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NEO-CONSERVATISM AFTER IRAQ  
FUKUYAMA VS KRISTOL

By

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## AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Fukuyama Vs Kristol

In 1998 prominent neoconservatives in the U.S. drafted a letter to President Bill Clinton demanding U.S. action to end tyranny in Iraq. Military action was advocated as a mean to eliminate Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction, remove Iraq's President Saddam Hussein from power, and initiate a democratic domino effect throughout the Middle Eastern region. Following the manifestation of the neoconservatives' Iraqi agenda by President George W. Bush's administration and the conclusion of the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, neoconservative ideologues split around the lessons earned. One group was persistent in its stand that the U.S. decision to launch a preemptive and unilateral war represented an opportunity to promote global democracy and U.S. supremacy. The second group held the position that unilateralism and coercive regime change would implicate U.S. foreign policy decision with global isolationism. This thesis examines the positions of both camps through the views held by two prominent neoconservatives: William Kristol and Francis Fukuyama. The thesis reveals the theoretical repositioning of the U.S. neoconservatives that followed the 2003 Iraq invasion with prospect of their reorientation toward a U.S. foreign policy rapprochement in Iran.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTERNATIONAL RELATION THEORIES

Tens of thousands of Iraqis have been and continue to be killed every day since the beginning of “liberation” by the Coalition Forces in March 2003. The impact of this war has also been tremendous on the philosophy of US foreign-policy making in several ways. Prior to the war, neoconservatives supporting the Preemption Theory regarded the war on Iraq as a golden opportunity to end dictatorship, spread democracy, and achieve US hegemony. But other Americans believed that alternative channels such as diplomacy and containment need to be exhausted before even considering war as an option. The problematic question of what makes war “just” seems to lie at the heart of both arguments. In the aftermath of the invasion of Iraq, this moral question opened a rift within the ranks of the neo-conservative community, provoking a debate around neo-conservative principles pertaining to war.

‘Just War’ theory attempts to determine whether the use of arms is morally justifiable. Just War theorists express aversion towards war, while, at the same time, acknowledging that war at times may be necessary. Just War theories seek to establish how the use of arms might be directed at the purpose of establishing lasting peace and justice.

Based on the Geneva Conventions, the following principles outline Just War theory:

- War should be waged as a last resort;
- War should be waged by a legitimate authority;
- War should be fought with right intentions to repair a wrong suffered;
- War should be waged only if there is evidence of a moderate chance of success;

- The ultimate purpose of war is to install peace;
- Violence inflicted upon the enemy be proportional to the injury suffered; and
- The use of weapons must distinguish between combatants and civilians.

Aristotle, Cicero, Augustine, Aquinas, and Hugo Grotius are cited amongst the early philosophers of Just War theory.

'Just War' tradition rests upon three parts; *jus ad bellum*: when it is right to use armed force; *jus in bello*: acceptable conduct in war; and *jus post bellum*: peace agreements and war termination.

*Jus ad bellum* deals with the following issues: 'just cause', comparative justice, legitimate authority, right intention, probability of success, last resort, and macro-proportionality. *Jus in bello* tackles distinction, proportionality and military necessity. *Jus post bellum* requires just cause for termination and addresses right intention, public declaration and authority, discrimination, and proportionality.

### **1.1 - Neo-conservatives and the Iraq War**

Both advocates and opponents of the war against Iraq formulated their arguments in the context of Just War theory. Since each side interpreted differently how Just War criteria are to be applied, they reached different conclusions. The central criterion in conflict between the opposing camps was the legitimacy of the aggressor's authority to wage war. Advocates of the war considered the US a legitimate authority to wage war on the basis of being a sovereign state, whereas opponents emphasized that for an authority to be considered legitimate to wage war a specific UN Security Council resolution is required. As per the Geneva conventions war is

justified only if waged in a nation's self-defense to repel an attack or in order to end violations of human rights.

A number of neo-conservative observers have accused the George W. Bush administration of using excessive force in its war against Iraq (Fukuyama, 2006). This paper examines the impact of the Iraq war on neo-conservatism to assess the extent of major ideological shifts pertaining to Just War.

To begin the assessment, this paper surveys the contemporary political thought of two major neo-conservative figures who advocated the doctrine of preemption prior to the war: Francis Fukuyama and William Kristol. The selection of these two authors was based on the fact that both were amongst the signatories to the letter (enclosed at the end of this thesis) addressed to President Bill Clinton, which stressed their belief in the seriousness of the threat that late President Saddam Hussein posed to "The Free World" and called for the removal of Saddam Hussein from power. The signatories considered that military action was needed to eliminate the possibility of Iraq carrying out its threats to use weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), particularly since diplomacy had visibly failed.

Another reason for choosing the above mentioned authors is that the war on Iraq has impacted their views differently: Fukuyama shifting his positions from a proponent stance to a critical one while Kristol maintained his consistent defense of the war.

Indeed the impact of the Iraq war divided the neo-conservatives divided into two camps: a camp which still believes that the Iraq war was an opportunity to promote democracy in Iraq and the rest of the Middle East, and another camp which now believes that "unilateralism and coercive regime change cannot be the basis for an effective American foreign policy" as stated

by Fukuyama in his article 'Why Shouldn't I Change My Mind?' published on April 9, 2006. This poses the question of which of the two camps did really shift away from the fundamentals of neo-conservatism as set by Leo Strauss?

Leo Strauss (1899–1973) was a German Jewish political theorist who wrote interpretive essays on the thought of classical philosophers including Plato and Aristotle. Strauss' ideas were politicized by his university students and linked to contemporary politics. Strauss believed that every regime affects the character of its citizens, and that the regime is the key to a better understanding of political life. Strauss also attested that, although politics certainly shapes regimes, one cannot formulate a regime change without taking into account the mores, habits, and traditions of the society fundamental to the regime. Therefore, democracy cannot be entirely imported. Strauss stresses the fact that democracy is not the default option to which societies would resort to once dictatorships are toppled.

The war on Iraq has impacted international relations theory in many ways. For neo-conservatism in particular, two schools of thought within international relations appear to be emerging. One perspective has come to acknowledge that the reasons justifying the letter addressed to Clinton no longer stand. The failure to find weapons of mass destruction and to quickly democratize the Iraqi regime are inflicting great damage upon the credibility and standing of the US in the world. Former advocates now urge the Bush administration to reconsider its foreign policy. The other perspective is one that continues to assert unilateralism and preemption as appropriate foreign policy strategies for the US. Its proponents warn of adverse consequences should the precautionary, offensive approach be compromised.

Francis Fukuyama advocated neo-conservatism prior to the war on Iraq. However, upon witnessing the enormous human and material cost of the war, he veered from the neo-

conservative agenda to argue that the US must seek a way out of Iraq. He captures the sentiments of the first camp.

Fukuyama felt that the neo-conservative position on the Iraq war had become overly militaristic and based on unilateral armed intervention to further democratization within authoritarian regimes. On the first anniversary of September 11, Fukuyama argued in *The Washington Post* that invading Iraq must be done only with the UN Security Council's approval, reserving military intervention as a last resort. In his article "Why Shouldn't I Change My Mind", he declares that he no longer supports the letter to Clinton.

The second school of thought can be detected in the writings of William Kristol, who co-founded the Project for the New American Century (PNAC) with Robert Kagan. The PNAC was established in early 1997 with the goal of promoting US global hegemony and condoned the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. This school considers the US to be the best hegemon in history, and assigns to the US the duty of maintaining world order.

Hence, key principles of neo-conservative thought on Just War are now facing fundamental challenges as a direct consequence of the Iraqi war. Yet, despite increasing desertions, the doctrine of preemption – which constitutes the premise for the neo-conservative formulation of Just War – maintains fundamental prominence as the Iraqi conflict continues to be directed within the struggle for democratic order. This paper will try to demonstrate that even presumed dissenters (such as Fukuyama) will eventually yield and revert back to the fundamentals of neo-conservatism on Just War within the perceived framework of a global struggle for democracy.

## 1.2 - Methodology

In the following sections, we will first survey the definition and intellectual origins of neo-conservatism. Then we take the letter addressed to Clinton on January 26, 1998, as a starting point, and trace the changing positions of the signatories after the war. Next, we examine the writings of Fukuyama and Kristol in order to analyze the following issues:

- Preemption doctrine
- US leadership
- US vis-à-vis the UN
- Democratization

Examining the letter addressed to Clinton attentively highlights the above four points, which constitute the core elements of neo-conservative thought as applied today.

In chapter five, a comparative analysis will be conducted in order to reveal theoretical and practical propositions and neo-conservative shifts throughout the works of Fukuyama and Kristol.

In the conclusion, the above four issues essence of today's neo-conservatism will be examined through the speeches and writings of a political figure and candidate to the 2008 presidential elections: John McCain. In the second section of the conclusion, we will analyze the position of neo-conservatives towards Iran nuclear program and whether the war over Iraq taught them any lessons.

### **1.3 - Origins of neo-conservatism**

Before the outbreak of World War I, theories of international politics were not a preoccupation of Western political thought, which primarily focused on domestic issues. While historians might tell us how and why a specific war happened, they did not shed light on the rationale behind the occurrence of war in general. A modern theory of international politics attempts to answer this causality question. Such a theory does not look at each war as unique but analyzes many wars to discern common patterns. It then specifies from the related data exactly which conditions prevail repeatedly and consistently to necessitate war. Such solid theories can predict the approximate likelihood of an event to happen.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the rise of various schools of international relations. In order to understand the particular endowment of neo-conservatism it is crucial to understand the various 20<sup>th</sup> century theories that helped its emergence; realism, liberalism and conservatism, which will now be briefly survey.

#### **1.3.1 - Realism**

Realism considers the state to be the core element of a country. Realists would attribute World War I on power politics, and believe that World War II stemmed from the neglect of power politics. Hans Morgenthau states; “International Politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power.”

There are two schools of realism explaining why power and power relations are the essence of international politics.

The first school: Classical Realism (a minority) places emphasis on what were postulated to be inherent aspects of human nature, a human nature that is essentially fixed and unchangeable. People are said to possess an inherent, insatiable desire for power. This desire inevitably leads them, either individually or collectively, to struggle for power; and that struggle sooner or later results in conflict. Classical realists assume, therefore, that statesmen, representing nations, also think and act in terms of interest defined as power.

Thucydides, Hans Morgenthau, Edward.H.Carr, Reinhold Niebuhr, Oliver Holmes and Friedrich Nietzsche are considered to be among the prominent classical realists.

Structural Realism or Neo-realism: states that nations' primary influence of power considerations flows from the basic structure of the international system. They reject human nature as a starting point and focus on what they consider the basic fact of international existence: the absence of central authoritative international institutions to make rules, apply them, enforce decisions, settle disputes, or provide for order and security. Therefore, anarchy is the basis of international politics. Robert J. Art, Joseph Grieco, Robert Jervis, John Mearsheimer, Randa Schweller, Stephen Walt and Kenneth Waltz are cited as neorealist figures.

