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## Spanish Interpretations of the American Presidency

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### **Abstract:**

*This paper aims at presenting the different interpretations, views, and images given between the United States and Europe along the 20th century history from the Spanish perspective. Nowadays, almost all of us are very much aware of the importance of maintaining proper channels of communication between sides, the United States and the Old Continent.*

*But has it always been like this? Have the American presidents and their administrations along the 20th century been as much concerned and worried about their public image and interpretations and valuations offered to Europe as they seem to be nowadays? The bare answer is no.*

*What we therefore intend to explain is how different the image given to Europe by the different American presidents has been, whether Republican or Democrat, along 20th century history. By merely skimming out this paper, we will be able to check out how much, in some instances, or how little, in some others, the American presidents dared for the relations with their European counterparts, and were concerned about the images and perceptions offered or given.*

**Keywords:** *American presidency – interpretations – Spanish viewpoint – European relations*

### **1. Introduction**

The sections in this article chronicle the conduct of American foreign policy over the last century. They provide a fascinating portrait of how the US both viewed the rest of the world and of its own role within the international community.

Over the past one hundred years America's perception of the world has undergone a remarkable change as has the nation's attitude towards responding to developments in the rest of the globe. The American intervention in the WWI, its central role in the WWII, its leadership in the Cold War which ended in the disintegration of the Soviet Union, were all extraordinary developments for a nation that until this century was wedded to the doctrine of isolationism.

But whatever the difficulties, in this century the US embraced internationalism and a central role in the affairs of the globe with the attendant implications of an American Empire. The history of American foreign relations is the story of power in its many forms. The moods of influence and compulsion are as much cultural and intellectual as they are political and military: "Europeans often ask, and Americans do not always explain, how it happens that this office is not more frequently filled by great and striking men" (Bryce, 1888).

### **2. Historical Overview of American Foreign Relations**

Nothing could have appeared more remote than an American Empire in 1776, the year of President George Washington's farewell address. Americans were committed to republicanism, representative institutions and the common man, while Europe represented all that the US had rejected.

Washington's advice to his fellow citizens was to avoid foreign political entanglements as far as possible. Isolationism should be the great role of US foreign policy and this advice guided the conduct of policy until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

"Ideas are nebulous things and often trade at a discount in the material world of international affairs" (Schulzinger, 2006). The ideas of American foreign relations have typically arisen from questions regarding the national interest. In 1914, the century of European peace ended, and Americans once more had to pay close attention to transatlantic affairs. The question of how closely America's fate was tied to that of the world has been the hinge of all discussion of American foreign policy ever since.

Woodrow Wilson had one answer. Although the Democratic President avowed neutrality at the outset of WWI, by early 1917 he became convinced of two things: that the US couldn't thrive in a world that included a triumphant Germany, and that the world couldn't survive without an engaged US. Wilsonianism came to mean a belief that both American interest and world welfare required a continuing American commitment to international institutions.

During the 1920s and 1930s, with the election of Republican Presidents, there were many Americans who rejected this idea. Watching Europe slide toward fascism, they contended that the appropriate American response was disengagement and isolationism. The

intervention in WWI became a deviation from the norm. However, the war had substantially altered the globe and isolationism was both more difficult to maintain and justify.

Pearl Harbour changed everything about American thinking about the world, and it also ended American isolationism. By the end of WWII, it was impossible to advocate the kind of formality that had been both conventional wisdom and American policy during the 1920s and 1930s.

The world at the end of 1945 was strikingly different from 1939. The great European powers were no longer great, and there can be little doubt that the US was the most powerful nation in the world. President Roosevelt, and his successor Harry Truman, were both committed to the US playing a key role in the establishment of a world order after 1945.

In those immediate post-1945 years, the American response to what it viewed as Soviet aggression and expansionism was established: The Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and the formation of NATO were among the most significant responses to the perceived Soviet threat. The Soviet Union and its allies needed to be contained.

