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# ISIS: A Product of the United States' Quest for the Neoconservative Identity

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**ISIS: A Product of the United States' Quest for the Neoconservative Identity**

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Class of 2016**

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## **Introduction**

Today the United States is engaged in a war against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The Islamic extremist group poses real life threats to people all over the world. From San Bernardino, California to Paris, France, ISIS has been terrorizing the world through violence and hate. They are undeniably the enemy of the United States and a major focus of its foreign policy efforts.

But how did ISIS come to be? There is a tendency to think of ISIS as an anomaly born out of the darkest corners of radical Islam. However, ISIS is anything but a singularity. ISIS is part of a much broader relationship between the United States and Iraq. They are the product of almost 40 years of American policy specifically tailored for the Iraq. The purpose of this project is to locate the existence of ISIS within a broader historical lens of American foreign policy and its quest to define itself within the international order. In order to do this it is necessary to start in the 1980's when the White House was occupied by the Reagan administration.

Before examining the long relationship between the United States and Iraq, it is necessary to outline four dominant theses about the United States' position within the international community. The first chapter will discuss the major tenets of each of the following theses: 1) unipolarity: the belief that the United States is the world's sole superpower; 2) neoconservatism: the belief that the United States is the world's sole superpower and has the moral obligation to spread democracy through the use of its military; 3) the "Rise of the Rest": other nations are rising to match the capabilities of the

United States, therefore multipolar and multilateral diplomacy should be the dominate path of American policy; and 4) “American Descent”: since the Vietnam War, the United States has consistently been declining in relative power and respect from the international community. This chapter will allow for a deeper understanding of the complex relationship that would develop between the United States and Iraq and how the American identity would become linked to it.

Each subsequent chapter will focus on one of the three major interactions the United States and Iraq shared: the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988), the Gulf War (1990-1991), and the Iraq War (2003). Under the Reagan administration, the United States acted as a military advisor while providing some aid. Set in the Cold War era, the development of neoconservatism and a strong agenda began to occur within the administration, however; they were constrained by Cold War power politics. The next chapter focuses on the Gulf War and president H.W. Bush. After declaring a New World Order, the Bush Sr. administration organized a united coalition in a fight against Saddam Hussein. While its efforts were channeled through multilateral organizations, the United States viewed itself as a globally hegemonic power simply appeasing the presence of other perspectives of how they should act within the international community. In a short interlude briefly outlining the Clinton years, I will show how the United States’ policy towards Iraq became entrenched in how they defined themselves within the world. Finally, I will examine the Iraq War in 2003. The post-9/11 security environment created the condition viable for the resurgence of the neoconservative agenda and ultimately successful implementation of its policy under the presidency of George W. Bush.

## **Chapter 1: Four Theses on the Role of the United States Within the International Order**

There are several theories floating around the scholarly community about America's position within the international structure: Unipolarity, neoconservatism, the "Rise of the Rest" and the "American Descent." While each of these theses locates America within the international system, there are several major differences among them. Firstly, I will deconstruct the arguments in order for the reader to get a fuller understanding of each. From there I will use each thesis as a lens to analyze America's three major interactions with Iraq (Iran-Iraq War, the Gulf War, and the Iraq War), looking at the justifications provided by the executive branch and other important players in order to determine which school of thought most accurately describes American foreign policy. The significance of this information will allow me to determine how American should act going forward in a post Cold-War security environment. It is important to understand the main differences between the theses, as they will each provide a deeper significance for the development of American identity and its subsequent foreign policy in Iraq.

### **Unipolarity**

The unipolarity thesis views international relations as a system where one state obtains significant supremacy in the areas of cultural, economic, and military influence. They are the sole ruler and authority in the international community because their power and influence is second to none. A common train of thinking throughout unipolar theorists is the idea that states no longer are threatened by other states through direct

military engagement. There are forces and ideologies outside of the concept of nationhood that pose unique threats in an international system dominated by one superpower: the United States of America.

One prominent scholar Charles Krauthammer, author of *The Unipolar Moment Revisited*, argues that the United States is the world's only superpower. In the world of international relations the United States has risen to such an elevated position in terms of resources, economy, military might, that no other nation comes even close to America. After the collapse of the Soviet Union the world no longer had two competing superpowers. It now only had one and that super power was the United States. Krauthammer argues that in a post Cold-War security environment, the United States no longer has to worry about competing with other nation states. He claims the only realistic threat to American unipolarity is a collection of rouge states with weapons of mass destruction (Krauthammer 2002). To delve more specifically, Krauthammer indicts radical Islam as the biggest perpetrator of threatening America and world security. It was radical Islamists who attacked the United States on September 11<sup>th</sup> and they still pose a significant threat to the international community. If the end of the Cold War created a world with asymmetry, Krauthammer claims "September 11 heightened the asymmetry" even more (Krauthammer 2002, 7). He highlights the fact that the attacks allowed the United States to demonstrate to the world three things: American military power; a new form of American strength and resoluteness; and realigning of nations behind American interests and foreign policy.

The unipolar thesis fundamentally argues against the liberal internationalism school of thought. While liberal internationalism "seeks through multilateralism to

transcend power politics, narrow national interests, and ultimately the nation-state itself” Krauthammer argues this simply cannot occur because of the United States’ position as a unipolar power (Krauthammer 2002, 12). If the international system had other significant players with the ability to move towards liberal internationalist goals, then they would have already done so. Krauthammer thinks this is a naïve view of the world and that the United States position on top of the international order reigns supreme over all other nation-states, international governing bodies, and non-state actors.

Another team of scholars, Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth authors of *American Primacy in Perspective*, agree with Krauthammer’s claim that American is the world’s only superpower. They argue, “If today’s American primacy does not constitute unipolarity, then nothing ever will” (Brooks and Wohlforth 2002, 21). Brooks and Wohlforth point out that the United States’ has supremacy in three areas that allow it to hold its position as a hegemon: the military, economic dominance, and supremacy in technology. However they claim it isn’t just military supremacy, technological supremacy, or economic supremacy but the combination of all these at the same time that make the United States the unipolar power (Brooks and Wohlforth 2002). Something that Brooks and Wohlforth and Krauthammer disagree on is what threats exist to American hegemony. While Krauthammer believes it is only rouge states with WMD capabilities, Brooks and Wohlforth find that China “is the only feasible threat to U.S. unipolarity” (Brooks and Wohlforth 2002). Their argument lies in the logic that China over time will be able to close the economic gap that the U.S. has created. However this will take years. Even with China potentially out ranking the U.S. economically, America will still have military, technological, and geographical supremacy.



Brooks and Wohlforth support Krauthammer's argument that in foreign policy the United States dictates whom it wants to work with. They state, "the sources of American strength are so varied and so durable that U.S. foreign policy operates in the realm of choice rather than necessity" (Brooks and Wohlforth 2002). Both scholars find that in no other point in history could a nation act the way the United States does. Because of its elevated position in an asymmetrical world the U.S can act independently and without the constraints of the international community. This is not a justification that the U.S. should act regardless of international opinion, however, there is relatively little that other nations or international organizations can do. Even states like Russia and China have "demonstrated a willingness to cooperate with the United States periodically on strategic matters" they understand the benefits of working with rather than against the world's hegemonic power (Brooks and Wohlforth 2002, 28).

Robert Jervis in his book *American Foreign Policy in a New Era* refutes the notion that the world no longer relies on one superpower. Addressing the Bush Doctrine in regards to the Iraq War, Jervis responds to the claim made by European diplomats "we are no longer in an era where one or two countries control the fate of another country" by stating "[they] describe the world as [they] would like it to be, not as it is" (Jervis 2013). He uses the Bush Doctrine as a prime example of this fact. The Bush Doctrine can be characterized by two words: unilateralism and hegemony. The Iraq War is the perfect example of how unilateralism and hegemony were part of American foreign policy well into the new millennium. The Iraq War was part of "the preventive war doctrine" which was "based on strength and on the associated desire to ensure the maintenance of American dominance" (Jervis 2013).

The unipolar thesis provides a lens for looking at U.S. foreign policy as a decisions made as the sole ruler in the international system. They are not held accountable to any other nation or international governing body, such as the United Nations. Unipolarity is closely linked with a realist perspective and sharply contrasts with a liberal perspective. The United States should act in accordance with this role of unmatched global superiority. As the world's leading and unrivaled power, they have a responsibility to ensure the national interests of the United States are present and guiding principles in all areas of the globe. In regards to the Iraq, the United States had a responsibility three times to intervene for the benefit of the globe, as well as America. Due to the unique hegemonic stature of America, they are the only nation qualified, and ultimately morally obligated, to intervene in international issues that have seemingly little to do with their own affairs.

### **Neoconservatism**

The neoconservative thesis is similar to the unipolar thesis and that it sees the United States as the world's leading power, however, it argues that there are specific characteristics that can be pulled out from a pattern of U.S. foreign policy throughout the Cold War and into the twenty-first century. Francis Fukuyama, author of *America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power, and the Neoconservative Legacy*, outlines four common principles that he believes defines neoconservatism:

A concern with democracy, human rights, and more generally the internal politics of states; a belief that US power can be used for moral purposes; a skepticism about the ability of international law and institutions to solve serious security problems; and finally,

a view that ambitious social engineering often leads to unexpected consequences and often undermines its own ends (Fukuyama 2007)

These four characteristics can each be summed up with single words: regime change; hegemony; unipolarity; and preemption. From Fukuyama's perspective neoconservatives believe "that the internal character of regimes matter and that foreign policy must reflect the deepest values of liberal democratic societies" (Fukuyama 2007). In the context of the Cold War, neoconservatives would argue that it "was a struggle of ideology and value" and not necessarily the struggle for power as realists would put it. The United States and the Soviet Union were battling to spread their values and ideologies to other states, not to gain power for themselves. Because the regime is the "central organizing principle of politics" with a state, American neoconservatives seek to alter or replace it if it does not align with American values and interests of democracy (Fukuyama 2007). In the context of the twenty-first century security environment, neoconservatives would agree with unipolar proponents that radical Islamists pose a significant threat. After September 11<sup>th</sup>, the United States did not go to war with the Afghan or Iraqi people, but rather with "the radical ideology that appeals to a distinct group of Muslims" (Fukuyama 2007). One difference between unipolarity and neoconservatism is the level of severity radical rouge states pose as a threat. Fukuyama believes the likelihood of similar attacks on U.S. soil are much more unlikely due to the level of increased security that emerged as a response.

The second thread Fukuyama finds throughout American neoconservative foreign policy is "a belief that American power has been and could be used for moral purposes" as well as the fact that "the United States needs to remain engaged in international

affairs” (Fukuyama 2007). Underlying this thread is the notion that power is necessary to achieve moral purposes: “as the world’s dominant power, the United States has special responsibilities in the realm of security” (Fukuyama 2007).

Max Boot, author of *The Case for an American Empire*, explicitly argues in congruency with this assertion, however, from a historically critical viewpoint of American foreign policy. Boot claims that the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> can be directly linked to the lack of military presence and American show of power in previous decades. He argues, “the problem...has not been excessive American assertiveness” as some critics would say “but rather insufficient assertiveness” (Boot 2001). Boot agrees with Fukuyama that America should use its military might for moral purposes, or what he calls “enlightened foreign administration” (Boot 2001). Boot even proposes a new military doctrine in *The New American Way of War* calling for an increase in the effectiveness and efficiency of the American military machine. Backing up his previous assertion of a complacent American foreign policy strategy in the decades leading up to September 11<sup>th</sup>, Boot proposes a “transformational military [that] will actually cost more than the old force, but the result will be worth it, since it will allow the U.S. military to continue winning wars at a small cost in lives” (Boot 2003). The continual growth of American military power will allow the United States to stay in their privileged position where they can use force for good.

The third thread of neoconservatism is “skepticism about the legitimacy and effectiveness of international laws and institutions to achieve either success or justice” (Fukuyama 2007). Here neoconservatives take a realist approach and are super critical of institutions like the U.N. Similar to unipolarity proponents they believe that the United

States has more influence and ability than any international body. However, returning to the second thread, it is the duty of the United States to ensure justice and security. Again this is not to say that the United States should act alone. Neoconservatives believe in “collective action based on shared democratic principles” if they align with and are driven by the United States.

Lastly, neoconservatism condemns ambitious social engineering projects. Fukuyama “links the critique of Stalinism in the 1940s with...skepticism about the Great Society in the 1960s” claiming that both “[undermined] its own end” (Fukuyama 2007). This is more or less an affirmation at the previous three principles: it essentially sums up a justification American values and its duty to ensure they are being practiced around the globe.

What makes the neoconservative theory unique is that it combines several schools of thought into one. It rolls skepticism of international institutions (realism), democracy based internationalist foreign policy (liberalism), and pessimism of social engineering (conventional right) into a unique approach to foreign policy. Neoconservatives viewed American intervention in Iraq as necessary based upon the reasons outlined above. There was clearly a need for regime change that constituted American action due to its superiority and hegemonic position. In regards to the attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup> and the subsequent Global War on Terror, it was due to the fact that the United States was not aggressive enough in the first place that gave the perception to the international community that they were weak. In all three interactions this project focuses on, Iraq was not a matter of choice but rather of moral obligation for the United States. It was the duty

of America to spread its values and ideologies to the rest of the world backed by its unmatched military

### **Rise of the Rest**

One of the overarching similarities that helps to define the “Rise of the Rest” theory is the notion that forces outside of the United States’ control are causing it to slide into an international system in which they will have to share power and influence. The rest of the world is finally catching up to the United States in terms of economic and cultural fortitude, which is causing the international order to begin to shift to a more equal and multilateral playing field. Supporters of this claim also offer the notion that the United States will be able to maintain its role as a global leader if they respond with appropriate legislation and policy. However, many authors in this school of thought are pessimistic about the ability of the American political system to correct itself in order to preserve America’s legacy.

According to other scholars (Zakaria, 2012) the world is coming into a new age and experiencing “the birth of a truly global order.” The age of American international dominance is coming to an end, not because of their own decline, but rather other nations are raising themselves up. Over the past century America has been able to succeed as the world’s sole super power because they were willing to adopt foreign policy that other nations had neither the capability nor the willingness to do so. However, countries like China, Brazil, and India are beginning to adopt similar policies that are posing threats to the U.S. economy. Zakaria in *The Post-American World* compares the American “empire” to the British Empire: an over extension of resources and capabilities resulting

in the descent of its spot as the world's leading power. Making a connection to what many scholars and historians believe as the onset of the British downfall, the Boer War, Zakaria applies the same question to the United States' involvement with the Iraq War. He believes that the U.S. "has been overextended and distracted" by this unnecessary conflict thereby causing "history to happen again" (Zakaria 2012).

Joseph Nye, author of *Is the American Century Over?*, supports Zakaria's "Rise of the Rest" theory, however from a perspective that lends toward a positive American outlook in the twenty-first century. Like Zakaria, Nye finds that "the real problem of the United States is not that it will be overtaken by China" or any single contender, "but that it will be faced with a rise in the power resources of many others—both state and non-state actors" (Nye 2015).

At this point it is important to introduce Francis Fukuyama's theory of a multilateral international system which he developed in his 1989 essay *The End of History*. Fukuyama poses the question: has mankind reached the endpoint of its ideological evolution and landed at the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government? (Fukuyama 1989). Essentially he is arguing that the world has progressed to a final stage of "democratic-egalitarian" stage of society where all relevant actors in the international community abide and operate by the same ideologies (Fukuyama 1989). While their arguments are not exactly the same, Fukuyama and Zakaria both see a world in which the international community has organically fostered a system of multilateralism based upon a set of universal ideologies.

The argument for a multilateral world has become important in the world of international relations scholars, however; Fukuyama has ended up evolving his

perspective over time. Fukuyama has moved towards viewing the world through a neoconservative lens--his multilateralism argument is still widely used by other scholars. This is an interesting situation because he is an anchoring author in multiple schools of thought in locating America within the international order. However for this project it is important to be able to separate them from each other. Fukuyama can be credited for bringing the multilateralism thesis to international relations; however, he has since abandoned it while others, such as Zakaria and Nye, have taken over as the leading proponents.

Nye and Zakaria disagree on several points of the rise-of-the-rest theory. While Zakaria's argument aligns more closely with Fukuyama's multilateralism theory, Nye argues that this trend of declining American power can still be reversed. First Nye finds that international system tends to operate on a cyclic pattern of power. Every one hundred years or so, a new nation-state assumes the position as the world's leading power. Within this cyclic pattern the United States is actually returning to a "normal" position in terms of economic power. Here is where Zakaria and Nye split. Nye believes that the United States is in a historically unique position to use their run of exception economic prosperity to perpetuate other areas of its power: military and soft power capabilities. He constructs the idea that the United States has established an international framework of policy that other countries have historically benefitted from participating in. Nye writes, "some analysts point out that it can be rational for states that benefit to preserve this institutional framework" of American supremacy "even if American power resources decline" (Nye 2015). This will only occur, however, if the United States corrects flaws in their political system.



