

**Kicking the Vietnam Syndrome: The Dual Dynamic of Neoconservatism and Liberal
Interventionism from the Gulf to Kosovo**

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Abstract

In the shadow of the ignominious defeat of Vietnam, the US found itself constrained in its ability to engage in direct foreign military intervention. The reluctance of the US public to engage in prolonged military intervention was referred to pejoratively in certain foreign policy circles as the "Vietnam Syndrome." The goal of these foreign policymakers is to make military intervention acceptable to the US public and to eliminate the constraints placed on the America's ability to intervene militarily when it is deemed necessary. This major research project examines liberal institutionalist and neoconservative schools of international relations as differing ideologies used by policymakers to justify US intervention abroad and finally defeat the Vietnam Syndrome. As demonstrated by the case studies of Bush Sr.'s Gulf War and Clinton's intervention in Kosovo, the rhetoric of the Vietnam Syndrome recurs whenever there is a fear that the US is engaged in imperial overstretch. Neocons and liberals both view American Empire as fundamentally benign, but prior to 9/11 their actions were restricted by pragmatic necessities. I conclude by examining how the imperial arrogance and moralistic zeal of neocons and liberals in the wake of 9/11 lead to a resurgence of the very fear they sought to conquer, replacing the Vietnam Syndrome with the "Iraq Syndrome." By doing so, I hope to demonstrate that the fundamental lesson from the Vietnam experience is the folly of imperial politics. If we do not appreciate this reality, we are forever damned to repeat the same foreign policy blunders.

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I. The Vietnam Syndrome: A Historiographic Diagnosis

From the perch of the twenty-first century, it is easy to see the US war against Vietnam as an unmitigated failure. The 1971 publication of the Pentagon Papers exposed the Johnson administration's justifications for escalation as a collection of deceptions and falsehoods. As a result, a war weariness developed amongst the American population and foreign policymakers, who became constrained in their ability to intervene abroad. Covert action became the order of the day, as the exigencies of Empire require some form of global presence, but there was a widespread consensus of restraint in American international relations. The limits of US power were clear to anyone who cared to look. At the same time, certain policymakers sought to shatter this consensus against direct military intervention abroad, and in doing so consign the dreaded "Vietnam Syndrome" to the waste basket of history. As we shall see, the first such attempt occurred in the dying days of the Carter administration, and this debate on the legacy of the Vietnam War recurs with every subsequent US military action. On the mainstream American political spectrum, the lessons learnt from Vietnam are strategic rather than moral: the question is not whether the US ought to project its influence abroad, but how to do so most effectively.

This major research project investigates neoconservatism and liberal interventionism as contending ideologies amongst US foreign policymakers who see themselves as morally obliged to spread American influence throughout the world. This task requires the Vietnam Syndrome's alleviation, and the debate is framed in terms of *how*, not *if*, the US can do so at the lowest cost to Empire. Thus emerges a debate between unilateralists, who prefer independent US military action to no action at all, and multilateralists, who prefer to keep US actions within the confines of international norms and to share the burdens of intervention with regional allies. Neoconservatives are characterized by their preference for unilateral expressions of American

power, while liberals seek to form broad-based coalitions through established international institutions; realists fall somewhere in between with their insistence on using both multilateralism and unilateralism when fortune dictates. Although policymakers have their preferences for unilateralism or multilateralism, the necessity of pragmatism in US politics makes a successful statesman inherently realist: they will use international institutions when they can, but act alone when they must. Much is already written on the Vietnam Syndrome, and the commonalities of neoconservatism and liberal interventionism individually, but to my knowledge nothing is written that deliberately and precisely draws the connection between the Vietnam Syndrome and the dual dynamic of liberal and neocon foreign policies.

This project is divided into five chapters, with each building on the information in the last. In this chapter, I provide a historiographic overview of the Vietnam Syndrome, analyzing major events from Operation Eagle Claw in Iran to Operation Restore Hope in Somalia, and examining the consequent debates on Vietnam's legacy. In Chapter 2, I compare and contrast neoconservative and liberal theories of international relations in the context of the inherent tension between Wilsonian idealism and Theodore Roosevelt's gritty *realpolitik*. Next I discuss the Persian Gulf War, where my concern is with debates surrounding America's role in the post-Cold War world and concurrent attempt to give the Vietnam Syndrome its final defeat. We see these exact debates emerge with the crises in the Balkans, particularly Kosovo, which I discuss in the fourth chapter. Finally, I attempt to bring all this together in my conclusion, where I deal with the aftermath of 9/11 and its impact on foreign policy decision making. The 2001 terrorist attacks allowed neoconservatives to abandon practical constraints and justify their lawlessness in terms of national security. Throughout I hope to demonstrate the inherent tension between the lofty ideals of democratic enlargement and the practical constraints of imperial overstretch.

The glaring contradictions in preaching the virtues of peace and humanitarianism from the pulpit of an imperial power is exposed by President Carter's relationship with the Shah in Iran. Carter came into office with the promise of restricting arm sales to major human rights abusers. Immediately, a contradiction emerged between this stated policy and the US's close connection with the notoriously brutal Shah Reza Pahlavi, who was seen as a bulwark against Communism in the Middle East. Presidential Directive 13 of 1977 restricted arm sales to human rights abusers, but with the major caveat that these sales could continue in service of "exceptional foreign policy" interests. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, one of the more stringent multilateralists in the Carter administration, assured Iranian diplomats that these restrictions would not apply to the Shah, given his status as a major regional ally.¹ Through its relationship with the Shah, the US attempted to present him as a "Great Modernizer" who would drag the once glorious Persians into the present, with or without the masses' approval. "The Shah's political repression, while not to be encouraged, was dismissed as [a] short-term inevitability of modernization," writes Professor Bruce Jentleson.²

This policy of collaboration and coordination with the Shah came crashing down when the Iranian Revolution erupted in 1979, but the proceeding hostage crisis in the American consulate provided US policymakers with their first opportunity to conquer the Vietnam Syndrome. With his multilateralist inclinations, Carter attempted to free the hostages through diplomatic means; when little progress was made after six months of negotiations, the president "undertook a dramatic military rescue attempt in April of 1980." According to Dr. Rose McDermott, this militarily precarious endeavor stood in direct opposition to Carter's

¹ Bruce Jentleson, "American Commitments in the Third World: Theory vs. Practice," *International Organization* 41.4 (1987): p. 679.

² Jentleson, "American Commitments," p. 680.

"humanitarian emphasis in world politics,"³ but was deemed necessary to restore America's credibility as a global hegemon in the aftermath of Vietnam. It also became increasingly clear that if Carter did not rescue the hostages, by force if necessary, he would lose the 1980 election to Ronald Reagan. Thus a combination of foreign and domestic factors forced Carter's hand in Iran, whereby he had to act to avoid being perceived as weak by the American electorate, while simultaneously guarding against military overexertion.⁴

The rescue mission was deemed the most effective course of action, as it provided "the best balance of political and military risk."⁵ There were five options under consideration to bring about the hostages' release: "From the lowest to the highest level of risk, these options were to do nothing; engage in minimal political and diplomatic sanctions; undertake a rescue mission; mine the harbors and engage in an all-out military strike."⁶ Whereas the first two options, favored by the dovish Vance, were considered insufficiently forceful, the latter two were deemed overtly provocative. As "the alternatives were perceived to amount to either letting the situation continue to fester or to go to all-out war," the rescue mission seemed the least unattractive option.⁷ Vance's reluctance to act forcefully was almost explicitly referred to as a product of the Vietnam Syndrome by Chief of Staff Hamilton Jordan: "Cy is the ultimate example of a good man who has been traumatized by his Vietnam experience."⁸ This was before the ultimate failure of Operation Eagle Claw, with the crashed helicopter and death of eight US soldiers bringing back widespread memories of the Vietnamese nightmare; it would be three years before another opportunity to kick the syndrome presented itself.

³ Rose McDermott, "Prospect Theory in International Relations: The Iranian Hostage Rescue Mission," *Political Psychology* 13.2 (1992): p. 237.

⁴ McDermott, "Prospect Theory," p. 240.

⁵ McDermott, "Prospect Theory," p. 244.

⁶ McDermott, "Prospect Theory," p. 242.

⁷ McDermott, "Prospect Theory," p. 244.

⁸ Quoted in McDermott, "Prospect Theory," p. 251.

While President Carter was the object of ridicule at home for his perceived weakness, Vice Presidential candidate George H.W. Bush's colleague at the CIA, William Casey, was abroad securing their release. "According to many accounts," writes former White House aide for Iranian affairs Gary Sick, "the deal between the Reagan-Bush campaign and Iran over the hostages was carried out with professional assistance - either from former CIA officers with long experience in covert actions, or from former CIA officers who were still on active duty."⁹ There was a genuine fear in the Reagan campaign that Carter would secure the hostages' release in time for the election, providing voters with an "October surprise" that could sway the election in his favor; thus Bush Sr. used his connections as Director of the CIA to sabotage the Carter presidency. If this account is accurate, Casey met with two Iranian officials in Paris and/or Madrid, convincing them to delay the hostages' release until Reagan's inauguration in exchange for supplying the Iranians with weapons.¹⁰ Casey's associates deny that he was abroad at the time in question (early 1980), but a brief article in the *New York Times* from that period contradicts this.¹¹ We also know from the Iran-Contra affair that the Reagan administration indeed supplied the mullahs with weapons, and that the hostages were freed almost instantly after Reagan's inauguration. As I.F. Stone famously wrote, "don't believe anything until it's officially denied."

If Sick's account is true and the CIA colluded with the Reagan-Bush campaign to bring down the Carter administration, then we must reevaluate the common perception of Reagan as a hard-line unilateralist. While Carter planned unilateral action to secure the hostages' release, Reagan's emissaries engaged in bilateral diplomacy, albeit in an illegitimate, conspiratorial

⁹ Gary Sick, *October Surprise: America's Hostages in Iran and the Election of Ronald Reagan* (Toronto: Random House of Canada Ltd., 1991), p. 8.

¹⁰ Sick, *October Surprise*, p. 11.

¹¹ Sick, *October Surprise*, p. 6.

fashion. This difference is less a matter of principle than of pragmatism: Carter needed to engage in some form of military action to save his presidency, whereas the only way Reagan could ensure Carter's defeat was to use his contacts to engage in negotiations. Carter and Reagan had almost diametrically opposed views on how to best preserve American power and fight the Cold War, but the exigencies of running for office shaped their actions concerning Iran. In terms of fighting the Cold War, it is evident that Reagan, particularly in his first term, charted a much more radical path than his predecessors, attempting to bring about the ultimate defeat of both the Vietnam Syndrome and Soviet Union.

When discussing the policies of a two-term president, it is vital to distinguish between each term. Nowhere is this more evident than with the Reagan and, as we shall see in Chapter 4, Clinton presidencies. In his first term, Reagan sought to "roll back" Soviet influence in the Third World "by *initiating* challenges to the USSR rather than simply *responding* to Soviet actions," says historian Robert Collins. "He wanted to rebuild America's military and economic strength, contest Soviet advances around the world, and increase pressure on the Soviet Union itself" as a means of discrediting state socialism as a whole. Because he ultimately succeeded in weakening the Soviets, he was able to return to arms reduction negotiations in his second term from a position of power.¹² In his first administration, Reagan charted an aggressive course in an effort to bring about the triumph of American liberalism across the globe. This bullish policy is evident with Reagan's interventions in Lebanon and Grenada, only one of which was successful and can be said to have served as a temporary respite for the Vietnam Syndrome.

In 1982, in the midst of the country's brutal civil war, Israel invaded Lebanon in an effort to crush the PLO. The US sent a contingent of Marines as part of the Multinational Force [MNF]

¹² Robert M. Collins, "Combating the Evil Empire," in *Transforming America: Politics and Culture in the Reagan Years* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), p. 196.

out of a desire to stabilize Lebanon, based on the fear of a Soviet-backed Syrian or Palestinian victory. "Its principal mission," Jentleson writes, "was to mediate the withdrawal from Lebanon of all foreign forces (Israeli, Syrian, and PLO),"¹³ bringing some semblance of stability to the war-torn nation. By this time, Israel had supplanted Iran as America's primary anti-Communist ally in the region, which was a much more convenient alliance for the US, given Israel's successful presentation of itself as the lone thriving Western democracy in a sea of Arab tyranny.¹⁴ In other words, the Reagan administration made a commitment to Israel that if it withdrew along with Syrian and Palestinian forces, the MNF would keep it safe from Syrian and Palestinian advances. Reagan chose "to cut and run," violating his commitment to Israel after the Iranian and Syrian-linked Hezbollah killed 241 US Marines. Secretary of State George Shultz objected to the withdrawal, insisting "that withdrawal in Lebanon would call into question other American commitments,"¹⁵ but Reagan, acting as a pragmatist, decided to abandon Lebanon in October 1983. By dispatching troops to Lebanon, Reagan attempted to demonstrate America's "new post-post-Vietnam resolve."¹⁶ Like Operation Eagle Claw, this endeavor ended in undisputed failure, but it was only a matter of days before Reagan sought to kick the Vietnam Syndrome again with his invasion of Grenada.

