

America's Quest for Global Hegemony: Offensive Realism, the Bush Doctrine, and the 2003 Iraq War

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Abstract: Research in the discipline of international relations finds that the democratic great powers are less likely to pursue revisionist policies. This investigation challenges this argument by showing that the United States's decision to oust Saddam Hussein's regime in March 2003 were consistent with a modified version of John Mearsheimer's theory of offensive realism, which finds that great powers' motivation is global hegemony. This investigation is divided into three sections. Section one considers the value of Mearsheimer's theory and reworks it by adding domestic variables to explain why states abandon defensive strategies for offensive ones. The second section shows how pre-9/11 American foreign policy strategy was, for the most part, status quo oriented, while section three shows why and how the Bush administration introduced a revisionist foreign policy strategy after the 9/11 attacks. This investigation concludes by showing how the 2003 Iraq war is the first step in the United States' quest for global hegemony.

Post-9/11 American foreign policy has abandoned its tradition of moderation and self-restraint; defensive strategies designed to preserve the status quo have been replaced with a more aggressive strategy. The United States (US), under President George W. Bush's guidance, has used its position of power to re-make the world according to its interests and ideals. In doing so, it has disregarded international law, downgraded the value of multilateral mechanisms, attempted to co-opt the United Nations (UN), and ignored its allies' interests. The Bush administration's 2002 *National Security Strategy* presented the rationale for this departure in American foreign policy and the US-led coalition's ousting of Saddam Hussein's regime from power indicated the influence of these ideas. While many Americans are displeased with the Bush administration's handling of post-war Iraq, the recent release of the 2006 *National Security Strategy* re-affirms its commitments to the most controversial aspects of the 2002 policy document, including the US's right to engage in pre-emptive strikes.

What explains this transformation in American foreign policy thinking? Were the 9/11 terrorist attacks responsible for these changes? Why did the Bush administration decide to invade Iraq and disregard international public opinion? Some influential

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scholars have explained the president's unilateral leanings, the Bush Doctrine and the Iraq War as different elements of a strategy to build an American empire. Other scholars describe these changes as a reaction to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. In this article, I make two interrelated arguments.

First, in line with John Mearsheimer's theory of offensive realism, where by great powers pursue global hegemony as a way of increasing their security and freedom of action, post-9/11 American foreign policy has been influenced by a desire to expand US hegemony. Thus, the Iraq War was pursued as a way of re-establishing American pre-eminence and influence over the Middle East, while re-creating the world according to its interests and ideals. Descriptions of American foreign policy as imperial have been mostly used to suggest that the US disregarded international legal mechanisms to advance its interests.¹ This article suggests that post-9/11 foreign policy may be best described as revisionist. As noted below, revisionist states pursue offensive strategies to mold the international system according to their needs and interests, often ignoring the interests of secondary states, international norms, and established legal procedures (Johnston 2003: 10-11; Schweller 1994: 105; and Gilpin 1981: 34-35). Second, while the 9/11 attacks did have an impact on Bush's world-view, his strategies need to be seen as a reaction to the Clinton administration's legacy in foreign affairs and national security. For many in the Bush administration, Clinton's policies weakened America's relative position in the world. Even before the 9/11 attacks, Bush's advisors had demonstrated their unilateral tendencies and their desire to employ the nation's capabilities to re-fashion the world according to American interests and to thwart the rise of potential challengers to America's position of power.

Taken together, I maintain that post-9/11 foreign policy has become revisionist in nature, abandoning the status quo orientation which defined its character since the end of the Cold War. Consequently, this article contends that democratic powers can also conduct revisionist strategies to aggressively advance their interests. International relations research indicates that non-democratic powers, dissatisfied with the international order are more likely to conduct revisionist foreign policies than democratic

¹ These views are in line with Hans Morgenthau's claim that revisionist states pursue "imperialist" foreign policies (1978: 74).

great powers or hegemonic states. Democracies are less inclined to pursue aggressive foreign policies because public support is difficult to sustain over the long-term, while a hegemonic state is less prone to construct revisionist policies because the international system reflects its values and interests (Chan 2004: 208-211). Given these findings, what factors allowed the Bush administration to construct a revisionist policy? Did domestic politics play any role or were international events driving Washington's assessments? What impact did Bush's closest national security advisors had on the administration's policies?

This article is divided into three sections. The first section reviews John Mearsheimer's (2001) theory of offensive realism. This review shows both the strengths and weaknesses of Mearsheimer's project. In line with Glenn Snyder's (2002) views, I use Mearsheimer's work to explain why and how revisionist states attempt to establish global hegemony as a path to security. Meaning that, I explore why American foreign policy's status quo orientation turned revisionist after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. In this way, building on Eric Lab's (1999) work, I link offensive realism with domestic variables to explain why the Bush administration changed the nature of American foreign policy and pursued Iraq's invasion in March 2003. The second section analyzes the Clinton administration's foreign policy strategy, showing that it was for the most part status quo orientated. It also examines some of the neo-conservative and nationalist criticisms of this strategy, while pointing out how George W. Bush's pre-9/11 foreign policy strategy showed signs of being status quo leaning, though also exhibiting the elements of a more revisionist foreign policy. The third section reviews the Bush administration's foreign policy strategy after the terrorist attacks, demonstrating why this strategy is revisionist in nature and showing how the US is currently pursuing global hegemony, as offensive realist theory maintains. This article concludes by showing how the war in Iraq was a first step in Bush's quest for global hegemony.

Linking the Logic of Offensive Realism to Domestic Politics

During the 1990s, the division within the neo-realist camp in the field of international relations along the lines of defensive and offensive realisms became more pronounced. Inspired by Kenneth Waltz's (1979) *Theory of International Politics*, defensive realists

have argued that great powers prefer to maintain the status quo, than increase overall power, because the cost of expansion commonly outweigh the benefits of having more power. Moreover, defensive realists posit a world where cooperation between great powers can reduce the risks of international anarchy and minimize the effects of the security dilemma. Thus, their theories can account for the sustained levels of cooperation between the US and Western European countries in the post-Cold War or for the absence of war between the great powers since 1945.

Even though offensive realists may accept that states may cooperate and build an international order that minimizes the security dilemma, they argue that great powers are “always searching for opportunities to gain power over their rivals, with hegemony as their final goal” (Mearsheimer 2001: 29). Similar to defensive realism, Mearsheimer’s theory is also “a structural theory of international politics.” However, “Offensive realism parts company with defensive realism over the question of how much power states want.” As noted above defensive realists argue that states want to preserve the existing balance of power. In contrast, offensive realists believe that “a state’s ultimate goal is to be the hegemon of the system” (Mearsheimer 2001: 21). How much power does a state want? Mearsheimer (2001: 36) argues that great powers are interested in gaining *absolute power*. In this way, “They are not motivated by balance-of-power logic but instead are concerned with amassing power without regard to how much power other states control”. Given this understanding, great powers’ foreign policies are revisionist in nature, searching for opportunities to use their capabilities to reorder the international system according to their interests.

