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Success as U.S. Identity in Foreign Eyes: Spanish Perceptions and Historical Constructions¹

Success in the Pursuit of Happiness: The American Dream

The phrase “an American success story” immediately conjures up one of the most widely held images of the United States. Popular perceptions both among Americans themselves and throughout Europe have long linked the country with notions of success. Individual success stories tell of socially esteemed achievements, usually after sustained efforts to overcome great obstacles, that might be environmental, physical, social, cultural, psychological, or even spiritual. Often the stories are “rags-to-riches” biographies of “self-made” men and women who attained their material American Dream.² Indeed, for Tocqueville, the American Dream could be summed up as “the charm of anticipated success.”³

Collective aspirations expand the Dream to larger goals. Diverse social groups —industrial workers, professional groups, political parties, religious communities, ethnic and racial minorities, women, gays or students— have mobilized to attain specific goals for the collective happiness of the group. In more philosophical and political terms, American success stories represent the realization of one of the three unalienable rights claimed for humankind in the preamble of

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² Dan McAdams, “American Identity: The Redemptive Self.” *The General Psychologist* 43/1 (Spring 2008), pp. 20–27. At: <http://www.sesp.northwestern.edu/docs/publications/2094657112490a0f25ec2b9.pdf>, reminds us that “From Benjamin Franklin to Senator John Edwards, the rags-to-riches success story—sometimes called “the American Dream—has enjoyed a privileged status in the anthology of American myths.” See also Brian Tracy and Erwin Helms, eds., *The American Dream: Myth and Reality in Contemporary America*, Frankfurt 1982, and John D. Ramage, *Twentieth-century American Success Rhetoric: How to Construct a Suitable Self*, Carbondale 2005, p. 5, who assures us that “The peculiarly American mythos of the self-made man [...] is certainly one of the themes lurking in the shadows of contemporary success rhetoric”.

³ Alexis Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, London 1840, vol. 3, p. 147.

the Declaration of Independence of 1776: the Pursuit of Happiness; and it is the American political system that makes it possible for both individuals and diverse social groups as well as the nation as a whole to imagine and successfully pursue their respective American Dreams.⁴

There are many definitions of that system. President Lincoln described it at the start of the Civil War: “This is the just and generous and prosperous system which opens the way to all, gives hope to all, and consequent energy and progress and improvement of condition to all.”⁵ The success of that system is what defines the United States throughout its history, even though James Truslow Adams did not popularize the phrase “the American Dream” until 1931.⁶ The American republic was founded on the promise of 1776, and its national identity was gradually forged around the belief in the possibility of a national success story that would make that promise a reality.

Identity

When Crèvecoeur posed his ageless question in the 1770s —“What, then, is the American, this new man?”—, he told the story of a poor immigrant called Andrew, newly arrived in the USA, who was given the all-important advice that his future success would depend entirely on his own conduct.⁷ American national identity was thus linked to the idea of the successful pursuit of happiness from the very beginning.⁸ Indeed, Rumanian scholar Diana Stiuliuc argues that the American Dream is the cultural expression of American identity.⁹ Clearly, however, in historical perspective the American Dream has meant different things to different individuals and social groups. What I am proposing here is that,

⁴ Jennifer L. Hochschild, *Facing Up to the American Dream: Race, Class and the Soul of the Nation*, Princeton 1995, p. 37, says: “the political culture of the United States is largely shaped by a set of views in which the American Dream is prominent, and by a set of institutions that make it even more prominent”.

⁵ Abraham Lincoln: “First Annual Message,” December 3, 1861. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. At: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29502>.

⁶ James T. Adams, *The Epic of America*, Boston 1931, p. 404. See Scott A. Sandage, *Born Losers: A History of Failure in America*, Cambridge 2006, p. 337, for uses of the phrase before 1931.

⁷ J. Hector St. John De Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782), “Letter III. What is an American?” p. 102, at: <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/CREV/letter03.html>, 11/06/2013.

⁸ Hochschild, *Facing Up to the American Dream*, pp. 15, 29, argues that success is central to Americans’ self-image, and that “The American dream consists of tenets about achieving success”.

⁹ Diana Știuliuc, “The American Dream as the Cultural Expression of North American Identity.” *Philologica Jassyensia*, VII/2/14 (2011), pp. 363–370. At: http://www.philologica-jassyensia.ro/upload/VII_2_Stiuliuc.pdf.

whatever the personal or collective hopes and aspirations of Americans may be, and whatever the direction of their efforts in pursuit of those dreams, everybody's "dream" is based on a single, simple belief, and that is, that every worthwhile goal is attainable, in short, that success is possible in the United States. It matters not what you want *to do*, or who you want *to be*. The one thing that *all* Americans have cherished, as the cultural matrix of their society, is the conviction that success is possible. Peter Freese posits this idea as one of six key elements making up the American Dream, but one could argue that it is this one "belief in the general attainability of success" that makes all the other goals viable.¹⁰ The Obama election campaign slogan of 2009—"Yes, we can"—tapped into that American belief. The message was loud and clear: We *can win* the election, and a black man *can be* the President of the United States. The possibility of success in chosen pursuits, then, lies at the heart of all the "can do, can be" identities of Americans.

Perceptions

Both success and identity are, however, the result of personal and social constructions, and as such, are part of the complex world of perceptions. They are slippery enough to negotiate even within any given culture, but the processes of recognizing, measuring and evaluating other people's success are complicated many times over by cultural factors connected with the construction of one's own identity and of alterity.¹¹ In the case of the United States, the highly propagandistic nature of public discourse during the revolutionary era created a natural reference point for participants both at home and observers abroad. Formal expressions of intentions and values became blueprints for the formation of national identity as well as measuring sticks of success, setting the stage for people's expectations everywhere. The Declaration of Independence and other founding documents set out American motives, intentions, and visions for the future, holding out the promise of a better society with a better political system. They became the references for the identity of the United States as a nation-state and the measuring sticks of its success.

The perception of American national identity has often been intimately associated with the idea of US exceptionalism.¹² This is a fascinating subject of

¹⁰ Peter Freese, *'America': Dream or Nightmare?: Reflections on a Composite Image* (3rd. ed.), Essen 1994, p. 106.

¹¹ Hochschild, *Facing Up to the American Dream*, p. 16, points out that "a definition of success involves measurement as well as content."

¹² Jack P. Greene, *The Intellectual Construction of America: Exceptionalism and Identity from 1492 to 1800*, Chapel Hill 1993. Charles Lockhart, *The Roots of American Exceptionalism: History, Institutions and Culture*, New York 2003. Godfrey Hodgson, *The Myth of American*

cultural history, not only because it has been (and for many remains) a central belief of American nationalism, but because of its historical and current repercussions in transnational and international relations. The idea of US exceptionalism (at least until the mid-20th century) was often embraced by liberal or progressive groups in Europe and other parts of the world and instrumentalized in their own public discourse as the historical American model-myth.¹³ A vast literature defines and dissects these ideas but one essential ingredient upon which all would agree is that American exceptionalism has revolved around the notion of US collective *success* as a nation. Without that success, American exceptionalism would have attracted little attention. It would have taken its place among all the other exceptionalist national narratives.¹⁴

My aim now is to discuss US success as American national identity through Spanish impressions over the long term. Jennifer Hochschild proposes that success can be categorized as absolute, relative, and/or competitive.¹⁵ Clearly, the relative and competitive components of the perceptions of another nation's success are especially relevant to an understanding of the views of foreign observers, whose perspectives depend on the social and cultural characteristics of their own country.¹⁶ The study will focus on Spanish perceptions of the element that has been central to the formation of American national identity and self-image of success—the US political system, that is, American democracy—at the three turns of the century since the Revolutionary Era, all of which have been critical moments in the history of Spanish-US relations.¹⁷

Exceptionalism, New Haven 2009. For a thoughtful recent study of its current vitality and its capacity to provoke controversy, see Ian Tyrrell, "The Myth(s) that Will Not Die: American National Exceptionalism," in Gérard Bouchard, ed., *National Myths: Constructed Pasts, Contested Presents*, New York 2013, pp. 46–65.

