

IDEOLOGY AND THE FALL OF EMPIRES: THE DECLINE OF THE SPANISH
EMPIRE AND ITS COMPARISON TO CURRENT AMERICAN STRATEGY

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army
Command and General Staff College in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE
General Studies

by

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Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
2013-01

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.					
1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 14-06-2013		2. REPORT TYPE Master's Thesis		3. DATES COVERED (From - To) AUG 2012 – JUN 2013	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Ideology and the Fall of Empires: The Decline of the Spanish Empire and Its Comparison to Current American Strategy				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Enrique Gomariz Devesa, Maj, Spanish Army				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Command and General Staff College ATTN: ATZL-SWD-GD Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301				8. PERFORMING ORG REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for Public Release; Distribution is Unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT Sometimes, the ideology that formed the basis for founding an empire can become the cause of its fall. The decline of the Spanish Empire is a clear example of how ideology may both adversely influence national grand strategies and trigger processes of decline of an empire. The strong religious conviction of the Habsburgs was a fundamental factor in defining an imperial strategy that did not conform to the genuine interests of Spain as the core of the Empire. This strategy did not take into account limited Spanish capabilities that were not enough to achieve its religious goals. The purpose of this research is not to analyze in depth how religion influenced the decline of the Spanish Empire, but to use this process to establish a paradigm to explain how ideologies can become a negative influence on national policies. Once the paradigm is established, it will be compared to a similar process to develop some valid conclusions regarding the importance of defining national strategic objectives according to the interests and capabilities of each state. Over the last two decades, the desire to expand and promote democracy around the world became the dominant ideology in the United States. Therefore, its influence in the evolution of recent American national strategies serves as a valid comparison. This study presents some conclusions that not only might be applicable for the analysis and study of national strategies, but also may help to understand how and when ideologies that may be necessary to maintain the cohesion of nations and empires, can become a source of national decline.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Ideology, National security strategy, Decline of the Spanish Empire, Democracy, Religion					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT (U)	b. ABSTRACT (U)	c. THIS PAGE (U)			19b. PHONE NUMBER (include area code)
			(U)	107	

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 8-98)
Prescribed by ANSI Std. Z39.18

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

IDEOLOGY AND THE FALL OF EMPIRES: THE DECLINE OF THE SPANISH EMPIRE AND ITS COMPARISON TO CURRENT AMERICAN STRATEGY, by Maj. Enrique Gomariz Devesa, 107 pages.

Sometimes, the ideology that formed the basis for founding an empire can become the cause of its fall. The decline of the Spanish Empire is a clear example of how ideology may both adversely influence national grand strategies and trigger processes of decline of an empire. The strong religious conviction of the Habsburgs was a fundamental factor in defining an imperial strategy that did not conform to the genuine interests of Spain as the core of the Empire. This strategy did not take into account limited Spanish capabilities that were not enough to achieve its religious goals.

The purpose of this research is not to analyze in depth how religion influenced the decline of the Spanish Empire, but to use this process to establish a paradigm to explain how ideologies can become a negative influence on national policies. Once the paradigm is established, it will be compared to a similar process to develop some valid conclusions regarding the importance of defining national strategic objectives according to the interests and capabilities of each state.

Over the last two decades, the desire to expand and promote democracy around the world became the dominant ideology in the United States. Therefore, its influence in the evolution of recent American national strategies serves as a valid comparison. This study presents some conclusions that not only might be applicable for the analysis and study of national strategies, but also may help to understand how and when ideologies that may be necessary to maintain the cohesion of nations and empires, can become a source of national decline.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The process to complete this work could not have been accomplished without the support of many who guided and directed me since the very beginnings of this research project. First, I would like to thank my committee for their guidance and counsel during the whole process. All of them, Dr. Prisco R. Hernandez, Mr. Wilburn E. Meador, and Mr. Stephen G. Whitworth, have played a critical role to my success by giving me not only valuable advice, but also honest feedback.

I am also greatly indebted to my instructors and classmates from Staff Group 14 Delta. I really appreciate their assistance and the encouragement that I have always received from all of them; singular thanks to Major Seanegan Sculley for his constructive advice. I also appreciate the inestimable help that I have received from the Department of Graduate Degree Programs, especially from Mrs. Venita Krueger.

Finally, I thank my wife Veronica and my two daughters Veronica and Blanca, for your support, patience, and sacrifices during this year; many thanks.

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ACRONYMS

DOD	Department of Defense
DPG	Defense Planning Guidance
NSS	National Security Strategy
NSSR	National Security Strategy Report
U.S.	United States

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Strategy is not merely the art of preparing for the armed conflicts in which a nation may become involved and planning the use of its resources and the deployment of its forces in such way as to bring a successful issue. It is the rational determination of a nation's vital interests, the things that are essential to its security, its fundamental purposes in its relations with other nations, and its priorities with respect to goals.

— Gordon A. Craig and Felix Gilbert,
Reflections on Strategy in the Present and Future

Many factors influence the fall of empires; even the same ideology that formed the basis for founding an empire can become the cause of its fall. The case of the Spanish Empire is a clear example of how the ideology that served to establish its roots was, some years later, one of the most important causes for its decline.

The strong Catholic conviction of the Habsburgs was the fundamental factor, if not the only one, in defining an imperial strategy that did not conform to the genuine interests of Spain as the core of the Empire. This strategy did not take into account that the capabilities of Spain were not enough to achieve its goals. Moreover, it pushed Spanish economic and industrial development into the background, and focused all the national resources on expanding and imposing the Catholic religion all over its Empire.

However, the purpose of this research is not to analyze in depth how religion influenced the decline of the Spanish Empire, but to establish a paradigm of how individual ideologies whether they be religious or secular, can become a negative influences to national policies and/or promote the decline of nations.

Nevertheless, once established, it is necessary to compare the paradigm with other similar processes to develop some conclusions regarding how ideologies influence national strategies, and the importance of defining national strategic objectives according to the capabilities of each state. The other example which will be examined is that of the United States (U.S.). In this case, the desire to expand and promote democracy around the world emerged as the dominant ideology within the U.S. during the last two decades. The influence of democracy as ideology in the evolution of recent American national strategies will serve as comparative element.

The Spanish Empire

In 1469, the marriage between Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile established the foundations of what will be called the Hispanic Monarchy. Some years later, on January 2, 1492, the last Muslim bastion on the Iberian Peninsula, Granada, fell into Christian hands. With this event, the Hispanic kingdoms put an end to seven centuries of religiously-based struggle, expelling the Muslims, who, after the invasion of 711, had occupied almost the entire Iberian Peninsula.

Moreover, only three months after the conquest of Granada, in March, the Catholic Monarchs signed an edict ordering the expulsion of all professed Jews. Furthermore, that same year, on October 12, Christopher Columbus discovered the Americas and took possession of the new lands in the name of the Catholic Monarchs. Truly, 1492 was a crucial year for the Hispanic Monarchy.

As a result of these new facts, Spain faced two clearly different scenarios to implement its policies: the Mediterranean, where the Turkish and Berber presence was a

threat to navigation and to the coasts of the Spanish kingdoms, and the Atlantic, where the discovery of a new continent opened the possibility of creating a vast empire.

After Ferdinand's death (1516), his grandson Charles I¹ inherited Spain's Crown. At this time, Spain had already consolidated its presence in both scenarios, the Mediterranean Sea and the Americas², and had laid the groundwork for its expansion through them. Despite the magnitude of the project, Spanish resources and military capabilities were enough to attain the immediate successive objectives. Moreover, the Catholic Monarchs had the support of the clergy, the ruling classes and the common people.

It is important to highlight that four dynastic inheritances converged in the person of Charles I. He received, among other possessions, the Crown of Castile, a number of places on the coast of North Africa, an American Empire still undefined, the Crowns of Aragon, Naples and Sicily, the Duchy of Burgundy, and the Archduchy of Austria. Therefore, Charles I of Spain was the most powerful monarch in Europe. However, as a consequence, he had to face complex challenges and different conflicts: rivalry and confrontation with France, the onset and progress of the Protestant Reformation within the Empire and in the Netherlands, secessionist movements in the Netherlands, a Turkish threat on Austria, etc.

Similarly, the Spanish monarchy also assumed the leadership of the defense of the Catholic Church against Muslims and Lutherans. Therefore, the Spanish monarchy had to combat, sometimes simultaneously, against Turks, Berbers, French, Dutch, Venetians, Lutheran princes and so on.

On the other hand, Spain had to support the tremendous effort of consolidating the American empire, and its extension through Asia and the Philippines. All this combined with the maintenance of freedom of the following navigation axes:

1. Barcelona/Valencia–Balearic Islands - Sicily.
2. Seville–Canary Islands - Antilles.
3. Coruña–English Channel - The Netherlands.

Due to all these commitments, Spain did not have a day of peace in 200 years.



Figure 1. Spanish navigation axes in sixteenth century

Source: Created by author using a map from Central Intelligence Agency, World Factbook, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/refmaps.html> (accessed April 16, 2013).

In 1556, Charles I abdicated and appointed his son, Philip II (1527-1598), heir of all his Spanish, American, and West European dominions, but bequeathed the Crown of the Empire to his brother Ferdinand. Later, in 1580, Philip II inherited Portugal and the

Spanish monarchy reached its peak of power. This monarch possessed a vast empire that spanned four continents. Spain was the most powerful nation in the world. But, when the sixteenth century ended, Spain had been fighting for a hundred years without a day of respite. Spanish armies were still unbeatable, but there were clear indications that something else was happening. The economy, despite the silver and gold of the known as the New World, was in crisis, agriculture and industry were suffering from a lack of labor, and the state was not be able to support their armies and naval forces any more.³

All these circumstances pointed to the need for a change in strategy. However, in matters of national policy, the seventeenth century was a continuation of the sixteenth century. Nothing changed and Spain had to face an additional 100 years of uninterrupted war. In other words, Spain was not able to adapt its strategic objectives to the real capabilities and possibilities of the nation along with its empire.

In this process, religion profoundly influenced the development of the foreign policy of the Spanish monarchy. As mentioned before, in the early sixteenth century, the Spanish kingdoms ended seven centuries of war against Muslims. This war had become a crusade against the infidel. Furthermore,

The idea of the crusade, with its popular religious and emotional overtones, was therefore ready at hand for Ferdinand and Isabella. A vigorous renewal of the war against Granada would do more than anything else to rally the country behind its new rulers, and associate Crown and people in a heroic enterprise which would make the name of Spain ring through Christendom. (Elliott 2002, 46)

Therefore, it was logical that, after the conquest of the last Muslim stronghold on the peninsula, this crusading spirit was transformed into a fight against Turkish Empire that threatened Christianity in the Mediterranean Sea and in Eastern Europe.

Spain fought, alone, or with the support of Venice and the Papacy, both by sea and by land, to stop the advance of the Turkish Empire. Similarly, the nation subordinated its commercial interests to the religious interests not only of the Church of Rome, but also to the self-imposed moral duty of the Spanish monarchy. Something similar happened with the appearance of the Lutheran Reformation. In this case, the Spanish monarchy became the key element to implement the Counter-Reformation with the support of the Church of Rome, its theologians, and their military and economic resources. As a result, all the Spanish efforts were focused on facing a series of religious conflicts.

Spain proudly assumed the role of champion of the Catholic Church against Muslims and Lutherans. Moreover, this championing that had begun with the Catholic Monarchs, continued with Charles I and, then with Phillip II. However, this role hindered the economic development of Spain due to the lack of resources to attend to all the national interests. This issue was a major factor that prompted the decline of the Spanish Empire.

The Strategy of the United States

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, as a consequence of “years of economic decline and political infighting among members of the Communist Party” (Ryan 2009, 1), the world started a new era led by the U.S. as the only superpower within the context of a new democratic wave (Waltz 2000, 6). As Charles Krauthammer states in his article *The Unipolar Moment*, “The immediate post-Cold War world is not multipolar. It is unipolar. The center of world power is an unchallenged superpower, the United States, attended by its Western allies” (Krauthammer 1990-1991, 23).

Only four years before, in 1987, the U.S President submitted, according to the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense (DOD) Reorganization Act of 1986,⁴ the first National Security Strategy Report (NSSR). This document establishes not only the basis of national grand strategy, but also includes the following considerations in its section 104 (b) (1, 4), among others:

1. The worldwide interests, goals, and objectives of the United States that are vital to the national security of the United States.
2. The adequacy of the capabilities of the United States to carry out the national security strategy of the United States, including an evaluation of the balance among the capabilities of all elements of the national power of the United States to support the implementation of the national security strategy.

National security concerns, the international environment, the state of the global and national economies, domestic politics, pressure lobbies, and other factors and actors influence the development of a national grand strategy. Although the current U.S. strategy has been evolving since 1987, it has maintained an array of features that can be identified by what Paul D. Miller (Miller 2012, 49) or Peter Feaver (Feaver 2012, 60-61) has called the five pillars of the American grand strategy,

1. Building a democratic peace.
2. Defending the American homeland from attack.
3. Maintaining a favorable balance of power among the great powers.
4. Punishing rogue actors.
5. Investing in good governance and allied capabilities abroad.

However, as mentioned before, this national grand strategy is not fixed or permanent. It changes and evolves according to domestic and international events. As an example, during the Cold War, which lasted for more than forty years, the U.S. grand strategy was focused on combating all the military, political, economic and social challenges posed by the former Soviet Union (Chollet 2009, xii). Concretely,

The Cold War dominated international relations for over forty-five years (1945–1991). Within a framework of political relations, economic linkages, and military alliances, the Cold War was characterized by a high degree of tension between the United States and the Soviet Union; a costly and dangerous arms race; the polarization of domestic and international politics; the division of the world into economic spheres; and competition and conflict in the Third World. (Painter 1999, 1)

Some of the consequences of the implementation of U.S. Cold War strategy were the Korean and Vietnam wars, interventions in South and Central America or the deployment of large units in Western Europe. Since then, new events like terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, have influenced American grand strategy. Furthermore, any possibility of a resurgent American isolationism, as suggested by Charles Krauhammer, disappeared with this tragedy.⁵ Specifically, “A second feature of this new post-Cold War world, I [Charles Krauhammer] venture, would be a resurgent American isolationism. I was wrong. It turns out that the new form for America is not post-World War I withdrawal but post-World War II engagement” (Krauhammer 2003, 6).

All these circumstances along with belief in the principles of the “democratic peace thesis” in the mentality of the American political leaders have resulted in a new kind of American interventionism that focused on the expansion and imposition of democracy. This new approach is based on the belief that “democracies rarely fight another because they share common norms of life-and-let-live and domestic institutions

that constrain the recourse to war” (Rosato 2003, 585). Moreover, as stated by President Bill Clinton in his 1994 State of the Union Address, “Ultimately, the best strategy to ensure our security and to build a durable peace is to support the advance of democracy elsewhere. Democracies don't attack each other. They make better trading partners and partners in diplomacy” (Clinton 1994).

At this point, although American ideology includes “perspectives on human nature, society, and politics, and it sets forth distinctive conceptions of its central ideas, notably what it calls ‘democracy,’ ‘freedom,’ ‘equality,’ and ‘capitalism’” (Ryn 2003, 384), it is noteworthy how the values related to democracy have assumed the central role becoming an ideology itself. In other words, democracy, or more specifically the expansion and imposition of democracy, has been the ideology that has provided the basis to set the main parameters of the U.S. grand strategy during the last twenty years.

Particularly, the influence of this ideology (democracy) implied that some important national interests were subordinated to ideological concerns. In fact, according to the analysis of William C. Martel, in his article “Why America Needs a Grand Strategy,” “The United States faces grinding wars without end, a deep economic crisis, the emergence of authoritarian powers such as China and Russia . . . deep worries about the future, and no clear sense of purpose” (Martel 2012).

Nevertheless, the U.S. has been able to identify the importance of ensuring and maintaining its economic power to remain the superpower that it is currently. To achieve this objective, the current American grand strategy focuses more on pragmatic values (commercial) than on ideological values (expansion and imposition of the democracy).

This new approach reflects the new international and domestic environment after different events:

1. A financial crisis that, from 2008, is impacting most developed economies in the world including the American economy.
2. The human and economic costs of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.
3. The economic growth of the Asia-Pacific region that could remain above the world average for the near to mid-future.
4. China's desire to dominate the Asia-Pacific region.

In this regard, an analysis of the latter strategy document released in 2012 and its comparison with previous National Security Strategies (NSS) highlight the current need to protect the U.S. economy against China's influence, and the need to share the costs of defense with other allies. Furthermore, this document states not only that "China's emergence as a regional power will have the potential to affect the U.S. economy and our security in a variety of ways," but also that "building partnership capacity elsewhere in the world also remains important for sharing the costs and responsibilities of global leadership" (Department of Defense 2012, 2-3).

