementation of American policy within the context of the UN. Under Obama, the UN is on a pleasant course with the United States, she says. “They had Susan Rice, of course, and now Samantha Power. Those are very multilateral-minded people, who seek cooperation, and give diplomacy a much greater significance. Under Hillary Clinton, too, of course, and John Kerry: those are heavy weights within the Democratic Party.” So while a change in administration can certainly alter positions, and lessen or create friction in the U.S.-UN relationship, this is not to the extreme extent that is sometimes sketched, official X says.

When asked about a possible attitude of superiority of American diplomats in the UN, answers differed. According to Dirk Jan Nieuwenhuis, such a thing is very noticeable. He said that Americans have an image of being a super power and being able to impose its will, and that they certainly behave differently than other member states. However, he saw Russia and China adopting similar attitudes towards the United Nations, and therefore states that political, military, and economic power has a bigger influence on this than ideology or values. Ceta Noland also argued that the United States is a permanent member of the Security Council, and therefore cannot simply be equated with other non-P5 members in their position towards the UN, as they by definition have a superior position in the UN-system. She states that there are multiple power blocs within the United Nations, and that the U.S. is one of them, but so is the European Union. Similarly, official X notes that “the United States acts like the kind of country that it is.” Jeroen Steeghs says that “it is not that they are arrogant, but American diplomats do carry out a certain vision, of American values, stability, democracy. You can see that very clearly, but not in an arrogant way, I have never experienced that.” Rather, “the Americans, at least the diplomats, were very much aware of the power of their nation and the trickle-down effects of their policies.” Similarly, looking back on her

experiences with American diplomats in negotiations about the UN budget, official X says that if they really wanted to make a major point, Americans could bring in great political weight and heavy diplomatic pressure, and “when certain issues came into danger, they really did that sometimes.” But, she says, “I have to say that it struck me that Americans usually handled that role very carefully.”

Regarding the leadership role that the United States claims to embody, Ceta Noland qualifies this assertion: “In the Security Council, and the UN in general, it is often the United States to take the lead when a crisis breaks out somewhere, but not always. Other Security Council members, like the United Kingdom or France, and also non-permanent members, regularly initiate action to address a precarious situation.” Official X, too, asserts that “the United States still calls the shots in many places, but that is not as self-evident anymore as it was before, I think.” In the same vein, Eran Nagan states that after the Cold War, there was a period of clear U.S. dominance, but that today, it is not self-evident anymore for the vast majority of countries to automatically follow the American direction. Still, he says, the American position is very important in UN processes: “A lot of nations look to the United States for guidance, thinking, if the Americans approve of it, it is probably okay, and vice versa. Moreover, when it comes to the really important affairs like a new UN treaty, where I happen to have some direct experience, you simply need the Americans.” Recalling his involvement in the UN Arms Trade Treaty talks, Nagan says that in the years of negotiating that treaty, the process tilted at the end of George W. Bush’s term. Until 2008, he says, the United States opposed such a treaty that regulated international arms trade. The U.S. did not believe in it, thought it was nonsense, and believed arms trade to be something that was up to sovereign governments to determine, something where the United Nations had nothing to do with in the first place. Under Obama, this position turned a 180 degrees, Nagan says, and American diplomats in the UN have since supported a treaty to regulate arms trade within a certain framework: “Once the Americans approved, the process gained momentum, and the treaty was eventually ratified by a vast majority of the member states in 2013. So yes, the position of the United States has a major impact in the UN.”

On the topic of the relative power position of the U.S. within the UN, official X draws a comparison with the Netherlands. “Our first question always is, ‘how does the field look like?’ What are other nations doing? Based on that, we determine our position. This is much more of a secondary concern for bigger powers. In that regard, the United States is a nation that simply determines its own position. But so does China, or any other big country.”

Finally, throughout the interviews, the reactions of other nations to the American policies in the UN came forward several times. When asked about the response of other nations to the paradoxical policies of the U.S. towards the UN, Dirk Jan Nieuwenhuis says that especially the United States' classical opponents – Cuba, China, North Korea, Venezuela – are eager to openly exploit matters like Iraq, the arrears issue, or American policies in the Middle East. As to Western government leaders, it would be unlikely for them to openly criticize the United States: “We do not always agree with the United States, but we do agree with them more than with some other nations. We are dependent on the United States for our security, too, so we would not publicly tell them to try a little harder for the Middle East peace process for once. We do so on other occasions, of course, you use the moments behind closed doors to discuss issues with less consensus. We do not all uncritically follow the United States.”

On soft power

When asked if he recognizes the idea that the United States has a tendency to present universal values as its own, Dirk Jan Nieuwenhuis says, “yes, absolutely. They have completely claimed that, while the originators can be found in European Enlightenment after all. There is overlap, of course – the American Revolution had a similar background as the French Revolution – but still, the values on which the UN was founded are French-Atlantic, conceived in Europe.” Jeroen Steeghs says about this that there are many developing states and Arabic nations pointing at the Universal Declaration for Human Rights and rejecting those beliefs as theirs. “The United States is heavily opposed to that tendency of questioning the universality of those values. They really lay claim to those values, certainly, but they are not alone in this, we in the Netherlands do that, too. But the United States, I think, is very much the bearer, representative, and embodiment of those universal human rights.” Eran Nagan, too, recognizes the tension between authoritarian regimes asserting that the system of human rights is a Western invention – one that therefore does not apply to them – and Western nations arguing that they are indeed universal values, enshrined in the 1945 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which diplomats from every continent contributed to, and in addition, that such a system should be seen as norms and values above cultural differences. Nagan, however, says he believes that U.S. diplomats do not utilize the theme of those values being American a lot: “a good diplomat, at least, would never emphasize that – it would serve the critics from Iran or Egypt, for example, who argue that what we call human rights is a Western dictate that does not apply to them. If Obama did ever bring it like that, it

would be intended for internal use, or for the American audience, I would imagine.” Nagan also alludes to the importance of soft power when he says that he thinks that a change has taken place under Obama, and that the United States is increasingly realizing that it can be much more effective if it listens better, and invests more time in bilateral relations and efforts to “take others with them,” instead of telling other nations what to do. “A conviction of being a chosen nation can lead to a very narrow view. In diplomacy, no matter how powerful you are, you have to keep in touch with what is happening around you. You have to maintain your network, and not by dictating others what to do. If you are able to take them with you, so to say, you can achieve more in diplomacy than by saying ‘this is how it should be done, because we say so.’” Similarly, recalling his experiences negotiating the UN Arms Trade Treaty, Nagan says that precisely by cooperating, the American diplomats were able to leave their mark on the contents of the treaty, and actually partly worked their own national regulations of arms trade in. Eventually, he says, there was the insight that by not resisting something that is not in the United States direct interest – as the U.S. has its own national regulations that it keeps to regarding international arms trade – and by setting a certain standard and coming to an agreement with a broad group of member states, there is more to gain.

When asked about the extent to which the United States is able to determine the UN agenda, Dirk Jan Nieuwenhuis said that they do influence that, but not to a very large extent, particularly in the General Assembly, where any member state can put something on the agenda. Jeroen Steeghs also asserts that in the GA, the United States does not have a dominant position in agenda setting over other member states. Nieuwenhuis notes, however, that this is different in the Security Council, where the U.S. does play a very important role in setting the agenda, and uses its veto power as well as soft power to do this. “The United States is more activist in this than China and Russia. You are more likely to have a European-P5 or American initiative to address the situation in Burundi, for example, than one coming from the Russians or Chinese. This has to do with the worldview of the United States, one of freedom, democracy, peace, etcetera.” Consequentially, Nieuwenhuis says, the United States is much more activist in the sense of wanting to interfere in conflicts in the world – in a positive way. “They will say, ‘there is fighting in Sudan, so we have to take a stance,’ while Russia, and China too, are much more inclined to say, ‘that is an internal conflict, we have nothing to do with that.’” This could then also influence the degree of intervention: under pressure of domestic public opinion but also the rest of the world, Nieuwenhuis says, the U.S. is eager to go to battle against injustice, suppression, and political violence, and is inclined

towards an activist foreign policy, whereas “as Europeans, we might be more careful and nuanced therein than the United States.”

Eran Nagan illustrates the limits of American exceptionalism and intervention by pointing to Samantha Power’s book *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*, about genocide in the twentieth century and how the international community, and the United States especially, failed to adequately respond to almost all those cases. Power, currently the American ambassador to the UN, is now in a position to be able to do something about it, but reality is more unruly and difficult than you might imagine, Nagan says. “She did not succeed to have the U.S. intervene in Syria and try to stop the bombing of civilians. That is explainable and understandable to a certain extent: if the Americans did intervene, they would have become a party in a conflict where they would have fought against Assad alongside Muslim fundamentalists. They might have ended up with an even more horrible regime. In that way, I think exceptionalism is accompanied with certain expectations.”

Official X, then, argues that the extent to which the U.S. is willing to take action in defense of its values seems to be decreasing. “The past years, you see retreating movements from the United States. They did not intervene in Syria. Regarding Libya, we received a rather clear signal that it was a European affair, and we had to handle it.” She suggests that costs-and benefits calculations might be among the factors that influence the extent of intervention by the United State. Obama, she says, is not one to intervene somewhere when it does not affect America’s direct interests. He reasons very pragmatically, from an interest point of view and costs and benefits calculations. She says that the U.S. is probably only still in Iraq because of previous involvement in 2003, and not because of oil, because the United States is becoming less and less dependent on the Middle East for their welfare. “Sometimes I think it is exactly because of the decrease in American dependency on oil. They simply have fewer stakes far from to home.”

On personal experiences with U.S. diplomats

Finally, it should be noted that each of the officials interviewed emphasized the professional and pleasant style of American diplomats in the United Nations. Official X regarded the American diplomats she encountered in negotiations as nice, very professional, and honest. “They are really good, and really smart: they know their stuff, are well-prepared and very diligent. They are pleasant in their cooperation, and while I have seen them use their political weight several times, they were not different in this from other major nations [...] they simply do what is expected of them. I always found them pleasant and transparent. I have

found several times that you are more likely to be cheated on by your European colleagues, than to be stabbed in the back by an American – I have never experienced that.” Eran Nagan, too, calls his experiences with his American colleagues very pleasant. He also stressed the expertise of the Americans in many areas: “In the U.S. State Department, people work for much longer on more specific policy areas than we do in the Netherlands, for example. They have more specialists: Dutch officials doing export control, for example, do so for all weapons technology. The U.S. has people working on export control of missile technology specifically their entire life. They have much more specific expertise.” Ceta Noland, too, experienced cooperation with American diplomats as good and pleasant. She never encountered attitudes of exemptionalism or superiority in her interactions with U.S. officials: “with the exception of the arrears issue – which has been solved by now – they abide to the prevailing UN rules. It is my experience, too, that the United States abides by their treaty obligations. If American policy needs initially do not tally with a treaty, the U.S. initiates a dialogue with their treaty partners about the interpretation of those treaty obligations.”

