

# Between Iraq and a Hard Place

*The change in Republican Foreign Policy  
and the Realism-Neoconservatism Debate*

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## Preface

On the morning of September 11, 2001, my morning class at American University in Washington, D.C. was cancelled due to the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Fighter jets were flying above our campus, and weeks later letters containing anthrax caused deaths at our local post office. Since then I have been investigating and tried to find answers to the many questions we all had on that morning. The events that unfolded that day and its aftermath could be studied in a thousand ways. I have chosen one of them.

I would like to thank Center for Strategic and International Studies - John Hamre and Erik Peterson in particular - for letting me use their expertise and facilities during my internship there in 2005. Furthermore, I would like to thank the following people: Professor John Calabrese at American University for inspiring me to choose this field of study, my tutor Svein Melby for his patience and interesting discussions on American politics, The Royal Norwegian Embassy and Erik Enger for housing during my trips to Washington, D.C.

A special gratitude to Eirik, Finn, and Gard Bergesen, Magnus Georgsen and Thomas Sætren for devoted proof-reading and useful comments.

Finally, I would like to thank my family - my parents in particular, for their never-ending commitment and support. My fellow students a.k.a. 'the Lunch Institute' deserve big thanks for intriguing discussions on this and other issues.

*To Ulla, Ask, and Albert*  
*for putting a smile on everyone's faces*

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## 1. Introduction

*“How often have statesmen been motivated by the desire to improve the world, and ended up making it worse? And how often have they sought one goal, and ended up by achieving something they neither expected nor desired?”*

Hans J. Morgenthau (1993:6)

With no peer competitor in sight, the United States is more powerful than any other nation state in modern history. The U.S. has substantial interests throughout the globe and its government seems to aim at remaining the sole superpower. The last five years have spurred a debate on the nature and purpose of this power and how best to make use of it. In the debates of the 2000 Presidential campaign, the then Governor Bush made a point of second-guessing former Vice President Al Gore’s agenda of active American involvement in a number of cases of conflict resolution abroad. To underline his point, Bush used the phrase “I would be very careful about using our troops as nation builders” in a derogative manner. The Republican foreign policy agenda was significantly more isolationist than that of the Democratic Clinton administration. Six years later, in George W. Bush’s second term as United States President, Republican foreign policy has taken on a large-scale war on terrorism and intervened in Afghanistan and Iraq, operations that would be seen as inconceivable a few years ago. Coercive democratization has since become the hallmark of the Bush Presidency. Which underlying mechanisms have caused this shift from the course of 2000 to new course of 2006? This thesis intends to examine how the theoretical bases of realism and idealism have guided the current Bush administration to choose the promotion of democracy over containment and deterrence. Most particularly, these shifts in policy lead the U.S. to attack Iraq, and to this date, express no intention of leaving in the near future.



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## 1.1 Purpose<sup>1</sup>

In Europe, the image of the American cowboy is a negative one, most often aimed to ridicule American politicians as overly eager to resolve international conflicts in their own image. In America, the cowboy holds a powerful image of resolve and determination. The theme of the lonesome sheriff marching into town to remove trouble against all odds, remains the ground-lying plot of many a western. Perhaps this illustrates the narrative divide between American supporters and international critics of Bush' foreign policy. A quick look at the President's rhetoric shows he does not shy away from metaphors linked to world of the cowboy.

Furthermore, the Bush administration is often viewed as consisting of realist hawks even though there is in fact no evident link between the word "realist" and the word "hawk." There is neither any obvious causal linkage between idealism and a dovish approach to foreign policy. What the Bush administration believed was resolve and steadfastness, others perceived as unilateralism and manifestations of the worst aspects of American hegemonic tendencies.

Chapter 2 will present the theories in play in U.S. foreign policy and eliminate the ones that go beyond the purpose of this thesis. Chapter 3 starts off with the "preliminary picture", presenting which forces decided Republican foreign policy before President George W. Bush entered office. The rest of chapter 3 portrays the Bush Administration's foreign policy divided into two stages. *Stage 1* elaborates on the events of September 11 and its aftermath, which contributed to the formulation of the Bush Doctrine, whereas chapter 4 discusses *stage 2* Iraqi Freedom, where the administration's strategy was put in practice chapter 5. Chapter 5 analyzes the Bush Administration up against the realism and idealism theories.

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<sup>1</sup> I have left out some parts of American foreign policy. To evaluate the degree of success and fiasco in Iraq is beyond the framework of this thesis. To perform such a study is to be aiming and shooting at a "moving target" and will surely be a relevant case for historians and social scientists to be studying in years to come.

## 1.2 Research Question

Has the grand strategy of the George W. Bush administration's foreign policy shifted from one based on realist principles to one that is guided by idealism? In order to find out whether this is the case, I will be assessing the Bush Doctrine and Operation Iraqi Freedom and its aftermath. Was Operation Iraqi Freedom fought on the basis of realist or idealist theory? If this is the case - that there has been a fundamental change in the theoretical approach - has this change of strategic thinking marked a long-term realignment in Republican foreign policy or rather realism wrapped in idealist rhetoric?

Hence, the hypothesis I seek test in this thesis is whether the Bush administration's foreign policy has gone from a realist perception to an idealist perception as basis for the grand strategy.

### 1.2.1 Expected Empirical Findings

In order to examine which elements that have guided the Bush administration's foreign policy, one must first clarify the background of each of the theoretical principles. The history of American foreign policy is a narrative of cyclical swings between isolationism and internationalism, between global involvement and entrenchment. In order to differentiate idealism and realism in this picture, an operationalization of the terms is needed. These operationalizations are organizing of principles that are created in order to examine whether or not the Bush administration's foreign policy corresponds to the prescriptions given by each school of thought.

	<b>Realism</b>	<b>Idealism / neoconservatism</b>
<b>Basic principles</b>	Interests	Ideals
<b>Desired world-view</b>	Stability	Democratization
<b>Stated goals</b>	Status quo	Change

When attempting to map out a Republican foreign policy and conservative alternatives, one must examine alternative strategies. What separates the different Republican prescriptions for action? In order to answer that question, I will explore the two main Republican traditions; realism and idealism. Republican idealists, the so-called neoconservatives, approve of a policy that actively promotes democratization, urging the administration to be more consistent in words and actions furthering this agenda.<sup>2</sup> Foreign policy realists, meanwhile, are not enthusiastic about the relative prominence of moralistic democracy promotion, labeling such actions as counterproductive and a risk factor. A comprehensive explanation of these operationalizations will be presented in the chapters about realism and idealism, respectively.

### 1.3 Methodological Approach

According to Goldstein and Pevehouse (2006:15-17) there are four levels of analyzing the effects of international relations, namely (1) the individual level, (2) the domestic level, (3) The interstate level and, (4) the global level. Because this thesis will examine the Republican Party's foreign policy, I will select the individual and domestic level as the basis for this thesis. To illustrate the gap between the individual and domestic level, i.e. the interaction between the Republican Party and the Bush administration, will be crucial in order to single out the core of the Republican foreign policy and the expected changes it has been subject to. One must ask: Who took the decisions based on which calculations?

#### 1.3.1 The Individual Level

The individual level of analysis has to do with perceptions, choices, and actions of individuals (ibid:15). In order to examine the foreign policy of the U.S., it is vital to analyze the commander-in-chief, President Bush as he has the final word in every decision that might take the U.S. to war. It is hard, if not impossible, to access the real

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<sup>2</sup> The thesis will be using both terms; idealism and neoconservatism, when discussing of this fraction of the Republican Party. Neoconservatism has been subject to a number of myths. This thesis will for the better deal with the neoconservative school of foreign policy and nothing else.

intentions of a state leader, no less the President of the United States. Getting the statesman's motives could be misleading, as they are just one among many clues that point to the direction the foreign policy is heading (Morgenthau 1993:6). As a consequence, I have opted to include the thoughts and ideas of the President's closest aides through official documentation and own writings. I elaborate on this below, under research methods.

### **1.3.2 The Domestic Level**

The domestic level concerns the aggregation of individuals within states that influence state action on the international arena (Goldstein & Pevehouse 2006:15). In order to get to a core understanding of Republican Party thinking, special interest groups, and governmental agencies will be included in this bracket of the analysis. In order to analyze the Republican Party, one must take into account the spoils system in American politics. This system allows the elected President to alter not only the whole cabinet, but additionally a large share of the foreign policy organization. Thus, major changes occur whenever a new President is instated and commonly has immediate impact on the direction foreign policy takes. The domestic level analysis is two-fold. Firstly and most importantly, I will seek to draw attention to the divisions within the government and vigorous forces within the Republican Party. Secondly, I will be looking at a domestic pressure groups and the wider foreign policy community's attempt to gain access to and change the Bush administration's foreign policy.

### **1.3.3 Research Design**

Case studies are complex examples which give insights into the context of a problem as well as illustrating the main point and are the preferred strategy when the researchers have little control over the events that are being studied (Beaty 2003:138, Yin 1994:1). This thesis includes both an interpretative study of the Bush Doctrine as a U.S. grand strategy and a case study of the administration's behavior in Operation Iraqi Freedom. While the former provides an indication of the strategic visions of the Bush administration, the latter acts as a test as to how the principles in the strategy

are played out in a time of war. The core of the case study is to draw new implications out of theoretical insights and apply them to new data (Andersen 2003:17). That is the main focus of this thesis. I am relying on operationalizations that are generated from idealism and realism, respectively, and their “prescriptions” for action. In order to do this I will employ in the case study be using the pattern-matching logic as described by Pattern-matching implies matching the empirical evidence - the Bush Administration’s decisions before and during the Iraq War - with theory - the prescriptions and predictions given by realism and idealism regarding reasons for going to war (Yin 1994:106).

### **1.3.4 Research Methods**

A major strength to using the case study as method of collecting data is the opportunity of applying multiple sources of evidence (Yin 1994:84). Methods triangulation implies the use of different sources of evidence. The sources of evidence used in this thesis are three-fold: (1) official policy documents, (2) secondary sources such as books, published articles on American foreign policy, news stories, and (3) open-ended interviews with foreign policy experts. Using different sources of evidence provides cross-data validity checks and is less vulnerable to errors than studies that use only one method (Patton 1999:1192). The documents used are strategic plans such as the 2002 National Security Strategy, transcripts of Presidential speeches to Congress, U.S. officials’ speeches to other audiences, as well as biographies of President George W. Bush. The interviews conducted are guided conversations, a methodology that, because the nature of interviews, is preferred over structured queries (Yin 1994:85).

The pitfall to using theories such as idealism and realism in their prescriptive aspects, is the fact that many writers tend use realism and idealism detached from its theoretical origins in International Relations (IR) theory. Proponents of each school of thought wish to promote their world-views by using a fixed version of the different theories. For this reason, realism and idealism do not always receive a forcefully critical examination and may reveal bias in the author’s arguments. Seeking clarity in

this regard, I will, in chapter 2, outline the interpretations of the two traditions, based on scholars whom are well familiar with the theories. For the purpose of avoiding bias, I have been very careful whilst collecting the data. Should the views presented in this thesis contain any particular political leaning, this will be addressed.

My methodology in analyzing the data material will employ analyst triangulation (also known as investigator triangulation). Investigator triangulation means that I will employ other researchers' findings (in effect foreign policy experts) to reduce the potential bias that comes from examining only my own selections. Two or more analyzing the same set of data (for example Bush's rhetoric) reduces chances of selective perception and blind interpretive bias (Patton 1999:1196). Converging one or more researcher's conclusions with my own findings gives higher validity for the hypothesis put forward. A common misunderstanding about triangulation is that the point is to demonstrate that different data sources or inquiry approaches yield essentially the same result (ibid:1193). The point is rather to test the consistency of these sources and examine if they correspond with my own findings.

Language, whether official or private, rhetorical or observational, has a lot to tell us about the mind-sets of those who use it (Hill 2003:9). The subject of analysis, the Bush administration, has an excessive range of language to be analyzed. Due to the rapid growth in the frequency of presidential speeches, there is an extensive collection of speeches by President Bush available.<sup>3</sup> However, as the saying goes, action speaks louder than words, thus the actions of the Bush administration, how the strategies were implemented, must have at least an equal share when analyzing the Bush administration's foreign policy.

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<sup>3</sup> There has been a tremendous growth in presidential speech making. For an extensive overview, see Morris P. Fiorina, Paul E. Peterson, and D. Stephen Voss, *America's New Democracy*, 2. ed., New York: Penguin Academics, 2004, pp. 316-317.

## 2. Theoretical Approach

There are many ways to study IR. Realism, liberalism, and constructivism have dominated the theoretical debate in IR in the last decades. Most of the great intellectual battles among scholars have traditionally taken place across or within the divide between liberalism and realism (Mearsheimer 2001:14).

Foreign policy is a sub-field of IR. A country's foreign policy is usually based on values and interests (Cameron 2002:xvi). When working with a Republican administration, I have decided to apply realism and idealism. The reason for choosing idealism rather than liberalism is because previous Republican administrations have shown that its policies fit better with the idealism-realism duality than the one of liberalism-realism. Social constructivism, although not a fully developed theory, has become a contending school of thought. The reason why I have left social constructivism out of this thesis is because, as stated later in this chapter, I am looking at the prescriptive aspects of IR theory and not the descriptive or explanatory aspect of it. Some foreign policy analysts, including Michael Williams (2005) argue that neoconservatism should become an independent theory. Since the theoretical framework is scarce, I have not treated neoconservatism as a self-sufficient theory but placed it under the auspices of idealism.

### 2.1 American Foreign Policy in the International Relations Theory Framework

There are many ways to study American foreign policy. Hans Morgenthau (1951:13) presents three types of American foreign policy: (1) *the realistic*, thinking and acting in terms of power, (2) *the ideological*, thinking in terms of moral principles and acting in terms of power, and (3) *the moralistic*, thinking and acting in terms of moral principles. Contemporary analysts operate with similar classifications. Svein Melby (2004:47) operates with three categories, namely (1) realism, (2) institutionalism, and (3) expansionism, emphasizing the role of American policymakers and elites and

their positioning. Charles Krauthammer (2004:15-16) detects four: (1) isolationism, (2) realism, (3) liberal institutionalism, and (4) democratic globalism. Walter Russell Mead (2004:84) works with four traditions shaping the foreign policy debate; (1) economic nationalism (Hamiltonians), (2) idealistic internationalism (Wilsonians), (3) isolationism (Jeffersonians), and (4) populist nationalism (Jacksonians) taking into account American public opinion traditions as well as the “elitist” ones. Francis Fukuyama’s (2006:7-8) updated list suggests yet another division: (1) neoconservatism, (2) realism, (3) liberal institutionalism, and (4) nationalism. In combination, these organizations illustrate the multitude in American foreign policy theory.