The Research Question

The premise of this work is that when a state or empire uses ideology as the main argument and the sole reason to establish its national strategy, this ideology can cause a process of decline, especially when the rest of the national interests are subordinated to the attainment of ideological objectives. Therefore, the primary research question of this work is: Can the same ideology that served as the basis to found an empire or hegemonic power become the cause of its decline?

This research takes the decline of the Spanish Empire as a case study to establish a paradigm; as the first step to validate this hypothesis. Therefore, two secondary questions are defined:

1. How did religion influence the strategy established by the Habsburgs in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries?
2. What were the main strategic concerns for Spain, as a nation? Did Spanish domestic interests coincide with the imperial interests established by the Habsburgs' strategy?

This work provides an analysis not only of the religious context in which the Habsburgs established their strategies, but also of the main concerns of Spain as a nation. The comparison of both imperial objectives and domestic concerns will serve as the basis to analyze the causes of the decline of the Spanish Empire, and the influence of religion in this process.

This research will also compare between the conclusions extracted from the decline of Spanish Empire with the evolution of the NSS of the U.S., as the second step to validate the thesis. Three other secondary questions must be addressed in this comparison:

1. Is there any ideology influencing the most recent National Security Strategies of the U.S.?
2. Does the last National Security Strategy take into account the main concerns of the U.S.?
3. Are there any similarities between the process of decline of the Spanish Empire and the evolution of American Strategy in the last ten years?

Definitions

As Carl von Clausewitz stated in his book *On War*:

The primary purpose of any theory is to clarify concepts and ideas that have become, as it were, confused and entangled. Not until terms and concepts have been defined can one hope to make any progress in examining the question clearly and simply and expect the reader to share one's views. (1989, 132)

Grand Strategy

The concept of grand strategy is widely used by many politicians, scholars, journalists or even military officers, above all within the foreign policy environment. However, it is a term that remains ambiguous and there is no definitive and unanimously agreed definition yet. Some definitions are focused on the use of the military means of the states, while some others, as for example the one included in the current U.S. DOD *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, identify grand strategy with the NSS.

Within the framework of this thesis, grand strategy includes not only the military means of the states, but also the political and economic ones. Moreover, all these means have to be used in a coordinated manner, within the accepted international conventions, to achieve the national interests. As Hal Brands stated “Grand strategy is defined as the theory, or logic, that binds a country's highest interests to its daily interactions with the world” (Brands 2012, 3). Similarly, according to Harry R. Yarger “Strategy at all levels is the calculation of objectives, concepts, and resources within acceptable bounds of risk to create more favorable outcomes than might otherwise exist by chance or at the hands of others” (Yarger 2006, 1).

Other scholars such as John Lewis Gaddis, try to define grand strategy in a simplistic manner as “the calculated relationship of means to large ends” or, in other words, “how one uses whatever one has to get to wherever it is one wants to go” (Gaddis

2009). Nevertheless, the definition established by the Lieutenant Colonel J. A. Bassani Jr. is the one that best conforms to the purpose of this work:

An overarching concept that guides how nations employ all of the instruments of national power to shape world events and achieve specific national security objectives. Grand strategy provides the linkage between national goals and actions by establishing a deliberately ambiguous vision of the world as we would like it to be (ends) and the methods (ways) and resources (means) we will employ in pursuit of that vision. (Bassani 2005, 12)

Ideology

All individuals must understand the world around them in order to be able to participate and support, with full confidence, the systems and processes (social, political, military, economic, etc.) that interact with the community in which they live. Moreover, when a group of people, each share the same beliefs and values of the others, they become a real community with specific characteristics that differentiate it from other communities or groups.

Nevertheless, due the complexity of the human mind and the nature of relationships among different groups (communities, states, social classes, etc.), it is necessary to simplify all interactions that occur not only among all the members of a specific group, but also those that take place between different groups. One way, perhaps the most usual way to achieve this simplification is through ideology. Ideology is a concept that can be defined according to Michael H. Hunt as “an interrelated set of convictions or assumptions that reduces the complexities of a particular slice of reality to easily comprehensible terms and suggest appropriate ways of dealing with that reality” (Hunt 1990, 108).

Ideologies can appear in the context of a simple single group; for example, an isolated tribe in the Amazon, a particular social class (ruling class, working-class, etc.), a

whole community (state or nation), or even several communities (empire). In the last two cases, national ideologies (or the predominant ideology within the society) play the main role not only shaping national inhabitant's behaviors, but also influencing some national decisions in the international arena. More significantly, national ideology implies that some values and beliefs, sometimes a true reflection of those prevailing in the respective society, sometimes imposed by the ruling classes, are rooted in the society.

Because of the complexity of societies, each of them with different sub-cultures, traditions, beliefs, interests, or visions of national mission, among other circumstances, ideologies vary widely. In some cases, religion becomes the main pillar of ideology,⁶ while in other societies, the prevailing ideology can be based on economic values,⁷ or even in the cultural values that underpin political systems.⁸

Despite the lack of specificity that is inherent in this concept, it is possible to identify some common characteristics:

1. Ideology is always used to refer to a set of related beliefs or ideas characteristic of a group or community (Plamenatz 1973, 109).
2. Ideology, once rooted in a society, shapes and influences many of the emotions of its members and moves them to action both to defend the values contained therein, as well as to impose them on other societies when they feel threatened.
3. Ideology simplifies a complex environment, but may distort reality. Moreover, as Darrell Dobbs states, "the worldly triumph of an ideology does not imply that it is a prescription for the best political order" (Dobbs 2000, 49).
4. Ideology tends to become dogmatic and intolerant of other ideas. This affirmation acquires even more value when the ruling classes try to legitimate

their own values, shaping and modifying ideologies through myths and beliefs to gain the total support of the population.

Nazi Germany was a clear and extreme example of how a specific ideology can be based on destructive values and thereby distorting reality and influencing not only policy makers, but also the whole society driving them to adopt and defend violent and immoral actions and positions.

Limitations

The analysis of American security strategy is limited to unclassified sources in order to facilitate the dissemination of this work.

In addition, this research work compares two different processes separated by a period of more than four centuries. As a result, the reality that existed in Spain in the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries presents important cultural, social, political, economic, and military differences compared with the current U.S. reality. Therefore, the comparison of these two processes is limited to conceptual aspects rather than concrete facts measurable with data.

Delimitations

The causes of the fall of the empires are manifold but this work is focused only on ideology as an important factor in this process. Many factors influenced the decline of the Spanish Empire: the decline of national economy, the rise of international alliances against Spain, the collapse of the Spanish armies and navies, etc. But, this study is limited to analyzing the influence of religion as an ideology and how this religious ideology

(Catholicism) became the most important goal in the creation of the Habsburg imperial strategy.

The scope of this research is limited to the Habsburg's monarchy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; that is, from the reign of Charles I to that of Charles II.

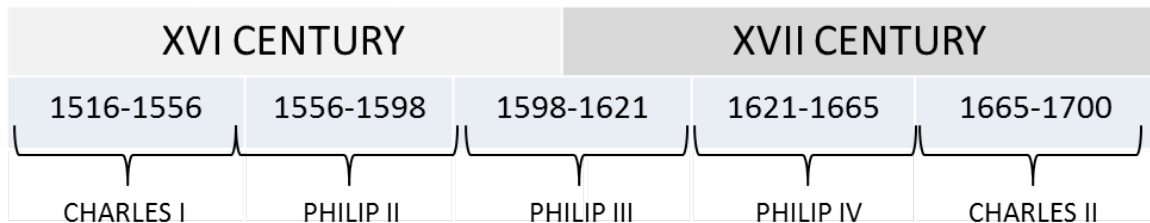


Figure 2. The Habsburg's Monarchy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries

Source: Created by author.

The analysis of the NSS of the U.S. is limited to the last ten years. In other words, the research about this issue covers from the NSS of 2002 to the document *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense* released by the U.S. DOD in 2012.

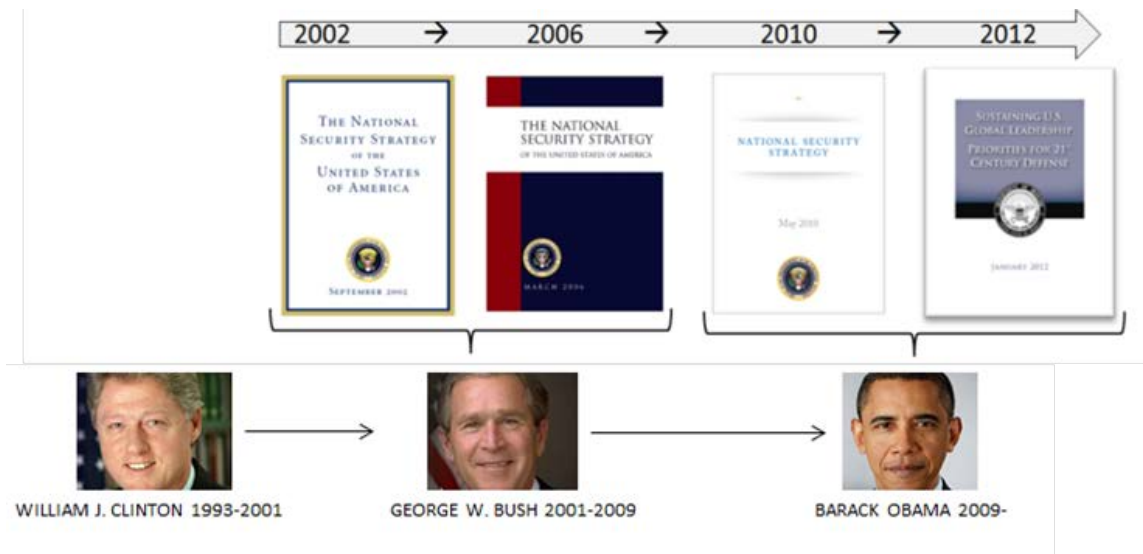


Figure 3. Time frame for the analysis of the American strategy

Source: Created by author using the photos of the Presidents, White House webpage, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents> (accessed May 1, 2013).

Significance of the Study

Although there are some studies examining both the decline of the Spanish Empire and the evolution of the American strategy during the last decades, this work provides a new approach using the influence of ideology on national strategy as the point of comparison.

¹Charles I of Spain was also known as Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor.

²Also known as the *Indies*.

³In this regard, it is noteworthy that expulsion of the Jews, already mentioned on page 2 of this work, was one of the events that most adversely affected the Spanish economy. Moreover, “the resources for accomplishing the great enterprises that lay ahead were none too plentiful in fifteenth-century Spain, and they were inevitably diminished by the expulsion of the Jews. . . . The effect of the expulsion was thus to weaken the economic foundations of the Spanish Monarchy at the very outset of its imperial career; and this was all the more unfortunate in that the economic and social policies of

Ferdinand and Isabella proved in the long run to be the least successful part of their programme for the restoration of Spain.” (Elliot 2002, 110)

⁴According to Public Law 99-433, in its section 104 (a) (1), dated on October 1, 1986, each year, the President of the U.S. must transmit to Congress a comprehensive report on the national security strategy.

⁵Nevertheless, the U.S. withdraws from Iraq and Afghanistan along with other recent decisions adopted by the Bush administration could contradict this assertion.

⁶This is what happened in Spain during the XVI and XVII centuries, when religion, in this case, Catholicism, become an ideology that not only influenced almost every national decision regarding international policy, but also shaped the customs and beliefs of the population.

⁷An example of this could be when capitalist values become the most important factor to influence national decisions and to shape social models.

⁸Democracy, Communism and Nazism are examples of political ideologies.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

A moment has arrived when a great power with global responsibilities is having a crisis of confidence. Its economy has grown sluggish and it is being overtaken by a number of rising competitors. Financial pressures loom, notably the ability to keep a balance between government revenues and expenses. It is losing long-standing superiorities psychological as well as technological and numerical in key categories of military power.

— Michael J. Mazarr,
The Risk of Ignoring Strategic Insolvency

As stated in chapter 1, this work compares two different processes that occurred in Spain and the U.S, in which ideology assumed a central role within national strategies. The purpose of this comparison is to develop some conclusions about the importance of defining national strategic objectives according to the real national interests and capabilities of each state.

In the case of the Spanish Empire, the ideology that most influenced the national strategy during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was religion. Moreover, this influence was one of the most important causes of the decline of the Spanish Empire. On the other hand, the national strategy of the U.S. has been influenced by the democratic peace thesis that has arguably become an ideology. This thesis is based on the expansion and imposition of democracy as the driving principle of foreign policy. The way and extent to which the last American national strategies, developed under the influence of this ideology, have conditioned the future of the U.S. as a superpower are not clear yet.

This chapter provides an analysis of different sources available to research the hypothesis of this work. Essential sources for the research about the decline of the

Spanish Empire are books by established historians of the period. In this case, there are a great amount of studies about this process not only from different point of views (European and American perspectives), but also focused on different aspects (economic, military, religious, etc.). This circumstance helps to explain the complexity of the problem in all its facets.

Primary sources on U.S. strategy are official documents, such as the different NSS from 2002, as well as public statements of the last U.S presidents and senior political and military American leaders. In addition, countless think-tank strategic analysts have published different analyses on the recent American grand strategy and its evolution during the last two decades. These works provide valuable sources of information for this research.

The Spanish Empire

As mentioned before, there are many studies and publications on the decline of the Spanish Empire analyzing the process from different points of view. Some are focused on national issues (the Spanish economy, industry, biases, etc.) and others on external factors.

Regarding the national perspective, some scholars like Claudio Sanchez-Albornoz highlight how religion, through the concept of crusade, was very present in the Spanish monarchs' policy during the Catholic Monarchs' reign (Sanchez-Albornoz 1973). Similarly, Menendez-Pidal, in his book *The Cid and his Spain*, describes not only how Spain "was preaching a holy war of Christendom as a counter-stroke to the holy war of Islam," (Menendez-Pidal 1934, 459), but also how Spaniards "were well aware that the

Reconquest was a duty towards Western Christendom” considering themselves as a martyrs carrying out a fair mission (Menendez-Pidal 1934, 461).

This self-imaging of themselves as champions of the Catholic Church against the Muslims, and later against Lutherans, continued with Charles I, and then with Philip II. This religious obsession became evident when, in 1594, the Monarch requested from the Castile’s Cortes of 1592-98 new funds to defray his military campaigns in France and England. The specific reasons why the king requested help were “the defense of the Christian religion, of these my Kingdoms and other nations” (Thompson 1997, 47). Furthermore, Philip II justified new religious campaigns insisting that the preservation of the holy Catholic faith was not only a royal obligation, as its only protector, but also an obligation of the kingdom as part of the universal Christian community.

However, these religious values had never endangered the development of Spain as a nation until the arrival of the Habsburgs. This assertion is consistent with the existence of a realist trend that was rooted within different structures of Spanish society, which opposed the adoption of a foreign policy based solely on religious parameters.

As an example, there was a clearly organized opposition in the Castile’s Cortes of 1592-98 against the religious policy of Philip II (Thompson 1997, 37-62). Concretely, Jerónimo de Salamanca, the representative of Burgos, tried to persuade Philip II to end all his religious campaigns in Europe. Furthermore, Jerónimo de Salamanca identified the necessity to focus national resources on defending the Mediterranean coast of Spain, the Italian possessions, and the maritime routes from the *Indies* as the only way to ensure the survival of the Spanish Empire (Sanchez-Albornoz 1973, 527).

Despite all this advice, the posture of Philip II did not change and on several occasions he stated that the most important concern for him was God and religion. Correspondence with his ambassador in Rome, Luis de Requesens y Zúñiga provides a clear example of the Monarch's determination when he wrote, "Rather than suffer the slightest crack in relation to religion and my [Philip II] service to God, I would lose all my states and a hundred lives that I could have. I have neither the intention nor the desire to be lord of heretics" (Sanchez-Albornoz 1973, 525-526).

Similarly, authors like Mia J. Rodriguez-Salgado and Aurelio Espinosa make a deep analysis of how religion was present in all the decisions adopted by the Habsburgs contrary to the more realistic assessments from different sectors of Spanish society.

Furthermore, due to religious fanaticism that was present in almost all royal decisions during the sixteen and seventeen centuries, Spain was continuously at war. "Where religious differences were involved, as between the Catholic Hapsburgs and the Protestant Germans, rulers were more likely to fight than to seek a compromise" (Taylor 2011, 52).