For Mearsheimer (2001: 31), great powers are rational actors operating in an anarchical system that forces them to compete against each other to preserve their sovereignty. The struggle for power is not an end in itself, but the path to survival in a self-help world. Like other neo-realists, Mearsheimer (2001: 54) believes that all great powers, regardless of their economic and political system, must behave aggressively. If not, it may lead to their downfall. While states will consider cooperating with other states to create new international orders that can minimize the risks associated with anarchy, Mearsheimer (2001: 51-52) argues that cooperation cannot be sustained in the long run because states *fear* that other states might “cheat the system” to gain more power at their

expense. When cooperation between great powers does take place, it is influenced by offensive realism's logic. In other words, states might enter alliances to deter another actor from establishing hegemonic control over a region or the globe, but as he contends these "are only temporary marriages of convenience" because states know that today's friends is tomorrow's enemy (Mearsheimer 2001: 33).

Great powers' final objective, as stated above, is to establish global hegemony. Mearsheimer (2001: 40) defines a hegemon as "a state that is so powerful that it dominates all the other states in the system. No other state has the military wherewithal to put up a serious fight against it". While this theory equates hegemony to domination, others suggest that hegemony is best described as overwhelming influence. These other theories also tend to stress a hegemon's benign intentions, arguing that secondary states accept hegemonic rule only if the hegemon provides a series of public goods (i.e. economic stability and international peace) in exchange for their cooperation (Kindlerberger 1973). It is important to emphasize that Mearsheimer's (2001: 40) theory considers "a hegemon as the only great power in the system." Thus, states are searching for absolute power, as it enables them to establish and prolong their hegemony. Because Mearsheimer believes that military power is the only way a hegemon can ultimately sustain its rule, he implicitly argues that a global hegemon must also be able to shield itself from nuclear threats. Accordingly, a hegemon must be able to use its capabilities to advance its interests in the world without fear of possible nuclear retaliation from other states (Snyder 2002: 152).

Although global hegemony is the final goal, Mearsheimer maintains that most great powers can only hope to realize regional hegemony, as global hegemony is difficult to establish because the world's oceans hinder regional hegemons from projecting power to other parts of the world. Thus, he argues, "there has never been a global hegemon." Even though the US is "the only regional hegemon in modern history", many great powers have attempted to establish regional hegemony as a path to global hegemony. But the US kept their aspirations in check, because it feared the emergence of regional hegemons in either Europe or Asia would threaten its control over the Western Hemisphere (Mearsheimer 2001: 41).

This definition of hegemony says little about the hegemon's relations with secondary states. But, if America's hegemony in the Western Hemisphere is any indication of what Mearsheimer's thinks in this respect, he is not saying that the hegemon aspires to build an empire per se. Hegemony must be seen as a condition where power is distributed unequally among the systems' units (Doyle 1986: 12; and Slater 1976: 85), allowing the hegemon to extend its influence. In other words, a hegemon does not assume "effective sovereignty" over other states (Doyle 1986: 19); they want to influence secondary states' preferences in the areas of foreign and defense policies in order to dissuade them from joining alliances that could challenge the hegemon's rule and to employ their capabilities to manage challenges to the existing international order. For instance, hegemonic states may establish military bases in secondary states to keep in check potential challengers to their position of power. In many ways, hegemonic states, at least in Mearsheimer's understandings, are less interested in their domestic policies, paying closer attention to their defense and foreign policies.

What are great powers' sources of power? What strategies can they employ to advance their interests? Great power must have the capability to project power outside its borders. In other words, they are required to "build formidable military forces" (Mearsheimer 2001: 43) As a result, great powers must translate socio-economic ingredients, such as economic wealth and the overall size of its population, into military power: "Great powers need money, technology, and personnel to build military forces and to fight wars" (Mearsheimer 2001: 55). Because great powers rely in these socio-economic ingredients, what Mearsheimer (2001: 78-79) calls "latent power", in its struggle with rivals for global hegemony, actors are forced to organize society and economy in the most efficient fashion, so it can draw on in its "latent power" in times of crisis.

While military capabilities define a great power's strength, Mearsheimer contends that great powers longing for global hegemony must invest their resources into making well-trained armies. Naval and air forces are important to Mearsheimer (2001: 86-87), as they can transport troops to different battlefields or restrict rivals ability of moving their own troops, but armies are the only forces that can conquer and control territory. Thus, naval and air forces can be used to coerce other states into submission, but in the end total

victory can only be accomplished through conquest and occupation. What should a great power do once it occupies another country following a war? Mearsheimer is silent in this important question. In light of the Iraq War, it is important to consider what the objectives of an occupation should be, though the logic implied in Mearsheimer's theory is that occupation can not lead to a condition that would question the occupier's power or influence in the region. The post-war occupations of West Germany and Japan following the Second World War may be important cases, as these two countries helped the US advance its interests during the Cold War.

His argument that great powers are "always searching for opportunities to gain power over their rivals, with hegemony as their final goal" is valid in the following cases: Japan (1868-1945), Germany (1862-1945), Italy (1861-1945), and the Soviet Union (1917-1991). But the theory's assertions are weakened by the US's (1800-1990) and the United Kingdom's (1792-1945) decision to not expand power, even though both had the opportunity and the capabilities to do so. In the case of the United Kingdom, it did not achieve regional hegemony in Europe, while the US, as the Western Hemisphere's hegemon, decided not to establish hegemony in Europe or Asia.

Mearsheimer (2001: 264) argues that these two cases do not contradict his theory. He contends that these two great powers decided not to expand because of the "stopping power of water". But, this seems to be contradicted by Japan's ability to conquer vast amounts of territory in its attempt to establish regional hegemony. Mearsheimer explains that Japan faced little opposition because China was not a great power, while the Soviet Union was more concerned with Europe than Asia. While this is plausible, the answer to the question might be that the United Kingdom and the US had different interests and that their political and economic values opposed the logic of offensive realism. After all, the US and Britain are the only two liberal democratic great powers in Mearsheimer's study. While challenging his claim that all great powers behave in similar fashion, regardless of their system of government, British and American policies of restraint are in line with research findings that show that democratic states are less likely to pursue revisionist foreign policies (Chan 2004).

Consequently, I employ Mearsheimer's theory with Glenn Snyder's suggestion in mind: offensive realism helps us understand the behavior of revisionist states (2002: 172-

173). In other words, what is needed is not so much a grand theory that can explain great powers' strategies, but a theory that may help us understand what factors influence great powers' decision to pursue offensive or defensive strategies. The changing balance of power in the international system might be an important factor influencing great powers' decisions. However, given that democratic great powers question Mearsheimer's theory, offensive realism should also study how domestic variables may affect a great power's foreign policy strategy (Rose 1998). Considering how domestic variables can affect a state's decision to expand power is a tricky undertaking. However, combining systemic variables with domestic ones would produce a more complete picture of why some states are revisionists and other status quo oriented (see Schweller 1998: Chapter 1).

Eric Labs's (1999) work on offensive realism may be a good way of addressing this problem, as he provides a theoretical framework that tries to explain how domestic factors can explain a great power's decision to seek more power. Using Britain during the First World War as a case study, Labs test three hypotheses to demonstrate the reasons why British war aims expanded during the war to include the expansion of the empire to the Middle East. He concludes by showing how his social mobilization hypothesis accurately helps explain why the British government expanded its war aims. This hypothesis argues that the expansion of British war aims were part of the government's effort to mobilize society to assure access to the country's resources and to increase public support for the war at a time when British losses started to increase.