The US invasion of Grenada that occurred on October 25 1983 is vital to any discussion of the Vietnam Syndrome, as it constituted the first mass deployment of US troops abroad since the Vietnam quagmire. It also "represented the most direct application of US military power in support of the Reagan Doctrine." Grenada had been a potential target for US intervention since a

¹³ Jentleson, "American Commitments," p. 681.

¹⁴ This claim is not without its merits, but the ongoing occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Golan Heights certainly weakens Israel's democratic credentials.

¹⁵ Jentleson, "American Commitments," p. 682.

¹⁶ Jentleson, "American Commitments," p. 696.

coup brought pro-Cuban Marxist Maurice Bishop to power in the late 1970s,¹⁷ but the Carter administration was preoccupied with the Iranian Revolution. Shortly after the defeat of US military prowess Lebanon, another coup occurred in Grenada, bringing to power an even more independent-minded government. Reagan saw this tiny island off the coast of Venezuela as the ideal location to bring about a defeat of the US public's reluctance to go to war. As there were 800 American medical students in Grenada, Reagan successfully framed the operation as a rescue mission. The Grenadian army was swiftly defeated, leading to "an outburst of long-suppressed martial patriotism,"¹⁸ or as political scientist Anatol Lieven would correctly call it, "self-righteous nationalist extremism," on the part of the American public.¹⁹

Yet the US public's post-Vietnam War aversion to foreign entanglements could not disappear in the matter of days it took to conquer Grenada. It was not until Bush Sr.'s Gulf War (discussed in detail in Chapter 3) that the Vietnam Syndrome was proudly proclaimed a relic of the Cold War. As we shall see, this declaration was premature, but there was certainly a genuine sense of national jubilation comparable to the aftermath of the Grenada invasion. The media played a salient role in manufacturing this sense of triumph. Professor Andrew Parasiliti observes: "The press underwent self-evaluation after the Vietnam War in response to criticism of its alleged oppositional role. This process led to an even more entrenched establishment orientation," particularly evident in coverage of the Grenada and Persian Gulf Wars. Reporters who attempted to access Grenada were detained by the US Navy and were not allowed onto the

¹⁷ Collins, "Combating the Evil Empire," p. 217.

¹⁸ Collins, "Combating the Evil Empire," p. 217 - 8.

¹⁹ Anatol Lieven, *America Right or Wrong: An Anatomy of American Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 81.

island until five days after the invasion.²⁰ They had to wait until victory was assured before they could report on the war, avoiding the coverage of death and destruction that had characterized the media's perceived role in Vietnam.

Whereas the invasion of Grenada was justified to the public "as an act of self-defense, albeit at several removes,"²¹ President Clinton's interventions in Somalia and the Balkans were presented as selfless acts of humanitarianism. US involvement in Somalia began towards the end of the Bush41 administration. "On December 3, 1992, the United Nations approved the use of all necessary force to reestablish a secure environment for humanitarian operations in Somalia," says Republican Congressman Bereuter of Nebraska. The next day, the president announced a deployment of troops to Somalia, solely for the expressed purposes of "humanitarian relief."²² Bereuter emphasizes the mission's limited mandate: "the United States troops would be withdrawn and the security mission handed back to the United Nations peacekeeping force... as soon as a secure environment for the delivery of food has been created."²³ Bush was under pressure from liberal interventionists "to take action in both Somalia and Bosnia,"²⁴ and it being an election year, was more inclined to take their advice in the hope of receiving their votes. He resisted intervention in the Balkans, but by sending troops to Somalia he began a process that lead to a resurgence of the Vietnam Syndrome.

After the siege of Sarajevo in Bosnia (discussed more in-depth in Chapter 4), it became clear that the US public demanded some sort of action to put a stop to ethnic cleansing in the

²⁰ Andrew T. Parasiliti, "Defeating Vietnam Syndrome: The Military, the Media, and the Gulf War," in *The Gulf War and the New World Order: International Relations of the Middle East*, Tareq Y. Ismael, and Jacqueline S. Ismael, Eds. (Gainesville, FL: The University Press of Florida, 1994), p. 244.

²¹ Michael Mandelbaum, "Foreign Policy as Social Work," *Foreign Affairs* 75.1 (1996): p. 19.

²² Representative Bereuter (NE), "Somalia, World Hunger, and the Foreign Policy Implications of Humanitarian Relief in the New World Order," 139:29 (March 10, 1993) H1156, p. 2.

²³ Bereuter, "Humanitarian Relief in the New World Order," p. 3.

²⁴ Jon Western, *Selling Intervention & War: The President, the Media, and the American Public* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2005), p. 137.

former Yugoslavia. Just as Jimmy Carter battled a public perception that he was weak during his failed re-election campaign, George Bush Sr. fought a perception that he was cold-hearted, intervening in Iraq to protect his oil interests but doing nothing when faced with the re-emergence of concentration camps in Europe. Bush intervened in Somalia because it "was 'a lot cheaper' than intervention in Bosnia."²⁵ Clinton inherited this engagement, but expanded its mandate to, in his words, "complete the work of rebuilding and creating a peaceful, self-sustaining, and democratic civil society,"²⁶ a much more lofty task than assisting food distribution. When three Black Hawk helicopters were shot down by warlord Mohammed Farah Aided's forces, leading to the death of eighteen US soldiers, Clinton announced the withdrawal of all US troops from Somalia by March 1994.²⁷ Like Reagan in Lebanon, Clinton suffered an ignominious defeat of one of his major foreign policy goals, temporarily disabling his preference for military intervention abroad.

Although Bush Sr. proclaimed the end of the Vietnam Syndrome in the wake of the Persian Gulf War's success, the failure of Clinton's escalation in Somalia led to its resurgence. "A principle consequence of Vietnam Syndrome [sic]," writes Geoff Simons in his polemical *Vietnam Syndrome: Impact on US Foreign Policy*, "was that the United States was forced to re-evaluate its general policies on the use of military force." This does not mean the US had to refrain from foreign intervention, but that they had to do so "cautiously and with circumspection."²⁸ Clinton ultimately intervened in Bosnia and Kosovo, but his inability to send troops, as some prominent ideologues desired, reflects the US public's reluctance to put young

²⁵ Western, *Selling Intervention*, p. 162 - 3.

²⁶ Quoted in Chih-Hann Chang, "US Foreign Policy after the Cold War: Clinton's Foreign Policy," in *Ethical Foreign Policy? US Humanitarian Interventions* (Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2011), p. 75.

²⁷ Chang, "Clinton's Foreign Policy," p. 76.

²⁸ Geoff Simons, "Options and Issues," in *Vietnam Syndrome: Impact on US Foreign Policy* (London, UK: MacMillan Press, 1998), p. 288.

adults in danger abroad after the failures in Vietnam, Iran, Lebanon, and Somalia. In Grenada and Iraq, the US was able to temporarily subdue this reluctance, but we see it re-emerge with debates on intervention in the Balkans. In the next chapter, I discuss two contending theories of international relations that provide the moralistic zeal necessary to justify imperial ventures in the post-Vietnam and post-Cold War era.

II. Neoconservatism vs. Liberal Interventionism

The difficulty in discussing international relations theory is its potential to serve as a sort of straw-man argument. Although policymakers have their ideological preferences, they are forced by external constraints to engage in compromise. No prudent statesman is a pure liberal or conservative, but by necessity a realist. However, due to natural ideological inclinations, a desire to shape the world in one's image, there is a constant effort to bring externalities under control and make ideology practical. When this cannot be achieved, like during the Carter administration's handling of the Iranian Hostage Crisis, politicians are forced to compromise their principles. With the end of the Cold War, there was a hope amongst certain policymakers that the demise of the Soviet Union and ensuing "New World Order" would decrease the constraints on the use of US military power abroad characterized by the post-Vietnam era. In this context, liberal interventionism and neoconservatism can be regarded as ideological challenges to the natural trend towards pragmatism in US foreign policy. To better understand the challenges to the status quo in international relations represented by liberal interventionism and neoconservatism, we must delve into Dr. Kissinger's distinction between realism and Wilsonian idealism.

Both liberal interventionists and neoconservatives see themselves as the rightful inheritors of the Wilsonian tradition. To begin, it is important to note what these two ideologies have in common before we discuss their differences and practical applications. In Chapter 2 of *Diplomacy*, "The Hinge: Theodore Roosevelt or Woodrow Wilson," Kissinger describes the two presidents' contending visions of America's role on the global stage. Roosevelt, "a sophisticated analyst of the balance of power," represented the traditional realist school of international relations. "He insisted on an international role for America because its national interest

demanded it, and because a global balance of power was inconceivable to him without American participation." Wilson, by contrast, had a messianic zeal that his predecessor lacked: in his view, "America had an obligation, not to the balance of power, but to spread its principles throughout the world."²⁹ This mission to spread American values throughout the world, balance of power be damned, unites the liberal and neoconservative visions of American power. Realists, liberals, and neoconservatives are all concerned with the US national interest, but where they fundamentally differ is how they define it. Due to their Wilsonian orientation, the liberal and neoconservative conceptions of America's role in the world share as much in common with each other as with classical realism.

Until the consolidation of American Empire represented by the Spanish-American war, US foreign policy was rather simple: "to fulfill the country's manifest destiny, and to remain free of entanglements overseas." Policymakers certainly had a preference for like-minded democracies, "but abjured action to vindicate its preferences."³⁰ Whereas the Monroe Doctrine, based on this notion of manifest destiny, initially served to keep European powers from intervening in the New World, by the turn of the century "its meaning had been gradually expanded to justify American hegemony in the Western hemisphere."³¹ There was a persistent fear of foreign entanglements, similar to policymakers' fear of entering a quagmire in the wake of the Vietnam War. The fundamental distinction is that the Founding Fathers' refusal to engage in interventions overseas was based on principle, whereas the shift to covert action in the aftermath of the Vietnam venture was based on practical necessity. Whereas his predecessors sought to avoid overseas entanglements at all costs, believing that America led best by example,

²⁹ Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), p. 29 - 30.

³⁰ Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, p. 34.

³¹ Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, p. 36.

"Roosevelt held that America had real foreign policy interests that went far beyond its interest in remaining unentangled."³²

Both leaders believed "that America's instinctive isolation could be overcome," but differed in their means of achieving this goal. For Roosevelt, the most effective means of securing America's national interest was the practice of Old World power politics; for Wilson, it was highlighting the exceptionalism and universality of American values.³³ Roosevelt sought to transform America into one of many great European powers, but "Wilson moved America onto a plane entirely remote from such considerations;" America was destined to be the single global power that would usher in an era of cooperation and prosperity by virtue of its greatness.³⁴ "To varying degrees," writes Christopher Burkett of the Heritage Foundation, Wilsonian idealism seeped into "virtually every approach to foreign policy today, from liberal internationalists to hawkish neo-conservatives."³⁵ Kissinger concurs: though the lofty ambitions of Wilsonians "had never before been put forward by any nation, let alone been implemented," they continued to influence every successive US administration.³⁶ Whenever there is a failure of policy steeped in the Wilsonian tradition, out of necessity we see a return to the pragmatic power politics of Theodore Roosevelt; there is no returning to the quasi-isolationism of the Founding Fathers.

For "Progressives," a term Burkett conflates with 'Wilsonian,' global events "would provide the United States with particular moments in which it would be imperative for us to act in the name of freedom and democracy abroad."³⁷ This sentiment is echoed in Michael Ignatieff's *Empire Lite*, where he writes: "All imperial exercises of power must find a balance between

³² Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, p. 38 - 9.

³³ Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, p. 44.

³⁴ Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, p. 47.

³⁵ Christopher C. Burkett, "Remaking the World: Progressivism and American Foreign Policy," *The Heritage Foundation* 47 (September 24, 2013): p. 2.