The Cold War dominated American political life for the next four decades. Its impact was pervasive and profound when the nation entered into a series of regional alliances and maintained for the first time in its history a permanent and large military establishment abroad. The US had become a truly global power.

Reagan's characterization of the Soviet Union as an evil empire and the dramatic increase in military expenditure during the 1980s sharply raised the tensions between the two nations. Ironically, by the end of his second administration, détente between the two countries had been established and the Cold War was at an end.

The principal question for American policymakers was how to establish a framework for American intervention. None doubted that the US would defend its own interests overseas. At the dawn of the new millennium, the buzz word was globalization. The concept was slippery, but its economic emphasis underscored the degree to which traditional notions of security continued to diminish.

The problem that the US now confronts is defining its role in the world and vision of a new world order. The US is now the only superpower in the world, but it is a world where military primacy may not be quite so important.

### 3. Pre-World War Interpretations

This section covers three Republican Presidents: William McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, and William Taft, who turned the US into a world power. McKinley was a good, capable president who believed in territorial expansion, winning the Spanish-American war. Roosevelt was one of the great presidents in US history, involving the country in world affairs receiving the Noble Peace Prize for it. Finally, Taft loved the law and never wanted to be president.

- William McKinley (1897 – 1901) brought about a major change in US foreign policy. The isolationism that had been in place since Washington's presidency finally ended. For the first time, the US pursued an active, expansionist foreign policy. McKinley turned the country into a world power and helped it take its place among the great powers in the world: "It has been the policy of the US to cultivate relations of peace and amity with all the nations of the world. We have cherished the policy of non-interference with affairs of foreign governments" (McKinley, 1897).

McKinley, in one of the great accomplishments of his presidency, brought the US into the international area. For the first time, the US had a significant hand in various conflicts and showed the rest of the world that it was ready to join the ranks of the European world powers of the 1890s. He started the process of US imperialism, or the annexation and domination of weaker countries.

His accomplishment in the area of imperialism included the Spanish-American War of 1898, which led to the annexation of Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines. His foreign policy proved to be popular with the US public and he won re-election easily in 1900. Once the war was settled, it was his fervent prayer that if differences arose between the US and other powers in the world, they may be settled by peaceful arbitration.

- Theodore Roosevelt (1901 – 1909) was one of America's best presidents. He came into office after McKinley's assassination. Roosevelt turned the US into a true world power, becoming the first strong president of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was the president who best characterized the progressive period.

In foreign policy, Roosevelt established the US as a world power. He was not afraid to interfere in European affairs. He received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1906 for his work in the international arena. Roosevelt's great love was foreign policy; he didn't believe in isolationism. Instead, he wanted the US to be a great power that pursued an active foreign policy: "Toward all other nations, our attitude must be one of cordial and sincere friendship. Our relations with the other powers of the world are important" (Roosevelt, 1905).

At the same time, he rejected taking control of weaker foreign nations. During his presidency, Roosevelt was more interested in resolving international disputes peacefully than going to war. By 1904, Roosevelt put his foreign policy into place in the so-called "Roosevelt Corollary", which stated that only the US had the right to interfere in the affairs of the Americas, and that the European powers needed to stay out.

In 1907 he encouraged the Second Hague Conference, which dealt with arms control and disarmament. Roosevelt went to Europe when he was well liked and gave guest lectures at many European universities. The Europeans treated him royally.

- William H. Taft (1909 – 1913) was a unique figure in US history. He never wanted to be president, and he hated politics. Only his foreign policy was truly a failure. He attempted to open up many regions in the world to US investment: "Our international policy is always to promote peace. The policy of the US in the Spanish War and since has given it a position of influence among the nations that it never had before" (Taft, 1909).

#### 4. Inter-World War Interpretations

The following section deals with the period from the outbreak of the WWI (1913) to the aftermath of the WWII (1945). The period covers up 5 different presidents, starting and finishing with Democrat Presidents, Woodrow Wilson and FD Roosevelt respectively. In between, we come across 3 Republican Presidents: Warren Harding, Calvin Coolidge, and Herbert Hoover.

