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THESIS

ESTABLISHING THE NEOCONSERVATIVE FOOTPRINT

by

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March 2011

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ABSTRACT

This thesis evaluates efforts by neoconservatives during the George W. Bush administration to reorient and perpetuate their foreign policy principles away from the status quo realist stance dominant during the Cold War. It will examine the main principles of neoconservatives, namely the promotion of democracy through the exertion of American power, and demonstrate how these principles have changed America's foreign policy. This thesis argues that neoconservatives have advocated a forward leaning foreign policy stance by drawing on themes linked to American exceptionalism and democracy promotion. Neoconservatives further perpetuate their arguments by connecting their message to American nationalism and through access to media outlets to voice their positions on issues. Overall, many of the neoconservative policies enacted in the first term of the Bush Administration continue, albeit through different means in the Obama Administration.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

9/11	Refers to the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon on September 11, 2001
CMD	Coalition for the Democratic Majority
CPD	Committee on the Present Danger
DoD	Department of Defense
DoS	Department of State
GWOT	Global War on Terror
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

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I. ESTABLISHING THE NEOCONSERVATIVE FOOTPRINT

A. RESEARCH QUESTION

This thesis examines the legacy of the neoconservative movement in foreign policy established during the first administration of President George Walker Bush. It evaluates the success of its bid at reorienting American foreign policy in the Middle East away from the status quo of realist principles that previously guided foreign policy in this region for much of the post-World War II era. In order to analyze this issue, the thesis will seek to determine to what extent, if any, neoconservative policies have replaced realist policies and how effective neoconservatives have been in establishing conditions to perpetuate their relevance. These two variables will be measured through the various policy initiatives endorsed by neoconservatives. The main policy initiatives to be evaluated are: (1) The establishment of a more aggressive posture calling for the use of force for preemption as well as a more generalized use as a “preventative” tool established in the 2002 National Security Strategy; (2) The adoption of democratization as a focal point of American foreign policy in initiating regime change; (3) American unilateralism and disdain for the international order in executing these objectives; and (4) The diplomatic approach addressing the Arab-Israeli conflict. The analysis of these policy issues will reveal how neoconservatives have affected American foreign policy and the extent to which neoconservatives are entrenched in the mainstream of foreign policy ideas.

B. IMPORTANCE

As the global superpower, the direction and principles defining America’s foreign policy dramatically impacts world affairs. Realist policies of containment (both during the Cold War and early in the 1990s in Iraq) and détente prevented the Cold War between the United States and USSR from escalating into interstate war and global conflict. Realist Cold War principles also guided

American foreign policy in the Middle East, as this area actively participated in the jockeying between Cold War superpowers. This changed in 2000, when neocon advisers to President Bush rejected realist balance of power politics in the Middle East, instead arguing for the reorientation of American foreign policy in accordance with their own principles. This process was further galvanized by the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon on September 11, 2001 (9/11), prompting the Bush Administration to initiate the global war on terror and eventually invade Iraq.

The attempted reorientation of foreign policy by neoconservatives from realist policies reflects the conflict in principles that drive both ideals. Neocons advocate an internationalist foreign agenda, insisting upon a forward leaning posture in world affairs to defend U.S. interests and credibility. They endorse the idea of American exceptionalism and inherent morality, holding that the U.S. must be the world's "benevolent global hegemony."¹ This moral ideal is then coupled with the idea that U.S. power must not be restrained by international organizations, particularly the United Nations. In order to maintain its dominance, the United States must maintain a strong military capable of defending its interests worldwide. Lastly, neocons hold to the universality of human rights and freedom, fleshed out through the process of democratic government.²

Neoconservative foreign policy makers operationalized these five principles into new security policies in response to 9/11, and drew upon these principles to justify the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Critical to these principles is the theory of "bandwagoning," wherein rogue states witness the posture and domination of American military might and forgo any attempts at challenging

¹ William Kristol and Robert Kagan, "Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs* 75, no. 4 (July/August 1996). 19–20.

² Justin Vaisse, *Why Neoconservatism Still Matters*, Policy Paper, Foreign Policy, The Brookings Institute (Washington, DC: Brookings Institute, May 2010), 3–6.

them. Instead, these states join the United States and capitulate to the American interests, ideally through democratic means.³

The realist school of foreign policy contrasts these claims. Realists bypass the moral foundation championed by neocons, preferring to treat sovereign states in the grand scheme of global anarchy where war is “an ever-present possibility.”⁴ Instead of relying on military superiority and national dominance central to neoconservative views, realists argue that a balance of power must be struck within the international arena to address a nation’s national interests.⁵ These interests will drive a nation’s actions and revolve around the maximization of a state’s power. Instead of assuming previously hostile states would capitulate and submit to American dominance, realists hold that states would hunker down with renewed fervor and shore up defenses against an aggressive superpower in an attempt to balance the scales of power once again.⁶ This theory was dominant in Cold War calculations with the Soviet Union and was expressed through policies of containment and détente as means to restrict the expansionary power of the Soviet Union in the Third World and elsewhere.⁷

Liberals differ from both realists and neocons in their use of soft power, specifically in the utilization of economics and development toward the pursuit of national interests. They agree with neoconservative support for democratic

³ John J Mearsheimer, “Hans Morgenthau and the Iraq War: realism versus neoconservatism,” *Open Democracy*, May 18, 2005, <http://www.opendemocracy.org/content/articles/PDF/2522.pdf>. (accessed Sept 6, 2010), 2.

⁴ Michael C. Williams and Brian C. Schmidt, “The Bush Doctrine and the Iraq War: Neoconservatives vs. Realists,” *The American University of Paris*, Nov 2007, www.aup.edu/pdf/WPSeries/AUP_wp61-WilliamsSchmidt.pdf (accessed Aug 30, 2010), 2–3.

⁵ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 5th ed. (New York, NY: Alfred A Knopf, 1973), 4–14.

⁶ Mearsheimer, “Hans Morgenthau,” 4 and John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York, NY: Norton & Co., 2001), 3.

⁷ For more thorough context of these interactions: Raymond L Garthoff, *Detente and Confrontation* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1994)

governments and the importance of morality in evaluating foreign policy.⁸ Liberals and neoconservatives have few other commonalities other than democratic implications toward world peace, specifically liberal ideas on the use of military power and U.S. involvement in the international arena. Liberals see the United Nations as a means of advancing U.S. interests, and are particularly hesitant in the use of military force, some going so far as general pacifist tendencies.

Some argue that the actions of the Bush Administration flowed from a particular and unique set of principles and priorities adopted by the Administration from neoconservative influences. President Bush rejected the realist foreign policy championed by his father in favor of idealistic policies such as democracy promotion and preemptive defense driven by the threat of weapons of mass destruction proliferating into the hands of terrorists. These policies support neoconservative principles and are a major reorientation from historically dominant positions of realist foreign policy thinkers. Instead of looking to balance power through strategic bargaining, neocons instead push for state transformation from the inside, asserting that democracies are a more adequate representation of the people, are generally peaceful, and rarely fight each other.⁹ Furthermore, the concept of preemption and preventative war stems from the neoconservative propensity for unilateral military action, rejecting the sovereignty draining demands of the international system, and again directly in contradiction with realist methods of coalition building. This propensity further reflects the neocon emphasis on use of force as a means to effect change over a realist-based effort to utilize diplomacy.

The policies of the neoconservatives are blamed by some for an apparent decline in U.S. political credibility around the world, suggesting the advancement of American imperialism into parts of the world it does not belong, while suffering

⁸ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 9.

⁹ Vaisse, "*Why Neoconservatism*," 6.

from hubris and “excessive idealism.”¹⁰ Others question whether invasion to enact regime change in Iraq was necessary, or whether containment and further inspections, the policy from 1991 through 2003, would have eventually weakened Saddam Hussein and resulted in his overthrow.¹¹ Discerning the extent neoconservative ideas play in this degradation of U.S. power and influence is important in validating the efficacy of the neocon experience and determining its future viability.

This thesis focuses on the neoconservative influence on events in the Middle East for several reasons. Policy meets real-world crisis most often through the international arena of the Middle East. Laden with vast reserves of hydrocarbons, home of three of the world’s major religions, and the continued threat of radical Islamic fundamentalism, the Middle East continues to dominate the U.S. foreign policy agenda. The impact of the neoconservative movement in American foreign policy profoundly impacts this region, as Iraq has already experienced the effects of U.S. attempts at democracy. The process toward Israeli-Palestinian peace, the prosecution of the global war on terror, and the efforts of democratization among the authoritarian regimes in the region remain as lingering issues for future policy decision makers.

C. PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESES

This thesis presents several problems in determining the extent of foreign policy reorientation and perpetuation of the neocon ideal. In order to successfully measure each of these two questions, political rhetoric and opinions must be separated from official U.S. policy. Each of these components is vital in the development and execution of foreign policy and is important measures of neocon influence. However, they must be adequately separated in order to

¹⁰ Robert Kagan, “Neocon Nation: Neoconservatism, c. 1776,” *World Affairs Journal* (Heldref Publications), Spring 2008.

¹¹ Brent Scowcroft, “Don’t Attack Saddam,” *Wall Street Journal*, Aug 15, 2002: A12. Lawrence Freedman, *A Choice of Enemies* (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2008), 397–8.

distinguish the ideals promulgated by neoconservative thinkers and the effects of actual policy, viewed through Presidential speeches, humanitarian aid, scholarly writings, and official policy.

This thesis examines how neoconservatives successfully reoriented and operationalized U.S. foreign policy away from realist policies during the first term of the Bush Administration. This reorientation was accomplished both in the development of a new direction of American foreign policy at home, as well as the execution of this policy in the Middle East. The response to the 9/11 attacks along with the buildup and eventual execution of the Iraq War in 2003 demonstrate the extent to which American foreign policy no longer pointed down a realist path. Armed with a “coalition of the willing,” in essence a unilateral approach to Iraq (especially compared to the 1991 Gulf War), a dominant military, and championing the need for preemptive invasion to thwart Saddam Hussein’s weapons of mass destruction (WMD) threat, American efforts in Iraq directly corresponds to neoconservative principles.¹²

Additionally, this thesis argues that neoconservatives have perpetuated themselves amidst the changing climate of American politics. While several of their principles have stalled or fallen into neglect, much of neoconservative’s central ideology remains powerful and applicable to world affairs and attempts at American leadership. The realities of a global economic downturn, combined with expensive wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have necessitated a change of path by the Obama administration to a more realist oriented direction. This change of direction and method reflect more the perceived limits of American power and influence than an intentional abandonment of the ideals of the neoconservatives.

The establishment and sustainment of the neoconservative legacy in the Middle East has several dimensions foremost of which is the continued fight for democratic ideals in a land traditionally dominated by authoritarian rulers.

¹² George W. Bush, *President Bush Delivers Graduation Speech at West Point*, June 1, 2002, www.teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?documentprint=916 (accessed Dec 5, 2010).

Neoconservative policies of active democratization within Iraq, Lebanon, and Palestine have borne unexpected fruits, often not wholly in support of U.S. national interests.¹³ Substantial political rhetoric has been developed regarding the advancement of democracy in the region, although until Spring of 2011, authoritarian regimes continue to dominate the region and remain close allies, regardless of the desire for popular representation.¹⁴ The balance between perceived security threats and the continued desire to promote democracy within the region has restricted the breadth of the Bush Administration's democratization effort in the Middle East. This reality demonstrates how the political rhetoric favors neocon ideals of democracy promotion, while the reality in the Middle East continues to reflect the realist balance of power. With the waning of neoconservative influence in the second term of the Bush Administration, Secretary of State Rice pushed for further efforts to democratize within the Muslim world with decreasing effectiveness, although the argument remains that with democratic government in regimes such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and others, Islamist parties could gain power and shed any ties to American influence.¹⁵ Additionally, American ineptitude in the execution of the Iraq War continues to haunt reform and democratization efforts in the region.¹⁶

The spring of 2011 has added a layer of intrigue regarding the neoconservative calling for democratization of the Middle East. Regime overthrow in Tunisia, Egypt, rising tensions in Libya and Bahrain, combined with the unknown effects of demonstrations in other major Middle Eastern states such

¹³ Jeremy Sharp, *U.S. Democracy Promotion Policy in the Middle East: The Islamist Dilemma*, Congressional Research Service (Washington, DC: CRS Web, 2006).

¹⁴ Richard Falk, "The global setting: US foreign policy and the future of the Middle East," in *The Iraq War and Democratic Politics*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2005), 23.

¹⁵ Nathan J. Brown, Amr Hamzawy, Karim Sadjadpour, and Paul Salem Marina Ottaway, *The New Middle East* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2008), 1–2, 37.