Bush's decision to overthrow Saddam Hussein's regime can be understood as an expansion of the main objective of America's global war on terror: destroying al Qaeda's infrastructure and capturing or killing Osama Bin Laden. However, the fact that Bush's advisors were thinking of ways to transform Clinton's foreign policy strategy before the 9/11 terrorist attacks shows that changing the regime in Iraq may have been part of an earlier agenda. Similarly, Bush repeatedly hinted in late 2001 and throughout 2002 that rogue regimes were also important threats that deserved America's attention. Thus, a case can be made that the Iraq War was not an expansion of Bush's war aims, but an integral part of the original strategy.

Although this debate deserves more attention, in this article I am interested in reasons why the US decided to invade Iraq and how this operation is part of Bush's

foreign policy strategy, which has been taking form since the 2000 presidential campaign. It is clear that the 2003 Iraq War was an offensive war. In a matter of months, the Bush administration transformed Saddam Hussein's regime from a regional problem to an immanent threat to the American homeland (Althus and Largio 2004). How did this happen? Can systemic variables account for the US's decision to overthrow Saddam Hussein? Could domestic reasons explain why the majority of Americans were willing to back Bush's plans?

Both systemic and domestic factors after the 9/11 attacks provided an opportunity for Bush and his advisors to forge a new foreign policy strategy that enabled it to expand its power in the Middle East. But, as it will be argued below, the strategy's objective was not just ousting Saddam Hussein's regime from power, but to also use the war as a step towards global hegemony, as described in Mearsheimer's work. Although this argument seems to be treading the conspiratorial line, it is not. Prior historical examples show that international events can move a dovish public to more hawkish positions, giving leaders the opportunity to accomplish what they consider to be important aims. Domestic concerns are not the sole determinants why a nation is willing to go on the offensive. As Mearsheimer's theory suggests, states are rational actors and they expand power when international conditions are ripe for such ventures. As a consequence, I propose a two-step argument. If there is no or little systemic restraints and public opinion backs the use of force for offensive purposes, then leaders in a democratic polity will be free to pursue offensive strategies and use the war as a way of expanding their war aims. However, if a democratic polity's public is critical of offensive strategies, even if systemic conditions are ripe, leaders will be less able to execute these strategies.

A good example is the US's decision to go to war against Spain in 1898. The war may have been fought to help Cubans achieve their independence or as retribution for the 266 sailors that died in the explosion of the USS *Maine* in Havana harbor, which many Americans at the time blamed on Spain (McCormick 2005: 25; and Smith 1995: 34). However, the war permitted the US to establish an overseas empire, an objective many leaders during that time period, favored. One of these leaders was Theodore Roosevelt, who at the time was the Assistant Secretary of the Navy, and had passionately, along with Henry Cabot Lodge and Captain Alfred Mahan, promoted the virtues of expanding

America's territorial holdings (Karsten 1971: 585-86 and Fensterwald 1951: 118). Although these events helped turn public opinion in favor of going to war, the prevailing balance-of-power at the time and the European powers' willingness to accept Spain's decline and America's rise to great power status also allowed the US to pursue a war against Spain (Zimmerman 2002: 261).

This is a good example for two reasons. First, it suggests that combining offensive realism with domestic factors, as Labs's work argues, is possible. Second, this example elucidates why the US was successful at establishing regional hegemony. Mearsheimer (2001: 242-252) contends that the Monroe Doctrine allowed it to minimize European involvement in the hemisphere and that America's westward expansion turned it into a great power. This explanation is too simplistic. The US may have had much latent power, but it did not have the will to mobilize it in pursuit of an overseas empire. The new imperial possessions allowed the US to protect the hemisphere from foreign threats, as Mahan (see Karsten 1971) argued before the Spanish-American War, but it is important to stress that the McKinley administration's decision to expand America's territorial size was nurtured by events it had no control over. Consequently, domestic factors are as important as systemic factors, as both enabled the McKinley administration to establish its hegemony over the western hemisphere.

Consequently, to consider why the Bush administration decided to overthrow Saddam Hussein's regime, it is important to appreciate how American public opinion after 9/11 turned hawkish, allowing the administration to frame a revisionist foreign policy. This policy was informed by the debates on American foreign policy strategy that took place during the 1990s. As it will be seen below, America's search for global hegemony is a project that owes much of its evolution to senior officials that served in George H. W. Bush's administration, some of who became strong critics of Clinton's foreign policy initiatives and who served in the first term of George W. Bush's administration.

Post-Cold War Status Quo Leaning Foreign Policy and Its Critics

The international system underwent a profound transformation in 1991. The US led a coalition to reverse Saddam Hussein's annexation of Kuwait. The Persian Gulf War demonstrated America's new willingness to use its military to enforce international law.

The coalition's success seemed to have buried the Vietnam syndrome, enabling American decision-makers to consider ways military force could be used to accomplish the national interest. By the end of the year, the Soviet Union had dissolved; making the US the world's remaining superpower and providing decision-makers in Washington a rationale to develop a new foreign policy strategy. For the US, 1992 was not only an election year, but it was also a time of great debate concerning the nation's role in world affairs.

George H. W. Bush's administration faced a great dilemma: should it continue to pursue its interests via the policies prior administrations employed during the Cold War or should it re-write them according to new realities? The fact that America was the remaining superpower led many countries to question whether the US was going to use its power to maintain the status quo or to radically change the post-1945 international order. Similarly, the lack of an enemy forced American allies to reconsider the value of American hegemony, while Americans equally questioned the need for an internationalist foreign policy (Saul 2004: 251). While George H. W. Bush talked about a "new world order," the Pentagon considered ways of convincing Congress to keep the existing force structure intact. Different options were debated at the time, but most scholars and practitioners agreed that the US was in an unenviable position; it was the owner of its own destiny. In other words, they argued that because American post-1945 foreign policy strategy was shaped by the Soviet threat (Deibel 1992: 81), a new strategy could be framed by the realities furnished by what Charles Krauthammer (1991) called the "unipolar moment" to maintain and expand America's position of power.

In March 1992, the White House leaked a draft version of a Pentagon planning paper that argued for a new foreign policy strategy. Known as the *Defense Planning Guide* (DPG), it considered ways the US could sustain its hegemony in the post-Cold War and prevent the emergence of a multipolar world. As Barry Posen and Andrew Ross (1996-1997: 32) suggest, the policy clearly argued that US foreign policy's objective was "not merely to preserve peace among the great powers, but to preserve US supremacy by politically, economically, and militarily outdistancing any global challenger". Thus, the DPG provided a rationale for the preservation of America's Cold War military and for the US's investment in new technologies that would secure American military predominance (Posen and Ross 1996-1997: 40-41). At first sight, the DPG did not provide a departure

from America's Cold War foreign policy strategy. However, a closer reading suggests otherwise. The document was skeptical of international organizations and other multilateral bodies. While recognizing the legitimacy these institutions may provide to American policies, the authors of the DPG² and its supporters emphasized that the US should not submit its interests to the whims of the international community. This left open the door for the US to execute its policies unilaterally. Furthermore, the DPG questioned the soundness of deterrence and containment strategies, stressing the need to develop offensive strategies that could preempt "an impending attack with nuclear, chemical or biological weapons" (cited in Mann 2004: 200).

