Democratic peace as global errand

America's post-Cold War foreign policy jeremiad

Patricia L. Dunmire
Kent State University

Focusing on the foreign policy discourse of George H. W. Bush and William Clinton, I examine the role the American jeremiad played in conceptualizing the geopolitical change initiated by the ending of the Cold War. I identify "extending the democratic peace" as the nation's post-Cold War "errand" and argue that this global mission represented the contemporary "re-dedication" of American policy to the nation's "divine cause." I demonstrate that a key issue facing the nation was whether the U.S. would reap the benefits of its Cold War victory by extending its political-economic system globally or whether it would turn inward and, thereby, give rein of the future to the forces of "anarchy" and chaos." As with earlier renditions of the jeremiad, the post-Cold War variant turned this liminal moment into a "mode of socialization" (Bercovitch 2012, 25) by deploying the concept of democratic peace to legitimate an interventionist foreign policy.

Keywords: American jeremiad, democratic peace, foreign policy discourse, George H. W. Bush, post-Cold War era, William Clinton

1. Introduction

A key goal of U.S. foreign policy in the post-Cold War era has been *global future design*, the strategy of shaping the future development of geopolitics in ways that accord with elite U.S. economic, political, and security interests (Dunmire 2014). In what follows, I examine how this global mission has been discursively conceptualized and authorized in post-Cold War foreign policy discourse. I situate this discourse within the tradition of the "American Jeremiad" (hereafter, "jeremiad") which historically has served as a rhetorical ritual for articulating,

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legitimating, and sustaining the nation's identity, as well as its place and purpose in the world.[1]

The insistence that America has a global leadership role to play is anchored in the jeremiad concept of "errand:" the conviction that the nation is an instrument of "historical design" coupled with the anxiety that this purpose remains perpetually unfulfilled and under threat. I identify "extending the democratic peace" as the post-Cold War errand and argue that this global mission represents the contemporary "rededication" of American foreign policy to the nation's "divine cause" (Bercovitch 2012, xiii). This rededication was important at the inception of the post-Cold War era because the U.S. Cold War "victory" raised the specter of an isolationist policy for the 21st century. That is, in the wake of the Cold War politicians and pundits questioned whether the U.S. would reap the benefits of its victory by extending its political-economic system throughout the world or whether it would turn inward, thereby giving rein of the future to the forces of "chaos" and "anarchy." This discourse positioned the nation at a liminal moment, as "poised" between its "cultural ideal and its disastrous alternative," as "'betwixt and between' . . . at the brink of some momentous decision" (Bercovitch 2012, 137, 25). The post-Cold War variant of the jeremiad used this liminal moment as a "mode of socialization" (Bercovitch 2012, 25) by deploying the rhetoric of "democratic peace" to legitimate a policy that would, ostensibly, not only advance the interests of the U.S. but also those of global society.

2. Analytic Framework

I understand post-Cold War foreign policy discourse to be, in Blommaert's (2005, 127) language, a "repositor[y] of historical precedent," and, thus, seek to situate it within a discursive-historical context that predates the geopolitical changes that occurred at the turn of the 20th century. Following Reisigl and Wodak (2001, 33–35), my analysis "transcends the purely linguistic" to include the historical and political in order to analyze the "discursive occasion" brought about by the ending of the Cold War. I do so by drawing on genre theory, which provides a framework for conceptualizing discursive acts as intrinsically historical and for locating "individual" acts within a broader discursive history. Drawing on Bakhtin (1986, 65),

1. In the wake of Miller (1956, 1961) and Bercovitch's (1978) foundational work, the American jeremiad has received considerable attention from rhetorical and cultural analysts. See, for example, Harrell (2011), Howard-Pitney (2005), Jendrysik (2002), Johannesen (1986), Jones and Rowland (2005), Murphy (1990), Murphy (2009), Murphy and Jasinski (2009), Noble (1985) and Ritter (1980).

I understand speech genres to be the "drive belts from the history of society to the history of language" which serve to integrate individual utterances into a stream of on-going discursive practice that characterizes a particular domain of social life. Any utterance, then, is necessarily intertextual, a "link in a chain of speech communion" which transcends particular historical moments and, as such, can be examined for its participation in established speech genres (Bakhtin 1986, 76, 65). As I demonstrate below, post-Cold War foreign policy discourse is united with its foreign policy forebears by presenting a conception of the nation's global mission through the rhetorical ritual of the American jeremiad.

