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The Faustian Aspects of American Policy: An Examination of the Approaches of Woodrow Wilson (1913-1921) and George W. Bush (2001-2009)

الجوانب الفاونستية في السياسة الأمريكية:
دراسة لنهجي وودرو ويلسون (1913-1921) وجورج دبليو بوش (2001-2009)

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Abstract:

This study offers a comprehensive analysis of the Faustian dimensions of American policies during the administrations of Woodrow Wilson and George W. Bush. The research argues that the United States' domestic and foreign attitudes, as well as its international relations, often stand in stark contrast to the country's official rhetoric regarding the promotion of democracy and human rights on a global scale. Similar to Goethe's Faust, who forsook his principles in pursuit of limitless power and hegemony, the United States has strayed from the mission established by its Founding Fathers to uphold the nation's constitutional values and principles. This study employs both a historical-analytical and a comparative approach to examine policies implemented by the aforementioned presidents in relation to the foundational principles upon which the nation was built. The findings indicate that, in contrast to its stated principles and values, the United States prioritizes the preservation of its self-interests and the exertion of its influence and hegemony globally, often at the expense of adherence to international law and the protection of fundamental human rights.

Keywords: Faustian Policies, Wilson and Bush Administrations, Democracy, International Law, World Hegemony.

الملخص:

تقدم هذه الدراسة تحليلاً شاملاً للأبعاد الفاستية في السياسات الأمريكية خلال إدارتي وودرو ويلسون وجورج دبليو بوش. يجادل البحث بأن مواقف الولايات المتحدة الداخلية والخارجية، وعلاقاتها الدولية، كثيراً ما تقف في تناقض صارخ مع خطابها الرسمي الداعي إلى تعزيز الديمقراطية وحقوق الإنسان على الصعيد العالمي. على غرار فاوست لغوته الذي تخلى عن مبادئه سعياً وراء القوة المهيمنة غير المحدودة، فقد انحرفت الولايات المتحدة عن المهمة التي وضعها الآباء المؤسسون للحفاظ على القيم والمبادئ الدستورية للأمة. تستخدم هذه الدراسة منهجاً تاريخياً تحليلياً وآخر مقارناً لفحص السياسات التي نفذها الرئيسان المذكوران فيما يتعلق بالمبادئ التأسيسية التي أقيمت عليها الأمة. تشير النتائج إلى أن الولايات المتحدة، على النقيض من مبادئها وقيمها المعلنة، تفضل الحفاظ على مصالحها الذاتية وإعمال نفوذها وهيمنتها عالمياً، وغالباً ما يكون ذلك على حساب الالتزام بالقانون الدولي وحماية حقوق الإنسان الأساسية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: السياسات الفاستية ، ادارتي ويلسون وبوش ، الديمقراطية ، القانون الدولي ، الهيمنة العالمية

1. INTRODUCTION

The dawn of the 21st century solidified the United States' position as the preeminent global power, a status forged through two World Wars, the Cold War, and a strategic shift from isolationism to assertive international engagement. This transformation birthed a "New World Order" defined by American hegemony, underpinned by economic dominance, military supremacy, and ideological influence. Central to this order is a paradox: while the U.S. positions itself as a champion of democracy, human rights, and multilateralism—epitomized by its role in founding institutions like the United Nations (UN) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)—its pursuit of global leadership has repeatedly clashed with its constitutional ideals. This tension mirrors the Faustian bargain in Goethe's tragic play, where the protagonist trades his moral integrity for limitless power (Kuiper, n.d.). Like Faust, the U.S. has compromised its foundational principles of liberty, self-determination, and non-intervention in its quest for hegemony, creating a duality between rhetoric and action that defines its modern foreign policy.

The Faustian metaphor offers a critical lens to analyze this contradiction. In Faust, the titular character's pact with Mephistopheles symbolizes the peril of sacrificing ethics for ambition—a theme starkly reflected in America's foreign policy trajectory. From Woodrow Wilson's idealistic yet sovereignty-undermining League of Nations to George W. Bush's militarized "War on Terror," the U.S. has rationalized interventionism and power projection as necessary for global stability, even as such actions erode its commitment to constitutional and international norms. The Faustian parallel lies not only in this moral trade-off but in the cyclical nature of overreach: just as Faust's fleeting gains lead to existential despair, America's interventions—from Cold War coups to the Iraq War—have often bred destabilization, distrust, and blowback.