³⁶ Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, p. 52.

³⁷ Burkett, "Remaking the World," p. 7.

hubris and prudence."³⁸ Liberals and neoconservatives may desire to intervene in any place where there is authoritarianism and civil strife, but practical constraints prohibit their doing so; they must wait for the opportunity to arise and seize it. Realists are also on a constant hunt for opportunities to showcase American military might, but liberals and neoconservatives are united in opposition to the realist presumption against morality in foreign affairs. In the Wilsonian view, liberal democracy has a certain moral legitimacy and universality that ought to be spread; authoritarian regimes are fair game for intervention solely on the basis of their illiberalism.³⁹

Another point of criticism of realism shared by liberals and neoconservatives is its perceived overemphasis on state sovereignty. This critique is based "on the idea that state sovereignty is not absolute, and that the right of individuals can be more important than the sovereignty of states."⁴⁰ Liberal society is perceived as the ideal form of political organization, as it offers individuals protection by law. With the fall of the Soviet Union, this confidence was exasperated. Scholars like Francis Fukuyama declared that liberal democracy was the highest possible achievement of political organization.⁴¹ If we take their claims at face value, liberals and neocons both seek the spread of liberal values, but they fundamentally differ in their means to achieve this end. While liberals favor some form of multilateralism when engaging in military intervention, the neoconservatives have an almost religious reverence for unilateral demonstrations of American power and are thus more vehement in their desire to rid America of the Vietnam Syndrome.

³⁸ Michael Ignatieff, *Empire Lite: Nation-Building in Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan* (Toronto: Pearson Canada, 2003), p. 11.

³⁹ Ray Kiely, "What Difference Does Difference Make? Reflections on Neo-conservatism as a Liberal Cosmopolitan Project," *Contemporary Politics* 10.3 - 4 (2004): p. 186.

⁴⁰ Kiely, "Neo-conservatism as a Liberal Cosmopolitan Project," p. 191.

⁴¹ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Simon & Schuster Inc., 2006), p. xii - xiii.

Although many neoconservatives see themselves as the true heirs to the Wilsonian tradition, Wilson had much more in common with modern liberals.⁴² To better understand the fundamental differences between neoconservative and liberal approaches to the projection of US power, it is important to discuss what I term the "three i's of liberal foreign policy:" internationalism, interventionism, and institutionalism. Liberals are internationalist in their desire to transcend realism's state-centeredness; interventionist in their acknowledgement "that the use of force is sometimes necessary;"⁴³ and institutionalist in their preference for solving disputes through established multilateral institutions. The neocons, though internationalist and interventionist, do not attempt to conceal their contempt for international institutions. "[I]n contrast, Wilson "sought to demonstrate the greatness and selflessness of the United States by tying it down in an institution devoted to collective security," writes political scientist Brian Rathbun.⁴⁴ For neocons, this faith in multilateralism "is a formula for disaster, a naive underestimation of the evil lodged in the hearts of our enemies"⁴⁵ that constrains our ability to promote American values.

Realists, like Council of Foreign Relations president Richard Haass, agree that liberal institutionalism is needlessly dependent on the good will of other nations; however, Haass also cautions against an excessive reliance on unilateral action, given its costliness and potential to damage America's global standing.⁴⁶ "In the final analysis," he writes, "*legitimacy must reside in the policy and derive from the ends and means of intervention, not from some external*

⁴² Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, p. 12.

⁴³ John McGowan, "Neoconservatism," in *American Liberalism: An Interpretation for Our Time* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), p. 125.

⁴⁴ Brian C. Rathbun, "Does One Right Make a Realist? Conservatism, Neoconservatism, and Isolationism in the Foreign Policy Ideology of American Elites," *Political Science Quarterly* 123.2 (2008): p. 286.

⁴⁵ McGowan, "Neoconservatism," p. 126.

⁴⁶ Richard N. Haass, "Considering the Future," in *Intervention: The Use of Military Force in the Post-Cold War Era* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1994), p. 148.

organization or international court of law [emphasis in original]."⁴⁷ By this view, multilateralism is potentially useful for the purposes of international legitimacy, but cannot be allowed to constrain US actions in pursuit of vital interests.⁴⁸ The rulings of international courts and forums are used as justifications when they conform to US policy and ignored when they do not. Realists' ambivalence towards international institutions is transformed into outright contempt by the neoconservatives. In the limited sense of its attitude towards multilateralism, realism occupies a middle-ground between the perceived overreliance of liberals and hostility of neocons.

According to Rathbun, neoconservatives "oppose the involvement of multilateral institutions on principled grounds as illegitimate bodies inherently threatening to American sovereignty." From this, Rathbun gathers that neocons cannot be described as idealists in the Wilsonian tradition, because their belief in the universality of American principles "emerges from a deep sense of national pride that in its more exuberant form translates into a feeling of moral superiority in international affairs." He concludes this lofty paragraph with this assertion: "They are not idealists or realists, but nationalists."⁴⁹ This claim is based on a false dichotomy between the traditional idealism and realism of international relations on the one hand, and the hyper-nationalism of neoconservatives on the other. Here, nationalism is a matter of degree: liberals and realists are certainly nationalist, as they see themselves promoting the US national interest in their different ways, but neocons are even more fervent "in their repeated insistence that there is no distinction between the national interest and that of the international community."⁵⁰ Realist and liberals also believe that what is good for America is good for the

⁴⁷ Haass, "Considering the Future," p. 151.

⁴⁸ Haass, "Considering the Future," p. 142 - 3.

⁴⁹ Rathbun, "Does One Right Make One a Realist?" p. 273.

⁵⁰ Rathbun, "Does One Right Make One a Realist?" p. 283.

world, but do not believe their goals can be reached through a rigid insistence on unilateral action.

In his article "Power and Democratic Weakness," Northwestern University professor Jonathan Caverley contends the opposite of what I suggest: that neoconservatism has more in common with the hard-headed realism of Theodore Roosevelt than the liberal internationalism of Woodrow Wilson. "The reasoning behind the urge to spread democracy" in neoconservative thought, he writes, is "the enervating effects of democracy on the creation and use of state power." The spread of American-style democracy is credited with creating a balance of power "more favourable to American interests in a competitive, state-centric and anarchic world."⁵¹ It is true that neoconservatism shares three key assumptions with realism, that distinguish both from the liberal/idealist tradition: "conflict groups (i.e. states) are the key actors in world politics, power is the fundamental feature of international relations[,] and the essential nature of international relations is conflictual."⁵² This analysis confuses means and ends: unlike realists, neocons seek to create an international order of democracies; for them, the projection of US power is a means to this end, whereas for realists, the projection of power is an end in-itself.

Caverley does acknowledge "that one element at Wilsonianism's core is American promotion of liberal values abroad, and that neoconservatism shares this tenet," but he maintains "that this is the *only* concrete elements shared by these two theories [emphasis in original]."⁵³ In an attempt to demonstrate this, he borrows international relations scholar G. John Ikenberry's identification of six major tenets common to Wilsonian idealism and modern liberalism. "The first four cover various paths to peace: democracy, free trade, international law and international

⁵¹ Jonathan D. Caverley, "Power and Democratic Weakness: Neoconservatism and Neoclassical Realism," *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 38.593 (2010): p. 594.

⁵² Caverley, "Power and Democratic Weakness," p. 598.

⁵³ Caverley, "Power and Democratic Weakness," p. 599.

bodies, and collective security. The final two are a progressive optimism about modernity coupled with the need for American leadership as 'a moral agent.'" Caverly claims that the neocons only accept the necessity of democratic expansion and US moral leadership, which equals a petty one-third of shared assumptions,⁵⁴ but I am unconvinced that all six tenets are of equal value to Wilsonians. As with his analysis of realism, Caverly seems to confuse the means and ends of Wilsonianism. Wilsonians seek the spread of democracy under American aegis, which is assumed synonymous with peace and security. In order to do so, they promote free trade, international institutions, and collective security with an optimism that they are effective means. The neoconservatives share the same ends of democratic peace as Wilsonians, but prefer to bring them about without recourse to restrictive multilateralism; in other words, they use realist means to achieve Wilsonian ends. I do not deny that liberal interventionists more closely approximate the vision of Wilson than the neocons, but believe that their shared ideological zeal for US-led democratic expansion outweighs their differences in method.

Though some scholars, like Caverly, consider neocons as bastardized realists, the most important elements of their worldview stand in contrast to the realist tradition. As University of Wales professor Michael Williams observes, another point of departure from realism to neoconservatism is their radically different conceptions of the national interest. "For neoconservatives," he writes, "the national interest is not just an analytic concept, nor can it be reduced to a material strategic imperative. Rather it is a symbol and barometer of the health of a political order, and particularly a mark of decadence or vibrancy and virtue in a society."⁵⁵ Neocons attack the flexibility of the realist conception of the national interest as unprincipled, believe it is impossible to divorce foreign policy from moral imperatives, and see the amorality

⁵⁴ Caverly, "Power and Democratic Weakness," p. 600.

⁵⁵ Michael C. Williams, "What Is the National Interest? The Neoconservative Challenge in IR Theory," *European Journal of International Relations* 11.3 (2005), p. 309 - 310.

of realists as an indicator of Western societal decay.⁵⁶ Griffith University lecturer Danny Cooper writes that neocons "depict the work of foreign policy realists as being out of touch with America."⁵⁷ They appropriate talk of securing America's interests from realists, but present themselves as guardians of liberal democracy in an attempt to appeal to both sides of the American political spectrum.

Before delving into primary sources from Irving Kristol, Fukuyama, and William Kristol and Robert Kagan, it is important to place these ideologues in their appropriate historical context. Many neoconservatives, from the elder Kristol to Christopher Hitchens,⁵⁸ began their intellectual careers on the socialist left. This is important to note, because when they shifted rightwards they brought with them their Manichean worldview. "The neoconservatives, like Trotsky, believed in the power and primacy of ideas," writes Jacob Heilbrunn in *They Knew They Were Right*. "Politics, in their view, was less a pragmatic clash of interests than a question of contending philosophies."⁵⁹ For Hitchens, the purported catalyst for his political transformation was the Balkan Wars and 9/11; for the elder Kristol, it was the US defeat in Vietnam and rise of the New Left.

The early generation of neoconservatives' political shift came about as a result of their disillusionment with the anti-war left that emerged in response to the Vietnam War. To them, the New Left went too far in its rejection of established institutions, leading to a false moral equivalence between US and Communist actions. With their staunch anti-totalitarianism, the

⁵⁶ Williams, "The Neoconservative Challenge," p. 322.

⁵⁷ Danny Cooper, "Protecting the Idea of Human Rights," in *Neoconservatism and American Foreign Policy: A Critical Analysis* (New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 54.

⁵⁸ Hitchens himself disputed this designation, but his famous support for unilateral demonstrations of US power in the service of purportedly humanitarian ends places him in the neoconservative camp, despite his differences with other neocons regarding Israel and many domestic issues.

⁵⁹ Jacob Heilbrunn, *They Knew They Were Right: The Rise of the Neocons* (New York: Doubleday, 2008), p. 196 - 7.

neocons presented themselves as the true inheritors of the liberal tradition.⁶⁰ "The real danger for contemporary society is thus not, say socialism, but rather nihilism,"⁶¹ which they saw in both the countercultural left and realist right. As former leftists, "it is not surprising that neoconservatives would for the most part end up opposing the realist foreign policy of Henry Kissinger during the 1970s," writes Fukuyama in his reappraisal of the neoconservative movement, *America at the Crossroads*.⁶² As we saw earlier, Kissinger believed that the only way to conduct foreign policy was through establishing a balance of power to guard against external threats; the Wilsonian claim to be spreading universal American values is mere rhetoric for public consumption. Regardless of ideological orientation, the exigencies of international relations compel statesmen to compromise their ideals and engage in power politics. This insistence upon pragmatism over ideology is precisely what ex-leftists like Irving Kristol found abhorrent about Kissinger's realism.

The following passage from Kristol's influential "American Intellectuals and Foreign Policy" indicates that although he despised both the anti-war left and the realist right, particular scorn was reserved for his former comrades on the left:

What we are witnessing is no mere difference about foreign policy, or about Vietnam. Such differences of opinion exist, of course. Some of the most articulate critics... insist that the United States has unthinkingly accepted world responsibilities which are beyond its resources and that, in any case, these responsibilities have only an illusory connection with the enduring national interest. These men may be right, or they may be wrong. But right or wrong *this* debate is largely irrelevant to the convulsion in the American intellectual community is now going through... One does not accuse the President of the United States and the Secretary of State of being "war criminals" and "mass murderers"

⁶⁰ John Guelke, "The Political Morality of the Neo-conservatives: An Analysis," *International Politics* 42 (2005): p. 99 - 100.