The DPG's authors never considered what kind of effect unilateral actions may have had on America's international position (Art 2003: 90). They assumed that other nations saw the US as a benevolent hegemon, arguing that they would ultimately support American policies, because US hegemony was better than a return to the unpredictability of a multipolar world (Kagan 1998, Posen and Ross 1996: 32; and Kristol and Kagan 1996). The DPG also stressed that American foreign policy should be guided by "the calculations of power and self-interests rather than altruism and high ideals" (Bacevich 2002: 45). In other words, it stated that the American military should not be used to spread democratic and capitalist values or to try to solve civil wars or similar humanitarian crises (Posen and Ross 1996-1997: 41).

As Andrew Bacevich (2002: 44-45) notes, the draft DPG was heavily criticized by the American public as well as its allies. While the allies were concerned with Washington's potential willingness to use its power unilaterally, Americans questioned the value of a strategy that did not support the expansion of American ideals. Other commentators argued that it was a self-defeating project because the continued search for security and power could never be satisfied, forcing the US to incessantly seek new ways to expand its capabilities in order to prevent other countries from countering its interests (Art 2003: 89). Some conservatives even feared that a search for power for the sake of

² Zalmay Khalilzad, who worked for Paul Wolfowitz's protégé, Lewis "Scooter" Libby, wrote the leaked draft of the DPG. Libby subsequently wrote the final DPG, but Wolfowitz seems to have provided more supervision as he feared that the final draft could have furthered angered American politicians and close US allies (Mann 2004: 209-210). Khalilzad is presently Ambassador to Iraq, Libby was Vice President Dick Cheney's Chief of Staff and Wolfowitz was the Deputy Secretary of Defense and the current President of the World Bank.

power would undermine the very same principles that have defined America's foreign policy, while weakening the multilateral bodies that legitimated the US hegemonic project (Durham 2004: 262-264).

This debate had a deep impact on President William J. Clinton's foreign policy strategy. Using the terms "gunboats", "gurkhas" and "proconsuls" as metaphors,³ Bacevich (2002: 145-180) argues that post-Cold War US foreign policy primarily relied on coercive mechanisms to sustain and expand its influence. Even though this book makes a strong case, it tends to overlook the importance of international institutions, as mechanisms, created by the US, to manage the international system. Moreover, Bacevich does not explain how America's position of power also rests on the seductiveness of its ideals and values, which helps the U.S. legitimate its project of transforming the world according to its image (Cronin 2001: 107). Nevertheless, Bacevich convincingly shows that the first Bush administration's and Clinton's foreign policy strategies were pursuing "openness." According to Bacevich (2002: 88), openness is achieved via:

the removal of barriers to the movement of goods, capital, people, and ideas, thereby fostering an international order conducive to American interests, governed by American norms, regulated by American power, and above all, satisfying the expectations of the American people for ever greater abundance.

This strategy was generally supported by the US allies as well as by other countries in the world. The American public also supported it, though Americans were less internationalist in their attitudes than US decision-makers during the 1990s (Holsti 2001: 40-41). The main aspect of the Clinton administration's strategy is not necessarily the pursuit of openness, but the administration's decision to employ what G. John

³ According to Bacevich (2002: 148), "the Clinton administration found modern equivalent of old-fashioned 'gunboats' in cruise missiles and aircraft armed with precision-guided munitions". As for the "ghurkas," he argues that the U.S. relied on "third parties" to carry-out missions that could stabilize different regions of the world, allowing U.S. troops to direct their attention to other more pressing matters. A good example is the Clinton administration funding of the Africa Crisis Response Initiative, which trained African militaries so they could undertake peacekeeping missions in their continent (2002: 158). Also, the Clinton administration also relied on private military contractors to achieve key interests in different parts of the world (2002: 161-62). The new American "proconsuls" are essentially the CINCs or presently known as combat commanders whom are responsible for U.S. interests in different regions of the world (2002: 173-180). For an interesting review of the CINCs power, see: Dana Priest (2004: Chapters 3 to 5).

Ikenberry (1998-1999: 62-71) calls a policy of “strategic restraint.” In other words, Ikenberry argues that US foreign policy could have attempted to dominate other countries, but it instead decided to deepen existing multilateral structures, giving a greater voice to secondary nations in the making of a post-Cold War international order. This legitimized the Clinton administration’s economic policies and democratization efforts, which were engines of economic and political openness. This policy of “strategic restraint” also supported the Clinton White House’s desire to reform Cold War security arrangements in ways that would safeguard American influence and military predominance in key regions of the world, but without directly challenging its allies’ interests.

In many ways, the Clinton administration firmly expanded the US’s influence within the institutional infrastructures created in the early Cold War. But, critics pointed out that it had not done enough to combat the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction or the transformation of rogue regimes, especially Iraq. Others felt that the administration was too supportive of multilateral bodies and their interests, though it is important to note that Clinton’s support for multilateralism waned after his first year in office. This is not to say that the international community was completely satisfied with Clinton’s foreign policy strategy. Its continuation of the sanctions regime against Iraq, Libya, Iran and Cuba angered many countries. Some world leaders openly expressed their fear in the late 1990s that the US would try to pursue its interests unilaterally. However, Clinton’s foreign policy strategy, while building on American values and interests, was, for the most part, in line with the interests and expectations of America’s closest allies as the strategy sought to achieve key interests via multilateral institutions (Allin and Simon 2004-2005: 14).

At home, neo-conservatives and Republican “nationalists” heavily criticized the Clinton administration. For neo-conservatives, Clinton’s strategy failed short in regards to two issues. First, neo-conservatives wanted the Clinton administration to promote “political and economic freedom everywhere” by actively challenging rogue regimes and if necessary using force to transform these societies along democratic lines (Halper and Clarke 2004: 103). Not surprisingly, neo-conservatives became supporters of Clinton’s decision to push NATO to war against Yugoslavia over Kosovo. They also vigorously

campaigns for regime change in Iraq, driving Congress to pass the 1998 Iraq Liberation Act. The same rationale applied to other rogue regimes, such as North Korea, Libya, Syria and Iran. In many ways, neo-conservatives wanted the US to abandon containment and deterrence strategies for more interventionist policies that would assure these regimes' transformation. Thus, they were not opposed to nation-building efforts, though this is an issue that received little attention in neo-conservative circles (Halper and Clarke 2004: 28). But, regime change was urged because it was the only way the US could effectively combat the challenge posed by rogue regimes and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Second, neo-conservatives wanted the Clinton administration to increase the defense budget and to redirect more money to the production of precision-guided weapons platforms. A stronger and a more flexible military would enable the US to use its power to achieve its interests. Kosovo provided a good example why the military was an important element of a grander diplomatic strategy. In addition, neo-conservatives argued for the creation of a national missile defense system to protect the American homeland from particularly three threats: North Korea, Iran and Iraq. Even though the rationale seemed to be benign, some analysts observed that such a system would enable the US to pursue a more unilateralist policy, as other nations' nuclear capabilities could not deter America from achieving its interests (Herrick 2003: 99).

