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**United States Foreign Policy towards the Gulf Cooperation
Council Countries (GCC) 2001-2008: Searching for Stable
Security Framework**

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By

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Abstract

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This study analyzes US foreign policy towards the GCC states during the two terms of the G. W. Bush administration in the period 2001-2008. It concentrates on describing and analyzing US interactions with Arabia; a region of central geo-political importance as it possesses bountiful proven oil reserves, upon which American and western prosperity depends. Furthermore, it provides a detailed account of US interests and strategic objectives in the Gulf region.

Of particular interest to this study is exploring what associations can be made between the US's strategic relations with its GCC allies and the objectives of US grand strategy. This synthesis of analysis is appropriate to demarcate a proper framework that will enhance understanding of US-Gulf policy. US relations with the six GCC member states (Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman and Bahrain) have been entrenched over a course of more than six decades and have evolved on solid foundations based on oil and security.

Simultaneously, the US's relations with its Arab Gulf partners have experienced turning points and tumultuous periods in the aftermath of the trauma of September 11, due to which US relations with Saudi Arabia, in particular, were put under a tremendous strain. As a result, many scholars saw a remarkable change in US-Gulf policy. Conversely, this study argues that the Bush administration policy towards America's longtime allies in the Gulf region has been one of continuity as opposed to change and has not departed dramatically from the conventional policy. Interestingly, US economic and geo-political interests in the Gulf region have created a deep relationship between the US and its Gulf 'friends'. Therefore, Gulf security has preoccupied American strategic thinking and preserving Arabia remains the core objective of US security engagement with the region. This security relationship is at the core of long term US-GCC relations and was never going to be affected by post-9/11 neoconservative ideologies.

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Dedication

To My Parents and My Wife

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This study attempts to scrutinize and examine diverse aspects of US foreign policy towards the Gulf Cooperation Council states (GCC) during the two terms of the G. W. Bush administration in the period 2001-2008. This is an important topic of study because much academic study has focused on US foreign policy generally, but not necessarily upon US foreign policy towards the GCC states. This is an important area which requires analysis. This case study therefore attempts to fill a gap in the historical record regarding US foreign policy, while also providing an in-depth study that deals with important debates about US foreign policy. The political climate after the 9/11 attacks placed pressure on the US but also provided it with opportunities. Since then, there has been a debate about how radical US foreign policy was, and connected to this, how influential neoconservatives were in US foreign policy. It has been evident from this debate that, in general, the GCC states (including Saudi Arabia) are a very useful case study to focus on to examine this issue. Therefore, this thesis also has a second focus on the development of US foreign policy. Those who saw a radical trend within US foreign policy argued that its promotion of democracy was genuine, and reflected an important trend in neoconservative thinking (Mann, 2004; Cooper, 2011). But there was also an approach to this analysis, which looked at the continuity of US foreign policy. This approach might be allied with neorealism. In short, that the US had major and unchanging strategic interests in the GCC region. These included maintaining US hegemony, maintaining stable oil supplies for the western economies and combatting terrorism. None of these were new, despite the focus on stopping terrorism after the 9/11 atrocity. This is a particularly appropriate area, facilitating this thesis in arguing for the *continuity* of US foreign policy in an area where it might have been expected to promote change (the GCC states are not democracies in the Western sense).

Having made this argument, because this thesis is a detailed case study it accepts that even with continuity, understanding the G. W. Bush administration's foreign policy entails understanding the conflicting ideas, views and agendas of the main advisers of

the administration and how they influenced the making of foreign policy as well as its subsequent implementation. There were internal struggles within the Bush administration with regard to how America should engage with the world and how the foreign policy should be implemented. So, internationalist realists advocated a traditionalist/pragmatic approach to foreign policy, whereas hawkish unilateralists and neoconservatives wanted a transformational foreign policy. Hawkish realists' concern is with protecting US interests and maintaining its global leadership through using military power unilaterally. Neoconservatives like Paul Wolfowitz and Douglas Feith supported such notions and yet believed in promoting democracy with the purpose of enhancing American interests.

For example, as we shall see in the next chapter, the influence of the Department of Defense, represented by Donald Rumsfeld, and the Office of the Vice President, represented by Dick Cheney, would become more and more pronounced than the influence of the State Department, represented by Colin Powell, especially after the September 11 terrorist's attacks. Cheney and Rumsfeld had a unilateralist approach in foreign policy and held beliefs about American exceptionalism and unilateralism that resemble neoconservative notions. However, Powell advocated a multilateral approach to achieving US national interests. More broadly, the different intellectual schools of thought would combine together to constitute what was called the "Vulcans"- a nickname used for the first time by Condoleezza Rice to describe the Bush administration's mixed group of realists and idealists who would interact closely to achieve the US foreign policy objectives (Shareef, 2010: 65; see also Nye, 2003). This coalition of realists and idealists, and their common views and beliefs, were reflected in the Bush National Security Strategy of September 2002. The strategy's striking feature is embodied in its marriage of democratic idealism with the exercise of pre-emptive power (see Leffler, 2003). As stated, despite this, the realists won out in the end. There was no democracy promotion campaign in the Middle East; and little pressure on Saudi Arabia over the actions of bin Laden and Al Qaeda. Instead, the US and Saudis furthered their co-operation on counter terrorism and moved diplomatically closer soon after the rupture of 9/11.

1. Problem Definition and Argument:

As argued above, this thesis seeks to answer two problems. The first is to provide detailed coverage of US foreign policy towards the GCC states after 9/11, and second to see how the debates about US foreign policy apply to the GCC states. Contrary to some arguments that conceived that G. W. Bush foreign policy drastically shifted from its historically conventional policy, the premise of this thesis is that US-Gulf policy is basically one of continuity rather than change as US national strategic interests and security concerns in the Gulf region have been and remain defined by traditional spectrum of interests and objectives that have not changed dramatically in the post 9/11 era. Having argued this, the change that can be noticed was pertaining to the means that pursued to achieve the US strategic objectives. As Daalder and Lindsay rightly argue, "Bush had set in motion a revolution in American foreign policy. It was not a revolution in America's goals abroad, but rather in how to achieve them." (Daalder, 2003: 2).

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq would be prominent examples of this. As a result, the neoconservatives who benefited from the alliance with the unilateralists in both the Defense Department and the Office of Vice President had gained influence over the President's choices with regard to the war on terror and the Iraq invasion in 2003. The two episodes indicated a change in the American grand strategy; nonetheless, this change has not constituted a departure from traditional US foreign policy, but rather it manifests a change in the tools and tactics used to uphold US national interests. In other words, the Bush administration's foreign policy did not show a fundamental break with the past; rather, it remained constrained by long-standing grand strategy parameters taking into account the attempts to adjust the tactics and tools implemented to protect US interests and provide gulf security. The Bush foreign policy team viewed, during the Bush first term, toppling the Iraqi regime as an important tactic and a decisive tool for spreading liberalism and combating terrorism. However, arguably, the President has pursued a traditional and realist approach with America's longtime allies in the gulf region; this manifested clearly in the second term of the Bush administration.

Furthermore, and importantly for this thesis, this did not apply to the GCC states where continuity *even in tools was evident*. It can be argued that G. W. Bush has continued his predecessor's maintenance of strong relations with the Arab Gulf States; a policy which

has endured for more than six decades. Evidently, the US pledge and commitment to provide gulf security with the ultimate goal of protecting its interests in the region comprehensively explains the realist tendencies that the Bush administration has pursued via US-Gulf relations, which have not changed or hardly been affected by significant events like 9/11. This security relationship is at the core of long term US-GCC relations and was never going to be affected by post-9/11 neoconservative ideologies.

This study provides an exposition of the US foreign policy trajectory towards the GCC countries in the time frame 2001-2008. Arabia was seen as a holistic and unified area with which US relations were conducted. Therefore, for reasons of limited space, exploring US bilateral relations with the *individual* Arab Gulf States is beyond the study scope. The study scope provides analysis to the American foreign policy at two interconnected levels. At the national level, it will be shown that the relationship between the United States and the six GCC states (Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman and Bahrain) extends for more than six decades and has been evolving on firm foundations of mutual dependency based on oil and security.[1] US relations with the Gulf partners passed through fluctuating and tumultuous periods, especially in the aftermath of September 11. This did cause a temporary strain in US relations with its Gulf allies; Saudi Arabia in particular. However this cannot be conceived of a remarkable change in US-Gulf policy or even any major frictions and enmity in the US-Saudi relationship, regardless of some differences in views and Saudi dismay over US stance towards Iraq war, the Arab-Israeli conflict and the war on terrorism.

In essence, US national strategic interests in the Gulf region are wide ranging and have long been, and remain, grounded in protecting the free flow of oil from the Gulf region into the international markets through maintaining open sea lanes. Other factors include counterterrorism; non-proliferation of WMDs; US arms sales to the GCC states and preserving the stability and security of the Arab Gulf ruling elites against any probable

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[1] The devastating terrorist attacks in 2001 spawned problems for the US-Saudi relationship. Nevertheless, the bonds of over half a century were solidifying the mutual relations in spite of some disparities in outlook. 'Over the long term, the destiny of the relationship appears to be guided, as ever, by the relentless logic of energy and security in the hydrocarbon age' says an essay by Josh Pollack, Saudi Arabia and the United States, 1931-2002, The Middle East Review of International Affairs (MERIA) Journal, Volume 6, No. 3 – September 2002.

domestic crises or regional encroachment. This mutual interdependence, generated and intensified by US voluminous economic and geo-political interests, gives the United States a stake in Gulf stability. Therefore, American strategic thinking remains preoccupied by Gulf security, and there seem to be strong reasons for the United States to remain engaged in securing a region in possession of bountiful and proven oil reserves upon which American and western security and prosperity depends.

For the Gulf States, Iraq and Iran have been classified as 'rogue states', sponsoring terrorism, and viewed as possible sources of strategic threats to U.S. interests and the domestic GCC states' security alike. Indeed, Saudi Arabia and the other smaller GCC states had legitimate fears and concerns that Shiite ascendancy in Iraq after the removal of Saddam Hussein would exacerbate the Iranian ascendancy in the Gulf. This would embolden Iran to ramp up intrusion into the domestic affairs of the Gulf States, particularly Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, which are considered more vulnerable to potential internal threats from pro-Iranian Shiite movements.[2] Therefore, there seems to be a rational impetus and strategic logic to maintaining the American military presence in the region to reassure the Arab Gulf States that any attempt to intimidate or destabilize them would be repelled decisively by US force.[3]

At the global level, the US grand strategy seeks to maintain the U.S's leadership position and supremacy within the international order and this goal has been articulated explicitly in numerous governmental documents. These include, amongst others: declassified documents, National Security Strategies, Quadrennial Defense reports etc. and can be observed in the ideological thoughts of the various Presidential administrations. This goal has been compounded further by the US policy of maintaining regional control over the Gulf region to maintain the political and economic framework of the region. However, the continuity of this strategic and

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[2] Noticeably, Iranian interference in the domestic affairs of other countries has manifested recently in its response to the 'Arab Spring', when Iranian political elites described the 'uprisings as a "second awakening" of the Islamic movement initiated during Iran's 1979 revolution'. (see Jeffrey, 2013)

[3] One of the most notable and historical speeches that demonstrates the strategic importance of securing the GCC states, was President Jimmy Carter's announcement in 1980 that: 'an attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force'. (Carter, 1980)

long-held objective of preserving American global leadership could be derived from the establishment of 'The Project for the New American Century' (PNAC) in 1997. The main objective of this organization was to promote American global leadership. This organization, which includes William Kristol as chairman, and Robert Kagan as director along with others, issued in September 2000 a special report titled: 'Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources For a New Century'. This report encompasses recommendations to increase military and defense expenditure and to support American unilateralism. Moreover, the report sets out from a conviction that America has to maintain and even extend its global hegemony by preserving the 'preeminence of U.S. military forces'. It states bluntly: 'At present the United States faces no global rival. America's grand strategy should aim to preserve and extend this advantageous position as far into the future as possible' (Donnelly et al, 2000: ii; iv).

Similarly, the above goals echo what was articulated in the Defense Planning Guidance - a declassified document drafted in 1992 under the supervision of Paul Wolfowitz, then-Undersecretary of Defense for Policy and his then-assistant Scooter Libby which came to be known as the *Wolfowitz Doctrine*, which presented a project for preserving and enhancing American preeminence as the world's unique superpower. The document states clearly that a key strategic pillar of US defense policy would be 'to preclude any hostile power from dominating a region critical to our interests, and also thereby to strengthen the barriers against the reemergence of a global threat to the interests of the U.S. and our allies'. The document identified the Gulf region as a critical area and the American role in the Gulf security structure as one of particular importance. It notes:

> We must not squander the position of security we achieved at great sacrifice through the Cold War, nor eliminate our ability to shape the future security environment in ways favorable to us and those who share our values. (Defense planning Guidance, 1992)

Arguably, US-Gulf policy under the Bush administration, as will be shown, has not changed significantly, but rather it has maintained the familiar pattern of focusing on the above notions through intensifying mutual economic exchange and military and defense cooperation with the GCC countries. It can be argued that US–Gulf policy has

been consistent throughout, and despite some discernable changes that occurred in strategies and tactics in response to 9/11, the American grand objectives and policies have remained markedly unchanged. However, as mentioned, US relations with its Gulf 'friends' are not confined or limited to economical shared interests; rather, they have been deepened to become robust and enduring strategic relations. Specifically, the US military presence in the Gulf region is compelling and has proved instrumental in guaranteeing the GCC states' sovereignty and independence. Undeniably, the continued American military presence in the Gulf was deemed necessary to preserve the security of pro-U.S. Arab governments in the Gulf, for example after the Iranian Revolution in 1979 and with regard to Iraq after 1990.

Certainly, it was clear that the 9/11 crisis added a new dimension to the American engagement in the Gulf. Ostensibly, the existence of American forces was and is needed to counter security threats from non-state actors, exemplified in Al-Qaeda and other radical extremist movements. The extremist perils are not confined to threatening to destabilize the internal security of the Arab Gulf States - they could also encroach on American interests in the region through attacking U.S. forces distributed throughout the Arabian Peninsula. Therefore, the exigencies of fighting and eliminating untoward extremists and militant groups that masterminded operations in the Gulf especially after 2003 have compounded further the importance of maintaining robust American military forces in Arabia.

Given the US key strategic objectives associated with the diverse and diffuse array of threats that beset the Gulf strategic environment, this study concludes and reconfirms that US geo-political and economic interests have been tightly connected with the GCC ruling elites and have survived even under critical conditions and aftershocks like 9/11, which demonstrates the extent to which the realist approach prevailed in US relations with the GCC states. Overall, this indicates and reconfirms that the US has become an indispensable guarantor of Gulf security.

2. Aims and Objectives

The objective of this research is to provide a detailed study of US foreign policy towards the Gulf states after 9/11 and also to challenge the assertion or assumption that George W. Bush's policy towards the Gulf region in general and GCC countries in particular was a stark aberration. This study takes the year 2001 as the starting point as it is the year George W. Bush took power (20 January 2001) and the two terms of his administration were of particular importance and interest since they dealt with critical events which have had wide ranging repercussions on US policy trajectory. Besides, this year witnessed the 9/11 terrorist attacks, which have had prominent effects on US–Gulf policymaking.

To embark on this research, a descriptive and analytical narrative of the evolution of US policy direction towards GCC States is presented, starting with the beginning of the George W. Bush Presidency and ending with his last term of office. In approaching the study's objectives, the author focuses primarily on two distinct interacting phases in US-Gulf policy. The first phase explains the US policy pre-9/11 attacks. This period of study investigates and analyzes the evolution of the US's critical security role in the Gulf region. Historically, the US depended on proxy powers to provide Gulf security after the British withdrawal. The US then became more and more involved in the region through a series of events: the Iranian revolution in 1979, the Iraq-Iran war (1980-88), the Cold War, and the Iraq invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. As such, US policy has relied on building up and supporting proxy forces or surrogates in the region (Iran and Saudi Arabia) in what was called the 'twin pillar' policy of the 1970s; and shifted to supporting Iraq in the 1980s to achieve three-fold objectives; keeping the Gulf region as a bulwark against communist expansion; protecting US geo-strategic interests; and maintaining the status quo and balance of power in the region in favor of America and its Arab Gulf allies.

Whilst the US military presence over that period took the form of naval forces in what was called the 'over the horizon' presence, it is true nonetheless that the Iranian revolution in 1979 and the Iraq occupation of Kuwait in 1990 disrupted the prevailing balance of power and thereby led to massive direct US military involvement in the Gulf region, starting with the first Gulf War in 1991 and culminating in the invasion of Iraq

in 2003. As a result, the GCC states, except for Saudi Arabia, have consensually signed defense agreements with the US that granted the American forces the rights to access military facilities in Arabia. Indeed, the Gulf security imperatives during that historical period have altered the US military posture from being an off-shore balancer to the military hegemon of the region. Consecutive US administrations after the British withdrawal therefore assumed a prominent security role to confront any disruption to the GCC states' stability and the American objective was explicit; Gulf oil wealth remained vitally important to the United States' economy and was even perceived as an American national interest.[4] As Alfred Prados observes, 'Oil and national security concerns have combined to produce a close and cooperative relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia for much of the past century' (Prados, 2003: 1). Further still, Gulf oil constitutes an integral component of Western economic security.

The second phase of this study concerns the consequences of the 9/11 attacks. Following these, the Bush administration faced, from its inception, serious challenges with regard to US relations with the GCC states, and in particular with Saudi Arabia, as the majority of the attackers was of Saudi origin. After the Al-Qaeda terrorist attacks, counterterrorism was elevated to become the overarching theme of US security engagement with the Gulf region. September 11 caused frosty relations with America's GCC partners. Saudi Arabia, in particular, was accused of supporting the terrorists (albeit indirectly) through financial transactions, wealthy citizen sympathizers, and inadequate governmental political measures to address the roots and causes of terrorism and violent extremism.

In addition, another source of seeming change was the ideological position of the neoconservatives in the Bush administration. They were outspoken advocates for maintaining American global supremacy through spreading democracy and free markets in the Middle East and the Gulf region, which, they argued, would achieve the ultimate goal of enhanced American national security. Therefore, some attributed the American inclination to play the role of hegemon in the Gulf region to the interventionists' neoconservative views. This seemed evident from the 2003 invasion of Iraq. However, although they played a role in engineering some policies, it was evident

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[4] 'The Bush administration's ties to the oil and gas industry are beyond extensive; they are pervasive' says an essay by Michael Renner. (see Renner, 2003)

that their role in directing the US-Gulf policy was overstated. In essence, in addition to the neoconservatives, there were other groups that contributed to the policy-making process and there were other, more consistent, factors that should be taken into account when analyzing the American approaches toward Arabia.

Additionally, it can be noticed that neocon officials have not held prominent positions in the Bush administration's top management. George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, Vice President, Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense, Colin Powell, Secretary of State, and Condoleezza Rice, National Security Advisor, were not neocons. Specifically, while Powell could be described as a 'liberal internationalist'; the others are best considered 'traditional national-interest conservatives' who opposed the Clinton administration's approach of nation-building and championing democracy. Therefore, it can be argued that the American invasion of Iraq and promotion of liberal reform, albeit advocated widely by neocons in the Bush administration, was not pursued because of the influential effects of this faction, but because of 'the impact of the four airplanes hijacked on September 11, 2001' (Boot, 2009).

Certainly, Bush's ambitious project of promoting democracy in the Gulf region and overthrowing the Saddam regime in Iraq could be understood as an attempt to change the regional context which produces security threats and dilemmas. Interestingly, in practice 9/11 provided an opportunity to pursue the long-desired policy of changing the Iraqi regime[5]. Moreover, the Bush administration sought, albeit cautiously, to promote political reform in the Gulf region; this was conceived by Bush and his policy officials as a proper strategy to reinforce the US leadership position vis-à-vis regional powers and expand the sphere of pro-American democracies.

However, this policy would encounter considerable challenges and obstacles that prevented the profound political reform from materializing in the GCC states. The author will discuss the caveats encapsulated in urging any deep political openings in the Gulf monarchies and will show that the outcome of this desired political transformation could yield undesired and unexpected consequences. As Byman notes, 'One oft-heard

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[5] Writing in 2010, Mohammed Shareef provides a detailed picture of US Iraq policy pre-and post-invasion. Moreover, the US policy towards Iraq in the aftermath of the attacks on 9/11 was the prime focus of his study (see Shareef, 2010). For more details on US policy towards Iraq and Iran prior to and post 9/11, (see Wright, 2005).

criticism of pushing for democracy [in the gulf region] is that it will empower followers of Bin Laden, not followers of Thomas Jefferson' (Byman, 2005). This was particularly the case after the invasion of Iraq turned into a disaster. The Bush administration's insistence on the viability of democracy as a proper method of governance and as an appropriate tool for fighting extremism reflected a remarkable ignorance of any political system's particularities. Similarly, 'The hope of advancing a regional democratic agenda has been deeply undercut by the Iraq war', writes Thomas Carothers, who adds: 'The Middle East not only remains deeply stuck in nondemocratic politics, it is wracked by violent conflicts in Iraq' (Carothers, 2007a: 14).

Overall, the author will show throughout this thesis that US realist interests in the Gulf region have consistently and predominantly trumped the pursuit of political change and democracy. In other words, Washington had built, over decades, robust relations with the Gulf monarchies and deep political reform might bring about governments unfriendly to Washington. Therefore, the Bush administration opted to continue, as predecessor administrations did, its pragmatic and realist approach through supporting America's Gulf allies despite the extremist voices that saw Saudi Arabia in particular as a US enemy in the wake of 9/11.

When it is looked at carefully, the Bush administration's policy demonstrates continuity rather than change with regard to grand objectives. Bush's inclinations to maintain US primacy in the international order through enhancing its liberal values are not new and were not introduced by neocons (accepting their success in the invasion of Iraq, which resulted in the toppling of the Saddam Hussein regime in 2003).[6] As Ikenberry notes, the US has been 'a liberal order builder' and it was the US core objective to maintain the 'American-led liberal hegemonic order' (Ikenberry 2011a; see also Ikenberry 2006) based on wide belief in the 'uniqueness' and 'exceptionalism' of the American political system and its viability to be emulated in the Middle East and the Gulf region. This reveals elements of strategic continuity in American foreign policy tradition. As Ikenberry notes, the US has been playing the role of "liberal leviathan" based on both American power dominance and liberal principles of governance (Ikenberry, 2011b: 7;

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[6] Removing Saddam Hussein's regime has been planned since the 1990s; a long time before G. W. Bush assumed power, in 2001. (see Paul Wolfowitz and Zalmay Khalilzad, Overthrow Him. *The Weekly Standard*, Vol. 3, No. 12, December 1997).

see also Brooks, 2002).

But this liberal order has always had primacy over ideological programs for deep political change in individual states. Noticeably, the Gulf War in 1991 is an evident example of the U.S. tendency for military dominance and the desire to act as a preeminent power, building a liberal (but not necessarily democratic) order in the Middle East. The American victory in the Gulf War in 1991 was described as a defining event in U.S. global leadership (Defense Planning Guidance, 1992). In a sense, the conflict enabled the U.S. to project its power and create a perennial military presence through establishing an extensive network of military bases in the GCC states' territories, and this constituted the lynchpin for protecting its interests in the region. A close look at G. W. Bush's attitudes toward the Gulf region reveals a continuation of the traditional desire for hegemony that was established a long time prior to 9/11. American unipolar primacy and predominance has been the defining feature of the global balance of power since the end of the Cold War (Hook, 2014; see also Hook, 2012). Simultaneously, preserving American hegemonic influence in the Gulf region has been an extension of that central goal in US foreign policy. George W. Bush, claimed, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, that U.S. military forces "will be strong enough to dissuade potential adversaries from pursuing a military build-up in hopes of surpassing, or equaling, the power of the United States." (The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, 2002: 30). This objective continues in foreign policy, even under the current Obama administration, which maintains that America "will continue to underwrite global security." Yet, it emphasizes the need to renew American leadership in the long term so as to secure US interests: "Our national security strategy is, therefore, focused on renewing American leadership so that we can more effectively advance our interests in the 21st century" (National Security Strategy, 2010: 1).

The continuity of the Bush administration policy could be derived from a pragmatic propensity, even in the freedom agenda that has become the heart of the foreign policy agenda, as a response to the events of September 11th. Despite the rhetoric on political reform, he pursued a realist approach that delineated the US-Gulf policy. This is not a new direction, as this approach was commensurate with the objective of maintaining and sustaining US strategic interests in the region. Remarkably, America's ideals and ideology have always encapsulated and mirrored its interests and this has been

demonstrated by the National Security Strategy of 2002 which states: "The U.S. national security strategy will be based on a distinctly American internationalism that reflects the union of our values and our national interests" (The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, 2002: 1). As a consequence, the Bush administration cemented American relations with the Arab Gulf partners - manifested by close cooperation on varied issues of mutual concern, including the efforts to counter terrorism and violent extremism.[7] Moreover, the American realist policy is exemplified by bolstering the GCC states' defensive capabilities and reinforcing military cooperation, which reached its highest levels when the US launched its operations against Afghanistan and Iraq in 2001 and 2003, respectively.

As has already been highlighted, the American foreign policy continuity after 9/11 can be derived from continuous acknowledgement of the necessity to maintain Gulf security. Viewed dispassionately, US policymakers have made security their major priority as the region faced, and continues to face, a complex myriad of security challenges on the regional level that could jeopardize the stability of pro-American Gulf regimes. Rather than a single threat, the GCC states face a host of diffuse and evolving problems that beset the Gulf's regional security, and therefore US relations with Arab Gulf States are still filtered through the prism of these complex concerns: 1) the Iranian threat, especially after the apparent rise in its influence over Iraq post-2003; 2) pervasive uncertainty over Iraq's political and security developments; 3) nuclear proliferation;[8] 4) counterterrorism, and 5) the protection of oil resources.

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[7] Writing in 2002, Fraser Cameron provides an evaluation of US foreign policy during the George W. Bush administration in his book titled: US Foreign Policy after the Cold War: Global Hegemon or Reluctant Sheriff? The book examines the change in US foreign and security policy in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Furthermore, it analyzes the direction of US foreign policy and focuses on the US's main foreign policy priorities including terrorism, rogue states, and democracy promotion in the Middle East. (see Cameron, 2002)

[8] For more details on this issue, see Kori N. Schake and Judith S. Yaphe, "The Strategic Implications of a Nuclear- Armed Iran," McNair Paper No. 64 (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 2001). see also (Stivang, 2006; Tertrais, 2007; Jones, 2005)

3. The Uniqueness of the Thesis and its Main Contributions

This study has two claims to originality. First, this case study attempts to fill a gap in the historical record regarding US foreign policy. Few studies have attempted to analyze U.S. policy towards the GCC Countries. The available literature indicates that the research topic has been detailed in a few academic works, but has not been the subject of scholarly analysis. For example, Lawrence Freedman, in *A Choice of Enemies. America Confronts the Middle East* (New York: Public Affairs 2008), presents a final chapter on George W Bush's foreign policy, wherein Saudi Arabia is only briefly mentioned. Even a critical work by Kylie Baxter and Shahram Akbarzadeh, *US Foreign Policy in the Middle East: The Roots of Anti-Americanism* (London: Routledge 2008) covers what are now the usual points with regard to Saudi Arabia – its support for the *mujahedeen*, its role as an oil producer and the role of Saudi Arabia in the first Gulf War. Meanwhile, Colin Dueck's *Hard Line: The Republican Party and U.S. Foreign Policy Since World War II* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2010) only mentions Saudi Arabia seven times but has a substantial focus on foreign policy after 2001. Even a book such as *Energy and US Foreign Policy: The Quest for Resource Security After the Cold War* by Ahmed Mahdi (London: I B Taurus 2010), based on a PhD thesis, has a relatively limited approach to US foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia in terms of detail and analysis (see chapter four). Peter Gries, in *The Politics of American Foreign Policy: How Ideology Divides Liberals and Conservatives over Foreign Affairs* (Stanford: Stanford Security 2014), makes no reference to Saudi Arabia at all. Gordon Adams and Shoon Murray (editors), in *Mission Creep: The Militarization of US Foreign Policy* (Washington: Georgetown 2014), similarly has only one reference to Saudi Arabia.[9] So, the importance of this current research derives from the existing literature's limited addressing of US foreign policy towards the Middle East, of which the Gulf is a component. (see, for example, Wright, 2005).

The same is true for academic articles and chapters. Two searches conducted on google scholar in August 2015 covered 'US foreign policy' and 'Saudi Arabia' and 'US foreign policy' and the 'GCC'/'Gulf States.' The search covered the period 2008-2015 to capture the period when it was more likely that studies covering the Bush period had

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[9] Also, the GCC states are sometimes mentioned within the context of discussing the US policy towards certain Gulf States such as Iraq (see Shareef, 2010).

been conducted. Only a small number of articles were found that were relevant (on a generous judgement).[10] And these, it can be seen, concern the foreign policy of GCC states; not US foreign policy towards these states. In fact, the majority of articles covered areas such as Turkey-GCC relations, Turkey-Saudi Arabia relations, China-GCC relations. (The study excluded reports from the Congressional Report Service (4) and Chatham House (1) and these were general country or region studies of the GGC states themselves). Therefore, it might be argued that US foreign policy towards the GCC is assumed as a 'given'. But this thesis argues that it needs to be studied in depth rather than accepted as unchanging.

Second, using such detail, this thesis aims to provide a critical examination of US foreign policy based on this case study. Current scholarship has conceived George W. Bush's policy as unconventional in its approach and even as representing a dramatic shift in US foreign policy. For example Tamara Wittes argues that the Bush administration's strategy of emphasizing the promotion of its freedom agenda represented a major shift in the traditional U.S. foreign policy (see Wittes, 2006: IX). Also, Markakis observes that the Bush administration's policy of promoting democracy in the Middle East has 'initiated a significant departure in the traditional direction of US policy' (Markakis, 2012: 2).Similarly, Daniel Brumberg states that: 'No American administration has talked more about democracy in the Middle East than the Bush administration.' (Brumberg, 2003: 3) Thomas Carothers argues also that certainly the Bush administration has engaged with the issue of democracy in the Middle East more than any previous U.S. administration. (Carothers, 2007a: 5) Fukuyama saw the events of September 11, 2001, as having radically jarred G. W. Bush's thinking on the nature of international threats and that it triggered, according to him, a 'fundamental reevaluation of his administration's national security policy that elevated democracy promotion as a central objective of his foreign policy agenda'. (Fukuyama and McFaul, 2007: 23) besides, John Gaddis argues that the Bush war on terrorism represented a fundamental shift from US's traditional policy, and thus he describes Bush's new strategy as 'The most sweeping redesign of U.S. grand strategy since the presidency of Franklin D.

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[10] M. Yamani 'The two faces of Saudi Arabia' *Survival* Vol 50 No 1 (2008): 143-156; P. Aarts and J. van Duijne 'Saudi Arabia after US-Iranian détente: left in the lurch?' Middle East Policy Vol XVI No 3 2009 pp64-73; M. Kamrava 'Mediation and Qatari foreign policy' *Middle East Journal* Vol 65 No 4 2011 539-556; Steven Wright 'Foreign Policy in the GCC States' in M. Kamrava (editor) *International Politics of the Persian Gulf* (Syracuse University Press 2011) only has pages 91-93 dealing with GCC-US relations and the chapter overall is historic.

Roosevelt'. (Gaddis, 2005). In a related vein, Michael Hirsh believes that "The Bush doctrine has been used to justify a new assertiveness abroad unprecedented since the early days of the Cold War—amounting nearly to the declaration of American hegemony—and it has redefined U.S. relationships around the world". (Hirsh, 2002: 19)

The authors cited above argue that Bush's democracy promotion agenda was somehow unique to this Presidency and more ambitious than any democracy agenda before; some even argued that 9/11 caused a fundamental shift in Bush's foreign policy towards the region. However, this consensus needs to be critiqued and examined thoroughly and therefore this study will capitalize on consistencies and departures within G. W. Bush's foreign policy as an analytical framework from which we can measure the continuity of US–Gulf policy directions. This thesis argues that although September 11th and its aftermath had bearing on US relations with its gulf partners, the developments do not denote any substantive change in American policy towards America's GCC allies.

There was an assumption among some scholars that the US policy makers were conducting a fundamental reassessment of US-Gulf relations after the events of September 11th, and assumed that G. W. Bush's strategic thinking had changed and that relations would become frosty with America's GCC allies, who were accused of supporting terrorism. However, this study contests that it is erroneous to consider that there were serious disruptions of longstanding US relations with Saudi Arabia, that are defined by a complex set of long-term strategic objectives. Obviously, the American-Saudi relationship has brought tremendous privileges, for both the two partners and the western industrial world alike.

Furthermore, counter terrorism did not lead to massive substantial changes in US-GCC relations, and the strategic relations were, if anything, restored due to US geo-political interests in the region and the support that the Arab Gulf states provided with regard to the US security arrangements and counterterrorism strategy. Indeed, US-Saudi cooperation on counter terrorism was very close, and more generally US-GCC defense cooperation and renewed strategic defense alliances saw GCC states hosting American land, air, and naval forces, which played a critical role in supporting and facilitating the American security strategies in the Gulf region, including the war

on terrorism. In other words, despite the September 11th terrorist attacks, and the rise of the neocons plus a new ideological discourse in US foreign policy, in practice American economic, political and security interests in the Gulf region remained centered on long-term traditional concerns that contributed, as a determinant factor, to solidifying American relations with its gulf partners. This is especially the case with regard to US relations with Saudi Arabia;[11] a linchpin of American political and military strategy in the Gulf region.

To address this deficiency, this study sets out to make a contribution to understanding the nature of US-Gulf policy in a period that has been rich in critical events, in an attempt to fill the gap in US-Gulf studies.

4. Methodology and Study Approach

The objectives of the thesis will be delineated through a descriptive and analytical method. Due to the empirical nature of this research, it focuses on US longstanding interests in the Gulf region and the policies that were worked out and pursued to maintain and guarantee them. This provides a historical platform of evidence by which any change or continuity can be evidenced. However, the thesis also has to provide a theoretical framework as a model to understand US-Gulf interactions. Therefore, the thesis adopts an approach influenced by neo-realism to explain continuity in US foreign policy. Of central importance is neorealism. Neorealism argues that all states have core interests, that the international system is anarchic (no institution provides authority and regulation) and that states seek hegemony to secure their positions. These continuing assumptions are seen by this thesis as important as guides to US foreign policy over the long term. However although a systemic theory of international politics, would help interpret US goals over the long term it would be insufficient to provide deep understanding of the development and changes of the US foreign policy attitudes and

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[11] Indeed, the US-Saudi relationship is much more important than many tend to believe. Saudi Arabia is the world's largest producer of crude oil and takes a leading role in deciding oil production policy in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) (see US Energy Information Administration, 2014). Besides, 'Saudi Arabia was the second largest U.S. trading partner in the Middle East in 2002. For that year, Saudi exports to the United States were estimated at \$12.2 billion and imports from the United States at \$4.3 billion'. Additionally there is estimation that Saudi nationals have invested between \$500 and \$700 billion in the U.S. economy (see Prados, 2003).

would not introduce an overarching interpretation as to how and why the US policymakers have chosen certain policies at certain times. Therefore, neorealism is used as a guide rather than a central part of explanation. For example, unlike neorealism the study also attempts to integrate domestic politics with the US global grand strategy as this would generate greater understanding of the dynamics of US-Gulf policy. Indeed, US interchangeable and engrained interests with the GCC states rested, for more than six decades, on a mutual dependency on oil, arms and security, and therefore America has been consistently playing a decisive role in underwriting the Gulf regional security. This emphasizes broadly the realist approach that seems appropriate to understanding US-Gulf policy.

This framework set out above, is the framework in which the deep historical analysis of US foreign policy and the GCC as a case study operates. The analytical framework gives a detailed account of US-Gulf policy at two levels of interactions; National and Supranational, through two distinct time phases; prior to and post September 11th 2001. This serves as a benchmark to measure consistencies and shifts in US–Gulf policy.

Given the above outlined objectives, this thesis discusses a set of variables and factors that have played a prominent role in formulating US-Gulf policy. The dependent variable here is the foreign policy itself and the independent variables contain determinative factors that have produced different outcomes. Specifically, the author will use the narrative method to point out the articulated events that took place in the Gulf region to demonstrate continuity and/or change in the Bush administration's policies toward the Arab Gulf States.

Substantial use of the available primary and secondary material will be made and this study would benefit from four major categories of sources of primary material for thoroughly understanding the US-Gulf policy dynamics. The first category comprises Public Governmental and Official Documents, including National Security Strategies (NSS), U.S. State Department reports and Defense Department reports, amongst others. The second category is the body of public statements made by Presidents and senior administration officials in speeches, press conferences, and oral testimonies in congressional hearings. The third category of primary sources comprises Washington-based think tanks and research institute publications. A fourth category, of

secondary sources, comprises books, newspaper articles, journal articles, reports from published and unpublished research papers presented at conferences, and PhD theses that have been written in similar areas of interest.

5. Thesis Structure

This thesis consists of seven chapters. The first chapter (this one) outlines the research objectives, the motivations, the methodology and the study structure. The second chapter provides a theoretical framework and its major purpose is to look at how the senior advisers of the Bush administration influenced the policy making process and subsequent foreign policy outcomes. This section provides a detailed literature review providing a picture of various schools of thought and examines the apparently conflicting ideas, views and ideological positions of the Bush administration's foreign policy team. Moreover, it outlines how the defining events of 9/11 were employed by the Bush inner circle elites to advance their agenda, and how this eventually impacted US-Gulf policymaking and subsequent outcomes.

The third chapter provides analysis of the US interests and objectives in the Gulf from a historical point of view and illustrates the continuing strategic significance of the Gulf region in US policy calculations. It attempts to comprehensively account for the factors that contributed to shaping the US-Gulf policy over the long-term and subsequently examines the continuity of the US policies toward the Gulf region. It argues that the US's longstanding interests in the Gulf region fundamentally determined the policy direction towards Arabia. Energy is an example. Before World War II, the American and western consumption of Gulf oil was limited, but this situation changed as the American and European economies recovered after the war and became massive oil consumers. Changes in the Gulf regional security environment needed to be addressed following the British withdrawal from the gulf region in 1971. Moreover, the author will elaborate on the US's expansionary security strategy in the gulf region prior 9/11. Historically, the US was dependent on proxy powers such as Iran and Saudi Arabia to provide Gulf security after the British withdrawal. The US then became more and more involved in the region through a series of events culminating in a large military presence in the territory of the Arab Gulf States in the 1990s.

The fourth chapter comprehensively addresses the US strategy to achieve Gulf security in the aftermath of 9/11. The chapter presents a more detailed examination of theories of US security to provide a clear framework before examining issues in Gulf security in more detail. Realism, hegemony and cooperative security are discussed before the realist approach is, overall, reinforced as a more accurate way of understanding the US's role in establishing Gulf security. This section of the thesis outlines the US approaches to Gulf Regional Security and the role of direct military intervention as well as how the US security policy in the Gulf has affected the security dynamics in the region. Moreover, the chapter highlights the more pressing security challenges the region has faced, particularly instability in Iraq, the intentions of Iran with its nuclear and hegemonic aspirations and the WMD threat. This chapter elaborates on the Gulf States' military reliance on the US as 1] the primary defender since the British withdrawal from the region in early 1970s and 2] as a primary supplier of weapons and military technology. Additionally, the importance of the U.S. military presence in the Gulf in light of regional security challenges will be analyzed thoroughly. The chapter will show that the continued American military presence in the Gulf region appears to be the most feasible available option for securing the GCC countries.

The fifth chapter looks at the George W. Bush administration's Freedom agenda that came to the fore of US foreign policy priorities after 9/11. The Bush administration conceived of spreading American liberal democratic ideals as a pivotal tool to counter the roots of terrorism and extremism. Simultaneously, G. W. Bush believed that political reform in the GCC states would contribute to maintaining and sustaining the US's long-term interests in the Gulf region. Remarkably, the political reform, as will be shown, has experienced many hurdles, either with regard to the restrictions on US longstanding political, economic and security objectives or the GCC's domestic governance particularities that defied the desired political reform. Taken together, these setbacks led ultimately to a retreat from idealism to embrace realism, taking into account the US's pragmatic interests that have been steadfastly predominant in US relations with the GCC states.

The sixth chapter discusses Gulf-US relations under the rubric of the War on Terrorism. It elaborates on the catastrophic events of September 11th, which triggered grave concerns among Bush administration officials and contributed to the apparent

re-definition of the US strategy towards Gulf regional security. This chapter examines the U.S. counterterrorism strategy and the extent to which it contributed, positively or negatively, to maintaining the US's geostrategic interests in the Gulf region and enhancing Gulf regional security. However, the chapter shows that despite the events of 9/11, mutual longstanding relations between Washington and its gulf allies have been preserved and even upgraded (especially in the case of Saudi Arabia) as the gulf regimes played significant roles in maintaining the US interests in the Gulf. This section of the thesis will give special attention to the GCC; in particular, Saudi Arabia's, efforts in combating terrorism, and will elaborate on the active cooperation that GCC states provided to Washington in its campaign against terrorism.

The final chapter restates the main argument of the thesis. It argues that US-Gulf state relations are an important area of study in US foreign policy after 9/11. It also argues that US foreign policy in relation to the Gulf States has demonstrated remarkable continuity. It also points out the additional areas of research that could be undertaken in regard to US relations with the GCC countries.

Chapter 2

Developing the Theoretical Framework: The Bush Administration's Senior Advisers and the Power of Ideas

Introduction

The previous chapter has set out the scope of the thesis, including the argument and the methodology to be used. This chapter goes into more detail on the theoretical framework that would lay the foundations for a model that bridges domestic and international politics in an attempt to explain the driving factors that have determined the state officials' actions in foreign policy during the Bush administration. Moreover, this chapter seeks to provide a detailed, rigorous and deductive picture about different internal groups and schools of thought inside the Bush administration and how these influenced US foreign policy and the consequent US-Gulf policy. The approach attempts to combine a strategic approach to US foreign policy with an approach which takes note of domestic influences.

The debate set out in chapter one centered on how to approach US foreign policy and its implementation, regarding which there are a number of perspectives. One important one is the contrasting of continuity versus change. Linked to this, another is the strategic approach to US foreign policy (neorealism) versus the influence of other actors, particularly domestic ideological groups. Therefore, this thesis, aims to prove its argument of there being continuity within US foreign policy towards the Gulf States, and will examine, in detail, the personnel influencing US foreign policy after 9/11. The author examines the apparently-conflicting ideas and views of the main actors of the Bush administration and how they influenced the President's choices and decisions in foreign policy.

It seems that a realist approach would help in understanding the rationale behind the realist tendencies shown by the G. W. Bush administration with the GCC states, despite the changes that took place at the grand strategy level (the war on terrorism) and the tactics used to achieve the objectives of the US's new grand strategy which materialized

in the preemption doctrine and Iraq war. This level of analysis will also to show how US foreign policy, via a historical analysis, has remained consistent to the GCC states. Overall, this chapter would serve to set a comprehensive and coherent model that could help in understanding the ever-expanding US-Gulf relations.

As one school of thought inside the Bush administration held realist attitudes and since realist tendencies prevailed in US-Gulf policy during the Bush administration, it might, consequently, be useful to introduce a brief explanation of the key principles of realism. Simultaneously, the author will elaborate on neo-conservatism as a school of thought before discussing the role of the neoconservative group within the Bush administration in the policy-making process.

1. Core Principles of Realism

Realism emphasizes nation states as the primary actors in world politics, motivated by concerns for security and national interests, and therefore competition for power. (Beer, 2001: 2-3; Karpowicz, 2010) This approach concentrates on military force and the struggle for survival through the enhancement of power positions vis-à-vis rivals. Therefore, the great powers are involved in competition permanent over power and power distribution in the international system (Waltz, 1990: 26). Based on these principles, Waltz defines realism as a process of evaluating the policies that will serve the state's interests (Waltz, 1979: 117). It seems that the theory focuses deeply on a struggle over power and state interests, as states - as in human nature - have an insatiable appetite for power. Therefore, the theory assumes that international politics is understood through rational analysis of competing interests between states (Donnelley, 2000: 8). Moreover, from a realist point of view, the international system is anarchic and the main objective for states is the pursuit of national power to maintain security. This perception has been used by some scholars as a key analytical tool to understand both domestic and international politics. (Mastanduno et al, 1989: 459; see also Krasner, 1992)

Realistically, maintaining the global balance of power has been a central US foreign policy aim for many decades (see chapter three). The US's constant major goal in the

gulf region is embodied in the prevention of any rival state from securing considerable power up to the point of threatening US interests or targeting its allies (Miller, 2012: 15). This dimension applies particularly to the US military's presence in the Gulf region since 1990, which has aimed at maintaining the balance of power in the Gulf within the US sphere of influence, through deterring Iraq and Iran from gaining regional hegemony in an attempt to maintain security and stability in the region (Hajjar, 2002: 2). George W. Bush has clearly emphasized this target as he states: 'In Iraq, a dictator is building and hiding weapons that could enable him to dominate the Middle East and intimidate the civilized world -- and we will not allow it' (Bush, 2003a).

Realism could be used as a prelude to analyzing the continuity of US foreign policy in general and US-Gulf relations in particular. It has shown certain relevant points in terms of setting out the objectives that direct and control state behavior in international politics. So, the US's long-term policy of maintaining Gulf security through preventing either Iran or Iraq from dominating the Gulf region, both before and after the Cold War, could be classified within the realist characterization of state action to achieve narrow domestic national interests, represented explicitly in securing oil and acquiring more power and leverage in the competing interest equation. For example, the Gulf War in the year 1991 has led to constant US military presence in the Gulf region, motivated by the American insistence on preventing any military power from gaining regional hegemony and threatening the Gulf region that constitutes a huge and valuable strategic interest in US decision makers' perceptions.

Noticeably, America's preponderance of military capabilities is inextricably intertwined with geo-economic foundations. In other words, maintaining an influential, hegemonic role in the gulf through securing gulf oil producing countries contributes to shoring up and solidifying American leverage in this strategically important area, and with that, to enhancing American global preeminence and leadership. As such, there have been economic goals that parallel this military dominance, resulting in maintaining a stable American presence in the gulf region. Simultaneously, the Gulf Arab oil producers commit to pricing their oil exports in dollars and keeping the petrodollar recycling through buying substantial numbers of U.S. government securities and large amounts of U.S. military arms; these measures remain critical to consolidating the US leverage and perpetuating dollar hegemony in international

energy markets (Flynt 2014).

One of the theory's pillars is skepticism and pessimism about the role of moral and ethical norms in international relations since it views the morality, if it exists, as a tool that is used to justify state actions (Karpowicz, 2010). Although this notion could be understood within the context of linking US ideals with the protection of American national interests, as articulated in the national security strategies of the Bush administration (see National Security Strategy of 2002), and even under the Obama administration (see National Security Strategy of 2010).

It is arguable, however, that the US, over the last two decades, became concerned with promotion of democracy and democratic peace theory - values which have become essential elements in US foreign policy rhetoric and agendas. But having said this, this PhD thesis will argue that there is an overall consistency in US grand strategy. Even the post-Cold war era has encompassed much continuity of US policy and the prevalent view (based on the 'war on terror' since 2001) that perceives US foreign policy under the Bush administration as a departure from traditional policies is therefore misleading. Since the Cold War, the goal of building democratic peace has been the dominant component of the US's grand strategy. More importantly, this persistent objective has shaped the major directions of US foreign policy for the last two decades. Yet, there are other elements of US grand strategy other than championing liberalism, embodied in protecting US security, maintaining a balance of power between great powers and acting against rogue actors. All of these goals were rooted, for a long time, in US foreign policy, and have been consistent and supported by bipartisan actors for decades (Miller, 2012: 7). Therefore Kenneth Waltz, one of neorealism's prominent supporters, argues that realism is still a valid theory to describe international politics. World politics remains a self-help realm and thus realism, according to him, retains its explanatory power (Waltz, 2000: 5). Post-realist theory emphasizes the importance of world actors other than nation states, driven by motivations other than power to achieve their interests.

2. Neo-conservatism's Core Principles:

In this section the author will identify the neoconservative intellectual school of thought and will give a general overview of its main principles. Historically, the emergence of the neoconservatives in the foreign policy realm goes back to the 1970s, in the aftermath of the Vietnam War. In the wake of that war, three attitudes emerged regarding how America should engage with the world; the first was the attitude of the Democrats, who believed that America should limit its international engagement; the second was realist approach, which favored limited engagement in international affairs and supported the principle of détente and accommodation, represented by President Richard Nixon and Secretary of foreign affairs Henry Kissinger. The third attitude was that of the disaffected people from both Democrat and Republican parties, such as Paul Wolfowitz and Richard Perle, who would become prominent neoconservatives in the republican administrations (see Shareef, 2010; Fagernes, 2011). They strongly believe that American military power and capabilities should be employed to serve the US's ideals and moral principles. Simply put, this group of people wants to invoke America's ideals, which they tend to link to military power (Mann, 2004).

This intellectual school presented many concepts and set different goals in the foreign policy realm, such as coercive regime change, US hegemony, unilateralism and the universe of democracy and human rights issues. This school believes in using military force to achieve these objectives. (Fukuyama, 2006; Ikenberry, 2004) This group featured prominent figures like Elliott Abrams, Joshua Muravchik, Richard Perle, Paul Wolfowitz, David Brooks, and Tom Donnelly (Vaïsse, 2010: 7). Another intellectual faction of neoconservatives had emerged in the mid-1990s through different think tanks such as the Weekly Standard, the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), and the Project for the New American Century (PNAC). The new faction featured figures like Irving Kristol, Bill Kristol, Robert Kagan, Gary Schmitt, Max Boot and Doug Feith (Vaïsse, 2010: 3). The neoconservatives have set five major tenets that distinguished them from other schools of thought as the following:

1. Internationalism

Neoconservatives believe that the United States should play a vital role in the world,

rather than resurgent American isolationism or simply 'defensive Realism' and they support the United States' presence in the world as well as encouraging international interventions to a greater extent than realists, who place restrictions on the use of American power. This ideology has been asserted by Irving Kristol, who states: 'The United States will always feel obliged to defend, if possible, a democratic nation under attack from nondemocratic forces, external or internal' (Kristol, 2003).

2. Supremacy

Neoconservatives believe in American primacy to achieve liberation and democracy in the world. To achieve such goals there is a need, in their opinion, to preserve and maintaining American unipolar leadership since it would ensure both American and international interests alike. Nonetheless, this view has been objected to by realists as they believe that American primacy includes risk, bears high costs and yet, could lead to a hostile backlash from other powers. Overall, realists contend that the US could not manage the entire world and hence it should be selective in regard to foreign policy issues and focus on preserving a balance of power in the international system. (Vaïsse, 2010: 4)

It should be noted that neoconservatives' commitment to building up American primacy and hegemony is not a new trend, but rather it predates President Bush's National Security Strategy, which was formulated in the year 2002. This continuity was evident in the Defense Guidance Document produced in March 1992, which emphasized US primacy through preventing the appearance of new rivals (see Defense Planning Guidance, 1992).

3. Unilateralism

Neoconservatives hold the conviction that American power keeps peace in the world rather than international organizations like the United Nations Security Council. To them, American actions should not be restricted by treaties or international institutions and they have shared the unilateralist approach with some 'nationalist hawks' like Dick Cheney, and Donald Rumsfeld (Vaïsse, 2010: 5). The unilateralist approach, in foreign policy, has been asserted by different supporters such as Irving Kristol, who states

clearly that: 'The United States emerged as uniquely powerful' (Kristol, 2003). This vision has been further emphasized by Brooks, who argued: 'Today the United States has no rival in any critical dimension of power. There has never been a system of sovereign states that contained one state with this degree of dominance' (Brooks, 2002: 23). Moreover, he describes the structure of the international system as unipolar: 'If today's American primacy does not constitute unipolarity, then nothing ever will. The only things left for dispute are how long it will last and what the implications are for American foreign policy' (Brooks, 2002: 21). According to neoconservatives, US superiority stems from its military, political and economic capacity, which enable it to be the main player in any dispute in any part of the world. In practice, the US's unilateral behavior was evident in the Gulf region in the year 1990, in which the US prevented Iraq, according to Krauthammer, from gaining control of the entire region (Krauthammer, 1990: 24).

It is worth mentioning that the aforementioned positions which advocated US unilateral action in world politics have been reflected in US foreign policy, in which President Bush has shown willingness to act unilaterally and without authorized resolutions from the United Nations Security Council when it comes to American interests. The preemptive war outlined in the 'Bush doctrine' was emphasized in the 2002 National Security Strategy, which declared: 'we must be prepared to stop rogue states and their terrorist clients before they are able to threaten or use weapons of mass destruction against the United States and our allies and friends…We must deter and defend against the threat before it is unleashed' (The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, 2002: 14). Later, as Bush realized the difficulty of achieving consensus over the preemptive war through UN international resolutions, he invaded Iraq in 2003 by US unilateral decision. Many conservatives who were critical of the multilateral approach to US foreign policy unsurprisingly supported this step (Williams and Schmidt, 2007: 8).

4. Militarism

Neoconservatives place great importance on maintaining huge US military capabilities and therefore asked to increase the Pentagon budget as well as the numbers of US troops deployed (Vaïsse, 2010: 5). William Kristol and Robert Kagan confirmed this

reality by stating:

> In a world in which peace and 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. American hegemony is the only reliable defense against a breakdown of peace and international order. To achieve this goal, the United States needs a neo- Reaganite foreign policy of military supremacy and moral confidence. (Kristol and Kagan, 1996: 23)

Scoop Jackson, who is considered the most vocal proponent of the neoconservative's foreign policy, reiterated the importance of using US military force to defend democracy and create a safer world (Vaïsse, 2010: 3). Such positions have been supported further by Irving Kristol, who stated: 'with power come responsibilities, whether sought or not, whether welcome or not. And it is a fact that if you have the kind of power we now have, either you will find opportunities to use it, or the world will discover them for you'. (Kristol, 2003)

5. Democracy

Since the end of the Cold War, the US has pursued a foreign policy built upon the promotion of democracy worldwide because the US grand strategy had assumed that democracy propagation would result in stability that eventually would serve US national interests. Miller has confirmed this assertion as he believes that spreading democracy in the world would modify the balance of power in a way that serves the US itself (Miller, 2012: 49-76). Neoconservatives considered the regimes responsible for wars and terrorism and they placed emphasis upon the avoidance of dealing with autocracies; instead they urged regime change in such countries (Vaïsse, 2010: 6).[12] Concurrently, neoconservatives established a correlation between democracy and confronting terrorism. This view has been asserted by Miller, who envisions democracy as an essential element in US efforts to overcome terrorist groups (Miller, 2012: 33). In addition, he called for actions against rogue states such as Iran and Pakistan in order to

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[12] Neoconservatives believed that the US should change the tyrannical regimes in North Korea and Iran because these regimes are developing nuclear weapons that could be utilized by terrorists to penetrate US security (Boot: 2009).

restrict their support for terrorist groups and as a step for supporting liberalism (Miller, 2012: 32). Indeed, spreading democracy was envisaged as a proper strategy for enhancing US interests. Irving Kristol claimed that the US will permanently defend democratic nations because this will lead to protecting US national interests (Kristol, 2003). Furthermore, neoconservatives consider spreading democracy and human rights as a universal objective, regardless of uneven cultural backgrounds. To them, the source of instability in the Middle East lies in the lack of democracy and therefore issues of terrorism, proliferation and rogue states should be tackled through concentrating on democracy promotion. This vision has been further emphasized by Paul Wolfowitz, who believes that democracy could grow in the Middle East and he has disregarded the realists' warnings of cultural differentiations that could prevent such moves (Vaïsse, 2010: 6).