- Woodrow Wilson (1913 – 1921) was a visionary and one of the best presidents in US history. Besides saving democracy in Europe, he implemented many reforms that propelled the US into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Isolation from the political affairs of Europe came to an end when the US became involved in WWI: “We are provincials no longer. The things we shall stand for are that all nations are equally interested in the peace of the world” (Wilson, 1917).

Wilson committed the US to a progressive, democratic, capitalist, and peaceful world order. He offered 4 principles for a new world order: national self-determination, open door globalization, collective security, and progressive historicism. Wilson summarised this American ideology in his “Fourteen Points”, as the foundation for peace and justice after the war.

Wilson’s foreign policy was just in nature. He respected other countries. For Wilson, it was important that all partners, not just the US, benefit from foreign policy. Wilson considered it illegal to intervene in the policies of other nations.

For the first time, in 1916, Wilson publicly stated that the US military would not only be used for the defence of the country, but also to protect other nations abroad. In April 1917, the US entered WWI on the side of the Allied powers, so Wilson moved quickly to get the country ready for war.

When the time came to make peace in Europe, Wilson was ready to make it and strengthen democracy in the process. Pursuing both America’s mission and its national interests in 1917-18, Wilsonianism anticipated the domino theory of the Cold War era. Wilson travelled to Europe in December 1918, becoming the first sitting US president to do so. He received a hero’s welcome, opening the Peace Conference in Paris 1919.

The League of Nations came into existence in 1920 with 42 nations joining the organization. It lasted until 1946 when it was replaced by the United Nations. During the League’s years of existence, 63 nations were members at one time or another, but not the US.

After Wilson, the 3 Republican presidents of the golden 1920s came over: Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover. Times were good, the economy was booming until 1929 and the country was not involved in any foreign conflicts.

- Warren Harding (1921 – 1923) has the distinction of being one of the worst presidents in US history. He was not interested in the presidency. Harding’s administration, famous for its corruption, was successful in protecting US industries from foreign competition with the “FordneyMcCumber Act”, an act that increased tariffs.

In 1921, Harding called for a conference in Washington between the great European powers. The conference resulted in the Fire Power Treaty, an attempt to prevent a naval arms race that began after WWI. The conference proved to be the most notable achievement of the Harding administration.

- Calvin Coolidge (1923 – 1929) did not do much as president. The US was at peace and doing well during his term. Instead of trying to prevent the approaching Great Depression, he sat back believing that the government had no role in the economy.

Coolidge’s greatest accomplishment came in the area of foreign policy. The passage of the “Kellogg-Brand Act” in 1928 was his crowning achievement in foreign policy. The 65 signatures of the act renounced the use of war as an instrument and relied upon peaceful means to settle disputes: “America should not become implicated in the political controversies of the Old World” (Coolidge, 1923).

- Herbert Hoover (1929 – 1933), known as the great humanitarian, is the most maligned president in US history. Many blame him for the Great Depression which is quite unfair. He actually set the foundation for Roosevelt’s New Deal policies. Hoover not only organized relief efforts to Europe during and after WWI, but he also became active after WWII when President Truman called him back into service.

With these efforts, Hoover literally saved millions of Europeans from starvation. He headed the Commission for the Relief of Belgium, supervising the distributing of millions of tons of aid to Belgium and Northern France. Hoover provided food to 300 million people across Europe.

- Franklin D. Roosevelt (1933 – 1945) is one of the best-known and most successful presidents in US history. He became president at a time when the country faced a massive economic crisis, the Great Depression. His programs restored hope, helped the economy out of a recession, and helped win a world war. He guided the country through WWII and turned the US into a superpower by 1945.

During WWI, Roosevelt toured Europe to gain first-hand knowledge of the war. This experience came in handy 24 years later during WWII. Events in Europe saved him winning his third term. Foreign policy suddenly came to the forefront.