¹³ The subject lends itself in many interesting ways to the new transnational history. See for example Michael Adas, "From Settler Colony to Global Hegemon: Integrating the Exceptionalist Narrative of the American Experience into World History." *American Historical Review* 106/5 (Dec. 2001), pp. 1692–1720.

¹⁴ Andrew Kohut and Bruce Stokes, *The Problem of American Exceptionalism. (Our values and attitudes may be misunderstood, but they have consequences on the world scene)*. Pew Research, Global Attitudes Project, May 9, 2006, at: <http://www.pewglobal.org/2006/05/09/the-problem-of-american-exceptionalism/>, make the same point but what I have chosen to call success, they call power, which one could argue is actually one of the results of that success.

¹⁵ Hochschild, *Facing Up to the American Dream*, pp. 16–17.

¹⁶ Peter J. Katzenstein, and Robert Owen Keohane, eds., *Anti-Americanisms in World Politics*, Ithaca 2007, p. 16, note that "Anti- and pro-Americanism have as much to do with the conceptual lenses through which individuals living in very different societies view America, as with America itself."

¹⁷ This selection necessarily sacrifices many nuances that a deeper, more detailed book-length study would show, in order to focus on long-term continuities and change in the limited extension of an article.

Foreign Eyes: Continuity and Change in Spanish Perceptions of the United States

The most enduring Spanish attitude toward the United States since 1776 has tended to be unfavorable. Anti-American prejudices and negative stereotypical images have been constantly recycled, most of the time by successive generations of political and cultural conservatives, but in the twentieth century (especially since the 1960s) mainly by Spanish socialists, communists and other left-leaning progressives.¹⁸ For nation-states to construct an exceptional or uniquely superior self-image is not historically unusual. Both Spain and the United States did so. They also share the experience, when at the height of their power, of having been singled out for denigration as exceptionally evil empires by their international enemies. Much more unusual is the adoption and diffusion by foreigners of another nation's own finest self-perception. Nonetheless, foreign exaltation of American exceptionalism has existed in many countries, including Spain, but has been far less studied.

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In the late eighteenth century and early 1800s, Spain was a vast empire, under a monarchy that was both despotic and enlightened with cautiously reformist tendencies. Attitudes towards the emerging North American republic were mainly negative, because it posed an obvious threat, in many ways, to the Hispanic imperial monarchy.¹⁹ Nonetheless, the evolving interests and ideologies of Spain's governing elites generated some ambivalent, even positive views of the United States, revealing that a small minority of the Spanish enlightened leaders saw in the young republic a new political model inspired by an ideology that held many attractions. A few observers clearly valued certain images of the United States as comparative references, or propaganda, for political purposes within Spain.

¹⁸ General works on anti-Americanism in Spain are William Chislett, *El antiamericanismo en España: el peso de la historia*. Documento de trabajo del Real Instituto Elcano, n. 228, 15–11–2005. At: http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/documentos/228/228_Chislett.pdf. Alessandro Seregini, *El antiamericanismo español*, Madrid 2007. Francisco J. Rodríguez Jiménez, and Daniel Fernández de Miguel, "La larga durabilidad de los estereotipos. El peso de los prejuicios en la visión española de EE.UU." *Cuadernos de ALDEEU (USA)* 23, Fall 2011, pp. 33–61. Daniel Fernández de Miguel, *El enemigo yanqui. Las raíces conservadoras del antiamericanismo español*, Zaragoza 2012.

¹⁹ This reaction would fall into the category of "sovereign-nationalist" anti-Americanism described by Katzenstein, and Keohane, eds., *Anti-Americanisms in World Politics*, cit., and "Anti-Americanisms." *Hoover Institution, Stanford University, Policy Review* 139 (October 1, 2006), at: <http://www.hoover.org/publications/policy-review/article/7815>.

Spaniards in the know were already impressed by Angloamerican successes in demographic growth and mobility, territorial settlement and expansion, economic development and material wealth, and soon US political achievements confirmed their view that this was a great power in the making. In the 1780s, Antonio de Alcedo published a solidly informative 5-volume geographical-historical encyclopaedia of the Americas. On the United States, he included a quotation from an American source of 1774: “The time has arrived for an important revolution, whose *success or failure* will perpetuate forever the sorrow or the admiration of posterity [...] the future happiness or misery of its innumerable descendants”.²⁰

During the American war of Independence, Count Aranda was the Spanish ambassador in Paris. He met the American envoys there and signed the treaty of 1783 on behalf of Spain. In that year Aranda penned a famous report to the King in which he predicted that this new nation, “born a pygmy”, would soon become a giant and eventually an “irresistible colossus” because the advantages offered by the combination of its geographical conditions and its unique political system would naturally and inevitably guarantee American success as a nation-state.²¹

In the first critical twenty years of US independence, keen Spanish observers noted the many internal forces that threatened to destroy the Union, so the first all-important success that Spanish sources underscored, after the creation of the Union, was the success in maintaining and consolidating it. They realized immediately that the federal constitution of 1787 was a decisive step in the strengthening of the central government, and they also foresaw that it would be an efficient political instrument to encourage and control territorial expansion without compromising individual freedom or national unity. After that, predictions of future American successes were frequent, and generally associated with dire warnings about the threat to Spanish monarchical, imperial and Catholic interests. Nothing, Spaniards thought, would now be able to stop American demographic, economic, territorial and political growth.²²

²⁰ Antonio de Alcedo y Bejarano, *Diccionario geográfico-histórico de las Indias Occidentales o América* (5 vols.), Madrid 1786–89, 2: 104, my emphasis.

²¹ Count Aranda to the King, ‘Dictamen reservado’, 1783, in Mario Rodríguez, *La Revolución Americana de 1776 y el mundo hispánico*, Madrid 1976, pp. 63–66: “The freedom of religion, the ease with which people can settle in immense territories and the advantages offered by that new government, will appeal to farmers and artisans of all nations, because men go where they expect to better their fortunes.”

²² See Sylvia L. Hilton, “Movilidad y expansión en la construcción política de los Estados Unidos: ‘estos errantes colonos’ en las fronteras españolas del Misisipi (1776–1803).” *Revista Complutense de Historia de América* 28 (2002), pp. 63–96, and “‘Un pueblo que aumentará a pérdida de vista’: tempranas impresiones españolas sobre los Estados Unidos”, in Emma Sánchez Montañés, et al., eds., *Norteamérica a finales del siglo XVIII: España y los Estados Unidos*, Madrid 2008, pp. 241–264.