⁶¹ Guelke, "Political Morality of the Neo-conservatives," p. 101.

⁶² Francis Fukuyama, "The Neoconservative Legacy," in *America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power, and the Neoconservative Legacy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 37.

because they have erred in estimating the proper dimensions of the United States' overseas commitments.⁶³

Unlike New Left stalwart Noam Chomsky, who believes American intellectuals have a moral obligation to scrutinize the motives of US foreign policy,⁶⁴ Kristol came to believe in the benevolent aims of US foreign policy and that critics ought to frame their criticisms in this context.

Due to the Cold War context in which he wrote, there is a certain pessimism in Kristol's worldview: the US is engaged in a struggle with the evil scourge of totalitarianism, from which a US victory is not guaranteed; if we are to win the Cold War, intellectuals ought to come on our side. As mentioned earlier, the fall of the Soviet Union led to a sense of optimism amongst neoconservative ideologues. The time was ripe for expanding American influence across the globe in a manner prevented by the Cold War doctrine of containment. It was in this context that Fukuyama boldly proclaimed "the end of history." The world was seen as being on a long march towards global democracy, and with the Soviet threat eliminated, foreign policy elites could now focus on democracy promotion in the Third World, which "continues to be a realm of struggle, war, injustice, and poverty."⁶⁵ The problem arises of how Western democracies are to deal with the persistence of illiberal forces after the fall of the Soviet Union, and in his handling of this dilemma, Fukuyama perfectly encapsulates the intersection of liberal and neoconservative foreign policy perspectives.

Whereas Western democracies have entered a "post-historical" world characterized by free trade and peaceful relations, Fukuyama believes that the Third World, due to the "relatively

⁶³ Irving Kristol, "American Intellectuals and Foreign Policy," in *Neoconservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), p. 76 - 77.

⁶⁴ Noam Chomsky, "The Responsibility of Intellectuals," *New York Review of Books* (February 3, 1967) <<http://www.chomsky.info/articles/19670223.htm>>.

⁶⁵ Fukuyama, *End of History*, p. 318.

late arrival of industrialization and nationalism," remains mired in history.⁶⁶ In true neoconservative fashion, the notion "that the difficulties of underdeveloped nations stemmed from Western imperialism" is dismissed outright in favor of a narrative of internal "corruption, social disintegration, the absence of the liberal-democratic tradition, and ill-conceived efforts at socialism."⁶⁷ By this view, Western intervention can only benefit its recipients. While realists also believe their foreign ventures are beneficial to their subjects, this belief is based on an action's contribution to global stability, not spreading universal values; as we saw above, this is a trait shared by neoconservative and liberal foreign policy elites. In Fukuyama's vision, Western Europe, Canada, the US, and Japan share a moral obligation to spread their liberal values, by force if necessary.

If the world is indeed divided into a "historical world" ('us') and a "post-historical world" ('them'), then we cannot treat both sides' motives in international conduct as morally equivalent; Western democracy is deemed objectively better than Third World autocracy. Most individuals would not object to this precept, but the manner in which its application is approached distinguishes neoconservatives from liberal interventionists and the anti-imperialist left. "The historical half of the world," writes Fukuyama, "persists in operating according to realist principles, and the post-historical half must make use of realist methods when dealing with the part still in history."⁶⁸ For anti-imperialists, foreign military intervention lacks the potential to bring democracy to the Third World and can only result in a Vietnam-style quagmire; liberals share this post-Vietnam weariness, but, along with realists and neocons, believe that sometimes might makes right. Whereas liberals seek "to develop and strengthen international institutions"

⁶⁶ Fukuyama, *End of History*, p. 276.

⁶⁷ Alonzo L. Hamby, *Liberalism and Its Challengers: From FDR to Bush* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 301.

⁶⁸ Fukuyama, *End of History*, p. 279.

out of a conviction that "no country should be the judge of its own case,"⁶⁹ neocons seek to modernize the Third World through selective displays of military might.

A central facet of neoconservative thought is its hostility towards the United Nations, which stems from their belief that autocracies and democracies should not be treated the same in the global arena. Though Fukuyama is sympathetic to Wilson's attempt at creating "a league of nations according to Kant's... precepts" outlined in *Perpetual Peace*, he believes that a truly democratic global order "would have to look much more like NATO than the United Nations," meaning "a league of free states brought to together by their common commitment to liberal principles." "Such a league," he continues, "should be much more capable of forceful action to protect its collective security from threats arising from the non-democratic part of the world."⁷⁰ The states within this coalition would be able to deal with each other on a multilateral basis with respect for international law, but would deal with threats emanating from outside with unrestrained force. While the liberal claim "that liberal democracies are different from nonliberal regimes"⁷¹ is accepted by Fukuyama, he does not believe that they should be judged by the same moral standards.

This resolute faith in American moral exceptionalism in a post-Cold War environment provides a convenient segue into the writings of junior Kristol and Kagan. Rather than turn to the potentially constraining institutionalism of liberals, Kristol and Kagan advocate three basic strategies for maintaining American primacy. Fukuyama, in his reexamination of neoconservatism, identifies them as: "overwhelming military superiority; a renewed dedication to U.S. alliances; and missile defense as a means of protecting the American homeland from

⁶⁹ McGowan, "Neoconservatism," p. 128.

⁷⁰ Fukuyama, *End of History*, p. 282 - 3.

⁷¹ Western, *Selling Intervention and War*, p. 6.

counterattack."⁷² From this, it follows that "regime change" should be a strategic imperative to bring the Third World out from the depths of history.⁷³ However, by declaring their renewed commitment to American alliances, Kristol and Kagan show an uncharacteristic display of realism in conceding that sometimes the national interest warrants supporting unsavory allies. The end goal for Kristol and Kagan then is not the promotion of democracy abroad, but its promotion when it can be reconciled with the exigencies of *realpolitik*; In this regard, Fukuyama (at least in the *End of History*) represents the more idealist and universalist end of neoconservative thought, whereas Kristol and Kagan, along with their contemporary Charles Krauthammer, represent the more realist and particularistic faction. Democracy promotion is seen by both sides as beneficial to the national interest, but Kristol and Kagan are more willing to make exceptions for the benefit of the national interest than early Fukuyama.

In a piece as influential, if not more, than the elder Kristol's, William Kristol and Robert Kagan outline a "Neo-Reaganite" foreign policy to create the conditions for their selective democratic crusade. The authors praise Reagan's "controversial vision of ideological and strategic victory over the forces of international communism" for injecting a "greater moral clarity and purpose in U.S. foreign policy" and refusing "to accept the limits on American power imposed by the domestic political realities that others assumed were fixed."⁷⁴ If Reagan could achieve all this within the confines of the Cold War,⁷⁵ then the US ought to capitalize upon its "strategic and ideological predominance" after the fall of Communism and ensure the maintenance of a unipolar world dominated by the US.⁷⁶ "In a world in which peace and

⁷² Fukuyama, "Neoconservative Legacy," p. 41.

⁷³ Fukuyama, "Neoconservative Legacy," p. 41 - 2.

⁷⁴ William Kristol, and Robert Kagan, "Toward a Neo-Reaganite Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 1996): p. 2.

⁷⁵ Whether he did is highly debatable, given the distinct foreign policies of his two administrations.

⁷⁶ Kristol and Kagan, "Neo-Reaganite," p. 3.

American security depend on American power and the will to use it, the main threat the United States faces now and in the future is its own weakness," whether military or moral.⁷⁷

It is only through military superiority that America can "make the world safe for democracy," to borrow a Wilsonian phrase. Wilson's institutionalism is regarded as an inconvenient roadblock on the path towards his ultimate goal of exporting democracy. "These days, some critics complain about the fact that the United States spends more on defense than the next six major powers combined," Kristol and Kagan lament. "But the enormous disparity between U.S. military strength and that of any potential challenger is a good thing for America and the world. After all, America's world role is entirely different from that of the other powers."⁷⁸ In their view, America did not become the world's sole remaining superpower due its successful pursuit of a balance of power, but because of its exceptional "principles of governance abroad - democracy, free markets, respect for liberty."⁷⁹ This does little to explain US support for anti-Communist, and after the Cold War pro-American, dictatorships, but does provide effective rhetorical cover for the pursuit of American hegemony.

At this point, it should be clear that neoconservatism is essentially a blend of realism and liberal idealism. It is liberal in its rhetoric of democratization, but realist in its preference for unilateral demonstrations of American power. As we shall in the next two chapters' case studies, it is near impossible to engage in foreign policy without some degree of realism. Whether ostensibly neoconservative, realist, or liberal in outlook, a prudent statesman must compromise their ideology based on domestic and international realities; due to its inherent flexibility, realism is the most conducive to this end. Whether it is through the preferred multilateralism of liberals, or unilateralism of the neocons, ideology has a definite influence on policymakers, but it is no

⁷⁷ Kristol and Kagan, "Neo-Reaganite," p. 5 - 6.

⁷⁸ Kristol and Kagan, "Neo-Reaganite," p. 8.

⁷⁹ Kristol and Kagan, "Neo-Reaganite," p. 9.

more than a rough guideline. The entire US mainstream political spectrum seeks to conquer the public's post-Vietnam aversion to overt warfare, but they have different strategies for doing so. These strategies are rooted in ideology, but they are constantly evolving as a result of the pragmatic trend in American politics. In the proceeding chapter, we see these contending strategies at work in debates concerning US intervention in the Gulf and the future of the post-Cold War world.

III. The Persian Gulf War and the New World Order

To better understand the debates surrounding the Persian Gulf War, it is important to understand the context of Saddam's decision to invade Kuwait. Journalist Said Aburish, in "The Friend-Foe Game" chapter of his masterful *Saddam Hussein: The Politics of Revenge*, places Saddam's actions in the context of the war he fought with Iran throughout the 1980s. "Somewhat similar to victorious Britain after the Second World War, but without the advantage of a democratic system," Aburish writes of the Iran-Iraq War's aftermath, Saddam "presided over a disrupted society and bankrupt country." Iraq was profoundly indebted, and with a low price of oil, "whatever income the oil exports generated was not enough to service Iraq's existing debt and meet the country's burgeoning needs."⁸⁰ In 1980, at the start of the war with Iran, Iraq's oil output was approximately \$26 billion per year; by the war's end in 1988, output was a mere \$14 billion. Saddam needed an increase in the price of oil to pay for his reconstruction efforts, but the day after the ceasefire Kuwait increased its production, further decreasing the price.⁸¹ "Saddam, humiliated by Kuwaiti arrogance, was dead-set on exacting revenge,"⁸² hence the book's title.

Much controversy surrounded US ambassador April Glaspie's meeting with Saddam prior to his final decision to invade. It was not the meeting itself, as Bush41 made clear his desire to test diplomacy before engaging militarily,⁸³ but what she told Saddam that caused consternation. According to Bush41, her claim that "we don't take a stand on territorial disputes" was "grossly misconstrued as implying we would look the other way" in the event of an invasion. To Bush, this statement was "standard State Department language that we do not take positions on the

⁸⁰ Said K. Aburish, "The Friend-Foe Game," *Saddam Hussein: The Politics of Revenge* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2000), p. 252.

⁸¹ Aburish, "Friend-Foe Game," p. 259 - 60.

⁸² Aburish, "Friend-Foe Game," p. 279.

⁸³ George H.W. Bush, and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York: Vintage Books, 2011) Kindle Edition, location 7218 of 11461.

merits of a boundary dispute, but expect it to be settled peacefully."⁸⁴ Because the conversation was in Arabic, it is difficult to determine what Glaspie actually said. Aburish quotes her saying that America has "no opinion on Arab conflicts," but agrees with Bush that this does not constitute an approval of invasion.⁸⁵ Regardless of her exact words or intent, Saddam clearly saw an opening for his invasion of Kuwait.

