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PhD THESIS ABSTRACT
THE IMPACT OF THE WAR UPON THE CONSTRUCTION OF UNITED STATES’
IDENTITY AND INTERESTS.
FROM THE LYNDON JOHNSON ADMINISTRATION TO THE GEORGE W. BUSH
ADMINISTRATION

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Introduction

Presentation of the research theme

The main research theme of the PhD thesis is the analysis of the manner in which the wars in the last 50 years have influenced the construction process of the United States' identity and interests. Firstly, the simple reading of these first lines introduces to the reader the chronological framework of the paper. It begins with the 1960s, the beginning of the escalation of the American military intervention in the Indochinese peninsula, event which led gradually to the beginning of the Vietnam War (the American phase of the war: 1964-1973), it continues with the First Gulf War (August 1990 – February 1991) and it ends with the War on Terror – with its two components, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Secondly, the main research theme presented in the first lines shows the aim of the PhD thesis: the analysis of the manner in which the war, as a phenomenon, influences the construction process of the United States' identity and interests. As the next sections will show, every state (or international actor) acts in the international system according to several conceptions about itself and its interests. These conceptions, the identity and the interests of the states are, in turn, influenced by the events and phenomena in the international system. Thus, the research theme of the PhD thesis is apposite and current: it is important to study how the war, a phenomenon existing in the international relations, influences the construction process of the states' identities and interests. In the PhD thesis, I decided to study this influence in the case of the United States, the hegemonic state, or the main superpower (*primus inter pares*) of the current international system.

Of course, it is worth mentioning here why I chose the wars listed above to serve as case studies for the research theme. The 50 year chronological framework has been chosen because of my personal opinion that such a time interval can serve as a relevant study cycle for the research theme proposed. These 50 year cycles are extremely popular in the International Political Economy, a subfield of International Relations. Nikolai Kondratiev, for example, used them.

The three wars included in this chronological framework present an interesting particularity: they are so interconnected, they have such a powerful bound, that they cannot be analyzed separately. Every American decision-maker who took the decision to initiate a new war has done it starting from various analogies between that war and the ones which preceded it. For example, the "Vietnam syndrome" has affected every decision of the presidential administrations to initiate a new military conflict, Saddam Hussein decided to invade Kuwait

starting from the assumption that the American society would not afford a new war, overestimating the post-Vietnam trauma of America, or the Islamic extremists who carried the 9/11 terrorist attacks (the cause of the War on Terror) have wrongly assessed the hesitation of the Bush senior administration to enter Iraq in 1991, overestimating themselves the intensity of the American politicians' fear to wage a lengthy war on foreign land.

No matter how wrong the perceptions of the United States' enemies have proven, we must admit that they started from a real argument. The war influences heavily the national identity and interests of a state. As I have mentioned in the first lines, the research theme of the PhD thesis will be the analysis of the manner in which the wars mentioned above have influenced the construction process of the United States' identity and interests. Last but not least, it is worth explaining why I chose to use in the title the term "impact" of the war, a term which implies a collision, bump or shock. This term is used precisely to highlight that the influence of the war upon the identity and the interests of a state take a sudden, shocking, and most often traumatic form.

The theoretical framework of the research

The PhD thesis uses as theoretical framework of its research the realist constructivism, a relatively new theory in the International Relations domain. The theory has been developed by Samuel Barkin in 2010 in the book entitled *Realist Constructivism. Rethinking International Relations Theory*.¹ As its name shows, the new theory is a synthesis between two of the most influent theories of International Relations: (classical) realism and constructivism. To better understand the synthesis of realist constructivism, it is necessary to present the two original theories which stay at the basis of the above mentioned synthesis.

Realism is the most influent theory of International Relations. The origins of the theory, it can be argued, are found in Thucydides' volume, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, in the fifth century B.Chr. In the fifth book, chapters 84 – 116, Thucydides presents the negotiations between the Athenian messengers and the rulers of the Melos island. In the dramatized version of this real event, the Greek historian introduces several conceptions which would occupy a central role in the realist theory: 1) the importance of *power* in the relations between the states, detrimental to *morality*; 2) the human nature is conflictual and

¹ For more details on this research model, see Samuel Barkin, *Realist Constructivism. Rethinking International Relations Theory*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2010

directed towards obtaining power; 3) the importance of displaying the power in the international system.²

The same pessimistic perception about the imperfect human nature is also found in the *Leviathan* (1651) written by the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes. He claimed that at the beginning of humanity, the natural state of man was characterised by complete liberty, but life was unpleasant, brutal and short. This reality was due to the human nature directed towards the domination of the others, which Hobbes described through the phrase *homo homini lupus*. Gradually, men managed to overcome this state of perpetual vulnerability by giving away a part of their liberty and sovereignty towards a sovereign body (the state), which had the mission to provide security to its citizens. The problem identified by Hobbes in the international relations was that the states cannot be convinced to give away a part of their sovereignty in order to create a superior body, so the international domain remains a “war of all against all.”³

The tragical events of the twentieth century – the two World Wars and the beginning of the Cold War – brought back into the foreground of the researchers the interest for studying conflicts, especially their causes. The new wave of researchers of International Relations, Edward Hallet Carr, Hans Morgenthau, or George Kennan, the exponents of classical realism, have brought back into the center of the International Relations domain the problem of the imperfect human nature, which drives humans and states towards conflict.