¹⁶ Falk, "The global setting," 31–33; George W. Bush, *Remarks by President George W. Bush at the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy*, Nov 6, 2003, <http://www.ned.org/george-w-bush/remarks-by-president-bush-at-20th-anniversary> (accessed Aug 20, 2010).

as Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Iran have called into question what was increasing being viewed as a failed mission to transform the Middle East into a land fertile for democracy by neoconservatives. These changes remain in their infancy, but they have the potential to reinforce the neoconservative dream of a democratic, U.S.-friendly Middle East or prove its fallacy. These developments, along with the rise of Islamic groups integrating into the political process, particularly Hamas in the Gaza Strip, have drawn questions of whether or not democracy promotion is in the national interests.¹⁷

Additionally, the neoconservative experience perpetuated their existence by exposing to the public eye the morality of relying on authoritarian leaders in the region and the broader complexities inherent to a “long war” against terrorism and radical Islamic fundamentalism. Furthermore, the complications of the Iraq war continue to create waves within the public consciousness, specifically regarding the conduct of the military at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. These actions directly challenge the neocon notion of American exceptionalism, displaying a rather unexceptional behavior from America’s finest and stirring questions regarding the principles behind the Iraq invasion.

D. LITERATURE REVIEW

Many voices have weighed in on whether neoconservatives have reoriented foreign policy and whether they have been able to perpetuate themselves. Some argue that with the backlash from the failed occupation following Iraq War of 2003, neoconservatives are in full retreat, while others, including neoconservatives

¹⁷ Alan Johnson, “The Neoconservative Persuasion and Foreign Policy: An Interview with Joshua Muravchik,” in *Global Politics After 9/11: The Democratic Interviews*, 273–274 (London, 2008).

themselves, insist their message continues to apply to today's political environment and the challenges facing the Obama Administration.¹⁸

Neoconservatives argue that despite the significant price from the 2003 Iraq War, neoconservative principles have indeed made substantial inroads against the balance of power oriented realist policies. Prominent neocon writer Robert Kagan, in an article written prior to the 2008 Presidential election, argues that the policies during the Bush Administration reflected the priorities of both Democratic and Republican parties. He states that the language used during the 2008 Presidential debates directly reflects the principles of the neoconservatives. These include principles of American primacy, a strong military, and to quote then Senator Barack Obama, the fact that American must be the "leader of the free world" in battling evil and promoting good.¹⁹ This morally polarized rhetoric intimately reflects the core principles advocated by neocons.

Robert Kagan also demonstrates how neocons perpetuate themselves, by connecting their principles to the United States' founding fathers. Kagan attempts to portray neocon principles as mainstream and wholly American by drawing a line in principle from Alexander Hamilton to Theodore Roosevelt to Woodrow Wilson until today. He asserts that neocon actions fall in line with the actions of other great Americans and reflect an attitude of ambition, honor, the self-defense of national interests and principles, the accumulation and use of power, and belief in the possibility of change.²⁰ He admits that while these characteristics are often uncomfortable, they are wholly American, as are the

¹⁸ Those arguing for the decline of neoconservative ideology include: Francis Fukuyama, *After Neoconservatism*, Feb 19, 2006, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/19/magazine/neo.html> (accessed July 15, 2010); G. John Ikenberry, "The End of the Neoconservative Movement," *Survival* (International Institute for Strategic Studies) 46, no. 1 (Spring 2004); Stefan Halper and Jonathan Clarke, *America Alone* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). Those arguing for its continued relevance: Justin Vaisse, *Neoconservatism: The Biography of a Movement*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010); Jesus Velasco, *Neoconservatives in U.S. Foreign Policy under Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2010); Jacob Heilbrunn, *They Knew They Were Right* (New York, NY: Random House, 2008)..

¹⁹ Kagan, "Neocon Nation."

²⁰ Ibid.

neoconservatives. This line of thinking promotes future neoconservative debate and discourages opponents from questioning neoconservative values.

Realists also have expressed their take on the future of the neoconservative ideal. One example is an article by prominent realist writer G. John Ikenberry, wherein he describes the misguided policy of hyper-moral, unilateral-oriented neoconservatives as rapidly damaging the country's "prestige, credibility, security partnerships, and goodwill of other countries."²¹ He goes on to claim that the neocon agenda was a mistake that will ultimately force U.S. foreign policy back into its multilateral orientation due to the tremendous expense of occupying Iraq. Furthermore, he states that the neocon belief of American exceptionalism and the hope of bandwagoning nations eager to adopt democracy both are flawed beliefs. In fact, the neocons have squandered American legitimacy and moral authority by attempting to act unilaterally and bully other states through fear and intimidation.²²

Other voices outside of the neoconservative and realist camps assert a more moderate perspective. Michael Williams and Brian Schmidt, of the American University of Paris, claim that while neocons have been the scapegoat due to the Iraq occupation, their ability to "frame policy questions within the broader discourse of 'culture wars' of American politics" have greatly enhanced their permanency in the foreign policy debate.²³

Justin Vaisse of the Brookings Institution makes a strong argument for why the neocons have perpetuated themselves. He states that neoconservatives perpetuate their existence through influential thinkers at work in major publications, the general support of the Republican Party, as well as joining forces with liberals to further human rights issues.²⁴ These avenues of exposure

²¹ Ikenberry, "The End of the Neoconservative Movement," 7.

²² Ibid.

²³ Williams and Schmidt, "The Bush Doctrine."

²⁴ Vaisse, *Why Neoconservatism*, 7–10.

ensure that neocons remain in the public eye. In addition, the neocon view of idealistic, moralistic, patriotic message has an appeal to young thinkers growing up with the Iraq and Afghani wars.²⁵

E. METHODS AND SOURCES

The method for this thesis will be a case study that examines two distinct time periods. The first period will examine the establishment of the neocon influence and its initial efforts at perpetuation through the first term of the Bush Administration. The second period will then evaluate the permanency of the neocons through the second term of the Bush Administration and the first two years of the Obama Administration. In order to evaluate these periods, this paper will utilize documents covering the full spectrum of foreign policy debate, including those of both realist and neocons. Additionally, official government documents will be used to define official U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. Sources will include various think tanks, academic journals and other scholarly books, opinion pieces and reports from well-respected newspapers, and conference proceedings.

F. THESIS OVERVIEW

This thesis will be organized as follows: Chapter I has introduced the core beliefs of neoconservatives and how they differ from realist and liberal views. Additionally, Chapter I presented the question of whether neocons have reoriented policy from realist principles and do they perpetuate their existence. Chapter II describes the means of determining if the neocons were able to establish themselves and why these means were selected. Chapter III then discusses neoconservatives' importance during the Bush Administration and the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Chapter IV will discuss how these measures have been impacted during the second term of the Bush Administration into the Obama

²⁵ Vaisse, *Why Neoconservatism*, 7; Further discussion in Vaisse, *Neoconservatism* and Valesco, *Neoconservatives in U.S. Foreign Policy*;

Administration. Chapter V will evaluate what has happened to the neoconservative movement and draw conclusions regarding their foreign policy impact and future as reflected in the foreign policy of the Obama Administration.

II. ENDS AND MEANS OF NEOCONSERVATISM

This chapter will examine the neoconservative efforts in opposition to realist and liberal policies of U.S. foreign policy since the 1960s, and provide historical context necessary for understanding how neoconservatives captured the attention of the Bush administration as a salient philosophy for the developing crisis of the radical Islamic threat. It will be accomplished by detailing the call to arms against Soviet aggression by neoconservatives during the Cold War, the assertion of conservative principles during the Reagan Administration, and the latent frustration experienced during both the elder Bush and Clinton administrations. This historical memory provides necessary context for the policies and decisions of the later Bush Administration. Throughout these periods, observing the means of achieving neoconservative policies will also be discussed.

A. FOUNDATIONAL EXPERIENCE

The neoconservative challenge to realist and liberal veins of American foreign policy consists of a struggle through various individuals and organizations since the late 1960s.²⁶ During this period, the American military and political establishment was reeling from the effects of the quagmire in Vietnam. The Democratic Party's response to Vietnam resulted in the emergence of the New Left movement, with its leader and eventual Presidential candidate, Senator George McGovern. McGovern called for an immediate pullout from Vietnam, a significant reduction in military spending, accompanied by an isolationist foreign policy. He believed America's foreign policy regarding the Soviet Union was "expansionist and immoral."²⁷

²⁶ Justin Vaisse has conducted an exhaustive work on the neoconservative movement and divides the various strands of neocons into three generations. This paper will primarily deal with the later two generations, the Scoop Jackson Democrats and the group known simply as Neocons. Vaisse, *Neoconservatism*.

²⁷ Velasco, *Neoconservatives in U.S. Foreign Policy*, 42.

It is in this context that the first neoconservatives concerned with foreign policy emerge as group located at the center of the Democratic Party. They aimed at regaining the heart of the party from the New Left and their reaction to Vietnam that excused Soviet expansion and advocated American retreat through isolation.²⁸ Their members included democratic intellectuals like Jeane Kirkpatrick, Joshua Muravchik, Elliott Abrams, Norman Podhoretz and others. Democratic Senator Henry “Scoop” Jackson led the neoconservatives as a steadfast anti-communist who rejected arms limitation talks or any other perceived cooperation with the Soviet Union. Instead, he called for a strong military to counter communism and threats to human rights, coupled with progressive government for domestic affairs.²⁹

While McGovern championed the Democratic New Left, the American electorate thought otherwise. In a crushing defeat, Richard Nixon won the Presidency and with it, shifted foreign policy toward closure of Vietnam and détente with the Soviet Union. President Richard Nixon entered the White House promising to usher into the Cold War an “era of negotiation” where peace might be reaffirmed and reestablished through arms reductions and peaceful co-existence with the Soviet Union.³⁰ This period, referred to as détente, was felt as necessary due to an American weariness with the Vietnam War. This perception by the American populace fed a feeling that, in the grand scheme of the Cold War, the balance of power between the United States and the Soviet Union had shifted to the point that Americans believed that the United States no longer enjoyed military superiority and would likely not reacquire that advantage.³¹ Nixon recognized what he believed as American limits and looked to retain the considerable advantages that the United States had and use these to his advantage to engage with the Soviets.

²⁸ Velasco, *Neoconservatives in U.S. Foreign Policy*, 42.

²⁹ Vaisse, *Why Neoconservatism*, 1–2; Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, 460.

³⁰ Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, 29–30.

³¹ *Ibid.*

Followers of Senator Jackson, known as Scoop Jackson Democrats, took issue with détente due to its passive, compliant posture toward the Soviet Union. While President Nixon spoke of an “age of negotiation,” neoconservative foreign policy experts countered by asserting détente conveyed a message of weakness to a Soviet regime that was in its very nature expansionary and threatening. They also firmly believed in the defense of the democratic world to stave off communist expansion, to include the newly formed state of Israel. Their cause was very much ideological, contrasting the amoral view of the Nixon Administration.³²

To combat the détente agenda, neoconservatives helped form the Coalition for a Democratic Majority (CDM) in late 1972. As a generally hawkish institution originally intended to recenter the Democratic Party, the CDM became one of the first dominant voices challenging Kissinger’s détente.³³ Ultimately, the CDM advocated an increase in the military budget, including the nuclear arsenal, to address the acute threat posed by the Soviet Union’s military expansion and the threat to U.S. allies.³⁴ The CDM held the belief that the United States must frame the Cold War as an ideological struggle with the Soviet Union and bolster its military to defend this belief.³⁵

This stance isolated neoconservatives from the Democratic Party’s New Left, while simultaneously causing conflict with the developing Nixon policy of détente with the Soviet Union. Crucial to the successful execution of détente was a centralized decision-making that enabled linkages to be established between various initiatives with the Soviets. One episode in particular demonstrates the divergence of philosophies between Kissinger and Jackson. In 1972, following Soviet-U.S. negotiations regarding increased trade, Senator Jackson saw an opportunity to attack détente and expose the weakness of the

³² Vaisse, *Neoconservatism*, 100.

³³ Garthoff, *Détente*, 461.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 104.

³⁵ Velasco, *Neoconservatives in U.S. Foreign Policy*, 42.