When assessing Republican foreign policy, I have landed on two classifications, (1) realism and (2) idealism, because these have proven to be the most important components of American foreign policy and because I find these most fitting when analyzing the forces in play in and around the Bush administration. Henry Kissinger (1994:833-834) portrays American foreign policy as a constant struggle between realism, epitomized by Theodore Roosevelt, and idealism exemplified by Woodrow Wilson. Another author that establishes this dichotomy is Robert Endicott Osgood (1964). He argues that two major ideas or traditions have constantly been incompatible with each other through the history of United States’ foreign policy. One is the idea of self-interest, and the other the one of ideals.

The relation between the two ideas has to be further examined. There is however problems related to analyzing ideals and self-interest with mechanical precision and scientific objectivity. The indistinctness of these terms makes it necessary to clarify the meaning of them. The rest of this chapter will, after a short historical background, examine idealism and realism.

### **2.1.1 Descriptive and Prescriptive Aspects of International Relations Theory**

There are two ways of understanding international relation theories: the *descriptive* and the *prescriptive* aspects. (Mearsheimer 2002:11). Throughout this thesis I will



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focus on the latter aspect of IR theory when analyzing the Bush administration's policies.

The prescriptive aspect of a theory seeks to highlight why and how a state *should* act. Given that this thesis is seeking to uncover the influences that the Bush administration has been subjected to, I will be employing the prescriptive aspect of IR theory. Instead of merely asking; "are the theories at hand able to explain U.S. foreign policy?" I am posing the question "how are the theories affecting U.S. foreign policy?"

The descriptive theory aims to explain how states have behaved and how they are likely to behave in the future, while a prescriptive theory explains more normatively how states ought to act. In order to explain the differences, an example is in order: Descriptive realism is the claim that states *can not* behave morally, and thus, moral discourse is not a subject (Orend 2000:67). Prescriptive realism, on the other hand, is the claim that a state *ought to* behave amorally in the international arena (ibid). In other words, realism argues that a state should, for prudence sake, adhere to an amoral policy in the international arena, but it does not rule out acting morally. Thus, a politician following a realist prescription might end up with a different outcome than one merely following a descriptive understanding of the theory.

However, the two aspects are overlapping. In order to look at either school's "prescriptions" for the political leaders, one must look into how their proponents describe the policies of others. The same thing is true in regard to my thesis. What happens if someone acts according to, or in contradiction to, the prescribed IR theory? Consequently, this work will not deal with the development or study of IR theory, but it will hopefully leave the reader with a more nuanced examination of how idealism and realism function as prescriptions or parameters for today's Republican administration's foreign policy.

### 2.1.2 Defining 'The National Interest'

In order to discuss on U.S. foreign policy, one must first establish an understanding of what the lies in the term *national interest*. National interest is defined as “a country’s foreign policy is usually aimed at preserving or promoting its economic and political interests abroad and its position in the world” Cameron (2002:xxi).

*American* national interests could be summarized in the following set of basic objectives: (1) the protection of their lives and personal safety, both at home and abroad, (2) the maintenance of the nation’s sovereignty, political freedoms, and independence with its values, institutions, and territory intact, and (3) their material well-being and prosperity (Biddle 2005:3).<sup>4</sup> Ever since the Declaration of Independence and the founding of the U.S., American governments’ security documents have employed similar terminology.

## 2.2 Realism

*”Realpolitik...is foreign policy based on calculation of power and the national interest.”*

Henry Kissinger (1994:137)

Realism is the oldest theory in IR. The Chinese military strategist Sun Tzu who lived over 2000 years ago, was one of the first ones to argue in objective, realist terms, warning that moral reasoning was not useful to the state rulers (Goldstein & Pevehouse 2006:55-56). Niccolò Machiavelli and Thomas Hobbes took realism into the realm of modern political theory, claiming that politics are governed by objective laws that have roots in human nature (Morgenthau 1993:4). In the interwar period, scholars like E.H. Carr, Roland Niebuhr, Nicholas Spykman, and Hans Morgenthau brought realism into the modern world. Important modifications of realist theory were made by neorealist Kenneth Waltz and his advance of structural realism.

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<sup>4</sup> The objectives are based on the 1995 *Annual Report* of the U.S. Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen.

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Realism rests on five assumptions about how the world is organized: (1) states are the principle actors and operate in an anarchic system, (2) great powers invariably have some offensive capability, (3) states can never be certain whether other states have hostile intentions toward them, (4) great powers place a high premium on survival, and (5) states are rational actors (Mearsheimer 2001:3-4, 362, Huntington 1996:21).<sup>5</sup>

The realist notion is a state-centric one and each state is committed to pursuing power at the other's expense. The more powerful they are relatively to their rivals, the better their chances of survival (Mearsheimer 2001:3). To illustrate their independence and sovereignty, realism tends to treat states like black boxes or billiard balls. Because of this concern for power politics it has been associated with Machiavellianism (Osgood 1964:84). Realism views the world as a Hobbesian state of anarchy. This anarchic model of international politics means that there exists no authority that can maintain order and enforce laws in world politics. There is "no government over government." Power, the ability to get another actor to do what it would not otherwise have done, is central to realist theory. Hence, there is a continuous struggle for power within the anarchic system leading to a climate where no state can ultimately trust another state to follow its own policies. "Because other states are potential threats, and there is no higher authority to come to their rescue when they dial 911, states cannot depend on others for their own security" (Mearsheimer 2001:33).

In order to examine the prescriptive aspect of realism, one must look at the school's preferred structure of the international system. Realism views balanced bipolarity as the least war prone of the global orders, because this condition keeps checks and balances on two contending powers. Furthermore, realism, as a consequence of this balance-of-power system, perceives a development where states will "concert to challenge the superior one, and when leading states decline; other states rise to challenge them" (Waltz 1993:76). Since all great powers seek to maximize their share of the power, states will automatically balance each other, creating a balance of

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<sup>5</sup> Different realist scholars operate with other assumptions. For other classifications, see Hans J. Morgenthau's (1993) six principles.

power. The assumption that other states will try to balance the leading state makes policies based on realism to be prudent and strategically careful.

Realism does, however, have different arrangements. Michael Mastanduno (1997:50) calls it a “research program that contains a core set of assumptions from which a variety of theories and explanations can be developed.” In order to analyze whether Bush has followed a realist path, I will be presenting prescriptions mostly based upon classical realism and its modern reevaluations, where the drive for power and the disregard for morality as means to spread democracy is intrinsically linked to human nature and a world which lacks clear rules.

### **2.3.1 The Realist Tradition in America**

*“She goes not abroad, in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own.”*

President John Quincy Adams (in Lieven 2004:64)

In American foreign policy realism has functioned as an undertow of pragmatism and moderated or even blocked tendencies to messianism and geopolitical over-extension (Hulsman & Lieven 2005:41) Realism is marked by a distilled, yet cooperative, diplomacy, which, according to realists, has produced the greatest advances in American interests.<sup>6</sup> Since the end of World War II, American foreign policy has relied heavily on realism as a model for its foreign policy. Its prescriptive aspects especially influenced and drove American foreign policy with regards to the détente policy towards Soviet Union throughout the Cold War (Lieven 2004:171-172). In 1946, the renowned American diplomat George Kennan introduced the containment policy that was to shape U.S. policy towards the Soviet Union in the Cold War. The foundation for U.S. strategy against the Soviet Union is found in *NSC-68: United States Objectives and Programs for National Security* and should be viewed as realism in action. Kennan argued for a more realistic and less moralistic approach to the problems facing the U.S. (Hess 2001:3-4).

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<sup>6</sup> Halper & Clarke (2004: 310) mentions the creation of the post-World War II international institutions and the handling of the Cold War endgame as examples of such diplomacy.

American realists take many different shapes and forms. There are realists in all ends of the political specter. Mead (2002:245) suggests a dissection into two major groups that are suitable in describing the realist fraction of the Republican Party: (1) the Jeffersonian version that adopts a minimalist role for the U.S. seeking to define the national interest as narrowly as possible with an absolute minimum of force, and (2) the Jacksonian approach places more emphasis on military institutions, concern for reputation and honor, that encompasses more moderate Republicans (ibid). The Jeffersonian-Jacksonian realist resistance to conventional American foreign policy cuts across ideological and political fault lines and covers as different groups as libertarians, isolationists, nationalists, and moderate Republicans. These two versions of American realism share the belief that it is natural and evitable that national politics work on different principles from those that exist in the international arena. Together they form the central element of “the American realist”: the opposition to interventions in support of utopian ideals that come in the way of the national interest. Furthermore, America’s geographical position between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans gives the U.S. the advantage of the “the stopping power of water.” Thus, the U.S. is suitable for a role as an “offshore balancer” (Eland 2004:224).

According to realism’s prescriptive aspect, the state leader’s own personal values and political must be kept in sharp distinction to the achievable. As Morgenthau (1993:6), paraphrasing Abraham Lincoln’s distinction between the “official duty” and the “personal wish” of a president, argues; one must avoid equating the foreign policies of a statesman with his philosophic or political sympathies.

### **2.3.2 Realism Today: National Interests, Stability, and Status Quo**

*“Realism acknowledges democratic values at home and abroad. The issue is how to apply them”*

Henry Kissinger (2005:50)

One of the discourses in the realist-idealist debate is the treatment of American ideals and American national interests. Realists tend not to draw sharp distinction between

*good* and *bad* states, because all great powers “act according to their environment” (Mearsheimer 2001:17-18). Furthermore, realism strongly opposes the “democratic peace theory,” a theory that claims that democracies do not fight each other (ibid:16). Mearsheimer seems to agree with the pessimistic worldview presented by the classical realism of E. H. Carr: “In contrast to liberals, realists are pessimists when it comes to international politics” (ibid:17). For many outsiders realism’s prescription is apparently free from passion when it comes to shaping the world in American ideals.

The question that needs to be posed is: in what instances does realism advocate the use of force, *action*, and when does it land on a preference of non-intervention or *in-action*? Realism predicts that states “try to expand its economical political and territorial control; it will try to change the international system in accordance with its own interests” (Gilpin 1984:94-95). Realism suggests that states are motivated principally by power considerations and its advocates put much emphasis in the importance of developing offensive military capabilities to defend or extend their power (Mearsheimer 2001:20, Baylis 2001:257). Nonetheless, realists advocate a cautious approach in applying these capabilities. Since realism emphasizes states as the main players on the world stage, their proponents put high value on state sovereignty.

Realism’s concern for each state’s national interest leads to a careful analysis behind a prescription for behavior before and during wars. Realism suggests a composed testing of pros and cons, similar to the cost-benefit analysis in the field of economics, meaning it will support a war if it is for the country’s best, but oppose it if it harms the country’s national interest, in line with the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine<sup>7</sup>. As a point of departure, the potential use of force must be beneficial to the U.S. This leads realism to come up with different prescriptions for different wars. A good example of the action or inaction dilemma is to be found in the Reagan Administration, where realists differed in opinion on whether the U.S. should intervene or not and whether it

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<sup>7</sup> The Weinberger-Powell Doctrine will be further presented in chapter 4.2.

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was to intervene directly, or through covert or overt operations.<sup>8</sup> According to William Wohlforth (2006:8) contemporary American realists oppose expansionist tinges in American foreign policy. Almost all American realists opposed the Vietnam War and nearly every intervention after it, including President Reagan's proactive war-fighting strategies and President Clinton's humanitarian interventions, NATO expansion and interventions in Bosnia and Kosovo in the 1990s. Realism recognizes that great powers might pursue "non-security goals" such as the fostering of human rights as long as it does not conflict with the balance-of power logic (Mearsheimer 2001:46-47). Humanitarian interventions and small-scale operations often fit this description, and because they include little costs (ibid). Examples of cases where realists have argued for intervention, both all-out wars and limited operations, are the 1991 Persian Gulf War, the ousting of Noriega in Panama in 1989 and relief operations in Somalia, Bangladesh, and Bosnia (Powell 1992:39).

Realists do not believe in nation-building because it is not the primary interest or practically suitable for the U.S. in determining the government of other societies. Moreover, realism takes into account all possible consequences of involvement in a conflict and often land on a pessimistic assessment. "Creating a peaceful world is surely an attractive idea, but it is not a practical one" (Mearsheimer 2001:17). Realism represents moral abolitionism in that Western or American values are not always suitable in other regions of the world. Kenneth Waltz (1993:79) argues that realism is not in favor of moral crusades that could "exacerbate the situation" in a potential disorderly surroundings. In line with classical realism, he is hoping that the U.S. can be able to restrain itself so that "other countries... [will have] the chance to deal with their own problems and to make their own mistakes" (ibid). Some realists go further in advocating a minimalist role of the American military. Christopher Preble (2004) sees an involvement where the U.S. instead of taking charge in international operations instead takes on logistical functions. Eland (2004:86-90), referring to Joseph Stromberg and Chalmers Johnson's blowback theory, believes

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<sup>8</sup> For more on realism and the Reagan Doctrine, see Mark P. Lagon (1992)

that less involvement in foreign civil and ethnic wars would dramatically reduce the chances that such groups would attack the U.S.<sup>9</sup>

In conclusion, contemporary prescriptive realism puts “interests over ideals,” “status quo over change,” and “stability over democratization” based on cost-benefit analysis. Consequently, a foreign policy rested on realist principles suggests less American involvement in civil and ethnic wars than an idealist one.

## 2.4 Idealism

*“The world must be made safe for democracy. Its peace must be planted upon the tested foundations of political liberty. We have no selfish ends to serve.”*

President Woodrow Wilson (1917: 349)

President Woodrow Wilson’s famous saying has stood as a symbol of American idealism (1913-20)<sup>10</sup>, and has been rephrased and reinvented numerous times.

Paul H. Nitze (1994:51) describes that idealism in its purest form could be explained as an “absolute, clear and ideal conviction of what is right and good.” Its supporters are unresponsive to calculations of what is feasible in the real world. The focus is on ideal ends rather than on effective means: “Read the realities in light of the ideals. Follow these ideals, and the world will be made over” (ibid). The idealist tradition can in effect be linked back to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, and other Enlightenment philosophers.