Conclusion

From these stories of former UN representatives, several conclusions can be drawn about American foreign diplomacy and the role of the United States in the United Nations. The importance of distinguishing between formal diplomatic channels and public discourse when assessing U.S. policies, and the friction between rhetoric and practice is stressed several times: what is expressed by policy makers in public is likely to be somewhat amplified: after all, like any other nation, U.S. foreign policy is a two-level game, and has to take into account the domestic audience, too. In the same vein, it is made clear that a lot of diplomatic negotiations take place behind closed doors, and that a lack of openly expressed criticism does not necessarily indicate agreement. Furthermore, the United States appears as confident and self-assured in its relative power position, yet uncertain about what tactics exactly to employ to utilize that power, and ambiguous towards institutionalized multilateralism – as was also seen in chapter three and four.

In addition, the interviewees stress the differences between the role of American politicians and diplomats in the UN: the former are more likely to view the United Nations simply as an instrument for American power, which can be used and cast aside if it does not work satisfactorily, while the latter are much more concerned with effective and efficient multilateral cooperation. Similarly, it is argued that it is mostly domestic forces, and

especially Congress, that influence and can ease or heighten tension in the U.S.-UN relationship.

Regarding the notion of American exceptionalism, there is skepticism but also agreement. Doubts are expressed about the effectivity of a diplomacy based on exceptionalist notions and it is agreed upon that material interests come before idealist concerns, yet the interviewees do agree that the United States is more concerned with human rights than its co-P5 members Russia and China, who tend to emphasize sovereignty as their priorities rather than democracy and freedom. States closer to the United States in their interests and values, such as the United Kingdom and France, but also the Netherlands, are less effective in promoting those values in terms of their power and reach. Similarly, American leadership is generally agreed upon: it is made clear that the American allies do not follow the United States uncritically, though it is confirmed that a large part of the world looks to the United States for guidance to determine the force field of international politics, and that American support is needed for successful multinational cooperation.

CHAPTER VI

TRANSNATIONAL CONTEXT

To finally place this research in a broader transitional context, it is necessary to take into account how both the UN itself and other nations respond to the U.S. position and the notion of American exceptionalism. The focus up to this point has been on the American side of things, and the United States' effort to pursue its interests and spread its values and beliefs. However, considering the interconnectedness of the world today, and especially this paper's focus on the United Nations, the reciprocal aspect is also important. It is still the question how the UN itself and other member states react to the U.S. attitude, and what the implications are for the position of the United States in the greater international community. American exceptionalism and U.S. foreign policy in general, are after all not isolated matters: they exist in and interact with the larger network of international relations and institutions.

Authoritarian states and developing nations have regularly expressed harsh criticism towards the United States' foreign policy. In September 2006, for example, the Foreign Minister of Syria told the General Assembly:

Tragically, we all end up paying the price when the decision-makers in Washington believe that they know better, and are in a better position to understand and grasp the needs and circumstances of the Arabs. They diagnose the ambitions and aspirations of the Arab individual in a manner that is tailored to their own vision. ("Washington out of Touch with Anger of Arab World")

Similarly, in September 2008, Eritrea's Minister of Foreign Affairs stated in the UN General Assembly that "the misguided and domineering policies of the United States are causing and exacerbating crises around the world" and called for the international community to check American power ("Eritrea"). As seen in chapter one, Russian President Putin called American exceptionalism extremely dangerous, and the president of Ecuador even compared it to the Nazis' rhetoric. It should be noted, however, that authoritarian states and developing nations have their own history with both the United Nations and the United States, which is embedded in the larger tradition of anti-colonialism. Further elaboration on this topic can be found, among others, in Craig Murphy's *Global Institutions, Marginalization and Development* and Robert Jackson's *Quasi States: Sovereignty, International Relations and the*

Third World. Both works explore the history of the relationship of authoritarian and developing nations with international institutions. Due to this separate history in which reactions from authoritarian and developing states to American foreign policies are embedded, the focus of this chapter will be on responses to American exceptionalism from Western nations.

6.1. Reactions to the American position

6.1.1. UN Responses

The United Nations can be seen to frequently recognize and respond to the exceptionalist traits of American UN policies. It has expressed its praise for United States' leadership or financial and material aid on a regular basis, for example, when it announced in 2009 that UN air aid to Chad could be kept alive for a month longer due to one million dollars in funding from the United States ("Chad"). In addition, UN news reports regularly emphasize the importance of U.S. support for the UN itself and for global politics in general, for example when Ban Ki-moon in 2011 stated that "the continued engagement and leadership of the United States is essential for the United Nations to be able to succeed in the many tasks you look to us to do" ("Continued U.S. Support Vital to UN's Success"). Vice versa, the consequences of United States' withdrawal are also often expressed, for example in Ban Ki-moon's 2010 report on the situation in Iraq, in which he stressed the increasing difficulties for the UN carrying out its operations with the United States increasingly retreating its military forces ("U.S. Drawdown").

While it can thus be said that the United Nations acknowledges and appreciates the leadership role the U.S. takes on in international affairs, the UN has nevertheless also frequently reprimanded the United States. Oftentimes this concerned American domestic policies, most recently the death penalty and execution methods, the treatment of Native Americans, and police brutality against minorities. The annual UN resolution calling for an end to the Cuba embargo, as discussed in chapter four, is another example. American foreign policies have also been subject to UN criticism. These cases were usually related to American counterterror policies, and specifically regarded human rights violations.

As for American policies, the U.S. does not necessarily seem pressured by UN criticism to change it. The Cuba Embargo is still in place, for example, and the death penalty does still take place, even with botched lethal injections. While national protest and deliberation are more likely to lead to change in these practices than UN reprimands, that does

not completely negate the significance of UN judgments. Because statements of UN support or disapproval can legitimize or challenge domestic policies, there is still a certain interplay between American politics and UN judgments. Nevertheless, it should also be remembered, as explained in chapter two, that the United Nations is essentially only a technical device to facilitate international cooperation. It does not function as a higher authority in international relations and cannot enforce compliance by its member states. When the United States does not comply with a UN ruling, there is thus little the United Nations can do. In addition, it should not be forgotten that the UN in itself is not a neutral entity, in that it also reflects power relations. It is therefore useful to also include the response to the American position from Western member states here.

6.1.2. Response of other Western nations

When looking at reactions to American exceptionalism specifically, it appears that outspoken criticism from Western member states in the UN towards what can be characterized as an American exceptionalist attitude is rare. America's allies are unlikely to articulate harsh and outspoken criticism like authoritarian states regularly do. The previous chapters of this research can be of help here: though they focused on the American views and policies, they indirectly also provided insights in the position of other nations.

The comparison of U.S. presidential addresses to the UNGA with those of the United Kingdom and France in chapter three, for example, shows how the American exceptionalist rhetoric has frequently clashed with the worldview of other Western nations. If France and the U.K. can be momentarily taken here as representing Western nations in general, it can be argued that they attribute much more value to the approval of the United Nations, before conducting any intervening actions. In addition, it was seen that United States' claim to certain rather universal values such as freedom and democracy is very much contested by other nations.

The discussion of U.S. voting behavior in chapter four included the low voting coincidence of the United States with the rest of the UN member states. Agreement between the U.S. and the rest of the world on various UN issues is rather low, with an average of 33.6 percent for all member states combined. Even the European Union, surely close to the United States in culture and policies, concurred with the U.S. on only 57.2 percent of the votes between 2000 and 2013. Similarly, the analysis of American voting substantiations on the issues that were designated as important by the State Department in chapter four and the overview in Appendix I, showed how often the United States was in heavy minority, or even

alone, in its position. Rather than publicly calling out the United States for its policies, this could be seen as a more subtle way to show disapproval of American policies.

The experiences of former UN-representatives with American diplomats and U.S. actions in the UN, as presented in chapter five, have deliberately been taken as personal views, supplementing the more formal and static analyses of executive speeches and voting records, and not as the official position of the Dutch government. Still, the interviewees, as Dutch citizens, embody and represent a certain Western viewpoint. As such, their stories can also be read as Western European reactions to American policies. They would then show a somewhat twofold response to American exceptionalist policies. On the one hand, it is made clear that the United States is not uncritically followed, that American leadership is not self-evident and that cooperation is crucial. On the other hand, it is admitted that the American values and beliefs are generally close to theirs, so there is in fact a tendency to lean towards the U.S. stance. Additionally, it is frequently stressed that the United States acts fitting to its relative power position – self-assured and forceful when necessary, but not arrogant or indifferent to the rules and relations of the international system.

Much like the American ambivalence towards the United Nations and international relations in general, as discussed in chapter two, are responses to American exceptionalism thus complicated and rather paradoxical. Though outspoken denunciations of U.S. policies are rare, critique is not non-existent, and may be expressed more indirectly by not voting along the U.S. lines and not going along with American policies. At the same time, many nations are inclined to follow the United States, as a major power with similar values and beliefs.

6.2. Implications for the U.S. relative power position

As seen in chapter three and four, the difficulties of reconciling a foreign policy with strong strains of idealism with the realities of international relations lead to an uncertain and at times paradoxical policy directive, that wavers between restraint and unilateralism, and multilateralism and international cooperation. The transnational context and policies of the rest of the world can now be added to these considerations. How other nations regard American policies and react to them has its effects on the relative place of the United States in global politics. After all, in today's interconnected world, the U.S. is bound to certain international institutions, regulations, and alliances, and the United States simply cannot ignore the transnational context.

It is not just the United States placing itself in a leadership position, it is also pushed there by a large part of the rest of the world that, albeit sometimes grudgingly, looks to the

U.S. for guidance and affiliation. In addition, many nations are to a certain extent dependent on the United States, as a major agenda setter in international politics, for the promotion of their interests. American allies lose, too, if the United States chooses to act alone, which explains the international frustration with instances of American unilateralism and exemptionalism. While the United States is thus on the one hand faced with certain responsibilities and expectations from the rest of the world, the U.S. is also quickly criticized for taking its leadership role too far. Accusations of the United States interfering in any nation's domestic affairs under the banner of promoting democracy are not uncommon, something that is less the case for other Western nations. Indeed, as was confirmed by the interviewees in chapter five, the United States stands alone in the world in terms of idealism when coupled with capabilities. Nations close the United States in size and power capacity such as Russia and China have little interest in human rights affairs and tend to emphasize sovereignty instead, while more like-minded nations are far from the United States in terms of power and reach and are therefore less effective in promoting those values. Hence, there exists a contradiction between American allies calling for United States' leadership and at the same time criticizing its implementation. This sentiment was also expressed by President Obama, as mentioned in chapter three, when he in his 2009 address to the UN General Assembly stated that "those who used to *chastise* America for acting alone in the world cannot now stand by and wait for America to solve the world's problems alone" ("Remarks" 2009). Or, as Luck writes, "certainly it is fair to ask the U.S. for early and full consultations, a reasonable degree of consistency, observance of agreed rules, and a careful hearing of allied viewpoints. But it is neither realistic nor reasonable to expect the U.S. to lead from behind" (*Mixed Messages* 293-294).