Soviet system and its economy. Jackson introduced an amendment linking U.S.-Soviet trade of grain and most favored nation status with quotas for the emigration of Soviet Jews. This linkage strained the entire premise of détente. By demanding higher than anticipated exit quotas for Soviet Jews, Kissinger lost leverage on other issues, while Jackson exposed Soviet unwillingness to address human rights. Ultimately, the trade treaty was dropped by the Soviets who were enraged with U.S. meddling in their internal affairs.³⁶

A second episode that highlights several key strands of neoconservative ideology occurs in the 1973 Israeli War. During this conflict, neoconservatives supported the administration's military aid to Israel, but several conclusions emerge that expose some of the roots of neoconservatives. The 1973 War demonstrated cooperation between the Soviet Union and United States, but at the expense of Israeli interests, namely the destruction of the Egyptian army. Neoconservatives saw this effect of détente as yet another cause for rejecting its premise.³⁷ It also demonstrated the intent of the Soviet Union to influence affairs in the Middle East, counter to both American and Israeli priorities. Second, it reinforced the reality that Israel remained the lone democracy among authoritarian leaders in the region, and as such deserved unmatched support from the United States. The democracy partnership with Israel against communism remains a theme through the Cold War and eventually transitions as the communist threat fades, but authoritarian leaders hostile to Israel remain in power.³⁸

After a failed run at the Presidency in the 1976 elections, Senator Jackson and the neoconservatives experienced a falling out with the Carter Administration. A strained relationship between Jackson and Carter, minimal political appointments within the ranks of the neoconservatives into the new

³⁶ Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, 347–8, 367, 401, 461; Vaisse, *Neoconservatism*, 115–7.

³⁷ Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, 455–6.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

administration, and indications of McGovern-aimed foreign policy all reflected a discomfort felt by neoconservatives with Carter. President Carter's foreign policy record did nothing to bridge that gap. A weakened position on strategic weapons (the SALT II treaty talks), the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the overthrow of the shah of Iran all are widened the gap between neoconservatives (then in the Democratic center) and the Carter administration. President Carter did attempt to wean U.S. foreign policy off of détente, abandoning its usage, and advancing an agenda challenging the Soviet Union. Despite this attempt, Carter's execution of his principles, combined with difficulties home and abroad, severely limited his successes. Differences between Carter and neoconservatives caused neoconservative democrats to question their party and drew supporters of Scoop Jackson toward the right.

A second indicator of the drift between neoconservative democrats and the rest of the Democratic Party was the formation of the Committee on the Present Danger (CPD) in late 1976. The CPD was an attempt at expressing bipartisan concern regarding the unacknowledged threat of the Soviet Union, as exposed in the Team B report.³⁹ The Team B project was a parallel investigation initiated by then director of Central Intelligence, George H. W. Bush, to examine the capabilities and intent of the Soviet Union. Team B challenged the prevailing reports by the CIA by assessing Soviet intentions and motives, claiming the Soviets were using the period of détente to enhance their capabilities and position in the world.⁴⁰ Team B accused the CIA of "mirror-imaging," and failing to take into account the Soviet worldview.⁴¹ These misconceptions by the CIA and exposure of what was viewed as the true intent of Soviet advances spurred the formation of the CPD to warn America and create policy to address an unacknowledged threat. The CPD differed from the CDM in that it consisted of a

³⁹ Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, 157.

⁴⁰ James Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush's War Cabinet* (New York, NY: Viking, 2004), 74.

⁴¹ Vaisse, *Neoconservatism*, 155.

60/40 split between Democrats and Republicans, and included many politicians who would gain notoriety in the 1980s, including Ronald Reagan, George Shultz, Richard Allen, Jeane Kirkpatrick, and William Casey, among others.⁴² The CPD produced various pamphlets and articles alerting the American public of the Soviet threat, the inadequate policies attempted by the Carter Administration, and the need for a more robust military to counter this growing threat.⁴³ The assessments of the Soviet intentions attempted to alert the public, but also worked to create fear through exaggeration of the threat. This particular method of public interaction becomes a recurring theme in the neoconservative conversation, especially in the late 1990s and 2000s.

The events and presidential election of 1980 proved a critical moment for neoconservatives. Unable to agree with the prevailing views of the Democratic Party and their candidate, Jimmy Carter, many neoconservatives joined the campaign of Ronald Reagan, a fellow member of the CPD, believing that he might restore American prominence. During the Reagan years, neoconservatives witnessed a president who shared their convictions regarding a strong military and an aggressive foreign policy against the Soviet Union. President Reagan shifted the attitude of the U.S.-Soviet relationship from détente, perceived by neoconservatives, and Reagan himself, as passive acknowledgement of Soviet initiatives, to one exposing the weaknesses of the Soviet regime and the strength of the U.S. capitalist system.⁴⁴ He intentionally sought to expand U.S. support for democratic movements within the perceived Soviet sphere, increased the military budget (from \$227 billion in 1984 to \$303 billion in 1989) and maintained the superiority of U.S. ideals and principles.⁴⁵

Reagan's strength in addressing the Soviet Union lay in his outlook regarding the entirety of the Cold War. His philosophy, drastically different from

⁴² Vaisse, *Neoconservatism*, 187.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 166–68.

⁴⁴ Sean Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2008), 152.

⁴⁵ Vaisse, *Neoconservatism*. 186–9.

the age of détente and preservation of the status quo, held to the belief that the United States was uninterested in maintaining the status quo through containment or détente, but was interested in victory.⁴⁶ This belief, very much in sync with neoconservative attitudes at the time, manifested itself in the labeling of the Soviets as an “evil empire,” clearly drawing allusions to the forces of good and evil in the Cold War.⁴⁷ Reagan also thrust democracy promotion into the foreign policy debate as a tactic for confronting the Soviets. Reagan created the National Endowment for Democracy, an organization that promotes democracy throughout the world both overtly and covertly, authorizing \$18 million toward this effort.⁴⁸ Through the Reagan Doctrine, the United States supported guerilla movements or initiated regime change in Grenada, Nicaragua, Afghanistan, and throughout the Third World. This tactic specifically combated Soviet attempts at expanding their influence into the Third World, but failed to specifically address the need for democracy that would define the Bush Doctrine 20 years later. During the Bush Administration, with neoconservative backing, the promotion of democracy became a means of creating stability, both on a political level and in the internal, domestic actions of a nation.

Initially, Reagan enjoyed support from neoconservatives who approved of his perspective regarding the Soviets, however in the latter years of his presidency, the moderation of his advisors after the Iran-Contra affair, his growing relationship with Soviet Premier Gorbachev, and the movement toward peace initiated between them disturbed neoconservatives, who advocated a more aggressive, militaristic method of regime change.⁴⁹ Regardless of their later opposition, neoconservatives continue to hold onto the tradition of Ronald

⁴⁶ Wilentz, *Age of Reagan*, 152.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 163.

⁴⁸ David Lowe, *Idea to Reality: NED at 25*, <http://www.ned.org/about/history> (accessed Mar 8, 2011).

⁴⁹ Wilentz, *Age of Reagan*, 284.

Reagan as a courageous stand against communism, paralleled during the younger Bush Administration's struggle with terrorism.⁵⁰

The fall of the Soviet Union, from 1989–1991, proved instrumental for a new group of neoconservatives. The third generation of neoconservatives, as defined by Vaisse, experienced the transition from Cold War life as the role of America changed dramatically. With the fall of the Soviet Union, America no longer faced a superpower adversary, and many declared the United States now lived in a unipolar world.⁵¹ Neoconservatives experienced the validation and subsequent disappointment (to some) of their dominant military posture in the 1991 Gulf War, and then during the Clinton Administration, bemoaned the relaxation and complacency within U.S. foreign policy, declaring that unless the United States adopted an aggressive, proactive posture regarding the continued threats to its national interests, the nation would lose this moment and succumb to another power.⁵² This assessment of foreign policy ran counter to the prevailing post-Cold War conception of a peace dividend, where the United States would be able to cash in on excessive military spending previously required to buffer against Soviet aggression, diminished attention to world affairs.⁵³

During the Clinton Administration, foreign policy experienced a diminished priority for an administration keen on expanding the effects of globalization and cashing in on the perceived "peace dividend." The Clinton Administration rejected the status quo, balance of power perspectives of the Bush administration, embracing a more liberal, humanitarian mission for U.S. foreign policy. This liberal bent expressed itself through engagement with the United

⁵⁰ David Hoogland Noon, "Cold War Revival: Neocservatives and Historical Memory in the War on Terror," *American Studies* (Mid-American Studies Association) 48, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 91.

⁵¹ William Kristol and Robert Kagan, "National Interest and Global Responsibility," in *Present Dangers: Crisis and Opportunity in American Foreign and Defense Policy*, ed. William Kristol and Robert Kagan (San Francisco, CA: Encounter Books, 2000), 5–6.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 5–8.

⁵³ Vaisse, *Neoconservatism*, 224; Kristol and Kagan, "National Interest," 8. Kristol and Kagan provide numerical evidence regarding the "peace dividend" and its impact on the U.S. military.

Nations over Kosovo, and other interventions that neoconservatives and others opposed to Clinton, claim either are not sufficient, or do not engage U.S. interests.⁵⁴ Furthermore, neocons cite America's failed handling of terrorist attacks within the United States and abroad coupled with a soft tolerance of hostile regimes instead of initiating their overthrow as a failure to advance America's national interests.⁵⁵

Both within the Clinton administration and the Republican opposition, the late 1990s saw a fight for continued American engagement in world affairs, as different parts of both parties "turned away from the world's problems or decline[d] responsibility."⁵⁶ Both liberals and neoconservatives (and many conservatives) agreed on the role of America as the lone superpower. With great power comes great responsibility, however.

To this end, neoconservatives championed the cause of "preserving and reinforcing America's benevolent global hegemony" through a robust military, the "spread of American principles of governance to include democracy, free markets, and respect of liberty" in order to enhance U.S. security interests, along with a general disdain for international organizations that conflict with the exercise of American hegemony.⁵⁷ The Prospect for the New American Century (PNAC) was created as an organization to support these views. PNAC lobbied both President Clinton and congress, expressing their views regarding the sustainment of American hegemony, the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, and a

⁵⁴ Adam Wolfson, "Conservatives and Neoconservatives," in *The Neocon Reader*, ed. Irwin Stelzer (New York, NY: Grove Press, 2004). 227–8; Derek Chollet and James Goldgeier, *America Between the Wars* (New York, NY: PublicAffairs, 2008). 84, 103.

⁵⁵ Kristol and Kagan, "National Interest," 12–14. and Noon, "Cold War Revival," 91–2.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 176.

⁵⁷ Kristol and Kagan, "Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy," 23–8.

harder stance in Kosovo.⁵⁸ PNAC's statement of principles through an acknowledged acceptance of America's role in the world as the primary shaper of the international environment, increase the defense budget to meet these responsibilities, and promote democracy abroad to encourage political and economic freedom.⁵⁹

Countering the neoconservative cry for military strength, liberals during the Clinton years saw the expansion of economic globalization policies and the humanitarian missions in Kosovo and Somalia, while maintaining a continued emphasis on the promotion of democracy.⁶⁰ In Iraq, the realist themed policy of containment continued in an attempt to restrain further aggression from Saddam Hussein. In the Persian Gulf and Levant, tacit support of regional allies continued in order to maintain both economic and political stability.

B. THE EXPRESSION OF AMERICAN POWER

The neoconservative transformative vision of American foreign policy since the time of the Cold War through the events of 9/11 had several overarching goals. Overall, neoconservatives desired to transform U.S. foreign policy back into a forward leaning, aggressive stance necessary for positive engagement and protection of American foreign interests throughout the world. The threat against America dramatically changed during this period, shifting from the Soviet Union, to failed states to include Iraq, to terrorism and WMD, but the neoconservative stance remained true in its defense of American interests. They believe that American power and leadership finds its roots in a strong, superior military capable of defending U.S. interests abroad. The dominative presence of

⁵⁸ Project for a New American Century, *Letter to Gingrich and Lott*, May 29, 1998, <http://www.newamericancentury.org/iraqletter1998.htm> (accessed Feb 24, 2011); Project for a New American Century, *Letter to President Clinton on Iraq*, Jan 26, 1998, <http://www.newamericancentury.org/iraqclintonletter.htm> (accessed Feb 24, 2011); Project for a New American Century, *Letter to the President on Milosevic*, Sept 11, 1998, <http://www.newamericancentury.org/kosovomilosevicsep98.htm> (accessed Feb 24, 2011).

⁵⁹ Project for a New American Century, *Statement of Principles*, Jun 3, 1997, <http://www.newamericancentury.org/statementofprinciples.htm> (accessed Feb 24, 2011).

⁶⁰ Freedman, *A Choice of Enemies*, 275–80.

the United States also reduces the role and importance of international bodies such as the United Nations. These institutions fail to enforce their actions without substantial backing from major world powers, which the United States, as the preeminent power, refuses to cater to unless in our interests. Neoconservatives also believe that U.S. interests and intent regarding world affairs reflects universal values, such as freedom, liberty, and ultimately democracy for all people. This altruistic approach to American foreign policy is not new, however, the context in which it was operationalized and the threat it was challenging remains unique.