Thus, the first branch of the realist theory, classical realism, lays its analysis on the *individual level*, it tries to explain the states' behavior in the international system through the research of the human nature. The reasoning of the theory is easy to understand: states are ruled by men, so the key to understand their behavior lays in the analysis of the human nature. Edward Hallet Carr, in his work *The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919-1939. An Introduction to the Study of International Relations* (with its two editions: 1939 and 1946) claims that the human nature has a dual character: it is characterized by morality and power. So, politics can never be separated by power. Carr argues that ignoring power is fatal in politics. But, it is true, he draws attention that every political man also relies on moral principles in his action. Politics

² Tucidide, *History of the Peloponesian War*, translated by William Smith, Jones & Co., London, 1831, pp. 210-215

³ Jill Steans et al. (eds.) *An Introduction to International Relations Theory. Perspectives and Themes*, 3rd edition, Pearson Education Limited, Harlow, 2010, p. 56

is, according to him, a compound of morality and power, where the second component plays a more important role.⁴

Hans Morgenthau, in his book *Politics among Nations. The Struggle for Power and Peace* (1948) simply claims that “international politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power...power is always the immediate aim.”⁵ The researcher, also using the human nature as an explicative element of the states’ behavior in the international relations, argues that “the struggle for power is universal in time and space...The desire to live, to propagate, and to dominate are common to all men...The desire to dominate, in particular, is a constitutive element of all human associations, from the family through fraternal and professional associations and local political organizations to the state.”⁶

In the 1970s, in the context of the international relations dynamics specific to the Cold War, comes out a new form of realism, structural realism or neorealism. The scientist who created the new theory was Kenneth Waltz, in his work *Theory of International Politics*. This new approach disclaimed the classical realism analysis centered on the individual level, considered too subjective and incapable of reaching scientifically tested knowledge. In turn, Waltz focuses on the *international system level*. The new scientific approach tried to delimitate itself from any attribute of the states, except for their capabilities. Thus, the explanation of the states’ behavior lays in the anarchical structure of the international system, which constrains states from some actions, while directing them towards others. More specific, “every unit must put itself in a position to be able to take care of itself since no one else can be counted on to do so. Differences between states are of capability, not function.”⁷

Another neorealist, John Mearsheimer, embraced this analysis centered on the international system. His theory argues that states confront an uncertain international environment in which any state can use its power to harm another. Therefore, the relative capabilities are of overwhelmingly importance, and the need for security determines states to wish to obtain as much power as they can. Mearsheimer deduces from this reasoning that states fear each other, they can rely only on their own power when it comes to their security, and their best strategy to assure their survival is the maximization of their relative power – achieving the hegemonic status. This is why his version of the neorealist theory is called

⁴ Edward Hallett Carr, *The Twenty Years’ Crisis 1919-1939. An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, 2nd edition, Ed. Macmillan & Co., London, 1946, pp. 96-97

⁵ Hans Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations. The Struggle for Power and Peace*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1948, p. 13

⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 16 - 18

⁷ Scott Burchill et al., *Theories of International Relations*, 3rd edition, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2005, pp. 34-35

offensive structural realism.⁸ Kenneth Waltz claims the contrary, arguing it is not wise for a state to seek hegemony in the international system in order to secure its survival. On the contrary, states should undertake defensive and moderate policies to ensure their security and avoid the aggression of the other states. This is why his version of the neorealist theory is called defensive structural realism.

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The second theory of International Relations on which Samuel Barkin's synthesis is based on, is constructivism. This theoretical paradigm appeared during the dispute over the nature of anarchy in the international system between neorealism and neoliberalism at the end of the Cold War. The neorealists argue that the anarchy is a structure which constrains the states' behavior so competition, conflict and eventually war, are guaranteed. Neoliberalism assumed that the anarchy is a process of learning which takes place between states, through their daily interactions, so more institutions and cooperative interactions result from this process, which make war undesirable in the international system.

Constructivism claims that the effects of the anarchy are not as easy to predict as the previous paradigms suggest. Anarchy is not necessarily conflictual, nor cooperative. There is no such thing as a nature of the international anarchy. If states behave conflictually one towards the other, then the nature of the international anarchy seems conflictual. If the states cooperate, then the nature of the anarchy seems cooperative. Thus, the analyst must focus on the actions of the states to understand conflict and cooperation in international relations, because the states determine the nature of the international anarchy. And more important, the actions of the states are determined by their identity and interests, which can change across time. Constructivism argues that identity and interests in international relations are not stable, they do not have a predetermined nature.⁹ An International Relations analyst should study the manner in which states' identity and interests are constructed, because they determine the states' priorities and behavior in the international arena.