Furthermore, democracy and militarism are linked, since neoconservatives not only supported the promotion of democracy but also they accepted this goal being achieved by military force, which implies a probable interventionist policy. John Mearsheimer has described democracy in this dimension as 'Wilsonianism with teeth', which means that the 'Wilsonianism' provides the idealist thoughts that could be implemented through using military power. This vision has been asserted by Max Boot, who believes that US foreign policy should be premised on promoting American ideals with the possibility of using force to achieve this goal, which would lead eventually to protection of US security (Boot, 2009).

2.1 The 9/11 Defining Events: The Political Climate that Aided the Neoconservative and Unilateralist Agendas

Noticeably, neocons had not gained effective influence during the first eight months of the incoming Bush administration, but after 9/11 the growth in their influence received increased momentum. They attracted attention in the year 2002-2003 as a result of their intensified efforts to change the regime in Iraq, under allegations of supporting terrorism and developing weapons of mass destruction. Hence, the 9/11 events provided momentum to the neoconservatives' long-term views, and approaches materialized for overthrowing Saddam Hussein's regime and embarking on the

democratic transformation of Iraq and the entire Middle East to enlarge the zone of democracy. Wolfowitz believed in the viability of spreading democracy that would eventually transform the Middle East. He saw democracy as a universal idea: "I think democracy is a universal idea. And I think letting people rule themselves happens to be something that serves Americans and America's interests" (Wolfowitz, 2003). Apparently their influence in the Iraq war decision was evident and reflected in the Bush address as he said:

> In Iraq, a dictator is building and hiding weapons that could enable him to dominate the Middle East and intimidate the civilized world -- and we will not allow it. This same tyrant has close ties to terrorist organizations, and could supply them with the terrible means to strike this country -- and America will not permit it. The danger posed by Saddam Hussein and his weapons cannot be ignored or wished away. The danger must be confronted. We hope that the Iraqi regime will meet the demands of the United Nations and disarm, fully and peacefully. If it does not, we are prepared to disarm Iraq by force. Either way, this danger will be removed. (Bush, 2003a)

Furthermore, the neoconservatives' championing of democracy has impacted the George W. Bush administration's general rhetoric and this was evident in his statement: 'The advance of freedom within nations will build the peace among nations' (Bush, 2005a). Hence, promoting democracy in Iraq has been seen within the US decision-making apparatus as an essential tool and mechanism to change its foreign policy and eliminate the terrorist threat from Iraq, let alone the belief that promoting democracy inside Iraq would spill over to the rest of the Middle Eastern countries. President Bush has emphasized this thought in his statement as he said: 'Iraqi democracy will succeed—and that success will send forth news, from Damascus to Tehran—that freedom can be the future of every nation'. (Bush, 2003b)

Neoconservatives felt that it was their duty to guide a foreign policy that should act to reflect the US internal morality. Indeed the neoconservative ideas have been propped up by the 9/11 attacks, which reinforced a policy that supported democracy promotion; maintained US primacy and countered terrorism, with visible action showing that the spread of weapons of mass destruction would be halted through preemptive war if

required. Neoconservatives believe that a traditional deterrence and containment policy was no longer suitable for dealing with terrorists and rogue states. So, it is obvious that Neoconservatives have articulated all the policies that have been stated in the National Security Strategy, issued in 2002 (Boot, 2009). Moreover, the neoconservatives' thoughts constitute the basic foundations of the Bush Doctrine that supported the regime change policy in Iraq (Williams and Schmidt, 2007: 4). Moreover, this school of thought considers US hegemony as superior to the traditional balance of power and views the US's capabilities and leadership as necessary elements for achieving a peaceful world. This belief is consistent with the Bush doctrine which aims for US leadership to be preserved indefinitely into the future (Williams and Schmidt, 2007: 5).

It is worth mentioning that the championing of democracy was translated into policies under the first Bush administration through the US's calls on the GCC regimes to reinforce democratic values among their societies and conduct real political reform. George W. Bush said in this regard:

> The world has a clear interest in the spread of democratic values…. And there are hopeful signs of a desire for freedom in the Middle East…..Leaders in the region speak of a new Arab charter that champions internal reform, greater politics participation, economic openness, and free trade. And from Morocco to Bahrain and beyond, nations are taking genuine steps toward politics reform. A new regime in Iraq would serve as a dramatic and inspiring example of freedom for other nations in the region. (Bush, 2003c)

A close look at neocons' plans reveals a continuation of their longstanding ambitions and agenda. In essence, they were unsatisfied with the outcomes of the Gulf War in 1991 and they exerted a lot of pressure on the US administration to use military force to change the regime in Iraq. Hence, they urged the invasion of Iraq during President Clinton's administration in January 1998 when some members of the Project for a New American Century, including William Kristol, Robert Kagan, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle, and Francis Fukuyama, sent a letter to then-President Clinton in which they advised him to change the regime in Iraq militarily (Williams and Schmidt, 2007: 3).

However, Waltz has criticized the neoconservative's vision of spreading democracy; he himself argues that if we acknowledge democracy as important to achieving peace, whereby democracies do not fight democracies, it will still be the case that democratic systems do not change the structure of global politics. Even if all states turned into democracies, the structure of international politics would remain anarchic because there is no external authority to control state behaviors and that is why states cannot guarantee that 'today's friend will not be tomorrow's enemy' (Waltz, 2000: 10; see also Krasner, 1992) As Krasner argues, "a world of democratic states would not necessarily be more peaceful than a world of autocratic ones" (Krasner, 1992).

Overall, neoconservatives' theory cast some shadows on US foreign policy during the Bush administration. This impact has been emphasized by the neoconservative pundit Charles Krauthammer, who states: 'The remarkable fact that the Bush Doctrine is, essentially, a synonym for neoconservative foreign policy' (Krauthammer, 2005: 22). Neoconservatives had specific effects on foreign policy; nevertheless, it is unpersuasive that they monopolized and manipulated foreign policy decisions as the Bush administration has not heeded the neoconservatives' calls for the change of regimes in both North Korea and Iran. But rather, he initiated negotiations with the North Korean regime and improved relations with china against the desire of many neoconservatives. Moreover, he supported efforts to settle the Israeli-Palestinian issue although many neoconservatives thought that such efforts would bring nothing on the ground (Boot: 2009). Furthermore, neoconservatives do not hold positions in the top management of the Bush administration. It is evident that among senior figures: Dick Cheney, the Vice President, Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense, Colin Powell, Secretary of State, and Condoleezza Rice, National Security Advisor, none of them were neoconservatives; instead they might be considered as conventional national interest conservatives who criticized the constant focus on human rights and foreign interventions which were praised by neoconservatives (Boot, 2009).

3. The Bush Administration Senior Advisers: The Power of ideas

Domestic variables and their influence on foreign policy are of particular importance in analyzing and understanding US foreign policy directions. Therefore, it seems that discussing the interplay, splits and disagreements between various strategic actors

within the state bureaucracy would be of particular interest in understanding the officials' distinctive roles in advancing and influencing the President's foreign policy decisions. Indeed, Individual-level analysis is one of the foreign policy analysis levels that helps in understanding the extent to which the senior advisers of George W. Bush's administration played a role in influencing policymaking and its subsequent implementation. Of particular interest is apprehending the apparently-conflicting ideas, views and approaches of the main actors, the far more experienced advisers, of the Bush administration and their internal interactions since this would enhance our understanding of the foreign policy outcomes and would be decisive in determining how and why certain policies were chosen. Hence, the major objective of this section is to provide background and a detailed account on the intellectual currents within the Bush administration in terms of the key individual groups or personages, their ideologies, ideas and their agencies that played an influential role in thinking and formulating the US foreign policy in the time period 2001-2008. The Bush foreign policy team would contribute tremendously in shaping the foreign policy agenda and determining the outcome of the policy process during the first term of the administration from its inauguration in 2001 to the Presidential election in 2004. However, the influence of the presidency's inner circle elites would continue to shape foreign policy in the second term of the Bush administration (2004-08).

3.1 The Bush Senior advisers: Incompatible Ideas

Contrary to the prevailing assumption that perceives neoconservatives as the dominant faction in the Bush administration and that they have captured the heart and mind of the President, this part of the thesis identifies other groups that contributed to the policy-making process. However, each agency within the Bush administration consists of individual members who represent different agendas that were often at odds with one another and the defining events of 9/11 and the war on terror would provide an appropriate climate that would enable some of the foreign policy actors to practice more influence on the making of foreign policy than the others. Interagency quarrels during the first term of George W. Bush would prove more relevant in shaping and influencing the outcome of the foreign policy process. As such, the Department of State and the Defense Department would fight to draw the President's attention in an attempt

to influence his decisions and advance their own agendas. The Department of Defense would work closely and cooperate actively with the Office of the Vice President, forming an alliance against the State Department. As a result, an imbalance of influence between the key members of the Bush foreign policy team would develop. As we shall see, the State Department's influential role would be waning, due to less access to the President, especially after 9/11, in favor of the Defense Department and Office of Vice President, which came to have a more influential role in the President's decisions during the first term, in the wake of the catastrophic events of 9/11.

The Bush administration faced, from the outset, internal challenges which manifested in interagency competition and quarrels with respect to how the foreign policy should be managed. Consequently, there were conflicting positions between realists that concentrated on multilateral relations to achieve US objectives; those who advocated unilateralism in conducting foreign policy (the hawks) and the neoconservatives, who sought a transformational foreign policy. Generally, different groups and actors inside the Bush administration contributed, at varying levels, to the foreign policy decisions as follows:

1) Neoconservatives. This faction was important in the Bush administration and had played a critical role in engineering certain approaches to US foreign policy. This group emphasizes the importance of promoting democracy using American military force to achieve this goal with the ultimate purpose of protecting and maintaining US interests. 2) The assertive Nationalists faction that concentrates on maintaining US hegemony and predominant power. 3) The classic realists group, which shares the nationalists' objectives but were not keen to use US military force or excessive expansion of military power to preserve America's national security and prosperity. 4) The President himself was another key figure in policy-making, who saw himself as a man with a *mission* to spread American political norms and liberal governance. The author will elaborate on these groups of individuals and their contributions to foreign policy formulation and implementation.

3.1.1 Neoconservatives:

As mentioned earlier, Neoconservatives represent an ideological movement in American domestic politics that emphasizes a confrontational policy and muscular American action (Marshall, 2003). Neoconservatism sets out from a wide belief in American exceptionalism and the viability of its political system being emulated worldwide. (Ikenberry, 2004) Noticeably, Neoconservatives held, within the Bush administration, the deputy and assistant level positions both at the Office of Vice President and the Department of Defense. However, the most influential officials at the Department of Defense and Office of the Vice President were either neoconservatives or transformationalists. The Defense Department and Office of the Vice President had an ideological homogeneity which led to their forming a stronger alliance that would oppose the traditionalists at the State Department (Fagernes, 2011: 53-4).

Neoconservatives held senior positions in the George W. Bush administration. This group includes Paul Wolfowitz, Deputy Secretary of Defense; Douglas Feith, Undersecretary of Defense for Policy; Lewis "Scooter" Libby, the Vice President's Chief of Staff; Elliott Abrams, the National Security Council staffer for Near East, Southwest Asian, and North African Affairs; and Richard Perle, a member of the Defense Policy Board at the Pentagon (Boot, 2009). Neoconservatives occupied the second tier of executive branch positions in the Bush administration; nonetheless, they have succeeded in advancing their views and agenda through their superiors - the Iraq war was an instructive example. For instance, although Rumsfeld contributed efficiently to inner circle debates at the Pentagon with respect to defense transformation, nonetheless he has been highly influential upon foreign policy issues via his neocon lieutenants - Wolfowitz and Feith, both of whom were decisive and exercised notable control over all aspects relating to the war's policymaking (Marshall, 2003).

Similarly, the internal staff members' influence extended also to include Vice President Cheney, who believed strongly in military power and assertive leadership in US foreign relations. He formerly distances himself from hawks' voices that encouraged the Iraq war in the 1990s. However, apparently the 9/11 events changed his position as he become an outspoken advocate of toppling Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq. It was obvious that this transformation in Cheney's thoughts and position were architected by

neocon voices either inside or outside the administration. The apparent influence of his chief of staff, I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby, led him to embrace the neocon stance with regard to the Iraq invasion in 2003 (Marshall, 2003).

Neoconservatives and unilateralists have common beliefs in US global power and unrivaled hegemony and therefore an alliance emerged between the two groups in the first term of the G. W. Bush administration. Their views hold belief that the "unilateral assertion of America's unrivaled hard power will be the primary means not only of winning the war on terror, but of preserving American dominance indefinitely, uncompromised for the most part by the international system or the diplomatic demands of other nations". (Hirsh, 2002: 25) The close cooperation between the neoconservatives and unilateralists in the Republican Party, advocated moral principles in policymaking. This manifested clearly through the establishment of the Project for the New American Century (PNAC) in 1997, when several leading actors in both camps, who criticized the foreign and defense policies of the Clinton administration, joined together to establish this organization. Remarkably, some of its key members would play important roles in the Bush administration, and the alliance between unilateralists and neoconservatives would continue distinctly influencing foreign policy outcomes (Fagernes, 2011: 48).[13]

The author gives, in the following section, more detail on the agencies' leading members. Other officials, of course, played important roles in policymaking but reported to their superiors who were officially in charge of representing the bureaucratic agency and presenting plans to the President.

Paul Wolfowitz: U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defense (2001 to 2005)

Wolfowitz, who served at the pentagon during Nixon-Ford and Carter administrations, was among the neoconservatives within the Democratic Party who advocated a more hawkish and idealistic foreign policy (Mann 2004: 91). Wolfowitz, who articulated the formal Department of Defense policy in the G. W. Bush administration, had been developing ideas since he had served in the Carter administration and continued to

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[13] The PNAC members who would be important in the Bush administration were: Dick Cheney, Zalmay Khalilzad, I. Lewis Libby, Donald Rumsfeld, and Paul Wolfowitz

work on his strategies during the Reagan and senior Bush administrations. Wolfowitz continued his work in the pentagon during the Carter administration, which was elected in 1976, and in the late 1970s, Iraq was perceived as a serious threat from neoconservatives' point of view. Wolfowitz, who was Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense in the Carter administration, warned about Iraq's emergence as a likely threat to US interests in the region and claimed, in his Limited Contingency Study of 1977 that, "Iraq has become militarily pre-eminent in the Persian Gulf", arguing that Iraq had military capabilities that might be used to intimidate its neighbors in the gulf region. Moreover, Wolfowitz emphasizes in that document the strategic importance of the gulf region and he indicates that maintaining access to the gulf oil resources would become tremendously important in U.S. defense and security strategies. Furthermore, in his mentioned study, he called for a pre-eminent U.S. military presence in the Arabian Peninsula in order to maintain American control over oil resources and preserve the balance of power in the region. He believes that the Gulf War in 1991 ended prematurely and emphasized the importance of maintaining an American military presence in the Arabian Peninsula (see Mann, 2004: 79-83).

When Cheney was appointed as Secretary of Defense in the elder Bush administration, he appointed Paul Wolfowitz to serve as his Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. (Mann, 2004: 171) Wolfowitz, advocated continued military engagement with Iraq after Saddam's forces had invaded Kuwait in 1990 and wanted the United States to ensure the fall of the regime - an objective that was fulfilled during the first Bush administration in 2003 (Fagernes, 2011: 19). Wolfowitz, who advocated keeping U.S. military power prominent and uncontested, has drafted, along with his deputies, the United States Defense Planning Guidance document in 1992, in which he emphasizes American supremacy as uncontested hegemony, asserting that America is the world's super power and that this position should be rigorously maintained. Remarkably, the preemption strategy, which was reflected in the National Security Strategy of 2002 and implemented by the younger Bush administration, was the core of the document wherein he advocated using American military power preemptively to preserve its position and eliminate threats to its national security interests (see Defense Planning Guidance, 1992). Interestingly, much of the ideas that were included in the 1992 document would reemerge during the Bush administration in what would be known as "The Bush Doctrine.". Wolfowitz's notions and strategies with regard to foreign policy

would become more and more attractive and relevant to the President in the aftermath of the terrorists attacks on September 11th.

3.1.2 The Assertive Nationalists[14]

This group of people consists of "national-interest realists" who believe that in the aftermath of 9/11 there were serious threats which emanated from hostile states, terrorists and WMD. Therefore, they believed in maintaining American military primacy to defeat such threats. The two prominent members of this group were Vice President Richard (Dick) Cheney and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. Both of them, contrary to the neocons, had not shown an interest in nation building and democracy promotion. They set out from an assertive position and were willing to use American military power unilaterally to protect US national security and preserve American geopolitical interests. Cheney and Rumsfeld were concerned with projecting the US preponderance of power and were less concerned about remaking the politics of the Middle East (Shareef, 2010: 61).

Dick Cheney: Vice President of the United States (2001 to 2009)

Cheney, who had served as special assistant for Rumsfeld during the Nixon and Ford administrations, advocated conservative views and shared his boss Donald Rumsfeld's belief in maintaining and preserving American universal ideals and power (Fagernes, 2011: 16). Cheney and Rumsfeld had distinctive experiences as they were appointed to top-level positions in the Ford administration; Rumsfeld was appointed Secretary of Defense and Cheney became President Ford's Chief of Staff. Cheney was working to advance his conservatives' agenda as he was a "strong believer in a foreign policy guided by unilateralism" (Fagernes, 2011: 17). Dick Cheney, who was a tough Secretary of Defense during senior George Bush's administration would become Vice President in G. W. Bush's administration and would become, after the 9/11 events, the closest adviser to the President. Donald Rumsfeld, who had a close relationship with Cheney, would play a key role in leading the Pentagon. This relationship with the Vice President would enable Rumsfeld to reach the President constantly and he would

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[14] This group was also called Offensive Realists/traditional hardline realists.

become a close advisor, resulting in tremendous leverage inside the Bush administration, particularly after 9/11. "Cheney and Rumsfeld were known as foreign policy hawks, and they would adhere to the strategies developed by Wolfowitz in the previous years" (Fagernes 2011: 11).

Donald Rumsfeld: Secretary of Defense (2001 to 2006)

Donald Rumsfeld, who served as Secretary of Defense during the Ford administration, believed that Cold War strategy had to be changed and advocated a transformational policy - from the principles of détente established during President Nixon's era and by his Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, in the 1970s, to a more tough and assertive foreign policy. Nixon and Kissinger's détente policy was seen by Rumsfeld as causing an American decline, and as having limited its leading, powerful, global position (Fagernes 2011: 13). Rumsfeld, who was viewed as having a "confrontational style" of policy, would become more influential in the first Bush administration and would be able to employ his bureaucratic and organizational skills to increase his influence and diminish the power of the State Department, represented by Colin Powell.

Rumsfeld, who dominated the Department of Defense, would have much influence on the Bush foreign policy team from the time of his appointment to his resignation in 2006. He was the uncontested leader of the Pentagon and would contribute crucially to making the Department of Defense the most influential agency inside the Bush administration during its first term. Wolfowitz, who was serving as Deputy Secretary of Defense, acted as the Department's strategic thinker. Working through the Office of the Vice President, Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz would have easy access to the President, resulting in a large degree of influence on the President's choices, and therefore many people tend to believe that the Pentagon was the sole agency dealing with US foreign policy (Fagernes, 2011: 53).

Cheney and Rumsfeld believe that the US's strength and primacy should be used to change the status quo in the world. In other words, America should shift from the course of defense, or that of a reactive posture, to a preemptive position. It has been argued that the United States should "aggressively go abroad searching for monsters to destroy". (Daalder, 2003: 13) This call to act preemptively constituted the logic behind

the Iraq War in 2003. Moreover, this faction believes in US unilateralism, which was appealing because it was more efficient than multilateralism in reaching and implementing the required policies. As such, Cheney and Rumsfeld preferred Unilateralism because multilateralism was seen as complicating the war effort and therefore America being unbound would lead to more freedom of action as the decision makers in the pentagon would not subject their decisions to foreign approval (Daalder, 2003: 13-4). Obviously, these notions of US preemptive strikes and unilateralism, presented by the "assertive nationalists", influenced foreign policy attitudes in the post-9/11 era with respect to the Iraq war in 2003 and the war on terrorism since 2001, as we shall see in the next chapters.

While "neoconservatives" and "assertive nationalists" had contending notions with respect to spreading American values abroad, they shared a wide belief in American power projection and were skeptical about the rule of law and the relevance of international institutions. This agreement, and common beliefs in the role of power in protecting US national security between both factions, coupled with the defining events of 9/11, would lead both the neoconservatives and assertive nationalists to form a "marriage of convenience" - an alliance that would play a critical role in influencing the President's choices and decisions with regard to the war on terror and Iraq invasion (see Daalder, 2003: 15-6). Undoubtedly, these decisions would bring effects and security concerns regarding US-Gulf relations, as we shall see in the next chapters.

Condoleezza Rice: United States Secretary of State (2005 – 2009)

Rice could be identified with the realist school of international relations. In her article that was published in Foreign Affairs' January-February issue of 2000, Condoleezza Rice outlined much of the Bush foreign policy agenda. She was Bush's main advisor on foreign policy during the Bush Presidential campaign and she clearly indicated in her article the Bush administration approach to foreign policy. Rice recognizes the United States as a predominant hegemon that should play a leading role in world affairs due to military capabilities and an unrivaled position that would enable it to ensure continued dominance (see Rice 2000).

Rice was appointed Secretary of State in 2005 and continued the traditionalist approach that Colin Powell had advocated while serving in the same position, though the internal battles amongst the administration's departments that tilted to the hawkish and transformationlists' side had weakened Rice's role when she was serving as National Security Advisor (Fagernes, 2011: 51). Condoleezza Rice, National Security Advisor (2001-2005) and her staff at the National Security Council (NSC) would respond to the 9/11 events by leaving much of the responsibilities to the other agencies. The NSC had failed as an agency in taking the terrorist threats toward the United States seriously, and the failure of the NSC would continue as the agency was unable to assume the role of mediator between other agencies in the period that followed the 9/11 attacks. Rice let the Department of Defense and the Office of the Vice President dominate the inner circle of the President and she did not practice a decisive role, as the Vice President and the Secretary of Defense did. Apparently, she was overrun by the foreign policy heavyweights in the administration (Fagernes, 2011: 69). As a result, she would support the President's decisions in foreign policy including the Iraq war and the war on terror.

3.1.3 Defensive Realists

This group of foreign policy individuals was one of the administration's pillars that played a leading role in foreign policy prior to the 9/11 attacks. They were cautious nationalists who believe in multilateralism and the importance of international organizations like the UN and the viability of international alliances, diplomacy, partnerships and cooperation. In addition, realists were skeptical and even cautious to use force in international relations as this was perceived to be incompatible with the US's national interests. So they did not see the situation in Iraq as requiring military intervention.

Colin Powell: United States Secretary of State (2001 to 2005)

Colin Powell was the leader of the realist faction, along with his deputy Richard Armitage. Also, this group included Richard Haass, Director of Policy Planning at the State Department, and many other diplomats at the State Department. The 9/11 events had marginalized the influential role of this faction and caused tensions and disagreements between the Department of State and Department of Defense. Powell

was skeptical on US foreign policy orientations in the aftermath of 9/11 and opposed many of the directions of the administration. Powell, who was a practical official and less ideological figure, hated ideology and hated Wolfowitz as he looked on him as an ideologue. (Shareef, 2010: 63).

Powell and Armitage were practical officials and preferred the containment policy towards Iraq rather than military invasion as they believed in exhausting diplomatic alternatives before considering the war option. Powell held a different worldview from Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Rice as he believed that changing the Saddam regime was not an urgent matter and he favored multilateral diplomacy through the UN rather than going directly for changing the regime militarily. It was obvious that Powell was concerned with the war's consequences. However, it was clear that in the wake of 9/11 the nature of debate inside the administration has changed, resulting in harder efforts by the neoconservatives (Wolfowitz) and assertive nationalists (Cheney and Rumsfeld) to marginalize Powell and the role of the State Department. As a result, "conservative realists", with Powell as the leading prominent figure, lost the President's attention. Obviously, the President stopped listening to them (Shareef, 2010: 63-4).

Powell, who had served during both the elder and younger Bush administrations, was among the younger Bush administration's traditionalists or realists. The realist approach sought to protect and maintain American national interests and many in this realist group had served previously in the George H. W. Bush administration. This group of individuals could be described as internationalists since, according to them; the US's National interests should be managed via international cooperation with other governments. Their vision is that the United States is a part of a global world, and in its foreign policy the cooperation with others would serve best the protection of American national interests. However, as the debate between traditionalists and transformationalists within the administration deepened after the 9/11 attacks, diplomatic alternatives therefore, as favored and advocated by Colin Powell, would become less attractive and the military approach would become more and more prominent in the Bush administration's foreign policy. Transformationalists claimed that there was no time to obtain an international consensus and therefore they urged rapid action using military force (Fagernes, 2011: 49-50).

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Under the pressure of 9/11 it was obvious that the President was in need of quick alternatives and plans for action. Consequently, the Department of Defense and Office of the Vice President assumed a prominent role in providing the President with policy plans which resulted in the State Department losing its influence over foreign policy because it had not responded to the events as quickly as the Defense Department and Office of Vice President. As such, Powell, who expected to be the driving force of the Bush administration's foreign policy agenda, was neutralized and overrun by the tremendous influence of Vice President Cheney and his partner at the Department of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld (Fagernes, 2011: 57).

The State Department did not get the massive attention the Pentagon did, because there was an urgent need to provide defense plans, which led to the exclusion of any attempts to push for diplomatic solutions, as the State Department was maneuvering. Hence, during the first phase of the war on terror, Powell did not go against his commander-in-chief and sided with the rest of the administration because the United States had to respond to the terrorists. Despite his reservations on the Bush administration's military directions, Powell was left planning and implementing the military strategy, as Rice did, for Rumsfeld and his team at the Pentagon (Fagernes, 2011: 69).

4. The President

G. W. Bush came to office on January 20, 2001, with hardly any foreign policy experience and in order to implement his foreign policy agenda, he had surrounded himself with a team of tremendously experienced advisors of previous Republican administrations, who had worked in the administrations of Nixon, Carter, Reagan and senior George Bush. This foreign policy team included Dick Cheney, the Vice President; Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense; Paul Wolfowitz, Deputy Secretary of Defense; Colin Powell, Secretary of State in the first George W. Bush administration; his Deputy, Richard Armitage and Condoleezza Rice. This group would interact closely with one another and they gave themselves the name of the "Vulcans" (Mann 2005).

Conventional wisdom reveals that neoconservatives were winning the policy battles inside the Bush administration and consequently were controlling the foreign policy agenda. Nonetheless, the theory of the neoconservatives winning this struggle was overstated, because G. W. Bush himself played a determined and decisive role in foreign policy. As Daalder argues, Bush was not "a figurehead in someone else's revolution". Despite Bush's lack of experience in foreign affairs, he was the "puppeteer, not the puppet" (Daalder, 2003: 16).

The foreign policy pursued by Bush and his team during the first term can be associated with the President's personal believes and idealistic principles, along with his religious faith in Christianity. This could be observed in his beliefs in good versus evil (Fagernes, 2011: 44). Bush might not have had the vast foreign policy experience his father enjoyed when he took office, but ultimately he would be the uncontested leader that made the final decisions (see Mann 2004). G. W. Bush has been described as an assertive and determined President who was the "unquestioned master of his own administration" (Daalder, 2003: 2).

The continuity of G. W. Bush in foreign policy could be demonstrated through his practical policy. He has echoed President Ronald Reagan's ideas and his way of thinking with respect to how he viewed American involvement in the world. Bush's worldview encompassed a combination of realist and idealist elements, in what he called "American internationalism". This approach consists of defending America's interests in the Gulf region and promoting political freedom. "A distinctly American internationalism" vision was based on "Idealism, without illusions. Confidence, without conceit. Realism, in the service of American ideals" (Bush, 1999b). Bush's worldview, according to Robert Kagan, "represents the strongest and clearest articulation of a policy of American global leadership by a major political figure since the collapse of the Soviet Empire". The Bush attempts to renew American strength and leadership was a clear continuation of, and resemblance to, the Ronald Reagan administration's foreign policy (Kagan, 1999).

Bush came to office with a vision and moral attitude that rested on the belief that he had a mission and duty to transform the Middle Eastern societies through advancing freedom, free trade, human rights, and enhancing women's rights. He has believed in

promoting democracy as a universal value that is compatible with all mankind's cultures. In 1999, Bush outlined these principles clearly as he asserted that American foreign policy had "a great and guiding goal: to turn this time of American influence into generations of democratic peace" (Bush, 1999b). Bush's faith in the war against evil is an important factor that contributed to shaping his understanding of the world and subsequent foreign policy attitudes. He envisaged his mission and duty in the world as a "struggle between good and evil". He used the old phrase of "rogue state" and then the phrase of "Axis of Evil" to describe hostile states (Iraq, Iran and North Korea). As such, the policy of promoting democracy that elevated to the forefront objective on the administration agenda means that he has been continuing the policies of his predecessor President Reagan in what has been called "a neo-Reaganite foreign policy". His perceptions on the evil states, as stated above, resemble that of Reagan who described the Soviet Union in 1983 as an "evil Empire". Moreover, his calls for democracy promotion echoed Woodrow Wilson's belief that the powerful state's values were universal (see Shareef, 2010: 54-8).

Daalder and Lindsay argue in their book "America Unbound" that the role of neoconservatives (they call them "democratic imperialists") has been remarkably overstated, placing greater importance on the President's worldview. The President, according to them, has been the key decision-maker taking into account the influence of hard-line advisers such as Vice President Dick Cheney and Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld. Besides, prominent personnel such as Paul Wolfowitz, Deputy Secretary of Defense and Richard Perle, Pentagon adviser, did not hold positions in the top management of the Bush administration and therefore, as Daalder and Lindsay argue, the big influence on foreign policy was from a group of key individuals called "assertive nationalists" such as Cheney, Rice, and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld (see Daalder, 2003). As one scholar observes: "It is true that none of the administration's principals -- Bush, Cheney, Secretary of State Colin Powell, Rumsfeld, or Rice -- could fairly be called a neoconservative" (Marshall, 2003).

4.1 September 11 and the President's 'Revolution' in Foreign Policy

As already mentioned, the Bush administration has faced as much war among its members as with the terrorists. As Hirsh observes:

> Caught in the middle of titanic fights between Secretary of State Colin Powell and his lonely band of moderate multilateralists, the Donald Rumsfeld–Dick Cheney axis of realist unilateralists, and a third group of influential neoconservatives led by Wolfowitz, the President cannot seem to decide which world view he embraces. As a result, Bush has veered between a harsh, pared-down realism, which seeks to stay out of the world (and in which nation building, much less world building, is shunned), and a strident internationalism that seeks to reorder the world "for freedom." (Hirsh, 2002: 22)

Practically, As a consequence to the terrorist attacks on 9/11, President Bush would become closer to the hawkish unilateralist approach presented by Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz than the multilateral internationalism represented by Colin Powell at the State Department. In his first term in office, and under the pressure of the September 11th attacks, G. W. Bush redefined many of the foreign policy mechanisms as he relied on unilateralism in using American power and discarded the role of international law and institutions. Moreover, he discarded and downplayed the strategies of deterrence and containment and championed the preemptive use of military force and forceful regime change. He preferred dependence on "ad hoc coalitions of the willing to gain support abroad and ignored permanent alliances" (Daalder, 2003: 2). Moreover, the President saw the United States in a state of war which gave America the right to act alone and follow an offensive approach in fighting the war on terror. He believes that U.S. power is fundamental in maintaining the global order and conceived of spreading democracy and freedom as of particular importance to a safer and more peaceful world. Bush reiterated such thinking in his 2006 State of the Union address, insisting that the United States will "act boldly in freedom's cause" and "never surrender to evil." (Gordon, 2006).

The Bush transformational policy post-9/11 materialized in introducing three main changes in the U.S. grand strategy as follows:

1) preferring ad hoc coalitions rather than reliance on permanent alliances and international institutions, 2) depending on a new principle of preventive war, 3) and advocating coercive democratization as a proper solution to Middle Eastern terrorism. Those changes were perceived as revolutionary in their nature and were articulated clearly in the National Security Strategy of 2002 (Nye, 2006).

The Bush "revolution" in foreign policy has been perceived as a neoconservative triumph. But this perception is misleading. As already outlined, neoconservatives were not prominent inside the administration but rather they were, most notably, more active on the publication pages of Commentary and the Weekly Standard and they were prominent in the television studios of Fox News rather than inside the Bush administration (Daalder and Lindsay 2003: 15). The prominent Bush advisers, including Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld, were not neocons. They were best described as "assertive nationalists—traditional hard-line conservatives willing to use American military power to defeat threats to U.S. security but reluctant as a general rule to use American primacy to remake the world in its image" (Daalder and Lindsay 2003: 15).

Indeed, the Gulf regional events and subsequent American foreign policy decisions would show clearly that Bush has pursued a realist approach as he favored, and acted to preserve, the GCC states' stability and to maintain the regional balance of power - a policy that represents a continuation of long-term policy inherited from his predecessors rather than a sea-change. In effect, the President has oscillated between the approaches of reforming the GCC states' political systems and democratizing the region, which received increased momentum in the first term, in the wake of the events of 9/11, and intensified after the Iraq invasion in 2003, and moves to preserve American long-term hard interests embodied in ensuring unembedded oil flowed from the gulf region to the global markets, the GCC government's cooperation in the war on terrorism and the GCC strategic and logistical assistance in Iraq's invasion, among others. In the second term of his Presidency, realism would become more and more asserted as the President favored gulf regional stability over initiating deep and fundamental political

reform inside the GCC states.

Another element of realism in the Bush administration is that it recognized states as the most important and influential actors in international relations. Bush and his advisors used to link terrorism to rogue and hostile regimes and states. Although the September 11th events were perpetuated by the individual members of the Al-Qaeda terrorist organization under the leadership of Osama bin Laden, the formal US policy continued a realist approach, which manifested in looking at states that harbored the terrorists as the major concern regarding terrorism, which, according to them, is a product of sponsoring states. Shortly after the events of 9/11, Richard Perle argued:

> It seemed to me that, at the time -- and it has seemed to me for years now --that the failure to impose a penalty on states harboring terrorists meant that states were harboring terrorists, and they were able to operate far more effectively as a result of that. So if we were going to take terrorism seriously, we had to consider action against the states harboring them (Perle, 2003).

Conclusion

The US foreign policy establishment, both before and after 9/11, was split between differing points of view. This, of course, is not new to US foreign policy. However, under George W Bush the split included neo-conservatives, who had become influential for the first time since the 1980s under Ronald Reagan. Traditional realists continued to emphasize the necessity of preserving US long-term strategic interests and national security, regardless of governance systems in concerned states. The realists remained focused on preserving regional stability and maintaining the prevailing balance of power. In contrast, neoconservatives believed that American national security and long-term national interests would be assured through promoting democratic principles coupled with using military force if needed.

It has been shown that the foreign policy making process emanated from close interactions among interlocking circles of thinkers and policymakers. Hence, the executive bureaucracy that consists of different agencies; the State Department, the

Department of Defense, and the National Security Council, constitute the major agencies that would influence the foreign policy trajectory. The neocon group within the Bush administration was a distinctive one that managed to exert decisive influence on Iraq war decisions. As Ikenberry makes mention, "the conquest of Iraq was the neo-conservative's defining goal and their crowning achievement". (Ikenberry, 2004: 7) The neoconservatives and the unilateralists were unified in their vision regarding Iraq, which perceived it as a major threat to American national security and gulf regional stability.

Although the President has played a distinctive role in policymaking, as he was the person who takes the final decision, the foreign policy team, which has massive foreign policy experience, would play a tremendously prominent role in affecting the outcome of the foreign policy. A close look at the individuals of the Bush foreign policy team shows that there was unbalanced influence between the hawks at the Department of Defense and Office of the Vice President that increased over the moderates who were members of the State Department, resulting in pursuing an approach that led to coercive regime change in Iraq and the initiation of the war on terrorism.

Additionally, 9/11's events provided an appropriate climate and opportunity through which the Bush foreign policy hawks and transformationalists, who adhered to the neoconservative ideological views, gained ground inside the administration. As a consequence, the Department of Defense became the leading bureaucracy in foreign policy because the President wanted plans to act in response to the terrorist networks. So, the attacks would be used and manipulated by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, Deputy Secretary of Defense Wolfowitz, and Vice President Dick Cheney to advocate military intervention in Iraq to topple the Saddam Hussein regime (Shareef, 2010: 70-1). Indeed, the Iraq invasion decision is not new but goes back to what Kenneth Katzman called "unfinished business" theory in which some officials that served in the Bush senior administration including Cheney who was Secretary of Defense and Paul Wolfowitz who was Undersecretary of Defense for Policy had wanted the administration to continue the Gulf War in 1991 to remove Saddam regime. But the influence of Cheney and Wolfowitz was overruled that time by moderates in the elder Bush administration such as Brent Scowcroft who was National Security Adviser and Colin Powell who was then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff 1989–1993. (see

Katzman, 2005) However, 9/11 events provided a golden opportunity to continue the policy debate with regards to Iraq that started in 1991. Thus, while Bush took into consideration Colin Powell's advice and pursued a multilateral attitude through forming the NATO coalition to support the war efforts in Afghanistan, the position was different in the case of the Iraq war. President Bush, under pressure from the 9/11 attacks, did not believe that diplomacy would work in the case of Iraq and it seems that he fell under significant influence from transformationalists within the administration and thus turned his back on the traditionalists (Fagernes 2011: 50).

As such, the Iraq invasion in 2003 was attributed to the decisive role of the neoconservatives, though their role in this decision was overstated as the most influential individuals of the foreign policy team, with the exception of Paul Wolfowitz, were not neoconservatives (Fagernes 2011: 48). Besides, Neoconservatives were one of the major factions that supported the Iraq war decision. Apparently, three major factions within the Bush administration had encouraged the Iraq war decision in 2003. Hence, the neoconservatives, the assertive nationalists (offensive realists), and the President himself were in harmony in their positions toward Iraq that identified a major threat. So, their stance was unified with respect to the necessity of overthrowing Saddam's regime and liberating a people from oppression and tyranny. However, the cautious nationalists (defensive realists) were opposed to the war decision (Shareef, 2010: 67-8; 70-1).

A close look at the Bush policies indicates that preserving US national security played a large role in Bush's thinking and therefore he has been influenced by the American nationalists (Cheney and Rumsfeld) that held prominent and dominant positions in the Bush administration. Additionally, Bush was impressed by neoconservative notions about American power and universal values. As such, he shared with the neoconservatives the idea that freedom is a universal ideal that gives the US a moral mission to transform the world. While Cheney represented the national-interest conservative camp, Wolfowitz represented the neoconservative group within the administration. Obviously, President Bush shared common ground with both groups (Shareef, 2010: 68). As a result, it can be noticed that the "Bush Doctrine", which was codified in the 2002 National Security Strategy, was the outcome of the whole Bush administration's internal interactions. It was a doctrine that compromised the thoughts,

ideologies and objectives of varies actors inside the Bush administration (Shareef, 2010: 69).

However the invasion of Iraq was the most radical example of this US foreign policy. Can the example of Iraq be at all used as a framework to understand US foreign policy towards the GCC states? This thesis argues that this is not the case. *Both in his first and second administrations* Bush's foreign policy approach to the GCC states was influenced by neorealism. This is the case when democracy promotion is concerned and also when the US-GCC relations in the areas of security policy are examined. US relations with the GCC countries remain deep and were not subject to comprehensive revision after the events of 9/11, as some scholars argued. Furthermore, the most controversial decisions with regard to the Iraq war and the war on terror had not caused enmity or frictions between the US and its Gulf allies, Saudi Arabia in particular; but rather, the two events had demonstrated, as we shall see in the next chapters, the robustness of the mutual strategic relations which manifested through wide cooperation by GCC states with Washington in counter-terrorist campaigns which facilitated the war efforts against Afghanistan and Iraq.

Chapter 3

The United States' Interests and Objectives in the Gulf Region: Historical Background

Introduction

Successive American administrations have recognized the US's enduring and salient interests in the Gulf region. The region is important as a source of US energy supplies, as a strategic-military base of operations and also as a site of US foreign policy influence through relationships with individual nations such as Saudi Arabia and the smaller GCC states. This has translated into a process of devising overarching US geostrategic policies that safeguard the US perennial interests and serve its grand strategy. This has been asserted by Hunter, who rightly argues that: 'the United States' continued, indeed permanent, engagement in the [Gulf] region has already been determined by its interests' (Hunter, 2010: xi).

The author will introduce, in this chapter, a concise historical overview and will highlight the major articulated episodes that took place in the Gulf regional environment in an attempt to explore to what extent it impacted the US-Gulf evolving policy. The importance of this background lies in that remembering and recalling the past along with its prominent events and perturbations helps to fathom the complexities in US-GCC relations and thereby illustrates the hallmarks of continuity and consistency in US policy towards the highly-coveted Gulf region. More broadly, this chapter seeks to explore the continuities of the US's longstanding interests and oft-repeated concerns in the Gulf region prior the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Simultaneously, the author underscores the threats and challenges that have jeopardized the US's traditional objectives in the Gulf region and examines how the regional events and precarious security developments have contributed to shaping and crafting the US strategies and policies toward this volatile area of great centrality to the US's interest.

More broadly, the tenor of the chapter is building up the groundwork for the subsequent research sections through discussing the US's strategic objectives in the Gulf region and the policies that have been pursued and implemented to achieve these objectives. Ultimately, the following analysis will be consistent with the methodological and analytical framework that has been set out for this thesis and will demonstrate the extent to which the US objectives and policies under the Bush administration echo a continuation of previous US interests and policies.

1. United States and the Gulf Region: Historical Overview

The Gulf region's geostrategic importance, as Wallace argues, 'make[s] it not only a vital U.S. interest but also an increasingly global one' (Wallace, 2005: 3) and he rightly points that 'Over the past half century, the Persian Gulf region has become an increasingly important but problematic area of interest for U.S. foreign policy' (Wallace, 2005: 1). This has been asserted further by Hunter, who rightly indicates that the US's continuous involvement in the Gulf region has been determined by a constant strategy to preserve the US's geopolitical and economic interests since the Truman Doctrine in the 1940s and this eventually culminated in the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 (Hunter, 2010: 4).

Historically, the Soviet threat to the Gulf's security during the Cold War has been perceived as the major challenge facing US interests in the region from the 1950s to the 1980s. The Soviet containment goal translated into policy when the United States declared the Eisenhower Doctrine in 1957, in which it vowed to support any state in the Middle East that was threatened by international communism. This announcement was immediately welcomed at that time by King Saud of Saudi Arabia and he agreed to renew the American access to the Dhahran airfield for five years and the US, in turn, pledged to develop the Saudi navy and provide Saudi Arabia with military assistance (Gause, 2004: 13). The US maintained military and political relations with Iran and Saudi Arabia as friendly States to preserve Gulf regional security, with the US offering to protect the two states from any internal or external threats in order to keep the region stable and US interest's prominent (Agom, 1993: 5). The US's close ties with both Saudi Arabia and Iran stemmed from the US's concerns about increased Soviet power and as a result the US became increasingly involved in the Gulf's defense affairs (Kemp and

Saunders, 2003: 2). In 1979, President Carter explicitly expressed that Soviet challenge and described the consequences of the Soviet military invasion of Afghanistan as 'the most serious threat to the peace since the Second World War'. He considered the 'increased projection of Soviet military power beyond its own borders' as one of the primary US security challenges (Carter: 1980). President Reagan followed the Carter Doctrine, in which he acted to provide Gulf defense and robustly reinforced this policy through supporting Afghan resistance against Soviet troops. Eventually, because of the US and Saudi Arabian support, the Afghan resistance succeeded in their war against the Soviet Union and this triumph culminated in complete Soviet withdrawal in 1989. Noticeably, it was obvious that without Saudi Arabian and US assistance, the Soviet army would have defeated the resistance and built up military bases that could have created real threats to the Gulf region (Kemp and Saunders, 2003: 3). Michael Hudson stated that the Soviet expansion in the oil-rich Gulf region could have affected the world economies and would critically upset the world balance (Hudson, 1996: 336) and therefore the US's goals were embodied in preventing the Soviet Union from dominating the region, limiting oil production, and raising prices (Hudson, 1996: 332).

It can be noticed from a historical standpoint that during the Cold War era, the US focused on three objectives in the Gulf region: to contain Soviet expansion; maintain oil flow at stable prices, and protect the security of the states that have good relations with the US (Agom, 1993: 7). Simultaneously, the American economic, political and strategic goals have rendered the Gulf region paramount in American foreign policy during and after the Cold War era (Gause, 2004: 3) and this has coincided with a US vision that defending the Gulf region is an essential part of the US defense strategy in the post-Cold War era (Kugler, 2003: 89).

The US was successful in its policy of containment, although the disappearance of the Soviet military, political and ideological challenge created new horizons for the United States to craft new security policy in the Gulf region. However, the policy, on examination, was not totally new. In the post-Cold War period US objectives in the Gulf region were still focused on Gulf oil resources at *reasonable prices* and protecting the Gulf's regional security and stability against any (non-USA) hegemony. (Agom, 1993: 16) This was evident in the 1998 National Security Strategy which states that:

Where the U.S. has clear, vital interests, the American military helps assure the security of our allies and friends. The reinforcement of U.S. forces in the Gulf from Fall 1997 to Spring 1998 clearly illustrates the importance of military power in achieving U.S. national security objectives and stabilizing a potentially volatile situation. (The White House, 1998: 12)

Historically, US interests have been explicitly revealed and summarized in the United States Security Strategy that was issued during President Reagan's reign, which mentions that the US's main interests in the Middle East are embodied in: 'maintaining regional stability, containing and reducing Soviet influence, preserving the security of Israel and our other friends in the area, retaining access to oil on reasonable terms for ourselves and our allies, and curbing state-sponsored terrorism.' (The White House, 1987: 17). Likewise, the National Security report submitted by the Bush administration in the aftermath of the Gulf War in 1991 had emphasized the above traditional declared goals and added new strategic objectives which materialized in 'curbing the proliferation of WMD and ballistic missiles and countering terrorism' (The White House, 1991: 10).

2. The Principal Determinants

Indeed, US policy towards the broader Gulf region environment that includes the six GCC states (Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman), along with Iraq and Iran, has been determined and characterized by various intertwined variables and factors that have contributed to US policy formation and implementation in the Gulf region. These variables include: energy, the British military withdrawal from the Gulf in 1971, the Iranian Revolution of 1979, the war between Iraq and Iran 1980-1988, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, and the Arab-Israeli conflict. This author will address and elaborate on these issues in order to examine how these events have contributed to shaping the main and persisting themes of US-Gulf policy.

2.1 Gulf Oil Resources

US interest in the Gulf region has been rooted explicitly in American foreign policy for several decades and therefore there has been a consensus among US policy makers over the course of the past decades to ensure the oil producing Gulf countries retain stability and security because oil supply is considered one of the core and profound US objectives in the US-Gulf policy (Guase, 2004: 7). The Gulf region, with its vast energy reserves discovered before World War Two, saw the Middle East become important to Britain. But after World War Two, oil became the major American rationale interest that led the US to devise and pursue varying strategies in which the US clout in the Gulf region surpassed Britain and was gradually augmented. So, the Gulf's key position in the oil international market illustrates the reasons behind the consistency of the American dealing with the Gulf region for the last 60 years (Guase, 2004: 3).

The Gulf oil resources have been perceived as vital and pivotal to the United States' national interests and this perception has been asserted by consecutive presidential administrations. Hence, President Carter made it clear when he mentioned that 'overwhelming dependence of the Western democracies on oil supplies from the Middle East' is a primary challenge that faced US policy. Also, he emphasized the importance of the Gulf region as 'It contains more than two-thirds of the world's exportable oil' (Carter, 1980). Compounding this, the world economy depends largely on Gulf oil that is considered a key driver for the development of the industrialized world. Estimated statistics show that the Gulf region possesses approximately 674 billion barrels of proven oil reserves, accounting for two thirds of the total world energy reserves and about 35% of total world natural gas reserves. Furthermore, this dependency is unlikely to fundamentally shift any time soon. Gulf oil production is projected to increase to 42.9 million barrels per day in 2020 and in terms of gas reserves; Iran and Qatar occupied the second and the third position, respectively, behind Russia as the world's largest holder of reserves of natural gas. (US Energy Information Administration, 2003).

Notwithstanding, the Gulf region is not only important because of its large proportion of proven world oil reserves; rather, it derives its significance from the ability and

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capacity to produce oil and deliver it to the world market in an efficient way because the cost of the Gulf oil production is lower than any other region. Oil expectations in other regions such as the Caspian Sea remain unsure and in order to bring such supplies to the market requires a significantly long time for investment and development, always taking into account that the outcomes could be very limited and eventually do not look promising (Korb, 2005: 3). The Caspian basin contains roughly 33 billion barrels which constitutes less than 5% of the amount of oil in the Gulf, which means that the Gulf region continues to be the primary source for energy supply (McMillan, 2003: 16). Therefore Telhami, for example, argues that the Gulf region's oil has attracted the largest share of the world's attention over the past half century and will remain 'critical for future energy supplies' (Telhami, 2002).

The continued dependency of the industrial economies on oil in their production and economic growth unfolded clearly and consistently after 1945. The historical overview shows that 'oil did not acquire strategic security dimension until World War II' (Hudson, 1996: 332). After the war, oil was cheap and production capacities could be easily increased whenever needed. Throughout the 1960's, the demand for oil increased remarkably as the post-war economies started to recover, resulting in a huge demand for oil. So, the western economies' oil consumption increased from 18.7 million barrels per day in 1960 to 39 million in 1970 and the Gulf region had the ability and capacity to provide the required supply (Gause, 2004: 17). The US's own economy also developed and its oil consumption increased in the period between 1980 and 2007, from 17.1 million barrels per day to 20.7 and hence the US accounts, in 2007, for 24% of the global oil consumption, which means that the US is the largest oil consumer in the world while it accounts for only 10% of the world's oil production (Crane, 2009: 8). Notwithstanding, however, the American energy situation has changed recently. The recent shale discoveries, the domestic increase in oil and gas production, and increasing domestic production from oil sands are projected to reduce American oil imports from the gulf region to minimal rates. According to recent statistics, due to the above developments there will be a dramatic decline in American oil imports from "over 12 Mb/d, or 60% of demand, in 2005 to just 1 Mb/d, or less than 10% of demand in 2035." However, China's oil imports are projected to reach almost "14 Mb/d, or 75% of demand", thereby overtaking the US as the world's largest consumer by 2029 (BP Energy Outlook, 2014: 39). Moreover, China's dependence on hydrocarbons will

increase substantially. Recent estimates noted that Chinese demand will grow from 8 Mb/d (2013) to 18 Mb/d in 2035 (BP Energy Outlook, 2014: 27).

The American economy, under the first term of the George W. Bush administration, had imported from the Gulf region roughly 2.3 million barrels of oil per day in 2002 and the majority of the imported oil came from Saudi Arabia (69%), from Iraq (20%), from Kuwait (10%) and from Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (less than 1%). Overall, the Gulf accounted for 22 % of US net oil imports and 11% of U.S. oil demand in 2002 (US Energy Information Administration, 2003). Amongst other smaller Gulf monarchies, Saudi Arabia has been of central importance to the United States as it has the highest levels of oil production and abundant oil reserves; recent statistics show that Saudi Arabia exported roughly 1.4 million barrels per day to the United States during 2012, accounting for 16% of the US's total crude oil imports. Therefore Saudi Arabia still holds the second rank, after Canada, in exporting petroleum to the United States. Moreover, Saudi Arabia remains the largest oil producer and exporter in the world as it holds approximately one-fifth of the world's crude oil reserves (US Energy Information Administration, 2013).

Furthermore, Saudi Arabia has considerable capacity to increase or decrease oil production at any time, which gives it significant control over oil prices. Consequently, the stability of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region constitutes a real interest for US foreign policy (Kemp and Saunders, 2003: 9). Cordesman rightly points out that Saudi Arabia's importance is two-fold; on the one hand, its prominent role in stabilizing the oil prices, as it has huge capacity for oil production; and the United States depends on it as an essential energy provider since the oil embargo in 1974 and as a reliable partner for the Gulf's regional security on the other hand (Cordesman, 2000: 14). He also asserts the continuity of the US-Saudi bilateral relations, which have developed through many decades. Hence, Saudi Arabia has been perceived as an inescapable element in the US's successful security strategy in the Gulf region and the bilateral relations have been successful in this general context (Cordesman, 2000: 14). As Kaiser and Ottaway put it: 'Oil and security did provide the basis for a fruitful relationship from the mid-1970s through the Persian Gulf War in 1991' (Kaiser and Ottaway, 2002).

Additionally, the US interest in the Gulf is not confined to oil resources, but rather it has a definite interest in maintaining permanent access to the Gulf oil resources at *reasonable prices.* The US began to put the security of the Gulf region at the forefront of its priorities in foreign policy, not only because it imports 11% of its oil demand from the Gulf region but also because of the effects that oil prices could have on the US economy. Soaring oil prices would create serious concerns in the US economy since it is accustomed to low cost gasoline and therefore any problem with oil production or transportation would adversely impact the US economy (Kemp and Saunders, 2003: 8).