From an economic point of view, Earl J. Hamilton identifies Spanish dependence on American treasures as one of the most important factors to explain the decline of the Empire. Concretely, he states that the most important external cause of decline was that Spain "could not survive the withdrawal associated with drastically reduced imports of precious metals in the 1620s and 1630s" (Hamilton 1937, 168-70). Furthermore, he asserts in his article "The Decline of the Spain" that,

In broad terms, one can say that it took Spain only a century . . . to attain political pre-eminence and only a century . . . to fall into the rank of a second-rate power. Economics and politics were clearly interrelated, but a loss of economic strength

appears to have been more largely a cause than a result of the political decline. (Hamilton 1938, 169)

Similarly, Dennis O. Flynn concludes that the wars with the French, the English, and the Turks ruined the Spanish treasury when the surplus from America vanished (Flynn 1982, 147). In this regard, it is noteworthy that with more than 70,000 troops regularly fighting in Europe, the Spanish treasury spent in these campaigns more than doubled what it received from the *Indies*. Specifically, “Between 1566 and 1654, the Military Treasury in the Netherlands received a minimum of 218 million ducats from Castile, while the Crown received only 121 million ducats from the Indies” (Flynn 1982, 147). These financial problems were much more evident at the end of the seventeenth century when “during the brief war against France in 1683-4, for example, Spain could only muster a Flanders Army of 20,000 compared to one of 90,000 in 1640” (Lemieux 2004, 19).

Other authors, as Henry Charles Lea or Earl J. Hamilton, analyze the economic problem from another perspective, and identify the Moorish expulsion of 1609-14¹ as an element “which contributed to the decadence of Spain” (Lea 1898, 37). Moreover, many scholars point out that this expulsion was the “the overshadowing cause of Spanish economic decadence” (Hamilton 1938, 171).

On the other hand, Henry Kamen provides a different vision of the decline of the Spanish Empire. This scholar analyzes, from the perspective of the relation between the ends and the means in the framework of a strategy, how Castile, as the core of the Empire, was not able to meet its commitments due to the lack of resources. At the same time, he identifies the “demands of foreign wars” (Kamen 1964, 72) as a cause of the financial difficulties in Spain. Furthermore,

The vast Spanish Empire had been built up almost entirely by the resources, in men and money, of Castile, and by the beginning of the seventeenth century it was clear that the Crown of Castile was no longer able to meet its commitments, principally because the economic basis of the old war machine was collapsing. (Kamen 1964, 64)

Fourteen years later, the same author provides a new approach to the issue of the decline of the Spanish Empire in his article “The Decline of Spain: A Historical Myth?” Specifically, in this article, Kamen argues that the Spanish empire was based primarily on the accumulation of inheritance but never had a state strong enough to maintain it. Nevertheless, he establishes as the main consideration “to bear in mind is that Spain had never been an economically strong nation. Castile in particular was barely self-sufficient in agriculture, and relied heavily on wool alone for wealth” (Kamen 1978, 35).

John H. Elliott presents a similar conclusion in his book *Imperial Spain 1469-1716*, when he asserts that “Yet the fatal over-commitment of Spain to foreign wars at a time when Castile lacked the economic and demographic resources to fight them with success, cannot be simply attributed to the blunders of one man. It reflects, rather, the failure of a generation, and of an entire governing class” (Elliott 2002, 380).

The American Strategy

The literature review is mainly based on the analysis of the NSS and other strategic documents released by the Government of the U.S., as well as on different reports and analysis from scholars and think-tanks.

First, and regarding the evolution of the NSS, it is important to note that the NSS 2002, which was signed in a time of war, as stated the former President George W. Bush

in the graduation speech at West Point (Bush 2002), was an inflexion point in comparison with past strategies, specially due to two aspects:

1. The fight against global terrorism as a priority:

Defending our Nation [the U.S.] against its enemies is the first and fundamental commitment of the Federal Government. Today, that task has changed dramatically. Enemies in the past needed great armies and great industrial capabilities to endanger America. Now, shadowy networks of individuals can bring great chaos and suffering to our shores for less than it costs to purchase a single tank. Terrorists are organized to penetrate open societies and to turn the power of modern technologies against us. (The White House 2002)

2. The possibility of taking preventive actions:

The United States has long maintained the option of preemptive actions to counter a sufficient threat to our national security. The greater the threat, the greater is the risk of inaction—and the more compelling the case for taking anticipatory action to defend ourselves, even if uncertainty remains as to the time and place of the enemy's attack. To forestall or prevent such hostile acts by our adversaries, the United States will, if necessary, act preemptively. (The White House 2002, 15)

Four years later, the NSS 2006 had more similarities than differences in relation to the NSS 2002. Specifically, the new strategy maintained global terrorism as the main threat to American security:

America is at war. This is a wartime national security strategy required by the grave challenge we [the U.S.] face- the rise of terrorism fueled by an aggressive ideology of hatred and murder. . . . This strategy reflects our [the U.S.] most solemn obligation: to protect the security of the American people. (The White House 2006a)

Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that this NSS puts a new emphasis, in line with the principles of the democratic peace thesis, on the promotion of democracy as a way to facilitate global stability,

Because democracies are the most responsible members of the international system, promoting democracy is the most effective long-term measure for strengthening international stability; reducing regional conflicts; countering

terrorism and terror-supporting extremism; and extending peace and prosperity. (The White House 2006a, 3)

Furthermore, one of the goals that the NSS 2006 established to facilitate American's national security institutions to meet the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century was the reorientation of the Department of State towards transformational diplomacy, "which promotes effective democracy and responsible sovereignty" (The White House 2006a, 43).

In other words, the democratic peace thesis, explained in chapter 2 of this work, began to play an important role within the U.S. grand strategy. Similarly, as Felix Arteaga states in his article about the NSS 2006, "the promotion of democracy and freedom have been two of the most popular objectives of the NSS 2002 and 2006" (Arteaga 2006, 6). Nevertheless, this concept has been present in American policy from the end of World War II. It is a concept that, according to G. John Ikenberry, reflects "a pragmatic, evolving, and sophisticated understanding of how to create a stable and relatively peaceful order" (Ikenberry 1999, 56-57).

This vision of the promotion of democracy abroad as the best method to establish a peaceful international environment has been part of American liberal grand strategy since President Wilson tried to "create world order through the League of the Nations after World War I" (Ikenberry 1999, 58). Similarly, Colin Dueck cites in his article "New Perspectives on American Strategy" that "the liberal goal of democracy promotion is of course central to the American foreign policy tradition" (Dueck 2004, 208).

Despite the great influence of the democratic peace thesis in the formulation of the latest America grand strategies, it is difficult to clearly identify a defined American grand strategy since 1991. In this regard, Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross define, in

their essay *Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy*, four main grand strategy visions that have served, and continue to serve, as an ideological base to define the main different American national grand strategies. These grand strategy visions are neo-isolationism; selective engagement; cooperative security; and primacy.

	Neo-Isolationism	Selective Engagement	Cooperative Security	Primacy
Analytical Anchor	Minimal, defensive realism	Traditional balance of power realism	Liberalism	Maximal realism/unilateralism
Major Problem of Int'l Politics	Avoiding entanglement in the affairs of others	Peace among the major powers	The indivisibility of peace	The rise of a peer competitor
Preferred World Order	Distant balance of power	Balance of power	Interdependence	Hegemonic
Nuclear Dynamics	Supports status quo	Supports status quo	Supports aggression	Supports aggression
Conception of National Interests	Narrow	Restricted	Transnational	Broad
Regional Priorities	North America	Industrial Eurasia	Global	Industrial Eurasia & the home of any potential peer competitor
Nuclear Proliferation	Not our problem	Discriminate prevention	Indiscriminate prevention	Indiscriminate prevention
NATO	Withdraw	Maintain	Transform & expand	Expand
Regional Conflict	Abstain	Contain; discriminate intervention	Intervene	Contain; discriminate intervention
Ethnic Conflict	Abstain	Contain	Nearly indiscriminate intervention	Contain
Humanitarian Intervention	Abstain	Discriminate intervention	Nearly indiscriminate intervention	Discriminate intervention
Use of Force	Self-defense	Discriminate	Frequent	At will
Force Posture	Minimal self-defense force	Two-MRC force	Reconnaissance strike complex for multilateral action	A two-power-standard force

Figure 4. Competing Grand Strategy Visions

Source: Barry R. Posen and Andrew L. Ross, *Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1996-1997), 4. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2539272> (accessed January 19, 2013).

For the purpose of this work is important to highlight that the main objective for the strategy vision called primacy is “to preserve U.S. supremacy by politically, economically, and military outdistancing any global challenger” (Posen and Ross 1996-1997, 30). This posture was held, for example, by neoconservatives as I. Lewis Libby,

Paul Wolfowitz, Dick Cheney, and Zalmay Khalilzad in the decade of the 90s. The 1992 draft Defense Planning Guidance (DPG), developed during the administration of George H.W. Bush, was a clear example of their principles and values. More in detail, the aforementioned document stated, “The U.S. must show the leadership necessary to establish and protect a new order that holds the promise of convincing potential competitors that they need not aspire to a greater role or pursue a more aggressive posture to protect their legitimate interests” (Tyler 1992). Nevertheless, it also included some of the principles of the democratic peace thesis, and identified as the second defense strategy objective:

To address sources of regional conflict and instability in such a way as to promote increasing respect for international law, limit international violence, and encourage the spread of democratic forms of government and open economic systems. (Draft of the DPG for the Fiscal Years 1994-1999 as appeared in Tyler 1992)

Similar to Possen and Ross, John J. Mearsheimer also identifies, in his article “Imperial by Design,” four different ways of approaching American grand strategy that are similar to those aforementioned:

Table 1. Different ways of approaching American grand strategy	
Options	Main Characteristics
Isolationism	Isolationism is based on the assumption that there is no region outside the Western Hemisphere that is strategically important enough to justify expending American blood and treasure.
Offshore balancing	Offshore balancing is predicated on the belief that there are three regions of the world that there are strategically important to the U.S. –Europe, North-east Asia and Persian Gulf.
Selective engagement	It is more ambitious strategy than offshore balancing in that it calls for permanently stationing U.S. troops in Europe, North-east Asia and Persian Gulf, to help maintain peace.
Global dominance	Global dominance has two broad objectives: maintaining American primacy, which means making sure that the U.S. remains the most powerful state in the international system; and spreading democracy across the globe, in effect, making the world over in America's image.

Source: Created by the author based on data and definitions provided by John J. Mearsheimer, *Imperial by Design* (Washington: The National Interest, 2011), 18-19.

Concretely, Mearsheimer suggests in his essay “Imperial by Design,” that the democratic peace thesis is included within the option called *global dominance*, along with the ideas of Yoshihiro Francis Fukuyama and Krauthammer, have influenced most American policy makers for the last twenty years. In this regard, it is important to highlight that Krauthammer thinks that America, as the most powerful country after the Cold War has to “lead a unipolar world, unashamedly laying down the rules of world order and being prepared to enforce them” (Krauthammer 1990-1991, 33). This vision of the role of the U.S. is shared by Fukuyama. Furthermore, as Mearsheimer explains, “Krauthammer’s advice fit neatly with Fukuyama’s vision of the future: the US should

take the lead in bringing democracy to less developed countries the world over” (Mearsheimer 2011, 16).

Michael J. Mazarr establishes a new approach in his article “The Risk of Ignoring Strategic Insolvency” when he identifies some specific tenets that have shaped the U.S. national strategy during the last years. Concretely, he enumerates five primary elements that conform to what could be called the U.S. strategic paradigm. Although he does not mention the imposition of the democracy abroad, he highlights how the “stability of many regions has become dependent on a substantial U.S. regional presence of bases, forward-deployed combat forces, and active diplomatic engagement.” (Mazarr 2012, 9)

Despite the influence of the democratic peace thesis on U.S. grand strategy, some scholars, as Ikenberry, John Owen, or Thomas Risse argue that the U.S. differs from other empires in its lack of interest in playing the role of empire (Dueck 2004, 199-200). Similarly, Krauthammer states in his article “The Unipolar Moment Revisited,” “The U.S. is not an imperial power with a desire to rule other countries. . . . Indeed, America is the first hegemonic power in history to be obsessed with *exit strategies*” (Krauthammer 2002-2003, 14).

However, in 2010, U.S. leaders realized that they could not shape the international environment as easily as they thought. As a consequence, the NSS 2010 introduces a new approach that differs from previous NSS. According to Felix Arteaga’s analysis of the NSS 2010, the previous strategies were focused on a proactive approach to external action. This approach implied that the U.S. should shape world order to promote democracy, development and security worldwide; especially where states were weaker or failed. Now, the NSS 2010 replaces this enthusiastic leadership by another more

pragmatic approach. In other words, the Obama administration has understood that there a lot of things to change at home (in the U.S.) before being able to change the outside environment (Arteaga 2010, 2).

Therefore, the NSS 2010 can be defined as a transition strategy that introduces a multinational approach by identifying the need for sharing defense and security responsibilities with international allies. It is a strategy that tries to align the national objectives to the resources available in order to ensure that the U.S. can maintain the current leadership in the international arena. However, one of the most important changes in this new strategy is that it renounces the idea that American values can be imposed by force. Concretely, “The United States rejects the false choice between the narrow pursuit of our interests and an endless campaign to impose our values. . . . [the U.S.] will not seek to impose these values through force” (The White House 2010, 5).

Furthermore, the new American strategy focuses more on improving domestic economic stability, and prosperity as the first step to maintain the current role of superpower. Concretely, in the recent document *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense* the U.S. identifies the importance of protecting the nation’s economic vitality and realigns its main efforts towards the Asia-Pacific region when it states that “As we [Americans] responsibly draw down from these two operations [Iraq and Afghanistan], take steps to protect our [American] nation’s economic vitality, and protect our interests in a world of accelerating change, we face an inflection point” (DOD 2012, 1).

Similarly, Secretary of Defense Leon E. Panetta stated that this Defense Strategic Guidance for 21st Century “recognizes that this country [the U.S.] is at a strategic turning

point after a decade of war and large increases in defense spending” (Embassy of the United States 2012).

¹In 1609, the remaining Moors were expelled from Valencia, Castile, Extremadura, and La Mancha. One year later, in 1610, the same occurred to the Moors who lived in Granada, Andalusia, and Aragon. Similarly, Moors were expelled from Catalonia in 1611, and three years later, in 1614, from Murcia. These expulsions marked the end of the Muslim presence in Spain.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As in all research, the methods selected for gathering information depend on the nature of the information required.

— Judith Bell,
Doing Your Research Project

Introduction

In order to achieve the objectives described in chapter 1, the research methodology is based not only on the collection of information about the process of the decline of the Spanish Empire and the evolution of the American strategy during the last decade, but also on the comparison of the lessons learned from the analysis of these processes.

Initially, data collection focused on answering the secondary questions regarding the influence of religion on the strategy established by the Habsburgs, and identifying the main domestic concerns for Spain in this period of time. Then, the focus of the research shifted to gathering information about the evolution of recent American strategy, trying to identify the influence of any ideology in the definition of the national objectives. In other words, the second step provides the answers to the secondary questions about the influence of ideologies in the American strategy, and the inclusion of the main concerns of the U.S. in it.

The last part of the process is the comparison of the conclusions obtained through the two initial steps to answer not only the secondary questions regarding the similarities between both processes, but also the primary research question necessary to validate the

hypothesis that the same ideology that served as the basis to found an empire or hegemonic power can become the cause of its decline.

The Research Concept

Sources for this work include books, specialized magazines, academic works and reports, and official government documents and publications.

The analysis of the Spanish Empire is based on the theory developed by Arthur F. Lykke that defines strategy in terms of how (ways) states use the power available (means) to achieve objectives (ends) that support national interests (Lykke 2001, 179-185). The research will not only identify the imperial objectives, the Spanish concerns, and the resources available to carry out the Habsburgs' strategy, but also link them to each other according to Lykke's theory.

The final objective is to validate the premise of how religion influenced the establishment of objectives (ends) without taking into account the resources available (means) in the context of an imperial strategy that did not meet the genuine interest of Spain.

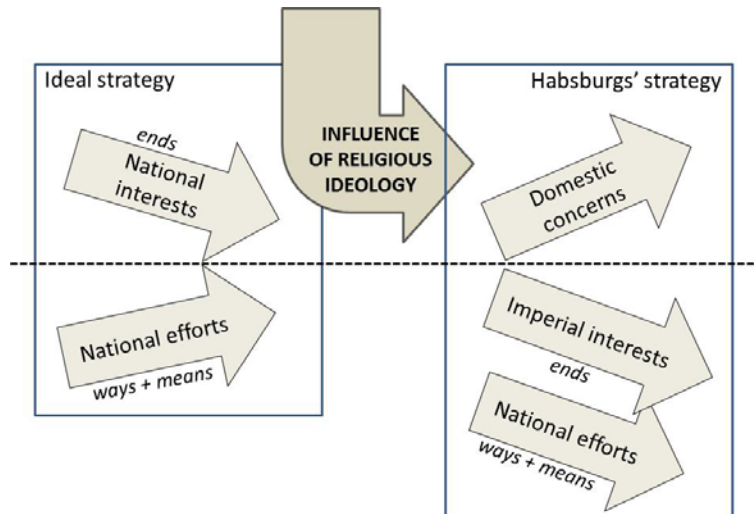


Figure 5. Influence of religion in the Imperial Strategy

Source: Created by author.