Alexander Wendt, Ted Hopf or Peter Katzenstein, the main exponents of constructivism, claim that identities lay at the foundation of states' interests. Actors do not have a "portfolio" of interests, which they carry no matter of the social context, in turn they

⁸ Martin Griffiths (ed.), *International Relations Theory for the Twenty-First Century. An Introduction*, Routledge, London, 2007, pp. 18-19

⁹ Cynthia Weber, *International Relations Theory*, 3rd Edition, Ed. Routledge, New York, 2005, p. 62

define their interests in the process of defining the situation and their identity in the context of the respective situation.¹⁰ Ontologically, constructivism is a social theory which describes international relations as a distribution of identity and interests. Epistemologically, the theory is concerned with the social investigation concerning the nature of the human factor and its relationship with social structures, the role of ideas and material forces in the social life.¹¹

Constructivism claims that the identity and the interests of the actors in the international system are influenced both by the normative and material structures. For example, the study of the states' behavior in international relations must be centered on 1) the patterns of behavioral norms and expectations inside the system and 2) the material factors. In other words, the researcher should take in consideration both social and material factors in his International Relations analysis. As Emanuel Adler explained, constructivism takes the middle ground, between structuralism and post-structuralism; it is interested in understanding the manner in which the material, subjective and intersubjective worlds interact in the social construction of reality and, instead of focusing exclusively on the manner in which the structures constitute agents' identities and interests, it also seeks to explain how individual agents construct those structures.¹²

Equally important, constructivism can adopt a holistic model of analysis: unit-level, centered upon the study of the decision-making process of the American political establishment (a paradigm closer to the works of Peter Katzenstein and Ted Hopf¹³, who emphasize the importance of researching the domestic political processes to understand the states' behavior in the international arena), or system-level, a paradigm closer to the works of Alexander Wendt and Martha Finnemore¹⁴, who focus on the influence of the international system's structure upon the states' behavior.

¹⁰ Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics" in *International Organization*, vol. 46, no. 2, 1992, p. 398

¹¹ *Idem*, *Social Theory of International Politics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999, p. 5, also see John Ruggie, "What Makes the World Hang Together? Neo-utilitarianism and the Social Constructivist Challenge" in *International Organization*, vol. 52, no. 4, autumn 1998, pp. 855-885 and Stefano Guzzini, "A Reconstruction of Constructivism in International Relations" in *European Journal of International Relations*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2000, pp. 147-182

¹² Emanuel Adler, "Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics" in *European Journal of International Relations*, vol. 3, no. 3, 1997, p. 330

¹³ For exemplification, see Peter Katzenstein, *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1996 and Ted Hopf, "The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory" in *International Security*, vol. 23, no. 1, summer 1998, pp. 171-200

¹⁴ For exemplification, see Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics" in *International Organization*, vol. 46, no. 2, 1992, pp. 391-425; or Martha Finnemore, Kathryn Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change" in *International Organization*, vol. 52, no. 4, autumn 1998, pp. 887 - 917

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As it was presented in the previous pages, the theoretical framework of the research is represented by realist constructivism, a synthesis of the two theories presented in the pages above. Realist constructivism proposes as model of research a synthesis which takes from the classical realism its focus on the power politics and the foreign policy, and from constructivism its focus on (and a methodology for) studying the co-constitution of the structures and agents. This model proposed by Barkin maintains from realism the concern for power, but it is understood as relational, not structural. In other words, the researcher should adopt in his study a logic of the social, and to analyze the historical context, the beliefs of the decision-makers, and the actors' identity and interests. Only this way, the actions of the actors in the international system (who wish power) can be understood properly.¹⁵

Thus, the PhD thesis focuses its analysis both on **social factors**: the American decision-makers' thinking, the behavioral expectations imposed on them from the inside and the outside of the American society, and on **material factors**: especially the political, military, and economic power. Regarding the research's variables, the thesis draws inspiration from neoclassical realism, a version of realism which aims to bring back in the center of the realist research the individual level. Neoclassical realism, it can be observed, has broadly the same aims as realist constructivism: to maintain the international system in International Relations analysis, but to complete it with the individual level, item ignored by neorealists.