The emphasis on power and on security as the essence of centrality of democracy constitutes the common points between realism and neo-realism. Realism in international relations centers on the human and institutional aspects of international politics whereas liberalism tackles the economic aspect.



### **1.3.2 - Liberalism**

Liberalism recommends limited intervention of the state in a country's affairs. Classic liberalism emerged with Adam Smith and the publication of his book *The Wealth of Nations*, which promoted classic laissez-faire economics. As per Smith, the true wealth of a nation is in the amount of goods and services its people produce. He also considered that the government should not interfere in the economy as it would retard its growth. In order to prevent monopoly and high prices, competition should not be banished, and, for the sake of motivating domestic industry, the government should not impose high tariffs on importations. Smith argued that by letting the economy take its own course, one would have the optimal system. As to whether such a system would lead to chaos, Smith argued that there would be an 'invisible hand' which would guide, regulate, and self-correct the economy.

Modern liberalism was the result of Adam Smith's classic economic liberalism and its consequence of manufacturers' establishment of monopolies, which gave rise to class divisions. In 1880, Thomas Hill Green rethought liberalism and reasoned that the goal of liberalism was a free society. According to classic economic liberalism, wages would find their own level. However what should occur if wages reached a very low level? According to Thomas Hill Green, the government would have to step in and protect freedoms. This would result in what Thomas Hill Green called positive freedom. In general, modern liberalism was in favor of regulating the working schedule, allowing the formation of unions, promoting health insurance, and improving education. In order to achieve this, higher taxes must be imposed upon the rich rather than upon the working class (progressive taxation).

Wilsonianism considers the promotion of democracy throughout the world as the best way to safeguard American security interests. Ethnic self-determination, spread of democracy

and anti-isolationism are considered to be the core principles of Wilsonianism. Wilsonians are the advocates of foreign policy ideals of former US President Woodrow Wilson.

Neo-liberalism emerged in the 1980s as a reaction to US President Ronald Reagan's conservatism. Neo-liberals were distinct from the modern liberals in that they were to a large extent in agreement with what neo-conservatives proclaimed. Neo-liberalism enclosed some aspects of realism by stressing the importance of the global spread of liberal ideas.

The next section deals with the path of ideas that led to the appearance of neo-conservatism.

### **1.3.3 - Conservatism**

Conservatism is a political ideology that requires power. Classic conservatism is largely based on the ideas of Edmund Burke, which were published in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Today, however, conservatism diverges from the classical thought in several ways. Within his time, Burke objected to the way liberal ideas were applied in France by revolutionaries as they became to be radical in nature under the influence of Jean Jacques Rousseau. Burke, unlike liberals, claimed that one could not gamble on the rational part of a human being because there is the irrational which tends to over-control. To contain the irrational passions, society has developed traditions, institutions, and moral standards. Without social mores, man's irrational impulses would lead to chaos, ultimately reaching tyranny.

Burke argued that there should be some gradual change in order for people to adjust. As for institutions and traditions, they cannot be wholly bad for they have been shaped throughout the years. With time, people change, and their traditions therefore evolve thus institutions change in order to go conform to the newly shaped traditions.

For a modern conservative, Burke's emphasis on religion, traditions, and morality still has an authoritative role. Modern conservatism combines the economic ideas of Adam Smith and the sociological perspective of Edmund Burke. Neo-conservatism is similar in its ideas to modern conservatism, though its promoters were disillusioned liberals and leftists, who claimed to be truthful to the modern liberalism of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Many liberals who came under the influence of the popular ideas in 1960s and early 1970s turned to neo-conservatism and the ideas of neo-conservatives clashed with those of traditional conservatives. The former emphasized free-market economics whereas the latter maintained focus on religious and traditional values.

According to Irving Kristol neo-conservatism rests on three basic pillars:

- Economics – promoting steady wide-spread economic growth through cutting taxes
- Domestic affairs – encouraging strong but non-intrusive government and attachment to social conservatism
- Foreign policy – valuing patriotism, protecting national interests at home and abroad, and the great importance of having strong military forces.

Neo-conservatism is a mixture of aspects of realism, liberalism and conservatism. In examining the Iraq war these different components will be revealed.

In the next chapter, we will try to analyze why neo-conservatives such as Kristol advocated war over Iraq

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **JUST WAR AND DEMOCRATIZING IRAQ**

After World War II, the US was primarily concerned with the containment of the Soviet Union and communism; which was manifested by the US efforts to support anti-communist countries throughout the world while isolating pro-soviet countries throughout the world and exerting pressure for regimes to undergo permanent change. The Cold War ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union, leaving the US as the 'only remaining superpower'. US foreign policy today covers constructing and maintaining diplomatic relations with other states and international organizations, foreign aid and disaster relief, peacekeeping functions, and international economic issues. As a world leader, the US today maintains a wide role in addressing international economic issues and in negotiating settlements to end regional conflicts.

Increasingly, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the US as the sole superpower in a now unipolar world order, ideological pressure from hawkish elements within the US have been mounted or increased for the US to assert its global leadership in expanding democracy and undermining anti-US regimes in the world. This was reflected in the first US aggressive engagement in world affairs particularly in the first Gulf war.

On August 2, 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait, annexing it and declaring it as the 19<sup>th</sup> province Iraq. This came upon the failure of talks over oil production and debt repayments. President George Bush, assuming that Iraq was about to invade Saudi Arabia in order to control the region's oil supplies, organized a multinational coalition to free Kuwait. The UN Security

Council imposed economic sanctions on Iraq and released a resolution setting January 15, 1991 as a deadline for Iraq to withdraw unconditionally from Kuwait. Bush rejected a Soviet-Iraq peace plan since the gradual withdrawal offered did not comply with all UN resolutions. Air strikes were launched with congressional approval (January 12 1991) by January 16, 1991. Bush ordered the start of the ground war on February 24, 1991. The Allies entered Kuwait City on February 26, 1991, and the official cease-fire was accepted and signed on April 6 after Iraq agreed to abide by all pertaining UN resolutions on March 3, 1991. This invasion ended up raising the already high tension among the countries of the region.

Years later, convinced that the American policy towards Iraq was not working and that Americans were about to face in the Middle East the most serious threat since the Cold War, a group of intellectuals (Elliott Abrams, Richard L. Armitage, William J. Bennett, Jeffrey Bergner, John Bolton, Paula Dobriansky, Francis Fukuyama, Robert Kagan, Zalmay Khalilzad, William Kristol, Richard Perle, Peter W. Rodman, Donald Rumsfeld, William Schneider, Jr. Vin Weber, Paul Wolfowitz, R. James Woolsey, Robert B. Zoellick) addressed a letter to President Clinton on January 26, 1998. In this letter, they urged him to put together a new strategy that would preserve the interests of the US and its allies in the world. They perceived Saddam Hussein's removal from power the core aim of this strategy, considering the policy of "containment" adopted vis-à-vis Saddam as ineffective. The group claimed that the US can no longer depend on their partners of the Gulf War coalition to pursue and punish Saddam in the event of evading UN inspections. Therefore, the US would not be able to determine with any certainty whether Iraq did possess weapons of mass destruction. This uncertainty alone destabilized the whole of the Middle East. The ability of Saddam to use weapons of mass destruction would have put at risk the safety of American troops and allies in the region. Saddam remaining in power would have

also jeopardized an important share of the world's oil supply. The group considered that the American foreign policy should aim force mostly at removing Saddam Hussein from power. Military action should be undertaken since diplomacy was clearly failing.

These groups of intellectuals were in essence advocating a shift in US foreign policy from containment to pre-emptiveness where the latter becomes a core element validating just war. At that time however, given the size of the threat, it was highly hazardous to rely upon US coalition partners and the cooperation of Hussein. The only plausible strategy was ruling out the possibility of Iraq's ability to use or to threaten to use weapons of mass destruction. The signatories of this letter urged the president to act decisively. They believed that the dangers of failing to put this strategy into action were greater than those resulting of its implementation. They considered the US, under the existing UN resolutions, to have the authority to take all necessary steps that such strategy required, and that US policy cannot continue to be hampered by the principle of unanimity in the UN Security Council. They demanded the president to put an end to the threat of weapons of mass destruction jeopardizing US interests and survival altogether.

Nowadays, the terms "Liberal Hawks" or neo-conservatives are used interchangeably to describe neo-liberals and neo-leftists that supported or still support the US decision to invade Iraq. These neo-liberals believe in using the military force of the US to accomplish "good things" such as imposing democracy. This is a general principle that they hold and apply to situations such as Iraq. The concerns expressed in the letter may not have found solid ground, but a seemingly irrelevant event provided the boost needed for implementation.

The events of September 11 pushed the US towards the realization that peace and stability could not be achieved via globalization and commerce; a new roadmap was needed. September 11 also marked the end of an era and the beginning of the next. The US was urged to shape this era, or else others would shape it for the US and the rest of the “free world” in ways that, to say the least, would not meet the ideals and interests that the US upholds and defends. The question of which approach to adopt regarding Iraq falls under the umbrella of a larger concept: the future of the Middle East and the war against terror. The choice of approach was about what kind of world Americans wanted to live in and what type of role they were planning to undertake in this new era. It was vital to liberate Iraq, but it was also important that the principles standing behind this choice should guide American foreign policy within a wider context.

President George W. Bush made a difference from his predecessors by “engaging Iraq in accord with American principles” (Kristol and Kaplan, 2003). George W. Bush transformed American policy towards Iraq into a success. According to the “Bush doctrine,” the whole world had to be in accord with American principles. The George W. Bush administration would reach this by implementing the concept of military preemption and regime change. Kristol believed that an America with its power fully engaged was able to achieve this necessity. September 11 helped President George W. Bush to identify the “Axis of Evil”, components of which were regimes with records of support for terrorism, thus posing a threat to the US and the rest of the world. Iraq was at the top of this list.

Kristol considered that the debate over war with Iraq proved that many around the world have lost their aptitude to identify evil and take action against it, even as it looked them directly in the eye. According to Kristol, Saddam did not even make the effort to hide the threat he posed. After the destruction of Osirak, Saddam pursued diversifying his WMD and invested

considerable efforts towards obtaining nuclear weapons. According to Adnan Saed, an Iraqi civil engineer, these activities were taking place covertly in the rear of government institutions and in private villas or underground in fake water wells. Baghdad did not reveal all the figures in its inventory of WMDs to the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) weapons inspectors. Iraqis were successful in concealing documents and evidence, preventing the UN inspectors from producing reports reflecting reality. In Kristol's view, it was certainly the UN's job to sanction Iraq for its violations, but not all members of the Security Council shared America's view on the importance of disarming Iraq. France and Russia had commercial ties with Baghdad, and both were content with tempting US foreign policy. "Finally, in December 2002, the UN inspection team reported that Iraq had failed to account for crucial elements of its deadly inventories." (Kristol and Kaplan, 2003: 33).