President Carter made this clear when he said: 'The Soviet effort to dominate Afghanistan has brought Soviet military forces to within 300 miles of the Indian Ocean and close to the Strait of Hormuz, a waterway through which most of the world's oil must flow' and he considered that this 'poses a grave threat to the free movement of Middle East oil' (Carter, 1980). This fear continued to shape American foreign policy under President Bill Clinton as he clearly asserted, in his Security Strategy for the Middle East, that 'Our paramount national security interest in the Middle East is maintaining the unhindered flow of oil' from the Gulf to the international markets (Department of Defense, 1995: 6). The continuity of this objective was further underlined in a White House document released in October 1998, in which it explicitly emphasized the necessity of maintaining free access to the Gulf's oil resources, and vowed to continue the U.S. 'commitment and resolve in the Persian Gulf' (The White House, 1998: 54). Moreover, the Bush administration's Quadrennial Defense Review report, which was released in September 2001, continued to reaffirm that 'the United States and its allies and friends will continue to depend on the energy resources of the Middle East' and therefore it envisioned oil protection through ensuring military access to the region as the foremost security priority in US policy towards the Middle East (Quadrennial Report, 2001: 4).

Of equal importance, the oil is transferred from the Gulf region to the international trade markets through maritime passages such as the Strait of Hormuz, Bab el Mandeb and the Suez Canal. A massive 90% of exported Gulf oil in 2000 was transited through the Strait of Hormuz' a passage that connects the Gulf with the Arabian Sea. Therefore the world economy could not afford the closure of this chokepoint. (McMillan, 2003: 18) Conspicuously, the recent figures show that the Strait of Hormuz has great

importance due to the oil daily transition over the strait that reached to 17 million barrels a day in 2011, which constituted approximately 20 percent of the international oil trade (US Energy Information Administration, 2012). As such, maintaining and ensuring the free flow of oil across the Strait continues to be a significant priority in US policy and this has been emphasized by a US official, who said in a statement before the senate Foreign Relations Committee: 'The unimpeded flow of oil through the Strait of Hormuz is a vital interest and critical to the economic health of the Western world' (Armacost, 1987: 11), and therefore it is in the US and the world's economies' interests to keep the lifeline of the Strait of Hormuz flowing, without any threats of shipping disruption that could occur due to various actions such as the placement of mines or anti-ship missiles or any probable attack on the local ports (Korb, 2005: 5).

Compounding this, the Strait of Hormuz, the Bab el Mandeb, and the Suez Canal are not dedicated to transiting oil only. Rather, they are equally important to enable the United States to move military forces in case of a crisis, and to deploy forces, as happened in the operations implemented in Afghanistan in which the Indian Ocean was used to deploy US forces. So, these waterways and airways have supported the United States' military strategy in the Gulf region (McMillan, 2003: 19), which indicates that the Gulf region is valuable not only in its oil reserves but, in strategic terms, for projecting US military capabilities and military operations like launching air and missile strikes and in order to reinforce and resupply troops and to conduct maritime military operations. As an example, the US has established agreements with Bahrain to harbor the headquarters of the American fifth fleet in the region (Korb, 2005: 5). Although closing these routes might not happen in light of the prominent American military presence in the region, some analysts point out that maintaining a robust military force is essential to avoid any actions by Iran that could hinder the shipping through the Strait of Hormuz by using mines and targeting ships by cruise missiles. (McMillan, 2003: 19)

Giving the strategic importance of the Gulf oil and its contribution to the growth of the US and international economy, the US has pursued a policy of securing the oil producing countries of the Gulf and projecting the US military presence in the Gulf region to inhibit any regional power from dominating this valuable region (McMillan, 2003: 13; Kemp and Saunders, 2003: 9). Yet, this commitment has been translated into

policy, as when President Carter stressed the US's role in protecting Gulf security: 'We must call on the best that is in us to preserve the security of this crucial region' (Carter, 1980). Moreover, he explicitly pledged to protect Gulf security:

> Let our position be absolutely clear: An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force. (Carter, 1980)

Equally important, the policy of preventing any hegemony or control over the region has continued to be a major concern, as articulated in the United States' Middle East Security Strategy in May 1995: 'Control over Gulf oil fields would thus enable a potential adversary to try to blackmail the United States and its allies in Europe and East Asia' (Department of Defense, 1995: 6). Simultaneously, President Bush reiterated the importance of the Gulf oil resources in American strategy and in the State of the Union address in 2007 he puts it bluntly:

> Extending hope and opportunity depends on a stable supply of energy that keeps America's economy running... For too long our nation has been dependent on foreign oil. And this dependence leaves us more vulnerable to hostile regimes, and to terrorists who could cause huge disruptions of oil shipments, and raise the price of oil, and do great harm to our economy. (Bush, 2007)

Having made this point, as argued previously, the US dependence on oil remained significant and evident in the 1990s and 2000s. Western Europe remained dependent on Middle East oil. Therefore a closer look at the global economy shows that the economic linkage between the US economy and the world economy is important in a number of ways. As Telhami states, 'The oil market is seamless and is largely driven by supply and demand' (Telhami, 2002) and is bound up with the global market. Even if the US reduced its imported oil from the Gulf region the price of oil inside the United States would continue to be defined by international shifts of supply and demand and therefore any abrupt fall or decline in global oil supply would raise the oil prices and consequently would disrupt US economy activity, causing a reduction in US economic output irrespective of the amount of oil that the United States imports (Crane, 2009:

xiv).

To illustrate this in US thinking, the United States Security Strategy (1995) stated:

> The importance of Gulf oil to the United States must be understood in its global context. Oil is traded on a worldwide market; a blockage of Gulf supplies or a large increase in prices would immediately resonate throughout the international market, driving up energy costs to consumers everywhere. (Department of Defense, 1995: 6)

This was further asserted in the National Security Strategy released in 1998, in which it is stated that:

> The United States has profound interests at stake in the health of the global economy. Our future prosperity depends upon a stable international financial system and robust global growth. Economic stability and growth are essential for the spread of free markets and their integration into the global economy. (The White House, 1998: iv)

Moreover, the same Security Strategy mentioned that 'Previous oil shocks and the Gulf War underscore the strategic importance of the region and show the impact that an interruption of oil supplies can have on the world's economy' (The White House, 1998: 54). For these reasons the US policy of giving priority to Gulf security has remained unchanged as a fundamental factor in its policy towards the region. The Gulf region is the only producing area that contains surplus production with the capacity to meet any substantial demand for oil in the world market and therefore the US places great importance on Gulf security. The continued importance of the gulf region maintained a common sense consensus inside the American bureaucracy on the US commitment to providing Gulf security and the necessity to ensure the security of the Gulf oil countries and to prevent any potential hegemony on this significant area (Korb, 2005: 3). Noticeably, oil played a central role in the US's military intervention in the Gulf war in 1990, by which Kuwait sovereignty was restored from Iraqi occupation - because the US administration viewed Iraq's occupation as a threat to Saudi Arabia and its oil resources which, entailed its intervention (Kemp and Saunders, 2003: 9).

In sum, oil has ensured the Gulf region provides a crucial contribution to the entire world economy and Western industrial economies that depend heavily on oil to power their economies. Gulf oil production, along with the American and western dependence on it, became a core concern to the US after 1945 and therefore the American decision-makers have continued to pursue a policy that contributed to preserving the region's security and stability even through direct military intervention in the Gulf region where the US interests had been perceived to be at stake, as happened in 1990 and 2003.

2.2 Changes in the Gulf Regional Environment

The Gulf has encompassed different political and strategic episodes that have contributed to the US's evolving policy towards the region. This includes the British withdrawal from the Gulf in 1971, the Iranian Revolution of 1979, the Iraq-Iran war in 1980-1988, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and the Arab-Israeli conflict. The following sections examine how these events affected the directions of the US-Gulf policy.

2.2.1 British Withdrawal from the Gulf Region in 1971: US Policy of 'Leading from Behind'

Historically, the Gulf was a British protectorate in the period from the 19th century until 1970s, but when Britain decided to give up its role and withdraw from the Gulf region, the US involvement in the region accelerated (Cook, 2012: 2). Although the United States' security role in the Gulf region started with a low American presence in 1970s, this increased remarkably in the 1980s and 1990s (Cook, 2012: 3) in the wake of Harold Wilson government's decision, in January 1968, to withdraw British forces from east of the Suez Canal by 1971. Each of the United States, Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia became the key pillars of the Gulf region's balance of power. Nevertheless, the military balance of power was remarkably altered because of the disturbances that the region witnessed, represented by the Iranian Revolution in 1979, the Iraq-Iran war in 1980, the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait in 1990, and the 'Iraqi freedom operation' in 2003 and as a result, both Saudi Arabia and Iran have risen as the prominent military powers in the Gulf

region (Wallace, 2005: 13).

The US embroilment in the Vietnam War (1965-1973), along with American public opinion that refused any international military commitments, resonated in that period with the idea of a reduced US direct military presence in the Gulf region. But the British withdrawal created a vacuum in the region. Since the US was unwilling to take up Britain's role in providing the Gulf States with defense and security, as an alternative to direct American military involvement in the Gulf, the Nixon administration (in power from January 1969) boosted its relations with regional powers to provide Gulf security. After extensive discussion, Nixon came up with a policy that preferred dealing with both Iran and Saudi Arabia as staunch regional proxies powers to assist the US in preserving Gulf security. The new strategy has been called the 'Twin Pillar' policy, in which the US opted to rely on Iran and Saudi Arabia to provide the Gulf's security rather than depending exclusively on Iran (Gause, 2004: 20). The 'Twin Pillar' policy was solidified by large amounts of US arms that were sold to Saudi Arabia and Iran. It is worth noting that oil revenues had enabled both countries to build up their military forces and therefore arms sales increased to Iran from $103.6 million in 1970 to $552.7 million in 1972 and to Saudi Arabia from $15.8 million in 1970 to $312.4 Million in 1972 (Gause, 2004: 21).

Noticeably, the Gulf region has experienced, after the British withdrawal, different regional attempts and countermoves to dominate the region; in 1970s and 1980s, respectively. Iran is a particular case in point, which threatened the Gulf under the Iranian revolution by which Iran threatened to spread its revolution to the neighboring Gulf States. Therefore, the United States did begin to increase its direct military presence in the Gulf region with Jimmy Carter declaring, in November 1979, that the Gulf as a vital interest of the United States. This resulted in the creation of the 'Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force' to defend the Arab Gulf States (Yaphe, 2003: 38). In short, the British military withdrawal from the Gulf region upset the balance of power in the region and created a security vacuum that was not filled by a direct US military role. Instead, US policy relied on both Saudi Arabia and Iran as proxies to preserve the security of the region and restore the balance of power that was upset by the Iranian revolution in 1979.

2.2.2 The Iranian Revolution in 1979

The Iranian role in the Gulf region fundamentally shifted and the balance of power changed remarkably when Iran underwent a revolution in 1979, which obliged the US to reconfigure its policy in the region. The US cut off its relations with Iran because of the 'hostage crisis' in which Iranian students seized the US Embassy in Tehran and detained the American employees inside the Embassy as hostages for 444 days. Concurrently, the regional developments had further worsened, with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, the success of which would have meant that Soviet military forces would be within 600 miles of the Gulf region. Consequently, Saudi Arabia became the US's main strategic ally in the Gulf region (Kemp and Saunders, 2003: 10) and since that time, Hajjar mentions, 'the U.S. military involvement in the Gulf became more robust, involved, and gradually expanded' (Hajjar, 2002: 17). US relations with Saudi Arabia developed further as the US sold military arms to Saudi Arabia between 1974 and 1991 worth roughly $60 billion. The basic US goal of this close relationship with Saudi Arabia was to strengthen it against any Soviet threat to the region; counter Iranian influence and prevent any threat to oil flows. The US took other practical steps to confirm its military presence in the Gulf to meet threats and therefore the US had deployed, by March 1979 and upon Saudi request, an Airborne Warning and Control Systems aircraft (AWACS). (Guase, 2004: 25). Saudi Arabia refused the large deployment of American military forces on its land, though it accepted, along with other Gulf States, a small US naval force to be stationed in the Gulf. However, this situation changed after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, after which a large scale US personnel deployment remained in Saudi Arabia between the period 1991 until 2003 and Saudi Arabia allowed the United States and Britain to use its air space to apply a no fly zone in southern Iraq (Kemp and Saunders, 2003: 10).

Indeed, the Iranian revolution that toppled the Shah regime in 1979 shifted Iran from being a reliable, close ally to the United States during the Cold War competition with the Soviet Union to a threatening foe that threatened US interests in the Gulf region. Obviously, the November 1979 hostage crises that continued until January 1981 worsened this estrangement and hostility in the relations between the United States and Iran that continues to the present. These developments meant the non-efficacy of the 'Twin Pillars' strategy, and as a result the United States had little choice but to opt for

the policy route, which relied on Saudi Arabia and the other small Arab Gulf states as a means by which the security of the Gulf region could be maintained. So, the Iranian revolution resulted in direct American involvement in the Gulf military affairs during the 1980's and the Gulf War of 1990-1; a role that has been augmented and continues to the present day.

However, after the end of the hostage crisis in January 1981 the US recognized that Soviet Union was not further proceeding beyond Afghanistan and Iran and therefore American interests were more secure. Consequently, US relations with Iran took the form of a containment policy that aimed to watch Iranian activities in the region and as a tool to spread out the regional stability and security (Hunter, 2010: 20). Thus, the Iranian revolution in 1979 upended Iran from being a key ally to the United States and turned them into a target for a dual containment policy that was codified under the Clinton administration. The goal of a dual containment policy, as Hudson mentions, was 'to topple the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq and reform the regime in Iran' (Hudson, 1996: 340). Noticeably, the Bush administration continued the containment policy of the Clinton administration. As Pollack points out, the Bush foreign policy towards the Gulf region has much continuity with the Clinton administration policies, particularly with the US policy in regard to both Iraq and Iran (Pollack, 2002).

Given this contextual situation, the American policy of securing the Gulf has been paralleled by the Arab Gulf States' fears and obsessions regarding Iranian intentions as it threatens to destabilize the Gulf States in an attempt to dominate the region and these misgivings and concerns have been galvanized by Iran's occupation of the three United Arab Emirates islands (greater/lesser Tunb and Abu Musa) (Cook, 2012: 15). Moreover, the GCC states have been concerned about the Iranian advanced ballistic missile that is estimated to reach between 150 and 5500 kilometers (Cook, 2012: 17). To address the GCC concerns and preserve its interests against any probable Iranian aggression after the Iranian revolution in 1979, the US continued to commence some procedures to enhance the regional security in the Gulf through increasing its naval activity in Bahrain, which had persisted since 1948; it initiated an agreement with Oman, in which the US was permitted limited use of a military facility, and it established a Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force. The US objective behind these military measures was to tacitly back the Arab Gulf States through forging, informally, a stable security system

in the Gulf region through developing American power projection although the military forces were working at a time 'over the horizon' and kept at a distance from direct military engagement in the Gulf region (Hunter, 2010: 18). This was because the US wanted to avoid stirring up a wide range of criticism of US 'imperialism.' Nonetheless, this situation had changed after the Gulf war in 1990, so that large numbers of US soldiers remained in Saudi Arabia bases and Qatar has been the major place for American military forces' deployment in the Gulf region following the 9/11 attacks and before the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 (Hunter, 2010: 19).

In summary, the Iranian revolution that replaced Mohammad Riza Pahlavi (the Shah) by Ayatollah Khomeini changed the US approaches to the Gulf region and it obviously afforded the United States the opportunity to establish a foothold in the Gulf region (Morris, 2002). With this revolution, the US had lost its preeminent ally in the Gulf region and this situation has been complicated because the new regime which emerged was hostile to the US and this was accompanied by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which led President Jimmy Carter to declare that any Soviet threat to Gulf oil would be treated as requiring American military action. Carter went further with the creation of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF) in order to defend Gulf security (Kemp and Saunders, 2003: 3). The Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force became the U.S. Central Command in 1983 (CENTCOM) and its mission was to 'deter the Soviets and their surrogates from further expansion and, if necessary, defend against it' (Yaphe, 2003: 58).

2.2.3 Iraq-Iran War 1980-1988

The Iraq-Iran war threatened the United States interests in the Gulf region and unsettled the GCC, alike. Indeed, the use of ballistic missiles and chemical weapons by Iraq had triggered deep concerns about the development of weapons in the Gulf region for both the United States and the GCC states. Therefore, the Arab Gulf States established, in 1981, the Gulf Cooperation Council organization (GCC) as a defensive measure to overcome the fear of missile proliferation (Kahwaji, 2004: 53). Correspondingly, the United States tacitly supported Iraq and even fought Iranian naval vessels and destroyed half of them through skirmishes in the year 1987 (Katzman, 2003: 10).

Moreover, the United States, as well as the GCC states, supported Iraq in its war with Iran because Iran had declared its commitment to export its revolution into the neighboring GCC countries and support the 'Shiite' communities residing inside the GCC states (Kahwaji, 2004: 53).

In response to Iranian behaviors, the United States' military role in the Gulf region increased during the Iran war with Iraq through providing Iraq with assistance to preventing Iran from emerging as hegemonic, though the US presence was offshore and not positioned directly in the Gulf, with no bases and limited access rights with Bahrain and Oman only (Yaphe, 2003: 38). The US fostered relations with the Saddam Hussein regime through western supplies of arms that were provided to Iraq in an attempt to counter a hostile Iran that was perceived by the US as a threatening factor to the Gulf's regional stability (see Phythian, 1996). By the end of the 1980s, Iraq emerged with military capability and Iran became weak after it was defeated in its war with Iraq, and it therefore was unable to balance Iraqi power. Thus, ironically Iraq emerged in the Gulf region as the new hegemon, but the US's friendly relations with the new hegemon did not persist. In 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait and again upset the balance of power in the Gulf region. The US formed an international coalition and interfered militarily to restore Gulf security and stability (Agom, 1993: 15).

2.2.4 The Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait in 1990

When Iraq invaded Kuwait on 2 August 1990, the security of the region was tenuous and the United States seized upon this opportunity to establish a foothold and a prominent military presence in the Gulf region through close relations and cooperation with the GCC states. This close cooperation between the United States and the GCC states had clearly manifested itself when the Arab Gulf States demanded American protection to protect their oil tankers and the maritime passages that were used to transfer Gulf oil (Kahwaji, 2004: 53). Undoubtedly, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait motivated the US to further strengthen its military presence in the region to defend its interests and this policy was evident in the 1991 US National Security Strategy in which it was stated:

The reversal of Iraq's aggression against Kuwait was a watershed event. Nonetheless, our basic policy toward the region shows powerful continuity. American strategic concerns still include promoting stability and the security of our friends, maintaining a free flow of oil, curbing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles, discouraging destabilizing conventional arms sales, countering terrorism and encouraging a peace process that brings about reconciliation between Israel and the Arab states as well as between Palestinians and Israel in a manner consonant with our enduring commitment to Israel's security. (The White House, 1991: 10)

Moreover, the US goal of inhibiting any power from gaining leverage over the Gulf region was asserted in the Pentagon's, February 18, 1992 draft of the Defense Planning Guidance for the Fiscal Years 1994-1999 in which it mentions:

As demonstrated by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, it remains fundamentally important to prevent a hegemon or alignment of powers from dominating the region. This pertains especially to the Arabian Peninsula. Therefore, we must continue to play a strong role through enhanced deterrence and improved cooperative security. (The New York Times, 1992)

This policy was asserted further in the 1998 National Security Strategy, as it states: 'The United States will not allow a hostile power to dominate any region of critical importance to our interests' (The White House, 1998: 5). Consequently, the US embarked on military action to protect oil-rich Gulf States from Iraqi domination through gathering supporters from both Arab and western countries (Kemp and Saunders, 2003: 9). As a result, the United States deployed in the Gulf 500,000 troops along with 200,000 troops from 33 countries to restore Kuwaiti independence from Iraq in Operation 'Desert Storm'. The Arab Gulf States provided the United States with essential cooperation. Iraq was defeated and Kuwait was liberated (Katzman, 2003: 2, 10).

All in all, the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait afforded the US the opportunity to increase its military presence in the region through signing defense agreements with the GCC states in which military bases have been created (Darvishi, 2010: 171). Yet, the US tendency

to increase its military presence in the Gulf region coincided with the GCC's clear position in the wake of the Gulf war as the Arab Gulf States had shown increased readiness to accept a prominent US military presence that was unlikely before the Gulf War. Thereby, they accepted a greater US role in the Gulf's regional security (Agom, 1993: 30). As Iraq had upset the balance of power and threatened the US's interests, the dual containment of both Iran and Iraq was the key US strategy of countering security threats in the Gulf region until the terrorist attacks in September 2001 (Sokolsky, 2003: 3). The National Security Strategy of 1998 clearly set out the goal of containing Iraq: 'our goal is containing the threat Saddam Hussein poses to Iraq's neighbors' (The White House, 1998: 52). Further, as Hajar mentions, the United States' presence in the Gulf region was expanded after the Gulf war because of the United Nations' sanctions that were implemented on Iraq and the strategy of containing both Iraq and Iran; both envisaged as rogue states (Hajar, 2002: 4).

2.2.5 The Arab-Israeli Conflict

In the wake of the Arab-Israeli war in October 1973, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates announced an embargo of oil sales and shipments to the western countries (Gause, 2004: 21). The GCC oil embargo and the decision to cut oil production by 5% per month caused upheaval in the world's oil markets and resulted in vastly increased oil prices - from less than $3 per barrel in the summer of 1973 to $11 per barrel by January 1974. Bahrain also terminated the American small naval force there in October 1973. In light of these developments, and in order to resolve this issue, the US exerted pressure through the Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, in negotiations with Egypt and Israel to end the Arab-Israeli war. Kissinger tried, during his visits to Riyadh, to convince the Saudi leadership to end the embargo and concurrently some American officials, including Kissinger himself, had threatened to take certain actions if the embargo continued: using force to end the embargo was tacitly one of the options (Gause, 2004: 22).

Eventually both American diplomacy and threats resulted in the decision to abandon the policy of cutting oil production by 5% per month in late December 1973 and the GCC embargo on oil sales to the US was ended in March 1974 (Gauze, 2004: 22).

Obviously, there was the fact that the GCC had now arisen, with huge wealth from oil revenues and their position and importance in regional politics as well as the world economy had become clear. The oil embargo had resulted in negative effects on the American economy. Therefore, Washington decided to reinforce its relations with the Gulf region and certain measures were taken as it initiated military cooperation with Saudi Arabia, provided it with increased arms sales and established a mutual economic commission in 1974 (Gause, 2004: 23).

Indeed, the US continued its support for Israel and the American role in the Arab-Israeli conflict in general has been perceived as a prominent setback in achieving any security arrangements in the region and even as adversely impacting the US's interests (O'Reilly, 2008: 4). Furthermore, it became evident that there is a prominent link between the Palestinian issue and the Gulf's security, such that the US's serious involvement to solve the conflict will enhance its interests in the region (Hunter, 2010: xvi). Simultaneously, as Cordesman rightly argues, the Arab-Israeli peace process is an essential factor in achieving Gulf Security and preserving the US's existence in the Gulf region. (Cordesman, 2000: 5) He further asserts that the US should practice extensive efforts to settle the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians in order to convince the Gulf States that it is working hard to solve the issue between the two parties (Cordesman, 2000: 8).

Hence, The American policy-makers become convinced that solving the conflict would enhance not only the Palestinians situation but rather help Israel, itself, through ensuring its security and well-being. Ultimately this would motivate Arabs, including the Gulf States, to normalize their relations with Israel. This thinking was asserted in the 1998 National Security Strategy which stated:

> An historic transformation has taken place in the political landscape of the Middle East: peace agreements are taking hold, requiring concerted implementation efforts. The United States—as an architect and sponsor of the peace process—has a clear national interest in seeing the process deepen and widen to include all Israel's neighbors. (The White House, 1998: 52)

It also stated:

The United States has enduring interests in pursuing a just, lasting and comprehensive Middle East peace, ensuring the security and well-being of Israel, helping our Arab friends provide for their security, and maintaining the free flow of oil at reasonable prices. Our strategy reflects those interests. (The White House, 1998: 51)

The same objectives were reiterated and emphasized in the US National Security Strategy for year 2000 (see The White House, 2000: 73). Noticeably, the US National Security Strategy released in September 2002 reflected the above concerns. It stated that the conflict between Israel and Palestine is significant due to the US's strong relations with Israel and other important Arab states and because of the region's position and importance in US global strategy. The document revealed, also, that the US is committed to a Palestinian state living peacefully side by side with Israel and to achieve this purpose, the US will urge the concerned parties to play their role to reach justice with an overarching settlement (National Security Strategy, 2002: 9). It unveiled also that the US encouraged Israeli governments to step up to solve the conflict with the Palestinians through allowing an independent Palestinian state to emerge and to withdraw from Palestinian territory that it held prior to September 28, 2000. Moreover, the document called on Israel to stop its settlement actions in the occupied Palestinian lands in order to achieve peace and security (National Security Strategy, 2002: 10).

Nevertheless, as the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians continued to deteriorate and as a response to the American disengagement in resolving the conflict between Israel and Palestine, Saudi Arabian diplomacy moved forward to complain about the George W. Bush policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict through a letter in August 2001, delivered by Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to Washington, Prince 'Bandar bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz', in which a harsh message was conveyed from Saudi leader king Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud (he was crown prince at that time, but considered a *de facto* ruler because of the incapacitation of his half-brother, king Fahad) to President George W. Bush. Prince Bandar delivered the letter to Condoleezza Rice, National Security Adviser and Colin L. Powell, Secretary of State. The letter stated bluntly: 'From now on, we will protect our national interests, regardless of where America's interests lie in the region' (Kaiser and Ottaway, 2002).

The Saudi message was a shock to President George W, Bush and there were extensive attempts to calm the Saudi leader, which culminated in a letter from President George W. Bush to the Saudi king in which President Bush declared the US's willingness to participate effectively in the peace process and support the two-state solution and thereby this turnabout was acceptable for Saudis as Bush indicated the establishment of a viable Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza strip (Kaiser and Ottaway, 2002). George W. Bush, in 2002, stated: 'In the situation the Palestinian people will grow more and more miserable. My vision is two states, living side by side in peace and security' (Bush, 2002a). He went further and called on Israel to end the occupation as he said: 'The Israeli occupation that began in 1967 will be ended through a settlement negotiated between the parties, based on U.N. Resolutions 242 and 338, with Israeli withdrawal to secure and recognize borders' (Bush, 2002a).

Thus, it can be gleaned from the above analysis that there is a general perception that solving the conflict contributes to enhancing Gulf security and this can be demonstrated in many ways. American interests in the Gulf have become an important element in enhancing the US-Gulf relations. The oil embargo in 1973 that came as a GCC response to the American policy towards the Arab-Israeli war serves as evidence. Saudi diplomacy played a prominent role in pushing the US as a sponsor of the peace process to play a serious role in negotiations between the two parties and apparently Saudi Arabia was trying to take advantage of US interests in the gulf and its strong relations with Washington to apply more pressure on the US administration to exert more effort and push Israel to resume the peace negotiations. However, The US policy of maintaining good relations with the Gulf States required some maneuvering on the part of the US. The US had to begin to make public efforts to achieve a comprehensive settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict and for example, George W. Bush proclaimed in the fall of 2001 the US vision to solve the issue through two states living side by side.

More broadly, the US policy officials recognized the correlation between the Arab-Israeli conflict and the security of the Gulf region. Basically, the GCC regimes' stability and continuity in governance was deemed essential in preserving and maintaining the US interests in the region. Therefore, American efforts to solve this conflict would satisfy the gulf rulers through showing an active American role in the Arab world's most longstanding issue and this will contribute to reducing the Gulf

States' embarrassment towards the issue as it maintains robust relations with Washington, which plays an effective role in supporting Israel, especially in the military realm for reasons rooted in American society (domestic pressure from Jewish lobbies and emotional ideology) and politics (long term American commitment to protect Israel as it envisaged the model of democratic state in the region). Indeed, Arab public opinion perceives the American policy as biased and anti-Arab and this perception no more can be ignored because the gulf rulers could come under increasing internal pressure to reduce or eliminate the American military presence should the US's biased policy persist and the violence in Palestine escalate. The flow of oil from the gulf to the international markets is not facing immediate or short-term threat, but this situation in the long term could change if the US continues its inactive role in achieving peace between the Palestinians and the Israelis (see Hajjar, 2002).

Moreover, constant American political and military support to Israel was one of the justifications and catalysts that urged Al-Qaeda in the gulf region to antagonize and target the American presence in the region. So, Al Qaeda and its sympathizers expressed their resentment of the US position regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict and continued deterioration in the attempted peace settlement could motivate radical extremists, with potential support from Iran, which had expressed its commitment to helping the Palestinians, to target American forces or facilities in the gulf in addition to the probability of fomenting violent riots and plots against the gulf governments themselves, which have prominent relations with Washington. For these reasons, the American policy has seen the peace negotiations between the two parties, along with the GCC countries' support in this regard, as an important objective that would contribute to enhancing US interests and gulf security. As the violence escalated between the Palestinians and Israelis in the early months of 2002, and as the US was rallying the GCC countries' support in the war against Saddam Hussein, which required some progress on the Arab Israeli conflict, Bush acted by sponsoring a resolution at the UN Security Council in March 2002 that called for the establishment of a Palestinian state (see Gause, 2004).

Similarly, this issue continues to form essential part of Obama administration policy as he considers peace process one of key pillars in US policy towards the region. A large portion of the President's speech in 2011 was devoted to the Israel-Palestinian conflict.

He renewed his push for a two-state solution and acknowledged that "a lasting peace will involve two states for two peoples" declaring that "The dream of a Jewish and democratic state cannot be fulfilled with permanent occupation". Moreover, he reaffirmed the long-held idea that a future Palestinian state should be based on borders that existed before the 1967 war. He states clearly: "We believe the borders of Israel and Palestine should be based on the 1967 lines with mutually agreed swaps, so that secure and recognized borders are established for both states. The Palestinian people must have the right to govern themselves, and reach their full potential, in a sovereign and contiguous state". (The White House, 2011)

3. US Security Strategy in the Gulf: Historical Overview

3.1 Changing the Guard

The Gulf region has been characterized by a perennial cycle of instability that motivated the external powers to play a vital role in securing this region, which is of particular strategic importance. So, the precarious Gulf region has emerged as prominent area in regard to international security concerns and subsequently it has been subject to continuous external protection (Ghaffar, 2012: 2). This situation has prompted Michael Kraig to state that preserving the balance of power in the Gulf 'would probably be impossible without substantial contributions by external powers' (Kraig, 2004: 150). The UK was the key guarantor of Gulf security but it relinquished this role in 1971, and therefore the need for new, efficient, security system has emerged markedly after the British disengagement from the region. Initially, the United States was not anxious to engage in the Gulf region directly as it wanted 'to avoid a costly and unwelcome forward presence in the region' (Rathmell et al, 2003: 2). Therefore, it has controlled Gulf regional security and preserved the balance of power through supporting local partners, or as Michael Kraig calls it 'local hegemony' in the region to bring stability in lieu of direct American military involvement.

Thus, the US has shown increased willingness to undertake the role of the Gulf guard and this has been asserted by Abdul Ghaffar, who states that: 'The Eisenhower Doctrine

of 1957 encapsulated American strategic intentions to fill the power vacuum left by the British' (Ghaffar, 2012: 2). The United States then pursued different approaches to fulfill the objective of maintaining Gulf regional stability. For example, the Nixon doctrine in 1969 offered US allies the opportunity to benefit from US security assistance and therefore the 'Twin Pillars' strategy, which depended on Saudi Arabia and Iran, emerged in the 1970s as a mechanism to preserve and enhance US interests in the region as well as providing the Gulf with regional security. However, this policy has failed because of the Iranian revolution in 1979 that ousted the pro-American shah from power. Hence, transformations in US relations with Iran have led the US to restore the power equilibrium in the region through intelligence and financial assistance to Iraq during its war with Iran in the 1980s, and obviously the American goal of supporting Iraq was to prevent Iran from emerging as a dominant power in the region, and thereby threatening GCC states' stability (Kraig, 2004: 147).

This was followed by the Carter doctrine in 1980, which perceived the Gulf as one of the 'vital interests of the United States of America' and therefore it publicly declared its willingness to defend the Gulf militarily if threatened or occupied by outside powers. These doctrines paved the way to increase US arms sales to the Gulf region during the 1970s and ultimately increased the US's direct military presence in the GCC states' lands, reaching to its zenith in the wake of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 (United States Senate, 2012: 7). Nonetheless, the United States' reliance on Iraq reached its end when Iraq attacked a GCC state (Kuwait) in August 1990, and this prompted US direct involvement in Gulf security affairs through a huge troop deployment and security cooperation with GCC states (Rathmell et al, 2003: 3). As a result, the US followed a 'Dual Containment' policy, in which it kept a continuous eye on both Iraq and Iran, which traditionally threatened Gulf security and through this policy, which lasted for more than a decade during 1990s, the US 'had to provide the balance of power against both Iraq and Iran'. The implementation of this strategy meant that the United States has no option but to remain directly engaged in the Gulf region to provide the desired balance of power and contain both countries (Hunter, 2010: 22).

The primary objective of the containment policy was to prevent Saddam Hussein from rebuilding Iraq's military capabilities and acquiring weapons of mass destruction, thereby threatening and intimidating his neighbors in the region (Pollack, 2002). This

policy has achieved relative peace in the region, although it does not have a structured security system and therefore the security situation has been characterized by instability as it has been controlled by the US military presence in the Gulf region and by the unwillingness of the regional powers to seriously defy US policies. (Hunter, 2010: 22). Nonetheless, the United States' strategies of depending on the 'twin pillars' policy, supporting Iraq during the 1980s, and on the 'dual containment' strategy during the 1990s against Iraq and Iran, all proved its deficiencies and they were unsuccessful in maintaining and preserving Gulf security; therefore, the United States was obliged to intervene in the region three times, in Iran in 1987-1988, and in Iraq in 1991 and 2003 (Pollack, 2003a).

The United States has identified, over several decades, its security strategy components and its long-term interests in the Gulf region. So, US security policy towards the Gulf region since the Gulf war in 1991 has been built upon three foundations: (a) maintaining unimpeded access to oil at *reasonable prices*; (b) preventing any attempts, by a hostile power, to dominate the oil-rich Gulf states, and finally, (c) the US's readiness and tendency to use military force decisively if needed in order to advance and protect the US's long-standing interests in the region (Russell, 2003: 24). Hajjar concentrates on the Middle East peace process, ensuring the security of Israel and allied Arab states, but he still maintains that free access to oil resources is a main objective of US security policy in the Gulf (Hajjar, 2002: 4).

In short, the US's prevalent security posture in the Gulf region from the Gulf War in 1990 until the 9/11 terrorists attacks, was embodied in the policy of dual containment for both Iraq and Iran, which was codified under President Clinton's administration. In this period, the US's main objective was to maintain the free flow of the Gulf's oil, at stable prices, and the general security situation in the Gulf region has been characterized by reliance on the United States' military presence in the GCC countries' lands (Sokolsky, 2003: 3). Over the decades, this strategic aim led the US to become more and more directly involved in Gulf Security.

3.2 Gulf Security and US Policy Directions Prior to September 11, 2001

In an attempt to maintain and protect the US's identified interests in the Gulf region, the US followed different means, including: (a) forward deployment of forces; (b) establishing a US military presence; (c) building up military bases in the GCC states; and (d) presenting military aid and arms sales to the GCC countries. Indeed, US military engagement has increased systematically through various developments, beginning with President Franklin D. Roosevelt's meeting with Saudi Arabian leader King Abdulaziz Al Saud on February 14, 1945, the Nixon, Carter and Reagan doctrines and the Iraq invasion of Kuwait in 1990, which lead to a huge US military presence in the Arab Gulf bases (Wallace, 2005: 22). Furthermore, the close military cooperation and coordination between the United States and GCC states has been established for many years and it started during the Iran-Iraq war, in which GCC states requested American protection for their oil tankers in the Arabian Sea. By the Gulf War in 1991, the American military presence in the Gulf had reached unprecedented levels and this war strengthened GCC countries' cooperation with the United States through bilateral defense agreements, and deepened GCC states' dependence on the US as a close partner in preserving its security (Kahwaji, 2004: 53). As Michael Knights mentions, the US's permanent military presence in the Gulf region constitutes the main aspect of the strong US-GCC military relations (Knights, 2013: 3). In the sections that follow, the thesis gives a brief overview of U.S. security cooperation with each of the six countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

Saudi Arabia

In spite of some political tensions in the US's relationship with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, this relationship constitutes the centerpiece of US-Gulf policy. For several decades, there has been a broad consensus on mutual objectives between the two parties pertaining to major political and economic issues (Gause, 2011: vii). The US's relationship with Saudi Arabia had been entrenched and: 'In fact, it is important to note that current US policy towards Saudi Arabia is the product of decades of evolution and is successful in most ways' (Cordesman 2000: 14). Saudi Arabia has been, for decades, a US strategic ally and partner and it supports US policy in the Gulf region. Saudi

Arabia is 'the key to energy security in the Gulf' in terms of production capability and the stability of oil prices, and it enjoys a distinguished security relationship with the US. Further, it is considered a counterbalance to both Iraq and Iran as it has the military capabilities that make it eligible to play a tangible role in supporting US security measures in the Gulf region. Noticeably, US major security concerns in the Gulf region are intertwined with those of Saudi Arabia and represented in three major issues: 'regional security, counterterrorism, and nonproliferation' (Gause, 2011: 27).

Saudi Arabia is a major US ally in the Gulf due to, as Cook mentions, 'Its wealth, size, and influence throughout the Arab and Muslim world'. Moreover, Saudi Arabia is a major purchaser of US arms and 'ground weapon systems' (Cook, 2012: 13). Although Saudi Arabia did not sign official defense agreements with the United States due to local pressures opposing any US presence on its soil, it has been involved in specific agreements pertaining to 'defense procurement' and training programs (Katzman, 2003: 19). This situation has been asserted further by Blanchard, who states that 'military training programs remain an important pillar of U.S.-Saudi relations' and the United States has participated effectively in 'the development, training, and arming of the Saudi Arabian military since the 1940s'. Moreover, Saudi Arabia has long-standing dependence on 'U.S. military technology and training' that plays a significant role in maintaining its security (Blanchard, 2010: 24).

Kuwait

Kuwait has a positive stance towards the US presence in the Gulf as it 'welcomed a more enduring American footprint' and therefore 'the Bush administration designated Kuwait a major non-NATO ally' in 2004 (United States Senate, 2012: 12). US Military cooperation with Kuwait has been organized through a defense agreement that was signed in 1991 and extended in 2001. As a result, the US established military bases in Kuwait which provide logistical support for any operations in the Gulf region (United States Senate, 2012: 12). Moreover, Kuwait is a strong US supporter and it has provided the US with bases for air and land forces, which have implemented military operations in the Gulf region. In addition, Kuwait is considered an important purchaser of US arms and missile systems (Cook, 2012: 11). Kuwait has benefited from its security relations with the United States as it was in need of American protection from

both Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq, which insisted on viewing Kuwait as an integral part of Iraq, and from the Iranian potential threat (Hajjar, 2002: 39). Moreover, Kuwait and the other GCC states' security requirements provided the United States with opportunities in the form of a 'lucrative market for arms sales' (Hajjar, 2002: 40).

Bahrain

Bahrain is another United States 'major non-NATO ally'. Bahrain hosts the U.S. Fifth Fleet, which was established in 1995 and the US has the right of access to military facilities and to hold joint military exercises based on defense agreements signed between Bahrain and the United States in 1991 (United States Senate, 2012: 13-4). In addition, Bahrain, like most of the other GCC countries, is a US arms customer (Cook, 2012: 11).

Qatar

The US was granted the right to access Qatari military facilities in the wake of Kuwait's liberation in 1991 and the US has strengthened its defense relations with Qatar through a formal cooperation agreement signed in 1992. Qatar expanded the 'Al Udied' air base in the 1990s at the cost of 1 billion dollars and it is considered a major hub for any US operations in the region. As Qatar increasingly supports the US's regional operations, the US enhanced its security facilities in the country. So, in the period 2003-2010, over 394 million dollars has been authorized by congress to build up and construct military projects in Qatar, which hosts roughly 7,500 US troops and is considered the critical hub and 'forward deployed base of the US central command' (United States Senate, 2012: 15).

United Arab Emirates

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) increased its security cooperation with Washington during the Gulf War and it deepened bilateral relations with the US by signing a defense agreement in 1994. The UAE hosts approximately 3,000 US troops and it supports an American military presence, which it hosts in the 'Al Dhafra' air base 'US fighter,

attack, and reconnaissance aircraft' and it also 'hosts US Patriot missile batteries' (United States Senate, 2012: 17). Moreover, the US provided the UAE with different types of defense equipment and in the period 2007-2010, the UAE agreed to receive US defense equipment through the foreign military sales program worth $10.4 billion dollars; an amount that exceeds any other country except Saudi Arabia (United States Senate, 2012: 17). As Cook makes mention, 'The UAE provides berthing and husbanding of U.S. naval vessels which are essential for forward basing and support of the Fifth Fleet' (Cook, 2012: 11) stationed in Bahrain, and the United States has 'poured over $60 million in military construction into Al Dhafra Air Base in the United Arab Emirates' (Russell, 2009).

Oman

Oman initiated defense relations with the US after the Iranian revolution in 1979 (United States Senate, 2012: 18). Oman has been a theatre for military deployment and this was evident during Iran-Iraq war, in which US forces implemented 'maritime patrols' using Omani facilities. This was also clear when 4,000 US personnel were stationed in Oman during 'operation enduring freedom' in Afghanistan (United States Senate, 2012: 19). Moreover, Oman signed a defense agreement with the United States in 1980, in which it granted the US the right to maintain a small military presence and free access to Omani airbases at 'Seeb, Thumrait, and Masirah' (Katzman, 2003: 20).

3.2.1 Gulf Security and the US Military Presence

The Gulf region has witnessed dangerous wars that resulted in regional imbalances in 1980 and 1990. Indeed, the outbreak of three wars in less than three decades indicates that old 'over-the horizon' US military intervention strategy was not sufficient to secure the region and therefore, the US has maintained Gulf regional security through a strong military presence on GCC lands, motivated by the goal of maintaining the balance of power in the region. This situation has prompted Andrew Rathmell to believe that a large US military presence indicates there would be a failure to maintain Gulf regional security without the robust American military posture in the region (Rathmell et al,

2003: 3). Similarly, Mcmillan explains that the US military's presence in the Gulf region maintains Washington's interests there, brings stability, and forestalls the possibility of hindering the flow of oil, as well as preventing any regional power from gaining control over this strategic area (McMillan, 2003: 13). This vision has been supported firmly by one analyst, who states that the Gulf region has a prominent place in superpower strategies and policies in order to deny rivals from controlling the seas and straits of this region (Ghaffar, 2012: 4).

The eruption of the Gulf War in 1990, as a result of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, resulted in turbulence of the military balance in the region, which led to a large US military presence on GCC soil. As such, Paul Salem makes mention that the new security environment has obliged the US to engage militarily to re-establish the balance and the same situation has compelled the US to interfere in the region again with the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 (Salem, 2010: 9). As a result to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the United States has intensified its military presence in the Gulf, and hence it completely filled the vacuum that was created after the British withdrawal from the region. This situation has prompted James Russell to describe this era as 'Pax Americana' in the Gulf region (Russell, 2003: 25). This has also been asserted by Hajjar, as he states that Pre-Gulf war in 1990 the US military presence remained limited and took the form of an 'over the horizon military presence'; meanwhile, after the Gulf war the US military presence in the Gulf became largely 'visible, substantial, and controversial' (Hajjar, 2002: 26).

Indeed, the number of US military personnel in the Gulf increased from 700 as late as 1989 to 500,000 in the wake of Saddam Hussein's occupation of Kuwait in 1990. It reduced, but never to those low figures, and as detailed above the US military presence became a permanent one. Hence, Bradley Bowman believes that this large military deployment constitutes a watershed in US military strategy in the Gulf region (Bowman, 2008: 81). Similarly, some studies mention that US military forces have ranged between 17,000 to 25,000, along with 30 naval vessels and 175 aircraft (Russell, 2003: 26). Meanwhile, Katzman makes mention that the number of US military forces before 2001 reached approximately 20,000 personnel (Katzman, 2003: 19). Other analyses mentions that the number of military troops stationed in GCC states, in aggregate, normally reached 20,000 to 25,000 personnel (Kugler, 2003: 91). From this

total number, approximately 11,000 US personnel were 'stationed ashore' throughout the Gulf region and around 10,000 to 14,000 troops were normally 'deployed at sea'. The on-shore troops are distributed over GCC states; approximately 5,110 personnel are located in Saudi Arabia, 4,690 in Kuwait and the rest of the US personnel are distributed in varying numbers between Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates. CENTCOM is the main military headquarters, based in Saudi Arabia at Prince Sultan air base (Kugler, 2003: 92). In addition, the U.S. has around 20 military bases with 500 tanks, three bases for patriot missiles, 25 warships, cruisers and a carrier battle group, as well as 600 warplanes and helicopters (Darvishi, 2010: 175).

The American military presence in the Gulf region, including ground, air and naval forces, has served as deterrence against any potential aggression that could target US interests and the security of the Arab Gulf States. Moreover, the policy of deterrence that has been pursued in the Gulf region during the 1990s was articulated clearly in the Bush Administration's Quadrennial Defense Review report, which calls for the US to enhance 'a wide range of offensive and defensive capabilities that can achieve strategic and operational objectives in the face of determined adversaries' (Quadrennial Defense Review Report, 2001: 25). It should be unambiguously clear that the US forward deployment force is considered the centerpiece of the US security strategy in the Gulf and reviewing the Gulf region's historic circumstances in the aftermath of the Gulf War tells us that the United States followed a strategy of increasing its visible presence on the GCC states' land. So, the United States has more than 20,000 troops stationed in the GCC states in order to 'defend vital US security interest[s]' in the region (Preble, 2003: 6). For his part, Hajjar states that by March 2001, CENTCOM had between 18,500 and 25,000 personnel stationed in the Gulf region in order to observe a no-fly zone in Iraq and to provide oversight and interrupt any illegal shipments to or from Iraq (Hajjar, 2002: 26).

It should be noted that the US maintained a large military troop presence in Saudi Arabia between 1992-2003, but this caused a public backlash – indeed, it was one of the issue that enraged Osama bin Laden, who later declared war against US forces in the Kingdom in August 1996 and committed terrorist attacks that targeted US personnel. This partly led to the US forces' withdrawal from Saudi Arabia in late 2003. However, security cooperation continued between the US and Saudi Arabia through military

officers that work closely with the Saudi Ministry of Defense as well as the Ministry of the Interior and Saudi National Guard (United States Senate, 2012: 10).

3.2.2 Building up Military Bases

The United States has worked assiduously to foster its security posture after liberating Kuwait from Iraq's invasion in 1990, and has built a military basing infrastructure in the GCC states based on individual bilateral defense agreements by which the US gained many privileges including 'pre-position military equipment' in GCC states, to improve their ability to face any contingency or situation in the region. The agreements also include regular training exercises and military maneuvers (Anthony, 2006: 16). Moreover, these agreements give the US access to military facilities in the GCC states and they provide different services, including US advice, training, exercises and weapons sales (Katzman, 2003: 18). Indeed, the US had established military infrastructure in Kuwait including 'Camp Arifjan, Ali Al Salem Air Field, and Camp Buehring' and these facilities provide the United States with the ability to conduct training and operations in the region. Also, 'Al Udeid' Air Base is an important logistical center in Qatar, meanwhile 'Al Dhafra' Air Base in UAE and its port at 'Jebel Ali' are considered important logistical hubs that support the US regional operations. The United States also retains 'Patriot batteries' and a 'missile defense system' in the GCC states (United States Senate, 2012: 25). The US military bases in the GCC states play a central role in US military operations against terrorism and serve the US's other bases that extend to central and south Asia, as well as the horn of Africa (Russell, 2005: 283).

Practically, the efficiency of the US military presence in the GCC states has been demonstrated through operation Iraqi freedom in 2003, in which the US operations against Iraq were instructed and ordered out of the military facilities in Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Besides, the American 'forward-deployed footprint' in the Gulf has served as a strong indication for other regional countries about the US military's capabilities and power projection (Russell, 2005: 292). As Russell puts it, 'The Gulf provides the United States the ideal platform upon which to project power' (Russell, 2005: 294). Additionally, as Russell makes mention, the US forces stationed in the Gulf, along with

the established military infrastructure, provided the United States with an opportunity to achieve manifold objectives: (a) they assure GCC states and reiterate the US commitment to securing them; (b) they deter any potential aggression from regional states such as Iran, since the existence of US military personnel, along with the military equipment, would be a strong reminder to Iran about US influential power in the region and (c) they enhance the Bush administration's strategy of maintaining the prevailing 'status quo' of the region through 'a powerful coercive influence' against Iran that has been regarded by the Bush administration as jeopardizing the Gulf's security as well as threatening the stability of the world order (Russell, 2005: 293). However, as stated, the United States' bilateral defense agreements with the six GCC states have hindered the development of the GCC's 'collective military framework' and as a result, the GCC states have remained reliant on the United States to achieve Gulf regional security (Ulrichsen, 2009: 4).

3.2.3 Reinforcing GCC Military Capabilities

Strengthening GCC military capabilities and reinforcing its defense commitment is one of the US security mechanisms in the Gulf region and therefore 'A key feature of the U.S. strategy for protecting the Gulf States has been to sell them arms and related defense Services' (Katzman, 2006: 12). This has been clearly indicated in a White House document, which states: 'The United States also remains committed to support the individual and collective self-defense of friendly countries in the area to enable them to play a more active role in their own defense' (The White House, 1989). Thus, selling arms and defense services to GCC countries constitutes the main pillar in the US strategy to secure the Gulf region and US congress has been approving US arms sales to GCC states since the Gulf war in 1991, in spite of some reservations on selling some 'sophisticated weapons' as this has been perceived as a threat to Israel's 'qualitative edge' (Katzman, 2003: 23).

The American military support for GCC states can be demonstrated, for instance, through looking at US arms sales to Saudi Arabia. So, despite some tensions in United States relations with Saudi Arabia in the shadow of the 9/11 terrorists attacks, the US is still the main provider of Saudi Arabian security assistance. So, in the period from 1950

through 2006, Saudi Arabia received from the United States 'weapons, military equipment, and related services via Foreign Military Sales worth over $62.7 billion and foreign military construction services worth over $17.1 billion' (Blanchard, 2010: 19). Michael Knights mentions that U.S. arms sales to Saudi Arabia in the period from 1950 to 2009 had reached $79.5 billion (Knights, 2013: 9). Furthermore, in the period from 2007-2010, Saudi Arabia purchased an advanced weapon systems and defense equipment worth $13.8 billion and in 2010 'Saudi Arabia agreed to over $2 billion in U.S. Foreign Military Sales and $409 million in Foreign Military Construction Agreements' (United States Senate, 2012: 10). Moreover, 'From January 2005 through January 2009, the Bush Administration and Congress approved a number of potential U.S. military sales to Saudi Arabia with a possible combined value of over $16.7 billion' (Blanchard, 2010: 20).

Indeed, reinforced GCC military capacity through dedicated programs for arms sales could be viewed as a demonstration of the US's commitment to secure the GCC states. So, 'the Bush administration has sought to sell approximately $20 billion of weapons' to Arab Gulf States in order to strengthen their defenses to meet any threats to their security, especially from Iran (Bowman, 2008: 87). Moreover, in the period from 2007 to 2010, the six states of the GCC agreed to purchase U.S. defense articles and services worth over $26.7 billion (United States Senate, 2012: 2).

It should be noted that the US security partnership with the GCC states has supported US policies in the region, where the GCC members have contributed constructively in achieving US strategic objectives and enhancing its force's posture in the Gulf region (Bronson, 2001). This has been asserted by Anthony Cordesman, as he makes mention that 'the key to successful security policy is success in bilateral relations between the US and each of its individual Southern Gulf allies' (Cordesman, 2000: 14). Similarly, Michael Knights states that fostering GCC states' military capabilities would serve US interests in the Gulf through dissuading Iran from threatening GCC states and altering Iran's calculations 'by making attacks on GCC states more costly and less likely to succeed' (Knights, 2006: 115). Also, he presumes that the US should reinforce GCC defense capacity so as to become 'capable of resisting any explicit or implicit intimidation from a nuclear or nonnuclear Iran' (Knights, 2006: 167). Moreover, military support for GCC states has been asserted by White House documents; they

state that 'The Secretaries of State and Defense should develop a strategy for a long-term program of arms sales to Saudi Arabia and the other GCC states that serves our national interest' (The White House, 1989). Yet, the United States Senate supports strengthening GCC states' military capabilities and it recommends that 'The United States should continue to supply Gulf partners with security assistance that supports a comprehensive strategy for regional arms sales to ensure a stable security architecture' (United States Senate, 2012: 28). This has been asserted further by Michael Knights as he emphasizes that the United States plays a significant role in maintaining Gulf security through 'greater use of cost-effective US approved arms sales, US funded training, and grants of surplus US military equipment' (Knights, 2006: xii).

To sum up, Gulf stability and security has been a key pillar of US National Security Strategy. Based on this reasoning, consecutive US administrations had committed firmly to preserving GCC states' security through various means including training, joint maneuvers, establishing military bases, arms sales, and American direct engagement in the region's military affairs (Blanchard, 2008a: 1). Furthermore, the US security assistance to the GCC states has been channeled through the programs of 'Foreign Military Sales (FMS), Foreign Military Financing (FMF), and Excess Defense Articles (EDA)'. These programs have supported the GCC's conventional military capabilities and have advised the GCC defense budgets to achieve the required objectives (Knights, 2013: 39).

Conclusion

The US's underlying policy goals in the Gulf region have incorporated a number of intrinsic interests, which have materialized in the free flow of oil, cooperation in counterterrorism, eliminating the threat of weapons of mass destruction, supporting the Middle East peace process and protecting the Gulf monarchies from probable regional security threats. The US's substantial interests were coincident with the traditional conviction, among US policy makers, that the continuity of the GCC ruling regimes were deemed essential to maintaining the status quo and protecting those interests.

