

George W. Bush

– en (r)evolution i amerikansk utrikespolitik?

av

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Abstract

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This PhD dissertation sets out to deepen our understanding of American foreign policy and to place the George W. Bush administration, its world view, ideology and war on terror in a historical perspective. The question is if George W. Bush should be regarded as a revolution in American foreign policy or as a continuum of the policies of previous administrations? This is answered by the construction of a historical synthesis, based on a vast amount of literature about American foreign policy, with the addition of primary empirical data such as historical documentation, speeches, policy documents and interviews.

The study finds that there are certain core ideas in American foreign policy that were formulated already when the country was established, and that still are primary driving forces for how administrations in Washington act and react. The absolute core ideas are *exceptionalism* and *self ownership*. These concepts have since evolved and mutually reinforced each other over time, and ideas such as vulnerability, absolute security, manifest destiny and mission have been tied to their essence. These concepts, coupled with the actual economic success and territorial expansion that America experienced during the 19th century, created a *progressive continuity*. This in turn, led to a commonly shared notion among political administrations that they should seize every opportunity to expand American spheres of influence. Major historical breaking points have appeared four times in American history. This has happened during periods when internal and external contexts have gone through changes which have coincided with the evolution of the core ideas. It is consequently possible to define four different periods in American history where George W. Bush should be regarded as a part of the fourth phase. Much in the same way as previous Presidents have seized the opportunity to expand American power, did George W. Bush seize the opportunity to enlarge America's role in the world system after 9.11 2001. Most of George W. Bush's decisions, actions and ideas are consequently a continuum of previous politics and a part of an evolution in American foreign policy that has expanded - from a political project to secure freedom for the American people - to a global mission of establishing an Imperium Americana. His time in office should therefore be regarded as both a continuum and a revolution: a *r-evolution*.

Keywords: International relations, American foreign policy history, historical synthesis, ideology, Bush doctrine, security, progressive continuity