

**United States Foreign Policy in the Middle East and North Africa:
Ideology, Hegemony, and Grand Strategy
under the Presidencies of George W. Bush and Barack Obama**

Julian Velasquez

Master's Candidate

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Thesis Supervisor: Matthias Waechter

The United States of America has been the world's preeminent superpower for the majority of contemporary living memory. As the sole possessors of the world's most formidable military power, the U.S.'s international presence has been highly visible through countless military interventions and armed intrusions the world over. Both criticized and lauded for this expansive presence around the globe, the U. S.'s reach goes far beyond military capacity- American economics, politics, culture, and traditions traverse across international boundaries and permeate even the most remote of societies. This study focuses the majority of its analysis on the last two leaders of the U.S., Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama, who have guided American foreign policy from the commencement of the 21st century until present day. Personified by their differences and similarities within the ideological justification and means of U.S. manifestations, including waging the two major wars of the post-September 11th era and beyond, each President's administration can be analyzed for their specific beliefs concerning the role of American hegemony, the U.S.'s role within international affairs, and the methods for going about achieving these different objectives. Especially relevant concerning the current state of international affairs in the Middle East and North Africa today, the United States' prominent position in world politics cannot be dismissed or disregarded in the study of the past, present, and future outlooks for one of the most influential and significant regions in the world.

Why the M.E.N.A.?

The Middle East and North African (M.E.N.A.) regions are of vital importance in world affairs, past and present, for two major reasons: strategic and economic. Strategically, the Middle East is distinguished for its ancient and contemporary position as the decisive and tactical crossroads of Eurasia.¹ While the Suez Canal's

¹ Executive Intelligence Review. *The Middle East as A Strategic Crossroad*. Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., 26 May 2002. Web. 13 June 2016.

strategic prominence as the nexus between the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean is evident, cross-land channels across the Middle East are far more fundamental forms of transport.² There is no chance for the economic prosperity of the United States from the recent world economic recession, without particular collaboration in the land-transport-based enlargement of the Eurasian and African continents as a whole, but with a special emphasis reserved for the Middle East.³ Economically, the Middle East has been synonymous with fossil fuels and natural energy reserves in the form of petroleum for the better part of the 20th century. According to Sheila Carapico and Chris Toensing for the *Middle East Report*,

“The U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the American military occupation there represented only the latest stage of American militarism in the Middle East. While more considerable in scale, duration, and devastation than previous military misadventures in the region, the Iraq War was the outgrowth of several decades of strategic thinking and policy making about oil. It is true, of course, that terrorism and especially the attacks of September 11, 2001, helped accelerate the drive to war in 2003, but to focus too much on 9/11 is to overlook and discount the ways that oil and oil producers have long been militarized, the role oil has played in regional confrontation for almost four decades, and the connections between the most recent confrontation with Iraq and those of the past.”⁴

In this view, American conflicts revolving around petroleum have not been about instituting direct control over oil fields nor about liberal values such as liberation or freedom, at least not in the form of political freedom for the peoples of the region. Keeping oil prices stable and maintaining pro-American regimes in power were central to U.S. foreign strategy policy.”⁵ Militarized government policies in the region helped lay the groundwork for the era of violence and insecurity that

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ See Sheila Carapico and Chris Toensing, “The Strategic Logic of the Iraq Blunder,” *Middle East Report* (no. 239, Summer 2006), 6–11 In: Jones, Toby Craig. “America, Oil, and War in the Middle East.” *Journal of American History* 99.1 (n.d.): 208-218. Oxford Journals, June 2012. Web. 13 June 2016.

⁵ Jones, Toby Craig. “America, Oil, and War in the Middle East.” *Journal of American History* 99.1 (n.d.): 208-18. Oxford Journals, June 2012. Web. 13 June 2016.

followed by reassuring Middle Eastern authoritarian leaders who became increasingly assertive and threatening, ultimately setting the stage for the causes of the Arab Spring, which will be analyzed in chapters to come.⁶ Author Toby Craig Jones argues,

“it might be tempting to argue that the escalating involvement of the United States and its history of militarism and military engagement in the Gulf region have provided a kind of security for the region...but three decades of war belie this argument. War is not tantamount to security, stability, or peace.”⁷

The growing predisposition of the United States to utilize strength and violence to uphold the flow of oil to global markets has not been an indicator of American might, but instead of its limits, having intrinsically associated the fortune of those relations to American national security effectively affirms that while the United States is finishing up its latest oil war, its military and political experts are already planning for the next one.”⁸ This pessimistic and cynical view of U.S. military interventions and presence in region is but one explanation as to the United States’ fixation with the Middle East in terms of strategic importance to American grand strategy.

Brief History of U.S. Role in International Affairs

According to Dr. Richard K. Betts, professor of War and Peace Studies at Columbia University, since the culmination of the Spanish-American War in 1898, the United States of America has projected its power and influence throughout the world by fostering Western ideals, defending other countries, and molding the world

⁶ Ibid., p. 208-218.

⁷ Ibid., p. 208-218.

⁸ Ibid., p.208-218.

in its own image.⁹ By briskly and emphatically defeating Spain, one of Europe's historically great powers, and seizing control of a number of its overseas territorial possessions, the United States announced to the rest of the world that it had become a serious actor upon the international stage and no longer a distant, remote former English colony insignificant in European and world affairs. With the debut and emergence of the U.S. as a major world actor at the onset of the 20th century, several defining factors and major events aligned to pave the way for the United States to increase its role and influence and ultimately become the world hegemonic power we know today.

Like much of European history since the birth of the concept for the modern nation-state in the immediate aftermath of the Thirty Year's War and the ensuing Peace of Westphalia during the 17th century¹⁰, the early 20th century was characterized by a multitude of great foreign powers who championed numerous different and often-combating political, economic, and social ideologies. These conflicting belief systems culminated with a catastrophic marriage of intertwined national allegiances, imperialistic ambitions, dangerous new advancements in technology, and antiquated tactics for waging war, all came to a head which launched the world into a conflict then unprecedented in both carnage and ferocity, known today as the First World War. The U.S.'s half-hearted and feeble attempts to control the delicate "world order" which emerged after World War I directly led to the causes and conditions for World War II.¹¹ Favorable economic, industrial, technological, social, and geographical circumstances all contributed to the United States' fortunate position and solidified the country's path to hegemonic status towards the end of the 20th century. Most significant to this study, the U.S.'s victorious, advantageous, and relatively-uncathed situation at the end of the

⁹ Betts, Richard K. "American Strategy: Grand vs. Grandiose." *America's Path: Grand Strategy for the Next Administration*. 31-42. Center for a New American Security, May 2012. Web. 30 May 2016.

¹⁰ Waechter, Matthias. "War and Peace." Class Lecture. CIFE, Nice. 2 Nov. 2015. Lecture.

¹¹ R. K. Betts, "American Strategy: Grand vs. Grandiose," p. 31-42

Second World War allowed for the emergence (and eventual triumph) of a global race for influence vis-à-vis the only other major superpower left standing in 1945, the Soviet Union. "Facing a threatened and expansive Soviet Union after 1945, the United States stepped forward to fill the vacuum left by a waning British empire and a collapsing European order to provide a counterweight to Soviet power."¹² This "American system" which was shaped and evolved after World War Two was an "open, negotiated, and institutionalized order among the major democracies."¹³ Evidenced by its lead role in creating and organizing summits such as the Bretton Woods Conference which shaped American economic primacy for the second half of the 20th century, and the design of international institutions such as the United Nations (U.N) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (N.A.T.O.), the International Monetary Fund (I.M.F.), and the World Bank (W.B.) among others, the U.S. played an integral role in formulating and molding a future world order more akin to its global interests and ambitions

One key fact which was essential to the United States' rise to hegemon and cannot be overlooked was the U.S.'s development and deployment of nuclear weapons towards the end of the Second World War. This unprecedented demonstration of unimaginable military might is traditionally accredited as being the deciding factor which forced Japan to cease hostilities and surrender, and in doing so, effectively ending World War II. Soon thereafter, the Soviet Union also developed atomic capacities and the two major superpowers were locked in a Cold War with both parties harnessing the ability to inflict damages unseen before in human history. "Order was maintained during these decades by the management of the bipolar balance between the American and Soviet camps...through nuclear deterrence. For the first time in the modern era, nuclear weapons and the doctrine

¹² Ikenberry, G. John. "Power and Liberal Order: America's Postwar World Order in Transition." *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 5 (2005): p. 133-152. Web. 31 May 2016.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 133-152.

of mutual assured destruction made war between great powers utterly irrational.”¹⁴ As the world entered the Atomic Age, the U.S. and the Soviet Union possessed the technological knowhow with which to destroy the world several times over. These major technological advancements facilitated the U.S.’s rise to hegemonic power as in the immediate post-war years, only one country could realistically stand toe-to-toe with the United States in terms of military capability.

Dr. Betts goes on to contrast the unique and different conditions which faced American foreign policy in 1945 and how they are unlike circumstances today. First, immediately after World War II, the U.S. possessed a revitalized economy thanks in large part to the unparalleled scale of industrialization triggered to support the war effort. The American economy was responsible for half of the war-ravaged world’s economic output and employed a credible plan for retiring national debt. However, today, there is no threatening Communist menace, American allies are wealthier compared to the immediate post-war years, and are able to, for the most part, defend themselves.”¹⁵ In terms of ambitions, interests, and alliances, the United States today is pursuing the similar grand strategy that it practiced from 1945 until 1991-- the policy of preponderance or hegemony.¹⁶ The Merriam-Webster English Dictionary defines the word “hegemony” as: preponderant influence or authority over others, domination; the social, cultural, ideological, or economic influence exerted by a dominant group. This term accurately describes and explains the degree of authority the United States has enjoyed in the international arena since the culmination of World War Two. Even after the end of the Cold War, the United States has shown no sign of backing down from its numerous foreign commitments

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 133-52.

¹⁵ R. K. Betts, “American Strategy: Grand vs. Grandiose,” p. 31-42

¹⁶ See Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford, Cal: Stanford Univ. Press, 1992). In: Layne, Christopher. "Rethinking American Grand Strategy: Hegemony or Balance of Power in the Twenty-First Century?" *World Policy Journal* Summer (1998): 8-28. Web. 1 June 2016.

and quasi-omnipresent status around the world. "Since 1989...the US dominates the terrain as the only superpower, in possession of superior capabilities and able to advance its particular interests across a wide range of political, military, and economic issues."¹⁷ However, the U.S. has not gone at it entirely alone and due to its strategic position in helping create supranational organizations such as the U.N., N.A.T.O., the W.B., and the I.M.F., has had help it implementing policies and strategies in its favor throughout the globe, as stated by professor of Politics and International Affairs in the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University, G. John Ikenberry, in his essay on the U.S.'s post-war world order; "American success after both World War II and the Cold War is closely linked to the creation and extension of international institutions, which both limited and legitimized American power."¹⁸ It is important to note Ikenberry's inclusion of the world "limited" as, we will see later in this study, international institutions have played an increasingly essential role to checking and constraining American hegemonic tendencies in present day. On the other side of this argument, Associate Professor at the Naval Postgraduate School, Christopher Layne, argues "the Soviet Union was a much less central factor in shaping U.S. policy than is commonly supposed. In fact, after the Second World War American policymakers sought to create a U.S.-led world order based on preeminent U.S. political, military, and economic power, and on American values."¹⁹ The two conflicting theories on the precise influence the Soviet Union and the Cold War played in ushering the modern age of American global supremacy have given rise to two different major schools of thought concerning the role of the Cold War and post-Cold War period on American

¹⁷ Kapstein, Ethan B., and Michael Mastanduno. "Realism and State Strategies After the Cold War." *Unipolar Politics: Realism and State Strategies after the Cold War*. New York: Columbia UP, 1999. 1. Print.

¹⁸ G. J. Ikenberry, "Power and Liberal Order: America's Postwar World Order in Transition," p. 133-152.

¹⁹ C. Layne, "Rethinking American Grand Strategy: Hegemony or Balance of Power in the Twenty-First Century?" p. 8-28.

foreign policy strategies. First, the U.S. security policy after the Cold War was largely incoherent and directionless. This theory contends there was no overarching grand strategy to U.S. foreign policy after the fall of the Iron Curtain and was more or less haphazard and coincidental that the U.S. was able to retain a favorable world stand point until the radical shift in strategy after the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001. Michael Mastanduno of Dartmouth College argues quite the contrary- the U.S. took consistent tactics in the quest of a prominent global position in the immediate Post-Cold War years. Second, the U.S. has been trying to instantaneously participate in “economic hardball” and “security softball” distinguished by an attempt to supervise the conflicting tension created by foreign economic policy from disturbing the procurement of its central national security aims.²⁰ While the Soviet Union’s influence upon U.S. hegemony and consequent international grand strategy cannot be brushed aside, it was rather the United States’ response to outlasting the U.S.S.R. and its decisions made once it was truly the world’s sole superpower left standing which are of interest to this study.