George W. Bush's 2000 presidential campaign did not embrace all the elements that defined the neo-conservative movement. John Judis (2004: 167-168) argues that before the 9/11 attacks "nationalists" strongly influenced Bush's thinking on foreign policy. These "nationalists", who included Condoleezza Rice, Donald Rumsfeld, and Dick Cheney, argued that foreign policy should be guided by the national interest. Nationalists' main criticisms of Clinton's policies were: its decision to embroil American troops in UN-sanctioned nation-building missions; its decision to cut the defense budget; its willingness to submit American decisions to the whims of multilateral institutions; and its keenness to use public opinion polls to make foreign policy decisions (Kagan 2001; Feinberg 2000; Rice 2000 and Zoellick 2000). In many ways, to Bush and his advisers, Clinton's foreign policy was based on a number of catchphrases, which "vaguely defined and ambiguously prioritized national interests" (Miskel 2002: 101). Because of these

tendencies, the Clinton administration's policies lacked consistency or any direction, forcing allies and adversaries to question America's credibility and its willingness to achieve its priorities (Rice 2000: 61).

Neo-conservatives and nationalists, though differing in their willingness to forcefully expand democracy and to engage in nation-building missions, had many things in common. Bush included individuals from both groups. Thus, the Bush administration's approach to foreign policy was a combination of these views. It attempted to transform Clinton's foreign policy strategy by defining the national interest in terms of "tangible power," guided by a commitment to preserve America's position of power and to deter potential competitors from building-up their capabilities. The Bush administration's policies were best described as "primacy with aloofness," that is to say, power to be used when it was in America's material interests, but not for "charitable adventures" or multilateral interests (Betts 2002). While Bush was willing to work with other nation-states and multilateral bodies to achieve common international goals, his advisors explained that cooperation was not to be considered as an end in itself; they were a means to achieve key American interests. If international goals were not in line with American interests, then the Bush administration was ready to ignore them and pursue its policies unilaterally.

Consequently, in the first months of its first term, the Bush administration pushed for a national missile defense system, dismissed the Kyoto Protocol and actively challenged the legitimacy of the International Criminal Court. It also indicated that it would pullout U.S. troops from Bosnia and Kosovo. After much criticism from European countries, senior administration officials decided to decrease the number of troops participating in peacekeeping missions in the region, rather than taking all of them out (Borger 2001). Bush's first months in office were defined by growing trans-Atlantic debate and the president's willingness to strengthen American-Russian relations, as Bush knew that they would weaken once he pulled out the US from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. Relations with China also dominated the White House's foreign policy agenda. During the campaign, Rice (2000: 56) warned that China was not "a 'status quo' power". She argued that it was seeking "to alter Asia's balance of power in its favor." Thus, the crisis that ensued after a US Navy EP-3E reconnaissance plane collided with a Chinese

fighter jet had the potential to wreck Sino-American relations. Nevertheless, Secretary of State Colin Powell's skillful diplomacy freed the plane's crew without permanently harming Sino-American relations (Daalder and Lindsay 2003: 62-77).

During the campaign, Bush stated that Iraq would face “great consequences” if Saddam Hussein showed any willingness to develop weapons of mass destruction (cited in Payne 2001: 306). Once he took office, Iraq received less public attention, but former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill said that Saddam Hussein's threat was discussed in the first National Security Council's meeting (Suskind 2003: 82-83). More tellingly, the Bush administration authorized American pilots patrolling the no-fly zones to attack Iraqi military positions outside these zones (Payne 2001: 306). Nevertheless, it seems that a policy of regime change was not a serious option, though it seems that the Pentagon was actively lobbying the president, via the National Security Council's deputies committee, for a tougher strategy that may have included a plan to oust Saddam Hussein from power (Woodward 2004: 21). Before the 9/11 attacks, the official policy concerning Iraq was defined by Powell's initiative to strengthen the international sanctions regime against Saddam Hussein, though Condoleezza Rice (2000: 59) had argued that changing the regime in Iraq would be beneficial for the US interests in the Middle East.

The Bush administration had taken a realist stance, practicing a form of defensive realism. It was mostly interested in maintaining the status quo, though signs of a willingness to prevent the emergence of potential challengers forced some allies to question Washington's intentions. Moreover, the Bush administration's decision to pull the US from the Kyoto Protocol and to pursue a missile defense system angered the international community. Although Bush was not advocating a revisionist strategy to remake the world according to American interests, its actions did show the end of the Clinton administration's practice of “strategic restraint.” Nevertheless, the Bush administration was not bent on expanding its position of power and influence. Nor were Americans calling for a new foreign policy strategy. So, what exactly explains the Bush administration's sudden shift from a defensive to an offensive strategy? Neo-conservatives were campaigning for a more offensive posture, but their pleas were balanced with nationalist leaders' view that the US should manage the existing international order by focusing on great powers relations, rather than on multilateral

issues that could weaken America's ability to respond to potential future crises. While nationalist leaders were not willing to pursue an offensive strategy before the 9/11 attacks, this did not mean that they were completely opposed to the idea. The key goal was the maintenance of American primacy, which the Bush administration wanted to achieve by dissuading potential competitors from building capabilities that could challenge America's foreign policy interests. In many ways, the 1992 DPG's principles influenced Bush's early foreign policy strategy.

Domestic Anxiety, Opportunity, and the Bush Doctrine

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 caught the nation by surprise. What type of impact did the attacks have on international affairs or American politics? The world remained unipolar and America's capabilities were still greater than those of the other great powers. However, two important changes did take place shortly after the terrorist attacks. First, the international community, including many countries in the Middle East, expressed their outrage and support for the US. Another critical change was Americans' attitude towards the world. Cheney (cited in Crawford 2004b: 685) summarized America's feelings in a television interview: "9/11 changed everything. It changed the way we think about threats to the US. It changed about our recognition of our vulnerabilities. It changed in terms of the kind of national security strategy we need to pursue."

The international community's overwhelming support was marked by its expectations that the Bush administration would moderate its unilateral stance and embrace multilateral mechanisms as a way to fight the war on terror. The Bush administration, while welcoming international support and using some multilateral mechanisms to pursue its global war on terror,⁴ was reluctant to open discussions with its allies on how it would fight this war. Bush's decision to not take-up NATO's offer to assist in the war effort indicated that he wanted the freedom to conduct the war on his own terms. Rumsfeld, the Secretary of Defense, summarized this view: "the mission

⁴ The United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1373 to support counter-terrorism efforts. Apart from establishing the Counter-Terrorism Committee, it produced a list of measures member states have to translate domestically to fight global terror. Failure to adopt these measures could lead the Security Council, via its 1267 Sanctions Committee, to call for enforcement actions (Alvarez, 2003: 874-876).

needs to define the coalition and we ought not to think that a coalition should define the mission” (cited in Gordon and Shapiro 2004: 61). Even though Powell made a case for a strong coalition, Bush told Bob Woodward (2002: 81) that while he understood the benefits of such a coalition, he also reasoned that it would be difficult to sustain it over the long-term and that America would have to be prepared to go to war alone. In fact, Bush was not ready to negotiate the war’s strategy with the allies. He expected the coalition’s members to follow America’s interests in exchange for America’s leadership. Bush and his advisors were convinced that decisive leadership was enough to mobilize the international community. Philip Gordon and Jeremy Shapiro observe (2004: 50) that: “Such leadership entailed staking out firm positions and then demonstrating capacity, and an implacable will, to follow through on policies regardless of the opposition they might generate.”