Idealism is the embodiment of American exceptionalism; the idea that America is indispensable to global progress. (Halper & Clarke 2004:309). American values and institutions have brought with it “some of the most generous acts of selfless sacrifice for global good in history” (ibid). “The indispensable nation” regularly referred to by

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<sup>9</sup> “Joseph Stromberg’s First Law” states that “there is virtually no situation anywhere in the world that can’t be made worse by US intervention” (cited in Eland 2004: 86). Chalmers Johnson (1999: 33) warned of a terrorist attack as a result of American foreign policy in the last decades, also known as his blowback theory.

<sup>10</sup> “To make the world safe for democracy” was used by President Wilson in a speech before a joint session of Congress on April 2, 1917 in an attempt to seek a declaration of war against Germany. The phrasing was most notably reinvented by the Clinton administration in the 1990s.



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former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright does not only function as a vision of the U.S., but is also works as a strategically important.

American idealism stems from the “do-good” thinking in the United States and the idea that the American way of democracy could and should work as an example for other nations, because all nations deserve to be free (Mahoney-Norris 2006). This “do-good” policy was the core of President Woodrow Wilson’s foreign policy. Ever since his watershed presidency; American foreign policy has “marched to the drumbeat of his idealism” (Kissinger 1994: 30).

Idealism is a broad concept. Thus, it is difficult to establish a consensus on what ought to be an “idealistic” foreign policy. Andrew Bacevich (2005) mentions two forms of idealism in present-day American politics: the left liberal one, which emphasizes humanitarian interventionism and the neoconservative version that urges using American power to promote American values (ibid). Robert Cooper (2004:49) refers to “an imperial tinge in American policy in its desire to promote democracy.” He goes on stating that this cause “attracts both Left and Right, Wilsonians and neoconservatives (ibid).” Thus, both forms of idealism, liberal institutionalism often linked to Democratic Party (i.e. the belief in joint world governance) and neoconservatism linked to the Republican Party, should be treated as forms of idealism. Since this thesis’ aim is to shed light on the Republican Party’s foreign policy, it is neoconservatism that is the subject of investigation. In order to describe this idealism, it is crucial to make an operational distinction between Republican and Democratic Party idealism.

The parallel between the two forms of idealism is that their basis is in Wilsonianism offensive, often messianic, strategy of exporting American values. Presidents of both parties have admired and supported Wilsonian ideals throughout history. Both left and right Wilsonianism has a history of intervening in sovereign countries for humanitarian ends (Eland 2004:123, 131). The difference between them is that, while “left Wilsonianism” has a preference for working within an international and

multilateral institutional framework, the “right Wilsonianism” does not shy away for using unilateralist policies.

### **2.4.1 The Idealist Tradition in America**

Some, including Robert Kagan (2003:37-38), have tried to make a sharp distinction between Europe and the U.S., where the latter is the firm believer in hard power and Europe is left in a Kantian peace-loving state. This is not an accurate finding. The U.S. is more idealist than what first meets the eye. Although the U.S. most of the time has acted on the international arena on power political terms, Americans have tended to conceive the actions in non-political, moralistic terms (Morgenthau 1951:7). The belief in moral significance of democracy has been a fundamental theme of a society settled by immigrants (Kissinger 2005:50). This argument is backed by other foreign policy experts. According to Morgenthau (1951:11-12) idealism, the ideal of a free, peaceful, and prosperous world, was a natural outgrowth of the American experience. Idealism rests on the assumption that the realist-alleged struggle for power on the international scene in reality it is not a struggle about power, but a struggle between good and evil, which can only end with a complete triumph of good (ibid).

President Wilson was proposing a world order based on moral rather than geopolitical judgments (Kissinger 1994:227). Wilson established a blueprint for global stability based on four principles: (1) states were best formed on the basis of national democratic self-determination, (2) a politically plural world should be open economically, (3) that an anti-imperialist, economically, politically plural world needed the creation of historically unprecedented set of international organizations with a primary responsibility to keep the peace, and (4) that it was absolutely essential to have a full-scale American involvement in world affairs in order to make these other ambitions workable (Smith 1999:174). In order for these principles to function, Wilsonianism included a moralistic element in that the American national interest is identical with the interest of mankind itself (Morgenthau 1951:29).

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The question at hand is: to which of these principles do American neoconservatives adhere to? Fukuyama (2006:4-5) presents four neoconservative principles: (1) a concern with democracy, human rights, and the internal politics of states, (2) the belief that the U.S. power can be used for moral purposes, (3) a scepticism about the ability of international law and institutions, and (4) ambitious social engineering often leads to unexpected outcomes and often undermines its own ends. Even if the world has changed in the century that has passed since, the neoconservative principles converge with most of the idealist ones presented by Wilson. Neoconservatism's dubious view of international institutions merely illustrates a deep-rooted Jacksonian disbelief in the institutions rather than a blatant rejection of them.

Neoconservatism has a long standing in American politics. The movement's origins can be dated back to the 1930s and the City College of New York where non-communist socialists met and discussed the nature of their anti-Stalinism (Halper & Clarke 2004:45).<sup>11</sup> The neoconservative road to power was long and crooked and foreign policy was not their primary focus. Publications like *Commentary* and *The Public Interest* and their editors Norman Podhoretz and Irving Kristol helped create an intellectual infrastructure of neoconservative writers from the 1950s through the late 1970s (Halper & Clarke 2004:46).<sup>12</sup> Many, including Norris (2002), have claimed German philosopher Leo Strauss' influence on the last generation neoconservatives. Even if Strauss' texts often return to "political antiquity" and discussions on tyranny, Plato and Machiavelli, his ideas are transferable to both the moral battle during the Cold War and to the civilizational battle against terrorism and tyranny (Halper & Clarke 2004:66). Strauss' central theme was not foreign policy per se, but a inclination of the end of tyranny as cause for interventionism and see it as a moral duty to oppose a leader who is seen as a "tyrant" (Halper & Clarke 2004:67, Mann 2004:93). However Strauss taught at the University of Chicago, where both Alan Bloom and other neocon figureheads attended his classes. Irving Kristol and Daniel

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<sup>11</sup> Among the City College of New York alumni were Irving Kristol, Seymour Martin Lipset, Nathan Glazer, and Daniel Patrick Moynihan (Fukuyama 2006: 15). The founder of modern neoconservatism, Irving Kristol, describes himself as "a liberal mugged by reality" (Kinsley 2005).

<sup>12</sup> According to a 1979 study of the 70 most prestigious contemporary American intellectuals one in every four of the intellectual elite was a neoconservative (Halper & Clarke: 2004:46).

Patrick Moynihan both acknowledge their debt to him, yet some modern neoconservatives have stated that they do not even know who Strauss is (ibid:64-65, Fukuyama 2006:21). By affiliation or derivations, however, Strauss's ideas were spread to many who came to settle in the highest levels of office in Washington.

Most of the neoconservatives were initially liberal Democrats who after the defeat of their political leader and candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1972 and 1976, Henry "Scoop" Jackson, crossed the party line to work for President Ronald Reagan and the Republican Party. Leading neoconservatives developed strong links to Washington think tanks, among others, American Enterprise Institute and Heritage Foundation. Not yet accepted as an IR theory, the neoconservatives have preferred to put forth their ideas through in magazines and newspapers such as Weekly Standard instead of in the form of more abstract theoretical formulations (Williams 2005:308). Outside government, "second generation" neoconservatives such as Richard Perle, Robert Kagan and William Kristol started to influence political leaders through their network Project for a New American Century (PNAC).<sup>13</sup> This loose organization was founded in 1997 and has been in the forefront in thinking "outside the box" in regards to democracy promotion on a global scale.

#### **2.4.2 Idealism Today: Ideals, Democratization, and Change**

No school of thought in regards to American foreign policy has been more debated in the last years than the neoconservative school. Neoconservative theory is essentially Wilsonianism with teeth.<sup>14</sup> Wilsonianism provides the idealism, while an emphasis on power provides the teeth (Mearsheimer 2005a). Neoconservatives, much in line with their self-proclaimed Wilsonian roots, want to remake the world based on American principles and moral values. At the same time they recognize the national interest, seemingly wanting the best of both worlds, the Hobbesian *and* the Kantian. Thus, neoconservatives are Wilsonian idealist, in the sense that they believe that American

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<sup>13</sup> Among the PNAC Statement of Principles signatories were later-to-be Bush Administration officials. Other signatories include Francis Fukuyama, Norman Podhoretz, Steve Forbes and Max Boot.

<sup>14</sup> Other experts use other terms, such as John Hamre's (2005) "Wilsonianism on Viagra," Francis Fukuyama's (2004) "muscular Wilsonianism," Anatol Lieven's (2004: 75) "Wolfish Wilsonianism," Walter Russell Mead's (XXX) "Revival Wilsonianism," Thomas Risse's (2003:14) "Wilsonianism with Boots," and Max Boot's (2004:49) "Hard Wilsonianism."

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foreign policy should be guided by the promotion of American ideals, not just the protection of “narrowly defined strategic and economic interest, as realpolitikers believe” (Boot 2004:49).

Where realists are warning of promoting American moral values abroad and find it conflicting with the national interest, idealists see the two working in tandem. Kristol and Kagan (2004:61) recommend a “fundamental change in the way our leaders and the public think about America’s role in the world, not “better management of the status quo.”

In conclusion, Republican idealism, when operationalized, corresponds to change, democratization, a new account of sovereignty, and the excessive use of American power to achieve it.

## 2.6 The Realist-Idealist Debate: A History of Disagreement and Compromise

*“It is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world...[but] we may safely trust to temporary alliances for extraordinary emergencies”*

President George Washington (in Jentleson & Paterson 1997:310)

*The United States has become great because we, as a people, have been able to work together for great objectives even while differing about details*

President Henry Truman (1948:1)

In order to fully understand the realist-idealist debate over contemporary foreign policy, a step back in U.S. history is necessary. The proclamation made by President George Washington in his 1796 Farewell Address became the cornerstone of U.S. isolationist sentiment.<sup>15</sup> Abstaining from foreign quarrels became a trademark for the U.S. Like spectators, they watched the struggle that was ongoing between Europe, Asia, and Africa. The national destiny of the United States has since the birth of the republic been understood in libertarian terms and for being antimilitaristic

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<sup>15</sup> President Washington’s meaning behind the speech was not that the U.S. was to become completely detached from Europe, but the U.S. needed to retreat from European politics could be taken to mean retreat from power politics as such (Morgenthau 1993:40).

(Morgenthau 1993:40). Thus, the expansionism and imperialism shown in the Spanish-American War in 1898 was, by many, viewed to be at odds with traditions and interests of the American people. The platform that both realism and idealism descend from is the nature of the American model of democracy. Alexis de Tocqueville, when studying the American society, admired the American model of democracy and concluded that democracy lies in everyone's future (Fukuyama 2006: 31).

Before the Theodore Roosevelt (1901-09) and the Woodrow Wilson's (1913-21) presidencies, isolationist tendencies had shaped American foreign policy. Charles Beard (1946:17) describes isolationism as "neutrality, peace, and defense for the United States through measures appropriate to those purposes; and the pursuit of a foreign policy friendly to all nations disposed to reciprocate." Due to America's rapidly expanding power and the gradual collapse of the international system centered on Europe, both presidents recognized the crucial role America had to play in the world (Kissinger 2004:29-30). Their strategies were based on emergence from isolationism, but their foreign policy became quite different. Roosevelt's justification for an international role for the U.S. because "its national interest demanded it and because a global balance of power was inconceivable without American participation" (ibid:29-30). Wilson sought a "messianic approach": America had an obligation to spread its principles throughout the world (ibid:30).

The interwar period took shape as a struggle between internationalism and isolationism and was carried on in moral terms. Wilsonianism and isolationism were as "brothers under the same skin" (Morgenthau 1951:29). President Woodrow Wilson's promise in 1917 to "make the world safe for democracy" and the following the idea about the League of Nation set off a realist critique. Carr, Niebuhr, and Morgenthau, in particular, opposed the very idea that the League of Nations, in which the great powers have to cooperate to bring about peace and prosperity, could solve the problem of the nature of power politics and the fact that states are motivated by power considerations. Where realism looks at how the world really is, idealists are blamed for looking at how it ought to be (Goldstein & Pevehouse 2006:55). In his

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famous book *Twenty Years' Crisis*, first issued in 1939, Edward H. Carr attacked idealism's project that he sees as "utopianism." He argues that the idealists had to tone their ideals, wishes and utopian goals and take note from the empirical description of the realities (Carr 1946:5). The idealists ignored these theoretic or declared their analysis as "unwarranted cynicism" (Rothstein 1972: 349).

In the inter-war period, the Democrats were the party for overseas intervention. After World War II the non-interventionists came mainly from the right side of the political spectrum (Eland 2004:54). The period was brought to a close when Franklin D. Roosevelt took the United States to World War II in 1941, only years after the country had passed a number of Neutrality Acts, it marked "a first step toward permanent international engagement" (Kissinger 1994:372). Hence, World War II functioned as a "shock of recognition" for realism and made it a "popular and fully articulated interpretation of international politics" (Rothstein 1972:349).

During the Cold War the idealists and realists Republican clashed again, but with less intensity. The neoconservative faction was on the rise in some intellectual circles, while the realists, by and large, dominated in Washington. While the latter was more concerned about stability and peace than promoting American principles, the former was alarmed at what they saw as a compromise with the totalitarian evil (Rosen 2005:3). On the subject of the Soviet Union, the realists advocated détente, while the neoconservatives promoted a policy of rollback of Soviet power in Eastern Europe. The Nixon-Kissinger strategy of peaceful coexistence with the Soviet Union made neoconservatism a household ideology and an important element in American foreign policy (Halper & Clarke 2004: 60, Kinsley 2005). A détente with Moscow was for the neoconservative idealists immoral since it could serve to perpetuate a repressive, anti-democratic regime (Mann 2004: 279). The Cold War was a long era of relative stability in the politics of the American foreign policy debate, reflecting the compromising efforts and pragmatism on behalf of the presidencies.<sup>16</sup> The consensus was deep and durable (Mead (2002: 265). However, the global activism of the

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<sup>16</sup> In between the containment policy towards the Soviet Union, there were periods of high tensions (such as the Cuban Missile Crisis) and détente (such as the Nixon administration's rounds of arms control negotiations) (Cameron 2002: 10).

Vietnam War broke the consensus within both parties and in idealist and realist circles.<sup>17</sup> The main realist critique of the war was the Wilsonian elements leading the U.S. to fight for “what was right, regardless of local circumstances, and independent of geopolitics.” The lessons learned in Vietnam did not only create a peace movement, it also produced a “Vietnam Syndrome” that stimulated a growing neo-isolationism that had implication for U.S. involvement in conflicts for years to come. The transition in world politics accelerated and the Cold War was brought to a close much due to the Reagan administration’s idealist policies of the 1980s. In modern-day Republican politics, President Ronald Reagan stands out in terms of advocating an idealist foreign policy.