International Relations Theoretical Background

The foundations for the liberal theory of international relations can be summarized into three key points: simple Liberal assertions about fundamental social actors and their motivations, the connections between the state and civil society, and the circumstances under which states develop strategies and act upon them within the international system.²¹ Central to this theory, liberals refuse the doctrine that state interests are inherently only either convergent or conflictual.²²

²⁰ E. B. Kapstein and M. Mastanduno, "Realism and State Strategies After the Cold War." p. 139-140.

²¹ On the three-levels analysis, see Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959). In: Moravcsik, Andrew, Harvard University, and University of Chicago. "Liberalism and International Relations Theory." *Paper No. 92-6* (n.d.): n. pag. *Center for European Studies*. Web. 13 June 2016.

²² Cf. Joseph M. Grieco, "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism," *International Organization* 42 (Summer 1988), 485-508, and the Realist literature cited there., In: A. Moravcsik, "Liberalism and International Relations Theory".

They are not so black and white and the true motivation for liberal governments often lies in the gray area in between. Liberalism's most essential donation to international relations theory is found in its description of the social conditions that determine variations in the underlying level of conflict and convergence between the preferences of states.²³

Professor of International Relations at the University of Haifa and President of the Israeli Association for International Studies, Benjamin Miller, contends there are two distinct variants of liberal theory within the vast realm of international relations academia relevant to study U.S. foreign policy: offensive and defensive liberalism. Notably different in their divulgence on the beliefs concerning the appropriateness, extent, and preference for the utilization of force, offensive and defensive liberal theories can both be used at different instances to describe contemporary U.S. foreign policy. Offensive liberals advocate imposed democratization, such as regime change, by removal of security threats stemming from regimes deemed hostile before they can pose a credible (or perceived) threat. Through either direct military intervention methods or indirectly by providing aid and supporting political groups which aim to replace authoritarian regimes with democratic regimes, the U.S. has lately championed offensive liberalism to achieve its foreign policy strategies.²⁴ The post-9/11 attempt to democratize Iraq can be defined by an offensive liberal strategy to eradicate terrorism and weapons of mass destruction (W.M.D) in Arab countries with authoritarian governments, beginning with Iraq as a potential successful "model" for "peaceful democracy." The reasoning was that the illiberal character of these Arab regimes allegedly produced large-scale terrorism – due to the absence of non-violent outlets for the expression of political grievances—a theme which we will see again with the rise of the 2011 Arab Spring

²³ Kant, "Idea for a Universal History," in Reiss, ed. *Kant's Political Writings*, 45. In: A. Moravcsik, "Liberalism and International Relations Theory".

²⁴ Miller, Benjamin. "Democracy Promotion: Offensive Liberalism versus the Rest (of IR Theory)." *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 38.3 (2010): p. 561-591. Web. 13 June 2016.

Revolutions. Illiberalism was allegedly also the basis for the mission to find weapons of mass destruction – exposing the aggressive nature of these regimes.²⁵

On the other hand, defensive liberal theory advances some of the prerequisites for peaceful democratization, but does not follow a total obligation to democracy in the country in question. Proponents of defensive liberalism theory argue invasive military interventions will most likely only serve to produce an unfriendly nationalist reaction and strong international condemnation to the intruding power thus leading to a failure of the attempted democratization. Instead, defensive realism supports a limited and gradual approach concentrating on establishing the preconditions for a democratic state, such as humanitarian intervention to protect human rights, promotion of a market economy, and assistance with institution-building, commencing with the rule-of-law aspects of statehood.²⁶ Examples of U.S. humanitarian interventions without compulsory democratization include Somalia (1992–4), Haiti (1994), Bosnia (1995) and Kosovo (1999). It is important to note, however, that these interventions were multilateral in nature and conducted in cooperation with either the United Nations (U.N.) or North Atlantic Treaty Organization (N.A.T.O.).²⁷

Constructivism emphasizes the social and relational construction of what states are and what they want with an emphasis on individual or shared experiences shaping how one sees and perceives their surrounding environment.²⁸

Constructivism within international relations is defined as analyzing foreign affairs with a special focus to the social construction of actors, institutions, and events. It entails commencing from the hypothesis that how people and states reason and act

²⁵ Ibid., p. 561-591.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 561-591.

²⁷ See Robert DiPrazio, *Armed Humanitarians: US Interventions from Northern Iraq to Kosovo* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002). In: B. Miller, "Democracy Promotion: Offensive Liberalism versus the Rest (of IR Theory)," p. 561-591.

²⁸ Hurd, Ian. "Constructivism," in: Christian Reus-Smit/Duncan Snidal: *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2010): 298-316.

in world politics is based on their comprehension of “the world around them, which includes their own beliefs about the world, the identities they hold about themselves and others, and the shared understandings and practices in which they participate.”²⁹

Most pertinent to this study in terms of constructivist theory, are the distinct and singular aspects of personality present in the governance of both Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama, and how in turn, these unique dispositions and experiences affected each respective administration’s foreign policy strategies. The theory also goes onto contest every leader is a direct product of their own political climate and belief systems “formed by a combination of memories, values, and historical precedents” which undoubtedly have a significant impact on government policy, including and especially international relations.³⁰ Individual explanations justify concepts of perception and cognition but simply stated, constructivist theory places the heaviest emphasis on how an individual perceives the world and their subsequent personal policy preferences.³¹ This study will go further in depth into the differences of character and consequent foreign policy theories between Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama in later chapters.

Realism is an international relations theory which holds national security and state survival at its very core.³² Characterized by the assumptions that human nature is a pessimistic endeavor, success in international politics and domestic politics are entirely incomparable, international affairs are comprised of competing anarchical sovereign nation states and inherently conflictual and only ultimately solved by violence, realism sees power as the centerpiece of political activities and envisions

²⁹ Ibid., p. 298-316.

³⁰ Snow, Donald M., and Patrick Jude. Haney. *American Foreign Policy in a New Era*. Boston: Pearson, 2013. p. 72. Print.

³¹ Ibid., p. 72.

³² Jackson, Robert, and Georg Sorenson. "Realism." *Introduction to International Relations Theories and Approaches*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010. p. 58-94, p. 95-126. Print.

states as primarily concerned with ensuring their own security in a world where there's no world government to protect them from others.^{33,34} According to the realist school, the aim, means, and uses of power are a crucial concern of political activity. Foreign policy is thus represented under the moniker of "power politics" and regarded as a means based on emotionless calculations of a state's power and interests as directly pitted against those of competitors and opponents.³⁵

Realists can also be divided into two separate ideological camps: offensive and defensive realism. Offensive realism postulates that a great power's central fixation is to ensure its material national security interests regardless of ideological respects. Hence, according to this interpretation of realism, a great power could, in theory, partake in deposing a democratic government – even if the great power were itself a democracy – if this democratic regime seems antagonistic to the great power and its material security and economic interests.³⁶ On the contrary, defensive realism recommends a guarded policy, avoiding pro-democratic interventions so as to prevent unnecessary dangers and the heavy costs of war, based on the principle that the nature of the regime is not a decisive factor in shaping foreign policy.³⁷

Offensive realists consider that in order to safeguard security, the state has to amplify its relative power and achieve superiority in relation to its rivals. The larger the power it employs, the greater the allowance of protection the state enjoys. Maximum defense is realized through total hegemony in the international system. Without such supremacy, challengers will grow fiercer and may prove to become potential hazards to its security. If an adversary develops, the hegemon can resort to preventative war to meet the challenge according to offensive realism

³³ Ibid., p. 95-126.

³⁴ Walt, Stephen M. "What Would a Realist World Have Looked Like?" *Foreign Policy What Would a Realist World Have Looked Like Comments*. Foreign Policy, 8 Jan. 2016. Web. 10 June 2016.

³⁵ R. Jackson and G. Sorenson, "Realism," p. 95-126.

³⁶ B. Miller, "Democracy Promotion: Offensive Liberalism versus the Rest (of IR Theory)," p. 561-591.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 561-591.

maxims.³⁸ On the other hand, defensive realists do not make a correlation between augmenting power and security – they believe power-maximization may even serve to threaten state security.³⁹ Defensive realists seek to preserve the status-quo with survival and security, not power maximization, as their top goal. Nations protect themselves against dangers and attempts at expansion are both pointless for state security and even likely to backfire. In this defensive realist analysis, an accumulation of power beyond what is necessary to preserve the status quo – especially through the procurement of offensive capacities – could make the state less secure through the mechanisms of the security dilemma. Such a weapons collection, even if only for defensive purposes, might alarm other states, who arm themselves in response to the apparent danger to their security.⁴⁰ Quite the opposite from offensive realism concerning the role of the international community, defensive realism champions that security should be accomplished interdependently as opposed to unilaterally. No state can be truly protected if other powers consider them to be weak.⁴¹ Similarly, defensive realists believe intimidation is not advantageous in the international stage, as a counteracting alliance will be formed against the most menacing nation to prohibit it from realizing its hegemonic objectives.⁴² Defensive realists regard nuclear weapons as the greatest instrument for security as they provide states with the ability to discourage each other with the threat of unacceptable destruction.⁴³

³⁸ Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, 191; see also Copeland, *The Origins of Major War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000). In: B. Miller, "Democracy Promotion: Offensive Liberalism versus the Rest (of IR Theory)," p. 561-591.

³⁹ Robert Jervis, 'Cooperation under the Security Dilemma', *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (1978): p. 167–214; Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979) In: B. Miller, "Democracy Promotion: Offensive Liberalism versus the Rest (of IR Theory)," p. 561-591.

⁴⁰ B. Miller, "Democracy Promotion: Offensive Liberalism versus the Rest (of IR Theory)," p. 561-591.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 561-591.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 561-591.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 561-591.

Liberalism and constructivism share a great deal in common as they both assign critical importance to the role of ideas in foreign policy, in distinction to the realist emphasis on material factors.⁴⁴ However, three main differences soon arise. First, constructivism tends to largely focus on ideational elements as opposed to some branches of liberalism which do include some material factors, namely economic interdependence and its peacemaking effects (defensive liberalism) and the military power of great democratic states, namely the U.S., which maintains its authority in a unipolar system and expands democracy through power (offensive liberalism).⁴⁵ Secondly, constructivism is not as solid a theory in traditional International Relations academia in the way that liberalism and realism are. Instead, constructivism promotes an ambiguous, even philosophical, framework for interpretation by musing on the major role of ideas, norms, and identities.⁴⁶ Lastly, liberalism and constructivism disagree on the central methodology through which to obtain peace. For liberals, identifiable institutions such as democracy or collective security associations are the best option. For constructivists, the more wide-ranging effects of identities, normative, and ideational factors such as 'mutual identifications, transnational values, intersubjective understandings, and shared identities' present the most realistic possibility for peace.⁴⁷

The divide between realism and constructivism is undeniably wider than between liberalism and constructivism as a result of liberalism's innate ideational elements.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, constructivists can promote a core rationalization of purportedly "realist" behavior and conclusions (such as balancing, hegemony-

⁴⁴ Williams, 'What Is the National Interest?', p. 8-327. In: B. Miller, "Democracy Promotion: Offensive Liberalism versus the Rest (of IR Theory)," p. 561-591.

⁴⁵ B. Miller, "Democracy Promotion: Offensive Liberalism versus the Rest (of IR Theory)," p. 561-591.

⁴⁶ B. Miller, "Democracy Promotion: Offensive Liberalism versus the Rest (of IR Theory)," p. 561-591.

⁴⁷ Adler and Barnett, *Security Communities*, p. 59. In: B. Miller, "Democracy Promotion: Offensive Liberalism versus the Rest (of IR Theory)," p. 561-591.

⁴⁸ Williams, 'What Is the National Interest?' p. 8-327. In: B. Miller, "Democracy Promotion: Offensive Liberalism versus the Rest (of IR Theory)," p. 561-591.

seeking, armament, the security dilemma) by demonstrating that they are the product of the supremacy of “realist” ideas held by leaders and societies due to cultural effects.⁴⁹ Constructivism challenges realist formulas for peacemaking by implying that “security communities” exist in the international system and these communities do not require equalizing or hegemony to attain and uphold the peace.⁵⁰

In accordance with the realist school of thought, balance-of-power adherents see the theory as both “an empirical concept concerning the way that world politics are seen to operate and a normative concept: it is a legitimate goal and a guide to responsible statecraft on the part of the leaders of the great powers. [Balance-of-power theory] upholds the basic values of peace and security.”⁵¹ As stated by Kenneth Waltz’s interpretation of balance-of-power theory, proponents predict the world’s transition to multipolarity to be rapid. Modern day supporters go on to argue that according to the balance-of-power theory, we should be witnessing the U.S. distancing itself from its Cold War commitments abroad—but rather the central aspect of post-Cold War U.S. strategy has been to strengthen and even intensify these obligations. The U.S. wishes to maintain the status quo in security affairs with its Cold War allies, and at the same time is trying to engage and incorporate its Cold War adversaries into a world order that continues to preserve the dominant role of the United States.⁵² In both security and economic strategies after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, American international behavior has been more constant with the extrapolations of balance-of-power theory.⁵³

As stated in Ethan B. Kapstein and Michael Mastanduno’s treatise on unipolarity after the Cold War, a special emphasis is placed by the authors on the

⁴⁹ B. Miller, "Democracy Promotion: Offensive Liberalism versus the Rest (of IR Theory)," p. 561-591.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 561-591.