Unlike like neoconservatives and unipolar proponents, those in the “Rise of the Rest” school of thought do not see the greatest threat to American hegemony as external. While there is a heavy emphasis on the economic progression of other nation-states they believe that the biggest threat to America is its own political system. Zakaria finds that “the problem today is that the American political system seems to have lost its ability to create broad coalitions that solve complex issues” (Zakaria 2012). In the past America has always been able to respond to challenges at its economic supremacy: “a focus on American economic decline [through flexible policy has] ended up preventing it” (Zakaria 2012). Nye also concurs with this finding stating “gridlock in the American political system will prevent it from translating its power resources into power outcomes” (Nye 2015). He goes further to say “the idea of decline touches a raw nerve in American politics” which manifests itself in strict partisanship (Nye 2015). He does not see this a serious problem “if it were to merely contribute to self-correcting efforts at improvement” however this notion of decline has led to harmful “nationalistic and protectionist policies” (Nye 2015).

“Rise of the Rest” advocates do not see the world as unipolar for much longer and certainly do not view it from a neoconservative point of view. They attribute the changing nature of the international system to the positive external developments in other nations. At the same time they believe that the United States’ political system is responding poorly, if not accelerating this process of the redistribution of international power and influence. Their basis for argument can be largely found in the principles of a liberal internationalist and a multilateral perspective.

If there are other rising super powers, then how should the United States' deal with Iraq and the threat of ISIS? The "Rise of the Rest" school of thought largely believes that the United States' involvement in Iraq have been an overextension of their resources and capabilities. If a truly multipolar world is emerging, then the responsibility now falls on a multitude of nations to act as the world's police force and combat ISIS. It would be foolish for the United States to continue acting alone when they no longer hold the same clout as the previous decades. Iraq, and other areas of the world that need assistance, should be a combined effort of all of the world's most powerful nations. The United States must cope with their changing identity responsibly in order to remain the most significant player in a new international order of multiple superstars.

### **"American Descent"**

A final theory of America's position within the international system is the "American Descent" thesis. Some of the commonalities that encapsulate this branch of the scholarship are an idea that America has over extended itself over the previous decades. The United States is conducting foreign policy the same way it was over half a century ago—policy styles and doctrines that are representative of an archaic international world. From this perspective, the international community does not view the United States as a global power using its strength for good, but rather as a decaying giant that is acting destructively to themselves and others on their ungraceful descent from greatness.

There are those scholars that argue that America power and influence has been waning for decades now. Immanuel Wallerstein, author of *The Eagle has Crash Landed*,

takes a very pessimistic stance of America's relative position within the global order. He claims that the United States is "a lone superpower that lacks true power, a world leader nobody follows and few respect, and a nation drifting dangerously amidst a global chaos it cannot control" (Wallerstein 2002). According to Wallerstein the "the United States has been fading as a global power since the 1970s, and the U.S. response to the terrorist attack [of September 11<sup>th</sup>] has merely accelerated this decline (Wallerstein 2002). America's involvement in Vietnam marks the gradual downfall of the United States because it turned what Wallerstein calls "the United States' success as a hegemonic power in the postwar period [and] created the conditions of the nation's hegemonic demise" (Wallerstein 2002). Wallerstein believes the fall of the Soviet Union accelerated this demise because American no longer had a justification for the way it was acting. It no longer had an ideology to battle with or use as justification to intervene in world affairs. The end of "communism... signified the collapse of liberalism, removing the only ideological justification behind U.S. hegemony" (Wallerstein 2002).

Without a legitimate claim to hegemony, the United States can no longer go into a country, quickly destroy the enemy and then implement a friendly and stable regime. Naia Shabnam and Reagan Dey, authors of *Can Democracy be Exported?*, support this claim. They argue "democracy is not a commodity to be exported militarily, as political, social culture and economic factors" present major complexities that America, or any other imposing nation can foresee (Shabnam & Dey, 1). The authors conclude through comparative case studies that democratization has been successful through the use of economic liberty and free trade, not through force or "military occupation [which] has

become a key medium of exporting democracy” for the United States (Shabnam & Dey, 2)

David Beetham, author of *The Contradictions of Democratization by Force: the Case of Iraq*, also supports Wallerstein’s notion of the lack of American legitimacy for international intervention. He finds that nationalism is now the world’s dominant ideology. Beetham goes further to indict the United States as hypocrites in their pursuit of exporting democracy through military intervention. He says “there is no widespread ideology legitimizing anyone else ruling over a nation-state. Since only ‘the people’ should rule, anti-imperialism is rampant across the world” (Beetham 2009).

The same “economic, political, and military factors that contributed to U.S. hegemony are the same factors that will inexorably produce the coming of U.S. decline” (Wallerstein 2002). In the eyes of a declinist, America is continuing the pattern and style of foreign policy that made it successful in the post World War II years before the end of the Cold War. However, the post Cold War security environment is a different world, one in which the United States is going to have to alter its doctrine based in a more realistic view of the international system and their role within it. Iraq is continuing this pattern of overextension of the United States’ resources, both economic capital and political capital. The United States cannot continue to engage in such behavior in the international community because the world has changed.

## **Conclusion**

It is extremely important to lay these arguments out in order for the reader to have an understanding of the multiple conversations occurring throughout the timeframe

covered in this project. What is more, it will now allow me to use these theses as analytical lens for interpreting each of the United States' major interactions with Iraq. This is where there is a gap in the scholarship. There is relatively little comparison and analysis over between the schools of thought focusing on America's relationship with Iraq. I believe that it is significant because these three events (the Iran-Iraq War, the Gulf War, Iraq 2003) were pivotal moments in American foreign policy. By comparing, contrasting, and looking at Iraq through each of these different lens it may lead us to be able to discern a bigger implication of American foreign policy in the future.

## **Chapter 2: America and the Iran-Iraq War (1982-1988): the Development of the Four Theses of America's International Position?**

### **How is U.S. intervention being framed?**

The first interaction between the United States and Iraq that this project examines comes during the decade long war between Iran and Iraq in the 1980's under the presidency of Ronald Reagan. In order to understand the greater implications of this intervention, it is necessary to have a brief history of the conflict between Iran and Iraq. Afterwards, this chapter will examine the specific instances where the United States played a major role. Finally, it will discuss the justifications used the Reagan administration and how it they reflect the intellectual thinking that dominated the creation American foreign policy.

The significance of this chapter is to highlight and follow the development of the theories of the United States' role within the international community. Where within American foreign policy do we start to see these theories emerge? Up until this point there was not much variation amongst scholars in terms of the United States' role within the international system. It was largely agreed upon that the Cold War was still raging and the international order was characterized as a bipolar world: the United States' democracy versus the Soviet Union's communism. However, the Iran-Iraq War is one of the final major instances that occur during the Cold War and is where the theses begin to emerge in the conversations of the intellectual and foreign policy communities. By examining specific documents, speeches, and ideologies practiced by the Reagan

administration and their resulting responses, it will allow me to determine how these four theses played a role in American foreign policy and therefore understand subsequent actions of the United States.

### **Brief Historical Background of the Iran-Iraq War**

The Iran-Iraq War officially began on September 22, 1980 when Saddam Hussein and the “government of Iraq launched simultaneous strikes against all Iranian airfields within reach of its bombers” and at the same time “its massed armies advanced along a 450-mile front into Iran’s Khuzistan Province” (Sick 1989, 230). While this date marks the official start to the war, a multitude of events had created what seemed to be an environment destined for conflict. According to Gary Sick, author of *Trail by Error: Reflections of the Iran-Iraq War*, “reduced to its essentials, the Iran-Iraq war was a dispute about borders, specifically a disagreement about the divisions of the waters of the Shatt al-Arab River which separates the two countries” (Sick 1989, 231). Throughout the previous decade, “Iran was the most powerful state in the Persian Gulf” and dominated the region (Mearsheimer and Walt 2003, 53). Iran was under the control of a long established ruling family, the Shah, who maintained relative stability within the region. In 1969 Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, decided to renounce a 1937 treaty that had established the Shatt al-Arab as the dividing line between Iran and Iraq. This caused serious tensions between two countries; however, it was resolved with the 1975 Algiers Agreement, which reestablished the *thalweg* principle as the official division.

This agreement lasted for several more years until the Iranian Revolution and the radical Islamic takeover led by Ruhollah Khomeini occurred in 1979, straining once more relations between the two neighbors. It was Khomeini religious fanaticism that stirred up problems once again over the borders. The leaders of the revolution “did not consider themselves bound by any of the shah’s agreements” (Sick 1989, 232). Using religion as a justification for taking over Iran, “they pointedly noted that in traditional Islam there were no borders dividing the faithful” and hinted at using this logic to expand their area of influence and control (Sick 1989, 232). Khomeini “was determined to extend his revolution across the Islamic world, starting with Iraq” (Mearsheimer and Walt 2003, 53). Saddam Hussein looked at this current chaotic environment in Iran as an opportunity to alter the status quo in the Middle East. He thought that Iran would be so preoccupied in dealing with the revolution that it would be too disorganized to defend against an invasion. Therefore on September 22, 1980 Hussein launched his attack justifying it by claiming “there was a necessity of self-defense [from a religious fanatic], instant, overwhelming, leaving no choice of means and no moment of deliberations” (Sick 1989, 232). In other words, there was no time for deliberations because Iran might pull itself together if Iraq were to wait any longer for an invasion. Hussein thought that Iran would call for a ceasefire after the initial invasion; however, he had wildly misjudged the level of preparedness the new leaders of Iran possessed. For the next eight years “these two bitterly hostile foes” would fight each other, finally ending the bloodshed in 1988 almost exactly where they had started—neither side able to achieve their goals from the war.

There are many campaigns, offensives, and details that are important in understanding the war, however, they fall outside the scope of this project. This project



aims to focus on only those details and occurrences that the United States had a role in influencing the outcome. Specifically, what role did the U.S. play and what the significance is in relation to the United States' future relationship with Iraq? This chapter will have a chronologically historical aspect to it but primarily gives attention to the discussions around the justifications the United States used for intervening in the conflict.

### **The United States' Role in the Iran-Iraq War**

How was the issue of the Iran-Iraq war being framed in the United States? What were the reasons given to justify American intervention? These are the essential questions that must be looked at in order to understand America's decision, or rather the decision of a small group of Americans, to intervene in the Iran-Iraq war. It was clear from the start of the war that the United States would have an atypical role in the Iran-Iraq war. The international community operated on a bipolar system that was dominated by the United States and the Soviet Union—the Middle East was a vital battleground for their competing ideologies. The Persian Gulf was a very important location for the United States to have allies, or at the very least, to deny the Soviet Union allies.

It is important to understand that from the start the United States only got involved in order to protect their national interests. Sick finds that “the policies of the United States throughout the war were equivocal and often contradictory” which leads to the notion that it only got involved for their own benefit (Sick 1989, 239). On the outset of the Iran-Iraq war, the United States was perfectly content with letting the two sides fight it out, as long as the conflict ended in a stalemate and there was little change to the

regional status quo. Up until the Iranian revolution, the American government supported the previous Iranian government, which they “relied on the Shah to support chief American goals in the Middle East—denying Soviet access to the Persian Gulf and ensuring ‘Free World’ access to oil” (Freedman 2012, 536). Under the new Reagan administration the same goal laid out by the Carter Doctrine remained the same: to keep the Middle East oil reserves open to the Western world and to deny them to the Soviet sphere. Now that Iran was under the control of a radical Islamic regime, the United States dropped its support and looked to other actors in the region that could preserve its national interests and the interests of its allies. Due to the initial success of the Iraqi nation, president Reagan was happy with remaining outside of the conflict.

The United States did not deem it necessary to get involved in the war until the “summer of 1982 [when] the strategic picture had changed dramatically. After its initial gains, Iraq was on the defensive” (Dobbs 2002, 2). It looked likely that the “Iranian might achieve a breakthrough on the Basra front, destabilizing Kuwait [an important American ally], the Gulf States, and even Saudi Arabia, thereby threatening U.S. oil supplies” (Dobbs 2002, 2). This threat to American interests mobilized the Reagan administration, which changed American policy towards Iraq and began to establish positive relations with Bagdad. Despite strong opposition from Congress, “as part of its opening to Bagdad, the Reagan administration removed Iraq from the State Department terrorism list in February 1982” (Dobbs 2002, 3). With the combination of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Iranian Revolution, the Reagan administration wanted to squash the regional chaos. Removing Iraq from the State Departments’ terrorism list was the first step in achieving this goal. According to Zach Freedman, “Washington’s tilt reflected a

consensus that secular Iraq—despite being a repulsive regime—was a lesser evil than fundamentalist Iran” (Freedman 2012, 536).

By 1984 the United States was “providing Iraq with military intelligence derived from satellites” and other means of reconnaissance in order to prevent or at least hold off the Iranian counter offensive (Sick 1989, 239). While the Reagan Administration did not deploy American troops to the region, a positive military relationship had been established between Washington and Bagdad. Soon after the United States began providing intelligence on Iranian troop positions and movements, they introduced Operation Staunch: “an attempt to persuade other nations to stop selling arms to Iran” (Gigot 1990, 4). This initiative was “conceived to prevent Iran from acquiring new weapons or spare parts on the international arms market [and] cut western arms sales to Tehran” (Freedman 2012, 536). What is more, the United States even gave Iraq agricultural credits in order to prevent a financial crisis in Bagdad, which they would continue to do through the end of the war and into the Bush administration and would become a major aspect to the changing relationship between the two nations. It is clear that the U.S. put a significant amount of effort into making this new relationship work. They did not want to incite any animosity between the two nations if they could help it. Unfortunately, that would not be the case.

Throughout the war, the relationship between Washington and Bagdad was not entirely free of controversy and tension. In fact, there were many aspects of their relationship that contradicted what normal Americans would see as morally justifiable. As early as 1983 the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) “detected Iraqi chemical weapons use” against the Iranian forces, something that went completely against the

United States' code of conduct (Freedman 2012, 536). In a report titled *Chemical Warfare in Iraq*, which came out November 7, 1983, the National Security Planning Group, a small group of foreign policy advisors to the president, stated, "We expect Iraq to continue to employ chemical weapons...Iran will continue to emphasize protective measures" (NSPG 76, 1983). The White House had full knowledge of the use of these weapons and however decided not to take action. George P. Shultz, the Secretary of State under Reagan "claims he told [Taliq] Aziz" Iraq's foreign minister to the United States and one of Saddam Hussein's closest advisors, "that Washington 'was unalterably opposed to the use of chemical weapons and that [he] would be watching Iraq closely" (Hiltermann 2007, 56).

However, there is evidence that the Reagan Administration intentionally ignored this issue, believing that it could be dealt with at the end of the war. The Assistant Secretary of State during the Reagan Administration, Richard W. Murphy, claimed, "The U.S.-Iraqi relationship is...important to our long-term political and economic objectives. We believe that economic sanctions will be useless or counterproductive to influence the Iraqis" (Dobb 2002, 5). Tariq Aziz affirmed this claim stating "making chemical weapons central to Washington's Iraq policy would poison the atmosphere between the two powers" and would give the appearance the United States wanted to undermine Iraqi's industrial capacity. This again highlights the level of skepticism present on both sides of the relationship. The United States and Iraqi were not traditional allies, but rather two political entities using each other for ulterior motives, each not willing to be fully transparent.

Freedman expands on this issue and in *Shoring Up Iraq, 1983 to 1990: Washington and the Chemical Weapons Controversy* he goes so far as to argue that the United States' construed, and at times contradictory, relationship with Saddam Hussein actually created the conditions in the Middle East that led to the Gulf War in 1990. Freedman argues that the United States did not actually have the amount of influence over the Iraqi regime as they had thought. Saddam Hussein was simply using the Americans as a means to an end, dominance in the Middle East, and did not see them as an enduring ally. This is an important aspect to the Iran-Iraq war and will be discussed later on in this chapter.

Another sketchy contradiction in the Iran-Iraq war was the Iran-Contra scandal. In 1985, after Operation Staunch had been initiated and pushed by the United States to the rest of the Western community, President Reagan secretly reached out the Iranian government hoping to strike a deal. The deal was that United States would "provide weapons...to Iranian forces squeezed by Operation Staunch" and in return Iran would "help free American hostages held in Lebanon" (Kemp 2010, 3). He justified this illegal action by stating Iran still had "strategic importance and...this policy was intended to 'prevent Soviet expansionism'" (Benoit, Gullifor, Panici 1991, 283). Going against his own initiative, Reagan conducted this deal, which eventually led to controversial conversations with the Iraqi government. When Saddam Hussein and the rest of the world uncovered the truth that the United States had illegally conducted business with Iran there was outrage. Ultimately the United States was able to mend its relationship with Bagdad, but not before American lives were lost.

On May 17, 1987 an Iraqi aircraft fired a missile upon the *USS Stark*, an American naval ship, killing 37 American servicemen. Saddam Hussein immediately apologized to President Reagan claiming that Iraq had “no intention whatsoever to strike against a target belonging to [the United States]” and that the incident was a complete accident (Freedman 2012, 542). The most telling aspect of this was that the White House “obligingly accepted Saddam’s apology and agreed to a joint American-Iraqi review of the incident” (Freedman 2012, 542). It speaks to the greater national interests goal the Reagan administration was working towards. Essentially the United States paid for offending Iraq with American blood and were forced to accept the situation if they wanted to maintain a “healthy” relationship with Bagdad.