This project's data comprises statements on foreign policy made by the George H. W. Bush and William Clinton administrations, both of which ushered in the post-Cold War era.[2] As several scholars have noted, moments representing historical "turning points" are ripe for a jeremiad. Ritter (1980, 162), for example, identifies the invocation of an "historical juncture" in presidential nomination speeches as a commonplace that evinces the jeremiad genre. Johannesen (1986, 84) demonstrates how depictions of a society as being "on the verge" serve as the impetus for the jeremiad's calls for decision and action. The transition from the Cold War to the post-Cold War era represented such a "turning point" as it was consistently rendered as a significant historical moment during which the nation was urged to think anew about its place and purpose in the world. As I demonstrate below, both administrations drew on the jeremiad during this moment of ambiguity and change as a "vehicle of socialization and cultural coherence and continuity" in order to sustain the "Ideal of America" and, thereby, to legitimate an expansive global mission (Bercovitch 2012, x).

In focusing on statements from both Republican and Democratic administrations, I eschew partisan differences that may exist between them and focus, instead, on the role each plays in the historical process of articulating and legitimating the nation's identity and geopolitical purpose. I adopt Bacevich's (2002, 33) position of not confusing partisan differences with "genuine policy differences." In fact, consensus over foreign policy fundamentals is "so deep-seated that its . . . premises are asserted rather than demonstrated" (Bacevich 2002, 33). These fundamentals constitute what Bourdieu (1977, 168) calls the "doxa," that is, the unanimous, unquestioned precepts of foreign policy.

I analyzed speeches archived at The American Presidency Project (Woolley and Gerhard 2010) which have a clear foreign policy focus and those comprising statements about foreign policy matters. I coded the individual statements in

2. Due to space considerations, I have limited my data set to President George H. W. Bush and President Clinton's foreign policy statements. This analysis is part of a larger project which includes data from presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama.

terms of three key themes which index the jeremiad: "errand," "liminality," and "threat as promise" which, as can be seen in Table 1, are variants of those cited as the key semantic features of the secular jeremiad.

Table 1. Semantic themes of the American jeremiad

chosen-ness/promise: the characterization of America as chosen to undertake the divinely sanctioned mission of shaping a progressive future	**errand:** the particular mission on behalf of which the nation's exceptional status is to be leveraged
lament of declension: an admonition that the nation is neglecting its errand and violating its founding principles and a warning that calamity will ensue if the declension is not remedied	**liminality:** the temporal and spatial dimensions of the jeremiad lament which situates the nation in a temporal space between the present moment and a future moment of potential calamity
prophecy: a call for the nation to recommit to its special responsibilities and founding principles and a prophetic assurance that the errand will be successful	**threat as promise:** rededication to the nation's errand is rhetorically sanctioned through the juxtaposing of threat and promise and declarations of the ultimate success of the errand

3. The Post-Cold War Jeremiad

3.1 The errand continues: Democratic peace as global mission

Bercovitch (2012, 7–8, 99) explains that from its earliest conception, America has been characterized as comprising "a peculiar people" who have not only been "called" but "chosen . . . as instruments of sacred and historical design… to prepare 'the way for the future, glorious times'" for all of mankind. Much more than a geographical place, America is a "culture on an errand" (Bercovitch 2012, 23). As conceived by the Puritans, the jeremiad was designed to "direct an imperiled people of God toward the fulfillment of their destiny" (Bercovitch 2012, 9). This rhetorical task involved creating a communal identity and purpose among a disparate people by orienting them to a mission that bore the imprint of a "grand providential design" (Bercovitch 2012, 108). As Bercovitch explains (2012, 143–144), this design is articulated, in part, through the jeremiad's "insistent temporality" which frames it within a "progressive figural outlook" according to which the American project represents "the climax of history and the pattern of things to come." In short, through the ritual of the jeremiad, "*This* [American] way of life" is rendered as "futurity itself" (Bercovitch 2012, xx; emphasis in original).