Similarly, the analysis regarding the American strategy is also based on Lykke's theory but focusing on the evolution of the NSS in the last ten years. This work identifies and compares the main objectives (ends) of the each strategy; analyzes their repercussions in relation to the means available (especially economical); and identifies the main factors influencing the establishment of the objectives.

Furthermore, the research is based on a qualitative perspective (Judith 2010, 5) because of the importance of understanding the societies' perceptions about not only of the role of their states, but also of their role in the world, and due to the three centuries that have elapsed between both processes. However, specific data is used to compare particular processes as, for example, defense expenditures or economic evolution in both countries Spain and the U.S. Nevertheless, in these cases, the main objective is to support the identification of the consequences of the influence of ideologies in national strategies.

Similarly, it is important to note that some circumstances make it difficult to compare the decline of the Spanish Empire and the evolution of the U.S. grand strategy. The table 2 enumerates some of these differences.

Table 2. Main differences between processes analyzed	
SPAIN	The U.S.
– XVI and XVII centuries	– XXI century
– Monarchy ▪ Dynastic ▪ Absolute power	– Federal Constitutional republic ▪ Democracy ▪ Checks and balances
– Empire based on disparate states	– Consolidated federal republic
– Church as a source of power	– Secular nation
– Religion as an ideology	– Democracy as an ideology
– Weak economy	– Strong and advanced economy

Source: Created by author.

The comparison of both processes is made through the analysis of different parameters:

1. The role played by elites in charge of establishing each strategy.
2. The role of each country within the international arena.
3. The influence of ideology in establishing the objectives of the strategies.
4. The impact of carrying out the chosen strategy on the national economy of each country.
5. The duration of each strategy, and the influence of pressure groups to change it.
6. The posture of the different sectors of the society in the face of the consequences of the implementation of each strategy.

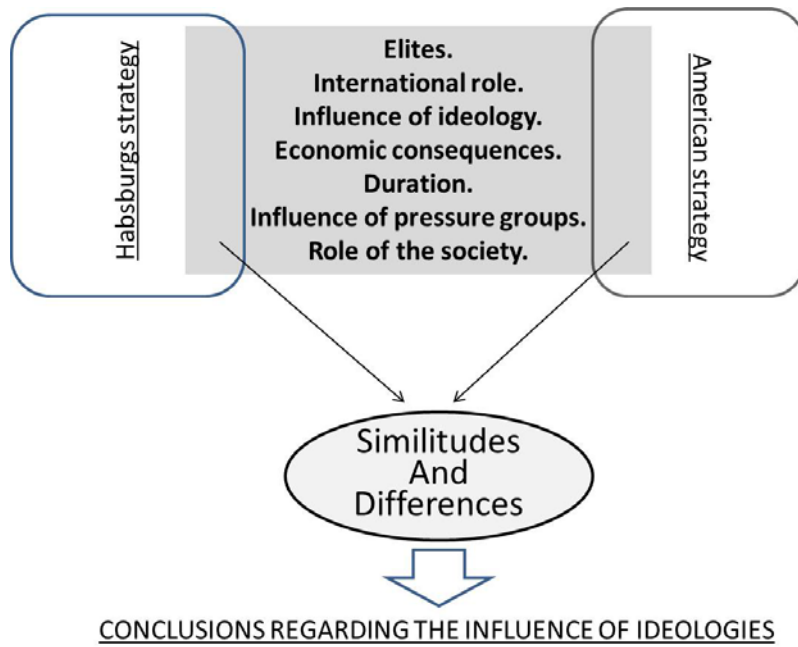


Figure 6. Comparison process

Source: Created by author

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

Throughout history, major powers have conformed painful inflections points when their resources, their national will, or the global geopolitical context no longer sustained their strategic postures.

— Michael J. Mazarr,
The Risks of Ignoring Strategic Insolvency

The Decline of the Spanish Empire

In 1580, with the annexation of Portugal, Spain established one of the largest empires in History. Moreover, as Earl J. Hamilton states in his article “Revisions in Economic History: VIII.-The Decline of Spain,”

The union of Castile and Aragon, the overthrow of the Moslem kingdom of Granada, the discovery of America, the conquest of Naples, and the annexation of Navarre under the Catholic Kings; the acquisition of Burgundy, Flanders, the Low Countries, Franche- Comte, and Milan under Charles V; and the addition of Portugal, with its vast oriental possessions, under Philip II gave Spain the political hegemony of Europe and an empire far greater than any other nation had ever controlled.” (Hamilton 1938, 168)

The Spanish Empire encompassed possessions not only in Europe (Netherlands, Luxembourg, Belgium, most of Italy, and parts of Germany and France), but also in Africa, America, Asia and Oceania. At the same time, the fearless *Spanish Tercios* organized by Charles I in Naples, Sicily, and Lombardy (Parker 2009, 150) established their supremacy within European battlefields.

In this respect, Henry Charles Lea states in his study on the decline of Spain, “His [Philip II] revenues far exceeded those of any other monarch, his armies were admitted to

be the most formidable in Europe, and his command of the sea was disputed only by the Turk, whose navy he crushed at Lepanto” (Lea 1898, 1).

However, two centuries later, the Spanish Empire had lost its military and diplomatic supremacy. Even at the height of her power, Spain started an unstoppable process of decline whose final result was the loss not only of an important part of its Empire, but also of any relevant influence within the international arena. In this case, the role played by religion as ideology became an important destabilizing factor that promoted this process of decline.

Specifically, religious influence started with the campaigns of reconquest against Muslims. These campaigns not only had a strong religious overtone, as it was explained in the chapter 2 of this work, but also tended to identify Muslims with the enemies of Christ and his Church. Furthermore, the entire Spanish society, without distinction of social classes, fought not only to regain the old Spanish soil, but also to spread the faith of Christ.

On the other hand, it is important to highlight that this war was fought during seven centuries and served as nexus to maintain unity among disparate Spanish kingdoms. Once Granada fell and the Reconquest ended, it was necessary to maintain a common feeling of unity among all the Catholic Monarchs’ subjects that would be stronger than provincial tendencies. The reason was that, after the Reconquest, the union of the different peninsular kingdoms became a reality, but each of them maintained their own political, economic, and cultural structures. In this context, the Monarchy identified religion as the key factor that could ensure unity and cohesion among them.

Religion as an Ideology

Within this framework, the strong conviction of being the nation chosen to defend Christianity from infidel enemies, which was promoted by the Spanish monarchs in the context of an autocratic absolutism that controlled all the aspects of the society, became a feeling that rooted in the mentality of most of the inhabitants of the Iberian Peninsula. Concretely, and according to Charles Lea, “the autocratic absolutism of the form of government, which deprived the people of all initiative, and subjected everything to the will of the monarch,” (Lea 1898, 7) was a cause of the retrogression that Spain suffered during the XVI and XVII centuries. As a result, the boundaries between religion and politics disappeared, while new challenges arose for Spanish society. In other words,

In perpetuating Castile’s crusading tradition, and giving it a new sense of purpose and direction, he [Charles I] undoubtedly met a psychological need. But there was a high price to be paid, for the perpetuation of a crusade entailed the perpetuation of the archaic social organization of a crusading society. (Elliott 2002, 169)

Moreover, the new religious ardor, almost fanaticism, of the Spanish people served the Spanish Church to significantly increase its power and its influence on political national decisions. In this respect, Charles Lea states, “This fanaticism [religious] gave to the priesthood preponderating power. . . . The royal confessor was ex officio a member of the Council of State, and under a weak monarch his influence was almost unbounded” (Lea 1898, 5).

There is not unanimity among scholars regarding the initial religious strategy of the Catholic Monarchs, and Henry Kamen, for example, argues that, “The religious motive was obviously central, yet despite the almost fanatical Catholicism of the Catholic Monarchs, at the beginning they seem to have had no plans for bringing about religious uniformity in Spain through the Inquisition” (Kamen 1964, 48). However, the Spanish

Inquisition, created in 1480, became another factor that helped not only to establish the unity of faith among all the Spanish population, but also to avoid any deviation from royal religious guidance.

Concretely, the Inquisition, according to Charles Lea was, “established for the purpose of securing the supreme good of unblemished purity and uniformity of belief. Nothing was allowed to stand in the way of this, and no sacrifice was deemed too great for its accomplishment” (Lea 1898, 6). This permanent religious indoctrination established a sense of intolerance among the Spanish population that hampered any approach to subsequent reforms promulgated by Martin Luther.

As a consequence of all the developments just mentioned, and according to the facts in the table number 3, religion became the predominant ideology in Spain during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. This continued until the end of the Habsburg dynasty at the end of the seventeenth century.

Table 3. Religion as an ideology in Spain during the XV and XVI centuries	
Concept of Ideology	The role of religion in Spain
– Ideology is always used to refer to a set of related beliefs or ideas characteristic of a group or community.	– The strong religious conviction of the Spanish monarchs, along with the role of the Inquisition and the power of the Spanish Church, fostered the spread of religious beliefs that became the defining element of common identity for all the inhabitants of Spain.
– Ideology, once rooted in a society, shapes and leads many of the emotions of its members and moves them to action both to defend the values contained therein, as well as to impose them on other societies when they feel threatened.	– Spanish society was firmly convinced that they had not only to defend Catholicism from infidel enemies, but also to impose their ideals on those who, like Lutherans, deviated from what they considered the only authentic and unique religion.
– Ideology simplifies a complex environment, but may distort reality.	– Religion, through the monarchs, the Church and the Inquisition, was used to explain almost every aspect of human life.
– Ideology tends to become dogmatic and intolerant of other ideas.	– The Inquisition, and expulsion of the Jews and the <i>Conversos</i> are clear examples of religious intolerance based on ideology.

Source: Created by author.

Influence of Religion on the Causes of the Decline of the Spanish Empire

As mentioned in the chapter 2 of this work, there are several causes of the decline of the Spanish Empire. Nevertheless, some of the most important ones are the bankruptcy of the Spanish economy, overstretching its armies and naval forces, and the lack of a realistic national strategy consistent with available resources. These causes were promoted, to a large extent, by the influence of religion as the predominant ideology in most of the decisions that Spanish leaders took during the sixteenth and seventeenth

centuries. As an example, the bankruptcy was caused not only by huge and constant war expenditures to fund military campaigns that had religious goals, but also due to the increasing clericalism and the expulsion of the Jews and the Moors.

War Expenditures

Spanish religious ideology, derived from the ardent Catholicism of the Spanish monarchs along with the prominent role of the Spanish Church in the political arena. Religious ideology, which promoted a crusading mentality, was the main factor to explain why Spain was permanently at war. This profound religious conviction, together with the firm decision to continue the crusade against Moors and Lutherans, drove Spain to a dead end. Indeed, Paul Kennedy clearly analyzes the impossibility of separating political trends from religious trends in the European rivalries that ravaged the continent during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Clearly, religious ideology was one of most important causes that explains why the Habsburgs were at war for almost two centuries of seemingly endless wars.

Paul Kennedy states, in his book *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, “National and dynastic rivalries had been confused with a religious zeal to keep men fighting each other when, in a former time, they would have been willing to negotiate” (Kennedy 1989, 65).

Within this context, a military revolution¹ occurred during the sixteenth century, mainly as consequence of the introduction of the “fiery weapons, especially artillery, and of new systems of fortifications” (Parker 2009, 106). This revolution that started with what Geoffrey Parker called the *Gunpowder Revolution* (Parker 2009, 106), increased not

only the number of troops and equipment needed to face the new characteristics of the war, but also the time these armies needed to achieve decisive results for their states.

As a consequence of these changes in warfare, the expenditures on war increased exponentially. Spain's expenditures on war, for example, "escalated five-fold during the later sixteenth century" (Parker, 2009, 116). This circumstance worsened the economic situation in Spain, which began to have troubles to pay its armies that were fighting in Europe. Nevertheless, Charles I and then, Philip II, maintained the desire of defeating Protestant princes as one of their most important priorities. Therefore, blinded by strong conviction and fueled by religious ideology, they had no doubt that they were the true defenders of Christianity, and they were convinced of the necessity of using the treasures from the Americas to fund these wars that also required an increasing number of soldiers.

The precious metals from the Americas were the most important source of income for the Spanish Crown, but this influx of treasure was not enough to support increasingly costly wars. For example, in 1552, the campaign in Metz required the amount of 2,5 million of ducats, which was equivalent to ten times the income from the Americas during the same year (Kennedy 1989, 78). Concretely, Spain wasted around of 218 million of ducats in the Netherlands, while the income from the *Americas* was about 121 million of ducats. Furthermore, in the late sixteenth century, Spain became unable to support its armies, and this led to actions that alienated local populations. For example, in 1576, the Spanish troops commanded by Sancho d'Avila sacked the city of Antwerp as a consequence of delays in payment.

Events like the sack of Antwerp along with the religious intransigence of the Spanish monarchs, and the pressure to collect more money to support the war, "wrecked

Spanish policy in the Netherlands and advance the cause of the rebellions Dutch” (Knox 2009, 7). Moreover, the Spanish presence in Netherlands drove the latter to form alliances with France and England² in order to stop what was perceived as a Spanish maneuver to break the balance of power in Europe.

The massive use of almost all the economic resources to maintain the innumerable wars that Spain was fighting hindered Spanish industrial development. Moreover, as Paul Kennedy states when he analyzes the causes of the decline of the Spanish Empire, “However, the advent of the Counter reform and the many wars of the Habsburgs stimulated religious and military elements of Spanish society, while weakened trade” (Kennedy 1989, 87).

Increasing Clericalism

The increasing clericalism within Spain favored not only a spirit of intolerance among the population and ruling classes that hindered any possibility of assuming new concepts and technologies from abroad, but also abetted the already mentioned process of economic decline. Obsession with maintaining the purity of faith within the limits of Spain, led to paralysis of all intellectual movements and establishment of strict and costly regulations that wrecked the domestic industries and commerce (Lea 1898, 3). In other words, the whole world was evolving and adapting to a new reality but Spain looked backwards attempting to maintain a particular world view fueled by religious ideology.

Moreover, the new role of the Church hindered any option to improve the production and circulation of goods. Concretely, the large number of clerics steadily increased because “every one [within Spain] sought to gain a livelihood in the public service or in the Church” (Lea 1898, 3) created an immense number of useless

consumers. This fact along with the confiscations made by the Inquisition and donations to various religious communities became an essential factor in explaining the economic decline of Spain (Garcia de Cortaza 2002, 46).

In this respect, in 1623, Pedro Fernandez Navarrete mentions, in his book *Conservación de Monarquías*, how the monarchy was squandering large amounts of money and labor in the construction and maintenance of the many monasteries that were spread across the geography of Spain (Fernandez 1792, 378-383). Similarly, he identifies the large number of priests and a church increasingly powerful, but not productive in terms of trade as causes of poverty of (Fernandez 1792, 389-396).

Similarly, Pedro Rodríguez Campomanes, in 1765, points out the lack of labor within Spain as a consequence of the immigration to the Indies and the excessive number of monks and clerics. He mentions how the population of the city of Burgos decreased from 7000 to 900 people from 1715 to 1765 (Rodríguez 1765, 255).