The mood of the country became isolationist, as many people wanted the US to stay out of world affairs. Congress, reacting to the will of the public, passed numerous neutrality acts to make sure that the US would not become involved in another war in Europe. However, Roosevelt believed that vital American interests were at stake in the conflicts developing in Europe.

The USA was hostile to the new Republican government in Spain. When the Civil War erupted, Secretary of State moved to ban arm sales to the Spanish government. Although over 2,000 Americans volunteered on the Republican side, American corporations assisted the Nationalists.

Until the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, Roosevelt had hope that the US would only have to use naval and air forces. In short, the president wanted both victory and influence without paying the price for it.

By 1942, the war had turned in favour of the Allies. This allowed Roosevelt to discuss strategies to win the war and to focus on the post-war era. For this purpose, Roosevelt attended several conferences in the next 3 years.

The Yalta Conference, which was the last conference attended by him, laid out the structure of the post-war world, calling for the creation of the United Nations. In 1944, winning his fourth mandate, Roosevelt faced the problem of figuring out what to do with all the returning soldiers.

### 5. The Cold War Era Interpretations

The following section takes up from the aftermath of WWII and the starting of the Cold War era in 1945 with President Truman till its end by 1989 under President Reagan. This period covers up to 8 different US presidents (half Democrat, half Republican): Truman, Kennedy, Johnson, and Carter on the Democrat side; Eisenhower, Nixon, Ford, and Reagan on the Republican one.

- Harry Truman (1945 – 1953) is one of the most underrated presidents in US history. People credit him with saving western and southern Europe from Soviet domination. He also receives credit for establishing NATO, which provides for the common defence of member countries.

His first official foreign policy decision was to hold a conference in San Francisco to establish the United Nations. After war, the Allies used Spain ties to Axis powers to keep it from joining the United Nations. The consequence was the establishment of an embargo against the Franco regime.

The Soviet Union expanded aggressively in Eastern and Western Europe. Under his presidency, the wartime partnership between the US and the Soviet Union soon turned to mistrust and suspicion when the war was over. The Soviet Union perceived Truman's actions as aggression, and the Cold War, the ideological and political conflict between the Soviet Union and the US, began.

Henceforth he proposed the so-called Truman Doctrine in an address to Congress in March 1947: "I believe that it must be the policy of the US to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures" (Stadelman, 2002). Truman reasoned that totalitarian regimes coerced free people and they represented a threat to international peace and national security of the US. The situation was perceived as very important for American balance of power politics in the context of the Cold War.

Together with his Secretary of State, George C. Marshall, Truman came up with the European Recovery Plan. The Marshall Plan was the primary program for rebuilding and creating a stronger economic foundation for the countries of Western Europe, with the exception of Spain, which did not overtly participate in WWII.

The plan, both economic and political in nature, offered economic aid to all nations of Europe. The US offered billions of dollars in loans to any European country that applied for it. It was a great success and laid the foundations of Western Europe's post-war economic power, and it also strengthened the political ties between Western Europe and the US. Every Western European country accepted the offer of aid.

Truman knew that he could help undermine communist efforts in Europe by restoring economic prosperity to the continent. He saved western European democracies. This accomplishment was one of the greatest successes in the history of US foreign policy.

With the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949, which meant that an attack on one member was an attack on all, the US had moved from isolationism to be part of a European peacetime military alliance.

- Dwight Eisenhower (1953 – 1961) is one of the most beloved presidents in US history. He presided over the booming economy of the golden 50s when times were good. He suffered the immense impact which the Cold War had on American society, preventing the Soviet Union from expanding, and stood up for US rights in regard to US allies. This period saw a rapid growth in the military capability of the US and the arms industry which supplied it.

The Doctrine of Massive Retaliation was the answer to the cutback of the large budget deficit. The doctrine was simple; the US threatened any country that committed an act of aggression against it or any of its allies with a massive nuclear attack.

Under Eisenhower doctrine, a country could request American economic assistance or aid from the US military forces if it was being threatened by an armed aggression from another state. Spain's gradual readmission to the international fold was given visible form with the visit of US President Dwight Eisenhower in 1959, and with the signing of the 'Pact of Madrid' under which Spain received economic assistance in form of grants and loans.

