

## *September 11, 2001: U.S. Ruling Class's Agenda for Hegemony*

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### **Abstract**

The attacks of September 11, 2001 represented a turning point in modern history. The United States' territories were attacked for the second time ever; victims belonged to diverse nationalities, ethnicities and religions; and the attacks received intensive, long-lasting, coverage by media agencies across the globe. Additionally, the attacks were followed by a U.S.-led global war on terror, while the international community growingly adopted tighter security measures. Nonetheless, terrorist attacks have recurrently persisted, which led scholars to question the ruling classes' insistence, in the U.S. and other countries, on amplifying security measures and perpetuating security discourses, while undermining all other alternatives. Hence, this study examines the historical context and underlying factors, which shaped the ruling class's reaction, under George W. Bush's leadership, to the 9/11 attacks. The paper argues that the U.S. ruling class has used 9/11 and the following massive anti-terrorism campaign to achieve two major hegemonic projects: reinforcing the American army's activities domestically and globally, as well as limiting individual liberties and reducing domestic opposition to the elite's ideology and strategies. Namely, 9/11 represented 'a pretext of convenience' that served to revive the U.S. ruling class's hegemony by consolidating its power, domestically and internationally, and meeting some of its political, cultural and economic interests.

Keywords: September 11, the war on terror, ruling class, hegemony

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## Introduction

The attacks of September 11, 2001 represented a turning point in the history of the phenomenon of 'terrorism'. It was the second time ever for the world's biggest superpower—the United States of America—to witness a direct attack on its territories, after the attacks on Pearl Harbor in 1941. The 9/11 attacks involved people of diverse nationalities, ethnicities and religious affiliations, and was intensively covered by the media. Moreover, most countries reacted to the attacks by severely intensifying their security systems—intensive airport checks, difficulties in obtaining tourism or immigration visas, and frequent discrimination against Arabs and Muslims traveling or residing in North America and Western Europe. Nevertheless, despite the tight security measures and the war on terror led by the U.S., terrorist attacks have been on the rise, as terrorists increasingly used more innovative means to infiltrate the security barriers and get their social or political messages across. These recurring attacks, thus, raised doubts about the effectiveness of the war on terror and the full dependence on force to eliminate terrorism. Indeed, from late 2001 onward, many studies were dedicated to investigate the motives behind states and ruling classes' persistence on favoring hard power over other alternatives in response to terrorist attacks. Similarly, this paper aims to investigate the case of the 9/11 attacks by addressing the following questions: why has the U.S. ruling class, been determined to focus and invest in amplifying security measures and in perpetuating a security discourse that opt to curb individual liberties, while undermining negotiations, diplomacy and investigations into the demands and motives of the attackers? Is it a question of effectiveness and inevitability as often portrayed by the ruling class, or do these policies actually serve deeper state policies related to state and ruling class hegemony?

In order to explore these questions, the study conducts a thorough analysis of the political roots and context, which shaped the security discourse perpetuated, and policies carried out, by the U.S. ruling class, under the leadership of Former President George W. Bush. This paper argues that the 9/11 attacks constituted 'a pretext of convenience' for the U.S. ruling class to activate a preset agenda that aimed to revive the domestic and international hegemony, which the U.S. enjoyed from World War Two (WWII) until the end of the Cold War. In that regard, the global fight against terrorism represented a cover-up for deeper political strategies deployed by the U.S. ruling class to consolidate its power and meet some of its political, cultural and economic interests. This study looks particularly at two of the U.S. ruling class's objectives, which 9/11 facilitated achieving. The first goal concerned the military sector and related to the reinforcement of the U.S. military might and the increase of the army's activities domestically and globally. Secondly, the U.S. ruling elite aimed to increase domestic control and nurture an 'organized consent' for its ideology and policies. The paper frequently resort to primary sources, including Bush's speeches and other official documents, to highlight the security discourse perpetuated post 9/11. As to theoretically, the paper analyzes the actions of the U.S. ruling class and its various projects using a Gramscian framework—Gramsci and his theory on cultural hegemony, which underlines the notion of hegemony in the understanding of state behavior. On that note, the paper begins by briefly defining three key terms—terrorism, hegemony and pretext of convenience—before proceeding to examine the two projects that served the hegemonic agenda embraced by the Bush administration in the aftermath of the attacks.