⁵¹ R. Jackson and G. Sorenson, "Realism," p. 58-126.

⁵² E. B. Kapstein and M. Mastanduno, "Realism and State Strategies After the Cold War." p. 145-146.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 157.

economic components of world hegemony and the direct link between economic might and military prowess. They argue that “throughout history, the military capabilities of a state have depended on size and development of its economy...great economic powers become great military powers. If economic power is the basis for military strength, then states that are competitive in the military arena will naturally compete...”⁵⁴ Alarming, and perhaps most relevant to the two American presidential administrations under scrutiny in this investigation, “The bipolar structure [of the Cold War] has given way to unipolarity and the U.S. position in the international economic structure has been in relative decline...the U.S. remains very powerful in absolute terms but is less advantageous now than it was during the 1945-1970 period.”⁵⁵ Despite the United States’ success over the U.S.S.R. in the nearly half-century long conflict, the authors contend U.S. grand strategy after the Cold War did not adjust accordingly as scholars and academics had predicted. Having prevailed in the Cold War, the United States could have retracted from its expensive foreign commitments—however this was not the case.⁵⁶ The end of ideological, political, and economic hostilities with the Soviet Union made it reasonable to scale down American efforts abroad but economic conditions now render it essential. Primacy—the lone superpower title that gives the U.S. more say on more topics than any other nation in the world—provides opportunity; paralysis in solving its economic hardships inflicts constraint, according to Dr. Betts.⁵⁷ In spite of this, even though the U.S.’s economic domination has diminished, the country’s military superiority shows no sign of weakening, nor is the worldwide alliance framework that comprises the crux of the existing liberal international system.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 157.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 159.

⁵⁶ C. Layne, "Rethinking American Grand Strategy: Hegemony or Balance of Power in the Twenty-First Century?" p. 8-28.

⁵⁷ R. K. Betts, "American Strategy: Grand vs. Grandiose," p. 31-42.

⁵⁸ Brooks, Stephen G., and William C. Wohlforth. "The Once and Future Superpower." *Foreign Affairs* May-June 2016: n. pag. *Council on Foreign Relations*. Web. 31 May 2016.

Also important to consider are the monetary costs associated with the strategic advantages of external involvements, including, but not limited to, political and economic encouragement to support beneficial policies in other states, the expansion of liberal democracy to promote a U.S.-friendly world order, and assistance to humanitarian catastrophes around the world. The costs associated in pursuing these objectives can be beneficial when they include diplomacy, covert action, or economic aid but customarily, “assurance that costs are will be acceptable is lowest when the interests are pursued with military force, a blunt instrument with effects that are usually uncertain and sometimes counter-productive.”⁵⁹ However, economic difficulties do not necessarily spell negative outlooks for the future of United States’ foreign policy strategy. The regression of the United States’ economic situation in recent years may have the beneficial effect of mandating U.S. leaders to focus more on the fundamental elements of the nation’s grand strategy instead of being drawn into new tangled and complex peripheral engagements. Indeed, that has been the guiding rationality behind President Barack Obama’s foreign policy.⁶⁰ The ramifications of this economic decline towards the conclusion of the 20th century, and in particular the global financial crisis of 2007-2008, while a special focus on its impact on U.S. foreign policy during the Obama administration, will be addressed at length in subsequent chapters.

The Hegemonic-stability theory of international relations has also been argued in the particular case of global influence by the United States, especially in the post-Cold War years and leading up to present day. The theory is grounded upon two basic assumptions: First, stability in global politics is regularly generated by a single state; and second, lasting order depends on the steadfastness of hegemony, so the growth of other powerful rivals weakens the established international

⁵⁹ R.K. Betts, "American Strategy: Grand vs. Grandiose." p. 31-42.

⁶⁰ S.G. Brooks and W. C. Wohlforth, "The Once and Future Superpower".

order.⁶¹ Borrowing from the notions of collective goods theory (it is cheaper to pay for benefits today than conflicts tomorrow) hegemons are both better able and more inclined to deliver public goods because they directly profit from a well-ordered system.^{62,63} Conversely, the balance of power theory disagrees with this notion and states that peace through hegemony is not possible due of the effect of the equilibrium mechanism (weaker powers forming coalitions to match hegemon).⁶⁴ This direct challenge to the hegemon will lead to tension and is not conducive to keeping harmony according to the hegemonic-stability theory. Offensive realists would contend that U.S. hegemony and the unipolar construction of the international system guarantee peace.⁶⁵ Defensive realists predicted the formation of an international coalition to counter the U.S. after the Iraq War in 2003, citing the hegemon's unilateral exploits, its recourse towards preventative war, and ushering regime change by force, all served to increase the perceived threat posed by U.S. policies to other nations. The most likely scenario of a "soft balancing" by the international community would be diplomatic resistance and a lack of cooperation with the U.S. within international institutions to restrict its freedom of activities around the world, and in doing so, installing a form of power balance to restrain U.S. military force.⁶⁶

⁶¹ See A.F.K. Organski, *World Politics*, 2nd ed. (New York: Knopf, 1968), p. 354; Modelski, 'The Long Cycle of Global Politics', p. 217; and Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, p. 145. In: B. Miller, "Democracy Promotion: Offensive Liberalism versus the Rest (of IR Theory)," p. 561-591.

⁶² Olson, Mancur. *The Logic of Collective Action* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965). In: B. Miller, "Democracy Promotion: Offensive Liberalism versus the Rest (of IR Theory)," p. 561-591.

⁶³ See Organski, *World Politics*, Ch. 14, esp. pp. 361, 366-7; and Modelski, 'The Long Cycle of Global Politics', p. 217. In: B. Miller, "Democracy Promotion: Offensive Liberalism versus the Rest (of IR Theory)," p. 561-591.

⁶⁴ Martin Wight, 'The Balance of Power and International Order', in *The Bases of International Order*, ed. J. Alan (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 100; Rosecrance, *The Rise of the Trading State*, p. 56-58, In: B. Miller, "Democracy Promotion: Offensive Liberalism versus the Rest (of IR Theory)," p. 561-591.

⁶⁵ B. Miller, "Democracy Promotion: Offensive Liberalism versus the Rest (of IR Theory)," p. 91-561.

⁶⁶ See T.V. Paul, 'Soft Balancing in the Age of US Primacy', *International Security* 30, no. 1 (2005): p. 46-71; Robert Pape, 'Soft Balancing against the US', *International Security*, 30, no. 1 (2005): p. 7-45; and Walt, *Taming American Power*. In: B. Miller, "Democracy Promotion: Offensive Liberalism versus the Rest (of IR Theory)," p. 561-591.

The assessment of each President's foreign policy records and their subsequent analyses and justifications within international relations theories is a heavily-contested issue and depends greatly on individual interpretations. Each individual policy decision is part of a larger picture and neatly categorizing them in specific theoretical windows is nearly impossible. With regards to which theory most closely fit President George W. Bush's foreign policy agenda in the M.E.N.A. region, Benjamin Miller agrees that Bush cannot be easily categorized under one specific international relations theory. He argues that Bush acted like a realist by utilizing superior U.S. military capacity to unilaterally launch a pre-emptive or, in his view a more accurately-described, preventative war against a theoretical security threat in Iraq in 2003. On the other hand, President Bush expressed unmistakably liberal characteristics in his overall grand strategy, as well, due to his resilient emphasis on regime change in Iraq and his deeming the democratization of the Middle East as a cornerstone of U.S. security and international stability. Nevertheless, Miller claims the theory of offensive liberalism appears to portray the spirit of Bush's post-9/11 grand strategy much better than other hypotheses.⁶⁷

When trying to catalog President Barack Obama's foreign policy strategy in the Middle East and North African regions, one also encounters conflicting and differing academic examinations. Dr. James M. Lindsay, Senior Vice-President and Director of Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, contends Obama's hesitance to support humanitarian intervention and his blasé attitude towards democracy promotion sparked debates that he was a foreign policy realist.⁶⁸ Indeed, Obama's own remarks give credence to this assessment; "The truth is...my foreign policy is actually a return to the traditional bipartisan realistic policy of George Bush's father,

⁶⁷ B. Miller, "Democracy Promotion: Offensive Liberalism versus the Rest (of IR Theory)," p. 561-591.

⁶⁸ Lindsay, James M. "George W. Bush, Barack Obama and the Future of US Global Leadership." *International Affairs* 87.4 (2011): p. 765-779. Web. 6 June 2016.

of John F. Kennedy, of, in some ways, Ronald Reagan.”⁶⁹ As traditional American titans of the Cold War, Obama takes a departure from these leaders by being conscious of the fact that U.S. power is not limitless and that military might alone is an unrefined apparatus which cannot singly resolve every issue. He firmly trusts that the U.S. is extraordinarily safe from attacks at home and only nuclear terrorism and climate change present concrete threats for the foreseeable future.⁷⁰ His recent “pivot to Asia” foreign policy strategy confirms an appreciation for the central position that military and economic capacities (hard power) serve in international relations. Obama’s attention on “nation building at home” reveal an understanding that domestic stability is the cornerstone of national security and external influence. Lastly, Obama steadfastly considers the belief that the U.S. must fight meaningless wars in order to uphold its “credibility” intact is both hazardous and nonsense.⁷¹ Stephen M. Walt, professor of international affairs at Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government, contends President Obama believes there are only four main strategic options for the U.S.: realism, liberal interventionism, internationalism, and isolationism but wholly discards isolationism and considers foreign policy making revolves around selecting from the first three. Obama, like Bush, resolutely believes in U.S. exceptionalism and in the fact that American leadership of the international arena is “indispensable.” Unlike Bush, Obama is willing to recognize that limits exist to American power, but the U.S can still act when vital interests are pressured.⁷² By going against the wishes of the international community and placing an overriding importance on the might of the American military, President Bush showcased distinct components of realism with regards to his administration’s foreign policy. Oppositely, Obama’s foreign policy is not realist,

⁶⁹ Quoted in Lizza, ‘The consequentialist’, p. 46. In: J. M. Lindsay, “George W. Bush, Barack Obama and the Future of US Global Leadership,” p. 765-779.

⁷⁰ Walt, Stephen M. “Obama Was Not a Realist President.” *Foreign Policy*. Foreign Policy Magazine, 7 Apr. 2016. Web. 25 May 2016.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² S. M. Walt, “Obama Was Not a Realist President”.

as he does not consider the world in a realist mindset, did not appoint a significant number of realists to important administration positions, and never tried to negate the bipartisan consensus behind the grand strategy of U.S. liberal hegemony. True realism, according to Walt, would have entailed a punctual withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2009, unequivocal denunciation of additional N.A.T.O. expansion, and evaded any instance of “regime change.” Walt concludes by alluding to the structure and agency model by labeling the president’s voice as just one view-point where the U.S.’s interventional grand strategy is ultimately influenced by wealthy private citizens, mighty corporations, well-known think tanks, and deeply-ingrained lobbies.⁷³ In spite of this, a more precise narrative of how Obama assesses foreign policy would be pragmatism instead of realism. He pledged to judge each international issue on its particular qualities, and then attempt to concoct a distinct solution as he saw best.⁷⁴

American unipolarity

“Grand strategy” is the term which refers to the practice by which a nation’s government “matches ends and means” in the pursuit of security.⁷⁵ During the Cold War, bipolarity focused Washington’s concentration on the Soviet contest and spurred economic and security strategy in matching directions. Today, unipolarity spells less of a restraint and grants the U.S. more space to maneuver.⁷⁶ Recent U.S grand strategy has been less constraining for the nation to act unilaterally in international affairs, with slight differences between Presidents George W. Bush and Barack, which will be explored in depth in subsequent chapters dedicated to the

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ : J. M. Lindsay, "George W. Bush, Barack Obama and the Future of US Global Leadership," p. 765-779.

⁷⁵ C. Layne, "Rethinking American Grand Strategy: Hegemony or Balance of Power in the Twenty-First Century?" p. 8-28.