The Spanish ambassador in the US through the 1790s, Carlos Martínez de Irujo, married Sally McKean, the daughter of the governor of Pennsylvania, who was a leading member of the democratic republican party. Indeed, Irujo actually lived in the governor's house for a number of years, and consequently was well informed about political affairs and Jeffersonian ideas, but, more than that, he was clearly impressed by the early successes of the United States: *their progress has exceeded all calculations of probability. Emigration from Europe, the increase of these inhabitants thanks to the means of subsistence, a vast commerce, [...] will take this country, within very few years, to such a level of population, wealth and power, that it will very seriously influence the political system of Europe. Every power should carefully monitor this progress.*²³

Manuel Gayoso, as the governor of Spanish *Luisiana* (that is the entire territory west of the Mississippi to the Rocky Mountains), faced the front line of American expansion and he dealt with westering pioneers on a daily basis. He had no doubts that the political system adopted by the United States in 1787 was ideally suited to support popular expansion across the continent and ensure the successful territorial growth of the nation.²⁴

After fighting in the Spanish forces that distracted British troops in Florida during the US war for independence, a young Francisco de Miranda traveled in the United States in 1783–1784. He was to become the best known early precursor of Spanish American independence movements. Fully impressed by US successes in the collective pursuit of happiness by the beginning of the nineteenth century, the example of their political system inspired Miranda's hopes for the future of Spanish America: *Let us follow in the footsteps of our brothers the North Americans, establishing like them a free and wise government; we shall obtain the same benefits that they have and enjoy now. They have not been free for more than 25 years; nonetheless, ¿What cities have they not built in this time, what commerce have they not created, what prosperity and happiness cannot be seen among them?*²⁵

For his part, Valentín de Foronda corresponded with Jefferson when he was serving as a Spanish consul in Philadelphia. His liberal ideas caused him to fall

²³ Carlos Martínez de Irujo to Príncipe de la Paz, Philadelphia, 20 julio 1797, n. 73. Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid, hereafter AHN, Estado, leg. 5630.

²⁴ Manuel Gayoso y Lemos to Miguel José de Azanza, viceroy of New Spain, New Orleans, 2 August 1798. Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico, Sección Historia, t. 334, fs. 30–38, repr. in Jack D.L. Holmes, "La última barrera. La Luisiana y la Nueva España." *Historia Mexicana*, X/40 (abril-junio 1961), 637–649, at 644: "the Angloamericans [...] when their number is sufficient, will establish their customs, laws and religion, after which they will form into independent states, joining the Union, which will not reject them, and progressively they will reach the Pacific Ocean."

²⁵ Francisco de Miranda, Proclamation to Spanish Americans, 1801, at: <http://uniondelsur.menpet.gob.ve/interface.sp/database/fichero/free/30/4.PDF>.

out of favor when he returned to Spain, but he, too, was a great admirer of the success attained by Americans in only a few years.²⁶

In sum, it was real and foreseeable American success that inspired both the majority discourse of hostile criticism and the more positive responses of a minority. As the United States went from strength to strength, and its identity as a democratic nation matured, at the root of early Spanish anti-Americanism were two fundamental issues: the knowledge that US independence and expansion would threaten the future of Spain's vast overseas empire (what the United States might *do*) and, closer to home, fear that US republican democracy would threaten Spain's monarchical regime and traditionalist Catholic culture (what the United States *was* or represented). By contrast, at the heart of the more favorable views lay a few enlightened Spaniards' admiration of American success in the democratic experiment and their hopes for the future fulfilment of the promise of 1776 in their own country.

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After fighting a desperate people's war of independence against invading Napoleonic armies, Spain limped on through the nineteenth century as a monarchy which very slowly and painfully evolved from royal absolutism to constitutional parliamentarianism, with a brief republican interlude between February 1873 and December 1874. Anti-Americanism was the prevailing attitude towards the United States in this period, but it was especially strong among the dominant monarchical, traditionalist, conservative, Catholic and pan-Hispanist sectors.²⁷ They harped on the evident contradictions between the proclaimed American ideals and historical or everyday realities (in particular, the treatment of Indians and Africans, the lack of a 'true' ethnic identity, cultural vulgarity, materialism, hypocrisy and political corruption), repeating the negative stereotypes seen throughout Europe.²⁸

²⁶ Valentín de Foronda, *Carta sobre lo que debe hacer un príncipe que tenga colonias a gran distancia*, Philadelphia 1803. His comparative intention could not be clearer in a series of rhetorical questions such as this: "Is there a country on this Earth where its people live with more comforts and abundance than those of the United States of North America? [...] No."

²⁷ Paul Isbell, "El final del antiamericanismo." *Leviatán. Revista de Hechos e Ideas* 75 (primavera 1999), pp. 107. Fernández de Miguel, *El enemigo yanqui*, pp. 27–65, 70–92, 98–110.

²⁸ The historiography on this subject is huge. For example: Rob Kroes and Maarten van Rossem, eds., *Anti-Americanism in Europe*, Amsterdam 1986. Paul Hollander, *Anti-Americanism: Critiques at Home and Abroad, 1965–1990*, Oxford 1992, and ed., *Understanding Anti-Americanism. Its Origins and Impact at Home and Abroad*, Chicago 2004. Sylvie Mathé, ed., *L'Antiaméricanisme: Anti-Americanism at Home and Abroad*, Aix-en-Provence 2000. Massimo Teodori, *Maledetti americani. Destra, sinistra e cattolici: storia del pregiudizio antiamericano*, Milan 2002. Jean-François Revel, *L'obsession anti-américaine. Son fonctionnement, ses causes, ses conséquences*, Paris 2002. Christian Schwaabe, *Antiamerikanismus: Wandlungen eines Feindbildes*, München 2003.

The rhetoric of a traditionalist newspaper during the American War of Secession exemplifies this view: *The history of the model republic can be summarized in a few words. It was born out of a rebellion, its constitution was based on atheism, it was populated by the pestilent waste of all the nations in the world, it grew by depredation, it lived without God's law or law of nations, after a hundred years it was destroyed by greed, it fought like a barbarian and it died drowning in blood and mud. Such is the true story of the only State on the Earth that has established itself according to the grandiose theories of democracy. The experiment is not conducive to wanting to repeat it in Europe.*²⁹

However, all such perceived failings would hardly have raised an eyebrow in Spain, except for the inescapable fact of American success. The Spanish case supports the thesis that the anti-Americanism of European elites has often been fueled by “a particular dismay that success has been achieved by such a seemingly inferior nation, allegedly populated by an unsophisticated people.”³⁰ Spain's dominant conservative elites continued to see their values contradicted and their interests threatened by this functioning republican democracy that not only secured rights for all citizens, including religious freedom, but also championed anticolonialism, self-determination of peoples, and abolitionism, and simultaneously achieved a rate of demographic and economic growth that left Spain far behind. American success scalded Spanish sensibilities and motivated their hostility.³¹ Thus, at the root of Spanish anti-Americanism festered their resentment of the ideological and political success of the United States in comparison with Spain's evident decline.

A rather different issue is what this response to American success tells us about the self-image of nineteenth-century Spaniards. One study recently argued that Spaniards developed a “pessimistic self-perception” that contrasted with “the success of the social experiment” in the USA, suggesting that this was why hostile reactionary attitudes and rejection dominated Spanish public

Russell Berman, *Anti-Americanism in Europe: A Cultural Problem*, Stanford, CA 2004. Manuel Tamames, *La cultura del mal. Una guía del antiamericanismo*, Madrid 2005. Philippe Roger, *The American Enemy: The History of French Anti-Americanism*, Chicago 2005. Brendon O'Connor, ed., *Anti-Americanism: History, Causes, and Themes. Vol. I: Causes and Sources*, Westport, Conn. 2007.

²⁹ *El Pensamiento Español*, Madrid, 6 Sept. 1862, cit. in Fernández de Miguel, *El enemigo yanqui*, p. 50.

³⁰ Brendon O'Connor, *The Anti-American Tradition: A Literature Review*. The United States Studies Centre, at the University of Sydney, Working Paper, October 2009, p. 7. At: http://ussc.edu.au/s/media/docs/publications/0910_oconnor_antiamerica.pdf.

³¹ Fernández de Miguel, *El enemigo yanqui*, pp. 47–48, also points to the success of the American democratic experiment in contrast with Spanish impotence as the cause of nineteenth-century Spanish conservatives' hatred of the United States.

discourse concerning the United States.³² Hating others for having what you want for yourself is a deep psycho-sociological interpretation that might explain Spanish conservatives' envy of American wealth and power, but it does not follow that it sprang from or caused a negative self-image.³³ On the contrary, it seems clear that most of them genuinely believed in the superiority of Hispanic political, social and cultural values.