A major change in US foreign policy took place in 1954. The US now pledged to liberate countries under communist control. As Eisenhower once said: "We face a hostile ideology, global in scope, atheistic in nature, ruthless in purpose, and insidious in method" (Stadelman, 2002).

Eisenhower wanted to go out with a bang in 1960. He called for a major arms control meeting between the US, the Soviet Union, Britain, and France. He wanted to push the Soviet leader, Khrushchev, into accepting a ban on nuclear testing.

- John K. Kennedy (1961 – 1963) is one of the most admired and revered presidents in US history. He brought about dramatic changes in US foreign policy, changes that ultimately failed. Kennedy was prepared to make major changes to US foreign policy. He voiced the support for containment of communism and the reversal of communist progress in the western hemisphere.

Instead of reaching out to the US, the Soviet Union started to behave aggressively in Europe (Berlin) and America (Cuba). Kennedy was disappointed so he returned to the policies of his predecessors, working to stop Soviet aggression and contain the Soviet Union's sphere of influence.

Under his administration, the Cold War reached a crisis point over Cuba. After the 1959 revolution, relations between the US and Castro turned sour as communist influence on his government eventually led to a one-party government. The Cuban Missile Crisis ended after 7 tense days when the Soviet Union agreed to remove the missiles of the US lifted the blockade and promised not to invade the island.

By the 1950s, the 3 Western allies had created West Berlin after the Potsdam Conference, while the Soviet Union had set up East Berlin. By the early 1960s, the number of people fleeing to West Germany had created a problem for the East German government. Then in August, the Soviet Union and the communist East German government built a wall to close off East Berlin from the West and prevent the flow of people fleeing the country.

Initially, the Western powers did not react to the building of the wall. The Kennedy administration publicly condemned the building of the wall but did nothing more. He travelled to West Berlin in June 1963 to show his support for the people there and to demonstrate that the US would pursue a hard-line anti-communist foreign policy.

The Kennedy administration projected an ambitious foreign aid program that would promote social justice and economic progress. Modernization through American aid would ensure that the newly emerging European nations would achieve prosperity and political stability.

- Lyndon Johnson (1963 – 1969) is one of the most contentious presidents in US history. He escalated US involvement in Vietnam, committing thousands of troops to a cause that turned into one of the greatest disasters in the history of US foreign policy.

Johnson doctrine declared that domestic revolution in the western hemisphere would no longer be a local matter when the object was the establishment of a communist dictatorship. To keep up morale among America's allies, the US would have to continue to hold fast in Berlin.

Johnson's foreign policy contributions were positive, especially given the volatile international environment he faced. America's allies generally welcomed his efforts to achieve détente. However, the French leader advocated an independent course for Europe, and announced that his country no longer wanted to be tied to an alliance dominated by the US and Britain.

De Gaulle foreign policy helped maintain a healthy distance between the US and Western Europe and paved the way for a truly independent European Union. The US wanted a French ally that would toe the line, while the French were determined to pursue an independent course. The French became assertive in foreign policy matters and presented a series of challenges to US policies.

- Richard Nixon (1969 – 1974) was a foreign policy genius. He put forward what was called the Nixon Doctrine, which reflected a shift in emphasis in American support for its overseas allies. The new emphasis was to be on the US helping its allies to help themselves more: "I shall consecrate my office, my energies, and all the wisdom I can summon to the cause of peace among nations" (Nixon, 1969).

Nixon set out to make major changes in US foreign policy. In addition, he believed that it was necessary to enter into arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union. He travelled to the Soviet Union to sign the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks Treaty.

