

# Bush's Foreign Policy Revolution: A Radical Change?

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## Introduction

It was no secret in Washington that President Bush was inexperienced regarding U.S. foreign policy and America's relationship with other nations before he decided to run for President. He came to power with no foreign policy experience. During the presidential campaign in early 1999 he sat down for an interview with Andy Hiller, a reporter from the Boston local station WHDH-TV who asked him: "Can you name the president of Chechnya?" Bush replied: "No, can you?"<sup>1</sup> Bush's lack of foreign policy experience was not surprising; his tenure as Governor of Texas was dedicated primarily to domestic issues and he was also known for not travelling much outside of the United States prior to becoming President.

However, in the months after the interview in Boston, Bush reassured voters that he "knows what he does not know about foreign policy", and that he would surround himself with advisors who had great experience in foreign policy. Among those senior advisors were Colin Powell, Condoleezza Rice, Paul Wolfowitz, and Donald Rumsfeld, most of whom served in the administration of Bush's father, George H.W. Bush, between 1989 and 1993. The number of policy advisors reflects the President's perception of his role in politics as the chief executive officer of an administration. Bush's role identity evolved from his previous management experience as the Chief Executive Officer of Spectrum 7, an oil and gas exploration company in Texas and other oil companies. Part of this identity was to surround himself with political advisors that could counsel him on policy options and strategies so that he would make informed final decisions.

It is true that knowledge about foreign policy never pushed candidates into the White House. Domestic issues such as tax cuts, health care, minimum wage and the economy largely dominate American Presidential campaigns. Almost none of the previous 43 Presidents have campaigned for office using foreign policy issues. Even Bill Clinton who today is seen in the media as a successful President knew almost nothing about foreign policy issues. He campaigned through American cities with the slogan "It's the economy, stupid!" trying to tell American voters that the economy is the driving force for American power. His famous line from 1992 led the world to expect that he would be a President that would not be pre-occupied with foreign

policy issues. American Presidents learn about foreign policy issues “on the job”. After being sworn into office most presidents realize that foreign policy issues largely dominate their daily Presidential work rather than domestic issues.

This paper will look at the foreign policy of the George W. Bush administration. Further, it will offer a comparative analysis to President Clinton’s Presidency analyzing the similarities as well as differences. In doing so, the paper will make use of the foreign policy traditions developed by Walter Russell Mead in his book *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World*<sup>2</sup> as a framework of analysis. According to Mead, American foreign policy, since the declaration of independence, can be characterized by four traditions. The first Mead describes is Hamiltonianism followed by Wilsonianism, Jeffersonianism, and Jacksonianism. The two foreign policy traditions that are relevant for the analysis of this paper are Wilsonianism and Jacksonianism, both of which will be explained in greater detail.

This paper will argue that America’s foreign policy under George W. Bush is a continuation of President Clinton’s foreign policy and is rooted deeply in both the foreign policy traditions of Andrew Jackson and Woodrow Wilson. It will further argue that the use of unilateral force is not a new phenomenon that occurred during the Bush Presidency, but is rather a continuation of Clinton’s foreign policies.

The analysis begins by explaining the ‘new fundamentalism’ in U.S. foreign policy after September 11<sup>th</sup>. It then outlines the theories of Jacksonianism and Wilsonianism before tracing the George W. Bush administration’s foreign policy as it relates to these traditions. Finally, Bush’s foreign policy is compared to President Clinton’s foreign policy.

The new fundamentalism  
September 11<sup>th</sup> clearly changed the nature of President Bush’s agenda and America’s overall grand strategy. Suddenly, foreign policy was on the top of the agenda list. Osama bin Laden and his terror network Al Qaeda dominated the news for the months to come. In the immediate aftermath of the attack voices were raised calling for immediate retaliation. It was the American public that demanded the leadership of its commander in chief. However, 9/11 caught Bush and his advisors by surprise and the plan to go to war with Afghanistan was knitted together rather quickly. In the following months, the administration struggled to find an adequate response to the attacks. Donald Rumsfeld reported in a meeting at the White House that there were not enough targets in Afghanistan to carry out a long air campaign<sup>3</sup>. The Secretary of State, Colin Powell,