1. Context for a Strong Military

The neoconservative means to change U.S. foreign policy holds as its main pillar a dominant, technologically advanced military. This idea has become ingrained in neoconservative thinking as a reaction to the defeatism incurred by the struggle in Vietnam, and takes on a larger scale after the fall of the Soviet Union. In this post-Cold War era, specifically after the military dominance experienced during the Gulf War, neoconservatives attempted to voice concern regarding the future course of American foreign policy. This concern is best addressed through two documents that highlight the neoconservative agenda. The first document, addressing America's lost vision for foreign policy, is the initial draft of the "Defense Planning Guidance" and its successor written by then Secretary of Defense, Dick Cheney.

This document specifically address the U.S. role in the post Soviet world, asserting that the United States must prevent the rise of another world hegemon of equivalent power of the former Soviet Union. Based on the performance of the U.S. military during the Gulf War, the United States should continue to remain the dominant military presence worldwide, while maintaining continuous awareness

of needless police action that is not within our broad national interests.⁶¹ Furthermore, the United States needs to maintain the ability to act alone if necessary to combat threats around the world and maintain a military that acts as a deterrent against another nation's attempted military buildup.⁶²

While the Defense Planning Guidance attempted to provide strategic vision for the United States after the Gulf War and fall of the Soviet Union, another call went out to conservatives from neoconservatives Robert Kagan and William Kristol through their article "Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy." This article attempts to explain the cause for conservative loss of direction as well as the positive means for the restoration of American power. They insist on the preservation of America as a "benevolent global hegemony" and, to this end, American foreign policy must preserve this status through military supremacy and moral confidence.⁶³ Their case for military supremacy is based on the need for the United States, as the global hegemon, to have the most technologically advanced, global military available to defend against "a breakdown of peace and international order."⁶⁴ This message was advanced in the midst of an aging military whose demands for modernization continue to outpace its budget. Moral confidence was necessary in order to continue to synchronize America's moral calling and its national interests. They recall the active promotion of American principles of liberal democracy coupled with pressure on authoritarian regimes such as China, Iran, and North Korea.⁶⁵ Through their writings, they hoped to spur the conservative roots of the Republican party through inspiration, which

⁶¹ Pentagon, *New York Times*, Mar 8, 1992, <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/03/08/world/excerpts-from-pentagon-s-plan-prevent-the-re-emergence-of-a-new-rival.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm> (accessed Feb 4, 2011); Vaisse, *Neoconservatism*, 225.

⁶² Dick Cheney, "Defense Strategy for the 1990s: The Regional Defense Strategy," *Information Clearinghouse*, Jan 1993, http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/pdf/naarpr_Defense.pdf (accessed Feb 7, 2011).

⁶³ Kristol and Kagan, "Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy," 23.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 27–8.

was not enough of a motivation to obtain the executive branch in 1996. After the 9/11 attacks, this motivation shifted to one of fear, a more persuasive argument for action.⁶⁶

Neoconservatives have established a vision for American foreign policy that rebuffs the realist tradition and provides specificity for the often “global police” role the liberal tradition implies for American presence worldwide. Through a dominant military and a moral compass aimed at the spread of liberal values worldwide, neoconservatives look to extend the preeminence of America’s “global hegemony” into the distant future.

C. COUNTERARGUMENTS

Some argue that the neoconservative vision of “global hegemony” is merely an underhanded way of promoting American Empire, or Pax Americana. Gary Dorrien argues that American ascendancy into world dominance was inevitable, but the management of this newfound position has been fundamentally mishandled by neoconservatives. He argues the neocon principles encourage “global warfare and cultural engineering” (democracy promotion toward an American centered values set).⁶⁷ Additionally, authors like Chalmers Johnson point to the expansive 737 bases maintained by the U.S. military and intervention in Iraq among other issues, as proof of imperial overreach.⁶⁸ He connects the U.S. bases in Saudi Arabia as one of the initial complaints of Osama bin Laden, implying that U.S. imperialistic tendencies have wrought this upon itself.⁶⁹ Michael Hunt provides additional insight into this phenomenon of American benevolence in reshaping areas of the world. He argues that American conduct exposes American foreign policy as “hypocritical

⁶⁶ Chollet and Goldgeier, *America Between the Wars*, 142.

⁶⁷ Gary Dorrien, *Imperial Designs* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004). Gary Dorrien, *Imperial Designs* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004).244.

⁶⁸ Chalmers Johnson, *The Sorrow of Empire* (New York, NY: Henry Holt, 2004). 226, 236–7.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 241.

and aggressive rather than enlightened and peace-loving.”⁷⁰ This perception is one of the chief issues against the ideology of the neoconservatives and their foreign policy.

D. THE CHALLENGE OF SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

The events of 9/11 gave face to these threats warned by Neo-Reaganites. Preoccupied with the rise of China and Russia as potential threats, the sudden exposure of the Al Qaeda network through the destruction of the World Trade Center towers focused the neoconservative agenda and gave it new purpose. The events of 9/11 and its aftershock demonstrated with unparalleled clarity the insufficiency of realist principles of containment and complacent intervention in dealing with global terrorist networks.⁷¹ As President Bush then reaffirmed in the 2002 National Security Strategy, terrorists could not be deterred, and the potential of their acquisition of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) pose a new and severe threat.⁷² This view of the twofold threat to America’s security, terrorism and the potential of WMD in terrorist hands, gave rise to several new components of neoconservative doctrine. Preemption as a means of preventative attack was adopted as an assertive upgrade from what was seen as passive Clintonian cruise missile strikes that did little to destroy or deter an enemy now believed capable of potentially accessing WMD. The threat of another 9/11 changed U.S. decision makers, specifically President Bush, in that the United States was unwilling to risk ignoring the internal affairs of states when threatened with potential nuclear terrorism, dismissing a foundational assumption of realist views. Along with a growing interest in the internal happenings of states, neoconservatives acknowledged the moral contradiction within U.S. policy in supporting authoritarian regimes. The repressive tendencies of non-

⁷⁰ Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), 174.

⁷¹ Francis Fukuyama, *America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power, and the Neoconservative Legacy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 67–68.

⁷² George W. Bush, *National Security Strategy, 2002*, Policy Paper, President of the United States of America (Washington, DC: Department of State, 2002), 15.

democratic regimes to maintain power erode the moral legitimacy of U.S. policy and must resort to instigating regime change. Initially, this theory specifically applied to Communist China, North Korea, Iraq, and other hostile nations. This assertion by neoconservatives loses its appeal when addressing the regional leaders of the Middle East. This phenomenon will be discussed in greater detail regarding Iraq in Chapter III. Notwithstanding the Middle East, neocon democracy promotion demanded the assumption that democracies are inherently peaceful compared to other regimes thereby enhancing U.S. security interests in the region.⁷³

The attacks on 9/11 provided the opportunity to exercise the aggressive position of hard-line neoconservatives. Bolstered by united public support and a president looking for clear answers, neoconservatives provided clear assessments and solutions to the new threats to the United States.⁷⁴

E. CONCLUSION

This chapter has illustrated the neoconservative experience and aims for reorienting American foreign policy. In the broadest terms, neoconservatives support a forward leaning posture, actively involved in world affairs in order to shape conditions favorable for U.S. interests. Neoconservatives label this pursuit “global hegemony,” while other hard-line neoconservatives and critics call it Pax Americana, implying there are broader imperial aims involved. Regardless of these differences, it is clear that neoconservatives are not satisfied with policies that in the short term or long term, threaten U.S. interests or reputation or merely defend the status quo. Realist concepts of containment and détente do not adequately protect U.S. interests; rather, they threaten to undermine them by ignoring potential threats. Neoconservatives demand American foreign policy lead, promoting intentionally or not the perception of American empire.

⁷³ Vaisse, *Neoconservatism*, 233.

⁷⁴ The validity of these assessments and their effects are another matter, but regardless, neoconservatives provided a clear vision for American leadership in a world seemingly in chaos that found favor in the Bush Administration.

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III. NEOCONSERVATIVES AND IRAQ

The neoconservative reorientation of American foreign policy in the Middle East away from realist principles revolves around the events of 9/11 and culminates in the invasion of Iraq in 2003. This chapter will analyze the change within the Bush Administration due to 9/11 that led to the adoption of the neoconservative leaning Bush Doctrine. The invasion of Iraq will then be analyzed to show how neoconservative principles became operationalized as an active reorientation of America's foreign policy.

A. BEFORE AND AFTER 9/11

The execution of foreign policy relies heavily on the input and worldview of the President of the United States. Each president shapes his administration around his priorities and beliefs, creating his own specific doctrine to govern foreign interactions. The development of President Bush's worldview during September 11, 2001, demonstrate the enormous impact the terrorist attacks had on revealing and motivating President Bush's stance as well as the change in his perspective on foreign policy. Who he listened to during this crucial time and what advisors proposed combined with his general stance on the role of American in the international system are important factors when considering the impact of the neoconservatives.

President George W. Bush assumed the presidency having campaigned for the return of humility to American foreign policy. He supported his father's decision to end the Gulf War at the 100th hour in support of the United Nations' resolution, preventing the overthrow of Saddam Hussein.⁷⁵ It was assumed by many that he would follow the footsteps of his realist-oriented father and continue the tradition of containment and sanctions in Iraq that the Clinton Administration had been ineffective in enforcing consistently.⁷⁶ Initially, these assumptions

⁷⁵ Bob Woodward, *Bush at War* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 329.

⁷⁶ Condoleezza Rice, "Promoting the National Interest," *Foreign Affairs*, Jan/Feb 2000.

proved true: President Bush did not radically change the priorities regarding Iraq, although he began to assert a more focused national interest in American foreign policy by withdrawing U.S. support for the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the Kyoto Protocol. Prior to 9/11, President Bush's priorities coincided with nationalist tendencies, where he was more concerned with the U.S. interests than in crusading any moral causes or expanding an imperial empire, as some might claim. Stanley Renshon describes the basis of President Bush's worldview as one of a nationalistic realist prior to 9/11, and nationaliststic with neoconservative tendencies after 9/11.⁷⁷ Clearly, the events of 9/11 weighed heavily on the President and revealed the weakness of realists' arguments on facing the new threat while displaying the strength of neoconservative arguments.

The events of 9/11 substantially changed President Bush's perspective regarding the role and use of American power in conducting foreign policy. The president quickly recognized the new threat to America and began to calculate the risks necessary to face this threat. The first step was acknowledging that America had been attacked and was subsequently at war. In attempting to frame the bounds of this new war, the president began to describe the attackers, terrorists of the al Qaeda network, as a radical version of Islam and eventually proclaimed America's war with both terrorists and those states that harbor terrorists.⁷⁸ This decision spawned what is now known as the Global War on Terror (GWOT).

Resolute on defeating this new threat, the president adhered to a specific perspective regarding both the Middle East and the source of the terrorist threat. He advanced the liberal peace theory, asserting that the authoritarian regimes of the Middle East, who advanced a culture of repression and hatred of their people, were ultimately the source of the radical Islamic threat. To this end, he

⁷⁷ Stanley A. Renshon, *National Security in the Obama Administration* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2010), 31–32.

⁷⁸ George W. Bush, *The White House*, Sept 20, 2001, <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/print/20010920-8.html> (accessed Feb 4, 2011).

declared the United States would advance the universal values of freedom and liberty throughout the region with the hopes of transformation. With this democratic transformation, the United States would then inherit new allies with common governmental systems, common values, and common strategic priorities, whose people prospered and rejected the radical beliefs of Islamic terrorists.⁷⁹

This mission started with the immediate prosecution of the Taliban government in Afghanistan, accused of harboring the Al Qaeda network. A U.S. military invasion quickly followed, and the attempt at transforming Afghanistan from a decentralized tribal system to a centralized liberal democracy continues to this day. After the initial success of subduing the Taliban, the administration began to develop the next phase of the GWOT, Iraq.