The relationship between the two countries stayed relatively the same throughout the remaining duration of the war, even when it became undeniable to the rest of the world that Saddam was using chemical weapons against Iranians and Iraq’s own Kurdish population. The use of chemical weapons was no longer confined to CIA intelligence but had been captured by the media and was being shown around the world. This forced the United States to officially condemn the use of the chemical weapons, however, they still did not change their policy for reasons mentioned above. Sanctions against Iraq were out of the question because they would interfere with larger American national interests.

With the end of the war marked a vital point in the changing relationship between Iraq and the United States, which centered on the idea of sanctions. How and why did the United States quickly turn their back on Iraq? How did they justify to themselves and the world this sweeping change in policy? What does this tell us about the presiding

dominant theory of America's position within the world? This is an important area to discuss and will be done so at the end of the chapter.

### **American Justification for Intervention**

Now that I have addressed and highlighted the important areas of the American involvement in the Iran-Iraq war, I am going to discuss the justifications used by the Reagan Administration. Through out the previous section there were hints at the justifications used, but now I am going to examine deeper and more specific key documents and agendas that created the common thread of intellectual thinking and policy that resulted in the actions outlined above. I will also examine key members that helped craft the foreign policy and place their actions within the appropriate thesis. This section argues that the justifications used stem from the broader pattern of foreign policy in response to the Cold War and an attempt to change the status quo in the international order. Current theories on the United States' role within the world came out of this period of a transitioning world order. As the Cold War power politics began to fade away, a new understanding on international relations would begin to take its place. For the Reagan administration that was neoconservatism. The following sections will demonstrate how neoconservative characteristics began to emerge within the rhetoric and policies coming out of the Reagan White House.

### **A History of Presidential Foreign Policy Doctrine**

Before examining what would become known as the Reagan Doctrine, it is necessary to provide historical context of presidential foreign policy doctrines—a history that informed the creation of the Reagan Doctrine. I will give a quick overview of the Truman Doctrine, Eisenhower Doctrine, Nixon Doctrine, and the Carter Doctrine. The Truman Doctrine was established in 1947 along with the National Security Act of 1947, which consolidated and better organized the military. The Truman Doctrine stated that the United States would provide “political, military and economic assistance to all democratic nations under threat from external or internal authoritarian forces” (“Truman Doctrine 1945-1952”, 2015). This was a shift from the previous style of foreign policy of the United States before World War II. Unlike the isolationism before the World War II, the United States would no longer withdraw from regional conflict in which they were not involved, but rather involve themselves in far away conflicts such as the Korean War. The Eisenhower Doctrine was simply an extension of the Truman Doctrine. The notion was still prevalent throughout the Executive Branch that the United States had an obligation to physically intervene in far away conflicts that did not necessarily involve them. This was still the Cold War and they were still the protectors of democracy. The Nixon Doctrine stated that the United States should only play an advisory role in Asian affairs and intervene only in the case of nuclear threat. In response to the situation in Vietnam, the United States did not want to get bogged down in another unwinnable conflict. While it primarily dealt with Asia, the Nixon Doctrine showed the receding tendency of the United States to refrain from intervening in worldly affairs in which they could not benefit from.



The Carter Doctrine reversed this trend in rhetoric. It stated “An attempt by an outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States” (Brzezinski 1981). The document follows this statement up by clearly addressing America’s response to such violations: “It will be repelled by the use of any means necessary, including military force” (Brzezinski 1981). While this doctrine may have had significant influence over president Reagan’s decision to intervene in the Iran-Iraq War, it is not vital information in regards to the goals of this chapter. It does show that there was a definitive and official moment that the United States declared the Middle East equivalent to its vital interests—something that could be considered the conception of the current involvement of the United States in the region. Carrying on the tradition created by his predecessors, president Reagan established his own brand of foreign policy—first he needed to provide an overarching blanket of justification.

### ***The National Security Strategy (NSS)***

One of the most important documents that justified the actions of the Reagan administration is the National Security Strategy (NSS): a document outlining the national security goals of the United States and the means of accomplishing said goals. Essentially Reagan’s entire foreign policy strategy, which can be seen throughout the two terms of his presidency, stems from this document: a document that was first created under his administration and should be seen as a highly political move and would become a tradition of American presidents to come, as well as a political tool.

Reagan brings the first National Security Strategy in 1987 with a concise statement defining the entirety of American foreign policy: “The most significant threat to U.S. security and national interests is the global challenge posed by the Soviet Union” (ADMIN 1987). Every proposed strategy or outline initiative following this statement has this statement in mind. The United States is engaged in the Cold War and is willing to do everything it can to ensure that the national interests of the United States remain intact and unchallenged. The NSS breaks down the overall strategy into subsections based upon regions and areas of focus. In regards to the Middle East the NSS states the following:

Our principal interests in the Middle East include maintaining regional stability, containing and reducing Soviet influence, preserving the security of Israel and our other friends in the area, retaining access to oil on reasonable terms for ourselves and our allies, and curbing state-sponsored terrorism. Those interests are threatened by the continuation of the Iran-Iraq conflict... the growth of anti Western political movements in the region, and the use of terrorism as an instrument of state policy, particularly by Libya, Syria, and Iran . Our strategy in the region aims to safeguard our interests from those threats; to hasten negotiated settlements of the Palestinian problem and the Iran-Iraq war; to bolster the security and economic well-being of Israel and moderate Arab regimes; to help our friends in the Gulf protect themselves and international shipping lanes; and to isolate and deter state sponsors of terrorism. (ADMIN 1987).

While this section of the NSS outlines the understanding and justifications for the United States involvement in the Middle East, and therefore the Iran-Iraq war, it does so with open ended and vague language that allows the Reagan administration to operate within a wide range of foreign policy. By being unspecific, they allowed themselves the opportunity to act with a wide variety of foreign policy initiatives, and to then retrospectively go back to and justify those actions. It is important to understand that the National Security Strategy came out during the middle of Reagan’s presidency and the Iran-Iraq war. There is no other reason than the fact that Reagan wanted to officially outline justifications for any sort of intervention the United States would partake in, including the Iran-Iraq war. When challenged by anyone on the validity to his decisions,

President Reagan could point back the National Security Strategy as an unquestionable justification. Specifically addressing the Iran-Iraq war the NSS states: “Current Iranian behavior poses a serious threat to our interests and those of our friends in the region. Until Iran ceases its efforts to prolong the senseless war with Iraq, we will work actively to block the flow of arms and military material to Iran” (ADMIN 1987). Interestingly enough this was portion of the strategy was included after the Iran-Contra scandal in 1985. Perhaps it was a retroactive apology or attempt to mend the damage the scandal caused in the first place, however, it clearly demonstrated how the United States planned on acting.

### **The Reagan Doctrine**

The National Security Strategy is a part actually the manifestation the previous decade’s foreign policy pattern that has been labeled the Reagan Doctrine. The Reagan Doctrine can be characterized by a set of policies that established a new form of globalism and strategy of containment within American foreign policy. Diverting from the old strategy of direct American intervention and the active involvement of U.S. forces in military conflicts, the Reagan administration developed a strategy in which the United States backed political entities in military conflicts that had paralleling interests with America.

It was determined that the Soviet Union of the 1970’s was no longer contained within its previous borders, but was “expanding into all areas of the developing world (Scott 1996, 1048). American policy makers said that this spread was threatening American values and interests and called for a response by the United States. The Reagan

Doctrine was the response. The international community during Reagan's presidency was still characterized as a bipolar system: the United States and democracy heading one sphere of influence; the Soviet Union and communism dominating the other. The two powers were competing against one another, not for territorial gain, but for the victory of their respective ideologies. The administration acknowledged this international system but decided to see the world in terms of "Good versus Evil", the United States being the former. Naturally, as the crusaders of democracy, the U.S. could not sit idly back as the Soviet Union began to build its empire in vulnerable developing regions of the world, such as Afghanistan, Nicaragua, Iran, and Cuba. Early on, this administration had a clear sense of purpose. Their mission was to eradicate the world of Communism and to spread Democracy. This goal drove every action of foreign relations and international policy that came out of the White House for nearly a decade.

This strategy developed by the president and other members of his advisory team differed significantly from American foreign policy of the 1960's and 1970's. According to Robert Tucker, author of *Reagan's Foreign Policy*, "Reagan accepted the limitations on the employment of American military power that were underscored by the Vietnam experience" and turned it into a successful foreign policy strategy. He understood that as an elected official he was held accountable to the public. He must act within the perceived image and role of the U.S. that the American people held in their own heads. In fact, the Reagan Doctrine was an attempt "to reassert U.S. power and purpose in the wake of Vietnam" (Scott 1996a, 14). Prior to the Vietnam War "America's dominant position in the world went unquestioned at home and abroad...sustained by a domestic

consensus [of this identity] that was both broad and deep” (Tucker 1988, 8). The aftermath of the Vietnam War destroyed that consensus and President Reagan wanted to recapture it.

Tucker’s argument is one of few examples that show the emergence of an alternative to the neoconservative thesis. This argument made by Tucker can be seen as one of the first authors that begin the conversation about the “American Descent”. Along with Eagleton, he identifies the Vietnam War as the beginning of the long trend of declining American clout and influence in the international world. The Reagan Doctrine for Tucker is simply a response to this phenomenon, not a fix. While the Reagan Doctrine proved to be more widely accepted in the realm of public opinion, both domestic and within the international community, it continued a pattern of American intervention that only accelerated the United States fall from the top of the international order. The international order has not even transitioned into the phase of unipolarity marked by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, however, Tucker has already begun to pick up on what he and future “American Descent” scholars view as the trends pulling the United States down. Again, this is one of the few instances where one can find evidence of any thesis other than the neoconservative tendencies of major policy makers.

### **Reagan’s Inner Circle and the Institutionalization of Neoconservatism**

Something that is vital to understanding the National Security Strategy and the greater foreign policy that stemmed from its inception is to know the contributing authors to the document. Who were the major actors surrounding the Reagan administration? Who had the president’s ear when formulating a decade’s worth of foreign policy

doctrine? In examining the key authors of the Reagan Doctrine, it becomes clear that there was a limited, but potent, ideology that dominated the intellectual elites that Reagan surrounded himself with. Select Members within the president's cabinet held strong egalitarian views with even stronger religious overtones that called upon the United States to act as the world's guiding light.

There are several key players and organizations that had significant influence on Reagan's foreign policy. As James Scott puts it "the President is one voice...but his is not the only voice" (Scott 1996, 1058). The Reagan Doctrine was the efforts of a small group of advisors and members of the executive branch. The Doctrine's success relied on the efforts, ideologies and initiatives of multiple key actors that the president surrounded himself with. The most influential actors that contributed to the Reagan Doctrine were the Secretary of State Alexander Haig, National Security Advisor Richard Allen, U.N. Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick, Director of the CIA William Casey, and the Special Envoy to the Middle East Donald Rumsfeld. Together these men (with the exception of Rumsfeld) compromised the National Security Planning Group (NSPG).

William Casey was perhaps the most influential of the four. In a speech given on January 9, 1985, he advised the president with urgency that a response was needed in what he called "a Soviet strategy to pressure various 'strategic checkpoints,'" the Persian Gulf being one of the many areas highlighted (Scott 1996, 1052). Casey's strategic advice is underscored by the foreign policy suggestions of a relatively junior member of Reagan's National Security Council, but nonetheless significant. Constantine C. Menges was a special assistant to the president with the National Security Council. He worked closely with many of the high officials who dominated Reagan's foreign policy team.

During his time with the White House, Menges was asked to give some ideas for a speech the president had to give on US-Soviet relations, focusing on the “regional conflict” issues, the same areas that Casey had brought to the president’s attention. Menges’ contributions made the conclusion that all “conflicts had been caused by Soviet-bloc aggression” and therefore the majority of the governments involved in the conflicts were illegitimate (Menges 1988, 244). What is more, Menges suggested to the president that these conflict zones should receive support from the United States for one of three reasons: “they were seeking to restore national independence, defeat external aggression, [or] offer the promise of a far better government” (Menges 1988, 244). Not only did these suggestions become what was to become a major aspect of the Reagan Doctrine, but also the neoconservative agenda is at the core of its justifications. Menges, like William Casey and President Reagan, believed that if a regime was illegitimate that they should be uprooted and replaced with a government that was conducive to democracy (Menges 1988, 244).

Other speeches given by Casey provide an extra layer of intricacy to the development of the Reagan Doctrine and the role of the four theses as pressuring agents in the foreign policy decision-making process of the administration. In *Scouting the Future: the Public Speeches of William J. Casey*, Director Casey provides an interesting addition to the development of American foreign policy and the neoconservative school of thought that dominated the NSPG. Almost every one of his speeches, spanning from 1980 to 1987 call the Soviet Union the primary challenge in American foreign policy, and world security. This is nothing new compared to other facets of the Reagan Doctrine, however, Casey then goes on to say “International tensions and threats are not

limited to military ones” (Casey 1989, 21). By this he means the United States can be hurt through economic catastrophes, particularly addressing oil crises, and therefore it is the vital interest of the U.S. to protect the Middle East from Soviet influence.

What Casey says next is the most important component of his contribution: “We see the U.S. falling behind...Just a few decades ago, the United States dominated the world economically, politically and militarily...That day is long past” (Casey 1989, 22, 25). Both of these statements actually highlight, or at least acknowledge the beginning of the “Rise of the Rest” thesis. Casey is undoubtedly a neoconservative, however, in two cases he clearly demonstrates core pillars of another as being a significant factor that should be considered in foreign policy. Casey makes it a point to state that the United States does not have the same level of undisputed wealth throughout the world. Therefore he argues the international system is going to change accordingly. What is interesting is that Casey provides a neoconservative solution to what seems to be a “Rise of the Rest” problem: “We Americans willingly shoulder [the burden of freedom] today as forefathers did in the past” (Casey 1989, 23). Even though there might be economic and military threats to the United States, they still are the one who is obligated to eradicate the world of the evils of the Soviet Union ideology. He provides evidence of his support to and development of the neoconservative thesis by claiming “the most immediately dangerous [threat] may be the [religious] tensions running through Iran [and] Iraq...which could bring heavy Soviet influence into the oil regions of the Middle East” (Casey 1989, 52). Here he ties in the issue of religion being a threat to American interests. This sentiment is later officiated through the National Security Decision Directive 114, a vital document to



the Reagan Doctrine and a major justification for the intervention in Iran-Iraq war, which will be examined in a later section.

What now needs to be considered here is the possible presence of dual theses in the crafting of a decade long foreign policy strategy. Can an individual acknowledge the real existence of one thesis at the same time as another? Can one thesis be the solution to the problem posed by another? It seems here that Casey, while he does not call it by name, acknowledges the general premise of the “Rise of the Rest”. However, his solution is for the United States to act as a hegemonic and unilateral power in order to fulfill the role of the protector of freedom. Regardless of this questionable paradox, the “Rise of the Rest” thesis does begin to circulate amongst the intellectual community. The relative attention it receives, however, is not significant enough to argue the full thesis has been developed. Being one of the most influential members of Reagan’s advisory staff, hints of the “Rise of the Rest” thesis must have circulated around the White House. However, while it was present, perhaps it provided momentum for the neoconservative agenda to perpetuate itself throughout the foreign policy of the 1980’s. The question must be asked, is the neoconservative thesis a response to the origins of the “Rise of the Rest” thesis? Was there a conscious decision to project an image that would firmly establish American dominance and quell any notions of multipolarity?

Other key members of the National Security Council held many of these same ideas about the United State’s role. The transcript of a meeting held by the National Security Council on October 16, 1981 about “East-West Trade Controls” demonstrates the sentiments that controlled the administration’s foreign policy strategy. The members of this meeting include President Reagan, CIA Director Casey, Secretary Alexander

Haig, Richard Allen, and a number of other Executive branch officials. The subject of the meeting was over the matter of oil machinery and limiting the access of oil to the Soviet Union. Underneath the specifics of the dialogue lies the formulation of the neoconservative thesis. The main contributors to this conversation are the same contributors to America's foreign policy throughout the majority of the next decade.

Mr. Edward Meese, an official from the White House included in the meeting, made a passing remark "Foreign policy and national security are the same" (NSCM 1981, 2). While this was made as a joke there is definitely a lot of truth behind it. It perfectly sums up the way that the Reagan administration viewed foreign policy. Foreign policy and national security were one in the same. And if national security and the protection of democracy and strong egalitarian values is the same thing as foreign policy, then those same values are what the administration was attempting to spread throughout the world. There was no discrimination amongst what were American values and what were the best "values" for the rest of the international community. While America's role in the Iran-Iraq war had a great deal to do with protecting access to oil/preventing access to the Soviet Union, it also had to do with protecting an ideology. The American government could not allow radical Islamic rule spread throughout the Middle East because it would undermine everything they stood for. While the label had not yet been created, President Reagan and his team of advisors, the team that crafted the Reagan Doctrine, were operating under the neoconservative school of thought. Neoconservatism was the Reagan Doctrine.