As the form and function of the jeremiad changed, Bercovitch (2012, 11) notes, the key question became less a question of "Who are we?" and more a question of "When is our errand to be fufilled?" The rhetorical and material import of this question derives from its articulating the "not yet" with the "will be:" it simultaneously gives voice to the concern that the nation's mission remains unfulfilled yet provides assurance that it will be. Because the modern state is constituted through representational practices, this perpetual condition of nonfulfillment, of being "always in a process of becoming," is critical to its survival (Campbell 1998, 12). Moreover, if the security of a state was ever fully achieved – if its people no longer felt imperiled – "the state would cease to exist . . . stasis would equal death" (Campbell 1998, 12).

The ending of the Cold War was, potentially, one such moment. The nation, seemingly, had achieved its Cold War goal of "foster[ing] a world environment in which the American system [could] survive and flourish" (May 1993, 40). Indeed, the end of the Cold War was lauded as "the end of history:" America had been selected by "the logic of historical development" as the world's lone superpower and its system of free market democratic capitalism as the only viable economic and political system (Fukuyama 1992; Smith 2012, 207). At the close of the 20th century the American present seemed to be the moment when the nation had moved from "promise to fulfillment" (Bercovitch 2012, 93).

Amidst this triumphalism, however, emerged a simmering anxiety over "a range of dangers that might occupy the place of the old" (Campbell 1998, 7). This anxiety found expression in concerns over the nation's safety from threats and its ability to seize the new era's "opportunities" and manage its "challenges" (Dunmire 2014). As with jeremiads past, as soon as peace was declared politicians and policymakers resumed their "lament" about the nation's future prospects (Bercovitch 2012, 118–119). President Bush (April 9, 1992), for example, warned that although the U.S. "defeated imperial communism," it had not yet "won the victory for democracy," a victory which would be "years in the building." President Clinton's National Security Advisor, Anthony Lake (1993), noted that although "democracy and market economies are ascendant" they are not "everywhere triumphant" as "vast areas" remained where they have yet to take hold. He insisted that the nation had not, in fact, "arrived at the end of history . . . ." (Lake 1993). In sum, the Cold War battle "just past . . . did not resolve the crisis;" rather, it seemed that the "great season of our national probation had just begun" (Bercovitch 2012, 119).

Lest it be "mesmerized by uncertainty," the Bush and Clinton administrations assured the nation that the U.S. remained an exceptional nation on an errand (Dr. Martin L. King, quoted in Murphy and Jasinski 2009, 112). As can be seen in the following renderings of the nation's identity, capacity, and responsibility, both

administrations reiterated the concept of "American exceptionalism" to urge the nation to continue with its historic mission.

Bush administration:

(1) "has meaning beyond what we see" (Bush January 20, 1989)

(2) "last, best hope on earth" (Bush April 9, 1992)

(3) "the enduring dream" that is "alive in the minds of people everywhere" (Bush January 31, 1990)

(4) "historic responsibility . . . to advance peace and democracy" (Bush May 31, 1989)

(5) serves a "high moral purpose," a "purpose higher than ourselves, a shining purpose" (Bush January 20, 1989; Bush January 29, 1991)

(6) "lead the world away from . . . dark chaos . . . toward a brighter promise of a better day" (Bush January 29, 1991)

Clinton administration:

(7) "profound," "solemn" responsibility to "make . . . a world better than we have known" (Clinton January 29, 1998; Clinton 1999; Clinton February 4, 1997)

(8) sees "further than other countries into the future" (Albright 1998)

(9) "more than a place . . . an idea that has become the ideal for billions" (Clinton November 27, 1995)

(10) the world's "indispensable nation" (Clinton August 5, 1996)

(11) a nation which possesses "eternal promise" (Clinton January 24, 1995)

The narrative of America as an exceptional nation on an errand was adorned in the early years of the post-Cold War era in the "verbal vestment" (Bakhtin 1986, 88) of "democratic peace." Rooted in Kant's (1991) conception of "perpetual peace," democratic peace theory holds that democracies typically do not wage war against each other and, thus, are inherently peaceful.[3] The more democracy expands globally, so the thinking goes, the better are the chances for a global peace. Ish-Shalom (2013, 51) demonstrates that as a term and concept, "democratic peace" "truly came of age" in the post-Cold War era. Indeed, it became a highly coherent ideology that feigned "to know the mysteries of the whole historical process – the

3. The literature concerning the details and validity of the democratic peace thesis is quite extensive. See Ish-Shalom (2013) and Brown, et al. (1996) for synopses of the debates and additional sources on the democratic peace thesis.

secrets of the past, the intricacies of the present, the uncertainties of the future" (Arendt, quoted in Smith 2012, 206–207).