demanded that Afghanistan's neighbouring countries, Pakistan and Iran, should be involved in the planning process as well. However, on October 7, 2001 the President decided to disregard such concerns and ordered the bombing of major targets in Afghanistan. Because of the time constraints and the minimal operational planning, the campaign in Afghanistan started with a lack of clarity about the objective of the military mission<sup>4</sup>. Did President Bush want to overthrow the Taliban regime, or did he intend to hunt down Osama bin Laden? Or maybe both? Should the administration seek approval of the United Nations Security Council or should it move ahead unilaterally? The US military had no contingency plan in place for going after Al Qaeda and the Taliban, so plans for Special Forces operations and the participation of coalition partners had to be hastily drawn up by the Pentagon. Regardless of the absent military planning, the global war on terrorism became the defining moment of George W. Bush's Presidency in the months to come. The problem he was faced with was trying to find an answer how to best fight global terrorism to make the American homeland safer? As a first step, military doctrines and strategies were revised to prepare the American military for the global war on terror. The administration released a new National Security Strategy (NSS) on September 20, 2002 that outlined strategies and tactics on how to best meet the threats facing the United States in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In accordance with Goldwater- Nichols Department of Defence Reorganization Act of 1986, every President of the United States has to send a detailed report to Congress outlining the administration's grand strategy. This was a good opportunity for the President to revise current U.S. strategy. The document highlights the concept of pre-emptive attacks. The key argument is that the President reserves the right of anticipatory military actions against any state that poses a national security threat to the United States. In essence it is argued that the Cold War concept of deterrence is not suitable any more in the age of fighting terrorism. The President himself conveyed his visions for a new U.S. defence strategy in the State of the Union address on January 29, 2002, saying that "we must prevent the terrorists and regimes who seek chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons from threatening the United States and the world".<sup>5</sup> In the following months, Iran, Iraq, and North Korea were added to the "axes of evil" list of countries that pose a danger to America. President Bush explained this strategic vision in a speech at West Point on June 1, 2002:

For much of the last century, America's defence relied on the Cold War doctrines of deterrence and containment. In some cases, those strategies still apply. But new threats also require new thinking. Deterrence -- the promise of massive retaliation against nations -- means nothing against shadowy terrorist networks

with no nation or citizens to defend. Containment is not possible when unbalanced dictators with weapons of mass destruction can deliver those weapons on missiles or secretly provide them to terrorist allies. We cannot defend America and our friends by hoping for the best. We cannot put our faith in the word of tyrants, who solemnly sign non-proliferation treaties, and then systemically break them. If we wait for threats to fully materialize, we will have waited too long.”<sup>6</sup>

However, the administration was split on how to meet the new terrorist threats – either unilaterally using U.S. military power or multilaterally in concert with other states. The State department debated with officials from the White House and the Pentagon on the best strategy to eliminate terrorist threats while Colin Powell favoured the use of diplomacy above the use of force favoured by Rumsfeld and Cheney. Bush’s foreign policy is novel in accepting that “today Washington faces new threats of such dire nature that it must escape the constraints of the multilateral structures it helped build after World War II.”<sup>7</sup> In a post 9/11 world the traditional ‘state-to-state’ relationship changed to ‘state to non-state’ relationship. The use of American military force was at the centre of this new doctrine. In the months ahead, Bush’s foreign policy could be characterized by predominance of the military, the end of multilateralism, internationalism, and unilateralism.

#### US unilateralism

In 1999, Condoleezza Rice published an article in *Foreign Affairs* outlining Bush’s potential foreign policy.<sup>8</sup> At that time she was special advisor to the then Presidential Candidate George Bush arguing that if he was elected President, his foreign policy would be “more realist”, and thus more focused on America’s national interests. The new Bush administration, Rice argued, would pursue key priorities of ensuring that the American military was capable of deterring war, projecting power as well as renewing America’s alliances.<sup>9</sup> She accused the previous Clinton administration of deploying American troops and risking the lives of U.S. soldiers in countries such as Somalia or Rwanda where the United States had no national interest. The new Bush administration would correct Clinton’s approach and refocus on military missions where America’s national interests were involved. During the 2000 Presidential campaign, George W. Bush revealed that he would pursue a “distinctly American internationalism”.<sup>10</sup> This ‘distinct foreign policy’, one can argue, is deeply rooted in classical Realism, which assumes that states are the principal actors in foreign policy. Therefore, the United States would focus on state-to-state relations rather than on internal policies of other states. Secondly, classical realists assume that