Thus, the PhD thesis takes into consideration **systemic variables** (distribution of power at the international system level); **domestic variables** (the decision-making process within the American institutions), and also the **cognitive variables** (the perceptions of the political leaders).¹⁶ The paper uses Randall Schweller' premises, according to which states shape their behavior in international relations according to a combination of power and interests – theory which was called “balance of interests.” According to the theory, states' actions can be understood through studying the state's characteristics, the perceptions of its leaders, and the manner in which these are shaped by the structural constraints.¹⁷

¹⁵ For more details on this research model, see Samuel Barkin, *Realist Constructivism. Rethinking International Relations Theory*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2010

¹⁶ Gideon Rose, “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy” in *World Politics*, vol. 51, no. 1, October 1998, pp. 169 - 172

¹⁷ Randall Schweller, “Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In” in *International Security*, vol. 19, no. 1, summer 1994, pp. 99-100

The methodological framework

The methodological framework of the PhD thesis is represented by historical analysis, discourse analysis and political marketing. Thus, it can be noticed, the paper represents an interdisciplinary study, which borrows research methods from various study disciplines, as International Relations, Political Science, History, or Political Marketing.

The research behind the thesis has, firstly, a rich historical component. Every conclusion forwarded is based on an analysis of historical events undertaken on archive documents, memoirs, declassified memoranda and so on. The analysis of the sources follows a well established pattern. This pattern begins with establishing the source's validity (is the source relevant for the domain?); continues with studying the source (who is its author?; when, where and why was the source elaborated?; to whom does the author address?); and ends with framing the information from the source in the analysis model proposed for the PhD thesis, namely the analysis on the impact of the war on the construction process of the United States' identity and interests.

Discourse analysis, the second component of the methodological framework, has had across the years different meanings and designs. For example, some scholars emphasised the importance of studying the language used in people's discourses. According to Brian Paltridge, "discourse analysis focuses on how language presents different views and understandings of the world and how the use of language is influenced by the relationships between participants as well as the effects the use of language has on social identities and relations. It also considers how views of the world, and identities, are constructed through the use of discourse."¹⁸ In the PhD thesis, I decided to use a more profound conception about the discourse analysis.

I started from Ian Parker's conception about discourse: "Discourse is an interrelated set of texts, and the practices of their production, dissemination, and reception, which brings an object into being."¹⁹ I added to this perspective several notions brought to the discourse analysis methodology by Nelson Phillips and Cynthia Hardy. According to them, "the things that make up the social world – including our very identities – appear out of discourse ... Our talk, and what we are, are one and the same...Without discourse, there is no social reality, and without understanding discourse, we cannot understand our reality, our experiences, our

¹⁸ Brian Paltridge, *Discourse Analysis: An introduction*, 2nd edition, Bloomsbury Academic, London, 2012, p. 2

¹⁹ Ian Parker, *Discourse Dynamics: Critical analysis for Social and Individual Psychology*, Routledge, London, 1992, p.3

ourselves.”²⁰ Social reality is produced and made real through discourses, and social interactions cannot be fully understood without reference to the discourses that give them meaning. So, through discourse analysis, the researcher’s task is to ”explore the relationship between discourse and reality.”²¹

My approach to the study of discourse is ”three-dimensional,” meaning that I do not rely only on studying the texts of the discourses. Following Phillips’ and Hardy’s example, I connect texts to discourses, and locate them in a historical and social context, by which I refer to the particular actors, relationships, and practices that characterize the situation under study. In analyzing the bodies of the texts discovered during the research, I studied the interrelations between texts, changes in texts, and new textual forms, that constitute a discourse over the period of time chosen as the chronological framework. I also studied the social context in which the texts were found and the discourses were produced. It is exactly this connection between discourses and the social reality which is at the bottom of the analysis.²²

Since the analysis of the American decision-makers’ discourses is also centered on the political marketing used by them, some explanations of the concept are needed. The concept of “political marketing” has been introduced by Stanley Kelly in his 1956 book, *Professional Public Relations and Political Power*. In this paper, I decided to present several definitions of marketing, which I consider relevant and current.

In August 2004, *American Marketing Association* developed the following definition: “Marketing is an organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationship in ways that benefits the organization and its stakeholders.”²³

Policy is compatible with marketing because of its interest in the relationship between elites and masses: the electorate and candidates or media and audiences. The two disciplines seek to understand how an organization or the elite function in relation to masses, and otherwise.²⁴ Through political marketing, leaders try to impose or introduce and promote images which affect the manner in which the public (the international community or the domestic society) perceives a certain situation. To realise this objective, leaders use *framing*, the manner in which a decision is presented. Framing operates like a lens through which the

²⁰ Nelson Phillips, Cynthia Hardy, ”Discourse Analysis: Investigating Processes of Social Construction”, in *Sage University Papers Series on Qualitative Research Methods*, vol. 50, p. 2

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 3

²² *Ibidem*, pp. 4-5

²³ Henry Sun, “International Political Marketing: a Case Study of United States Soft Power and Public Diplomacy” in *Journal of Public Affairs*, no. 8, 2008, p. 168