## Definitions and Theoretical Framework

Starting with the notion of 'Terrorism', which still lacks a universally accepted definition, this study adopts Walter Enders and Todd Sandler's definition outlined in their book *The Political Economy of Terrorism* (2006, p.3). The authors described terrorism as "the premeditated use or threat to use violence by individuals or subnational groups in order to obtain a political or social objective through the intimidation of a large audience beyond that of the immediate victims. Two essential ingredients characterize any modern definition of terrorism: the presence or threat of violence and a political/social motive." This definition is particularly powerful as it captures the visible aspect of the phenomenon of terrorism—the use or threat of the use of force—as well as the more subtle and often silenced aspect, which corresponds to the constant presence of a political or social motive behind terrorism. Indeed, realizing the constant presence of a political or social motive behind terrorist attacks represents a determining factor in analyzing and comprehending state response to terrorism.

Moving to the definition of 'Hegemony', this paper's analysis of the U.S. ruling class's response to 9/11 is guided by Antonio Gramsci's theory on cultural hegemony. In *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (1991), Gramsci described 'hegemony' as the success of the ruling or dominant classes in a society to impose their own understanding and view of reality on the rest of the population so it may be widely perceived as 'common sense'. He argued (p.193) that "the supremacy of a social group manifests itself in two ways, as 'domination' and as 'intellectual and moral leadership.' The 'normal' exercise of hegemony on the now classical terrain of the parliamentary regime is characterized by the combination of force and consent, which balance each other reciprocally, without force predominating excessively over consent." In other words, hegemony is established following a general 'consensus' to the dominant class's ideology as the "only sensible way of seeing the world; while any group who present an alternative view are therefore marginalized" (Goldberg). Similarly, this paper suggests that following 9/11/2001, the U.S. ruling class attempted to implement its preset hegemonic agenda using a balance of consent, especially at home, and force, usually abroad.

Lastly, the concept of 'pretext' refers to the occurrence of "a dramatic event that will be contrived to give the (mistaken) impression that a foreign power has threatened vital national interests" (Gibbs, 2004, p.315). Ruling classes usually resort to one of two types of pretexts to gain consent for their agendas. On the one hand, there is what David Gibbs (p.295) termed an 'orchestrated pretext', which "involves the deliberate manufacture of key events to be used as pretexts." On the other hand, ruling classes would take advantage of any dramatic event that occurs to argue for strategies and policy decisions that once lacked public consent (Ibid, p.294). Gibbs called this second type of pretext, which is relevant to this paper, a 'pretext of convenience'. Accordingly, this study argues that, although 9/11 was a shock to the Bush administration, it was immediately conceived as the pretext, which the U.S. ruling class needed to launch its preset agenda for hegemony with little, if any, opposition from the public.

## **Militarizing Terrorism and The ‘War on Terror’**

The end of the cold war constituted a major victory for the U.S. and its allies over the wave of communism. However, this victory brought to a halt the rationale advanced by the U.S. ruling class since WWII as to the constant need to increase U.S. military expenditures (Ibid, p.315). By February 1992, the U.S. congress issued a primary report that discussed decreasing U.S. defense budget. The report stated that “while future U.S. defense needs are still unclear, they will surely require less money and fewer people, as well as shifting in kind. It is now safe to contemplate very substantial reductions in defense spending—perhaps to the lowest level in 40 years” (U.S. Congress, 1992, iii). However, the cuts in U.S. Defense budget created deep tensions in the political and economic arenas. On the one hand, the cuts led to serious changes in the structure and capacity of the U.S. military services, which the army perceived as a source of humiliation. On the other hand, many of the “interest groups associated with the military-industrial complex” during consecutive decades of a U.S. economy of war were having extreme difficulties coping with the new situation (Gibbs, p.317). Nevertheless, any lobbying or public campaigns in favor for rearmament, during the first half of the 1990s, were perceived as unfounded and lacking credibility due to the absence of powerful enemies at the level of the former Soviet Union (Ibid, p.318).