Another National Security Council meeting held on March 30, 1984 titled "Middle East Update" reinforces the strong sentiments and unified goals of Reagan's

National Security Council. Donald Rumsfeld, the head of the president's Special Envoy to the Middle East and who would later become President George W. Bush's Secretary of Defense, in a report regarding Iran's current success in the war makes the assertion: "As president Reagan has said before, if you want to kill a snake you go for the head" (Saltoun-Ebin 2012, 229). The "snake" in this case is the radical Iranian government. Rumsfeld then implores, "We need to change governments in the countries that practice state sponsored terrorism" (Saltoun-Ebin 2012, 229). Regime change is one of the core tenants of the neoconservative thesis and is openly talked about in a National Security Council meeting. It is a part of the discussion involving policy and adds to the Reagan Doctrine as a whole. Rumsfeld closes his report during the meeting by reminding the National Security Council and the president of their ultimate goal: "Remember...the most important thing is to prevent Soviet involvement in the Gulf" (Saltoun-Ebin 2012, 230). This report by Rumsfeld explicitly demonstrates both the administration's attitude towards the Middle East as a strategic area for national security as well as the emerging neoconservative thinking.

Rumsfeld would continue to play an important role in the shaping of American foreign policy. Arguably, he is the most important player in the neoconservative team. On December 1, 1989 at the Third Annual Report of the Secretaries of Defense, Rumsfeld gives his vision for the future of the United States and how they should act in the world at the conclusion of the Cold War:

What is our role? We have to decide that going forward. We decided it early on after World War II. We made a conscious decisions that we were going to play a leading role in the world. There are those who believe that the United States in decline that in fact we should sit back and let someone else to contribute to the stability in the world. I happen to disagree with that. I believe that we need to provide leadership and I think that leadership can make an enormous difference in what the world's gonna look like in the nineteen

nineties, in the year two thousand. But the big misunderstanding it seems to me is illustrated by this fact if you read the newspapers or watch television today and you look at the polls. First they ranked Gorbachev as the reason these changes occurring and second they gave Reagan some credit... which is ridiculous. The credit belongs to Truman and Adler and to steadfastness over forty years... It went to the concept of peace through strength. We need to understand how to get to where we are, because going forward we are going to have to make a judgment as to what role our country ought to play and a passive role would be terribly dangerous? Who do we want to provide leadership in the world? Somebody else? Who? Name them. (*The Third Annual Report of the Secretaries of Defense (1989)*)

While the conference was held at the very end of the Reagan administration, the beliefs were the guiding forces behind the administration's foreign policy and would remain a dominant part of the Executive branch under both Bush administrations. With the waning significance and relative power of the Soviet Union, the opportunity would present itself to the world to challenge former roles within the international community. President Reagan was preparing the United States to fill the political void through a neoconservative standpoint—when the circumstances met the opportunity.

This same exquisite rhetoric and strong ideological language can also be found in several speeches the President has given over his eight years in the oval office. During one of President Reagan's most famous speeches, dubbed the "Evil Empire" speech, the President Reagan uses religion as a justification of American national interests and values. Addressing the level of strength of the American character, Reagan said "the basis of those ideals and principles [from which American gains its strength,] is a commitment to freedom and personal liberty that, itself, is grounded in the much deeper realization that freedom prospers only where the blessings of God are avidly sought and humbly accepted" (Reagan March 8, 1983). This justification extends through Reagan's foreign policy and ultimately makes up a core of aspect of the neoconservative thesis. He reasserts this notion and confirms America's mission by saying: "[the Soviet Union] must

be made to understand we will never compromise our principles and standards. We will never give away our freedom. We will never abandon our belief in God” (Reagan March 8, 1983). This speech highlights the religious and moral “necessity” of the United States to spread their values around the world. Reagan reaffirmed this notion by saying “the real crisis we face today is a spiritual one; at root, it is a test of moral will and faith” (Reagan March 8, 1983). Combined with the rhetoric and policy of other important players in Reagan’s inner circle, the administration had a well-defined ideology as a driving force behind the Reagan Doctrine.

#### **National Security Directive 114**

Another significant document that undoubtedly lays out American justification is the National Security Decision Directive 114 (NSDD). This document, paired with the Reagan Doctrine and its underlying goals, made U.S. intervention in the Iran-Iraq War unavoidable. Similarly to the NSS, it is vitally important to understand the language the administration used in the document. Not once is any nation specifically mentioned. This document was published November 26, 1983; right at the beginning of the United States’ involvement in the Iran-Iraq War and several years before the creation of the National Security Strategy. Vague language is again used to ensure that the interests of the United States are protected under official policy. The actors aligned with American interests may change, however, the United States’ actions would not. In the first paragraph the document states: “Political consultations should begin immediately followed by military consultations with those Allies and regional states which express willingness to cooperate with us in planning measures necessary to deter or defend against attacks on or

interference with non-belligerent shipping or on critical oil productions...in the Persian Gulf” (NSDD 114). There is no mention of ideology. There is no mention of democracy. There is no mention of anything except the acquisition of oil. The authors then go on to write, “we should assign the highest priority to...forces necessary to defend the critical [access to] oil” (NSDD 114). What is more, Reagan further explains how the United States is going to accomplish this mission and the reasons behind it:

Accordingly, U.S. military forces will attempt to deter and, if that fails, to defeat any hostile efforts to close the Strait [of Hormuz] to international shipping. Because of the real and psychological impact of a curtailment in the flow of oil from the Persian Gulf on the international economic system, we must assure our readiness to deal promptly with actions aimed at disrupting that traffic” (NSDD114).

The use “we” and not “the U.S. and our allies” is a significant use of language. Here the administration clearly gives the impression that it is the United State’s job to protect the western world. They are the protectors of the international economic system and will use their military to ensure its vitality. The language corresponds to the same style used in other important documents that helped to officiate the Reagan Doctrine in practice. This only further enunciated the ideologies from the inner circle of the Executive Branch into American foreign policy.

### **The Emergence of the Other Theses**

There is clear evidence that shows the neoconservative thesis has begun to take hold during this time period, but what about other three? From my findings, there is too little evidence to argue that the “American Descent”, the “Rise of the Rest”, and the unipolar theses gathered enough clout to be considered developed. There are, however, a

few examples of scholars analyzing the actions of the Reagan administration to the extent that it fits within one of these theses.

Paul Gigot, author of *A Great American Screw-Up: The U.S. and Iraq 1980-1990*, argues that the United States involvement in the Iran-Iraq war marked the “beginning of a decade of American misjudgment” (Gigot 1990, 3). Written in response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, Gigot makes the argument that the United States actually facilitated the environment that led to Saddam Hussein thinking it was acceptable to invade in the first place. According to Gigot, because the United States wanted to maintain control over the Middle East they ignored evidence about the true intentions of Hussein:

What U.S. officials failed to do, however, was to use those signals to change their hypothesis about Saddam's intentions. They could not shake what even they themselves now call "the mindset" about Iraq. They let the accumulating evidence fit their favored hypothesis, rather than change that hypothesis to fit the new evidence. They had concluded that Saddam's growing threats were meant to coerce concessions from Kuwait, not to invade, even up to the day before the actual invasion” (Gigot 1990, 4)

Gigot's argument extends back throughout all of U.S. involvement in the Iran-Iraq war. What greater implications does this argument raise? There are elements of the “American Decent” in this finding. There is the emerging conversation that perhaps the United States could no longer act the way it used to. The United States was so keen on making Saddam’s regime fit their acceptable prerequisites for an ally that they ignored overwhelming evidence that proved him to act the opposite. This “misjudgment” fits within the pattern found by later authors of the “American Descent” school of thought.

The argument made by Robert Tucker also falls within the “American Descent” thesis. His findings contribute some of the most compelling evidence from a thesis other

than neoconservatism, He would agree with Gigot about the inappropriateness of president Reagan to intervene in the Iran-Iraq war because the United States is only creating more problems and hurting everyone involved.

Charles Krauthammer, a strong proponent of unipolarity, called the Reagan Doctrine “the American response to the Brezhnev Doctrine” which declares “once a Soviet acquisition, always a Soviet acquisition” (Krauthammer 1985, 1). Krauthammer sees the Reagan Doctrine as proof that “the president obviously believes in the cause of anticommunist revolution” Krauthammer 1985, 2). The United States simply wanted to eradicate the Soviet Union and the spread of communism in whatever way they could. The Reagan Doctrine established a means of completing this goal. While this does not speak directly to the unipolar argument, Krauthammer sees the Reagan Doctrine as the beginning of the end for bipolarity. It is because of the Reagan Doctrine that the Soviet Union collapsed and therefore allowed the United States to dominate in the international political system.

### **Conclusion: The Waning of Cold War Realism**

It is undeniable that there are traces of each thesis of American location emerging during this era of foreign politics. Although the international order is still characterized as a bipolar system, there are the grumblings of new and different perspectives about how to locate the United States within the world’s power structure. However, it is clear that there is one that dominates the intellectual conversation amongst those in charge of American foreign policy. While there has yet to have been a sweeping consensus in the intellectual thinking in Washington, in the midst of a waning Cold War realist approach to the international system, the neoconservative agenda has already begun to take its



place as the dominating perspective. What will become the core tenants of the neoconservative thesis is clearly demonstrated throughout justifications of the Reagan administrations in both rhetoric and action.

Going forward, what needs to be examined is exactly how the relationship between the United States and Iraq changed and what role individuals certain schools of thought played into this change. In less than two years Iraq went from American ally to American foe. Between the Reagan administration and the Bush Sr. administration, there is some significant overlap in the high level officials and advisors that stayed in the White House. If the players were more of less the same, then something about the way the international system must have changed. Did the end of the Cold War open up significant opportunity for the United States to act in ways that it was previously constrained by the international before? Where and from whom do we see the theses emerge out of—is there a greater implication being made about the international environment? How significant of a role does the overlapping of high-level officials in the White House play in the evolution of American foreign policy?

The next chapter will examine all of these questions. Focusing on the first Gulf War and the presidency of George H.W. Bush, I will be closely examining how and where changes were made and how American foreign policy began to develop in the first years of a post Cold War era. There is an easily identifiable point where the relationship of the United States and Iraq went from cautiously cooperative to openly hostile; however, it is less clear as to the reasoning behind the shift. Not only is history a window into the past, but it also provides an understanding for the present. By examining the key players, events, and intellectual lines of thinking that were present during this era, it will

provide a better understanding to the way the United States currently chooses to conduct itself on the international arena.

## **Chapter 3: A New International Order: The Gulf War and the Changing Role of the United States in the Post Cold War Security Environment**

### **The Fall of the Soviet Union and the Transition to a New International Order**

The end of the 1980's marked a significant change in the world. Ronald Reagan was leaving the White House succeeded by his vice-president George H.W. Bush. The Soviet Union would soon come crashing down leaving a question mark over a new international order. The United States had new leadership that was forced to answer to this question. As Donald Rumsfeld stated in a 1989 conference of former Secretaries of Defense: "Who do we want to provide leadership in the world? Somebody else?" (The Third Annual Report of the Secretaries of Defense (1989)). This question can be considered the mantra of the United States as they looked to answer the vacancy left by the fall of the Soviet Union. The United States attempt to answer this question is exemplified perfectly during their involvement in the first Gulf War from 1990-1991. While the Soviet Union had not officially collapsed, the once great opposing challenger to the United States was effectively an inoperable power. The United States has already begun to transition its role from a bipolar superpower to unipolar hegemon in the world. The Gulf War would be the first time the United States would project its power and being to solidify their identity within the New World Order.

Throughout this emergence of new role in the world there are several important factors that must be considered. First, when looking at the decisions coming out of the White House, one must take into account the level of unchecked influence members of the National Security Council have on the president. They are often his closest advisors and are hand picked by the president for their like-mindedness. It is important to

remember that these are not elected officials. They are not accountable to any constituents or government bureaucracies—the president is the only person they have to answer to. In the previous chapter we saw the emergence of the neoconservative thesis within the White House, dominating the perspectives of many of Reagan’s top policy makers. What we now need to examine is to what extent did this ideology carry over into the next administration. The United States will once again get involved into the affairs of Iraq, this time engaged in the conflict on the opposite side of things—from ally to enemy. What are the similarities and differences, further developments and expansions, and the changing role of the United States in this conflict? How does the way the United States chooses to act in this conflict help to explain their position within the world during this time? What are the major effect and consequences—both positive and negative—of this example of American intervention?

How the United States deals with Iraq and particularly Saddam Hussein in the Gulf War is profoundly significant in the development of America’s own perception and the modes of thinking that will develop in the elite decision making body. This chapter will show that there is the emergence of the unipolar thesis in president Bush’s foreign policy team. However, this project finds that there are more than one of the theses present in the decision making process. International relations and the United States’ role within them cannot be simplified and located to one specific thesis. The four theses are the responses, results of, and coexist with each other. The most important concept to understand is which thesis takes control and dominates the narrative within American foreign policy. We will see at the end of the Gulf War that the decision to leave Saddam Hussein in power at the conclusion of the war ultimately led to a resurgence of the

neoconservative agenda within the White House before the attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup> and the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

### **Transitioning From Wearing Ally to Hostile Enemy**

Within a matter of three years, the United States and Iraq went from being allies to enemies—helping Iraq win a war against Iran to then fighting a war against them. While the position of the United States changed, its rationale was almost exactly the same for helping Iraq only several years previous: the Middle East was an important region vital to the national interests of the United States and any threat to those interests would be met with American opposition, not excluding military force. However, there were some major differences between the vision the United States saw themselves fulfilling in a new international order.

President George H.W. Bush came into the White House in the wake of the Iran-Iraq War. He had served as Reagan's vice president and was well versed in the current relations with Saddam Hussein. Once the war in the Middle East finally ended, the United States thought it best to navigate timidly when dealing with Saddam in order to preserve the somewhat positive relationship they spent nearly a decade building. At the same time there was a clear and present need to curb Saddam's power—something that had been relatively unchecked during the war when it suited the United States' interests to let him act freely. According to Karabell, the Bush administration “decided on a policy of constructive engagement with Iraq in the hopes that such a policy would lead Saddam

Hussein's moderation" (Karabell 1995, 28). Coming into the White House, Bush thought, or at least hoped, that the United States and Iraq could keep their relations in tact and work collectively to maintain stability in the region. Similar to an older sibling keeping an eye on a mischievous brother, the Bush administration hoped they could still work with Iraq. The United States had seemingly no choice: the stability of the region "demanded that Hussein emerge from the war with his regime intact" (Karabell 1995, 30). At first it seemed like the United States' decision to ally with Saddam proved to be positive. According to president Reagan's Secretary of State Richard Murphy: "the war had weakened Saddam's ties with the Soviet Union, and the Iraqi purchases of European weapons and U.S. grain had drawn Hussein closer to the West" (Karabell 1995, 30).

It was with this mentality of maintaining relations with Iraq that President Bush brought with him into the White House. Within the first year of his presidency, Bush had implemented National Security Decision Directive 26, which stated: "Normal relations between the United States and Iraq would serve our longer-term interests and promote stability in both the Gulf and the Middle East. The United States should propose economic and political incentives for Iraq to moderate its behavior and to increase our influence with Iraq" (NSDD 26 1989). These economic and political incentives meant continued agricultural trading and economic packages that would facilitate a positive long-term relationship between the two countries. All of this hopefulness of a prosperous future ended when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait.

## **The Gulf War: Historical Context of Desert Shield and Desert Storm**

On August 2, 1990 Saddam Hussein launched an invasion into the American allied state of Kuwait attempting to annex it annex it province of Iraq. Saddam Hussein was operating under a new psychology where he envisioned himself a protector of the Arab region. He believed that it was his right to annex Kuwait because he was uniting what he deemed a part of Iraq's rightful territory. He was an anti-imperialist acting in a new age where democracy and state identification were important. He took it upon himself to create this strong identity, which resulted in the greater Gulf War. It is possible that Saddam Hussein was attempting to "help bridge [the] chasm [of unity] and provide an impetus for the ultimate integration of Arab states into a new regional and global order" (Renshon 1993, 24). While this issue falls outside the scope of this project, it is important to have a base understanding of the psychology of Iraq's leader, as he will appear in the next chapter as well.

American involvement came in two parts: Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm. Operation Desert Shield was the build up of allied forces in the Persian Gulf area while the world waited for Saddam Hussein to respond to UN Resolution 678, which gave the dictator a hard deadline to remove his forces from Kuwait. It lasted from the initial invasion of Kuwait August 2, 1990, until January 17, 1991. Operation Desert Storm was the active part of the war when the allies first engaged in combat with Iraq. The war lasted a total of 43 days and was an awesome display of the United States' military might. Casualties of the war were significantly disproportionate. While the casualty numbers on the Iraqi side are somewhat controversial, it is estimated that

somewhere around 100,000 Iraqi soldiers were either killed or injured during the 43 daylong war. The allied forces (which mainly consisted of American troops) suffered less than 400 combat related casualties throughout the entire war making it one of the most successful wars in American history.