Having defeated the Soviet Union's "design" of imposing its "absolute authority over the rest of the world" (May 1993, 25), the test now facing the nation would be its ability to secure "the peace of the world" by expanding "the perimeter of democratic government and free market capitalism to the ends of the earth" (Smith 2012, 207). According to Hobson and Kurki (2012, 1), this global democratizing project became one of the "defining characteristics of the post-Cold War international order" as a world organized in terms of market-based democracy became "the consensus end point being worked toward." The prevalence of the concept was partially due to its coherence with the nation's collective identity as an exceptional nation seeking global peace and freedom (Ish-Shalom 2013, 69). As such, the concept of democratic peace lent the post-Cold War project definitional rigor and provided a remedy for the identity crisis pundits claimed was facing the nation after the demise of the Soviet Union (Smith 2012, 204; Ish-Shalom 2013, 70).

After initially searching for a concise conceptualization of post-Cold War foreign policy, the Bush administration seized upon Democratic Peace Theory in early 1992, characterizing the post-Cold War era as a moment for exploring the "new frontier" created by the demise of the Soviet Union:

(12) Americans have always responded best when a new frontier beckoned. And I believe the next frontier for us, and for the generation that follows, is to secure a democratic peace . . . that will ensure a lasting peace for the United States. The democratic peace must be founded on the twin pillars of political and economic freedom. The success of reform . . . will be the single best guarantee of our security, our prosperity, and our values.

(Bush April 9, 1992)

This vision was reiterated by Secretary of State Baker in his answer to the "summons to leadership" that he insisted had been issued to the U.S. Given that the nation's Cold War policy resulted in "'a zone of peace and prosperity' that has opened new horizons for so many nations . . . not the least, for the United States of America," the U.S. was now "summoned" to win a "democratic peace" not just for "half a world – the free half – but for the whole world" (Baker 1992).

The Bush administration outlined the key components of a post-Cold War democratic peace. The goal of "extending the zone of peace and prosperity" is construed as an *errand* which the nation has been "summoned" to pursue on behalf of global society. This errand is geographically and temporally expansive: it is undertaken on behalf of "the whole world" and will extend to future generations of American leaders. Moreover, the democratic peace errand is both a political *and* economic project as it posits a causal dynamic whereby the spread of capitalistic

economies will lead to the proliferation of democratic forms of governance, which, in turn, will lead to global peace. Thus, to "win" the post-Cold War democratic peace, the U.S. will have to embark on an "errand into the wilderness" of sorts: It will have to work to reform the economic and political structures of nations outside the "zone of peace and prosperity" and integrate them into a global system of free market capitalism and liberal democracy (Dunmire 2014).

Throughout the two terms of the Clinton administration, democracy and free market capitalism were touted as the means for improving the lives of people around the globe and ensuring the security and prosperity of American. Anthony Lake (1993) explained that "to the extent that democracy and market economies hold sway in other nations, our nation will be more secure, prosperous, and influential, while the broader world will be more humane and peaceful." This phenomenon, he explained, derives from the fact that "The expansion of market-based economies fuels demands for political liberalization abroad" (Lake 1993). Speaking at the U.N. General Assembly, President Clinton (September 27, 1993) explained that "In a new era of peril and promise" the international community must seek "to expand and strengthen the world's community of market-based democracies." Doing so, he insisted, would serve global security interests because "the habits of democracy are the habits of peace. . . . Democracies rarely wage war on one another" (Clinton September 27, 1993). To "build a more peaceful 21st century world," the nation must seek to "extend the areas where wars don't happen" (Clinton 1999). In his final State of the Union address, President Clinton (2000) noted that because "open markets and rule-based trade are the best engines for . . . assuring the free-flow of ideas," the nation must do its part to expand freedom by expanding trade.