the power of the state is essential in the conduct of foreign policy where the resources of power determine the interests of a state.<sup>11</sup> Inherent in this assumption is the logic that once states gain power it is their desire to expand territorially.<sup>12</sup> Thirdly, classical realists focus on great power politics arguing that no great power should ever be able to dominate international relations. Therefore, the administration should oppose U.S. involvements in internal affairs of sovereign countries, humanitarian interventions, as well as stay away from engagements in international institutions.<sup>13</sup> It turns out that the administration kept its promises after inauguration day. Washington rejected the Kyoto Protocol to control global warming, disagreed with the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty that limits the spread of nuclear weapons, and withdrew from the 1972 Anti Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM). In short, the United States was deemed to reduce the amount of entangling alliances that could have an impact on American sovereignty.

However, September 11<sup>th</sup> changed U.S. classical realist policies. The terrorist attacks clearly transformed the posture of U.S. foreign policy towards a ‘defensive realism’ mixed with a form of idealism. Defensive realism basically shares the assumption with classical realists. However, the major difference between the two is that defensive realism highlights the importance of states’ insecurity, which is the driving motivation for them to act militarily.<sup>14</sup> Bush’s foreign policy was modified from a narrow definition of American national interests to a broader one.<sup>15</sup> Lastly, idealist views and approaches made their way into U.S. foreign policy promoting the idea of regime change and the promotion of democracy in Afghanistan and Iraq.<sup>16</sup> It was President Clinton’s mishap, Bush argued himself<sup>17</sup>, to deploy American forces to countries abroad that were not primarily in America’s national interest. And referred to U.S. military deployments to Bosnia, Haiti, and Somalia. The previous “distinct American internationalism”, as Bush called it himself, was modified to a “comprehensive American globalism”. Distinct about America’s globalism was the stated notion that the U.S. reserves the right to act unilaterally despite strong opposition from alliance partners. In short, what was new about Bush’s foreign policy was the explicitness of this pre-emption approach and the tendency towards preventive strikes. The European media and governments were especially unhappy with U.S. views that alliances and other international agreements are seen only as necessary if they would match America’s national interest. Germany, France, and a few other European countries accused the Bush administration of creating an American empire that was detached from moral values, partnership, and historical alliances and thus they called the U.S. isolationist. The Europeans disliked the notion

in the new NSS that threats to national security must be dealt with pre-emptive strikes against any aggressor that tries to change the balance of power or kill innocent American people around the globe.

#### Origins of U.S. unilateralism

World War II left most European countries and their economies destroyed or severely weakened. This, quite naturally, had an influence on their domestic power: without economic statecraft, there would be no military capabilities and therefore no power to project. In addition, Europe's population was simply exhausted from fighting. The United States came out of the war with a powerful economy and a less exhausted military. America's economic prosperity reached for global economic hegemony in the decades to come while promoting free trade and free markets around the world. Overall, it was Washington who created the post WWII environment of international institutions such as the Bretton Woods system, the United Nations, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and others. In addition, after the war, Washington was the only government in place that possessed nuclear capabilities. The United States was not only stronger than anybody else; it was stronger than everybody else. In numbers, America's economy was nearly 50% larger<sup>18</sup> than those of its nearest competitor. This is what the American scholar called the 'unipolar moment'<sup>19</sup>. Also, America's defence budget alone is equal to the defence budget of the next six NATO countries combined; it is also leading the world's educational institutions and research. Hollywood movies and shows are seen on TV and movie screens all over the world. At the core of the soft power concept is the ability to shape what others want by attracting them to America's values and culture.<sup>20</sup> This attractiveness of the U.S. will lead into greater cooperation with other countries. The message is clear: if America leads, others will follow.

This power house, multiplied with the end of the Cold War, left the United States as the sole global hegemon. During and after the Cold War, the United States still provided security for the European continent. Today, as a result of this power growth, the United States refuses to play by the same rules as other states. Washington argues that this is the price that the world has to pay for a U.S. security guarantee<sup>21</sup>. This new geopolitical remoteness after 9/11 can be found in Donald Rumsfeld's dictum that the "mission determines the coalition". In other words, previous long-time alliances are no longer considered necessary for handling international threats to American national security. "When it comes to our security we really don't need anybody's