- The Gerald Ford (1974 – 1977) administration handled many foreign policy events, including the Helsinki Accords and the Vladivostok Agreements. In 1975, 35 countries met in Helsinki and ratified accords that recognized all post-WWII borders in Europe as legitimate in an attempt to improve relations between the communist bloc and the west.
- Jimmy Carter (1977 – 1981) attempted to base his foreign policy on human rights considerations. He cut off aid to friendly dictatorships if they violated human rights: "To be true to ourselves, we must be true to others. We will not behave in foreign places so as to violate our rules and standards here at home. The world itself is dominated by a new spirit" (Carter, 1977). His doctrine was a response to the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union.

In September 1978, the crowning moment of the Carter administration's foreign policy took place. After long negotiations, the Camp David Accords, which ended the state of war between Israel and Egypt, were finalized.

- Ronald Reagan (1981 – 1989) is one of the most beloved presidents in US history. He was able to communicate in a unique way with the US public, reassuring the country and instilling a new patriotism: "Americans courageously helped preserve peace in a troubled world and supported the struggle for liberty, self-government and free enterprise throughout the world" (Reagan, 1985).

As president, Reagan restored US pride and prestige in the world. He not only contained communism but also liberated communist countries. He took decisive actions on the foreign policy front, especially in the cause of wiping out communism. The Reagan Doctrine pledged economic and military aid to any movement fighting communism during the final years of the Cold War.

Reagan's presidency marks the beginning of the end of the Cold War. The nature of the relationship between the US and the Soviet Union was to be transformed during Reagan's two terms as president. Détente, or peaceful co-existence, was re-established when Reagan and Soviet leader Gorbachev met in 1985 and 1986.

## 6. Post-Cold War Era Interpretations

The next section covers the period from the ending of the Cold War, up to the coming of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This period saw the ruling of two well-differentiated presidents, Republican George H. Bush, and Democrat Bill Clinton.

- The administration of George H.W. Bush (1989 – 1993) won praise for negotiating the peaceful transition from communism to capitalism in Eastern Europe. Bush himself proclaimed the dawn of a new world order: "Great nations of the world are moving toward democracy through the door to freedom. Men and women of the world move toward free markets through the door to prosperity. The people of the world agitate for free expression and free thought" (Bush, 1989).

Bush's major successes came in the area of foreign relations. He presided over the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Bush is one of the best foreign policy presidents in US history. Bush handled the liberation of Eastern Europe skilfully.

The transformation of the Soviet Union began under Gorbachev and the response of the US brought the Cold War period to a close and the 'Paris Joint Declaration' formally marked its end. It was signed by 22 nations, including the US and the Soviet Union.

- Bill Clinton (1993 – 2001) is one of the most controversial US presidents in history. Clinton's two terms seemed to be full of scandals, being the only president to have been involved in a scandal as he left office. During the Clinton presidency, many foreign policies crisis took place.

With him specializing in domestic policies, it was clear that foreign policy was not as important to him: "The world is no longer divided into 2 hostile camps. Instead we are now building bonds with nations that once were our adversaries, and for the very first time in all of history, more people on the planet live under democracy than dictatorship" (Clinton, 1997).

It fell to the Clinton administration to shape the post-Cold War world. The break-up of Yugoslavia led to the human catastrophe of Bosnia and Kosovo. The Clinton administration's handling of war in the Balkans provoked so much controversy.

The Dayton Peace Accords, reached in 1995, settled the conflict in Bosnia by dividing the country into 3 well-differentiated parts, with each faction in the conflict controlling one part. The NATO and President Clinton initiated strikes against Serbia, whose troops were committing genocide or mass murder in the province of Kosovo in the spring of 1999. The NATO-led IFOR was responsible for implementing military aspects of the agreements with the participation of Spanish forces.

### 7. 21<sup>st</sup> Century Interpretations

Finally, we are going to consider the two US presidents ruling fully in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Again, we come across an alternation between a Republican President, George W. Bush, and the actual Democrat President, Barack Obama.

- George W. Bush (2001 – 2009) prevailed in the most disputed election in US history, and he seemed destined to preside over a contentious and partisan presidency. Then terrorism struck the US, and President Bush was called upon to answer the attack: "It is the policy of the US to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world" (Bush, 2005).