The pitfall of using terms like idealism and realism is that they might seem like polarized views. Condoleezza Rice (2000: 48) portrayed the problem of the realist-idealist debate like this: “[t]his polarized view -- you are either a realist or devoted to norms and values -- may be just fine in academic debate, but it is a disaster for American foreign policy.” Republican realists and idealists do agree on certain principles. Nau (2004: 3) claims that for “all conservatives - neoconservatives, realists, and nationalists...individual and national liberty counts more than collective and universal equality.” Furthermore, Nau suggests that “competition is a bigger engine of change than institutional cooperation” and that “[m]ilitary power takes precedence over economic, diplomatic, and soft power” (ibid). Finally, Nau argues that “[l]egitimacy derives more from the substantive beliefs of individuals and societies...than from the procedural habits of shared social practices and institutions.” The idea that the U.S. should make decisions alone and not based on the international community is, beyond doubt, a basis of agreement. All the time working with other nations could prove valuable, allowing the United Nations carte blanche to decide over American foreign policy, is not in either school of thought’s interest. Thus, realists are grateful to the work done by many neoconservatives, such as Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Jeanne Kirkpatrick. Indeed, the latter’s essay *Dictatorships*

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<sup>17</sup> For an extensive review of the decision making in the Vietnam War, see Kissinger (1994: 620-702) and Hess (2001: 75-112).



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*and Double Standards* brought collective conservative dismay at the Carter Administration's policies.

After all, states are fully able to reach two goals simultaneously, for example like when the U. S. fought Nazi Germany in World War II, and when it opposed the Soviet Union during the Cold War. In both cases, the United States was engaged in a just conflict that also made eminently good strategic sense, and so it did not have to choose between its ideals and its concerns about power (Mearsheimer 2005b: 142).

### **2.6.1 Entering Unipolarity: "Superpower Lives Here"**

*"We have to put up a shingle outside the door saying: 'Superpower Lives Here'"*

Colin Powell (in Sifry & Cerf 2003:241)

The end of the Cold War left the U.S. in a vacuum in terms of foreign policy strategy. America had won the ideological war with the Soviet Union and the bipolar competition for power had ended. In Francis Fukuyama's (1992) words, the world had seen an "end of history," the death of ideological struggle and the definitive victory for the liberal-capitalist political order. The structure of the international system was altered from one of bipolar confrontation to one in which the United States stood alone as the sole superpower (Pauly 2005:58). The U.S. was no longer kept in check by its only great-power rival, its power had become more diffuse and that ability to employ it to shape the rest of the world had decreased (Kissinger 1994:809). This diffuseness and uncertainty was symbolized by Mearsheimer's (1990:35) melancholic longing for the Cold War order that kept the anarchy of international relations in check. The new "untamed anarchy" that unipolarity caused was going to characterize the realists' view of the post-Cold War order. The realist prediction was that this period of unipolarity with the U.S. as a hegemon would be short-lived because the balance-of-power system would make states "concert to challenge the superior one, and when leading states decline, other states rise to challenge them" (Waltz 1993:76). This has yet to happen and the U.S. is subjected to a relatively stable unipolarity. Some realists seem to have acknowledged that the return of bipolarity is not forthcoming. While waiting for a contestant to arise,

realism favors balanced multipolarity over a hegemonic unipolar system. What is seen as the most perilous of distribution of power is unbalanced multipolarity (Mearsheimer 2001:44-45, 346-347). Hence, realists advocate modesty and prudence while at the same time warning of powerful states that might come to threaten the American temporary predominance.

Wohlforth (1999:8-9) claims that unipolarity is both peaceful and durable and that American leadership in world politics is necessary. As an extension of that analysis, many leading neoconservative experts claim that the United States is in this era of unipolarity and must seek new forms of maintaining its prosperity expressing the need for American predominance. Krauthammer (2002) has been an important contributor of this view.

A more open and globalized world created not only possibilities, but also new threats. Dealing with totalitarian regimes has become a predicament for the world's sole superpower. Robert Pauly (2005:45) quotes Lawrence Eagleburger, then Deputy Secretary of State (1989-1992): “[a]s the bipolar world is relaxed, it permits aggression, giving people flexibility because they are not worried about the involvement of the superpowers. The statement is illustrative of what unipolar hegemony brought with it.

A strain of isolationism ran through the Republican Party in the 1990s. A wide range of Republicans, even some of the neoconservatives, disliked the Clinton administration's nation-building operations. The Republican opposition to the activist stance of the Clinton administration in Somalia in 1992, Haiti in 1994, Bosnia in 1995, and Kosovo in 1999 was to a large extent based on realist principles.<sup>18</sup> The costs of threatening or even going to war were in many realists' eyes greater than the benefits of taking such steps. A confrontation between Clinton's Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright and the then chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Colin Powell

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<sup>18</sup> Many, including representatives for the Republican Party, argued in realist fashion *for* intervention in Bosnia on the grounds that American military presence in Europe would avoid a European power to grow strong (Eland 2004: 137). Moreover, many realists saw the new “out-of-area” missions in the Balkans as a way to strengthen NATO, while the ostensible humanitarian goal of the US and NATO was to stop ethnic cleansing (ibid: 37-38). Some neoconservatives opposed the Balkan interventions (Krauthammer 2004b).

over U.S. Bosnia policy describes the realist-idealist clash: “What’s the point of having this superb military that you are always talking about if we can not use it?” asked Albright. In describing the incident in his memoirs, Powell stated: “I thought I would have an aneurism” (Mann 2004:221). The expansionist neoconservatives, on the other hand, attacked Clinton for refusing to use American military power and for neglecting new threats, such as terrorism (Melby 2004:55). Although the realist-idealist debate lived strong in the academic sphere, the sharp debate within the higher ranks of the Republican Party did not surface during Clinton’s two-term tenant as president.

### 3. Before the Storm: The Reluctant Sheriff<sup>19</sup>

*“We must be proud and confident of our values, but humble in how we treat nations that are figuring out how to chart their own course.”*

President George W. Bush (2000b)

In order to evaluate the American response to the events 9/11 in connection to the theories in it is necessary to look back at the foreign policy that directed George W. Bush before the 2000 elections and the prelude to September 2001.

When the then Texas governor and Republican presidential nominee George W. Bush was campaigning for office, foreign policy was visibly not at the top of his agenda. His campaign promoted a compassionate conservatism at home, strong American values abroad and he was a confirmed opponent of deploying American forces for the sake of nation-building (Kesler 2005:222, Melby 2004:91). Furthermore, Bush promised a “humble” foreign policy that concentrated on “enduring national interests,” key themes from Jeffersonian and Jacksonian realism (Gordon & Shapiro 2004:48, Mead 2002:176). The Bush campaign avoided taking strong positions, something which lead many to expect a foreign policy in-synch with his predecessor and father George H. W. Bush’s prudent, multilateral foreign policy without the heaviest risk-taking.

The 1990s had left the Republican and Democratic Party miles apart on foreign policy issues. Disagreement on the 1999 Kosovo air campaigns were still on the agenda as the presidential race started. Republican critics were furious over the role that the Clinton Administration’s excessive willingness to compromise with allies and its alleged “foreign policy as social work.”<sup>20</sup> The disdain of the President’s alleged failure to set priorities led the Bush campaign to use the slogan “ABC, anything but Clinton” (Daalder & Lindsay 2003:37). Bipartisanship when dealing with American foreign policy was at that time a scarce commodity (Lindsay 2000:5).

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<sup>19</sup> This heading refers to a book title by President of the Council of Foreign Relations Richard Haass. Haass was director of policy planning for the U.S. Department of State (2001-2003) where he was a principal adviser to Secretary of State Colin Powell.

<sup>20</sup> A term introduced by Michael Mandelbaum in his January/February 1996 Foreign Affairs article titled “Foreign Policy as Social Work.”

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The Bush more restrained American role in the world was welcoming news to both Republican moderates and isolationists who were exasperated by President Bill Clinton's interventions in the Bosnian and Kosovo Wars during the 1990s. The neoconservative camp's preferred candidate for the Republican nomination was Bush's opponent in the primary elections, Arizona Senator John McCain (Mann 2004:259). On Iraq, the presidential candidate Bush told an interviewer that the most realistic way to deal with Saddam Hussein and his kind was to "keep them isolated in the world of public opinion and to work with our alliances to keep them isolated" (Bush 2000a). Additionally, he stated that he was "going to be very hesitant to deploy troops outside those areas...defined as our national strategic interests" (ibid). In the second Bush-Gore presidential debate Bush admitted that he and his running mate Dick Cheney disagreed on the role of use of troops and the idea of nation-building. Where Cheney believed in nation-building, Bush argued that using American troops like nation builders would draw a picture of the U.S. as the world's policeman (Mann 2004:256).

The foreign policy team eventually picked by George W. Bush was highly experienced. Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of State Colin Powell, and National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice all served under the President's father, George H. W. Bush. Donald Rumsfeld was also familiar with party politics having served under Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford and in a range of advisory positions in the 1980s and 90s (Pauly 2005:94). Together with Paul Wolfowitz and Richard Armitage, deputies at Department of Defense and State, respectively - they constituted a group that was come to known as "the Vulcans," after the Roman god of fire, forge, and metalwork (ibid:94). It was a foreign policy team that "sought to convey a sense of power, toughness, resilience, and durability" (Mann 2004:ix-x).

### 3.1 Stage I: 9/11

*“Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated.”*

President George W. Bush (2001b)

The attacks on the United States marked the beginning of a new era in American foreign policy, the war on terror. The unsuspected attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia on September 11, 2001 (9/11) were unparalleled to any attack on American soil both in style and level of destruction. Certainly, terror had struck the U.S. before, but these attacks were smaller in scale, they were not committed or supported by any state, and were not retaliated with full-scale war.<sup>21</sup>

### 3.2 9/11 as a catalyst

The 9/11 attacks on World Trade Center and Pentagon made a huge impact and created a remarkable sentiment of togetherness in American society. Suspicion, fear, and feelings of injustice and lust for revenge shown by the most Americans, including the media, indicated that something had changed completely on that morning. The President’s address to the joint session of Congress and the American people, nine days later - on September 20, 2001 - was the first real test of the President’s crisis management, leadership, and consequently a first real test on foreign policy leaning. Was George W. Bush going to represent strictly conventional realism in the same pattern as his father, or was he going to more of a Wilsonian Reaganite with the ambition to change the world by encouraging the spread of democracy? The speech ended up being the latter; the first glimpses of an idealist turn in American foreign policy.

The change in tone did not just affect the President. In Congress, the bipartisan rancor that had built up over the Clinton years disappeared in an instant. Patriotism and

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<sup>21</sup> US mainland was hit in 1993 (World Trade Center bombings) and in 1995 (Oklahoma City bombing). In addition, in 1998 suicide attacks struck U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania and in 2000 the destroyer USS Cole was bombed in anchorage in the port of Aden, Yemen. The embassy attacks were retaliated with cruise missile attacks. Osama Bin Laden and Al Qaeda are believed to be the architects behind the latter two.

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nationalism blossomed in conjunction with America's response to the attacks, handing over authority to the President to do whatever was necessary to secure the nation. Opinion polls taken shortly after the 9/11 attacks showed figures that made him the most trusted Commander-in-chief in American history.<sup>22</sup> The response in the Republican camp was at first glance unanimous. None in the Republican Party seemed to disagree that the terrorist acts were to be treated as actions of war. In the direct aftermath of the attack, many Americans asked themselves questions "why did they do it?" and "why do they hate us?" According to Newt Gingrich (2005) most Republicans did not spend time thinking about the reasons behind the terrorist acts, stating: "They [the Democrats] spent a decade trying to deal with terrorism through the FBI, the courts, and really good psychologists. They wanted to understand our opponents. Bush just wanted to defeat them." The moral clarity of the President Bush was applauded by most of the political America, while others were provoked by his highly moral rhetoric (Podhoretz 2005:121). Neoconservatives called him "politically born again as a passionate democratic idealist of the Reaganite stamp" (ibid:119).

The attacks on 9/11 were so massive that they had to be regarded as "an act of war against our country" (Bush 2001a). Already on September 20, Bush laid out its first plans to retaliate, by issuing in Congress a plan that left countries no choice: "Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists" (ibid). The phase 1 of the war on terror was initiated as a response to the 9/11 attacks. Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan was the first test facing the U.S.-led campaign against terrorism. The campaign started on October 7, 2001 aimed to attack Al Qaeda training camps and the mission was to dislodge Afghanistan as a base for terrorism and destroy the military capability of the Taliban regime who harbored Osama bin Laden who was considered the architect behind the 9/11 attacks. The 9/11 attacks had invoked the principle of collective

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<sup>22</sup> The highest rating for a U.S. president ever recorded by the Gallup polling group was President Bush's 90 percent job approval rating (N=1,005, MoE  $\pm$  3), polled on September 21-22, 2001. It outranked the previous record, a rating of 89 percent garnered by former President George H. W. Bush, at the end of the 1991 Gulf War. A number of surveys, including Newsweek, ABC/Washington Post, Gallup/USA Today, and NBC/Wall Street Journal polls presented the President's approval rating between 80 and 90 percent mark in the weeks after 9/11. For a detailed overview of these findings, see <http://www.pollingreport.com/BushJob1.htm>.

defense in NATO's Article 5 which as a result helped the U.S. receive widespread support for its Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan.<sup>23</sup>

### 3.3 The Bush Doctrine<sup>24</sup>

*“The United States possesses unprecedented—and unequalled—strength and influence in the world. Sustained by faith in the principles of liberty, and the value of a free society, this position comes with unparalleled responsibilities, obligations, and opportunity. The great strength of this nation must be used to promote a balance of power that favors freedom.”*

(Bush 2002b)

Shortly after 9/11 no watershed strategy was formulated that could distinguish the administration as realist or idealist. Operation Enduring Freedom caused no big controversy in either the realist or idealist camps as it was viewed as an act of retaliation. The Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) released by the Department of Defense just weeks after 9/11 confirmed a factual and sober strategy in that “the purpose of the U.S. Armed Forces is to protect and advance U.S. national interests and, if deterrence fails, to decisively defeat threats to those interests” (U.S. Department of Defense: 2001:2). The threats remained the same as earlier strategic documents; proliferation, regional powers, state failure, terrorism, and transnational crime (Biddle 2005:4).