Saddam was considered a tyrant not only because of the horrific treatment of his citizens but because of his acts of aggression outside the Iraqi borders, i.e., in Iran, Kuwait, and Israel. Therefore, according to Kristol, preemptive action against Iraq was not only justified but even necessary. We may never come to prove Saddam's links with Bin Laden, but "perhaps the most convincing evidence of Iraq's involvement in terrorism was that it harbored well-known terrorists" (Kristol and Kaplan, 2003: 25) i.e. Abu Nidal. The September 11 events pushed the Bush administration towards the conviction that, in order to safeguard America, all so-called terrorist regimes had to be transformed into democracies. To back up its campaign for imposing democracy, the administration used the theory of Just War as its slogan.

Neo-conservatives have a deep conviction that democracy weakens the probability of threats and that democracies do not fight one another. The regime change in Iraq even by force and democratizing the country according to US interests will eliminate the threat and may very



well send a ripple effect around the countries in the region. Therefore democratizing Iraq, which according to the neo-conservatives requires regime change via a preemptive action, provides “good moral” justification for war.

In the next chapter, we will probe preemption, U.S. leadership, U.S. and the UN and democratization respectively through the works of Fukuyama and Kristol.

## CHAPTER THREE

### DISSENTERS vs. ADVOCATES: FUKUYAMA vs. KRISTOL

#### 3.1 - Preemption

##### 3.1.1 - Fukuyama

Perceptions of threats to the US changed on September 11, when two threats already existing concerns for US foreign policy, were brought together to form one deadly package: radical Islamism and WMDs. A thorough threat assessment needed to take into consideration the political dimension of the threat emerging from radical Islamists (or “jihadists,” as per Fukuyama). According to Fukuyama, jihadism will remain even in modern societies, since it is a by-product of globalization. To contain it, the major issue is not how to democratize the Middle East but rather how to come up with a method to integrate Muslims in the democratic western countries. Poll data pinpointed the general feeling that Muslims do not dislike the US but they rather dislike the American foreign policy that supports Israel and the Arab dictators at the expense of democracy (Fukuyama, 2006).

Fukuyama argues that in order to justify its war in Iraq, the George W. Bush administration found refuge in three arguments: First, Iraq possesses WMDs; second, Iraq is linked to Al-Qaida; and third, the Iraqi regime was a tyranny from which the Iraqi people should be liberated. To gain support for its military action in Iraq, the administration promoted the fear that Iraqi WMDs would be used by terrorists who directly threaten the US homeland. After the

war began, the administration failed to prove the existence of WMDs and the link to Al-Qaida, and had no left, other than that of implementing democracy and safeguarding human rights.

The most debatable issue in the general strategy of the George W. Bush administration was the doctrine of preemption. In the 2002 National Security Strategy (NSS) of the United States, George W. Bush declared that terrorists cannot be dealt with via the usual channels of deterrence and containment, and that the US had to act against the threats that these terrorists posed before the threats can materialize. In the course of defending its homeland, the US will collaborate with the international institutions wherever possible, or else it will find itself obliged to resort to the “coalitions of the willing”. In the NSS, the George W. Bush administration intended to consider preemption and preventive war as to be the same. By allowing itself to pursue the doctrine of regime change, the US was breaching the right of every state to sovereignty. “Preemption is usually understood to be an effort to break up an imminent military attack; preventive war is a military operation designed to head off a threat that is months or years away from materializing” (Fukuyama, 2006: 83).

The UN charter allows states in the event of a threat of an imminent danger combined with the inability to obtain help from the existing international institutions, to take the necessary preemptive action to dissolve this threat. The US, conflating preemption and preventive war, needed its accusations on the threats that Iraq posed to be accurate. It turned out that the threats were overstated and that the war against Iraq came to prove that preemption and preventive war are distinct concepts and should be differentiated.

In Fukuyama’s view, we are not yet in a world where rogue states regularly give terrorists WMDs. When acting as if we have already reached such reality, we are pushed towards costly

choices. Even in the case of Iraq, it would have been a lot easier to justify, morally and prudentially, preemption rather than preventive war. Fukuyama argues that what renders preventive war problematic is that one should be able to predict the future accurately. He also claims it irrational to consider that a bigger intelligence budget or reorganization of the intelligence agencies will translate into a higher level of accuracy for the US. Fukuyama claims that the US overestimated the Iraqi WMD threat in 2003 because it underestimated the Iraqi threat in 1991 and did not want to be fooled again. Fukuyama attests that preventive war is more justifiable the nearer the threat is (Fukuyama, 2006: 87).

Is preventive war still an option to be considered when dealing with nuclear proliferation? According to Fukuyama, it no longer constitutes a viable option, for the following reasons:

- Preemptive strikes are facing growing tactical difficulties since proliferating states are moving their facilities underground or dispersing them.
- While preemption may deter proliferation, it could in other cases act as a boost for proliferation. Preemption, when effective, can only slow proliferation but does not stop it.
- If the US is planning to undertake “regime change” to stop rogue state proliferators, it should be able to direct the process successfully.
- Using military force to stop proliferation might lead to political damage that needs to be taken into account (i.e., Iran).

According to Fukuyama, in order reach fair analysis, one should question the Bush administration not about the risks it undertook in its foreign policy but whether those risks were reasonable based on the information present at that time. The danger Saddam represented was exaggerated by the administration. Not only did Saddam not have an ongoing nuclear weapons

program, but he also did not even have the necessary supplies (biological and chemical), contrary to what was stated by the Secretary of State Colin Powell in his February 6, 2003, speech to the UN Security Council.

In light of the reports of the Iraq Survey Group (ISG), Saddam had the intention of working to get WMD capabilities once the sanctions were lifted, which rendered the threat not that imminent. There was no evidence that Iraq had restarted its nuclear program; therefore, according to Fukuyama, the George W. Bush administration is to be blamed for overestimating this specific aspect of the threat. Fukuyama accuses the administration's officials for not undertaking a deeper and broader investigation of the Iraqi case prior to starting a preventive war.

President George W. Bush, after the report of ISG, continued to argue that the war in Iraq was launched due to Saddam's intention of acquiring WMDs. However, by that criterion, many countries should be regarded as prospects for US intervention as noted Fukuyama. Fukuyama considered that the outcome of the Iraqi war has made clear that the preemption doctrine as a whole needs to be reconsidered.

### **3.1.2 - Kristol**

Based on the conviction of rogue states and terrorists, America was obliged to detect the threat and destroy it before it was able to materialize on its soil. There were some critics who argued against preemption towards Iraq, and considered containment to be a more reasonable alternative. Their argument, of course, cannot hold water for a number of discrepancies with the

Iraqi case. Deterrence worked during the Cold War because the leaders of the Soviet Union, even though brutal, did not wish to see their country destroyed in a nuclear exchange. In the case of Iraq, however, Saddam had proven to be an unpredictable risk-taker. He took his decisions based on information from “yes-men who share his delusions” (Kristol and Kaplan, 2003: 82).

According to Kristol, Saddam could be attacked promptly with minimal risk; but once he acquired a nuclear bomb, it was the US who was going to be deterred. Kristol argues deterrence has no place in today’s world of proliferation because deterrence is attached to the hope that a large number of adversaries will act reasonably. Many of these adversaries are non-state actors with no “return addresses”, and are based on suicide, such as Al-Qaida; therefore, as September 11 has proven, they are ‘undeterrable’. For Kristol, the only way left for the US to safeguard its people was through preemption, an approach used in previous US strategies. President George W. Bush clarified on several occasions that preemption applied as a last resort after exhausting all other channels. Critics of Bush’s preemption doctrine argued that by adopting preemption, the president was eroding international law and American precedent. A closer look at these two claims, though, showed ample precedent of preemption.

Kristol believes by attacking Iraq, the US was enforcing neglected or violated UN resolutions and thus enforcing international law. As per Henry Kissinger, “In the 21st century, potential victims cannot wait until the threat has been implemented. Preemption is inherent in the technology and ideology of the 21st century system.” (Kristol and Kaplan, 2003: 86).

## **3.2 - US leadership**

### **3.2.1 - Fukuyama**

By invading Iraq, the administration commended itself for doing a public good, but it failed to predict the negative international reaction vis-à-vis the war. Many asserted that the Bush administration was contemptuous of international public opinion. To counter this criticism, many members of the Bush administration argued that because of the weaknesses in decision-making of international institutions, the US would have to act first and gain the approval afterwards.

Others argued that by invading Iraq the US was enforcing the UN resolution concerning Iraq's disarmament. It was certainly clear that Saddam had violated many UN resolutions, but what was less clear was whether the two permanent members of UN Security Council, the US and the UK, had the legal right to enforce the UN resolutions on their own. For Fukuyama, having done so, they were looked upon by many as jeopardizing conformity with international law, especially that the violated resolutions contained no specific legal authorization to attack Iraq militarily.

On the eve of the war, the large majority of public opinion was not supportive of the US' act, which would most likely have changed if the US were able to discover WMDs. If that had come to be the case, the Bush administration would then been able to argue that international law is not the only basis for legitimate military action. The collective action issue perceived by the Bush administration lies with the UN and the European governments who insist on working out each and every problem via the UN. The Bush administration, citing the Clinton administration's experience in the Balkans, was convinced of the UN's ineptitude to restore security. The major

reason why the war in Iraq was so unpopular was that the US granted itself a right that it would deny of other countries; it considered itself different from other states, and was the only state capable of using its military power fairly and wisely. However Fukuyama argues; “It is not sufficient that Americans believe in their own good intentions; non-Americans must be convinced of them as well” (Fukuyama, 2006: 103).

The problem with the 2002 NSS was that it did not specify any criteria for determining when the US is entitled to use preventive war. Condoleezza Rice, then US National Security Advisor, stated that this did not grant countries the right to revert to preventive war before exhausting all other means. Fukuyama stresses that this message should have been declared within the NSS itself and repeated frequently and then also reiterated by the administration. Instead, President George W. Bush talked about an “axis of evil” comprising of Iraq, Iran, and North Korea, which compelled observers towards assuming that the administration’s plan was a set of three preventive wars. There were numerous plausible explanations for why such an experienced foreign policy team made elementary mistakes of such nature, including the following:

- The administration made little effort to identify clearly the audience to which it addressed the slogan “for us or against us” (Yemen and Pakistan).
- The conditions under which the preemption doctrine was to be adopted were not stated explicitly, since no final agreement was reached within the administration.
- Colin Powell was the least amongst his predecessors to make the case for the Iraq war. Anti-Americanism reached unprecedented high levels after September 1 (Fukuyama, 2006). American foreign policy was criticized by its closest allies, not only from the left but from many on the right and in the center.



The concept of a benevolent hegemony was shaped earlier by the idea that, having defeated the “evil empire,” the US now enjoys strategic and ideological predominance. The first objective of US foreign policy should therefore be to preserve and enhance that dominance by strengthening America’s security, supporting its allies, advancing its interests, and standing up for its principles around the world. This concept contains many flaws and contradictions that render it, according to Fukuyama, an untenable basis for shaping American foreign policy:

- Most non-Americans do not find the notion of American ‘exceptionalism’ credible. US generosity and interests converge.
- The Bush administration was criticized by many in Europe and in the Middle East for not truly being aware of what was involved in the political transformation it was launching in the Middle East.