Spain, under the presidency of Aznar, gave special support to the US-lead Iraq War against public opinion. The Madrid train bombings in March 2004 were seen as the result of the Spanish support to the US in the Iraq War.

Bush's foreign policy faced too much criticism. Bush looked like an isolationist out to antagonize the rest of the world. After the terrorist attacks in September 2001, the shocked and angry nation demanded action, and Bush laid blame for the attack on the Al Qaeda terrorist network.

As promised during the electoral campaign in Spain, Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero removed all Spanish soldiers from Iraq. His relations with the US have become strained following the withdrawal of the Spanish forces from Iraq.

The current US President Barack Obama (2009 –) has sought to let European countries and allies alike know that America is a friend of each nation and that every man, woman, and child who seeks a future of peace and dignity will have the support and aid of America.

All this is reflected in his Inaugural Address in which his administration meets the new threats that a globalize world demands on the nation, even greater co-operation and understanding between nation: "To those leaders around the globe who seek to sow conflict or blame their society's ills on the West, know that your people will judge you on what you can build, not on what you destroy" (2009).

### 8. Conclusions

The results of this analysis provide the basis for some clear conclusions regarding American foreign relations. Most Americans nowadays believe that the isolationism that previously featured US foreign policy, is outdated, and that rather co-operation and willingness are the principles which all nations are to keep on.

Patriotism, an exaggerated sentiment in the US in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, became conspicuous in both WWI and WWII. While others abroad were less partial to such patriotic excess, the US exalted in what it conceived to be its unique prowess.

Alexis de Tocqueville prophesied correctly the evolution of the American presidency and administrations in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He recognized that a growing concern with foreign affairs and a larger engagement in wars abroad would change the presidential office.

Summoning on all the different presidents we have analysed in this presentation, we can conclude that most of them were among the best presidents in US history for their relation and treatment with the European powers. Only quite a few of them still pursued isolationist policies, making America inaccessible to the rest of the world.

Theodore Roosevelt broke the longstanding isolationist tradition that kept the US deliberately uninvolved in world affairs. By getting involved in world affairs, he set the foundation for the US to become a world power in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Woodrow Wilson saved democracy in Europe. He made the decision to enter WWI on the side of the democratic allies in Europe. The League of Nations, the predecessor of the United Nations, was his brainchild. Even though the US Senate refused to join the League of Nations, the foundation for the United Nations was set.

Warren Harding's administration was a massive failure. Harding called for a conference in Washington between the great European powers. The conference proved to be the most notable achievement of the Harding administration.

Herbert Hoover was a self-made man and a great humanitarian who was responsible for saving millions of Europeans from starving to death after both world wars. He supervised the distributing of millions of tons of aid to Belgium and Northern France, providing food to 300 million people across Europe.

FD Roosevelt saved democracy in Europe by aiding Britain early in its struggle with Nazi Germany, and turned the US economy into a wartime economy capable of winning WWII. During the war, he became one of the founding fathers of the United Nations, committing the US to an active interventionist foreign policy.

Harry Truman is one of the most underrated presidents in US history. He made the difficult choice of dropping 2 atomic bombs in Japan, which ended WWII. Truman saved Western and Southern Europe from communism with the Truman Doctrine, extending

military aid to countries fighting communist up-risings; and the Marshall Plan, which helped to rebuild the economies of post-war Europe. He was the first president to realize the Soviet threat. He acted to stop communism from expanding, establishing organizations such as NATO to contain Soviet expansionism.

Dwight Eisenhower was a president who accomplished much in a very quiet way. He ended the war in Korea and managed to contain the Soviet Union for the 8 years he held office. He gave the US 8 years of peace. During his tenure in office, not one US soldier was lost in combat.

Ronald Reagan was elected president in a time of crisis, as US power was declining internationally. He restored US power and prestige throughout the world. His military spending led to the destruction of the Soviet economy, and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Empire. Without Reagan, the US may not have won the Cold War in 1991.

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