On the other hand, Spain's progressive liberal, republican and democratic minority did have a negative self-image. They hated Spain's decadence, superstition and backwardness, and I have argued elsewhere that there was clearly a connection between that negative self-perception and admiration of the United States. Their discourse constantly underscored the political, social, economic and cultural success of the US, always attributing it to the democratic republican form of government, and always stressing the comparison with the negative record of failure of the Spanish monarchy.³⁴ For this small minority in the Spanish political spectrum, American success vindicated their own ideology and gave them the most powerful reason to desire Spanish imitation of the US model.³⁵ One democratic republican, José María Orense, even proposed to the constitutional convention of 1869 that the US constitution be adopted in Spain, explaining: "in the practical things of life I am always guided by the countries in which our ideal is a reality; I proclaim the complete system practiced in the United States since it gives such good results there."³⁶

³² Rodríguez Jiménez and Fernández de Miguel, "La larga durabilidad de los estereotipos", pp. 39–41. To support this view they cite Richard L. Kagan, "Prescott's Paradigm: American Historical Scholarship and the Decline of Spain." *American Historical Review*, 101/2 (1996) pp. 423–446, which studies William Hickling Prescott's creation of an antithetical opposition between Spain as representation of monarchism, indolence, fanaticism and the past, and the USA as representation of republicanism, industriousness, rationality, and the future. However this was *Prescott's* view, which might be extended to American public opinion, and even to Spanish republicans, but it is not so easy to argue that this was the view of Spanish conservatives, at least not before 1899.

³³ See Paul Johnson's provocative "Anti-Americanism is racist envy." *Forbes Magazine* (21st July 2003), at: <http://www.forbes.com/global/2003/0721/017.html>.

³⁴ For example in Sylvia L. Hilton, "Los Estados Unidos como modelo: los federalistas españoles y el mito americano durante la crisis colonial de 1895–1898." *Ibero-Americana Pragensia* XXXII (1998), pp. 11–29, and "The World in Black and White: Spanish Federalists on U.S. Democracy and Imperialism in 1898." *Comparative American Studies. An International Journal* 5/2 (June 2007), pp. 119–146.

³⁵ Republican admiration of the United States is much less well known, and has received little historiographical attention. See, for example, Joaquín Oltra Pons, "The American Dream in the Spanish Mind (XIX Century)." *Anuario. Departamento de Inglés*, Barcelona 1978, pp. 45–60. Manuel Azcárate, "La percepción española de los Estados Unidos." *Leviatán* 33 (otoño 1988), pp. 5–8. Fernández de Miguel, *El enemigo yanqui*, pp. 56, 65–70, 92–98.

³⁶ *Diario de Sesiones de las Cortes Constituyentes de 1869* (Madrid: Impr. J.A. García, 1870), vol. 3, sesión n.º. 74, 17 mayo 1869, p. 2002. Also cit. in Oltra "The American Dream", p. 57, with slightly different translation.

Clearly, a major consideration that he thought should be persuasive was that the results obtained by the American democratic republican system proved that it was a great success. For his part, federalist republican leader, Francisco Pi y Margall, summarized this whole theme of Spanish perceptions of the United States as the incarnation of democracy, at the conclusion of the list of virtues and successes which he identified with the United States: “You are liberty,” he solemnly declared, “you are democracy.”³⁷

Nonetheless, the dominant nineteenth-century anti-American discourse reached its high point in Spain during the colonial crisis that led to president McKinley’s intervention and the Spanish-American war of 1898.³⁸ At that point, even democratic republicans were criticizing the United States, contradicting their own traditional discourse of admiration for the “Great Republic”. Alejandro Lerroux’s newspaper, *El Progreso*, was bitterly critical of Americans: “A people formed by all the detritus, a shapeless pile of social debris; a people whose material abundance goes hand in hand with moral degeneration... The American people... strong with the weak and weak with the strong...”³⁹

And in April of 1898, *El País* excoriated: *that nation of bandits, of homeless, scum of the human race thrown to the other side of the Ocean by vice, crime, greed and tempestuous flight from home and country... campsite of barbarians who have exterminated three million innocent Indians living on the plains.*⁴⁰

Most of the republicans who joined in the anti-Americanist cacophony at that time did so ostensibly for patriotic reasons, but I have argued elsewhere that the provocative rhetoric was also part of a strategy to destabilize the monarchy, in the hope of creating an opportunity to launch a new Spanish republic.⁴¹ Astonishingly, however, one small group—the Spanish federalist republicans—struggled mightily to defend their traditional admiration of the United States, despite the war.

On February 15, 1898, the American ship *Maine*, supposedly on a friendly visit to the port of Havana in Cuba, exploded and sank in the harbor. Late nineteenth-century “yellow” journalism rushed to exploit the tragedy, and Spanish

³⁷ Francisco Pi y Margall, *A la república de los Estados Unidos de América*, Barcelona 1998, p. 35.

³⁸ Spanish historiography on this subject is considerable, but see Seregini, *El antiamericanismo español*, pp. 53–111, and Fernández de Miguel, *El enemigo yanqui*, pp. 71–81.

³⁹ *El Progreso*, 31 October 1897.

⁴⁰ *El País*, 7 April 1898.

⁴¹ Sylvia L. Hilton, “The United States through Spanish Republican Eyes in the Colonial Crisis of 1895–98,” [in:] Sylvia L. Hilton, and Steve J.S. Ickringill, eds., *European Perceptions of the Spanish-American War of 1898*, Bern 1999, pp. 53–70, and “U.S. Intervention and Monroeism: Spanish Perspectives on the American Role in the Colonial Crisis of 1895–1898,” in Virginia M. Bouvier, ed., *Whose America?: The War of 1898 and the Battles to Define the Nation*, Westport, Conn. 2001, pp. 37–59.

federalist republicans, fearing that war-mongers on both sides of the Atlantic might push the two governments into a war, repeated their litany identifying the United States with democratic values, urging: “Peace and harmony with the United States! War never! It is the leading nation in the world, the shield of liberty, the torch of progress.”⁴² Despite their efforts, the war did come, and Spain was quickly defeated. Anti-American discourse at that time might be excused and was certainly understandable but, in reply to Spanish critics, the federalist republicans used the American victory as clear proof of the superior success of that federal republican regime: *They are blind, they do not see that the nation that has just defeated us is a federally constituted republic [...] Let them say now if there is in the world any nation where order is better ensured, where liberty is better guaranteed, where agriculture, the arts and trade are more developed, where action is more united, where there are more means of offense and defense.*⁴³

The federalists themselves were forced to face their own blindness, however, when the terms of the peace treaty were published and their worst fears materialized. Then came the anguish: *We shall never be consoled over this change in the policy of Washington’s Republic. We, who loved her more than our own country, because we considered her the safeguard of the liberty of nations and the future redeemer of oppressed peoples, have suffered a great disenchantment on seeing her converted into the voice and tool of force. [...] With McKinley’s policy the freedom of the world is in danger.*⁴⁴

The Spanish federalists were, nonetheless, true believers in US superiority compared not only with Spain but with all other nations. So, on the last day of 1898—a year that many Spaniards still remember as the year of the ‘Disaster’, when, after a humiliating defeat, Spain lost all its remaining overseas possessions (Cuba and Puerto Rico in the Caribbean, and the Philippines, the Caroline and Palaos Islands in the Pacific Ocean)—, this small group of Spanish republicans began to reconstruct their mythical image of the United States.