#### 3.3.1 From Deterrence to Preemption

The first real sign that things U.S. strategy was about to change remarkably came with the President's graduation speech at the Military Academy at West Point on June 1, 2002. In this watershed speech, Bush (2002b) placed emphasis on preemption arguing that the new threats, posed by international terrorism, require new thinking. “Deterrence -- the promise of massive retaliation against nations -- means nothing against shadowy terrorists...if we wait for threats to fully materialize, we will have

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<sup>23</sup> In fact, the response was so massive that Pentagon, for military and political reasons, chose to turn down NATO contributions like troops and equipment. (Gordon & Shapiro 2004: 64).

<sup>24</sup> The Bush Doctrine includes the 2002 NSS, and speeches given by President Bush and his administration, some of which the NSS was made up of.



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waited too long” (ibid). The U.S. was on the offense, and the speech marked a departure from the reactive posture of the 1990s.<sup>25</sup> The West Point speech represented the transformation of the Bush Administration pre-911 and post-911. The concept of containment and deterrence were, in Washington’s view not suited for dealing with non-state terrorists or terrorists in collaboration with sovereign states. Not since President Woodrow Wilson had a president put forward a more ambitious agenda (Melby 2004:21).

Later that year, the 2002 National Security Strategy (NSS) was released. Its focus was on eliminating threats to the U.S. before enemies could pose a threat to the U.S. Terrorism, rogue states, and regional crisis were not new to the U.S. and were included in President Clinton’s 1996 NSS, but whereas the Clinton administration looked at terrorism as a criminal matter, the Bush administration elevated it to most important threat, not only to the U.S., but also to the world as a whole. The solution was preemption, hegemony, and democratization. The 2002 NSS (Bush 2002c:15) restated the preemption was “we cannot let our enemies strike first” the primary case for presenting the idea of using proactive counterproliferation efforts, i.e. preemptive and even preventive war as a tool in the war on terror.<sup>26</sup> Instead of using deterrence as the primary foreign policy tool, the U.S. would now emphasize preemption as the preferred strategy for dealing with threats (ibid). The NSS clearly stated that it had become both a right and a duty to take preemptive action, not only in face of an imminent threat, but even against a potential threat (Gordon & Shapiro:68).

The NSS gave a clear-cut warning to dictatorships around the world that the United States had “changed it ways” from deterrence to proactiveness: “[D]eterrance based only upon the threat of retaliation is less likely to work against leaders of rogue states more willing to take risks, gambling with the lives of their people, and the wealth of

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<sup>25</sup> This view was reemphasized by other members of the Bush Administration. Vice President Dick Cheney (2003) concluded that “[t]he strategy of deterrence, which served us so well during the decades of the Cold War, will no longer do.”

<sup>26</sup> Preemption, as defined by Michael Walzer (2000:74) is an “anticipatory attack against adversaries who present sufficient threat to a state’s political independence or territorial integrity.”

their nations” (Bush 2002c). This was the first official warning to Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi regime.

### **3.3.2 A New Concept of Sovereignty**

The Bush administration did not only impose obligations on themselves. In the preface to the NSS, President Bush states that “[a]ll nations have important responsibilities. Nations that enjoy freedom must actively fight terror.” What would happen if countries did not meet these responsibilities? A wider presentation of this new way of thinking about sovereignty and intervention was presented by the then director of policy planning for the U.S. Department of State, Richard Haass (2003). Sovereignty was no longer to be treated as a “blank check.” Rather, Haass claimed that sovereignty entails obligations to fight terror. When it does not meet these obligations it risks “forfeiting its sovereign privileges...and in extreme cases its immunity from armed intervention” (ibid). He argues that there are three circumstances when exceptions to the norm of non-intervention are warranted: (1) when a state commits or fails to prevent genocide or crimes against humanity; (2) when a state harbors international terrorists or are not capable of controlling terrorists operating within their borders; and (3) when a state takes steps – such as attempt to acquire weapons of mass destruction – that are a clear threat to global security, particularly a state with a history of aggression and support for terrorism (ibid).

### **3.3.3 The Bandwagoning Logic**

The bandwagoning logic is the strategy where a threatened state abandons hope of preventing the aggressor from gaining power by joining forces or “jumping on their rival’s bandwagon” in attempt to avoid an armed confrontation (Mearsheimer 2001:139, Mearsheimer 2005a). The bandwagoning mindset was presented in President Bush’s 2002 State of the Union address (Bush 2002a), commonly known as the “axis of evil” speech. The speech, in which the inclusion of Iran, Iraq and North Korea in the axis of evil was the focal point, proved the Bush Administration’s bandwagoning motivation, as they gave them a choice to give up their nuclear ambitions. (Mearsheimer 2005a). The idea was an extension of the idea presented in

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the immediate aftermath of 9/11 that stated that every state was either with “us” or “the terrorists” (Bush 2001b). The “axis of evil” did not only categorize three countries that the U.S. saw as dangerous rivals who would, it also gave them a choice, either surrender their nuclear ambitions and adhere to international rules or end up being the next on the hit list.

### 3.4 Assessing the Bush Doctrine: The Resolute Sheriff

Bearing in mind the Republican Presidential nominee Bush’s humble, realist viewpoints in the 2000 elections, the Bush Doctrine was viewed as a fundamental change, from reluctant to resolute.

This new thinking about sovereignty is an extension of idealist traditions and one that is reminiscent of the Clinton administration’s language. Ikenberry (2006:10), when assessing Richard Haass’ new concept of sovereignty, goes as far as saying that President Bush has built upon a liberal tradition and taken it “several steps forward...bolstering the legitimacy of the international community’s intrusive interest in what goes on within countries.”

More than anything the Bush Doctrine represented America’s status as the global hegemon. The Bush Doctrine laid out plans for the U.S. to maintain so much military power that no nation or group of nations will ever challenge its military dominance (Bush 2002c). The offensive rhetoric and high anxiety level it created was purposely put in place hoping to achieve two objectives: (1) deterring existing and potential enemies, and (2) to cause a bandwagoning effect that would make potential rivals to adhere to American and the international community’s rules.

Although preemption caused a big stir in it was not a new phenomenon in American foreign policy. Gaddis (2004:16-17) argues that the terms were first used in an American context in the days of President John Quincy Adams and has since then been frequently operationalized.<sup>27</sup> What made the preemption somewhat

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<sup>27</sup> Preemption differs from prevention in a military sense in that the former implies military action undertaken to forestall an imminent attack from a hostile state while the latter implies starting a war to keep such a state from building the capacity to

revolutionary was that it was linked to a complete new backdrop; the war on terror and the strategy of “coalition of the willing.” The basic idea of this strategy was that “the mission defines the coalition,” and countries willing to participate joined in with varied strength. This was another win for the neoconservative camp who wanted a flexible and muscular strategy, where realists preferred to act through established alliances and tolerantly reorganize them to meet the new threats.

The spill-over effect that Washington had hoped for by implementing bandwagoning was not going to function the way that the administration had hoped. The countries mentioned in the “axis of evil” speech did not jump on the American bandwagon but brought instead it brought an escalation of Iranian, Iraqi and North Korean hatred of the U.S. It also disrupted diplomacy with key allies and bringing hostility in formerly friendly nations (Krauthammer 2003:54, Mearsheimer 2005a). The refusal to bandwagon with the U.S. was linked with the fact that while the 9/11 effect lived strongly in the U.S.; the trauma of 9/11 had passed in other places of the world. Countries, allied and adversaries alike increasingly started opposing U.S. policies (Gordon & Shapiro 2004:65). This decreasing cooperation would have implications for the next step in the war on terrorism, Operation Iraqi Freedom.

### **3.4.1 The Significance of Ideas**

Had 9/11 and the subsequent creation of the new doctrine cause changes in the views of the President’s closest advisors administration officials?

If presidential candidate Bush did not have a visionary foreign policy, others in his newly appointed administration did. The first term Bush Presidency was composed of

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attack (Betts 1982:145-47). American history shows that preemption has been a tactic used by a number of presidents. Pauly & Landsford (2005:42) consider the Truman Administration’s decision to drop atomic bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki to stop the Japanese from creating further mass murder in 1945 a preemptive action. Preemption had never been ruled out in the Cold War either. American presidents who were in charge in the Cold War used a variety of preemptive military and non-military means to further US interests relative to those of the Soviet Union, as proven by President Kennedy in the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis and President Reagan’s rollback strategy after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (ibid: 43). Even though the Eisenhower administration’s nuclear doctrine in the 1950s was called “massive retaliation” evidence indicates that the US was ready to preemptively attack Soviet bombers before they took off (Eland 2004: 127). In the 1990s, the Clinton Administration used preemptive actions in Panama, Grenada, and Haiti (Halper & Clarke 2004: 142-143).

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two fractions: neoconservative liberal unilateralists and traditional conservatives who wanted to preserve America's alliances, on the other (Risse 2003:14). The real foreign policy battle was being fought out between Wolfowitz and Powell, Pentagon and Foggy Bottom (Melby 2004:64). Notwithstanding influencing President Bush, it was viewed as important for both fractions to win over to their side the pragmatics like Cheney and Rumsfeld who were particularly close to the President.

Rumsfeld and Cheney made up their minds at an early stage. They had over the years established a close relationship with many of the idealist through PNAC and Team B, who reviewed the intelligence agencies (Daalder & Lindsay 2003:25-26). In addition, Cheney as Secretary of Defense in the George H. W. Bush administration, employed Wolfowitz and Libby to be his undersecretaries. The neoconservative subscribers were first and foremost Deputy Secretary of Defense, Paul Wolfowitz.<sup>28</sup> Wolfowitz was a strong believer in interventionism and nation-building and was regarded as the neocon stereotype: "a hawkish...intellectual godfather" (Woodward 2004:21). The muscular idealistic rhetoric in the NSS and in the Bush Doctrine in general could be traced back to much of the neoconservative thinking. He had, like other neoconservatives, been an opponent of the *détente* policy of the Cold War, where he advocated rollback. "You can't use democracy...as a battle with the Soviet Union, and then turn around and be completely hypocritical about it when it's on your side of the line," Wolfowitz explained in Mann's book on the Vulcans (2004:134). The same prescriptions were now advocated towards undemocratic regimes in the Middle East.

The administration also consisted of people with realist credentials. According to Mann (2004:121) Secretary of State Colin Powell and his deputy Richard Armitage were "mistrustful of people with strong views or ideologies," much because of their military background. Their experiences as soldiers in Vietnam set them apart from most of the foreign policy elite as they had experienced the frustration of a war the U.S. had not won and one that Americans had not wholeheartedly supported

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<sup>28</sup> In addition to, Vice President's Chief of Staff Lewis Libby, Undersecretary of Defense Douglas Feith, Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Affairs John Bolton, Deputy Assistant to the President Elliot Abrams, Undersecretary of State Democracy for Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky, Special Adviser to Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security David Wurmser, and Senior Director at the National Security Council Zalmay Khalilzad were the most influential neoconservatives who were assigned to the Bush Administration in 2001 (Halper & Clarke 2004:147).

(ibid:38). They represented the administration's moderate conservatism and inherent realism. It was evident that Powell was becoming more and more marginalized. In private, Powell and Armitage frequently joked about the former's status in the administration as "in the refrigerator" (Woodward 2004:79, 149).

Condoleezza Rice, at the time at the time National Security Advisor and perhaps Bush's closest aide, got the important task of bringing together the opinions from both camps. Rice was a prominent Stanford University professor and a protégé of former National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft and regularly identified herself as a realist (Mann 2004:147).<sup>29</sup> Her statements in 2000 clearly supporting a realist foreign policy, attacked Clinton's Wilsonian internationalism and attachment to the illusionary "norms" of international behavior and stating that a Republican foreign policy should "refocus the United States on the national interest and the pursuit of key priorities" (Rice 2000:46-47). These refocused priorities were realist-based as they would seek to deter war, renew strong and intimate relationship with allies who share American values. The benefits of Wilsonianism were second-order effects clearly indicating that Rice seems to reject the "humanitarian" and "international" values that motivated many U.S. interventions in the 1990s.

Rice was the single administration official who had changed position in foreign policy. She was author of many of the texts written in the post-9/11 environment, including most notably the NSS, and got the important task of transformation. Rice (2003) offered and requested of the world a "generational commitment to helping the people of the Middle East transform their region." Transformation, in this context, had a significant double meaning. Not only was she in charge of the transformation in the cabinet, Rice's also transformed her own foreign policy outlook. The ideas written in the post-9/11 period did not resemble the ones she wrote just before the elections. She saw an "historic opportunity to break the destructive pattern of great power rivalry that has bedevilled the world since the rise of the nation-state in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century" (Rice 2002). Furthermore, she went against her own school's preaching

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<sup>29</sup> Scowcroft served as National Security Advisor to both Presidents Gerald Ford (1974-1977) and George H.W. Bush (1989-1993).

stating “we must abandon the quest for multipolarity, and instead work for a balance of power that favors freedom” (ibid). Albeit her tough job of maintaining the balance between differences of opinions in the administration, these changing views illustrate the fundamental changes occurring in Washington.

In conclusion, the Bush Doctrine constituted a major change on the U.S. conception of the post-9/11 world. The emphasis on preemption was not new, but its backdrop was. Backed by highly aggressive language, and followed up by warnings to that would have dire consequences for those who did not take the war on terror seriously, the Bush Doctrine left an image of a revolution in American foreign policy. The U.S. was on the offense and it had no intention of soften up its strategy. While critics of the administration warned of “crisis mongering,” the administration in Mead’s (2004:115) words found that “it was more important to frighten and deter potential enemies, than to reassure friends.” The Iraq War was going to bring major confrontations between the Republican realists and idealists. The question was how the offensive language of the Bush Doctrine was going to play out in practice.

## 4. Stage II: Operation Iraqi Freedom

*“We come to Iraq with respect for its citizens, for their great civilization and for the religious faiths they practice. We have no ambition in Iraq, except to remove a threat and restore control of that country to its own people.”*

George W. Bush (2003a)

Iraq had been a constant frustration for Washington ever since the 1991 Persian Gulf War. The George H. W. Bush administration’s mission, accomplished after months of diplomacy and four weeks of fighting, was to expel Iraqi forces from Kuwait. Iraq was not officially mentioned in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks.<sup>30</sup> Wolfowitz was the only strong advocate of an attack at that point, telling his aides that Saddam Hussein was behind the attacks and must be dealt with a direct attack (Woodward 2004:25-26, Daalder & Lindsay 2003:130). Wolfowitz had been working on how to topple Saddam Hussein’s Baathist Party in Iraq ever since President George H. W. Bush removed his troops in Kuwait in 1991.<sup>31</sup> Neoconservatives, critical of what they saw as a modest mission, were disappointed in Bush the elder’s decision to leave without ousting Saddam, but instead leaving it in the hands of the Shiite and Kurdish minorities to do so (Pauly 2005:54-55, Rosen 2005:3, Pollack 2003:48). The eight years that followed hindered the idealist Republicans to get it their way as President Clinton was unwilling to get rid of Saddam, upholding the status quo. Apart from Operation Desert Fox in 1998, a brief cruise missile strike that was launched in an attempt to get Saddam to adhere to a series of UN Security Council Resolutions including prohibitions against development of WMDs and sponsorship of terrorist groups, Clinton stayed on the defensive.