The aftermath of the Iraq war did not increase public support for more costly interventions. Fukuyama argues that the Americans deep down are not an imperial people (Fukuyama, 2006).

### **3.2.2 - Kristol**

The last and most controversial tenet of the Bush doctrine is American dominance. Kristol sees no harm with dominance as long as it serves trustworthy principles and high ideals. President George W. Bush promised to preempt threats wherever they occurred and to promote the requirements of freedom everywhere. “American policymakers nowadays can draw the following lesson: Resist aggression with force if necessary, and sooner rather than later” (Kristol

and Kaplan, 2003:115). Kristol considers the Powell doctrine, which sees the national interest as the only justification for American interference, a pattern for inaction.

According to Kristol (Kristol and Kaplan, 2003), it is the US who maintains world order; and whenever it steps aside, the order is affected. The US needs to pursue two aims at the same time: promoting a world order favorable to American interests, and acting against obstacles that endanger this order. It is America's benevolent influence that maintains today's world order. Even if the Iraqi threat was neutralized, it does not relieve the US from its duties regarding the stability of world order. In order to ensure a world order favorable to American interests, the US should fight against tyrants and warfare ideologies, and assist those who are facing the most excessive aspects of human evil. It is America who will ensure a humane future. The substitute to American leadership is a world where aggression is full scale, a world in which there is no peace and no safety, and where international norms cannot be enforced. Those who believe that America's non-intervention in the world will make international resentments fade away are gravely deluded; even a passive America will attract France, Russia, China, and the Islamic world's jealousy and hostility.

Hence, for Kristol, an America capable of extending its use of force to regions worldwide will deter those who plan to disturb global stability. The missile defense capability helps US prevent attacks on its soil and the soil of its "allies". America's mission starts in Iraq but does not by any means end there. The US, properly armed, must act to protect its homeland and to foster the cause of liberty in Iraq and beyond.

### **3.3 - US and the UN**

#### **3.3.1 - Fukuyama**

The war in Iraq highlighted the limits of US benevolent hegemony as well as the limits of the international institutions, specifically the UN, that failed both to approve officially the US decision to go to war and to stop the US from acting of its own accord. At present, international institutions are often unable to provide the collective action with the needed authority. The coming generation will have to facilitate the emergence of institutions capable of balancing effectiveness and legitimacy. The need for accountability is the by-product of globalization and the one-sided influence of the US on the international stage.

Fukuyama argues that the UN, even though useful in peacekeeping and nation-building, fails to meet the standards of effectiveness and legitimacy; and he further doubts that reforms applied within the current circumstances will ever solve this problem. The most plausible solution is to create new institutions and to adapt the existing ones to new conditions that would result in what he labeled “multi-multilateralism” (Fukuyama, 2006:158). The UN will not disappear; it will be fostered by other organizations sharing the same concerns: legitimacy and effectiveness. As such, Europeans consider the UN to be more legitimate than Americans do. Americans distrust the UN and are reluctant to abide by its resolutions. One of the reasons for this distrust lies in the US’ special relations with Israel and how the UN has dealt with the Arab-Israeli conflict. Americans and Israelis have regarded UN resolutions to be pro-Arab, whereas Europeans have put the blame on Israel for bringing disapproval to itself.

The veto power guarantees the five permanent members that the Security Council would never act against their interests, thus rendering the UN inept in dealing with security threats,

which touch on the interests of the permanent five. This does not mean that the UN has lost its “important role in post-conflict reconstruction and other nation-building activities” (Fukuyama, 2006:161). The UN is not capable of undertaking decisive action simply because it is an organization that works via consensus and depends on its major donors for its operation. Fukuyama proposes a multiplicity of international institutions because he considers the world to be “far too diverse and complex to be overseen properly by a single global body” (Fukuyama, 2006:162). Many Americans advance as a substitute an alliance of democratic states similar to Immanuel Kant’s League of Nations.

### **3.3.2 - Kristol**

The most valuable advantage of preemption is that it is less costly than containment. Liberals argue that what disqualifies preemption as a legitimate tool of foreign policy is that it is based on unilateral action. It would be much easier, financially and politically if not militarily, for the US to act in concert with other nations. But should the US never act without multilateral consent?

Kristol finds it very strange to consider the UN a higher moral authority than the US. After all, the UN is an organization that welcomes tyranny as well as democracy. Among its permanent members; China, Russia, Britain, the US, and France, only three are considered to be mature democracies. All members use the UN to promote their agendas. A coalition for acting against Iraq was a coalition not worth having, Kristol believed, since its effect will be to hinder the US from accomplishing its mission. Because different countries bring different concerns and

sensitivities; “the broader the coalition becomes, the narrower America’s freedom to maneuver” (Kristol and Kaplan, 2003:92). Many liberals so eager to oppose Bush ended up seeming to support Saddam. Advocates of multilateralism view the breadth of the coalition to have been “a constructive source of restraint” in the case of Iraq. The US mission against Iraq had a moral and humanitarian aspect, given that the US was ridding the world of a tyrant who massacred his own people, attacked his neighbors, developed WMDs, and eroded the validity of nearly the entirety of UN resolutions concerning Iraq.

### **3.4 - Spreading democracy**

#### **3.4.1 - Fukuyama**

After the attacks of September 11, the George W. Bush administration declared the adoption of a preemptive approach, and subsequently invaded Iraq. The decision to invade was made by summer 2002, before the return of the UN arms inspection commission to Iraq. The US, even as it declared it would welcome the UN Security Council’s support, did not bind itself to the latter, and gave little concern to what its allies and the other members of the international community thought. The US, planning a fast war on Iraq and a smooth transition to a post-Saddam Iraq, was surprised to find itself trapped in a long-lasting insurgency. Many observers considered the Bush administration to be shaped by neoconservatives, based on the observation that it adopted the foreign policy agenda that the neoconservatives proposed in 2000. The core four points of this agenda were as follows: regime change, benevolent hegemony, preemption, and unipolarity.

The Bush administration, as per Fukuyama, in shaping its foreign policy in its first term, committed mistakes which were the result of decisions that it had based on three main areas of biased judgment:

- The US wrongly assessed the status of Iraq's WMD program before the war, and thus overestimated the threat the program presented. The US did not pay sufficient attention to the fact that preventive war is justified only when the real enemy is identified or with the existence of an imminent or actual threat.
- The US failed to anticipate that its bias against the UN and other international organizations as well as its reluctance to participate in most forms of international cooperation would result in apprehension by even the closest of US allies.
- The administration failed to envisage the requirements for building a post-war Iraq.  
An alliance of neoconservatives and Jacksonian nationalists, who adhere to the political philosophy of US President Andrew Jackson and his supporters, nevertheless promoted war against Iraq for different reasons.

Fukuyama advised the administration to build its foreign policy by taking into account what went on inside states and by noting that promotion of democracy is a difficult and costly task. The administration should consider alternatives to preemptive war; it should also take multilateralism into consideration, which is more amenable for co-existence in a globalized world. Fukuyama assured that history would not judge the Iraq war kindly. The US still had the chance to put in place a Shiite-dominated democratic Iraq, but the government will be weak for the coming years and will depend on US military aid.

US preoccupation with Iraq distracted the attention of senior policy makers from problems in other parts of the world, problems that most likely were going to pose greater challenges in the future. The US opted for preventive war in Iraq whereas it gave assurances that it would not resort to military force in Iran and North Korea. It seemed that the administration had recognized the costs borne by its war on Iraq and had concluded that “preventive war cannot be the centerpiece of American strategy” (Fukuyama, 2006:183). One of the consequences of the notable failure in Iraq will be a discredited neo-conservative agenda.

Fukuyama recommended a revised NSS, which would define specific and precise criteria for when the use of preventive war is legitimate. The US should promote political and economic development through the use of ‘soft power’ and should take care of what goes on inside states. People within societies must lead any successful development. America’s power is the most effective when it is least visible. The Bush administration and its neo-conservative supporters ought to have anticipated, prior to the war, the wave of anti-Americanism which post-Cold War unipolarism has created. This approach would have substituted hard power with soft power and utilized more discreet ways of shaping world order.

The Iraq war had proven that US military effectiveness was limited, which has led the Pentagon to question whether the US had the capability to engage in two regional wars simultaneously which is a pillar of US post-Cold War strategy. Europeans, usually fractious, were united around the view that the irresponsible use of American military power constitutes one of the major problems in today’s international politics. The US, instead of downplaying its dominance, introduced a doctrine of regime change and preventive war and overtly criticized a number of international allies and institutions.

Fukuyama argues that the US needed to exercise its power via its ability to shape international institutions through its influence, not through military power. Institutions are highly impacted by the people of the country they are managing. Fukuyama believes that the institutions of one country cannot be imported to another country given the fact that they share different culture and history.

Fukuyama considers that democracy promotion ought to be a very basic component of American foreign policy. The US can be very helpful in ensuring democratic transitions in countries wanting to become democratic, but one cannot impose democracy where it is not welcomed. There are four conditions, as per Fukuyama, which facilitate democratic transition: the level of development, culture, neighborhood, and ideas (most industrialized countries are democratic whereas few poor countries are democratic, noting the exceptions such as India and Costa Rica, on the one hand, and Kuwait and Saudi Arabia on another; the ability to maintain a stable democracy is closely linked to GDP). Fukuyama asserts that a democratic society cannot revert back to an authoritarian regime. To sustain a democracy, one has to worry about political development as well as economic development (Fukuyama, 2006: 114).

To make democracy work, peoples must be introduced to and acquainted with certain cultural values and norms, an aptitude to make concessions, a will to give up certain types of rule and a respect for law. Islam cannot accommodate a true democracy since Islam does not afford the split between Mosque and State. To have a genuine democracy, one must have a people who believe in democracy. Otherwise, forcible regime change can create considerable adversity as well as resistance unless there is a clear moral justification for American intervention accepted by the people.



It is in the US' long-term interest to promote and establish democracy, if possible, in the Middle East, since many of the problems of the US (including terrorism) result from the political systems in place in the Middle East. Fukuyama sees the Middle East as ripe for change, but the US is the wrong agent to promote democracy, given that its credibility in this part of this world has fallen far too low. If democracy is to flourish in this region, it will have to bear a different face. Religion will unmistakably assume a role in the region's political society larger than it does in Europe or the US. "Democracy promotion will be a process that we are never able to really control or master, because the whole process of democracy itself is pretty messy" (Fukuyama, 2006).

#### **3.4.2 - Kristol**

President George W. Bush's initial justification for war against Iraq relied on three pillars: WMDs, links to Al-Qaida, and lack of democracy and many human rights violation. After the first two justifications crumbled, the Bush administration stressed the need for democracy as the rationale for its actions in Iraq. But the administration misunderstood the potential obstacles that a democratic transition might face. It also considered that lack of democracy in the Middle East was safeguarding jihadist terrorism. This assumption can be rendered void as jihadism expands as a reaction to the identity crisis brought about by modernization, and furthermore it is Western Europe that constitutes a refuge for so many terrorists and potential terrorists.