²⁴ Jennifer Lees-Marshment, *Political Marketing: Principles and Applications*, 2nd edition, Routledge, New York, 2009, p. 11

public watches and examines the situation. In this regard, the political leaders play the role of the optometrist who offers and adjusts the lenses for his customers. The politicians' desire is to mount lenses to the public which make their policies and actions look good, and through negative marketing, the opponents' actions to look bad.²⁵

By analyzing the discourses of the American decision-makers, I showed in the thesis how the political marketing used by the leaders evolved from the simple promotion of their political decisions (for example, the simple justification to the public of the Johnson administration's decision to escalate the war in Vietnam) to the fierce attempts of the Bush administrations to attract the moral support of the national and international community for the military interventions. In terms specific to political marketing methodology, this evolution means the transition from a strategy based on "political marketing as sale" (the political marketing research is conducted after the product is developed, it does not affect the leaders' decision, only the way in which the product is promoted) to a strategy based on "empirical or co-formative political marketing" which focuses on the involvement of the public into an active experience with the leaders' decisions. The public is not only spectator, but also part of the event.²⁶

Once clarified these notions, I examined the channels used by the decision-makers to spread their own beliefs. Framing and marketing are possible because the public has limited information about the foreign policy domain. Media is an important channel through which the leaders can educate/manipulate the public through careful management and selective control of the information flow. Thus, people's perception about a problem can be changed through the framing of the problem, without the distortion or removal of the information, but only through framing the events in a favorable mode.²⁷

I also examined the *manufacturing consent theory* which argues that the elites control the media and use it to obtain the public's support for certain politics. There are two manners in which consensus can be reached: the executive version, in which the framing of the subject is in compliance with the official agenda of the executive and the media elites' version, in which the narrative of the news criticizes the executive power. The last version is the example of the mass-media institutions' involvement in the process of construction of a state's national identity and interests, and is visible especially in the case of the Vietnam war.

²⁵ Alex Mintz, Karl DeRouen Jr., *Understanding Foreign Policy Decision Making*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2010, pp. 149-150

²⁶ Jennifer Lees-Marshment, *op.cit.*, pp. 7-9

²⁷ Alex Mintz, Karl DeRouen Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 151

The concept “international political marketing” was defined for the first time in a study presented at *The Fourth Conference of International Political Marketing*. The definition was then published in *Journal of Public Affairs* by Henry Sun in 2007.

*International Political Marketing seeks to establish, maintain and enhance long-term relations among peoples, nation-states, interest groups and international organizations, so that the objectives of the national political actors and organizations involved are met. This is done by mutual exchange and fulfillment of promises through marketing strategy and the marketing mix of product, place, polling and promotion.*²⁸

A central role in my analysis will be occupied by the study of the international political marketing used by the American presidential administrations in the last 50 years. Thus, I will grant special attention to the mode in which the American leaders used the *soft power, hard power, smart power* and *public diplomacy*²⁹ concepts to win the international community’s support. I will be careful to emphasize the successes and failures of the American initiatives.

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The paper’s method of presentation is chronological. I tried to present the impact of the war on the construction of US identity and interests through the research of its impact on the American policy and society. The starting point of the analysis is the impact of the Vietnam war on the American society, and the point which I chose as the end my research is represented by the study of the impact of the George W. Bush administration’s wars on the United States.

The main function of the PhD thesis is descriptive – it focuses on the identification and presentation of the facts and the events, but the paper also has a strong explicative function, suggesting causal relationships to verify the assumptions. The paper also has a summary function, by concentrating the value enunciations and the knowledge previously verified, as well as a practical function, it suggests a model of analysis in compliance with the academical requirements.

²⁸ Henry Sun, *op. cit.*, p. 170

²⁹ In 1998, Joseph Nye and Robert Keohane defined (in an article published in *Foreign Affairs* and intitled *Power and Interdependence in the Information Age*) *soft power* as the ability of a state to indirectly influence, through attractivity, other states to follow its political and cultural values and *hard power* as the ability to force the others through threat or reward.

Smart power is a political strategy which combines elements of *hard power* and *soft power*.

In 1987, the US Department of State defined the *public diplomacy* as government sponsored programmes which aim to inform or influence the public opinion in other countries. Its main tools are publications, movies, cultural exchanges, radio and TV programmes.

The research methods are both quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative research I undertook in writing the PhD thesis is represented by the analysis of the statistics, tables, and charts. I sought to combine these quantitative methods with the qualitative research, namely the analysis of the documents, of the public discourses of the political leaders, of the journals and memoirs. The qualitative methods grant the research a more profound understanding of the examined problems, even if I was aware of the attention I have to offer to the great degree of subjectivity these methods imply. Thus, I used secondary data analysis, namely the investigation of the sources through the research of the official ideologies and justifications, as well as the real interests behind the initiation of the wars studied in the paper – making the disjunction between them when it was the case.

The structure of the PhD thesis

The PhD thesis consists of five chapters in which I analyzed the manner in which the previously mentioned wars shaped the construction of the US national identity and interests.