The mission in 2003 went a lot further than President Bush’s predecessors. Operation Iraqi Freedom was “phase two” in the War on Terror and the ultimate test upon whether President Bush’s preemption doctrine would work in action.

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<sup>30</sup> The first official mentioning of Iraq was the President’s 2002 State of the Union Address where President Bush (2002a) linked Iraq along with North Korea and Iran to the “axis of evil,” stating that Saddam’s regime “has something to hide from the civilized world.”

<sup>31</sup> As Undersecretary of Defense Policy, Wolfowitz had the responsibility for draft for the 1992 Defense Planning Guidance. The draft that leaked to the New York Times pressed for a more interventionist policy in the Middle East, particularly in Iraq, but the final report did not contain such policy advice.



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## 4.1 The Rationale for Going to War: Realism and Idealism

*“We have no ambition in Iraq, except to remove a threat and restore control of that country to its own people.”*

George W. Bush (2003a)

Initially, the risks of leaving Saddam Hussein’s Iraq alone were presented as a direct threat to the national interest. Among the experts who advised the Bush Administration to initiate an invasion of Iraq was Middle East analyst Kenneth Pollack. He had spent years studying the various options the U.S. had and ended up arguing that an armed conflict was unavoidable. He reluctantly believed that the U.S. has come to the last resort, because Saddam “would be the most dangerous leader in the world with whom to get into a nuclear confrontation” (Pollack 2002:276).

The official rationale was three-fold: (1) Regime change; (2) Saddam’s weapons of mass destruction; (3) Saddam’s link to Al Qaeda (Daalder & Lindsay 2003:130-132).

Critics brought into question whether the three official motives were genuine and concluded that the real motives were strictly about petroleum. The reasoning was, among others, that the only way to permanently reduce US dependence on Saudi Arabia, was by taking over Iraq and securing its long-term oil dependency (Klare 2003:401-402).<sup>32</sup> This argument has been evaluated in great depth by many scholars and has been downplayed by most. Claes (2005:48-57) when examining security of supply, price levels, and regime change, came to the conclusion that the U.S. would not benefit from a war because today’s petroleum market is not open for government contracts like the ones that were common in the 1970s. Furthermore, there is no evident link between form of government and stable oil prices or more secure oil supplies (ibid).

The issue for the president was to convince both liberals and conservatives that an invasion of Iraq was necessary and unavoidable. Bush needed domestic consensus before he went to the United Nations. The consensus in Washington to attack Iraq eventually gained strong support, in striking contrast to the first Bush administration

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<sup>32</sup> For a detailed version of this view, see Michael Renner (2003) and Michael T. Klare (2003).

twelve years earlier.<sup>33</sup> The congressional Democrats seemed to agree that this was no time for partisanship. To get the U.N. in on an attack was going to be more difficult. It started off promisingly. Powell and Great Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair was able to get President Bush to go to the U.N. and seek backing for a weapons inspection regime, causing a blow to Cheney who was against inspectors (Daalder & Lindsay 2003:139).<sup>34</sup> It was "Powell's route to Cheney's goal" (ibid). In November 2002 the U.N. Security Council (UNSC) passed Resolution 1440 which commanded Iraq to dismantle their WMDs, and to readmit the international inspectors it had thrown out in 1998. Rejection by Saddam would have proven the "smoking gun," that would have allowed the U.S., as head of a U.N. coalition, to invade the country, but Saddam hesitantly allowed the inspectors back in and created a headache for the Americans and British whose forces were already deployed in the Gulf (Gaddis 2004:96). The metrological timetable was not on the coalition's side. They needed to attack before the hot Iraqi spring commenced. When Powell presented the final testimony before the United Nations the UNSC seemed unsure on whether it was enough evidence to legitimize an invasion. Two of the veto powers, France and Russia, unasserted of the British and American intelligence, wanted to give the U.N. weapons inspectors more time, turning their backs to the war plan. The consequence was that no other great power joined the U.S. and Great Britain when the invasion started on March 20, 2003, a remarkable contrast to the first Bush administration's support twelve years earlier.<sup>35</sup>

## 4.2 Realists in favour of Containment

The American positioning of unbounded power, taken together with conventional wisdom of realism's confidence in state's desire to maximizing interest, could lead one to believe that realists would be in favor of seizing the opportunity to attack Iraq

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<sup>33</sup> The Senate War Resolution passed the House with a comfortable 296 to 133, 46 more than his father had before the Persian Gulf War in 1991. In the Senate, the numbers were 77 to 23 (just 52 to 47 in 1991) (Woodward 2004:204, Hess 2001:194-95).

<sup>34</sup> According to Daalder & Lindsay (2003:139) Blair had told Bush that Great Britain could not support the U.S. in war without U.N. resolutions.

<sup>35</sup> The coalition went to war alongside small units from Australia, Poland, and South Korea (Gaddis 2004:98).

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as a broader strike on international terrorism. As this chapter will show, they ended up concluding the opposite. The realists viewed Iraq as a sideshow and a distraction from the more important task of destroying Al Qaeda.

The realist arguments had been the same all through the 1990s. Saddam was easily contained and did not present an imminent threat to the U.S. He was to be contained, or as Mearsheimer and Walt (2003c) put it; “kept in a box.”

Shortly before 9/11, Powell thought that Wolfowitz “enclave strategy,” the plan of attacking southern Iraq and, through bandwagoning logic, ridding Saddam from power was “lunacy” and “one of the most absurd, strategically unsound proposals he had ever heard” (Woodward 2004:22). He did not change his mind after the 9/11 attacks seeing no linkage between Al Qaeda and Saddam (ibid:25). In a meeting on August 5 2002, six months prior to the invasion, Powell spoke up about the destabilizing effects doubts about a war with Iraq and he thought it would have on friendly regimes in the Middle East (ibid:150). “You are going to be the proud owner of 25 million people...you will own all their hopes, aspirations and problems,” he bluntly warned the President (ibid).<sup>36</sup> Whereas Vice President Cheney was uncertain that going to the U.N. would prove successful, Powell saw it as a way to internationalize the problem, and was convinced that the U.S. would be able to build a coalition (ibid:151, 153). Powell based his prudent view on his own doctrinal basis. In 1992, then holding the job as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the U.S. armed forces, Powell wrote what has later been known as the Powell Doctrine.<sup>37</sup> The doctrine was based on Powell’s own experience as soldier in the Vietnam War as well as his positions in the Reagan, Bush 41 and Clinton administrations. The doctrine makes an attempt to clarify when and how the United States should use its armed forces. “We must not ...send our military forces into a crisis with an unclear mission they cannot accomplish” (Powell 1992:39). In short, the doctrine seeks to limit the use of American force to those instances where war is strictly necessary for the national

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<sup>36</sup> Privately, Powell and Armitage called this the Pottery Barn rule: “You brake it, you own it.” (Woodward 2004:150).

<sup>37</sup> The official title is *US Forces: The Challenges Ahead* and is based on the Weinberger Doctrine. Originally, it can be dated back to President Ronald Reagan’s Secretary of Defense, Caspar Weinberger, who was Colin Powell’s boss in 1984.

interest. Thus, many realists have made it their preferred strategy when considering engaging in a conflict.

In the academic sphere the realist opposition to the Iraq War was almost unison. The belief was that deterrence and containment would work, and that a preventive war would only do harm and distract the emphasis on the war on terrorism. Although the realists trusted the intelligence put forward by the intelligence community that Saddam might be in possession of WMDs, they doubted that he was willing to use them. Mearsheimer and Walt (2003c:7-8) argued that even if Saddam possessed these weapons, preventive war would be unnecessary since he would have no incentive of using it against the U.S. or its allies unless his survival is threatened. This was backed by historic evidence on Saddam's past behavior. Iraq did not fire chemical or biological warheads at Israel during the Persian Gulf War, let alone using WMDs against American forces stationed in the region (ibid:6, 8). Layne (2004:1) suggested that the administration's Iraq policy was antithetical to American national interests and warned that the current policy would lead to an imperial overstretch. Mearsheimer and Walt (2003b:422) further questioned the link between the secular Saddam and Osama bin Laden, the fundamentalist leader of Al Qaeda, whose relationship they saw as antipathetic.

In sum, realists in government and outside argue that the costs of attacking outweigh the benefits even if Iraq was to become a success. In conclusion, the realist's view was rooted in within the scepticism and prudent stance of what Mead (2002:245) calls the Jeffersonian-Jacksonian realist tradition as well as the deep-rooted fundamentals of Morgenthau's realism.

### 4.3 Neoconservatives in favour of Intervention

Since the Persian Gulf War, the GOP idealists advocated an interventionist policy toward Iraq, seeing realpolitik as a cowardly enterprise.

Wolfowitz, by many seen as the architect behind the Iraq War, had a very optimistic outlook on Iraq. He believed it was possible to send in the military to overrun and

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seize Iraq's southern enclaves. Having seized the enclaves, the anti-Saddam population of the enclaves would then help rally the rest of the country to overthrow Saddam (Woodward 2004:22). This faith in the efficiency in bandwagoning was a repeated argument in the idealist fraction of the administration.

Outside government, Norman Podhoretz (2005:115) argues that the first Bush Administration's decision not to go into Baghdad was the fear of the casualties that the United States might suffer in doing so.<sup>38</sup> In 1998, PNAC sent an open letter to the Clinton administration urging his administration, in the short term, to undertake military action in order to eliminate the WMD threat and to remove Saddam Hussein from power (Kristol et al 2003a). A new letter was sent a week after 9/11, on September 20, 2001, restating the letter from 1998 that "any strategy aiming at the eradication of terrorism...must include a determined effort to remove Saddam Hussein from power (Kristol et al 2003b)." This view was repeatedly articulated in a series of op-eds in newspapers and magazines in the months between 9/11 and the initiation of Operation Freedom.

Although the neoconservatives mentioned WMDs as basis for their interventionist prescription, this message was clearly linked to the need to back up commitment to the Iraqi opposition and democratic change. "Saddam's pursuit of weapons of mass destruction was inextricably intertwined with the nature of his tyrannical rule, his serial aggression, his defiance of international obligations, and his undeniable ties to a variety of terrorists" (Kagan and Kristol 2005:18). The neoconservative push for war went longer than intervention in Iraq, and included "working more aggressively towards regime change in North Korea" (Boot 2003).

The war was endorsed also in academic circles, including those whose view not linked to any specific school of thought. Kenneth Pollack (2003:410), who served as director of Gulf Affairs in President Clinton's NSC saw deterrence as the most risky policy and one which could produce terrible costs comparing deterrence to gambling: "If we were to make this bet [of deterring Saddam] and lose, the results would be

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<sup>38</sup> For an analysis of why the George W. H. Bush administration did not overthrow Saddam in 1991, see George W. H. Bush & Brent Scowcroft, "Why We Didn't Go To Baghdad" in Sifry & Cerf 2003:101-102.

catastrophic.” It was evident that given the intelligence accessible at the time, the difference of opinion regarding Saddam between proponents and opponents of the war, was about rationality. The realists saw Saddam as a rational actor who would not dare to use possible weapons because, whereas the proponents, the neoconservatives in particular perceived Saddam, not only as a reckless and delusional leader. The latter view was in line with the administration’s perseverance on a preventive war.

#### 4.4 Opposition within the Republican Party

Although the majority of Republicans stood behind their President’s decisions, a opposition within the party ranks was unavoidable. Early on, in July 2002, Republican Richard Lugar, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, along with Democratic Senator Joseph Biden (2002) voiced concern over a precipitously attack on Iraq, because “might precipitate the very thing we are trying to prevent: his use of weapons of mass destruction.” This was similar to the intelligence community’s view, both the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), whose thoughts were that Saddam would not use chemical weapons unless regime survival was imminently threatened (Lindsay & Daalder 2003:127). In August, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee held a series of hearings where several Republicans had their say on the issue. House Republican Majority Leader Dick Armey, as cited in Daalder and Lindsay (ibid:137-138), stated that it was against American tradition to make an unprovoked attack on Iraq: “As long as he [Saddam] behaves himself within his own borders, we should not be addressing any attack...against him.”

Conservatives, including, but not limited to, Brent Scowcroft, Lawrence Eagleburger, and Pat Buchanan were vocal in their critics of the Bush Administration’s Iraq policy. The latter’s concern was that American a “utopian crusade” was the way to defeat Islamic extremism (Buchanan 2003). He appraised the presence of Colin Powell as conservatism true ally: “[W]hile the neocons were doing graduate work at Harvard and Yale, Powell was doing his in Vietnam The Powell Doctrine that came out of Vietnam - Don’t commit the army until you commit the nation! - is the quintessence

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of conservatism” (ibid). Scowcroft simply did not see Saddam Hussein as an imminent threat to the United States. He echoed the realist claim that an attack would “seriously jeopardize, if not destroy, the global counterterrorist campaign” (Scowcroft 2002). Other Washington insiders stressed concern over the little progress of the general war on terror. Former key national security statesmen like James Baker, and Democrat Zbigniew Brzezinski,<sup>39</sup> both whom have worked under former presidents, raised concerns over the administration’s adventurous strategy. “To win the war on terrorism, one must...set two goals: first to destroy the terrorists and second to begin a political effort that focuses on the conditions that brought about their emergence” (Brzezinski 2002).<sup>40</sup>

#### **4.4.1 The Altered Rationale for Going to War: Idealism**

As seen in chapter 4.1, the Bush administration argued both in realist and idealist terms in the lead-up to the invasion. After the major combat operations were officially declared over on May 1, 2003, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) soon met problems establishing democracy in Iraq.<sup>41</sup>

Furthermore, the failure to find Saddam’s alleged WMDs and links between the Iraqi leader and Al Qaeda failed. The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence’s report concluded that most of the key judgements in the Intelligence Community’s October 2002 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Iraq’s Continuing Programs for Weapons of Mass Destruction, that laid the groundwork for the official rationale, was “either overstated, or were not supported by, the underlying intelligence reporting” (U.S. Senate 2004:14). Furthermore, the Senate report did not support the key

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<sup>39</sup> Scowcroft was National Security Advisor to Gerald Ford (1975-77) and George H. W. Bush (1989-93), James Baker was Secretary of State under President George H.W. Bush (1989-93), and Brzezinski was National Security Advisor to President Jimmy Carter (1977-81).