⁷⁶ E. B. Kapstein and M. Mastanduno, "Realism and State Strategies After the Cold War." p. 167-168.

matter. “For the first time in the modern age, the world’s most powerful state can operate on the global stage without the fear of counterbalancing competitors. The world has entered the age of American unipolarity,”⁷⁷ states Ikenberry in his analysis of post-Cold War American grand strategy. This system—forged with European and East Asian partners in the immediate years before the Cold War and structured around open economic markets, security alliances, multilateral cooperation, and democratic kinship—has stipulated the framework and effective rationality for contemporary world politics.⁷⁸ According to Ikenberry, using the term “empire” to describe modern American hegemony is technically not correct, as he favors the phrase “[an] American-led open-democratic political order” characterized by the idea that the use of force by others is inconceivable and a form of U.S.-led “security community” effectively perpetuates these conditions around the world.⁷⁹ Post-World War Two global planning was purposely crafted in this direction by the U.S. which ensured that “...Europe and the United States would be part of a single security system. Such a system would ensure that the democratic great powers would not go back to the dangerous game of strategic rivalry and balance of power politics.”⁸⁰ The United States’ victorious position in 1945 allowed the nation an extremely advantageous opportunity to set the pieces in motion from which to structure the emerging new international order and utilize the instruments available to champion its definition of a grand strategy.

Various academics have also postulated as to the expected longevity and long-term maintenance of grand strategies, such as the policies approached by the United States since the end of the Cold War. International relations theorist at Texas A&M University, Christopher Layne, argues that “grand strategies must be judged by

⁷⁷ G. J. Ikenberry, "Power and Liberal Order: America's Postwar World Order in Transition," p. 133-152.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 133-152.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 133-152.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 133-152.

the amount of security they provide; whether they are sustainable; their cost; the degree of risk they entail; and their tangible and intangible domestic effects...The time is rapidly approaching when the strategy preponderance [hegemony] will be able to pass these tests.”⁸¹ As a professed neorealist, Layne supports the U.S.’s current hegemonic agenda and predicts its effective sustainability moving forward in time. The length of the unipolar status for the United States will be determined on the efficiency of U.S. diplomacy through 3 criteria: First, Washington must continue to supervise conflicts between its global economic and security policies so as to ensure that economic clashes do not wear away security associations and ultimately prompt a balancing reaction. Second, U.S. officials must uphold encouragement in the domestic sphere for the desired policies of commitment and reassurance. This will not come painlessly, as political scientist Robert Tucker declared, “‘the great issue’ of contemporary U.S foreign policy is the ‘contradiction between the persisting desire to remain the premier global power and an ever deepening aversion to bearing the costs of this position.’”⁸² Lastly, U.S. administrations must control what can be known as the ‘arrogance of power.’ The prevailing nation in any global system faces convincing impulses to act unilaterally, to mandate rather than to confer, to advocate its principles, and to force its values upon others. In the case of the U.S., these urges are intensified by a democratic political legacy that has a propensity to instill foreign policy with the morals of its society and to reassure that moral deliberations are never far removed from the agenda in dialogues of foreign policy.⁸³ Despite all this, the United States has managed to quell the opposing forces and place its self in a position of hegemonic status. The high expenditures and perils of operating the planet as an American empire are tremendous yet the country’s

⁸¹ C. Layne, "Rethinking American Grand Strategy: Hegemony or Balance of Power in the Twenty-First Century?" p. 8-28.

⁸² E.B. Kapstein and M. Mastanduno, "Realism and State Strategies After the Cold War," p. 167-170.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 167-170.

liberal devotion to the rule of law is undiminished.”⁸⁴ From economics to security to culture, it has become more or less unfeasible for states to suppress from the “long arm of the U.S.,” or to enact with any success policies that are opposed or contrary to American inclinations or interests around the world today.⁸⁵

President George W. Bush

George Walker Bush was inaugurated as U.S. President in January of 2001 and served as the nation’s Commander-in-Chief until January of 2009. Entire scholarly publications have been dedicated to the Bush administration, but with respect to the scope and investigative boundaries of this study, special focus will only be given to the foreign policy component of his eight years in the White House. Bush’s entire foreign policy is, and forever will be, defined and associated with the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001, as they occurred less than a year into his presidency and went on to dominate the discourse of his subsequent foreign policy strategies.

It is pertinent to note that President Bush did not originally embark to reconstruct or otherwise alter U.S. foreign policy. When he announced his candidacy for the presidency in 1999, domestic matters overshadowed the political agenda; foreign policy was but a mere afterthought for the majority of American citizens.⁸⁶ Virtually every political and economic expert agrees that the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001, “changed everything” and signaled a major shift in the

⁸⁴ G.J. Ikenberry, "Power and Liberal Order: America's Postwar World Order in Transition," p. 133-152.

⁸⁵ E.B. Kapstein and M. Mastanduno, "Does Unipolarity Have a Future?" p. 464.

⁸⁶ See Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, 'American public opinion and US foreign policy, 1998' (Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Science Research). In: J.M. Lindsay, "George W. Bush, Barack Obama and the Future of US Global Leadership." p. 765-779.

foreign policy and ideological identity of the Bush administration.⁸⁷ In his analysis of both Bush and Obama's foreign policy approaches, James M. Lindsay equates Bush's resolve to combat global terrorism with the historical precedents of the U.S.'s previous ideological foes;

"Fighting terrorism became not just *a* priority, but *the* priority. Bush saw September 11 not just as a horrific act but as the manifestation of an existential threat on a par with those posed by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. This was not an ordinary geopolitical clash, but rather a struggle between good and evil that affected all the world's nations."⁸⁸

President Bush's ensuing foreign policy strategy in the M.E.N.A. was an explicit development which stemmed from examining why the terrorist attacks of 9/11 occurred in the first place.⁸⁹ Concluding that the absence of political and economic liberty in the region,⁹⁰ marginalized and alienated segments of the population were susceptible to radicalization and driven to terrorist activity as a violent, visible, and direct form of protest against the many issues plaguing the region. Accordingly, the Bush administration, swayed by his then-National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice's policies regarding "democratizing" the Middle East, and caught up in a larger post-Cold War liberal euphoria, manifested in the September 2002 U.S. National Security Strategy, professed the 20th century had, so far, demonstrated there was only;

"a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free-enterprise...America must stand *firmly* [emphasis added] for the nonnegotiable demands of human dignity: the rule of law; limits on the absolute power of the

⁸⁷ Cakmak, Cenap. "American Foreign Policy and September 11." *Perceptions* (2003): n. pag. *Center for Strategic Research*. Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Spring 2003. Web. 17 June 2016.

⁸⁸ J.M. Lindsay, "George W. Bush, Barack Obama and the Future of US Global Leadership." p. 765-779.

⁸⁹ Alessandri, Emiliano, Oz Hassan, and Ted Reinart. "U.S. Democracy Promotion from Bush to Obama." *Euspring Working Paper*. No. 1 (2015): n. pag. Web. 23 May 2016.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

state; free speech; freedom of worship; equal justice; respect for women; religious and ethnic tolerance; and respect for private property.”⁹¹

Echoed in Bush’s second presidential inaugural address in 2005, Bush states that “the best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world...we will encourage reform in other governments by making clear that success in our relations will require the decent treatment of their own people.”⁹² With this declaration, the Bush administration justified its utilization of unipolar military power to mediate right and wrong in the implementation of human rights and global peace.⁹³ This principle was perhaps nowhere as clearly defined as in Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice’s 2005 speech at the American University in Cairo-- she states;

“We should all look to a future when every government respects the will of its citizens -- because the ideal of democracy is universal. For 60 years, my country, the United States, pursued stability at the expense of democracy in this region here in the Middle East -- and we achieved neither. Now, we are taking a different course. We are supporting the democratic aspirations of all people.”

In a drastic turn from American leaders prior to September 11, 2001, attitudes that viewed U.S. leadership, and especially its use of force restricted to protecting limited and conventional core American interests, Bush has instead expressed a sweeping policy that calls for something very much, in the words of Professor of International Affairs at Columbia University, Robert Jervis, like an empire.⁹⁴ This “American empire” forms the ideological basis for what has since

⁹¹ The White House, 2002, (Alessandri, Hassan, Reinart, 2015)

⁹² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ceSJLivxk2k>. Dir. Buyout Footage Historic HD Film Archive. Perf. George W. Bush. *YouTube*. YouTube, 20 Jan. 2005. Web. 11 June 2016.

⁹³ G.J. Ikenberry, "Power and Liberal Order: America's Postwar World Order in Transition," p. 133-152.

⁹⁴ Jervis, Robert. "Understanding the Bush Doctrine." *Political Science Quarterly* 118.3 (2003): 365-388. Web. 1 June 2016.

been described as the Bush Doctrine. In a televised address to the nation in the hours after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, Bush stated, "We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them,"⁹⁵ clearly announcing to the world his resolve by any means necessary to wage his war on global terrorism. Bush's global "War on Terror" as it became to be known, served as the theoretical justification for his succeeding foreign policy strategies characterized by numerous military interventions, unilateral foreign relations, and a strong desire to impose democratization. Genuinely believing the ideological justification and greater purpose of this foreign policy, Bush stated, "We understand history has called us into action, and we are not going to miss that opportunity to make the world more peaceful and more free."⁹⁶

Following the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the Bush administration progressively outlined U.S. security necessities in terms of the U.S.'s ability to influence the domestic political structures and societies of failed and menacing state, as demonstrated by two regional conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq as a central factor of the American reaction to the strategic danger presented by international terrorism.⁹⁷ The Bush Doctrine contains four major central elements. First, a firm conviction in the importance of a state's domestic establishment in shaping its foreign policy and the related conclusion that this offers a suitable and appropriate time to change international politics in accordance with U.S. interests. Second, the opinion that menacing threats can only be overcome by new and forceful policies—most notably preventative war. Third, a disposition to act unilaterally when

⁹⁵ Bush, 'Address to the nation'. In: J.M. Lindsay, "George W. Bush, Barack Obama and the Future of US Global Leadership." p. 765-779.

⁹⁶ "President, Vice President Discuss the Middle East," White House Press Release, 21 March 2002, In: R. Jervis, "Understanding the Bush Doctrine," p. 365-388.

⁹⁷ Monten, Jonathan. "The Roots of the Bush Doctrine: Power, Nationalism, and Democracy Promotion in U.S. Strategy." *International Security* Spring 29.4 (2005): p. 112-156. *The MIT Press*. Web. 4 June 2016.

required. Lastly, a prevailing idea that peace and stability oblige the U.S. to impose its primacy in international affairs.⁹⁸ Ikenberry adds to this list by arguing,

“...[the] Bush doctrine of preemption, under which the United States claims a new right to use force ‘to act against emerging threats before they are fully formed.’⁹⁹ The Bush administration also warns other great powers not to challenge America’s military preeminence. The United States insists that it will not accept the rise of a ‘peer competitor’...in the Bush view, no one should want to try: everyone benefits in a world where a single superpower maintains the peace.”¹⁰⁰

Indeed, in Bush’s eyes, his aggressive approach to foreign policy was not only best for America, but in the rest of the world’s best interest as well. However, this has since been proven to be not the case. Ikenberry points out that the Bush’s administration’s “War on Terror”, military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, increased military budgets, and controversial 2002 National Security Strategy have all shoved American dominance under the microscope—and, in doing so, severely unsettled much of the world. Contrary to Bush’s intended goals for his foreign policy, anti-Americanism is a growing attribute of politics in many regions of the world today, in effect having the opposite intended consequence he envisioned.¹⁰¹ But on the other hand, if replacing the Iraqi political regime was predicted to produce democracy and stability in the Middle East, dissuade authoritarian leaders, invigorate reformers around the globe, and validate the U.S.’s readiness to provide a definition of what it believes to be “world order,” whether other states like it or not, then as part of a greater mission, the Bush Doctrine holds true.¹⁰² The current conflicts in the area and the rise of the Islamic State in the regions today ultimately

⁹⁸ R. Jervis, "Understanding the Bush Doctrine," p. 365-388.

⁹⁹ Office of the President, 2002, Ikenberry, 2016.

¹⁰⁰ G.J. Ikenberry, "Power and Liberal Order: America's Postwar World Order in Transition," p. 133-152.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 133-152.

¹⁰² R. Jervis, "Understanding the Bush Doctrine," p. 365-388.

reveal the inherent structural and ideological problems with the Bush Doctrine and Bush's global "War on Terror."