This study argues that the administrations of Wilson (1913–1921) and Bush (2001–2009) exemplify the Faustian dimensions of U.S. policy, where the pursuit of hegemony systematically undermines the nation's founding principles. Both eras reveal a recurring pattern: the U.S. frames its global ambitions as altruistic missions, yet its methods—covert regime changes, preemptive wars, and alliances with authoritarian regimes—betray a Faustian willingness to discard ethical constraints.

By examining these case studies through historical-analytical and comparative approaches, this paper illuminates the systemic dissonance between America's professed values and its realpolitik. It contends that the nation's constitutional principles—enshrined in documents like the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights—are increasingly sidelined in favor of unilateralism and hegemony. The consequences are twofold: internationally, such policies erode U.S. moral authority and perpetuate cycles of conflict; domestically, they normalize the erosion of rights, from surveillance to migrant detention. Ultimately, this analysis underscores the urgency of reconciling power with principle, lest the U.S., like Faust, finds itself ensnared in the consequences of its own ambition.

I. The American Values and Principles: Ambivalent Attitudes

1. America: Liberal Empire and the Founding Fathers

In its most expansive definition, liberalism constitutes a political and social philosophy that champions the principles of liberty, equality, and individual rights. From an American standpoint, liberalism promotes the freedoms of religion and speech, the establishment of democratic governance, and the adherence to the rule of law. It also repudiates the historically entrenched tradition of absolute monarchy, which had long dominated the political landscape of both the British Empire and Europe at large. (Hepler & Grimsley, 2021; Collins, 1957).

Hepler and Grimsley (2021) assert that the concept of liberalism is deeply

embedded in American history, tracing its origins to the nation's quest for independence. In the aftermath of the American Revolution, the Founding Fathers undertook the significant task of constructing a nation founded on liberal principles, drawing upon the philosophical doctrines of Enlightenment thinkers such as John Locke and Montesquieu. The burgeoning influence of these intellectuals and their liberal ideas culminated in the creation of pivotal historical documents—the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution—both of which have profoundly shaped the identity of American society to this day.

Liberalism is frequently identified as a fundamental element of American exceptionalism. In his article “The Provinciality of American Empire: ‘Liberal Exceptionalism’ and U.S. Colonial Rule,” Go (2007) argues that the American Empire is distinct from its European counterparts, necessitating a clear differentiation between the two. While European empires have typically been characterized by authoritarianism and oppression—often established through direct colonial domination—the American Empire has purportedly been defined by its “beneficent and selfless” nature. This perception positions American imperialism as a necessary force for the promotion of liberal ideals such as democracy, liberty, and human rights, thus warranting a justification of its actions within this broader framework.

However, this notion of American exceptionalism is not without its internal debates. Critics within the United States have raised concerns about the contradictions between its liberal ideals and the imperialistic actions taken in the name of promoting democracy. These debates emphasize the ambivalence in American attitudes toward its role as a global leader and the ethical implications of its foreign actions.

2. America: The Vanguard of Democracy

In his article titled “Empire, Liberalism & the Quest for Perpetual Peace,” Pagden (2005) posits that the United States

fundamentally subscribes to the liberal-democratic notion that democracy represents the optimal form of governance, which ought to be actively promoted. In the aftermath of its victory in World War II, the United States has directed considerable efforts toward advocating American ideals globally, with a particular emphasis on democracy as the cornerstone of the international liberal system. This commitment was further solidified as the United States assumed the mantle of responsibility in aiding other nations in their struggles against authoritarian regimes.

The relationship between the United States and Chad offers a compelling illustration of the United States' role in supporting democracy and human rights initiatives. After enduring a prolonged period of political and economic instability under French colonial rule, Chad gained its independence in 1960. Immediately following Chad's emergence as an independent nation, the United States established robust diplomatic ties, undertaking significant initiatives to assist the Chadian government in addressing the challenges of regional instability and the refugee crisis (U.S. Department of State, 2022).

In pursuit of enhancing these bilateral relations, the U.S. government has provided substantial humanitarian assistance to Chad, including shelter, medical care, and essential supplies for the displaced and refugee populations. In addition to bolstering Chad's national security and promoting human rights and the rule of law, the United States has made concerted efforts to facilitate Chad's involvement and representation in international organizations such as the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization. Furthermore, Chad serves as a vital economic partner for the United States, with a considerable proportion of Chad's imports originating from the U.S., encompassing machinery, plastics, and grains (U.S. Department of State, 2022).