### **National Security Council**

When it came to foreign policy, president Bush was not unique in surrounding himself with like-minded individuals: “Since the Kennedy administration, presidents have given less priority to making overall government function with maximum effectiveness and more to having a White House staff that is loyal to them alone” (Daalder and Destler 2009, 7). A pattern of autonomy had become the norm when selecting White House officials, particularly in the selection of a president’s National Security Council. President Bush fell into this norm. It is of extreme importance to ask the question, what role does the National Security Council have in terms of accountability to the American people—and by extension the international community? When looking at the decisions coming out of the White House during the Gulf War, one must take into account the level of unchecked influence members of the National Security Council have on the president. They are often his closest advisors and are hand picked by the president for their like-mindedness. It is important to remember that these are not elected officials. They are not accountable to any constituents or government bureaucracies—the president is the only person they have to answer to. This is a very important aspect to take into account during the transition of the international community from the bipolar system of



the Cold War to the New World Order. At this point in history, the United States was trying to figure how to define themselves in the international community. In the previous chapter we saw the emergence of the neoconservative thesis within the White House, dominating the perspectives of many of Reagan's top policy makers. What we now need to examine is to what extent did this ideology carry over into the next administration? We have already seen the plurality of theses within the president's ultimate decisions to engage in the Gulf War. We must now examine those select individuals who helped craft these decisions and the dominant perspective they were viewing the world through.

### **Brent Snowcroft**

Brent Snowcroft was president Bush's National Security Advisor as well as his most trusted friend within the administration. He was the president's top advisor and was trusted and understood to speak for the president in times of his absence. Destler and Daadler characterized the Bush administration as "reactive rather than proactive"—a characteristic of the Executive Branch strongly influenced by Snowcroft's initiatives (Destler and Daadler 2009, 173). Snowcroft's style of leadership was "tough, hard-headed...power politics oriented—but with relatively low ideological content" (Destler and Daadler 2009, 173). When it was necessary for tough decisions to be made, such as responding to the invasion of Kuwait, Snowcroft was the guy the president called upon to get the job done. The difference between Snowcroft and the National Security Advisors of the Reagan administration was that he was not infatuated with the ideological premise of the neoconservative agenda. If there were a problem, he would confront it with expertise and calculated aggression; however, he was not looking to overextend the

United States on the basis of neoconservatism. When Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait on August 2, 1990, “Brent Snowcroft took charge of the effort to fashion an American response. He literally took control of the process overnight” when the president himself was even unaware of the situation (Destler and Daadler 2009, 173). Snowcroft’s quickly established the firm policy, that “Agression must never be appeased... America must lead” (Destler and Daadler 2009, 173).

This policy was quickly adopted by the president and used as another moral justification for sending the nation to war. The idea of appeasing Saddam Hussein was as equal to appeasing Hitler in the eyes of president Bush. As a World War II veteran, president Bush took appeasement personally, especially since he was now the one making the ultimate decision to send Americans to war. George Lakoff addresses the issue of George Bush justifying the Gulf War by codifying it into a mythical metaphor that the general public of the United States and the world could accept as a righteous. He essentially turned Snowcroft’s policy of anti-appeasement and the need to act swiftly into a fairy tale that the American people could rationalize. Bush used what Lakoff calls the State-as-Person metaphor, which groups all of the actions of a nation (the United States) into single acts that are translated into the “concept of ‘national interests’” and implies the “economic health and the military strength of the state” in the justification for said action (Lakoff 1991, 31). Secretary of State Jimmy Baker reaffirmed this fairy tale by telling the public that Iraq was “sitting on [the United States’] economic lifeline” (Lakoff 1991, 25). In terms of the Gulf War, Lakoff sees the Bush administration distancing the realities of the war in order to gain worldwide acceptance and participation. It is easier to buy into a fairy tale where the rhetoric paints Saddam Hussein and Iraq as a villain,

mirroring the actions of Hitler, and those in opposition of him as heroes than to enter a war without any greater significance than the need for oil. To sum up his assessment of the Gulf War, Lakoff believes that the metaphors used were dangerous in that it allowed the United States to build a coalition and eventually engage Iraq in war. This is not necessarily a criticism of the Gulf War, but rather war in general and that conflicts should be dealt with through humanitarian efforts. One can see here “Rise of the Rest” elements within this argument. Written closely after the end of the Gulf War, Lakoff offers an alternative to the way in which the United States, as well as the rest of the world should conduct international affairs. He does not explicitly address the role of economic relationships and other humanitarian examples that have resulted in peaceful resolutions but he does generalize these types of endeavors as better and viable solutions to war. Lakoff calls upon the collective international intellectual community to combine their resources (economic, technological, intellectual) in order to create a world without war.

Snowcroft had the kind of influence on the president, which could lead him to craft this metaphor for American people. In a memo to the president Snowcroft wrote “I am aware as you are how costly and risky such a conflict would prove to be...But so too would be accepting this new status quo. We would be setting a terrible precedent—one that would only accelerate violent centrifugal tendencies—in this emerging ‘post Cold War’ era” (Daadler and Destler 2009, 196). Snowcroft wanted to push the unipolar agenda to the president in order to respond to what he and the rest of the world saw as a emerging new world order. There was no time to sit back and wait for anyone else to make a move—the United States had to be the one dictating international affairs, not

Saddam Hussein. Snowcroft recognized that an aggressive display of American intentions and power was necessary and prudent in order to accomplish the goals of the Bush administration. Snowcroft was actually upset with the lack of concern that other members of Bush's close-knit group had with the Gulf crisis. He noted that he was "appalled at the undertone of the discussion" in first few days after the invasion, finding that "much of the discussion tended to skip over the ramifications of the aggression on the emerging post-Cold War world" (Daadler and Destler 2009, 197). Snowcroft was the man that pushed the conversation towards a strong American response to the situation. He understood that the world would be looking for someone to fill the vacuum left by the waning Soviet Union—for Brent Snowcroft that was the United States, and he made sure the president adopted his unipolar mentality.

### **Colin Powell and Dick Cheney**

Perhaps one of the most significant aspects of the United States' decision to intervene in the Gulf region was the fact that the U.S. military had been operating under a doctrine of limited engagement and caution since the end of the Vietnam War. Kenneth Campbell, author of *Once Burned, Twice Cautious*, argues that this style of hesitant military engagement "was affirmed and strengthened in a series of international crises throughout the 1980s and early 1990s (one being the Gulf War), and currently holds a hegemonic position within the larger U.S. foreign policy community" (Campbell 1998, 358). The doctrine Campbell refers to is called the Powell Doctrine—named after General Colin Powell, president Bush's Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The core concept of this doctrine was influenced by the Weinberg Doctrine, which developed at

the end of the Vietnam War. At the end of the Vietnam War, the United States military went under a significant change: “by far the most important change in the military was the rejection of the pre-Vietnam ‘Can do!’ confidence and its replacement with a post-Vietnam ‘No can do!’ reluctance regarding the use of force in ambiguous foreign crises” (Campbell 1998, 363). This change in the military’s attitude can clearly be seen in the Reagan Doctrine—however the Gulf War was a completely different situation that resulted in the overwhelming employment of the United States military. Operation Shock and Awe, a massive airstrike and bombing campaign that preceded the ground war, was almost a celebration of America’s newly revamped military—one that president Bush wanted the world to see. Again we see the presence of multiple perspectives over the United States’ role in the international community. Campbell’s argument clearly aligns with the “American Descent” thesis. Not only does it mark the beginning of the decent of American power and influence due to Vietnam as Immanuel Wallerstein suggests, but it also highlights the notion that the United States government, and especially the Executive Branch, held this doctrine as a part of their decision making processes (Wallerstein 2002).

Within the parameters of this doctrine there is the element of “remorse” for the United States’ previous actions. Not remorse in the actual actions, but rather remorse for the negative outcomes they had on their perceived position within the world. At the same time president Bush and his National Security Council acted aggressively and decisively as the world’s hegemon. The Bush administration vowed that the Gulf War would not be the same as Vietnam. As an experienced veteran and politician, Bush wanted to implement the mantra “never fight a war with a hand tied behind your back” into the Gulf

War policy (Renshon 1993, 41). They fully acknowledged that sending the American military into an active engagement was a risk, but it was a gamble worth taking in order to reaffirm to the world that the United States' was the world's unipolar power. Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney "recognizing the institutional health of the American military was at stake in the Persian Gulf, warned: 'The military if finished in this society if we screw this up'" (Campbell 1998, 366). Cheney, being charge with the task of the "deployments of hundreds of thousands of troops, tanks, planes, and ships to the [Gulf] region" understood the magnitude of the decision that was being made (Daadler and Destler 2009, 196). The Powell Doctrine was at the forefront of the Bush administration's decision—they however decided to navigate through the image connected to in it in order to rebrand the American military. The military is an extension of the state that employs it; therefore through a successful positive military intervention the face of the state is cast in a positive light. The lens the Bush administration wanted that light to be beaming through was unipolar.

### **National Security Strategy 1990**

The decision to rebrand the United States' image in the international community through its performance in the Gulf War came through a series of official documents—both at the national and international levels. President Bush continued the tradition started by president Reagan by creating his own National Security Strategy. In this document there are two significant pieces of information that speak to the larger trends that this project aims to uncover. The first is the acknowledgement of the dwindling

power and significance of the Soviet Union in the international community. The Bush administration stated “our goal is to move beyond containment, to seek the integration of the Soviet Union into the international system as a constructive partner. For the first time in the postwar period, this goal appears within reach” (NSS 1990, 9). This demonstrates an understanding of the restructuring of the bipolar system into a unipolar system. While there is no explicit evidence that clearly states the United States’ psychological strategy in regards to this newly found rapprochement of the Soviet Union, the United States was already starting to play the role they saw themselves soon filling in reality. As part of their foreign policy strategy, the United States was beginning to operate under the assumption that the Soviet Union was not only not a threat, but also a potential ally. This opened up an unprecedented opportunity for the United States to act as the world’s only super power. No other country in the world could match their economic strength, their technological advancements, or their military power. The United States was becoming the world’s first true hegemon where second place was miles from being even close to catch them. Unipolarity was beginning to establish roots within the decision making body of the United States government and would lead them to make decisions that they could not have made otherwise.

Due to the fact that president Bush acknowledged and established the United States as the world’s unipolar power, he was able to then make certain claims and justifications that would only be acceptable if the United States made them. He was now free to extend America’s objectives—whether they were economic, security, or other reasons—without the threat of a significant opposing force. At the beginning of the document Bush outlines a general strategy that the United States plans to execute. It

states the United States aims to “deter any aggression that could threaten its security and, should deterrence fail, repel or defeat military attack and end conflict on terms favorable to the United States, its interests and allies” (NSS 1990, 2). This can be looked at as a warning order to the world. If any nation is deemed to threaten the national interests of the United States then they have the full right to forcibly stop them from doing so. In addition to the statements written above, the United States also seeks to “promote the rule of law and diplomatic solutions to regional conflicts” as well as “maintain stable regional military balances to deter those powers that might seek regional dominance” (NSS 1990, 2). It is interesting because this section of the NSS was most likely written with Iraq in mind. The United States had evidence that Iraq was planning on launching some sort of aggressive expansionist campaign. This addition to the NSS was a preemptive justification for the intervention in the Gulf region (this should not be confused with the preemptive strike doctrine developed under the Bush Jr. administration that would be used as justification for the invasion of Iraq 2003. Here Bush Sr. expected Iraq to do something that warranted a US response and made legal preparation for when that time came, as opposed to responding militarily before something happened, which is what Bush Jr. did). Intelligence gave the United States the tools to justify their actions before they were even necessary or carried out. Saddam Hussein began to mass his forces on the border of Iraq and Kuwait months before he launched his invasion. While the United States believed this to just be a stunt and show of force, it is highly likely that they wanted to be prepared in case there was an actual invasion.

Further in the document Bush narrows this definition of national interests and security: “Religious fanaticism may continue to endanger American lives, or countries



friendly to us in the Middle East, on whose energy resources the free world continues to depend. The scourge of terrorism, and of states who sponsor it, likewise remains a threat” (NSS 1990, 6). This statement has profound significance on the United States’ foreign policy for decades to come. President Bush and his advisors may not have realized the effects of this, but with this sentence they formally made “religious fanaticism”—which should be read in the context of radical Islam—the new enemy of the United States. This will become even more important after the end of the Gulf War and the presidency of George Bush, however; it is necessary to understand where this notion of “Islam as the enemy” came from. This will be addressed at the conclusion of this chapter and set up the next engagement the United States will have with Iraq in 2003.

After naming religious fanaticism as the source of threat, Bush identifies the national interests that are at stake: “The free world's reliance on energy supplies from this pivotal region and our strong ties with many of the region's countries continue to constitute important interests of the United States” (NSS 1990, 13). Not only did the Bush administration clearly define the problem, but also a very explicit solution: “[the United States] will maintain a naval presence in the eastern Mediterranean Sea, the Persian Gulf, and the Indian Ocean. We will conduct periodic exercises and pursue improved host-nation support and prepositioning of equipment throughout the region” (NSS 1990, 13). Unlike the National Security Strategies of the Reagan administration, the Bush administration was undeniably clear about their goals and intentions. As if there was a need to attach an economic component to the naval presence the NSS opened its section concerning “Energy” with the following statement: “The concentration of 65 percent of the world's known oil reserves in the Persian Gulf means we must continue to

ensure reliable access to competitively priced oil and a prompt, adequate response to any major oil supply disruption” (NSS 1990, 22). Throughout the entire document, the Middle East was popping up as a region vital to the national interests of the United States. This would only make the justification for intervention in the Persian Gulf an extremely easy task for the Bush administration. The real importance is not that the administration justified the intervention, but how they framed it to the American people, the world, and most importantly to themselves. With unipolarity in mind, the Bush administration was demonstrating to the world that they were able to dictate their concerns within the world and get the results they wanted. If there were something that would jeopardize American national interests then the United States would do everything that threat was removed. The National Security Strategy of 1990 was the first showing of how the United States saw themselves in the New World Order.

### **National Security Directive 45— August 20, 1990**

On August 20, 1990, several weeks after the occupation of Kuwait had begun, the Bush administration published National Security Directive 45. This was essentially an extension of the National Security Strategy, which narrowed even further the United States’ intentions.

The subject of this document is titled “U.S. Policy in Response to the Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait.” Like the National Security Strategies and Decision Directives of the Reagan administration, it is clearly stated that the Persian Gulf is vital to the national security of the United States. Immediately it is made clear that the United States has a

legal and moral justification to intervene. Military force was also made undeniably clear. If Iraq was going to invade an ally and potentially destabilize the Middle East then the United States was going to get involved.

What is important to take note of is the section outlining the United State's explicit decision to "work bilaterally with its allies and friends" (NSD 45 1990). In this official document the president strategically chose to use the word "bilaterally." It is no secret that president H.W. Bush was a master politician and even greater diplomat. Throughout his extensive career in Washington, he had the opportunity to personally meet and build positive relationships with many of the world's leaders. According to Daadler and Destler, co-authors of *In the Shadow of the Oval Office*, during his first year as president he made 150 personal phone calls to world leaders—an unprecedented amount of personal diplomacy from any president (Daadler and Destler 2009). Over Bush's long political career he had acquired a vast network of high-ranking leaders in all areas of the international order. When he finally took his place in the Oval Office, he was able to take advantage of the relationships he had built in order to effectively ignite international participation.

### **UN Security Council Resolution 678**

As part of an effort to include other world powers in the Gulf War, president Bush strongly pushed for a global coalition backed by the United Nations. Through his expert diplomacy, Bush was able to craft UN Security Council Resolution 678, which: "[authorizes] Member States co-operating with the Government of Kuwait, unless Iraq on

or before 15 January 1991 fully implement...the above-mentioned resolutions, to use all necessary means to uphold and implement resolution 660 (1990) and all subsequent relevant resolutions and to restore international peace and security in the area” (UN Resolution 678, 1990, 27-28). This was an incredible step in the direction of the United States acting the role in which they saw themselves playing. Jim Baker, president Bush’s Secretary of State, was a huge supporter for this Resolution 678 because it “set a deadline of January 15, 1991, for Saddam Hussein to withdraw from Kuwait”—a deadline that was set by the world, not just the United States (Meacham 2015, 453). Another demonstration of the United States’ eagerness to work collectively came the day after the initial invasion of Kuwait. On August 3, Secretary of State Baker and Soviet foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze condemned the invasion of Kuwait. Calling the invasion illegal, the American and Soviet diplomats called “upon the rest of the international community to join [the United States and the Soviet Union] in an international cutoff of all arms supplies to Iraq” (Smith 18). It appeared that at the beginning of the invasions the only means of action that was being proposed by anyone in the world were diplomatic initiatives and economic restrictions. This example highlights the fact that the United States was using its new role to rally the world behind their vision. The fact that the United States and the Soviet Union came to a consensus and issued a joint statement is critical in the development of a unipolar international system.

This finding falls in line with the strong assertion of Donald Rumsfeld in that the United States had been presented with a unique opportunity to change the rules of the international order: “No longer did the United States have to calculate Soviet interests, intentions and military capabilities so carefully...when making its own Middle East

policy decisions” (Renshon 1992, 31).” Without having to worry about the Soviet Union, the United States was an unchallenged power. They could do what they wanted and the rest of the world would have to follow along and reap the benefits or stay out of the way. According to Stephen Wayne, author of *President Bush Goes to War*, this allowed president Bush to “cloak U.S. policy in a UN flag” which allowed for—if not pressured—an international effort and response against the invasion of Kuwait.