3.2 Liminality and the new frontier

In designating "secure a democratic peace" as the nation's post-Cold War errand, President Bush was careful to situate his call within the broader context of the nation's historical development. By reminding the nation that "Americans have always responded best when a new frontier beckoned" and insisting that "the next frontier for us, and for the generation that follows, is to secure a democratic peace," the President drew upon the "myth of the frontier" and, thereby, aligned his plea with the American tradition of foreign policy.

Although it originated in the material conditions faced by the colonists and pioneers, Slotkin (1985, 15) explains that the Myth of the Frontier has "out-lived" these conditions and continues to resonate in contemporary discourse as "the longest-lived of American myths." According to Bercovitch (2012, 163), the frontier began to take on a mythical character when the Puritans transformed its meaning

from "secular barrier to a mythical threshold." No longer "a border separating one people from another," the frontier represented a "*figural* outpost, the outskirts of the advancing kingdom of God" (Bercovitch 2012, 163; emphasis in original). Consequently, the very existence of the frontier served as a "summons to expansion" (Bercovitch 2012, 164). It came to signify "prophecy and unlimited prospects" and to be understood as "a moving stage for the quintessentially American drama of destined progress" (Bercovitch 2012, 164). By the close of the 19th century, Slotkin (1992, 61) notes, the frontier had been wholly transformed from a geographical place into a "mythic space" and "set of symbols" that has served to explain America's historical purpose. Its categories have been metaphorically extended to account for various moments in the nation's foreign policy history, while the very concept of "frontier" has been reconstituted "in terms appropriate to the modern era" (Slotkin 1992, 53–54). As such, referencing the myth invokes "a tradition of discourse that . . . carries with it a heavy and persistent ideological load" (Slotkin 1985, 18).

The Frontier Myth explains "American Exceptionalism" in terms of the vast frontier that was claimed and exploited as the original thirteen colonies became "America." According to Slotkin (1992, 2–3), the frontier has been used as a symbol for explaining and justifying the use of political power throughout the nation's history. Its "vast untapped reserve of western land" served as a "field on which would be worked out 'the untransacted destiny of the American people'" (Slotkin 1992, 45). The Myth found expression in Frederick Jacksons Turner's "frontier thesis" which holds that "the frontier represents the economic basis for all future development and prosperity" and serves as a "gate of escape" from domestic pressures (Slotkin 1985, 281; Turner 1893).

Accordingly, throughout its history, the nation's economic well-being and political liberty have been understood as depending upon "sustained, ever increasing overseas economic expansion" throughout a world ideologically sympathetic to the U.S. (Williams 1959, 15; Layne 2006, 32). Given the expansionist imperative of the Myth, the frontier has historically represented, in Slotkin's (1985, 9) words, the site of a "grand tournament between representatives of a dying past and the progressive future," with the stakes of this tournament being "the power to shape a progressive future." In this way, the metaphor of the frontier, Bercovitch (2012, 164) argues, has served as a "vehicle of the jeremiad: to create anxiety, to denounce backsliders, to reinforce social values, and (summarily) to define the American consensus." Because of the importance of an "empty" frontier to the development of the nation's institutions and character, the "passing of the frontier" has been seen as portending a national crisis (Slotkin 1992, 30). That is, Slotkin explains that (1985, 45), because the frontier represents the border between "a world of possibilities and one of actualities," reaching "the end of the frontier" is akin to reaching the end of history.

By invoking the Myth of the Frontier, President Bush forestalled the closing of the 21st century figural frontier by construing the end of the Cold War era as the inception of the "next season" of national probation. By proffering a democratic peace as the post-Cold War errand, the President issued a challenge: Cold War victory aside, the nation must decide whether it would rededicate itself to its divine global mission or "turn permanently away from the world" (Bush January 28, 1992). He, in effect, situated the nation at a liminal place and moment: as poised at a threshold, betwixt and between "the world of possibility and one of actuality," betwixt and between "a dying past and the progressive future." The potential for a global democratic peace would provide the impetus for pushing through this liminal moment to a future of unprecedented peace and prosperity.