Gordon and Shapiro’s observations build on Robert Kagan’s (1998: 33) belief that “to be effective, multilateralism must be preceded by unilateralism. In the toughest situations, the most effective multilateral response comes when the strongest power decides to act, with or without the others and then asks its partners whether they will join.” In some ways, the Bush administration did not want a repeat of NATO’s Kosovo War. Both neo-conservatives and nationalists agreed that the allies should not have dictated the terms of the war, when their contribution to the war effort was so small (Mann 2004: 304). For the Bush administration, the American way was the right way and the US had the capabilities to achieve its national interest, with or without the assistance of the allies. Other states understood this reality and they were forced to decide whether to be part of the American-led coalition or sit in the sidelines. Bush knew that if they agreed to join, they would be good partners, making suggestions, but not imposing conditions on American actions. Bush’s (2001) speech to a joint session of Congress following the attacks may have captured his views on this issue: “Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.” This declaration did not only set the tone of the war as struggle between good and evil, but it also gave the US the authority to lead, and forced the rest of the world to follow. His call to “[e]very nation, in every region” also delineated all regions of the world as the battleground for the American-led war on terror.

In the same speech, Bush (2001) stated: “this country will define our times, not be defined by them”, strongly demonstrating the country’s will to embark on a new strategy, where America would not practice “self-restraint” but embark on a new expansive foreign policy strategy. More importantly, the Bush administration enjoyed strong American support. During the 1990s, many Americans were reluctant to engage in an active foreign agenda (Walt 2002: 16), constraining the Clinton administration’s ability to pursue a more expansive foreign policy strategy. The 9/11 attacks challenged this reluctance, convincing many Americans of the importance of following Bush’s lead. Indeed, after the attacks, the president’s critics were silenced and the media, which had been a critic of Bush’s foreign policy before the attacks, became one of its strongest supporters (Harper and Clarke 2004: 184-185; LaFeber 2004: xiv).

Some European leaders were outraged by Bush’s approach. Javier Solana, the former NATO Secretary General, publicly stated that “the alliance should determine the mission and not vice versa” (cited in Gordon and Shapiro 2004: 62). Critics felt that the US’s reaction failed to appreciate the complexity inherent in a war against terrorism. For the European allies, Bush’s description of counter-terrorism as a war was in itself problematic. A strategy based on war, without addressing the socio-economic roots of terror, was an open-ended project, as they strongly believed that terrorism could not be entirely eliminated (Gordon and Shapiro 2004: 60-61). European allies also felt uneasy with some American commentators’ views that the 9/11 attacks offered the US an opportunity to re-organize the world according to its own interests. More importantly, the Europeans were quickly realizing that Bush’s foreign policy, for the first time since 1945, would not be centered on Europe, but on the Greater Middle East. Thus, Europe was of little consequence, as French officials found out when they came to America after the 9/11 attacks to offer their assistance and returned to France with no major role in the military offensive against the Taliban (Mann 2004: 304-305).

By early 2002, Europe’s fears materialized. With strong public support, a permissive international environment, and bolstered by the US’s swift victory over the Taliban, the Bush administration set out a policy to expand its war aims. The war’s first objective was to destroy the Taliban and replace it with a pro-American government. The second objective was the destruction of the al Qaeda network. Even though these two

goals would serve as retribution for the 9/11 attacks, the Bush administration wanted to expand its influence in the Middle East, while also advocating the need for regime change of rogue states as a way to stop their drive to develop weapons of mass destruction. Bush's advisors even advocated regime change in Iraq as a first step to increase its influence in the Middle East. Commentators described this new departure as America's quest for empire, but they miss the point. The Bush administration's goals are not imperial, but revisionist. As a revisionist state, the US wants to gain security by expanding power to regions that it has failed to influence (Ignateff 2003: 57; and Jervis 2003: 382). The Bush Doctrine provides a step by step rationale for this hegemonic strategy.

Neta Crawford (2004b: 693) argues that four interconnected elements define this strategy: American military primacy; Rumsfeld's project to transform defense policy and the military; pre-emptive war; and an assertive counter-proliferation initiatives. Another element is Bush's belief that democratization is a way to consolidate and promote American influence and security. This last element, which was mentioned, but not fully expanded in Bush's National Security Strategy (NSS 2002), was the centerpiece of his second inaugural address.

As noted in the 1992 DPG, the Bush administration is committed to building and maintaining the American military "beyond challenge" (NSS 2002: 29). The plan is to make sure that American military predominance will "dissuade potential adversaries from pursuing a military build-up in hopes of surpassing, or equaling, the power of the United States" (NSS 2002: 30). But, building-up America's military might was not the only way to materialize this strategy. The NSS also calls for an American defense policy consistent with Rumsfeld's (2002: 24) proposals to transform the US military and to move from "the old 'threat-based' strategy that dominated [U.S.] defense planning for nearly half a century" and "adopt a new 'capabilities-based' approach." In essence, Rumsfeld wants American defense and military planners to study "how an adversary might fight instead of on who the adversary might be or when and where the war might occur" (Correll 2003: 33). By focusing on capabilities rather than possible threats, Rumsfeld gave credence to Bush's pre-emption strategy. This approach finds that the Bush administration must prevent states from developing capabilities that could undermine American hegemony.

Accordingly, any state, even if considered a friend before the 9/11 attacks, could potentially become an American adversary in the future.

This “capability-based” approach also applies to the capabilities the American military needs to develop in order to fight wars in the twenty-first century. Rumsfeld wants the armed services to integrate new information technologies into existing weapons platforms, while also advocating for new military strategies, equipment, and weapons systems that would enable the military to react quickly and decisively in any part of the world (NSS 2002: 16). A new emphasis on technology, mobility, and pre-emption forced the Department of Defense to replace the Clinton administration’s strategy to fight two “major theater wars” with a new standard some commentators have called “4-2-1” (Correll 2003: 33). This new standard requires the American military to deter aggression in “four critical theaters,” to overpower “two aggressors at the same time,” and to conduct a “massive counteroffensive to occupy and aggressor’s capital and replace its regime” (Rumsfeld 2002: 24). In addition to these requirements, Rumsfeld (2003) strongly argued against U.S. participation in peacekeeping missions, believing that American forces should concentrate in preparing for and fighting wars. This is not to say that he or Bush dismissed peacekeeping operations outright. In fact, post-Taliban Afghanistan shows exactly what the Bush administration expected in postwar scenarios – American troops are responsible for fighting the war, while coalition members assume responsibility for peacekeeping.