For example, the United States became a net oil importer in the 1970s and as a result its own energy security became tied, more directly, to developments in the Gulf region. The US, since the British withdrawal from the Gulf in 1971, has played a constant role in protecting the Gulf region from regional domination and acted to keep the region within its sphere of influence so that it enhances its political leverage, which has underpinned its leadership role in the world. American concerns in the Gulf region centered on securing oil flow from the region into Western Europe and Japan, which is, in turn, deemed vital to maintaining US economic prosperity. The regional events that took place deepened further the US's security engagement and commitment within the region. American vital economic and strategic interests in the region underpinned its continuous commitment to securing its Arab gulf friends and allies with the purpose of establishing pro-American political and security systems. Hence, the US policymakers had developed post-World War II security architecture. They had articulated the twin pillars policy of the 1970s and the balancing policy through supporting Iraq against Iran in 1980s and then the dual containment policy to weaken both Iran and Iraq in 1990s. The US developed an abiding interest in Gulf stability and security; a major objective that was not introduced by G. W. Bush, but rather was inherited from his predecessors' administrations. The US goals in the Gulf region were made more pressing by the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and although the overall policy was consistent, there started to be calls for political reform in US-Gulf relations, as we shall see in the next chapters.

Chapter 4

United States and Gulf Security: Regional Challenges and Building up a Sustainable Security Structure

Introduction

Successive American administrations have perceived the Gulf region as a significant strategic interest that must be rigorously protected. As a result, the United States has worked relentlessly to preserve the stability of its Arab Gulf allies in a region that has experienced significant turbulence in the last three decades, culminating in the outbreak of three wars in the period from 1980-2003. In an attempt to conceptualize the US security policy in the Gulf region, this chapter seeks to scrutinize the contemporary security theories so as to present a systematic analysis that combines theory and practice in order to come up with a formula that would help to comprehend the US impulses to maintain and support the Gulf's geopolitical security. Noticeably, US security policy in the Gulf has been formulated in line with American long-term national interests in the region and therefore it is prudent to sketch out and examine a variety of approaches that US decision makers have pursued to support Gulf security, prevent regional instability, and advance their strategic objectives in the region.

Furthermore, a basic purpose of this chapter is to address various intersecting variables that had deleterious consequences which impinged on Gulf security and overall US-Gulf policy. As such, the chapter will discuss the Gulf security environment and the main factors that threatened the stability of the Arabian Peninsula. Moreover, the author will focus on the US military presence and the forward deployment strategy that has been pursued by the George W. Bush administration to manage the regional balance of power in the Gulf region.

Drawing on the assessment of US strategic objectives and interests in the Gulf region in the preceding chapter, and as a result of the Gulf region's abundance of oil and its

continuing geostrategic significance, the GCC countries emerged with significantly increased geopolitical and security importance that extended beyond its borders and therefore it held a prominent and pivotal place on the US security agenda. As such, oil supply, preserving regional security, and preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as well as countering terrorism, were considered the main objectives characterizing American security policies in the Gulf in the period 1991 until 2008 (Darvishi, 2010: 167).

Similarly, Simon Henderson states that 'the main reason for the continuing US presence in this dangerous neighborhood has been, and will continue to be, the fact that it contains two-thirds of the world's oil reserves' (Henderson, 2003: xiii). This has been emphasized by the White House's declassified document in which it focuses on free access to Gulf oil and maintaining the security of the US allies in the Gulf region as centerpiece goals in the U.S. National Security Strategy. As a result, it emphasized the United States' commitment 'to defend its vital interests in the region, if necessary and appropriate through the use of U.S. military force' (The White House, 1989). Indeed the prosperity of the western and global economy has been tied with the Gulf's regional stability. Thus, the Gulf's prominent features have prompted Lawrence Korb to believe that 'No region of the world currently has a larger influence on US security strategy than the Persian Gulf…. and the region will be central to American security strategy in the near future' (Korb, 2005: 1).

Thus far, the Gulf region's security system has been confronted with a myriad of multifaceted and interlocking challenges. Amongst these threats and challenges, the following factors can be counted: (1) Iran's historical hegemony aspirations and its increasing influence in Iraq; (2) political developments in Iraq and their repercussions for Gulf regional security; (3) the spread of weapons of mass destruction and; (4) extremism and counterterrorism.

1. US and Gulf Security: Theoretical Analysis

As analyzing the US security directions should take into consideration the decision-maker's strategic choices and options in the foreign policy realm, it is therefore prudent to elaborate briefly on three intellectual schools prevailing in the

contemporary international security literature. Therefore, this chapter will discuss the realist school (competitive Realpolitik), the hegemonic school, and the cooperative-security school, respectively. Although the author has previously dedicated a specific chapter to discussing the theoretical framework, this chapter will elaborate briefly on specific security theories that could be used to conceptualize and comprehend US security strategy in the Gulf region in more detail.

1.1 Realpolitik Theory

Realpolitik theory posits that states have competing interests and security concerns that may drive them to forge alliances to counter certain threats and defend their interests and security alike. This theory deals with implicit and explicit threats and according to its assumptions, there are neither permanent alliances nor permanent enemies because states would have varying perceptions of military threats and common interests (Kraig, 2004: 140). In this sense, Michael Kraig assumes that states usually pursue a traditional competitive approach in their relations that is stands on 'a balance of interests based upon a rough balance of power' (Kraig, 2004: 144) and this vision has been supported by James Russell, who argues that United States policy in the Gulf region 'reflects an assumptive construct built on a balance of power theory' (Russell, 2003: 30).

Similarly, one observer concentrates on preserving the military balance as the US's primary goal in the Gulf region and he argues that the United States dominates the Gulf region through the military infrastructure embodied in naval, land, and air troops that comprise more than 50,000 personnel stationed in military bases in the GCC states as well as 25 warships that support two aircraft carriers. Moreover, the US administration has regularly supplied its allies in the Gulf with military arms in order to strengthen their military capabilities against Iran's missile capacity. In other words, Washington wants, through its military support to its Gulf allies, to maintain and preserve the balance of power in the Gulf region (Ghaffar, 2012: 13) and therefore the US intensified its military cooperation with GCC states through arms selling. Since 2007, GCC states have requested arms sales worth more than 75 billion dollars (Knights, 2013: 3).

However, Steve Yetiv goes against the above opinions, pointing out that the United States had varying objectives and that it used a plethora of approaches to achieve them; therefore, he argues that United States policies in the Gulf region have not been characterized or motivated by balance of power considerations or by goals of preserving the prevailing balance of power, as many scholars believe. This has been evinced, according to him, by US policy, which sometimes does not balance against the powerful actors and at the same time does not escape behaviors that disorder the prevailing balance of power. Moreover, the balancing of power is not the ultimate goal for US policy in the Gulf region because it has sometimes supported the strongest player instead of balancing against it. Furthermore, US decision-makers have pursued approaches that engendered imbalances of power in the Gulf region and therefore Steve Yetiv suggests that US policy is better understood through what he calls a 'balance of threat policy', in which the US acted to balance against the perils of threatening states rather than the strongest and powerful state (Yetiv, 2008: 4). In this sense, he states that the balance of power strategy, particularly under George W. Bush's administration and under the influence of the neoconservatives, has been overridden by values that can be considered strange to realism, such as promoting liberal democracy and spreading United States' traditions and culture in other countries. Hence, he demonstrates his vision by using the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 as an example, where the war was triggered by 'motivations and approaches that ran largely counter to balance-of-power policy' (Yetiv, 2008: 6). In addition, he states that the American foreign policy in the Arabian Peninsula demonstrates that 'the United States did not practice balance-of power policy much', let alone that the balance of power has 'decreased in prominence in U.S. foreign policy' (Yetiv, 2008: 182).

However, this thesis argues that this approach does not appreciate the core principles behind US foreign policy. The US has promoted its strategic interests and sought to balance power more often than it has promoted democracy. Realistically, the US has a long-standing interest in maintaining the balance of power in the Gulf, as it is perceived from an American standpoint. It should be noted that since 1970 the main pillars in the Gulf's balance of power are Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and the United States. The region has witnessed event-driven changes that have disordered the regional balance of power. These include the Iranian Revolution of 1979, the Iran-Iraq war from 1980-1988, the Iraq invasion of Kuwait in 1990, the Kuwait liberation war in 1991, and Operation Iraqi

Freedom in 2003. The US's response to these and other security issues has been that of a realist actor, and even the US disposing of the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq in 2003 (supposedly out of democratic aspirations), materially changed the military balance as Iraq no longer constitutes a real threat in the region and therefore Iran and Saudi Arabia remain the pillars of the military balance in the region (Wallace, 2005: 13).

1.2 Hegemonic Theory

Michael Kraig defines the essence of hegemonic theory (known also as compellance) as 'the victory of the interests of one set of states over those of others and the operational use of military and economic instruments for compellance as well as deterrence'. This approach uses different tools to achieve its purposes, such as conventional weapons, nuclear arsenals, proactive defense strategy, as well as preemptive strikes. Michael Kraig emphasizes these methods and he makes mention that, 'The perfection of defense, deterrence and preemption has become the major goal of the U.S. national-security planning community'. (Kraig, 2004: 142).

Michael Kraig indicates that US has pursued a hegemony policy in its security strategy in the Gulf, noting that 'The more recent U.S. strategic evolution can be thought of as an imbalance of power and interests (hegemony) based upon both offensive (compellant) and defensive (deterrent) threats, used in conjunction with one another' (Kraig, 2004: 144). Moreover, the American tendencies to play a hegemonic role have been articulated in the American grand strategy, in which US national interests would not be achieved without the overseas projection of US military power. Power projection is therefore pivotal to enhancing the objectives of the American grand strategy, with selective engagement to ensure the advance of US strategic interests (Art, 2008: 32). A selective engagement strategy concentrates on establishing military bases abroad so as to practice and enforce US power. Therefore, it is assumed that the projection of US military power is best achieved through creating military bases because a US 'in-theater military presence' would help the US to influence local developments through deterrence and reassurance practices. As Robert Art puts it, 'an in-theater presence, either onshore or offshore, provides tangible evidence of U.S. power and commitment' (Art, 2008: 33).

Interestingly, there are various trends that promote and support a US leadership role in the world and numerous scholars have stuck to the notion that the US has an opportunity to mold the international security environment to serve its long-term interests. American dominance has been asserted further by realist scholar Robert Art, who argues that the prominent feature of the contemporary international system is the United States' salient unrivalled predominance and the absence of peer competitors (Art, 2008: 25). Moreover, he points out that the US has different aspects of 'unparalleled assets' in terms of economic and military capabilities that have prominently enabled it to become the world's most powerful state, and therefore it has the ability to affect and influence international politics (Art, 2008: 26). Similarly, James Russell points out that the United States' avowed policy of underwriting GCC states' security emanates from its being the 'world's pre-eminent economic and military power' (Russell, 2003: 36). Moreover, Steve Yetiv emphasizes the hegemonic tendencies in US foreign policy and he states that: 'The rise of American global power…yielded Washington the capability to pursue more aggressive foreign policy approaches' (Yetiv, 2008: 6). By the same token, Barry Posen calls for the maintenance of the United States' supremacy all over the world, stating that 'America should directly manage regional security relationships in any corner of the world that is of strategic importance, which increasingly is every corner of the world' (Posen, 2008: 91).

This has been emphasized from a liberal standpoint by John Ikenberry, as he makes mention that the US is 'unchecked by a coalition of balancing states or a superpower wielding a rival universalistic ideology' (Ikenberry, 2008: 45). This point of view has been further asserted from a realist standpoint by Frederick Kagan, who believes that America is still the predominant power in the world economically, politically, culturally, and militarily. The US spends roughly 4% of its gross domestic product (GDP) on defense and therefore it continues to play a preeminent global leadership role and its dominance has not substantially retreated as a consequence of the 9/11 terrorist attacks or the American invasion of Iraq (Kagan, 2008: 69). As Sewell also notes 'The United States, for all its perceived post-9/11 vulnerability, remains the world's strongest power by many measures' (Sewall, 2008: 121).

Practically, America has been playing the leading role in structuring the Gulf security system, and thereby the prevailing view in GCC states conceives American policy in

the Gulf region as a hegemonic one. Anthony Cordesman states that the United States' presence in the Gulf region has been viewed by people of the hosting countries as 'imperialist', and therefore they reject the US military presence out of cultural and social considerations. Yet, Cordesman believes that the US military presence in the Gulf region is essential, noting that: 'The Gulf, however, is a vital US strategic interest and not a popularity contest' (Cordesman, 2000: 47). The United States' hegemonic approach can be executed through providing the GCC countries with military assistance, along with the establishment of military bases on their soil so as to defend the Gulf from regional threats. As a result, GCC states became dependent of US in providing security (Knights, 2006: 203) and this vision has been asserted further by Mehran Kamrava, as he makes mention that the prevailing security architecture in the Gulf region has been characterized in the period 2001 to 2008 by US 'imperial hegemonic tendencies' that have sought to override the traditional security policies like containment and balance of power politics (Kamrava, 2009: 1). This possibly led authors like Art to argue that the US should maintain an equilibrium policy and that 'while the United States must lead, it must also avoid excessive unilateralism' (Art, 2008: 34).

Therefore, its strongest critics argue that the US was effectively imperialist. However, whatever the case, it can be argued that the US hegemony has manifested clearly in George W. Bush's declared policy of preemptive wars, and some analysts have supported this policy, arguing that it advanced US interests and values through a security strategy based on 'proactive, not merely reactive' policy (Kugler, 2003: 97). This has been asserted further by Lawrence Korb, who states that the Bush administration has pursued 'a strategy of American dominance and preventive action' (Korb, 2005: 23). Similarly, Mearshiemer makes mention that the proponents of the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 had been engaged in 'selling a preventive war' (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2003).

In a related vein, the hegemonic directions of US foreign policy could be extracted from the declaratory 'Bush doctrine' that consists of three interwoven objectives; emphasizing the United States' pre-eminence and military superiority, emphasizing the United States' eligibility for taking 'preventive and preemptive action' to counter terrorists and dictators and prevent them from developing weapons of mass destruction

and finally, emphasizing the hard work of constituting democracies and free markets all over the world (Korb, 2005: 23-4). Practically, the above tenets have been made manifest via the Bush administration's policies and actions in the Gulf region, particularly toward Iraq, and therefore Michael Knights notes that the US military forces stationed in the lands of the GCC states have given the US a greater degree of domination in the region through enhancing its leverage in dealing with the region's security affairs (Knights, 2006: 10).

Joseph McMillan looks at US hegemony in a positive way and claims that it contributes to achieving Gulf security. As he puts it:

> U.S. primacy will remain necessary to guarantee the security of the region. In the aftermath of war with Iraq, the issue is how the United States will choose to exercise its hegemony in the region. The government could, on the one hand, seek to impose U.S. policies or to thwart the initiatives of others. Indeed, this vision of "Gulf Americana" is seductive, precisely because no other country is in a position to challenge U.S. preponderance in the area. (McMillan et al, 2003: 173)

American hegemonic tendencies in the Gulf region, under George W. Bush's administration, have coincided with excessive use of military force even before the September 2001 terrorist attacks. Moreover, the US security strategy, which assigns a great role to the use of military force to protect US vital interests, has been articulated explicitly in a report released by the so-called Project for the New American Century, in which they urged the United States to continue its international leadership in order to maintain its superiority and hegemony. (Indeed this report was published a year before the 9/11 terrorist attacks):

> The United States is the world's only superpower, combining preeminent military power, global technological leadership, and the world's largest economy….At present; the United States faces no global rival. America's grand strategy should aim to preserve and extend this advantageous position as far into the future as possible. (Donnelly et al, 2000: i)

It could be argued that the United States' decision-makers had adopted a military vision to define US security policies in the Gulf region and this can be demonstrated through US containment and deterrence policies against Iraq and Iran. Yet, the US has constantly succeeded in the rapid deployment of US forces in the GCC states pursuant to bilateral defense agreements with these states and this success has been evinced by the US invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Indeed, the US pursued actual military actions to secure the Gulf region instead of setting and formulating political tools and frameworks to promote regional security, and this has been clearly emphasized by Michael Kraig who stated that: 'There was a failure to build an order [in the Gulf] based upon common principles, norms, expectations, institutions and the rule of law' (Kraig, 2004: 147).

Concurrently, the deterrence policy against Iraq and Iran indicates that US security policy in the Gulf has been exclusionary in its nature, as the US had established bilateral relations with the Arab Gulf states in lieu of creating a wide regional coalition that integrates allies and enemies. In other words, the US has pursued an approach to security in the Gulf region that excludes major regional powers from participating in forming regional security systems and this exclusion has been implemented through economic sanctions and deterrence measures against GCC states' adversaries (Kraig, 2004: 152). Indeed, Michael Kraig describes the US's overarching security strategy in the Gulf region as exclusionary because it segregates the US's friends and allies, on one side, and the US's adversaries, such as Iran, on the other. Moreover, the nature of this security policy and hegemonic practice can be grasped from its objectives as it seeks to isolate 'rogue states' and create changes in the regimes or even to eliminate the regimes completely, as happened with Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq in 2003 (Kraig, 2004: 153).

In short, the hegemonic school looks at political relations among states as being built upon bilateral and selective multilateral relations and this includes, as Kraig mentions, either 'formal alliances or informal security understandings between friends'. Practically, the US has demonstrated a hegemonic approach to its security policy in the Gulf region through US military assistance and high-technology military sales to its southern Arab Gulf friends. Unlike a realpolitik approach, this model stands to meet

'explicit and implicit threats'; not through creating and maintaining an equilibrium or balance of power between different actors, but rather through strengthening allies and friends and maintaining supremacy either economically or militarily. Under this school of thought, states would publically seek to make sure that their own interests, along with those of their allies, are dominant (Kraig, 2004: 142).

1.3 Cooperative Security Theory

Known as liberal internationalism, liberal institutionalism or constitutionalism, this model has a different vision of international relations and the primary assumption of this approach is that all states would have the mutual interest of achieving their security through constraining the military capability of states and would avoid seeking predominance, either unilaterally or through forming alliances. Moreover, it presumes that security could be achieved by cooperating with other states, rather than working against them. As Kraig puts it, 'security is increasingly defined as a collective good that cannot be divided'. What distinguishes this model is not only that it has a place for allies and friends, but also that it gives an opportunity for potential rivals to participate in widespread security cooperation despite mutual differences and a lack of trust between the actors (Kraig, 2004: 143). He believes that all states have a mutual interest in attaining security and that this ultimate goal could not be achieved by segregating actors into friends and enemies. In other words, security could be achieved appropriately by cooperation between actors, regardless of explicit differences in policies and ideologies (Kraig, 2004: 144).

The cooperative approach could be understood best 'as a balance of interests based upon mutual reassurance'. From previous analysis, it is obvious that two models of security have some similarities; that is, the realpolitik approach, which rests upon the balance of power, resembles the cooperative security framework as both depend largely on 'a balance of interests'. However, there is a difference between the two approaches in terms of the desirable shape in which to secure the balance of interests. So, while realpolitik approaches concentrate on dealing with potential threats, the cooperative approach focuses on mutual reassurance and legal pacts. Further, the two schools differ starkly from the hegemony approach, which focuses on building up a bloc or alliance of

friends and allies that explicitly and deeply share the US foreign policy objectives. The hegemony approach sets out from a conviction that the best method to handle the negative impacts of competition is to get rid of the competition itself by undercutting the actors that bear contending visions and objectives. To the contrary, the cooperative approach depends on a notion that each actor's interests would be possible to achieve with varying or minimal levels. Moreover, the cooperative security approach resembles realism as it assumes that states are the primary player in world politics (Kraig, 2004: 144).

1.4 Applying the Theories to the Gulf

From the above discussion it is arguable that US hegemonic practice has been hindering the cooperative security model from being realized in US-GCC security relations. As such, the US's security policy has driven the GCC states to become heavily dependent on the US security umbrella and therefore no political framework has been reached to integrate GCC defense capabilities because each GCC member has preferred to cooperate with Washington individually through bilateral defense agreements that paved the way for a visible American military presence in the GCC territories. This has impeded any attempt to integrate the GCC forces into a collective security system and has not contributed to the creation of a multilateral coalition among GCC states.

Consequently, due to the US's failure in forging a collective security structure in the Gulf region, and due to the GCC's difficulties in reaching collective security arrangements (as it prefers bilateral cooperation with the US) and due to the fact that the integration of the GCC military capabilities remain poor, the realpolitik approach continues to dominate the security relations between the US and the GCC countries (Kraig, 2004: 148). Yet, the United States' 'realpolitik' policy has led to an increase and enhancement of the Arab Gulf States' military capabilities and therefore the GCC cooperation with the US has become the key pillar of their defense posture. Therefore, the GCC states continue their dependence on the US in an attempt, as Michael Kraig states, 'to protect their sovereignty, domestic identity and regime security'. Concurrently, the American support to any balance of power in the region took varying shapes; sometimes through conventional arms sales to the GCC countries and

sometimes through direct American military intervention in the region (Kraig, 2004: 148). This situation of GCC dependency on the US as a guarantor to their security has prompted Kraig to state that 'the GCC is a net consumer of security from the United States rather than a net producer' (Kraig, 2004: 149).

Frederick Kagan emphasizes the realpolitik tenets of George W. Bush's foreign policy and he rightly argues that 'George W. Bush's grand strategy was characterized by highly moralistic rhetoric and highly realpolitik decision making'. However, the realpolitik direction of the George W. Bush administration represents continuity in US foreign policy and therefore Kagan determines that a lot of George W. Bush's foreign policy rhetoric resembles that of Clinton; hence, he makes mention that: 'It is extremely easy, in fact, to compile a selection of key quotations from Bush and Clinton administration speeches about foreign policy that would leave the casual reader unable to determine who said what'. Moreover, he thinks that the most important two decisions of the Bush administration with respect to the war against Afghanistan and Iraq have been built upon 'realpolitik calculations' and on pragmatic practices. For Afghanistan, the administration's decision came as a response to continuing 'Taliban' support for Al Qaeda terrorists who had attacked the United States and the US decision to invade Iraq in 2003 was taken based on the wrong assumption that Iraq possesses weapons of mass destruction and that Saddam Hussein had links with Al-Qaeda (Kagan, 2008: 66).

Additionally, Kagan emphasizes the realpolitik nature of the George W. Bush administration by explaining that the US may have traditional moral values such as supporting democracy and human rights, opposing tyranny and other objectives but the formal and practical policy is to not defend such values unless they are coincident with the protection of a core US interest, and he went further, to state that despite the perceived and assumed role of the neoconservatives' agenda, which encouraged the Bush administration to invade Iraq in 2003, the principle tenets of the agenda were substantially realpolitik rather than moralistic in nature (Kagan, 2008: 67). Kagan's view is therefore not a critical one, as that of Kraig, who criticizes the absence of a culture of collective security. Kagan argues that the US acts in its core interests and if other things result from this (such as democracy), that this is a benefit but not a driver of US policy.

Interestingly, the previous debate on US security policy in the Gulf region supports what has been discussed earlier - that US rhetoric and foreign policy has been consistent, to a large extent, with the goal of protecting vital US interests in the Gulf region. As James Russell has argued, 'United States security strategy in the Gulf and the Middle East remained remarkably consistent throughout most of the post-1945 era' (Russell, 2005: 288). This thesis argues in more detail with regard to the GCC, that the US attitudes and policies during the two terms of the George. W. Bush administration have shown continuity rather than change. The following sections will enlarge upon the above concepts.

2. The US and the Gulf Region after the 9/11 trauma: A Gulf security system in disarray

The US policy continued to focus on a spectrum of interests which manifested in the preservation of Gulf stability, keeping oil freely flowing at *reasonable prices*, and countering terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (Kemp and Saunders, 2003: 7; see also Darvishi, 2010: 167). This point of view has been emphasized further by Cook, who believes that guarding oil supplies from any disruption, preventing the possession of weapons of mass destruction and countering terrorism are still the major United States interests in the Gulf region (Cook, 2012: 10).

At the aggregate level, it can be argued that in the wake of September 11, 2001 the Bush administration pursued a foreign policy that was motivated by the war on terrorism and the calls for democracy and political reform in the Gulf region (Kemp and Saunders, 2003: 23). As a result, the Bush administration's policy focused on supporting the security of the Gulf, reinforcing the alliance with the GCC, and reinforcing human rights and democratic processes across the Gulf (Wallace, 2005: 29). Even though some aspects of this policy (democracy promotion) might appear new, the overall direction had roots in US policy trajectory from long before, and therefore some scholars have pointed out that there is a consistency, since the Cold War, in US interests and the way in which the successive administrations have viewed these interests (Hajar, 2002: 6). Historically, countering terrorism was demonstrated in the 1987 National Security Strategy, which identified 'curbing state-sponsored terrorism' as a national American

interest (The White House, 1987: 17), and further by the 1991 National Security Strategy in which 'curbing the proliferation of WMD and ballistic missiles and countering terrorism' is seen as in the American national interest (The White House, 1991: 10).

The continuity of the Bush administration policy after 9/11 was noted by Robert Kagan and William Kristol; they mentioned that the policy of the Bush administration was that they were 'content to continue walking down dangerous paths in foreign and defense policy laid out over the past eight years by Bill Clinton'. Also, they did not see Bush's foreign policy as significantly different from his predecessors (Kagan and Kristol, 2001: 11). Nevertheless, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks the situation changed because of, among other factors, the neoconservatives' role in dictating Bush's policies, and consequently the prevailing perception in Washington was that Iraq posed a serious threat to US interests and the security of the GCC - based on allegations of the development of WMD and a connection between Saddam Hussein and Al-Qaeda. The rise of the neocons' influence over the bureaucracy eventually resulted in the Bush administration launching 'Operation Iraqi Freedom' and emphasizing a political reform agenda that gained significant attention after 9/11 and became one of the US strategies in its relations with the Gulf region (Kahwaji, 2004: 52). But overall, the US's primary concerns in the Gulf region were to maintain the flow of oil, counter any attempt to dominate the Gulf region, protect the Gulf States' security, prevent radicalism, protect Israel and control Iranian influence in the Gulf region. These objectives remained unchanged from before 9/11. As Martin Indyk mentions, Clinton expressed the US's interest in keeping unrestricted oil flowing at stable prices, maintaining good relations with the Arab states that desired to establish good relations with Washington, preserving Israeli security and seeking a permanent and comprehensive settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict (Indyk, 1993).

Two objectives that are seen as original after 9/11; which is that the countering of terrorism and WMD proliferation were extensively reinforced and became core elements of US foreign policy, but these were not new (Darvishi, 2010: 172). Even democratization, which was desired by the neocons more than any other actor, was reinforced by the September 11 terrorist's attacks, which accelerated the 'war on terrorism' rhetoric and stepped up calls for democracy and political transformation in

the Gulf region, albeit without initiating it. It is noteworthy that the terrorist attacks caused tensions in US relations with Saudi Arabia which had reached a significant level since the GCC oil embargo in 1973 (Gause, 2004: 51); because these attacks had been planned and supported by the Saudi 'Osama bin laden', these relations were complicated further; also because the majority of the perpetrators were Saudi citizens (Gause, 2004: 52). Additionally, relations between the US and GCC had witnessed some tension over the American war on terrorism strategy because the GCC viewed this issue in a different way and the US expected more cooperation from the GCC in this new strategy (Gause, 2004: 54). The author will elaborate on this in a different chapter that will handle the war on terrorism as the US's main goal in its foreign policy after September 11th.

As has already been discussed in the theoretical framework chapter, it can be argued that the September 11th attacks reinforced the US's ambitions for international leadership and hegemony. The US National Security Strategy that the Bush administration released in 2002 demonstrated this, through revealing a preemptive strategy to defend US security against probable security threats as, according to the document, 'the United States cannot remain idle while dangers gather' (National Security Strategy, 2002: 15). This policy has triggered criticism and has been described as 'arrogant, patronizing, complacent, amazingly presumptuous - but above all, aggressive' (The Guardian, 2002). Moreover, the National Security Strategy had clearly called, in 2002, for the country to have the potential capability to inflict defeat on US enemies if a deterrence policy failed to achieve the required result and it further emphasized that: 'Our forces will be strong enough to dissuade potential adversaries from pursuing a military build-up in hopes of surpassing, or equaling, the power of the United States' (National Security Strategy, 2002: 30).

As has already been mentioned in the theoretical framework, a mixed group of hawks and neocons, including Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz, had asserted American unilateralism and encouraged American military supremacy with a pre-emption policy (see Leffler, 2003; Armstrong, 2002). Although some key figures within the Bush team, such as Dick Cheney and Paul Wolfowitz, have held the desire and the tendency to assert American hegemony, the Bush administration's decisions and subsequent foreign policy were driven, as Leffler argues, by 'fear for survival',

rather than projecting power. Therefore, the 9/11 attacks had increased the sense of fear, which in turn impacted upon the US's strategy, in which a pre-emption strategy became a more evident tool in US foreign policy (see Leffler, 2003). However, others contend that the Bush preemption strategy was outlined by Paul Wolfowitz, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, in the 'Defense Planning Guidance' document drafted in 1992, and that therefore Wolfowitz has been a key figure in the Bush administration who contributed to forming the President's plans and policies (Gaddis, 2002: 52). This was asserted by Stephen Waltz, as he pointed out that the Defense Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, and his deputy, Paul Wolfowitz, as well as National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, were responsible for the US embroilment in the Iraq war, based on incorrect allegations because Iraq has neither been proved to possess weapons of mass destruction nor to have relations with Al-Qaeda. As Waltz rightly indicates, the President 'went to war on the basis of very bad advice' and he also mentions that the Bush administration was planning to build up military bases in 'a pro-American Iraq', but he states that the right thing within the bad situation in Iraq is to find an exit strategy and abandon the imperial dreams (Walt, 2003).

However, calls for US supremacy have been accompanied by a huge proportion of expenditure being devoted to defense, which exceeded the spending by approximately the next six main powers altogether. This policy came from a conviction that the United States has a mission in the world that requires the US to build up military force as well as the required technology to maintain their supremacy and deter any attempt, from any power that has ambition and desire such as Iran, to challenge the United States' interests and upset the current world order (Kristol and Kagan, 1996). This was asserted further by Condoleezza Rice when she discussed Saddam Hussein's regime:

> He is therefore determined to develop WMD. Nothing will change until Saddam is gone, so the United States must mobilize whatever resources it can, including support from his opposition, to remove him. (Rice, 2000: 60)

Indeed, the goal of preserving American interests in the Gulf region has continued to be a key pillar in US security policy in the region after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. As a consequence of these attacks, the war on terrorism and the threats from weapons of mass destruction (WMD) have gained more attention (Greenwald and Malley, 2004).

As Charles Wallace mentions, 'the free flow of oil has been the strategic imperative for decades but the global war on terror and weapons of mass destruction have also become increasingly important' (Wallace, 2005: 28). Furthermore, the 9/11 terrorist attacks granted the American neoconservatives and assertive nationalists an outstanding opportunity to create changes in military planning, resulting in the American occupation of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003.

2.1 Gulf Security Dialogue

After 9/11, US security cooperation continued with Arab Gulf States and the George W. Bush administration founded the Gulf Security Dialogue (GSD) in May 2006 in order to revive defense ties with GCC states and counter transnational terrorism and WMD proliferation threats (Blanchard, 2008a: 2). Condoleezza Rice illustrates the importance of this dialogue:

> Through our Gulf Security Dialogue, we are helping to strengthen the defensive capabilities of our partners, and we plan to initiate discussions with Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf States on a proposed package of military technologies that will help support their ability to secure peace and stability in the Gulf region. (Rice, 2007)

The Gulf Security Dialogue represents a significant US security cooperation initiative that is designed to address various issues, such as improving the GCC defense capabilities, coordinating regional security issues, countering proliferation, and countering terrorism (Blanchard, 2008b; see also Knapp, 2010). Anthony Cordesman has added other issues that the Gulf Security Dialogue addresses, like the Arab-Israeli conflict, the security situation in Iraq, and building 'interoperability' between the defense forces of the GCC states (Cordesman, 2013a: 39). Moreover, Christopher Blanchard emphasizes that the main objective of the dialogue is to concentrate on 'the promotion of intra-GCC and GCC-U.S. Cooperation to meet common perceived threats' (Blanchard, 2008a: 2). Nevertheless, the Gulf Security Dialogue does not represent significant change in the general attitudes of U.S. foreign policy in the region. Rather, it reflects, according to Christopher Blanchard, the continuation and the reinforcement of

a policy that has been consolidated over decades (Blanchard, 2008a: 3).

2.2 The US-led Invasion of Iraq 2003

The GCC countries had offered the United States the opportunity to perform military missions in Afghanistan in the so-called 'Operation Enduring Freedom' (OEF) to combat the Taliban and Al Qaeda. While Saudi Arabia refused to permit the US use of its territory to lunch air strikes against Afghanistan, it did allow the United States to use the Prince Sultan Air Base (south of Riyadh) to coordinate U.S. air strikes against Afghanistan. Qatar allowed the US use of the 'Al Udaid air base' in OEF operations and Bahrain supported this operation by providing 'frigate naval vessels'. Similarly, GCC states supported US efforts in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Qatar permitted the United States to host US central command (CENTCOM) headquarters at 'Saliyah' in order to coordinate the military operations against Iraq (Katzman, 2003: 19).

George W. Bush's administration set many goals for its plan to invade Iraq in 2003 and among these goals was to prevent Iraq from developing weapons of mass destruction that could be used to intimidate the US and its Arab Gulf allies, to prevent such weapons from reaching terrorist factions, and finally to oust Saddam Hussein's regime in an attempt to push forward democracy throughout the Gulf region (Russell, 2005: 286). Additionally, Judith Yaphe points out that the key drivers which shape United States policy in the Gulf have materialized in the US reducing the Iraqi threat to the region, countering terrorism, maintaining free access to the Gulf's oil at reasonable prices, and dissuading Iran from developing weapons of mass destruction as well as deterring it from pursuing actions that undermine the US interests in the region (Yaphe, 2008: 37). Interestingly, the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 represents the continuation of a previous US policy that sought to cement security cooperation with GCC states since the Gulf war in 1991. As Katzman puts it:

> The post-Saddam Gulf is somewhat less stable than the United States initially expected, and the pillars of U.S.-Gulf defense cooperation that were put in place after the 1991 Gulf war are drawing renewed emphasis as Iran's power is perceived to be rising. (Katzman, 2006: 7)

Additionally, one observer notes that the US invasion of Iraq in March 2003 derived from the dual containment policy that was formally crafted under the President Clinton administration and pursued informally by President George H. W. Bush. As Hunter makes mention, the Bush policy towards Iraq resembles the Clinton policy with a difference in the degree, rather than the nature, of the policy. Hunter states that the containment policy towards Iraq had mutated from 'passive aggressive to active-aggressive' and this change and transformation in the policy has been animated by the 9/11 terrorist attacks (Hunter, 2010: 23). Meanwhile, Kenneth Pollack asserts that the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 represents a continuation of the old US policy back to the year 1991. As he puts it:

> The United States should invade Iraq, eliminate the present regime,….The reasons for contemplating such dramatic action have little to do with the events of September 11 and the subsequent crisis and much to do with the course of U.S. policy toward Iraq since 1991. (Pollack, 2002)

Indeed, US policy makers perceived that the invasion of Iraq and change of regime would serve the US security objectives in the Gulf region and apparently 9/11 terrorists attacks had accelerated the neoconservatives' agenda with respect to the war on terrorism and a part of the justifications for the Iraq war was the presumed linkage between the Saddam Hussein regime and the terrorist organization, Al-Qaeda. But some analysts argued that this war not only proved costly but also has not appropriately served the American security goals in the Gulf region. As for cost, it should be noted that the United States has invested deeply in ensuring the security of the Gulf region and according to some estimated statistics; the US has spent between $30 billion and $60 billion per annum to finance its forces' presence in the Gulf region (Preble, 2003: 6). This has been emphasized by Hass, who states that as a result to the war in both Afghanistan and Iraq, military spending has risen to 8% annually in overall spending and therefore the American financial situation has slipped 'from a surplus of over $100 billion in 2001 to an estimated deficit of approximately $250 billion in 2007'. So, the costly wars of George Bush have prompted Hass to believe that the Iraq war 'has proved to be an expensive war of choice -- militarily, economically, and diplomatically as well as in human terms' (Haass, 2008: 49).

As for the far-reaching repercussions of the Iraq war on Gulf regional security, some American policy officials believe that this war was unnecessary and counterproductive. In this sense, Douglas Feith, who was Under Secretary of Defense for Policy in the Bush administration, has explicitly admitted that 'America's setting up a protracted occupation of Iraq was a mistake. When we transformed ourselves from liberators to occupiers, we aggravated all of our main problems in the country' (Feith, 2013). Similarly, Richard N. Haass, who was a senior State Department official in the Bush administration, said in an interview published by the Council on Foreign Relations that after ten years of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, that war represents 'a poor choice poorly implemented' and he added that the Iraq war's outcomes 'show the folly of overlooking local realities, be they political, cultural, or historic, and trying to impose our views on these societies and trying to remake these societies using large amounts of American military might'. He also stresses that the Iraq war 'was still objectively a war of choice; it was not a war that needed to be started at the time' (Haass, 2013).

Similarly, John Mearshamier emphasizes that Iraq was an unnecessary war and argues that:

> The belief that Saddam's past behavior shows he cannot be contained rests on distorted history and faulty logic. In fact, the historical record shows that the United States can contain Iraq effectively - even if Saddam has nuclear weapons – just as it contained the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Regardless of whether Iraq complies with U.N. inspections or what the inspectors find, the campaign to wage war against Iraq rests on a flimsy foundation. (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2003)

He went further in criticizing the war, noting that 'This war would be one the Bush administration chose to fight but did not have to fight. Even if such a war goes well and has positive long-range consequences, it will still have been unnecessary' (Mearsheimer and Walt, 2003). To the contrary, some old proponents of the Iraq war still justify it. Paul Wolfowitz, who was US Deputy Secretary of Defense in the Bush administration, sticks to the notion that it still too early to judge the outcome of the Iraq war. As he puts it: 'it may be many years before we have a clear picture of the future of Iraq' (Wolfowitz, 2013).

Indeed, criticism of the Iraq war has stretched from US political circles to the GCC states. So, despite the GCC's support for the American military operations against Iraq, US relations with some GCC states have not been unproblematic as there were actual differences between the United States and the majority of the GCC states in relation to the American invasion of Iraq. GCC states were concerned that this occupation would upset the security environment in the Gulf through strengthening Iran's position in the region, and according to Ghaffar, GCC obsessions and concerns were proved right, as Iran emerged, in the wake of the Iraq invasion, as the greatest beneficiary of Iraq's diminished military forces; therefore, Iran developed its missile capacities and exploited the time to develop its controversial nuclear program as well as mobilizing the pro-Iran Shiites residing in GCC countries to destabilize the Gulf monarchies' internal security (Ghaffar, 2012: 3).

However, the toppling of regimes in both Afghanistan and Iraq has led to expanding Iranian security and military interests, now that Iraq is no longer able to serve as a counterweight to Iran. As a result, the military balance has been disrupted and tilted in Iran's favor, which poses a real threat to the GCC states (Ghaffar, 2012: 11; Sadeghinia, 2011: 120). Indeed, this analysis represents the practical application of what was discussed earlier with respect to realpolitik theory. The opponents of the military balance notion have been able to argue that US decision-makers took decisions that had been inconsistent with the purposes of maintaining the military equilibrium in the Gulf region. Their actions caused an imbalance of power instead of supporting the military balance as traditional realpolitik assumes.

Having argued this, the US invasion of Iraq was still consistent with the idea of preserving US key strategic interests in the Gulf region, even if such policies have counterproductive consequences on the Gulf's regional balance of power. Therefore the US invasion of Iraq signaled a change in US security tactics for providing Gulf regional security, but not a grand change in the overall US foreign policy trajectory towards the Gulf region.

3. Building up a Sustainable Security Structure

Some analysts state that there is an opportunity after the overthrow of the Saddam Hussein regime to reap the fruits of American military intervention in Iraq and to exploit the consequent new circumstances to recast the Gulf regional security system in an attempt to create a proper collective security apparatus and meaningful military cooperation (Russell, 2003: 35). Moreover, Andrew Rathmell believes that Iraqi military capabilities have been weakened after the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, and that the new situation will enable the United States to recast its military strategy in the Gulf region and consequently reduce the numbers of US forces deployed there (Rathmell et al, 2003: 8). Consequently, in searching for a stable security framework in the Gulf region, Andrew Rathmell makes mention of two options for Gulf security, which could emerge in the post-Saddam era; the first one suggests deep political reform and the second one focuses on returning to the old fashioned security structure that was built based on the realism of the 1970s era. But neither of the two options would adequately fulfill the regional security requirements (Rathmell et al, 2003: 5) and therefore the Gulf's security should be established based on overlapping and interlocking factors: (a) balance of power, (b) political reform and(C) multilateralism. Such a combination would help to lay the foundations for a stable and endure security system in the Gulf region (Rathmell et al, 2003: 7). Moreover, establishing a durable security system requires reform in the region politically and economically, since the region needs political transformation through concentration on good governance, transparency and the rule of law (Rathmell et al, 2003: 8). The author will elaborate on political reform in GCC states and will examine the importance of this issue in overall US-Gulf policy in a separate chapter.

As some scholars mention, the balance of power and reform cannot be completed by the US alone and it requires partners to share the Gulf security burden. So, it could cooperate with the EU to achieve tangible steps in stabilizing Iraq and motivate political reform in Iran, as well as playing a role in persuading the GCC states to initiate political transformation inside their societies. So, this paradigm includes incorporation of the US's conventional role in supporting the power equilibrium in the Gulf region and European efforts in supporting economic and political reform that are conducive to

good governance and democracy (Rathmell et al, 2003: 9). Based on this reasoning, the Gulf security system should be two-fold, with the following elements; the first one should be designed based on a vertical axis. In other words, establishing a military balance between Iran, Iraq and GCC states, and the second one should be structured based on a horizontal axis that includes building up democracy through working effectively to promote good governance, build up institutions, encourage free markets, give a larger role to the media and improve education (Rathmell et al, 2003: 10).

In contrast, Bowman calls on the United States to develop a new Gulf security architecture that could improve security in the region, thereby reducing the need for a U.S. military presence. The proposed architecture, which reminds us of the security cooperation theory, should include the GCC states along with Iraq and Iran instead of forming an alliance against Iran. Moreover, the new security architecture would serve as a forum to address common security issues. Although including Iran could be a contentious issue, Bowman argues that 'any regional security architecture that excluded Iran would only heighten tensions and validate the perception of many Iranians that Iran's security requires nuclear weapons'. So, including Iran, according to this point of view, in any security arrangements would be a good step to maintain long-term Gulf regional security (Bowman, 2008: 88).

This vision has been asserted by one scholar who states that 'To ensure a successful regional security system, Iran, Iraq and Yemen must be part of any security arrangement in the Persian Gulf' (Lotfian, 2007: 2). Similarly, Joseph McMillan emphasizes these perceptions:

> The [Gulf] region needs regularized multilateral connections on security and related issues that encompass all the key players in the region, namely, Iraq, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. Enhancing regional security in this part of the world does not require a Gulf version of the European Union or NATO. Instead, what the Gulf needs is a series of overlapping bilateral and multilateral relationships, with the newest element being a mutually reinforcing network of linkages among all the Gulf states, including Iraq and Iran. (McMillan et al, 2003: 167)

However, the downside of these projects, as Kenneth Pollack explains, is that expanding the security system to include more powers like Iran and Iraq could bring further sophisticated problems rather than solving the current ones, because bringing any new member to the current security architecture would make decision making and achieving a general consensus difficult, especially when the new member holds different ideologies, interests and visions from those of the GCC states (Pollack, 2012: 5).

It can be argued that any suggested security framework in the Gulf region would necessarily include a basic US role so as to give the proposed structure the required efficiency. This reality has been asserted by many scholars; Anthony Cordesman believes that 'Calls for new regional security arrangements that mean US withdrawal, and a reliance on any form of collective security based solely on the Gulf States is a fantasy' (Cordesman 2000: 24) because 'there is no credible military alternative to the US, and talk about purely Gulf security regimes is little more than gratuitous military nonsense' (Cordesman, 2000: 47).

Similarly, Michael Knights argues that the GCC's reliance on the US military's capabilities in the Gulf region is 'the most cost-effective and, thus, practical approach to maintaining regional stability in the Persian Gulf'. So, any attempts to forge new security system in the Gulf region based on indigenous forces would not constitute a suitable pattern to follow because, as Knights states, 'the GCC states continue to prefer using the U.S. military as the "hub" of the wheel of their defense' (Knights, 2013: ix). Yet, this point of view has been asserted further by the United States Senate when it stated that the 'Gulf security architecture' will include a remarkable role for the United States in coordinating regional security affairs and this role has been conceived as 'crucial to the viability of a [Gulf] security framework' (United States Senate, 2012: 21).

Furthermore, Andrew Rathmell states that it is in the US's interest to establish 'a more favorable, affordable, and durable Gulf security system' which is supposed to alleviate and restrain likely threats in the region. So, although Iraq has been neutralized in the post-Saddam era, it still faces security challenges and there is a considerable concern about Iran and its potential role in the region as it may threaten the free shipping lanes

in the Arabian Sea through hostile actions by using 'missiles, mines, gunboats or submarines', which could pointedly affect the global energy trade (Rathmell et al, 2003: 4).

Arguably, the US role in securing the gulf region continued to be part of American strategy even under the current Obama administration, although it made changes in the economic realm and has concentrated on developing economic relations with Asia in what is called "pivoting Asia", by which some analysts perceived that the American policy is rebalancing towards Asia, and consequently American relations with the GCC states would witness real transformations. This outlook is reinforced by the US's recent economic shifts under Obama. But this perception needs to be critiqued. It is true that American relations with the Arab Gulf States is centered on a reduced rate of importing gulf oil and exporting weapons; nonetheless, American concern over gulf oil is not merely to meet substantial local needs for energy as was the case since the early 1970s, when the US turned into a net oil importer, but rather to secure oil flow from the gulf into the international market at lower prices, as this is deemed essential for the western world's development, and for American long-term economic prosperity. However, a cursive look at US trading relations with the GCC states under the current Obama administration reveals substantial shifts in the economic realm from the gulf to Asia, but it is unpersuasive that Obama's orientations imply withdrawal from the gulf region. Rather, the Obama administration revealed that America would continue to underwrite gulf security. Despite the rise of China and India as pivotal economic powers in East Asia, which might command increased momentum during the next two decades, thereby assuming a larger role in gulf security related affairs, the American preponderant hegemony and influential role in gulf regional affairs would not diminish in the foreseeable future. The evidence can be grouped into many determinant factors. While Japan and South Korea's economic relations with the gulf depend largely on importing oil, China and India have the advantage of benefiting from big markets in the gulf to which they export their products. Obviously, Saudi Arabia and the UAE are China's biggest trade partners in the gulf region. China and India look at their relations with the Arab Gulf States through the lenses of hydrocarbons and the substantial importance of the gulf markets to Chinese and Indian exports. In other words, they are interested, currently, in developing and sustaining their relations in the economic realm only. Elevating this relationship to include political and military engagement in the

gulf's affairs remains to be seen in the future but is unlikely to happen any time soon (see Niplock 2014a; see also Niplock 2014b; Hook and Niblock, 2015; Gupta, 2014).

Besides, recognizing the substantial decline of American oil imports from the gulf as a result of the enhancing of domestic production and diversifying oil suppliers, the gulf governments focused on expanding their economic relations with China and India as incremental markets for gulf oil in what is called the GCC's "look east" policy (Janardhan, 2014; see also Bahgat, 2015). Although the GCC's ties with Asia are expanding, it is true, nonetheless, that in the hard security realm, there is no other international actor with the capabilities to take over the American role of securing the gulf in the short or medium term, always taking into account that contemplating creating an indigenous security framework based on mutual security cooperation between the GCC states themselves and excluding the role of the US as a durable alternative security architecture is highly unlikely in the current conditions (Janardhan, 2014).

The current trading patterns indicate certain shifts have materialized, with less American oil imports accompanied by American diversification of oil suppliers to include importing oil from African states like Angola, while China and India's demand for gulf liquid oil will increase substantially over the next two decades. Therefore, maintaining relations with the GCC states is of central importance for China's energy security strategy, as it imports sixty percent of its oil needs from the gulf countries. Would this lead to the transformation of the Asian-gulf economic relationship to a western style security commitment or engagement?

The answer depends on China's and, to a broader extent, Asian governments' understanding of the concept of gulf security and the nature of threats. According to Tim Niplock, Threats to gulf security could be grouped into four sources: "the overthrow of existing regimes (leading either to domestic instability, or to the emergence of regimes inimical to Western countries); external, non-Western, intervention in the region; inter-state conflict within the Gulf; and the cutting of the sea-lanes along which oil is transported to the rest of the world" (Niplock 2014a). China and India, notably, do not conceive the first three potential threats as requiring its military engagement-most Asian states are not eager for intervention in other states'

internal affairs. As Niplock rightly states, China's access to Gulf oil is "effectively safeguarded by the US navy" and engaging in gulf security would not bring any benefits-on the contrary it might affect its interests in the gulf, taking into account the stark differences between American military capabilities and China's military strength, which makes any Chinese military strategy towards the gulf untenable in current conditions, taking into account that China is not looking to usurp the American role in providing gulf security in the short and medium terms. Simultaneously, China would be interested in one pillar of gulf security; that is, "the protection of the sea-routes into and out of the Gulf" in collaboration with other powers, rather than acting out of rivalry (Niplock, 2014a).

Overall, there is no rationale for the Chinese, and to a wider extent Asian governments, to expand GCC-Asia relations beyond the prosperous economic aspects. Moreover, the gulf countries have realized the urgent need for establishing a regional security system in the Gulf and therefore varied renewed proposals were put forward by the governments of Bahrain, Iraq, Iran and Saudi Arabia. Nonetheless, these attempts had not got attention from either the Gulf States themselves or from external international powers. (see Alani, 2008: 191-8) Hence, the security posture in the region did not change radically, and the gulf regional security continues to held prominent place on US engagement with the gulf region. This confirms the author's argument regarding the US's continuity; even under the current Obama administration, in playing a remarkable and central role in providing gulf security. Appealing alternatives to the American security role in the Arabian Peninsula have not yet crystallized.

4. The Gulf Regional Security Challenges and the Necessity of a US Military Presence

The preceding sections addressed various interconnecting factors that had deleterious consequences for Gulf security. A basic purpose of this section is to discuss, in more detail, the Gulf security environment and the main factors that threatened, and continue to threaten, the stability of Arabia. Special emphasis will be given to Iran's hegemony and dominance ambitions, the Iraq political and security quagmire and the spread of Weapons of Mass Destruction. Moreover, the author will elaborate on the US military

presence in the GCC territories, thereby illustrating the pivotal significance of America's enduring engagement in the Gulf region, especially under the myriad challenges that besiege the Gulf strategic environment and the influence they have had on shaping and making US-Gulf policy.

The Arab Gulf States live in an extremely challenging security environment and therefore the Gulf region needs a sustainable, enduring and workable security structure. In this regard Hunter states that 'A valid and useful security structure, therefore, is not a one-off, but rather something that has some capacity to endure and, hence, offer predictability' (Hunter, 2010: 10). Moreover, he states that 'the United States, along with its allies and friends, faces the need to define a long-term strategy for the region. Part of that strategy will relate to immediate issues of continuing U.S. involvement in Iraq, part to challenges posed by Iran' (Hunter, 2010: xi). In a related vein, Kenneth Pollack believes that the Iraqi security situation and Iran's nuclear program are the major issues that engulf the security system of the region (Pollack, 2003a; Pollack, 2003c). Noticeably, creating a durable security framework in the Gulf region depends, essentially, on three major powers; Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran (Rathmell et al, 2003: 2) and therefore the developments in the most influential powers in the Gulf security system (Iraq and Iran) are among the important variables that have far-reaching effects on the Gulf's regional security and subsequent US-Gulf policy. Moreover, US military strategy for the Gulf region focuses on the potential for an attack by either Iraq or Iran on US Gulf allies, and this perception has played a remarkable role in US policy towards the region since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 (Byman and Wise, 2002: 11). This has been asserted further by the Department of Defense, which saw Iran and Iraq as military threats to the Arab Gulf states, 'as one of its canonical major-war scenarios' (Rathmell et al, 2003: 3).

Equally important, there are a variety of reasons that require continuous US military involvement in the Gulf region and we should not view the American successes in changing the Iraqi regime as a 'panacea' to the region's security problems. As such, the geostrategic location of the Gulf region and its prominent and focal position in world oil trade, along with its vulnerability to threats mean that the US could not abandon its longstanding role in maintaining the Gulf's regional security (National Defense University Report, 2002: 1). Simon Hinderson makes mention that toppling Saddam

Hussein's regime in Iraq has changed the security environment in the Gulf 'by removing a regional threat and by deepening (and probably lengthening) the security commitment of the United States to the region' (Henederson, 2003: 77). For these reasons, the author will discuss, in the following section, the security challenges that both Iraq and Iran pose to the Gulf's regional security system, and would examine the US role in deterring the Iraqi and Iranian threats, emphasizing the long term continuities of US security policymaking rather than the immediate high profile effects of the war on terror.

4.1 The Iraqi Challenge

After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the security environment in the Gulf region has developed towards a new trajectory; thereby, US policy towards Iraq has mutated from the containment strategy that prevailed during the 1990s to changing the regime. George W. Bush portrayed Iraq, along with North Korea and Iran, in his State of the Union Address on January 29, 2002, as an 'axis of evil' (Bush, 2002b). He concentrated on the danger that Iraq poses to the United States and its allies' security through, as he states, Saddam Hussein developing WMD that could be used to threaten GCC countries or deliver these weapons to terrorist factions that could target the American interests in the Gulf region. The US invaded Iraq in the so-called Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) on March 19, 2003, which resulted in the collapse of the Iraqi regime on April 9, 2003. Even at the time it was argued that the US's successful eliminating of the Iraqi threat and subsequent transformation of the regime would not solve all security threats that marked the Gulf region (McMillan et al, 2003: 161).

Although the overthrow of the Iraqi regime had removed the main conventional military threat to Arab Gulf states' security, these states had legitimate concerns about the future security situation if the US withdrew before good governance had been installed. They also had concerns that a post invasion weak and fragmented Iraq might motivate Iran to play a prominent role in Gulf security arrangements and could emerge as a leading power in the region at the expense of the GCC countries (Katzman, 2003: 6). This fear of an increasing Iranian role in the region was accepted by the United

States Senate after the instability caused by the occupation: 'Despite their animosity towards Saddam Hussein, most Gulf States had reservations about the 2003 invasion of Iraq, and since then, Saudi Arabia in particular has been deeply concerned about Iran's influence on Baghdad' (United States Senate, 2012: 30).