### **George Herbert Walker Bush—The Complicated Decision**

There is no doubt that president Bush had to bare the ultimate responsibility: to send young men and women war. Throughout history that decision has never been made easier to endure. It would be foolish to think that the loss of American lives was not calculated in the decision making process that Bush went through before sending the nation to war. Meacham writes “Bush encouraged military planning on the grounds that Saddam would, in the end, only understand force. ‘The final analysis: we will prevail...Saddam Hussein will get out of Kuwait, and the United States will have been the catalyst and the key in getting this done, and that is important. Our role as world leader will once again have been reaffirmed, but if we compromise and if we fail, we would be reduced to total impotence, and that is not going to happen” (Meacham 2015, 451). President Bush understood that the status of the United States would be called into question, as there was the emerging vacancy at the top of the international order. As veteran of World War II, president Bush knew what it meant to have the world look upon the United States as the world’s safety net and the global security force. While no

president wants to send American men in women into harms way, he believed that he could not sit back and let an evil dictator lash out in the Middle East.

We can see in the National Security Strategy the calculated and politically worded justifications for the United States intervention into Iraq. What the document fails to include, and simply has no room for it, is the human component of president Bush's decision-making. There was an emotional factor that Meacham presents in his book arguing that there was enough justification based on the atrocities Saddam Hussein was committing through his invasion for the United States to act. The president would frequently cite an "Amnesty International report on the brutalities of the Iraq occupation...offering it as evidence in support of his moral case for war" (Meacham 2015, 453).

While the president wanted to assert to the world that the United States was the super power, he also understood the value and importance of including other actors and allies in international policy. Bush understood that he was traversing on an unprecedented opportunity—the possibility to establish a New World Order. In order for this to successfully work he could not have the United States perceived as a disregarding hegemon. Perception is reality, something that president Bush fully understood along with the notion of "noblesse oblige" (nobility obliges) and intended to act as such. If the United States was going to be a hegemon, it was their responsibility to act like one. On January 13, 1991, Bush said "It is my decision to step back and let sanctions work, or to move forward, and in my view, help establish a New World Order", something that Meacham describes as a "vision of international cooperation" (Meacham 2015, 458-459).

For Bush “The international environment created conditions that were conducive to a forceful U.S. response” (Renshon 1993, 31). The fall of the Soviet Union created a political vacuum that had two perverse effects: Saddam Hussein acting aggressively in the Middle East and the United States fulfilling the role as the world’s super power. The latter meant the United States would lead the coalition against the Iraqi dictator. This was Bush’s reality and that reality shaped his decision to intervene in the Gulf region.

### **The Plurality of Theses**

Something that is to be considered here is whether or not “international cooperation” constitutes the same thing as multipolarity—I believe that in this case it certainly does not. In a speech given to the returning soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines who had fought in the Gulf War, president Bush affirmed his understand of the United States within the global context: “When you left, it was still fashionable to question America’s decency. America’s courage, America’s resolve. No one, no one in the whole world doubts us anymore” (Meacham 2015, 474). Jean Edawrd Smith, author of *George Bush’s War*, reaffirms this sentiment as well as underscores the plurality of the United States’ actions in Iraq: “Never in the history of warfare...have a nation’s armed forces served with greater efficiency, or been more responsive to political necessity. The requirements of our allies were never lost sight of” (Smith 1992, 3). The Gulf War was not about the United States flexing its muscles, however, it did provide them the opportunity to solidify their position at the top of the international order—a New World Order in which they were going to lead.

It is important to understand that the reality in which the president Bush was operating, there were multiple pressures that played into the identity and self-image of the United States. These theses did not exist in isolation from each other and each had a significant role in how the president chose to act in foreign affairs. There was not only one set of guiding principles that influenced Bush's foreign policy, however, there were those that were stronger than others. They can be broken down into two categories: active and reactive. The active political lenses are unipolarity and neoconservatism. These have been the main guiding principles in the White House when the United States has been involved with Iraq in any capacity. They are main driving factors in policy creation and are strongly present when decisions are made. They are the beliefs and political psychology of the decision making body. The reactive theses are "the "American Descent" thesis and the "Rise of the Rest" thesis. Both theses are readily acknowledged as existing in the international political environment and influence the United States' foreign policy decisions, however, they are more or less on seen as secondary factors in the decision making process. They generally only make an appearance when the United States feels as though it is necessary to act prudently in order to not severely offend other nation states' sense of inclusion and participation in foreign affairs. The seeking of UN sanctioned ultimatums as well as a global coalition was president Bush's way of working through and responding to the "Rise of the Rest"/multipolar thesis. The Bush administration's response to the "American Descent" thesis can be seen through the implementation of the Powell Doctrine.

The invasion of Kuwait went against the "New World Order" that the United States was pushing the international system towards through its careful navigation of



identity pressures imposed by each thesis: “Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait seemed more like the politics of the old world order, not the new” and it was the duty of the United States to fix it (Renshon 1993, 81). Ultimately unipolarity surfaced as the most dominate ideological lens of foreign policy during the Gulf War period, which led to the major decision to invade Iraq. If the United States truly saw themselves as the world’s superpower then they had to act like it—intervention was simply part of its job description.

### **Conclusion**

At the end of Reagan’s episode of intervention into Iraq we saw the strong emergence of neoconservatism throughout the high level leadership of his administration. During president George H. W. Bush’s presidency, there is a clear development of the other three theses carving space in the intellectual community. The end of the Cold War left political vacuum that needed to be quickly filled. The international order was rapidly changing—it was could no longer be characterized as a bipolar system. The United States clearly emerged as the world’s sole superpower; however, the foreign policy decisions that were made during this time of rapid development were influenced by the presence of other perceptions about their role in international politics. One cannot look at the decisions of the Bush administration as existing within a bubble of unipolarity. To do so would not only be ignorant, but also harmful to understanding the larger topic of international relations. While the United States was clearly the sole unipolar player at the end of the Cold War and fall of the Soviet Union, they were still a player affected by the environment of the “game.”

President Bush had a very good understanding of the delicacy of the international system during this time of uncertainty, which he skillfully navigated through in order to quell an evil power. At the conclusion of the “Gulf War” section, Meacham presents the overall experience of the war from the president’s perspective:

Our stated mission, as codified in UN resolutions, was a simple one—end the aggression, knock Iraq’s forces out of Kuwait, and restore Kuwait’s leaders. To occupy Iraq would instantly shatter our coalition, turning the whole Arab world against us, and make a broken tyrant into a latter-day Arab hero. It would have taken us way beyond the imprimatur of international law bestowed by the resolutions of the Security Council, assigning young soldiers to a fruitless hunt for a securely entrenched dictator and condemning them to fight in what would be an unwinnable urban guerilla war. It could only plunge that part of the world into ever-greater instability and destroy the credibility we were working so hard to reestablish. (Meacham 2015, 464-465).

Perhaps it is the timeless phenomenon of rebelling against one’s father, but president George W. Bush did the exact opposite of his father’s recommendation—a heeded warning might be a better description of this confession.

Once again we must look towards the change in personnel in order to build upon the understanding of the United States’ role. As Bill Clinton takes over the White House in 1993, the United States is no longer engaged in an active war against Iraq, however; it is during this time that policy and identity become severely intertwined. Through UN sanctions and U.S. policy, the Clinton administration continues a tradition of intervention in Iraq as part of a quest to solidify their position within the international order.

## **Interlude: President Clinton—Continuing the American Tradition in Iraq**

Between the two Bush administrations President Clinton occupied the White House for eight years. While president Clinton did not formally engage in a war with Iraq, his policy is significant in the continuation of the United States' relationship with Bagdad. During his presidency, Bill Clinton continued the pattern of policy that was established under the Reagan administration and continued under the first Bush administration. As a Democratic President, the neoconservative foreign policy specifically designed for and limited to Iraq stresses the significance of the United States' understanding of itself in the world.

The purpose of this section is to highlight the importance of president Clinton's policy on Iraq and how it led to the continuation of president George H.W. Bush's policy. What is more, it also serves as a major indicator for how the United States had begun to solidify its self image in the post Cold War era. When thinking about the contemporary relationship with Iraq, the period between the Gulf War and the 2003 invasion is often overlooked. The Clinton administration's relationship with Iraq is a striking example of how the United States' self image in the world became linked its policy in Iraq. This section will first broadly outline the Clinton doctrine, president Clinton's general foreign policy strategy, and then discuss his policy on Iraq. This juxtaposition will hopefully highlight the underlying presence of neoconservatism as the firmly established policy of Iraq and to set the stage for president George W. Bush's invasion of Iraq in 2003.

## **The Clinton Doctrine**

President Clinton had a much different foreign policy strategy than his predecessor: he wanted to ensure that the United States was working bilaterally with other nations and international institutions to promote democracy, economic prosperity, and to protect human rights across the globe. He recognized that “without [America’s] leadership and engagement, threats would multiply and [the world’s] opportunities would narrow” (NSS 1997, 2). At the forefront of his foreign policy strategy was the inclusion of multiple state actors to promote democracy through peaceful trade and humanitarian efforts: “Clinton [was a strong] proponent of multilateralism, wanted to calm the international landscape—but only if the U.N. or NATO stood resolutely by America’s side” (Brinkley 1997, 112-113). Much of the president’s foreign policy relied on this cooperation and approval of international institutions before getting involved in international affairs. The president actually came “under attack from House Republicans, conservative Democrats...and foreign affairs commentators for its overreliance on the U.N. in Somalia, its timidity in Haiti, and its fickleness in Bosnia” (Brinkley 1997, 113). In his first years as president, Clinton had yet to establish a firm foreign policy strategy or doctrine that he could demonstrate to the world.

Wanting to establish a more active and concrete foreign policy strategy president Clinton adopted the idea of “democratic enlargement” into his agenda. This strategy of democratic enlargement “focused on four points: 1) to strengthen the community of market democracies; 2) to foster and consolidate new democracies and market economies where possible; 3) to counter the aggression and support the liberalization of states

hostile to democracy; and 4) to help democracy and market economies take root in regions of greatest humanitarian concern” (Brinkley 1997, 116). While there are similar threads to neoconservatism, this policy strategy was primarily focused on using economic liberation as a solution and means to solving democratic issues. The Clinton administration was not necessarily concerned with altering the political systems of every nation they engaged in economically. Its biggest concern was that the relationship they had with other nations was adding to the economic health of the United States. In Asia, for example, because many Asian countries had a different view on what democracy was “under enlargement, America’s chief concern in Asia would therefore be free market access—the rest...would be left to sort itself out” (Brinkley 1997, 116). In general the Clinton Doctrine did not hold the same imperialistic tendencies (read neoconservative) of his previous two predecessors. There was not the same sense of unrestrained power and hegemony that the Bush administration displayed. While Clinton acknowledged the United States’ position of the world’s sole superpower, he intended to channel that power through international institutions and multilateral efforts in order to empower the rest of the world and promote Western democracy by example. This strategy of “enlargement rejected the more expansive view that the United States was duty-bound to promote constitutional democracy and human rights everywhere; as a politically viable concept, [it] had to be aimed at primary U.S. strategic and economic interests” (Brinkley 1997, 116). This in essence was the Clinton Doctrine. This is how the majority of Clinton’s foreign policy initiatives were crafted—with “democratic enlargement” in mind. Economics was his key to opening the world to democratic and American values. The role of “global peacemaker” and “economic partner” would replace that of “military foe”

or “imperial occupier.” All of this proved to dominate the Clinton administration’s foreign policy in every area of the world except one—Iraq.

### **Iraq Liberation Act of 1998**

In 1998 two very significant policy decisions were made that involved Iraq. The first was the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998. Signed into law by president Clinton on October 31, 1998, it stated “it should be the policy of the United States to seek to remove the Saddam Hussein regime from power in Iraq and to replace it with a democratic government” (Gilman 1998, 1). President Clinton codified the neoconservative agenda into public law by passing this bill. It was now the official policy of the United States to remove Saddam Hussein from leadership and to establish a democratic government that was friendly and accepting of the United States. This law contained almost identical wording of the letter sent to the president from the Project For A New American Century (PNAC), the leading neoconservative group in Washington, and whose members would later take up leadership positions under the second Bush administration. While president Clinton’s foreign policy in other areas of the world may not have stemmed from neoconservative roots, it was clear that Iraq was not going to escape the neoconservative agenda. In simple terms Iraq policy meant neoconservative policy—there was no alternative.

### **Policy of Containment**

After the end of the Gulf War, the United States practiced a policy of containment in Iraq to ensure that Saddam Hussein would be unable to wage war against his neighbors

ever again. This extensive policy included several aspects such as Operation Provide Comfort; a humanitarian/relief operation in northern Iraq, as well as US led sanctions imposed through the UN. Other main aspects of the policy of containment can be summarized as follows: “ringing Saddam Hussein with military forces, building up ground facilities in Kuwait, running intelligence operations in Kurdish areas, flying warplanes over much of his territory, and periodically pummeling Iraqi military and intelligence facilities with missiles and bombs” (Ricks 2006, 12). Seeing the end of the Gulf War as a missed opportunity to fulfill the neoconservative agenda, at the end of his term president Bush tried to create his desired results through the imposition of this policy—one that the Clinton administration would continue practicing as he overtook the Oval Office. While the Bush administration may have established the policy of containment, the Clinton administration codified it as a tradition of American foreign policy. Ultimately the “periodic pummeling” mentioned above came to its maximum fruition under the Clinton administration through Operation Desert Fox.

### **Operation Desert Fox 1998**

Several months after president Clinton signed the Iraq Liberation Act into law, the United States launched Operation Desert Fox: a three day bombing campaign against Iraq that was intended to degrade Saddam Hussein’s ability to produce Weapons of Mass Destruction and wage war against neighboring countries. In this short but destructive campaign, American and British aircraft destroyed approximately 100 strategic targets in Iraq. Chemical facilities, biological facilities, as well as locations that included the

Hussein's secret police and other government buildings were destroyed. This was not an official act of war. There was no opposition from the Iraqi military either before or after the bombings, only the refusal of Hussein to allow UN inspectors into suspected WMD facilities. In total, there was more ordinance dropped on Iraq during those three days than there was during the entire Gulf War: "A total of 415 cruise missiles had been used, more than the 317 employed during the entire Gulf War" (Ricks 2006, 19).

### **Iraq as an Exception**

When comparing president Clinton's foreign policy track record, his policy towards Iraq does not fit into the pattern. Iraq for the Clinton administration is an exception.

The democratic, humanitarian, war-avoiding president essentially ignored his own doctrine when dealing with Iraq. One could say that he might have been responding to the general will of the Congress—and ergo the people of the United States—but that does not explain the entire picture. For the third presidency in a row, it had become an American tradition to control affairs in the Middle East, specifically Iraq. Iraq had become a focal point or an experimentation ground of some sorts for American international supremacy. It is almost as though the country had become a permanent display of American might and power—the United States was using it as a justification of their understanding of themselves as world leaders. The Iraq Liberation Act and Operation Desert Fox fall completely outside of Clinton Doctrine and fall in line with the trajectory started by president Reagan and propelled further by president H.W. Bush.



It is this tradition of involvement in Iraq that must be understood when looking towards the contemporary relationship Washington and Bagdad share. Presidents come and go, as well as their doctrines, but what remains constant is how the United States chooses to deal with Iraq. It is as if there has been a written guidebook—an “Iraq Policy For Dummies”—that each president is required to read and use as a template for crafting foreign policy regarding Iraq. Going forward it is anything but a surprise that the second Bush administration, an extension of president Reagan and his father’s legacy, continued this trajectory. While 9/11 may not have been connected to Iraq in any way, it allowed the Bush administration to continue the process of stripping Iraq to its bone in order to install a friendly democracy—a result that president Clinton would have achieved if he could have remained in office for a third term.

During the eight-year gap between the father and the son, massive developments in the perception over the role of the United States’ began to emerge. Old neoconservative players began to expand their ideologies to other intellectuals and build a dominant force that would ultimately dominate the Executive Branch under the presidency of George Bush Jr. The next chapter will cover this development that would ultimately manifest itself in the Global War on Terror and the United States’ third engagement in Iraq in less than 25 years—Iraq 2003.

## **Chapter 4: The Invasion of Iraq 2003: Resuming the Neoconservative Tradition of American Foreign Policy in the Middle East**

The election of George W. Bush to the White House in 2000 was simply a resumption of the neoconservative tradition that had become the United States' preferred foreign policy strategy in Iraq since the Reagan administration. Neoconservatism had over a decade to build momentum and a significant following, transcending party politics (making an appearance in the Clinton administration) and eventually landed itself right back in the major players of the second Bush administration. For the first time since the beginning of the New World Order, all of the components of neoconservatism were able to act freely within the American foreign policy elite. A true hegemony was exercising its power that was unrestricted by any other form of power, international or otherwise, in order to implement a regime change that would align with the democratic values and interests of the United States and its Western allies. The invasion of Iraq in 2003 was the result of strong consolidation of power in an exclusively neoconservative administration and allowed the United States to fully implement the neoconservative policies that were constrained by the power politics of the Cold War and intentionally not carried through during the Gulf War. The Bush administration intentionally ignored the presence of other theses and surrounded itself with like-minded neoconservatives in order to produce the result they wanted. The attacks on September 11, 2001 provided the United States with the necessary international political environment in order to launch a crusade that would “deter any challengers of ever dreaming of challenging [them] on the world stage” (Mamdani 2004, 210). It also provided the necessary internal sentiments that manifested in the unprecedented ability and consolidation of the power to wage war. Through a

combination of the post-9/11 security mindset, a reemergence of old neoconservative players, and careful selective reasoning, neoconservatism solidified its dominance as the United States' lens for constructing foreign policy, which ultimately manifested in the invasion of Iraq 2003.