The NSS (2002: 15) also firmly established that the US has the legal right, the power, and the willingness to engage in pre-emptive wars to protect America from further terrorist attacks. Building on his address to the 2002 graduating class at US Military Academy at West Point, Bush (2002, reprinted 2003a: 269) argued:

For much of the last century, America’s defense relied on the Cold War doctrines of deterrence and containment. In some cases, those strategies still apply. But new threats also require new thinking. Deterrence – the promise of massive retaliation against nations – means nothing against shadowy terrorist networks with no nations and no citizens to defend. Containment is not possible when unbalanced dictators with weapons of mass destructions can deliver those missiles or secretly provide them to terrorist allies.

Bush (2003a: 269) decisively argued that the war on terror could not be won on the defensive, stating: “We must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans, and confront the worst threats before they emerge. In the world, we have entered the only path to safety is a path of action.”

As controversial as this new willingness to use force pre-emptively currently is, John Lewis Gaddis (2004: 16-22; also see Leffler 2004: 23) has noted that this is not a departure in American strategic thinking. It is essentially a nineteenth century approach, which the US repeatedly used to expand or secure its boundaries. Ironically, even though Bush believes that national strength and steadfast leadership are necessary requirements to win the global war on terror, his decision to embrace pre-emptive strikes, as a way of dealing with these threats, also demonstrates a sense of weakness and vulnerability. Consequently, Bush does not distinguish between imminent and immanent threats. As Crawford (2004b: 695) observes, both are combined, showing that “adversaries are always out to get us and capable of doing so. It is not what they have or intend to do right now, it is what they might get or think about in the future.”

Connected to pre-emptive strikes, the Bush administration also proposed a more assertive counter-proliferation initiative. The US in this respect wants to dissuade rogue nations and other states from developing weapons of mass destruction. Even though the Bush administration prefers to work with the international community on this issue, it is also ready to use its military power, including its nuclear forces, to achieve this objective (Crawford 2004b: 696). Pre-emptive wars are also an integral part of this rationale, as it will convince rogue nations that the US has the willingness and capabilities to attain its interests. Moreover, Bush’s desire to build a national missile defense system is part of a long-term approach to secure the American homeland. While this system would not protect the country from suicide bombers and other type of terrorist attacks, it does dissuade other states from pursuing nuclear weapons, as they would also have to create new technologies to bypass the proposed system. A national missile defense system at this moment is no more than a promissory note. Nevertheless, this system is an integral part of Bush’s counter-terrorism initiative (NSS 2002: iv).

To this point, the NSS is in line with offensive realism’s logic. Motivated by fear and insecurity, the US is willing to use its capabilities to expand its hegemony.

Mearsheimer's definition of hegemony, as a state that dominates all other states in a region or the international system, suggests that a hegemonic state must enjoy military primacy over potential challengers. More importantly, it must be free to execute its strategies to maintain and expand its position of power. These not only require investments and integration of new military technologies, but it also necessitates nuclear supremacy. Fear of nuclear attacks becomes an important reason why not to pursue a revisionist policy. Thus, Bush's national missile defense system and the other aspects of his assertive counter-proliferation strategy are clear intentions of a desire to freely execute his administration's strategies. Rumsfeld's "capabilities-based" approach also emphasizes that the US does not discriminate an enemy nation from a friendly one. By concentrating on capabilities, rather than actual threats, Rumsfeld implicitly affirms offensive realism's view that today's friend can be tomorrow's enemy. Moreover, Bush's unilateralism and his suspicion of multilateral bodies also acknowledge Mearsheimer's view that these bodies are "marriage of conveniences" that must be abandoned when the national interest collides with so-called international ones.

The NSS's final element, Bush's keenness to actively promote democracy and capitalism, may not be in line with the logic of offensive realism as presented in Mearsheimer's research. However, as noted in the first section, domestic variables are important determinants of foreign policy in democratic polities and they should not be ignored. In fact, realists such as Henry Kissinger (2001: 11) admit American foreign policy makers would face difficulties promoting a strategy that does not embrace America's exceptionalism. History has showed how difficult it would be for any president to campaign for a bold foreign policy strategy without including a commitment to the spread of American political and economic principles. From a more geo-strategic perspective, the US's position of influence in Europe and East Asia has been sustained by its close connections to democratic allies and to American bases in these countries. The reconstruction of Germany and Japan became an important element of America's Cold War strategy as they closely worked with Washington to balance Soviet ambitions in their regions. While Mearsheimer may advise against including this element in an offensive strategy, this would contradict a strong American foreign policy tradition. Pragmatism requires a combination of idealist and realist elements. Finding a balance, as

Kissinger (2001) argues, is difficult, but doing so provides the needed public support presidents need to carry out controversial strategies.

These theoretical issues aside, it must also be recognized that Bush believes that democracy is presently under attack and that the only way of strengthening democracy is by fostering democracy in different parts of the world. Even though Bush recognizes that this is a long-term agenda, he believes that this will also remove the causes of terrorism. Gaddis (2004: 89), commenting on why individuals join terrorist movements, finds that “frustrations growing out of the absence of representative institutions within their own societies, so that the only outlet for dissent was religious fanaticism.” Bush seems to concur. But, it must be noted that his embracing of Wilsonianism is not necessarily in line with Woodrow Wilson’s view of American foreign policy. As Judis (2004: 211) notes, Wilson believed America’s role was to create “a world in which nations didn’t seek to conquer or dominate others nations”. Bush’s democratic project, though in line with American exceptionalism, is also in accordance with his global hegemonic strategy because he assumes that America’s hegemony is not only benign, but it is also something the international community will embrace because there are worse things than American power (Gaddis 2002: 52).

It is clear that the Bush Doctrine presents a departure from the status quo tilting post-Cold War foreign policy strategy. The Bush administration’s road to global hegemony may have started in early 2002, as Bush and his advisors talked of the new Doctrine’s elements and interests. But, their project materialized in the later part of the year when the case for the invasion of Iraq was made to the American people and the world.

Concluding Remarks

Even before the attacks, Bush’s advisors, especially those associated with the neo-conservative movement, campaigned for a more robust foreign policy strategy to turn what Krauthammer described as the “unipolar moment” into a long-term reality. Even though the Clinton administration’s strategy did extend America’s influence and power potential, many criticized these efforts because they found that they surrendered America’s interests in the altar of multilateralism. Bush’s initial foreign policy response

was kept within the limits of Clinton's strategy, but his advisors, building on the 1992 DPG, wanted to revise the existing international order to maximize America's ability of fulfilling its national interest.

The 9/11 attacks presented the Bush administration an opportunity to refashion American foreign policy and to subsequently reorder the world around America's interests. Walter Russell Mead (2004: 192) makes the case that Osama Bin Laden must be thanked, as the attacks prompted a sense of vulnerability that convinced Americans of the need of the very type of foreign policy strategy that they had rejected in 1992. After four years in office, the Bush administration "institutionalized fear in U.S. foreign policy" (Crawford 2004b: 86). By heightening this sense of fear and vulnerability, Bush mobilized American public opinion behind his revisionist strategy designed to extend US hegemony. The debates concerning the proposed invasion of Iraq and those that defined the 2004 presidential elections show that Bush's strategy was in line with the public's concerns.