A week after Saddam's act of aggression on August 2, 1990, Bush Sr. gave a speech replete with images of World War II that reflects the Manichean worldview of neoconservatives. "Iraq's tanks stormed in *blitzkrieg* fashion through Kuwait in a few short hours [emphasis mine]," he exclaimed. For those who believed that more time was needed for diplomacy to work, the president invoked the image of Neville Chamberlain: "Appeasement does not work. As was the case in the 1930s, we see in Saddam Hussein an aggressive dictator threatening his neighbors."⁸⁶ Although this component of his rhetoric was decidedly neoconservative, presenting a battle between the forces of light and darkness, Bush "proclaimed his hope for a new world order in classically Wilsonian terms:"⁸⁷ "We have a vision of a new partnership of nations that transcends the Cold War. A partnership based on consultation, cooperation, and collective action, especially through international and regional organizations."⁸⁸ This was more a matter of pragmatism than principle: Bush worked through established institutions because, in the wake of the Cold War, he could without fear of Soviet obstruction; circumstances aligned in favor of the multilateral option.

⁸⁴ Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, loc. 6384.

⁸⁵ Aburish, "Friend-Foe Game," p. 281.

⁸⁶ George H.W. Bush, "Address on Iraq's Invasion of Kuwait" (speech, Charlottesville, VA, August 8, 1990), Miller Center, <<http://millercenter.org/archives/speeches/detail/5529>>.

⁸⁷ Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, p. 804.

⁸⁸ Quoted in Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, p. 804 - 5.

In order to ensure that the war would not devolve into a Vietnam-style catastrophe, Bush "exploited a variety of financial options" to create a broad-based multinational coalition. Geoff Simons observes: "IMF and World Bank loans were to China; the Soviet Union was offered a multi-billion-dollar aid package; Zaire was offered debt forgiveness; Ethiopia was offered investment capital; an Egyptian debt of \$7 billion was written off; and Turkey was promised IMF and World Bank loans and other domestic capital."⁸⁹ This generosity was in the name of extracting these countries' support for the effort against Saddam. Although he believed American leadership to be indispensable, Bush acknowledges: "We couldn't have a solo US effort in the Middle East." The administration needed the rest of the world to come onside, particularly the Gulf states who were potentially threatened if Saddam decided to go further than Kuwait.⁹⁰ Bush sought to give the first US-led intervention of the post-Cold War era international legitimacy absent from the Vietnam experience. This way, the Bush Sr. administration could seize the opportunity afforded by the fall of the Soviet Union and usher in an era of undisputed American hegemony.

Donald Pease contends that the Persian Gulf War was largely symbolic: it "was designed to supply U.S. citizens with televisual representations of a military victory that the conclusion to the cold war [sic] lacked."⁹¹ He does not dispute that the war was fought to deter Saddam, but "at the same time was an attempt, in the aftermath of the cold war, to solicit spontaneous assent to the alternative means of entering historical events Bush named the New World Order." In order to establish this new paradigm, it was not sufficient to eject Saddam from Kuwait; policymakers

⁸⁹ Geoff Simons, "Options and Issues," p. 304.

⁹⁰ Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, loc. 6586.

⁹¹ Donald Pease, "Staging the New World Order," in *The New American Exceptionalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), p. 40.

also wanted to use the war as a means of putting the Vietnam Syndrome to rest.⁹² This explains Bush's initial caution against going to war; referring to Secretary of State James Baker, Bush writes: "He worried, too, that we could get bogged down in another Vietnam, lose public support, and see the Bush presidency destroyed."⁹³ Before the use of force was agreed upon, the president wanted to ensure "that we had the domestic or international backing to act,"⁹⁴ and thus present the world with a unified front against Saddam for both symbolic and electoral purposes.

The final decision to invade Iraq came about in three stages, as outlined by the Brookings Institution's Shibley Telhami. In the first stage, Bush's "decision to deploy U.S. forces was almost automatic." If he did not immediately respond to Saddam's deliberate provocation, he would have been perceived as weak for neglecting to take advantage of the unipolar moment,⁹⁵ so he sent troops to the Saudi border with Kuwait. The question was never *if* the US would intervene in the Gulf, but *when* it would escalate into an invasion. In the second stage of intervention (October 1990), the US opted to double its troops stationed on the Saudi border. This was not only an effort to intimidate Saddam into withdrawal, but a response to the Israelis' killing of five Palestinians at the *al-Aqsa* mosque in Jerusalem. The administration did not want Saddam capitalizing on popular resentment of Israel in the Arab world, so they were forced to act before the Arab members of the coalition had an opportunity to disband.⁹⁶ In November, UN Resolution 678 was passed, which demanded action if Iraq did not withdraw by January 15, 1991.⁹⁷ The final stage, Operation Desert Storm, began when the date came without an Iraqi

⁹² Pease, "Staging the New World Order," p. 41.

⁹³ Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, loc. 7234.

⁹⁴ Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, loc. 7212 - 9.

⁹⁵ Shibley Telhami, "Explaining U.S. Behavior in the Gulf Crisis," in *The Gulf War and the New World Order*, p. 163.

⁹⁶ Telhami, "Explaining U.S. Behavior," p. 165 - 6.

⁹⁷ Telhami, "Explaining U.S. Behavior," p. 169.

withdrawal.⁹⁸ At this point, there was no turning back from the military option, as the president would have been seen as engaging in empty rhetoric.

At the onset of Operation Desert Storm, President Bush assured his electorate that "this will not be another Vietnam,"⁹⁹ but he had detractors in the legislative branch who expressed their opposition in such terms. Although sympathetic towards Bush Sr.'s efforts to maintain US hegemony in the unipolar world,¹⁰⁰ Democratic Congressman Rosa DeLauro fears that Saddam has drawn the US into a quagmire from which there is no return.¹⁰¹ This was easily dismissed a mere five months into the war, but is highly prescient with our hindsight knowledge of Bush Jr.'s disastrous 2003 invasion of Iraq. Bush Jr.'s liberal critics were pleased that the president had consulted the United Nations and attempted diplomacy and sanctions prior to invading Iraq, but thought the US risked playing too much of a leading role. Senator Paul Simon captures this sentiment when he quotes Cyrus Vance, saying: "No nation can resolve all its own problems without the help of other nations. Common action is essential."¹⁰² Simon cites Vance approvingly, suggesting that the UN ought to be given more power to stop potential aggressors before they engage in aggression, lest the US get forced into a prolonged military confrontation.¹⁰³ Like Bush's decision to engage with the UN, this liberal insistence upon further co-operation through multilateral forums is made for the purposes of limiting potential damage to US troops and enhancing the international legitimacy of their actions.

In these legislative debates, the necessity of establishing a US-led New World Order is taken for granted. Debate surrounds the degree to which the US ought to take the lead, with

⁹⁸ Telhami, "Explaining U.S. Behavior," p. 170.

⁹⁹ Quoted in Parasiliti, "The Military, the Media, and the Gulf War," p. 242.

¹⁰⁰ Representative DeLauro (CT), "New World Order Requires New United Nations," 137:81 (May 29, 1991) E1952, p. 3.

¹⁰¹ Representative DeLauro, "New United Nations," p. 2.

¹⁰² Senator Simon (IL), "A New World Order?" 137:94 (June 18, 1991) S8041, p. 7.

¹⁰³ Senator Simon, "A New World Order?" p. 1.

liberals believing more in a lead-from-behind approach and neocons demanding more unilateral demonstrations of American power. Despite these differences, they were united in their desire to see Saddam removed and dismay at the administration's refusal to do so. As Heilbrunn writes in *They Knew They Were Right*, "Bush prosecuted the Gulf War very differently than the neocons would have liked. His aim wasn't to create a better world but to restore the balance of power in the region."¹⁰⁴ Richard Nixon, one of the early neoconservatives' objects of derision, praises Bush Sr.'s handling of the Gulf crisis. In *Seize the Moment*, he observes that Bush successfully "avoided the quagmire of playing kingmaker in Iraqi internal politics."¹⁰⁵ Nixon, with all the dreadful things that should be said of him, apparently learnt lessons from his inherited quagmire in Vietnam; the same cannot be said of the neocons and many liberals, who in the wake of Operation Desert Storm's success demanded further intervention in Iraq.

By establishing "a domestic consensus to support the action against Iraq, Bush had promised a strategy that would minimize American casualties and the risk of becoming entangled in a Vietnam-style quagmire," write Efraim Karsh and Lawrence Freedman, echoing President Nixon. "He had no intention of allowing his shining victory to be dimmed by a side-step into the treacherous marsh of Iraq's domestic politics and by risking a prolonged and embarrassing entanglement."¹⁰⁶ At the same time, Bush called on "the Iraqi military and Iraqi people to take matters into their own hands and force Saddam Hussein, the dictator, to step aside."¹⁰⁷ This rhetoric helped the president present himself as a democratic crusader, while simultaneously rejecting direct US involvement in Iraqi affairs. "The appeal had been conceived

¹⁰⁴ Heilbrunn, *They Knew They Were Right*, p. 203.

¹⁰⁵ Richard Nixon, *Seize the Moment: America's Challenge in a One-Superpower World* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), p. 29 - 30.

¹⁰⁶ Efraim Karsh, and Lawrence Freedman, *The Gulf Conflict 1990 - 1991: Diplomacy and War in the New World Order* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 417.

¹⁰⁷ Quoted in Andrew Cockburn, and Patrick Cockburn, *Out of the Ashes: The Resurrections of Saddam Hussein* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1999), p. 13.

as an incitement to the Iraqi military to stage a coup, and the 'Iraqi people' had been included only as an afterthought, but the effects were far-reaching," write journalists Andrew and Patrick Cockburn. To the Shiite and Kurdish masses who were preparing a revolt against Saddam, it appeared as if the president "had asked them to join his invincible coalition."¹⁰⁸ Just as the exigencies of *realpolitik* compelled Bush to seek an international coalition to eject Saddam from Kuwait, these very exigencies prevented him from supporting the Shiite and Kurdish revolts.

By March 1991, Saddam had "lost control of fourteen of Iraq's eighteen provinces" to the insurrection.¹⁰⁹ Saddam was successfully able to depict the revolts as Iranian meddling in his country's internal affairs, which further prevented the US from offering support.¹¹⁰ They had just fought a war against Iraq for the purposes of re-establishing a regional balance of power; the administration feared that if the revolts succeeded, the balance would be shifted in Iran's favor. Furthermore, since the war was defended as necessary to maintain "the sanctity of national borders," the Bush administration did not want to be perceived as violating the "principle over which the coalition had just fought a ferocious war."¹¹¹ Whether the administration liked it or not, observe Karsh and Freedman, "the Iraqi Government was still the legal authority in Iraq,"¹¹² and policymakers had to take this reality into account. A more cynical view of the administration's inaction is put forward by the Cockburn brothers: "No one wanted to encourage democracy in Iraq. It might prove catching. It had been a conservative war to keep the Middle East as it was, not to introduce change."¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ Cockburn and Cockburn, *Out of the Ashes*, *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Cockburn and Cockburn, *Out of the Ashes*, p. 20.

¹¹⁰ Cockburn and Cockburn, *Out of the Ashes*, p. 22, 25.

¹¹¹ Karsh and Freedman, *Gulf Conflict*, p. 422 - 3.

¹¹² Karsh and Freedman, *Gulf Conflict*, p. 423.

¹¹³ Cockburn and Cockburn, *Out of the Ashes*, p. 33.

Vice-President, and former Senator, Joe Biden expresses his opposition to Bush41's post-war Iraq policy in decidedly liberal interventionist terms:

First captivated by a bizarre concern to maintain Iraq's territorial integrity, the President failed to drive Saddam from power, instead ordering our forces to stand idle while Saddam - whom the President had equated to Hitler - regrouped his defeated army to massacre tens of thousands of Kurds and Shiites who had been inspired by our President's rhetoric to rise in rebellion.

The administration then failed further, and far more sweepingly by doing nothing in the many months thereafter to give even a preliminary meaning to the grand concept of a new order, which it had used so fervently as a rallying cry for war.¹¹⁴

Like his aforementioned colleagues in the Democratic Party, Biden is not opposed to a New World Order, but the manner in which the president attempted to bring it into fruition. In Biden's view, Bush should have used the post-war rebellions as an opportunity to establish a foothold for democracy in Iraq; a position shared with the neocons.

Biden hints at this convergence of neoconservative and liberal ideology when he says:

"The great choice facing us... is not between isolationism and internationalism. Our challenge is to determine the nature of American nationalism."¹¹⁵ "Our task today - the duty of western democracies, led by the United States," he continues, "is to see, and seize upon" the opportunity afforded by the Cold War's end, and ensuing international consensus against Iraq.¹¹⁶ Whereas Bush's vision of a New World Order merely entailed adherence to the tenets of existing state sovereignty, Biden, in true liberal fashion, sought the expansion of Wilsonian ideals: "That rationality might be imposed upon chaos and that principles of political democracy, national self-determination, economic cooperation, and collective security might prevail over repression and carnage in the affairs of mankind."¹¹⁷ Like many of the neocons, Biden sought to use the

¹¹⁴ Senator Biden (DE), "The Threshold of the New World Order: The Wilsonian Vision and American Foreign Policy in the 1990's and Beyond," 138:95 (June 29, 1992) S9098, p. 2.