As Ulrichsen had also argued, 'Since the US-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003, regional and international discourse on Iraq has been dominated by analysis of its geopolitical and strategic implications for the regional balance of power' (Ulrichsen, 2009: 9). Eliminating Iraq impacted upon the regional equilibrium in favor of Iran. Moreover, the GCC states also worry about the possibility of an emerging Iraq with Shiite dominance that could induce Shiite populations in other GCC states to search for prominent roles in the political system (Katzman, 2003: 28). While some analysts believed that the US-led invasion of Iraq and the subsequent removal of the Iraqi regime paved the way for the United States to build up a durable security framework in the Gulf region (Pollack, 2003a), the GCC states themselves continued to have 'realist' security concerns, especially after the invasion went so badly.

4.2 The Iranian Challenge

GCC states had been in a relationship of intense hostility with Iran since its revolution in 1979 because of its historic legacy of regional hegemony aspirations and long-standing ambitions to dominate the Gulf region. Iran remains a perceived source of tension and instability to the United States and its Gulf allies and friends alike. Iran has publicly pursued a policy that manifests the Iranian objectives to control the Gulf region so as to play a larger role in the Gulf security architecture. Simultaneously, the Iranian threat has mounted with the existence of Shiite residents in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Kuwait and such communities could turn out to become destabilizing factors for GCC internal security. Practically, Iran makes recurrent claims of sovereignty over Bahrain and it still occupy (since 1971) three islands that belong to the United Arab Emirates. It is worth noting that Iranian hegemonic attitudes have been deterred by the United States' commitment to providing GCC states' security and this is 'a continuation of a much older strategy of survival against regional predators'. Hence, the Iranian regional policies had cemented the hostile image of Iran, and consequently

US successive administrations had denied any positive role for Iran in Gulf regional security; in fact, it remains depicted as a factor of insecurity that targets GCC security and stability (Ulrichsen, 2009: 12).

More interestingly, Gregory Gause clarifies the Saudi worries and he emphasizes that Saudi Arabia's main concern is not that the Iranian military might achieve the acquisition of nuclear weapons; rather, it fears that the possession of a nuclear weapon would embolden Iran to enhance its influence in the region and it could be perceived as a reliable 'ally for sub state groups throughout the Arab world':

> The Saudis see Iranian power in more political than military terms. It is Iranian political influence in Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen, and Palestine that worries them, not the prospect of the use of Iranian military force. They see the Iranian threat to the Gulf States as centered in Iran's power to mobilize support among Shiite sympathizers in those states, not in the prospect of an Iranian missile attack or amphibious landing on the Arab shore of the Gulf. (Gause, 2010)

Simultaneously, the Iranian policies led Steven Wright to believe that Iran presents a real threat to the US's allies and interests in the Gulf region, as it has the ability to 'disrupt shipping access through the strait of Hormuz' (Wright, 2007: 93). This assessment was taken further by Matteo Legrenzi, who states that while the proponents of the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 perceived that the removal of Saddam Hussein lessened the security threat in the Gulf region, the GCC states consider, in practice, that Iran is the main beneficiary of toppling the Iraqi regime: 'Indeed, in the eyes of GCC states Iran is emerging as the real beneficiary of Saddam Hussein's fall, and as such it has become a much bigger threat to stability in their neighborhood' (Legrenzi, 2011: 115).

Moreover, Legrenzi states that from a US standpoint 'Iran is perceived as a hard security threat' and he makes mention that 'For Western analysts and policymakers this threat is almost quantifiable and very material and is dominated by terrorism, WMD and missile capabilities' (Legrenzi, 2011: 128). This has been asserted further by James Russell, who states: 'the situation in Iraq assists Iran in its regional ambitions to extend its influence and power and its desire to position itself as a champion of regional

political causes to the detriment of the surrounding Sunni political elites' (Russell, 2008: 35).

Indeed, evidence of Iranian hegemonic tendencies could be extracted from Iranian official statements[15] in which a senior aide to Iranian supreme leader 'Ayatollah Ali Khamenei' has pointedly stated that 'Iran has the power to control the Gulf as no vessel can cross the vital seaway without coming in range of its sophisticated weaponry' (Agence France-Presse, 2008). Moreover, the Iranian ambition of dominating the Gulf region has been evident through Iranian official statements that gave the 'Revolutionary Guards Corps' the responsibility of defending the Gulf region (Agence France-Presse, 2008). Some Iranian officials state that 'Our armed forces with their defense equipment including missile, air, naval and torpedo capabilities are able to control the Strait of Hormuz' (Agence France-Presse, 2008). This has been asserted further by a former Iranian consul-general to Dubai (Adel Al-Assadi), who gave an interview to the Dubai-based Gulf News, in which he stated that Iran had run, since 1979, a network of sleeper cells in GCC states and they could be instructed by Iran to destabilize GCC countries. He declared that 'Iran has an undercover presence in the six GCC countries' (Agence France-Presse, 2008).

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[15] Iranian officials have boasted of the expanding Iranian role in the region. Ali Reza Zakani, representative of Tehran city in the Iranian parliament, and considered close to the Iranian supreme guide Ali Khamenei, expressed clearly and openly the Iranian hegemonic aspirations when he pointed out that the Iranian influence in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon has tilted the balance of power in Iran's favor. He said: 'Three Arab capitals have today ended up in the hands of Iran and belong to the Islamic Iranian revolution'. Moreover, he makes mention that Sanaa, the capital of Yemen, has become the fourth Arab capital to join the Iranian revolution and he regards the Yemeni revolution as an extension to the Iranian revolution. Furthermore, he points out that Iran is experiencing 'grand jihad', as a description of what is going on in Iraq, Syria and Yemen, adding that 'there was Saudi Islam and Turkish secularism. But after the success of the Iranian revolution, the political equation in the region has changed in Iran's favor. Today we are at the peak of our strength; we impose our will and our strategic interests on everyone in the region'. Obviously, the Iranian interventionist role has become clearer recently in Iraq, where the Iranian Al-Quds legion moved into the country under the pretext of fighting the ISIS terrorist organization. Undoubtedly, The Iranian military intervention in Iraq poses questions regarding the genuine Iranian objectives, which has caused concerns among the GCC states, in particular Saudi Arabia. Such concerns and doubts of Iran intentions to boost its influence in the region have been exacerbated by Zakani's statements, in which he claims that after Yemen falling under Houthi control then their influence will extend to Saudi Arabia. He noted: 'The Yemeni revolution will not be confined to Yemen alone. It will extend, following its success, into Saudi territories. The vast Yemeni-Saudi borders will help accelerate its reach into the depths of Saudi land' (Sanaa is the fourth Arab capital to join the Iranian revolution, The Middle East Monitor, 27 September 2014). Available at: <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/news/middle-east/14389-sanaa-is-the-fourth-arab-capital-to-join-the-iranian-revolution> Access date: 25 January 2015.

Also, Iran's unconstructive role in the region's security has been clearly evident from an Iranian official's allegations that 'Bahrain, which has a Shiite majority, used to be Iran's 14th governorate' (Alsharq Alawsat, 2009). Simultaneously, Iran's hegemonic ambitions were expressed through former Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's statements at a news conference, in which he noted that the power of the United States is rapidly collapsing in Iraq and that Iran is ready to step in and fill the vacuum there. He stated: 'The political power of the occupiers (of Iraq) is being destroyed rapidly and very soon we will be witnessing a great void of power in the region'; he added, 'We, with the help of regional friends and the Iraqi nation, are ready to fill this void.'[16] (Asharq Al-Awsat, 2007). The U.S. Department of State criticized these statements, noting:

> There's no shortage of support for terrorism or militias or violence or instability in Iraq right now from the Iranian Government… President Ahmadi-Nejad's comments is just more of the same Iranian rhetoric that claims to hold out support and friendship for the people of Iraq while actions, unfortunately, take them in the opposite direction. (U.S. Department of State, 2007)

Obviously the above Iranian claims fuel doubts about Iran's intentions and policies toward the Gulf's regional stability. However, in order to deter Iran and prevent it from threatening peace in the Gulf region, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Nicolas Burns, emphasizes the US's broad strategic interest in maintaining a robust American presence and influence in the Gulf region. He unveiled the US's efforts to 'rebuff the attempt by Iran to advance its own strategic interests in the region and to expand its influence in the region' through making 'sure that countries are strong enough from a defensive standpoint to protect their borders, to deal with maritime security as well as other threats to security' (Burns, 2007). Moreover, he indicates that the significant American arms sales to the GCC countries were viewed as an effort 'to

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[16] Similarly, Iran's expansionary attitude towards its regional role and rising hegemony has been openly revealed by Ali Younesi, a former Iranian Minister of Intelligence and Security, and currently the special advisor to Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, who was quoted as saying: 'The geography and culture of Iraq and Iran are inseparable', adding that 'Baghdad is our capital, the center of our culture and identity– today as in the past' (Iran continues to boast of its regional reach, Middle East Eye, 10 March 2015). Available at:
<http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/iran-continues-boast-regional-reach-944755422> Access date: 12 March 2015.

enable these countries to strengthen their defenses and therefore, to provide a deterrence against Iranian expansionism and Iranian aggression in the future' (Burns, 2007).

Iran is an important component in the Gulf security architecture and the US's traditional vision has perceived Iran as a rival state; a vision that has been strengthened by the controversial Iranian nuclear program. Moreover, Iran has exploited the US's diminishing forces in Iraq by playing a major role in influencing the country, applying leverage so as to dominate the Gulf region which has long been an ambition of Iran's foreign policy[17] (Hunter, 2010: xiii; Yaphe, 2008: 1; Eisenstadt et al, 2011). Yaphe elaborates: 'For the United States, any consideration of Persian Gulf security must begin with Iran: its ambitions, perceptions, and behavior' (Yaphe, 2008: 1).

Iran constitutes a threat to regional security as it has its own ground forces and naval capabilities that could impede the transition of oil through the Strait of Hormuz by using anti-ship missiles, mines and submarines in addition to the dedicated programs of weapons of mass destruction. So, from the United States' point of view, Iran still poses a threat to US interests in the region as well as a challenge to the prevailing security system (Korb, 2005: 7), which has been further emphasized by Gregory Gause, who states that 'Regional security involves containment of Iranian ambitions and, where possible, rollback of Iranian influence in the Arab world' (Gause, 2011: 27).

Gregory Gause reminds us that regional security arrangements mean that the United States should continue its security role in providing Saudi Arabia and the smaller GCC states with the required protection. From his point of view, the US should assure its friends and allies in the Gulf region that reducing troops in Iraq does not mean that Washington would abandon them and leave them to Iranian control because GCC states have an important role in supporting US security strategies in the Gulf region (Gause, 2011: 28). Indeed, the US invasion of Iraq and consequent removal of Saddam

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[17] Indeed, the security concerns in the Gulf region are exacerbated by Iraq falling under Iran's sway and ostensibly, Iran has had the upper hand in Iraq since 2003. Therefore, countering Iranian influence in Iraq and acting seriously to forestall Iran from widening its regional influence is particularly important for achieving Gulf regional security. Michael Knights, an expert on defense issues, Iraq and Iran, points out: 'Ceding Iran unchallenged dominance of the Iraqi security sector is not an acceptable outcome of U.S. policy' (Knights, 2015: x).

Hussein's regime has led to the loss of Iraq as a parallel power vis-a-vis Iran and this situation has obviously resulted in the reinforcement of Iran's influence in the region. As McMillan states, 'Tehran is likely to stay on the path of pursuing regional hegemony, acquiring or developing nuclear weapons, and improving its military capabilities' (McMillan et al, 2003: 162). Alternatively of course, Iran, itself, believes it is a key factor in the Gulf stability (Yaphe, 2008: 2).

It can be argued that the US policy towards Iran intersects with GCC states in general, and Saudi Arabia in particular, and that it embodies the prevention of Iran from disrupting the prevailing military balance and rolling back its endeavors to tilt that balance in its favor. So, there is legitimate fear that Iran could exploit the weakened Iraq to enhance its influence over regional issues, thereby dominating the region.[18] This realist theory analysis has been supported by Gause, who states that 'American policy toward Iran, like that of the Saudis, seems to be driven by regional balance of power concerns' (Gause, 2007).

4.3 Proliferation: Weapons of Mass Destructions (WMD) Challenge

The proliferation of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons in the Gulf region is a problematic and controversial issue and therefore it has been placed on the US strategic agenda for many years. This, again, connects with Iran, which has emerged as one of Washington's major concerns as it seeks to own nuclear weapons. As Kagan makes mention, the US seeks 'to deter the proliferation and use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) of all varieties' (Kagan, 2008: 68). Anthony Cordesman states that

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[18] Saudi Arabia has been involved in a cold war, so to speak, with Iran since its revolution in 1979. Saudi Arabia, along with the other smaller GCC states, is concerned with ongoing developments in the surrounding security zone, which are exemplified in Iraq and Yemen, and wishes to prevent Iranian expansion in these countries and to rein in its influence there. Hence, the GCC states introduced initiatives. An example was the Saudi initiative, proposed during the GCC summit held in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in December 2011, whereby it was suggested to transform the GCC organization from the status of mere cooperation into a union. Also, the GCC countries brokered the Yemeni process of power transition from the former Yemeni President to a new, democratically elected President in February 2012 after protests against President Ali Abdullah Saleh in 2011. Nonetheless, at the time of writing, Houthi rebels have recently seized control of large parts of the country, including the capital "Sanaa" and obliged the new President, by military force, to resign from office in January 2015, shortly after his government submitted its resignation. The GCC states' foreign ministers held a meeting in Riyadh in February 2015, through which they condemned the Houthi military coup and requested the international Security Council to issue a resolution to reinstate the legitimate authority in Yemen by force.

there have been consistent and active Iranian attempts to acquire nuclear power and long-range ballistic missiles and in spite of vague Iranian statements on the real intention of the Iranian nuclear endeavors, the Iranian behaviors and policies clearly indicate the country's continued motive to seek and developing weapons of mass destruction (Cordesman, 2006: 7). Indeed, because the Gulf has been characterized as an unstable region since it witnessed military conflicts and tensions, the spread of WMD has been a worrisome issue to the United States, and surely Iran is a particular case in point as it seeks to develop WMD programs in an attempt to counter US influence in the Gulf region and threaten the interests of the United States and its Gulf allies. According to Korb, 'Iran is the number two state on the US list of proliferation threats, immediately behind North Korea' (Korb, 2005: 8). Moreover, as argued in the previous section, above, there is the perception of a threat amongst the US and its Arab friends in the GCC states, that a nuclear Iran means an outstanding threat to the balance of power and this has been asserted by Wallace as he makes mention that 'the possibility of a nuclear Iran also poses a threat to the currently manageable balance of power between Iran and the GCC states' (Wallace, 2005: 22). Similarly, Barry Posen states that 'The risk that nuclear weapons could "fall" into the hands of violent non-state actors is so great that the United States should be willing to take extraordinary measures, including preventive war, to keep suspicious countries from acquiring these weapons' (Posen, 2008: 91).

For the above reasons, the U.S. considers Iran the most serious threat that requires a robust American military presence in the GCC states and this has been clarified by the United States Senate: 'the rationale for continued American engagement in the region is compelling. Iran, one of the United States most pressing security threats, continues to defy international condemnation in its pursuit of a nuclear capability' (United States Senate, 2012: 30). Similarly, Michael Knights makes mention that the US military forces should conduct land and air military exercises that he considers an 'indispensable symbol of U.S. commitment' to strengthen GCC defense capabilities and guarantee their security (Knights, 2013: 39). As such, preventing Iran from developing nuclear weapons is an American national interest because Iran's possession of nuclear weapons could, on the one hand, force the United States to conduct military action against Iran, while it could embolden the states in the region to seek to acquire such weapons on the other hand (Knights, 2006: xiii).

Additionally, the U.S. Defense Department concentrates on the importance of the US forces in the region to defend the Gulf's regional security, noting, 'U.S. policy will emphasize Gulf security, in collaboration with Gulf Cooperation Council countries when appropriate, to prevent Iran's development of a nuclear weapon capability and counter its destabilizing policies' (U.S. Department of Defense, 2012: 2). Moreover, the enormity of this challenge has led the US Department of Defense to explicitly declare that:

> The proliferation of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons technology has the potential to magnify the threats posed by regional state actors, giving them more freedom of action to challenge U.S. interests. Terrorist access to even simple nuclear devices poses the prospect of devastating consequences for the United States. Accordingly, the Department of Defense will continue to enhance its capabilities, acting with an array of domestic and foreign partners, to conduct effective operations to counter the proliferation of WMD. (U.S. Department of Defense, 2012: 3)

This has been asserted by one of the US's official statements, in which it emphasizes that:

> Our goal is to prevent Iran from achieving a nuclear weapons capability and we will work with our allies and partners towards that goal as well as to counter Iranian actions that threaten to destabilize the greater Middle East and the rest of the world. (Steinberg, 2009)

Indeed, the GCC states and United States show convergence in their views about uranium enrichment because Iran's nuclear program overrides the peaceful purposes set out by the International Atomic Energy Agency and also Iran did not show compliance with the resolutions of the Security Council (Ghaffar, 2012: 23). So, the US would need to assure its allies in the Gulf that it continues to protect them against Iran; this has been emphasized by Davis Martini, who points out that the United States would need to prove to its Arab Gulf allies that its commitment to their security is beyond question and that it will defend them against any potential aggression by Iran. According to Martini, there are many factors underlying GCC concerns about Iranian nuclear

enrichment, represented in its proximity to Iran and the Shiite residents who could destabilize the domestic security of the host states through coordination with Iran. Moreover, GCC states hold the conviction that Iran is a strong power in the region and that its acquisition of a nuclear weapon would enhance its capabilities to change the balance of power in its favor. Besides, the GCC countries have concerns that Iran could target them with missiles as a reaction to any potential American strike against Iranian nuclear facilities (Martini and Nader, 2011: 51-2).

Similarly, one observer notes that the Iranian nuclear program could lead Iran to pursue an antagonistic foreign policy against US interests in the GCC states, attack Israel, and intentionally give such weapons to terrorist factions like 'Hezbollah' and Al Qaeda (Bowman, 2008: 79). This has been emphasized by Michael Knights, as he states that 'Eventual nuclear ownership by Iran could lead to more assertive foreign policy in the Gulf as well as a strengthened strategic position' (Knights, 2006: 54) and therefore, he calls on the United States to remain ready to 'deter Iran at all levels of conflict. Iran represents a formidable foe perhaps more sophisticated than the Iraqi military at its peak' (Knights, 2006: 82). In this sense, while some scholars believe that the Iranian bomb is a daunting threat that could urge the use of military force to hinder the Iranian endeavors, other scholars think that Iran has embarked on a vague nuclear program so as to use it 'as a deterrent without provoking assault. Iran does not need to "win" the conflict to have success; it only needs to thwart its enemies goals' (Alterman et al, 2013). Iran could use this weapon to intimidate the GCC states as well as the US troops present in the GCC military bases (McMillan, 2003: 20).

Having made this point, it seems that Iran has achieved considerable progress in its nuclear program (Cordesman et al, 2012: vii). Indeed, Iran has developed its ballistic missile capacity that reaches far beyond the region's borders. However, there are three nuclear locations in Iran: the Bushehr installation, Natanz, and another facility in Arak, in central Iran, and through scientific research Iran has gathered enough knowledge that would help it to obtain nuclear weapons within a few years (Takeyh, 2006: 51). Therefore, there is a significant possibility that Iran would have nuclear weapons and the means of delivery, which would thereby endanger the security of the region. Cordesman thinks that any outbreak of war in the region will adversely impact the world economy, which receives approximately 20% of its oil needs from the Gulf

(Cordesman et al, 2012: vii). Clawson supports Cordesman's views, as he states:

> In a broad sense, the United States sees Iran with a bomb as profoundly changing the balance of power in the Middle East, intimidating moderates and emboldening extremists. This, in turn, holds the prospect of disrupting energy supplies from a vital region (Clawson and Makovsky, 2012: 3).

The above concerns have led Gause to state that America should assure Saudi Arabia that Iran's relentless seeking of nuclear weapons means that the US would reinforce and intensify its commitment to provide the GCC states with security rather than withdrawing from the region (Gause, 2011: 30). As for US policy towards Iran's nuclear program, it has materialized in unilateral and multilateral sanctions. So, the first phase of sanctions was unilaterally imposed by the US from 1979 to 1995; the second phase was from 1995 to 2006, in which Washington targeted Iranian oil and gas sectors so as to try to collapse the regime, and from 2006 to 2010, this period included multilateral sanctions at the international level and has consisted of a set of punitive procedures being imposed on the companies that deal with the Iranian oil trade (International Crisis Group, 2013: 5; see also Cordesman, 2013b).

5. The Exigencies of Securing the Gulf

The Gulf region represents a paramount US concern and there are multidimensional implications of Gulf regional developments on US policy. So, global oil supply, the threat of sub-state actor violence, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, opaqueness of political and economic reform and Iraq's future, all of these characteristics are threatening factors that could adversely affect Gulf regional stability (Wallace, 2005: 11). Among the above concerns, oil had preoccupied the American decision makers and therefore one observer notes that the US security role in the GCC states would continue 'due to the West's critical need for their oil' (Parsi, 2011: 22). Yet, the growth of the global world economy depends largely on Gulf oil, and therefore the security of the Gulf oil producing countries has been a primary objective of the US military presence in the Gulf region (Russell, 2003: 36).

Simultaneously, the Gulf's contribution to the development of the entire world economy is a strong reason placing Gulf security among the prominent priorities for US policy, because any disruption in oil supply would result in a tangible rise in oil prices that would heavily affect the growth of the global economy (Korb, 2005: 3). So, regardless of how much the United States depends on Gulf oil, it has a real interest in maintaining a stable oil supply that contributes to the prosperity of the United States and the world economy, alike. (Rathmell et al, 2003: 4). For his part, Michael Knights supports this notion and he explains that although the US does not depend largely on Gulf oil, its economy will continue to be impacted by oil prices in global markets (Knights, 2013: 37) and he believes that US forces would remain in the Gulf and are not expected to 'leave entirely anytime soon' (Knights, 2006: xi). Yet, the Gulf's energy importance has prompted Blanchard to state that 'The stability and security of the Persian Gulf region and its energy resources will likely remain U.S. national security priorities for the foreseeable future' (Blanchard, 2008a: 4).

For the above reasons, the United States Senate explicitly recommends the United States to remain a central part of the Gulf security structure (United States Senate, 2012: 22). It emphasizes the US's essential role in securing the Gulf and has warned of 'undertaking a capricious or erratic policy' because 'Abandoning allies is a strategy that is unlikely to advance the United States long-term interests'. Furthermore, it is in the US's interest to provide Gulf security because 'The United States derives significant leverage from being the prime security provider for the Gulf region' (United States Senate, 2012: 20).

On a related topic, some analysts view the US military bases and its military presence in the Arab Gulf states as a demonstration of the US's supremacy and hegemony ambitions that would be achieved through control over Arab oil supplies (Kahwaji, 2004: 56). Others view the US military presence on the soil of the GCC states as necessary to achieve its interests. Telhami argues that the US benefits from its military presence by wielding political and military leverage, meanwhile the GCC will rally behind the US when its security is subject to threats, as happened when Iraq invaded Kuwait in the 1990 Gulf War. He further states that the US presence in the Gulf region is driven by mutual incentives that necessitate cooperation between the US and the GCC states (Telhami, 2002).

Noticeably, there are two trends with respect to the American military presence in the Gulf region; the first one supports this presence and considers it indispensable, while the second one takes a different stance and perceives this presence as unnecessary and even counterproductive. The following sections will elaborate on these controversial views with regard to the inevitability of an American military presence in the gulf region.

5.1 The Necessity of the US Military Presence

Anthony Cordesman is one of the scholars who emphasize the US's important security role in the Gulf, as the Gulf's uncertainties and complicated problems require the US 'to stay in the Gulf for decades'. Moreover, he describes the calls for a US withdrawal from the Gulf region as unwise (Cordesman, 2000: 24). This vision has been asserted by Kugler, who believes that the Gulf region is a volatile and uncertain region which has encountered different disturbances which ensure that keeping US forces in the Gulf region has become an essential element in US defense strategy (Kugler, 2003: 89). Similarly, Korb states that American decision-makers have a common vision, which is that 'the United States must ensure that no rival power exercises hegemonic control over the [Gulf] region and its energy supplies' (Korb, 2005: 3). Moreover, Hajjar believes that US military presence in the Gulf is essential and desired by the GCC states and he thinks that the US involvement in the Gulf region is critical to maintaining the GCC regimes' sustainability and the region's stability (Hajjar, 2002: 37). As a result, US disengagement from the volatile Gulf region is not contemplated because the U.S. has various interests there, and consequently it has 'no choice but to remain a deeply engaged power in the region' (Hunter, 2010: xi). In this sense, one observer notes that the US security ties with the GCC countries have played a remarkable role in preserving GCC internal security by 'reinforcing regimes security as much against their own societies as against neighboring states' (Ulrichsen, 2009: 5).

Furthermore, Simon Henederson mentions that the GCC states had spent a lot developing military arms, although he believes that this proved inefficient to deter and counter the military capabilities of Iran, which owns the 'largest conventional force' in the region (Henederson, 2003: xiv). Moreover, the 'GCC combined manpower'

constitutes half of that of Iran or Iraq, and therefore it was unable to prevent Saddam from attacking Kuwait in 1990. Subsequently, the GCC states have had no option but to continue their reliance on the US security umbrella to deter or counter any regional threat (Henederson, 2003: 68). Matteo Legrenzi shares this vision, believing that despite the military development of the GCC states, they 'will never be in a position to withstand hostile actions on the part of their bigger neighbours. Therefore, the choice of GCC states to rely on indefinite American support is a logical one' (Legrenzi, 2011: 76). For his part, Kenneth Pollack agrees with this point of view and states that it is unrealistic to think that GCC states will be able to 'defend themselves against large-scale aggression without U.S. military intervention' (Pollack, 2003b: 86). This has been emphasized by Wallace, who states that 'GCC states will remain dependent on U.S. security guarantees despite their significant military investments, a situation that benefits U.S. foreign policy' (Wallace, 2005: 23).

Additionally, Steven Yetiv emphasizes the US's essential role in Gulf security and argues that: 'Whatever the impact of September 11 and the Iraq War, one thing remains fairly clear: an overview of two decades of regional politics and security reveals clearly that there is no real substitute for the U.S. regional role' (Yetiv, 2004: 93). He also makes mention that: 'No state or combination of states can currently assume the responsibilities the United States has taken on following Britain's withdrawal east of Suez in 1971'. As he puts it:

> The GCC remains incapable of deterring or even significantly impeding a major attack on one of its members, chiefly because it lacks the manpower and combat training, but also because it is not effectively unified. Indeed, all of the weapons bought by GCC states over the years were not enough to deter the Iraqi invasion and occupation of Kuwait. Repeated attempts by GCC states in the post-crisis period to develop a more effective military arm have fallen short, despite hopeful plans to do so initiated as early as 1981. (Yetiv, 2004: 94)

He adds:

> Of course, a better outcome for both the United States and the [Gulf] region would be to create an indigenous security system that allowed the United States to play a

secondary and over-the-horizon role in the region. But while that may be possible someday, it does not appear likely in the near term. (Yetiv, 2004: 96)

Indeed, disagreement amongst GCC states on creating a collective security framework has compounded the need for a continuing American military presence on GCC soil, and therefore US attempts to create GCC integrated defense capabilities were impeded by 'petty political disputes, differing security strategies, resentment of Saudi domination, and suspicion of Iraq' (Ottaway, 2009). Moreover, combining and integrating the GCC states' military capabilities has been hindered by varied issues: (a) the GCC states' deep dependence on US military force; (b) the GCC countries' preference to cooperate with the US on a bilateral basis rather than a multilateral basis, as they have varying political visions that affect the extent of military cooperation between them, and (c) the smaller GCC members do not look at the GCC organization as an effective tool to solve the GCC states' bilateral disagreements and conceive of Saudi Arabia as a bigger GCC state that wants to lead the smaller states and play the role of hegemon in the Gulf region (Byman and Wise, 2002: 40). For these reasons, Joseph McMillan states: 'Despite considerable success in the trade and economic sphere, the GCC's record as a mutual defense group has thus far been disappointing, with a long list of false starts and grandiose but ineffective initiatives' (McMillan et al, 2003: 168).

Remarkably, the GCC states' vulnerability has prompted Michael Kraig to state that 'Arab friends and allies would not base security on their own indigenous capabilities but rather on continued dependence on the United States as an outside power, through bilateral agreements' (Kraig, 2004: 154). Similarly, this has been asserted further by Anthony Cordesman, who believes that the GCC states, neither individually nor collectively, would develop prominent military forces and deterrence capabilities to counter threats from either Iraq or Iran and therefore he thinks that the US should prop up the GCC forces and reinforce the GCC states' defense capabilities. Moreover, he assumes that 'the fragile structure of military security in the Gulf could explode at any time' and hence United States military existence and security role is badly needed (Cordesman, 2000: 25). Ostensibly, the United States' role is essential to keep the military balance in the Gulf region. As Cordesman puts it: 'The greatest single key to ensuring the stability of the military balance in the Gulf, and to maintain future peace, is

to understand that the US must continue to play the role of the balancing power in [the Gulf] region, and take the lead in ensuring any form of aggression will be checked'. (Cordesman, 2000: 47). However, the American critical role in maintaining gulf security is compounded further; as he states, United States policy should be constructed on the premise of the necessity to maintain US forces in the Gulf region for decades and he compares the United States' commitment to Gulf security to its enduring commitment to NATO. Consequently, he calls on the United States to defend its allies in the GCC states through 'Maintaining strong, combat ready US power projection capabilities' (Cordesman, 2000: 47). Moreover, he pointedly observes that the US should maintain its military presence so that it makes sure that no regional power dominates the region (Cordesman, 2000: 48). Practically, a visible US military presence in the Gulf region has changed the balance of power in the GCC's favor, and therefore without the US's existence in the region the GCC could face the possibility of aggression either by Iraq or Iran (Byman and Wise, 2002: 12). Similarly, Kenneth Katzman agrees with Anthony Cordesman's argument with respect to the balance of power issue and he makes mention that the conventional military balance between Iran and Iraq has been altered drastically in Iran's favor because Iraqi military capabilities have been weakened after the American invasion and they have become incapable of balancing or countering Iran. This has been compounded by the emergence of an 'Iran–influenced Iraq' that reinforces GCC states' legitimate concerns about Iran's increasing role in the Gulf's regional security architecture. So, Iran's potential to take on a more prominent role in the region security arrangements represents another driving force that compelled the United States to keep its military presence in the Gulf region (Katzman, 2003: 28). This exigency prompts Michael Knights to state that GCC states have no alternatives to US security commitments, and as Iraq would not be able to balance Iran, at least in the near term, the US presence therefore would be necessary in order to check and deter Iranian power (Knights, 2013: 2).

Kenneth Pollack illustrates the above analysis further, noting that US concern exceeds the objective of unimpeded oil access, including the goal of preventing any rival state from dominating the region's oil resources, whereby it could 'blackmail the world'. Besides, he focuses on the importance of the US military presence in the Gulf because of the Gulf's geo strategically important position, close to the 'Middle East, central Asia, eastern Africa and south Asia'. So, the US presence in the Gulf will enable the US to

exercise oversight and control critical developments in these areas and this has proved true through US military operations against Afghanistan that were launched from US military bases located in GCC states (Pollack, 2003a). Moreover, Richard Sokolsky asserts further the importance of the US presence in the Gulf: 'the United States will need to maintain forces in the region, and Saudi Arabia will continue to assume an important role in the American forward deployed posture' (Sokolsky, 2003: 8).

Concurrently, the US presence in the Gulf benefits not only the GCC states, but it serves also the US strategic goals in the region, and therefore US and GCC states have a mutual interest in maintaining US military forces in the region; this has been evidenced by GCC bilateral defense agreements with the United States, the forward military presence in the GCC states, arms sales, and finally, the American security coordination and cooperation with the GCC states through creating the Gulf security dialogue initiative (The Center for Applied Policy Research, 2010: 3).

5.2 The Critique of the US Military Presence

In contrast, there is a school of thought with the opposite viewpoint with respect to the American military presence in the Gulf. So, Bradley Bowman believes that maintaining U.S. interests in the Gulf region could be achieved with a modest and limited American posture rather than an extensive and permanent military presence. As he puts it, 'In fact, a large U.S. military presence in the [Gulf] region is unnecessary and often counterproductive' (Bowman, 2008: 77). He went further, to conclude that the US military's presence could fuel radicalization and terrorist actions against US troops and military facilities in the GCC states' lands (Bowman, 2008: 81). Moreover, he argues that the U.S. Navy could respond to any potential attack on offshore oil facilities or oil tankers by either Al-Qaeda or Iran by using naval bases either in Bahrain or the United Arab Emirates and therefore there is no need to station US forces on permanent bases in the GCC states' territories (Bowman, 2008: 82). As he argues: 'Not only is a robust U.S. military presence in the Middle East unnecessary, but it is also often counterproductive' because US interests in the Gulf region 'do not require a large network of bases or a large quantity of troops' (Bowman, 2008: 89).

Similarly, Joseph McMillan believes that large contingents of US military troops in the Gulf region 'will increasingly be subject to a variety of regional domestic political pressures' (McMillan et al, 2003: 163). By the same token, the National Defense University report emphasizes this conclusion: 'the U.S. military presence in the region, especially Saudi Arabia, is a source of growing resentment and a mounting domestic liability for the ruling families of host countries' (National Defense University, 2002: 2). This has been evinced by the Saudi leadership's desire to evacuate U.S. personnel from the kingdom so as to avoid increasing internal pressures. Tyler clarifies: 'The presence of foreign -- especially American -- forces since the Persian Gulf war of 1991 has been a contentious issue in Saudi Arabia and has spurred the terrorism of Osama bin Laden and his followers in Al Qaeda'. He went even far when he described the Saudi move as 'an era of military disengagement from the United States' (Tyler, 2003). In a related vein, Barbara Conry stands explicitly against a US military presence in the Gulf region:

> Washington has been attempting to manage Persian Gulf security ever since President George Bush decided on a U.S. military response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Such high-profile involvement in the Gulf is unwise…Washington has effectively transformed the region into a U.S. military protectorate, thus becoming entangled in the convoluted affairs of the entire area... The pattern of ever-deepening involvement is undeniable and will continue as long as Washington persists in taking responsibility for Persian Gulf security. The United States has no interests at stake in the region to justify the escalating risks and costs of its current policy...The United States needs to fundamentally rethink its Persian Gulf policy. Washington should recognize that no vital U.S. national security interests are at stake in the Gulf and withdraw U.S. troops, before the United States becomes further entangled in the perennially volatile affairs of the region. (Conry, 1996)

However, it can be argued that US's continuous military presence in the GCC states has been consistent with the goals identified by the Quadrennial Defense Review of 2001 and the National Military Strategy of 2004. The Quadrennial Defense Review report emphasizes the role of US forces: 'Over time, U.S. forces will be tailored increasingly to maintain favorable regional balances in concert with U.S. allies and friends with the aim of swiftly defeating attacks with only modest reinforcement and, where necessary, assuring access for follow-on forces'. The document also states that a primary goal for

US forces is to 'increase the capability of its forward forces, thereby improving their deterrent effect' (Quadrennial Defense Review Report, 2001: 20). This point has been asserted further by the National Military Strategy, which mentions that: 'Our primary line of defense remains well forward. Forces operating in key regions are essential to the defense of the United States and to the protection of allies and US interests' (The National Military Strategy of the United States of America, 2004: 10).

Most interestingly, the George W. Bush administration's security policy in the Gulf was characterized by a variety of principles in the aftermath of September 11, such as concentrating on preemptive wars and calls to foster American superiority in the world. Although US foreign policy directions have been affected by the neoconservatives' agenda, it should be noted that the US Department of Defense and the global defense strategy have played a role in US policy attitudes, and therefore Michael Knights makes mention that the US security strategy in the Gulf region 'is not driven wholly by the nature of the threats facing US and allied interests in the region. Rather, the development of US theater strategy responds to global factors and decisions made by the US department of defense' (Knights, 2006: 93). Moreover, U.S. military strategy in the Gulf region has been directed by U.S. global defense strategy as articulated in the 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review Report, which calls for the maximization of US capabilities to obstruct possible adversaries or competitors from following competitive behaviors that would endanger the Gulf's regional security. The concept that drives this policy is that the US military's might and the enhancing of the GCC's defensive capabilities would send strong signals to potential adversaries that their endeavors to build up military forces and contemplate constructing WMD weapons would be counterproductive, as this will be deterred through maintaining a visible and robust US military force in the Gulf region. As such, the policy of dissuasion would work as a catalyst to adversaries, to avoid pursuing antagonistic policies against the US and its friendly Arab Gulf states and therefore the US military presence in the region would dissuade either Iran or Iraq, which are traditionally regarded as major threats and destabilizing powers, from pursuing competitive policies in the Gulf region (Kugler, 2003: 99).

Indeed, this kind of force planning had led to the creation of a sizable overseas military presence in the Gulf region and this policy has been perceived by US decision-makers

as necessary to achieve various goals, in terms of deterring potential and future threats, consolidating alliances, supporting the regional balance of power, enabling the US to defeat any attacks on GCC states decisively and quickly, and creating military bases and infrastructure to serve the objectives of the American grand strategy (Kugler, 2003: 99). Yet, Douglas Feith, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (2001-2005) in the George W. Bush administration, emphasizes the American hegemonic policies that were based on a strategy of forward deployment and power projection. He mentions that 'Key premises underlying our forward posture have changed fundamentally: We no longer expect our forces to fight in place; rather, their purpose is to project power into theaters that may be distant from where they are based' (Feith, 2003). As Josef Nye mentions, the George W. Bush National Security Strategy 2002 'attracted criticism at home and abroad for its excessive rhetoric about preemptive military strikes and the promotion of American primacy'. As a result, he calls on American policy-makers to focus on soft power rather than military power. He mentions that although the National Security Strategy focuses greatly on terrorism and weapons of mass destruction as primary threats facing the United States, he stresses that meeting such challenges would require cooperation with others, and that this could be enhanced through concentration on the employment of soft power (Nye, 2004: 259). He added:

> In short, America's success will depend upon our developing a deeper understanding the role of soft power and developing a better balance of hard and soft power in our foreign policy. That will be smart power. We have done it before; we can do it again. (Nye, 2004: 270)

Conclusion

To sum up, it should be noted that the GCC states desperately need the United States' security assurance and therefore the US has embarked on providing its Arab Gulf allies with security in order to achieve the twin goals; maintaining US key interests and preserving GCC states' stability. Moreover, although the September 11th terrorist attacks caused temporary estrangement in US relations with Saudi Arabia, as the majority of the attackers were Saudis, these relations were quickly restored and

returned to their longstanding familiar pattern. The continuity of the US-Saudi security relationship has been emphasized by Michael Knights, who states: 'In the face of Iran's threat and in the shadow of 9/11, the continuity in U.S.-Saudi defense relationships is an important aspect of the enduring strategic partnership between the world's greatest energy producer and the world's preeminent military power' (Knights, 2013: 9).

In conclusion, the previous analysis demonstrates the enormous continuity of US-Gulf security policy during the past 60 years that has coincided with US policy makers' consensus over the tremendous and substantial strategic goals that have been consistent throughout that period of time. Yet, US continuity has been asserted by Shawn Brimley, who rightly argues that although the 9/11 terrorist attacks have been exploited to either justify or critique the Bush administration's foreign policy decisions, it should be noted that the September events 'did not change everything' (Brimley, 2008: 11). This notion has been asserted further by Hunter, who believes that the US's continued engagement in the Gulf region represents an extension of the old US security policy. As he puts it: 'The United States fate in this regard began to be determined as early as the development of the Truman Doctrine of the late 1940s, and that fate was finally sealed with the invasion of Iraq in 2003' (Hunter, 2010: 4). So, there is a traditional conviction of the importance of the US's constant military presence in the Gulf region, which indicates the realpolitik approach that both US and GCC states had followed in their mutual bilateral relations and as a result, the security cooperation paradigm proved difficult to formulate and has become extremely unlikely to occur in the current conditions. Consequently, the US military presence in the Gulf region is deemed instrumental and a staple to maintain and protect US long-term national interests through cementing the US security relationship with each individual Arab Gulf state.

Chapter 5

The US Relations with the GCC Countries and the Policy of Promoting Democracy

Introduction

This chapter generates a comprehensive and deeper understanding of the George W. Bush administration's Freedom agenda, which assumed a prominent role in US foreign policy. Unsurprisingly, the US strategy to promote democratization in the Middle East in general and in the Gulf region in particular has consisted of a synthesis of elements into American foreign policy. These are epitomized by the spreading of American liberal democratic ideals along with maintaining and sustaining the US's long-term interests in the strategic Gulf sub-region. Equally important are the Bush administration's democratic agenda and the subsequent policies which encompass a complex and multifaceted engagement in the Gulf region, ranging from diplomatic pressure to military intervention, with the ultimate objective of continuing as the predominant power in the region.

This chapter explores the extent to which the Bush administration's emphasis on democracy could be viewed as traditional or a new paradigm in US foreign policy and to address the factors of continuity and change in the G. W. Bush policy compared to the policies of his predecessors. In doing so, the author seeks, in this chapter, to address three primary questions; 1) how and why the Bush administration prioritized democracy promotion to become a central component in the US grand strategy and 2) to what extent the September 11 events increased and intensified the appeals for freedom and democratization. Finally, 3) the author will explore the impediments that his administration has confronted in this realm.

Obviously, the strategy of democracy promotion could be understood better by situating it within the broader context of the staunch US attempts to influence the Gulf States' politics and preserve its enduring vital interests. As Tamara Wittes observes,

'Ongoing American involvement in the [Gulf] region is a foregone conclusion—therefore, the question is not whether U.S. actions ought to impact Arab political development, but in what way.' (Wittes, 2005: 23). Significantly, the Gulf's regional security and stability continues to be a paramount priority in US-Gulf relations and therefore G. W. Bush's appeals for democracy have been ambivalent, since any policy of democratization is caught between the US's long-standing relations with the Arab Gulf regimes, which contributed crucially to maintaining and sustaining the American geostrategic interests in the region, and the proclaimed project of promoting liberal and democratic values that could, from a US standpoint, reinforce the Gulf's long-term regional stability. In effect, this understanding will allow extrapolation and examination of the US's promotion of democracy in the Gulf region and illustrate how, in practice, they have been characterized by pragmatism.

Remarkably, many scholars saw a departure of the G. W. Bush administration's policy from a traditional agenda and they noted change in his foreign policy attitudes, which placed greater emphasis on democratizing the Middle East, in which the Gulf region is a component. [19] Accordingly, this change reached new heights when the Bush administration conceived of democracy promotion as a vital instrument to protect the US national interests, secure the Gulf's regional stability, and eliminate terrorism. As this chapter demonstrates, Bush's fervent appeals for constituting democracy set out from 'a distinctive ideological-discursive' that came as a reaction to the September 11th attacks and this discourse has been developed and institutionalized in the period 2001-2008 (Hassan, 2009: 14).

Implementation of the US freedom agenda in the GCC states has faced unyielding difficulties and contradictions, resulting in the practice following a gradual and slow approach with the US's Gulf allies. Simultaneously, the US pursued military intervention to force its agenda and the Iraq case is instructive in this regard. It was thought that Iraq would stimulate the other states in the Arab world and that ultimately this would radiate the American liberal values throughout the region (see Halabi, 2009: 120). This paradox signifies Bush's failure in turning his vision of democracy into

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[19] For example, Tamara Wittes argues that 'This new strategy [freedom agenda] represented a major shift in the traditional U.S. foreign policy approach to the Middle East, and has evoked varied reactions ranging from enthusiasm to ambivalence to outright hostility.' (Wittes, 2006: IX).

manifested results, and thereby he pursued a 'low-intensity democracy' policy in US relations with the Arab Gulf monarchies (see Hassan, 2009: 10-17).

Therefore, contrary to some prevailing arguments, this chapter argues that the G. W. Bush administration's policy of promoting democracy in the Middle East in general and in the Gulf region in particular should be seen as a broadly traditional pursuit consistent with the predecessor administrations, and therefore his policy did not drastically depart from US traditional policy. Remarkably, successive administrations since President Reagan in the 1980s had perceived the spreading of American liberal and democratic values in the Middle East as one of the mechanisms that could maintain ongoing stability, bring prosperity and serve US long-standing interests in the Gulf region. However, the strategy has become a paramount exigency in G. W. Bush's foreign policy, although it oscillated between a US idealistic liberalism ideology and US economic and security realism in dealings with the Gulf oil monarchies.

1. The Formation of the Freedom Agenda

The Bush administration has made democracy-building 'the new overarching rationale to US foreign policy' and to implement his vision of creating more democratic states in the Middle East, he established the Freedom Agenda, inspired by 'democratic peace theory'[20] and the universality of American liberal democratic values. The National Security Strategy of 2002 emphasizes American values of freedom and democracy as it begins: "Our Nation's cause has always been larger than our Nation's defense. We fight, as we always fight, for a just peace—a peace that favors liberty" (The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, 2002: 1). Noticeably, this objective continued to be part of US foreign policy under the current Obama administration, as articulated clearly in the National Security Strategy of 2010, which states: "America's commitment to democracy, human rights, and the rule of law are essential sources of our strength and influence in the world" (National Security Strategy, 2010: 2).

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[20] Larry Diamond believes that: 'democratic countries do not go to war with one another or sponsor terrorism against other democracies. They do not build weapons of mass destruction to threaten one another. Democratic countries are more reliable, open, and enduring trading partners, and offer more stable climates for investment.' (Diamond 1992:30). In contrast, Dietrich Jung believes that it is unwise to take the assumptions of the school of democratic peace for granted and there is no inevitable relationship between state democratic structure and a peaceful foreign policy. Also, there is no consensus that democracy enhances regional stability (see Jung 2006: 180-81).

Yet, G. W. Bush's appeals for freedom featured an ideological component, as promoting democracy was hoped to enhance liberty against extremist ideology[21] (see Hassan, 2012: 16). Moreover, the events of September 11th underpinned the Bush administration's ideological discourse and after G. W. Bush's reelection in 2004, he continued the democracy promotion rhetoric and it 'became even more central to official American rhetoric— it served as the basis for Bush's inaugural address and early in Bush's second term was reiterated often by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and other senior officials.' (Brown and Shahin, 2009: 22).

Indeed, analyzing the democracy position in US foreign policy necessitates better understanding of democracy formation at three interrelated levels: (1) the ideational level that reflects the fundamental belief in the US's political liberal values and national identity; (2) the strategic level, which indicates the transformation of American political values to hold a prominent place among foreign policy goals, and (3) at the policy level, by which democracy is transferred from beliefs and aspirations to practical measures and policies embedded in actual actions to promote democracy in the targeted countries (Bouchet, 2013: 34). In essence, the US liberal values comprising 'National identity, liberalism, exceptionalism and universalism' have marked the democracy project that G. W. Bush sought to project in US international relations (Bouchet, 2013: 38). Notably, this projection was not G. W. Bush's innovation; rather 'The projection of liberal values has traditionally been one central element of American strategic thinking.' Simultaneously, as we shall see, it should be obvious that the US's traditional policy has concentrated on pursuing US economic and security interests and this strategic goal precedes democracy promotion in the formation of US grand strategy. As Nicolas Bouchet rightly observes, democracy promotion 'has rarely been the uppermost priority, nor has it generally been allowed to supersede vital economic and security interests where they have clashed'. So, democracy 'has [been] pursued abroad after or alongside security and economic interests.' (Bouchet, 2013: 40). Importantly, the National Security Strategy of 2006 has articulated the importance of democracy promotion in advancing US ideals and interests. It claims that 'The United States has long championed freedom because doing so reflects our values and advances our interests.' Yet, it holds that supporting democracy abroad is necessary to enhance US national

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[21] Charles Krauthammer believes that 'Democracies are inherently more friendly to the United States, less belligerent to their neighbors, and generally more inclined to peace.' (Krauthammer 2004:15).

security and therefore it clearly indicates that: 'Championing freedom advances our interests because the survival of liberty at home increasingly depends on the success of liberty abroad' (The White House, 2006: 3).

Consequently, it should be clear from the outset that the US democracy strategy has been formulated and implemented based on calculations of the US's real interests. These interests include the thinking that democracy promotes stability and the more 'realist' thinking that democracy is promoted when it fits in with US strategic and economic interests. In other words, as the author will demonstrate throughout this chapter, the Bush administration promotes democracy when it conforms to the US's economic and security interests and when democracy clashes with those interests the strategy has been downplayed or even neglected, which signifies profound proof of the continuity of US interests as a determinant factor in Bush's foreign policy.

1.1 Defining the Freedom Agenda

Concomitant with the US's emergence as a superpower, successive administrations sought to spread the US's vision and ideology that comprised political liberalist norms alongside free market capitalist principles, which combined together the main thesis of the US democracy promotion strategy[22] (Markakis, 2012: 9). However, that strategy incorporates a variety of 'formative' components that are derived from a staunch belief in (1) 'American exceptionalism' in terms of traditional liberal democratic values and good governance, (2) the intrinsic relationship between spreading democracy and US national security 'democratic peace theory', and (3) the free market economy[23] (see

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[22] Markakis argues that in addition to the above goals, the main US objective of promoting democracy abroad is to ensure the stability and security of the states concerned and achieve the US strategic goal of hegemony (see Markakis, 2012: 11; 30). He also argues that: 'US democracy promotion in the aftermath of the second world war has constituted a pursuit of hegemony.' (see Markakis, 2012: 50; 76).

[23] The National Security Strategy of George W. Bush in 2002 asserted the above when it stated that: 'The United States possesses unprecedented— and unequaled—strength and influence in the world. Sustained by faith in the principles of liberty, and the value of a free society, this position comes with unparalleled responsibilities, obligations, and opportunity. The great strength of this nation must be used to promote a balance of power that favors freedom.' The National Security Strategy of 2002 emphasized the importance of free market capitalism when it states: 'A strong world economy enhances our national security by advancing prosperity and freedom in the rest of the world.' It states, also, that: 'We will promote economic growth and economic freedom beyond America's shores.' (see The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, September 2002).

Markakis, 2012: 51-8). These principles were reflected clearly in the National Security Strategy of 2002, which starts:

> The great struggles of the twentieth century between liberty and totalitarianism ended with a decisive victory for the forces of freedom—and a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise. (The White House, 2002)

Similarly, the same National Security Strategy emphasizes the US's commitment to spreading democracy worldwide and it explicitly states that the US 'will actively work to bring the hope of democracy, development, free markets, and free trade to every corner of the world' [24] (The White House, 2002). Moreover, the National Security Strategy of 2006 has pledged to 'support democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world.' (The White House, 2006: 1).

In addition to the above White House documents, which viewed democracy as a proper and legitimized strategy to enhance the US's national security, there have been many American scholars who defend and support the G. W. Bush administration's democracy promotion policy. So, Larry Diamond supports the notion that promoting democracy abroad serves the US national interests and therefore he denies the 'realists'' claims that the US should limit its intervention in other states and concentrate on threats that have immediate effects on US security. According to him, America has a moral mission to spread freedom worldwide and this is the reason behind the US's eligibility to play the role of 'international leadership' (Diamond, 1992: 29). He went further, to claim that 'A more democratic world would be a safer, saner, and more prosperous world for the United States.' (Diamond, 1992: 30).

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[24] The National Security Strategy emphasizes the American international role in promoting democracy when it says: 'The United States must defend liberty and justice because these Principles are right and true for all people everywhere.' (The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, September 2002: 3).

Similarly, Francis Fukuyama conceived democracy as a useful tool to achieve the US's national security objectives. He claims: 'in the long run, the emergence of more democratic regimes in the most autocratic region of the world should also make the United States more secure'. Accordingly, US security, he argues, would be enhanced through the creation of more democratic governments in the Arab world that would be conducive to legitimizing the political process and reducing the activities of extremist groups such as Al-Qaeda[25] (Fukuyama and McFaul, 2007: 26). This notion has been asserted further by Kenneth Wollack, who believes that democracy is a practical means of fighting radical ideologies. As he observes: 'Democracy and human rights are not only ideals to be pursued by all nations; they are also pragmatic tools that are powerful weapons against extremism.' (Wollack, 2008: 434).

In addition to the above intellectual notions, there have been 'conservative' opinions that support more American engagement in international affairs so as to consolidate the US's influence. As Max Boot has noted, 'The September 11 attack was a result of insufficient American involvement and ambition; the solution is to be more expansive in our goals and more assertive in their implementation'. (Boot, 2001)

As such, it can be said that promoting democracy has been conceived as a proper strategy to strengthen American power and prevent American decline. McFaul claims that: 'There is a genuine correlation between the advance of democracy as well as democratic norms worldwide and the growth of U.S. power.' (McFaul, 2004: 158). Furthermore, Charles Krauthammer illustrates the relationship between promoting democracy and preserving American interests. He believes that: 'The spread of democracy is not just an end but a means, an indispensable means for securing American interests.' (Krauthammer, 2004a: 15).

Moreover, he looks at democracy as a proper tool with which to spread American values, though he believes that the policy should be realistic in its aspirations through the shift from 'a democratic globalism to a democratic realism.' According to him, the

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[25] Francis Fukuyama and Michael McFaul believe that internal stability would be enhanced through democratic governance as it would reduce conflicts between states, on the one hand, and decrease the demands for weapons on the other (see Fukuyama and McFaul, 2007: 26).

spreading of democracy must be 'targeted, focused and limited.' [26] (Krauthammer, 2004a: 18). Yet, he evokes the commitment to US strategic interests whilst seeking to promote democracy. He notes that 'American intervention [to promote democracy] must always be strategically grounded' and therefore he called upon decision-makers 'to restrain the idealistic universalism with the realist consideration of strategic necessity.' (see Krauthammer, 2004b: 20).

The purpose of pointing out the above American scholars' ideas is to demonstrate that strengthening the US's efficiency as a key player in the Gulf's regional affairs has been the core objective and motivation that drives American foreign policy even in the realm of promoting democracy. Moreover, although there have been opposing views, as we shall see, which criticized the American democracy project because of the Iraq war and its repercussions, which impacted the policy of democratization and called into question the credibility of US democratic appeals, the general tone of the G. W. Bush administration's foreign policy is largely a realist one. Democracy promotion has not, in practice, been the priority.