Perhaps the recipe for why these policies failed can be found in the five fundamental assertions and assumptions for Bush's "War on Terror." First, America's global and military superiority justified an unprecedented capacity to wage war abroad, even simultaneously on different fronts if need be. Second, the U.S.'s hesitance to respond militarily to terrorist attacks for the last two decades had emboldened Al-Qaeda and other insurgency groups to attack the U.S. in the first place. Third, Cold War dogmas of deterrence and containment would not be successful in the fight against global terrorism. Fourth, terrorists cannot function without illicit state support. Last, alliances and multinational organizations could in some occasions aid the U.S. in its fight against terrorism, but they are not crucial.¹⁰³ Bush and his administration were certain that because they were supporting the interests of their allies as well, allies would rush to their cause.¹⁰⁴ This illustrates a glimpse of the mindfulness for the need of multilateral approaches to foreign policy by the Bush administration but also a willingness to bypass this strategy if necessary. An almost-unanimous U.S. Congress allowed Bush "to use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, or harbored such organizations or persons,"¹⁰⁵ demonstrating the widespread support Bush had in his decision to militarily enter Afghanistan. However, the invasion of Afghanistan was but the first chapter of Bush's overall grand strategy for the region. Most U.S. allies assumed Bush was following an Afghanistan-only policy. He was, in fact, practicing an Afghanistan-first strategy.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ J.M. Lindsay, "George W. Bush, Barack Obama and the Future of US Global Leadership." p. 765-779.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 765-779.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 765-779.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 765-779.

With the pretense that the regime of Saddam Hussein possessed nuclear weapons and proved a direct and credible threat to U.S. security, Bush launched a military invasion of Iraq in March of 2003. According to Washington Post reporter Bob Woodward, the Bush administration had deliberated whether to invade Iraq as soon as 2001 in the immediate aftermath of September 11.¹⁰⁷ Bush ultimately decided against it as an initial plan, but,

“Saddam Hussein embodied the convergence of Bush’s three fears—terrorism, tyrants and technologies of mass destruction. Although US intelligence agencies had not found any evidence linking Saddam Hussein to Al-Qaeda... the United States could not wait, as Condoleezza Rice put it, ‘for the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud’.”¹⁰⁸

The threat of Hussein possessing nuclear weapons justified the need for a second American intervention in the span of 2 years, but as soon as it became apparent that the Iraqi nuclear program was not nearly as advanced or dangerous as originally claimed by the Bush administration, Bush needed an alternative validation for U.S. involvement in Iraq. “Despite the work of 1,400 people and an investment of more than US\$1 billion, no nuclear, chemical or biological weapons were discovered... with no W.M.D.’s to be found, Bush increasingly justified the war in terms of promoting democracy in Iraq and eventually the rest of the Arab world.”¹⁰⁹ This allowed Bush to frame the narrative to his advantage and granted his administration a brutally effective rhetorical apparatus for discrediting domestic critics. By switching the focus away from nuclear weapons, Bush diverted scrutiny from the

¹⁰⁷ See Woodward, *Bush at War*, Ch. 6. In: J.M. Lindsay, "George W. Bush, Barack Obama and the Future of US Global Leadership." p. 765-779.

¹⁰⁸ CNN, 'Late edition with Wolf Blitzer', 8 Sept. 2002, <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0209/08/le.00.html>, accessed 23 May 2011. In: J.M. Lindsay, "George W. Bush, Barack Obama and the Future of US Global Leadership." p. 765-779.

¹⁰⁹ J.M. Lindsay, "George W. Bush, Barack Obama and the Future of US Global Leadership." p. 765-779.

weapons of mass destruction topic and compelled challengers either to support the intervention or to explain why they fought the expansion of democracy.”¹¹⁰

It soon became apparent that the Bush Doctrine contains some intrinsic difficulties and contradictions in its interpretation of U.S. grand strategy. Three major flaws started to emerge concerning Bush’s global “War on Terror.” First, the Bush administration had no tangible blueprint to achieve such lofty objectives. Democratization is a noble endeavor but without a clear and concise strategy, the process could cause more harm than good. Second, democracy promotion habitually clashed with more central U.S. foreign policy goals, like combating terrorism. A large number of the allies in the “War on Terror” were autocracies and requiring they accept democratic reform gambled losing their collaboration dealing with terrorism. Third, democracy, in theory, could elect governments and leaders potentially unfriendly to U.S. interests, such as when Palestinians voted Hamas into power in 2006, an outcome which the Bush administration falsely considered utterly impossible.¹¹¹ Critics of the Bush Doctrine also contend that preventative wars are seldom required because deterrence can be as efficient and many dangers are either embellished or can be dealt with firm yet less militarized strategies.¹¹² Iconic German statesman and early proponent of realpolitik, Otto von Bismarck, famously described preventive wars as “suicide for fear of death,” and, although the imbalance of muscle between the U.S. and its foes makes this no longer the case, the debate for such confrontations suggests a high level of certainty that the future will be dismal unless they are carried out with the credence that a state will be

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 765-779.

¹¹¹ Steven R. Weisman, ‘Rice admits US underestimated Hamas strength’, *New York Times*, 30 Jan. 2006. In: J.M. Lindsay, "George W. Bush, Barack Obama and the Future of US Global Leadership." p. 765-779.

¹¹² R. Jervis, "Understanding the Bush Doctrine," p. 365-388.

worse than the likely outcome brought upon about by war.¹¹³ Best summarized by President Bush's successor and stark critic, Barack Obama, Obama muses on his predication of what Bush's policies will ultimately spell for the region;

"I know that even a successful war against Iraq will require a U.S. occupation of undetermined length, at undetermined cost, with undetermined consequences. I know that an invasion of Iraq without a clear rationale and without strong international support will only fan the flames of the Middle East, and encourage the worst, rather than the best, impulses of the Arab World, and strengthen the recruitment arm of Al-Qaeda."¹¹⁴

Obamas assessment of Bush's unilateral, over-militarized, and preemptive approaches to the problems facing the Middle East have unfortunately proven to be the case in the present-day situation plaguing the M.E.N.A. Obama demonstrates an awareness for the need to shift U.S. foreign policy strategy in the region and, as we will explore in the next chapters, how effective he ultimately was in this endeavor.

As echoed in Condoleezza Rice's speech at the American University in Cairo 2005, Bush's administration had valued political stability at the expense of liberal ideals such as democracy and human rights. By recognizing the fault in this strategy, Bush is actively straying away from his neoconservative principles. Ikenberry expands this notion one step further;

"neo-conservatives in Washington...fail to appreciate the role of cooperative institutions and multilateral rules in the exercise and preservation of American power...The costs of military actions—in lives, treasure, and lost legitimacy—is greater than neo-conservatives realize. The American people are not seized with the desire to run colonies or a global empire. So, even in a unipolar era, there are limits on American imperial pretensions."¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 365-388.

¹¹⁴ Obama, Barack. *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream*. New York: Crown, 2006. p. 295.

¹¹⁵ G. J. Ikenberry, "Power and Liberal Order: America's Postwar World Order in Transition," p. 133-152.

Bush's failure to recognize the fatigue and war-weariness his foreign policy placed upon the American public ultimately allowed for the rise and support of a candidate preaching restraint and responsibility on the world stage. Barack Obama in this sense owed his political achievement to George W. Bush. Obama was a relatively unknown Illinois state legislator when he utilized an anti-war protest in Chicago in October of 2002 to decry Bush's progression towards a "dumb war."¹¹⁶ Obama tactfully maintained that he had resisted the war from the beginning, thus differentiating himself from the rest of the candidates. Although his official foreign policy qualifications were inconsiderable, he successfully disputed that his better judgement outplayed his rival's superior experience.¹¹⁷

The Bush administration's willingness to bypass the international community's mechanisms for unilateral action was perhaps nowhere better illustrated than the U.S.'s actions concerning N.A.T.O. in light of the intervention in Afghanistan. In the immediate wake of the 9/11 attacks, N.A.T.O. deliberated the invocation of Article V of its charter, which states that an attack on a member state is regarded as an attack on all. Then Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, dispatched his deputy, Paul Wolfowitz, to assure member states that inciting Article V would not be necessary, since "the mission would define the coalition," expressly indicating the U.S.'s willingness and resolve to combat terrorism in a strict unilateral fashion.¹¹⁸ The Bush military offensive in Iraq and overall indifference for international laws and regulations, which it deemed was rationalized by America's

¹¹⁶ Quoted in Greg Bryane and Jane B. Vaughn, '300 attend rally against Iraq war', *Chicago Daily Herald*, 3 Oct. 2002. In: J.M. Lindsay, "George W. Bush, Barack Obama and the Future of US Global Leadership." p. 765-779.

¹¹⁷ See James M. Lindsay, 'National security, the electoral connection, and policy choice', in Martin A. Levin, Daniel DiSalvo and Martin Shapiro, eds., *Getting past no from Clinton to Bush to Obama* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011)., In: J.M. Lindsay, "George W. Bush, Barack Obama and the Future of US Global Leadership." p. 765-779.

¹¹⁸ Hirsch, "Bush and the World" In: C. Cakmak, "American Foreign Policy and September 11."

undisputed hegemonic status, has launched an outburst of bitterness and condemnation throughout the democratic world. The Bush administration risked diminishing credibility, reputation, admiration, and political support when it was regarded to sidestep or discredit the rules and norms of the liberal system. This instable geopolitical terrain has accordingly fashioned a “security trap” for the U.S.—when America tries to resolve security issues by implementing power and employing force, it sparks opposition and aggression that ultimately makes it harder for the United States to realize its security objectives.¹¹⁹ According to Ikenberry, there are three distinct ways to solve Bush’s “security trap”: First, the U.S. must transmit an unmistakable signal to the rest of the world that it is again obliging itself to upholding and functioning within a rule-based international system. Second, the U.S. needs to search for alternative methods to form decisions on the use of force within larger collective organizations, particularly the U.N. and N.A.T.O. Third, the U.S. has to verbalize an applicable and inclusive concept of international order.¹²⁰

Some critics have put forth the ideological notion that democratization efforts in the Middle East are doomed from the start citing irreconcilable differences between the Arab World and liberal ideals. Jervis challenges this discriminatory theory by postulating that, “liberating Iraq will not only produce democracy there, but it will also encourage democracy in the rest of the Middle East. There is no incompatibility between Islam or any other culture and democracy.”¹²¹ President Bush in a speech from the White House in 2002 proclaims that the concepts of “prosperity and freedom and dignity are not just American hopes, or Western hopes. They are universal, human hopes. And even in the violence and turmoil of the Middle East, America believes those hopes have the power to transform lives

¹¹⁹ Ikenberry, G. John. "America's Security Trap." *US Foreign Policy*. By Michael Cox and Doug Stokes. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008. p. 426-431. Print.

¹²⁰ G.J. Ikenberry, "America's Security Trap." p. 426-431.

¹²¹ R. Jervis, "Understanding the Bush Doctrine," p. 365-388.

and nations.”¹²² The current quagmire facing the M.E.N.A. today is a direct result of the policy failures and shortsightedness of the Bush administration and cannot be so simply attributed to false and bigoted perceived notions of religious or cultural obstacles to universal ideals.

Difference Between Presidents

Under the constructivist theory umbrella, focus must be paid to the individual presidential styles of both Presidents Bush and Obama and their respective administrations. Eloquently summarized by Snow and Haney in their American Policy in a New Era, “trying to find the right mix of hard and soft power, the right levers to pull and buttons to push, the right mix of carrots and sticks, is the essence of statecraft.”¹²³ How each man ultimately reaches the decisions which shape policy conclusions is a direct result of this process.

Bush employed the formalistic model of governance where decisions are sorted upward through the decision progression so that only a handful of choices ultimately reach the President’s desk for deliberation, and the decisions are passed downward through this same system.¹²⁴ On the other hand, Obama follows more of a collegial model which attempts to amass a group of key advisors, aides, and cabinet officials with generally like-minded, but not duplicate, opinions on policy but, crucially, are able to work as one cohesive unit. Obama lies at the center of power and ideas within his foreign policy team. These highly qualified experts are able to provide differing opinions or recommendations while simultaneously unifying behind official policies once decisions have been reached.¹²⁵ Also an integral part of these decision-making processes, various forms of constraints and

¹²² Bush, George W. "President Bush Calls for New Palestinian Leadership." The Rose Garden. United States, Washington, D.C. 24 June 2002. *The Guardian*. Web. 10 June 2016.