Expulsion of the Jews and Moors

It is important to note that the relation between Jews and Christians were cordial and normal in the late fifteenth century. Furthermore, as stated by Franois Soyer in his study about the persecution of the Jews and Muslims of Portugal,

For centuries Jewish and Muslim minorities of various sizes cohabited more or less peacefully alongside a dominant Christian population. Jews and Muslims were permitted to practice their faiths and live in autonomous communities under royal protection provided that they paid discriminatory taxes and did not challenge the dominant faith. (Soyer 2007, 1)

However, a new anti-Jewish movement rose in some areas of Spain, as for example, in Avila, Plasencia, Zamora or Segovia. In this case, although the “*conversos*,” who became archbishops, bishops, and theologians” (Roth 1995, 278) were the main

instigators of this movement, the main causes were rooted in the new concept of Spain as a Catholic nation that emerged with the marriage between Isabella I of Castile and Ferdinand II of Aragon. In other words, religious radicalization of Spanish society as well as the Monarchy's desire of establishing Catholicism as the distinguishing feature of the new Spain triggered the expulsion of the Jews. In this respect, Henry Charles Lea states,

In the earlier Middle Ages no other European nation had been so tolerant as Spain in its dealings with the Jew and the infidel, but, under the careful stimulation of the Church, this tolerant spirit had passed away with the fourteenth century, and in its place there had gradually arisen a fierce and implacable hatred of all faiths outside of Catholicism. (Lea 1898, 5)

The problem was that Jews contributed, for example, not only to salaries of the guards in cities directly threatened by Muslim attacks, but also lent great amounts of money to Catholic Monarchs to provide financial support for important issues such as the conquest of Granada or Columbus' expeditions. Furthermore, in 1482, a special tax was imposed on all Jews and Muslims in Castile and Leon in support of the war. Specifically,

In cities directly threatened by Muslim attack, such as Jerez, Jews contributed to the salaries of the guards of the city (1482) along with other inhabitants. The Monarchs lost no time in demanding the payment of the taxes. In a letter (1485) to the Jews of Burgo de Osma informing the Jews of that diocese, which included Soria and other towns, of the amount due for each community, the sum of 18,000 castellanos is mentioned. . . . In 1490, the rulers ordered an additional payment of 10,000 castellanos, bringing the total for that year to 20,000. Besides these taxes, Isabel had earlier borrowed money from some Jewish sources. In 1483 she borrowed a total of 238,000 mrs. from various individual Jews of Soria for the expenses of the war." (Roth 1995, 280)

Although according to Norman Roth in his book *Conversos, Inquisition and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain*, "the overwhelming majority of the Jews in Spain converted during the years 1400-1490" (Roth 1995, 376), the expulsion of the Jews, as consequence of the religious radicalization within Spain, adversely influenced the national economy. As mentioned by John H. Elliott in his book *Imperial Spain*:

The resources for accomplishing the great enterprises that lay ahead were none too plentiful in fifteenth-century Spain, and they were inevitably diminished by the expulsion of the Jews. . . . The effect of the expulsion was thus to weaken the economic foundations of the Spanish Monarchy at the very outset of its imperial career; and this was all the more unfortunate in that the economic and social policies of Ferdinand and Isabella proved in the long run to be the least successful part of their programme for the restoration of Spain. (Elliott 2002, 110)

But this wave of religious intolerance continued during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, eliminating any religious pluralism within Spain by forcing conversion of the Muslims and expulsion of the Moors. Despite many scholars identifying the Moorish expulsion as an essential issue to explain the Spanish economic decadence, some studies noted that the influence of this expulsion in the Spanish economy could be less than initial estimates.

In this respect, Earl J. Hamilton concludes, in his economic analysis of the decline of Spain, “Facts are not in accord with the accepted thesis concerning the economic consequences of the Moorish expulsion” (Hamilton 1938, 172). Nevertheless, the Moors provided a considerable part of the agricultural labor force within southern Spain that could not be assumed by Christians because of a constant demand for soldiers to fight in the Netherlands and settlers to establish new colonies in the Americas. Therefore, the Moorish expulsion adversely influenced Spanish economy. Furthermore, the Moorish expulsion is another example of the wave of religious intolerance that swept the Iberian Peninsula ending centuries of peaceful coexistence between different faiths.

The Lack of a Realistic National Strategy

Until the union of the peninsular crowns of Castile and Aragon, both kingdoms had different strategic objectives and therefore, they had different foreign policies and strategic lines of action. For Aragon, its goal was the Mediterranean and Italy, where it

found the opposition of France, which laid claim to Roussillon and Sardinia (the trans-Pyrenean Catalonia), as well as to control of Navarre. Consequently, the foreign policy of Aragon was aimed at getting alliances and agreements with England and some Italian states to isolate and put pressure on France.

The strategic objective of Castile, during the last phase of the Reconquest, and despite Portugal's opposition, was to control northern Morocco in order to prevent new invasions and to consolidate their limited presence in the Atlantic (Canary Islands and Santa Cruz de la Mar Pequeña off the coast of Morocco) while maintaining a thriving wool export trade with England and France. It is important to note that Castile wanted to maintain an active policy of good neighborliness with France.



Figure 7. Localization of the Canary Islands and Santa Cruz de la Mar Pequeña

Source: Created by author using a map from Central Intelligence Agency, World Factbook, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/refmaps.html> (accessed April 16, 2013).

With the union of the crowns of Aragon and Castile after the Reconquest, Ferdinand II pushed a common foreign policy more oriented towards the objectives of the Crown of Aragon rather than to Castile's ones. Nevertheless, the latter not only soon assumed this new common policy as its own, but also led its implementation. This new situation allowed Ferdinand II to boost his Mediterranean policy. He established more ambitious but achievable objectives with available resources at this time.

Within this framework, the discovery of the *Indies*, also called the New World, opened a new stage to Spain, and added the newly discovered lands to the foreign policy scenarios in Italy and Africa. This fact drove the Catholic Monarchs to identify two lines of strategic action. One of them was a clear and well defined Mediterranean strategic action line. The other, by contrast, was an uncertain and ill-defined Atlantic strategic action line.

Ferdinand's strategy was to consolidate his Italian states (Naples, Sicily, Corsica) to form a defensive arc based on the Spanish possessions in Naples,³ Sicily,⁴ the Egadi Islands, Lipari, Malta, Pantelleria,⁵ and Lampedusa.⁶ This defensive arc that leaned on the axis Tunis⁷-Tripoli, would become a forward containment barrier intended to stop the Turkish threat to the western Mediterranean.

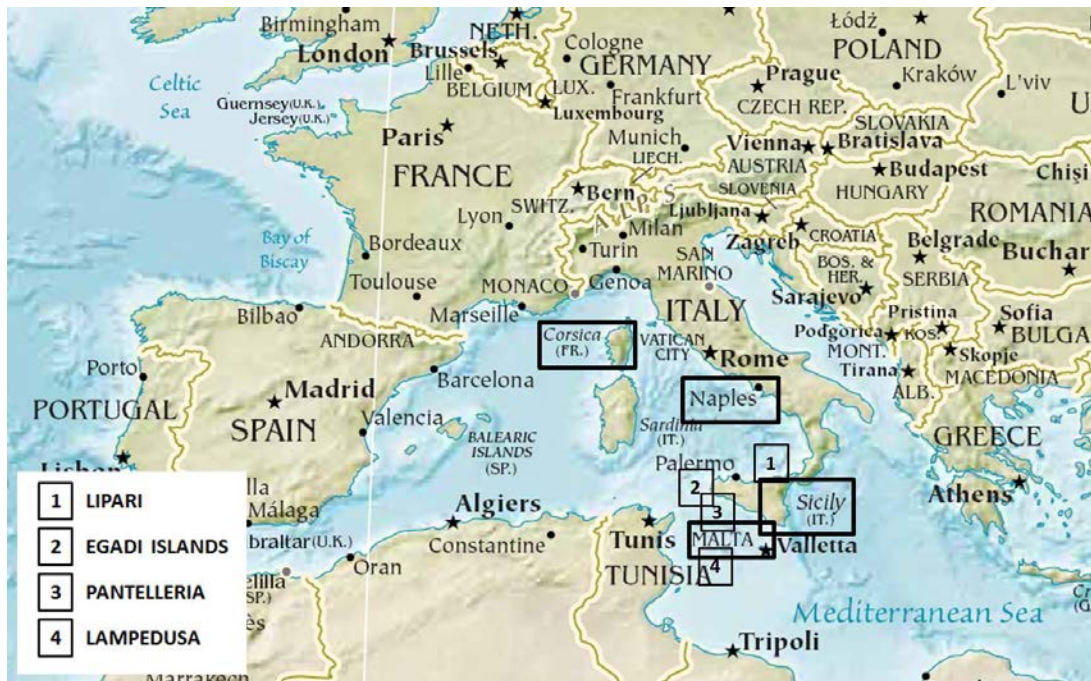


Figure 8. Spanish possessions within the Mediterranean

Source: Created by author using a map from Central Intelligence Agency, World Factbook, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/refmaps.html> (accessed April 16, 2013).

At a stage, the goal of the Ferdinand was to gain total control of the western Mediterranean, to reactivate trade and ensure free navigation in those waters that were threatened by the Barbary Corsairs from North Africa and by Turkish incursions. To achieve this objective, Ferdinand II planned a series of operations seconded by Cardinal Cisneros to occupy key ports in North Africa. As a result, Melilla, Peñón de Velez de la Gomera, Mazalquivir, Oran, Mostaganem, Algiers, Bugia, and Tripoli, among other places became Spanish possessions.

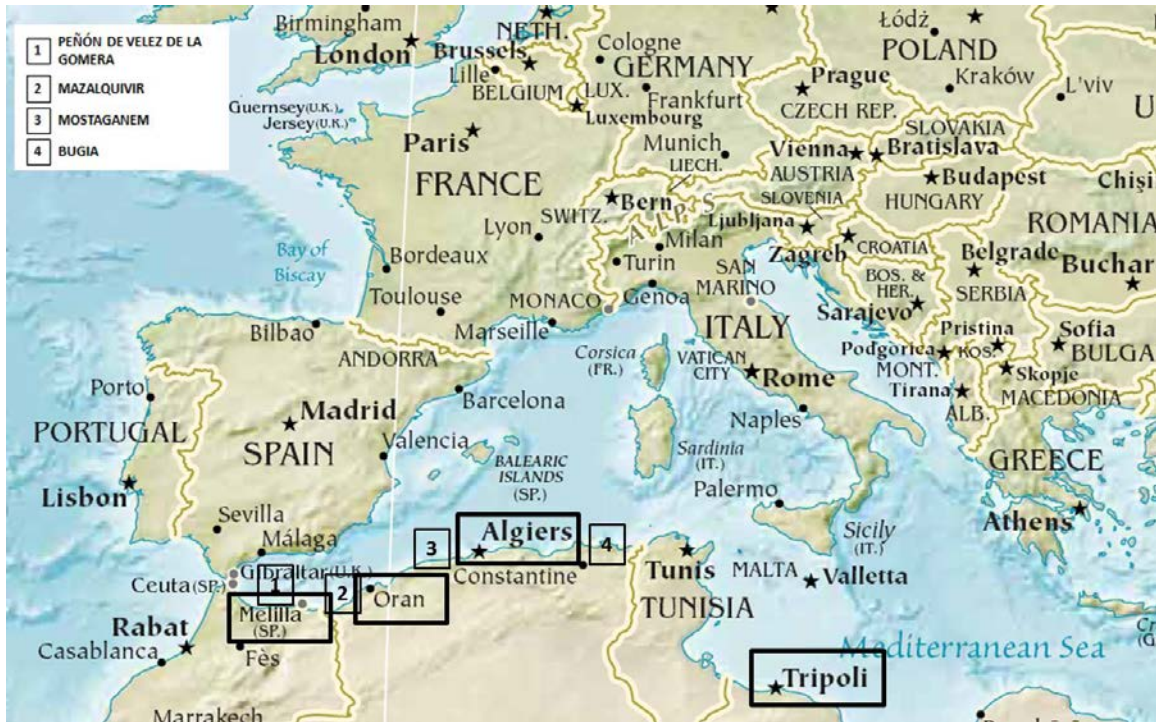


Figure 9. New Spanish possessions within the Mediterranean

Source: Created by author using a map from Central Intelligence Agency, World Factbook, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/docs/refmaps.html> (accessed April 16, 2013).

At a later stage, Ferdinand's intention was to use these new possessions not only as the core to establish a containment barrier, but also as the starting point for a future crusade to defeat the infidel (the Turks) in the Eastern Mediterranean. He even volunteered to lead, alone or with the support of other Christian princes, this campaign. However, death surprised him before starting this new crusade.

It is noteworthy that the Italian states only occasionally supported Spain in its struggle against the Turks. In addition, the Spanish Crown had simultaneous and constant clashes with France, who did not hesitate to ally even with the Turks to prevent Spanish dominance. Within this context, Ferdinand II devised a foreign policy based on marriages

with the ruling royal families within the Spanish Empire, England and Portugal in order to isolate France. Moreover, Ferdinand II *the Catholic* combined national interests with the defense of Christianity and the evangelization of Spanish possessions in the Americas, while maintaining a balance between strategic objectives and the means to achieve them.

Regarding the *Indies* or New World, the Treaty of Tordesillas⁸ delimited, in 1494, the zones of influence of both Spain and Portugal. As a result, and for several decades, Spain was able to conquer, colonize and evangelize its new possessions within the American empire without the interference of any European power.

In other words, during Ferdinand's reign, there existed a grand strategy based on national interests while defending Catholicism and keeping a balance between resources and objectives. Furthermore, Ferdinand II the Catholic wanted his grandson Charles I to consolidate a strategy focused on peace with the Christian princes as a prerequisite to keep fighting against the infidels. Specifically, Ferdinand II showed special interest in the necessity of establishing a new empire in North Africa to ensure Spanish influence up to Tripoli.

When Charles I succeeded his grandfather Ferdinand the Catholic, Spain was already a great power which dominated the western Mediterranean, fought against the infidel in the Mediterranean and North Africa, and was evangelizing the Americas to create a new empire. However, with the arrival of the Habsburgs, who also inherited the Imperial crown, and the outbreak of the Protestant Reformation, the strategic priorities shifted to defend dynastic possessions and fight against heresy. As a result of this change in strategy, partially imposed by the large and diverse responsibilities Charles I assumed

because of the impressive inheritances he received, Spanish interests began to merge with religious and imperial objectives.

Indeed, this new strategy was focused on the short term, and on how to maintain Catholicism as the most characteristic trait of the whole empire. Furthermore, this strategy ignored the objectives and requirements that Spain, as a state, had to achieve not only to consolidate as a world power within a competitive environment, but also to be able of maintaining the huge inherited empire.

Geoffrey Parker also identifies, in his book *The Grand Strategy of Philip II*, how during the reign of Philip II imperial strategy was already focused on a religious ideology. Concretely, he concludes that although Philip II had a grand strategy built around a variety of policies, the most important one was to protect Catholicism, while defeating Protestant heretics. The second priority was a continuation of the one started by Ferdinand the Catholic and consisted of securing both the Mediterranean and North African possessions to contain the expansion of the Ottoman Empire.

Furthermore, successive Habsburgs did not hesitate to use all Spanish resources, mainly those of Castile, to fight against heretics and infidels within the context of their personal crusades as the true defenders of Catholicism. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the Mediterranean continued to be an important concern for the Habsburgs in the late 1560s. Indeed, when in 1570, the Turks restarted the offensive against Christianity and captured, among other territories, Tunis and Cyprus, Spain formed a coalition with the papacy, and Venetian princes, the *Holy League*, that won an important naval victory at Lepanto. This circumstance "led naturally to an expansion of Spain's commitment in the Mediterranean in the following year" (Parker 1970, 84).

Nevertheless, since large areas of the Low Countries rebelled against Philip II's policies in 1572 (Parker 1970, 84), Spain shifted its efforts to face this new revolt in the Netherlands, and dramatically increased its war expenditures to fund its Netherlands armies. The table number 4 details Spanish revenues, defense expenditures and deb-interests for 1571-1576.

Table 4. The Spanish Budget, 1571-6						
YEAR	REVENUE (estimated)	EXPENDITURES				
		TOTAL EXPENDITURE (approx..)	DEFENSE AND EXPENDITURE (estimated)	INTEREST ON STATE DEBT (estimated)	NETHERLANDS ARMY (estimated)	MEDITERRANEA FLEET
		In ducats of 375 maravedies			In escudos of 380 maravedis	
1571	5,500,000	5,680,184	2,000,000	2,000,000	453,943	1,226,241
1572	5,500,000	10,224,471	2,000,000	2,000,000	4,409,497	1,814,974
1573	5,500,000	8,208,733	2,000,000	2,500,000	2,043,071	1,665,662
1574	5,978,535	11,510,170	2,000,000	2,730,943	4,726,593	2,052,634
1575	6,000,000	8,577,925	2,000,000	2,700,000	2,984,281	862,701
1576	6,000,000	6,927,646	2,000,000	2,700,000	946,129	1,250,574

Source: Geoffrey Parker, "Spain, Her Enemies and the Revolt of the Netherlands 1559-1648," *Past and Present* no. 49 (November 1970), 85.

Within an economic context, in which the balance was always negative, Spain was neither able to maintain both fronts without driving Spain to bankruptcy, nor ensure a victory in any of them. Nevertheless, and although in 1577, Philip II got an informal assurance that the Ottoman fleet would no operate within the western Mediterranean, the Spanish monarch decided to resume the war against the Protestant princes (Parker 1970, 87) instead of focusing all the resources available on strengthening the Spanish economy, and consolidating the internal structure of Spain as a nation.

The American Strategy during the Last Two Decades

In 2006, the NSS of the U.S. clearly stated that the country was fighting a *War on Terror* in which religious ideology did not play any role. The NSS 2006 defined the *War on Terror* as a “battle of ideas; a fight against the terrorists and against their murderous ideology” (The White House 2006a, 9). Therefore, it is clear that no religious ideology is influencing the latest American policies as it did during the process of the decline of the Spanish Empire. However, it is also clear that ideology plays a central role in the present strategic environment.