The situation slowly changed in the late 1990s as the sparkle of the victory started to decline, and renewed efforts emerged to promote reinforcement of the army and augmented budgetary allocations. Claiming that the U.S. was subject to new threats and enemies, these campaigns insisted that the U.S. must be always fully prepared for any emergency. The most prominent campaign aimed at fortifying the U.S. army was led by the Project for the New American Century (PNAC), created by a group of neoconservatives in 1997. In its Statement of Principles (1997), the PNAC justified its call for increasing U.S. defense spending by stating that “the history of the 20th century should have taught us that it is important to shape circumstances before crises emerge, and to meet threats before they become dire.” On September 2000, two months before Bush’s win of the U.S. presidency, PNAC issued an 81-page-report entitled “Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources For a New Century.” The report detailed some ‘core missions’ that the U.S. army needed to carry out, including “maintaining nuclear superiority, expanding the armed forces by 200,000 active-duty personnel, and "repositioning" those forces "to respond to 21st century strategic realities” (Schanberg and Miraldi, p.214). Once in office, Bush explicitly embraced the PNAC’s vision and objectives, and started pushing for a proactive foreign policy based on military primacy. He recurrently argued that the U.S. was endangered by “all the unconventional and invisible threats of new technologies and old hatreds” (Bacevich, 2001, p.74). On February 2001, while introducing the budget, Bush “called for an increase of \$14.2 billion, or 4.8 percent, in defense spending” (Higgs, 2001). Nonetheless, with no apparent threat on the U.S. lands, proposals for military strengthening and action, advanced by Bush and PNAC, remained subject to “uniformed skepticism and informed hostility” (Gibbs, p.294). Therefore, a ‘pretext’ was needed to overcome the dominant public opposition and proceed with the U.S. ruling class hegemonic plans.

The few hours that followed the 9/11 attacks on the twin towers and other key locations in the U.S. generated an atmosphere of fear and shock, while raising serious

doubts about the U.S. ability to respond to these attacks. At such critical moments, U.S. presidents have always played a key role “in determining the impact of terrorism on (the U.S.). Through their actions and statements, presidents can either help fuel a crisis atmosphere over terrorism or they can help defuse it” (Simon, 2001, p.xviii). Hence, Bush’s speech on the night of the attacks represented the first opportunity to restore the ruling class’s credibility and power, while simultaneously laying the foundation to build public consent for the ruling class’s preset plans. As noted by Gramsci (p.315), a group achieves hegemony by implementing the ‘dual perspective’; namely, by combining in a dialectical unity the two levels “of force and of consent, authority and hegemony, violence and civilization, of agitation and of propaganda, of tactics and of strategy.” Indeed, Bush’s speech on 9/11 was characterized by a powerful rhetoric that infused a discourse of securitization and militarization, which would shape the U.S. public mentality during the following years. The notion of threat and the ‘evil’ nature of the attacks dominated the speech through the use of words and phrases such as ‘attack(s),’ ‘evil,’ ‘acts of terror,’ ‘frighten,’ ‘mass murder,’ ‘terrorists,’ ‘war,’ ‘death’ and ‘blood’ (Finkelman and Lesh, 2008, p.2069). Moreover, at several instances during the speech, Bush referred to the U.S. army, by highlighting its urgent role in the coming period, especially in ‘the war against terrorism’ (Ibid). However, the confidence, which Bush displayed in reference to the U.S. army—“our military is powerful, and it’s prepared”—wasn’t an accurate reflection of the then status of the U.S. army. Actually, while expressing condolence and assurance to the grieving U.S. citizens, Bush was sharing the ruling class’s intention to carry out a revival and reinforcement of the U.S. defense force (Ibid). Namely, the speech embodied the first expression of ‘The Bush Doctrine,’ which “stated that the United States was justified in taking military action against any nation that supported or harbored terrorist organizations” (Ibid, p.2066). From that moment onward, the 9/11 attacks became a decisive factor in the new proactive foreign policy carried out by the U.S. ruling class. Particularly, the attacks became the core stone, on which a multiplicity of strategies related to a major round of rearmament was founded (Gibbs, p.315).