<sup>40</sup> Paradoxically, the realists’ critique of the war coincided with the Left’s critique at the Bush Administration. Surprisingly, a liberal organization, MoveOn.org, started to quote realists such as Kissinger and Scowcroft in their press releases. Furthermore, Coalition for a More Realistic Foreign Policy, a loosely knit think-tank that sprung out of libertarian CATO Institute encompassed signatories from the political left. This bizarre assemblage of plausibly political enemies did not just mark a collective disagreement on opposition to the war; it also indicated a belief that the administration had lost touch with the common sense logic of the American public.

<sup>41</sup> The CPA was established on March 21, 2003 and functioned as a transitional government under the leadership of Jay Garner and successor Paul Bremer III until the establishment of the Iraqi Interim government was instated on June 28, 2004.

judgements in the NIE that chemical and biological weapons were within Iraq's technological capability nor that Iraq "is reconstituting its nuclear program" (ibid).

"Democratization and human rights were turned post de facto into the central justification for the war" (Lieven 2004:79). As the war grew larger, and had implications in the region, the rhetoric turned further idealist. The WMD threat and the Al Qaeda linkage was downplayed and the democratization argument and the bandwagoning effect Iraqi democracy could create was scaled up. Hulsman & Lieven (2004:37-38) acknowledge the Bush administration's tremendous success at the level of public discourse. Morality linked with war and democracy promotion proved to be a winning formula, both for the President's 2004 re-election campaign and in terms of support for the war on terror. The President's approval ratings had reached a staggering 70 percent in several polls in the initiation of Operation Iraqi Freedom, but had fallen dramatically soon after the invasion.<sup>42</sup> In the 2004 elections, President Bush's approval ratings increased and the fact that the nation was at war might have been a factor in the re-election. The shift in rhetoric from a focus on threats to one where democracy was emphasized was necessary in order to maintaining popular support for its actions in Iraq.

#### **4.4.2 Assessing Bush's Iraq Record**

In order to analyze whether Operation Enduring Freedom lives up to a realist or idealist criteria for going to war, the Powell Doctrine comes into play. It is important to notice that the doctrine is not to view as a "when-to-go-to-war doctrine," as there is no fixed set of rules when deciding for or against a war (Powell 1992:37-38). The doctrine should however be an adequate starting point in a discussion of the whether the Bush administration acted in a realist or idealist manner in the lead-up to and the accomplishments of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The Powell doctrine concludes that before any military action 6 key questions need to be answered: (1) Is the political

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<sup>42</sup> During the Iraq War, the approval ratings have in average been below the 50 percent mark, only to peak in connection with the capture of Saddam Hussein. These figures are much accredited to the assumption that people support their leader during a time of war, but distrust the leader when the basis for the war fails. For a statistical collection of President Bush's approval ratings, see University of Minnesota's project on the subject. Available from: <http://www.hist.umn.edu/~ruggles/Approval.htm>



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objective we seek to achieve important, clearly defined and understood? (2) Have all other nonviolent policy means failed? (3) Will military force achieve the objective? (4) At what cost? (5) Have the gains and risks been analyzed? (6) How might the situation that we seek to alter, once it is altered by force, develop further and what might be the consequences? (ibid:38). These six “test” certainly resonate with the realist prescription for warfare.

Powell’s first test is whether the political objective is clearly defined. President Bush’s (2002d) stated mission was to “disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction, to end Saddam Hussein's support for terrorism, and to free the Iraqi people” fulfills Powell’s criterion, albeit the fact that the objective itself was a highly debated objective among realists. The realist view was that the objective itself was not deriving from a vital national interest; consequently the war was based on miscalculations on behalf of the Bush administration. There are differences in opinion whether the second test on whether all measures have been tried to avoid war was fulfilled. There was broad agreement in the American security community that all other measures, like no-fly zones, embargoes, and occasional air strikes that hallmarked U.S. policy in the 1990s had been exhausted. In addition, the U.N. sanctions regime and the “oil for food” program were not working as intended, leaving the Iraqi people suffering. Still some realists contemplated that containment worked, and that the U.N. should have had a greater role. Comparisons to the President’s father become inescapable. The U.S. acted upon U.N. Resolution 1441 to which it reached consensual agreement. However, the realist prescription was to allow the weapons inspectors more time, hoping it would prove an armed conflict unnecessary.

Point 3, 4, and 5 concerning the force, costs, and risk calculation are intertwined. It is evident that point 3 was in tact; military force would achieve the objective. The coalition removed Saddam from power immediately and in December 2003 he was captured and is now standing trial for crimes against humanity before the Iraqi Special Tribunal. The campaign followed the Powell doctrine as the coalition won, and won *decisively*. The U.S. met little or no resistance from Saddam’s Republican

guard, even in their stronghold, Tikrit. The problem was not the invasion, but what came in the months after it. That is where the Powell's Doctrine's question of "at what costs?" come in. The many insurgencies and sectarian violence that have followed is an example of what the "fog of war" could bring with it. Sunni and Shiite jihadism under the leadership on al Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (and after his death; his successors) and Muqtada al-Sadr, respectively, has since April 2003 waged war on each other and at the same time tried to disrupt the coalition's efforts of building democracy. These consequences came as a direct result of the allied invasion. A substantial number of terrorists, residing in other countries in the region, rushed into Iraq in an effort to shape the country in their image rather than the American (Pauly 2005:123).

There have certainly been some positive upshots in Iraq. Since the CPA transferred power to the Iraqi interim government in June 2004, Iraq has held national election for a transitional government in January 2005, a referendum on the constitution in October 2005, and an election for a Council of Representatives in December 2005 that led to the formation of a new government in May 2006. The important political benchmarks that have been achieved have however not been without civil disorder. This is where the costs of the war come in. To evaluate the costs of a war is a highly normative exercise since "costs" could be defined in a number of ways, included economically, military, and number of casualties. The overall security situation in Iraq has deteriorated between 2003 and 2006 (U.S. GAO:4-5). The number of attacks has risen gradually and subsequently increased the number of American and coalition casualties (ibid).<sup>43</sup> Thus, by the Powell Doctrine standards and a strict interpretation of the national interest, the costs of the war in Iraq clearly have outweighed the benefits.

The discussion on whether enough resources were allocated, the answer is both "yes" and "no." Clearly, the initial attack had more than adequate strength. Both realist and

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<sup>43</sup> The number of U.S. casualties per October 28, 2006, issued by the Department of Defense is 2,808. For a detailed U.S. casualty status, see <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/casualty.pdf>.

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idealist camps outside government asked for overwhelming force and got it. Saddam's Republican guard did not stand a chance against the 100,000 American troops. As soon as the post-invasion phase started, however, troop levels have become a controversy. The then U.S. Army Chief of Staff, Eric Shinseki, disagreed on the level of troops, causing an open dispute over troop levels. Shinseki argued that the United States would need "several hundred thousand troops" while Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz publicly criticized Shinseki, the latter suggesting that these figures were "wildly off the mark" and "outlandish" (Daalder & Lindsay 2004:150, Cooper 2006:33).

Added to the costs of war, as many realists warned, came lack of reputation and wide-spread anti-Americanism in the greater Middle East, recruiting more terrorists to the jihadists agenda. Including in the costs was also loss of reputation in the wider global community. Finally, the Powell Doctrine leads us to the question of the post-conflict reconstruction in general and specifically whether there was a clearly defined exit strategy in place before the war. The reconstruction and nation-building efforts has been criticized by the foreign policy community and the military leaders themselves. An independent task force sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations found that the Defense Department's decision to take on the post-war reconstruction (instead of better-placed civilian agencies) was in breach with traditions and consequently not prepared to take on the complex task of post-intervention stabilization and reconstruction in Iraq (Nash et al. 2005:11-12). The Powell Doctrine's criteria for going to war were not upheld, leading most realists to question whether Iraq was the appropriate phase 2.

## 5. The Bush Presidency: An Assessment

it be that the people around President Bush were fully aware of the fact that realism was a tough sell and chose to talk up the policies to fit with idealism? As Mearsheimer (2001:23) argues, the American public, like most people, is idealist orientated, critical of power politics. Is the Bush Administration simply “hard-core realism” draped idealist language?

How has the Bush Administration’s foreign policy platform from its conception in the 2000 campaign until the Iraq War aftermath changed? In order to answer that question, we need to go back to the expected empirical findings presented in subchapter 1.2.1 and described in subchapters 2.3.2 and 2.42.. The dichotmies were: (1) ideals or interests; (2) status quo or change; and (3) stability or democratization. This chapter will assess the Bush administration in light of these dichotomies and the findings will be presented in chapter 6, the conclusion.

### 5.1 How Realist?

Realism is well-known for its anarchic view of the international system, its belief in the nation states as primary actors and its recognition of international organizations as reflecting states calculation of self interest (Mearsheimer 1995:13). It is indeed possible to argue in realist terms for making Iraq a U.S.-friendly democracy serving as a model for a broader regional transformation and bringing with it a more stable Middle East. Some sees it as paradoxically that realism, the belief that nations are driven by the quest for power rather than benevolence, ended up arguing against the Iraq War. Realism’s logic when considering waging war, as shown in subchapter 4.4.2, is that costs and benefits must be taken into consideration.

As mentioned in chapter 3, the Bush administration entered office with the intention of following a strict interpretation of the national interest and an opposition to the idea of nation-building. The 9/11 attacks were treated as an act of war; thus the decision to retaliate the attacks needed no debate. Realism predicts and advocates decisive

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retaliation when a country is under attack. Whether the next step in the chain of events, the construction of the Bush Doctrine, could be seen as realist is more uncertain. The high anxiety that the new strategy deliberately caused was not beneficial for the stability that realism is structured around. The Iraq War fueled instability in the Middle East, an important region for U.S. economy and for the continuous relationship with friendly regimes in the region. Thus realism's concern for stability and the preservation of the status quo was further under pressure when the war turned out to meet severe problems. On the question of legitimacy, whether the Bush administration was acting within international law; the administration has acted in a realist fashion like the George H. W. Bush administration before the 1991 Persian Gulf War. They went before the UN and sought to get a mandate through the UNSC. The diplomatic efforts, however, were not adequately put together. Though difficult to compare, the coalition assembled in 1991 showed a better handling of cooperation than the 2003 coalition, recognizing the need to avoid unilateral American action and built a broad coalition of Western, Eastern, and Middle Eastern states working under the auspices of the U.N (Pauly 2005:58). Upholding international law, defeating aggression, restoring Kuwaiti sovereignty, and protecting access to Middle Eastern oil supplies were the official rationale for the Persian Gulf War.

As chapter 3 and 4 has exposed the Republican idealists won the battle of ideas within the administration. The Powell Doctrine was essentially declared "out of fashion." With the realist fraction in the administration marginalized, others from the security community had to try to change the policies of the Bush administration. Bluntly speaking, the vast majority of realist critics came up with too little, too late in explaining the Bush administration's alleged wrongdoings. In Congress, the critics began attacking the occupation and the need for the war itself first when Iraq started to get dramatically chaotic (Eland 2004:119). To be rhetoric; when the critics finally spoke up, articulately and in numbers, the neocon van had already parked outside 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

Realism proved to be a tough sell as its projections and recommendations fit poorly with the American public's idealist impulses. Mearsheimer (2001:23) claims that

realist pessimist projections are at odds with the “deep-seated sense of optimism and moralism that pervades much of American society.” ”Because Americans dislike realpolitik, public discourse about foreign policy in the United States is usually couched in the language of liberalism...leaders tend to portray war as a moral crusade or an ideological contest, rather than as a struggle for power” (ibid). When speaking to the public it is easier for an administration to address liberal ideas such as democratization and nation-building, rather than restraint and reluctance to act. The question at hand is whether the Bush administration acted in adherence to these ideals?

## 5.2 How Idealist?

*“Sixty years of Western nations excusing and accommodating the lack of freedom in the Middle East did nothing to make us safe -- because in the long run, stability cannot be purchased at the expense of liberty.”*

George W. Bush (2003d)

*“Many Republicans are now the foremost advocates of democratization and state building—ideas strongly advocated by the Clinton Administration, and refuted by many Republicans during the 1990s. On the other side of the aisle, the Democratic Party has become increasingly averse to the process of state building. This reversal of party ideologies is more tragic than comic, Fukuyama argued, because building states remains an important component of American foreign policy, and that requires support across government.”*

Francis Fukuyama in Future Watch (2005)

Politicians, even state leaders, act according to their environment. It goes beyond saying that President Bush was influenced by the people and the ideas around him leading him to transforming his foreign policy. In his second inaugural, President Bush made his point even clearer than before. "It is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world" (Bush 2005). The links to the idealist-neoconservative prescription could not be any clearer.

Another sign that President Bush has gone in an idealist direction, is his admittance to his previous presidents wrongdoings. In a speech at the Air Force Academy in 2004,

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the President Bush explicitly spoke about previous American attempts on changing the Middle East: “For decades, free nations tolerated oppression in the Middle East for the sake of stability. In practice, this approach brought little stability, and much oppression. So I have changed this policy” (Bush 2004). The speech literally denotes his rejection of realism and a move towards idealism: “Some who call themselves realists question whether the spread of democracy in the Middle East should be of any concern of ours. But the realists in this case have lost contact with a fundamental reality: America has always been less secure when freedom is in retreat; America is always more secure when freedom is on the march” (ibid).

Bush has drawn a straight line between the national interest of the United States and the collective interest of the world. Even if the rhetoric in the West Point speech and the NSS revealed an idealist turn, it was not before the aftermath of the 2003 Operation Iraqi Freedom that the strategy proved to be idealist in practical terms. Launching nation-building operations in Iraq, the American-led coalition represented not only a confidence in liberal democratic values, but an effort to operationalize it in the Middle East, an undertaking strongly identifiable with an idealist foreign policy. In partnership with Prime Minister Blair, the U.S. has consistently talked of democratic values. In the more recent phase of the war on terrorism, the two leaders have talked about a “values change”, as opposed to “regime change” (Blair 2006). The president has not altered his language, nor has he changed his plan. This is evident in the fact that troop levels has not been reduced in Iraq. Instead, he chose to stick with his plan. In any case this exhibits consistent leadership and strengthens my hypothesis that the change in certain aspects of Republican foreign policy was neither coincidence, nor mere opportunism.