It is evident that values associated to the concept of democracy have been gaining more relevance than ever in the latest grand strategies of the U.S. As an example, the just mentioned NSS 2006 clearly highlights the importance of the concept of democracy in the current world. It stated,

Democracy is the opposite of terrorist tyranny, which is why the terrorists denounce it and are willing to kill the innocent to stop it. Democracy is based on empowerment, while the terrorists’ ideology is based on enslavement. Democracies expand the freedom of their citizens, while the terrorists seek to impose a single set of narrow beliefs. Democracy sees individuals as equal in worth and dignity, having an inherent potential to create and to govern themselves. (The White House 2006a, 11)

Furthermore, the desire to expand and promote democracy around the world, based on the democratic peace thesis, has become the dominant ideology in the U.S. Just as the Spanish Monarchs who used religion to maintain a nexus among all their possessions within the framework of their strong religious convictions, American political leaders have used the democratic peace thesis to create and maintain a secure environment dominated by the U.S. to ensure its current supremacy.

Democracy as an Ideology

According to the American Center for Civic Education “core democratic values are the fundamental beliefs and constitutional principles of American society, which unite all Americans” (Quigley 1991). Similarly, and just after the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001, a group of American scholars from different organizations released to the world a public letter in which they identified democratic principles as one of the fundamental values in American society. Furthermore, they pointed out how American society firmly believes that, just as the Spanish Monarchs believed that Catholicism could be spread throughout the world, democracy too can be spread around the world. Specifically, these scholars stated,

The founders of the United States . . . affirmed as “self-evident” the idea that all persons possess equal dignity. The clearest political expression of a belief in transcendent human dignity is democracy. In the United States in recent generations, among the clearest cultural expressions of this idea has been the affirmation of the equal dignity of men and women, and of all persons regardless of race or color. Second . . . is the conviction that universal moral truths (what our nation's founders called “laws of Nature and of Nature’s God”) exist and are accessible to all people. (Aird et al. 2002)

Analogous to what happened during the process of the decline of the Spanish Empire, these democratic values, now rooted within American society, along with the strong conviction that U.S. citizens have about the supremacy of these values against other ideologies, has influenced national grand strategies. In this case and according to the *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, American national grand strategy can be identified with the NSS (Department of Defense 2011, 156). Therefore, this work is focused on the analysis of the three last NSS to prove the influence of the democratic peace thesis on recent U.S. foreign policies.

Both the NSS 2002 and 2006 considered the expansion and promotion of democracy and freedom as fundamental pillars of U.S. national security. In this respect, the NSS 2002 stated that “the great struggles of the twentieth century between liberty and totalitarianism ended with a decisive victory for the forces of freedom—and a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise” (The White House 2002, Introduction). Furthermore, four years later, the NSS 2006 was categorical in what it denominated the *Way Ahead*,

Because democracies are the most responsible members of the international system, promoting democracy is the most effective long-term measure for strengthening international stability; reducing regional conflicts; countering terrorism and terror-supporting extremism; and extending peace and prosperity. (The White House 2006a, 3)

In addition, during a speech at Georgetown University on January 18, 2006, Defense Secretary Condoleezza Rice established the foundations of what she called *Transformational Diplomacy*, and defined it in this way: “To work with our many partners around the world, to build and sustain democratic, well-governed states that will respond to the needs of their people and conduct themselves responsibly in the international system” (Rice 2006).

This new concept was in line with the rhetoric of the former President of the U.S. George Bush, who stated during his second Inaugural Address, “the concerted effort of free nations to promote democracy is a prelude to our enemies' defeat” (Bush 2005). Further, this concept was clearly adopted by President Bush in March 2006 when he stated, in the introduction to the NSS 2006, that the American national security strategy was founded upon promoting freedom, justice, and human dignity through the promotion of effective democracies, while confronting new challenges by leading a growing

community of democracies (Bush 2006). Specifically, as stated in a Congressional Research Service report for Congress in 2007,

Democracy promotion has been a long-standing element of U.S. foreign policy. In recent years, however, it has become a primary component. Under the George W. Bush Administration, efforts to spread freedom to Iraq and around the world have been viewed as a tool to end tyranny and fight terrorism, as the way to promote stability in troubled regions, and as a mechanism to increase prosperity in poor countries. (Epstein, Serafino, and Miko 2007, 1)

As a clear expression, the U.S. has adopted in its foreign policy some of the premises of liberalism whose core beliefs are based on spreading democracy and global economic ties as a way of strengthening peace. As a consequence, interventionist postures have dominated over the isolationist ones within the U.S. current foreign policies. In this respect, Félix Arteaga states in his analysis of the NSS 2002 and 2006,

Finally, the promotion of democracy and freedom has been one of the most popular targets of the NSS 2002 and 2006. They come from the tradition of American political philosophy based on the high regard of the internal model . . . and its international mission of its foreign policy. (Arteaga 2006, 6)

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that there are different approaches to the concept of promoting democracy. For example, U.S. neoconservatives think that it is relatively easy to topple tyrannical governments and establish democracies. Moreover, according to them, the U.S. can shape the world using its powerful and uncontested armed forces. On the other hand, liberal imperialists (selective engagement) tend to see armed forces like an important element to do what John J. Mearsheimer called “social engineering” (Mearsheimer 2011, 19), but they are totally aware of the necessity of using other instruments of power not only from the U.S., but also from allies and international organizations. These two postures have been coexisting in the American political arena during the last two decades and influencing national strategies.

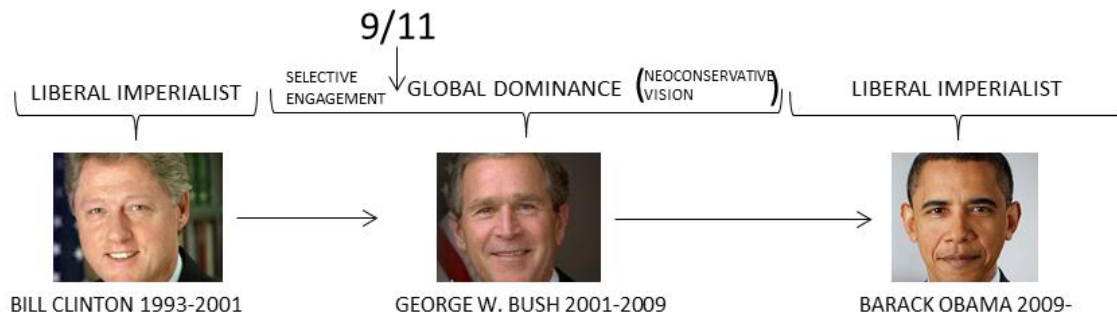


Figure 10. Main approaches to the concept of promoting democracy since 1993

Source: Created by author using information of John J. Mearsheimer, *Imperial by Design* (Washington, DC: The National Interest, 2011), 16-34, and the photos of the Presidents, White House webpage <http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents> (accessed May 1, 2013).

However, in 2010 the U.S. realized that is not possible to shape the world as they wanted within the framework of the current international environment. Moreover, in 2007, eighty-three percent of the American population already thought that the U.S. cannot impose its ideology, which is based on democratic values, by force on another country (Epstein, Serafino, and Miko 2007, 2).

Similarly, some scholars and studies warned of adverse consequences of “pushing democracy as a primary objective of U.S. national security and foreign policy” (Epstein, Serafino, and Miko 2007, 9). More in detail, Thomas O. Melia already stated in 2005, in his analysis of the *Infrastructure of American Democracy Promotion* that, although the U.S. has never tried impose democracy by military means, “Unfortunately, the rhetorical conflation by the Bush administration and its allies of the war in Iraq and democracy promotion has muddled the meaning of the democracy project, diminishing support for it at home and abroad” (Melia 2005, 1).

As a consequence, the new NSS 2010 notes that the world is changing and that since the U.S. cannot configure international reality, it must adapt to it (Arteaga 2010, 2). Despite of this new approach, and although the recent record of democracy promotion is bleak (Galston, Kamarck, and Burke, 2007, 42), the expansion of this ideology based on democratic values keeps playing an important role in the U.S. foreign policy as clearly shown in the NSS 2010,

The United States supports the expansion of democracy and human rights abroad because governments that respect these values are more just, peaceful, and legitimate. We also do so because their success abroad fosters an environment that supports America's national interests. Political systems that protect universal rights are ultimately more stable, successful, and secure. As our history shows, the United States can more effectively forge consensus to tackle shared challenges when working with governments that reflect the will and respect the rights of their people, rather than just the narrow interests of those in power. (The White House 2010, 37)

In the same line, many other scholars have also identified this characteristic, the promotion of the democracy, as the hallmark of U.S. foreign policy. For example, Thomas Carothers states, in his study for Carnegie Endowment for International Peace,

The unevenness of Obama's commitment to democracy abroad is more a continuation of a decades-long pattern than a change or a retreat. Moreover, it is true that as a result of a changed international landscape, the United States no longer has a central engagement on democracy promotion at the heart of its geostrategy. . . . Yet the United States remains engaged, as it has been for decades, in supporting democracy in numerous ways, large and small, in a very large number of places. In fact, the United States remains the most active and important supporter of democracy in the world. (Carothers 2012, 47)

Also in 2012, Rosa Brooks goes further and states, "democracy promotion should remain a vital part of our foreign policy-not despite our mistakes, inconsistencies, false starts, hypocrisies, and hesitations, but because of them" (Brooks 2012, 20). Moreover, in January 2013, Nicolas Bouchet, concludes, in his article "The democracy tradition in US foreign policy and the Obama presidency,"

Despite the differing approaches and emphases of successive administrations, there has been a great degree of continuity in US democracy promotion since at least the Reagan years—both on the positive and on the negative side. As he begins his second term, Obama stands squarely in the mainstream of the democracy tradition and in line with his predecessors, and there is no evidence to date that his presidency will mark any great shift in it. (Bouchet 2013, 51)

Similar to what happened with religion during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Spain, democratic peace thesis has become an ideology that has influenced U.S. national security strategies during the last decade and continues to do so. Nevertheless, it noteworthy that this process started more than seventy years ago, because, as stated by Mark P. Lagon,

After World War II, the United States played a significant role in deepening and widening democracy in Western Europe. The United States encouraged European integration to stabilize the West European democracies, and NATO was a bulwark within which Italy, West Germany, Portugal, and Spain democratized. (Lagon 2011)

Influence of the Democratic Peace Thesis on U.S. National Strategies:
A Comparison with the Decline of the Spanish Empire

In recent decades, the U.S. has been steadily increasing international commitments concerning ideological goals, many of them because of its role as a defender of democratic values all over the world. The problem is that, as happened with the Spanish Empire, the relative political and military power that the U.S. had twenty years ago has decreased within the new international scenario. In this case, the last financial crisis, the rise of China as a new superpower and its desire to dominate the Asia-Pacific region, and the permanent deployment of forces around the world, are some of the factors that have reduced the ability of the U.S. to shape the world according to its policies.

Even when recognizing the differences and characteristics of each historical period, it is undeniable that ideological factors have had consequences similar to those identified as causes of the decline of the Spanish Empire (Spanish bankruptcy, overstretching its Armies and naval forces, and the lack of a realistic national strategy consistent with available resources).

Consequences of Democracy Promotion to the U.S. Economy and Armed Forces

Significantly, the U.S. was forced to maintain, and even increment, its interventions in matters of international security as result of the U.S. foreign policy that maintains the promotion of democracy as one of the pivotal axis of their international interventions to improve its security. As an example, since 2000 the U.S. has deployed military units or advisers to Nigeria, East Timor, Afghanistan, Philippines, Côte d'Ivoire, Iraq, Liberia, Georgia, Djibouti, Haiti, Mali, Uganda, Jordan, Chad, and Libya, among other places.

As of February 8, 2013, the U.S. had 140,770 soldiers deployed within the framework of the three most important current operations (Iraqi Freedom, Enduring Freedom, and New Dawn).

OPERATION / LOCATION COUNTRY		TOTAL	ARMY	NAVY	MARINE CORPS	AIR FORCE
OPERATION NEW DAWN (ACTIVE COMPONENT PORTION OF STRENGTH INCLUDED ABOVE)		127	20	41	15	51
OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM (ACTIVE COMPONENT PORTION OF STRENGTH INCLUDED ABOVE)		974	2	935	37	0
OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM (ACTIVE COMPONENT PORTION OF STRENGTH INCLUDED ABOVE)		76,818	59,160	4,868	7,579	5,211
DEPLOYED FROM LOCATIONS OF OIF/OEF/OND (OTHER THAN U.S.) (ACTIVE COMPONENT PORTION OF STRENGTH INCLUDED ABOVE)	KUWAIT	15,352	12,868	814	265	1,405
	KYRGYZSTAN	3,041	719	17	58	2,247
	GERMANY	47	47	0	0	0
	ITALY	0	0	0	0	0
	JAPAN	3	0	0	3	0
	KOREA	0	0	0	0	0
	TURKEY	3	0	0	3	0
	UNITED KINGDOM	0	0	0	0	0
	OTHER	36,057	4,125	23,764	1122	7,046
	UNKNOWN	8,348	543	1,025	1	6,779
	TOTAL	140,770	77,484	31,464	9,083	22,739

*Totals include deployed Reserve/National Guard personnel.

Produced by Defense Manpower Data Center on February 8, 2013.

Figure 11. U.S. overseas contingency operations deployments

Source: DoD Personnel and Procurement Statistics, <http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/MMIDHOME.HTM> (accessed April 3, 2013).

Although, as stated in the *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* dated in 2006, “the long-term solution for winning the War on Terror is the advancement of freedom and human dignity through effective democracy” (The White House 2006b, 9), the problem is that these kinds of processes require a large amount of resources both material and economic for long periods of time.

As a consequence, expenditures related to operations have been steadily increasing since 2000, as shown in figure 12. Therefore, much of the defense budget is to maintain and support current operations that, although its primary goal was to defeat terrorist groups threatening the security of the U.S. and other allies, have shifted to operations linked to the imposition of an ideology based on democratic values, like Iraq and Afghanistan. Moreover, President George W. Bush clearly linked democracy

promotion with the war in Iraq when he stated in 2005, “Today [December 12, 2005] I’m going to speak in depth about another vital element of our strategy [in Iraq]: our efforts to help the Iraqi people build a lasting democracy in the heart of the Middle East” (Bush 2005).

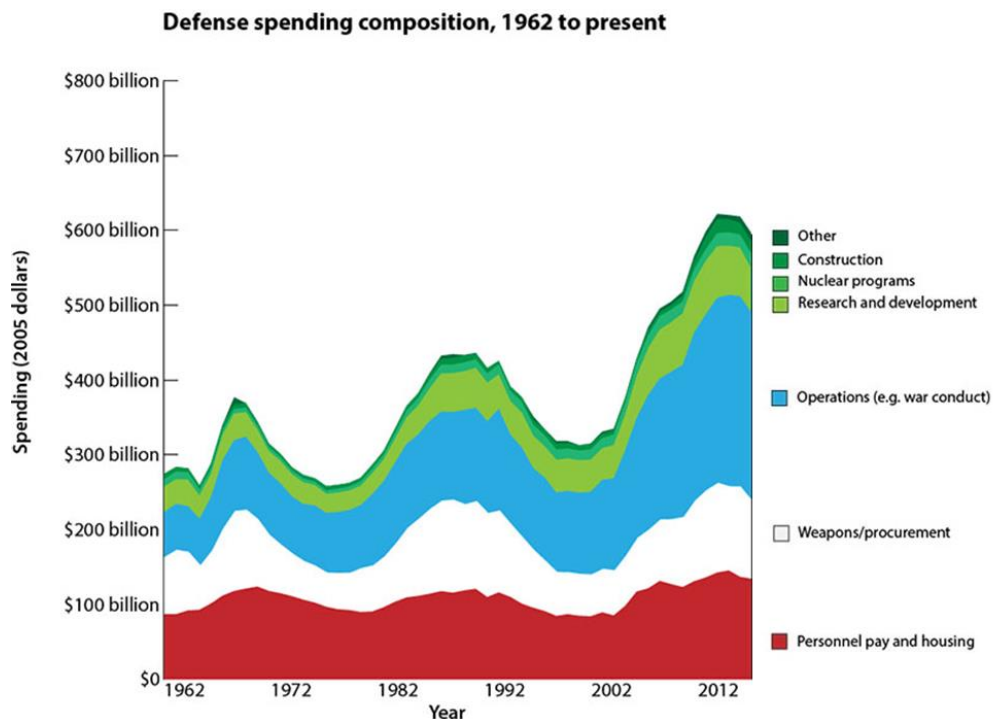


Figure 12. U.S. defense spending composition from 1962 to the present

Source: Office of Management and Budget, Graph: Dylan Matthews. From the article Brad Plumer, “America’s staggering defense budget, in charts.” January 7, 2013, *The Washington Post*, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2013/01/07/everything-chuck-hagel-needs-to-know-about-the-defense-budget-in-charts/> (accessed April 2, 2013).