The Iraq war had Americans sharply divided on what type of role America was to play in the world. Critics of the Bush administration going to war founded their argument on the failure to find WMDs in Iraq. However what made the toppling of Saddam's regime very desirable and necessary for both the Clinton and the Bush administrations was a mixture of various reasons such as tyrannical rule, continuous aggression, erosion of international law, and links to a wide range of terrorists.

Some argued that oppression at home is not a sustainable reason to launch war against Saddam. Liberating the Iraqi people is one of the reasons George W. Bush pursued war against Iraq. He considered that the whole future of the Middle East was threatened by Saddam's actions. Containing Saddam was no longer enough since it most probably will not be sustainable in the long run. Whether or not Saddam had WMDs, Iraq was in itself a danger, bearing such uncertainty that would bring enormous damage to the stability of the entire Middle East. The US was concerned about the growing threat that Saddam's lethal arsenal posed to US allies in the region. By remaining in power, Saddam was putting at stake American troops, America's allies in the region, the world's supply of oil, and the stability of the Middle East. He was providing weapons to terrorists who walk among us unnoticed.

What pushed the Bush administration to go to war and pursue Saddam was its belief that the latter might be slowed but never stopped. The reason behind the failure to find WMDs, according to the Bush administration, was that Saddam considered that the safest thing to do was work on advancing only the preparatory programs for weapons production and to wait for the right time to proceed with the production itself. Based on such arguments, the war against Iraq can be considered as a victorious round in the US' battle against terror and against weapons

proliferation. The war can be seen as a savior of both the Iraqi people and their neighbors, who have been liberated from the threat of Saddam's aggression.

Kristol considered that this war had served to create a 'pressure card' which could be played against other regimes in the Middle East, which were hotbeds for terrorists and were developing WMDs. He believes that, as a result, some regimes have even started to move in the right direction advocated by the US. It is true that the cost in blood and money the US is paying in Iraq is very high, but it is without a doubt worth it.

The next chapter goes through the reasons that led Fukuyama to change his mind about the war in Iraq and made him consider that neo-conservatism has turned into something he can no longer support.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### SHIFTS IN NEO-CONSERVATIVE THOUGHT

It is empirical evidence that led Fukuyama to change his mind concerning the war in Iraq. Fellow neo-conservatives accused him of betrayal, and, from the left, he was told that changing his mind would not erase the fact that he was amongst the signatories of the letter addressed to President Clinton, aiming to remove Saddam from power. Fukuyama was dismayed by being denied the right to change his political view. It is fair to argue that it is not of cowardly attitude to adopt a shift in perceptions in a certain situation, if new facts and empirical evidence have arisen.

A year before launching the war, Fukuyama stated that going to war must be backed up by the approval of the UN Security Council, otherwise the US would be perceived as if it was seeking an empire in the Middle East. The debate as to whether to go to war should have been about whether and when the US has the right to act unilaterally. Despite the costs and consequences of such an intervention; no one questions the morality of removing Saddam from power. The UN declared powerful nations not using their powers to stop human-rights abuses as complicit.

The Iraq Survey Group and the US military have published documents showing that Saddam believed and made his commanders believe that he had WMD capabilities that did not exist. The documents also show that Saddam's government was so dismantled by sanctions that it was not able to put in place a nuclear program even if sanctions were lifted, an unlikely turn of

events after the climate September 11 had formed. Such reality pushed Fukuyama to declare that neo-conservatism was now being associated with a failed policy and that American foreign policy should no longer be based on unilateralism. The human and monetary costs of the war, the human rights abuses perpetrated by the US, the failure to find WMDs, and the failure to establish a stable democracy, have all caused great damage to America's image and credibility in the world.

The left considers the war to be a criminal act whereas the right questions the patriotism of those who were against the war. Instead of defending hard-line positions, people should be open to reconsideration of their positions on occasion and alter their commitments if they come to clash with changed realities.

Fukuyama argues that history will not judge neo-conservatives kindly since they were the advocates of the war against Iraq. Their agenda and credibility will be tremendously threatened in the coming years. By using over-militaristic means, neo-conservatives have run the risk of weakening their own goals. US foreign policy must be reformulated to align the means used to the ends desired in an enhanced manner.

Fukuyama wonders how such a group on the right has come to believe that the source of terrorism in the Middle East is totalitarian regimes, and that the US has the obligation to promote democracy in the region, and that the democratic transition in Iraq will be carried out smoothly. The way the Cold War ended should have prevented neo-conservatives from falling into the same trap all over again, but some neo-conservatives point to the idea of the "world's sole remaining superpower" as evidence that their strategy won the Cold War and would therefore win this one as well.

The supporters of the war still believe that democracy is a default status to which societies revert once totalitarian regimes are toppled rather than a long process of reform and institutionalization. Fukuyama who also once believed this, now acknowledges that neo-conservatism has turned into something he can no longer support.

After the Cold War, the world had problems dealing with America's 'benevolent hegemony' for several reasons. Firstly, America can use its powers where others cannot; second, Americans do not long for other costly interferences; and third, Europeans and others criticize the US for invading Iraq for the wrong reason and accuse it of losing its focus in turning Iraq into a democracy.

Fukuyama now claims that the Bush administration overestimated the threat that radical Islamism posed to the US, and advises the US to reconsider its foreign policy. The US needs to seek means other than war to achieve its goals. It has to promote a set of international institutions other than the UN to confer legitimacy upon its affairs with other countries, since it considers the UN to be unreliable in dealing with serious matters. Fukuyama warns that the US has to be aware that promoting democracy will not necessarily lead to uprooting terrorism; given the fact that fundamentalism is the by-product of modernization, more specifically the loss of identity. He claims that the US needs new ideas that reshape its relations with the world, ideas that safeguard human rights around the world without the US resorting to its military power and hegemonic position.

Fukuyama considers that the challenge the US is facing today is much broader than fighting a band of terrorists to strike at the heart of radical Islam or Islamo-fascistic regimes which harbor these terrorists. He believes that it is up to Islam to choose whether to conclude

peace with modernity. And for Muslims, Fukuyama urges those seeking a more liberal strand of Islam to isolate the extremists among themselves. One must fight and defend the values that make modern democratic societies possible.

The neo-conservative approach towards change in the Middle East has been a huge failure on every level, simply because neo-conservatives are blind to the Arab World: they have dismissed its grievances, have failed to know its history, and have been arrogant enough to assume to know what it needed to develop. They have failed to acknowledge that the Middle East is a very complex region where public opinion is shaped by an aversion to foreign interference. As Anatol Leiven and Jonathan Hulsman argue in *Ethical Realism*, “What has failed in Iraq has been not just the strategy of the administration of George W. Bush, but a whole way of looking at the world.”

Fukuyama, who once supported the war in Iraq to oust Saddam from power and to free the people of Iraq and who was among the signatories of the letter addressed to President Clinton, shifted away from neo-conservatism, or, more accurately, away from the neo-conservative agenda, after seeing that no WMDs were found in Iraq and that the US intervention in Iraq was overly militaristic. Fukuyama wondered whether neo-conservatism had changed or whether it is wrongly interpreted and applied.

In the next chapter, a comparative analysis is conducted in order to identify theoretical and neo-conservative shifts throughout the works of Fukuyama and Kristol.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISSENTERS AND ADVOCATES

This thesis has attempted to demonstrate that the Iraq war divided the neo-conservatives, signatories to the letter to Clinton, into two camps: dissenters of the letter (e.g. Fukuyama) and its steadfast advocates (e.g. Kristol). Has this split in the aftermath of the Iraq war taught the contemporary neo-conservatives a lesson, or are they still holding onto their precepts, willing to undertake similar action elsewhere in the world?

Many neo-conservatives believe that the character of a regime is important. Thus, promoting democracy is a 'must' when dealing with the societies underlying those regimes. The George W. Bush administration failed to anticipate the costs and consequences of liberating Iraq and leading it towards democracy. War promoters were inclined to believe that democracy is the default condition to which societies would revert to once dictatorships are toppled.

#### 5.1 - Dissenters

In this section, we are going to analyze the reasoning that led dissenters such as Fukuyama to shift away from what neo-conservatism is considered to be nowadays. Fukuyama argues that, before a society can move to democracy, a number of institutions need to be put in place. Fukuyama states that these institutions are hard to establish. "In the absence of internal political



demand for reform, it may never be possible to get the institutions right” (Fukuyama, 2006: 125). One cannot think of political development without thinking of economic development because they become intertwined during the process of modernization.

The US needs to clearly define its objectives and closely examine the instruments it has for realizing them. Good governance cannot be achieved without democracy and public participation. Prior to having any democracy, having a state is a necessity; but to have a legitimate state, one must have democracy hence the concepts are intertwined. State building by outsider forces leads to long-term dependence and ultimately a lack of legitimacy with regard to the local actors. Such state building weakens the ability of domestic actors to install their own institutions.

Foreign powers involved in state-building must be willing to forgo some of their control in favor of local actors in order to enhance local ownership. This ownership is a requisite since outsider powers often do not possess the knowledge to govern locally, and furthermore local ownership helps to create local institutions strong enough to survive the exit of the foreign powers.

The challenge that nation-builders are facing is to convince the foundations of their political support, voters and taxpayers, to provide indefinite foreign-aid resources for governance projects in different places across the world. One can limit one’s interventions but cannot avoid them altogether. State building is something that cannot be moved from one place to another, for the establishment of well-functioning public institutions, the pillars of the state-building process, necessitates certain practice and attitudes. After the September 11 attacks, weak governance became both an international and national concern of the first order. Poverty was no longer

considered the immediate cause of terrorism, corroborated by the fact that the executors of the September 11 attacks came from well-off backgrounds pursuing their higher education in Western Europe.

The record of the US in promoting democracy contains few successes and many failures, and the successes requiring enormous effort and attention. These few successes would not have been possible without the existence of strong domestic actors. The Iraq war has proven that regime change through military intervention and occupation is uncertain and highly costly. America's successes elsewhere were secured by soft power (diplomatic channels, funding pro-democracy groups, training and monitoring elections in semi-authoritarian regimes). Hence, successful democracy promotion is based on three factors: inward initiative, a semi-authoritarian regime with some flexibility, and the acceptance on the part of native pro-democracy groups for external support.

It can be argued that modernization is a process that sooner or later will reach all societies; the only lasting choices are that of liberal democracy and market-oriented economics. Islamism, as a governing ideology, has proven to be unpopular even amongst many Muslims, based on the experience of Iran and Afghanistan. The events of September 11 have not and do not discredit modernization and globalization as the lasting pillars of world politics.

Europeans emphasize international institutions and law whereas Americans are accused of supporting unilateralism, particularly after President George W. Bush's waging of the 'war against terrorism' and some states' sponsorship of terrorism.