¹²³ D.M. Snow and P.J. Haney, *American Foreign Policy in a New Era*, p. 426.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

restrictions play a significant role in Presidential strategy formulation. Presidents assume office within a framework of previous history, and one of the limitations included in that experience is a linkage of past programs and policies.¹²⁶

Extrapolating on the ideological and connections to the American political system, Snow and Haney deliberate,

“If presidents come from the same party as his/her predecessor, new office holder may support most, even all, of the existing policies. However, if new president is member of opposite party...existing policy may represent major obstacle to overcome. Especially true in policy areas where the two parties are divided fundamentally along ideological, partisan lines and in which the new president campaigned on reversing policies by preceding incumbent.”¹²⁷

Assistant Professor of Defense Studies at King’s College in London, Dr. Andreas Krieg, argues that the transition from the Bush administration to the Obama administration in the Middle East is emblematic of the larger shifts evidenced in the American public. After two terms of offensive and rugged U.S. foreign policy under the Bush administration, Obama’s preliminary approach to foreign and security policies seemed more concentrated on the domestic concerns afflicting the U.S. in 2008, namely the economic recession.¹²⁸ After funding two major military operations, financed principally in terms of economic sacrifice by US taxpayers and human loss by American armed service personnel, Obama answered to growing calls for austerity and globalization around the globe by necessitating all future U.S military interventions must be both restricted to safeguard only imperative U.S. interests abroad and executed by a less-costly, lesser military force acting in full multilateral cooperation with allies.¹²⁹ However, this does not mean

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 108.

¹²⁷ D.M. Snow and P.J. Haney, *American Foreign Policy in a New Era*, p. 108.

¹²⁸ Krieg, Andreas. "Externalizing the Burden of War: The Obama Doctrine and US Foreign Policy in the Middle East." *International Affairs* 92.1 (2016): p. 97-113. Web.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 97-113.

Obama is a strict adherent to multilateral collaboration in requirement for U.S. interventions abroad. As stated in his words,

“...I’m convinced that it will almost always be in our strategic interest to act multilaterally rather than unilaterally when we use force around the world.... but our immediate safety can’t be held hostage to the desire for international consensus; if we have to go it alone, then the American people stand ready to pay any price and bear any burden to protect our country.”¹³⁰

It is important to note President Obama’s acknowledgement of the benefits to multilateral military interventions but interesting to see he is entirely willing to act unilaterally, and count on the support of the American public, if the need for one-sided actions arise.

Criticisms of Obama stem from his radical denunciation of Bush’s opinion of how the world operates. Where Bush indirectly refuted the assertion that globalization was reshaping international politics, Obama accepts it as a fundamental truth. A globalized world has created a plethora of threats that traverse national frontiers. Terrorism is only the most evident of a group that includes nuclear arms proliferation and climate change. American might, though immense, is inadequate to meet all these tests unaided. In Obama’s own words, “America cannot meet the threats of this century alone.”¹³¹ This coldblooded political calculation on his part revealed Iraq had rendered democracy promotion toxic and hostile to many Americans. Yet, it also showcases his estimation that democracy promotion promoted elections over what he considered the building blocks of democracy—security and economic opportunity.¹³² Obama’s views on

¹³⁰ B. Obama, *The Audacity of Hope*, p. 308-309.

¹³¹ Obama, ‘Renewing American leadership’, p. 4. In: J.M. Lindsay, "George W. Bush, Barack Obama and the Future of US Global Leadership." p. 765-779.

¹³² J.M. Lindsay, "George W. Bush, Barack Obama and the Future of US Global Leadership." p. 765-779.

international interventions involved a delicate balance of responsibility and duty, manifested in his interview by Charlie Rose for the Public Broadcasting Service,

“...the United States as the world’s singular super power has an obligation in all areas of the world where there’s mayhem, and war, and conflict, for us to try to be a positive force. But that does not mean that we should be deploying troops everywhere where a crisis is taking place...if and when it does not directly relate to U.S. core interests, but rather, it’s important for us to use diplomacy, and work with other countries, and build coalitions to try to resolve these issues.”¹³³

President Obama is aware of the limitations and negative components an overextended American foreign policy entails but crucially declares the U.S. will assume that role if need be. As evidenced by Obama himself in his 2006 manifesto, “...there will be times when we must again play the role of the world’s reluctant sheriff. This will not change—nor should it.”¹³⁴

Despite common perceptions of the vast differences between the foreign policy strategies of Presidents Bush and Obama, the fact of the matter is their differences are not so clearly defined and lie closer in a blurred, gray area in between. In his treatise on the United States under the Obama administration, Dr. Matthias Waechter argues, “...Obama didn’t condemn the Iraq intervention for reasons of principle, norms and morals, but because it constituted for him an inept and blundering use of American power, alienating allies and denigrating the reputation of the United States in the world.”¹³⁵ It was not so much the why, but rather the how which Obama did not agree with concerning Bush’s management of the Iraq invasion in 2003. This study contends that the actual similarities between

¹³³ Obama, Barack. "President Barack Obama." Interview by Charlie Rose. *Charlie Rose*. PBS, 19 Apr. 2016. Web. 31 May 2016.

¹³⁴ B. Obama, *The Audacity of Hope*, p. 306.

¹³⁵ Waechter, Matthias. "Between Rapprochement and Alienation: The United States under the Obama Administration and Europe." *L'Europe En Formation Summer Quarterly*. № 360 (2011): p. 5-12. Print.

the two presidents far exceed the differences in theoretical approach to American foreign policy and overall U.S. grand strategy. Both leaders, like many presidents before them, have been immense proponents of American exceptionalism. Historically, this principle of American politics has signified "the perception that the United States differs qualitatively from other developed nations, because of its unique origins, national credo, historical evolution, and distinctive political and religious institutions."¹³⁶ Different from conventional great powers, U.S. political identity has been arranged around a specific model of the national purpose, evidenced in foreign policy as the notion that Americans are "a chosen people," a selected nation piloted by a "special providence" to exhibit the practicability and expanse of the democratic institutions and tents that consist the "American experiment."¹³⁷

Jonathan Monten, Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science the University of Oklahoma, cites two distinct theories in explaining how the U.S. views and should project its role throughout the world: Exemplarism and vindicationism. Exemplarists contend that the United States ought to endorse democracy by advancing a benign archetype of a successful liberal-democratic state. By centering on its own domestic political and social stability, the U.S. is able to "better serve the cause of universal democracy by setting an example rather than by imposing a model."¹³⁸ Conversely, vindicationism claims the U.S. must move past example and play an active role in upholding its influence throughout the globe. Proponents of vindicationism believe exemplarism is too idealistic and unviable in today's international arena. The U.S. needs to accelerate the course of

¹³⁶ Harold Hongju Koh, "Foreword: On American Exceptionalism," *Stanford Law Review*, Vol. 55, No. 5 (May 2003), pp. 1470-1528. In: J. Monten, "The Roots of the Bush Doctrine: Power, Nationalism, and Democracy Promotion in U.S. Strategy," p. 112-156.

¹³⁷ J. Monten, "The Roots of the Bush Doctrine: Power, Nationalism, and Democracy Promotion in U.S. Strategy," p. 112-156.

¹³⁸ Mead, *Special Providence*, p. 182. In: J. Monten, "The Roots of the Bush Doctrine: Power, Nationalism, and Democracy Promotion in U.S. Strategy," p. 112-156.

democratization, through interventions and military actions if need be. Controversially, “American power is less likely to be misused or corrupted than that of any other government, both because American leaders are typically devoted to liberal-democratic morals and because of the restrictions enacted by the American political system's institutional diffusion of power.”¹³⁹ This is an extreme example for American exceptionalism as American leaders are just as susceptible to various forms of poor governance, corruption, and other forms of political malpractice. A delicate balance of deciding between the two more accurately explains these phenomena and their effects upon U.S. foreign policy.

Bush Legacy Upon Obama Administration

Due to the longevity and sluggish extent of President Bush’s military interventions in both Afghanistan and Iraq, President Obama’s foreign policy strategies were irrevocably intertwined with those of his predecessor. While the two foreign commitments resulted in consequences Bush had not anticipated, namely drawn-out and costly occupations that revealed the confines of American power.¹⁴⁰ In his earliest presidential campaign, President Obama declared that he simply did not wish to pull out from Iraq but he also sought to “end the mindset that got us into war in the first place.”¹⁴¹ In his own words the “invasion of Iraq was a mistake” and he aspired to direct his foreign policy strategies directly against those of President Bush.¹⁴² For Obama, the incursion in Iraq was a distraction from the struggle against the terrorists who attacked the U.S. on 9/11, and inept execution of the war by the Bush administration multiplied the strategic mistake of deciding to wage war in the first place.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Huntington, *American Politics*, p. 257. In: J. Monten, "The Roots of the Bush Doctrine: Power, Nationalism, and Democracy Promotion in U.S. Strategy," p. 112-156.

¹⁴⁰ J.M. Lindsay, "George W. Bush, Barack Obama and the Future of US Global Leadership." p. 765-779

¹⁴¹ S. M. Walt, "Obama Was Not a Realist President".

¹⁴² Obama, Barack. "President Barack Obama." Interview by Charlie Rose. 31 May 2016.

¹⁴³ B. Obama, "Renewing American Leadership," p. 4.

On a similar note to Waechter's interpretation of Obama's sentiments not disagreeing with the reasons to go to war, but rather the manner in which they were carried out, Obama confides, "and for me, as for most of us, the effect of September 11 felt profoundly personal."¹⁴⁴ The Bush administration responded to the unconventional attacks of 9/11 with conventional thinking of the past, largely viewing problems as state-based and principally amenable to military solutions in its strategy concerning the invasion of Afghanistan and their goal to topple the Taliban regime which supported Al-Qaeda.¹⁴⁵ In his 2007 editorial for *Foreign Affairs* magazine, President Obama elaborates on his beliefs concerning Afghanistan; "success in Afghanistan is still possible...we should pursue an integrated strategy that reinforces our troops in Afghanistan and works to remove the limitations placed by some NATO allies on their forces."¹⁴⁶ Stressing the importance of burden-sharing, a key element of "smart power," Obama reiterates his ideological and procedural differences from the unilateral, preemptive, and in-your-face foreign policies characteristic of the Bush administration.

According to Dr. Betts's analysis, the sole plausible risk for explicit attack on the U.S. today comes from Al-Qaeda and is the principle argument why counterterrorism ranks so high among the U.S.'s central strategic urgency.¹⁴⁷ However, it has not all been smooth sailing with regards to Obama's inheritance of the conflict in Afghanistan. Scrutinizing President Obama's foreign policy tactics in Afghanistan today, it is difficult to label his policies as anything less than precarious. In his first year in office in 2008, Obama contradicted his presidential campaign pledges to reduce American military presence in Afghanistan and dispatched an additional 60,000 troops in a last-ditch attempt to topple the Taliban and allow for a dignified American retreat. As of this writing in 2016, the Taliban control more

¹⁴⁴ B. Obama, *The Audacity of Hope*, p. 291.

¹⁴⁵ B. Obama, "Renewing American Leadership," p. 4.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁴⁷ R.K. Betts, "American Strategy: Grand vs. Grandiose." p. 31-42.

ground in Afghanistan than at any point since 2001 and the U.S. is militarily-obligated to Afghanistan for the unforeseeable future.¹⁴⁸

Obama Foreign Policy

As a departure from the abrasive rash military grand strategy employed by the Bush administration, Obama champions a new foreign policy deemed “smart power.” Smart power is a phrase created by political scientist and former Assistant Secretary of Defense of the Clinton Administration, Joseph Nye, to explain the troubles and tactics facing U.S. foreign policy in the 21st century.¹⁴⁹ It is comprised of a special combination and departure from conventional hard and soft power aspects of foreign policy strategies. Smart power represents a more restrained, detailed, and refined form of hard power. Characterized by such schemes such as maintaining a “light footprint”, such as the increased use of unmanned military drones and a severely-reduced physical military presence around the world, “leading from behind” such was the case in the 2011 military intervention to topple Muammar Gaddafi’s authoritarian regime in Libya led in large part by the U.N. Security Council and N.A.T.O., and a new emphasis on the depending on allies and strategic partnerships to shift from burden-sharing to burden-shifting for regional security concerning U.S. allies.¹⁵⁰ The other component of “smart power,” Obama tailors soft power to include ‘asymmetrical’ and trans-governmental relations by collaborating with the distinctive actors of the public para-governmental sphere (C.E.O.’s, institutions, N.G.O.’s, private citizens, etc.) Utilizing smart power to redistribute the spheres of influence and action of U.S. foreign policy, in Obama’s eyes, means an gradual and eventual retreat from the Middle East. This can be realistically attained by a fundamental denunciation of

¹⁴⁸ S. M. Walt, "Obama Was Not a Realist President".