However, this portrayal of America's role as the vanguard of democracy is complicated by its military interventions, which often provoke internal debate about the ethicality and effectiveness of such actions. The tension between promoting democracy and the militaristic approach taken in some instances highlights the ambivalence within American foreign policy, as well as the need for self-reflection regarding the principles that guide U.S. actions globally.

3. Preemptive Actions and Regime Change

Preemptive war occurs when a state initiates a military attack against another state before the latter has the opportunity to respond. This form of warfare is considered a type of self-defense that is legally recognized under international law ("Preemptive War," n.d.). Accordingly, the Bush doctrine, named after former President George W. Bush, exemplifies a justification for the United States' engagement in preemptive strikes. In the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks, the Bush Administration introduced this doctrine as a novel foreign policy strategy with the aim of enhancing national security. It mandated that the U.S. government take all necessary actions to preemptively combat terrorism. This doctrine has expanded the international role of the United States, often resulting in intervention in the domestic affairs of other nations and, in some instances, facilitating regime changes in countries perceived as harboring terrorists (Hepler & Muscato, 2022).

Historically, the United States has employed military actions and covert operations to influence or alter foreign governments in pursuit of its strategic and economic interests. Following World War II, the country began utilizing the newly established Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to conduct covert operations aimed at the overthrow of governments worldwide (Little, 2022). A notable instance of this was the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961, a failed military operation orchestrated by the CIA during the administration of John F. Kennedy

that sought to depose Cuban leader Fidel Castro and his government (Norris, 2008).

This operation was primarily motivated by American apprehensions regarding the threat of communist expansion following Castro's ascent to power and the implementation of his socialist agenda after the Cuban Revolution of 1959, which included forging closer ties with the Soviet Union (Milestones: 1961–1968, Office of the Historian, n.d.). However, the invasion ultimately resulted in failure, leading to the loss of significant American assets in Cuba, including mines, cattle ranches, and sugar plantations, as well as the missed opportunity to establish a pro-American government that could further U.S. interests in the region ("Bay of Pigs," 2022).

The complexity of preemptive actions and regime change highlights the inherent contradictions within U.S. foreign policy, particularly the tension between its liberal ideals and the realities of military intervention. As the United States continues to navigate its role on the global stage, it faces increasing scrutiny regarding the efficacy and ethics of its actions. The divergent perspectives on the justification of these interventions reflect an ongoing internal debate about America's identity—whether it is a promoter of freedom or a participant in imperialistic endeavors. Ultimately, the outcomes of these interventions not only shape the geopolitical landscape but also influence the domestic discourse on civil liberties and human rights, reinforcing the need for a more coherent and principled approach to foreign policy that aligns with the nation's foundational values.

4. Violations of Civil and Human Rights

Since its founding in 1776, the United States has championed the protection of civil and human rights. However, the nation's actions toward advancing its self-interests have often appeared to contradict its stated principles. The aftermath of the September 11 attacks serves as a poignant illustration of how the United States has violated human

and civil rights, both domestically and internationally.

In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, Muslim immigrants in the United States became increasingly subjected to scrutiny and exclusion. In this context, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and other law enforcement agencies detained and arrested over 1,200 individuals, the vast majority of whom were Arabs and Muslims. Many of those detained were held for months without access to family or legal representation, while others were expelled from the country. In response to the attacks, Congress enacted the “Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act of 2001,” commonly known as the USA PATRIOT Act. This legislation aimed to prevent future terrorist attacks by enhancing governmental powers to monitor and detain foreign nationals suspected of terrorism-related activities. However, it has faced widespread criticism for infringing on civil liberties, particularly as it disproportionately targeted Arab and Muslim individuals, reflecting the growing prevalence of Islamophobic sentiments across the nation (“U.S. Human Rights,” 2023).

Furthermore, reports indicate that the United States has repeatedly violated international laws in the Middle East and neighboring regions through acts that include war crimes, crimes against humanity, arbitrary detentions, the cruel treatment of detainees, and unilateral sanctions imposed without regard for humanitarian consequences. The 2003 invasion of Iraq exemplifies this trend, highlighting the increasing discrimination against civilians perpetrated by the U.S. military (“Chinese NGO,” 2022). An investigation into the treatment of prisoners at Abu Ghraib Prison, a U.S.-controlled facility for detaining Iraqis from 2003 to 2006, uncovered graphic photographs revealing that more than 3,800 Iraqi detainees were subjected to various forms of physical and psychological torture, as well as sexual abuse. The subsequent scandal, which became known as the Abu

Ghraib scandal, significantly tarnished the United States' reputation as a promoter of human rights (“Iraq Prison,” 2023).