This chapter does not focus on the specifics of the Iraq War but rather the buildup to the initial invasion and the immediate aftermath of the declaration of “Mission Accomplished” and the subsequent appointment of Paul Bremer as the Coalition Provisional Authority. The main purpose of this chapter is to highlight the major policy debates surrounding the invasion and the role they had in further development of the American identity.

### **Pre-9/11 Iraq Context: Neoconservatism As a Minority**

The resurgence of the neoconservative agenda came about through two significant factors: the Project for a New American Century and the attacks of September 11. The Project for a New American Century is where the maturation of neoconservative agenda took place. Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney, among other future members of the Bush White House, had been advocating for a change in the U.S.'s policy towards Iraq since the 1990's. The letter sent to president Clinton as well as their Statement of Principles on their website (which has been removed from the internet) contained a detailed plan of attack for the United States going into the new millennia. However, the newly elected Bush did not share the same enthusiasm for regime change in Iraq as his vice-president

and Secretary of Defense. It would take terrorist attacks on American soil to completely shift his policy.

Before the attacks on September 11, the neocons were looked at as the black sheep of foreign policy within the elite Washington intellectuals. There were conversations about regime change—the ideas were present; however, they were mainly confined to a small group of people. There was a debate in the foreign policy community over the effectiveness of containment. On the majority side were those that believed containment was working and should be continued as policy practice. The other side, made up of the neoconservative minority, believed that “the whole [Middle East] would be a safer place, Iraq would be a much more successful country, and the American national interest would benefit greatly if there were a change of regime in Iraq” (Ricks 2006, 27). The Bush administration did not fully solidify their position until after 9/11 when the neoconservative minority exploited the political circumstances. Cheney, Wolfowitz, and Rumsfeld were the major players on this neoconservative team; however, they were constrained by the current power politics of the international order. Not only was regime change not on the radar of the president, but also he had run on the platform of keeping containment as his policy strategy for Iraq. Shortly after being elected, Bush sent Colin Powell on a tour of the Middle East. After visiting the region, the newly appointed Secretary of State had found Saddam Hussein to not be a threat to the United States: “He had not developed any significant capability with respect to weapons of mass destruction. He is unable to project conventional power against his neighbors. So, in effect our policies have strengthened the security of the neighbors of Iraq, and these are the policies that we are going to keep in place” (Ricks 2006, 27). No one in Washington,

not even president Bush, wanted to entertain the idea of regime-change because there simply was no feasible strategy for achieving it without the United States massively disrupting the international system and creating a long list of enemies in the process. This dominating attitude towards Iraq would soon change. After September 11, Cheney and Rumsfeld would seize the opportunity to push their plans for Iraq to the forefront of American foreign policy.

Much like during the Reagan years, which both Cheney and Rumsfeld were a significant part of; the executive branch had a plan for Iraq that did not quite fit the current international political situation. The neoconservatives had missed their chance after the Gulf War to topple the Hussein regime and implement a democracy friendly to the United States. This lack of execution by the neoconservatives created a hunger within the elite foreign policy making circle. Even before the attacks on 9/11, Cheney and Rumsfeld were planning to invade Iraq. The attacks provided them with the international environment that would deem the invasion acceptable—even if it was loosely based in fact and justified on an extremely ideological basis. Through aggressive and unprecedented expansions of the Executive branch’s ability to wage war, Cheney and Rumsfeld found a way to make the once futile idea regime change in Iraq an unstoppable reality.

### **September 11 and the Authorization for Use of Military Force**

Just as the fall of the Soviet Union did in the 1990’s, the terrorist attacks on September 11 reconstructed the international order and rewrote the rules for foreign policy in the United States. It would begin with a massive and unprecedented shift in

ability to conduct warfare within the government. In a wave of panic and fury following the attacks, the Legislative Branch made a historical decision that would define the unprecedented style and practice of American foreign policy that is still present today. On September 14, 2001 both the House of Representatives and the Senate passed the Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF), which stated “the President is authorized to use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, or harbored such organizations or persons, in order to prevent any future acts of international terrorism against the United States by such organizations or persons” (Scahill 2013, 19). This monumental piece of legislation essentially gave the president the authority to wage war without the approval of Congress. In one sweeping motion, opposed only by a single Congresswoman, Congress gave the Executive Branch the authority to conduct a timeless and borderless war. It also completely undermined the War Powers Act of 1973, as well as the 1975 Church Committee Report that led to president Ford outlawing political assassinations in 1976. Each of these played a key role in the reformation of the ability of the United States to wage war. The Church Committee Report found that “Intelligence agencies have undermined the constitutional rights of citizens primarily because checks and balances designed by the framers of the Constitution to assure accountability have not been applied” (U.S. Senate: Church Committee 1975). The War Power Act, which is still technically a law, “requires the president to notify Congress in a timely fashion when American troops are being sent abroad with a strong probability that they will engage in combat” (New York Times 2011). The most important aspect of the law is that “it calls

for the troops to be removed from foreign territory within 60 days unless Congress explicitly gives approval for them to remain” (New York Times 2011). This essentially meant that the president was restricted and held accountable by Congress (and by extension, the American people) in his ability to wage war. The combination of the Church Committee Report and the War Powers Act significantly reduced the power of the Executive Branch and its ability to conduct military operations without the consent and oversight of the Legislative Branch. In one shift piece of legislation, the Executive Branch was let off its leash and allowed to conduct a Global War on Terror (GWOT). The AUMF was the final piece of the puzzle the Rumsfeld and Cheney were waiting for—it opened up the door that would eventually send American troops back to Iraq.

### **Cheney and Rumsfeld Seize Opportunity—The Practice of Blind Policy**

The Bush administration’s foreign policy can be defined by two phenomena: a new ability to wage war by the president and paired with an unprecedented ideological blindness that made up the key foreign policy makers. While president Bush was the commander in chief, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and vice president Dick Cheney ran the war in Iraq. Every aspect of foreign policy conducted was read within the context of the GWOT. The implementation of neoconservative policies became much easier after Congress passed the AUMF. In order to understand the significance of the AUMF to the cause of Rumsfeld and Cheney, it is necessary to go back a little to before the attacks.

As mentioned above, there was an immediate eagerness from Cheney and Rumsfeld about Iraq: “Within days after the administration came into office, Cheney was directing the conversation at the meeting of the National Security Council (NSC) to focus on Iraq” (Warshaw 2009, 205). Daalder and Destler found that the foreign policy agenda that Cheney, Rumsfeld “and others brought into the administration in 2001 — great powers, alliances, missile defense, and even Iraq—was the same one many of them had focused on when they were last in office in the early 1990s” (Daalder and Dester 2009, 261). The neoconservative agenda had taken a short break from the intellectual consistency of the White House but came back in full effect under Bush Jr.: “It was as if they had pushed the pause button on January 20, 1993 (the day Bush Sr. left the White House) and then the play button eight years later” (Daalder and Destler 2009, 261).

From day one neoconservative policy was the only policy even considered. It was as if Cheney and Rumsfeld were wearing glasses with neoconservatism as the prescription. Foreign policy in the Bush administration had been tainted with the goal of regime change in Iraq—everything was tailored around that goal. At the second National Security Council meeting of the new Bush administration on February 1, 2001, Cheney “dealt only with Iraq” refusing to address anything else that anyone attempted to bring up (Warshaw 2009, 207). In the documentary *The Unknown Known*, directed by Errol Morris, Rumsfeld is quoted saying “if Saddam’s regime were ousted we would have a much improved position in the region and elsewhere” (Morris 2011, 5:01). One way or another Cheney and Rumsfeld were going to have their way in Iraq, and they made it very clear from the beginning. Much like Bush’s “if you’re not with us you’re against us” declaration, Cheney and Rumsfeld’s foreign policy team would soon adopt the same



binary ultimatum—those who supported their goal stayed, those who did not were replaced. Throughout the progression of the future war, key individuals were appointed and organizations put into place for the sole purpose of fitting the Cheney and Rumsfeld agenda. One way of ensuring this uniformity was Cheney’s unprecedented role in National Security Council meetings. A pattern that would develop was that the vice president would ultimately end up running the show—he would lead meetings and set the agenda for discussion. This was traditionally left in the hands of the National Security Advisor to the president, who at the time was Condoleezza Rice. (EVIDENCE). This level of involvement by the vice-president was unseen and only the beginning of the many powers moves that would increase his and Rumsfeld’s ability to wage war.

While there was a strong ideological conformity growing within the Executive Branch, Cheney and Rumsfeld were receiving significant opposition from essentially every intelligence organization: “CIA Iraq specialists and the State Department were causing problems for the administration’s drive to war in Iraq” (Scahill 2013, 81). In fact, “A consensus was building in the intelligence community that no significant links existed, that there was ‘no credible information’ that Iraq was involved with 9/11 ‘or any other al-Qaeda strike’” (Scahill 2013, 81). What is more, almost immediately after the attacks George Tenet, the director of the Central Intelligence Agency, “had built a convincing case that those most likely to be responsible were individuals from [al-Qaeda]” (Warshaw 2009, 216). It is important to note that he “did not suggest that Iraq or Saddam Hussein had been involved with either the terrorist attacks” or with al-Qaeda in any way (Warshaw 2009, 216). Neither Cheney nor Rumsfeld would accept this fact. For

them, all roads were leading to Iraq. Because they were not getting the conclusions from the intelligence that they wanted, Cheney and Rumsfeld created their own that would produce the results that fit their neoconservative narrative. This led to the creation of the Office of Special Plans (OSP), the epitome of the sheer blindness the neoconservatives had while in office. The OSP, an office that was staffed with hand picked appointees, looked at the same intelligence that was coming into the CIA and other intelligence organizations found in the Pentagon; however, it came to completely different conclusions. The OSP “picked out the [intelligence] that supported their own preexisting views and pieced them together” for the sole purpose of providing the president with “legitimate” evidence and justifications for military action against Saddam Hussein.

Once relative success had been achieved in Iraq, Cheney and Rumsfeld appointed Paul Bremer as the Coalition Provisional Authority. Bremer’s appointment was simply an extension of the blind policy objectives of the Bush administration and ensured the success of their neoconservative legacy. Cheney and Rumsfeld needed a guy in Iraq that matched their ideological enthusiasm and to carry out their plans now that the mission of toppling Saddam Hussein was complete. Bremer was the perfect candidate. After 9/11, he publically called for a massive deployment of U.S. troops all around the globe to ensure American supremacy by any means necessary:

Our retribution must move beyond the limp-wristed attacks of the past decade, actions that seemed designed to ‘signal’ our seriousness to the terrorists without inflicting real damage. Naturally a feebleness demonstrated the opposite. This time the terrorists and their supporters must be crushed. This will mean war with one or more countries. And it will be a long war... We must avoid a mindless search for an international ‘consensus’ for our actions (Scahill 2013, 110).

Bremer's ideology would eventually turn into policy during his tenure in Bagdad. In his above statement he is clearly criticizing H.W. Bush's approach to Iraq during the Gulf War. He is attacking the way Bush Sr. navigated through the international order—by appealing an international coalition and going through multilateral channels rather than acting as a true hegemon should: however they please. Instead of asking for support first, Bremer forcefully argued for quick and aggressive American action. By acting today, the United States “will know who [their] true friends are” tomorrow (Scahill 2013, 110).

While this chapter's focus is not around the policy implemented after the removal of Saddam Hussein from power, it is worth noting that “De-Ba'athification” implemented by Bremer would have lasting negative effects on Iraq as a nation as well as the United States role within the country. De-Ba'athification and its aftermath will be discussed further in the conclusion of this project.

### **Opposition to Regime Change**

Even though there was a significant amount ideological conformity within the Bush administration, one could find opposition to the neoconservative agenda. The presence of the other theses did exist during this period, however; they were seldom heard by the Bush administration, even if they came from within. Stanley McChrystal, the Army General who would end running Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC; which will be discussed later), posed significant concerns about the United States intervention into Iraq. McChrystal gave a prudent warning on the brink of the U.S.

invasion stating: “Our actions, particularly interventions, can upset regions, nations, cultures, economies, and peoples, however virtuous our purpose. We must ensure that the cure we offer...is not worse than the disease” (Scahill 2013, 104) Even though McChrystal was charged with conducting the war, he essentially predicted the outcome of the intervention—a prolonged war that was diverted from its initial purpose and lost its strategic direction. Here we see the “American Descent” thesis. The United States is simply damaging itself by going against the international public opinion and dragging itself into a war that will only weaken their national security in the long run. McChrystal echoes the concerns over the United States’ use of the military after the Vietnam War—where the “American Descent” thesis originates.

Brent Snowcroft, the former National Security Advisor for Bush Sr., was another voice of opposition to the decision to invade Iraq—an interesting, and perhaps more compelling due to his neoconservative ties. In an article titled “Don’t Attack Saddam”, Snowcroft writes “Saddam’s strategic objective appears to be to dominate the Persian Gulf [and] to control oil from the region” (Snowcroft 2002, 53). He clearly understands that there is an actual threat to the United States’ national interests, however; he makes the differentiation between a strategic threat versus a mortal threat. While Saddam Hussein’s regime might “clearly [pose] a real threat to key U.S. interests...there [was] scant evidence to tie [him] to terrorist organizations, even less to the Sept. 11 attacks” (Snowcroft 2002, 53).

The most compelling part of his argument against the invasion is that Snowcroft does not try to refute the neoconservative agenda. In fact he advocates for it. He fully recognizes the “necessity” for the removal of Hussein from power but warns “An attack

on Iraq at this time would seriously jeopardize, if not destroy, the global counterterrorist campaign we have undertake”(Snowcroft 2002, 53). Like McChrystal, Snowcroft goes on to predict that not only would an attack on Iraq require a long and costly occupation in the aftermath, but it would also lead to “a serious degradation in international cooperation...against terrorism” (Snowcroft 2002, 54). Snowcroft was correct in thinking that if the United States conducted a war largely on their own volition without the consent of the international community that it would alienate support. While the United States might have the means of conducting a second war in addition to Afghanistan on their own, it does not necessarily mean they should. There are other nations, organizations, and institutions that create international pressure—something that if is not taken seriously damages a country’s reputation. Snowcroft is simultaneously arguing the “American Descent” and the Rise of the Rise theses. In order for the United States to be successful in what he sees as the more important war, the Global War on Terror, they need to cooperate with the rest of the world, otherwise they are facing a decline in relative power. International cooperation and multipolar initiatives is key in accomplishing their national interest goals. The United States cannot get caught up in a war simply for the fulfillment of an identity crisis. He is issuing a warning to the president and the rest of the National Security Council that a war in Iraq will hurt the United States in the long run.

Walt and Mearsheimer concur with the argument of a lack of link between al-Qaeda and Iraq. They emphasize Osama bin Laden’s fundamentalism and Saddam Hussein’s secular opposition to such fundamentalist movements as evidence to suggest an impossible alliance between the two leaders. Agreeing with Snowcroft, Walt and

Mearsheimer said, “Americans should understand that a compelling strategic rationale is absent. This war [is] one the Bush administration chose to fight but did not have to fight” (Walt and Mearsheimer 2003, 59). While it might be what Cheney and Rumsfeld wanted, they objectively had no valid reason for sending forces into Iraq. The obsession of the Bush administration with Iraq (or how Rumsfeld liked to rephrase it “not an obsession—a very measured, nuanced approach”) led to an isolated foreign policy (Morris 2011, 6:42). The United States had an established precedent of containment and the cooperation of strong regional allies yet they chose to push forward on their own.

Walt and Mearsheimer were amongst those in favor of revamping containment, the same group of people who were the majority voice before 9/11 and were pushed aside once Cheney and Rumsfeld decided the world was a battlefield. They point to “both logic and historical evidence” as a suggestion that “a policy of vigilant containment would work” (Walt and Mearsheimer 2003, 59). This would not have to lie solely on the shoulders of the United States. Many other powerful nations have just as much stake in the stability of Iraq’s leadership. The “United States and its regional allies [were] far stronger than Iraq” and would have been able to manage and manipulate his actions. This multilateral approach was completely ignored by the Bush administration as the shadow of neoconservatism began to cast its eyes over Baghdad.

### **The Bush Doctrine: the Birth of the Preemptive Warfare**

Like all great presidents, Bush Jr. had a doctrine. The Bush Doctrine, as outlined by Robert Jervis, contains four major pillars:

First “a strong belief “a strong belief in the importance of a state’s domestic regime in determining its foreign policy and the related judgment that this is an opportune time to transform international politics; the perception of great threats that can be defeated only by new and vigorous policies, most notably preventive war; a willingness to act unilaterally when necessary peace and stability require the United States to assert its primacy into world politics (Jervis 2003, 365).

This is essentially a summary of the neoconservative agenda. The Bush Doctrine was simply that agenda applied to the international political circumstances presented to him at the time. The post 9/11 security environment presented an opening where the neoconservative Bush administration could fulfill their long sought after goals—in this case, regime change in Iraq.