permission”, he affirmed<sup>22</sup>. This meant that NATO played only a periphery role in the days and months after 9/11 when the Alliance invoked Article 5. NATO’s response to the terrorist attacks was rather symbolic with its sending of Airborne Warning and Air Control (AWAC’s) planes to monitor North American Airspace and providing the U.S. with over-flight rights during the air campaign in Afghanistan. The United States clearly dictated the international agenda and determined where future threats were and how to deal with them best. Partners that were willing to join the United States in their effort to fight terrorism were welcome for their support. An ad hoc “coalition of the willing” would be created outside established international partnerships. In other words, the Bush administration created a system and credo in international relations, which sees the United States as the key player that does not seek compromises with other states<sup>23</sup>. This is a Jacksonian element of foreign policy espousing the refusal of authority: nobody should tell an American what to do. The director of policy planning at the U.S. State Department defined the new doctrine of “à la carte multilateralism”<sup>24</sup>.

This mix of realist theory and an America under imminent attack after September 11<sup>th</sup> led the United States to ignore international agreements and treaties. Acting unilaterally without difficult and complex alliance relationships would be the more effective tool for facing terrorist threats. Therefore, “coalitions of the willing” were created giving Washington the maximum flexibility it wanted. Contrarily, this also meant that America’s historical alliance partners were disregarded in their effort to fight international terrorism if they did not suit American interests or strategies.

### Jacksonianism

American unilateralism is not a new phenomenon and needs to be put into perspective. Earlier forms of American unilateralism can be found in President Andrew Jackson’s Presidency for whom a tradition of American foreign policy is named. Even further in the past, the founding fathers foresaw entangling alliances that might limit America’s freedom of action.<sup>25</sup> If the United States would act unilaterally, so their argument, it could pursue its own interests detached from British or French influences. Jacksonians are deeply suspicious of the rule of international law. They believe that the government should do everything it can to promote the political, economic, and cultural well-being of Americans. Any means are acceptable in achieving foreign policies that are purely in the national interest. As a General Jackson used pre-emptive strikes to secure the nation’s borders when he invaded the Spanish dominated Florida in 1818 before he became

President in 1829. His Secretary of State, John Quincy Adams, told the Spanish Ambassador that Spain failed to restore order along the border and this raised concerns in Washington. Later, during the Cold War, pre-emptive, covert strikes against regimes in the Third World were a standard practice by Democratic as well as Republican presidents. In 1946, the United States, under the leadership of President Truman, prevented the Soviet Union from dominating Turkey and Greece after Great Britain had withdrawn its aid to the conservative government in Greece to fight the left-wing forces that were supported by the Soviet Union, and the Turkish military as well after it came under immense pressure from Russia.<sup>26</sup> Even though Congress mistrusted the regimes in Turkey and Greece it authorized \$400 million for President Truman. Later on, the United States launched covert operations handled by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in Iran (1951), Guatemala (1954), Lebanon (1958), and Cuba (1960) to name only a few.<sup>27</sup> If the United States would not intervene, so went the credo, these regimes would fall under Communist dictatorship and would threaten the U.S. homeland. Later, this became known as the ‘domino theory’.<sup>28</sup> In each of the cases where the United States intervened pre-emptively, either in the Americas, the Middle East, or Southeast Asia, the promotion of freedom of the people was always the driving force behind intervention.<sup>29</sup>

In general, Jacksonians are very sceptical about the federal bureaucracy and favour more state autonomy. Partisans of this school of thought do not trust existing political departments, agencies, and the political elite in office.<sup>30</sup> Each U.S. State and local government should retain much more power than the federal government in Washington. The same can be said about the international community and the system of the United Nations. Jacksonians are sceptical about such supranational bodies and their elites that have the power to decide about the fate of the United States’ citizens. Their foremost principle is self-reliance<sup>31</sup>; that is the belief that America will make its own way through an anarchic international environment. This is called the individualistic moment of Jacksonians, the right to “think and live as one pleases”<sup>32</sup> believing that hard work will pay off in the long term. Also, in foreign policy, the unipolar nature of international relations or hegemony by one state is much preferred by the Jacksonian school of thought, assuming that conflict between great powers will occur should a multipolar world evolve. In this case, great powers might decide to threaten other great powers to reduce the risk of being attacked themselves.<sup>33</sup> One of the greatest dangers of multipolarity is uncertainty, caused by misperceptions and misinterpretations of other nations and their behaviour that could cause wars.

In sum, it can be said that the Jacksonian school of American foreign policy is the source of recent hawkish U.S. foreign policy behaviour that is not well understood in Europe. Jacksonianism only becomes very hawkish when American national interests are threatened. Therefore, national threats are an important element in the Jacksonian foreign policy view that determines how militaristic their defence policies are going to be.