The apparent contradictions between the United States' self-proclaimed role as a champion of civil and human rights and its actual practices reveal a profound ambivalence at the heart of American identity. The post-9/11 landscape underscores the challenges faced in balancing national security with the protection of individual liberties, particularly for marginalized groups. As the nation grapples with its historical and contemporary actions, the scrutiny of its practices becomes essential for fostering accountability and ensuring that the core principles of equality and justice are upheld. Ultimately, addressing these violations is not only crucial for restoring domestic and international trust but also for reaffirming the United States' commitment to its foundational ideals, paving the way for a more just and equitable society—both at home and abroad.

II. Faustianism in Action: U.S. Foreign Policy between Rhetoric and Action

1. The League of Nations and the International Criminal Court

As part of the efforts to rebuild Europe following WWI, U.S. President Woodrow Wilson convened the Paris Peace Conference, which included representatives from the victorious Allies: France, the United Kingdom, and Italy. This conference aimed to establish an international organization designed to set peace terms globally, resulting in the creation of the League of Nations. The League of Nations represented the first international association with the primary objective of maintaining peace and preventing future conflicts through collective security (Milestones: 1914-1920 - Office of the Historian, n.d.).

On June 28, 1919, following the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, which formed the basis of the League, President Wilson submitted his proposal for the League of Nations to the U.S. government as part of

his Fourteen Points plan to promote world peace. According to the U.S. Constitution, a treaty requires the approval of a two-thirds majority in the Senate to be ratified. However, Wilson faced significant opposition from Senate Majority Leader Henry Cabot Lodge, who contested the Senate's decision regarding America's membership in the League. Throughout their negotiations, Lodge adamantly opposed the notion that the U.S. should be obligated to "guarantee the territorial integrity and political independence of every nation on earth" (Williams, 2018). The majority of the Senate criticized both the League of Nations and the Treaty of Versailles, perceiving both as threats to American sovereignty and the nation's capacity to safeguard its interests ("League of Nations," 2023; Rust, 2023).

Isolationism has been a defining characteristic of American political thought, tracing its roots to George Washington's warning against the dangers of "foreign entanglements" in his farewell address on September 17, 1796. Senator William Borah of Idaho utilized this phrase to justify the Senate's disapproval of the League, asserting that any attempt at international intervention could jeopardize American national security. Other senators argued that participation in the League would potentially force the U.S. to deploy its armed forces in global conflicts that contradicted national interests. Therefore, opponents of the League of Nations believed it was preferable to prioritize American sovereignty over international cooperation (Morrison, 2021). This rejection can be interpreted as a Faustian pact, where the desire for national sovereignty and autonomy overshadowed the potential benefits of international collaboration for peace and stability.

In fact, this was not the first instance of the United States rejecting membership in international organizations. A notable example is its approach to the International Criminal Court (ICC), established in July 2002 as an independent judicial body with the authority to investigate and prosecute individuals charged with serious

international crimes, including genocide and war crimes. Under the Rome Statute, the treaty that established the ICC, the court possesses jurisdiction to file charges against crimes committed by citizens of member states as well as those committed by non-member states (Dworkin, 2020).

Despite actively participating in the Rome Conference and supporting the establishment of an international criminal court, the United States ultimately rejected the Rome Statute (Galbraith, 2003, p. 685). This decision was primarily predicated on concerns that the ICC would assert jurisdiction over American soldiers accused of war crimes, resulting from either illegal use of force or misconduct in foreign policy initiatives. Furthermore, critics argued that ICC prosecutions could impede U.S. military operations and conflict with the country's foreign policy agenda, thereby infringing on national sovereignty. Many opponents of America's decision contended that the refusal to join the ICC represented a direct abdication of responsibility for potential human rights violations and an unwillingness to adhere to international standards (Elsae, 2006).

Domestic resistance to these institutions was not merely isolationist but rooted in a deeper ideological conflict. The League's rejection reflected a bipartisan fear of subordinating U.S. interests to international consensus—a skepticism amplified by post-WWI disillusionment. Likewise, opposition to the ICC emerged from concerns over politicized prosecutions and the perceived infringement on U.S. legal autonomy. These internal debates reveal a nation torn between its aspirational rhetoric and a realpolitik-driven aversion to external constraints.