The US adopted preemption as a doctrine in response to the sharp threat Saddam posed not only to the US but also to the whole of Western civilization.

As per Fukuyama, it is legitimate for a state to act unilaterally if threatened by terrorists in possession of WMDs; it would be negligent of this state to refer to international law for self-defense. It is in the US' self-interest to consider reciprocity within the realm of cooperative institutions, given the fact that it is the world's most powerful democracy. It has to enunciate the limits of its new doctrine, that of preemption, and to specify the nature of the threats which justify the use of its power.

The fragmentation of international institutions constitutes the core problem of American soft power. The difficulties in reconstructing Iraq pushed the Bush administration to conduct a series of studies in order to enable the improvement in the administration's performance.

Fukuyama contends that the US would have done better by reinventing multilateral institutions instead of reconsidering its local institutions. The US' aversion toward the former will now result in a shrinking architecture for tackling problems of world order.

He states that he was never convinced of the necessity of launching war against Iraq. It is true that he signed the letter addressed to Clinton's administration urging it to oust Saddam from power. However, after participating in a study on 'long-term US strategy toward the war on terrorism', Fukuyama discovered that the war made absolutely no sense. He was confused as to whether he himself shifted away from neo-conservatism or whether the other neo-conservative advocates of the war were wrongly implementing the principles of neo-conservatism. He cannot comprehend how other neo-conservatives still applaud the US invasion of Iraq when no WMDs were found in Iraq, the US got caught in a bloody insurgency, and its unilateral strategy made it unpopular with almost all of the rest of the world. He concludes that neo-conservatism has turned

out to be something he can no longer stand for. He argues that neo-conservatism nowadays is closely identified with the policies of the George W. Bush administration.

## **5.2 - Advocates**

This section summarizes the elements that were behind advocates maintaining their same position vis a vis neo-conservatism.

Vietnam taught Americans that they should not intervene militarily in other states' internal affairs, unless there was a direct threat to either the US or its people. Powell argued "America should act only in those instances where the cold calculus of national interest was at stake" (Kristol and Kaplan, 2003: 69). But September 11 changed President George W. Bush, and hence his foreign policy; it re-cast him from a realist to an internationalist, promoting America's ideals and following in the footsteps of Harry Truman, John Kennedy, and Ronald Reagan. After September 11, George W. Bush described America's purpose in these words: "The advance of human freedom, the great achievement of our time and the great hope of every time, now depends on us. Our nation, this generation, will lift the dark threat of violence from our people and our future. We will rally the world to this cause by our efforts, by our courage. We will not tire, we will not falter, and we will not fail." (Kristol and Kaplan, 2003:72). On January 29, 2002, George W. Bush identified Iraq, Iran, and North Korea as elements of the 'axis of evil'. September 11 did not create the threat of Saddam; it clearly defined the outlines of this threat and its deadly consequences. September 11 helped the Bush administration to define its focal point in Iraq which turned out to be regime change.

The Bush doctrine tenets, as identified by President George W. Bush himself in an address at West Point in June 1, 2002, can be summarized as follows:

- Preemption
- Promoting America's principles abroad (Africa, Latin America, and the entire Islamic world)
- America to remain world's sole superpower

The Bush doctrine turned war into a campaign to uproot tyranny and spread democracy; it adopted American internationalism as the US' official governmental policy.

American internationalism, the alternative adopted by the Bush administration, is a mixture of successful elements drawn from both realism and liberalism. It stresses the uniqueness and the virtue of the US. The US' faith in the universal ideal of freedom makes it a model for the world to aspire to.

Regime change, which is part of the second tenet of the Bush doctrine, means that the US cannot coexist peacefully with states that are developing WMDs; therefore, it reserves the right to overthrow such regimes. Its ultimate goal is liberal democracy. By ousting Saddam, the Bush administration seeks to liberate the Iraqi people, because "open societies do not threaten the world with mass murder" (Kristol and Kaplan, 2003:95), as explained by President Bush in his Cincinnati address.

As per the Bush doctrine, democracy is an act of will; it is a choice. Someone should help it emerge. President George W. Bush believes that promoting and installing democracy in the Middle East will ease the lives of its oppressed peoples and help ensure the US' national security.

Critics attacking this logic question the feasibility of ousting Saddam. Colin Powell, for instance, argues that, for the sake of stability in the region, it is better to keep Iraq in one piece even if the only adhesive available happens to be Saddam (Kristol and Kaplan, 2003:96). Kristol acknowledges that the situation in Iraq without Saddam might get worse, but he cannot conceive how an Iraq reigned with fear and terror will turn against its liberators. The best solution to keep multi-ethnic Iraq united, according to Michael Mandelbaum, is to transform it into a federation. The oil revenues will considerably lighten the costs of rebuilding a post-Saddam Iraq.

Kristol, contrary to some realists, considers it easy for the US to implement democracy in Iraq after Saddam's defeat. To support his precept, he cites a number of nations whose democracies were at first guaranteed by the US such as Japan, Germany, Austria, Italy, and Panama. A factor that would help the US build a democracy in Iraq is that the Iraqi opposition has already established a strong democracy in the North. The principal aim of the Iraqi National Congress (INC) is to seek power through the ballot box.

Putting in place such a state will certainly have strong positive repercussions throughout the Arab world. According to Vice President Cheney, by toppling Saddam, peoples of the region will have a chance to advertise values that help establish lasting peace. "No people on earth yearn to be oppressed, aspire to servitude, or eagerly await the midnight knock of the secret police" (Kristol and Kaplan, 2003:104).

According to Kristol, no mistake is allowed in the war against Iraq because the outcome of this task will shape the roadmap of American foreign policy, America's security, and American hegemony.

After September 11, President George W. Bush found it necessary not only to go after the terrorist group that attacked the US but also to go after or put pressure on regimes that finance, harbor, and host those terrorist groups. He saw that maintaining status quo in the Middle East would not help uproot tyranny and terrorism. President George W. Bush was aware that the status quo cannot be changed overnight and that a plan should be put in place to modify the basic state of conduct in the Middle East. He considered that accommodating for Arab dictators should come to an end, for the straightforward reason that those same dictators are enhancing anti-Americanism, extremism, and terrorism as a way of securing their power at home.

According to Kristol, two things had to be accomplished in order to turn over the status quo: First, the US had to act in a strong and quick manner. The mistakes of the 1990s were no longer tolerated: The US did nothing in the Balkans and in Rwanda; it was not fast enough in dealing with terror and it did not topple Saddam. Second, the US needed to change its strategy in the Middle East; it had to promote democracy and to ensure that regimes no longer harbored terror.

A nation tends to wage war against another when it thinks it can win, otherwise it will not attempt such acts of aggression. The institutions of democracy facilitate compromise and various other moderate practices which nations then apply to their reciprocal relations. The US fosters democracy because “the more democratic the world becomes, the more likely it is to be congenial to America” (Kristol and Kaplan, 2003:105).

Kristol considers that the results that Americans have achieved in Iraq were in many aspects very remarkable: There is food, water, and hospitals; and the Arab and Muslim worlds’ reaction was not by any means violent and chaotic. He does, however, point out certain things

which are lacking and need to be dealt with, such as basic security, shortages in troops and personnel, ongoing assassinations, and the deliberate destruction of public utilities. As per Kristol, neglecting such issues will surely threaten the extremely thin peace that has been held in post-war Iraq. Kristol believes that more soldiers in Iraq will lead to fewer casualties, yet he stands against internationalizing the forces in Iraq. Kristol stresses the fact that injecting sufficient money in building up Iraq's economy is the way to provide Iraqis with a better life and to calm their anger against the US. The success of the Iraq mission falls on the shoulders of both the military forces and the Iraqi civilians. The US government must throw all of its weight behind this endeavor to ensure success.

Kristol claims that despite the mistakes committed in the war against Iraq, the president's credit was that he stayed the course. The effectiveness of the US depends highly on a State Department seeking to apply the president's foreign policy. Kristol acknowledges that conditions will not be favorable, but elections in Iraq, demonstrations in Lebanon, and the implicit wills of Mubarak and Saudi Arabia to empower people shape the way towards better possible results in the Middle East. With democracy penetrating the world at such an unusual rate, Kristol questions whether it is reasonable to stop now.

The following chapter will discuss how this neo-conservative debate remained prominent in the 2008 elections as well as the launched campaign towards Iran.



## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

In the first section of the conclusion, we are going to analyze the position of the Republican presidential candidate John McCain, which represents the middle-ground of conservative thought, somewhere between the repentant Fukuyama and the immovable Kristol. Whereas in the second section, we will be dealing with neo-conservatism and the Iranian issue in regards to its nuclear program.

#### **6.1 - 2008 U.S. Electoral Campaign**

For the first time since the Vietnam era, foreign affairs and national security had a significant effect in the 2008 presidential election. The Iraq war has caused sharp divisions in public opinion.

John McCain formally announced that he would run for president on April 25, 2007, in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. McCain declared that he was running for president to achieve tough but necessary goals. He considers that the US, when waging a war, must fully commit to it by all necessary resources, unlike what initially happened in Iraq.

According to *The Almanac of American Politics*, which rates congressional votes as liberal or conservative along the political spectrums of economic, social, and foreign policies,

McCain's ratings for 2005-2006 were as follows: The economic-policy rating was 59% conservative and 41% liberal, the social-policy rating was 54% conservative and 38% liberal, and the foreign-policy rating was 56% conservative and 43% liberal. Robert Robb considers that, while McCain tends towards conservative positions, he is not imbued with the philosophical pillars of modern American conservatism. McCain declares himself to be a realistic idealist.

McCain considers that by 2013 violence in Iraq will reach a reduced level, offering a chance for democracy to function despite the lingering effects of tyranny and sectarian tensions, and without the direct interference of American troops. By 2013, McCain expects that most of the service men and women will be back in the US and the Iraq war will have been won.

McCain believes that government necessitates serious reforms in as many areas as necessary in order to keep up with the challenges of our own time. He believes that, as Americans, there is a need to strengthen alliances and protect moral credibility. McCain disapproved of the way the Bush administration managed the war against Iraq, and called for change in strategy, which is now being applied. This plan is seeing success in Iraq under the command of General Petraeus as the Sunni combatants have joined the US troops in fighting Al-Qaida and the Iraqi government is moving forward towards political reconciliation.

McCain argues that the most urgent problem America faces today is its dependence on foreign oil hence industries must be encouraged to look for alternative energy sources. As per McCain, to maintain US national prosperity and strength, there is a need to reform and reinvent because conservatism as Ronald Reagan puts it "is not a narrow ideology" (McCain, 2008). McCain argues that the US should prepare itself for a quick and effective response if subject to another terrorist attack or natural disaster.

McCain considers the war in Iraq to be a struggle between extremism on the one hand and modernity and moderation on the other hand. Extremists constitute a tiny percentage of peaceful Muslims who are trying to boost their societies towards meeting the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. McCain declares that war on terror, the war for the future of the Middle East, and the war in Iraq are bound together.