¹¹⁵ Biden, "Wilsonian Vision," p. 6.

¹¹⁶ Biden, "Wilsonian Vision," p. 13.

¹¹⁷ Biden, "Wilsonian Vision," p. 10.

opportunity afforded by Bush's New World Order to spread democratic institutions in the Third World. The senator chastised President Bush for failing "to exercise even the power of persuasion to induce" the restored Kuwaiti monarchy "to distribute their wealth more wisely or to introduce the most democratic reforms."¹¹⁸ Biden saw the spread of democracy as essential for preventing the reemergence of another Saddam-like challenge to global order, but he differed from the neocons in his conviction that international institutions provide the most effective means.

Ironically, Dick Cheney provided an apt articulation of the Bush Sr. administration's opposition to regime change, an argument he would dismiss in the run-up to Bush Jr.'s Iraq invasion.

If we'd gone to Baghdad and got rid of Saddam Hussein - assuming we could have found him - we'd have had to put a lot of forces in and run him to ground some place. He would not have been easy to capture. Then you've got to put a new government in his place and then you're faced with the question of what kind of government are you going to establish in Iraq? Is it going to be a Kurdish government or a Shia government or a Sunni government? How many forces are you going to have to leave there to keep it propped up, how many casualties are you going to take through the course of this operation?¹¹⁹

This acceptance of Iraq's internal realities by a prominent neoconservative indicates that Cheney was constrained both by the requirements of *realpolitik* and the post-Vietnam fear of a quagmire. Cheney, along with his colleagues in the Bush Sr. administration, did not believe Saddam could withstand the impact of the 1990-1 War and ensuing sanctions. At the same time, they did not want to push too hard for his ouster and risk the emergence of a Shiite democracy that would almost certainly strengthen ties with neighboring Shiite-majority Iran, altering the regional balance of power.

¹¹⁸ Senator Biden (DE), "American Agenda for the New World Order: A. Cementing the Democratic Foundation; B. Forging a New Strategy of Containment," 138:96 (June 30, 1992), p. 6.

¹¹⁹ Quoted in Freedman and Karsh, *Gulf Conflict*, p. 413.

According to Andrew and Patrick Cockburn, Saddam believed erroneously that he was able to "return to something like the status quo of August 1, 1990, the day before the invasion of Kuwait." The New World Order prohibited his doing so: "The United States and its allies, principally Great Britain, were determined at the very least that Saddam... should never again be in a position to threaten their interests in the Middle East."¹²⁰ The target was not just Saddam, but any potential threat to the US-dominated global order. Neoconservatives and liberals generally agreed with the president that Saddam posed a dire threat to global stability, but differed in their various approaches to deterring him. Bush Sr. merely sought to drive Saddam from Kuwait, whereas neocons and liberals sought to eliminate what they saw as the root of the problem. They too had contending strategies: whereas liberals, like DeLauro, Simon, and Biden sought a more active role for the UN, neocons thought they should exceed the mandate provided by Resolution 678 and unilaterally destroy Saddam's regime.

Ultimately, the debates between liberals and realists on the Gulf War were more politically opportunistic than strategic. Out of the necessities of pragmatism, Bush Sr.'s approach to confronting Saddam had a multilateralist orientation: he needed international legitimacy if he was to ultimately defeat the dreaded Vietnam Syndrome. Biden *et al*, aside from vague rhetorical gestures to the contrary, did not significantly differentiate their approaches from the president's. As Democrats in the year prior to an election campaign against a Republican incumbent, they had to offer some criticism of the president, however vague, due to party loyalty. Neocons who were not part of the Bush administration, unlike Cheney, used the opportunity provided by these partisan squabbles to articulate a grander contending vision of the America's role in a New World Order. They wanted to see Saddam overthrown, and if the UN would not help them they would act alone. Before this opportunity would arise with Clinton's signing of the 1998 Iraq

¹²⁰Cockburn and Cockburn, *Out of the Ashes*, p. 29.

Liberation Act, the necons inserted themselves into debates on the crises in the Balkans, influencing the policies of an ostensibly liberal president; we turn to these debates in the next chapter.

IV. Humanitarian Imperialism in Kosovo

Just as it is near impossible to discuss the Persian Gulf War without some reference to the Iran-Iraq War, it is equally difficult to discuss the Kosovo War without the wider context of the preceding conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Unlike the Gulf War, when nearly the entire world united against Saddam's aggression, we see a dual narrative develop with regard to the Balkans, complicating its discussion. For the Clinton administration, Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic represented a threat to global order equal to Saddam; for the Russians and some in the West, Milosevic merely resisted attempts by the West to tear his country apart. We see a resurgence in Cold War tensions, which lead to paralysis at the UN. There was a global consensus that something ought to be done to alleviate the civil war's brutality, but there was vociferous debate over who was the primary guilty party.¹²¹ This desire to pin blame on one side or the other in a civil war prolonged the crisis, contributing to further loss of life in Bosnia. Although peace was achieved at Dayton by the end of 1995, it would not last, as ancient enmities reemerged three years later in Kosovo.

As Yugoslavia disintegrated, writes Clinton's envoy to the Balkans Richard Holbrooke, "the United Nations Security Council voted to impose an arms embargo on all of Yugoslavia" in 1991.¹²² This policy was supported by the Bush Sr. administration, who backed all of the relevant UN resolution but did not want to intervene militarily out of fear of a quagmire. "In practice," he continues, "this seemingly neutral position was a gift to the Serbs, since almost all the armaments and weapons factories of Yugoslavia were located in Serbia." Interestingly, the ostensibly liberal Holbrooke approvingly cites prominent neocon Paul Wolfowitz, who said the

¹²¹ Similar to the present Syrian Civil War, with Bashar al-Assad occupying the role of Milosevic.

¹²² Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War* (Toronto: Random House of Canada Ltd., 1999), location 796 of 8572.

blockade was "totally and disastrously one-sided in effect."¹²³ This does not necessarily make the statement incorrect, but provides us with an instance of the convergence of neoconservatism and liberal interventionism in practice. To better understand Holbrooke's interventionism, we must look towards his criticism of the prominent ancient enmities thesis.

Many non-interventionists expressed their opposition in terms of the impossibility of its success. As James Baker's replacement at the State Department, Lawrence Eagleburger, wrote in the dying days of the first Bush administration: "This tragedy is not something that can be settled from outside... Until the Bosnians, Serbs, and Croats decide to stop killing each other, there is nothing the outside world can do about it."¹²⁴ Holbrooke does not deny Eagleburger's insinuation that the conflict in the Balkans is deep-seated, but strongly dissents from his suggestion that all sides are equally at fault and nothing can be done to mitigate this disaster.¹²⁵ "Yugoslavia's tragedy was not foreordained," writes Holbrooke. "It was the product of bad, even criminal, political leaders who encouraged ethnic confrontation for personal, political, and financial gain."¹²⁶ Though leaders encouraged ethnic hostilities, I believe they were able to do so because of the deep-seated animosities that laid dormant, waiting to be awoken by opportunistic militarists. As we saw above Holbrooke's solution laid in lifting the arms embargo on Bosnia and allowing Muslims to defend themselves from both Croatian and Serbian advances.

By the middle of 1992, as political scientist John Western observes, "Serb forces had besieged Sarajevo, Bosnia's capital city, isolating nearly 300, 000 civilians." Public opinion began to shift in favor of intervention: "Media reports, editorials, and commentaries argued that the United States should use its military force, now freed from the Cold War priorities, in an

¹²³ Holbrooke, *To End a War*, loc. 806.

¹²⁴ Quoted in Holbrooke, *To End a War*, loc. 643.

¹²⁵ Holbrooke, *To End a War*, loc. 643.

¹²⁶ Holbrooke, *To End a War*, loc. 663.

effort to solve these humanitarian crises." The realists who dominated the Bush Sr. administration only believed in intervention in cases where there was a direct connection to US interests, so they resisted calls for intervention in Bosnia;¹²⁷ as we saw in Chapter 1, they sent a token contingent to Somalia as compensation. As the siege of Sarajevo intensified, the public image of the conflict began to shift "from suggesting that the conflict was... the result of spontaneous neighbor-on-neighbor violence - to new evidence of small bands of radical Serb nationalists and paramilitaries committing atrocities" in a calculated fashion.¹²⁸ Clinton captured this opportunity as a presidential candidate to present "a new round of public criticisms and urged the administration to consider the use of punitive air strikes against the Serbs to protect the [UN] relief effort."¹²⁹

When Clinton was inaugurated in January 1993, he sought to promote a foreign policy of "assertive multilateralism," engaging in foreign ventures under UN auspices. This brief experiment failed in October when US forces were driven from Somalia.¹³⁰ The appetite for intervention that had been festering in the US since the Serbian siege of Sarajevo was brought to a halt. Though candidate Clinton promised to intervene militarily in the Balkans if elected, the time was not yet ripe. "One of the direct effects of the Somalia disaster was America's failure to support the UN peacekeeping force in Rwanda,"¹³¹ which contributed to a scale of killing even greater than in Bosnia. At the same as Clinton's Republican opponents won control of Congress in 1994, many of whom advocated a tougher, more unilateral approach to foreign policy, "the Clinton economic boom was beginning to be felt. Associated with this boom," writes John Dumbrell in his cleverly titled *Clinton's Foreign Policy: Between the Bushes*, "was a newly

¹²⁷ Western, *Selling Intervention and War*, p. 136.

¹²⁸ Western, *Selling Intervention and War*, p. 156.

¹²⁹ Western, *Selling Intervention and War*, p. 158.

¹³⁰ Chang, "Clinton's Foreign Policy," p. 78.

¹³¹ Chang, "Clinton's Foreign Policy," p. 79.

vigorous American internationalism."¹³² Domestic circumstances converged in favor of a more aggressive interventionism that sought to use US military prowess to shape the world in its image. These domestic factors coincided with a joint Croatian-Muslim offensive against Bosnian Serb targets, which provided the Clinton administration with an opportunity to show off its international vigor.

As Laura Silber and Allan Little observe in their authoritative *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, Croatian President Tudjman successfully backed Milosevic into a corner. "The Croatian President was smart enough to put aside his distaste for his Muslim counterpart, Izetbegovic, and launched a co-ordinated offensive which had the green light from Washington. More territory changed hands in the summer of 1995 than at any time since the beginning of the war. The United States emerged center-stage."¹³³ This change in Croatian policy towards Bosnia's Muslims began the prior year, when Tudjman attempted to conquer the Croatian Serb enclave of Krajina. In exchange for abandoning their war against Bosnian Muslims, which the Americans threatened would lead to "international isolation and economic sanctions," the US offered to look the other way as the Croats took Krajina. As a result, "Zagreb and Washington signed a pact on military co-operation," which "led to a complete shift in the balance of power in Bosnia, favoring the Croats and Muslims against the Serbs."¹³⁴ Now the US could conduct negotiations from a position of power, but it took the horrendous massacre in Srebrenica and ensuing NATO bombing campaign to compel Milosevic's abandonment of his Bosnian Serb counterparts.

Until now, we have only dealt with the mainstream Western view of the conflict in the Balkans: Milosevic, and to an even great extent Bosnian Serb leaders Karadzic and Mladic, were

¹³² John Dumbrell, *Clinton's Foreign Policy: Between the Bushes, 1992 - 2000* (New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 29.

¹³³ Laura Silber, and Allan Little, "Part Five: The Endgame," in *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation* (London, UK: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1997), p. 345.

¹³⁴ Silber and Little, "The Endgame," p. 361.

murderous war criminals who ought to be stopped. By this view, the exigencies of *realpolitik* compelled the Clinton administration to back the Croatian offensive, as they were the only regional power capable of defeating the Serbs. That the Croats "had practiced ethnic cleansing on a scale comparable to the Bosnian Serbs"¹³⁵ was deemed an unfortunate byproduct of Serb aggression. In an observation that provides a convenient bridge between the mainstream Western and alternative views of the conflict, Silber and Little write:

While paying lip service to a multiethnic Bosnia, the West was unprepared to back such an endeavor, believing in essence that ethnic separation will now lead to peace. If so, it will be a peace that rewarded the use of force; a peace, indeed, that had been achieved by forcible creation of ethnically pure territories, by means of ethnic cleansing.¹³⁶

"The war had been fought in pursuit of ethnic separation; the war would end only when that was achieved," they continue. "To that extent, the Dayton talks represented the pursuit of peace through ethnic cleansing."¹³⁷ Depending on one's degree of cynicism, they can argue that this is precisely what the West wanted.