Conclusion

Robert McNamara once said: "if we cannot persuade nations with comparable values of the merit of our cause, we'd better re-examine our reasoning. If we'd followed that rule in Vietnam, we would not have been there. None of our allies supported us" (qtd. in Nye, *Soft Power* 65). Indeed, it is important to take into account how other nations view American policies: it becoming increasingly clear that there are limits even to American power – Iraq and Afghanistan would be painful examples – and that the United States cannot realistically act alone in today's international context, both because of the restraints of institutionalized multilateral cooperation, and the emergence of new security threats which call for a unitary response. Additionally, considering the position of other nations can work to increase soft

power, in that it legitimizes American actions. Still, given its de facto power position and the complexities of the international context as mentioned above, the United States is more prone to international criticism than other nations, and can never completely avoid disapproval and resentment for its foreign policies.

The exceptionalist framework can thus be said to be mutually constitutive: it was already seen that it influences how the United States perceives itself and the rest of the world, international politics and the American role therein, but it apparently also determines how others see the United States.

CONCLUSION

Finally returning to the research question posed in the introduction of this study, it is now possible to state that American exceptionalism runs as a red thread through American foreign policy, as exemplified in the United Nations. The key characteristics of the notion were identified as the United States harboring a sense of being qualitatively different from the rest of the world due to its exceptional history and values, having a mission and responsibility to spread freedom and democracy and also take on a leadership role in order to do so. When encountering international politics, this results in an ambiguous outlook on international organization and foreign policy, exemplified in its complicated relationship with the United Nations. With these paradoxical foreign policy outlooks, wavering between unilateralism and multilateralism, it is then the context of American exceptionalism that guides and shapes American policy choices and behavior, which is illustrated in U.S. policies and voting behavior in the UN. Finally, the ever underlying exceptionalist outlooks affect the place of the United States in the international political system, as the UN is very much dependent on American support – both materially and in its ideational position – and other Western nations look to the U.S. for leadership and guidance, while simultaneously judging the extent and severity of American intervention policies.

This research has sought to move beyond the superficial assertions of American exceptionalism as merely meaning arrogance or hypocrisy, and rather expose the intricacy and various complex aspects of the notion. It is not a single doctrine, nor is it an absolute policy prescription. Rather, it is a collection of complex contradictions that works as an underlying framework in foreign policy. It does so as one of many forces at work within American policies: the framework of American exceptionalism coexists and intertwines with other stimuli such as geopolitical interests, party politics, domestic influences, and individual leaders. As such, it is composed of and expressed in several different purposes and usages.

Exceptionalist themes are used to explain or justify behavior and actions. This works in different ways, for different audiences: the theme of the United States as the main defender for freedom and democracy is regularly amplified, both as a means to increase soft power, to sell policies to the domestic audience and to legitimize actions or thwart criticism on American policies for the international community, as well as to express indirect criticism towards the nations that defy those values.

American exceptionalism also shapes U.S. policies: not only does it influence how the United States sees the world and does it help identify the rights and wrongs in the world, hereby defining American interests, it also guides the choice between specific policy strategies available to pursue those interests, by influencing the extent of active or passive involvement.

As for relations with the rest of the world, the exceptionalist framework can be said to work as a mutually constitutive force: it is not only a means to self-identify and perceive others, but also affects how others view the United States.

Overarching this all is the theory of soft power: through the use of exceptionalist themes to justify certain actions and behavior, and by advocating the universality of American interests, U.S. policies are legitimized, which in turn promotes the United States' soft power. Vice versa, soft power is utilized to defend American exceptionalist policies: through agenda setting, the U.S. makes the promotion of democracy an international priority.

Finally, returning to the theory of neoliberalism as presented in chapter two, the usages and implications of American exceptionalism in the United Nations also show the significance and role of international institutions in global politics: they provide information about the interests and position of states, enable cooperation, and set certain international norms – visible in the number of times the United States justified or explained certain policies on the UN stage. In line with neoliberalism, it has also been shown here how international institutions do not function as a higher authority and cannot enforce obligation: states are foremost self-interested, and are unlikely to cooperate or comply with a regulation if this does not serve its interests or values.

Still, it is worth repeating that the framework of American exceptionalism is only one of many factors influence U.S. policies. Military and economic costs and benefits calculations, public opinion, domestic politics, the style, party, and agenda of a president, or an individual ambassador can all limit or undermine exceptionalist considerations or make them less visible. In addition, there has regularly been friction between rhetoric and practice, and between idealism and accusations of double standards.

However, this does not make the American exceptionalist framework irrelevant or useless. After all, the purpose of this research was not to determine whether or not American exceptionalism exists or how it is expressed, just as it was not the goal to weigh American foreign policy motives, strategies, and outcomes in terms of wrong or right, fair or hypocritical. Rather, what matters here is to explicate the workings and dynamics of an important factor within American foreign policy, in order to better understand the power

position of the United States in the world and the implications of that factor for international politics.

This framework of American exceptionalism, coupled with the realities of international politics, leads to various difficulties in policy design. As seen in chapter six, the collision between American exceptionalism with the realities of international politics leads to uncertainty in choosing specific strategies to promote and pursue American ideals and interests. Should it be through diplomatic negotiations, encouraging free trade and democracy, financial or material aid for opposition movements, or direct military intervention? (Nguyen 23). Reconciling exceptionalist beliefs and policies with the practices and restraints of multilateral institutional cooperation also has implications for the relative power position of the United States in global affairs: on the one hand, the exceptionalist sense of having a mission to spread democracy in the world, coupled with the United States' de facto power position leads to a foreign policy aimed at world leadership. On the other hand, there is the desire to protect the American national sovereignty, values, and beliefs, and a consequential inclination to avoid entanglement in international institutions and interference of those institutions in domestic affairs. There are thus incentives for cooperation, world leadership, and multilateralism, as well as for unilateralism, restraint, and cynicism towards international collaboration. The challenge lies in finding a balance between these extremes: in practice, the U.S. cannot realistically go it alone in the world, despite its superpower status – it is after all bound to international institutions, regulations and alliances. In addition, new and complex security issues are arising in the current international landscape that require a multilateral, unitary response. Threats like terrorism and religious fundamentalism cannot be handled effectively by nations individually, and the United States can – and should, according to the American exceptionalist line of thinking – play a central role in this. Finally, it has also become increasingly clear that the United States also needs other nations to pursue its interests – Iraq is only one example – and that there are limits even to American power (Sewell). All-out multilateralism is not a realistic option either, though. In global politics, the United States is in the difficult position of quickly being accused of playing the world's policeman while simultaneously being watched for ideational guidance and alliances, and needed for support and material aid by other Western nations as well as international organizations.

Last but not least, in addition to the complexities of the international context and certain expectations and responsibilities, the United States still has its interests to pursue and defend. While the grand rhetoric of American exceptionalism, combined with superpower

status, might lead one to expect the United States to act as a gigantic selfless force for worldwide peace, liberty, and democracy, this is not the case. The United States is a nation like any other, in that it is self-interested and is concerned with protecting its sovereignty and national values from foreign interference (De Lange and Howieson 1025).

It might be impossible for the United States to construct a foreign policy that perfectly balances all these considerations. What it can do, however, is try to minimize the backlash of its actions through engagement and dialogue (Fukuyama 190). As Nye writes in *The Paradox of American Power*:

At the beginning of the last century, as America rose to world power, Teddy Roosevelt advised that we should speak softly but carry a big stick. Now that we have the stick, we need to pay more attention to the first part of his admonition. And we need not just to speak softly but to listen more carefully. (157)

Indeed, efforts to shape and strengthen international institutions and create cooperative alliances with compatible nations can help the United States pursue its interests and ideals in a more constructive way.

The argument explicated here applies to the timeframe of the years 2001-2015, and the specific context of the United Nations. It might evolve, however, when these particular circumstances change. It has already been suggested in chapter one that the workings of American exceptionalism in the United Nations were significantly different in the Cold War-years, when it could be employed in the direct ideological battle with the Soviet Union. Similarly, in the period immediately following the Cold War, the American position as a lonely super power gave American exceptionalism much more room for maneuver. As for the workings of American exceptionalism in the future, its long history and deep historical and ideological roots make it unlikely to fade away any time soon. Still, as seen throughout this research, its exact usages and expressions are prone to change, and depend on domestic forces as well as on the broader international context. As asserted by the interviewees in chapter five, for example, a change in administration can make a difference: the strong expressions of exemptionalism, sovereignty, and exceptional American values that occurred under George W. Bush were largely replaced with multilateralism and cooperation when Obama took office.

In addition, Hastedt has suggested that the increasing presence of women and more ethnic diversity in policy-making processes can also be a force of change, as their histories might differ significantly from that of the 'classic' American past (34).

Suggestions for further research

This research also raises further questions in need of investigation, which could expand the specific framework to which the argument presented in this research applies.

As seen in chapter one, American exceptionalism can be applied to several other fields of studies besides international relations. A suggestion for further research would therefore be to include these other areas, and for example consider the economic applications of American exceptionalism and examine what effect the promotion of laissez-faire economics has had on the U.S. relative power position.

In addition, it would be interesting to conduct a full analysis of the UN policies of other P5 and Western nations, but also authoritarian states and developing nations, to further explicate the relative meaning of the United States' policies and its relative position in world politics.

Lastly, this research has primarily taken into account the ideational values of American exceptionalism. Though the influence of costs and benefits calculations have not been entirely surpassed, and were addressed in chapter four, five, and six as one of the many variables besides exceptionalism to influence American foreign policies – geopolitical interests in Israel, trade concerns in Cuba, and oil in the Middle East – more explanatory value could be added by further opening up these black boxes. Taking economic and military costs and benefits the same way as American exceptionalism has been used here, and explicate its motives, effects, and limitations, could explicate what exactly constitutes the U.S. interests, that in turn shape American policies. Further research into what exactly the military and economic costs and benefits in different policy areas are, and to what extent they influence rhetoric and practice, could provide a more complete political science analysis.

Finally..