On the same evening of the attacks, Bush started planning for war as he chaired two meetings—a large meeting that included the president’s domestic department, and a smaller, more secretive, meeting with his top advisers—later known as the president’s ‘war council’. While reviewing the meeting’s proceedings found in *The 9/11 Commission Report*, it seems evident that the 9/11 attacks formed the basis of a large military campaign and a hegemonic project, starting at home and extending abroad. First, the president announced, “it was time for self-defense,” as the U.S. would be equally punishing the attackers and those who supported them. Second, according to the report, “the president noted that the attacks provided a great opportunity to engage Russia and China” (Wartime, 2004, p.330). In other words, the attacks served as a tool to influence other big powers to advance U.S. interests and strategies. Moreover, the supremacy of the U.S. military in the Middle East was at the core of the war council’s considerations. For instance, while planning for war, the ‘war council’ considered a paper that went beyond hunting down al Qaeda to propose the “elimination of terrorism as a threat to the American way of life,” which later translated into the U.S. army “pursuing other international terrorist organizations in the Middle East” (Ibid). Similarly, long-term plans, on the role of the U.S. army in the Middle East and the Iraq war, were already being discussed less than two months after

the attacks. Commenting on the post-9/11 Bush serial-war planning, Wars Wesley Clark (2003, p.130) wrote:

“As I went back through the Pentagon in November 2001, one of the senior military staff officers had time for a chat. Yes, we were still on track for going against Iraq, he said. But there was more. This was being discussed as part of a five-year campaign plan, he said, and there were a total of seven countries, beginning with Iraq, then Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Iran, Somalia and Sudan.”

Even before invading Iraq in 2003, the U.S. military was already mobilized in the US-led invasion of Afghanistan on 7 October 2001, less than one month after the attacks.

The impact of the continuous stress on the military and security apparatus's role in reestablishing U.S. hegemony and gaining public trust was apparent in the reports and acts newly issued and ratified by the U.S. ruling class. For example, on 26 October 2001, Bush signed *Uniting And Strengthening America By Providing Appropriate Tools Required To Intercept And Obstruct Terrorism Act* (USA PATRIOT Act), which “traded off personal freedoms for collective security” (Enders and Sandler, p.225). Furthermore, on September 2002, The White House issued *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, which codified the new doctrine and laid down a detailed strategy of U.S. military supremacy as the only approach to fight terrorism. The White House's strategy equally highlighted the uncertain duration of this war against terrorism—a factor that was skillfully used by the U.S. ruling class to secure a free pass to generate an economy of war for as long as it claimed necessary. This growing war economy, then, served to foster domestic state power and facilitate the implementation of “agendas long shared equally by Republicans and Democrats” concerning military supremacy and U.S. expansion abroad (Boggs, 2002, p.251). In terms of resources, the revival and growth of this war economy translated into massive increase in military expenditure under the pretext of making the U.S. better equipped in its war against terrorism. In 2002, less than a year since the new round of U.S. rearmament started, the U.S. saw a 10% real terms increase in military expenditure, accounting for almost three-quarters of the global increase in response to 9/11 (Sköns et al., 2003). Moreover, on a national level, “federal spending for homeland security was \$21 billion” in the 2002 fiscal year, which then grew to \$55 billion in 2006, marking a 161% increase to the defense budget in just four years (Webel and Arnaldi, 2011, p.121). While largely perceived as disproportionate to the real security needs of the U.S. (Gibbs, p. 320), this significant allocation of resources, justified by 9/11, was highly favorable for the military services and the military-industrial complex. Through this round of rearmament, the U.S. Defense Forces reestablished itself as key player in American politics, after being slightly marginalized since the end of the Cold War. As for the military-industrial complex, the large-scale revival in arms' production and innovations, as well as the profit made by the defense companies following 9/11 was alarming. By 2002, “the growth in tasks, equipment, and personal for security companies of military and police duties,” led this military-industrial complex to capture a major sector of the U.S. economy (Webel and Arnaldi, p.121). As *The Economist* subtly noted, “for the world's stock-markets, September 11<sup>th</sup> was a ‘buy’ signal. Stocks for defense companies soared after more than a decade in the doldrums caused by the fall of the Berlin Wall” (Transformed?, 2002).