Journalist Diana Johnstone is much more suspicious of Western motives than other, more mainstream commentators in the West. This dispute regarding what exactly happened in the Balkans comes to increased prominence with the resurgence of Serb nationalism in Kosovo and Clinton's decision to bypass the UN and preemptively bomb Serbia in 1999. For Johnstone, the US true goal in the Balkans was not to achieve peace amongst the various ethnic groups, but to dismember the final remnant of Communism in Europe. "In a way, Yugoslavia became an enemy *both* as a discarded asset *and* a potential alternative," she writes. "When the Soviet Bloc collapsed, non-aligned Yugoslavia lost its value to the West as a strategic asset. As a nominally socialist country with considerable Third World relationships," Yugoslavia/Serbia served "as a

¹³⁵ Mandelbaum, "Foreign Policy as Social Work," p. 24.

¹³⁶ Silber and Little, "The Endgame," p. 379.

¹³⁷ Silber and Little, "The Endgame," p. 384.

potential alternative model."¹³⁸ They were more a threat to the Washington Consensus than any abstract notion of human rights. Johnstone succinctly articulates her position against Western intervention in the former Yugoslavia: "At best, the Great Powers intruded with all the helpfulness of bulls in a china shop. At worst, they deliberately stirred up fear and hatred in order to serve their own interests."¹³⁹ In this sense, "Albanian separatists were able to capture the ear of Empire because of their extraordinary eagerness to link their cause to the advance of NATO,"¹⁴⁰ not due to a unique legacy of Serb brutality.

The primary problem with Johnstone's account is that too often it reads as a pro-Serb polemic. Though harshly critical of the West for fomenting ethnic hostilities in the former Yugoslavia, Johnstone falls into the same trap with her reflexive endorsement of the Serb narrative. One can oppose the 1999 NATO bombardment of Serbia as an act of naked imperialism without turning the mainstream narrative on its head. Peoples' historian Howard Zinn expresses such an understanding of events. Although the Dayton Accords successfully ended the violence in Bosnia-Herzegovina, it allowed the Serbs and Croats to reap the fruits of their ethnic cleansing campaigns. For Zinn, the US should have used this opportunity to pre-empt a crisis in Kosovo through negotiation, whose Albanian majority had demanded independence from Yugoslavia since the end of the Cold War. Instead, Clinton waited until tensions flared and 2,000 Kosovar Albanians were murdered to seize this opportunity to demonstrate American power.¹⁴¹ Unlike Johnstone, Zinn does not deny the noxiousness of Serb nationalism, but as a committed pacifist does not see how military intervention can solve such a deep-seated conflict.

¹³⁸ Diana Johnstone, *Fool's Crusade: Yugoslavia, NATO and Western Delusions* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2002), p. 11 - 12.

¹³⁹ Johnstone, *Fool's Crusade*, p. 14.

¹⁴⁰ Johnstone, *Fool's Crusade*, p. 230.

¹⁴¹ Howard Zinn, "The Clinton Presidency," in *A People's History of the United States* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2003), p. 660.

Whether one believes the crisis in the Balkans emanated from clear-cut Serb aggression, as the mainstream narrative reads; outright US imperialism, as Johnstone contends; or a combination of both in the style of Zinn; it was clear by the end of 1998 that the infamous "Balkan Ghosts"¹⁴² had returned to haunt the world. Although the Russians had abandoned Milosevic by the time of the Dayton Accords, allowing NATO to bomb Serb targets, then-UN Secretary General Kofi Annan observes that when the crisis in Kosovo erupted, Russia "still saw Serbia as a key ally and did not want to see a repeat of the punishment Milosevic received at the end of the Bosnian war."¹⁴³ This split in global, and to a lesser degree Western, opinion made military action in the Balkans under UN auspices impossible. Those liberal supporters of intervention, like Annan and Holbrooke, had to think outside of established multilateral forums to accomplish their goal of stopping, and hopefully ousting, Milosevic. In this regard, their views overlapped with those of the neoconservatives, who saw in Kosovo an opportunity to express American values through force.

It is important to note, as BBC Defense correspondent Jonathan Marcus does, that in many ways the Kosovo War ushered in "a new approach to world affairs: a right of humanitarian intervention within a country's sovereign borders to redress wrongs," with or without the state in question's consent or UN Security Council's permission.¹⁴⁴ Annan tacitly approved NATO action, as he believed Milosevic was using the concept of state sovereignty to shield himself from justice.¹⁴⁵ The air campaign in Kosovo, Operation Allied Force, was "the most manifest illustration away from a realist foreign policy towards universal moral action," writes Dr. Aidan

¹⁴² The name of an influential text by Robert Kaplan, an analysis of which was not included due to space constraints.

¹⁴³ Kofi Annan, with Nader Mousavizadeh, *Interventions: A Life in War and Peace* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2012), p. 88.

¹⁴⁴ Jonathan Marcus, "Kosovo and After: American Primary in the Twenty-First Century," *The Washington Quarterly* 23.1 (2000): p. 80.

¹⁴⁵ Annan, *Interventions*, p. 89.

Hehir,¹⁴⁶ as its goals were articulated in almost purely Wilsonian terms. A key challenge for the Clinton administration, however, "was to constrain the conflict within bounds that were acceptable to U.S. public opinion."¹⁴⁷ Like President Bush before him, Clinton had to balance the public's fear of a quagmire with his globalist ambitions. Whereas Bush Sr. thought it appropriate to work through the UN in Iraq, creating a broad-based multilateral coalition to symbolically bring an end to the Cold War, circumstances compelled Clinton to work outside its confines in Kosovo.

In *Virtual War*, Michael Ignatieff observes that the Kosovo War was unique due to its "ambiguous legal state."¹⁴⁸ For Ignatieff, Operation Allied Force successfully demonstrated the limits of state sovereignty in the New World Order. "In retrospect," he writes, the Gulf War "was the last of the old wars: it mobilized a huge land force and the vast logistical support to sustain it, and it was fought for a classic end, to reverse a straightforward case of territorial aggression." Kosovo, by contrast, "was a war fought for a new end: the defense of a party to a civil war within a state. It was fought without ground troops, in the hope and expectation that there would be no casualties at all."¹⁴⁹ After the brutal Serb attack on Racak in January 1999, Clinton threatened to use air power to force Milosevic to the negotiating table at Rambouillet.¹⁵⁰ This decision to use the air force as an expression of US military might, as opposed to sending in ground troops, is reflective of the widespread fear amongst Americans that, with no clear end goal in sight, the Europeans were dragging the US into a Vietnam-style quagmire.

¹⁴⁶ Aidan Hehir, "The Normative Thesis and Operation Allied Force," in *Humanitarian Intervention After Kosovo: Iraq, Darfur and the Record of Global Civil Society* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), p. 47.

¹⁴⁷ Marcus, "Kosovo and After," p. 93.

¹⁴⁸ Michael Ignatieff, *Virtual War: Kosovo and Beyond* (Toronto: Viking, 2000), p. 4.

¹⁴⁹ Ignatieff, *Virtual War*, p. 5.

¹⁵⁰ Dumbrell, *Between the Bushes*, p. 93.

Due to Clinton's pragmatism, this fear did not materialize, but the Congressional debates at the time show a genuine consternation amongst some US policymakers. Political scientist Roland Paris writes that one of the most common metaphors to occur during debates on Kosovo was that of Vietnam, which took on a double meaning based on how the speaker viewed the catastrophe in Vietnam. "Some participants in the Kosovo debate used the Vietnam metaphor to imply that the United States had not devoted sufficient political and military resources to defeat Serbian forces," suggesting that the Vietnam War was a failure of will. "Others invoked Vietnam to suggest that the Kosovo campaign was being waged too vigorously," implying that the crisis was beyond America's reach. Both forms of the Vietnam metaphor were used to express opposition to the Kosovo War, but are reflective of two very different views of Vietnam's lessons.¹⁵¹ It is the difference between the US having bungled the crisis in Kosovo by not acting forcefully when it would have mattered more, and using excessive force to support one side in a civil war. Both versions accept that US foreign policy is fundamentally benign, and thus see Vietnam less as a historic injustice than a strategic error.

Republican Senator Thomas Gorton explicitly criticizes the Clinton administration's venture in Kosovo as a potential Vietnam repeat. He refers to "this Senate Gulf of Tonkin Resolution" as the "first step into getting into a situation, the consequences of which we simply cannot envisage."¹⁵² Gorton's colleague, Don Nickles, sees the administration as blackmailing a sovereign state into accepting its demands: "we are going to be attacking a foreign country because they refused to allow an international force to be stationed in their country,"¹⁵³ as stipulated by the Rambouillet plan. By doing so, Clinton has volunteered the US as "the air force for the KLA, the Kosovo Liberation Army." At the same time, the administration called for the

¹⁵¹ Roland Paris, "Kosovo and the Metaphor War," *Political Science Quarterly* 117.3 (2002), p. 426.

¹⁵² Senators Biden (DE), Nickles (OK), et al, "The Kosovo Quagmire," 145:46 (March 23, 1999) S3094, p. 12.

¹⁵³ Senators Biden, Nickles, et al, "The Kosovo Quagmire," p. 6.

KLA's disarmament at Rambouillet, indicating a strategy of confusion.¹⁵⁴ Although Nickles does not explicitly refer to the lessons of Vietnam, part of the blame for the US failure in Vietnam lies in the Johnson administration's lack of a coherent goal or exit plan. The same criticism arose prematurely towards Clinton's approach to the Kosovo crisis but did not materialize, as Clinton successfully forced Milosevic to the negotiation table on terms dictated by the US.

It is noteworthy that Gorton and Nickles do not express their opposition to the Kosovo War in terms of potential death and destruction, but its impact on the national interest, how it affects us. Although Clinton justified the war in humanitarian terms, he had to contend with the reality of a somewhat war-weary public. Due to the perceived success of the Dayton Accords, the public was not as inflicted with the Vietnam Syndrome as in the wake of the Somalia debacle, but there was the question of using force again to achieve diplomatic ends. Senator Biden frames his support for the administration's attack on Serbia/Kosovo in terms of vital national interests to safeguard his colleagues in the White House from the criticism of imperial overstretch. Whereas the failures of Vietnam and Somalia occurred in the Third World, Biden observes that there is much more at stake in Europe. "This is the place where we fought two world wars, where we got involved in the circumstances based upon the legitimate concern of the spread of communism... if there is chaos in Europe, we have a problem."¹⁵⁵ While maintaining the humanitarian justification, Biden insists that this proclaimed humanitarianism is consistent with the necessities of great power politics.

On March 24, the day Operation Allied Force began, Clinton expressed his goals in similar terms: "We act to prevent a wider war; to defuse a powder keg at the heart of Europe that has exploded twice before in this century with catastrophic results." The intervention was

¹⁵⁴ Senators Biden, Nickles, et al, "The Kosovo Quagmire," p. 7.

¹⁵⁵ Senators Biden, Nickles, et al, "The Kosovo Quagmire," p. 12.

simultaneously "a moral imperative" and "important to America's national interest."¹⁵⁶ In order to carry out this moral imperative, Clinton had to bypass the UN Security Council, as a Russian veto was almost guaranteed. "Moscow accused Washington, not unreasonably, of pursuing a policy of Serbian regime change rather than simple protection of Kosovo."¹⁵⁷ This willingness to go to war without the Security Council's approval indicates Clinton's unilateralist streak, but there is no such thing as pure unilateralism: an imperial power must share some of its burden. The decision to work alongside NATO provided some multilateralist constraint, as "all nineteen NATO defense ministers needed to be consulted" before engaging in intervention.¹⁵⁸ Yet Clinton's decision to act without UN approval set a dangerous precedent that would be exploited by the Bush43 administration in the aftermath of 9/11 to finally eliminate Saddam Hussein.