1.2 Democracy Institutions

Democracy aid programs were introduced to become one of the bulwarks of US foreign policy in the 1980s and 1990s to offer necessary assistance to build up the democracy project in targeted countries. So, USAID, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), and the State Department, were all created to provide financial assistance for concerned countries. During that period, the major provider of democratic aid was the USAID and NED, with limited contributions from the State Department. But the Bush administration increased the role of the latter in funding democracy and reduced the role of USAID, with the latter coming to operate under State Department supervision. Indeed, these changes reflected the G. W. Bush administration's policy that associated

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[26] Charles Krauthammer (neoconservative school) does not support 'democratic globalism' because it is 'too ambitious and too idealistic'; instead of idealism he proposed the implementation of what he called 'democratic realism', which concentrates on supporting democracy in the countries considered essential for preserving the US's strategic interests. So, although both democratic globalism and democratic realism concentrate on spreading democracy, they differ in the scope with which democracy should be promoted. As he noted, advocating democracy should be informed by 'geopolitical necessity as a condition for intervention.' (see Krauthammer, 2004b: 16; 17; 20). For more information on democratic globalism, (see Krauthammer, 2004a).

intimately financial assistance with US foreign policy goals and this perhaps explains the purpose behind magnifying the role of the State Department in US democracy aid programs (Carothers, 2007a: 30).

Obviously, the Bush administration did not found these institutions but rather utilized already extant ones, which had been established before he assumed office in 2001.[27] Hence, 'When George W. Bush's Administration arrived in office and later decided to elevate democracy promotion to the forefront of American foreign policy, there existed a considerable body of seasoned personnel and institutional mechanisms available to it' (Melia, 2005: 9).

2. The Development of the Freedom Agenda

This section of the research addresses the development of democracy before the 9/11 events and will explore and scrutinize the changes that these events had brought about for the democracy promotion strategy.

2.1 Promoting Democracy Prior to 9/11

The American administrations had consistently asserted the validity of the expansion of democracy worldwide in the 1980s and in the post-cold war era. So, democracy promotion was institutionalized under President Ronald Regan (1981-1989); it continued its development under George H. W. Bush (1989-1993) and under the Clinton administration (1993-2001).

Ronald Reagan

Although the promotion of democracy is long rooted in US political and liberal culture, it did not take shape in US foreign policy in a cohesive and organized manner until the Ronald Reagan administration in the 1980s. The Reagan administration practiced

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[27] For more details on democracy promotion efforts and political reform of institutional infrastructure prior to George W. Bush, see (Melia, 2005: 5-9).

innovative efforts to make democracy a central tenet of US policy and most subsequent administrations have continued to support its expansion abroad. This policy was advanced further under the Clinton administration and reached a watershed in US foreign policy under the G. W. Bush administration (Markakis, 2012: 76; 78).

President Reagan (1981-1989) had institutionalized the democratization process through the establishment of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) in order to assist and support democracy promotion worldwide. Simultaneously, the Reagan administration matched democracy promotion with the preservation of US interests through maintaining the US's 'long-standing Cold War friendships with autocratic governments'. (Carothers, 2007a: 16). US relations with Saudi Arabia and the other smaller Arab Gulf States were consolidated to keep the region out of reach of communism and to enhance mutual economic cooperation. Interestingly, G. W. Bush's democracy policy represents a continuation of that same policy.

G.H.W. Bush

Under the G. H. W. Bush administration, promotion of democracy lagged behind as the administration's attitudes were substantially realist and sought to keep relations with undemocratic regimes in the Gulf region, as a priority over democracy promotion. But after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, democracy promotion emerged as one of the administration's concerns (Carothers, 2007a: 17) and this was evident in his speech wherein he states that: 'in a world where we are the only remaining superpower, it is the role of the United States to marshal its moral and material resources to promote a democratic peace.' (Bush, 1993).

Bill Clinton:

The Clinton administration placed democracy among its prominent priorities in US foreign policy as he stated:

> Ultimately, the best strategy to ensure our security and to build a durable peace is to support the advance of democracy elsewhere. Democracies don't attack

each other. They make better trading partners and partners in diplomacy. (Clinton, 1994)

Notwithstanding, Clinton practically pursued a 'semi-realist' approach and this was evident through his integration of the 'U.S. ideals and interests' with democratization. Hence, he viewed promoting democracy as a suitable tool to maintain peace and subsequently preserve US core economic and security interests such as access to oil, trade, and cooperation with the peace process in the Middle East (Carothers, 2007a: 17). Undoubtedly, maintaining such interests in the Gulf region necessitated maintaining robust relations with non-democratic regimes and even the reinforcement and consolidation of these relations. Hence, the Clinton administration 'has preserved close U.S. ties with autocratic regimes that serve U.S. interests on oil, the Arab–Israeli peace process, and resistance to Islamic fundamentalist groups' (Carothers, 2000: 3).

Generally speaking, democracy promotion under both Reagan and Clinton was an important element in US foreign policy, though it consisted of two components; 'U.S. ideals and interests' and this has been emphasized by Thomas Carothers as he rightly states that: 'U.S. policy during both [Reagan and Clinton] was an amalgam of heady pro-democracy rhetoric and mixed pro-democratic and traditional realist policies' (Carothers, 2007a: 17). Indeed, the realist attitudes (see theoretical chapter) have dominated in US foreign policy, even in the democracy realm, and this has been further asserted by Thomas Carothers as he argues that: 'Where democracy appears to fit in well with U.S. security and economic interests, the United States promotes democracy. Where democracy clashes with other significant interests, it is downplayed or even ignored' (Carothers, 2000: 3).

In summary, prior to September 11, 2001 there was a lack of interest in promoting democracy in the Gulf region and this has been evidenced through the engrained relations that the US has maintained with Arab Gulf regimes to protect its economic and security interests. Hence, the administrations of George H. W. Bush, Clinton and the first few months, before the 9/11 attacks, of G. W. Bush had maintained relations with the Gulf allies as an acceptable alternative to the Islamic groups. Arguably, the US does not support genuine political reform in the region because the US decision makers perceived, in Nathan Brown words, 'the undemocratic status quo as far preferable to the

instability and anti-Western sentiment that many feared would sweep the region were authoritarian rulers to fall from power' (Brown and Shahin, 2009: 18). Thus, a cursory look at US policy in the 1990s shows that America has not pressured its Gulf allies for political reforms and was skeptical about advancing democracy in the Gulf region. As Nathan Brown observes:

> Prior to September 11, 2001, democracy and human rights issues were never included on the agendas of meetings with Arab leaders— indeed, the idea of raising the issue at the highest levels of government was simply unthinkable. (Brown and Shahin, 2009: 20)

2.2 Promoting Democracy in the Post 9/11 Era

There has been deep controversy with respect to the changes that the September 11th attacks triggered in US foreign policy and its freedom agenda. Many scholars have argued that the US's foreign policy has been changed, and has morphed significantly after September 11. Therefore, the Bush administration's policy, which saw the 'democratic deficit' in the Middle East as a catalyst to the events of September 11th, has 'initiated a significant departure in the traditional direction of US policy' (Markakis, 2012: 2).

It was that crisis which ascribes democracy such importance, and therefore spreading democracy in the Middle East emerged as a central tenet in the George W. Bush foreign policy (Hassan, 2009: 20)[28] (see Markakis, 2012: 12-3; Bowman, 2005: 93-101). This motivated Daniel Brumberg to state that: 'No American administration has talked more about democracy in the Middle East than the Bush administration.' (Brumberg, 2003: 3). Thomas Carothers also argues that 'The Bush administration has indeed engaged on the issue of democracy in the Middle East, certainly more so than any previous U.S. administration.' (Carothers, 2007a: 5). Baker also argues: 'Bush had made democracy

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[28] This was evident through the allocated funds to enhance and promote democracy initiatives under the Bush administration, which increased from approximately $500 million in 2000 to $1 billion in 2004, meanwhile it reached $2 billion in 2005, including spending on Iraq and Afghanistan (see Melia 2005: 13-4).

in the Middle East a cornerstone of his response to the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.' (Baker, 2007).

Francis Fukuyama illustrates the effects of the events clearly:

> Bush did not enter the White House with a mission to promote freedom around the world. As a presidential candidate, he put forward a modest foreign policy agenda that eschewed nation building. The events of September 11, 2001, however, radically jarred his thinking on the nature of international threats and triggered a fundamental reevaluation of his administration's national security policy that elevated democracy promotion as a central objective of his foreign policy agenda. (Fukuyama and McFaul, 2007: 23)

However this consensus needs to be critiqued. As will be shown in this chapter, US democracy promotion policies actually represent a continuation of the previous policies and therefore this chapter is skeptical about the claims that September 11th represents dramatic change in US foreign policy.

2.3 Democracy as a Tool to Fight Terrorism

September 11 impacted G. W. Bush's foreign policy and therefore 'the link between terrorism and the lack of democracy and political expression in the Arab world has been a focus of attention.' (Mathews, 2002: 7). As a result, G. W. Bush fervently intensified his rhetoric during his first term in office, stating that democracy is an essential tool to counter terrorism and extremism. Subsequently, the removal of Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq was perceived as necessary to fight terrorism and spread democracy in the Gulf region. Bush claimed:

> In Iraq, we are helping the long suffering people of that country to build a decent and democratic society at the center of the Middle East. Together we are transforming a place of torture chambers and mass graves into a nation of laws and free institutions. This undertaking is difficult and costly—yet worthy of our country, and critical to our security. The Middle East will either become a place

of progress and peace, or it will be an exporter of violence and terror that takes more lives in America and in other free nations. The triumph of democracy and tolerance in Iraq, in Afghanistan and beyond would be a grave setback for international terrorism. The terrorists thrive on the support of tyrants and the resentments of oppressed peoples. When tyrants fall, and resentment gives way to hope, men and women in every culture reject the ideologies of terror, and turn to the pursuits of peace. (Bush, 2003d)

After September 11th, G. W. Bush was joined by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and other senior officials, who spoke with frequent zeal about promoting democracy as a critical tool to eradicate the sources of terrorism[29] (Melia, 2005: 1). Notably, the above conceptions were reflected in the National Security Strategy of 2006, in which promoting democracy abroad was perceived as a viable tool to achieve international stability and fight terrorism and radicalism. It was premised on the belief that:

Promoting democracy is the most effective long-term measure for strengthening international stability; reducing regional conflicts; countering terrorism and terror-supporting extremism; and extending peace and prosperity. (The White House, 2006: 3)

Moreover, there has been a perception that the lack of democracy contributes to creating radicalism, and therefore there was a believe that: 'The failure of Arab politics to produce decent, democratic governments helped spawn homicidal opposition movements such as al-Qaeda' (Asmus, 2007). Therefore, generally this notion is built on a premise that American engagement in advancing political reform in the Arab world would contribute to limiting the risk of terrorist actions and at the same time preserve regional stability (Wittes, 2005: 22).

Conversely, some scholars believe that there is a contradiction in the Bush speech and subsequent strategies that associated democracy with the goal of eliminating terrorism, and they wonder how Bush could promote democracy and fight terrorism at the same time. This criticism was compounded by a belief that there is no guarantee that

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[29] Some scholars believe that democracy is not the proper strategy to counter terrorism (see Jung 2006: 181).

spreading democracy would dry the 'springs' of terrorism. Given the Iraqi insecurity and political quagmire, it is hard to believe that the US intervention in Iraq has constituted democracy, but rather it fortified the environment for civil war and terrorist actions (see Halabi, 2009). In effect, the war on terrorism that developed and magnified during the Bush administration has 'significantly damaged the cause not only of democracy but also of democracy promotion.' (Carothers, 2007a: 14).

However, some observers argue that the Bush administration ratcheted up the rhetoric with reference to the war on terrorism, and that 'His war on terror actually represented far more historical continuity than discontinuity. Significantly, it is a conflict his successor has sustained and escalated rather than abandoned.' (Lynch, 2010: 121). Indeed, September 11th and the subsequent US war on terrorism laid the foundations for democracy promotion as an instrument to address the roots and causes of terrorism as well as to curb the activities of jihadists and extremists. This policy was embodied explicitly in the National Strategy for Combating Terrorism of 2003:

> Ongoing U.S. efforts to resolve regional disputes, foster economic, social, and political development, market-based economies, good governance, and the rule of law, while not necessarily focused on combating terrorism, contribute to the campaign by addressing underlying conditions that terrorists often seek to manipulate for their own advantage. (National Strategy for Combating Terrorism, 2003: 23)

Similarly, the U.S. National Strategy for Combating Terrorism conceived democracy as 'the best antidote to the spread of terrorism.' (National Strategy for Combating Terrorism 2003: 30; see also National Strategy for Combating Terrorism 2006). Not surprisingly, G. W. Bush has conceived that spreading democratic values and political reform would effectively enhance efforts aimed at countering terrorism: "Everywhere that freedom takes hold, terror will retreat" (Bush, 2003d).

A recurring emphasis of G. W. Bush during his first term in office was that spreading democratic norms in the Gulf region would not only achieve US security, but also would enhance the Gulf's regional stability, and therefore he emphasizes that, 'To promote peace and stability in the broader Middle East, the United States will work

with our friends in the region to fight the common threat of terror, while we encourage a higher standard of freedom.' (Bush, 2005c). Noticeably, US democratization policy was expressed clearly through Bush's 'Greater Middle East Initiative' of 2004, which was described as 'the most ambitious U.S. democracy effort since the end of the Cold War.' (Wright, 2004).

Indeed, democracy promotion had emerged as a core reason for invading Iraq since spreading democracy was envisaged to be a proper instrument to achieve regional Gulf security, which in turn would contribute to advancing American security. (Ehteshami, 2006: 108). Therefore, policy analysts like Robert Kagan and William Kristol asserted, in their editorial in the Weekly Standard, that terrorism could be eliminated through 'defend[ing] and advanc[ing] liberal democratic principles.'. Thus, they have seen George W. Bush as 'a man with a mission' to spread American democratic values. (Kagan and Kristol, 2002). Similarly, it has been held that unseating Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq would cut off the support that Iraq, allegedly, provided to Al-Qaeda and would help to dry up the springs of terrorism. As John Gaddis illustrates, 'We can set in motion a process that could undermine and ultimately remove reactionary regimes elsewhere in the Middle East, thereby eliminating the principal breeding ground for terrorism'. (Gaddis, 2002)

Of particular interest regarding the above notions is that the Bush administration was pursuing an American liberal grand strategy that was deeply rooted in American foreign policy. This is important for this thesis as the authors cited above argued that Bush's democracy promotion agenda was somehow unique to this President, and more ambitious than any democracy agenda before. However, we can accept that the notions of open economies, integration of markets, and democracy have been long-term strategic objectives in the US's grand strategy. When G. W. Bush was campaigning for the Presidency, he emphasized that his foreign policy approach would focus on 'new realism', which would concentrate on building up military capability and he was uninterested in Clinton's nation building, opening of trade and promotion of democracy (see Ikenberry 2002). Nonetheless, Bush's actual foreign policy after the events of September 11th was reminiscent of Clinton, as it underscored the promotion of democracy and free markets as proper mechanisms to ensure American security and fight terrorism. Therefore 'Bush the realist became a zealous Wilsonian, espousing the

belief that democratization was the antidote to terrorism.' (Litwak, 2007: 25). In a related vein, these notions echo the American liberal strategy that sought to expand the American zone of democracy. As Richard Haass[30] notes, 'the principal aim of American foreign policy is to integrate other countries and organizations into arrangements that will sustain a world consistent with U.S. interests and values.' (Haass, 2002; see also Quadrennial Defense Review, 2014).

Substantively, the change in US strategic thinking in the aftermath of the September 11th's traumatic events materialized in the perceived link between the domestic natures of power relations and achieving security. In other words, the internal political systems have been regarded as essential factors in achieving regional security in the Gulf, which would in turn serve the US's grand objectives in the region. As such, there has been a perception that 'insecurity is simply a product of the nature of the internal power structure within the region's states.' So, security could be achieved through building up a reliable civil society that would control the states' behaviors to be 'steered away from hostility and insecurity.' (Wright, 2007: 7). According to this understanding, democracy emerges with significant importance as a mechanism for reducing ideological extremism, which is seen 'as a by-product of the socio-political conditions' in nondemocratic countries (Wright, 2007: 81). The logic behind these notions in the American strategic thinking in the aftermath of 9/11 is that non-democratic governments produce bad governance which produces terrorists and extremists. Therefore, to address and eliminate the roots and causes of terrorism good governance that derived from democracy and political reform should be brought to the Gulf region.

However, it might be argued that US policy-makers were simplistic with respect to democratization's usefulness as a tool to fight terrorism because the policy implementation could be counterproductive for US interests and could jeopardize the Gulf's security as well; therefore, Telhami makes mention that 'transitions [to democracy] are highly unstable and unpredictable, and successful ones take a long time.' (Telhami and Steinberg, 2005: 17). Thus, 'political reform is essential for long-term regional stability but may increase regional instability and anti-American sentiment in the short run' (Bensahel, 2004: 19). Furthermore, American policy makers

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[30] Richard Haass was the director of policy planning at the U.S. Department of State during the Bush administration.

needed to recognize the pre-requisites for achieving democratic transition in the Gulf region and of particular importance they needed to realize that imposing democracy could, crucially, prompt resentment among the Gulf States and this could be demonstrated by the fact that some Arabs, according to Telhami, 'have a more favorable view of al-Qa'ida than of the United States' and the 'negative view of the United States is what is driving their positive image of al-Qa'ida, not the other way around'. Hence, the support that bin Laden and Al-Qaeda obtained from the Gulf countries reflects 'resentment of American policies, not love for Binladenism' (Telhami and Steinberg, 2005: 16).[31] In a sense, this kind of discontentment has become entrenched as a result of the US invasion of Iraq, and the Bush administration's insistence on a democratization policy that has been 'seen as nothing more than American-style neo-imperialism.' (Ehteshami, 2006: 104).

Most importantly, the Gulf elites have voiced concerns that imposing democracy forcefully through military intervention in the Gulf region would kindle the jihadist movements against the US and even against the GCC states, particularly against Saudi Arabia as demonstrated by the Riyadh attacks in May 2003 that sought to destabilize the country and change the mechanisms of governance. As it turned out, the developments in Iraq and the manifest lack of sustainable security arrangements in post-invasion Iraq revealed that the GCC's doubts and concerns were realistic. In essence, the military intervention in Iraq had exacerbated the influential effect of non-state actors that became rampant in the Gulf region. Thus, the Iraq war has 'created an unstable environment that is an ideal venue for recruiting and organizing anti-Western militants' (Korb, 2005: 13). Receptiveness to Al-Qaeda in the region and their sympathizers' financial and political support expresses resentment against the US position towards central concerns in the region, including the constant American support, both politically and militarily to Israel, the US military's presence in the Arabian Peninsula, and its linking of the Iraq invasion to the efforts in fighting terrorism (Korb, 2005: 12; see also Sokolsky 2003).

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[31] Telhami believes that the Bush administration's unilateralist attitudes had prompted international resentment. He clearly states: 'To be sure, much of the current international resentment of the United States is driven by the Bush Administration's approach to foreign policy, which sees America alone as the arbiter of what is good for the world' (Telhami and Steinberg, 2005: 14).

Whilst the Bush administration's strategy sought to reconstruct Iraq on a democratic basis, the prospects for democracy's emergence remain dim, due in large part to worsening ethnic and religious strife among Iraqi sects (mainly between Arab Shiites and Arab Sunnis), and due to Iraq's tenuous security situation (see Serwer and Parker, 2008; see also Katz, 2010). As a result, instead of weakening transnational terrorism, the Iraq war has presented a favorable opportunity to foster terrorism as it 'gave al-Qaeda a foothold in the country and boosted its profile in the Middle East region.' (MacDonald et al, 2012: 10).

Simultaneously, it is important to elucidate a considerable challenge with respect to the political reform in the GCC states and its viability in reducing terrorist activity. The Bush administration assumed that democracy would enhance American security through reducing violence and terrorist actions as the people would find competitive channels to express their views openly and freely. Nonetheless, this proposition is contestable and it does not necessarily restrain terrorist activities because Al Qaeda's leaders would not be able to reach power peacefully through free elections and therefore transforming a state into a democracy would not prevent them from pursuing their course (Gause, 2005).

Further still, it would be erroneous to believe that spreading democracy in the GCC states would 'end Arab anti-Americanism and dry up funding and recruiting channels for Al Qaeda' (Gause, 2005) because the terrorists are an implacable adversary and would be persistent and wedded to achieving their goals on the one hand, while there is no guarantee that the outcomes of political transformation would be in Washington's favor on the other. In other words, the current Gulf monarchies are more cooperative with the US and turning to the production of governments through free and open elections could not guarantee the continuity of this kind of cooperation and it could bring about governments with anti-American views or even radical attitudes (see Bensahel, 2004: 300). So, the US needed to enhance the civil society in the GCC states rather than quickly pushing for free elections because pushing for premature democracy could lead to the domination of radical forces 'without reducing anti-American terrorism.' (Gause, 2005). Moreover, pushing for deep political reform without initializing proper and mature domestic conditions would be politically unsustainable and would reduce the instrumental value of the democratic

transformation.

2.4 Democracy Policy and the Role of Neoconservatives

As discussed earlier, the 9/11 terrorist attacks played an influential role in forming and implementing the democratization strategy. Significantly, the election of G. W. Bush in 2001, along with the ascendance of some neoconservative individuals to the defense department has redirected US foreign policy during the first term of the Bush administration. As such, this group of neoconservatives had exploited the September 11th tragedy to formulate the President's inclinations toward the Gulf region. As a result of the policy reorientation, 'several neoconservative predispositions and agendas assumed relevance.' (Lynch, 2010: 137; Russell, 2007: 107). Indeed, the effect of that group of personages has been evidenced through an intensified American worldview by which G. W. Bush stated it is the US's *duty and mission* to 'liberalize' the world. This vision was evident in his statement before the National Endowment for Democracy in November 6, 2003, in which he outlined a broadened worldview through 'a forward strategy of freedom in the Middle East' (Bush, 2003b).

Interestingly, the Iraq invasion demonstrated the influential effect of the neoconservatives inside the presidency establishment during its first term in office. This faction set their vision based on a 'domino theory' premise by which the neoconservatives thought that toppling the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq would intimidate other authoritarian regimes in the region and that this would lead eventually to strengthening the pro-democratic movements and reinforcing their demands for political change. Notably, this assumption has become a central justification for the Iraq war among the neoconservative foreign policy intellectuals (Brownstein, 2002) and therefore Daniel Brumberg claimed that Bush's statements clearly showed that the President has fully embraced the neo-conservatives' calls to extend the global democratic revolution to the Middle East (Brumberg, 2005: 1). Conversely, others argue that G. W. Bush's response to September 11 was "shaped by forces more enduring than those of neoconservative intellectuals.' (Lynch, 2010: 139). This can be seen in the US record of democracy promotion in practice.

3. The Implementation of the Democracy Strategy

G. W. Bush's democratization project has been pursued through an array of policies that encompassed diplomacy, political initiatives, economic measures and direct military intervention.

3.1 Diplomacy

Many American state officials, including Bush himself, emphasized the centrality of democracy in US foreign policy:

> It is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world. (Bush, 2005b)

Similarly, Condoleezza Rice revealed, at the American University in Cairo, in June 2005, that:

> For 60 years, my country, the United States, pursued stability at the expense of democracy in this region here in the Middle East -- and we achieved neither. Now, we are taking a different course. We are supporting the democratic aspirations of all people.' She states also that: 'Freedom and democracy are the only ideas powerful enough to overcome hatred, and division, and violence. (Rice, 2005)

It was thought that extensive American rhetoric on democratic change would contribute, in practice, to more political pressure on the targeted governments. By so doing, G. W. Bush and his senior administration individuals anticipated fruitful responses through heightened rhetoric on the necessity of embarking on gradual political reform.

3.2 Policy Initiatives

The Middle East partnership 2002 (MEPI) and the Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) 2004 initiatives are the most famous of their kind that are designed to enhance the reform process in the political, economic, social, and cultural areas (Markakis, 2012: 97). The Middle East Partnership Initiative was declared by Secretary of State Colin Powell on December 12, 2002:

> It is time to lay a firm foundation of hope. I am announcing today an initiative that places the United States firmly on the side of change, of reform, and of a modern future for the Middle East… I am pleased to announce the initial results of our work - an innovative set of programs and a framework for future cooperation that we call the U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative…. Through the U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative, we are adding hope to the U.S.-Middle East agenda. We are pledging our energy, our abilities, and our idealism to bring hope to all of God's children who call the Middle East home.[32] (Powell, 2002)

MEPI according to the United States Government Accountability Office contributes to counterterrorism and extremism through enhancing democracy and political reform. It states blatantly:

> According to the United Nations, many Middle Eastern and North African countries face enormous deficits of human development, including limited political and personal freedoms and low economic growth. Because of concern that these issues could sharpen extremism and increase the risk of terrorist activities originating from an already unstable region, the U.S. government has shown a growing interest in improving socioeconomic and political conditions in the region. In December 2002, the U.S. Department of State (State) announced the establishment of the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) as a presidential initiative to support the administration's new policy of promoting democracy and reform in the Middle East and North Africa. (United States Government

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[32] The initiative has been constructed on four pillars that include the topics of Politics, Economics, Education, and Women (see Powell 2002).

Accountability Office, 2005: 1)

MEPI according to the document "provides assistance in four reform areas, or pillars political, economic, and educational reform and women's empowerment". (United States Government Accountability Office, 2005: 1) MEPI focused on creating political, economic and social reform in the region, albeit the initiative projects such as women empowerment, education and trade reform already existed in U.S. aid programs (see Ottaway and Carothers, 2004: 1). But these programs could be pursued with governments that were in need of American political and financial assistance and would not play a significant role in advancing freedom in the oil-rich Gulf States. As Miller argued:

> The effectiveness of foreign aid in promoting and helping to consolidate democracy is still in its infancy. In other words, although democracy aid has grown, much remains unknown about its impact. Foreign aid in the aggregate does not promote democracy. (Miller et al 2012: 28)

Similarly, the Arab authors of the 2002 and 2003 United Nations Arab Human Development Reports identified three "deficits" in the Arab world; freedom, knowledge, and women's empowerment. This deficit has envisaged contributed to conditions that threaten the national interests of all G-8 members. As the Greater Middle East Partnership Initiative document states: "So long as the region's pool of politically and economically disenfranchised individuals grows, we will witness an increase in extremism, terrorism, international crime, and illegal migration".(Greater Middle East Partnership Initiative, 2004) Accordingly, the G-8 identified common reform priorities that would address the mentioned deficits by "Promoting Democracy and good governance; Building a knowledge society; and expanding economic opportunities". The document indicates clearly that these reform priorities are the key to the region's development since "democracy and good governance form the framework within which development takes, well-educated individuals are agents of development, and enterprise is the engine of development". (Greater Middle East Partnership Initiative, 2004)

3.3 Economic Engagement

There has been a conviction, particularly since the Clinton administration, that spreading democracy that coincides with economic reform could contribute better to creating a more stabilized region and serve US interests (Markakis, 2012: 90). Moreover, there has been wide belief among US administrations that a synthesis of democracy and a free market economy represent a good opportunity to achieve prosperity and stability. These notions have been reflected explicitly in the National Security Strategy of 2002:

> A strong world economy enhances our national security by advancing prosperity and freedom in the rest of the world. Economic growth supported by free trade and free markets creates new jobs and higher incomes. It allows people to lift their lives out of poverty, spurs economic and legal reform, and the fight against corruption and it reinforces the habits of liberty. (The White House, 2002: 17)

Of particular interest in these notions is the American worldview that has been emphasized in the same Security Strategy, wherein it states: 'We will promote economic growth and economic freedom beyond America's shores' (The White House, 2002: 17). Bush further claimed that:

> The Arab world has a great cultural tradition, but is largely missing out on the economic progress of our time. Across the globe, free markets and trade have helped defeat poverty, and taught men and women the habits of liberty. So I propose the establishment of a U.S. -Middle East free trade area within a decade, to bring the Middle East into an expanding circle of opportunity, to provide hope for the people who live in that region.[33] (Bush, 2003e)

Notwithstanding, it should be clear that there is no way to make sure that economic development is conducive to political liberalization and therefore 'Good governance no longer means simply that economic changes will pave the way for political

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[33] The United States signed free trade agreements with Bahrain (2006) and Oman (2009) in order to support economic and political reforms and enhance commercial relations.

liberalization, but rather that economic change and political liberalization go hand in hand to a great extent' (Najem, 2003: 19). Other scholars noted that 'There is no conclusive evidence that democracy *per se* either encourages or holds back economic development.' (Kinninmont, 2012: 6). So, it can be said that there is no guarantee that economic growth would precipitate political reform because 'the relationship between economic and political reform is complex and not necessarily predictable' (Chatham House, 2012: 5).

Accordingly, it is a mistake to assume that economic growth would produce democracy and it is noteworthy that the GCC states have vast natural resources that generate financial assets and high volumes of financial liquidity, which the governments have employed to satisfy their citizens and ease any tensions that could stem from demands for political change. As such, the Bush assumptions needed further analysis.

3.4 Military Intervention

Military intervention is among the instruments that the Bush administration has undertaken in foreign policy. The National Security Strategy of 2002 explicitly announces that: 'In the new world we have entered, the only path to peace and security is the path of action' (The White House, 2002). Obviously, US policy makers had perceived Iraq as a threat to American security due to assumptions of their developing WMD and the proposed connection to terrorism. This 'drove a change in American policy away from containment and towards preemption, so that preemption became the conceptual basis for invading Iraq.' (Yetiv, 2008: 125). In particular, it was clear that invading Iraq and changing the regime by force indisputably exemplified the implementation of such a principle. However, as Ronald Asmus[34] observes, the Bush administration's 'conflation of democracy promotion with the invasion of Iraq and the preventive use of military force has given freedom a bad name' and therefore the Bush misadventure in Iraq has led to unfavorable outcomes. Moreover, he claims that: 'One key lesson is that trying to impose democracy at the point of a gun, without the right preconditions on the ground or a competent plan for the day after, is a recipe for disaster'

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[34] He was Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs during the Clinton administration

(Asmus, 2007). Hence, it has been evident that 'The Iraq war has distracted Bush and, in some quarters, discredited his aspirations' (Baker, 2007). But what is vital for this thesis is the fact that there were obscured reasons that drove the Bush administration to invade Iraq, not least the advancing of the US realist economic interests and security priorities[35] (Hassan & Ralph, 2011: 515).

Indeed, the administration characterized its interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq as democratizing missions. However, in both cases security objectives played a major role (Carothers, 2007a: 5). Therefore, 'being undemocratic did not make Saddam a target of American action; being engaged in nefarious plotting against the United States did' (Cox et al, 2013: 189). So, it might be useful to elaborate briefly on the Iraq war and its implications on advancing political reform in the Arab Gulf States.

4. The Iraq War in 2003 and its Ramifications for the Freedom Agenda

The Bush administration had come up with a blueprint to engineer a pro-western Iraq, and it was thought that Iraq, particularly, would serve as a springboard to spread democracy across the Arab world (the domino theory). Nonetheless, 'The Bush administration miscalculated when it assumed that the transition to democracy in Iraq would be quick and smooth' (Halabi, 2009: 120). The US invasion of Iraq in 2003 blatantly 'muddied the meaning of the democracy project, diminishing support for it at home and abroad' (Melia, 2005: 1). Troubled by violence and security threats, Iraq has emerged as evidence of the US's lack of a clear plan to democratize this country and therefore it cast negative implications on advancing any liberalization across the Gulf region.

4.1 The Lack of a Clear Strategy

The absence of a clear plan to democratize Iraq has exacerbated the deterioration in security in post-invasion Iraq, which negatively affects the democratization strategy. As

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[35] For more information on the key motivations for going to war in Iraq, (see Yetiv 2008)

McFaul has argued:

> The call for "staying the course" is even more indefensible when one tries to find it…The president has boldly outlined the objective or endpoint of our policy: democratic regime change in the greater Middle East. But the president has never articulated or written down the strategy for getting there. Without a plan in hand, the Bush administration instead is compelled to move reactively from crisis to crisis, making up "the course" as it goes along. (McFaul, 2003)

Indeed, US democracy rhetoric 'was never married to an effective set of policy tools. It might even be said that there was no real policy—only a mentality and a rhetorical commitment that supported democracy and freedom in very general ways.' (Hamzawy and Brown, 2007). In a related vein, Daniel Brumberg criticizes the Bush policies and points out that there was no planned strategy to spread democracy in the Arab world. In Brumberg's words, 'The Bush administration has not chosen the path of encouraging democratization of liberalized autocracies. Rather than find even one Arab country that might be suitable for a genuine democratization strategy, it has hitched all its hopes on a policy of military intervention and regime change in Iraq' (Brumberg, 2005: 15). Hence, the Iraq war that was orchestrated by Cheney, Rumsfeld, Rice, and Bush, 'was an insufficiently neoconservative war that paid too little attention to the regime that would replace Saddam Hussein.' (Lynch, 2010: 138).

Indeed, In spite of G. W. Bush and his top advisors' heated rhetoric, during the first term in office, with reference to Iraq's 'democratization' process, the realities in Iraq inform the observer that the country was embroiled in an uncertain security dilemma and therefore the US's major concern during the second Bush administration turned from promoting democracy to saving the country from slipping into all-out chaos (Carothers, 2007a: 7). Moreover, the lack of a clear strategy has motivated Ehteshami and Wright to believe that Iraq has emerged as a serious setback for plans to expand democracy in the region and therefore he claims that: 'For many, the heightened level of insecurity within Iraq is now serving as a barrier to future reform—the complete opposite of what was intended by Washington.' (Ehteshami and Wright, 2007: 916). As a result, some American analysts presumed that 'Iraq is not a model of democracy promotion likely ever to be replicated' (Wittes, 2008: 10).

Of particular interest regarding the above notions is the fact that the Iraq debacle forced G. W. Bush, in his second administration, to adopt 'a more realistic, and minimal, foreign policy, in which democracy promotion played little to no part.' (Cox et al, 2013: 187). As a result, G. W. Bush's democracy policy in the Gulf region has been inefficient as it has not set a clear strategy to 'liberalize' the Gulf governments. Simply put, G. W. Bush 'has adopted a philosophy rather than a strategy, an aspiration rather than a coherent plan.' (see Brumberg, 2005: 1).

4.2 The Iraq War and its Impact on the US Democratization Project in the Gulf Region

The Bush administration assumed that democratizing Iraq would 'sow the seeds of democracy more broadly in the Middle East' (Yetiv, 2008: 123). But as already mentioned, military intervention in Iraq has vitiated the US's credibility in promoting democratic across the Arab world because this war was seen as illegal and unnecessary. Further still, the Iraq war has 'done enormous damage to the legitimacy of the very idea of democracy promotion'[36] (Carothers, 2007a: 15). In effect, toppling the Iraqi regime through military intervention has led to widespread skepticism about democratic policy in the Arab world and has even been viewed as 'unwise' (Dunne, 2007). In a related vein, Ehteshami believes that the US's 'hard' pressure to change the Iraqi regime cast doubts on the real intentions behind US democracy promotion (see Ehteshami, 2011: 25). Carothers states, in his testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee:

> The Bush administration's emphasis on the Iraq war as the leading wedge of its democracy promotion policy in the Middle East has closely associated democracy promotion with the assertion of American military power and security interests. With the U.S. intervention in Iraq viewed as illegitimate in most parts of the world, the legitimacy of the general concept of democracy promotion has suffered accordingly. (Carothers, 2006a)

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[36] Carothers goes further when he describes the American Intervention in Iraq as a hegemonic behavior aimed at consolidating US domination, which resulted in counterproductive outcomes as Iraq security developments demonstrate. Hence, it is that war that has tarnished the image, 'effectively rebranding democracy promotion as a tool of hegemonic interventionism—this time with a militaristic coloring.' (see Carothers 2007: 15).

What this statement infers is that associating democracy with regime change policy has 'contaminated democracy promotion' (Carothers, 2006a). Carothers also argues:

> The damage that the Bush administration has done to the global image of the United States as a symbol of democracy and human rights by repeatedly violating the rule of law at home and abroad has further weakened the legitimacy of the democracy-promotion cause. (Carothers, 2006b)

Similarly, Tamara Wittes believes that the disastrous adventure in Iraq has made democracy promotion in the Middle East synonymous with forceful regime change. The ongoing instability in Iraq has produced a backlash against the democratization project in the gulf region (Wittes, 2008: 76). Hence, the US linkage between democracy and military intervention has downplayed the attractiveness of the freedom agenda. As one scholar noted, 'it is more than advisable not to justify applying coercive means in the fight against "rogue states" and terrorist groups with the argument of promoting democracy in the region' (Jung, 2006: 182). As one analyst concludes, 'In Iraq, the mechanics of democratic politics actually hastened the country's descent into civil war and sectarian bloodletting.' (Hamzawy and Brown, 2007). Hence, Iraq's insecurity and the continued instability has been a pitfall for the American democratic project and therefore the US military's intervention in Iraq in the name of promoting democracy has tarnished the idea. Hence, 'by linking democracy promotion with what many now came to regard as a deeply flawed foreign policy design, democracy promotion now almost became a dirty word.' (Cox et al, 2013: 3).

Bush, along with his team, did not recognize the ethnic composition of Iraq and the Sunni and Shiite enmity within the society after long years of Saddam Hussein's reign. As one observer notes: 'Thus, while Bush proclaimed that democracy would mitigate sectarianism and weaken the insurgency [in Iraq], a sectarian war begets insecurity and renders democracy irrelevant.' As a result, many Arabs have seen the US democracy strategy as 'a mere cloak for neo-imperialism; they see the US as an occupier, not a liberator' (Halabi, 2009: 127).

Thus, the ambivalent security situation in Iraq has not motivated other governments in the Gulf region to follow the Iraqi adventure and 'certainly Iraq was not the best

candidate to be a pilot model of secular Arab democracy, to be emulated by other Arab states' (Halabi, 2009: 131). Furthermore, the Iraqi developments have shown the dangers and hazards of pursuing real and deep political openness, to say nothing of the uncertainties of the outcomes of such changes. Noticeably, 'Political change in a society, if it is too rapid or too violent, can disrupt the stability of a society to the extent that it is difficult, if not impossible, to have favorable economic relations with that society for a considerable period of time.' (Najem, 2003: 19). So, deep political reform in the GCC could bear undesired potential consequences; it may affect the stability of the region on the one hand, and could harm the US's paramount strategic interests with its Arab Gulf allies on the other hand. It is clear that the American freedom agenda, that it was hoped would spread across the Arab world has been stymied by the Iraq war, and therefore Iraq constitutes a setback for the promotion of democracy in the Gulf region.

Drawing on Iraq's experience, it is clear that the GCC regimes are not eager to create major domestic political change. Obviously, the invasion and occupation of Iraq, Ehteshami argues, was arguably the main catalyst for limiting reform measures in the GCC countries. Hence, the GCC rulers have seen the deteriorated security situation in Iraq 'as a deterrent to the introduction of further reforms.' (Ehteshami, 2013: 138). Saudi Arabia, for instance, perceived Iraq's democratic experiment as stark evidence of the unrealistic rhetoric of promoting democracy in the region (Ottaway, 2009).

Further, the GCC traditional polities, economic resources (vast oil reserves) and the United States' commitment to providing security and stability in the Gulf, have all been impeding the democracy promotion efforts and have contributed to the resilience of the Gulf regimes (see Miller et al, 2012: 43-53). This is discussed in more detail below.

5. The US's Freedom Agenda and Relations with the GCC States

The US has sought to constantly safeguard Gulf regional stability, given the repercussions of instability on US interests in the region. The US supported the Gulf governments because of the strategic confrontation in the context of the US-Soviet Cold War era. However, American support to the Gulf regimes has continued despite the end of the Cold War in 1991 and this indicates explicitly, more plausibly, the great

degree of interdependence between the US and its Gulf partners (Markakis, 2012: 85; Yetiv, 2008: 182; Wittes, 2005: 21).

Notably, the US democratic agenda was accompanied by countervailing concerns that directed the inclinations of the G. W. Bush foreign policy. As shown in chapter three of this study, for more than six decades the US's underlying policy goals in the Gulf region had incorporated diverse, intrinsic interests which materialized in the free flowing of oil, countering of terrorism, eliminating of the threat of weapons of mass destruction, supporting the Middle East peace process and protecting the Gulf monarchies against communism and probable regional security threats (see chapter three). To this extent, successive US administrations have been invariably engaged in the Gulf's regional affairs and maintained robust relations with the Gulf's friendly regimes. Carothers points out those relations as a determinant factor in the US's strategy of promoting political reform. He clearly makes mention that the Bush administration's policy of encouraging the Gulf monarchs to take democratic measures 'was inhibited from the start by the inescapable fact that the administration still needed the close cooperation of these governments on several fronts, such as antiterrorism, access to oil, and the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.' As a result, 'The margin for pushing hard for political change was very limited, a fact of which the Arab governments in question were well aware.' (Carothers, 2007a: 6).

Indeed, the US's substantial interests were coincident with traditional conviction among US policy makers that the continuity of the GCC ruling regimes was deemed essential to maintain the status quo and protect those interests. As one observer notes:

> The U.S. has once again discovered that it cannot oblige democratic reforms upon its autocratic clients when their political survival is intricately tied to irreducible strategic interests. The priorities of safeguarding Israel's security and regional energy supplies dominate American foreign policy calculations in the Arab world, and they continue to require the maintenance of stable, friendly autocracies willing to facilitate those interests. (Yom, 2008: 142)

Indeed, 'the rhetorical American commitment to democracy in the region does open Washington up to the accusation of hypocrisy regarding its cozy relations with its royal allies.' (Gause, 2013: 30; Brown; Shahin, 2009: 20). But as argued previously, this accords with the idea that US democracy promotion has always been subordinate to US economic and security concerns (see Carothers, 2007a: 7; Carothers 2000: 3; Leffler, 2003). Indeed, 'A real American push for democratic change in dynastic monarchies [GCC] could undermine the very stability that extended family rule has given those countries' (Gause, 2013: 30) and this notion indicates that 'America's core objective in the Middle East has been— and remains— [Gulf] regional stability' (Wittes, 2008: 16). As a result, the efforts to spread American liberal democratic values across the Gulf region have been impeded, and in spite of the US's commitment to promoting democracy, 'The gap between rhetoric and action is sometimes so glaring that observers have question the depth of the U.S. normative commitment to the democratic cause' (McFaul, 2004: 159). This gap is explained by the primary need for stability. 'In some countries, such as Saudi Arabia, there is no realistic democratic alternative to the current authoritarian leadership, and likely alternatives would clearly be worse from a strategic perspective. In these cases, authoritarian allies indeed represent the lesser of two evils.' (Fukuyama and McFaul, 2007: 31).

Therefore, the contradiction between ideological democratic discourse and US economic and security interests has allowed a 'double standard'. The US has continued its warm relations with the Gulf monarchies instead of promoting reform[37] (see Hassan, 2009: 12). The US has not been able to 'convert vision into action' (Hassan, 2009: 17) through *choice*. However, the US's robust relations with the Arab Gulf regimes that have been cooperating with Washington in the military, economic, security and intelligence dimensions have generated widespread belief that the G. W. Bush administration has halfheartedly exerted efforts to push for genuine political reform in the Arab Gulf States.

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[37] 'The potential for conflict between efforts to promote democracy and efforts to achieve other core U.S. strategic goals has been a long-standing obstacle to concerted U.S. pressure for internal political reforms.' (Wittes 2008: 18)

5.1 The US Freedom Agenda and the Conflict of Interest

As discussed earlier, democracy promotion in the Gulf region has been elevated during the first G. W. Bush administration, to take a prominent place in the US foreign policy agenda, especially in the years 2004-2006, though it was sidelined for the maintenance of the security of nondemocratic Gulf allies in the second Bush administration. In effect, this has been eminently evidenced by America's constant and robust military assistance to the GCC states and the commitment of the successive American administrations that pledged to defend the Gulf region against any rival powers that sought to dominate the region and upset the prevailing balance of power (see chapter three and four). In the post 9-11 period, G. W. Bush's efforts at spreading democracy have been sacrificed - 'trade-offs between the long-term project of democracy promotion and shorter-term imperatives such as counterterrorism cooperation, assistance in stabilizing Iraq, and support for the Middle East peace process.' (Wittes, 2008: 79).[38]

In contrast, there is a point of view which suggests that the US could avoid the dichotomy between promoting democracy and preserving the Gulf's regional stability. According to Bowman, the US could satisfy both the US's idealistic goals and interests through conducting gradual and consistent political reform. In other words, the US decision makers do not need to choose between Gulf regional stability and political reform as this, in Bowman words, is to 'offer a false dichotomy'. Rather, the US could pursue its interests and maintain a commitment to its democratic values through a combination of 'realism and idealism' that could be integrated together to form the US's foreign policy attitude in what might be called a 'practical idealism' strategy (see Bowman, 2005: 101-4). Bowman observes that:

> US policy in Saudi Arabia and the wider Middle East should be based on a healthy respect for the wisdom of both idealism and realism and a nuanced understanding of their relationship. America does not have to choose between its conscience and its economic and political needs; a prudent US foreign policy

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[38] Osman Hassan describes the G. W. Bush freedom policy as a 'conservative radicalism' policy. The radical aspect is embodied in its insistence on political reform; meanwhile, the conservative aspect of that policy is represented in preserving the US's core interests in the Gulf region through safeguarding the Gulf's regional stability (Hassan 2009: 16).

of practical idealism can satisfy both. (Bowman, 2005: 103)

It can be argued that the Bush administration has tilted to implement practical idealism with reference to democracy promotion in the Gulf region where his policy has encompassed synthesis of realism and less emphasized democratic elements. The tenor of this argument has been asserted by Carothers, who claimed that:

> With the exception of Iraq, the main lines of Bush policy… are already substantially realist. Even in the Middle East, where Bush did mount something of a democracy drive, the policy has already lapsed back to a predominantly realist mode. (Carothers, 2007a: 19)

In particular, it is important to note that American pragmatism has been pursued overwhelmingly, even in the realm of democracy. So, democracy has been perceived by US decision makers as an additional rationale for maintaining and sustaining US interests in the Gulf region. In other words, protecting American key interests abroad necessitated spreading democracy and therefore democracy has been perceived by some American scholars as an 'imperative' mechanism to safeguard the US's core interests in the Gulf region. As Tamara Wittes claims: 'Only the development of liberal democracies in the Arab world's major states will, in the long term, secure the advancement of American goals in the region.' (Wittes, 2008: 2). This has been asserted further by Carothers, who stated that: 'The core idea that democracy promotion is not merely an idealistic enterprise but is often integral to U.S. "hard" interests should be preserved' and therefore he believes that 'Slipping back to the view that democracy is merely a nice "add-on" in U.S. policy would be an unfortunate retrogression.' (Carothers, 2000: 9).

Further still, as Carothers has noted, 'The Bush administration has fallen into the habit of using democracy promotion as a cover for U.S. efforts to change or shape political outcomes in other countries for the sake of U.S. security interests with little real regard for whether the effect on the other country is in fact pro democratic.' (Carothers, 2007a: 22). Apparently, such policy would affect the US's credibility in promoting democracy and would give a bad impression to the Gulf governments of Washington's motivations behind such a policy.

Indeed, the realist tendency in the US democratization project has been explicitly asserted by Tamara Wittes. She states that 'President Bush's "forward strategy of freedom" was a bold restatement of American interests in the Arab Middle East.' (Wittes, 2005: 21). This evinces that the US's foremost concern in its foreign policy remains protecting its real interests in the Gulf region. In other words, 'Democratization was first about making Americans safe; making Muslims free was secondary.' (Lynch, 2010: 138). This sort of American pragmatism has caused one scholar to state that 'America's support for the Saudi regime is not conditional on democracy, but on the secure flow of oil.' (Yamani, 2005: 115). Bowman clarifies this more broadly as he claims:

> Therefore, as in the past, a major US and international objective should be the maintenance of a stable and moderate government in Saudi Arabia that will ensure the continued flow of Saudi oil to the world's industrialized nations. From a solely US perspective, America's enormous dependence on Saudi Arabian oil demands that the United States avoid any policies that might jeopardize the reliable flow of Saudi oil to US consumers... Fortunately, the United States does not have to sacrifice stability in order to achieve democratic reform in Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern countries. (Bowman, 2005: 101)

Of particular interest to the above notions is the fact that G. W. Bush has ratcheted up the democracy rhetoric, though the US realist interests have remained dominant in US foreign policy formation and implementation. As Carothers illustrates, G. W. Bush 'has built a gleaming rhetorical edifice around democracy promotion', though he has been restricted with traditional U.S. interests and therefore 'The main lines of Bush policy, with the singular exception of the Iraq intervention, have turned out to be largely realist in practice, with democracy and human rights generally relegated to minor corners.' (Carothers, 2007b). Further still, the Bush administration's relentless efforts to fortify and consolidate US relations with its Gulf partners have driven Carothers to believe that 'The notion that democracy promotion plays a dominant role in Bush policy is a myth.' (Carothers, 2007b). Moreover, 'The spread of democracy has not traditionally been pursued by the United States simply for altruistic reasons or as a blind ideological commitment; it is a strategy that has sought to enhance U.S. interests' (Lennon, 2009:

1). G. W. Bush himself has emphasized this pragmatism and the correlation between promoting democracy and US interests as he maintained:

> Our nation is strong. Our greatest strength is that we serve the cause of liberty. We support the advance of freedom in the Middle East, because it is our founding principle, and because it is in our national interest. (Bush, 2003e)

Consequently, American pragmatism in foreign policy has led to the belief that 'Bush's grand strategy, despite some neoconservative flourishes, was a study in geopolitical realism that had, at its core, the security of the American state and people.' (Lynch, 2010: 137). Equally important, the predominant American realist interests that necessitated a soft approach towards the GCC states encompassed 'theoretical dilemmas' with reference to the US policy of promoting democracy. So, the US policy that sought to avoid pressuring its Gulf allies for nondemocratic openings, either for the fear of the emergence of anti-western political Islam or to protect the US economic and security objectives, belies the essence of the US freedom agenda. As Sean Yom makes mention, these 'obstacles reflect the reality that America's overarching strategic goals, in particular the preservation of Israel's security and regional hydrocarbon reserves, require a vision of regional stability that unpredictable regime shifts would endanger.' (Yom, 2008: 131). Therefore, G. W. Bush has favored maintenance of Gulf regional stability over pushing hard for political reform as 'democratization was overtly acknowledged to represent a strategic benefit for the United States, supposed to produce security and economic gains.' (Bouchet, 2013: 31). Thus, the American economic and security interests in the Gulf region have marginalized the role of democracy in US-Gulf relations and this clearly indicates the continuity of the G. W. Bush democracy policy that had 'never matched its rhetoric and ultimately were scaled back to resemble simply a more garrulous version of what had come before.' (Brown; Shahin, 2009: 13). Significantly, US geopolitical interests in the Gulf region and Washington's long-standing relations with nondemocratic Gulf regimes had reoriented the US democracy policy to embrace the realist approach and therefore Sean Yom notes:

> Thus in just a few years the orientation of U.S. foreign policy has reverted from an enthusiastic stance of democracy promotion back to its classic Cold War-era

posture of preserving geopolitical order through conventional realism. (Yom, 2008: 135)

Consistently, promoting democracy abroad under Reagan, Clinton and G. W. Bush administrations has been characterized as a 'Semi-realist' approach that accounted the US key interests in the Gulf region as the main factor determining overall US-Gulf policy. Interestingly, the Bush administration's combination of idealism and realism in the democracy realm has been a continuation of previous US administrations' policies rather than a change, and this has been asserted by Carothers, who argued that:

> The Bush combination of idealism in words and semi-realism in deeds is not in itself a significant departure from recent predecessors. The foreign policies of Presidents Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, and Bill Clinton all combined in various proportions an emphasis on democracy with substantial realist elements. (Carothers, 2007a: v)

To recap, President G. W. Bush came to office with 'traditional realist' approaches and Condoleezza Rice, the National Security Advisor, asserted during the presidential campaign in 2000, that the Bush administration would concentrate on traditional foreign policy and 'the realist pursuit of the national interest'. Moreover, Bush ostensibly believed that nation-building was not among his priorities; nonetheless, in the wake of the 9/11 terrorists attacks, the Bush administration adopted the most ambitious goals to promote democracy in the Middle East through dubious attempts to spread democracy in Iraq (Ikenberry et al, 2009: 6). Hence, 'As the United States has learned from its failures at transforming the Middle East, old-fashioned balance-of-power politics are once again driving events in the region.' (Gause, 2009). Therefore, 'The democratization projects of neoconservative imagination were replaced by the decapitation methods of conservative realism.' (Lynch, 2010: 138). But even so, it is important to note, for this current research, that the US has ignored Bowman's idea of maintaining security while pushing for minor or gradual reform (Bowman 2005). Importantly this signals that the ideological component of the US push for democracy, even under G. W. Bush, has never been anywhere strong enough to override US concerns over stability, economic interest and counter terrorism. This lack of reform also rests on the internal political structures and the traditional methods of

governance. So, it would be useful to elaborate on these notions to explore how the Gulf's domestic political structures have been a determining factor in promoting liberal democratic values across the Gulf region.

5.2 The Characteristics of the GCC Political Systems

GCC states have wide-ranging particularities that distinguish their political systems in terms of the internal complexities of the ruling families and the nature of political succession.[39] So, their political systems are uniformly conservative, characterized by hereditary monarchs that have been holding power for many years and therefore the Gulf's traditional structures of power have exacerbated, as we shall see, the US democracy dilemma in the Arab Gulf States that rely on an extended family rule system as a traditional means of governance. As Gregory Gause has noted:

> With the partial exception of the Sultan of Oman, the Gulf's kings and emirs rule at the head of large families that share in executive authority through cabinet and other positions. The ruler cannot simply replace the prime minister when discontent rises, either because he is the Prime Minister (Saudi Arabia, Oman) or the prime minister is his nephew, uncle or cousin. About one-third of the cabinet positions in each of the GCC states, including many of the most important ones, are held by ruling family members. (Gause, 2013: 14)

Additionally, the political and economic significance of the Arab Gulf States derives from their being 'rentier states'[40] and their structures of power are monarchical, with the ruling family enjoying real power in the executive structures (see Ehteshami and Wright, 2011). Political participation in the GCC states is generally restricted[41] and the Arab human development report of 2002 points out 'Political participation is less advanced in the Arab world than in other developing regions' (The Arab Human Development Report, 2002: 108).