B. A RELUCTANT ALLY, CONTAINMENT, AND WAR

The U.S.-Iraqi relationship commenced in earnest during the Iran-Iraq War. Prior to this conflict, the United States policy in the region considered Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Israel as the three pillars supporting U.S. stability efforts in the Middle East. With the fall of the shah of Iran in 1979, and the subsequent invasion of Iran by Iraqi forces in 1981, the United States witnessed battle between rivals but remained neutral, primarily concerned with sustained oil exports from the Persian Gulf. When the Iran-Iraq War turned to the high seas, in what is known as the Tanker War, the United States intervened on behalf of Kuwait, reflagging Kuwaiti oilers carrying Iraqi oil with U.S. flags and escorting them out of the Gulf to preserve their valuable cargo. The cessation of hostilities between Iran and Iraq in August of 1988 led the United States to remain uninvolved in internal affairs, only concerned with the stability and economic prosperity of the region. Throughout this period, U.S. goals remained the stable

⁷⁹ Viasse, *Neoconservatism*, 244.

flow of oil out of the Persian Gulf coupled with a general concept of containment of Iran's new theocracy, in addition to any potential communist inroads in the region.⁸⁰

Saddam Hussein disrupted this equilibrium with the invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, and was harshly rebuked by U.S. forces in Operation Desert Storm. During this operation, U.S. forces ejected the Iraqi military from Kuwait, but failed to destroy the potent Iraqi Republican Guard, allowing much of the Iraqi army to flee intact to central Iraq and later be used to repress popular uprisings among Shiite and Kurdish people against the rule of Hussein. The decision to avoid the internal politics of Iraq and failure to fully eliminate Saddam's military backbone reflected the dominant position of the senior Bush Administration, based on realist balance of power positions, but left something to be desired by neoconservatives like Paul Wolfowitz, who saw hope of regime change disappear while Saddam's repression apparatus killed Iraqi citizens.⁸¹ Brent Scowcroft, the National Security Advisor during the first Gulf War, defended the administration's decision to withdraw, stating that he was constrained by the balance of power in the region, and did not want to threaten the United States' buffer (Iraq) to an increasingly hostile Iran.⁸²

The next 12 years in U.S.-Iraqi relations center around U.S. policy to contain the threat of an unstable regime in Iraq while preserving oil output from the Gulf. It reflected realist assumptions aimed at maintaining stability and producing a generally neutral, responsive approach to any potential aggression Saddam Hussein was able to muster. On multiple occasions through this period, United Nations inspectors, in Iraq to ensure the elimination of weapons of mass

⁸⁰ Freedman, *Choice of Enemies*, 153–167.

⁸¹ Michael R. Gordon and General Bernard E Trainor, *Cobra II* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 2006), 11.

⁸² Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 12. Additionally, the Council on Foreign Relations conducted a seminar with both Brent Scowcroft and Paul Wolfowitz discussing the first Gulf War providing further insight and reinforcement of these claims. Transcripts at Council on Foreign Relations, *The Gulf War Twenty Years Later*, Feb 15, 2011, <http://www.cfr.org/middle-east/gulf-wartwenty-years-later/p24150> (accessed Feb 18, 2011).

destruction, specifically nuclear weapons in accordance with United Nations Sanction 687, were detained, ejected, and stalled to prevent effective inspections of Iraqi weapons sites.⁸³ This culminated in the permanent removal of weapons inspectors in 1998, the official change in position of the United States with the passage of the Iraqi Liberation Bill endorsing regime change in Iraq as official policy, leading to Operation Desert Fox, which some believe substantially crippled Iraqi WMD stores and capabilities.⁸⁴ Operation Desert Fox effectively marked the end of containment, as its goal was not enforcement, but the weakening of Saddam's regime, a first step toward regime change.⁸⁵

After completion of Desert Fox, the stopgap policy of the Clinton Administration became "containment plus," which consisted of a low-level war against Saddam's regime, coupled with a half-hearted effort at regime change. Neoconservatives viewed this policy as "a policy of not having a policy," due to Saddam remaining in power without the pressure of WMD inspections.⁸⁶

1. Neoconservative Perspective on Iraq

Neoconservatives watched the eroding policy of containment with despair. In an open letter to President Clinton in 1998, many neoconservatives expressed their frustration with containment policies and insisted upon immediate steps toward regime change to stabilize Iraq.⁸⁷ They hoped that regime change in Iraq would produce the first wave of democracy in the region, where repressed Arab

⁸³ Douglass Feith, *War and Decision* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 2008). 179–82; Robert Kagan and William Kristol, "Why We Went to War," *The Weekly Standard*, Oct 20, 2003: 7–11; Lawrence Kaplan and William Kristol, *The War Over Iraq* (San Francisco, CA: Encounter Books, 2003). 64–6.

⁸⁴ Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York, NY: The Penguin Press, 2006), 21; U.S. H.R. 4655 Code, "Iraqi Liberation Act," Oct 31, 1998, http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=105_cong_public_laws&docid=f:publ338.105.pdf (accessed Mar 1, 2011).

⁸⁵ Chollet and Goldgeier, *America Between the Wars*, 202.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 204; Feith, *War and Decision*, 535–8.

⁸⁷ Project for the New American Century. (1998, Jan 26). *Letter to President Clinton on Iraq*. Retrieved Feb 24, 2011, from Project for the New American Century: <http://www.newamericancentury.org/iraqclintonletter.htm>.

people would rise up and claim their role in self-government, as a new, friendly ally of the United States.⁸⁸ Furthermore, the replacement of hostile authoritarian regimes with democratic ones provides an alternative in Iraq to the failed policy of containment excused during the Clinton years regarding Iraq. This view was reinforced by the President Bush's perspective after the 9/11 attacks where he states that containment has bought the United States stability at the price of liberty and freedom.⁸⁹ The primary reason to remove Saddam was the failure of containment as a means of minimizing the risk (specifically WMD) and threat (proliferation of WMD) he was to U.S. interests and allies in the region.⁹⁰ This reality could be achieved only through the forced removal of the established power structure in Iraq.

In light of this vision for the region, neoconservatives point to several events reinforcing the claim for regime change in Iraq. First, Iraq stood in open defiance of the international order, primarily the United States, but also the United Nations and the European Union, who since the 1991 Gulf War maintained forces in the Persian Gulf as an active containment of Saddam's expansionary rule. A record of inconsistent, often openly belligerent hostility toward mandated weapons inspectors, coupled with a continued opaqueness regarding Iraqi chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons, point toward a more interventionist solution. Second, neoconservatives keenly remember in the wake of the Gulf War, the shortsighted decision to allow the Iraqi military use of their attack helicopters. Approved by the U.S. military, these attack craft prosecuted the Shiite and Kurdish uprisings, mercilessly killing tens of thousands of innocent Iraqis.⁹¹ Paul Wolfowitz, in particular, saw this repression as a missed

⁸⁸ Norman Podhoretz, "World War IV: How It Started, What It Means, and Why We Have to Win," *Commentary*, Sept 2004: 17–54.

⁸⁹ George W. Bush, *National Endowment for Democracy*, Nov 6, 2003, <http://www.ned.org/george-w-bush/remarks-by-president-george-w-bush-at-the-20th-anniversary> (accessed Jan 14, 2011).

⁹⁰ Robert Kagan and William Kristol, "Why We Went to War," *The Weekly Standard*, Oct 20, 2003: 7–11;

⁹¹ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 5.

opportunity to initiate regime change if the United States had shown any support for the Shiite and Kurdish revolts.⁹² This act of repression immediately following the Gulf War, coupled with Saddam's use of chemical weapons on his own people (the Kurds in the north during the Iran-Iraq War), gave credence to initiating regime change.

The ultimate threat of failed regime change revolved around Iraq's nuclear program and other weapons of mass destruction. After the Gulf War and through substantial international pressure, Hussein admitted to nuclear and chemical facilities and was told to participate in the inspection and destruction of these facilities, per United Nations Resolution 687. These inspections proved ineffective due to Hussein's belligerent tactics with inspectors, leading eventually to a mass bombing of Iraqi defenses in Operation Desert Fox 1998. Neoconservatives point to this untrustworthy adversary and depart from the realist position of previous administrations who failed to actively impact internal happenings of Iraq.⁹³ Instead, regime change coupled with the opportunity for democracy should be the guiding principle for Iraq. Neoconservatives were quick to advance the threat and risk of failing to address the rogue Iraqi regime, and coupled with the attacks of 9/11, pressed for regime change as a guaranteed means of removing the threat.⁹⁴

C. AN UNLIKELY MARRIAGE: NEO-LIBERALS, NEOCONSERVATIVES, AND IRAQ

In making the case for regime change in Iraq, neoconservative hawks found themselves alongside some unlikely allies. Liberal hawks endorsed the neoconservative mission of regime change in Iraq, many with the help of Kenneth Pollack and his book, *A Threatening Storm*. Pollack goes into great

⁹² Council on Foreign Relations, *The Gulf War Twenty Years Later*, Feb 15, 2011, <http://www.cfr.org/middle-east/gulf-wartwenty-years-later/p24150> (accessed Feb 18, 2011).

⁹³ Norman Podhoretz, "World War IV," 18–19.

⁹⁴ Robert Kagan and William Kristol, "What to Do About Iraq," *The Weekly Standard*, Jan 21, 2002: 23–26.

detail regarding the plight of the Iraqi people, the waning international support for effective containment of Saddam through economic sanctions, and the instability of Saddam as a national leader. He makes similar arguments regarding the threat of Iraqi WMD, specifically nuclear weapons, and their potential proliferation, based on Saddam's poor calculus in world affairs (failure in the Iran-Iraq War, the first Gulf War, and in gaining the support of the Arab world in general). Through the lens of a post-9/11 world, these risks are not acceptable, and regime change, sooner or later, must be initiated.⁹⁵ Pollack's argument helped draw in liberals to the more blunt, radical claims championed by neoconservatives including Thomas Friedmann (columnist for the *New York Times*) and the many members of the Democratic Leadership Council.⁹⁶ Specifically the neoconservative message that containment was no longer enough, became an acknowledged reality in conversations regarding Iraq. Through these arguments, liberals joined with neoconservatives and advocated regime change.

D. MAINTAINING THE STATUS QUO: REALIST PERSPECTIVE REGARDING INVADING IRAQ

The realist perspective regarding the threat of Iraq is best embodied in the objections and policy recommendations of former National Security Advisor to George H. W. Bush, Brent Scowcroft. In his opinion piece in the *Wall Street Journal*, Scowcroft recalls the atrocities of Saddam Hussein, admitting that eventually regime change may be necessary. However, he warns of the threat of instability in the region that would occur with the vacuum of power created by Hussein's absence. Scowcroft reduces the warning championed by neoconservatives regarding the proliferation of nuclear weapons into the hands of terrorists, arguing that Saddam, even in his most irrational and unconventional,

⁹⁵ Kenneth Pollack, *The Threatening Storm* (New York, NY: Random House, 2002), xiv–xv.

⁹⁶ Bill Keller, *New York Times*, Feb 8, 2003, <http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F50914F6395F0C7B8CDDAB0894DB404482> (accessed Feb 18, 2011); Jacob Weisberg, *Liberal Hawks Reconsider the Iraq War*, Jan 12, 2004, <http://www.slate.com/id/2093620/entry/2093641/> (accessed Mar 10, 2011).

still seeks to preserve his own survival, and enabling terrorists to detonate a nuclear weapon would surely signal his last days due to the world-wide retribution he would experience. Scowcroft recommends no-warning weapons inspections as a means of calling out Hussein if he were to not cooperate.⁹⁷

In agreement with Scowcroft was Secretary of State Colin Powell, who conveyed the consequences of regime change, and held a skeptical view of the neoconservative assumption of the democratic wave ready to be unleashed on the Middle East with the fall of Saddam's Iraq. Instead, he maintained that the invasion of Iraq would drain momentum and resources from the GWOT but, more importantly, liberating Iraq would lead to occupying and then rebuilding Iraq. Support for an endeavor like this should be done on an international basis (namely through the UN).⁹⁸ Powell recognized the threat of Saddam Hussein, but also realized the long-term implications for regime change, thus rejecting much of the neoconservative argument.

Overall, military and economic containment advocated by realists failed to provide a convincing, positive means of handling the new threat embodied in Iraq. Realists called for handling the threat of a rogue leader, WMD, and terrorist cells collaborating to strike the United States from afar through passive means of economic sanctions, slow collaboration within the international system, and a firm reliance that Saddam acted rationally and would not initiate further conflict. Neoconservatives argue, in light of 9/11 and the attacks the United States homeland, these means of containment were insufficient to guard against future terrorist activity and demanded too much risk against a clear threat.

⁹⁷ Scowcroft, "Don't Attack Saddam," A12; Jeffrey Goldberg, "Breaking Ranks," *The New Yorker*, Oct 31, 2005. The neoconservative response to Scowcroft can be found here: Charles Krauthammer, "The Realist Who Got It Wrong," *The Washington Post*, Oct 30, 2005: B07.

⁹⁸ Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 71.

E. NEOCONSERVATIVE ALLIES

The operationalization of neoconservative principles through the invasion of Iraq is due to several factors. During the post-9/11 Bush Administration, neoconservative principles found favor in the eyes of leading officials within the administration. President George W. Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld all became allies to various causes supported by neoconservatives. Each of these individuals has vastly different approaches to American foreign policy, and it is safe to say that none of them is directly in sync with the neoconservative movement. That does little to dismiss the influence and importance of these three decision makers in shaping American foreign policy after 9/11, and in helping reorient policy toward neoconservative principles.