Richard Rose's statement that opened this thesis, the declaration that "America marches to a different drummer," can close this research too. American exceptionalism enables the United States to play a unique combination of roles in international relations: it acts as a guiding force in its agenda setting powers, an exemplary to turn to for moral guidance and leadership, and a guardian of human rights, freedom, and democracy, but simultaneously also behaves as an exemption to international regulations, regularly puts its economic and military interests before its idealistic beliefs, and interferes in other nation's domestic affairs. Despite these contradictions, and despite numerous other stimuli that exert their influence, American exceptionalism claims a central place in U.S. foreign policies.

APPENDIX I

Voting results indicated as [yes-no-abstention]

* Indicates United States sponsoring the resolution

** Indicates United States co-sponsoring the resolution

Important votes (and U.S. vote)	Important consensus action
<p style="text-align: center;">2001</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Israeli Actions in the Occupied Territories [124–6(US)–25] 2. Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine [131–6(US)–20] 3. U.S. Embargo Against Cuba [167–3(US)–3] 4. Compliance with the Anti–Ballistic Missile Treaty [82–5(US)–62] 5. Nuclear Disarmament [103–41(US)–17] 6. Risk of Nuclear Proliferation in the Middle East [153–3(US)–6] 7. Effects of the Use of Depleted Uranium in Armaments [45–54(US)–45] 8. Human Rights and Coercive Measures [114–51(US)–2] 9. Globalization and Human Rights [116–46(US)–9] 10. **Human Rights in Iran [72(US)–49–46] 11. Human Rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo [90(US)–3–69] 12. Human Rights in Iraq [100(US)–2–63] 	<p style="text-align: center;">2001</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Condemnation of Terrorist Attacks in the United States of America 2. Information and Telecommunications in Context of International Security 3. Toward Global Partnerships 4. Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism 5. International Convention Against Reproductive Cloning of Human Beings 6. **Promoting and Consolidating New or Restored Democracies 7. Human Rights in Parts of South–Eastern Europe 8. Human Rights in Afghanistan 9. International Trade and Development 10. Financing for Development 11. Afghanistan and Implications for International Peace and Security 12. Review of Peacekeeping Operations 13. Human Rights in Myanmar (Burma) 14. Review of Peacekeeping Operations 15. Scale of Assessments 16. Program Budget for 2002–2003
<p style="text-align: center;">2002</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. International Atomic Energy Agency Report [138(US)–1–2] 2. U.S. Embargo Against Cuba [173–3(US)–4] 3. National Legislation on Transfer of Arms [166(US)–0–0] 4. Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons [156–2(US)–13] 5. Risk of Nuclear Proliferation in Middle East [158–3(US)–0] 6. Work of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories [86–6(US)–66] 7. Future Operations of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women [136–7(US)–29] 8. Rights of the Child [175–2(US)–0] 9. The Fight against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related 	<p style="text-align: center;">2002</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. New Partnership for Africa’s Development 2. Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism 3. Bilateral Strategic Nuclear Arms Reductions and the New Strategic Frame-work 4. *Compliance with Arms Limitation and Disarmament and Non–Proliferation Agreements 5. UN Literacy Decade: Education for All 6. Trafficking in Women and Girls 7. **Working Towards the Elimination of Crimes Against Women Committed in the Name of Honor 8. The Girl Child 9. Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan 10. High–Level Dialogue on Strengthening International Economic Cooperation for Development Through Partnership 11. International Strategy for Disaster Reduction 12. Protection of Global Climate for Present and Future Generations of Man-kind

<p>Intolerance and the Comprehensive Implementation of and Follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Program of Action [173-3(US)-2]</p> <p>10. Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture [127-4(US)-42]</p> <p>11. Globalization and Human Rights [124-52(US)-5]</p> <p>12. Human Rights in Sudan [80(US)-62-33]</p> <p>13. **Situation of Human Rights in Iraq [97(US)-3-77]</p> <p>14. Situation of Human Rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo [92(US)-2-81]</p> <p>15. Effects of the Use of Depleted Uranium [35-59(US)-56]</p>	<p>13. **Integrated and Coordinated Implementation of and Follow-up to the Out-come of the Major UN Conferences and Summits in the Economic and Social Fields</p> <p>14. High-Level International Intergovernmental Consideration of Financing for Development</p> <p>15. Ensuring Effective Secretariat Support for Sustained Follow-up to the Out-come of the International Conference on Financing for Development</p> <p>16. Proposed Program Budget for the Biennium 2004-2005</p> <p>17. Program Budget for the Biennium 2002-2003</p> <p>18. Strengthening the UN</p> <p>19. Natural Disasters and Vulnerability</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">2003</p> <p>1. U.S. Embargo Against Cuba [179-3(US)-2]</p> <p>2. **International Convention Against the Reproductive Cloning of Human Beings [80-79(US)-15]</p> <p>3. Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People [97-7(US)-60]</p> <p>4. Illegal Israeli Actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the Rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory [90-8(US)-74]</p> <p>5. Confidence Building Measures in the Regional and Subregional Context [73-48(US)-46]</p> <p>6. Transparency in Armaments [150(US)-0-27]</p> <p>7. *Assistance to Palestine Refugees and Support for the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East [133(US)-0-35]</p> <p>8. Work of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories [87-7(US)-78]</p> <p>9. Rights of the Child [179-1(US)-0]</p> <p>10. *Strengthening the Role of the United Nations in Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections and the Promotion of Democratization [169(US)-0-8]</p> <p>11. Globalization and Its Impact on the Full Enjoyment of All Human Rights [123-51(US)-4]</p> <p>12. *Situation of Human Rights in Turkmenistan [73(US)-40-56]</p> <p>13. **Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran [68(US)-54-51]</p> <p>14. Situation of Human Rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo [81(US)-2-91]</p> <p>15. Provisional Program of Work for the Second Committee [167-3(US)-0]</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">2003</p> <p>1. UN Convention Against Corruption</p> <p>2. *Improving the Effectiveness of the Methods of Work of the First Committee</p> <p>3. Measures to Prevent Terrorists from Acquiring Weapons of Mass Destruction</p> <p>4. Safety and Security of Humanitarian Personnel and Protection of UN Personnel</p> <p>5. Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly</p> <p>6. Strengthening International Cooperation in Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Persons and Protecting Victims of Such Trafficking</p> <p>7. *Women and Political Participation</p> <p>8. Elimination of Domestic Violence Against Women</p> <p>9. Incompatibility Between Democracy and Racism</p> <p>10. **Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment</p> <p>11. Scale of Assessments</p> <p>12. **Creation of a Global Culture of Cybersecurity and the Protection of Critical Information Infrastructures</p> <p>13. Follow-Up to the International Conference on Financing for Development</p> <p>14. Follow-Up to the Outcome of the 26th Special Session: Implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS</p> <p>15. The Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects</p> <p>16. **Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar</p> <p>17. Scale of Assessments for the Apportionment of the Expenses of UN Peacekeeping Operations</p> <p>18. Strengthening the United Nations: An Agenda for Further Change</p> <p>19. Program Budget for the Biennium 2004-2005</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">2004</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. U.S. Embargo Against Cuba [179-4(US)-1] 2. **Situation of Human Rights in Sudan [91-74(US)-11] 3. Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People [104-7(US)-63] 4. Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat [103-8(US)-64] 5. Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty [179-2(US)-2] 6. Work of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories [84-9(US)-80] 7. **Elimination of All Forms of Religious Intolerance [186(US)-0-0] 8. **Enhancing the Role of Regional, Subregional, and Other Organizations and Arrangements in Promoting and Consolidating Democracy [172(US)-0-15] 9. **Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran [71(US)-54-55] 10. International Trade and Development [166-2(US)-6] 	<p style="text-align: center;">2004</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. International Convention Against the Reproductive Cloning of Human Beings 2. International Criminal Court 3. Bilateral Strategic Nuclear Arms Reductions and the New Strategic Framework 4. *Improving the Effectiveness of the Methods of Work of the First Committee 5. Celebrating the Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family 6. Providing Support to the Government of Afghanistan in Its Efforts to Eliminate Illicit Opium and Foster Stability and Security in the Region 7. Trafficking in Women and Girls 8. Assistance to Refugees, Returnees, and Displaced Persons in Africa 9. **Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment 10. Report of the Committee for Development Policy on Its Sixth Session (graduating countries from least developed country status) 11. Follow-Up to and Implementation of the Outcome of the International Conference on Financing for Development 12. Preventing and Combating Corrupt Practices and Transfer of Assets of Illicit Origin and Returning Such Assets to the Countries of Origin 13. Integration of the Economies in Transition into the World Economy 14. **Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar (Burma) 15. *Review of the Implementation of Resolution 48/218B and 52/244 16. Program Budget for the Biennium 2004–2005
<p style="text-align: center;">2005</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. U.S. Embargo Against Cuba [182-4(US)-1] 2. **Situation of Human Rights in Sudan [84-79(US)-12] 3. Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People [106-8(US)-59] 4. Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat [105-8(US)-59] 5. Compliance with Non-Proliferation, Arms Limitation, and Disarmament Agreements [163(US)-0-10] 6. Follow-up to Nuclear Disarmament Obligations [87-56(US)-26] 7. Work of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories [86-10(US)-74] 8. *Strengthening the Role of the United Nations in Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Principle of Periodic and Genuine Elections and the 	<p style="text-align: center;">2005</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. World Summit Outcome 2. **Holocaust Remembrance 3. Report of the International Criminal Court 4. **Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment 5. **Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief 6. The Peacebuilding Commission 7. Preventing and Combating Corrupt Practices and Transfer of Assets of Illicit Origin and Returning Such Assets to the Countries of Origin 8. Towards Global Partnerships 9. **Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar (Burma) 10. Program Budget for the Biennium 2006–2007