We do not hesitate to say so, we recognize the excellence of the Anglo-Saxon race. No other race has been able to conciliate liberty and order; to divest itself more quickly of religious intolerance, the greatest of tyrannies; to move ahead of others in all channels of progress; to give greater signs of activity, inventiveness, determination to execute the most arduous undertakings. American success was

⁴² “El Maine”, *El Nuevo Régimen* (hereafter *ENR*), 19 Feb. 1898, 1. For his part, J. Lluhí Rissech, “Patriotismo en el papel.” *La Autonomía*, 9 abril 1898, 1/3 to 2/1, stressed American success in comparison with Spain, saying that the United States is “rich, strong, a hundred times better organized than us. Their civilization has a hundred years’ advantage over us.”

⁴³ “La federación.” *ENR*, 8 Oct. 1898, 1/1–2. See also “La federación.” *ENR*, 26 Nov. 1898, 1/1–2.

⁴⁴ “La política de Mac-Kinley.” *ENR*, 17 Dec. 1898, 1.

incontestable to them, and so federalist utopianism waxed unrestrained, with only a hint of anxiety about the signs of American imperialist tendencies: *Let the Anglo-Saxon race become with our blessing the teacher of nations, let them be the sword of freedom and fight for the redemption of peoples oppressed by fanaticism or barbarism, let them break down barriers everywhere, let them widen straits, let them make the whole Earth the country and home of all men; but let them not wish to become the dominators of other races.*⁴⁵

As the 1800s gave way to the “American century”, Spanish conservatives, like their correligionaries everywhere in Europe, felt increasingly uneasy about the growing success of the American democratic experiment that had brought the United States to great power status. It seemed set to sweep away the established order and to transform the world.⁴⁶ Spanish conservatives worried that the United States would use its newly flexed muscles to become a hegemonic power, while democratic liberals and republicans worried that the taste of international military victory would lead their beloved model of democracy towards corruption in militaristic imperialism.

* * *

Thanks to US intervention in the Second World War, the Marshall Plan and the Fulbright Program, the United States became the leader of the so-called ‘free world’ during the long Cold War. This American role as the champion of democracy and capitalism was generally well received in most of Western Europe, but Spain’s case was different. During General Franco’s dictatorial rule (1940–75), both the right and the left of the Spanish political spectrum were anti-American. The nationalistic Catholics and ultra-conservatives of Franco’s regime were distrustful of the US democratic form of government and hostile to American culture.⁴⁷ The republicans and democrats, on the other hand, felt betrayed because the US did not support the legitimate government of the II Republic (1931–1939) against the fascists during the Spanish civil war (1936–1939).⁴⁸

⁴⁵ “Un artículo de Chamberlain.” *ENR*, 31 Dec. 1898, 1.

⁴⁶ Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht, “Always Blame the Americans: Anti-Americanism in Europe in the Twentieth Century.” *American Historical Review* 111//4 (Oct. 2006), pp. 1069.

⁴⁷ William Chislett, *Spain and the United States. The Quest for Mutual Rediscovery*, Madrid 2005, p. 116, at: <http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/publicaciones/libros/ChislettEsp-EEUU-ingles.pdf>: “Francoists [...] hated the democratic form of government in the United States and its liberal values.”

⁴⁸ Marta Rey García, *Stars for Spain. La guerra civil española en los Estados Unidos* (A Coruña 1997). Fernando Termis Soto, *Renunciando a todo. El régimen franquista y los Estados Unidos desde 1945 a 1963*, Madrid 2005. Joan Maria Thomàs, *Roosevelt y Franco: De la Guerra Civil Española a Pearl Harbor*, Barcelona 2007, and *La batalla del Wolframio. Estados Unidos*

Spain neither received US aid during the Second World War, nor benefited from the Marshall Plan. As a result, Spanish society developed no sense of gratitude like that seen elsewhere in Western Europe. After 1945, anti-American sentiments deepened among Spanish democrats and republicans, as successive US governments lent support to the oppressive regime of General Franco. The attitudes and foreign policies of the United States were, of course, dictated by Cold War rationale, which meant that they were willing to negotiate with the intensely anti-communist Spanish dictator in exchange for military bases in Spain (1953 Pacts).⁴⁹ Ironically, this diplomatic rapprochement eventually contributed to a gradual weakening of conservative anti-Americanism. In the 1950s this was especially visible in the Spanish film industry which began to portray Americans as friends of Spain.⁵⁰ The negotiation of American evacuation of those bases and new terms for American military activities in Spanish territory did not begin until the late 1980s, so democratic Spaniards, even those most sympathetic to the United States, have had a hard time forgetting those betrayals.⁵¹ Nonetheless, by 1997, when a Spanish opinion poll asked what the American position had been towards Franco's regime, only 31 percent said that the United States supported Franco, while 28 percent thought that it had opposed Franco and 40 percent replied that they did not know.⁵²

General Franco died in 1975. Since then, Spain has made the transition to a modern democracy under a constitutional monarchy, with socialists and modern conservatives alternating in power.⁵³ These new circumstances, to-

y España, de Pearl Harbor a la Guerra Fría (1941–1947), Madrid 2010. Misael Arturo Lopez Zapico, *Las relaciones entre Estados Unidos y España durante la Guerra Civil y el primer franquismo (1936–1945)*, Gijón 2008. Michael E. Chapman, *Arguing Americanism. Franco Lobbyists, Roosevelt's Foreign Policy and the Spanish Civil War*, Kent, OH 2011. Aurora Bosch Font, *Miedo a la democracia. Estados Unidos ante la Segunda República y la guerra civil española*, Barcelona 2012.

⁴⁹ Arturo Jarque Íñiguez, *‘Queremos esas bases!’: el acercamiento de EE.UU. a la España de Franco*, Alcalá de Henares 1998. Boris N. Liedtke, *Embracing a Dictatorship: U.S. Relations with Spain, 1945–1953*, London 1997.

⁵⁰ Kepa Sojo Gil, “La nueva imagen de los Estados Unidos en el cine español de los cincuenta tras el Pacto de Madrid (1953).” *Ars Bilduma*, 1 (2011), pp. 39–54.

⁵¹ This is an example of “legacy anti-Americanism” typified by Katzenstein and Keohane, *Anti-Americanisms in World Politics*, cit., and “Anti-Americanisms.”

⁵² Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS), *Barómetro. Estudio 2254*. Madrid: July 1997, at: http://www.cis.es/cis/export/sites/default/-Archivos/Marginales/2240_2259/2254/e225400.html.

⁵³ The main developments in this transition have been: 1975–82, conservative and democratic-centre transition governments presided by Carlos Arias Navarro, Adolfo Suárez, Leopoldo Calvo Sotelo; 1982–96, socialist governments under Felipe González; 1986, Spain was accepted into the European Community and a national referendum approved continued Spanish membership in NATO; 1996–2004, modern conservative governments under José María Aznar; 2004–2011, socialists under José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero; 2011–present, conservatives under Mariano Rajoy.

gether with the end of the Cold War in 1990, have had interesting consequences as regards Spanish perceptions of themselves, and therefore of the United States.

At the turn of the twentieth to the twenty-first century, John Ramage affirms that “the influence of the American success ethos is ubiquitous”, pervasively persuading that opportunities abound for individuals to attain their own American dream.⁵⁴ Ian Tyrrell remarks that “the idea of American Exceptionalism has never been talked about so much as in the first decade of the twenty-first century,” and concludes that “this self-sustaining and yet changing set of myths concerning the history of the United States remains vital to the nation’s identity.”⁵⁵ When a 1999 poll taken in the USA took for granted that the country was a success and asked Americans to account for this, a majority gave the credit to the “American system.”⁵⁶ For his part, President Barack Obama not only wrote a book about reclaiming the American dream, but in two recent speeches appealed to the collective belief in the past and continuing success of the American political system, reflecting the perceived power of this success narrative to inspire the American people, despite criticisms both at home and abroad.⁵⁷ Tapping into Americans’ sense of their own historical success as a democratic nation, in his 2008 electoral victory speech, he averred: “the true strength of our nation comes not from the might of our arms or the scale of our wealth, but from the enduring power of our ideals: democracy, liberty, opportunity and unyielding hope.”⁵⁸ In 2009, Obama used the idea in an effort to reconnect the people with essential democratic virtues: “In recent years, we’ve become enamored with our own past success, lulled into complacency by the glitter of our own achievements. [...] forgetting the qualities that got us there”.⁵⁹ The following year, he waxed eloquent on the same theme of American democracy, stressing his own belief in its continuing record as the world’s most successful political system: *Before we get too depressed about the current state of our politics, let’s remember our history. [...] What is amazing is that despite all the conflict, despite all its flaws and its frustrations,*

⁵⁴ Ramage, *Twentieth-Century American Success Rhetoric*, p. 3. He is talking specifically about success rhetoric in or referring to the workplace, but his comment can be extended to American society in general without too big a stretch.