¹⁴⁹ Kandel, Maya, and Maud Quessard-Salvaing. "AMERICAN SMART POWER STRATEGIES: Redefining Leadership in a Post-American World." *ÉTUDE DE L'IRSEM* 32 (2013): 1-2. *MIMMOC*. Web. 10 June 2016.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1-2.

military power, placing an added emphasis back on diplomacy, replacing the military with other channels of influence, above all, a complete reversal and urgency of turning increasingly to allies.¹⁵¹ Three distinct conclusions can be reached from President Obama's utilization of "smart power" in his viewpoint on U.S. grand strategy. First, "smart power" as a strategic approach indicates a return to a type of realism in U.S. foreign policy. Second, the methods equipped by Obama for achieving foreign policy goals are considerably more delicate and refined than under Bush. Lastly, "smart power" may appear like President Obama prefers inaction over deliberate action at all costs, and might also sometimes lead to unseen results, such as the case today with the ongoing Civil War in Syria and the proliferation of the Islamic State across Iraq.¹⁵²

Perhaps most important to the implementation of Obama's push for "smart power" in projecting U.S. foreign policy contingencies, is the theme of burden-sharing. By sharing the financial, military, and human costs associated with interventions more evenly among allies, Obama believes this fairer method will alleviate many pressures and criticisms which have plagued U.S. grand strategy, both at home and abroad, and only serve to the U.S.'s advantage moving forward. Simultaneous military incursions in Afghanistan and Iraq, set against the backdrop of the 2008 global financial recession, wreaked havoc on the U.S. federal monetary reserves. Dr. Betts argues that "the debt crisis highlights a paradox: With national security spending far higher proportionally than that of its allies, Washington borrows heavily in order to play the role of leader."¹⁵³ Obama realized the unfeasibility of this assessment and vowed to shift his foreign policy plans accordingly;

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 1-2.

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 1-2.

¹⁵³ R.K. Betts, "American Strategy: Grand vs. Grandiose." p. 31-42.

“[in order] to renew American leadership in the world, I intend to rebuild the alliances, partnerships, and institutions necessary to confront common threats and enhance common security. [These changes will not] come by bullying other countries...It will come when we convince other governments and peoples that they, too, have a stake in effective partnerships.”¹⁵⁴

By convincing American allies and partners to partake in burden-sharing, especially in the Middle East, Obama hopes to lessen American material commitments to the region in an effort to stress the importance of responsible distribution by other powers, while at the same, lessening the enormous strains involved with maintaining a vast international presence by the U.S.

Another example of Obama’s adoption of “smart power” is the president’s application of military power in diminished capacities in order to achieve less flashy goals than Bush, except in a lot more places.¹⁵⁵ Provided the killing of Osama bin Laden, the ruin of Al-Qaeda management in drone assaults and other military operations, and the passage of time without a major assault within the United States, there is ample reason to rejoice the decline of the organization. As long as sections of the “Al-Qaeda tapeworm survive,” however, and as long as young Muslim men throughout the globe incensed by American actions can be engaged, the group will not vanish and keep struggling. Deteriorated as it may be for now, prolonged detection by U.S. armed forces will continue to be needed indeterminately.¹⁵⁶ For critics who condemn Obama’s track record and their perceived belief that his hesitance and pacifism to deal with terrorists in an appropriate matter is a sign of weakness, Obama responds by brashly citing, “...if the notion is that I have been hesitant to use military force, and the people doubt my

¹⁵⁴ B. Obama, "Renewing American Leadership," p. 4.

¹⁵⁵ S. M. Walt, "Obama Was Not a Realist President".

¹⁵⁶ R. K. Betts, "American Strategy: Grand vs. Grandiose," p. 31-42

willingness to do so...they should ask Bin Laden.”¹⁵⁷ The fact that Obama quintupled the amount of strikes by armed drones against suspected terrorist sanctuaries in Pakistan and elsewhere, discredit the notions that he is a non-violent or passive leader.¹⁵⁸

Case Studies Around the Middle East/North Africa

Israel

In the case of Israel, a traditionally conservative ally of the U.S. since the period of the nation-state’s creation in the post-World War Two years, Presidents Bush and Obama took different paths in dealing with the highly complex and volatile Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In a speech made in the Rose Garden at the White House in 2002, President Bush describes the situation by stating, “Israeli citizens will continue to be victimized by terrorists, and so Israel will continue to defend herself,” justifying Israeli expansionist actions in the Gaza region.¹⁵⁹ Continuing by expressing sympathy with the Israeli plight, Bush goes on to declare that he “can understand the deep anger and anguish of the Israeli people. You have a right to a normal life; you have a right to security; and I deeply believe that you need a reformed, responsible Palestinian partner to achieve that security.”¹⁶⁰ Showing signs of favoritism and a preferential attitude towards Israel, Bush championed the best solution for the conflict was a two-state solution. “My vision is two states, living side by side in peace and security...peace requires a new and different Palestinian

¹⁵⁷ B. Obama, "President Barack Obama." Interview by Charlie Rose. 31 May 2016.

¹⁵⁸ Data on US drone strikes can be found at the New America Foundation, ‘Year of the drone’, <http://counterterrorism.newamerica.net/drones>, accessed 23 May 2011. [FROM] Lindsay, James M. "George W. Bush, Barack Obama and the Future of US Global Leadership." *International Affairs* 87.4 (2011): 765-79. Web. 6 June 2016.

¹⁵⁹ Bush, George W. "President Bush Calls for New Palestinian Leadership." The Rose Garden. United States, Washington, D.C. 24 June 2002. *The Guardian*. Web. 10 June 2016.

¹⁶⁰ Bush, George W. "President Bush Calls for New Palestinian Leadership." The Rose Garden. United States, Washington, D.C. 24 June 2002. *The Guardian*. Web. 10 June 2016.

leadership, so that a Palestinian state can be born.¹⁶¹ Despite the improbability of obtaining such lofty results and antagonizing Palestinian authorities, President Bush was a strong proponent for a two-state system as a means to stopping the decades long struggle. President Obama, on the other hand, employed a more realist stance towards Israel and demanded stricter compliance by the nation towards U.S. mandated policies. Evidenced by his May 2009 mandate that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu place a halt to all Israeli settlement construction in Palestinian-held areas.¹⁶² Unfortunately for Obama's success record, his foreign policy in Israel has been distinguished by good intentions but international embarrassments: Israeli settlements have magnified, Gaza was repeatedly attacked, moderate Palestinians were shunned from political discussions, Hamas became fiercer, and the two-state solution championed by President George W. Bush is now highly improbable.¹⁶³ In fact, Israel refused to freeze settlement construction, and in late 2010 Obama conceded and dropped his demand.¹⁶⁴ Perhaps most notoriously, Obama's Secretary of State John Kerry's highly-mediatized and harsh-criticized handling of a last-ditched effort to strike a deal between the two sides in 2014 is most emblematic of the larger failures of Obama's foreign policy strategies in the region. Leading Israeli liberal journalist at Haaretz, Ari Shavit, argued that Kerry's handling of the discussions had been "reckless" and,

"the Obama administration proved once again that it is the best friend of its enemies, and the biggest enemy of its friends. The man of peace from Massachusetts [Secretary of State John Kerry] intercepted with his own hands the

¹⁶¹ Bush, George W. "President Bush Calls for New Palestinian Leadership." The Rose Garden. United States, Washington, D.C. 24 June 2002. *The Guardian*. Web. 10 June 2016.

¹⁶² Glenn Kessler, 'Obama pushes Israel on settlement issue', *Washington Post*, 29 May 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/05/28/AR2009052803771.html>, accessed 23 May 2011. [FROM] Lindsay, James M. "George W. Bush, Barack Obama and the Future of US Global Leadership." *International Affairs* 87.4 (2011): 765-79. Web. 6 June 2016.

¹⁶³ S. M. Walt, "Obama Was Not a Realist President".

¹⁶⁴ Mark Landler, 'Clinton says US is committed to Mideast peace but reverting to old strategy', *New York Times*, 10 Dec. 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/11/world/middleeast/11diplo.html>, accessed 23 May 2011. [FROM] Lindsay, James M. "George W. Bush, Barack Obama and the Future of US Global Leadership." *International Affairs* 87.4 (2011): 765-79. Web. 6 June 2016.

reasonable cease-fire that was within reach, and pushed both the Palestinians and Israelis toward an escalation that most of them did not want.”¹⁶⁵

Ultimately exacerbated by the U.S. and Obama’s larger geopolitical grand strategy, sustaining Israel’s eminence as a powerful watchdog in the region which cannot be genuinely pressured by other powers in the region such as Iran’s support for Hezbollah and Hamas, solidifies U.S. influence in the region. However, asserting Israel’s sole possession of nuclear weapons in the Middle East is a vital component of this equation.¹⁶⁶ The U.S., no matter the presidential administration, is extremely likely to continue its unwavering support of Israel to please conservative elements in the domestic sphere and, more importantly, keep in good graces its staunchest ally in a strategic important and tense corner of the world.

Iran

Still, Obama’s foreign policies in the Middle East have not been entirely devoid of successes or positive achievements. Obama spurred a wave of diplomatic initiatives, most remarkably, upending Bush’s foreign policy plans by dispatching American officials to partake in international discussions with Iran over its nuclear program.”¹⁶⁷Iran, a hostile and visible opponent of the U.S. since its 1979 Islamic Revolution, has traditionally been closed in formal deliberations with the U.S. and larger Western world in general. In June 2010, the U.N. Security Council levied new sanctions on Iran in an effort to hinder its emerging nuclear program. Obama’s first success, and direct result of his ideologically multilateral mindset for the U.S., was when the nation managed to win backing of two veto-holding nations who had

¹⁶⁵ Taylor, Adam. "The One Thing Everyone in Israel Seems to Agree On: John Kerry Blew It." Editorial. *The Washington Post* [Washington, D.C.] 28 June 2014: n. pag. Print.

¹⁶⁶ Rosenthal, Steven J. "The US Foreign Policy and the Middle East." *Policy Perspectives* Special Issue 2010 7.1 (2010): n. pag. *Institute of Policy Studies, Islamabad*. Web. 13 June 2016.

¹⁶⁷ Lindsay, James M. "George W. Bush, Barack Obama and the Future of US Global Leadership." *International Affairs* 87.4 (2011): 765-79. Web. 6 June 2016.

objected dealings with Iran before: Russia and China.¹⁶⁸ Compounding on his rationale, Obama declared,

"We have to be effective in our defenses and hold Iran to account where it is acting in ways that are contrary to international rules and norms...but we also have to have the capacity to enter into a dialogue to reduce tensions and to identify ways in which the more reasonable forces inside of Iran can negotiate with the countries in the region, with its neighbors, so that we don't see an escalation of proxy fights across the region."¹⁶⁹

Confident in his new interpretation of U.S. foreign policy strategies, Obama expressed "this is a good day, because once again we're seeing what's possible with strong American diplomacy...Most important of all, we achieved this historic progress through diplomacy, without resorting to another war in the Middle East," directly differentiating his administration from the troublesome and abrasive qualities of his predecessor.¹⁷⁰

Arab Spring

The Arab Spring revolts of 2011 saw entrenched authoritarian rulers across North Africa and the Middle East ousted from power by waves of popular uprisings calling for increased political, economic, and social accountability in their respective societies. Spurred by massive youth participation and the prominent role of social media, the Arab Spring has, and will continue to be a major shifting point in the geopolitical condition of many of these countries. How the Obama administration

¹⁶⁸ United Nations Security Council Resolution 1929, 9 June 2010, <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N10/396/79/PDF/N1039679.pdf?OpenElement>, accessed 23 May 2011. [FROM] Lindsay, James M. "George W. Bush, Barack Obama and the Future of US Global Leadership." *International Affairs* 87.4 (2011): 765-79. Web. 6 June 2016.

¹⁶⁹ Stanglin, Doug. "Obama Seeks to Reassure Gulf Allies over Iran." *USA Today*. USA Today, 21 Apr. 2016. Web. 10 June 2016.

¹⁷⁰ Korte, Gregory. "Obama: Iran Deal Makes the World Safer." Editorial. *USA Today*. USA Today, 17 Jan. 2016. Web. 05 June 2016.

handled these situations varied greatly from country to country but general trends and observations can be deduced from his different policies to the revolts and uprisings.

In the case of Egypt, the Obama administration helped topple Egyptian strongman Hosni Mubarak from office and formally endorsed the newly-elected government of Mohamed Morsi, only to reverse course and take no action when a military coup overthrew Morsi and propped up a more “thuggish dictatorship.”¹⁷¹ Obama’s undefined strategy and skittish policies in Egypt have exacerbated a delicate political situation which is still unclear today. In the example of Libya, Obama, in concert with the greater international community, overthrew Muammar Ghaddafi and today Libya is both a failed state and an Islamic State fortress in North Africa.¹⁷² Admittedly, Obama confesses “...in Libya, we did take out a dictator who was threatening his own people...I actually believe that was the right decision. I think, had we not gone in, we would have seen another Syria in Libya. But Libya is still a big problem and a mess, and I think we did not do as good of a job as we should have.”¹⁷³ Indeed, in a Fox News interview discussing his legacy in April of 2016, President Obama has stated that “the biggest mistake of his presidency” was not participating in the military intervention in Libya, but rather the insufficiency and failure to assess and properly plan for the power vacuum left after removing Ghaddafi, and ushering Libya into a “spiral of chaos” and opening the door for violent extremists.¹⁷⁴ Perhaps where history will be most harshest when debating President Obama’s historical legacy will be the case of Syria. Starting in 2007, 4 years before the start of the Arab Uprisings, Obama displayed high hopes for success in Syria by decreeing that “diplomacy combined with pressure could also reorient Syria

¹⁷¹ S. M. Walt, "Obama Was Not a Realist President".