These rejections mirrored Faust's dilemma: the U.S. prioritized short-term autonomy over long-term collective security, sacrificing its role as a multilateral leader to preserve unilateral freedom. Critics framed this as a defense of national sovereignty, yet it also signaled a Faustian willingness to evade accountability for potential human

rights violations (Dworkin, 2020). These decisions underscore a recurring theme in U.S. foreign policy: the trade-off between ethical leadership and hegemonic self-interest, a core tenet of Faustianism

2. Espionage Act and the First Amendment

The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution states:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances" ("U.S. Constitution - First Amendment," n.d.).

Among the five fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Constitution, the freedom of speech clause of the First Amendment has long been regarded as the strongest guarantee of individual liberty in the United States. This commitment to safeguarding free expression is often attributed to the founding fathers, who, upon achieving independence, asserted that every American citizen possesses the innate right to voice their ideas and opinions openly without fear of government repression or surveillance (Greenky, 2023).

The First Amendment necessitates that Congress refrain from criminalizing any speech advocating for Communism, racism, or other anti-war ideologies. Furthermore, it denies the legitimacy of prohibiting protests aimed at specific viewpoints or allowing civil litigation against individuals for their speech, unless such expressions fall within an established exception to the amendment. Nevertheless, WWI serves as a significant example of the U.S. government's infringement on First Amendment rights, particularly regarding the restriction of freedom of speech ("First Amendment-

Rights," 2019; "Freedom of Speech-Origins," 2021).

In June 1917, shortly after the United States declared war on Germany, Congress enacted the Espionage Act in response to growing concerns about German anti-war sentiments and espionage activities perceived as a threat to national security. The Espionage Act criminalized the conduct of, or the leaking of, any information related to national defense with the intent to use such information against the United States or in favor of a foreign power. Additionally, it imposed severe penalties on individuals who actively encouraged disloyalty or rebellion and hindered enlistment in the armed forces (Davis, n.d.; "Espionage Act," 2024).

The landmark Supreme Court case *Schenck v. United States* interrogated the constitutionality of the Espionage Act. Although the First Amendment protects a wide array of expressive speech, it is reported that more than 2,000 Americans were arrested under the Espionage Act. Charles Schenck, a socialist, faced charges for distributing anti-draft leaflets urging Americans to resist military service. While Schenck and many others contended that their actions constituted a legitimate exercise of free speech under the First Amendment, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the validity of the Espionage Act, asserting that Schenck's words posed a "clear and present danger" to national security, thereby justifying restrictions on the First Amendment's guarantee of freedom of expression ("Freedom of Speech," 2023).

The vagueness of this criterion allowed successive administrations to justify silencing dissent, particularly during crises. During the Cold War, the test was invoked to target communist sympathizers, and post-9/11, it underpinned the PATRIOT Act's expansive surveillance measures. This legal elasticity underscores a Faustian pattern: the government's pursuit of security systematically erodes foundational freedoms, mirroring Faust's descent into moral compromise.

3. PATRIOT Act and the Fourth Amendment

The Fourth Amendment of the United States Constitution mandates the protection of American citizens from unwarranted searches and seizures by government authorities. Over time, the standards of "probable cause" and the conditions under which individuals may be subjected to searches have evolved through various rulings and interpretations by the U.S. Supreme Court (Merino, 2016). Upholding the principle that "a man's home is his castle," the Fourth Amendment serves to safeguard against arbitrary detentions and provides a legal framework for policies concerning wiretaps, search warrants, stop-and-frisk practices, safety inspections, and other forms of surveillance. It remains a fundamental component of American criminal and privacy law ("Fourth Amendment," n.d.).

Despite the adoption of the Exclusionary Rule by the U.S. Supreme Court, which aims to protect individuals from arbitrary arrests and searches in alignment with the Fourth Amendment, violations of this amendment have occurred since the enactment of the USA PATRIOT Act in 2001, a legislative response to the September 11 attacks. The acronym PATRIOT stands for Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism. This Act primarily aims to enhance national security, with a specific focus on defending the nation against domestic terrorism (Hartin & Schubert, 2022).