⁵⁵ Ian Tyrrell, “The Myths that Will Not Die”, p. 60.

⁵⁶ Kohut and Stokes, *The Problem of American Exceptionalism*, cit.

⁵⁷ Barack Obama, *The Audacity of Hope. Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream*, New York 2006.

⁵⁸ Barack Obama, Election Night Speech, Chicago, Nov. 4, 2008. In *CNN Politics.com*, at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/11/04/obama.transcript/>, or at: <http://usliberals.about.com/od/electionreform/a/ObamaElection.htm> (11/06/2013).

⁵⁹ Barack Obama, Commencement Address, Arizona State University, May 13, 2009, in *The New York Times*, at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/13/us/politics/13obama.text.html?pagewanted=all> (11/06/2013).

our experiment in democracy has worked better than any form of government on Earth.⁶⁰ All such comments suggest that, far from weakening, the connections between American exceptionalism, national identity and success are maintaining if not gaining prominence in public discourse.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, US foreign policy, economic power, capacity for world leadership, and American popular culture tended to dominate public discourse and foreign public opinion surveys about the United States. Consequently, it has become more difficult to evaluate opinions on the specific subject of the US political model or American democracy. Surveys do reflect overall evaluations of or “sentiments” towards the United States, and provide a starting point, as long as one bears in mind that such general perceptions are influenced by many competing aspects, and certainly simplify or ignore contradictions and nuances. They are, however, useful as indications of general comparative positions in world contexts.

This said, throughout the 1990s, Spaniards consistently held the United States as a country in moderately high esteem, with only small variations from year to year, in a position that was significantly lower than top-rated Germany but far above the worst rated countries such as Iraq.⁶¹ One 1996 survey of Spanish public opinion revealed that a modestly healthy 35.1 percent had favorable or very favorable “sentiments” towards the United States, whereas only 18.8 percent were critical or very critical, while the majority hung in the middle saying that they had neither favorable nor unfavorable sentiments.⁶² A similar survey taken the following year revealed that over 50 percent of participants held favorable or very favorable views of the United States in general, as a country, and, again, only 18 percent were critical. In the same 1997 survey, when asked to choose between pairs of opposite adjectives, 54 percent described the United States as democratic as opposed to 30 percent describing the country as authoritarian, although at the same time this general impression coexisted with a majority opinion (over 58 percent) that associated Americans with conservative political

⁶⁰ Barack Obama, Remarks at the University of Michigan Commencement, May 1st, 2010, in *The White House, Office of the Press Secretary*, at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-university-michigan-spring-commencement> (11/06/2013).

⁶¹ Salustiano del Campo, and Juan Manuel Camacho, *La opinión pública española y la política exterior*, Madrid 2003, pp. 43–44, at: <http://www.incepe.org/INFORME.INCIPE.2003.pdf>. Juan Díez Nicolás, *La opinión pública española y la política exterior. Informe INCIPE, 2006*. Madrid: INCIPE, 2006, p. 53, at: <http://www.incepe.org/informes.htm>. On a scale of 0 to 10, Spaniards rated the United States at 5.5 in 1991, 5.3 in 1992, 5.7 in 1995, and 5.5 in 1997. Germany was rated between 6 and 6.3, and Iraq between 2.3 and 2.6.

⁶² CIRES (Centro de Investigaciones de la Realidad Social), *Encuesta: Identificación supranacional*, April 1996, at: http://www.jdsurvey.net/jds/jdsurveyAnalisis.jsp?ES_COL=129&Idioma=E&SeccionCol=04&ESID=391, question 20.

ideology.⁶³ Spain's moderately favorable general perception of the United States reached 50 percent in 1999–2000 according to the US Department of State.⁶⁴ These favorable but unremarkable opinions may indicate that Spain, having become a democracy itself, no longer sees the American political model as being so very different or worthy of special note. Spaniards today are fairly satisfied that their own brand of democracy is at least as good as the American model, and possibly better.⁶⁵ Certainly, many Spaniards seem to feel that the US model is too individualistic and, as such, is not actually as successful as Spain in protecting collective well-being and that of the less able.

After the 11-S attacks, Spaniards joined in the general outpouring of sympathetic solidarity towards the USA, but soon attitudes were changing somewhat for the worse. Spaniards' esteem for the United States in general as a country suddenly fell in one survey from the 1990s average of 5.5 (on a scale of 0 to 10) to a score of 4.7 in 2002 and 4.4 in 2006.⁶⁶ This sudden shift in popular opinion most certainly reflected public condemnation of the Bush administration's unilateralism and the imminent war in Iraq, and this not only overshadowed more positive evaluations of the American political system, but revealed a deep rift between the people and Spanish political leaders, who gave the United States a high score of 6.81 points, in contrast with their normal tendency to coincide with the general public when expressing the levels of esteem in which they held different countries.⁶⁷ By early 2003, a Pew Research poll showed that favorable

⁶³ Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS), *Barómetro. Estudio 2254* (Madrid: July 1997), at: http://www.cis.es/cis/export/sites/default/-Archivos/Marginales/2240_2259/2254/e225400.html. Also cited in Javier Noya, *La imagen de Estados Unidos en España. Resultados del Barómetro del Real Instituto Elcano* (Madrid: Real Instituto Elcano, Working Paper, 21 julio 2003), pp. 1–2, at: <http://realinstitutoelcano.org/documento>, but his interpretive presentation lends the figures a negative twist which this author does not see.

⁶⁴ Survey data for 1999–2000, from US Department of State, Office of Research, in *America's Image Further Erodes, Europeans Want Weaker Ties. But Post-War Iraq Will Be Better Off, Most Say*. March 18, 2003, at: <http://www.pewglobal.org/2003/03/18/americas-image-further-erodes-europeans-want-weaker-ties//>.

⁶⁵ See for example *Sondeo: La opinión pública de los españoles*. ASEP, enero-diciembre 1994, question 32, at: http://www.jdsurvey.net/jds/jdsurveyAnalisis.jsp?ES_COL=130&Idioma=E&SeccionCol=02, which shows a level of satisfaction with the way democracy works in Spain between 42.3 percent and 51.9 percent, and an average approaching 50 percent.

⁶⁶ Del Campo, and Camacho, *La opinión pública española*, pp. 43–44. Also Carlos Alonso Zaldívar, *Miradas torcidas. Percepciones mutuas entre España y Estados Unidos* (Madrid, Working Paper 22, 4 septiembre 2003), p. 27; Noya, *La imagen de Estados Unidos en España*, pp. 2, 4–5, and Díez Nicolás, *La opinión pública española [...] 2006*, p. 59. Spanish opinions compiled in BRIE 1, November 2002, gave the United States a score of 4.8 on a scale of 1 to 10, placing it in a middling-to-low position in comparison with 12 other countries, whereas European countries, Argentina, Mexico and Japan were all better placed with more than 5 points.

⁶⁷ Del Campo, and Camacho, *La opinión pública española*, p. 131.