The first chapter is dedicated, firstly, to the presentation of the theoretical and methodological frameworks of the PhD thesis. I presented the main features of the realist constructivism, a paradigm which is based on the conjunction of similar elements of realism and constructivism. I demonstrated in what measure can the realist and constructivist assumptions cooperate in studying the impact of the war on the construction process of US national identity and interests.

Also in this chapter, I presented the main concepts of the historical analysis, discourse analysis and the political marketing – methodological tools which represent the methodological framework of the paper. I described how the three methodological tools helped me in studying the sources (public declarations, interviews, official documents, memoirs redacted by the main American decision-makers) and in analyzing the manner in which the American decision-makers perceived and presented to the public the three wars.

Also in the first chapter, I described the main concepts and notions used in the paper. The first concept is that of “war.” I mentioned the main definitions of the concept across time: the definitions of Carl von Clausewitz, Quincy Wright, Murray Rothbard, James Fearon, David Singer, or Harrison Wagner. Then, I described the manner in which the main theories of International Relations studied this phenomenon. Two other concepts which were also explained are “identity” and “interests.” These two concepts, in International Relations, refer to the identity and the interests upon which the states act in the international system. What draws attention to these two concepts is that they have a fluent and dynamic character, they

are perpetually changing (process which takes place at different speeds) and their creation process is influenced by both phenomena inside the state and outside it, situated at the level of the international system. Other concepts explained in this first chapter are “American exceptionalism,” “strategic culture,” “soft power,” “hard power” and “public diplomacy.”

The following three chapters take the shape of case studies, each chapter studying one of the three wars. These case studies have a balanced structure, they begin with the presentation of the historical framework in which the wars have been initiated, they continue with the presentation of the American presidential administration, and end with the proper analysis specific to each war.

The second chapter, the one dedicated to the analysis of the Vietnam war, begins with the framing of the conflagration in the political context of its inception. I presented, through the theoretical and methodological framework of the PhD thesis, the decision-making process of the Johnson administration: how its members positioned themselves toward the situation in Indochina, what discourses they employed, how they interacted during the decision-making process. After presenting these factors, I drew the conclusions regarding the impact of the Vietnam war on the US national identity and interests.

The third chapter, the one dedicated to the First Gulf War, follows the same model of research. I examined the reaction of the George H.W. Bush administration to the threat that the Iraqi aggression against Kuwait posed to the New World Order post-Cold War. I showed how an event so distant to the United States from a geographically point of view, threatened the construction process of the American identity and interests post-Cold War. The lack of an American response would have certainly had serious implications: the alteration of the balance of power in the Gulf region and the Middle East and the serious deterioration of the peace and stability in the international system.

The fourth chapter is reserved to the War against Terror. I highlighted the manner in which the September 11 attacks changed America. I presented the concern for the war against terrorism imposed to the American decision-makers so dramatically by the terrorist attacks against The Twin Towers and the Pentagon building and the impact of this war on the US identity and interests.

Regarding this chapter, it is worth mentioning that it is divided into two parts, which correspond to the two battlegrounds of the War against Terror: Afghanistan and Iraq. The last one is the one which had the greatest impact upon the United States of America. The United States, whose interests identified mostly with those of the United Nations, saw themselves in the position to initiate the war in Irak on a debatable authorization of the UN Security

Council. While the First Gulf War was initiated on solid resolutions of the UN Security Council (Resolutions 660, 662, 670, 674, 678), the legal justification for the Second Gulf War was as forced as it could be, resolutions 687 and 1441 did not represent a powerful legal ground for the justification of a military action. Here, it is important to study the role of the “Axis of Evil” concept and the relations of this axis with terrorism, from the perspective of the threats towards US identity and interests.

The fifth chapter is structured as a final chapter, in which the main conclusions of the PhD thesis are presented. The main link of the three wars is the influence of each upon the US identity and interests. They had such a great impact, that they radically changed the US behavior in the international system. As Charles Kupchan and Peter Trubowitz argued, the war in Vietnam provoked the economical decay of the 1970s, social and political divisions, especially the Civil Rights Movement, elements which seriously shook the consensus inside the American society for liberal internationalism (a foreign policy strategy based on the US power and international cooperation) promoted after the end of the Second World War.³⁰ The final blow to the liberal internationalism was given by the terrorist attacks from September 11 2001, which convinced the American leaders to seek cooperation in the foreign realm only for a limited number of political and military domains, such as information exchange, cooperation for law enforcement and freezing of the terrorists’ financial sources. This reality was due to the military requirements pattern of the counter-terrorist operations. American unilateralism was determined by the missions against the terrorist networks, which usually contain special operations and secret military actions, each requiring unity of command and detailed plannification.³¹

Conclusions

The aim of this section is to present the main conclusions of the research about the impact of the three wars upon the US identity and interests.