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[39] For more details on succession issues in the GCC states, (see Khalaf, 2006: 33-50).

[40] Rentier states mean that their income is generated from selling oil to the industrial world.

[41] For more details on GCC political participation, (see Kapiszewski, 2006: 88-131 and Peterson, 2006).

It emphasizes further that:

> There is a substantial lag between Arab countries and other regions in terms of participatory governance. The wave of democracy…has barely reached the Arab States. This freedom deficit undermines human development and is one of the most painful manifestations of lagging political development. (The Arab Human Development Report, 2002: 2)

Indeed, the lack of participation in the GCC states could be attributed to the 'centralization of power within the state apparatus, and not to issues of culture or a lack of desire for involvement among civil society.' (Chatham House, 2013: 6). Indeed, the real political influence remains held by the 'ruling core' (Khalaf, 2006: 35) and it appears that the ruling elites have a firm desire to sustain their continuity in power and would not substantially cede their privileges or shift their political postures as this would potentially threaten their rule. Importantly, 'unmanaged reform' has been seen, by the elite circles, as a threat to the status quo and the existing balance of power, which could be changed substantially, resulting in elites losing control over political power (Ehteshami, 2013: 143). This vision has driven Gregory Gause to presume that 'The democracy issue need not be on the American foreign policy agenda with these countries [GCC states] because it really is not on their domestic agenda in any serious way' (Gause, 2013: 31).

5.2.1 GCC Response to the US Democratization Project after 9/11

Some scholars have argued that after 9/11 the GCC ruling regimes did realize that they could not block any reform indefinitely. It was argued that the GCC states 'have to deal, for the first time, with the combined force of simultaneous pressures from external and domestic challenges' (Khalaf, 2006 :35) and that they were facing new challenges for reform (Mathews, 2002: 7; Khalaf, 2006: 42). Accordingly, GCC ruling elites introduced some variable political reforms, such as formulating constitutions, establishing consultative councils, conducting limited municipal and parliamentary elections, hosting National Dialogues, empowering women (by granting them the right to vote) and other political measures. Nonetheless, these reforms were limited, showing

that GCC ruling elites did not perceive democracy as a 'primary value' (Brown; Shahin, 2009: 4). The new constitutions still reflected the primacy of the ruling families and did not substantially change governance structures (Ehteshami, 2013: 135).[42]

Although Russell argued that the nascent political developments in some GCC countries 'represent an important step to introduce more representative forms of government in the region' (Russell, 2003), he was writing in 2003, and many of the authors quoted above were writing in 2005, when it seemed the GCC states would have to reform. This was an analysis that was based on seeing US democracy promotion and the context of the time as new, rather than marked by continuity as this PhD thesis argues.

5.2.2 The Challenges of Democratizing the GCC Countries and the US Policy Directions

There has been a prevalent belief that the Gulf region has exceptional conditions that are not necessarily compatible with American political and cultural values, though this perception has changed during the George W. Bush administration, particularly in the wake of the September 11th events, and Bush insisted on expanding democracy and political reform in the region. He claimed:

> We also hear doubts that democracy is a realistic goal for the greater Middle East, where freedom is rare. Yet it is mistaken and condescending to assume that whole cultures and great religions are incompatible with liberty and self-government. (Bush, 2004)

G. W. Bush has rejected the notion of Gulf region 'exceptionalism' and therefore he accelerated his rhetoric on the necessity of expanding democracy throughout the region in an attempt to enhance US interests in the region over the long run. In a landmark speech, he claimed:

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[42] Noticeably, also in the economic sphere the GCC countries have been seeking to improve their international trade positions and therefore have introduced some principles pertaining to the elimination of protectionism and trade integration (Najem, 2003: 14). The GCC states concentrated on implementing economic liberalization more than conducting reliable political reform. For more information on the definition, origins, and features of good governance, (see Najem 2003:1-26).

Sixty years of Western nations excusing and accommodating the lack of freedom in the Middle East did nothing to make us safe -- because in the long run, stability cannot be purchased at the expense of liberty. As long as the Middle East remains a place where freedom does not flourish, it will remain a place of stagnation, resentment, and violence ready for export. (Bush, 2003b)

Contrastingly, there have been some handicaps that challenged G. W. Bush's attempts to democratize the Gulf region and these could be classified based on two interconnected levels; the considerations of US substantial interests in the region and the Gulf's domestic constraints. As for the first level of challenges, it can be noticed that there is a setback in front of the American democracy project, embedded in the GCC's strong alliance with the US, so that it is committed to providing its partners with the necessary military assistance and protection[43] (Gause, 2013: 30). Given that GCC states have special polities and long traditions of governance, encouraging political change in the Gulf region could be counterproductive and encompasses potential pitfalls that could jeopardize the US's strategic interests there. This challenge provoked some scholars to believe that 'The road to reform in Saudi Arabia, however, will likely traverse treacherous ground that could endanger US political and economic interests' (Bowman, 2005: 91).

These concerns are compounded by the continuous significance of the Gulf region for the US strategy that spurred the American decision makers to be cautious and prudent while seeking to urge political reform. Tamara Wittes points out the uncertain implications of pressing the Arab Gulf States to conduct political reform as she notes:

To be sure, a policy of promoting political, economic, and social reform in the Arab world carries risks for the United States. Primary among these risks is that pressuring longstanding autocratic regimes to relax their control over political power may produce crisis and chaotic outcomes rather than gradual transitions to democracy. (Wittes, 2005: 24)

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[43] Gause argues that the GCC states remained in power because the rulers have 'constructed political alliances with domestic and foreign allies that provide support in times of crisis.' (see Gause 2013: 30).

Consequently, Washington could not exert real pressure on the Gulf's 'dynastic monarchies' to change their domestic ways of governance and the above notions consider, perhaps, potent reasons that explain why the G. W. Bush administration favored the pursuit of gradual political reform in the GCC countries, albeit it might take a long time and achieve limited outcomes rather than heavy-handed interference to initiate political changes by the Gulf monarchical elites.

As for the second level of challenges, it is of particular importance to note that the composition of the power structures inside the GCC countries constitute a major obstacle that hinders the political reform. So, briefly look at Saudi Arabia, for instance; the kingdom depends on consultation in what is called the Shura council, as a tool to discuss the public policies, but practically we should differentiate between 'representative democracy and traditional models of Shura', as the latter could not substitute the former as a method of democratic governance (Chatham House, 2013: 7). Practically, 'There is no tradition of democratic rule in Saudi Arabia' because 'the structure of the monarchy precludes any political agency being afforded to the population.' Moreover, Saudi Arabia was 'made up of multiple actors' controlling varied ministries and power positions and therefore it is not easy to 'unseat the prince from his ministerial position' to face popular demands or public protest (Chatham House, 2011). Bahrain is a constitutional monarchy, but practically 'the power rests with the ruler and key members of the royal family.' The king's controlling role is evinced through his authority in the appointment of the cabinet, in which the royal family's members hold the important ministries including finance, defense, foreign affairs, the interior and oil (Kinninmont, 2013: 2). Kuwait is a constitutional monarchy in which the constitution and the parliament can place some constraints on the emir, though 'most political power still lies with the ruler and his family' and therefore Kuwait could be classified as 'semi-democracy.' (Kinninmont, 2012: 2).

Of particular interest is the reality that the key positions inside the GCC governments are still held by the ruling elite members and therefore it is difficult to change the Prime Minister because this position has been held, usually for many years, by a senior member of the royal family. Notably, the same ruler in Saudi Arabia and Oman (the monarch) held the Prime Minister position, whilst the Prime Minister position in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) was held by the ruler of Dubai and in Qatar the premier

held the position of the foreign minister, meanwhile in Bahrain, the Prime Minister, who is the uncle of the king, is 'the longest serving premier in the world.' (Kinninmont, 2012: 2).

Indeed, GCC states differ in their stance with reference to the democratization process. So, while Kuwait is a good example of gradual political reform in terms of the existence of an elected parliament that seeks to obtain more control over the government, and the existence of a strong opposition, but Saudi Arabia stands in contrast to this. As Gause observes, 'The Saudi rulers do not want to hear American advice about domestic political reform' (Gause, 2013: 31) and therefore it appears that pushing Saudi Arabia to adopt real political change looks imprudent, given the 'tangible common interests' (see chapter three) that give priority to maintaining and sustaining the US's solid relations with the GCC states (Gause, 2013: 31; Wittes, 2008: 20). As such, to repeat, the American realist interests outweigh the democracy rhetoric and therefore the Bush administration favored stability over the risks of conducting profound political change in the Gulf allies' regimes and therefore he recognized that change in the GCC states should be pursued in a gradual and controlled manner.[44] Furthermore, GCC states are resource-rich and their abundant oil revenues enable the rulers to stave off demands for more radical change. As one scholar claims: 'One of the most prevalent explanations for the Arab world's lack of democracy is the presence of oil' (Miller et al, 2012: 47).

Consequently, the GCC's wealth makes it less likely to encounter any financial crisis so that the US's financial assistance is an unhelpful tool in US-Gulf relations. Accordingly, oil revenues enabled the Gulf's wealthy regimes to respond to the citizens' demands and requirements based on the governmental budget and therefore the economic benefits and services provided to the citizens by the Arab Gulf governments have dampened their demands for political reform.[45]

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[44] Gregory Gause asserts this reality as he claims: 'The ultimate rationale for keeping an American military base in a country is not to use it to exercise leverage on that country's domestic politics. Rather, it is to serve larger American strategic interests. Maintaining a base in an unstable country detracts from its military purpose and runs the risk that the United States will be drawn into domestic conflicts in ways that would damage U.S. interests.' (Gause 2013: 33).

[45] For more information on the effect of the oil revenues on the political reform, (see Ehteshami 2003: 60-66).

As such, it is evident that the Gulf's domestic equation has restrained the US from initiating remarkable political change and despite the US's willingness to support political reform inside the GCC states, it could not determine the outcomes (Ehteshami and Wright, 2011: 25). In other words, there are various features of the GCC's domestic environment that curtail the effectiveness of internal pressures for political reform. So, political parties are prohibited, and banned by law in all GCC states, let alone the severe regulations on civil society association and the restrictions that rein in public demonstrations. However, these restraints have cast doubts on the ability of the civil society to act as a driving force for reform (see Yom, 2005: 14–27) and therefore Ehteshami and Wright rightly observe:

> The ruling tribal elites have historically been in firm control of the reins of power, and civil society simply lacks the capacity to force change onto the political agenda. While the elites hold power so tightly, change will come only if those in power choose to implement it. (Ehteshami and Wright, 2007: 915)

Undoubtedly, the GCC regimes that still have strong control over power have marginalized the opportunity to build up a capable and influential civil society, which 'has little meaning outside the context of the state.' (Yom, 2005: 25). Hence, depending on internal civil society to trigger strong changes is indeed unrealistic and would be inefficient because 'Arab civil society may be stronger than in the past, but the state remains far more powerful' and therefore the American support, either financially or politically, to the civil society 'may be as useful as toothpicks attacking tanks.' (Yom, 2005: 27). This has been asserted further by Ehteshami, who rightly notes that:

> Currently, the GCC ruling elites are the firm masters of the political domain and are able to control the pace and direction of reform, although Kuwait seems to have entered into a new and uncharted phase. Civil society in the Gulf States is increasingly politically energized in a number of quarters, but simply does not have the ability to force additional reforms: reform essentially remains a top-down, controlled process. (Ehteshami and Wright, 2007: 931)

Of particular interest in this argument is that the monarchical regimes are unwilling to share their power and are still hesitant to 'cede too much to civil society' because they

believe that this would weaken their control (Ehteshami, 2013: 143) and therefore the GCC ruling elite have encountered a dilemma, embedded in the issue of 'how to balance reform to increase their own legitimacy against allowing the pendulum of power to move toward civil society.' (Ehteshami, 2013: 144).

Concurrently, some may refer to the Kuwaiti case as a reliable example of the undertaking of political changes, although the slow political reform procedures that Kuwait undertakes could be classified as what Daniel Brumberg calls 'controlled liberalization'. This means that the GCC executive systems respond to domestic and external pressures for political reform but it completely controls the liberalization process. In other words, the ruling elite grant concessions to the opposition but this do not include any fundamental changes in the positions of the ruling elites in the GCC states and therefore Brumberg claims that:

> The goal of state managed liberalization is to give opposition groups a way to blow off steam. The steam valve must meet opponents' minimal expectations for political openness and participation but prevent them from undermining the regime's ultimate control. (Brumberg, 2003: 6)

Similarly, Anoushiravan Ehteshami emphasizes that political reform is still controlled by the power holders of the GCC states and he claims that:

> Traditionally, therefore, the terms of reference for governance in the Gulf Arab monarchies has been determined by the ruling families themselves, in whose domain political power has tended to rest. (Ehteshami, 2003: 62)

Moreover, Ehteshami believes that political reform in the GCC states that is still a state-managed process precludes any substantial changes in the elites' power and the undertaken political changes have come to reinforce the political elites' capture of power. He clearly argues that, 'In the other Arab oil monarchies, the elites still maintain a clear hold on the reins of power and are carefully implementing liberalization initiatives to bolster their own positions.' (Ehteshami and Wright, 2007: 930)

Importantly, the above notions demonstrate that the Gulf's internal power dynamics have denuded the populations from the ability to remold the Arab Gulf States' governance structures. This challenge has been compounded by the Islamist fundamentalism conundrum, as there has been a wide perception and concern amongst US policy makers that pushing effectively for deep political change and encouraging significant democratic transformation could result in the emergence of 'Islamist fundamentalism' that could seize power, with its lingering stance against US and western democratic and liberal values (Carothers, 2007a: 6; Wittes, 2008: 7).

These concerns have been emphasized further by Marina Ottaway, as she gives a clear interpretation that is worth quoting at length; she claims:

> But the United States does not dare push the countries of the Middle East harder, in part because it is not certain of the consequences that a sudden opening of the political system might have in some countries. Rhetoric aside, the United States shares with many Middle East governments the conviction that while things are not good now, they could get a lot worse if radical Islamist groups took advantage of democratic openings and came to power. And there are good reasons for concern. The Middle East environment is not a benign one at present and neither the United States nor Arab governments can be oblivious to the potentially serious consequences of sudden change. (Ottaway and Carothers, 2004: 4)

Of particular concern to the Bush administration is that political reform could ultimately result in the rise of extremist factions and therefore American geopolitical interests in the Gulf region would be 'endangered if a groundswell of turbulent democratization washed away the region's secular, predictable autocrats in favor of extremist, reactionary regimes.' (Yom, 2008: 141). So, pushing the Gulf regimes too hard to conduct overarching political reform could critically harm US interests, especially if the consequent outcomes yielded power to radical or extremist factions. Thus, these difficulties, in the context of creating real political change inside the GCC states, had provoked the belief that 'promoting reforms in the liberalized autocracies of the Arab world poses dilemmas for which there are no easy answers.' (Brumberg, 2003: 4). Indeed, G. W. Bush has exaggerated the democracy rhetoric but his policies did not

have a remarkable impact on the GCC states and therefore the Bush democratization policy, claims Marina Ottaway, was 'never clearly defined, long on rhetoric, short on strategy, and fitfully implemented.' (Ottaway, 2008: 1). This gives a clear indication that the GCC states are still relatively impervious to the political reform process. Further still, introducing further democratization measures inside the GCC countries is still subject to the will of the ruling elites and this demonstrates the challenges that G. W. Bush has faced whilst seeking to democratize the region. Of particular interest regarding these obstacles is that the US could not be considered the key driving force for political change inside the GCC countries. According to Russell, the US has been confronted by the challenge 'to strike the right balance between supportive involvement and sufficient distance to allow the process to unfold at a pace that is defined by the region's elites and their publics.' (Russell, 2003). This refers to the limited role that the US could play in pushing democracy forward inside the Arab Gulf States. As Carothers makes mention, 'The role of outside actors in most attempted democratic transitions is relatively limited.' Apparently, the US could assist other governments through democracy programs in the field of observing and conducting the elections, though such programs 'overwhelmingly play only a supporting and not a leading role.' (Carothers, 2007c: 22).

Indeed, the GCC states that are powerful enough to repress any serious attempts to change the power structures do not feel obliged to enact remarkable political reforms. As Ehteshami has noted, the Arab oil monarchies have a homegrown consultative 'shura' system that is widely believed to 'function well enough for it not to be supplanted or substituted by half-baked Western-type systems of government built around competitive political party structures and elected national assemblies.' (Ehteshami, 2013: 137). He went further to presume that 'it would be erroneous to assume that the current electoral cycles will dramatically change the political landscape' of the GCC countries and therefore the political reform processes 'are likely to continue to be characterized by top-down change.' (Ehteshami, 2013: 135). For the above reasons, 'Still, much progress needs to be made before the GCC countries can be characterized as democracies.' (Kapiszewski, 2006: 89).

To recap, Democracy in general is a method of governance, organization and management. It includes the right to disagree, and it aims at rendering a window of

opportunity for the exchange of a variety of views and ideas. Obviously, this concept 'entails accumulative effects of adopting pluralism, diversity and the transfer of power.' (Al Nuaimi, 2005: 141). Hence, 'certain preconditions, above all, the rule of law and a well-functioning state, should be in place before a society democratizes.' (Carothers, 2007c: 13). Moreover, democracy needs robust elected legislatures that should be empowered enough to take some control from the executive government (Sayigh, 2005: 48) but the realities on the ground indicate that the GCC states have limited parliamentary experiments and although Kuwait emerged as an advanced model of political reform in terms of the existence of parliamentary elections and a strong opposition but the overall extent of Kuwaiti liberalization, as discussed earlier, is still a state-managed process and there are restrictions and severe regulations in terms of civil society associations and other aspects of political liberalization that impede more political openings in the GCC countries. Consequently, the GCC states' domestic political environment, which have cross-cutting obstacles, have made imposing magnificent and deep-reaching political changes in the Gulf regimes extremely difficult and therefore incremental measures to promote political reform have been a prudent policy that the G. W. Bush administration pursued with its Gulf oil monarchy allies.

To sum up, in the early years of launching the freedom agenda in 2002, there were calls from Condoleezza Rice to the Middle Eastern governments; on Saudi Arabia and the smaller gulf countries, to conduct political reform in terms of holding elections, empowering women, respecting human rights and expanding the sphere of free expression. The period between 2004-06 looked promising for conducting political reform throughout the region as the GCC states embarked on certain reform measures, as discussed earlier. These measures were seen by G. W. Bush, at the time, as a sign of the freedom agenda's progression (Hassan 2009: 230). However, different factors had altered the democracy promotion patterns, which resulted in a downplaying of the freedom agenda. The growing insurgency, sectarian violence and increasing instability in Iraq, and the gulf political systems' internal particularities, accompanied by the American concern over its geopolitical interests in the region and the importance of supporting the Gulf regimes to maintain those interests, all of these factors presented challenges to the freedom agenda's structure. It was obvious that G. W. Bush's freedom project lacked comprehensive coherence. Indeed, The Bush approach to democracy was vague and depended on "ideological convictions rather than detailed empirical

subscriptions" (Hassan 2009: 234).

Compounding this, the Freedom Agenda was not constituted based on a coherent rationale, but rather it was forged based on an agreement between various actors within the Bush administration. Ironically, the vision of those actors and policy advisors with respect to promoting democracy abroad were incompatible and different (see chapter two). While some advisors saw the Freedom Agenda as a means to support national interests, others viewed the Freedom Agenda as damaging long-term interests. So, neoconservatives like Paul Wolfowitz encouraged the idea, while realists like Colin Powell and assertive unilateralists like Cheney and Rumsfeld were not concerned about democracy promotion and remaking the political governance structures in the GCC countries. This interagency quarrel laid the foundations for a power struggle between the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), the State Department and the Defense Department's members, who were hostile to the freedom agenda but accepted the idea of democracy promotion under the pressures of the events of 9/11, by which political reform was conceived of as a proper method to combat terrorists and radical extremists- a strategy that would ultimately serve US national interests (Hassan 2009: 226). Moreover, the Bush administration's heightened rhetoric with regard to promoting liberal values from the autumn of 2002 was widely seen as one of the tools utilized for legitimating the Iraq invasion (Huuhtanen, 2003: 16) rather than a coherent structure and practical prescription for reform in the region. As Kenneth Katzman observes, the Bush administration emphasize on democracy in Iraq was necessitated by the failure to find WMDs or Saddam regime links to Al-Qaeda. Therefore, democracy promotion has served as a new rational for the high cost of the US military presence in Iraq. (Katzman 2005: 248) Indeed, the State Department and Department of Defense resisted the Freedom Agenda in the second Bush administration because it began to conflict with US long-term interests in the gulf region and its longstanding relations with Arab gulf allies, which had significant military relationships with the US, as explained throughout this thesis. Katzman illustrates: "The fall of Saddam Hussein has paved the way for the triumph of Khomeini's revolution in Iraq" and empowering pro- Khomeini movements in the country with serious consequences to gulf security. (Katzman, 2005: 246) Pro-US and pro-democracy parties have not flourished, rather the domestic Shiite movements in Iraq and the radical militant militias that have relations with Iran have been unleashed in Iraq, giving Iran the strategic depth it was seeking for since its

revolution in 1979. Therefore, Kenneth Katzman looks at de-emphasizing the push for democratization on the GCC states and rebuilding the extensive defense cooperation between the US and the GCC countries as essential element in rebuilding anew gulf security architecture. (Katzman 2005: 248) Hence, it unfolded that the central and overriding objective of US foreign policy towards the GCC countries remained regional stability, accompanied by the traditional conviction of the importance and necessity of maintaining and securing the gulf regimes as a feasible option to preserve American interests in the region. From a realpolitik perspective, pursuing a freedom agenda bears risks rather than opportunities. In other words, there is no guarantee that the political change and modernization process would bring about regimes or governments friendly to the US, which reflects the fundamentalism or radicalization dilemma (see Ottaway and Carothers, 2004: 4). On the one hand, the transformation to democracy could result in radical forces coming to power, or the democratically-elected governments could follow anti-American policies on the other hand. As realists posit, pushing hard for more democratic governance would mean producing more anti-American attitudes in foreign policy.

The above setbacks combined to give realists in the Republican Party a reason to challenge the Bush administration's approach which emphasized democracy promotion in the first term. Herein, while Condoleezza Rice had declared the need to move towards democracy and urged the Arab gulf governments to take further steps in political reform in the years 2002-06, it became evident that by 2006 this request was relegated - there was no push for domestic reform. As a result, from 2006 onwards the Bush administration, after the resignation of Donald Rumsfeld following early resignations from Paul Wolfowitz and Douglas Faith, lowered the level of pressure it applied to the gulf regimes and reforms in the GCC states have been pushed ahead more moderately. Therefore, during 2008, there was lesser focus on domestic political reform, in line with a general shift away from democratization as a core principle of the Bush administration foreign policy. G. W. Bush and several high-level advisors including Secretary Rice visited in January 2008 different countries in the Arabian Peninsula. His trip, which focused on political issues pertaining to Iran, Iraq, security cooperation and enhancing bilateral relations, included the UAE, Kuwait, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. During his visit the President has not criticized the GCC regimes on political reform and praised instead, with a very soft manner, the democratic openings in Kuwait and

Bahrain and the modernization efforts elsewhere. Moreover, the decision of U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to skip the Forum for the Future, an annual meeting of G-8 and Middle East foreign ministers that held in Abu Dhabi, UAE on October 2008 to promote government and nongovernment discussions on promoting democracy and good governance, and instead dispatch her deputy was a clear signal of the lesser US emphasis on political reform. (see Hokayem and McGovern, 2008: 138-9; see also Carpenter, 2008) As a result, many members of the Freedom Agenda institutions were increasingly sidelined within the State Department, which had not wanted to promote democracy from the beginning (see Hassan 2009). So, it became more apparent in early 2006 through to the end of the Bush administration's term in office that the freedom agenda had lapsed back to a realist approach and it was evident that the US relations with the Gulf's oil-producing countries had continued to rest on solid convergence of long-term interests and realist foundations that were characterized by stability rather than pushing hard to initiate deep political reform. This confirms the argument of this thesis, that the Bush policy showed highly moralistic rhetoric and highly realpolitik decision making. The principle tenets of the freedom agenda were substantially realpolitik rather than moralistic in nature (see Kagan, 2008). Overall, this conforms to the author's argument that the general line of the Bush policy encompassed synthesis of realism and placed less emphasis on democratic elements. Evidently, Bush ratcheted up the democracy rhetoric to new heights; nonetheless, the US realist interests have remained dominant in US foreign policy formation and implementation.

5.3 US Democracy Policy: The Factors of Continuity and Change

5.3.1 Apparent Continuities

Despite the argument that views G. W. Bush's policies as a departure from traditional US foreign policy, it has been demonstrated throughout this chapter that the Bush administration's policies with reference to democracy promotion are characterized by continuity rather than change. This can be argued in two areas. The first is that democracy promotion by the US has a long history. Of particular importance in this argument is the fact that in spite of the events of September 11th, which accelerated G. W. Bush's democratic rhetoric, democracy promotion is one of the strategies that

prevailed in the US's foreign policy since President Ronald Reagan in the 1980s and has largely continued as the forefront component in US foreign policy during the G. W. Bush administration. As Markakis has argued:

> Under G. W. Bush, the events of September 11 precipitated a more aggressive military stance in the region, but one that nonetheless drew heavily on the very same premises of political and economic reform. This reflects a fundamental continuity in the US strategy of democracy promotion in the Middle East, across both the Clinton and G.W. Bush administration, with its genesis found in the systematic advocacy of democracy abroad by the Reagan administration. (Markakis, 2012: 15)

Similarly, the different aspects of G. W. Bush's continuity are also emphasized by Nicolas Bouchet as he claims:

> Despite the differing approaches and emphases of successive administrations, there has been a great degree of continuity in US democracy promotion since at least the Reagan years—both on the positive and on the negative side.[46] (Bouchet, 2013: 51)

Indeed it has been argued, 'The Bush Administration's democracy promotion posture builds neatly on three decades of growing bipartisan consensus' and therefore the policy has evolved and advanced through the support of successive US administrations (Melia, 2005: 4) and Bush was tapping into a long-term foreign policy tradition in the Democratic and Republican parties (Fukuyama and McFaul, 2007: 44; see also Asmus 2007). In a similar vein, the critics argue that G. W. Bush was in fact 'insufficiently' neo conservative in his foreign policy (Lynch, 2010: 121).

Consequently, democracy promotion was not introduced in the Gulf region by G. W. Bush. He utilized initiatives from the Clinton administration, particularly with reference to promotion of free market economies, though what distinguishes the Bush

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[46] Cox believes that Democracy promotion was not a recent aberration; rather it was grounded in a popular tradition in American foreign relations that goes back at least as far as Woodrow Wilson, and arguably even further (see Cox et al, 2013: 180).

administration from that of his predecessor is the application of democracy propaganda, as he made it a clear slogan in US foreign policy (Markakis, 2012: 221).

Furthermore, that continuity was exemplified in the fact that successive US administrations held an assumption that spreading democracy, along with economic reform, would be conducive to a stable political and economic environment and could move the region forward towards modernization. For example, the Clinton administration focused on economic reform to create the desired political reform and this policy was advocated widely by the Bush administration. As Markakis notes:

> US policy in the Middle East, since the Clinton administration in particular, has been increasingly based on the premise that democratization, in conjunction with free market reforms, can usher in a new era of regional stability, and in the process ensure US interests. The G.W. Bush administration adopted a more belligerent stance in the region, as a result of the events of September 11, but one that nonetheless drew heavily, and indeed more overtly, on these same premises of reform. (Markakis, 2012: 90)

5.3.2. Changes

Nevertheless, there are some distinct changes that distinguished G. W. Bush's democracy promotion strategy, which motivated some scholars to believe that his policies are a departure from traditional US attitudes and caused some aversion to the strategy from concerned Gulf States. Consequently, the change that can be noticed in US policy with respect to democracy promotion is embedded primarily in three aspects: Firstly, a change in rhetoric. It is clear that G. W. Bush, along with senior individuals in his administration, had frequently emphasized democracy rhetoric, which reached significant levels under the Bush administration and this could be extracted from the statements of G. W. Bush himself, Condoleezza Rice, Colin Powell and others, as they spoke on promoting democracy abroad more than their predecessors. Although democracy has drawn the attention of previous administrations, the G. W. Bush administration 'has clearly raised the rhetorical bar to new heights.' (Melia, 2005: 4).

Secondly, associating democracy with military intervention. G. W. Bush has focused, in his appeals for democracy, on military intervention, as happened in Iraq, where the US invasion was not quick and easy, as portrayed, but rather it turned Iraq into, as Carothers calls it, 'a protracted, bloody fiasco.' (Carothers, 2007a: 18). It is obvious that in the run up for the Iraq war, democracy rhetoric has been intensified by the Bush administration and emerged as an additional rational for the US invasion of Iraq, and therefore the invasion was portrayed as 'a democracy mission' (Carothers, 2007a: 3).

Third, associating the freedom agenda with the war on terrorism. G. W. Bush associated democracy with the war on terrorism, as there was a perception among the Bush administration's staff that the lack of a democratic environment in the Arab world breeds extremist ideologies and radicalism that in turn underpins terrorism and deepens the hate towards the western world, and therefore if there is a desire to eliminate terrorism's causes, then promoting democracy would be the most appropriate strategy (Carothers, 2007a: 4).

5.3.3. Deep Continuities

Notwithstanding, it can be argued that the G. W. Bush foreign policy with respect to democracy promotion in the wake of September 11th is not as dramatic a departure as many scholars have claimed. Obviously, in spite of the September 11th events creating some tensions in US-Gulf relations, as we shall see in next chapter, because the majority of the attackers were Saudi citizens, the US maintained, under the G. W. Bush administration, its long-term relations with the GCC states, preserved its strategic geopolitical interests in the Gulf region and has been working constantly to preserve the Arab Gulf allies' enduring security and stability. As Wittes puts it: 'America's fundamental interests in the Middle East remain largely unchanged, despite the dramatic threats revealed by the attacks of September 11, 2001.' (Wittes, 2008: 2). So, the stability of the GCC, as a significant and traditional American objective, has overridden the democracy promotion objectives and this has been asserted further by Gause, who claims that: 'In each of these [GCC] countries, Washington has an agenda that goes beyond domestic political reform, with real interests related to oil,

Arab-Israeli peace, military cooperation, and intelligence-sharing all at stake.' (Gause, 2013: 30). As such, democracy reverted back, in the second Bush administration, to a 'semi-realist' foreign policy (Carothers, 2007a: 20). Therefore, 'the place of democracy in Bush's foreign policy was no greater, and in some ways was less, than in the foreign policies of his recent predecessors ' (Carothers, 2009: 4).

Conclusion

To sum up, American foreign policy is the outcome of 'an orchestra, not a soloist' and therefore we should be fully aware of the forces and the impulses that drive the Presidency in relation to foreign policy. So, adopting a singular intellectual approach to determining the behaviors of US foreign policy is in fact misleading. Moreover, most US presidents have utilized a variety of approaches, from diverse sources, and apparently G. W. Bush has not been any different. In his foreign policy, Bush placed great emphasis on democratization as a tool to protect American national security but his formulated policies failed to achieve remarkable effects (Lynch, 2010: 139). Bush was unable to push forward his freedom agenda in the GCC states because he favored regional stability rather than imposing democracy on GCC states, and thereby the Bush democratic ideological discourse retreated vis-à-vis the 'hard' US interests.

Chapter 6

US-GCC Relations and the War on Terrorism

Introduction

The catastrophic events of 9/11/2001 triggered grave concerns among the Bush administration's policy officials and contributed to the re-definition of the US strategy towards Gulf regional security. So, it seems appropriate to elaborate on these events. This chapter seeks to answer one primary question; to what extent the U.S. counterterrorism strategy contributed, positively or negatively, to bolstering the US geostrategic interests in the Gulf region and enhancing the Gulf's regional stability? To address this question, it is perhaps pertinent to understand the change that the September 11th tragedy had on the Bush administration's strategic attitudes to US-Gulf security dynamics. Over the last six decades the balance of power, deterrence, containment and off-shore balance principles substituted for American direct engagement in the Gulf region. Of particular importance are the overarching strategic attitudes and security approaches of the Bush administration toward the GCC countries in the wake of the American-led war on terrorism.

Noticeably, the first phase of the war on terrorism began with launching attacks against Afghanistan in October 2001, with the purpose of ousting the Taliban regime to make sure that Afghanistan did not offer the Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden and his assistants sanctuary. By the end of 2001, the Bush administration had succeeded in driving the Taliban regime out of power after the regime refused to hand bin Laden over to the United States. The second phase of this war began with invading Iraq on March 20th, 2003 with the objective of unseating Saddam Hussein. The third phase of the US war on terror began when G. W. Bush announced his strategy of combating terrorism through spreading democracy in the Arab world (see Litwak, 2007). As the first phase of the war on terrorism is beyond the scope of this thesis, the author will discuss the other two phases of this war as it related to fostering Gulf regional stability.

This chapter argues that the Bush administration's strategy in fighting terrorism encompassed a series of successes and failures. In effect, it overestimated the viability of using, unilaterally, conventional military force to fight transnational terrorism and perhaps the Bush decision to invade Iraq as part of the war on terrorism is instructive in this regard. Moreover, the Bush administration, as it will be shown, has exaggerated the liberal and political transformations as a presumably pivotal tool to eradicate terrorism and reinforce Gulf security, since a variety of obstacles impeded the US's attempts to spread democracy across the Gulf region (see chapter five). However, it can be argued that despite September 11th, US relations with the GCC countries can be characterized as one of continuity rather than change. Relations with Saudi Arabia are an example.

1. 9/11 Trauma and the Provenance of Strategic Attitudes

September 11th's events sparked a twofold argument; it yielded an opportunity to emphasize US primacy and preponderance: so the war on terrorism could be a proper strategy to enhance American security and protect its geo-political and economic interests in the Gulf region. Yet simultaneously, the events posed real challenges to American security and thereby transformed the Bush administration's priorities. So, it might be useful to elaborate on these notions with the purpose of exploring the extent to which the September 11th events contributed to redefining the American approaches toward Gulf regional security.

1.1 US Preponderance

Arguably, the September 11th attacks constituted a propitious moment for neocons to put in place not only a strategy to fight terrorism but, more importantly, to 'launch a new, aggressive American foreign policy' in an attempt to fulfill their 'world-remaking ambition' (Lemann 2002). This has driven some scholars to believe that although September 11's traumatic events posed tremendous challenges to the US security strategy, it provided the US with a historical opportunity to increase its global influence and solidify its preponderance (Cox, 2002: 264). Therefore, the war against terrorism was employed by the US decision makers to extend and strengthen American

prominence and its dominant position through military power projection and by establishing military bases (Paul Rogers, Quoted in the Observer, 2002).

Thus, establishing a perennial military presence (see chapter four) was critical to strategically project and sustain US influence in the Gulf region, to interfere in Gulf regional affairs and to enhance its economic interests and political values. These objectives indicate that 'The US is a typical example of countries seeking hegemony through a military presence' (Sun, 2014: 138-9). Obviously, this presence helped the US to launch its operations against Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and supported its war efforts against Iraq in 2003, since the military strikes had been conducted from US military bases established in the Arab Gulf States' lands. But it can be argued that the September 11th attacks were exploited significantly by the Bush administration to step forward and sustain American supremacy through a variety of ways; to maintain military and economic preponderance, reinforce preemption, launch a campaign against global-reach terrorism and, not least, spread democracy throughout the Middle East as an imperative strategy to enhance the American security (Ehteshami, 2007: 3). As Ikenberry notes, 'the Bush administration signaled a move towards a more hard-line unilateralist position' (Ikenberry, 2001: 20) and the 'unilateral orientation' of the G. W. Bush administration, coupled with preventive use of military force, has sought to reinforce the US military preponderant power (see Ikenberry, 2002; Donnelly, 2003).[47]

Evidently, the Bush administration's National Security Strategy of 2002 saw the tendency to act unilaterally articulated clearly in the document, which states:

> The United States will constantly strive to enlist the support of the international community; we will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right of self-defense by acting preemptively against such terrorists, to prevent them

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[47] John Ikenberry believes that 'some Bush administration officials embrace a more unilateral-even imperial- grand strategy, based on a starkly realist vision of American interests and global power realities.' (Ikenberry, 2001: 25). On unilateral and multilateral strategy with reference to counter terrorism, (see Ikenberry 2001). Indeed, G. W. Bush has pursued unilateral policies in his international engagements. As Charles A. Kupchan makes mention, G. W. Bush 'declined offers of NATO involvement in the war against the Taliban in Afghanistan, and then went to war in Iraq without UN authorization and with only a handful of allies. Through much of his first term, Bush and his top advisers were openly dismissive of international institutions and multilateralism.' (Kupchan and Trubowitz, 2007: 25).

from doing harm against our people and our country. (National Security Strategy, 2002: 6; see also National Strategy for Combating Terrorism 2003: 2)

Realistically, the Bush unilateralist approach has been demonstrated through the US operations in Afghanistan conducted under American leadership without UN Security Council authorization (see Litwak, 2007: 41). It was also obvious in the Bush pronouncements, which used the phrase 'Either you are with us, or you are against us.' However, the US's unilateral policy in the war on terrorism had to recognize that the GCC states' cooperation and support was of particular importance to any success in the war against terrorism. This cooperation was compounded by the instability and lack of security in both Afghanistan and Iraq, which indicated vividly that 'the Bush administration overestimated both the merits of unilateralism and the utility of superior military force.' (Kupchan and Trubowitz, 2007: 28).

Given the complexities of the war on terrorism, the US's foreign policy then reoriented to embrace the multilateralist approach that had prevailed in the US's foreign policy since the end of the cold war era (see Ikenberry, 2001: 26). Fundamentally, the exigencies of fighting global terrorism led the US to form a coalition and work closely with partners because it needed 'the military and logistical support of allies, intelligence sharing and the practical cooperation of front-line states.' (Ikenberry, 2001: 28; see also Walt, 2001: 63). Although the US is the main player in the counterterrorism coalition, by virtue of its military power it had to 'seek to exercise its leadership through multilateral partnership rather than unilateral initiative.' (Kupchan and Trubowitz, 2007: 8). Thus, the Bush administration became more willing to accept greater cooperation with allies and this change was asserted by Waltz, who noted:

> The irony is obvious: A president [G. W. Bush] whose initial approach to foreign policy was decidedly unilateralist is now being judged in large part on his ability to muster an unprecedented degree of international cooperation. (Walt, 2001: 63)

Furthermore, the need for collaborative and concerted efforts in anti-terrorism campaigns was combined with G. W. Bush's comprehensive policy to fight not only Al-Qaeda but also terrorism of global reach: 'Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda,

but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated.' (Bush, 2001). This recognition of global terrorism was not confined to G. W. Bush himself, but it extended to include influential personnel in his administration. So, Donald Rumsfeld, the Secretary of Defense, underlined the global nature of terrorism:

> This is not a war against an individual, a group, a religion or a country. Rather, our opponent is a global network of terrorist organizations and their state sponsors, committed to denying free people the opportunity to live as they choose. (Rumsfeld, 2001)

Subsequently, the Bush administration recognized the importance of maintaining cooperation to facilitate the campaign against terrorism and it appears that he became convinced that 'international support was indispensable' in the war against terrorism. (Walt, 2001: 63). Of particular importance was the need to recognize that the GCC states' cooperation with Washington in its war against global terrorism was deemed 'essential to any victory in the war on terrorism' and therefore the Bush administration stepped forward to 'work systematically and consistently with friendly regimes' in the Gulf region to confront terrorism (Cordesman, 2005: 2, 5). However, the GCC countries, as will be shown, aligned themselves with the US in the war on terror and provided Washington with all necessary cooperation that facilitated the American counterterrorism efforts.

1.2 US Preemption Policy

Recalling what has been discussed under the theoretical framework section, it is noteworthy that neoconservative officials in the Bush administration played a crucial role in motivating the Bush administration to adopt a preemptive policy (see chapter two) that advocated the use of American military force against states that sponsored terrorism. As Wright observes: 'The 9/11 attacks were highly significant for US policy towards the Persian Gulf in that the neoconservative vision of how the threat of terrorism should be countered had a direct bearing on US strategy towards achieving Persian Gulf security'. (Wright, 2007: 184)

The American preemption policy was manifested by some hard-line officials in the Bush administration. Paul Wolfowitz, Deputy US Defense Secretary, revealed during an international forum in Munich in February 2002, that the American policy 'has to aim at prevention and not merely punishment.' He went further to explain that 'Those countries that choose to tolerate terrorism and refuse to take action - or worse, those that continue to support it - will face consequences.' (Quoted in the Guardian, 2002). Similarly, Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense, has advocated this strategy as he maintained that, 'defending the United States requires prevention and sometimes preemption...Defending against terrorism and other emerging threats requires that we take the war to the enemy.' (Rumsfeld, 2002: 31). In essence, the hard-liners of the Bush administration succeeded in pushing their agenda forwards and therefore in an address at the West Point Military Academy, G. W. Bush explicitly declared his pre-emptive approach to the war on terrorism, as he made it abundantly clear that:

> The war on terror will not be won on the defensive. We must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans, and confront the worst threats before they emerge. In the world we have entered, the only path to safety is the path of action. And this nation will act. (Bush 2002c)

Within days of the September attacks, Congress responded to the Bush administration's efforts regarding the global war on terrorism and passed a resolution that granted the President broad authority to act against the terrorists that were involved in the September attacks. The authorization to use offensive military force was clearly included in the resolution as it stipulates:

> The President is authorized to use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, or harbored such organizations or persons, in order to prevent any future acts of international terrorism against the United States by such nations, organizations or persons. (see Public Law 107–40, 2001)

The Iraq invasion constituted a stark embodiment of that strategy. As Ehteshami has noted, 'the Iraq war of March 2003 demonstrated the full force of the pre-emption

element of the Bush doctrine.' (Ehteshami, 2006: 109). Thus, a group of neoconservatives in the Bush administration succeeded in employing the September 11th events to influence the President and produce 'a coherent, hawkish world view whose acceptance practically requires invading Iraq' (Lemann, 2002). As such, Donald Rumsfeld, Defense Secretary, Dick Cheney, Vice-President and Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, believed that stability in the Gulf region would be achieved through changing the Iraqi regime and ensuring a democratic transition in the country that in turn, according to them, would spark democratic transformations in other countries in the region (see Tan, 2009: 78; Wright, 2007: 167).[48] As such, both Rumsfeld and Cheney alleged frequently in 2002 and early 2003 that Saddam Hussein had WMD which could be used to attack the American homeland, and had established relations with Al Qaeda terrorist groups (Tan, 2009: 47).

However, the Bush administration exaggerated and magnified the potential threat of the Iraqi regime, since its military capabilities had weakened and therefore it did not constitute a threat to the GCC member states. This situation posits questions about the genuine goal of the Iraq invasion that remain to be answered. Based on the above analysis, the American decision to invade Iraq under the pretext of fighting terrorism could be interpreted as a concrete embodiment of the American strategy that sought, under the Bush administration, to assert American primacy and simultaneously to extend American influence in the Gulf region to keep the region within the American geopolitical and economical sphere.

However after the invasion of 2003, as the security situation deteriorated significantly in Iraq, the outcomes of targeting Iraq preemptively, as part of the war on terror, were far from satisfactory for the American decision makers. Therefore, the American strategy of maintaining its hegemony in the Gulf region and its subsequent policies to reinforce this objective yielded a bounty of unexpected results and posed questions about the effectiveness of US counterterrorist strategy (see Anthony, 2008). Hence, whilst the Bush administration unveiled a specific strategy in February 2003 for combating terrorism that concentrated on the US preemption strategy, three years later

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[48] 'Saddam Hussein did not constitute a clear and present danger to United States or to regional or international security' and therefore he was not 'an immediate priority in the global war against Al Qaeda.' (Tan, 2009: 50).

in September 2006 an updated National Strategy for Combating Terrorism was released, which sought to address the criticism regarding the US counterterrorism strategy that had been pursued since 9/11.

2. US Approaches to Countering Terrorism

This thesis has elaborated on the first part of debate - which viewed September 11th as an opportunity to enhance the US's strategic goals of maintaining primacy and preponderance. However, to provide comprehensive understanding and analysis of the impact of the events on US-Gulf policy it is pertinent to elaborate on the second part of the argument, which viewed those events as posing real challenges and thus stimulating the US to take action to address the ensuing security consequences. Military intervention and democracy promotion, which were seen by the Bush administration as viable options to ensure American security and bolster its strategy against terrorism in the Gulf region created problems. Nonetheless, the policies pursued had repercussions for the Gulf's regional security as well as for American efforts to combat terrorism. The US's actions, as a result of these problems, demonstrated the continuity in US foreign policy over the long-term.

2.1 Military Intervention

Of particular importance was military intervention, exemplified by actions against Afghanistan and Iraq. American strategy drew heavily on military power more than other diplomatic and political efforts to counter terrorism and obviously 'the U.S. soft-power effort' was 'drastically less successful than the hard-power effort.' (McGrath, 2011: 48). Thus, Bush's strategy for combating terrorism was 'offensive based', thereby redefining the American formula towards Gulf security, in which the US strategy for protecting Gulf security and maintaining American interests had depended largely on the US's direct military intervention and perennial military existence in the Gulf region (Wright, 2007: 86).

2.1.1 Hunting down Al-Qaeda

Al-Qaeda is an international movement that was established with the objective of constituting Islamic order across the Arab and Islamic societies. This organization looks at the US as its primary enemy and executes horrific actions to achieve its objectives, enhanced by cross-national support that reinforces its ability to conduct terrorist operations (Telhami and Steinberg, 2005: 13). Al-Qaeda is the major American enemy in the war on terror and Osama Bin laden, former chief of Al-Qaeda, dislikes democracy as a means of governance, calling instead for the establishment of an Islamic caliphate across the Arab world.

The US intelligence and military actions in Afghanistan had destroyed Al-Qaeda's safe havens and led to the arrest of its symbolic individuals, killing Al-Qaeda operatives and freezing its financial assets. As a result, Al-Qaeda was blunted and its 'leadership and operational capabilities have thus been in significant decline since 9/11' (Tan, 2009: 24). Moreover, the efficiency of Al-Qaeda was downgraded and has profoundly declined since the killing of its founder and leader, Osama bin Laden, through an American intelligence operation at his compound in Pakistan in May 2011.

Despite the ideological and religious foundations of Al-Qaeda, it appears that its agenda to confront the United States is 'rooted in political issues and socioeconomic grievances' that fueled their anger and resentment (Tan, 2009: 74). As such, it appears that the Bush administration's policy, which focused on the use of military force to eliminate the terrorist threat, was insufficient. The US cannot fight the feelings of anger and resentment that are rooted deeply in the hearts and minds of Al-Qaeda and its followers and sympathizers in the Arabian Peninsula. As Tan writes:

> The nature of the fight is in fact not a military battle of wills but a battle of ideas and legitimacy. It is a problem that cannot be redressed solely through the prism of a narrowly defined, hard security approach that only focuses on a "kill or capture" policy. (Tan, 2009: 74)

Similarly, this dilemma in fighting the terrorists has been asserted further by Hoffman, who made mention, during a congressional session, that the "kill or capture" approach

against Al-Qaeda militant leaders is 'a monumental failing' due to Al-Qaeda's capacity for recruitment and replenishment (see Hoffman, 2006). Indeed, the deficiencies of the war on terrorism strategy are not confined to its military shape, but rather extend to include the Bush policy of associating the war on terrorism with the war against Iraq, which showed the Bush misperception of the security threats encountered by the US and the manifest lack of a suitable strategy to pursue in the war on terrorism. The US's military-oriented policy has not eliminated Al-Qaeda, (albeit it has weakened it) but it has also seen Al-Qaeda become more decentralized, so that a diverse set of networked groups have emerged; some are associated with Al-Qaeda, meanwhile other new movements operate independently and have not 'sworn allegiance' to core Al Qaeda leaders (see Jones, 2014: xi; 3; 10-12). In essence, Al-Qaeda has regrouped and developed since 9/11 and it was transformed from an organization into an ideological movement that has adherents worldwide.[49] Thus, as Bruce Hoffman stated before the US congress in February 2006:

> Al Qaeda's greatest achievement has been the makeover it has given itself since 2001. The current al Qaeda thus exists more as an ideology than as an identifiable, unitary terrorist organization. It has become a vast enterprise——an international franchise with like-minded local representatives, loosely connected to a central ideological or motivational base… the result is that today there are many al Qaedas rather than the single al Qaeda of the past. (Hoffman, 2006)

Remarkably, the above shortcomings of the US strategy of combating terrorism prompted the US National Defense Strategy of 2008 to emphasize the necessity of changing policies through considering a variety of instruments to counter terrorism, not only by military force. It claims that 'U.S. dominance in conventional warfare has given prospective adversaries, particularly non-state actors and their state sponsors, strong motivation to adopt asymmetric methods to counter our advantages' and

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[49] For more information on Salafi-jihadist groups and Al-Qaeda decentralization, (see Jones 2014). Fawaz Gerges discusses broadly Al-Qaeda's evolution in rhetoric and its interactions with local pro-western secular regimes (the near enemy) as well as the United States (the far enemy). Also, he elaborates on Jihadist groups, Al-Qaeda's inner circle, leading actors and broader strategic goals (see Gerges, 2005).

therefore, meeting such risks would require 'better and more diverse capabilities in both hard and soft power.' (National Defense Strategy, 2008: 4). The document uses accurately the term 'long war' to describe the US efforts to fight extremism that appears to have turned out to be a prolonged struggle (National Defense Strategy, 2008: 7) and therefore it calls for the adoption of a more effective strategy to counter terrorism. According to the document:

> The use of force plays a role, yet military efforts to capture or kill terrorists are likely to be subordinate to measures to promote local participation in government and economic programs to spur development, as well as efforts to understand and address the grievances that often lie at the heart of insurgencies. (National Defense Strategy, 2008: 8)

Similarly, the Quadrennial Defense Review of 2014, issued by the Department of Defense, clearly illustrates the necessity of considering other options to fight terrorism along with the use of military force. As the document states:

> The United States will maintain a worldwide approach to countering violent extremists and terrorist threats using a combination of economic, diplomatic, intelligence, law enforcement, development, and military tools. (2014 Quadrennial Defense Review: 21)

Not only was the US military campaign unable to eradicate terrorism completely, albeit it achieved some success in capturing some of Al-Qaeda's figures and followers, but also the US's 'hard-power actions became a jihadist recruiting engine' in Iraq. Further still, despite the American crucial military strikes against Al-Qaeda, it remained 'fundamentally unshaken', and rather it continued its operations in Afghanistan and Iraq and even established a new presence in Yemen (McGrath, 2011: 63). Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, based in Yemen, constitutes a continuous real and potential threat to the US interests in the Gulf region. In formal testimony to the House Homeland Security Committee, Christopher Boucek explained that Al-Qaeda in Yemen 'has quickly eclipsed core al-Qaeda as the most immediate terrorist threat to U.S.

persons and interests'[50] (Boucek, 2011).

What is interesting from the above analysis is that the US needs to configure a holistic strategy and complementary approaches to combat terrorism. This has been encapsulated in the National Defense Strategy document of 2008, which bluntly noted the deficiency of an excessive use of military force to fight terrorism, when it stated that 'Iraq and Afghanistan remind us that military success alone is insufficient to achieve victory.' (National Defense Strategy, 2008: 17). That being said, it was evident that defeating radicalism through exclusive hard security arrangements has been less effective and even counterproductive for American security (see Boucek, 2008b: 23; Rogers, 2009: 3). Hence, a successful strategy to counter terrorism should contain 'fundamental parallel political, social, economic, and ideological activities' (Hoffman, 2006).

2.1.2. Repercussions of Military Intervention: Iraq War as a Model

The Bush administration's military invasion of Iraq has been associated with the goals of politically transforming Iraq and the Middle East region, defeating Bin Laden, assuming that Saddam Hussein had links with Al-Qaeda, and enhancing US economic, political and security interests in the Gulf region (Katz, 2010; see also Wright, 2007: 168). But as the 9/11 commission report concluded, although there were friendly contacts between Al-Qaeda and the Saddam Hussein regime, these contacts had not 'developed into a collaborative operational relationship.' (The 9/11 Commission Report: 66). This has been emphasized also by Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense, as he states that he had seen no evidence of a link between Iraq and Al Qaeda (Quoted in Stevenson and Sanger, 2004). Daniel Benjamin, former National Security Council analyst, concludes, 'Iraq and Al Qaeda are not obvious allies. In fact, they are natural enemies' (Benjamin, 2002). These clarifications prompted Russell to state that, 'the case that Iraq…represented an imminent danger to the United States requiring the use of force was always a weak argument.' (Russell, 2005: 284).

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[50] Al-Qaeda in Yemen constitutes a real challenge to the US's domestic security and GCC states' security as it turned into a prominent theater for jihad training. For more information on Al-Qaeda's operations in Yemen and its repercussions for the stability of the Arabian Peninsula, (see Boucek 2011).

What is notable about the above analysis is that the Iraq invasion was built upon unsubstantiated allegations and perhaps one interpretation for launching this war was the opportunity that September 11 provided to enhance American preponderance and a doctrine of preemption (see Litwak, 2007). Thus, the Iraq invasion was seen as a step in the direction of reinforcing American primacy that was advocated widely by the 'hawks' of the Bush administration. Nonetheless, the Arab Gulf States were reluctant to support a US war against Iraq because it was perceived as 'America's war for purely American interests.' (Kahwaji, 2004: 55). Further still, Iraq was an integral part of the security structure in the Gulf region and therefore the GCC countries were by no means far from the consequences. Hence, it voiced heightened apprehensions that the US invasion of Iraq would induce chaos and bring bad repercussions for the Gulf's regional stability. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia and some other smaller GCC states voiced concerns that 'the strategic weakness of post-war Iraq will embolden Iran to take a more active role in Gulf security and to seek to enlist the Gulf states in an Iran-led Gulf security structure' (Katzman, 2003 :6) thereby increasing Iranian influence in Gulf regional affairs. The clear explication of these concerns is the fact that the fall of Baghdad in 2003 has granted Arab Shias the opportunity to emerge with stronger political stature in Iraq (Ehteshami, 2006: 111). Nonetheless, the Bush administration insisted on attacking Iraq as an initial step to fight terrorism and therefore the American unilateral approach had led some scholars to believe that the US was 'working from its own script in the Gulf region without much regard to GCC views' (Kahwaji, 2004: 55).