## **The Creation of ‘Organized Consent’**

To become hegemonic in a ‘democratic’ society, the ruling class must obtain the ‘consent’ of the public, or rather the absence of any opposition, in order to legitimize and efficiently proceed with its agendas. Namely, a hegemonic ideology, Gramsci argued, must touch the everyday concerns of the people, and connect with their beliefs and their perception of morality (Fanis, 2004, p.5). In the case of 9/11, the attacks created a widespread state of shock and fear that dominated the public sphere and mentality, and created a public need for reassurance and security. For the ruling class, this public state of fear represented the receptive environment, which the ruling class longed for in order to successfully sell and legitimize its agenda for domestic and international hegemony. Thus, the U.S. ruling class immediately adopted a discourse of securitization and militarization, where its hegemonic agenda was framed as the immediate and only solution for the crisis, as well as the guarantor for public safety. Moreover, the war on terror—declared by Bush on the evening of the attacks—was soon used as a pretext to legitimize intensive governmental control and surveillance, which further nurtured the atmosphere of paranoia, fear and insecurity already spread among the American people (Boggs, p.252). However, the hegemonic projects of the U.S. ruling class—concerning military supremacy, domestic control and global hegemony—weren’t to be achieved over night. These long-term projects required an organized consent, which the ruling class must “educate” by creating a political and social sphere that enforce the ruling class’s ideology and continuously regenerate public consent. Following 9/11, the U.S. ruling class pursued three simultaneous strategies to create this organized consent. First, it worked on redefining the American identity; second, it portrayed the state, with an emphasis on its defense and intelligence institutions, as the only source of protection for the people from the threat of terrorism; and third, it recurrently neutralized any source of domestic opposition.

National identity, as defined by Maria Fanis (p.4), corresponds to “the culmination of deliberate and conscious attempts by interested and conscious elites to promote specific ideas and beliefs regarding the social organization of society.” The image of the U.S. as the defender of freedom, liberty and democracy was a defining feature in the new identity, which the U.S. ruling class projected on the American people in the aftermath of 9/11. However, this new identity—centered on the American people being ‘one nation,’ a defender of freedom and an enemy of ‘evil’—was highly problematic. Firstly, the idea of the U.S. as one nation was an oversimplified and deceptive image of the multinational, multicultural nature of the American society. Yet, the majority of the American people rapidly accepted this image of ‘one nation,’ because it evoked “a sense of national unity reminiscent of World War II and the Great depression,” which the people perceived as a source of strength to overcome this new crisis (Agathangelou and Ling, 2004, p.524). Moreover, this image was highly favorable for the ruling class, whose members constituted the representatives of this nation and the definer of its values. Furthermore, by consolidating this identity on the national level, starting with Bush’s speech on the attacks’ evening, the ruling class managed to make of this identity the defining element of the country’s security environment, which ultimately dictated the national interest of the country” (Fanis, p.3). Secondly, depicting the 9/11 attacks as pure ‘evil’, mad and irrational deeds of radical Arab Muslims, generated two outcomes that deeply affected the dynamics shaping the American society. On the one hand, there was no room or effort to seek

rational explanations for the terrorist attacks that would lead to discussions concerning motives and intentionality behind the attacks. The U.S. public—including politicians, ordinary citizens and the majority of intellectuals and academics—became largely consumed with moral outrage, which helped the ruling class to create social conformism and neutralize the opposition (Ibid, p.4). The second impact of Bush's depiction of the attacks as acts of 'evil' and religious radicalism concerned the Arab and Muslim population in the U.S., and in the larger Western World. Almost all Arab and Muslim Americans were perceived as linked to this image of 'evil', and thus, they became subject to intolerance and discrimination after the attacks. Many Muslims, Arabs and even Asians—either American citizens or living in the U.S.—reported to be victims of harassment and hate crimes. This behavior fueled by hatred and outrage was mostly based on stereotypes associated to Muslims and became occasionally fatal (Wood).