<p>Promotion of Democratization [173(US)-0-1]</p> <p>9. **Situation of Human Rights in Iran [75(US)-50-43]</p> <p>10. International Trade and Development [121-1(US)-51]</p> <p>11. Unilateral Economic Measures as a Means of Political and Economic Coercion Against Developing Countries [120-1(US)-50]</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">2006</p> <p>1. U.S. Embargo Against Cuba [183-4(US)-1]</p> <p>2. **Situation of Human Rights in Uzbekistan [74-69(US)-24]</p> <p>3. Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People [101-7(US)-62]</p> <p>4. Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat [101-7(US)-62]</p> <p>5. The Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons [176-1(US)-0]</p> <p>6. Towards an Arms Trade Treaty [153-1(US)-24]</p> <p>7. Work of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories [90-9(US)-81]</p> <p>8. Combating Defamation of Religions [111-54(US)-18]</p> <p>9. **Situation of Human Rights in North Korea [99(US)-21-56]</p> <p>10. *Situation of Human Rights in Belarus [72(US)-32-69]</p> <p>11. *Situation of Human Rights in Iran [72(US)-50-55]</p> <p>12. International Trade and Development [129-2(US)-52]</p> <p>13. Situation of Human Rights in Burma [82(US)-25-45]</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">2006</p> <p>1. Appointment of the UN Secretary-General</p> <p>2. Report of the International Criminal Court</p> <p>3. The Rule of Law at the National and International Levels</p> <p>4. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities</p> <p>5. **Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment</p> <p>6. Improving the Coordination of Efforts Against Trafficking in Persons</p> <p>7. Preventing and Combating Corrupt Practices and Transfer of Assets of Illicit Origin and Returning Such Assets, in Particular to the Countries of Origin, Consistent with the UN Convention Against Corruption</p> <p>8. Humanitarian Assistance and Reconstruction of Liberia</p> <p>9. Scale of Assessments for the Apportionment of UN Expenses</p> <p>10. Capital Master Plan</p> <p>11. Program Budget for the Biennium 2006–2007</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">2007</p> <p>1. U.S. Embargo of Cuba [184-4(US)-1]</p> <p>2. Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People [109-8(US)-55]</p> <p>3. Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat [110-8(US)-54]</p> <p>4. Work of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories [93-8(US)-74]</p> <p>5. **Human Rights Situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea [101(US)-22-59]</p> <p>6. Human Rights Situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran [80-84(US)-19]</p> <p>7. **Human Rights Situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran [73(US)-53-55]</p> <p>8. *Human Rights Situation in Belarus [72(US)-33-78]</p> <p>9. International Trade and Development [126-48(US)-7]</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">2007</p> <p>1. Report of the International Atomic Energy Agency</p> <p>2. The Rule of Law at the National and International Levels</p> <p>3. Protection of Global Climate for Present and Future Generations of Mankind</p> <p>4. Declaration of the Commemorative High-level Plenary Meeting Devoted to the Follow-up to the Outcome of the Special Session on Children</p> <p>5. Eliminating Rape and Other Forms of Sexual Violence in All Their Manifestations, Including in Conflict and Related Situations</p> <p>6. **Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment</p> <p>7. External Debt and Development: Towards a Durable Solution to the Debt Problems of Developing Countries</p> <p>8. Preventing and Combating Corrupt Practices and Transfer of Assets of Illicit Origin and Returning</p>

<p>10. **Agricultural Technology for Development [147(US)-0-30]</p> <p>11. Report of the Human Rights Council [150-7(US)-1]</p> <p>12. Human Rights Situation in Myanmar (Burma) [83(US)-22-47]</p> <p>13. Questions Relating to the Proposed Program Budget for the Biennium 2008-2009 [142-1(US)-0]</p>	<p>Such Assets, in Particular to the Countries of Origin, Consistent with the United Nations Convention against Corruption</p> <p>9. Financing of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur</p> <p>10. Reports of the Office of Internal Oversight Services and Financing of the Procurement Task Force</p> <p>11. Program Budget for the Biennium 2008-2009</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">2008</p> <p>1. U.S. Embargo of Cuba [185-3(US)-2]</p> <p>2. Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People [107-8(US)-57]</p> <p>3. Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat [106-8(US)-57]</p> <p>4. Work of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories [94-8(US)-73]</p> <p>5. Report of the Human Rights Council [121-7(US)-58]</p> <p>6. Moratorium on the Use of the Death Penalty [106-46(US)-34]</p> <p>7. Situation of Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea [94(US)-22-63]</p> <p>8. Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran [69-84(US)-25]</p> <p>9. **Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran [69(US)-54-57]</p> <p>10. Combating Defamation of Religions [86-53(US)-42]</p> <p>11. Toward a New International Economic Order [123-1(US)-52]</p> <p>12. Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar (Burma) [109-13(US)-35]</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">2008</p> <p>1. Report of the International Atomic Energy Agency</p> <p>2. Protection of Global Climate for Present and Future Generations of Mankind</p> <p>3. The Rule of Law at the National and International Levels</p> <p>4. **Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment</p> <p>5. **Elimination of all forms of intolerance and of discrimination based on religion or belief</p> <p>6. Doha Declaration on Financing for Development: outcome document of the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus</p> <p>7. Financing of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">2009</p> <p>1. U.S. Embargo of Cuba [187-3(US)-2]</p> <p>2. Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People [109-8(US)-55]</p> <p>3. Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat [112-9(US)-54]</p> <p>4. Renewed Determination Toward the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons [171(US)-2-8]</p> <p>5. Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty [175(US)-1-3]</p> <p>6. Work of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories [92-9(US)-74]</p> <p>7. Global Efforts for the Total Elimination of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance and the Comprehensive Implementation of and Follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Program of Action [128-</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">2009</p> <p>1. **Report of the International Atomic Energy Agency</p> <p>2. The Rule of Law at the National and International Levels</p> <p>3. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women</p> <p>4. Report of the Human Rights Council</p> <p>5. Rights of the Child</p> <p>6. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment</p> <p>7. The Right to Food</p> <p>8. Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief</p> <p>9. Doha Declaration on Financing for Development</p>

<p>13(US)-43]</p> <p>8. Combating Defamation of Religions [80-61(US)-42]</p> <p>9. Situation of Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea [99(US)-20-63]</p> <p>10. Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran [74(US)-49-59]</p> <p>11. **Agricultural Technology for Development [146(US)-1-32]</p> <p>12. Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar (Burma) [86(US)-23-39]</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">2010</p> <p>1. U.S. Embargo of Cuba [187-2(US)-3]</p> <p>2. Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People [112-9(US)-54]</p> <p>3. Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat [110-9(US)-56]</p> <p>4. United actions toward total elimination of nuclear weapons [173(US)-1-11]</p> <p>5. Hague Code of Conduct vs. Ballistic Missile Proliferation [162(US)-1-17]</p> <p>6. Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty [179(US)-1-3]</p> <p>7. Work of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories [94-9(US)-72]</p> <p>8. Report of the Human Rights Council [123-1-55(US)]</p> <p>9. Moratorium on use of the death penalty [109-41(US)-35]</p> <p>10. Extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions [122-1-62(US)]</p> <p>11. **Combating Defamation of Religions [79-67(US)-40]</p> <p>12. Situation of Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea [106(US)-20-57]</p> <p>13. Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran [78(US)-45-59]</p> <p>14. Global Efforts for the Total Elimination of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance and the Comprehensive Implementation of and Follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Program of Action [104-22(US)-33]</p> <p>15. Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar (Burma) [85(US)-26-46]</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">2010</p> <p>1. Report of the International Atomic Energy Agency</p> <p>2. Humanitarian assistance, emergency relief, rehabilitation, recovery and reconstruction in response to the humanitarian emergency in Haiti, including the devastating effects of the earthquake</p> <p>3. Protection of global climate for present and future generations of humankind</p> <p>4. Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly</p> <p>5. Torture & other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment</p> <p>6. Elimination of all forms of intolerance & of discrimination based on religion or belief</p> <p>7. Human Resources Management</p> <p>8. Proposed program budget outline for the 2012-2013 biennium</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">2011</p> <p>1. U.S. Embargo of Cuba [186-2(US)-3]</p> <p>2. Terrorist Attacks on Internationally Protected Persons [106(US)-9-40]</p> <p>3. Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People [115-8(US)-53]</p> <p>4. Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">2011</p> <p>1. Suspension of the rights of membership of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya in the Human Rights Council</p> <p>2. Report of the International Atomic Energy Agency</p> <p>3. Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism</p>

<p>[114-9(US)-54]</p> <p>5. United actions toward total elimination of nuclear weapons [169(US)-1-11]</p> <p>6. Work of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories [86-9(US)-75]</p> <p>7. Report of the Human Rights Council [122-3-59(US)]</p> <p>8. Situation of Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea [123(US)-16-51]</p> <p>9. Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran [89(US)-30-64]</p> <p>10. Situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic [133(US)-11-43]</p>	<p>4. Women and political participation</p> <p>5. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women</p> <p>6. Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly</p> <p>7. Torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment</p> <p>8. Elimination of all forms of intolerance and of discrimination based on religion or belief</p> <p>9. Implementation of Agenda 21, the Program for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development</p> <p>10. Program Budget for the biennium 2012-2013</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">2012</p> <p>1. Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba [188-3(US)-2]</p> <p>2. Status of Palestine in the United Nations [138-9(US)-41]</p> <p>3. Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People [106-7(US)-56]</p> <p>4. Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat [103-7(US)-61]</p> <p>5. Work of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories [98-8(US)-72]</p> <p>6. Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran [86(US)-32-65]</p> <p>7. Situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic [135(US)-12-36]</p> <p>8. Entrepreneurship for development [141(US)-31-11]</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">2012</p> <p>1. Report of the International Atomic Energy Agency</p> <p>2. Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women</p> <p>3. Trafficking in women and girls</p> <p>4. Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly</p> <p>5. Report of the Human Rights Council</p> <p>6. Torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment</p> <p>7. Intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilation</p> <p>8. Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons, based on religion or belief</p> <p>9. Freedom of Religion or Belief</p> <p>10. Situation of Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea</p> <p>11. Implementation of Agenda 21, the Program for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development</p> <p>12. Situation of human rights in Myanmar (Burma)</p> <p>13. Scale of assessments for the apportionment of UN expenses</p> <p>14. Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of UN peacekeeping operations</p> <p>15. Program Budget for the biennium 2012-2013</p> <p>16. Proposed program budget outline for the biennium 2014-2015</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">2013</p> <p>1. Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">2013</p> <p>1. Outcome Document of the High Level Meeting on the Realization of the Millennium</p>

<p>States of America against Cuba [188-2(US)-3]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People [110-7(US)-56] 3. Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat [108-7(US)-59] 4. Arms Trade Treaty [152(US)-0-29] 5. Transparency in Armaments [154(US)-0-28] 6. United action toward total elimination of nuclear weapons [169(US)-1-14] 7. Work of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories [95-8(US)-75] 8. Report of the Human Rights Council [94-71(US)-23] 9. Situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic [127(US)-13-47] 10. Situation of Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran [86(US)-36-61] 11. Agricultural Technology for Development [144(US)-1-34] 	<p>Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals for persons with disabilities: "The Way Forward, a disability-inclusive development agenda towards 2015 and beyond"</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Declaration of the High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development 3. Report of the International Atomic Energy Agency 4. The Situation in Afghanistan 5. Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction 6. Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism 7. Child, early and forced marriage 8. Rights of indigenous peoples 9. Torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment 10. The right to privacy in the digital age 11. Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping, stigmatization, discrimination, incitement to violence, and violence against persons based on religion or belief 12. Freedom of Religion or Belief 13. Situation of Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea 14. Taking action against gender-related killing of women and girls 15. Information and Communications Technologies for Development 16. Implementation of Agenda 21, the Program for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development 17. Women in development 18. Situation of human rights in Myanmar (Burma) 19. Program budget for the biennium 2014-2015 20. UN common system
--	---

Works Cited

Primary sources

"General Assembly Resolutions." *United Nations*. Web. 06 June 2015.