In a sense, the American military intervention in Iraq resulted in motivating radicalization and increasing 'Salafi-jihadist recruitment' (Jones, 2014: 53-4). Moreover, the American decision to disband Iraqi security forces and the failure to rebuild the country's institutions or provide meaningful security contributed to serve and consolidate, albeit unintentionally, Al-Qaeda recruitment (see Anthony, 2008; Jehl 2005). Hence, Iraq, the war-torn country, has become 'a vast training center for terrorists', which are not confined to Iraqi individuals but rather it attracts jihadists from the regional countries, particularly from Saudi Arabia, resulting in the establishment of what is called 'Al Qaeda in Iraq.' As a result, Iraq post U.S. invasion has become 'the breeding ground for a new generation of terrorists' and 'jihadist militants' (Tan, 2009: 42; 57-9; Kamrava, 2014: 6). Hence, a jihadist organization called 'Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad', commanded by Abu Mus'ab Al-Zarqawi, joined

Al-Qaeda by changing its name in 2004 to become Al Qaeda in Iraq, which indicated that the US invasion of Iraq negatively impacted the war on terrorism strategy as it provided 'the conditions and the opportunities for Al Qaeda to recruit both locally and globally to fight in the perceived U. S.-led war against Islam' and as a result it can be said that 'The greatest beneficiary of the U.S. invasion of Iraq has been Al Qaeda' (Tan, 2009: 81). Douglas Jehl, the New York Times reporter, pointed out a classified CIA report on the situation in Iraq in which the Central Intelligence Agency assessment reveals that the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 resulted in opening Iraq up to become 'a real-world laboratory for urban combat' because it provides an 'effective training ground' for local and foreign combatants (Jehl, 2005).

3. The Repercussions of 9/11 Trauma on US - GCC States Relations

The Bush administration has attached greater importance to the war against global terrorism which has been elevated to become 'the central aim of U.S. foreign and defense policy', with the objective of eradicating terrorism through attacking Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and its network in other countries (Walt, 2001: 64). However, September 11th marked a significant turning point in the US security strategy towards the Gulf region and it opened up a political milieu in which the US relations with the Arab Gulf States, for example especially with Saudi Arabia, were contested. Would they be subjected to fundamental reassessment in practice?

3.1 Strategic Allies but Fraught Relations

Undeniably, the fallout from the September 11th events stretched to affect the GCC states and there were extensive pressures from the American media to hold Saudi Arabia and the smaller GCC states responsible for what happened on 9/11. As such, the New York Times criticized Washington's warm relations with its partners in the Gulf region, especially with Saudi Arabia, and called for comprehensive evaluation of these relations. In its editorial titled 'Reconsidering Saudi Arabia', the New York Times states that US-Saudi relations are in an 'untenable and unreliable state' because of

'Saudi Arabia's tolerance for terrorism.' Yet, it directed severe accusations at Saudi Arabia and portrayed the kingdom as promoting terrorism abroad and thus the editorial calls the US policy makers to recognize that neglecting or denying the Saudi support for terrorism, due to US economic and security relations, is not a viable solution. As the article says, 'Pretending that Saudi Arabia is not a source of support for terrorism only invites further trouble.' Moreover, the article criticized the American laxity and called on US policy makers to exert more pressure on the Saudi government to initiate more political reform as a tool to eliminate the roots of extremism (The New York Times, 2001). In addition, Craig Unger published a controversial book detailing the close relationships between the Bush family and the Saudi Royal family which went back decades (Unger 2004).

Apparently, such views reflected the feelings of anger that consumed a wide segment of the American population and therefore September 11th represented one of the Bush Administration's greatest challenges with regard to Washington's relations with the Arab Gulf States. Undeniably, those events impacted the US-Saudi relations in particular and the bilateral relations were ostensibly fraught. As Gause observes, 'The attacks of September 11 complicated US-Saudi relations to an extent unprecedented since the 1973-74 oil embargo' (Gause, 2004a: 39). Practically, among the nineteen hijackers fifteen had Saudi origins. There were also accusations which pointed to Saudi Arabia financially supporting the Pakistani religious schools that have established connections with Al-Qaeda and the Taliban movement. These accusations have led many Americans to view the kingdom as enemy rather than a friend (Katzman, 2003: 18). Although Saudi Arabia was by no means involved in the attacks, the Americans criticized the indirect role of Saudi Arabia in developing and financing 'Salafi Jihadism' - the movement from which Osama bin Laden emerged, along with his organization (Al-Qaeda).[51] However, this sense of a split in US relations with Saudi Arabia was overblown. Looking back, the US had experienced tension after the Saudi oil embargo in 1973; differences with Saudi Arabia over the Arab-Israeli conflict; and over the war against Iraq in 2003. The relations were sustained, and as the 2000s went on, they were deemed vital to the preservation of both countries' interests. This recognition

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[51] Both Washington and Riyadh supported the 'Salafi Jihadism' movement in the 1980s, during the Afghanistan jihad against the Soviet Union, though the movement has turned from being a useful instrument to become a serious threat exemplified in targeting both Riyadh and Washington in its operations.

contributed substantially to restoring equilibrium to their mutual relations.

Most importantly, the view of Saudi Arabia as an American foe was not espoused within the Bush administration and therefore no major shift in these relations was observed. On the contrary, the relations saw a restored equilibrium for important reasons; first and foremost, both Washington and Riyadh had a common sense of terrorism and the threat of 'Salafi Jihadism' movement, especially after the Al-Qaeda attacks in Saudi Arabia in 2003 that prompted the regime to increase its efforts to fight the Salafi jihadist movement. Furthermore, the Saudi leadership embarked on an ideological and religious campaign to delegitimize the radical ideas of Bin Laden and his followers. Hence, Saudi Arabia's dedicated efforts to confront, domestically, 'Salafi Jihadism' created convergence between Washington and Riyadh which was expressed in their cooperation and coordination in sharing intelligence information and freezing the financial sources for jihadist militants.

Second, the US geo-political interests in the Gulf region resulted in Washington following a moderate policy with its Gulf allies. Further still, the regional strategic environment looked gloomy, especially after 2003, and Iraq did not encourage Washington to distance itself from Saudi Arabia and the other smaller GCC states. Following from this, there was the chaos in Iraq, the constant Iranian aspirations to dominate the Gulf region's politics and challenge the American interests in the region, the American concerns in keeping a stable global oil market, counterterrorism efforts, military cooperation and US arms sales to Saudi Arabia, as well as maintaining regional security in the Gulf, Saudi–U.S. cooperation in combating terrorism in Yemen and nonproliferation of weapons of mass destructions; all of these factors made the US unable to afford a further deterioration of its longstanding relations with the GCC partners. This was all especially true with Saudi Arabia, the main player in the Organization of Oil Producing Countries (OPEC), playing a major role in oil pricing and global market supply (see Gause, 2011: 27-8; Gause, 2009: 75-7; Gause, 2014).

Consequently, the US's pragmatic objectives in the Gulf region prevailed over the outcry of those who saw Saudi Arabia as the enemy. Washington and Riyadh continued to share vested interests and in fact were able to revitalize and sustain their bilateral relations, which had been built over decades on firm foundations.

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3.2 US War on Terrorism: GCC States' Cooperation

To generate greater understanding of the US-Gulf security dynamics, it is perhaps pertinent to comprehend the strategic role that GCC states and Saudi Arabia in particular, play in countering terrorism.[52] While acknowledging that the September 11 events were a watershed, the Bush administration has recognized that the Gulf region states are part of any solution or action against terrorism 'due to their historical, cultural and geographic position in the Islamic world.' (Korb, 2005: 14). Indeed, G. W. Bush stated that there was no neutral stance in the war on terrorism, 'You're either with us or against us in the fight against terror', has put more pressure on GCC countries to openly align with Washington in its counter-terrorism campaign. The Bush administration's steadfastness to launch the war on terrorism, which was widened to include the Iraq invasion, was evident in his address to a joint session of Congress in which he declared that:

> Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime. (Bush, 2001)

In the interim, GCC governments and Saudi Arabian leaders and clerics, in particular, denounced the 9/11 attacks as un-Islamic and engaged in positive and effective cooperation with Washington through constantly providing the US with the required military assistance for hunting down the terrorists. As such, GCC states supported the American military operations in Afghanistan; Bahrain took part in maritime operations in the Indian Ocean to assist in the US operations; the UAE and Oman opened their airbases to conduct military strikes against the Taliban movement; Saudi Arabia housed American Special Forces and the US used Saudi Arabia's Prince Sultan airbase, south of Riyadh, as central command for the air campaign against Afghanistan (Kahwaji,

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[52] Tim Niplock gives a detailed picture of the contemporary trends in Saudi politics, economy and international relations in his book titled: Saudi Arabia: Power, Legitimacy and Survival (The Contemporary Middle East, Routledge: 2006). In this book, he provides a better understanding of Saudi Arabia's vital role in gulf regional and international developments. Moreover, he elaborates on the critical role of Saudi Arabia with respect to the struggle with radical extremism and al-Qaeda, since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s through the events of September 11, 2001, and the US-led war on Iraq in 2003.

2004: 55; Cordesman, 2005: 6).

Furthermore, while US relations with Riyadh witnessed some differences and tensions over the war on terrorism and Iraq invasion, other smaller GCC states continued their military and security cooperation with Washington. As such, Kuwait hosted a huge number of US military personnel, and was the main point for attacking Iraq. Al-Udaid air base in Qatar served as the main point from which to launch air operations; meanwhile, Bahrain was the main place for naval military operations. Although the UAE and Oman were not involved in the American war efforts directly, they had provided the US military forces with the rights to use their airspace and access to logistical facilities (Gause, 2004a: 86-7).

Interestingly, the Arab Gulf States' cooperation with Washington developed dramatically and reached its highest level in the wake of Saudi Arabia's domestic attacks perpetrated by Al-Qaeda in May and November 2003 (see Cordesman, 2005: 7; McGrath, 2011: 47; Gause, 2004b: 95). Following the domestic attacks, the Saudi Arabian government embarked on effective counterterrorism measures. Not only did it employ a 'kill and capture' strategy against terrorists, it also began a campaign to combat the ideological and intellectual support of violence and extremism in what might be called 'soft' counter-terrorism measures. The Saudi strategy included rehabilitation programs crafted to persuade people to renounce radicalism and distance themselves from violence in an attempt to integrate them into the local community (Boucek, 2008a; see also Boucek, 2008b). Moreover, Saudi Arabia held an international conference for counterterrorism in Riyadh in February 2005, attended by US representatives, in which it urged all attendees to consolidate their efforts to combat terrorism. Besides, it has been providing regular reports to the United Nations Security Council Committees on its efforts to combat terrorism (Cordesman, 2005: 7).

Of particular importance, in addition to the military assistance that GCC states provided to Washington, it took a variety of measures in the domestic realm to counter terrorism. It embarked on decisive efforts to hunt down Al-Qaeda members through actions against Washington's list of financial organizations that were suspected to have links with Al-Qaeda. Moreover, Kuwait, Bahrain, UAE and Saudi Arabia all have closed the financial accounts that Al-Qaeda has used in its network operations and identified

suspected bank accounts that might be used to finance terrorist actions. Furthermore, it enacted new regulations to prevent money laundering and monitor illicit banking and finance transactions (Gause, 2004a: 48). Although Saudi Arabia denied any relationship between Islamic charities that were created to help poor people and the funding of terrorism, it established, in November 2002, an agency that monitors Saudi charities to make sure that any donation to these charities remains far from the reach of terrorists and other GCC states had taken, albeit with certain variations, the same procedures.[53]

Besides, Saudi Arabia and the UAE arrested terrorist cells and provided information used to arrest suspected Al-Qaeda activists (Katzman, 2003: 18). Likewise, Saudi Arabia adopted a Counter-Terrorist discourse by which it renounced terrorism, denied any connection between the Kingdom and Osama bin Laden,[54] and therefore the accusations directed at Saudi Arabia, describing it as supporting terrorist movements and doing little to fight terrorism, need reevaluation and substantial scrutiny. Indeed, Saudi Arabian cooperation with Washington in its campaign against terrorism has been illustrated by Gause, as he observes, 'In short, we have gotten what we need even if we have not gotten all that we want from the Saudis during the first phase of the war against terrorism.' (Gause, 2002: 47).

Saudi Arabia's vigorous counterterrorism efforts were profusely praised in the U.S. State Department's Annual Report on 'Patterns of Global Terrorism 2003' that was released in April 2004. Ambassador Cofer Black, Coordinator for Counterterrorism, praised Saudi Arabia's counterterrorism in the report's introduction:

> I would cite Saudi Arabia as an excellent example of a nation increasingly focusing its political will to fight terrorism. Saudi Arabia has launched an aggressive, comprehensive, and unprecedented campaign to hunt down terrorists, uncover their plots, and cut off their sources of funding. (United States Department of State, 2004: vii)

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[53] For more information on the Saudi Arabian legislative and administrative actions to fight terrorist financing, see A Report on Initiatives and Actions taken by Saudi Arabia to combat terrorist financing and Money Laundering, Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency, April 2004.

[54] Saudi Arabia banished Osama bin Laden from the kingdom in 1992 and he was divested of his Saudi citizenship in 1994.

Consequently, to repeat, it is erroneous to think that Saudi Arabia had turned to become the US enemy as a result of the September 11th events, but rather it can be said that 'No government in the Arab world is closer to Washington than that of Saudi Arabia.' (Gause, 2002: 37). Despite the negative image that 9/11 events reinforced of the Gulf region, US relations with the Arab Gulf states have continued their historical approach and the US has maintained a robust relationship with its Gulf allies. As Gause rightly notes:

> It would be a mistake to read the increasing distance in Saudi-American relations as a signal that the two countries have become enemies. Despite tensions in the relationship on a number of issues, and very negative public opinion views toward the other in both countries, both Washington and Riyadh have worked to maintain a cooperative relationship. (Gause, 2004a: 94)

Therefore, arguments that the US foreign policy after 9/11 constituted a major break with what had gone before must be analyzed in light of the strong continuities in US-GCC relations.

4. US Counterterrorism Strategy: The Inevitability of US Engagement

Viewed objectively, the effectiveness of the American counterterrorism strategy should depend on the nature of the threat to US homeland security and geopolitical interests, synchronous with evaluation of the concerned local government's capabilities and their efficiency in combatting the terrorists. So, whilst the 'Salafi-jihadist groups' were still involved in plotting harm to US national security and its vital interests in the Gulf region, the US engagement strategy deemed it essential to combat these groups, especially in the countries that had limited capabilities to undermine and counter such groups. Yemen for example, the stronghold of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula since 2008 to the present, has been the main theater for jihadist groups and Al-Qaeda operations. The central Yemeni government had minimal capacity to counter them as it was entangled in local insurgencies and political turmoil. These conditions applied also to Afghanistan and Pakistan, and therefore the advantages of the American engagement

strategy in these areas outweigh the potential risks. Further still, less US engagement could threaten its security and interests and therefore 'the risks of not being engaged could be serious' (Jones, 2014: 54-5). This means that the US strategy of fighting terrorism in Yemen, Pakistan, and Afghanistan entails a 'long-term engagement strategy', where jihadist groups continue plotting attacks against US interests (see Jones, 2014: 59).

Concurrently, the GCC states, particularly Saudi Arabia, had their own capacity to counter terrorists without the need for direct American involvement and thus the US role in these countries was confined to enhancing local government capacities through presenting military, intelligence, diplomatic and financial assistance in what might be called 'a forward partnering strategy' (Jones, 2014: 57). Viewed dispassionately, the US commitment to enhancing the GCC states' security and bolstering its defensive capabilities has been a paramount and ongoing objective in US-Gulf relations. As Cordesman observes, 'The United States has been a force for advancing Gulf cooperation since the GCC was established more than 30 years ago. This will not only continue, but accelerate in the years ahead' (Cordesman, 2014).

Simultaneously, U.S. interests and security remain inextricably connected to the GCC member's security. This has been recently manifested in the Quadrennial Defense Review report, which states that 'The United States also has enduring interests in the Middle East, and we will remain fully committed to the security of our [Arab Gulf] partners in the region.' To emphasize the American firm engagement in Gulf security affairs it states that the United States 'will continue to maintain a strong military posture in the Gulf region.' (Quadrennial Defense Review, 2014: VIII).

To recapitulate, the US counterterrorism strategy balanced its security engagement against probable popular resentment in the GCC states. In other words, the US decision-makers evaluated the security threats that could jeopardize American interests and formed policies to counter such threats. They did this because a perennial US military presence on the soil of GCC states has invariably been a motivating factor that mobilized the insurgents and jihadist groups to continue their plots against US national security and overseas interests. This was compounded by the deteriorating security situation in Iraq that provided Al-Qaeda with the impetus to reinvigorate its jihad

activities against the United States. As such, a comprehensive and manifold strategy maintained US commitments in the war on terrorism and placed less visible American forces in the GCC states to reduce potential terrorist attacks against those forces in the Gulf region, as this presence has been the rallying cry of Al-Qaeda leaders to mobilize its militant groups, networks and sympathizers against the US interests and the security of its Gulf partners alike.[55] Simultaneously, the US could continue to serve its interests and maintain its Gulf allies' security through covered intelligence operations, sharing of information, joint training programs, supporting the capabilities of local governments and even returning back to the old security posture that prevailed prior to the Gulf War in 1990; that is, the off-shore or over-the-horizon military presence.

Having argued this, the US will not retreat completely to an over-the-horizon capability because first, a minimized US presence would mean less oversight and control of the political developments in the Gulf region and nearby volatile areas which would minimize the US leverage in the region leading, probably, to exacerbating extremism and radical movements (see Dunne and Wehrey, 2014). Second, Al-Qaeda would exploit the drawdown of American troops to portray this as a grand victory for jihadist militants, which would embolden them to plot more operations against US interests in the Gulf region. Third, the US will remain as long as the Al-Qaeda organization and its affiliated networks are still involved in plots, not only against the United States' security and economic interests in the Gulf region, but also against the stability of the GCC member states.[56] This leads the thesis to the next section, discussing the nature of US foreign policy towards the Gulf States after 9/11.

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[55] See Bin laden messages timeline from October 7, 2001 -January 21, 2011. (Al Jazeera, May 2011) available at:
http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/05/20115272955828212.html

See also Al-Qaida video and audio tapes timeline from October 5 2001- June 30 2006 (The Guardian) available at:
http://www.theguardian.com/alqaida/page/0,12643,839823,00.html

[56] At the time of writing, a militant group had emerged and constitutes a potential threat to US interests in the Gulf region and the stability of the GCC states, alike. It is called 'The Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham' which is an incarnation of Al-Qaeda in Iraq. This group seeks to expand inside Iraq and has achieved noticeable progress as it came to dominate significant swaths of northern Iraq. This situation implies imminent danger that could jeopardize the internal security of regional Gulf States and therefore the US decided to launch an air campaign to destroy this organization. For more details on this group (see Eisenstadt, 2014; Ross, 2014; Levitt, 2014; Boghardt, 2014; Singh, 2014).

5. US Counterterrorism Strategy: Change or Continuity

There has been a prevailing conception among some scholars that G. W. Bush's foreign policy, driven by obsessions with the war on terrorism, represents a grand departure from US's conventional policy. They also point out that the catastrophic events marked a stark aberration in the US's traditional policy orientations.[57] Conversely, this thesis argued, however, that the Bush administration policy towards the Gulf region's security and the war on terrorism, although it has experienced temporal turning points, should be seen as a continuation to the US's traditional policy that sought to ensure American geostrategic interests and achieve the US's national security objectives. This is particularly important because the thesis has been arguing for continuity in a number of areas. Yet, it would seem that even if there was overall continuity in US-GCC relations, the one area where we might expect to find change would be in counter terrorism.

Therefore, as Walt wrote early in 2001, 'the foreign policy priorities of George W. Bush and his administration were not radically different from those of their predecessors.' (Walt, 2001: 56). Further, as Pillar argued 'combating international terrorism is - now, as at times in the past - a major objective of the United States.' (Pillar, 2001: 1). President Clinton, in his statement before the UN General Assembly in 1998, asserted that 'terrorism is at the top of the American agenda—and should be at the top of the world's agenda' (Clinton, 1998). Indeed, the Bush state of mind, according to his revelations and statements, indicates that he viewed the terrorist attacks on the US and the growing role of terrorists in the Gulf region as a big security challenge in which the US's key interests in the Gulf region were at stake and which entailed assertive policymaking. As Lemann noted, 'Any chief executive, of either party, would probably have done what Bush has done so far—made war on the Taliban and Al Qaeda and enhanced domestic security' (Lemann 2002). This continuity is even more evident after over ten years of the war on terror and with regard to the GCC states.

Indeed, there was a debate within the Bush administration, with respect to the relations with Saudi Arabia, between the realists, who recognized the US's shared strategic

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[57] For example, according to Kupchan and Trubowitz, the Bush administration's unilateralist attitudes 'represent a temporary departure from the United States traditional foreign policy.' (Kupchan and Trubowitz, 2007: 7).

interests with the Kingdom and the neoconservatives, who questioned such relations with a nondemocratic regime. This controversy was coupled with 'anti-Saudi sentiment' as a response to the 9/11 events. Nonetheless, there was no fundamental change in US-Saudi relations (see Leverett, 2005: 97). Rather, the Bush administration has continued to shore up these relations with the Kingdom, thus overriding the calls to re-think the US-Saudi relationship. Against this backdrop, it appears that cementing and sustaining US relations with Saudi Arabia has been one of the Bush administration's priorities because 'reinvigorating the U.S.-Saudi partnership is an indispensable part of a truly comprehensive Middle East policy' (Leverett, 2005: 101).

More importantly, this stature for Saudi Arabia could be attributed to the Kingdom's role in advancing the US policy objectives in the Gulf region for more than six decades and due to its role in any security arrangements with respect to Iraq, let alone the energy considerations and its contribution to the prosperity of the world's economy (see Anthony, 2008).

To summarize, after 9/11, terrorism rose to the fore of the Bush administration's foreign policy agenda. In particular, these events were manipulated by neocons in the Bush administration to create major change and expand the US sphere of influence in the Gulf region. Simultaneously, it contributed to creating a problem in US relations with the GCC states and therefore many analysts and scholars assumed that the US policy makers were conducting a fundamental reassessment of US-Gulf relations. Of additional importance were the fluctuating relations between Washington and the GCC countries, and particularly with Saudi Arabia. However, as this chapter has argued, there has not been a substantial change in US-GCC relations. Rather, the 9/11 period in fact restored the historical status of US-Saudi relations due in large part to the US's longstanding geo-political objectives in the region and the role of the Arab Gulf states in supporting the US counterterrorism strategy. More importantly, GCC states played an important role in supporting Washington in the war on terrorism through providing the US with military assistance to launch military operations against Al Qaeda in Afghanistan and against Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq. Besides, Saudi Arabia launched, domestically, a wide-ranging 'soft' counterterrorism strategy in the hope of demobilizing violent radicals and deterring the extremist sympathizers through combating the intellectual basis of militant radicalism.

Cooperation with the GCC states became particularly important after the pre-emption stage of the US counter terrorism strategy was seen as a failure. Noticeably, US military intervention in Iraq resulted in sectarian polarization among the Iraqi society components. Moreover, Iraq after the American invasion became the epicenter for religious discord and terrorist activities that spilled over the borders and crept to Saudi Arabia itself, as demonstrated by the May and November attacks in 2003. Yet, as the developments in Iraq illustrated, the American strategy for fight terrorism devoted too much attention to hunting down the terrorists militarily.

In a related vein, the Bush administration viewed democracy as a comprehensive and decisive solution to vanquishing terrorism and violent extremism. However, it can be argued that the American declared policy of staving off terrorism through spreading democracy was stymied by serious pitfalls and contradictions (see chapter five). Noticeably, it presupposed that democracy and deep political reform would deflect Al-Qaeda leaders from their course and it had a simplistic approach to democracy as the solution to all political issues and problems.

In the end, the chaos in Iraq; Iran's increased regional influence and aspirations for hegemony; the US interest in stable oil prices; the GCC and Saudi Arabia's critical role in the world oil market; US military sales to the GCC; the GCC's supportive role in counterterrorism, all these factors provided common incentives for mutual cooperation between the US and its Gulf partners. In this context, Washington found that it could not afford to aggravate the situation and worsen its relations, especially with Saudi Arabia, which has bountiful proven oil reserves.

Certainly, the GCC states themselves were concerned about the chaos in Iraq. Iraq became a magnet that attracted *mujahedeen* (combatants), either from among local Iraqis or others from regional states. Shia jihadist forces were strengthened in the region. The GCC states were not aloof to the chaotic security complexities in the post invasion Iraq era and therefore were significantly involved in the US war on terror and cooperated positively with Washington as it supported the US war efforts against Afghanistan and Iraq. The GCC states also embarked on a variety of counterterrorism measures in the domestic realm.

Conclusion

To recapitulate, the mutual understanding of the inextricable relationship between the US and the GCC member states, especially with Saudi Arabia, is self-evident and has helped both sides to overcome the fluctuations that engulfed their bilateral relations after September 11th and contributed substantially to reviving and enhancing those relations. Hence, although the September 11th terrorist attacks impacted massively on G. W. Bush's strategic thinking, he continued a traditional policy of protecting the US's homeland security and maintaining American interests in the Gulf region. This was evident even at the aggressive stage of the war on terror but was clearly evident after the war on terror became a source of instability from 2003 onwards. The GCC relationship with the US was strengthened and solidified as these states helped with counter-terrorism in both 'hard' and 'soft' areas.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

Thesis Argument and Originality

This study describes and analyses the origins and different aspects of US foreign policy towards the GCC states in the time period 2001-2008. It is original in two areas. First, it provides an in-depth case study of US foreign policy towards the GCC states, an area which has not received focus in the academic literature. Hopefully this thesis will serve as a historically-based case study of US foreign policy towards the GCC.

Second, its argument challenges the idea that in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington there was a watershed in US foreign policy. This is particularly the case when US relations with the GCC states are discussed. On the rarer occasions that policy towards the Gulf States was mentioned after 9/11 it was assumed that the new foreign policy would apply even to states like Saudi Arabia. Not only were the Bush administration's policies toward the Arab Gulf States not dramatically changed; they actually showed consistency, despite the periods where US relations with its Gulf partners passed through fluctuating periods.

The reason for this continuity is that in the GCC states the realist aspects of US foreign policy were very visible. The longstanding US interests in the Gulf region were fundamentally unaltered by the September 11th terrorist attacks. Gulf oil, among other factors, remained central to US economic development and security and therefore the US developed an abiding interest in Gulf stability and security; a major objective that was not introduced by G. W. Bush, but rather was inherited from his predecessor administrations.

Hence, one of most significant arguments of this thesis is that it observes the factors of continuity and change with respect to US-Gulf policy, backed by an analysis on two levels of interactions (National and Supranational levels), through two distinct time phases; prior to and post September 11th catastrophic events. This synthesis of

analysis allows evaluation of continuity and change in US foreign policy in a clear manner that illustrates the continuity with US grand objectives.

Framework of Analysis and Explanation

To better conceptualize the analysis, theoretical approaches were discussed in an attempt to provide a comprehensive interpretation of the behavior of the US decision makers. Realism, hegemony and cooperative security were discussed before the neorealist approach was reinforced (with qualifications) as a more accurate way of understanding Gulf security and the US role in producing it as well as the continuities in the US role in maintaining Gulf security. It has been shown that US approaches toward the Arabian Peninsula concentrate on the familiar pattern prevalent since the mid-twentieth century of focusing on security (Echagüe, 2010: 1). In this sense, it is unsurprisingly that Gulf security remained 'one of America's very highest international priorities' (Mead, 2007).

To map a comprehensive approach towards explaining US foreign policy, it was rational to introduce and examine a wider set of variables that could contribute critically, as a model, to help understand foreign policy and US-Gulf interactions. These included domestic interests, bureaucratic interests, ideology (particularly in the form of neoconservatism) and economic factors.

The G. W. Bush foreign policy team contributed tremendously to shaping the foreign policy agenda and determining the foreign policy outcome during the first and second terms of the administration. Therefore, this author has discussed the interplay, splits and disagreement between various strategic actors that have massive experience within the state bureaucracy, in an attempt to understand the officials' distinctive roles in advancing their agendas and influencing the policymaking process as well as its implementation.

Two opposing groups emerged within the Bush administration when it started outlining the foreign policy agenda from its inauguration in 2001 to the presidential election in 2004; the first group consisted of those who advocated a continuance of traditional foreign policy by concentrating on multilateralism, national interests and

limited use of military power. The second group consisted of individuals who favored a unilateral approach to foreign policy (the hawks) and had encouraged democracy promotion and advocated spreading American liberal and moral values as well as the unilateral use of military force. The neoconservatives become part of this unilateralist group. In other words, G. W. Bush faced internal struggles within his administration between two opposite camps; traditionalists and transformationalists. Most of the traditionalist, or realist, group was located at the State Department, with Colin Powell and Richard Armitage being the most influential actors. They followed a realist or traditionalist approach to foreign policy in the tradition of Henry Kissinger and the elder George Bush, as they advocated multilateralism, diplomacy and rapprochement with adversaries as appropriate means to protect and achieve US national interests. This faction of realists were described as moderates in their foreign policy attitudes and faced strong opposition from a coalition of "hawkish unilateralists" who believed tremendously in American superiority as a hegemon with uncontested power. Transformationalists were found in the Department of Defense, represented by Donald Rumsfeld, and the Office of the Vice President, represented by Dick Cheney. The agencies had acted differently in the policy making process, since in each agency individuals embraced difference ideological stances. So, the personnel who were identified as transformationalists had been following an ideological approach in the tradition of the ideologically driven President Ronald Reagan's policy, whereas the traditionalists had followed a pragmatic foreign policy in the tradition of President George H. W. Bush. Condoleezza Rice took a neutral position and did not align herself with either of the two groups. Nonetheless, as the foreign policy debate heightened inside the administration following the 9/11 events, and as the defense policy deliberations saw increased momentum, Rice saw moral factors important in shaping foreign policy. However, as a response to the 9/11 events, Rice and President Bush himself would side themselves with the transformationalists' campaign, which resulted in a militarized foreign policy during the first term of the Bush administration.

The quarrels between the foreign policy team that started in the first Bush administration continued in the second Bush presidential term. This was obvious with respect to the policy of promoting democracy, which was downgraded in the second Bush administration. Concurrently, the defining events of 9/11 and the war on terror

provided an appropriate climate that enabled some of the foreign policy actors and practitioners to exercise more influence on the policymaking process than others. As a consequence of the terrorist attacks on 9/11, President Bush became closer to the hawkish unilateralist approach represented by Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz than the multilateral internationalism represented by Colin Powell at the State Department. The Department of Defense worked closely and actively with the Office of the Vice President, taking advantage of the security situation engendered by the 9/11 attacks, and formed a strong alliance against the State Department. The internal competition between different actors inside the administration resulted in unbalanced influence between the officials of the State Department, who were sidelined after the 9/11 events, and the hawkish members of both the Department of Defense and the Vice President's Office led in turn to influence and limit the President's choices. Consequently a mixed group of unilateralists from both the Defense Department, represented by Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz, and the Office of Vice President represented by Cheney, had succeeded during the first term of the G. W. Bush administration and under the security pressures of the 9/11 events, to convince the President to set in motion the war on terrorism, beginning with the attacks of Afghanistan in 2001 and culminating in the Iraq invasion in 2003.

According to neoconservatives and liberalists, the worldview of American supremacy and leadership required spreading American political norms worldwide because the US, they claimed, has inimitable political assets that fit the entire world in what is called 'American exceptionalism'. For a period, the Bush worldview encapsulated an attempt to achieve equilibrium between US grand strategic interests and moral values that mirror the American national identity. The example of the invasion of Iraq in 2003 was held to be the highpoint of the influence of the neoconservatives in this. But in the end the continuity of US foreign policy was evident – the neoconservative influence was limited and US foreign policy continued to rest on long-term strategic parameters. As such, understanding US foreign policy is more effective through using a model that integrates domestic and systemic variables to explain decision-maker behavior and subsequent foreign policy outcomes. To this end, efforts have been made to address those variables with the purpose of understanding the core pillars that constituted and dictated US-Gulf policy. Thus, through integrating the domestic politics with the US global grand strategy it was possible to generate greater

understanding of the nature of the US relations with the GCC states that have long been, and to this day remain, viewed through the lens of oil and security.

Continuity in US Foreign Policy

To detail its case for continuity the thesis discussed the Bush administration's security approach prior to and after the September 11 terrorist attacks. This allowed for the observation of any changes in the US security policy trajectory. US security policy evolved steadily after British withdrawal from the Gulf region in 1971 - the year that Britain abrogated the protection treaties with the GCC states. US foreign policy then went through different phases: during the 1970s, the United States was concerned about being engaged directly in Gulf military affairs and instead it depended on regional proxy powers to control Gulf regional security. This regional concern of the US (preserving Arab Gulf States security) was a consonant theme, with the objectives of US grand strategy that prevailed over the Cold War era (1979-1991) driven by concerns of a blockade due to communist expansion of the Soviet Union. As a result, the US relied on Saudi Arabia (from as early as 1933 until the present), and on Iran (in the period 1953-1979) as reliable allies to preserve Gulf security and maintain the balance of power. But the Iranian revolution in 1979 ended the role of Iran as a US ally and therefore US policy tilted to support Iraq during its war with Iran from 1980-1988. Later, American dependence on Iraq then started to unravel because of Iraq's invasion and occupation of Kuwait in 1990. Consequently, the Gulf War of 1991 signaled the failure of the 'over the horizon' policy and it was far more central in laying the foundations for a visible American military presence in the GCC states' lands, which resulted in deep and direct intervention in the region. The American presence in the Gulf prior to 1990 was basically stationed on the outskirts of the GCC countries, but with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and pursuant to signed Defense Cooperation Agreements, the US foreign policy dynamics had entered a new phase and morphed into an intensive military presence in GCC territories. This development ushered in a new phase of American grand strategy (the liberal internationalist strategy) that prevailed during the post-cold war era (1991-2001). This strategic change was ensured by a containment strategy towards Iraq through sanctions imposed after the UN Security Council resolutions. Then, under Clinton the

containment strategy was developed to include Iran in what was called 'Dual Containment' to deter any potential aggression against US interests and the stability of the GCC states.

In contrast, US security policy in the wake of the trauma of September 11th was characterized by deep emphasis on preventive war, political reform and counter terrorism. That policy was occasioned by the Gulf regional security episodes as well as the US policy maker's perceptions as articulated in various National Security Strategies and Defense Department reports. Thus, a new phase of American grand strategy emerged in the period 2001-2008, announcing the war on terrorism as an overarching objective in US foreign policy. In this sense, Iraq was accused of developing WMD and establishing links with Al-Qaeda, which was the basis for the US invasion in 2003. Specifically, the American policy transformation from containing Iraq through sanctions and international pressure to military invasion signaled a significant change in the tactics used to achieve the US grand strategy. However, even with Iraq and the rise of the neoconservatives, as argued in this thesis, US policy has in fact been consistent since the 1970s, given the Gulf's strategic and economic attributes and due to the fact that the Gulf region is a security 'hot spot' of great political and strategic significance over the long haul. After the British left the region, the United States conceived that there were ample reasons to consider the region as the central theater in its security strategies and military planning. Hence, the US has been consistently playing an inextricable role in underwriting the Gulf's regional security and the US has shown a deeply ingrained engagement in the GCC's security affairs in terms of magnifying the GCC states' military strength through arms sales, downplaying their weaknesses and preventing regional instability. No less significant, although the US relations with Saudi Arabia were somewhat problematic in the wake of September 11th, it should be noted that the US interests remained symmetrical with those of Saudi Arabia and other smaller GCC states and the continued cooperation and coordination between the US and the GCC states has been a key pillar in US security strategy in the Gulf region.

To further contextualize US orientations toward the GCC states, it is of fundamental importance to recognize the US's interchangeable interests with the GCC states that rested for more than six decades on a mutual dependency on oil, arms and security.

This posture emphasizes broadly the realist approach that seems apposite to clarifying US-Gulf relations (but with the qualifications entered above). In essence, despite the ambitious American project of promoting democracy in the Middle East, in which the Gulf region is a component, it has been demonstrated throughout this thesis that the US's pragmatic and realist propensity was revealed and that the US could not afford to sacrifice its longstanding interests in the Gulf and endanger Gulf stability to promote its liberalism norms across the region. It has been demonstrated that the US's primary security concerns in the Gulf region were based on preserving GCC states' security and deterring Iraq and Iran because the American vision of the region remained based on the firm belief that US and global prosperity depends on unfettered oil supplies and trade over the Strait of Hormuz, the main maritime route to transfer Gulf oil to international markets. According to Tim Niblock, keeping oil shipping lanes open to transport oil from the Gulf to the world market constitutes an essential part of what is usually called 'Gulf security', whereby the US is more concerned about securing the free flow of oil from the Gulf than the security of the GCC states *per se* (Niblock, 2014a). Hence, Gulf security, according to Cook and Kugler, will continue as a major US concern and strategic component of its foreign policy for the foreseeable future. This magnifies the necessity of maintaining a robust US military force in the Gulf region that accounts for 'a geopolitical hot zone with an unstable military balance' (Cook, 2012: 19; Kugler, 2003: 96) and therefore the US decision makers have been 'working with the Gulf nations to increase cooperation to address security issues of mutual concern' (Steinberg, 2009).

Moreover, it has been obvious that the American position as a global preeminent power has yielded Washington the capabilities to mold the security situation in the Gulf States in a way that is consonant with its long-standing interests in the region. As has been highlighted earlier, the United States' security concerns in the Gulf region intersect with those of the Arabian peninsula states and therefore the GCC monarchies had granted the US the ability to erect military bases from which it conducted military actions and projected its combat power so as to roll back its adversaries from challenging the security of the key oil producing Arab Gulf states and dominating the region.

As can be gleaned from this thesis, the United States' relations with the Arab monarchies of the Gulf, and its security policy towards the entire Gulf region, have been consonant with the US's identified long-term strategic objectives in the region, and therefore relations have been strengthened and reinforced constantly during the last half century. As a result, the US could not afford to forsake using military power to maintain its critical interests in the Gulf and preserve the security of the region. This has been compounded by the GCC security concerns that have been predominantly correlated with American security concerns. Consequently, the US has inexorably pursued a variety of policies and approaches over the course of six decades that have been uneven and varied in their contributions and outcomes with respect to creating sustainable and durable Gulf regional security architecture. Noticeably, Iraq and Iran have been perpetual regional powerful adversaries that held hegemonic ambitions and had threatened, conventionally, the GCC states' security, and therefore the US's military posture in the Gulf region. But recently, with the weakening of Iraq, there has been a tilting of the balance of power in the GCC states' favor, a long-term aim of the US and the GCC states. This process can be fruitfully explained by realism and by hegemonic strategy and it can be concluded that US-Gulf security policy has been one of continuity and has been consistent despite some changes in US mechanisms and tactics.

Continuity in Relations and GCC Political Governance

Another dimension that was analyzed thoroughly in this study is the US concerns over political transformation in the Gulf's domestic governance. This thesis has shown that there appeared to be an assumption in the Bush administration that there is a harmony between American ideals and interests and that spreading democracy abroad would conform to this proposed synthesis. This was seen as either a radical change in US foreign policy or a continuation of a long term interest in democracy promotion which could finally be taken to the Middle East.[58] Either way, it was assumed that US foreign policy was different; something more than the collection of US interests. The US invaded Iraq to topple Saddam's regime and began to push even the GCC states to

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[58] Arguably, even G. W. Bush's promotion of democracy in the Gulf subsystem could be described as a vigorous continuation of previous administrations' policies that sought to maintain the status quo and ensure the Gulf's regional stability.

reform. However, realism soon reasserted itself. The deep continuities in US foreign policy meant that Bush's freedom agenda exposed a contradiction between promoting democracy and preserving US interests in the Gulf region. Thus, the US's constant economic and military support for Washington's nondemocratic allies and the Iraq security dilemma constituted, as Sean observes, an actual demonstration of the 'weaknesses in the content and method of democracy promotion tactics. Clearly, the Bush White House's words outstripped deeds.' (Yom, 2008: 135-37). Furthermore, it was clear that in order to avert the hastening collapse of the Arab Gulf regimes, 'the Bush administration seems to have come to the conclusion that easing the pressure on these regimes and relying instead on political elites to bring about gradual democratic openings is the best strategy out of the impasse.' (Hamzawy, 2006). The US trade, economic, military and security interests, the realist concerns that prevailed during the Cold War era, still competed with US democracy promotion, and in this competition the US's long-standing interests were steadfastly predominant.

Notably, or ironically, the Iraq invasion magnified the opposition among GCC countries to initiating further political openings, given Iraq as an evident example of the perils of conducting wide and deep political change that could result in unfavorable outcomes for both the regional government's security and the US's interests alike. Hence, the Bush administration's premise that Iraq would trigger a 'domino effect' throughout the entire Middle East region saw agreement in GCC states but not in the way that Bush envisaged it.

In addition to the security issues raised by the Iraq war and the US realist interests in the Gulf region that had diverted the US policy from idealism to realism with respect to democratizing the friendly Arab Gulf States, there have been other determinant factors at the GCC domestic level to be considered. Certainly, as a result to the September 11th events and increased local demands for political change, the GCC countries had embarked on a path of gradual political reform, including holding (limited) elections, giving the opposition more concessions, empowering women, and other aspects of minor political reform that were regarded by some observers as promising measures for the near future. However the strong existing governance systems of the GCC states combined with the pressures on Bush, especially after 2003, led to limited change.

Of particular significance is that the GCC countries have long-established traditional aspects of governance built upon loyalty to the ruling elites that cannot afford to share power with civil society agencies in any fundamental way. The nature of the internal political systems that were built over decades in these states, based upon rule by extended families; the ruling elite hold control over executive power, with an absence of political parties, weakness of the civil society, severe regulations on associations and demonstrations, and limited political participation; all of which factors, together, are important in GCC governance. Furthermore, although GCC states differ in visions of political reform (and perhaps some would consider Kuwait as a promising model for more political change in the region), there has been an agreement between many scholars that the general line of the GCC ruling system is inconsistent with the essence of democratization, and despite some political reform measures that were undertaken in the GCC countries, realistically the Gulf regimes still depend on centralization of power and therefore the political reform process is still a 'state-managed' and 'top-down' process, subjected in its extent to the will of the ruling elite. The ruling regimes basically do not recognize democracy as a necessity, depending on the premise that the oil revenues could forestall political reform demands.

Taken together, the US's geopolitical interests and the Gulf's political particularities have constituted a major setback that re-directed the US policy attitudes to retreat from idealism and embrace realism. Democracy promotion has generated limited effects in the GCC political systems.

Continuity in Counter Terrorism

US counterterrorism strategies that rose to the fore of the US foreign policy agenda were shown to have been compatible with idiosyncrasies of G. W. Bush and some individuals of his team. Apparently, the Bush religious background reflects on the new grand strategy of the war on terrorism, as he vindicated this war as a struggle between 'good and evil'; thereby, he has conceived of the war on terrorism as his 'sacred mission' (see Jervis, 2003). As such, terrorism rhetoric permeated through American policymaking circles and has been articulated clearly in the National Security Strategy of 2002. Subsequently, the US grand strategy was revisited, so that the war on

terrorism emerged as a paramount objective in US foreign policy. This change signified policy transformation towards the Gulf region, exemplified in relinquishing the balance of power that pervaded in the post-cold war era in favor of promoting democracy, which was perceived as a viable tool to achieve the threefold objective; preserve American traditional benefits, maintain Gulf security and eliminate the sources of terrorism recruitment.

Washington's relations, particularly with Saudi Arabia, underwent fluctuation and turning points following the events of 9/11. Another prominent contribution of this study is that it offers a detailed interpretation of the American counterterrorism strategy in terms of its role in either furthering or worsening the prospects for maintaining US geopolitical interests and ensuring Gulf regional stability. In particular, the 9/11 terrorist attacks were manipulated by neocons in the Bush administration to underscore strategic tenets exemplified in maintaining US primacy; domination and preponderance (see Jervis, 2003). Simultaneously, it created an awkward crisis in US relations with the GCC states and some claimed that at one time, US policy makers were conducting a fundamental reassessment of US-Gulf relations. As can be gleaned from the above, after the events of September 11th, it seemed that G. W. Bush's strategic thinking had changed and would cause frosty relations with America's GCC partners, as they were accused of supporting, albeit indirectly, terrorist groups through financial transactions, individual sympathizers, and inadequate governmental political measures to address the roots and causes of terrorism.

However, counter terrorism did not lead to substantial changes in US-GCC relations. Rather, the relations were, if anything, restored, due in large part to US's critical geo-political interests in the region and the role of the Arab Gulf states in supporting the US's counterterrorism strategy and security measures. GCC states played a firmly disproportionate role in supporting Washington in the war on terrorism. This cooperation was two-pronged; providing the US with all logistical support to launch military strikes against Afghanistan and Iraq and simultaneously the GCC states embarked on a variety of counterterrorism measures in the domestic realm. Specifically, Saudi Arabia has launched, domestically, wide-ranging 'soft' counterterrorism arrangements in the hope of stemming the influence of Al-Qaeda and

militants groups by demobilizing violent radicals, deterring the extremist sympathizers, and combating the intellectual basis of militant radicalism.

However, the Bush administration ambitious project of promoting democracy, which was perceived as a comprehensive and decisive solution to vanquish terrorism and violent extremism, has been stymied by serious pitfalls and contradictions (see chapter five). Noticeably, Al-Qaeda is an irreconcilable enemy and presupposing that democracy and deep political reform would deflect Al-Qaeda's leaders from their course entails further scrutiny and investigation.

Further, in terms of relations with individual states, this thesis demonstrates continuity (a particular strength of this thesis). Contrary to views which exaggerated the effects of those events on the sustainability of US-Saudi relations, this study contests that it is erroneous to contemplate a serious disruption of the US's longstanding relations with Saudi Arabia, which are defined by a complex set of strategic determinants and parameters. In essence, the mutual relations should be construed through the lens of ingrained interests which have created interdependence that strongly binds the two sides and maintains their traditional relevance. Saudi Arabia purchases billions of dollars of American-manufactured defense structures, security hardware, equipment, and training programs that sustain U.S. industrial production and simultaneously provide jobs for millions of Americans. Not only has the US-Saudi relationship brought enormous privileges for the two partners, but more broadly, it has proved to be of great benefit to the western industrial world (see Anthony, 2014a; Anthony, 2013).

Indeed, the Bush administration needed the GCC states even more after its military approach to counter terrorism resulted in massive problems. As it turned out, the military approach was fraught with perils and uncertain implications. US intervention in Iraq resulted in sectarian polarization among the components of Iraqi society, and caused Iraq to become an epicenter for religious discord and terrorist activities that wreaked havoc in Iraq and spilled over the borders to reach Saudi Arabia itself, as demonstrated by May and November attacks in 2003. In Iraq there was an opportunity for the terrorists to use Iraq as a favorable place to reinvigorate their terrorist activities in the region. As a result, Iraq became a magnet that attracted *mujahedeen*

(combatants), either from among local Iraqis or others from regional states which looked like they might jeopardize the US interests in the Gulf region.

Thus, whilst the Bush war on terror weakened Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, the US military invasion of Iraq yielded pitfalls to its counterterrorism efforts. GCC stability and cooperation became an important US aim. It is of fundamental importance to realize that the GCC cooperation with Washington in its campaign against terrorism refutes vividly the allegations that circulated widely in the aftermath of September 11's horrific events. At that time, many scholars and policy analysts saw US-Gulf relations, especially with Saudi Arabia, transformed into a tumultuous and antagonistic condition. For example, if we look at Saudi Arabia, as John Anthony correctly elucidates, US-Saudi relations 'remained not only exceptionally healthy and the envy of every other country but went from strength to strength.' (Anthony, 2013).

As noted before, Iraq's chaotic political and security turmoil, Iran's aspirations for regional hegemony,[59] stable oil prices, the GCC and in particular Saudi Arabia's critical role in the world oil market, US military sales to the Gulf allies, and the GCC's supportive role in counterterrorism, have all provided common incentives for mutual acknowledgement of the important cooperation between the US and its Gulf partners. In other words, whilst the US provided its Gulf partners with a security shield, the GCC ruling regimes provided the US with all necessary cooperation that facilitated the American strategies in the region, including the war on terror.

Overall, it can be deduced that at the national level, US national objectives remained coherent and consistent throughout the period that the study covers, with due regard to the change that has occurred in the aftermath of September 11th's events at the grand strategy level. What is noticeable about this coherence and consistency is that it combined with a remarkable degree of policy continuity as opposed to change. As

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[59] The pan-GCC countries show mistrust and suspicion of Iran, which increased recently due to Iranian intrusion into the domestic affairs of some GCC states such as Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. The GCC states have a long-standing adherence to the notion that Iran has inclinations to expand its influence through frequent and relentless attempts to encircle the GCC states with pro-Iranian Shi'a. The GCC regimes' doubts and fears are not baseless, as Iran has intervened, sometimes overly through its intelligence, in the domestic affairs of some of the Arab Gulf countries. So, it recently mobilized the Shia uprisings in Bahrain in 2011, protest movements in the eastern area of Saudi Arabia, and provoked Huthi unrest in Yemen, as well as its ongoing influential role over the pro-Iranian Iraqi government, amongst others (see chapter four).

Anthony states: 'there was not then nor is there likely to be in the foreseeable future any significant diminution of the overall strategic importance America has assigned and will continue to assign to the GCC countries and the Gulf as a whole.' (Anthony, 2014b). He explains further, "The United States was arguably without a planetary peer in terms of the number and diversity of benefits it continued to derive from its overall relations with the Gulf countries". Indeed, the US and its allies access to the Gulf's massive and manageably priced energy resources, the GCC continued commitment to price their oil exports in American dollars, the GCC commitment to recycling their petrodollar revenues and investing in US economy, the GCC countries' continuing reliance on the expensive American weaponry and defense systems, all these factors contributed crucially to the growth of the American economy. Hence he further elucidates: "These facets of the Gulf-US relationship remained a source of immense envy to the rest of the world's leaders, economists, and financial planners". (Anthony, 2008: 122).

On a related note, it is worth noting that whilst some recent studies fixated on Washington's inclinations to rebalance its priorities and shift its interest from the Gulf region towards the Asia-Pacific region, especially China, in what is called the 'American strategic pivot towards Asia' or 'pivoting Asia', to explore new horizons of economic growth and prosperity, it appears that the US continued to view Gulf security as a strategic priority (Niblock, 2014a; Bazoobandi and Quilliam, 2014). Depicting the US as abandoning the Gulf region oversimplifies the US's core interests in Arabia, which underpin US relations with the GCC ruling regimes, in particular Saudi Arabia, under consecutive administrations have long run deep.

Drawing upon the above conclusions, it is evident that the US military presence in the Gulf has contributed to stabilizing the current ruling elites and has served as a deterrent to any attempt to disrupt the flow of oil from the Gulf to the international markets. Leaving aside energy considerations, overall America has long been, and to this day remains, the balancing power in the Gulf and the strategic implications of American withdrawal from the region would be obvious and far-reaching. More particularly, it would create a serious security vacuum that would be unlikely to be

filled by Asian powers such as China,[60] and this situation might embolden regional powers, in particular Iran, to expand its regional influence and hegemony. Therefore, even current US orientations toward China and India do not imply US withdrawal from the Gulf and the patterns highlighted in this thesis show that Gulf security will continue to depend upon the US for the foreseeable future.

Future Areas of Research

Given the broader topic of US foreign policy towards the Arab Gulf States, there are a variety of relevant topics that require further research. First is foreign policy under Obama, to further examine change and continuity. Second is US foreign policy towards Iran in terms of its influential role in Gulf regional politics and its effects on the Gulf regional security structures, especially after the Iraq war in 2003. Third, in a related vein, a further area of potential research is the US negotiations with Iran relating to its nuclear program, which deliberately excluded the GCC states, and the prospective of Washington's rapprochement with Iran, which could culminate in a 'grand bargain' or an accommodation with Iran over its nuclear program, with due regard to the impact of this probable development on the regional status quo and US relations with the GCC states as well as the effect of such a possibility on future Gulf security structures.

A fourth area of research interest could be a comparative analysis of the US-Saudi relations prior to and post September 11th, since Saudi Arabia is a leading power in the Gulf sub-regional system, a distinct oil supplier and 'a swing-producer' and thus crucial to the Gulf geostrategic and economic environment. Fifth, another area that would provide deep understanding of US-Gulf politics would be to look at the US's grand strategy of the war on terror, with particular emphasis on the current radical ideological movements and organizations, either affiliated with Al-Qaeda or those

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[60] China has prominent commercial relations with the GCC states and it seems that China is uninterested in developing or elevating its economic relations into 'strategic-security based' relations (an American-style relationship), which means that US security engagement in the Gulf region is deemed essential and the American military presence in the Gulf region will continue for the foreseeable future. For more information on the growing economic interactions between the Arab Gulf states and Asia, see Tim Niblock, Gulf-Asia Economic Relations, Pan-Gulf and Pan-Asia Perspectives, in Tim Niblock, Monica Malik eds., Asia-Gulf Economic Relations in the 21st Century: The Local to Global Transformation (Berlin & London: Gerlach Press, April 2013).

operating independently from Al-Qaeda's leadership. At the time of writing, 'The Islamic state in Iraq and Al Sham' (ISIS) organization became the main militant group operating in Iraq, where it has seized new areas in northern Iraq and recently come to dominate the political landscape in the war-torn country, which in turn could become more menacing to Gulf regional stability. This potential and simmering threat is likely to encroach on US interests in the GCC states, with the possibility of destabilizing the security of Washington's strategic friends. Finally it is worth researching the US's recent inclinations toward Asia, especially China, and the extent to which this rebalance of priorities reflects on US strategic and security relations with the GCC countries.

This thesis has contributed towards current academic scholarship and has sought to benefit the scholars and researchers undertaking further studies in US foreign policy. Simultaneously it constitutes a useful background for US policy practitioners, policy analysts and researchers to utilize in their evaluation of the US attitudes and policies towards the Gulf region. Through detailed analyses and descriptions of US foreign policy from 2001-2008, it has provided clear treatment of the US-Gulf dynamics and allowed for a broader appreciation of the US longstanding interests in the Gulf region.

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