The Vietnam War (1964 - 1973)

The PhD thesis revealed the United States in the 1960s, the moment of the escalation of the conflict, as a state which enjoyed domestically a prosperity without a precedent in the history of the mankind. Externally, the United States assumed after the end of

³⁰ Charles Kupchan, Peter Trubowitz, “Dead Center: The Demise of Liberal Internationalism in the United States” in *International Security*, vol. 32, no. 2, autumn 2007, pp. 16-17

³¹ Adrian Lewis, *The American Culture of War*, Routledge, New York, 2007, p. 23

the Second World War the identity of leader of the free world, and its main interests were stopping the spread of communism and promoting the liberty and democracy on globe. Precisely this identity and these interests pushed the United States towards its military implication in the most troublesome region of the 1960s, Southeast Asia. The region was caught in a power game between the United States on one side, and the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, on the other. The stakes for the United States consisted in protecting the democracy and capitalism in the region, especially in South Vietnam and by default, demonstration of the American values' supremacy.

Initially, none of the first four post-war American administrations (Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy or Johnson) wanted full military implication into the Indochinese peninsula. But each administration's decisions to gradually expand the support for South Vietnam finally led to attracting the United States into a conflict on large scale. This reality illustrates Alexander Wendt's constructivist assumption that actors in the international system do not have a "portofolio" of interests, but they define their interests according to the situation. An unthinkable situation (the US involvement into a military conflict in Vietnam) for the 1950s became in the 1960s an uncontested reality.

Also, in the case of a democratic state, the study showed that the change of government can bring the change of certain interests. For example, the Nixon administration was the first American presidential administration after the Second World War who doubted the importance of Southeast Asia for the American interests. By elaborating the *Guam Doctrine* (or the *Nixon Doctrine*) the United States threatened the states of the region that they are not willing anymore to intervene unconditionally for their liberty. This approach was unthinkable in the first 25 years of the Cold War.

The study confirmed another constructivist assumption: actors are not always in charge of the construction process of their own interests. They do not act in an isolated environment, but are influenced by the interaction with other actors. For example, the US interests have been influenced by the encounters between the American political and military leaders and their counterparts from South Vietnam. The memoranda presented in the second chapter testify in that direction. Robert McNamara, general Maxwell Taylor, or general Earle Wheeler, after talking to the South Vietnamese leaders, changed the US policy. While the leaders in Washington, who did not get into direct touch with the realities on the field, were sensitive to sending more soldiers in Vietnam, the politicians and the military personnel sent on the field insisted on supplementing the number of forces. The last group was the successful party, establishing the US interests and actions in Indochina.

The research showed that war can, paradoxically, have an important function of promoting communication: it can lead, under certain circumstances, to rapprochement between states. For example, at the beginning of the 1970s, the United States used the negotiation channel for ceasing hostilities in Vietnam to get closer to an opponent state, the People's Republic of China. The rapprochement drew, though, the detachment between the two states and their war allies: the United States detached from the South Vietnam, and China from the Soviet Union.

Finally, it is worth mentioning here the impact of the war on the American domestic society. On the domestic front, America was confronted for the first time in history with a disident movement towards its war policy. There were ample street movements which adopted catchwords against the Johnson and Nixon administrations. Equally important were the conflicts of these two administrations with the American mass-media. For the first time in US history, mass-media was not anymore a channel used exclusively for propagating the messages of the decision-makers. Journalists began now to question the efficiency of the official politics of the presidential administrations, starting a genuine confrontation with the politicians.

The First Gulf War (August 2, 1990 – February 28, 1991)

The PhD thesis also studied the impact of the First Gulf War on the construction process of the US identity and interests in the post-Cold War period. At the beginning of the 1990s, the United States enjoyed a unique status in history. The victory in the Cold War offered America the opportunity to shape a new era in the international relations after its own values: democracy and market economy. The most influent scientific article of that period, Francis Fukuyama's "The End of History?" (published in *The National Interest* in the summer of 1989) announced the disappearance of the last great challenge to Western liberalism. So used to think many leaders of the time. The United States were, thus, entitled to assume the leadership (hegemonic) status of the new liberal international order.

But the lack of a perceivable enemy for the United States, and the disappearance of the old Cold War patterns of stability spurred a leader in front of a peripheral state in the international order, the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, to doubt America's capacity and availability to defend the new international order. He bet on the fact that he could undertake an aggressive military action against a neighbor state without bearing any consequences. This action represented the first attempt of contesting the new international order shaped by the United States after the victory in the Cold War.

The US response came quickly. According to the new identity and the new interests assumed in the post-Cold War era, the United States sought to solve the crisis through multilateral actions. Their strategy had two components: cooperation at the international organizations' level (United Nations or the Arab League) and cooperation at the bilateral level: the United States - the Soviet Union, the United States – Egypt or the United States – Saudi Arabia.