After pressing for the implementation of the new security plan in Iraq, McCain announced a cautious optimism in winning the war. Such a plan would ensure the cooperation of the Iraqi people, and would deal with the reality of affairs in Iraq.

Retreating from Iraq before a stable Iraqi government is installed will turn Iraq into a hotbed for terrorists who will directly threaten the American soil. It could lead the region to turmoil and consequently to the deprivation of millions of Arabs from ever achieving freedom. That might also result in the decline of the American economy and a dramatic escalation in the price of oil. McCain considered that the US' defeat in Iraq would be a defeat in the war on terror and against extremism, and would make the world a more dangerous place. He maintains that a military solution alone will not solve the problems in Iraq. Iraq's leaders must work to achieve political reconciliation within the security realm which both Americans and Iraqis are working hard to establish and sustain. This is because the Iraqi people will not give their trust to a local political authority which is unable to protect them. McCain believes that economic progress in Iraq will help preserve security gains. He advises Iraq's people and leaders to seize the chance offered by the US to enjoy a better future.

McCain states that the US should learn the following lesson from its war against Iraq: Never launch a war without having in place a comprehensive and realistic plan for success and

without being prepared to do everything necessary to succeed. Realism, which is more flexible, turns out to be more effective than neo-conservatism.

Going through McCain's speeches while probing for the four-point subject of our study, one can come up with the following positions:

- Preemption: McCain argues that the doctrine of deterrence the Americans relied upon during the Cold War is no longer sustainable in the war against terror.
- While McCain concedes that September 11 did establish the necessity of acquiring an aggressive strategy of confronting and uprooting terrorists wherever they exist, he insists that the use of force should only be a last resort.
- The US and the UN: McCain is promoting a worldwide League of Democracies that group all democratic peoples and nations. This organization could act where the UN fails to act; it would complement the UN and not supplant it.
- US leadership: McCain claims the US to be the world's leader and the most prosperous country on earth. It is the US' role to promote human freedom. It is America's greatness that makes it the main target for those who oppose the spread of democracy, freedom, security and prosperity, principles cherished by all.
- Spreading democracy: McCain holds that liberty is the bedrock of conservative belief, that America's security interests and the global promotion of its ideas are intertwined, and that wealth and power is the product of freedom.

McCain lost the 2008 elections to the benefit of President Obama.

In the last part of this thesis, it will be examined whether the neo-conservatives have learnt any valuable lessons from the war in Iraq and whether it has pushed them towards reconsidering their core strategies and ideals.

## **6.2 - The Neoconservatives and Iran**

Neoconservatives view that the Iraq war did not ensure the US the success of containing Iran; Ahmadinejad is proceeding with its nuclear program without giving foreign pressure much consideration.

Neoconservatives consider the ambiguity in regards to the nuclear plans and developments as an alarming factor that necessitates the US to act.

The neoconservatives were expecting that by toppling Saddam from power and by exerting regime change in Iraq, Iran will learn a lesson and its regime will no longer cause threat to the US interests. "If we get Iraq right, we won't have to go for Iran" (Jacob Heilbrunn, 2009).

The neoconservatives are arguing that once US draw downs from Iraq, Iran will come to dominate Iraq and therefore fifth of the world's oil wealth. Iran will feel encouraged to promote its interests in the Gulf region and to give Hamas and Hezbollah the necessary support. As a consequence Iran will be directly threatening Israel and jeopardizing US interests throughout the Middle East.

The neoconservatives are stating that the US should resolve the Iran issue even if via military action on its nuclear facilities (Rubin, 2010). Such an action, from their perspective, should be undertaken as soon as possible.

Iran poses a serious threat to the US interests and to those of its allies for the following major reason: Iran's pursuit of developing nuclear weapons. Iran continuing down this path will

encourage other countries in the region to develop their own nuclear programs. The nuclear program poses a vital threat to Israel sharpened by Iran's support of Hezbollah and Hamas refuting Israel's right to exist. These factors must lead to the imposition of serious but well-positioned sanctions over Iran (McFarlane, 2009).

Some neoconservatives are promulgating the idea that president Obama in order to save his presidency has to launch war over Iran (Pipes, 2010).

Neoconservatives are asserting that President Obama, in order to ensure his re-election, must undertake military action against Iran, in other words the neoconservatives are implying that such a war is to serve as a distraction from failures on the domestic agenda (Gibaldi, 2010)

Kristol advises the Obama administration to declare war on Iran before Israel takes the initiative of doing so (Kristol, 2010). The Iranian leadership from the neoconservatives' point of view cannot make a deal with the US. By doing so, it would be weakening the reason behind the existence of both the Islamic revolution and the Iranian leadership itself. The Islamic Republic of Iran was founded primarily on opposition to the West and especially the US. Therefore the neoconservatives are close to ensuring that Iran is unlikely to advocate dialogue with the US (Cook, 2010)

Before stepping into another war the US should make sure that Iran is within high probability of obtaining a nuclear bomb and ensure the rationale of why deterrence will not work with Iran (Buchanan, 2010).

The neoconservatives are disregarding the possibility that a war against Iran will only delay the progress of the so-called nuclear weapons' program and that Iran might employ retaliation against the American troops in the region as well as against Israel. The neoconservatives are also

under-estimating the likelihood of an increase in oil prices once the military action starts (Giraldi, 2010).

Giraldi accuses neoconservatives such as Steve Cohen and Anne Applebaum of preparing the ground to induce the US in a war against Iran primarily to appease Israeli concerns since Israel alone without the support of the US cannot undertake such an act. He is also accusing them of assuming that the US and Israel have the same national interest.

It was stated (*Gulf News*, 2010) that the neoconservatives are describing the possible war against Iran as part of the US war against “Islamic Fundamentalism”. They are arguing that the Obama administration should stick to the process that began under the Bush administration and its core goal which was to protect Israel’s security and interests and to maintain its regional hegemony. The neoconservatives are about to lead the US into a military action against Iran on the root of flawed and misleading information that they are meticulously spreading.

Lieutenant General Ronald L. Burgess, Jr., director of the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) has stated that the NIE (National Intelligence Estimate) in its updated version in 2010 will still uphold the same conclusions. The NIE was unable to prove that Tehran had resumed working on its nuclear program which was suspended in 2003. The NIE questions Iran’s abilities to build a nuclear weapon. The director of the DIA supports the Obama administration in its approach vis-à-vis Iran based on dialogue and economic pressure. He considers it to be a very comprehensive approach (Ronald Burgess, 2010).

Admiral Mike Mullen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff has declared that an attacked Iran would be just as, if not more, destabilizing to the region than a nuclear-capable Iran (Mullen, 2010, personal communication). While Kristol views the issue otherwise; the US should opt for

the option of attack instead of that of appeasement even though both options would have same degree of destabilization. Kristol considers that an attacked Iran with no possession of nuclear weapons is less damaging and destabilizing to the US interests. Such a conviction relies on Bill Kristol's belief that appeasement leads to an Iran possessing nuclear weapons going forward.

Haas considers that Iran in 2010 may be closer to intensive regime change than at any other time during the Islamic Revolution era. He advises the Obama administration of taking advantage of such a chance as the Green Movement had turned out to be stronger and larger than predicted. The US, Europe and their allies in dealing with Iran should focus on their support for the opposition party. They should stand up for the people of Iran and for their rights.

Haas declares that it is of high importance to provide internet to the opposition, restrained by the regime, since that will facilitate communication and access to information. Outside powers should give financial support to the dissidents for they might end up jobless. Foreign actors should be very careful not to appear as leaders of the opposition.

Political shift in Iran will lead to normal relations with the US and to an end of Tehran's support for terrorism. In order to boost this regime change, outsiders should fortify the opposition and intensify splits among the rulers (Richard Haas, 2010).

Fukuyama claims that neoconservatives have learned nothing from the war in Iraq and this is made very clear in their debate on how to deal with the Iranian nuclear issue. They are not considering the fact that unlike Al Qaeda, Iran is a state with equities to defend thus it may be very easily deterred by other countries in possession of nuclear weapons. Iran's protestations that its nuclear program is only for civilian use do not convince Fukuyama who believes it to be more rational that the nuclear program is the center for a weapons program.



For Fukuyama it is the US who promoted the rise of Iran's regional power when attacking Iraq and by ousting the Ba'ath party and giving power to the pro-Tehran Shiia parties.

An attack over Iran which will have to be conducted from the air, from Fukuyama's point of view, will not lead to regime change but to building support for the existing one. Such an act will provoke terrorism and transform American establishments and allies throughout the world into targets for terrorist attacks.

Fukuyama has been surprised to discover that the neoconservatives concerning Iran are adopting the same line of argument they had undertaken towards Iraq in 2002. Fukuyama is counting on the awareness of the American people not to fall victim of the same rationale once again.

President Obama has stated that his administration with regard to Iran is committed to diplomacy and that the US will enter into the talks with Iran along with Britain, France, Russia, China and Germany in other words with the P5+1.

The Obama administration is accusing Iran of working on to build up a nuclear weapon while Iran is asserting that its nuclear program is for the civilian purpose of energy production. The sole concern of the US is to make Iran cut short of its efforts to build a nuclear weapon.

Even though the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reports that Iran does not possess a nuclear weapons program, the US administration is still accusing Iran of maintaining such a program. The IAEA has stated that Iran has enriched only low-grade uranium which is insufficient for building a nuclear weapon.

The Obama administration declares that it would enter into talks with Iran only if the latter accepts to dump its nuclear program. Iran has responded that is its right to keep up with its nuclear civilian program and such a right is assured under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT) to which Iran is a member.

Jeremy Hammond (2009) claims that Obama's use of diplomacy was only to appease domestic as well as international opinions. This way Obama will justify its coercive approach by declaring that diplomacy has failed, he will also be in a better position to gain support from other countries to impose stronger sanctions against Tehran.

Iran's unwillingness to abide by the US demand is interpreted by the Obama administration as a sign of Iran aiming to produce nuclear weapons. While the IAEA argues that an Iran working to proceed with a weapons program would mean the evacuation of the nuclear inspectors.

By insisting on its demand, the Obama administration is ousting the possibility of having any productive outcome from the projected talks with Iran; such talks if undertaken might help disseminate tensions between Iran and the West (Hammond, 2009).

It was stated that President Obama and his Secretary of Defense prefer to engage Iran and try to convince it to suspend its nuclear program via diplomatic and economic channels (Morell, May 19 2009, personal communication). In case diplomacy failed, President Obama was referring to a more rigid international sanctions program.

Israel, as per General David Petraeus, might find itself threatened by the likelihood of an Iranian nuclear weapon that it would resort to pre-emptive military action in order to defend its

territory and people. Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Silvan Shalom stated that talks with Iran should have a time limit since Iran will soon reach in its nuclear program the point of no return.

There is little doubt that the Obama administration views military option against Iran only as a means of last resort, but if controversial wisdom solidifies around this stark choice of either a nuclear armed Iran or a military strike, President Obama is likely to find himself surrounded by members of both parties propagating the idea that all other options have, in fact, been exhausted (Disney, April 26 2010, personal communication).