1. President George W. Bush

President Bush aided the reorientation of U.S. foreign policy toward neoconservative views primarily in his response to the 9/11 attacks. Neoconservative ideas and the Bush Administration converge on several fronts. Fundamental to both camps' outlooks was the perception of threats and risk. In a post-9/11 world, the threat of another 9/11 attack, or worse—the threat of proliferation of WMD into terrorist hands—demanded action.⁹⁹ Preemption, if necessary, might be the only means to prevent a massive loss of life within the United States, and could be the necessary tool to neutralize a new and destructive threat facing the nation. The 9/11 attacks removed the option for U.S. to remain complacent and enjoy the buffer provided by its size, influence and power.¹⁰⁰

While it is unlikely the president sought out neoconservative thinkers, his response to the attacks and the course of action in their wake, points to an

⁹⁹ Woodward, *Bush at War*, 349.

¹⁰⁰ Stanley A. Renshon, "The Bush Doctrine Considered," in *Understanding the Bush Doctrine*, ed. Stanley A. Renshon and Peter Suedfeld (New York, NY: Routledge, 2007), 21.

agreement in perspective between neoconservatives and the president. Both agreed that decisive action was necessary, in line with neoconservative calls for active participation in shaping the international community. In a post-9/11 world, the president recognized the threat facing America, and felt it worth the risk of invasion to prevent catastrophic loss of life at home.

Besides the apparent merits of the neoconservative argument for initiating regime change in Iraq, it became increasingly clear that President Bush recognized the shortfalls of continued containment and sanctions mindset in the wake of the new threat to the United States. The 2002 Presidential Inauguration speech, the president begins the rhetorical discussion regarding the importance of freedom and liberty, and the American call to spread them and eliminate tyranny.¹⁰¹ In the preparations for the 2002 State of the Union address, speechwriter David Frum, himself a neoconservative, surmises that the president was unwilling to settle for stability as the main goal of the Middle East.¹⁰² He goes on further to state that he felt the president no longer wanted the United States to be a status quo power in the Middle East, but should look to initiate regime change in Iraq.¹⁰³ Additionally, the 2002 National Security Strategy compares the threat of the Cold War, where a hostile Soviet regime could be deterred through mutually assured destruction to the terrorist threat, who threaten WMD as intimidation factors, show little concern for their people, and whose methods show little concern for civilian casualties (martyrdom).¹⁰⁴

These beliefs, coupled with the personality of President Bush, a declared “compassionate conservative,” tuned into the moral element of this new struggle

¹⁰¹ George W. Bush, *www.wikisource.com*, Jan 29, 2002, http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/george_w_bush%27s_second_state_of_the_union_address (accessed Dec 8, 2010).

¹⁰² David Frum, *The Right Man* (New York, NY: Random House, 2003), 231.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 231–3.

¹⁰⁴ President George W. Bush, *National Security Strategy, 2002*, Policy Paper, President of the United States of America (Washington, DC: Department of State, 2002), 15.

and led to decisive action following 9/11, casting the conflict as good versus evil, reminiscent of the moral clarity called for by the Neo-Reaganite camp of neoconservatives.¹⁰⁵

2. Vice President Dick Cheney and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld

Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld were not new to the problem of Iraq. As former Secretary of Defense during the first Gulf War, Cheney was intimately familiar with the success and failures of that conflict. The inability to militarily defeat Saddam had a tremendous impact on Cheney, and provided motivation during his time as vice president under President George W. Bush. He defended his position in 1991 to stop the war, assuming sufficient momentum had been achieved for a military coup to remove Saddam from power, supported by CIA estimates. The failure of this to occur during the following years caused Cheney to believe that the Bush and Clinton policies of containment in Iraq was “faltering,” sanctions “fraying,” and that “Saddam was a growing menace.” After the proclamation of the GWOT, Cheney sought to finish the job in Iraq and instigate regime change.¹⁰⁶ With this mindset, Cheney was further enabled by his access and trusted status with the president. This relationship propelled him into a pivotal status in shaping the U.S. response to Saddam’s threatening regime.

Donald Rumsfeld advanced a superior military perspective, obvious in his treatment of Iraq, where his primary concern was the overthrow of Iraq, with little planning regarding what came next. This fell in line with his vision of transforming the military, a vision campaigned by President Bush.¹⁰⁷ Additionally, he expanded the military role in Iraq due to his and Cheney’s

¹⁰⁵ William Kristol, “Neoconservatism Remains the Bedrock of U.S. Foreign Policy,” in *Neocon Reader*, ed. Irwin Stelzer (New York, NY: Grove Press, 2004). 75–6; George W. Bush, [www.wikisource.com](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/george_w_bush%27s_second_state_of_the_union_address), Jan 29, 2002, http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/george_w_bush%27s_second_state_of_the_union_address (accessed Dec 8, 2010).

¹⁰⁶ Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 39-40.

¹⁰⁷ Bob Woodward, *State of Denial* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2006); Mann, *Vulcans*, 289–91.

suspicion of the intelligence agencies. Rumsfeld created his own intelligence network through the Office of Special Plans, led by neoconservative Douglas Feith. Mimicking the formation of Team B, neoconservatives within the DoD were able to analyze their own intelligence and present it to the president through the vice president and/or the secretary of defense. This process, combined with what were eventually found to be bogus reports by connections to Ahmed Chalabi's Iraqi National Congress, demonstrated a desire to have intelligence match policy instead of policy being guided by intelligence.¹⁰⁸

Both Cheney and Rumsfeld maintained different priorities from neoconservatives, but both aligned within the neoconservative camp regarding the threat of Iraq and the means of regime change to eliminate the threat. Their vision simplified the post-invasion situation, failing to address the complexity of democracy promotion in a nation foreign to these lofty ideals. To be clear, these three powerful individuals in the Bush Administration were not neoconservatives. However, their individual perspectives often aligned themselves with neoconservative principles, and expressed themselves in policy under the full, vocal support of the neoconservative movement.

The Bush administration diverged from neoconservative ideals on several fronts during the prosecution of the GWOT. In the run-up to the Iraq War, specific attention was made to attempt to convince the world through the United Nations, that Saddam was building WMD. Neoconservatives acquiesced to this enterprise as long as it did not derail the actual use of force and initiation of regime change.¹⁰⁹ The most disturbing contradiction between the Bush Administration and the principles of the neoconservatives was the Administration's treatment of authoritarian regimes, specifically in the Middle East.

¹⁰⁸ *Bush's War*, directed by Michael Kirk, 2008.

¹⁰⁹ Robert Kagan and William Kristol, *The U.N. Trap?*, Nov 18, 2002, <http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/001/882wsqal.asp?page=2> (accessed Mar 1, 2011).

During the initial aftermath of 9/11, President Bush made several allusions to democratic reform and liberal change in the cadre of regimes in the Middle East.¹¹⁰ In reality, the initial months and years of the GWOT saw little to no change in conduct. The United States was unable or unwilling to apply sufficient pressure to regimes (Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Saudi Arabia) for a variety of reasons, including supposed torture of suspected terrorists, or reliance on foreign oil.

F. IRAQ AND GWOT?

While the Bush Administration and its doctrine substantially reinforce neoconservative ideals, many argued against the actions taken by the administration. One of the weaknesses of the neoconservative agenda is its inability to distinguish within the public debate the differences regarding international terrorist organizations. This also fails in line with the vagueness of the GWOT of the Bush Administration. Scholars argue that neoconservatives fail to recognize the intricacies of the post-cold war world, specifically the reality that, while nations such as China and Russia may eventually pose significant threats to U.S. security, the current threat, exposed during the 9/11 attacks, exists on a transnational level, and should not be limited to various nations.¹¹¹ Neoconservatives insisted upon the danger of a known threat in Saddam's Iraq instead of coming to grips with the new threat, Al Qaeda.¹¹² Additionally, the nuance that exists between the countless Islamist groups, their various ideologies, and the critical distinctions between these groups have been largely

¹¹⁰ President George W. Bush, Second Inaugural Address.; George W. Bush, *National Endowment for Democracy*, Nov 6, 2003, <http://www.ned.org/george-w-bush/remarks-by-president-george-w-bush-at-the-20th-anniversary> (accessed Jan 14, 2011).

¹¹¹ Vaisse, *Neoconservatism*, 263.

¹¹² Jeremy Pressman, "Power without Influence: The Bush Administration's Foreign Policy Failure in the Middle East," *International Security* (MIT Press) 33, no. 4 (Spring 2009), 176.

missed by neoconservatives. Instead, broad labels have been affixed, which expose a lack of insight, and reduce opportunities for moderation among Islamic groups.¹¹³

The roots of this argument can be traced back to the Cold War and the experience of the neoconservatives in countering realist approaches to Soviet aggression. David Hoogland Noon succinctly points out the many connections between the neoconservative writings after 9/11 leading up to the Iraq War of 2003 and the experience of the neoconservatives during the Cold War.¹¹⁴ He states the neoconservatives attempt to draw historical lessons from the Cold War that are “reductive and dramatic” and, by doing so, “impose historical clarity where others might find ambiguity and contingency.”¹¹⁵

G. CONCLUSION

Overall, this chapter demonstrated how the Bush administration operationalized the core principles of neoconservatives as a response to the 9/11 attacks, specifically in the invasion of Iraq. The advance of their principles was embodied in the Bush Doctrine and enjoyed support due to a common cause with the White House and neoliberal establishment. Overall, the initial prosecution of the Iraq War demonstrates the culmination of the neoconservative vision. Chapter IV will demonstrate how quickly that vision collapsed, and how neoconservatives have responded to its demise.

¹¹³ Samuel Tadros and Jeffrey Azarva, “The Problem of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood,” *American Enterprise Institute*, www.aei.org (accessed Mar 2010).

¹¹⁴ David Hoogland Noon, “Cold War Revival: Neocservatives and Historical Memory in the War on Terror,” *American Studies* (Mid-American Studies Association) 48, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 75–99.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 77.

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IV. AFTER THE NEOCONSERVATIVE MOMENT

This chapter examines the changing environment in which neoconservatives found themselves during the second term of the Bush Administration into the Obama Administration. This period begins the erosion of legitimacy of the neoconservative ideology, as WMD are not found in Iraq, the hope of a quick transition to Iraqi democracy fades in the face of an active insurgency bordering on civil war, and American casualties mount. During this period, neoconservatives mount an active campaign to justify their existence and insert their opinions and perspectives into the national debate regarding developing foreign policy challenges. In addition to the changing political climate realized by neoconservatives, this chapter will also examine how neoconservatives perpetuate their existence and ideology in American foreign policy.

A. AFTER “MISSION ACCOMPLISHED” (MID–2003 THROUGH 2008)

While the conventional war against Iraq lasted a mere 21 days, ending with the fall of Baghdad on May 1, 2003, the U.S. presence on Iraqi soil was far from over. Neoconservative ideology had insisted, along with the Bush Administration, that a Saddam-less Iraq would quickly embrace freedom and assume responsibility for governing the country. The neoconservative vision for regime change had been initiated, but the crucial question to be answered was, what now? Neoconservatives like Richard Perle, Douglas Feith, and Paul Wolfowitz had become convinced that Ahmed Chalabi, leader of the vocal and influential Iraqi National Congress, would be the leader-in-waiting in Iraq.¹¹⁶ Reality on the ground conveyed a different truth. Chalabi, as an Iraqi exile, proved to wield minimal influence in a country he had fled years previously, resulting in minimal popular support in the transition government apart from U.S.-

¹¹⁶ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 31, 56–7, 104–5; Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 107, 315–6,

appointed positions granted him.¹¹⁷ Chalabi was only part of the disconnect between DoD and DoS in executing the transfer of power in Iraq. In the run-up to war, the DoD, particularly Secretary Rumsfeld, assumed primary responsibility regarding the invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq. His deputies, including Paul Wolfowitz, Douglas Feith, and Richard Pearle, all played major roles in developing policy while promoting a divided front within the U.S. government for post-invasion planning.¹¹⁸ Skeptical of any DoS inputs, or of Army planners, and content to allow former exiles like Chalabi presume to run Iraq, DoD leaders failed to provide necessary vision and then lost control of Ambassador Bremmer as he disbanded the Iraqi Army and prohibited Baathist leaders from assuming positions of power in the new government.¹¹⁹ The neoconservatives' hoped-for and expected swift transfer of government never happened. Not until 2005 were elections held, only after the security situation was calm enough to allow for mass elections. While this came as a surprise to some neoconservatives who had touted the examples of Germany and Japan as forerunners for change to democracy, scholars and skeptics believed otherwise.¹²⁰ Specifically, the swift, ideological transition described by neoconservatives failed to correspond to the realities on the ground. Even before the Iraqi invasion, the GWOT exposed a tension in the Bush Administration's democratic promotion that remains unresolved. The demands of the GWOT and realities of the Iraq War have left the United States unable to pressure autocratic regimes like Saudi Arabia and Egypt into democratic reforms.