<<http://www.un.org/documents/resga.htm>>.

De Tocqueville, Alexis. *Democracy in America*. Trans. Henry Reeve. New York: A.A. Knopf, 1945. Print.

Paine, Thomas. "Common Sense." *Ushistory.org*. Independence Hall Association. Web. 04 Feb. 2015. <<http://www.ushistory.org/paine/commonsense/htm>>.

Memorandum From the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs (Mallory) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs (Rubottom). 1960. *United States Department of State*. Web. 03 June 2015.

<<http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1958-60v06/d499>>.

Reagan, Ronald, and Richard Gibson Hubler. *Where's the Rest of Me?* New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1965. *Google Books*. Web. 17 July 2015.

"Voting System and Records." *United Nations Security Council*. Web. 25 June 2015.

<<http%3A%2F%2Fwww.un.org%2Fen%2Fsc%2Fmeetings%2Fvoting.shtml>>.

Winthrop, John. "A Model of Christian Charity." *The Winthrop Society: Descendants of the Great Migration*. Web. 05 Jan. 2015. <http://winthropsociety.com/doc_charity.php>.

Speeches

"David Cameron's Address to the United Nations General Assembly." 26 Sept. 2012. Web. 24 May 2015. <<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/david-camersons-address-to-the-united-nations-general-assembly>>.

"French President Addresses UN General Assembly." *France in the United Kingdom*. 24 Sept. 2014. Web. 15 May 2015. <<http://www.ambafrance-uk.org/French-President-addresses-UN>>.

Godard, Ronald D. "Explanation of Vote by Ambassador Ronald D. Godard, U.S. Senior Area Advisor for Western Hemisphere Affairs, at the UN General Assembly Meeting on the Cuba Embargo." *United States Mission to the United Nations*. State Department, 29 Oct. 2013. Web. 20 May 2015.

<<http://usun.state.gov/briefing/statements/215989.htm>>.

Godard, Ronald D. "Explanation of Vote by Ambassador Ronald D. Godard, U.S. Senior

- Area Advisor for Western Hemisphere Affairs, on the Cuba Resolution in the General Assembly Hall." *United States Mission to the United Nations*. State Department, 13 Nov. 2012. Web. 20 May 2015.
<<http://usun.state.gov/briefing/statements/200479.htm>>.
- "News Conference By President Obama." *The White House*. 4 Apr. 2009. Web. 05 Feb. 2015.
<<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/news-conference-president-obama-4042009>>.
- "Nick Clegg's Speech at the United Nations General Assembly 2013." 27 Sept. 2013. Web. 25 May 2015. <<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/nick-cleggs-speech-at-the-united-nations-general-assembly-2013>>.
- "PM Speech at the UN General Assembly 2014." 25 Sept. 2014. Web. 25 May 2015.
<<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-speech-at-the-un-general-assembly-2014>>.
- "President Bush Addresses United Nations General Assembly." *The White House*. 23 Sept. 2008. Web. 12 May 2015. <<http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2008/09/20080923-5.html>>.
- Reagan, Ronald. "We Will Be A City Upon A Hill." First Conservative Political Action Conference. 25 Jan. 1974. *Reagan 2020*. Web. 06 Feb. 2015.
<http://reagan2020.us/speeches/City_Upon_A_Hill.asp>.
- "Remarks by President Obama in Address to the United Nations General Assembly." *The White House*. 24 Sept. 2014. Web. 18 Apr. 2015. <<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/24/remarks-president-obama-address-united-nations-general-assembly>>.
- "Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Syria." *The White House*. 10 Sept. 2013. Web. 05 Feb. 2015. <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/09/10/remarks-president-address-nation-syria>>.
- "Remarks by the President to the UN General Assembly." *The White House*. 25 Sept. 2012. Web. 12 May 2015. <<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/09/25/remarks-president-un-general-assembly>>.
- "Remarks by the President to the United Nations General Assembly." *The White House*. 23 Sept. 2009. Web. 10 May 2015. <<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2009/09/23/remarks-president-united-nations-general-assembly>>.
- "Remarks by the President to the United Nations General Assembly." *The White House*. 23

Sept. 2010. Web. 11 May 2015. <<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/09/23/remarks-president-united-nations-general-assembly>>.

"Speech by Mr. François Hollande, President of the French Republic." 25 Sept. 2012. Web. 26 May 2015. <<http://www.franceonu.org/25-September-2012-67th-United>>.

Personal Interviews (full transcripts available upon request)

"Interview with Ceta Noland." E-mail interview. Apr. 2015.

"Interview with Dirk Jan Nieuwenhuis." Telephone interview. 21 May 2015.

"Interview with Eran Nagan." Personal interview. 20 May 2015. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Hague.

"Interview with Jeroen Steeghs." Telephone interview. 27 May 2015.

"Interview with official X." Personal interview. 20 May 2015. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Hague.

Voting Practices Reports

"Voting Practices in the United Nations, 2003." *United States Department of State*. Bureau of International Organization Affairs, 31 Mar. 2004. Web. 19 May 2015. <<http://www.state.gov/p/io/rls/rpt/2003/c12061.htm>>. PDF.

"Voting Practices in the United Nations, 2004." *United States Department of State*. Bureau of International Organization Affairs, 2004. Web. 21 May 2015. <<http://www.state.gov/p/io/rls/rpt/c14622.htm>>. PDF.

"Voting Practices in the United Nations, 2005." *United States Department of State*. Bureau of International Organization Affairs, 2 May 2006. Web. 21 May 2015. <<http://www.state.gov/p/io/rls/rpt/c17894.htm>>.

"Voting Practices in the United Nations, 2006." *United States Department of State*. Bureau of International Organization Affairs, 2 Apr. 2007. Web. 20 May 2015. <<http://www.state.gov/p/io/rls/rpt/c21928.htm>>. PDF.

"Voting Practices in the United Nations, 2007." *United States Department of State*. Bureau of International Organization Affairs, 5 May 2007. Web. 18 May 2015. <<http://www.state.gov/p/io/rls/rpt/c25867.htm>>. PDF.

"Voting Practices in the United Nations, 2008." *United States Department of State*. Bureau of International Organization Affairs, Apr. 2008. Web. 24 May 2015. <<http://www.state.gov/p/io/rls/rpt/c29990.htm>>. PDF.

"Voting Practices in the United Nations, 2009." *United States Department of State*. Bureau of

- International Organization Affairs, Mar. 2010. Web. 23 May 2015.
<<http://www.state.gov/p/io/rls/rpt/c36010.htm>>. PDF.
- "Voting Practices in the United Nations, 2010." *United States Department of State*. Bureau of International Organization Affairs, 31 Mar. 2011. Web. 20 May 2015.
<<http://www.state.gov/p/io/rls/rpt/c44269.htm>>. PDF.
- "Voting Practices in the United Nations, 2011." *United States Department of State*. Bureau of International Organization Affairs, 14 May 2012. Web. 18 May 2015.
<<http://www.state.gov/p/io/rls/rpt/2011/practices/index.htm>>. PDF.
- "Voting Practices in the United Nations, 2012." *United States Department of State*. Bureau of International Organization Affairs, 22 Apr. 2013. Web. 20 May 2015.
<<http://www.state.gov/p/io/rls/rpt/c57662.htm>>. PDF.
- "Voting Practices in the United Nations 2013." *United States Department of State*. Bureau of International Organization Affairs, Mar. 2014. Web. 18 May 2015.
<<http://www.state.gov/p/io/rls/rpt/2013/2013/index.htm>>. PDF.
- "Voting Practices in the United Nations for 2001." *United States Department of State*. Bureau of International Organization Affairs, June 2002. Web. 18 May 2015.
<<http://www.state.gov/p/io/rls/rpt/2001/vtg/index.htm>>. PDF.
- "Voting Practices in the United Nations for 2002." *United States Department of State*. Bureau of International Organization Affairs, 31 Mar. 2003. Web. 19 May 2015.
<<http://www.state.gov/p/io/rls/rpt/2002/vtg/index.htm>>. PDF.

Secondary sources

- Agnew, John A. *The United States in the World-economy: A Regional Geography*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987. Print.
- Attlah, Karen. "Why Won't the U.S. Ratify the U.N.'s Child Rights Treaty?" *The Washington Post*. 21 Nov. 2014. Web. 19 Apr. 2015. <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-partisan/wp/2014/11/21/why-wont-the-u-s-ratify-the-u-n-s-child-rights-treaty/>>.
- Bacevich, Andrew J. *The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism*. New York: Metropolitan, 2008. Print.
- Barlow, Rich. "Are Americans God's Chosen People?" *Boston University*. 22 Nov. 2010. Web. 13 July 2015. <<http://www.bu.edu/today/2010/are-americans-god%E2%80%99s-chosen-people-2/>>.
- Bernstein, Richard. "Why Does the United States Refuse to Pay Its UN Bill?" *The New York*

- Times*. 06 Aug. 1988. Web. 15 Apr. 2015.
 <<http://www.nytimes.com/1988/08/07/weekinreview/the-world-why-does-the-united-states-refuse-to-pay-its-un-bill.html?pagewanted=1>>.
- Blanchfield, Luisa, and Marjorie Ann Browne. "The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)." *Congressional Research Service*. 18 Mar. 2013. Web. 16 Apr. 2015. <<http://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R42999.pdf>>. CRS Report for Congress.
- Bolton, Sally. "UN War Doubters Unite against Resolution." *The Guardian*. 5 Mar. 2003. Web. 14 July 2015.
 <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/mar/05/firaq.politics>>.
- "Calling for Security Council Reform, General Assembly President Proposes Advisory Group to Move Process Forward." *UN News Center*. 7 Nov. 2013. Web. 24 May 2015.
 <<http://www.un.org/press/en/2013/ga11450.doc.htm>>.
- Ceaser, James W. "The Origins and Character of American Exceptionalism." *American Political Thought* 1 (2012): 3-28. Web. 11 Feb. 2015.
- "Chad: \$1 Million in Fresh Funds Keeps UN Air Service Alive for Another Month." *UN News Center*. United Nations, 14 Aug. 2009. Web. 02 Apr. 2015.
 <<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=31765#.VUfTjZM8pQI>>.
- Chambres, Paul. "American Exceptionalism, Not American Fire Power, Will Change the World." *The Blaze*. 27 Sept. 2013. Web. 5 May 2015.
 <<http://www.theblaze.com/contributions/american-exceptionalism-not-american-fire-power-will-change-the-world/>>.
- "Changing Patterns in the Use of the Veto." *Global Policy Forum*. Web. 10 June 2015.
 <<https://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/102/32810.html>>.
- Chasmar, Jessica. "Ecuador's Socialist President: American Exceptionalism Sounds like Nazi Rhetoric." *The Washington Times*. 8 Oct. 2013. Web. 05 Feb. 2015.
 <<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/oct/8/ecuadors-socialist-president-compares-us-nazi-germ/>>.
- Cohen, Roger. "America Unmasked." *The New York Times*. 25 Apr. 2009. Web. 13 Feb. 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/26/books/review/Cohen-t.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0>.
- "Continued U.S. Support Vital to UN's Success, Ban Says on Visit to Washington." *UN News*