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Obama, Barack. "President Barack Obama." Interview by Charlie Rose. 31 May 2016.

¹⁷⁴ Staff and Agencies, Agence France-Presse, and Associated Press. "Barack Obama Says Libya Was 'worst Mistake' of His Presidency." *The Guardian*. The Guardian, 12 Apr. 2016. Web. 10 June 2016.

away from its radical agenda to a more moderate stance..."¹⁷⁵ However, following Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad's harsh and violent crackdown to pro-revolutionary groups in his country, Obama affirmed al-Assad must withdraw from power in Syria, despite no well-defined protocol or feasible candidate to replace him. The Obama administration also denied the early U.N. attempts to broker a ceasefire.¹⁷⁶ Obama's most famous quote regarding the Syrian conflict was issued directly to Assad, stating "we have been very clear to the Assad regime...that a red line for us is we start seeing a whole bunch of chemical weapons moving around or being utilized."¹⁷⁷ However, even after discovering the use of chemical weapons by Assad against his own people, Obama reneged on his assertion and has not made true on his word to become more involved in the Syrian conflict. By being purposefully vague and ambiguous with his threats, Obama allowed himself ample room for maneuver in light of the conflict becoming a proxy war with Russia or caused a major setback for American legitimacy in the Middle East and world affairs at large, depending on how one frames the argument and one's ideological leanings. As for a definite answer to this question, it is too soon to tell as of the writing of this study and the events of the Syrian conflict are still tragically unfolding. In an editorial in the New York Times, Robert Cohen argues that after two failed post-9/11 wars, restraint by the Obama administration in Syria was needed. Half a million dead and 5 million refugees later, Obama's decision to not follow through with his threat has damaged American credibility and consolidated al-Assad.¹⁷⁸ In his own words, Obama tried to justify his failure to act in Syria by doubting the exact result a military intervention could have had on the conflict; "there was never a claim that, had I taken military action because of those chemical weapons, that we would have resolved the civil war in

¹⁷⁵ B. Obama, "Renewing American Leadership," p. 4.

¹⁷⁶ S. M. Walt, "Obama Was Not a Realist President".

¹⁷⁷ Goldberg, Jeffrey. "The Obama Doctrine." *The Atlantic*. N.p., Apr. 2016. Web. 25 May 2016.

¹⁷⁸ Cohen, Roger. "Obama's Flawed Realism." *The New York Times*. N.p., 18 Mar. 2016. Web. 25 May 2016.

Syria.”¹⁷⁹ Whether Obama admits it or not, the unsuccessful trappings of Afghanistan and Iraq have forced his hand in consequent foreign policy and will provide the framework for any future analysis of his grand strategy, particularly in the Middle East. Ultimately, it becomes evident that the Obama administration never had a concrete plan for the region, except for in the case of Iran’s nuclear program, and the end result was a series of misfortunate “incoherent improvisations.”¹⁸⁰ Perhaps most relevant to U.S. foreign policy in the M.E.N.A. region today is President Barack Obama’s approach towards combatting the rise of terrorist non-state actors, most notably the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (I.S.I.S.). Indeed, it is safe to say that the Obama administration was “blindsided by the emergence of the Islamic State” and no American foreign policy expert could have foreseen the extent, speed, and ferocity with which I.S.I.S. swept across the region.¹⁸¹ The rise of significant non-state actors, the “privatization” of war, and how traditional great state actors act in response to this unconventional threat, appears to be the future chapter in international relations by altering how the United States and other major states perceive their security. The greatest impact of how the rise of terrorist non-state actors will transform security among countries within the American order is by making international relations more confrontational as these states perceive threats in very different manners. Ikenberry argues that traditional incentives for security cooperation have dissolved, “making American power and its use of force more controversial and contested.”¹⁸²

As President Obama is still in office at the writing of this study, it is imprudent to attempt to classify Obama’s doctrine as being finalized, but only a few months removed from his departure from the White House, a few concrete

¹⁷⁹ Obama, Barack. "President Barack Obama." Interview by Charlie Rose. 31 May 2016.

¹⁸⁰ S. M. Walt, "Obama Was Not a Realist President".

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² G. J. Ikenberry, "Power and Liberal Order: America's Postwar World Order in Transition," p. 133-152.

conclusions can be made concerning his view of greater international grand strategy and the U.S.'s role within this system. Obama himself has elaborated on his describing his so-called doctrine by extrapolating that he has "...always shied away from labeling my foreign policy under a single banner because the hallmark, I hope, of my foreign policy has been to be very practical in thinking about how do we advance U.S. interests...[through] using diplomacy, multi-lateral institutions, economic development strategies, human rights as tools to continue to promote what I think is the best tradition of American foreign policy."¹⁸³ Possibly the best example of the Obama administration's willingness to forgo typical avenues for American global strategies is his inclination to work together with traditional opponents to U.S. foreign policy if necessary to achieve joint objectives. For example, when classified reports leaked that in 2014, the U.S. Air Force was granting indirect air support for Shi'i militia groups and Iranian advisors in Iraq to combat I.S.I.S., this revealed to the greater international community the fact that the U.S. was prepared to work with historic opponents to contest shared threats, and most importantly, with whom operational burdens could be allocated.¹⁸⁴ In the wake of the hugely detrimental and unpopular Afghanistan and Iraq wars, the Obama administration has not sought disengagement or conventional retreat, but rather a considerable transformation in the forms of engagement.¹⁸⁵ However, at no point does Obama believe this is the only option for the U.S. in conducting its international affairs; "it is undeniable...our military is the most capable fighting force on the planet. It's not close."¹⁸⁶

While President Obama embraces a different style and rhetoric from his predecessor, George W. Bush, he has quickly demonstrated that he is indeed a

¹⁸³ Obama, Barack. "President Barack Obama." Interview by Charlie Rose. 31 May 2016.

¹⁸⁴ A. Krieg, "Externalizing the Burden of War," p. 97-113.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 97-113.

¹⁸⁶ Jackson, David. "Obama to Air Force Grads: Isolationism Is Not an Option." *USA Today*. N.p., 2 June 2016. Web. 10 June 2016.

faithful guardian of the U.S. Empire. His offensive in Afghanistan, increased drone strikes in Pakistan, prolonging of American troops in Iraq, bombing raids in Yemen, all point to the fact that the brunt of U.S. foreign policy is not about to change anytime soon.¹⁸⁷ While originally campaigning for less military presences and commitments abroad, Obama has not been entirely faithful to those promises. As evidenced by his pragmatic and case-by-case approach to U.S. foreign policy, Obama denounces the theory of “one size fits all” diplomacy and, utilizing the benefits of “smart power,” has attempted to both correct the mistakes he felt were necessary from his predecessor while at the same time never sacrificing U.S. exceptionalism and hegemony throughout the world.

Summary

A few conclusions can be reached concerning President Obama and President Bush’s foreign policies within the larger M.E.N.A. region. First, the Middle East is no longer absolutely essential to U.S. foreign policy interests. Second, in the case it was, there would not be much any American leader could do to improve the region by force alone. Third, the intrinsic American wish to correct the kind of problems which exhibit themselves most radically in the Middle East unquestionably only cause violent conflict, American casualties, and the eventual deterioration of U.S. credibility and power. Fourth, the world cannot afford to see a decay of U.S. power. All of these points are embodied by Obama’s personal belief that it is a sound strategy to increase efforts where success is credible and limit contact with the rest where it is not. Critics maintain that the issues found in the M.E.N.A. cannot be simply discounted and without American military intervention will only compound.¹⁸⁸ However, the Obama administration is a firm believer in the belief that it is a blunder to equate guidance with forcing U.S. control or guaranteeing

¹⁸⁷ S.J. Rosenthal, “The US Foreign Policy and the Middle East”.

¹⁸⁸ J. Goldberg, “The Obama Doctrine”.

favorable outcomes on all important matters.¹⁸⁹ The might and unique position of the United States in world affairs can be used as an instrument of inspiration and not intimidation or fear, as expressed by Obama in his political manifesto The Audacity of Hope;

“When the world’s sole superpower willingly restrains its power and abides by internationally agreed upon standards of conduct, it sends a message that these are rules worth following, and robs terrorists and dictators of the argument that these rules are simply tools of American imperialism.”¹⁹⁰

Obama’s calm and collective personal demeanor, in accordance with constructivist theory, also does not easily give in to political hot-air and paranoid opinions concerning the future status of the United States. “Despite what is being said on the campaign trails these days, the United States is hardly in an unusually perilous global situation.”¹⁹¹ Yet, he is not idealistic to the point of discrediting and dismissing potential faults and dangers facing the country, evidenced in the statement; “but nor is its standing so secure that irresponsible policies by the next president won’t take their toll.”¹⁹² In doing so, he acknowledges the significant impact one individual leader can have in the determining the direction for the entire nation.

This is all not to say that Obama does not believe the place of the United States as the world’s top hegemon and the great deal of responsibility this position entails. Very much in accordance with President Bush’s overall grand strategy concerning the United States’ role in world politics, this paper finds that the while actual strategy apparatuses for U.S. foreign policy differed in ideology and theory between the two presidents, in practice much was kept the same for the duration of the time period in question. Characterized by an overwhelming sense of American exceptionalism, both presidents justify and maintain American foreign interventions

¹⁸⁹ R. K. Betts, “American Strategy: Grand vs. Grandiose,” p. 31-42

¹⁹⁰ B. Obama, *The Audacity of Hope*, p. 309.

¹⁹¹ S.G. Brooks and W. C. Wohlforth, “The Once and Future Superpower”.

¹⁹² Ibid.

under different rationalizations. Most tellingly, Obama's support of the Afghanistan War and Iraqi War demonstrate a willingness to commit U.S. forces around the world. In the case of Iraq, it was not the "why" but rather the "how" which Obama criticized the Bush administration on. For Obama, the final straw of Bush's "War on Terror" was the poor management and shortsightedness which has only served to further threaten U.S. interests in the M.E.N.A. region today. Also, Obama's self-centered desire to utilize "smart power" in the hopes of reducing American casualties and more equally distributing costs among allies through burden-sharing, directly juxtaposes Bush's "gung-ho" attitudes which only served to diminish American legitimacy and influence around the world. By accepting the reality of globalization and the U.S.'s changing role within international politics, Obama's foreign policy has placed the U.S. on a course to recuperate and regain lost prestige and authority. The international state system is much more willing to cooperate with Obama's "reluctant sheriff" as opposed to Bush's overzealous enforcer. Robert Jervis argues that "the American attempt to minimize the ability of others to resist U.S. pressures is the mark of a country bent, not on maintaining the status quo, but on fashioning a new and better order."¹⁹³ While recognizing the U.S.'s influential role in modern world politics, American leadership has, and will continue to, steer the international world order in a direction most beneficial for itself in accordance with its strong liberal values. However, all this can change as the world system evolves over time; states' power rise and wane, strategic partnerships alter their course, and the rise of volatile and violent non-state actors all threaten this highly interwoven fabric. As Paul Kennedy has observed, "it simply has not been given to any one society to remain *permanently* ahead of all the others...the conditions that made American preponderance possible are changing rapidly."¹⁹⁴ If the United States does

¹⁹³ R. Jervis, "Understanding the Bush Doctrine," p. 365-388.

¹⁹⁴ Kennedy, Paul. *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers*, p. 533 (emphasis in original)., in: C. Layne, "Rethinking American Grand Strategy: Hegemony or Balance of Power in the Twenty-First Century?" p. 8-28.

not decide now to start ushering in the transition to a new grand strategy more suited to the 21st century's materializing international realities, circumstances will force it to do so."¹⁹⁵ Under this liberal understanding of the world, international harmony develops from the combining of America's pre-eminence with its fundamental values, with the United States exerting its power to fashion consensual and legitimate apparatuses for international authority. Within this view, America can reconstruct and reaffirm its governance over the global stage.¹⁹⁶ Yet, the U.S. cannot encounter the perils of this century alone, and the international community cannot face them without the U.S. The future of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, and by extension in the rest of the world, was eloquently summarized and articulated by President Obama; "we can neither retreat from the world nor try to bully it into submission. We must lead the world, by deed and by example."¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵ C. Layne, "Rethinking American Grand Strategy: Hegemony or Balance of Power in the Twenty-First Century?" p. 8-28.

¹⁹⁶ G.J. Ikenberry, "America's Security Trap." p. 426-431.

¹⁹⁷ B. Obama, "Renewing American Leadership," p. 4.

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