¹¹⁷ Rajiv Chandrasekaran, *Imperial Life in the Emerald City* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006). 70, 73, 78.

¹¹⁸ *Bush's War*, directed by Michael Kirk, 2008; Ricks, *Fiasco*, 103.

¹¹⁹ Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 107, 485; Pressman, "Power without Influence," 171. Reflects the disconnect between Army leaders and Secretary Rumsfeld as well as between Rumsfeld and DoS.

¹²⁰ Kaplan and Kristol, *War Over Iraq*, 190–1;

This tension has exposed the hypocrisy of the democracy promotion push in the Middle East and weakened the neoconservative argument.¹²¹

Further troubling the neoconservative legacy in Iraq was the insurgency that rocked the country, and the descent into a sectarian conflict in 2006. The neoconservative vision of unilateral American power exercised in Iraq faced new and daunting challenges in the face of an asymmetric, unconventional insurgency. Initial Army estimates required 200,000–260,000 troops for post-combat operations, while Rumsfeld and some neoconservatives called for 75,000, and quickly diminishing that level to 30,000.¹²² Neoconservatives' expression of American power is through the military, and through the trust of military professionals. This alliance was broken largely due to the stubbornness of Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, who dominated major decisions regarding Iraq, and on whom neoconservatives eventually turn in the wake of the Abu Ghraib scandal.¹²³ Neoconservatives eventually aided the military by urging for more troops and helping to develop a new strategy to counter the war-torn nation, initiating what became the Iraqi Surge, an insertion of an additional 20,000 troops used to invigorate a new counterinsurgency strategy.¹²⁴ Neoconservatives blame the administration's failure to usher in a competent government after the fall of Saddam mostly on Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld and Paul Bremer, the top civilian in Iraq. Neoconservatives accuse Rumsfeld of shortchanging U.S. forces by demanding reduced troop levels, as well as failing to provide a succinct plan to rebuild the country.¹²⁵

¹²¹ Thomas Carothers, "Promoting Democracy and Fighting Terror," *Foreign Affairs* (Council on Foreign Relations) 82, no. 1 (Jan/Feb 2003): 84–97.

¹²² Ricks, *Fiasco*, 96–8; Kaplan and Kristol, *War Over Iraq*, 189.

¹²³ Robert Kagan and William Kristol, "Too Few Troops," *The Weekly Standard*, Apr 26, 2005.

¹²⁴ Thomas Ricks, *The Gamble* (New York, NY: The Penguin Press, 2009), 94–98.

¹²⁵ Ricks, *Fiasco*, 117; *The Economist*, *A Ghastly Week*, May 13, 2004, <https://www.economist.com/node/2676976> (accessed Mar 6, 2011). Coalition forces numbered 145,000, half of what was called for by the Army, reduced due to Rumsfeld's perseverance with top Army brass.

The other bombshell to the neoconservative ideology was the reports coming from Abu Ghraib prison. Abu Ghraib had been used as a primary detention facility for suspected terrorists and insurgents, but military personnel stationed at the prison were incapable of handling the massive managerial and security challenge thrust upon them. Coupled with a top-down demand of “actionable intelligence” by the chain of command, an ill-prepared force of interrogators in the prison treated prisoners outside the regulations established in the Geneva conventions. For neoconservatives, it exposed the total lack of planning involved, as well as betrayed the exceptional nature of American foreign policy.¹²⁶ This treatment also accompanied claims of torture and harsh treatment of “terrorists.” Some neoconservatives defend these claims due to the extraordinary nature of the new fight in which the United States found itself. This debate continues, especially regarding the status of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Regardless, the moral high ground was lost, along with the perception of American benevolence.¹²⁷

The effects of the neocon-supported invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq in 2003 had unintended consequences elsewhere in the Middle East. Israel, with a history of tense relations with its Arab neighbors, was given free license to dominate relations with Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip due to U.S. preoccupation with Iraq and unwillingness to engage with Yasser Arafat.¹²⁸ Instead of becoming tied up with fruitless negotiations with a known supporter of terrorism, the United States began to demand for renewed efforts at

¹²⁶ *Bush's War*, directed by Michael Kirk, 2008; Ricks, *Fiasco*, 291.

¹²⁷ Max Boot, *Torture at Gitmo? Ask the Mau Mau*, Jun 30, 2005, <http://articles.latimes.print/2005/jun/30/opinion/oe-boot30> (accessed Mar 5, 2011); Charles Krauthammer, *The Truth About Torture*, Dec 5, 2005, <http://www.weeklystandard.com/print/content/public/articles/000/000/006/400rhqav.asp?nopager=1> (accessed Mar 5, 2011); Ricks, *Fiasco*, 297.

¹²⁸ Brown et al., *The New Middle East*.

democratic governance within the Palestinian-occupied territories.¹²⁹ This ultimately resulted in the establishment of Hamas, another blatant supporter of terrorism.

During this period, several strands of neoconservative backing remained strong within the U.S. foreign policy. Rhetoric of democracy promotion in particular picked up steam with the formation of the Freedom Agenda. While Secretary Rice called for renewed democratic elections in Palestine, Egypt, and other Arab states, actual change was minimal. U.S. influence in the region, due to neoconservative-supported campaigns in Iraq and, to a lesser extent, Afghanistan, drained much of the influence and political willpower from further efforts of reform. While President Bush and neoconservatives talked of a “New Middle East,” little has changed as neoconservatives expected. In Gaza, Hamas won a democratic election, thrusting the Islamist group into formal government authority. In Egypt, the 2005 Presidential and Parliamentary elections are viewed as fraudulent, rigged to maintain Mubarak in power. Some view the administration’s shift into democratization as an excuse for the lack of WMD discovered in Iraq, while others point to the reality that going to war often has many complex reasons, to which democracy promotion was one of the more important ones.¹³⁰

Neoconservatives saw support for their vision erode from within as well as from outside sources. Notable neoconservative Francis Fukuyama, whose work the *End of History and the Last Man* was instrumental in forming the Bush administration’s perception of a post-Cold War world and its push for democracy, rejected what he called the “hard Wilsonian” execution of policy by neoconservatives. He states that those who advocate change through military means miss the heart of what neoconservatives stand for, and have created a distinct idea that he does not support.¹³¹

¹²⁹ Mann, *Vulcans*, 326.

¹³⁰ Renshon, *National Security in the Obama Administration*.

¹³¹ Fukuyama, *America at the Crossroads*.

B. THE ROLE OF BARACK OBAMA (2008–2011)

The election of Barack Obama signaled what was thought to be sweeping changes in American foreign policy. Campaigning as the “anti-Bush” and promising to reestablish American leadership in world affairs and usher in a period of engagement with hostile states, President Obama entered the White House amid tremendous expectations for change. This change amounted to a repudiation of the neoconservative ideology, although the actions of the Obama Administration fall short of fully revoking the legacy of the neoconservatives. During this period, the perpetuation and continued reorientation of foreign policy toward neoconservative principles enters a new stage with different challenges.

1. The Worldview of Barack Obama

Several documents point to President Obama’s foreign policy ideology. These documents will be examined and compared with the actual status in the Middle East, as will funding activity in support of these actions, in an attempt to demonstrate how neoconservatives have perpetuated themselves.

President Obama provided initial insight into his future foreign policy initiatives in his article, “Renewing American Leadership.” As the title of this article indicates, President Obama believes American leadership has gone astray, due to the Bush Administration’s response to the “unconventional attacks of 9/11 with conventional thinking of the past,” resulting a state-centric response to an asymmetric threat. The “war of choice” in Iraq and the resulting actions at Abu Ghraib have caused the world to lose trust in American purposes and principles.¹³² His response to this loss of trust is a direct challenge of neoconservative principles. While Obama reaffirms the importance of America’s military and reserves the right to act unilaterally when necessary, he insists upon

¹³² Barack Obama, “Renewing American Leadership,” *Foreign Affairs* (Council on Foreign Relations), July-Aug 2007, 2-16.

the necessity for American leadership with worldwide partners, instead of the harsher stance taken during the Bush Administration.¹³³

Two other speeches provide hints at the president's worldview. Here, the president reinforces several themes counter to neoconservative ideals. He specifically calls for multilateral action to address the world's problems, while maintaining the U.S. prerogative to strike unilaterally if necessary. Throughout these speeches, he emphasizes the need for cooperation, adherence to the rule of law, and treaties among nations.¹³⁴ Additionally, the president, in his speech to the Muslim world in Cairo, addresses the shortfalls of the Iraq invasion, stating the United States would not force nations to adopt democracy, but would partner with them.¹³⁵ All told, there is a clear movement by the president to shift focus and priorities from military dominance to one of engagement through soft power and diplomacy.

This movement away is further reflected in the 2010 National Security Strategy, wherein President Obama attempts to steer U.S. foreign policy execution away from the emphasis on preemption, prevention, and military intervention to advance and defend U.S. interests. Instead, he shifts the emphasis from confrontation with Iran and North Korea to soft power, a more nuanced view of a complex world where engagement through diplomatic discussions can also advance U.S. interests.¹³⁶ President Obama saw opportunity in the gray areas, while the Bush Administration demanded black and white distinctions. Neoconservatives meanwhile, assailed the president for

¹³³ Obama, "Renewing American Leadership," 2-16.

¹³⁴ President Barack Obama, *Remarks by the President at the Acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize*, Dec 10, 2009, www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-acceptance-nobel-peace-prize (accessed Feb 15, 2010); President Barack Obama, *Remarks by the President on a New Beginning*, June 4, 2009, www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-at-Cairo-University-6-04-09 (accessed Jan 15, 2010).

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Barack Obama, *National Security Strategy*, (Washington, DC: The White House, May 2010), 4, 23, 26.

coming down too soft on hostile regimes, compromising American safety against future terrorist threats, and blaming America for the shift in world opinion.¹³⁷

In spite of the shift of emphasis by President Obama, several themes of neoconservatives continue to enjoy popular approval and endorsement by the Obama Administration. The president continues to endorse the concept of American leadership and a forward-leaning American foreign policy espoused by the neo-Reaganite camp, but proposed the execution of this policy through new means. President Obama's view of American power still rested in the military, but its execution in the international system goes went beyond flexing the U.S. military strength. Additionally, President Obama supports the pursuit of universal values such as human rights, freedom and liberty, culminating in democratic government. This stance sounds familiar to neoconservatives, however the execution of these principles will not be done through the use of military force. Again, Obama backs away from military supported nation-building, instead looking to soft power through the DoS to encourage democratic growth.¹³⁸

2. The Actions of Barack Obama

While the worldview of the Obama Administration may have been outlined in various speeches and essays, his actions tell a more complete story of the Obama Administration's priorities. President Obama faced several challenges in assuming the Presidency in 2009. His first moves included an order outlining the closure of the Guantanamo Bay terrorist prison and withdraw troops from Iraq by December 2011. These actions are consistent with his worldview and signal a retreat from neoconservative ideals. His handling of Afghanistan, specifically his decision to send 17,000 more troops coupled with a withdrawal deadline of 2014 presents an interesting case regarding the president's worldview. Both the Iraq and Afghanistan wars were inherited from President Bush, however, Obama

¹³⁷ Robert Kaufman, *The Perils of President Obama's National Security Policy*, Jan 2010, www.foreignpolicyi.org/node/15511 (accessed Dec 10, 2010).

¹³⁸ Obama, *National Security Strategy*, 5. The term engagement is used 43 times in the NSS, indicating the shift in priorities from the Bush Administration.

campaigned on the “war of choice” in Iraq, which distracted U.S. efforts to combat the real threat, Al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The president’s decision to address the threat, in response to 9/11 and in spite of Iraq, shows a willingness to face the nation’s enemies and dismisses calls that Obama endorses a liberal humanitarian ideology. Neoconservatives were quick to support the president in his staying the course in both Iraq and Afghanistan, although their primary complaint regarding his tenure is the implied decline of American power that the president endorses.¹³⁹ President Obama’s handling of the U.S. operations in Afghanistan is one of several issues inherited from the Bush Administration where he has maintained course, in this case, unilateral, military action in Afghanistan, seemingly contrary to his stated worldview.