- Center*. United Nations, 07 Apr. 2011. Web. 26 Apr. 2015.
<<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=38043&Kw1=united%2Bstates&Kw2=&Kw3=>>.
- Crossley, Noële. *Multilateralism versus Unilateralism: The Relevance of the United Nations in a Unipolar World*. Frankfurt Am Main: Peter Lang, 2008. *Google Books*. Web. 18 Apr. 2015.
- Davies, Mathew. "Rhetorical Inaction? Compliance and the Human Rights Council of the United Nations." *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 35.4 (2010): 449-68. *SAGE*. Web. 15 Apr. 2015.
- De Lange, Paul, and Bryan Howieson. "International Accounting Standards Setting and U.S. Exceptionalism." *Critical Perspectives on Accounting* 17.8 (2006): 1007-032. Web. 3 May 2015.
- Donath, Mirjam, and Louis Charbonneau. "For 23rd Time, UN Nations Urge End to U.S. Embargo on Cuba." *Reuters*. 28 Oct. 2014. Web. 01 June 2015.
<<http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/10/28/us-cuba-un-idUSKBN0IH1RN20141028>>.
- Duffield, John S. "Oil and the Iraq War: How the United States Could Have Expected to Benefit, and Might Still." *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 9.2 (2005): 109-41. Web. 14 July 2015.
- Edwards, James A. "An Exceptional Debate: The Championing of and Challenge to American Exceptionalism." Rev. of *The Myth of American Exceptionalism*, by Geoffrey Hodgson. *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 15.2 (2012): 351-67. *Project Muse*. Web. 11 Feb. 2015.
- Eisenstadt, Michael, and David Pollock. "Friends with Benefits: Why the U.S.-Israeli Alliance Is Good for America." *Foreign Affairs*. 7 Nov. 2012. Web. 14 July 2015.
<<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2012-11-07/friends-benefits?gp=135637%3A36ce918050c21605>>.
- "Eritrea Tells UN Debate That United States Causes or Lengthens Crises Worldwide." *UN News Center*. United Nations, 29 Sept. 2008. Web. 28 Apr. 2015.
<<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28368&Kw1=united%2Bstates&Kw2=&Kw3=#.VUM0QpM8pQI>>.
- Fierke, Karin M. "Constructivism." *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*. By Timothy Dunne, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007. 187-204. Print.

"Financing Peacekeeping." *UN News Center*. Web. 13 July 2015.

<<http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/operations/financing.shtml>>.

Foot, Rosemary, S. Neil. MacFarlane, and Michael Mastanduno. *U.S. Hegemony and International Organizations: The United States and Multilateral Institutions*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003. Print.

Forsythe, David P. "Human Rights and U.S. Foreign Policy: Two Levels, Two Worlds." *Political Studies* 43.1 (1995): 111-30. *Wiley Online Library*. Web. 02 May 2015.

Friedman, Uri. "'American Exceptionalism': A Short History." *Foreign Policy*. 18 June 2012. Web. 06 Feb. 2015. <<http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/06/18/american-exceptionalism-a-short-history/>>.

Fukuyama, Francis. *America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power, and the Neoconservative Legacy*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2006. Print.

Gardiner, Nile. "The Decline and Fall of the United Nations: Why the UN Has Failed and How It Can Be Reformed." *The Heritage Foundation*. 13 Oct. 2006. Web. 18 Apr. 2015. <<http://www.heritage.org/research/lecture/the-decline-and-fall-of-the-united-nations-why-the-un-has-failed-and-how-it-can-be-reformed>>.

Gingrich, Newt, and Vince Haley. *A Nation like No Other: Why American Exceptionalism Matters*. Washington, D.C.: Regnery Pub., 2011. Print.

Gwertzman, Bernard. "U.S. Is Quitting UNESCO, Affirms Backing for U.N." *The New York Times*. 29 Dec. 1983. Web. 16 Apr. 2015. <<http://www.nytimes.com/1983/12/30/world/us-is-quitting-unesco-affirms-backing-for-un.html>>.

Hanson, Daniel, Dayne Batten, and Harrison Ealey. "It's Time For The U.S. To End Its Senseless Embargo Of Cuba." *Forbes*. 16 Jan. 2013. Web. 03 June 2015. <<http://www.forbes.com/sites/realspin/2013/01/16/its-time-for-the-u-s-to-end-its-senseless-embargo-of-cuba/>>.

Hastedt, Glenn P. *American Foreign Policy: Past, Present, Future*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1991. *Google Books*. Web.

"History of the United Nations." *United Nations*. Web. 15 Apr. 2015.

<<http://www.un.org/en/aboutun/history/>>.

Hodgson, Godfrey. *The Myth of American Exceptionalism*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2009. Print.

Hoogenboom, Ari. "American Exceptionalism: Republicanism as Ideology." *Bridging the*

- Atlantic: The Question of American Exceptionalism in Perspective*. By Elisabeth Gläser and Hermann Wellenreuther. Washington, D.C.: German Historical Institute, 2002. *Google Books*. Web. 1 Feb. 2015.
- Hughes, Rebecca C. *Abstention and Exemption: American Exceptionalism and the International Criminal Court*. Thesis. Connecticut College, 2004. Web. 3 May 2015. <<http://digitalcommons.conncoll.edu/govhp/1>>.
- Ignatieff, Michael. *American Exceptionalism and Human Rights*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2005. Print.
- "International Iraq Poll." *Gallup*. 2003. Web. 14 July 2015. <<http://www.gallup.com/poll/1633/iraq.aspx>>.
- Jaffe, Alexandra, and Elise Labott. "Historic Thaw in U.S.-Cuba Standoff." *CNN*. 17 Dec. 2014. Web. 02 June 2015. <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/12/17/politics/obama-cuba-castro-relations/index.html?hpt=hp_t1>.
- Johnstone, Andrew. "The United States and the United Nations: Hegemony, Unilateralism and the Limits of Internationalism." *Challenging U.S. Foreign Policy: America and the World in the Long Twentieth Century*. By Bevan Sewell and Scott Lucas. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. 205-24. Print.
- Jones, Jeffrey M. "Americans See U.S. as Exceptional; 37% Doubt Obama Does." *Gallup*. 22 Dec. 2010. Web. 05 Mar. 2015. <<http://www.gallup.com/poll/145358/americans-exceptional-doubt-obama.aspx>>.
- Kissinger, Henry. *Diplomacy*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994. Print.
- Koh, Harold Hongju. "On American Exceptionalism." *Stanford Law Review* 55.5 (2003): 1479-527. *JSTOR*. Web. 5 Jan. 2015.
- Lebow, Richard Ned. "Constitutive Causality: Imagined Spaces and Political Practices." *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 38.2 (2009): 211-39. Web.
- Lipset, Seymour Martin. *American Exceptionalism: A Double-edged Sword*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1996. Print.
- Lipset, Seymour Martin., and Gary Marks. *It Didn't Happen Here: Why Socialism Failed in the United States*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2000. Print.
- Luard, Evan. *A History of the United Nations - Volume 1: The Years of Western Dominance, 1945-1955*. London: Macmillan, 1982. Print.
- Luck, Edward C. "American Exceptionalism and International Organization: Lessons from

- the 1990s." *U.S. Hegemony and International Organizations: The United States and Multilateral Institutions*. By Rosemary Foot, S. Neil. MacFarlane, and Michael Mastanduno. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003. 25-48. Print.
- . *Mixed Messages: American Politics and International Organization, 1919-1999*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1999. Print.
- Madsen, Deborah L. *American Exceptionalism*. Jackson: U of Mississippi, 1998. *Google Books*. Web. 6 Feb. 2015.
- Marlowe, Lara. "French Minister Urges Greater UN Role to Counter U.S. 'hyperpower'" *The Irish Times*. 4 Nov. 1999. Web. 02 May 2015.
<<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/french-minister-urges-greater-un-role-to-counter-us-hyperpower-1.246289>>.
- McCormick, John. "American Exceptionalism: The Implications for Europe." *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 3.2 (2005): 199-215. Web. 3 Jan. 2015.
- McCoy, Terrence. "How Joseph Stalin Invented 'American Exceptionalism'" *The Atlantic*. Atlantic Media Company, 15 Mar. 2012. Web. 05 Feb. 2015.
<<http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2012/03/how-joseph-stalin-invented-american-exceptionalism/254534/>>.
- Mertus, Julie. *Bait and Switch: Human Rights and U.S. Foreign Policy*. New York: Routledge, 2004. *Google Books*. Web. 20 Feb. 2015.
- Mingst, Karen. "Troubled Waters: The United States-United Nations Relationship." *International Peacekeeping* 10.4 (2003): 82-93. Web. 3 May 2015.
- Mullen, Jethro. "Vladimir Putin's Comments on American Exceptionalism, Syria Cause a Fuss." *CNN*. Cable News Network, 12 Sept. 2013. Web. 05 Feb. 2015.
<http://edition.cnn.com/2013/09/12/politics/putin-syria-editorial-reaction/index.html?hpt=hp_t1>.
- Nederveen Pieterse, Jan. "Hyperpower Exceptionalism: Globalisation the American Way." *New Political Economy* 8.3 (2003): 299-319. Web. 01 May 2015.
- Nguyen, Hang Thi Thuy. "Theories of U.S. Foreign Policy: An Overview." *World Journal of Social Science* 1.1 (2013): 20-26. *Sciedu Press*. 13 Aug. 2013. Web. 3 Apr. 2015.
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.5430/wjss.v1n1p20>>.
- Noble, David W. *Death of a Nation: American Culture and the End of Exceptionalism*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 2002. Print.
- Nye, Joseph S., and David Welch. *Understanding Global Conflict and Cooperation: An Introduction to Theory and History*. Boston: Pearson Longman, 2011. Print.