The Fourth Amendment has been particularly compromised in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks and the ensuing War on Terror, which ushered in a new era of extensive surveillance practices. These practices included the use of automated drones, scrutiny of passengers' checked baggage on flights, and the burgeoning industry of international internet communications. Proponents of these measures often justified them under the guise of "probable cause" as necessary deterrents

against terrorism and criminal activity. Conversely, critics argue that such initiatives are overly broad and oppressive, thus undermining the protections afforded by the Fourth Amendment. Many contend that a significant portion of the data collected through these expansive surveillance programs was obtained unlawfully or constituted an infringement on individual privacy rights (Dilley, n.d.; Marcovitz, 2008). This period has seen a concerning trend in which the government prioritizes security measures at the expense of civil liberties, echoing the Faustian bargain where freedom is sacrificed for a semblance of safety.

4. Mexican Civil War 1917 and the Iraq War 2003

4.1. Mexican Civil War of 1917

Throughout the early 20th century, Mexico experienced a series of significant governmental transformations. After enduring three decades of dictatorship under Porfirio Díaz, widespread discontent arose in opposition to his oligarchic governance and policies that favored affluent individuals and business interests. This unrest culminated in the 1910 presidential elections, where Francisco Madero, a wealthy landowner, emerged victorious against Díaz, subsequently establishing a constitutional republic. However, Madero's presidency was short-lived, as it failed to fulfill the populace's expectations. The situation was exacerbated by the intervention of the U.S. government, which, aligning with rebels such as Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata, withdrew its support from Madero's administration due to concerns that his conciliatory approach toward the rebels could precipitate further unrest detrimental to American interests in the region (Wallenfeldt, 2023).

The U.S. involvement in Mexico's internal affairs intensified with General Victoriano Huerta's ascension to the presidency following Madero's assassination. The Wilson administration refused to acknowledge Huerta's government, asserting that his policies were

antithetical to American democratic values and thus posed a threat to U.S. interests. In an effort to foster a pro-American government, President Wilson endeavored to negotiate democratic free elections with Huerta, yet these attempts proved unsuccessful. In 1914, the administration escalated American intervention after Mexican authorities detained U.S. Marines in Tampico for breaching a restricted area. Following Wilson's directives, U.S. naval forces seized control of the port city of Veracruz, effectively halting arms shipments from Germany to Huerta's regime (Ambar, 2023; Wallenfeldt, 2023).

The Mexican Civil War, commonly referred to as the Mexican Revolution, reached a critical juncture following Huerta's exile in 1914, with Venustiano Carranza assuming the presidency. The U.S., having recognized the legitimacy of Carranza's government, extended significant support against various revolutionary factions, notably Pancho Villa, who had previously been viewed as a potential ally for American interests. Tensions escalated when Villa's forces conducted military incursions into U.S. territory, resulting in the deaths of several Americans. In response, the U.S. launched a military campaign aimed at capturing Villa, though these efforts ultimately proved unsuccessful. The conflict concluded with the withdrawal of American forces from Mexico and the establishment of the Mexican Constitution in 1917. This episode not only shaped the trajectory of Mexican history but also significantly influenced U.S. foreign policy doctrines, reaffirming the importance of isolationism in American diplomatic strategy (Perpuli, 2023).

While President Wilson framed his actions as promoting democracy, the intervention aimed to secure economic interests and counter German influence (Ambar, 2023; Wallenfeldt, 2023). This episode reinforced isolationist doctrines but also echoed "manifest destiny," the 19th-century belief in America's divine right to expand its influence. The conflict's aftermath

saw the U.S. oscillate between interventionism and withdrawal, a pattern that foreshadowed later Faustian dilemmas in foreign policy.

4.2. The Iraq War of 2003

The origins of the American-Iraqi conflict are widely believed to be rooted in the Persian Gulf War, which was precipitated by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990. In response to this aggression, alongside the implementation of economic sanctions against Iraq, the United States and its allies initiated a large-scale military operation that resulted in the defeat of Iraqi forces and the liberation of Kuwait. Following the invasion, President George H. W. Bush articulated a vision for establishing a "liberal democracy" in Iraq. The events of September 11, 2001, compounded by Saddam Hussein's refusal to vacate Iraq, ultimately led to the U.S. invasion of the country in 2003. The Bush administration alleged that Iraq was developing Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and was supplying them to al-Qaeda, thereby justifying the military intervention ("Iraq War," 2023).