As per Redelli (2010), it is only by decreasing the level of distrust and increasing political assurance that the international community can manage to contain Iran in terms of nuclear weapons.

Redelli advises the Obama administration not to commit the same mistakes as his predecessor; credibility is a core element for US success in its policy towards the Middle East (Inside Iran, 2010).

Iran's desire to possess a nuclear bomb comes out of security fears; the domestic fear which is represented by the opposition movement and the foreign fear. The latter has two aspects: military threats from the US and Israel and the threat of soft wars since the Obama administration is considering measures to free internet from the regime's control. The Islamic Republic is seeking nuclear weapons as a pressure tool against what it qualifies as "Western interference in Iran's affairs" (Inside Iran, 2010).

Iran also considers that having a nuclear bomb will increase its influence in the region. Iran considers now to be the optimal time to proceed with its nuclear program because it believes that President Obama will not target Iran because of the military troubles the US is facing in Iraq

and Afghanistan, particularly the resultant US economic crisis in his homeland and additionally because of his anti-war position.

In order to stop Iran's nuclear program, the world must aid the opposition movement. The sanctions option is not welcomed, even though Iranians do not approve their regime. Iranian oppositionists are filled with resentment towards the regime and consider it as an occupier. Thus the best way the world can offset Iran's nuclear aspirations is to sustain the Green Movement. This at least will force the government to focus all its time, efforts and resources to fight this movement (Inside Iran, 2010).

The West considers Iran as breaching international law since it did not respond to the UN demand, expressed via a set of sanctions on halting its enrichment activities of Uranium, considered by the US as binding. Iran asserts its right to enrich uranium by referring to the fact that the NPT guarantees such a right to all its signatories as long as nothing shows they are developing a weapons program in parallel.

Iran considers the UN resolutions in the relative context to be illegal and in violation of the UN charter thus void and null. The NPT obliges its parties to work under the safeguards of the IAEA. Those safeguards are to be designed and implemented in a way to prevent hindering the economic and technological progress of the NPT signatories. Iran respects the terms of the safeguards system by allowing the IAEA to monitor and examine its nuclear program where nothing shows it is used as the basis for a weapons program. As long as IAEA inspections are ongoing, the NPT clearly guarantees enrichment activities to its parties. The IAEA has no legal authority to oblige Iran to stop its rightful enrichment activities since it has no proof that those activities are illicit.

The UN Security Council by lacking evidence is unable to accuse Iran of threatening peace or engaging in any “act of aggression”. Hammond (2009) wonders why what is allowed for Israel is restricted from Iran.

In case a military action was launched over Iran, one should consider the possibility that Iran as a measure of retaliation would adopt the supplying of radical and terrorist groups with low enriched uranium (LEU). Needless to say, these groups’ main targets are the US, EU and Israel. As a revenge for attacking Iran, pro-Iranian groups could work on transferring LEU to Al Qaeda via Iraq, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Hezbollah and Hamas as well could gain possession of the LEU and create small dirty bombs. Nuclear fuel will be used against coalition forces and Western diplomats. It can also be used as raw material for short range rockets shot into Israel. Therefore if the US decides to go after Iran it should be prepared for what might rest ahead if any part of Iran’s LEU reaches the non-state actors (Choksy, April 6 2010, personal communication).

In his memo addressed to the top officials of the White House during January 2010, Robert M. Gates Defense Secretary warned that the US does not have in place an action plan on how to deal with Iran in case diplomacy and economic pressure have come to failure. For such a situation this memo written to the attention of Gen. James L. Jones, President Obama’s national security adviser, advances a set of military alternatives.

General Jones (2010) has stated that not communicating openly the full strategy to the world does not mean not having a strategy covering the full array of emergencies. In his memo, Mr. Gates expressed his concern that Iran might opt for assembling all the main parts it needs for a nuclear weapon and stops short of putting in place a fully set weapon. That way Iran will preserve itself as a signatory of the NPT while becoming a “virtual” nuclear weapons state. Mr.

Gates wonders about how the US would react in case weapons or fuel had reached the hands of terrorist groups Iran has supported.

Mr. Gates wrote his memo as a response to the fact that Iran ignored the 2009 deadline President Obama had set as to answer his offers of diplomatic engagement (Sanger and Shanker, 2010).

In their final statement of the nuclear summit held in 2010 the ministers of G8 have stressed the following: Iran must abide by the demands of the UN Security Council and fully collaborate with the IAEA. The ministers declared to keep the doors open for dialogue while stressing the international tenacity to sustain the international nuclear non-proliferation regime (Al Jazeera, 2010).

The Congress is seriously moving towards passing US sanctions on Iran. The Obama administration is working to amend the actions the Congress is considering in order to gain greater international support for UN sanctions. For instance, Brazil opposes applying new sets of sanctions against Iran.

A gasoline embargo on Iran is being debated within the US Congress. Such an embargo will be hitting the companies that sell Tehran the gasoline as well as the companies Tehran is dealing with for the sake of renovating its homeland refineries to enable them to cater for the domestic demand.

Georges Perkovich (2010), director of the Nuclear Policy Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, warns that unilateral US gasoline sanctions will only result in deepening the rift between the Iranian people and the West. As a support to his warning, he

mentions the oil embargo of early 1970s and how it generated US public resentment towards the Arabs.

**Figure 1: the UN Security Council sanctions on Iran**

UNSC RESOLUTION	DATE	VOTING	PRIMARY AIM(S)
*1696	July 31, 2006	14 in favor, 1 against (Qatar)	Iran must verifiably suspend enrichment-related and reprocessing activities.
*1737	December 23, 2006	15 in favor	Iran must verifiably suspend enrichment-related and reprocessing activities; prohibit sales to Iran of technology useful for enrichment or reprocessing activities; member states must freeze assets of identified firms and persons.
*1747	March 24, 2007	15 in favor	Iran must verifiably suspend enrichment-related and reprocessing activities; ban on arms transfers by Iran: required member states to report travel by sanctioned Iranians.
*1803	March 3, 2008	14 in favor, 1 abstention (Indonesia)	Iran must verifiably suspend enrichment-related and reprocessing activities; the resolution also authorizes cargo inspections for two Iranian firms, bans the sale of dual-use items, imposes a travel ban on certain individuals, and encourages a ban on financial transactions with identified banks.
1835	September 27, 2008	15 in favor	Reaffirms resolutions 1696, 1737, 1747 and 1803.

(American Enterprise Institute, 2009)

**Figure 2: Executive orders issued by the Bush Administration to implement the UNSC sanctions**

<b>EXECUTIVE ORDER (EO)</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>PRIMARY AIM(S)</b>
EO 13382	June 28, 2005	Freezes assets of persons engaged in proliferation of WMD and members of their support networks
EO 13224	September 23, 2001	Freezes assets of persons who commit, threaten to commit, or support terrorism
EO 13059	August 19, 1997	Consolidates prior EOs and prohibits US persons from virtually all trade and investment activities with Iran
EO 12959	May 6, 1995	Bans certain exports and investment in Iran
EO 12957	March 15, 1995	Prohibits US participation in Iran's petroleum development
EO 12938	November 14, 1994	Declares a national emergency to counter threat of WMD and delivery systems
EO 12613	October 29, 1987	Bans import of Iranian goods and services

(American Enterprise Institute, 2009)

Ahmadinejad on May 10 2010 warned the US that by imposing a new set of sanctions against Iran the relations between the two countries can no longer be repaired. Ahmadinejad claims that Obama's easiest way to solve the conflicts in Palestine, Afghanistan and Iraq is through establishing good relations with Iran.



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## Appendix

January 26, 1998

The Honorable William J. Clinton  
President of the United States  
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing you because we are convinced that current American policy toward Iraq is not succeeding, and that we may soon face a threat in the Middle East more serious than any we have known since the end of the Cold War. In your upcoming State of the Union Address, you have an opportunity to chart a clear and determined course for meeting this threat. We urge you to seize that opportunity, and to enunciate a new strategy that would secure the interests of the U.S. and our friends and allies around the world. That strategy should aim, above all, at the removal of Saddam Hussein's regime from power. We stand ready to offer our full support in this difficult but necessary endeavor.

The policy of "containment" of Saddam Hussein has been steadily eroding over the past several months. As recent events have demonstrated, we can no longer depend on our partners in the Gulf War coalition to continue to uphold the sanctions or to punish Saddam when he blocks or evades UN inspections. Our ability to ensure that Saddam Hussein is not producing weapons of mass destruction, therefore, has substantially diminished. Even if full inspections were

eventually to resume, which now seems highly unlikely, experience has shown that it is difficult if not impossible to monitor Iraq's chemical and biological weapons production. The lengthy period during which the inspectors will have been unable to enter many Iraqi facilities has made it even less likely that they will be able to uncover all of Saddam's secrets. As a result, in the not-too-distant future we will be unable to determine with any reasonable level of confidence whether Iraq does or does not possess such weapons.

Such uncertainty will, by itself, have a seriously destabilizing effect on the entire Middle East. It hardly needs to be added that if Saddam does acquire the capability to deliver weapons of mass destruction, as he is almost certain to do if we continue along the present course, the safety of American troops in the region, of our friends and allies like Israel and the moderate Arab states, and a significant portion of the world's supply of oil will all be put at hazard. As you have rightly declared, Mr. President, the security of the world in the first part of the 21st century will be determined largely by how we handle this threat.

Given the magnitude of the threat, the current policy, which depends for its success upon the steadfastness of our coalition partners and upon the cooperation of Saddam Hussein, is dangerously inadequate. The only acceptable strategy is one that eliminates the possibility that Iraq will be able to use or threaten to use weapons of mass destruction. In the near term, this means a willingness to undertake military action as diplomacy is clearly failing. In the long term, it means removing Saddam Hussein and his regime from power. That now needs to become the aim of American foreign policy.

We urge you to articulate this aim, and to turn your Administration's attention to implementing a strategy for removing Saddam's regime from power. This will require a full complement of

diplomatic, political and military efforts. Although we are fully aware of the dangers and difficulties in implementing this policy, we believe the dangers of failing to do so are far greater. We believe the U.S. has the authority under existing UN resolutions to take the necessary steps, including military steps, to protect our vital interests in the Gulf. In any case, American policy cannot continue to be crippled by a misguided insistence on unanimity in the UN Security Council.

We urge you to act decisively. If you act now to end the threat of weapons of mass destruction against the U.S. or its allies, you will be acting in the most fundamental national security interests of the country. If we accept a course of weakness and drift, we put our interests and our future at risk.

Sincerely,

**Elliott Abrams   Richard L. Armitage   William J. Bennett**

**Jeffrey Bergner   John Bolton   Paula Dobriansky**

**Francis Fukuyama   Robert Kagan   Zalmay Khalilzad**

**William Kristol   Richard Perle   Peter W. Rodman**

**Donald Rumsfeld   William Schneider, Jr.   Vin Weber**

**Paul Wolfowitz   R. James Woolsey   Robert B. Zoellick**