- Nye, Joseph S. "The Decline of America's Soft Power." *Foreign Affairs*. Council on Foreign Relations, May-June 2004. Web. 08 Feb. 2015.
<<http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/59888/joseph-s-nye-jr/the-decline-of-americas-soft-power>>.
- . *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go It Alone*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002. Print.
- . *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. New York: Public Affairs, 2004. Print.
- "Opening Annual Debate amid 'Time of Turmoil, Transition', Secretary-General Calls on World Leaders to Overcome Divisions, Do More to Address Sobering Challenges." *UN News Center*. 25 Sept. 201. Web. 14 May 2015.
<<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2012/ga11292.doc.htm>>. General Assembly Meetings Coverage
- Ostrower, Gary B. *The United Nations and the United States*. New York: Twayne/Simon & Schuster Macmillan, 1998. Print.
- Pape, Robert A. "Soft Balancing against the United States." *International Security* 30.1 (2005): 7-45. Web. 14 July 2015.
- Pardo, Ramon Pacheco. "Guided by Identities? A Constructivist Approach to Sino-american Relations." *Estudos Internacionais* 2.1 (2014): 39-60. Web.
- Parris, Matthew. "Ignore the Vanity of the Bushites, America's Might Is Draining Away." *The Sunday Times*. 22 Jan. 2005. Web. 4 Feb. 2015.
<<http://lists.extropy.org/pipermail/paleopsych/2005-February/001807.html>>.
- Patman, Robert G. "Globalisation, the New U.S. Exceptionalism and the War on Terror." *Third World Quarterly* 27.6 (2006): 963-86. Web. 18 Nov. 2014.
- Paul, Heike. *The Myths That Made America: An Introduction to American Studies*. Bielefeld: Transcript, 2014. *Google Books*. Web. 2 Feb. 2015.
- Pease, Donald E. *The New American Exceptionalism*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 2009. Print.
- Pincin, Jared. *Foreign Aid and Political Influence of the Development Assistance Committee Countries*. *Munich Personal RePEc Archive*. 25 June 2012. Web. 29 June 2015.
<<http://mpira.ub.uni-muenchen.de/39668/>>.
- Posner, Eric A., and Alan O. Sykes. "Voting Rules in International Organizations." *SSRN Journal* (2014). *Social Science Research Network*. Web. 02 June 2015. Working paper
- Renwick, Danielle, and Brianna Lee. "U.S.-Cuba Relations." *Council on Foreign Relations*.

- Web. 02 June 2015. <<http://www.cfr.org/cuba/us-cuba-relations/p11113>>.
- Rose, Richard. "How Exceptional Is the American Political Economy?" *Political Science Quarterly* 104.1 (1989): 91-115. *JSTOR*. Web. 10 Jan. 2015.
- Sanders, Barry A. *American Avatar: The United States in the Global Imagination*. Washington, D.C.: Potomac, 2011. *Google Books*. Web. 6 Feb. 2015.
- Schaefer, Brett D., and Anthony B. Kim. "Congress Should Link UN General Assembly Voting and Foreign Aid." *The Heritage Foundation*. 2 Sept. 2014. Web. 29 June 2015. <<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2014/09/congress-should-link-un-general-assembly-voting-and-foreign-aid>>.
- Scott, Shirley V., and Olivia Ambler. "Does Legality Really Matter? Accounting for the Decline in US Foreign Policy Legitimacy Following the 2003 Invasion of Iraq." *European Journal of International Relations* 13.1 (2007): 67-87. *SAGE*. Web. 14 July 2015.
- "Secretary-General Urges Human Rights Activists to 'Fill Leadership Vacuum', Hold World Leaders to Account, In Address to International Day Event." *United Nations*. 8 Dec. 2006. Web. 15 June 2015. <<http%3A%2F%2Fwww.un.org%2Fpress%2Fen%2F2006%2Fsgsm10788.doc.htm>>.
- "Secretary-General Welcomes Agreement on Details of Un Human Rights Review." *United Nations*. 20 June 2007. Web. 15 June 2015. <<http://newsletterarchive.org/newsletters/949568-secretary-general-welcomes-agreement-on-details-of-un-human-rights-review#.VYZWfEY8pQI>>.
- Shafer, Byron E. *Is America Different?: A New Look at American Exceptionalism*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1991. Print.
- Shah, Anup. "United States and the International Criminal Court." *Global Issues*. 25 Sept. 2005. Web. 03 May 2015. <<http://www.globalissues.org/article/490/united-states-and-the-icc>>.
- Sharp, Jeremy. United States. *U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel*. Cong. Rept. Congressional Research Service, 11 Apr. 2013. Web. 16 June 2015. <<https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33222.pdf>>.
- "SIPRI Military Expenditure Database." *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*. Web. 15 Mar. 2015. <http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/milex_database>.
- Smith, Tony. *America's Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1994. Print.

- Spanos, William V. *American Exceptionalism in the Age of Globalization: The Specter of Vietnam*. Albany: State U of New York, 2008. *Google Books*. Web. 6 Feb. 2015.
- Stephanson, Anders. *Manifest Destiny: American Expansionism and the Empire of Right*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1995. Print.
- Sterling-Folker, Jennifer. "Neoliberalism." *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*. By Timothy Dunne, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007. 114-31. Print.
- Taussig, Torrey. "From Liberty to Liberation: The Theory and Practice of American Exceptionalism." Thesis. Tufts University. 15 Jan. 2014. Web. 2 Mar. 2015. <<http://dl.tufts.edu/catalog/tufts:sd.0000020>>.
- Tharoor, Shashi. "Why America Still Needs the United Nations." *Foreign Affairs*. Sept.-Oct. 2003. Web. 18 Apr. 2015. <<http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/59184/shashi-tharoor/why-america-still-needs-the-united-nations>>.
- Turner, Craig. "U.S. Vetoes 2nd Term for Boutros-Ghali." *Los Angeles Times*. 20 Nov. 1996. Web. 19 Apr. 2015. <http://articles.latimes.com/1996-11-20/news/mn-976_1_boutros-ghali>.
- "The UN Human Rights Council." *Human Rights Watch*. 26 July 2007. Web. 15 June 2015. <<http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2007/07/25/un-human-rights-council>>.
- "UN Retains Strong Global Image." *Pew Research Centers*. 17 Sept. 2013. Web. 19 Apr. 2015. <<http://www.pewglobal.org/2013/09/17/united-nations-retains-strong-global-image/>>.
- "United Nations." *Gallup*. Web. 19 Apr. 2015. <<http://www.gallup.com/poll/116347/united-nations.aspx>>.
- "U.S. Drawdown in Iraq Affecting UN Ability to Carry out Its Operations, Ban Says." *UN News Center*. 1 Dec. 2010. Web. 30 June 2015. <<http%3A%2F%2Fwww.un.org%2Fapps%2Fnews%2Fstory.asp%3FNewsID%3D36928%26Kw1%3Dunited%2Bstates%26Kw2%3D%26Kw3%3D%23.VZL9eUY8pQJ>>.
- Voeten, Erik. "Resisting the Lonely Superpower: Responses of States in the United Nations to U.S. Dominance." *The Journal of Politics* 66.03 (2004): 729-54. Web. 02 June 2015.
- Voss, Kim. *The Making of American Exceptionalism: The Knights of Labor and Class Formation in the Nineteenth Century*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993. Print.
- Walt, Stephen M. "The Myth of American Exceptionalism." *Foreign Policy The Myth of American Exceptionalism Comments*. 11 Oct. 2011. Web. 16 Jan. 2015. <<http://foreignpolicy.com/2011/10/11/the-myth-of-american-exceptionalism/>>.

"Washington out of Touch with Anger of Arab World, Syrian Minister Tells UN." *UN News Center*. United Nations, 26 Sept. 2006. Web. 28 Apr. 2015.

<<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=20024&Kw1=united%2Bstates&Kw2=&Kw3=#.VUM0SpM8pQI>>.

Zinn, Howard. "The Myth of American Exceptionalism." *Massachusetts Institute of Technology*. Web. 11 Jan. 2015. <<http://video.mit.edu/watch/the-myth-of-american-exceptionalism-9935/>>.

Works Consulted

- David, Charles Philippe., and David Grondin. *Hegemony or Empire? The Redefinition of U.S. Power Under George W. Bush or Empire?: The Redefinition of U.S. Power under George W. Bush*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2006. Print.
- Delbanco, Andrew. "What Makes America Exceptional?" *Harvard Business Review* 60.6 (1982): 168-82. Web. 5 May 2015.
- Friedman, Max Paul. *Rethinking Anti-Americanism: The History of an Exceptional Concept in American Foreign Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2012. Print.
- Fukuyama, Francis. "The End of American Exceptionalism." *New Perspectives Quarterly* 18.4 (2001): 40-42. Web. 5 May 2015.
- Holsti, K. J. "Exceptionalism in American Foreign Policy: Is It Exceptional?" *European Journal of International Relations* 17.3 (2011): 381-404. Web. 02 May 2015.
- Jackson, Robert H. *Quasi-states: Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Third World*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990. *Google Books*. Web. 13 July 2015.
- Kagan, Robert. *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003. Print.
- Luck, Edward C., and Peter Fromuth. "Anti-Americanism at the United Nations: Perception or Reality?" *Anti-Americanism in the Third World: Implications for U.S. Foreign Policy*. By Alvin Z. Rubinstein and Donald Eugene Smith. New York: Praeger, 1985. 219-48. Print.
- McCrisken, Trevor B. "New American Nation." *American Foreign Relations*. Web. 02 May 2015. <<http://www.americanforeignrelations.com/E-N/Exceptionalism.html>>.
- Mead, Walter Russell. *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World*. New York: Knopf, 2001. Print.
- Mearsheimer, John J., and Stephen M. Walt. *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*. Print.
- Murphy, Craig. *Global Institutions, Marginalization, and Development*. London: Routledge, 2005. *Google Books*. Web. 13 July 2015.
- Scheffer, David J. "The United States and the International Criminal Court." *The American Journal of International Law* 93.1 (1999): 12-22. Web. 5 May 2015. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2997953>>.
- Sharp, Paul, and Geoffrey Wiseman. *American Diplomacy*. Boston: Martinus Nijhoff, 2012. Print.
- "The United States and the Founding of the United Nations, August 1941 - October 1945."

U.S. Department of State. Web. 15 Apr. 2015. <<http://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/pubs/fs/55407.htm>>.

Wicaksana, Wahyu. "The Constructivist Approach Towards Foreign Policy Analysis." *Indonesian Journal of Social Sciences* 1 (2009). Web. 15 Apr. 2015.