This perception was shared in other countries around the world. For example, Eric Hobsbawm, professor of the University of London, stated in his article “The Dangers of

Exporting Democracy,” “the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are but one part of a supposedly universal effort to create world order by spreading democracy” (Hobsbawm 2005).

All these circumstances along with the important role that the U.S. armed forces play as one of the main governmental tools to achieve the objectives of the different NSS implies the necessity of high military expenditures. Similar to what happened within the Spanish Empire during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the U.S. spends much more money than any other country to maintain its armed forces.

Michael J. Mazarr also identifies “disappearing finances” as one of the foundational areas that is suffering a crack that may hinder the current U.S. leadership. Concretely, he analyzes how the steady increase of the military’s health and pension programs could put “further pressure on those components of the defense budget essential to global strategy and power projection” (Mazarr 2012, 10). Although the U.S. military spending on defense matters decreased in 2011 in relation to the previous year, the U.S. continues spending, as already mentioned, much more money on military issues than any country in the world. Specifically, the U.S. military spending in 2011 was 41 per cent of the global expenditures. In other words, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, the U.S. spent 711 U.S. \$ billions (equivalent of 4.7 per cent of its gross domestic product) of the 1,738 U.S. \$ billions that were identified as global military expenditures in this year. The second country ranked by military spending is China with 143 U.S. \$ billions spent in defense (equivalent of 2 per cent of its gross domestic product).

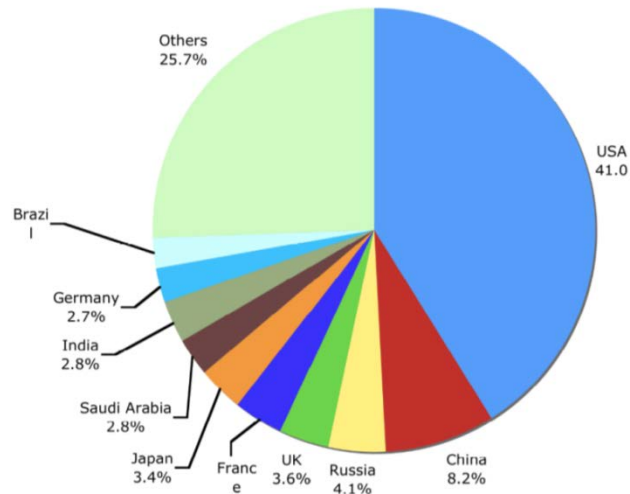


Figure 13. U.S. shares of world military spending for the top spenders, 2011

Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), *SIPRI Yearbook 2012: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), <http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/sipri-factsheet-on-military-expenditure-2011.pdf> (accessed April 4, 2013).

On one hand, it is noteworthy that many scholars and top leaders in the American administration agree that promoting and spreading democracy can reduce terrorism as well as favor stability and economic prosperity (Epstein, Serafino, and Miko 2007, 7). In this respect, recent events, such as the global financial crisis, have showed how democracies have the elements to facilitate long-term economic growth.

Furthermore, from an economic perspective, and according to a recent *Washington Post* article posted by Brad Plumer, defense expenditures could play an important role to stimulate the U.S. economy. Specifically, Plumer states,

On Wednesday [January 30, 2013], the government announced that the economy had shrunk at a 0.1 percent annual pace between October and December. That came as a surprise to most economists, who were expecting at least modest growth. So what happened? Less spending from the Pentagon, for one. Government defense expenditures dropped by a staggering 22.2 percent

annual pace between October and December. According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, the Pentagon spent significantly less on just about everything except military pay. Had the Pentagon not cut back on spending, the economy would have grown at a weak but positive 1.27 percent pace. (Plumer 2013)

On the other hand, it is also important to take into account that there are other analyses that show how excessively high military expenditures that are needed to maintain a national strategy based on an ideology focused on democracy promotion, adversely influence economic development of the U.S. In this respect, a work from the Institute for Economics and Peace concludes that,

Military spending, like other forms of government spending, can be an important source of economic demand during times of low confidence and downturn. It can lead to the development of new technologies, generate new industries and create sources of demand and employment. . . . However, analysis of the macroeconomic components of GDP . . . show heightened military spending had several adverse macroeconomic effects. . . . The U.S. has paid for its wars either through debt . . . taxation . . . or inflation. . . . In each case, taxpayers have been burdened, and private sector consumption and investment have been constrained as a result. Other negative effects include larger budget deficits, higher taxes, and growth above trend leading to inflation pressure. . . . Regardless of the way a war is financed, the overall macroeconomic effect on the economy tends to be negative. (Institute for Economics and Peace 2011, 18)

Similarly, Barney Frank concludes in his article posted on *Foreign Policy* that one of the solutions to the financial crisis is to cut defense expenditures. Specifically, he states, “Reducing excessive military spending . . . would allow us [the U.S.] to provide the short-term economic stimulus needed to continue the progress we are making in breaking out of the recession” (Frank 2012). From other perspective, Thomas K. Duncan and Christopher J. Coyne analyze the cost of what they called *the U.S. War Economy* and reach a similar conclusion,

Once the U.S. embarked upon the path of permanent war, starting with World War II, the result was a permanent war economy. The permanent war economy continuously draws resources into the military sector at the expense of the private economy, even in times of peace. . . . The permanent war economy does not just

transfer resources from the private economy, but also distorts and undermines the market process which is ultimately responsible for improvements in standards of living. (Coyne and Duncan 2012, 1)

Although according to the “World Economic Outlook” dated January 23, 2013, policy actions recently adopted have lowered acute crisis risks in the U.S., the priority of this country continues “to avoid excessive fiscal consolidation in the short term, promptly raise the debt ceiling, and agree on a credible medium-term fiscal consolidation plan, focused on entitlement and tax reform” (International Monetary Fund 2013, 3). More specifically, one of the consequences of this economic adjustment is the implementation of a “process of automatic, largely across-the-board spending reductions to meet or enforce certain budget policy goals” (Spar 2013, 1) established by the U.S. administration.

This process, also known as sequestration, implies a reduction in the defense budget. Furthermore, as estimated by the Office of Management and Budget, over the course of the fiscal year 2013,

Joint Committee sequestration requires a 7.8 percent reduction in non-exempt defense discretionary funding and a 5.0 percent reduction in non-exempt nondefense discretionary funding. The sequestration also imposes reductions of 2.0 percent to Medicare, 5.1 percent to other non-exempt nondefense mandatory programs, and 7.9 percent to non-exempt defense mandatory programs. (Office of Management and Budget 2013, 2)

Therefore, from a military perspective, and as a result of this sequestration, the ability of the U.S. to support and maintain the resources to operate in conflicts around the world is decreasing compared to ten years ago. In this respect, the Deputy Director for Management of the Office of Management and Budget stated on March 1, 2013,

The cuts required by sequestration will be deeply destructive to national security, domestic investments, and core Government functions. While the Department of Defense will shift funds where possible to minimize the impact on war-fighting

capabilities and critical military readiness, sequestration will result in a reduction in readiness of many non-deployed units, delays in investments in new equipment, cutbacks in equipment repairs and needed facilities maintenance, disruptions in military research and development efforts, significant reductions in weapons programs, and furloughs of most civilian employees for a significant amount of time. (Zients 2013, 1)

Within the framework of the current sequestration, a permanent deployment of forces overseas similar to the last ten years with units not only deployed in Afghanistan and Iraq, but also stationed at many military bases around the world could overextend the U.S. Army even more while worsening the national economy. In this respect it is worth quoting what President George W. Bush stated in his book *Decision Points* more than ten years ago,

When I ran for president, I never anticipated a mission like this [nation-building in Afghanistan]. In the fall of 2000, Al Gore and I debated the most pressing issues facing America. Not once did the words Afghanistan, bin Laden, or al Qaeda come up. We did discuss nation building. . . . “I would be very careful about using our troops as nation builders.” At the time, I worried about overextending our military by undertaking peacekeeping missions as we had in Bosnia and Somalia. But after 9/11, I changed my mind. Afghanistan was the ultimate nation building mission. (Bush 2010, 205)

As mentioned in chapter 2 of this work, the U.S. has shifted its defense strategy and as Deputy Defense Secretary Ash Carter said recently at the Harvard Institute of Politics,

We in the United States are currently embarked upon a great strategic transition. After a decade of necessary and very intense preoccupation on two wars of a particular kind in Iraq and Afghanistan—one that has finished, and one that will wind down to an enduring presence over the next two years—we are turning a strategic corner, and focusing our attention on the challenges and opportunities that will define our future. (Carter 2013)

This turning point implies, for example, a defense rebalance across the Asia-Pacific region where China and India continue not only prospering, but also strengthening their influence. In this case, contrary to Spain that simultaneously

maintained its ideological commitments in both the Mediterranean against Muslims, and in Europe against Lutherans, while consolidating its new American empire, the U.S. is trying to focus most of its efforts on the Asia-Pacific region, while avoiding ideological commitments. In the context of the financial crisis and taking into account domestic public opinion, this rebalance will be only possible after the conclusion of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that are linked to ideological concerns.

Main Similarities to the Spanish Empire

Similar to the Spanish Empire during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the U.S. has had, and still has not only an internal vitality, ambition, and ability to influence events abroad, but also the moral conviction of being carrying out a worthy mission. Moreover, most sectors of U.S. society have a firm determination to support moral, ethical, religious or political principles that they think are fair. In this respect, it is important to note that the promotion of democracy is linked with improving human rights, facilitating access to justice, and allowing freedom of expression among societies ruled by dictatorial regimes.

All these characteristics, along with the willingness to use American armed forces and material resources in the attainment of the objectives of its foreign policies, are essential to the continued viability of these interventionist policies based on ideological concerns. Although the social situation was totally different in Spain because its society, mostly illiterate, was ruled by absolutist parameters, and deeply influenced by religious values, much of Spanish society shared the same feelings and supported imperial policies similar to those supported by American society nowadays.

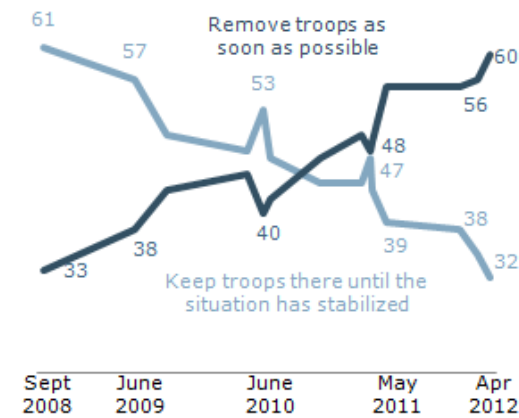
Nevertheless, the support of both societies to their respective national projects was not totally unanimous. This is similar to what happened during the Castile's Cortes of 1592-1598. As an example, there are different groups within the American society that reject the national project and support a policy based on the principles of isolationism. In this regard, Joseph M. Parent and Paul K. MacDonald stated, in an article published by *Foreign Affairs*,

The United States can no longer afford a world-spanning foreign policy. Retrenchment--cutting military spending, redefining foreign priorities, and shifting more of the defense burden to allies--is the only sensible course. Luckily, that does not have to spell instability abroad. History shows that pausing to recharge national batteries can renew a dominant power's international legitimacy. (Parent and MacDonald 2011)

Similarly, according to a research conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, despite the robust support for an active approach to world affairs, it is a steadily increasing number of American citizens that not only is in favor of a quick withdrawal of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, as shown in figure 14, but also that shared some kind of isolationism values. The research concluded that,

Currently, 83% [of the American society] agree that "we [the U.S.] should pay less attention to problems overseas and concentrate on problems here at home." That is up 10 points since 2002, shortly after the 9/11 attacks, and the highest percentage expressing this view since 1994. Meanwhile, the number agreeing that "it's best for the future of our country [the U.S.] to be active in world affairs" has fallen from 90% to 83% since 2009, while the percentage disagreeing has doubled, from 7% to 14%. (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2012, 77)

Record-Low Support for Keeping U.S. Troops in Afghanistan



PEW RESEARCH CENTER Apr. 4-15, 2012.

Figure 14. Support of the American society for keeping U.S. troops in Afghanistan

Source: Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, *Record Number Favors Removing U.S. Troops from Afghanistan*, June 2011, <http://www.people-press.org/files/legacy-pdf/6-21-11%20Afghanistan%20Release.pdf> (accessed April 3, 2013).

Moreover, in 2012, Michael J. Mazarr stated that one of the threats to the U.S. strategy was that “the American people have grown less willing to use them [America’s power projection instrument].” His assertion was based on some opinion polls that show how American people are less willing than ever to spend too much on defense or to assume an excessively proactive role in international matters (Mazarr 2012, 11-12).

As Ferdinand II of Aragon did during the fifteenth century, the U.S. has established pacts or alliances with diverse countries to share the burden of its ideological objectives around the world. Nevertheless, as happened to Spain, the U.S. has also perceived a lack of support or understanding from those who should be its natural allies.

The wars in Iraq and in Afghanistan were clear examples of this assertion when some Western countries did not join the initiatives of the U.S. It is an indicative that, for example, in 2008, the approval rate in Europe for George W. Bush's foreign policy was just 20 per cent (Transatlantic Academy 2010). Moreover, according to a study developed by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs in 2007, the key findings about the global perception of the U.S. leadership were that many people not only "reject the idea that the U.S. should continue to be the preeminent world leader," but also "believe that the U.S. plays the role of policeman more than it should" (Chicago Council on Global Affairs 2007, 7).

Main Differences with the Spanish Empire

When Spain and the U.S. started their respective hegemonic processes, each of them did it from a completely different structural situation in the social, economic, and ideological aspects. Specifically, during the fifteenth century, and even during the initial decades of the sixteenth, Spain was a nation in the process of consolidation after the union of the Crowns of Castile and Aragon as a result of the marriage of the Catholic Monarchs in 1469. Furthermore, it was a nation composed by different mentalities and customs that had combined their forces and willingness to expel the Muslims.

In this respect, it is noteworthy that Spanish foreign policy was based almost exclusively on the interests of a monarchy that was becoming more influenced than ever by religious ideology. The problem was that these interests were often opposed to the interests of the different states/kingdoms encompassed by the Spanish Empire. As a consequence, it was not unusual that Naples opposed some specific policies or campaigns that were perceived as favorable to Flanders or Aragon. Similarly, Portugal would hinder

any new initiative than could strengthen Castile while reducing the resources of the former. Only in some cases, especially when there was a direct threat to the whole empire, would all of the different states/kingdoms enthusiastically embrace the policies initiated by the Spanish monarchy.

At that time, the Spanish Empire was not a nation-state. It was the dynastic empire of the Habsburgs monarchy that was based mainly on Castile, and that exercised its power through a common royal army and naval forces within the framework of a personal diplomacy. As a result, the Habsburgs' monarchy unevenly distributed efforts to sustain their campaigns against infidels among its different states/kingdoms. Specifically, Castile was the kingdom that provided more resources to the empire.

Furthermore, although most sectors of society agreed with the goals of the Habsburgs' foreign policies based on religious ideology, Castile was the only kingdom that firmly supported all imperial and religious projects of the Spanish monarchy by providing soldiers, money, and other resources. The rest of the states/kingdoms provided only the minimum essential resources demanded by the Spanish monarchy. Only when Castile was immersed in a serious financial crisis did the Habsburgs attempt to redistribute the burdens associated with the different wars more equitably among its different states/kingdoms.

A major attempt at consolidation occurred in 1624, when the Habsburgs had serious problems to obtain enough resources from Castile to support the different wars the empire was facing, the Count-Duke of Olivares, Gaspar de Guzmán, tried to initiate a reform called *Union de Armas* (Union of Arms) to fairly distribute the imperial burden among all the kingdoms/states according the real possibilities (population, economy, and

size) of each of them. However, this reform, whose ultimate objective was to get a complete unification of Spain as a single kingdom, failed because the opposition of many of the other states/kingdoms. The revolts in Catalonia and in Portugal were clear examples of the rejection of part of Habsburgs' by parts of the empire.

In contrast, the U.S. is a unified nation both politically and socially. It is a united nation that shared common values and interacted with others within a laissez-faire market oriented framework. Its role as a hegemonic superpower evolved to adjust to the changing international environment since the end of the World War II. As a consequence, and contrary to what happened in Spain, the U.S. has been able to use all the resources of the country to support its foreign policies that have been established by a political class deeply influenced by an ideology based on democracy promotion.

Similarly, the characteristics of the American society, as stated by Paul Kennedy, have provided the U.S. more possibilities to readjust its national policies and trends to changing environments (Kennedy 1989, 626). Moreover, the same democratic values that became an ideology in the U.S. and have been adversely influencing some national policies are those that have allowed American society to actively participate and promote the strategic lines of action or national postures regarding international issues that they believe are most appropriate for the country. In this case, democratic tools such as political parties, a clear separation of powers, or a system of checks and balances have played an important role as mechanisms to promote changes in national strategies that were overly influenced by ideological values and, as a consequence, did not meet the genuine interests of the American society.