Perhaps the most important tenant of the Bush Doctrine is that “Optimism and pessimism are linked in the belief that if the United States does not make the world better, it will grow more dangerous” (Jervis 2003, 369). Jervis points out the Bush rationale was that because you can not deal with a terrorist organization the same way you can with a state—deterrence for example—“the United States must be ready to wage [preemptive] wars” in order to quell potential threats before they reach maturation (Jervis 2003, 369). While 9/11 was carried out by a terrorist organization, it did not stop the Bush administration from applying this mentality towards Iraq. The claim that Saddam Hussein possessed Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) fell perfectly into this mindset and qualified for preemptive action. Under the logic of the Bush Doctrine, and by extension neoconservatism, the solution to the problem of a future threat it a simple one: “because the state’s foreign policy is shaped, if not determined, by its political system” one can determine how that state, or regime, will act in the future (Jervis 2003, 370). Thus because the United States understood Iraq as a dictatorship under the rule of Saddam Hussein, who possessed WMDs, they could determine that he would use them if

he were not stopped. As the world's sole super power, the task of stopping him fell under the responsibility of the United States. In a speech given at the United States Military Academy in June 2002, president Bush began preparing the United States for its involvement in another war. Using Cheney and Rumsfeld's logic, president Bush declared the United States "must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans, and confront the worst threats before they emerge...If we wait for threats to fully materialize, we will have waited too long" (Ricks 2006, 38). This strategy of preemption would prove to be harmful, inciting more enemies than it aimed to quell. The further development of preemption and the following blowback it produced will be discussed in more detail later.

President Bush devoted an entire chapter outlining his rationale for preventative action in the 2002 National Security Strategy titling it "Prevent Our Enemies from Threatening Us, our Allies, and our Friends with Weapons of Mass Destruction" (NSS 2002, 13). It states, "At the time of the Gulf War, we acquired irrefutable proof that Iraq's [weapons capabilities]... extended to the acquisition of nuclear and biological agents" (NSS 2002, 18). Bush issued the warning that the "pursuit of, and global trade in, such weapons" by nations like Iraq "has become a looming threat to all nations" (NSS 2002, 18). Cheney and Rumsfeld had successfully put Iraq at the top of president Bush's foreign policy agenda and essentially sentenced Saddam Hussein to death. With the full support of the president, they were about to receive the war they had always wanted. While the formal start to the Iraq War was still months away, the president had made up his mind that the Global War on Terror would extend itself back to the Gulf region.



Bush placed his preemptive war rhetoric within the context of the GWOT. Early in the NSS, he wrote “In the twenty-first century, only nations that share a commitment to protecting basic human rights and guaranteeing political and economic freedom will be able to unleash the potential of their people and assure their future prosperity” (NSS 2002, i). Iraq was not considered one of those nations. Iraq was thrust into the “other” category created by a speech by president Bush given to Congress on September 20, 2001. When Bush stated that “Our enemy is a radical network of terrorists, and every government that supports them” he established binary system that essentially came down to “if you aren’t with us, you’re against us” (September 20, 2001; 5:41) This combination of a doctrine defined by the preemptive use of power and a black and white lens of the world became the chosen method of conducting war in the twenty-first century. The United States began to act quickly and explosively with a quick determination of enemy’s status. This “shoot first, ask later” policy applies to both large-scale military operations as well as specific ground missions. The way president Bush, Cheney, and Rumsfeld accomplished this swift neoconservative action was through the Joint Special Operations Command.

### **The Development of Joint Special Operations Command**

The development of the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) was the Bush administration’s (and later Obama’s) preferred way to conduct preemptive warfare. The Iraq War was one of preemption; therefore it is only logical that actions within the war were preemptive as well. Officially JSOC “is a subunified command of the US Special

Operations Command (USSOCOM)” with the specific task of studying “special operations requirements and techniques, ensure interoperability an equipment standardization, plan and conduct special operation exercises and training” (Joint Special Operations Command 2016). JSOC makes up the “tier 1” of the military’s special operations. They are Seal Team 6, Delta Force, and select Army Rangers. They receive the highest-level training, state of the art equipment, and reserved for the most secret, dangerous, and sexiest missions. They are the soldiers and sailors who are idolized in Hollywood films—real life G.I. Joes.

Before 9/11, JSOC was a relatively small unit within the massive operational forces of the military. They saw some limited action during the Cold War, but were essentially regarded as an unappealing option for military operations. When Rumsfeld came into his second appointment as the Secretary of Defense, he had the aggressive goal “to reorganize the structure of the US Special Operations Forces, blowing up [political] barriers to allow for fast, lethal, global operations with no bureaucratic meddling...The Special Mission Units (SMUs) of JSOC...were permitted to operate discreetly and globally without coordinating with the conventional command authorities” (Scahill 2013, 98). What this meant was that these forces were accountable only to the president. They did not coordinate with conventional forces, and did not require Congressional approval for conducting operations. Rumsfeld was ultimately successful in his plan: “JSOC... grew from fewer than 2000 troops before 9/11, to as many as 25,000 today” (Kelley 2016, 1). 25,000 troops is equivalent to 1/7 of the Marine Corps, an entire branch of the armed services. The implications of this in the development of foreign policy are unprecedented. With Rumsfeld’s successful cultivation of JSOC, he further expanded the

Executive Branch's ability to wage war—a power that president Bush would exploit during the Iraq War and create a new precedent for American foreign policy.

The purpose of including JSOC into this project highlights the massive impact neoconservatism had on the internal structure of the Executive Branch. This incredible development of an elite fighting force that answers only to the president further entrenched neoconservatism into the institutional framework of American foreign policy. JSOC was a tool that allowed for neoconservatism to flourish within the context of the GWOT and established a dangerous precedent for the way the United States conducts war in the modern era.

### **Conclusion**

The fallout of the War in Iraq has incredible implications and real effects on today's foreign policy strategy and only further entrenched the United States' self image within the neoconservative framework. Today the world faces another enemy in Iraq: the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria—ISIS. It is important to understand is that ISIS is the unintended creation of American foreign policy since the 2003 invasion of Iraq. If the Gulf War can be characterized as having the removal of the Cold War constraints, then Iraq 2003 can be characterized as having the removal of Congressional constraints on the Executive Branch to wage war. The AUMF was just the beginning in the United States' movement towards a streamlined capability to conduct military operations all over the world, without the traditional (outdated in the eyes of Rumsfeld) oversight of Congress. The Gulf War and the Iraq War were bound and fueled by the same neoconservative ideology. Iraq 2003 not only gave neoconservatives the opportunity to the complete their

desired outcome from the 1990's, but it reaffirmed the neoconservative agenda through the careful selection of likeminded policy creators and a conscious disregard for international opinion. Combined with a lack of Congressional oversight, the Executive Branch allowed a misguided, and perhaps disillusioned, obsession with Iraq to turn into a tragically unfocused, strategy lacking, and costly war scheme—one that the United States continues to practice. All the while, the United States continued to redefine its purpose in the world through the neoconservative lens: Iraq became both the recipient and source of a neoconservative agenda. This link between identity and policy had become solidified during the Iraq War and continue to influence foreign policy creators today.

## **Conclusion: The Threat of ISIS—A Product of the Long Tradition of Neoconservatism and the American Identity in Iraq**

Today the United States faces another enemy in Iraq: The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. There is a tendency by the general public to view this threat as something new and unique. Somehow it has been removed from a history of intervention and war on the part of the United States. ISIS is anything but new. It is the same group of Islamic extremists that operated under al-Qaeda, rebranded to fit the narrative of their location. ISIS is apart of the United States' long relationship with Iraq from the Cold War years of president Reagan through the Global War on Terror started by president Bush. Its origins are a byproduct located within a larger project carried out by the elite foreign policy makers of the American Executive Branch that has become American tradition and a way for the United States to define its role within the international order—the chosen method of self identification being neoconservatism.

During the 1980's the international order was still greatly defined by the Cold War. The United States and the Soviet Union were indirectly battling for hegemony through a series of third party engagements, or proxy wars—the Iran-Iraq war being one of them. While the American identity was largely located within the idea of bipolarity and Cold War realism, president Reagan and his foreign policy team began to tease out what would become the defining characteristics of neoconservatism. The success of Iraq was a strategic move in the larger Cold War chess game, however; it also served as an experimentation for neoconservatism. Reagan wanted to control the Middle East for the purpose of economic accessibility and secularly democratic leaders—the latter of which he had to wait on. Neoconservatism was the only theses that began to take any roots

within the intellectual community during this time. Cold War realism was suppressing the opportunity for other theories of the United States' role to enter into the narrative of the time. The early stages of neoconservatism mirrored some of the Cold War ambitions and therefore found a place within the Reagan administration as a viable foreign policy agenda, even if the circumstances did not match the opportunities. The United States' involvement in Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War was simply a preparation for future intervention. That intervention would come when the international order was appropriately situated along side the national interests of the United States—a change they would not have to wait long for.

The international order adjusted itself accordingly to the interests of the United States almost immediately after the end of the Iran-Iraq. In 1990 Saddam Hussein gave the United States a beautiful gift: the invasion of an American ally. The Bush Sr. administration, the first administration under the framework of a New World Order, was able to commandingly assert its hegemonic power into the Gulf nation. However, the New World Order allowed for the emergence of other theses on America's role in the world, therefore the Bush Sr. administration was forced to channel the United States' unipolar power through international organizations. While this led to a successful protection of the United States' reputation and status of world hegemon, it ultimately led to an unfulfilled neoconservative agenda. President Bush decided to leave Saddam Hussein in power, which created a hunger within the neoconservative school of thought.

As president Clinton took over the White House in 1993, the policies of containment his predecessor had implemented remained in place as his own solution to Iraq. It is during Clinton's time in office that the identity of the United States becomes

irrefutably linked to its policy on Iraq. While president Clinton was not officially at war with the nation, he enacted several significant measures to ensure the docility of Iraq. Creating specific policies outside his doctrine of international inclusion and cooperation, Clinton solidified neoconservatism as the United State's chosen lens for Iraq. The Iraq Liberation Act of 1998 combined with his policy of containment reiterated within the foreign policy elite the United States' role within the world. It was through their actions and policy in Iraq that the United States chose to define their identity.

The neoconservative identity would become even further entrenched in the American foreign policy system after September 11<sup>th</sup>. With old neoconservative elites once again at the helm of policy creation, the Global War on Terror allowed Iraq to slide back into the sights the United States. President Bush, vice president Cheney, and Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld orchestrated a war of which justification was barely acceptable on a moral basis, let alone a legal one. Through the use of overwhelming military might and momentum from 9/11, the Bush Jr. administration was able to accomplish a long sought after neoconservative goal: the toppling of Saddam Hussein's regime. The administration refused to acknowledge warnings or alternative options from intellectuals advocating other theses. A system of ideological conformity solidified itself under the guidance of Cheney and Rumsfeld, which filtered out anything that went against their neoconservative mission. However, once that goal was accomplished, the United States began to wander aimlessly in search for another justification for their presence in the region. With a single act, the United States had managed to alienate an entire nation while simultaneously inspiring the source of their next enemy—insurgency. A narrative surrounding “democracy” and “liberation” was simply a fallacy within the

reality of a nation in ruins. The Iraq War succeeded in accomplishing neoconservative goals, but it failed to bring stability to the region.

The United States' policy on Iraq has stayed the same since they first got involved under the Reagan administration. Although "the methods have changed after 9/11...the objective [of American foreign policy] remains the same as under the Reagan administration: to target and liquidate militant nationalism through regime change" (Mamdani 2004, 202) Even though the initial goal of regime change in Iraq was accomplished more than 13 years ago, "the significance of Iraq after 9/11...extends beyond the country itself. In attacking Iraq, the Bush administration hoped to achieve more than just regime change: Iraq presented another chance to redraw the political map of the entire region" (Mamdani 2004, 201). Iraq had always been a jumping board for American foreign policy within the Arab world. As stated by an unnamed Israeli general "Iraq is not the ultimate goal. The ultimate goal is the Middle East, the Arab world and the Muslim world. Iraq will be the first of step in this direction; winning the war against terrorism mean structurally changing the entire area" (Mamdani 2004, 201).

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Is this not what has happened since the Hussein regime was toppled in 2003? In the aftermath of the initial invasion, the United States through its policy of De-Baathification, managed to isolated the Iraqi people and remove the possibility of political space in the newly liberated country. In one of his first acts, Paul Bremer in May 2003 "issued CPA Orders to exclude from the new Iraq government members of the



Baath Party...and to disband the Iraqi Army” (Pfiffner 2010, 76). Due to the fact that one had to be a member of the Baath Party to work in any sector of the Hussein’s government, the entire infrastructure of the state was wiped clean. Not only was the Iraqi state body eliminated, but “hundreds of thousands of Iraqis...could not support themselves or their families” (Pfiffner 2010, 76). By removing hundreds of thousands of intellectual government officials, as well as career military personnel with more than sufficient training and experience, the Iraqi people were left without jobs or a voice in their new “community.” A lack of political space pushed many Iraqis to the only means of politics they had left: violent insurgency. The massive disbanding of trained professional warriors “immediately created a large pool of unemployed and armed men who felt humiliated and hostile to the US occupiers” (Pfiffner 2010, 80).

This pool would ultimately manifest into modern day ISIS. The insurgency opened the borders of Iraq to Islamic extremists who had previously been unwelcome in the country. The alienation of the Iraqi people forced them to join forces with the United States’ other enemy al-Qaeda. A new tentacle of the terrorist syndicate, al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), succeeded the homegrown insurgency and helped perpetuate fighting against the United States. As AQI began to diminish in power around 2006-2007, a political vacuum appeared within the failed state that Iraq had become. By 2012 that space was filled by old members of AQI under the refashioned brand of the terrorist organization that we now call ISIS (Laub and Masters 2014, 1).

ISIS is a very real threat that faces the United States and its allies. In the wake of a recent ISIS attacks both home and abroad, president Obama addressed the nation

outlining a strategy to eliminate the organization. Making it a badge of honor, Obama stated “Since the day I took office, I have authorized U.S. forces to take out terrorists abroad precisely because I know how real a threat the danger is” (Obama 2015, 3:07). He goes on to assure the American people, as well as ISIS, that the United States’ “military will continue to hunt down terrorist plotters in any country where it is necessary. In Iraq...airstrikes are taking out [ISIS] leaders” and other means of their operational effectiveness (Obama 2015, 4:24).

Underlying these statements is the fundamental flaw in the United States’ strategy against ISIS—it is a tactical approach to the problem, not a strategic one. If the United States wants to change the outcome of their actions then they need to make a dramatic change to their strategy. There is a difference between strategic thinking and tactical thinking—something the foreign policy creators of the past 16 years have confused. Tactical planning is the logistics of conducting a military operation—the mechanics of the “capture or kill” policy made common practice by the Bush and Obama administrations. The scope of tactical planning is immediate with little concern to the long-term effects the actions will create. Strategic planning is the long-term scheme of theoretically ending the war—a calculated design and management of the effects of the tactical engagements carried out and the forward implications of eliminating a High Value Target. For example, a strategic planner would ask the question “what will happen if we eliminate this highly ranked al-Qaeda (or ISIS) leader?” A tactical planner would ask, “What is the most efficient way I can kill them?” While the two are directly linked, throughout the GWOT there has been a shift towards favoring tactical planning over strategic and has become common practice in the fight against ISIS.

If the history of the United States in Iraq has proved anything, when a political vacuum is created in a state it is going to be filled. The same applies for terrorist organizations. The United States created a political vacuum in Iraq through toppling Saddam Hussein, which only led to the presence of Islamic extremist—a problem that was previously insignificant. Neoconservatism led to the invasion of Iraq. The invasion of Iraq led to regime change and the death of Saddam Hussein. The death of Saddam Hussein and installation of Paul Bremer led to a political vacuum and the alienation of the Iraqi people. This combination led the rise of Islamic extremists in the country that would eventually evolve into ISIS.

Now with the threat of ISIS posing very real threats, the United States is once again forced to engage in Iraq. However, they still do not have a well define goal in the region. Peace and prosperity is a given, however, there seems to be little understanding of how to reach that goal. Perhaps it is the irregularity of ISIS as an organization, not a state actor but a terrorist caliphate, but the United States seems to lack the ability to articulate a necessity for political conversation between the two groups.

The United States is still too blinded by the neoconservative lens to understand that there needs to a political space between the Americans and ISIS in order for the fighting to stop. There is no opportunity or space for the presence of alternative solutions, different ways of acting in the international community. The Untied States has carried out neoconservative foreign policies for so long, it has become an inherent and integral part of their identity, something that is hard pressed to change. ISIS is a product of the neoconservative agenda. In order for the United States to end this seemingly endless war,

they cannot solve the problem with the same strategy that created it. One cannot solve a problem with the same tools and ideology that helped create it. Iraq has become so entrenched in the American identity that it is hard for foreign policy creators to see it as anything other than a project to define, sustain, and perpetuate American supremacy in the modern era. Neoconservatism has become a hard practiced foreign policy strategy that has only been evolving as the international order continues to change. In order for the United States to break away from this nearly 40 year tradition of war with Iraq, they need to find a new way to define their identity and role within the international order.

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