Beside instituting the New American Identity, another major accomplishment for the ruling class's post 9/11 domestic agenda for hegemony was the ability to make a free society like the American people willingly accept state surveillance over their daily life. The state of chaos, fear and insecurity created by the 9/11 attacks was nurtured by the ruling class to reach what Carl Schmitt called 'the total state.' A 'total state' is a state where the identity of state and society are perceived as one; and where social matters and affairs of state are no longer separate (Schmitt, 1996, p.22). When Bush and the ruling class framed the terrorist attacks on 9/11 as an attack on freedom and on the American way of life, they implicitly led all American citizens to perceive themselves as immediate target of terrorism. Thus, when the ruling class portrayed the state as the defender and protector of freedom, the state by default became the only hope for the U.S. people to regain security. However, what the ruling class described as 'defending freedom' was translated into the state controlling and tightening liberties and freedom of U.S. citizens, under the pretext of being the only way to secure these values from the threat of terrorism. Some of the elements of the securitization discourse, which perpetuated this state of insecurity and imminent threat among the American people, included the launch of the "If You See Something Say Something" campaign, which the ruling class presented as a necessary procedure to "raise public awareness of indicators of terrorism and crime, and encourage citizens to report suspicious activity to law enforcement authorities" (Rowen). Moreover, the Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting Initiative was created to train "state and local law enforcement officials to recognize behaviors and indicators related to terrorism, crime, and other threats and standardize how the observations should be managed" (Ibid). Such initiatives equally cultivated the public fear of being constantly threatened by terrorists, and, thus, in need of state intervention to protect the U.S. citizens and diminish terrorists. Furthermore, the effect of the securitization discourse and the politicization of public freedom was very deep that the people became generally willing to accept extreme measures, such as those included in the USA PATRIOT Act. Some of these measures, which would have been otherwise totally rejected by the population, included curtailing many civil liberties, restrictions on habeas corpus, reduction of immigration rights and a wide electronic surveillance in the name of security against terrorism (Enders and Sandler, p.35).

Nevertheless, despite such restrictions, the domestic approval of President Bush, immediately after 9/11, reached 90 percent, the highest ever recorded by the Gallup Organization (Finkelman and Lesh, p.2063). This exceptionally "high rate of approval



in the days and weeks following the attacks suggests that the impact of his words and actions was regarded as favorable” and matching what the public wanted to hear (Ibid, p.2065). In reference to similar situations, Gramsci noted that “when a given ideology enjoys wide spread “popular consent” and does not rely on overt forms of persuasion, indoctrination, or enforcement, then this ideology is infused with real political legitimacy and can prevail over others” (Fanis, p.5). Thus, the hegemonic ideology of the U.S. ruling class after 9/11 was widely adopted by the population that the policies it proposed easily gained legitimacy and public trust. On surface, the ruling class was offering what the public wanted at this stage, namely, security, and that was the main reason behind the public consent to the ruling class’ ideology and policies. The new identity of the U.S. people was defined as a people threatened by terrorism, and in constant need for state intervention to guarantee its security and protect its freedom. Hence, through policies such as the USA PATRIOT Act, the 9/11 attacks were fully utilized by the U.S. ruling class to undermine individual freedom and to tighten its grip domestically, which directly facilitated the fulfillment of its hegemonic agenda.