The characterization of President Bush as an idealist is supported by a number of scholars. Joseph Nye (2006) points to the similarities between Presidents Wilson and Bush, in that they “[b]oth tended to portray the world in black and white rather than shades of gray. Both projected self-confidence, responded to a crisis with a bold vision and stuck to it. Though Wilson started as an idealist and Bush as a realist, both wound up stressing the promotion of democracy and freedom in the rest of the world

as their transformative vision.” Nye’s notion of President Bush is backed by John Lewis Gaddis (2006) who poses the question: “What do you do when the Republicans steal your principles?” His assessment concludes that Bush has been transformed into a “liberal interventionist” and compares the President to former Democratic presidents like Kennedy, Carter, and Kennedy (ibid). Nau (2004:8) assess a more hard-line idealist: “Bush seems to have migrated from a nationalist to a neocon position.”

These characterizations bring up a striking paradox. The Bush administration along with its Coalition’s legitimization for the invasion was now “humanitarian reasons,” a claim that was opposed by the international community, the UNSC, the Iraqi government (who naturally feared for its own existence), the political Left and finally realists, both within and outside the government. The Republican Party was not only the war party, but in considering lengths also the democratization party.

### **5.2.1 Realism Draped in Idealism?**

*“[I]f presidents are smart, they will drape policy made for reasons of realpolitik in idealistic rhetoric”*

Ivan Eland (2003: 134)

As mentioned in the last chapter, the Bush Administration altered their justifications for the Iraq War after they were unsuccessful of finding the alleged WMDs. The question is whether the war in Iraq was a definite turnaround from realism to idealism in official U.S. foreign policy or if it was realpolitik draped in idealistic rhetoric?

As Morgenthau (1993:6) stated, “we cannot conclude from the good intentions of a statesman that his foreign policies will be either morally praiseworthy or politically successful.” In other words, there is clearly no correlation between the motives and ideas and the practice and performance of that statesman’s country. This has lead to a belief that the war in Iraq was fought for reasons of realpolitik. Especially on the political Left, but also from other political leanings, the criticism was firm that the war was fought over other reasons than those that were presented. Given the idealist premises of American democracy, it is hard for presidents to conduct major wars of



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simple aggression over point of international law or long-term national interest without appeals to spreading democracy or help captive peoples. Instead politicians continuously justify wars on the basis of achieving moral ends well aware that because the American public is idealistic it would be an easier sell<sup>44</sup> (Eland 2004:132, Hulsman & Lieven 2006, Hanson 2005:231).

The concern is rather that any American president has foreign policy constraints, both in terms of getting the job done and keeping domestic public opinion content. Carothers (2003:84) writes about the President's duality, arguing that the President has a "split personality"; "Bush the realist" who actively cultivates warm relations with "friendly tyrants" around the world, and "Bush the neo-Reaganite" who takes the lead role in helping promoting democracy. The problem with fighting terrorism and promoting democracy at the same time is that it is not coherent with a fundamentalist approach to any of the two schools. Fighting terror means short-term cooperation with autocracies, promoting democracy means fighting autocracies, policies that make alarm clocks go off in both the idealist and realist camps in the Republican Party. There are unquestionably ambiguous strands in the Bush administration's policy, but it is plausible, though, that it is in the Bush administration's intention to pursue such ambiguous policy in order to confuse its enemies about American intentions.

Although the administration has some aspects of its strategy that can be viewed as a "double standard policy," the hypothesis that the policies have been realist with an idealist make-over is. The language in the 2002 Bush Doctrine was followed up by action in Iraq and its application is still being carried out despite the difficulties.

### 5.3 Rethinking IR Theory Prescriptions

Conventional wisdom on both idealism and realism seems to warrant a second look. Both realism and idealism, as described in IR text books should be analyzed with new

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<sup>44</sup> The author mentions several cases of ambiguous behaviour on the part of past U.S. administrations. In the Spanish-American War the rationale for intervention was freeing Cubans from Spanish oppression without giving neither Cuba, the Phillipines, nor Puerto Rico "genuine independence" (Eland 2004:133).

lenses. Republican idealists should be craving for a reality check on what is possible and what is easier said than done.

An inherent problem for Republican idealism is that general discussions of neoconservative ideas are problematic. The neoconservatives are highly independent thinkers who draw liberal, conservative, and socialist traditions (Halper & Clarke: 2004: 28). The neoconservative debate was bound to surface as the Bush administration met obstacles in the democratization and nation-building efforts. Fukuyama (2005) raised concerns that Washington does not have the know-how to do nation-building on a unilateral basis and that it “lacks of understanding of how to use American soft power institutions. Furthermore, he urges the neoconservatives to “take seriously” international institutions (ibid). This adjustment by a former neocon is an attempt to build a bridge between realism and idealism.

Thucydides’ realist narrative of the Peloponnesian War (431-404 B.C.) has come to characterize political realism: “The strong do what they have the power to do and the weak accept what they have to accept” (Thucydides 1972:402). However true in its core, it is too simplistic in prescribing today’s political order. Even strong states will have to. Thus, conventional views of realism need to be reassessed.

Conventional wisdom will have it that realism is more war-prone than other prescriptive theories. Orend (200:67) argues that “prescriptive realism might recommend more aggressive foreign policies – perhaps even more wars – than a justice-based [policy].” In the case of Iraq, realists from all corners were the ones warning of an armed conflict. A more specific assertion is presented by Goldstein & Pevehouse (2006:100). They assume that realists are thinking in short-term rational terms. Realists like Mearsheimer & Walt (2003c), in analyzing the long-term consequences, ended up opposing the war, assessed that “[i]nvasion and occupation would increase anti-Americanism in the Islamic world and help Osama bin Laden win more followers. Preventive war would also reinforce the growing perception that the United States is a bully, thereby jeopardizing the international unity necessary to defeat global terrorism.”

Wohlforth (2006) asserts that the realists' dovish stance during the Cold War made sense, but in a unipolar world where there is no one to counter-balance, realists do not have arguments but those of self-constraint. As mentioned in chapter 2, a realist understanding of world politics should be seen as a cost-benefit analysis. Anything that helps a country gain terrain is seen as something positive and anything that harms your country or makes you concede terrain is seen as a negative. This is seen as extremely cynical to most people and is certainly of no use when gaining popular support for foreign-policy decisions.

Furthermore, as Hill (2003:118) argues, a policy based on the national interest alone will not stand analytical scrutiny "these days." Fukuyama (2006b:8) seems to agree suggesting that realism inadequate to the 21st Century realities. Realism should adjust to modernity by acknowledging that what goes on inside states, not just their external behavior, is of crucial importance. This task of investigating not only the structure of the international system, but also as Zakaria (1992:178) puts it, "what goes on behind state doors" is a difficult task for any student of international affairs, because it steps over the border into comparative politics. Realism's challenge will be its adaptability to build on its arguments in the Iraq War and still keep its internationalist core without giving in to isolationism.

In conclusion, both theories, idealism and realism, need to be reassessed. The failure of many theorists not to appreciate the pluralism in realism and the toughness in idealism is something that needs to be addressed. Francis Fukuyama (2006) has with his realistic Wilsonianism taken on the task of building an intellectual bridge between neoconservatism and realism is one both camps should look into.

## 6. Conclusion: The Desirable and the Possible

*“Political realism does not require, nor does it condone, indifference to political ideals and moral principles, but it requires indeed a sharp distinction between the desirable and the possible - between what is desirable everywhere and at all times and what is possible under the concrete circumstances of time and place.”*

Hans Morgenthau (1993:7)

My research question in chapter 1.2 was: Has the grand strategy of the George W. Bush administration’s foreign policy shifted from one based on realist principles to one that is guided by idealism?

The change in the President Bush’s foreign policy is caused by a wide range of factors. The idealist turn in Republican foreign policy has been manifested through two stages, 9/11 and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The precondition for the idealist turn in U.S. foreign policy was the permanent state of emergency that the U.S. has been in ever since 9/11. The 9/11 effect, the fear of new attacks and the sense of revenge remained strong even in 2003. The broad public opinion was in favor of President Bush and taken together swift bipartisanship in Congress it provided him with what at the time seemed almost to be nearly unlimited support to do what was necessary to respond to the terror. Opinion polls soared in favor of the President’s actions. The Bush administration immediately elevated the war against terrorism to the top of his foreign policy priority and allocated massive resources to get the job done. The foreign policy was heavily influenced, but not hijacked by the neoconservative movement. His administration’s aides did not dictate the foreign policy for him. Nonetheless Bush was more influenced by the ones with the blueprint, the idealist-neoconservatives, than the defenders of the status-quo for the sake of stability; the realists. Secondly, Even if the idealist rhetoric always were not articulated as strong as the threat-based arguments, it was the quintessence of the Bush administration’s policy. Democratization was in the cards before the U.S. met problems in Iraq. According to John Hamre (2005), the rhetoric was in place before the Iraq War.

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The U.S. might be able to cope with the diplomatic and popular opposition it has been subject to since the initiation of the Iraq War. Economically and militarily, the superpower might even afford further democratizations in the years to come. The main problem seems to be found two places: in the Middle East and in American domestic politics. The Vietnam syndrome has started to kick in and has “nationalized” the trouble the Coalition has of establishing democracy in Iraq.

The Bush administration has shown what Sullivan (2006) calls “overconfidence” in the inevitability and ease of democratic change in Iraq. Neoconservatives themselves have come to acknowledge that the agenda of democratic change has lost momentum because of the “chaos in Iraq” (Boot 2006, Sullivan 2006). The neoconservative camp has influenced the Bush administration on the concept of American exceptionalism as their discourse has sought to operationalize it in a region – the Middle East (Halper & Clarke 2004:309). Herein lays one of the biggest differences between modern-day realism and idealism. Idealist neoconservatives see the existence of political institutions grounded in Islamic cultural values as threatening American interests and a threat that cannot be eliminated by any means other than restructuring the societies of the region, while realism question the basic of the West’s right to interfere in other societies and other values. Furthermore, realists question the neoconservative optimism in the new democracies and tend to ask; what guarantees are there that the government elected will have democratic instincts, let alone be friendly to the U.S.?

How can the Bush administration’s foreign policy be described in terms of the expected empirical findings as presented in subchapter 1.2.1.

(1) *Ideals over interests*. 9/11 raised the The Bush administration debate by raising the anxiety level in the American society. The goal by doing it was to deter potential enemies rather than reassure friends.

(2) *Change over status quo*. The Bush Doctrine was based on a fundamentally new approach to strategic thinking. Change and transformation was the basis for the attempts of democratizing the Middle East. Reassuring friends using “everything is

ok” rhetoric focusing on maintaining the status quo was never in the cards for the administration. Instead it chose to take the lead and using its immense power as hegemon to control the agenda.

(3) *Democratization over stability*. The Bush administration’s main task has been to make the U.S. safer. Securing the homeland, although not a new phenomenon, has been elevated and given a new meaning. In contemporary politics the importance of stability in realism has lead realists to argue for the preservation of the status quo, while idealism declares change of systems as a priority.

The dichotomy between the necessary and desirable is one that needs to be addressed if the U.S. is going to maintain its position the world’s sole superpower and strengthen its image abroad. Nitze’s (1994:52) clarification of a third way between idealistic and realistic choices regarding morality in foreign policy is imperative: “This group emphasizes the complexity of moral decisions in politics, the importance of careful consideration, the need to consider all the elements of the problem, and the checks and restraints of diverse views.” This should be the basis for any debate on future engagements.

The idealist policies will certainly be a key feature of American foreign policy. Realists will certainly continue to counter this policy. Thus, the U.S. will never have a true idealist or a true realist policy, but somewhere within the foreign policy equilibrium. As this thesis has shown the president’s political conviction, the often ideological and politicized pressure groups and the public opinion’s support is important for the outcome of American foreign policy.

Some claim that pragmatism has already returned to Washington. Philip Gordon (2006:75-76) has announced “the end of the Bush Revolution” assessing that the administration is back on a more realist track. The reason for the return to realist thinking might have various reasons: diplomatic, economical, political, and even electoral reasons might be behind this move.

The change in foreign policy was based on a number of instances: a combination of personal conviction, changing attitudes within the government, as well as advice from different pressure groups. In IR theory, this has been called groupthink. Groupthink consists in the tendency of groups to seek rapid internal agreement even at the expense of the merits of a problem, and then to stick to their consensus (Hill 2003:115). This collective psychological factor illustrates the foreign policy decision-making in the lead-up to the Iraq War. Moreover, it explains how Washington insisted on the allegations that Saddam possessed WMDs and the link to Al Qaeda.

The dangers with the Bush Administration's version of idealism is that it has moved into uncharted territory and taken on a task that is incomparably different than those past administrations have struggled with. The lack of previous knowledge about fighting a war on terror has deteriorated the outcomes of it. Democracy in Iraq has proven more difficult than the Bush administration.

Hill (2003:118-119) argues that it is common that foreign policy actors prefer to "hide behind a screen of presumed unity and collective responsibility." In the case of Iraq, this must have been, to play on his phrasing, a "wide screen." The presumed unity was largely unveiled in the months after the invasion when the alleged weapons of mass destruction were discovered. The Bush administration has shown what Sullivan (2006) calls "overconfidence" in the inevitability and ease of democratic change in Iraq. Neoconservatives themselves have come to acknowledge that the democratic change agenda has lost momentum because of the "chaos in Iraq" (Boot 2006, Sullivan 2006).

As presented in chapter 2.6, the history of American foreign policy has demonstrated cyclical swings between global involvement and entrenchment. The idealist policies will certainly be a key feature of American foreign policy and realism will certainly continue to counter this policy. The U.S. will almost certainly never have a true idealist or a true realist policy, but somewhere in the middle. As this study has clearly demonstrated the president and his closest advisors' political convictions, the often ideological and politicized pressure groups as well as the public opinion's support is

highly significant for the outcome of American foreign policy. The Bush administration's decision-making in the lead-up to the Iraq War for example was typified by groupthink, consensus reached by a mix of fear and hierarchy together with the fact that there was a blueprint present for change in the Middle East.

Robert Osgood's (1964:431) account of the two world wars of the twentieth century was that "[o]nly when America's idealistic pretensions were subjected to the discipline of adversity did the nation begin to conduct its foreign relations according to a more realistic view of international society". The same is true in regard to the Iraq War. This leaves us with the conclusion that the Bush Administration is between Iraq and a hard place, between benign intentions and difficult realities. The U.S. commitment to the Middle East will not end with President Bush at the helm. It is up to his successor to repair and refuel.



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