Spanish opinions of the United States had plummeted to only 14 percent.⁶⁸ Two surveys carried out in February and May of 2003 by the Royal Elcano Institute confirmed the shift, although the figures recorded were not so dramatic, showing that Spaniards who expressed favorable or very favorable evaluations of the United States as a country dropped from 39 percent to 33 percent, while those who expressed critical evaluations grew from 52 percent to 61 percent.⁶⁹

These same two surveys of 2003 included a question on perceptions of American democracy, with the result that only 31–33 percent of those surveyed specifically approved of American democracy, while 50–61 percent did not approve or had a negative opinion. This dramatic drop in Spanish esteem of the US political model was the lowest overall positive evaluation of any of the regions in the world which were surveyed at that time, and much lower than the average approval rate of the European Union (around 44 percent), and even more so than the Eastern European average (around 50 percent).⁷⁰ This trend was confirmed in 2004 by an opinion poll of the United States and European Countries, carried out by the German Marshall Fund. On average, Europeans gave the USA a reading of 55 on a scale of 1 to 100 when asked to rate their favorable sentiments, but Spain expressed “lukewarm feelings” with a rating of only 42, an evaluation that was repeated in the 2005 poll. Chislett interprets that these comparative figures reflect the fact that Spain is the most left-leaning country in Europe and also the most pacifist.⁷¹ Inocencio Arias, who has had a long and distinguished career as a diplomat and has occupied high government posts during both conservative and socialist administrations, has recently declared that a majority of Spaniards currently distrust the US political system and its institutions.⁷²

⁶⁸ *America's Image Further Erodes*, cit. Comparative data in this report show that favorable images of the USA fell between 1999–2000 and 2003, in Poland from 86 percent to 50 percent (this was the highest rating of the set), in the UK from 83 percent to 48 percent, and in Turkey (the lowest rating) from 52 percent to 12 percent.

⁶⁹ *Barómetro del Real Instituto Elcano (BRIE). Segunda oleada: Resultados de febrero de 2003* (Madrid March 2003), hereafter BRIE 2, & *Barómetro del Real Instituto Elcano (BRIE). Tercera oleada: Resultados de mayo de 2003* (Madrid June 2003) hereafter BRIE 3, cit. in Noya, *La imagen de Estados Unidos en España*, p. 3, and Alonso, *Miradas torcidas*, p. 27. The main shift to negative positions was seen among left-leaning participants, reflecting their vehement partisan opposition to the war in Iraq. See also comparative tables in Pew Research, Global Attitudes Project, *Global Opinion: The Spread of Anti-Americanism*, January 24, 2005, at: <http://www.pewglobal.org/2005/01/24/global-opinion-the-spread-of-anti-americanism/>.

⁷⁰ BRIE 2, and BRIE 3. This finding is cited in many analyses, including Noya, *La imagen de Estados Unidos en España*, pp. 3–7; Alonso, *Miradas torcidas*, pp. 30, 33–34.

⁷¹ German Marshall Fund, *Transatlantic Trends*, 2004, in Chislett, *Spain and the United States*, pp. 117–119. The Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2005, showed the evolution of favorable Spanish opinion about the United States: from 50 percent in 1999–2000, it dropped to 38 percent in 2003, and even though it climbed back to 41 percent in 2005, it was still the lowest rating in Europe.

⁷² Inocencio Arias, “Cómo los vemos y cómo nos ven.” *Tribuna Norteamericana* 12 (abril 2013),

In this period, too, the inversion of ideological positions that had been developing slowly since the mid-1950s was almost complete. The old right-wing anti-American bias has been much diluted, as modern Spanish conservatives have gradually become less hostile, sometimes even expressing moderately favorable views of the United States. Anti-Americanism has not disappeared on the right, but it has softened, especially among younger conservatives.⁷³ Self-identified right-wing participants in a 2002 Spanish survey put their level of esteem of the United States at a solid 5.7 on a scale of 1 to 10.⁷⁴ One analysis of the Spanish press through the 1980s and early 1990s shows that the American political model as reflected in its electoral system continued to inspire a mostly positive discourse in two major conservative newspapers. Author Coral Morera concludes that the Catalan newspaper *La Vanguardia* consistently argued: “the Soviet system has failed and the United States has triumphed as a political model. We are in the presence of a great country where liberty and progress are a way of life, despite internal and external crises of leadership.” The traditionally monarchical *ABC* offered more pondered and nuanced judgments, but on the whole maintained the idea that the USA is “a great nation, the leading Western power, thanks to a constitutional strength that has made it into a privileged place.”⁷⁵ These Spanish conservatives, then, not only identify the American political system as a successful democracy but now celebrate that success. By contrast, socialists, communists and other left-leaning groups have generally maintained strong negative attitudes, although there has been some strategic shifting for domestic political reasons and in reaction to the fall of the Soviet Union. Self-declared left-leaning participants in the 2002 Spanish opinion poll put their level of esteem of the United States at 4.3, on a scale of 1 to 10, which was considerably lower than the opinion expressed by Spanish conservatives.⁷⁶ The major socialist newspaper *El País* has consistently published criticisms of the USAmerican political model, although

p. 6. His career includes 1988–1991, (socialist government) Under-Secretary of Foreign Affairs; 1991–1993, Secretary of State for Overseas Cooperation; 1997–2004 (conservative government) Ambassador at the United Nations, where he presided the UN Anti-terrorism Committee and the Association of Ambassadors ONU; 2006–2010, General Consul in Los Angeles.

⁷³ Noya, *La imagen de Estados Unidos en España*, pp. 1, 4–5. Díez Nicolás, *La opinión pública española [...] 2006*, p. 62. Chislett, *Spain and the United States*, p. 116, says that “anti-Americanism on the right of the Spanish political spectrum has basically disappeared, but remains quite strong in the country as a whole, depending on what we mean by the concept.”

⁷⁴ BRIE 1, November 2002.

⁷⁵ Coral Morera Hernández, *La imagen de Estados Unidos en la prensa española en el final de la Guerra Fría: 1979–1992* (Ph.D. Thesis. Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, 2009), pp. 85–86, 486–487. *La Vanguardia*, published in Barcelona, has long represented Catalanian and Europeanist perspectives and *ABC* has traditionally supported constitutional monarchism.

⁷⁶ BRIE 1, November 2002.

for a few years under the government of Felipe González in the 1980s and early 1990s, official policy did encourage some restraint.⁷⁷

On the whole, according to analyst William Chislett, in addition to foreign policy, the chief factor that influences Spanish views of the United States, perhaps more than those of other countries, is “the gap between the democratic values preached at home and what is practiced abroad.”⁷⁸ He does not venture an explanation of why this is so, but if his observation is correct, one wonders if Spaniards possibly put a particularly high value on democracy because they waited so long and struggled so hard to achieve a democratic regime in their own country. The accusation of hypocrisy that foreign critics so often level at the United States, because of perceived contradictions between what that nation represents itself to *be* and what its governments *do*, would certainly resonate with many Spaniards who feel that American policies repeatedly hurt Spanish national interests in the past, and by supporting the Franco regime contributed to the long delay in establishing democracy in their country.

Conclusion

The “self-evident” truths laid down in 1776 were the cornerstone of American national identity; who Americans claimed to *be* was a function of the ideas they defended. Foreign onlookers might have simply dismissed the American claim to embody democracy, if it had not been for American success in first consolidating and then expanding their political system, while simultaneously deepening the national commitment to the democratic ideals which would form the so-called American creed, the essence of American national identity.⁷⁹

This essay has presented an overview of Spanish perceptions of the connection between American national identity and success at three equidistant historical moments over a long period of time. It is a study in bilateral cultural relations, but keeping an eye on the possibilities for comparative studies within the larger framework of historiographical debates about foreign “othering” of the United States. Of course, perceptions of foreign nations are in large part reflections of self-images and comparison with oneself. If, in addition, one believes with Katzenstein and Keohane that anti-American views in foreign countries are so polyvalent that they have little or no effect on those countries’ diplomatic relations with the United States, it might seem that the study of foreign perceptions of

⁷⁷ Morera, *La imagen de Estados Unidos*, pp. 485, 488–491.