A major drawback with the intervention in Kosovo, as was also the case with Bosnia, was that while the US supported intervention in the name of stopping the Serbs' ethnic cleansing of Albanians, or Muslims, they did nothing to prevent acts of retribution against the Serbs. "Along with the Serbs," writes *The Economist's* Tim Judah, "the Gypsies would also become an Albanian target for vengeance since they were widely believed to have collaborated with the Serbs."¹⁵⁹ Judah rightfully sees moral equivalence in the suffering of Albanians and Serbs: "just as most Serbs had so recently been indifferent to the fate of the Albanians, or thought they deserved to be expelled" for collaborating with NATO, "now most Kosovars were indifferent to the fate of the Serbs."¹⁶⁰ Whereas in Bosnia, Izetbegovic's call for a multi-ethnic state was stymied by the Croats' ethnic cleansing of Serbs', the KLA lacked the will to maintain Kosovo's

¹⁵⁶ Quoted in Dumbrell, *Between the Bushes*, p. 94.

¹⁵⁷ Dumbrell, *Between the Bushes*, p. 95.

¹⁵⁸ Tim Judah, *Kosovo: War and Revenge* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 271.

¹⁵⁹ Judah, *Kosovo*, p. 288.

¹⁶⁰ Judah, *Kosovo*, p. 294.

diversity. In both cases, America's support of unsavory forces, whether Croatian or Albanian, puts into question the stated US commitment to universal human rights.

Though Clinton began his presidency as a staunch multilateralist, throughout the course of his administration began to view international institutions with a growing skepticism.¹⁶¹ If the US is indeed on an exceptionally moral mission, as every president since Wilson has agreed, then it cannot let the UN constrain its ability to act as a moral agent. In this sense, Bush Sr. was fortunate to have an international mandate for his operation in the Gulf, but was not morally obliged to gather an international coalition; it merely helped him achieve his end of a US-dominated New World Order. Circumstances were not as kind to Clinton, who acted without UN approval to achieve the same end, albeit with a humanitarian twist. In both cases, the president was compelled to compromise ideology to more effectively promote their perceived American interests. Ignatieff correctly observes that "the language of human rights provides a powerful new rhetoric of abstract justification." It is our duty as global citizens to maintain "control of this powerful new rhetoric, making sure that the cause of human rights does not lure citizens" into needless imperial ventures.¹⁶² As we shall see in my conclusion, this is precisely what occurred leading into the 2003 invasion of Iraq, which led to a resurgence of Vietnam syndrome, the likes of which were not seen since the initial post-Vietnam era.

¹⁶¹ Chang, "Clinton's Foreign Policy," p. 70.

¹⁶² Ignatieff, *Virtual War*, p. 6.

V. Conclusion: The March to 2003

For Srinivas Aravamudan, the US was faced with a stark choice at the end of the century. "As a declining hegemon," he writes, "the United States can either participate in the newer structures of global multipolarity in the twenty-first century or react through a desire for dominance without hegemony, lashing out militarily against real and imaginary foes."¹⁶³ 9/11 provided the catalyst for the pursuit of the latter course amongst US foreign policy elites. The 1990s is widely seen as an era of peace and prosperity, which is partially due to the occasional resurgence of the post-Vietnam fear of a quagmire that constrained the actions of Bush Sr. and Clinton. This fear of foreign adventurism came crashing down along with the Twin Towers, which provided the Bush43 administration with the open-ended justification it sought to pursue regime change in Iraq. "Where the first George Bush and Bill Clinton had fumbled in the dark, searching for a doctrine to guide the exercise of U.S. power after the collapse of the Soviet Union," writes political scientist Corey Robin, "the mission of the United States was now clear: to defend civilization against barbarism, freedom against terror."¹⁶⁴

This imperial mentality, that the US can only do good for the world, is reflected in the First Gulf War, Kosovo War, 2003 invasion of Iraq, and virtually every other US foreign venture. With its imperial arrogance, the 2003 Iraq War was much more like the Vietnam War than any other, but Clinton's unilateral action in Kosovo opened the floodgates for further demonstrations of US military hubris. "In retrospect, if Clinton's military strategy was postmodern in that he bombed but did not occupy, his decision to go to war without explicit UN

¹⁶³ Srinivas Aravamudan, "Rogue States and Emergent Disciplines," in *States of Emergency: The Object of American Studies*, ed. Russ Castronovo, and Sudan Gillman (University of North Carolina Press, 2009), p. 24.

¹⁶⁴ Corey Robin, "Remembrance of Empires Past," in *The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism from Edmund Burke to Sarah Palin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 168.

approval was no less illegal than Bush[43]'s."¹⁶⁵ His decision not to send in ground troops, as many interventionists demanded, spared him the quagmire that many policymakers feared he was entering. Whereas the neocons' advice was largely ignored by the Bush Sr. and Clinton administrations, the neoconservative Project for a New American Century played a key role in formulating the foreign policy of the Bush34 administration.¹⁶⁶ The tragedy of 9/11 ultimately served to reunify and rejuvenate the neocons. Now they were able to shape the world in their image without the hindrances of prudential constraint evident in the two prior administrations. If anything defeated Vietnam syndrome, it was not the end of the Cold War or Persian Gulf War, but 9/11, which ushered in an era of paranoia and foreign policy adventurism not seen since the height of the Cold War.

Clinton and Bush Jr.'s different approaches to defending US militarism abroad is indicative of their contending views of America's role in the world; in other words, they are different expressions of American nationalism. Whereas Clinton's approach sought the legitimacy of American hegemony, whether through the UN or NATO, Bush Jr. made "a public cult of the unrestrained exercise of American will." The position that every president seeks "the domination of the world by capitalism and the primacy of the United States within the global capitalist system," while true, ignores their different "means to achieve these ends; the difference between intelligent and stupid means; and the extent to which the choice of means is influenced by irrational sentiments which are irrelevant and even contrary to the goals pursued."¹⁶⁷ While Clinton and Bush Sr. were imperialists *par excellence*, Bush Jr. let his administration's ultra-nationalism get in the way of promoting a realistic vision of US hegemony. "American nationalism has already played a key role in preventing America from taking advantage of the

¹⁶⁵ Aravamudan, "Rogue States," p. 25.

¹⁶⁶ Heilbrunn, *They Knew They Were Right*, p. 201.

¹⁶⁷ Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, p. 11.

uniquely beneficent world-historical moment falling the fall of communism,"¹⁶⁸ and the intense wave of nationalism following the first foreign attack on US soil since Pearl Harbor only made matters worse.

The neoconservatives were not alone in embracing this ultra-nationalist hysteria as a means of promoting unrestrained American militarism. Liberal hawks, like Senators Clinton and Biden and Professor Ignatieff, also saw the opportunity to continue the humanitarian imperialism that they endorsed in the Balkans. Ignatieff observes: "Despite all the denials by Western governments that humanitarian intervention is becoming a new imperialism, Kosovo does set a precedent" that state sovereignty is not absolute and can be taken away at will by Western governments.¹⁶⁹ Although the American Empire has been in decline since the fall of Saigon, it "has been roused by barbarian attack to go on the offensive" and invade Iraq, "not simply to enforce law, not merely to control the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, but to wipe out the leader of Arab rejectionism" and continue "to reorder the political map of the Middle East on American terms."¹⁷⁰ Ignatieff embraced this prospect of a new war in Iraq, and in doing so reveals the convergence of liberal and neoconservative visions of a fundamentally benign US imperialism, bound together by a sense of American exceptionalism that went unchecked by pragmatic considerations in the aftermath of 9/11.

Throughout the 1990s the neocons "continued to argue that they were in favor of multilateralism if it involved countries that were genuine democracies, that is NATO;" hence their support for the Kosovo War. "But when it became clear that NATO would not support the Iraq intervention, neoconservatives lost any interest in working through it," observes Fukuyama in his *mea culpa*. America's European allies who did not support military intervention in Iraq, but

¹⁶⁸ Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, p. 14.

¹⁶⁹ Ignatieff, *Empire Lite*, p. 70.

¹⁷⁰ Ignatieff, *Empire Lite*, p. 5 - 6.

had supported it in Kosovo, became "increasingly demonized as anti-American, anti-Semitic, or somehow imperfectly democratic."¹⁷¹ In these terms, 'democracy' those 'those who support George Bush's muscular foreign policy,' which has little, if not nothing, to do with a state's democratic credentials. This is a far cry from the elder Bush's attempt to assemble a multinational coalition to protect Kuwait's state sovereignty, or NATO's attempt to pre-empt the widespread ethnic cleansing of Kosovar Albanians. In both cases, the administrations' actions were constrained by the ubiquitous fear of a quagmire, which explains why Bush Sr. did not push towards Baghdad and Clinton refused to send ground troops to Kosovo. This restraint was not the case with Bush Jr., as the passions heated by 9/11 did away with prudential considerations across the mainstream American political spectrum.

In his bitter but brilliant essay, "The Silence of the Lambs: On the Strange Death of Liberal America," Tony Judt laments the loss of liberals' "long-standing commitment to international law, negotiation, and the importance of moral example." This "evisceration of liberal politics" has its origins in President Clinton's Third Way liberalism, but was exasperated by 9/11 and the ensuing War on Terror.¹⁷² "To be sure," he continues, "Bush's liberal supporters have been disappointed by his efforts,"¹⁷³ but insist that his heart was in the right place. "In today's America, neoconservatives generate brutish policies for which liberals provide the ethical fig leaf. There really is no other difference between them."¹⁷⁴ Whereas in the 1990s there were discernible ideological differences reflected in the contending strategies for solidifying US global dominance, after 9/11 liberals have allowed themselves to be manipulated by the neocons, who share their lofty Wilsonian ends but scoff at their notions of soft power and diplomacy. As

¹⁷¹ Fukuyama, "The Neoconservative Legacy," p. 64.

¹⁷² Tony Judt, "The Silence of the Lambs: On the Strange Death of Liberal America," in *Reappraisals: Reflections on the Forgotten Twentieth Century* (London, UK: Penguin Book, 2009), p. 385.

¹⁷³ Judt, "Silence of the Lambs," p. 387.

¹⁷⁴ Judt, "Silence of the Lambs," p. 389.

a result, liberals were forced to abandon their principles while the neocons were free to shape reality according to their selective humanitarianism, with disastrous consequences for America and the world.

Where past objections to military endeavors in mainstream American discourse have focused on the specter of another Vietnam, we now have what is aptly called "the Iraq Syndrome." In their zealous effort to defeat the Vietnam Syndrome, the neocons "have quite possibly not only destroyed conservatism as a political force for years to come but also created an Iraq syndrome that tarnishes the idea of intervention for several decades." Heilbrunn is sympathetic to the ends of US foreign adventurism, but fears that the neocons "have debauched the idea of intervention and created the environment for a new round of self-abnegation."¹⁷⁵ For him, the lessons learnt from Vietnam and Iraq concern the necessity of understanding the limits of US power and constraining the more ambitious visions of America's role in the world. This was the lesson American policymakers learnt from Vietnam, but the Iraq War exposed how little the contours of US foreign policy changed. In order to go beyond fighting the Iraq Syndrome, and engaging in military provocations that could very well spell its resurgence, we must fundamentally re-evaluate the role the US occupies in this unipolar world.

Recurring across the mainstream spectrum of American foreign policy elites, whether realist, liberal, or neoconservative in worldview, is the assumption that US hegemony is fundamentally beneficial for the world. By this view, the US makes mistakes but does not engage in outright aggression like its enemies. The necessity of pragmatism in American politics forces the various ideologues to compromise in terms of strategy, but they are not compelled to compromise their American exceptionalist disposition. Instead of debating how the US can most effectively dominate the world, we ought to use the disastrous experiences in Vietnam and Iraq

¹⁷⁵ Heilbrunn, *They Knew They Were Right*, p. 274.

as an opportunity to showcase the perils of one nation's global dominance. The question then is not how the US can most effectively display its military might with the minimum consequences, but how we can create a multipolar world, where power is at least devolved to multiple centers. The imperial overstretch characterized by the US experiences in Vietnam and Iraq are not coincidental, but the natural consequences of an Empire out of control, not an "Empire Lite," as Ignatieff calls it. The solution may not be to bring Empire under control, but to eliminate the scourge of imperialism before it returns to haunt us. Given the inherent pragmatism of US politics, this is no doubt a daunting task, as most policymakers cling to this notion of American exceptionalism that got us involved in Vietnam to begin with; they would be hard-pressed to support any motion that constrains US militarism. This goal of true multipolarity may appear lofty and untenable in our current global political environment, but it is necessary if we are to survive well into the twenty-first century.

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