Alongside the state of fear and insecurity, the 9/11 attacks equally generated a wave of frenetic patriotism and social conformism, which the ruling class carefully fostered among the American society under the umbrella of the new American identity. Any voices that questioned or opposed the securitization discourse and the new phenomenon of total state, were deterred by the ‘tyranny of majority opinion,’ which became the core stone of the transformed political, social and cultural arenas after 9/11. In the political arena, opposition to the mainstream support for the ruling class’s programs of hegemony was rare and severely attacked. Moreover, the democratic nature of American policy making was deeply undermined and compromised by the interests of the ruling class. Taking the USA PATRIOT Act as an example, the U.S. Congress passed the bill in October 2001 “without public input or congressional deliberation” (Boggs, p.252). Commenting on this bill, Representative Barney Frank said that it involved “the least democratic process for debating questions fundamental to democracy that I have ever seen” (Anderson, 2001). The legislation passed by a vote of 96-1 in the Senate, giving Bush and the ruling class, a carte blanche to carry out the new round of rearmament and military supremacy (Boggs, p.252). Representative Barbara Lee was the lone dissenting vote in the Senate; she called for an open debate on what she described as a life-and-death issue. However, as Lee challenged the political conformism and asked for open debate, she was accused of treason, being a communist and a “terrorist sympathizer by outraged citizens around the country, some even issuing death threats” (Ibid). Aside politics, other aspects of the U.S. society were equally characterized by closure, one-dimensionality and unquestionable support to the anti-terrorism proposals. In universities, the hegemonic projects of the ruling elite were largely accepted and defended under the pretext of fighting terrorism. The slightest criticism of U.S. domestic and foreign policies by faculty or students faced “ fierce hostility and a quick willingness to denounce ideas that might deviate from established definitions of the national interest” (Ibid, p.255). Even the mass media and popular culture became part of the hegemonic scheme of the ruling class, as they worked extensively and continuously to “distort and mystify what takes place on the world stage.” The mainstream news agencies and the entertainment industry strongly helped perpetuating an overwhelmingly positive image of the global and domestic impact of the U.S. policies (Ibid, p.245). Accordingly, the ruling class has successfully used 9/11 to construct organized consent to its hegemonic agenda—any political dissent voices in the aftermath of 9/11 was severely suppressed, while

public opinion was, both directly and indirectly, guided and manipulated to conform with the ruling class's ideology.

## **Conclusion**

With the end of the Cold War, the U.S. lost its biggest enemy—the Soviet Union—which the U.S. ruling class constantly used as a pretext to maintain domestic and global hegemony in the name of protecting the Western capitalist world from the threat of communism. Hence, between 1991 and 2001, the U.S. ruling class became largely unable to secure consent for many of the measures, which it used to easily take during the decades of the Cold War, including war economy and heavy military expenditure. Therefore, the U.S. ruling class needed 'a pretext of convenience'—the occurrence of a major event that could serve as a pretext—to regain domestic and global consent for its hegemonic position and projects. Hence, when the U.S. was attacked on 9/11/2001, the tragic events, while shocking to the U.S. ruling class and its public alike, were immediately perceived as the pretext of convenience needed to legitimize the ruling class's hegemonic interests. The hegemonic agenda of the U.S. ruling class, which was laid down pre-9/11, encompassed two major objectives. On the one hand, the U.S. ruling class aimed to reestablish the U.S. military supremacy and readopt an economy of war by promoting a new round of rearmament and a heavy increase in defense and security budget. On the other hand, the ruling elite looked to secure lasting organized consent for its hegemonic agenda, by effectively perpetuating a discourse of fear, based on the concept of the imminent threat of terrorism and the politicization and securitization of people's everyday lives. This discourse persuaded the public in giving its consent to state control over its rights and liberties; thus, increasing "state authority over the polity, all in the name of security (Fowler and Sen, 2010, p.24).

Nevertheless, although the hegemonic agenda of the U.S. ruling class was largely implemented in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, the following years uncovered major flaws and conflicting outcomes. In particular, the full dependence on military supremacy and coercive measures to suppress terrorism proved neither effective nor sustainable. Additionally, the American people have grown increasingly skeptical about the role and effectiveness of the U.S. forces spread around the globe. Solid criticism and opposition to the U.S. hegemony have been on the rise; particularly, as the discourse of fear gradually lost its momentum and the people grew more aware of the state infiltrating their lives and limiting their liberties. Thus, while initially acting as an effective pretext of convenience to revive the ruling class's hegemonic agenda; on the long run, the 9/11 attacks couldn't protect the ruling class from facing domestic and international opposition.

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