Another carryover from the Bush Administration is the continued focus on democracy promotion in the Middle East. Obama’s support for democracy is partially evident in his budgetary support for the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and the Middle East Partnering Initiative (MEPI). Over the last several years, Obama has authorized consistent budgetary increases for NED, raising funding from \$74 million in 2007 to \$118 million in 2010 and 2011.¹⁴⁰ This funding for democracy projects tells only part of the story considering the Arab Spring of 2011.

a. *Egyptian Calculations*

Recent revolts in Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya have once again drawn neoconservative views into the national discussion regarding the policy options for U.S. involvement in the greater Middle East. Both in Egypt and in Libya, questions are being asked regarding the role of the United States, as the self-proclaimed champion of democracy, standing by and watching the killing of

¹³⁹ Foreign Policy Initiative, *FPI Analysis: President Obama’s Foreign Policy, Year One*, Jan 20, 2010, <http://www.foreignpolicyi.org/files/uploads/images/FPI%20Briefing%20Book%2010%2028%2010.pdf> (accessed Feb 15, 2011).

¹⁴⁰ Secretary of State, “Congressional Budget Justification 2012,” *State Department*, Feb 1, 2010, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/156215.pdf> (accessed Mar 1, 2011).

innocent protesters by regime thugs. In Egypt, this played out in a call by neoconservatives for the United States to fully endorse the protestors and abandon America's longtime ally, Hosni Mubarak.¹⁴¹ This claim divided the neoconservative camp due to the perceived threat against Israel resulting from a democratic Egypt. Many leading neocons, including Robert Kagan, William Kristol, Charles Krauthammer, and Elliott Abrams, supported the Egyptian rebels touting the resurgence of the Bush Freedom Agenda. Some neoconservatives, such as John Bolton, have expressed their concern over the Israeli-Egyptian peace accords and the unknowns democracy will bring to their relationship.¹⁴² The president's involvement, besides phone communication with President Mubarak, is unclear, but the movement of Egypt toward democracy seems to have little to do with American efforts, regardless of neoconservative support.

While democracy promotion clearly remains an important priority within the Obama Administration, its execution stands in stark contrast to the Bush Administration and some neoconservatives. Instead of brute force, President Obama has been forced to forge ahead on foreign policy issues in spite of a weak economy and its lingering effects. Combined with the baggage inherited from the Bush Administration, the president has had less to work with in his attempt to restore American leadership.

C. NEOCONSERVATIVE PERPETUATION

The neoconservative response to both the retreat of the Bush Administration and the swift change by the Obama Administration was thorough.

¹⁴¹ The Working Group on Egypt, *Working Group on Egypt Writes to President Obama and Secretary Clinton*, Feb 7, 2011, <http://www.foreignpolicy.org/content/working-group-egypt-writes-president-obama-and-secretary-clinton> (accessed Feb 8, 2011).

¹⁴² Robert Kagan and Michele Dunne, *Why Egypt has to be the U.S. priority in the Middle East*, Mar 7, 2011, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/03/06/AR2011030602928.html> (accessed Mar 7, 2011); Charles Krauthammer, *From Freedom Agenda to Freedom Doctrine*, Feb 10, 2011, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/02/10/AR2011021005339_pf.html (accessed Feb 10, 2011); Ben Smith and Josh Gerstein, *Hosni Mubarak splits Israel from Neocon supporters*, Feb 3, 2011, <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0211/48747.html> (accessed Feb 3, 2011).

Neoconservatives drew on the formative years of American foreign policy, tracing their ideology to the historical examples of Teddy Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, and Ronald Reagan, neoconservatives defended their principles, equating them to those common among the themes of American foreign policy.¹⁴³ Part of this appeal was a general call of nationalism by neoconservative writers. The ideology of neoconservatives, expressed in their writings as well as in the rhetoric and support of President Bush and others in the administration, stoked nationalistic fervor. Ideas of liberty and freedom for all acted to connect the neoconservative message with one of American pride and sense of mission.¹⁴⁴ The cost of this association and an activist foreign policy is the deterioration of our “capacity for domestic renewal.”¹⁴⁵ This tension between an activist foreign policy, described as forward leaning or assertive throughout this paper, and the price of that policy, economic, political, strategic, and social, are questions neoconservatives face to maintain their influence. Part of this response can be seen in the revised vision of the Foreign Policy Initiative (FPI). This institution, founded by leading neoconservatives William Kristol and Robert Kagan, no longer aims for hegemony, but seeks to prevent isolationism from encroaching on American foreign policy. Additionally, this group calls for supporting U.S. allies, human rights, a strong defense budget, and the encouragement of international economic growth.¹⁴⁶ These goals seem to reflect the lessons learned from the activist policy in Iraq, although intentionally refraining from conceding over-reach.¹⁴⁷

Familiar with the changing cycles of power in American politics, neoconservatives have realigned in acknowledgement of their loss of standing. Their perpetuation and continued influence during the Obama Administration in

¹⁴³ Kagan, “Neocon Nation.”

¹⁴⁴ Hunt, *Ideology*, 190–1.

¹⁴⁵ Hunt, *Ideology*, 177.

¹⁴⁶ Foreign Policy Initiative, *Mission Statement*, 2009, <http://www.foreignpolicyi.org/about> (accessed Jan 8, 2011).

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

part relies on the exposure of their ideology within the media. Through various organizations, conservative and within the mainstream, neoconservatives have found continuous outlets for their views. Among the primary sources of the neoconservatives' writings, two institutes continue to support their views: the Weekly Standard and the American Enterprise Institute. The Prospect for a New American Century was disbanded due to the association with the Iraq war and replaced by Foreign Policy Initiative, as described above. Additionally, several neoconservative scholars have positions in the Brookings Institute (Robert Kagan) and the Council on Foreign Relations (Elliott Abrams, Max Boot, Kagan), as well as proclaiming their views in opinion pieces in the *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, *LA Times*, and routine coverage on Fox News.¹⁴⁸

Along with their establishment in media outlets, Jesus Valesco points out that neoconservatives have aligned themselves with certain career politicians, such as Joseph Lieberman (I-CT) and John McCain (R-AZ). Combined with a politically attuned awareness of opportunity, neoconservatives will continue to push for their ideals and look for the next opportunity to join in directing policy from within the government.¹⁴⁹

D. CONCLUSION

Overall, the second term of the Bush Administration into the Obama Administration have seen the removal of neoconservatives from government positions and a heavy critique of the effects of their principles in policy-making circles. The neoconservative goal of democratic change has struggled to come to fruition in Iraq or Afghanistan despite elections that indicate a first step forward. Overall, the impact to U.S. foreign policy due to the lack of post-war planning by the Bush Administration, the abuses at Abu Ghraib, and the general struggle in Iraq has weakened American positions against Iran and North Korea,

¹⁴⁸ Glenn Greenwald, *Persecution of the Right and the Washington Post Op-Ed page*, Jun 19, 2009, http://www.salon.com/news/opinion/glenn_greenwald/2009/06/19/washington_post (accessed Mar 1, 2011).

¹⁴⁹ Velasco, *Neoconservatives in U.S. Foreign Policy*, 225.

sent a message of frustration regarding the transition toward liberal democracy in the Arab world, and repelled any hope of assistance from other nations.¹⁵⁰

Neoconservatives have responded by continuing to voice their views regarding American engagement and remaining vocal in national security debate as evidenced by the recent revolts in Egypt and Libya. Several authors remain convinced that, while neoconservatives have fallen out of favor due to Iraq, they remain a potent opinion within the foreign policy discussion ready to reengage when the time is right.

¹⁵⁰ Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, 506.

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V. CONCLUSION

A. REORIENTATION

This thesis has argued that neoconservatives reoriented American foreign policy during the first administration of President George W. Bush in response to the 9/11 attacks. Neoconservatives utilized allies within the administration, as well as their own proponents, to advance an alternative to realist, status-quo foreign policy. Neoconservatives endorsed regime change in Iraq, established through military dominance and expressed in a preemptive, unilateral fashion due to the increased threat realized on 9/11. The history of Saddam Hussein, combined with the destruction of WMD, validated neoconservative calls for action in a post-9/11 world. In order to neutralize this newfound threat of terrorism and WMD, neoconservatives advocated the promotion of democracy, relying on the belief that mature democracies do not fight each other.

The record of the neoconservative influence on America's involvement in Iraq and the broader Middle East has undoubtedly drawn substantial, deserved fire. Failing to provide necessary detail to the massive operation of creating democracy in Iraq constitutes a major, inexcusable failure of neoconservative thought. Neocons maintain that the military failed to send enough troops and only too late reacted to the developing insurgencies. While these claims may be true, neoconservatives are responsible for the vision they cast, as a transformed Middle East capable of good government and responsible action in the international community.

Overall, this thesis aimed to show how neoconservatives, through the endorsement by the Bush Administration, reoriented American foreign policy away from realist concepts of containment and détente. While neoconservatives have engaged wider support for both democracy promotion and the broader concept of American exceptionalism, their views fail to engage with the Obama administration on several other issues. Due to the crippling effects of the global

recession, the United States has seen its unipolar dreams burst along with its domestic housing market. American action and influence continue to dominate world opinions, and there is little doubt that the United States remains the strongest nation in the world, but the popular debate and concern regarding the rise of China and other powers remains stuck in the collective memory.

Within the Persian Gulf and Levant states, the effects of the Iraqi democracy project remain to be seen. Several clear effects have developed. With Saddam deposed, the dominant issue in the region continues to be Iran's largely unchecked pursuit of nuclear weapons and the United States' response to these aims (a topic largely ignored in the run-up to the Iraq war). Within the future policy decisions, the neoconservatives again make their claims for regime change and democracy. The onus of preemption remains within the U.S. policy alternatives; however, regarding Iran, this option continues to be politically, economically, and militarily unfeasible in the current environment.

The recent uprisings in Egypt, Tunisia, and Yemen also have engaged with neoconservative arguments. Many are remembering the "Freedom Agenda" of the Bush Administration and glorying in the ousting of dictators and advancement of democratic governments. More radical neoconservatives have proclaimed the Freedom Doctrine, canonizing the efforts of President Bush.¹⁵¹

Meanwhile, as the United States continues to recover from a global recession and, for the first time, has its top military commanders concerned about national debt, maintaining a robust military budget looks unfeasible (and has become one of the primary challenges of neoconservatives). Secretary of Defense Gates has taken several steps to internally reduce the military budget, but likely faces significant cuts as deficit hawk politicians no longer regard the defense budget as untouchable. While conducting a midterm review of President Obama's foreign policy, James Lindsay pointed out that "[i]t is very hard to

sustain a role of global power when you are gushing red ink.”¹⁵² The lack of fiscal stability has hurt U.S. influence and, ultimately, U.S. power worldwide. Neoconservatives continue to rely on America’s military might, for good reason; but, the realities of the U.S. debt and its public reaction through the creation and elective power of the Tea Party contend with the neoconservative ideal.

B. PERPETUATION

In spite of these failures, neoconservatives have provided a vision for American foreign policy after the Cold War. Their appeal and ability to connect the historical tones of American foreign policy to the complex changing environment of today’s world remains their primary effort to the foreign policy debate. They have forced into question the role of American hegemony, proving that mere rhetoric and military force alone cannot secure democracy for a nation or a region. Additionally, their theory of cascading regimes toward democracy in the Middle East remains elusive and unrealistic for the reasons they supported.

The neoconservative ideology and its effects fall in a long line of ideological crusades within American foreign policy. Routinely, these efforts aimed at expanding liberty and freedom result in “conditions at home inimical to that very principle.”¹⁵³ From World War II interment camps, to the conduct of American servicemen at Abu Ghraib, the ideology expressed in American foreign policy often conflicts with the reality in American conduct.

Michael Hunt, writing in 1987 describes many of the lingering effects of the neoconservative footprint 20 years later as he observes the effects of ideological

¹⁵¹ Charles Krauthammer, *From Freedom Agenda to Freedom Doctrine*, Feb 10, 2011, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/02/10/AR2011021005339.html?wprss=rss_opinions (accessed Feb 22, 2011).

¹⁵² Council on Foreign Relations, *Assessing Obama’s Foreign Policy at Midterm*, Dec 23, 2010, <http://www.cfr.org/us-strategy-and-politics/assessing-obamas-foreign-policy-midterm/p23690> (accessed Jan 11, 2011).

¹⁵³ Hunt, *Ideology*, 178.

foreign policy. Hunt points out a secondary effect of ideological foreign policy periods in the form of the “imperial Presidency.” He describes this phenomenon:

Through the twentieth century, foreign affairs has strengthened the financial resources, expertise, and discretion available to the executive branch. Congress has been overshadowed, the public left in the dark, and a culture of national security has flourished. These trends have undermined constitutional checks and balances, restricted the flow of information, impeded intelligent debate, and diminished the electoral accountability of policymakers—all serious blows to the workings of a democratic political system.¹⁵⁴

All told, this description fits well into the footprint of the neoconservatives during the Bush Administration. While all of these effects should not be directly attributed to their ideology and influence, their ideas greatly contributed to how America would respond to 9/11 and the broader post-Cold War world.

¹⁵⁴ Hunt, *Ideology*, 178.

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