In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, President George W. Bush authorized a covert strategy for the war in Afghanistan while simultaneously directing the Department of Defense to prepare for potential military action against Iraq (Pfiffner, n.d.). In response to the attacks, President Bush promptly declared a "War on Terror" aimed at al-Qaeda and its affiliates. Following the overthrow of the Taliban government in Afghanistan, the focus shifted to Iraq, with the U.S. claiming a connection between the Iraqi government and al-Qaeda. Without providing substantial evidence, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell asserted that President Saddam Hussein was linked to al-Qaeda and implicated in the 9/11 attacks while also positing that he possessed WMD ("Iraq War: The invasion," n.d.; Cameron, 2023).

The United States consistently warned Iraq to comply with United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions

regarding disarmament, indicating that failure to do so would result in severe consequences. However, President Saddam's refusal to adhere to these demands led to a U.S. military invasion of Iraq, undertaken despite the UNSC's recommendations against military action. Tensions reached a climax when American forces captured the Iraqi capital, Baghdad, and subsequently deposed President Saddam, aided by allied forces. The Iraqi War effectively concluded with President Saddam's execution on December 30, 2006, following his conviction by an Iraqi court for crimes against humanity (Bowers et al., 2023; Ibrahim, 2023).

In the aftermath of President Saddam's execution, Americans were taken aback to discover that he did not possess biological, chemical, or nuclear weapons. As the truth about the false claims underlying the war became apparent—that Saddam was neither in possession of nor developing weapons of mass destruction—President Bush sought to reframe the rationale for military intervention. He purportedly emphasized that the goal of the war extended beyond disarmament and regime change, asserting a commitment to assist the Iraqi people in constructing a peaceful democracy while promoting liberal reforms across the Middle East (Kinzer, 2006).

The Iraq War epitomized the Bush Doctrine's Faustian logic: sacrificing international legitimacy for regime change. The war's aftermath devastated the Middle East, fueling sectarian violence, the rise of ISIS, and regional instability (Ibrahim, 2023).

Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive examination of the Faustian aspects of American policies, particularly during the presidential administrations of Woodrow Wilson and George W. Bush. By delving into pertinent data, the analysis reveals that the United States has often compromised its foundational values and principles in pursuit of its unilateral interests, which have consistently dominated its policy-making processes.

Goethe's Faustian allegory provides a profound framework for understanding the inherent contradictions in American foreign policy. Much like Faust's pact with Mephistopheles, the United States has engaged in a relentless pursuit of global hegemony, often rationalized through the doctrine of "exceptionalism." This ambition, while framed as a mission to spread democracy and human rights, has repeatedly clashed with the nation's foundational principles of liberty, non-intervention, and self-determination. Wilson's advocacy for the League of Nations and Bush's post-9/11 militarism exemplify this Faustian bargain. Both leaders prioritized geopolitical dominance over constitutional ideals, mirroring Faust's exchange of moral clarity for unchecked power.

The consequences of this Faustian duality are stark. Internationally, interventions such as the Iraq War—justified by fabricated claims of weapons of mass destruction—and Cold War-era coups reveal a pattern of hubris and overreach. These actions, cloaked in democratic rhetoric, have fueled global distrust and destabilization. Domestically, policies like mass surveillance under the PATRIOT Act and the erosion of Fourth Amendment protections underscore a parallel erosion of civil liberties. The U.S. government's willingness to compromise freedoms for "security" echoes Faust's tragic trade-offs, where short-term gains precipitate long-term moral and strategic costs.

Critically, America's Faustianism exposes systemic hypocrisy. While professing commitment to human rights, the nation has supported authoritarian regimes and overlooked injustices abroad, even as domestic issues like racial inequality and migrant detention remain unresolved. The refusal to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, coupled with historical interventions in Mexico, Cuba, and Iraq, illustrates a disconnect between ideals and actions. Such contradictions alienate some allies, legitimize adversarial narratives, and perpetuate cycles of blowback, as seen in

the aftermath of Abu Ghraib and prolonged Middle Eastern conflicts.

Yet Goethe's narrative leaves room for redemption. For the U.S., this necessitates a reckoning with its imperial legacy and a recommitment to ethical governance. By prioritizing accountability, reparative justice, and multilateral cooperation, the U.S. might transcend its Faustian trajectory. Just as Faust's redemption lay in communal labor, America's path forward hinges on humility, equity, and a rejection of exceptionalist hubris. Only then can it reclaim its constitutional promise—not as a hegemonic empire, but as a self-correcting democracy striving to harmonize power with principle.

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