⁷⁸ Chislett, *Spain and the United States*, p. 119.

⁷⁹ Ian Tyrrell, *Transnational Nation. United States History in Global Perspective since 1789*, Basingstoke 2007, p. 61: “what held Americans together was their civic identity.”

the United States holds only marginal interest for a superpower in an apparently unipolar world. However, following the lead of Joseph Nye's influential book on "soft power", other authors have argued that "public opinion about U.S. foreign policy in foreign countries does affect their policies towards the U.S."⁸⁰ In any case, while neither the American people nor American governments can control the domestic circumstances that color each country's perceptions of the United States, it hardly seems appropriate for a world superpower to ignore foreign opinions, or to eschew opportunities to positively influence them, or at least to avoid aggravating anti-Americanism.⁸¹

In Spain, throughout the long nineteenth century, conservatives would have been happy to see the American experiment fail, and they maintained a doubly negative attitude in the face of American success: first, because the success of American democracy posed an ideological and political threat to the established socio-political order; and second, because that successful democracy created the conditions which led to the spectacular growth of American human and economic resources, which in turn translated into US power, which was a constant threat to Spanish colonial interests in America until Spain's final defeat in 1898. In sum, conservative hostility was a reaction both against *who* Americans *were* and *what* Americans *did* or might do. By contrast, some enlightened and progressive liberals and most republicans in Spain maintained a strong positive attitude towards the United States, precisely because American success in establishing and developing a democracy served as a source of inspiration and provided them with a model for political, social and cultural reform in Spain. They admired American democracy and the values it represented, ignoring any actions or policies, whether in the United States itself or abroad, that compromised or contradicted that ideal vision. Indeed, they virtually created an American democratic identity based entirely on success, leaving no room at all for suggestions of failure or mention of the contradictions and deficiencies that were so often criticized by their political opponents.

The United States clearly had little hope of improving the dominant negative perceptions of Spanish conservatives, because their scorn, suspicion, fear, hate and hostile envy arose from their own strong attachment to cultural and

⁸⁰ Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, New York 2004. Benjamin E. Goldsmith, and Yusaku Horiuchi, "In Search of Soft Power: Does Foreign Public Opinion Matter for U.S. Foreign Policy?" (Australian National University, Crawford School of Economics and Government, Crawford School Research Paper No 8), *World Politics* 64/03 (July 2012), in Social Science Research Network, at: http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1932478, add that "this effect is conditional on the salience of an issue for mass publics."

⁸¹ In keeping with this essay's subject, Philipp Gassert, "The Anti-American as Americanizer. Revisiting the Anti-American Century in Germany." *German Politics and Society* vol. 27/90-1 (Spring 2009), pp. 24-38, argues that "anti-Americanism should be seen as a measure of America's continued influence and *success*." My emphasis.

socio-political conditions in Spain. Similarly, there is no reason to suppose that the United States could have done much to increase the pro-American fervor of the favorable republican views or to increase the number of admirers, because they, too, reflected mainly that minority's radical rejection of the cultural and socio-political conditions in Spain. In the twentieth century, however, both the negative and favorable attitudes were weakened by two main developments. First Spain became a democracy itself. Consequently, Spaniards now generally approve of American democratic values, but no longer find them exceptional, much less modelic. Indeed, from the vantage point of European and Spanish versions of democratic regimes, they find considerable fault with the actual American political system. Second, the United States, by actions that have negatively affected Spanish and world interests, has repeatedly and seriously compromised the values with which the United States professes to identify. Consequently, Spaniards on both sides of the ideological spectrum have become more attentive to and critical of what the United States *does*, especially when American foreign policy actions and economic interests seem to contradict declared American values.

Many studies indicate the importance of discerning between different types of attitudes towards the United States based on their different motivations. Perceptions that address issues of identity necessarily involve ideological, emotional or cultural bias and are therefore more difficult to influence, whereas opinions expressed in response to policy decisions and actions might be influenced by modifying those policies.⁸²

There seems little point in American attempts to convince foreigners of the continuing commitment of the United States to its democratic identity, because foreign perceptions clearly depend as much (if not more) on the ideological inclinations and cultural identity of the observers as on the self-image projected by US propaganda and 'soft' power, or even by the democratic reality of the American political system. US governments might change their policies to better reflect American democratic values, but the fact is that they may not be willing or able to substantially change their policies. The only viable solution, then, may well be for US governments to seek ways of explaining their foreign policies without using justifications connected with the defense or promotion of democracy in the world (except of course when this motivation is indisputable and supported by the means of action). This tendency serves only to weaken American identity and the international image of the United States as a democratic nation. Instead, US policies could be publicly based on more rational explanations of national interests and objectives that not only allow for dialogue and negotiation, but

⁸² See Katzenstein, and Keohane, eds., *Anti-Americanisms in World Politics*, and "Anti-Americanisms." cit. This distinction explains why many surveys of public opinion ask participants questions differentiating values and policies.

also accommodate criticism that does not have to call into question the democratic identity of the United States. Such an effort would certainly not stop foreign or even home-grown anti-Americanist sentiments and discourse, because hostile criticism is a function of asymmetrical power relations in a world in which the United States is the current superpower; but it might help to moderate its excesses.

Sukces jako amerykańska tożsamość w oczach obcokrajowców: hiszpańskie postrzeganie i struktury historyczne

Wartości demokratyczne są nierozdzielnie związane z amerykańską tożsamością. Stanowią sedno amerykańskiej autoprezentacji zarówno w kraju, jak i za granicą. Jednak obcokrajowcy mogliby odrzucić amerykańskie roszczenia do utożsamiania się z demokracją, gdyby nie polityczny, ekonomiczny, a nawet kulturowy sukces Stanów Zjednoczonych. Ten sukces i jego oczywiste powiązania z demokratycznymi ideami i instytucjami niewątpliwie zostały dostrzeżone. Niniejszy artykuł bada hiszpański punkt widzenia na powiązania pomiędzy amerykańską tożsamością a sukcesem w okresie obejmującym trzy kolejne przełomy wieków. Wraz z historyczną ewolucją obu państw, zmieniało się postrzeganie Stanów Zjednoczonych przez Hiszpanów, choć było ono niezmiennie naznaczone rywalizującymi hiszpańskimi ideologiami politycznymi. Na przykład, przez cały dziewiętnasty wiek hiszpańscy republikanie i niektórzy progresywni liberałowie tak bardzo podziwiali Stany Zjednoczone, że w ich dyskursie fakt zlania się amerykańskiej demokracji i sukcesu nie pozostawiał miejsca na jakiegokolwiek sugestie niepowodzenia czy też wzmianki dotyczące przeciwstawień lub niedociągnięć, tak często krytykowane przez ich politycznych oponentów. Niniejsza analiza przykładu hiszpańskiego wskazuje, że Amerykanie mają niewielki wpływ na to, w jaki sposób Stany Zjednoczone są postrzegane w poszczególnych krajach. W formułowaniu założeń polityki zagranicznej Stany Zjednoczone powinny kierować się swoimi własnymi interesami, dostrzegając jednak silne antyamerykańskie sentymenty zagranicą, ponieważ opinia publiczna może w niekorzystny sposób wpłynąć na wybór opcji preferowanych przez rządy potencjalnych sojuszników.

Słowa kluczowe: Stany Zjednoczone, Hiszpania, stosunki międzynarodowe, model polityczny, demokracja, postrzeganie, opinia publiczna, 1776–2012