The theme of liminality points to the post-Cold War variation on the jeremiad lament of declension, which typically concerns either the present state of moral decline of American society (Jendrysik 2002; Johannesen 1986; Murphy 1990) or the failure of contemporary society to live up to the promise of its founding principles for all citizens (Harrell 2011; Howard-Pitney 2005; Murphy and Jasinski 2009). Although such claims of *present* declension occur in post-Cold War rhetoric, this study has identified statements which project *future* declension to be a key feature of the post-Cold War jeremiad. These statements anticipate the decline of the U.S. as global actor which could occur if the U.S. fails to continue its global errand. From a geopolitical perspective, the nation's position at the end of the 20th century was one of ascension rather than declension: It was the world's lone superpower and had unprecedented military, economic, and political power. At issue, then, was not whether the nation had strayed from its founding principles but whether it would spread those principles until they were "everywhere triumphant."

The liminality of the post-Cold War moment was articulated through the insistence that the nation has arrived at a "pivotal" moment of choice and decision: It must decide whether to work to "replace the dangerous period of the Cold War with a democratic peace" (Baker 1992) and whether it will "rise to the occasion history presents" (Clinton February 17, 1993). This moment was construed as the "defining hour" (Bush January 29, 1991) which finds the nation "standing" at an "historic crossroads" (Lake 1993). President Bush (April 9, 1992) explained that the nation stands "at history's hinge point. A new world beckons while the ghost of history stands in the shadows." President Clinton (2000) similarly noted that "Behind us we can look back and see the great expanse of American achievement, and before us we see even greater, grander frontiers of possibility." In sum, the nation was rendered as "poised at the figural nick of time" (Bercovitch 2012, 146–7), situated, precariously, between past and future.

Key to this discourse of choice and decision is the trope of "shaping the future" which embeds the question of whether the nation will, in the words of H.G. Wells

(1987), "let the future happen" or whether it will work to shape the future in ways that accord with U.S. interests. Of interest here is that although it juxtaposes threat and promise, the "shaping the future" trope does not specify enemies and adversaries which pose material threats to the U.S.[4] Rather, threat and promise are represented in terms of the nation's willingness, or lack thereof, to shape the future:

(13) Either we answer the summons to leadership or we do not. Either we take hold of history or history will take hold of us. (Baker 1992)

(14) The choice for America is this: we can either win this peace through a deliberate policy . . . to shape our times, or we can stand aside and drift . . . while times shape us. (Baker 1992)

(15) History is calling our nation to decide anew whether we will lead or defer . . . whether we will shape a new era or instead be shaped by it. (Clinton April 1, 1992, 425)

(16) Now in the new century, we'll have a remarkable opportunity to shape a future more peaceful than the past, but only if we stand strong against the enemies of peace. (Clinton December 16, 1998)

The "promise" of the new era will be realized if the U.S. chooses to actively shape a progressive future by "tak[ing] hold of history" while the "threat" will come to fruition if the U.S. assumes the passive position of letting "times shape us." As such, if the U.S. is to remain ascendant, it must decide anew to "shape a new era" lest it "be shaped by it." Should the nation abdicate this responsibility, the prospects for both the U.S. and global society will be greatly diminished as the "enemies of peace" will most assuredly triumph over a future "more peaceful than the past." By situating the U.S. at the temporal intersection of the promise of continued ascendance and the threat of declension, the post-Cold War jeremiad turns this liminal moment into a "mode of socialization" by challenging the nation to recommit itself to its mission of designing a progressive future for global society.

3.3 Threat as promise: Revitalizing the errand

Situating the nation at "history's hinge point" casts the post-Cold War liminal moment in what Bercovitch (2012, 146) calls the "exalted mood of the American figural imagination" which has historically characterized the jeremiad. While this discourse exalts in the nation's glorious past, it exalts, even more so, in anticipation

4. The post-Cold War jeremiad's juxtaposing of threat and promise also includes construals of the material threats facing the U.S. and global society. I analyze these articulations in the following section.

of what lies ahead for the nation and, thus, for the world (Bercovitch 2012, 146). This anticipatory inclination of the American character rejects the "Old World ideal of stasis" in favor of a "New World vision of the future," a vision which propels the nation forward by showing its people how they can "act in history" (Bercovitch 2012, 23). This exaltation, however, is not unequivocal as the jeremiad tempers promises of future success with warnings of future challenge.