The American interests advanced by the American decision-makers during the Gulf War were the reconstruction of the international society and supporting the cooperation at the international level, the construction of the New International Order, and the construction of a new type of relationships with the Soviet Union, the former enemy in the last 40 years. All these interests, of course, can also be perceived as a manner to promote the American hegemony in the international system. This double interpretation is an expression of the dualism in the American foreign policy, which presents a moral component (for example, the American exceptionalism) and a practical component, whose aim is to increase the American power in the international system.

The quick success in the Gulf had a positive influence on the American identity and interests mentioned above. The United States proved to the entire world they can successfully assume the role of global leader. And they also managed to get rid of (at least partially) the trauma provoked by the previous war, the one in Vietnam. The First Gulf War brought back the cohesion spirit between the elites and the citizens in time of war, and the cooperation in Congress in regard to the war policy.

The War on Terror

The PhD thesis examined the manner in which the 9/11 terrorist attacks influenced the US identity and interests. The most powerful nation of the world was hit in the buildings which were symbols of its political, economic and military power by a group of extremists located in one of the poorest states in the world, Afghanistan. America's response to this attack was named the War on Terror. Its aim, explained by the American decision-makers, was to punish the terrorists who were guilty of those attacks; to overthrow the regime who supported them and to replace it with a government based on the principles of liberty and democracy; and to eliminate the possibility that terrorist elements could strike again the American territory. In other words, the United States had to prove to the entire world they were capable of maintaining their identity of leader of the international liberal order.

The War on Terror had two components. The first of them, the war in Afghanistan, was undertaken between October 7, 2001 (the beginning of the military operations) and June 2002 – October 2004, the election of the first Afghan govern, respectively the first President of the country, events which represented the restoration of the Afghanistan's sovereignty. The military initiatives fulfilled the objective enunciated by the American leaders after September 11, 2001.

The second component, the war in Iraq, was undertaken between March 2003 and June 2004. Truth is that the United States had an old experience of confrontation with Iraq: Saddam Hussein had a rich history of sustained defiance towards the US, the international law, and the regional and global stability. But between 1991 and 2001 (the end of the First Gulf War and the 9/11 terrorist attacks), the United States chose a diplomatic and multilateral approach towards Iraq, not one military and unilateral.

Yet, beginning with September 12, the officials of the George W. Bush administration were not willing anymore to make concessions in problems related to the national security. Saddam no longer represented only a defiance to the United States. The American leaders perceived him and presented him to the public as a threat to the national security.

As a result, the diplomatic strategy used to solve the Iraqi threat was changed with a military one. The change was done gradually, during more than a year. The decision to start the military operations in Iraq was determined by three major factors: the problem of the Iraqi weapons of massive destruction; the problem of Saddam's connections with the terrorist organizations; and the necessity to spread democracy in the region. In March 2003, the military operations started in Iraq, which by June 2004 overthrew Saddam's regime and gave the opportunity to the Iraqi citizens to establish a democratic state.

From studying the two military interventions emerges the American leaders' desire to avoid the labeling of the United States as invaders and occupiers in Afghanistan and Iraq. Thus, the United States engaged in both countries in broad processes of *nation-building*, which substantially upgraded the lives of the region's inhabitants. Moreover, the American politicians sought to re-establish as quick as they could the sovereignty of Afghanistan and Iraq.

A final influence of the 9/11 attacks and the War on Terror on the United States was represented by the changes imposed to the American domestic legislation and society: *Patriot Act* and the *Terrorist Surveillance* program. These two initiatives proved to be crucial in the fight against terrorism. The privileges given to the Secret Services in pursuing terrorists prevented the American territory from other terrorist attacks undertaken by a foreign terrorist

network. It is right, though, that the same privileges gave birth to important debates in the American society with relation to their legitimacy.

The Relevance of Research

The PhD thesis presents a strong innovating character, which consists in the originality of the research methods proposed and the objectives assumed. As I have shown in the previous pages, the multitude of the research methods offers a broad research framework. As the research has been interdisciplinary, the analysis which stood at the basis of the PhD thesis was complex, founded on solid premises, and had as a result the deduction of strongly scientific conclusions.

Regarding the assumed objectives, it must be said they are up to date for the academic study of the International Relations and Political Science. The clarity of their presentation, and the complexity they impose on the research represent the proof for the research theme's depth.

The establishment of a theoretical corpus specific to the research of the links between the national identity and interests of a state on the one side, and the discourse analysis and the political marketing used by the decision-makers, on the other side represents, in my opinion, the main achievement of the PhD thesis. This theoretical corpus started from an interdisciplinary approach because during the documentation and the analysis of the sources I used concepts and methods borrowed from different academic disciplines: International Relations, Political Science, History and Political Marketing.

In conclusion, I believe the most important contribution which the PhD thesis brings to the International Relations and Political Science study is the development of a new model of analysis for the impact of the war on the construction process of the US identity and interests, a model which can be used for other research themes, too.

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