The initial disruption of al Qaeda's network and the ousting of the Taliban were the testing grounds of the new concepts that made it into the Bush Doctrine. The combined fear of future attacks and the growing confidence in American military capabilities gave the Bush administration the opportunity to make the case that Saddam Hussein was a bigger challenge than Osama Bin Laden (Althus and Largio 2004). In many ways, the US faced many pressures in the Middle East and its road to global hegemony necessitated control over this region. The 9/11 attacks were symptomatic of a wider civil war taking place in the Middle East. And, while the US had not directly engaged in this war, it had taken sides, hindering radical Islamic movements from overthrowing the regimes that were supporting American regional interests (Doran 2002). Consequently, the US was faced with a dilemma: pull out from the Middle East or establish hegemony over the region.

It is important to notice that even though America had a strong military presence in the Persian Gulf, its influence was limited. As John Agnew (2003: 877) notes, "there are parts of the world where US hegemony does not currently prevail, but where hard power has to bear in order to prevent possible military threats from materializing, secure fundamental resources for the world economy, and eliminate ruler who refuse to play by

the rules as laid down under current hegemony.” The US, in Bush’s estimation had to bring its power to bear in order to reform the Middle East and bring it into the democratic circle of nations it has influenced over the past decades. As discussed above, democracy is seen as an antidote to terrorism.

In line with Agnew’s view, the US needed control over the Middle East for geo-strategic reasons. A strong American military presence would enable it to address possible challenges in the Caucasus, Central Asia and South Asia. The US’s position of pre-eminence in East Asia and Europe keeps potential challengers from challenging American hegemony. The long-term fear is that China or Russia may dominate Central Asia or South Asia, thus making a run towards regional hegemony, which would challenge America’s interests in the Middle East, Europe, and East Asia. Thus, a strong military presence in the Middle East and strong allies in the region would enable the US to project power in Central Asia and South Asia, dissuading China, Russia, or India from challenging America’s interests. From this position, the US could construct, with time, a truly global hegemonic order.

As a result, having secured America’s public approval for this strategy, the Bush administration made its case to oust Saddam Hussein’s government. Many analysts, including John Mearsheimer, argued against the war because they felt Iraq could be contained (Mearsheimer and Walt 2003; see also: Clarke 2004; and Scowcroft 2002).⁵ They further argued that the US should devote its resources to finish the job in

⁵ Regarding John Mearsheimer’s views, it is important to differentiate his personal views from his theory of offensive realism. His theory provides an explanation why the US should carry out a revisionist policy. However, Mearsheimer, in an interview conducted by Lisa Bastarache (2004), explained his personal views on realism:

Many people think that I accept with a certain amount of glee the fact that the world operates according to realist dictates. But that's not my view at all. I find international relations to be a deeply depressing subject, because it is filled with so many horror stories. The international system is a very dangerous place in which to operate. I wish that we didn't live in a realist world, but in a more benign one instead. The reason that I am a realist is not because I relish realism from a normative or philosophical point of view, but because I think that it is the best theory we have for understanding how the world works.

Clearly, Mearsheimer’s work may explain why the US embraced a revisionist policy, but it seems that he was against the war, not only at a theoretical level, as he thought Saddam Hussein’s regime could be contained, but also at a normative level because he considered it a choice that would have made the world more unstable. A transcript of the interview is available at the following website: <<http://int.usamnesia.com/mearsheimer.htm>>.

Afghanistan and destroy al Qaeda. Others felt that an invasion of Iraq would weaken the international coalition against al Qaeda, allowing the network to reconstitute itself and start further attacks against the US and its coalition partners. The Bush administration's dismissed these views and highlighted Iraq's ambitions to develop weapons of mass destruction and stressed Saddam Hussein's links with terrorist organizations, implicitly linking Saddam Hussein to the 9/11 attacks. In the end, the Bush administration convinced the American people and Congress of the importance of Operation Iraqi Freedom, but not without damaging America's standing in the international community. Even though some countries used the UN and other intergovernmental organizations to counter American efforts, they could not stop the US from going to war. Thus, the key element in Bush's revisionist strategy was to get Americans' support, because he knew that the international community could not deter the US from attacking Iraq.

Supporters and critics of the war have argued that Bush's Iraq war was animated by imperial designs. As noted above, these views miss the point. The US crafted a revisionist foreign policy as I described in the first section of this article. Iraq was as a first step in the quest for global hegemony. In addition, the Bush administration spent more time working on its military strategy, than on its post-war plan. As I (2004) have discussed elsewhere, Bush's advisors believed that Iraqis would welcome the invasion and they would work with American administrators to establish a democratic government. The US did not want to assume "effective sovereignty" over post-Saddam Iraq; it just wanted to make sure that the country's foreign and defense policies were not geared at challenging American hegemony in the region. Bush's (2003b: 558) comparison of post-war Iraq to post-1945 Germany and Japan indicated the sort of relation the US wanted to develop with the new Iraq. The war wanted to uphold American values, while also criticizing the countries and the international rules that tried to deter the US from ousting Saddam Hussein's regime from power. In Washington's estimation, a quick victory and transformed Iraq would show the goodness of American power and the value of the Bush administration's proposals to transform the international community according to its needs and interests.

Even though the US did emphasize its intention to liberate Iraq, it is important to also point out that geo-strategic interests were driving the policy. The Bush

administration had plans of establishing military bases to move the troops from Saudi Arabia (Spolar 2004), giving the Saudi government a chance to address their internal problems. The presence of American troops in Iraq would not only allow the United States to project power in the region and in Central Asia and South Asia, but it would also protect the developed world's access to Middle Eastern oil. Moreover, developing the Iraqi oil industry would increase world oil supplies, lowering the price of oil and strengthening the American economy, which in turn helps the US's drive to global hegemony over the long-term (Mead 2004: 44). Related to Bush's conviction that democracy is the solution to terrorism, the White House firmly argued that Iraq's democratization would become an example to other countries in the Middle East, promoting the very values that would weaken individuals' desire to join terrorist organizations and that would enable them to welcome a partnership with America. The Iraq war also enabled Rumsfeld to show why military transformation and a "capability-based" defense planning are important elements in America's quest for global hegemony.

Nevertheless, the Bush administration's hope of quickly achieving its interests has been dashed aside by the post-war insurgency. This is not to say that Bush or his advisors have given up on their hegemonic project, but it will require them to expend more resources doing so. Indeed, the recent release of the 2006 *National Security Strategy* re-emphasizes the value of the Bush Doctrine. Nonetheless, history will likely judge the Bush Doctrine and the Iraq war as an unnecessary gamble, hurting America's democratic project, leading its allies to question American intentions, and further radicalizing the Middle East. Could the folly of Iraq be the start of America's hegemonic decline? We should not be surprised by these turn in events, for Mearsheimer's research reminds us that revisionist states usually fail to accomplish their dreams of global hegemony. The mix of fear and hubris makes for reactionary policies that seem to lead great powers to their down fall. Similarly, revisionist states often fail to get international support for their actions. Although it is not surprising to see why the international community has not assisted the American-led coalition's efforts in post-war Iraq, the increasing costs associated with this project has compromised America's position of power and the legitimacy of its ideals. It is too early to declare the end of American hegemony, but this could be the beginning of that chapter in American history.

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