By "joining lament and celebration" in this way, the post-Cold War jeremiad simultaneously reaffirms the righteousness of the nation's errand and calls for a recommitment to it (Bercovitch 2012, 11). That is, as an errand, the nation's "worldly mission" would never actually be achieved since the future it promised, "though divinely assured," was "never quite there" (Bercovitch 2012, 23). The purpose of the jeremiad is to exploit this missionary zeal for global improvement by trumpeting its merits while simultaneously lamenting its lack of fulfillment. Through this ritualistic juxtaposing of promise and threat, the jeremiad functions rhetorically to "create a climate of anxiety" necessary for engaging the "restless 'progressivist' energies required for the success of the venture" (Bercovitch 2012, 23). This rhetoric is at once energizing and visionary: It urges the nation to push through the liminal post-Cold War moment, to move beyond past glories and onto future opportunities and challenges, while also offering a vision which provides "assurance about the future during a troubled period of transition" (Bercovitch 2012, 23, 80). As I'll demonstrate below, both administrations were careful to laud the promise the nation's Cold War victory foretold while also warning of the uncertainties, challenges, and dangers that lay ahead.

In the early months of the post-Cold War era, the future was construed as "hopeful" yet "uncertain" as its full outline was not yet apparent. President Bush acknowledged that, freed from the threats of global communism, the prospects for global democratic capitalism seemed quite clear. Noting that although "the future seems thick as a fog" at times, he insisted that "this is a time when the future seems a door you can walk right through into a room called tomorrow" (January 20, 1989). The nation, he explained, is part of a "great transition" (January 31, 1990). Secretary Baker (1992) similarly noted that while the prospect of a democratic future is "at once full of hope" it is also faces various threats. The President deftly juxtaposed the promise of this future with the threats arrayed against it when he cautioned that "the shadow of coercion" clouds "Democracy's journey" (May 31, 1989).

These uncertainties and amorphous threats were brought into full relief by Iraq's incursion into Kuwait which the Bush administration construed as a warning of the "perils" of the nation's "high enterprise" (Bercovitch 2012, 4). The President issued this warning by recontextualizing the conflict from a regional dispute over territory into a portent of the future that will come to be if the U.S. neglected its errand:

(17) Even in a world where democracy and freedom have made great gains, threats remain. The brutal aggression launched last night illustrates my central thesis . . . the world remains a dangerous place with serious threats to important U.S. interests. . . . These threats . . . can arise suddenly, unpredictably and from unexpected quarters. (August 2, 1990)

He further warned that, if left unchecked, "[Hussein's] lawlessness will threaten the peace and democracy of the emerging new world order we now see: this long dreamed of vision we've all worked toward for so long" (January 9, 1991). The President insisted that Iraq's "aggression" was "a menace" not only to one region's security but to "the entire world's vision of our future," a future "world of open borders, open trade, and . . . open minds" (October 1, 1990). Moreover, it "threatens to turn the dream of a new international order into a grim nightmare of anarchy in which the law of the jungle supplants the law of nations" (October 1, 1990). The President was careful, however, to use the conflict to "revitalize the errand" by "fetching good out of evil" (Bormann 1977, 131), declaring that "we step forward with a new sense of purpose, a new sense of possibilities" (October 1, 1990).

The post-Cold War errand did not, however, begin and end with the liberation of Kuwait. In his 1992 State of the Union address, President Bush (January 28, 1992) explained that he was speaking to the nation at "A dramatic and deeply promising time in our history and the history of man on earth." He reassured the nation that while "[t]here are still threats . . . . the long, drawn out dread [of the Cold War] is over" (January 28, 1992). This reassurance was checked, however, by his lament that "the world is still a dangerous place. . . . though yesterday's challenges are behind us, tomorrow's are being born" (January 28, 1992). A few months later, he noted that the "opportunities and dangers" of the post-Cold War era are "tremendous" and that, despite success in the Persian Gulf, "we've not yet won the victory for democracy;" this victory, in fact, "will not be easily won… democracy and economic freedom will be years in the building" (April 9, 1992).