In this respect, Spanish society was not able to influence national policies that were set by the Spanish monarchs under an autocratic absolutism, where the same religion that had become an ideology was totally merged with politics. As a result, the ruling class, and more specifically the monarchy, continued applying a national strategy increasingly distanced from the true interests of Spanish society because of the influence of religious ideology.

Another important difference between both processes is the fact that the U.S. started its hegemonic process being an economic superpower in a globalized world. Specifically, the U.S. is one of the major advanced economies, member of the *Group of Seven* top economies, and the reference point in all the financial markets. Spain, meanwhile, had very limited financial resources to face all self-imposed commitments. Moreover, its economy was largely based on the influx of gold and silver from the new American empire rather on the existence of solid industrial or commercial systems.

¹In this respect, it is noteworthy that the creation of the modern nation-state in the seventeenth century is considered as one of the five military revolutions that have changed the character of war.

²In 1596, Netherlands, France, and England negotiated a Triple Alliance against Spain.

³In 1503 Naples entered the possession of the Spanish Habsburgs. In 1734, Naples became, under the Spanish Bourbons, the capital of a large independent southern Italian kingdom under Don Carlos (the future Charles III of Spain). The source of this information is the Encyclopedia Britannica, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/402883/Naples/16141/Naples-from-the-Angevins-to-the-Risorgimento> (accessed February 23, 2013).

⁴Sicily and Lipari were ruled by Charles I of Anjou (1226-1285), and they were later fought over between the Kingdom of Sicily, the Aragonese, the Kingdom of Naples, and Anjou. The Turkish attack was a serious event for Lipari which again involved the destruction of the city. Charles V (1500-1558) rebuilt it, sending a colony of Spaniards, who restored the castle and surrounded it by more powerful walls. From the 17th century,

Lipari was annexed to the Kingdom of Sicily under Philip III (1578-1621), and from then on it followed the fate of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies until the Unification of Italy in 1861. The source of this information is the article “History of Lipari, Italy” <http://www.italythisway.com/places/articles/lipari-history.php> (accessed February 23, 2013).

⁵The island was taken by the Norman Roger II of Sicily in 1123. The members of the Spanish Requesens family were princes of Pantelleria from 1311 until the town of Pantelleria was sacked by the Turks in 1553. In addition, it is important to note that the island has a strategic situation in the narrow passage separating the eastern and western Mediterranean. The source of this information is the Encyclopedia Britannica, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/441520/Pantelleria-Island> (accessed February 23, 2013).

⁶In 1436 Lampedusa was given by Alfonso of Aragon to Don Giovanni de Caro, baron of Montechiaro. In 1661 its owner, Ferdinand Tommasi, received the title of prince from Charles II of Spain. The source of this information is the Encyclopedia Britannica, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/328858/Lampedusa-Island> (accessed February 23, 2013).

⁷The Holy Roman emperor Charles V took possession of it in 1535, and in 1539 the city passed into the hands of the Turks. It was retaken by the Spaniards, who held it from 1573 to 1574 but who were obliged to yield it to the Ottoman Empire, under which it remained until the French protectorate (1881–1956). The source of this information is the Encyclopedia Britannica, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/609220/Tunis> (accessed February 23, 2013).

⁸An agreement between Spain and Portugal aimed at settling conflicts over lands newly discovered or explored by Christopher Columbus and other late 15th-century voyagers. The source of this information is the Encyclopedia Britannica, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/599856/Treaty-of-Tordesillas> (accessed March 5, 2013).

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

You may have splendid moral goals, argued Machiavelli, but without sufficient power and the willingness to use it, you will accomplish nothing.

— Michael G Roskin,
National Interest: From Abstraction to Strategy

Throughout chapter 4 of this work, the analysis of the decline of the Spanish Empire and its comparison with the evolution of the American strategy during the last two decades have established the basis for answering the research questions posed in chapter 1. Moreover, this analysis has demonstrated that ideologies, which served either to found an empire or to consolidate a hegemonic superpower, may also be the origin of internal processes of decay when ideologies become the focal point of national strategies.

Specifically, this work has showed how religion became not only the predominant ideology in Spain during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but also an important destabilizing factor that promoted the process of decline of the empire. In that case, the strong conviction of the Spanish Monarchs of being the champions of Christianity along with other domestic circumstances put religion as the cornerstone of Spanish strategy. Furthermore, the boundaries between religion and politics disappeared and ideological goals were put on top of other national interests. As a result of the excessive influence of religious ideology, Spain started a process that drove it to a national bankruptcy and overstretched its armies and naval forces within the framework of a national strategy that was neither realistic nor consistent with available resources.

Similarly, the analysis of the latest U.S. strategic documents shown how the values of the democratic peace thesis, and concretely the desire to expand and promote democracy around the world, have become the predominant ideology in the U.S. in the last decade. In this case, the desire of American leaders to maintain the role of the U.S. as the guarantor of democratic values over other ideologies has increased the number of the U.S. commitments around the world. This excessive number of interventions abroad requires so many resources that it is putting at risk the ability of the United States to tackle all of them while maintaining an adequate economic, trade, and the academic and scientific growth that could assure its current status quo versus other emerging powers such as China.

In addition, the comparison of both processes has highlighted how structural differences in Spain and the U.S. played a decisive role within the two processes analyzed. Specifically, the nature of the ideology of the Spanish Empire led the monarchs to adopt a radical posture against any interpretation or deviation from this religious ideology, and the autocratic absolutism that existed in Spain during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries not only promoted the isolation of the empire, but also hindered any possibility of changing the royal decisions. Meanwhile, democratic tools that existed and still exist in U.S. society have become a key element to influence political leaders and allow the redefinition of national strategies that have started to be based on more realistic national interests while being in line with the current international environment which has become more globalized than ever.

Conclusions

Ideologies are necessary to consolidate and maintain the identity of empires or hegemonic superpowers. Moreover, one of the characteristics of empires or hegemonic superpowers, as well as most of the current states, is that their citizens share a common ideology. In addition, this ideology is part of the culture of every nation or empire. However, ideologies become a destabilizing factor within empires or hegemonic superpowers when these ideologies exert excessive influence on national strategies.

Therefore, ideologies in themselves are not negative. The problem appears when ideologies assume a dominant role in politics or are used to influence societies in order to justify decisions or national strategies that are designed to shape the world according to certain values that national leaders assume are the only ones that are fair and valid for all people.

National Interests

The foundations for the creation, development, and consolidation of an empire or hegemonic superpower must be grounded in specific national goals that must be clear, fair, and possible to achieve with the available resources while being compatible with the predominant ideology among their respective societies. These specific national goals not only have to include the state/empire's essential interests, but also how to face any domestic and external threat to these goals while taking into account the international environment. Besides, these national goals are the basis for establishing clear strategic lines of action that would allow the state to reach its policy goals.

The choice of adequate national objectives is essential to ensure the feasibility, consolidation, and development of any hegemonic power or empire. Moreover, selected

national objectives must be not only achievable with available resources, but also fully supported by national societies. However, realistic political guidance rather than ideological reasons must dominate the development of national strategies. When ideologies become the cornerstone of national strategies, national or imperial aims are normally more focused on imposing these ideologies as a way of ensuring the power and dominance of the states/empires rather than on maintaining an adequate internal development of its respective states/empires as tool to ensure the resources and popular support that are needed to maintain current status quo.

As an example, when, as a consequence of what can be defined as a religious fanaticism of the Spanish monarchs, religious ideology became the cornerstone of the Spanish Empire' strategy, domestic issues, as the reform of the Spanish institutions or the development of a modern industrial and trade systems, were secondary concerns. Moreover, the Spanish monarchs did not hesitate to use all the resources from Spain to support countless wars that were focused on the imposition of the values and religious beliefs that the Habsburgs though should be spread universally. In addition, the religious indoctrination of the Spanish population along with the absolute power of the subsequent monarchs hinders the possibilities of any effective popular pressure against the Habsburgs' strategies. Aurelio Spinoza clearly identifies these circumstances during his analysis of the grand strategy of Charles V (1500-1558). Specifically, he states,

The Protestant Reformation forced Charles to assess his priorities according to his conviction of religious unity and his dynastic claim of universal monarchy. Charles' ambitions compromised Spain's entrepreneurial agenda, which consisted of the defense of the Mediterranean against the Ottomans. Seeking to protect the coalescing transatlantic system and established commercial networks of Spanish businessmen, the Spanish administration under President Tavera (1524-1539) failed to convince Charles to focus on the Muslim enemy and to allow the

German people to decide their own religious destinies. Instead, Charles sought to contain his universal monarchy in Europe, and his decision to restore religious unity in the empire resulted in the overextension of Spanish resources and the eventual decline of Spain. (Espinosa 2005, 239)

Something similar happened to the U.S. national strategy during the last two decades. The role that the U.S. assumed as the global champion of democracy has created a significant gap between the available national resources and the countless commitments that the U.S. has been assuming within the international arena. The influence of a democratic ideology rooted in American society and its leadership, and national institutions and domestic lobbies reluctant to lose any portion of the U.S. global leadership favored the establishment of national strategies that defined vital interests more broadly than ever. The problem is that the process to protect these vital interests around the world is, sometimes, exclusively based on ideological values. Such an ideological world-view favors the recognition of new threats to U.S. security. In other words as was stated some years ago by Irving Babbitt as a kind of premonition, during the last century the U.S. has been “setting itself up as the great guardian and beneficiary of mankind” (Ryn 2003, 389). Similarly, but much more recently, Stephen M. Walt wrote in *Foreign Policy* magazine:

For the past fifty years or more, America's overarching power made it possible to expand our definition of "interests" almost without limit. And as the world's most powerful country, we assumed it was our right and responsibility to do most of the heavy lifting in various trouble spots. That tendency increased even more after the Soviet Union collapsed, leaving us without a peer competitor and in a position of (nearly) unchallenged primacy. (Walt 2003)

International Environment

All national objectives and goals must be ethically acceptable, in line with international laws, and should not produce rejection or opposition from other

international actors that otherwise should be allies. However, national strategies that are focused on the imposition of a specific ideology and try to endlessly increase a hegemonic or imperial power, can promote the emergence of unexpected alliances among opponents of this strategy. Specifically, these new alliances can oppose ideologically motivated strategies to counteract either an excessive concentration of power in a single nation or empire, or what they perceive as a threat to their own values.

Therefore, subordination of national goals in favor of the defense of certain ideologies or beliefs can turn empires/hegemonic powers to champions of a cause that although it may be fair and morally acceptable, can also cause rejection and, sometimes, the opposition and confrontation with other powers that do not share these values and that, otherwise, could have been allies to achieve other national interests.

The alliance of France with the Turks, and the alliance between Netherlands, France, and England against the Habsburgs' pretensions were clear examples of how international actors can establish unexpected alliances to avoid not only a shift in the current balance of power, in this case, in Europe, but also the imposition of specific values, in this case, a specific religious ideology. Something similar happened to the U.S. when, for example, France and Spain did not support the U.S during the war in Iraq. Although Spain initially supported the U.S. approach to the Iraqi problem, it is noteworthy that this initial support was canceled when Spanish society chose a new government that did not share some of the values of the Bush administration.

Moreover, ideological confrontations can generate the abandonment of strategic lines of action that were established to achieve national goals while promoting the adoption of new strategies focused on responding to new conflicts and violence arising

from these ideological confrontations. Therefore, even though the defense of certain ideological or religious principles may even help to achieve national goals, these ideological values never must prevail over national interests established by the political leadership or become the cornerstone of the national strategic lines of action.

Furthermore, the dynamics generated by the universal defense of ideological values forces empires/hegemonic powers to act on a growing number of scenarios depleting resources and energies necessary for the attainment of other genuine national interests.

In this respect, the large amount of money that Spain had to use to deal with the revolt of Netherlands, and the heavy casualties that the *Tercios of Flanders* had during these wars, are clear examples of how the Habsburgs' fanatic crusade to impose Catholicism in the Spanish Empire not only drove Spain to bankruptcy, but also led their armies to exhaustion. Furthermore, another confrontation based on religious issues was one of the causes of the progressive disappearance of the Spanish maritime preponderance that, among other things, ensured the valuable lines of communication with the Indies. Concretely, the loss in 1588, of the called *Invincible Armada* within the framework of the confrontation with Great Britain cost around of 10 million ducats (or 30 million florins) and meant the destruction of an important part of the Spanish navy (Parker 1970, 89).

Similarly, the recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan along with the countless commitments that the U.S. has assumed as a consequence of its role as a defender of democratic values around the world, has compromised the U.S economy and its ability to maintain a predominant world leadership that, until a few years ago, was indisputable.

Concretely, Harvard Kennedy School professor Linda J. Bilmes concludes in her research about the financial legacy of Iraq and Afghanistan that,

The Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts, taken together, will be the most expensive wars in US history—totaling somewhere between \$4 to \$6 trillion. . . . As a consequence of these wartime spending choices, the United States will face constraints in funding investments in personnel and diplomacy, research and development and new military initiatives. The legacy of decisions taken during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars will dominate future federal budgets for decades to come. (Bilmes 2013, 1)

Therefore, states must establish the adequate mechanisms to avoid taking courses of action intended to defend of certain ideologies (political, religious, etc.) which cause them to deviate from the true national interest. In this regard, it is important to consider how democracies have a better probability than authoritarian regimes to avoid lasting ideological radicalization of national strategies. Democratic mechanisms established in countries such as the U.S. facilitate not only the participation of citizens in political decisions through periodic elections of political leaders, but also the emergence of different kinds of associations that can influence political decisions within the framework of a clear separation of the different powers (legislative, executive, and judicial).

Recommendations

Within the context of the ongoing over commitments, the U.S. has to carefully prioritize its strategic objectives (ends) and carry out a detailed analysis of those that can be achieved (ways) with the resources available in the short to medium term (means). This analysis should, for example, distinguish between the goals derived from the main concerns of the nation to maintain its global supremacy from those derived of simply ideological reasons based on the promotion of democracy around the world. In other words, “Dedicated grand strategists should have a clear understanding of their country’s

most essential interests, the primary threats to those interests, and the extent and limits of the resources available to ward off these threats and advance core interests” (Brands 2012, 3-4).

Moreover, as Kennedy concluded more than twenty years ago, the U.S. must balance how to face the most dangerous threats to its security in the short term while ensuring adequate economic development of the country in the long run. In this analysis, it is important to note that as occurred when the Habsburgs tried to consolidate and expand their power in Europe (Kennedy 1989, 68), the U.S. could indirectly be encouraging other actors who do not share American ideology, to create new alliances to counterbalance the supremacy of the U.S. and its ideals.

As Michael J. Mazarr states, “Washington will still enjoy substantial influence, and many states will welcome (openly or grudgingly) a U.S. leadership role. But without revising the U.S. posture, the gap between U.S. ambitions and capabilities will only grow” (Mazarr 2012, 15).

Future Research

As stated in chapter 2 of this work, the U.S. national strategy is constantly evolving. Specifically, the progressive withdrawal of troops from Iraq and Afghanistan as well as the more passive role assumed by the U.S. in the Syria seem to be signals that something is changing regarding the U.S. national strategy. Moreover, the cautious role taken by the U.S. in Syria, and the recent defense budget cuts appear to be other signals of a new and more pragmatic approach of the U.S. to international issues. These decisions even seem to confirm that the current Obama administration could be adopting what Richard N. Hass called the “Restoration Doctrine.”

An American foreign policy based on restoring this country's strength and replenishing its economic, human and physical resources. . . . Restoration is not just about doing less or acting more discriminately abroad; to the contrary, it is even more about doing the right things at home. The principal focus would be on restoring the fiscal foundations of American power. The current situation is unsustainable and leaves the United States vulnerable either to market forces that could force an unwanted increase in interest rates and draconian spending cuts or to the pressures of one or more central banks motivated by economic or conceivably political concerns. . . . Restoration more than any other approach to American national security takes into account this era's domestic and international realities. That said, there would still be elements of the other contending doctrines within: democracy promotion, counterterrorism, humanitarianism and integration. (Hass 2012, 54-56)

The short time elapsed since the publication of the *Defense Strategic Guidance for 21st Century*, and the recently published comments just mentioned do not allow extracting valid conclusions about how real is the strategic turning point cited by Secretary of Defense Leon E. Panetta during his remarks on the Strategic Guidance of 05 January 2012.

Therefore, there is room for a future research to confirm if the U.S. national strategy is moving from its recent ideological framework towards a more pragmatic vision about the role of the U.S. in the international arena. It is yet to be determinate if these changes will influence the ability of the U.S. to maintain its military and economic supremacy.

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