President Clinton (September 27, 1993) likewise juxtaposed threat and promise by insisting that the "End of the Cold War did not bring us to the millennium of peace;" in fact, "it simply removed the lid from many cauldrons of ethnic, religious and territorial animosities." This "new world," despite all its promise, is "a place of peril" (January 29, 1998), a place where threats are "less apparent" (August 13, 1992), a place marked by "chaos," "lawless behavior," and "menace" (October 22, 1996). The President distilled the threat/promise dynamic into the concept of "two powerful tendencies" which would define the new era: forces of "integration" that are "fueling a welcome explosion of entrepreneurship and political liberalization" and forces of "resurgent aspirations of ethnic and religious groups" that threaten the power of international and state institutions (September 27, 1993). He pointed

to Iraq and the Balkans as illustrating the "storm clouds that may overwhelm our work and darken the march toward freedom" (September 27, 1993). The Balkans, Bosnia specifically, are the site of "the organized forces of intolerance and destruction" that "threaten freedom and democracy, peace and prosperity" (November 27, 1995). Similarly, Iraq manifests "the difficulties and dangers" that impede the nation's "progress in building a world of greater security, peace and democracy" (October 10, 1994).

Given this climate, President Clinton exhorted the nation to "redeem the Promise of America for the 21st Century" (January 20, 1997). The President, "[s]huttling between sacred past and sacred future" (Bercovitch 2012, 148), insisted that the nation's "journey" would be "guided" and "sustained" by "the ancient vision of a promised land" and by "the promise of America that was born in the 18th century" and "extended and preserved in the 19th century when our nation spread across the continent" (January 20, 1997). And while the nation's geographical frontier has long been closed, the President reassured the nation that this physical limitation would not limit the promise the future holds: "The promise we sought in a *new land* we will find again in a land of *new promise* . . . our land of *new promise*" (January 20, 1997; emphasis added). Yet he cautioned that, lest "our progress . . . mask the perils that remain" (February 4, 1997), we must "all acknowledge . . . that the world is far from free of risk. Challenges persist" (January 29, 1998).

4. Conclusion

As America's "founding national story" (Bercovitch 2012, xiii), the jeremiad has been the "authoritative," "mandatory" genre that has "set the tone" (Bakhtin 1986, 80, 88) for articulating and legitimating historically specific conceptions of the nation's identity and geopolitical purpose. It has sustained the "Ideal of America" by rendering it as a "story retold from one generation to the next by storytellers who revive its great actions, its heroes, and villians" (Bercovitch 2012, xi, xv). Through "*a 'regular process of repetition*,'" the jeremiad has served as "'*a stylized repetition of acts*'" that has been key to the constitution of the U. S. as a modern state (Campbell 1998, 10; emphasis in original). Finally, it has "played an important role in the process of both nation building and national self-expression" and has, "ritually and rhetorically . . . provided for variation and change while sustaining the growth of the system" (Bercovitch 2012, xv).

By juxtaposing visions of a progressive future with those of its catastrophic alternative, the Bush and Clinton administrations used the jeremiad to channel the nation's energy and attention away from its Cold War victory and toward a new era of global engagement and intervention (Bercovitch 2012, 150). In so doing,

they situated post-Cold War conceptions of foreign policy within the historical tendencies of foreign policy discourse. The jeremiad has provided the "leading ideas" (Bakhtin 1986, 88) for conceptualizing and legitimating the leadership role the U.S. does – and *should* – play in the world. Accordingly, it has been "cited, imitated, and followed" (Bakhtin 1986, 88) by politicians and policymakers seeking to ascribe a purpose and legitimacy to military interventions in the post-Cold War era. Indeed, the jeremiad does help explain many of the rhetorical features of post-Cold War foreign policy discourse. More importantly, however, the genre of the jeremiad contextualizes the motivations and functions of that discourse by incorporating it into a national rhetorical ritual that has been relentlessly performed throughout the nation's history.

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Author's address

Patricia L. Dunmire
Kent State University
113 Satterfield Hall
Kent OH 44242 USA
United States

pdunmire@kent.edu

Biographical notes

Patricia Dunmire's research focuses on U.S. foreign policy discourse. She is currently examining how the *future* – as a temporal domain, conceptual space, and rhetorical trope – has figured in America's conception of its geopolitical place and purpose. This project examines the importance of the future to America's identity as an "exceptional" nation and how this aspect of its identity has served to legitimate an expansionist approach to foreign policy in the post-World War II period.

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