#### Bush, Jacksonianism and the end of Multilateralism

Historically, U.S. Presidents always believed in American military capabilities and strength to defeat foreign aggressors. The same applies to the War on Terrorism. The United States was confident enough to defeat a regime in Kabul that assisted and harboured terrorists. Even though the U.S. welcomes support from other countries, their contributions were not seen as crucial for the overall success of the operation in Afghanistan. In short, the United States did not have to rely on the support of European countries or others to wage war in Afghanistan. If partners wanted to join the coalition against international terrorism they were welcomed by Washington to do so. This was the birth of the term 'coalition of the willing'. Nevertheless, the U.S. would not seek broad support among its partners. "Either you are with us or against us", the President bluntly explained America's relationship with other states. His statement is a replica of the Jacksonian understanding of community. "Through most of American history the Jacksonian community was one from which many Americans were automatically and absolutely excluded (...)." <sup>34</sup> Jacksonian society draws an important distinction between those who belong to the community and those that stand outside. Their group members share a common code and someone who breaches the code through acts of criminal misconduct can be punished with or without the formalities of law. <sup>35</sup> However, the role of the government in Jacksonian terms is to promote the well being of its people with any means necessary, including the use of force. Therefore, Bush's statement should not be a surprise since the U.S. had dominated business in NATO for the last five decades. Even though Washington always underlined its commitment to collective security and multilateralism publicly, it acknowledged that the U.S. had the might and right to act unilaterally. <sup>36</sup>

For better use of the military the Bush administration developed a new National Security Strategy outlining the grand strategy of the United States in the age of terrorism. The document, publicly called the 'Bush doctrine', emphasizes the need of the United States to cope better with terrorist threats through a combination of military power, increased homeland defence, updated

law enforcement, and better intelligence<sup>37</sup>. Again, at the heart of the doctrine is the concept of pre-emption and preventive action. Preventive actions are military actions for self-defence should rogue states attempt to threaten the United States by using WMD. Put differently, the Bush administration claims the right to strike against foreign countries should they pose a threat to U.S. national security by acquiring weapons of mass destruction.

“While 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 defence by acting pre-emptively against such terrorists, to prevent them from doing harm against our people and our country.”<sup>38</sup>

This doctrine incorporates values of international relations that can also be found in the Jacksonian school of thought. “The United States must be vigilant, strongly armed. Our diplomacy must be cunning, forceful, and no more scrupulous than any other country’s. At times we must fight preventive wars.”<sup>39</sup> In the Jacksonian view there is absolutely nothing wrong about subverting foreign governments with U.S. military force or assassinating foreign leaders. It seems to be clear from this short analysis of the Bush foreign policy that the United States is no longer reactive to external threats but actively tries to counter such dangers.

The neoconservatives, advisors who surround President Bush, are sceptical about America’s alliances and rules of liberal internationalism. In the months after 9/11 the administration in Washington showed little evidence of supporting multilateral institutions or global engagement. America’s unilateral approach to international tensions resulted in a disregard for international institutions and international law. Even before terrorists struck New York, the administration declared that there would be no continuous U.S. engagement in the peace processes in Northern Ireland and the Middle East. Washington also cancelled talks with North Korea about its intentions to acquire nuclear weapons. Instead, the administration announced that it would go ahead with its plans to implement a new missile defence system regardless of the views of its partners<sup>40</sup>. In 2001 Bush revealed his opposition to the Kyoto protocol and other international agreements such as the pact to control trafficking in small arms, a new protocol to the 1973 Biological Weapons Convention, an international pact on small arms, the establishment of an International Criminal Court, and the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)<sup>41</sup>. The CTBT created a global network of 321 stations to detect “clandestine explosions”<sup>42</sup> and to provide inspection services. Bush placed his decision to withdraw from the Kyoto protocol purely on

domestic politics and argued, “It does not make economic sense for America. (...) And I will consult with our friends. We will work together. But it's going to be in what's in the interest of our country, first and foremost”<sup>43</sup>. Bush’s foreign policy favoured retreating from existing international treaties and arrangements leaving America “unbound”. This would re-establish American primacy in the world providing worldwide security and stability. Again, Jacksonian influence can be found in this policy approach. Jacksonians believe that social welfare as well as foreign aid programs are ineffective. Further, international agreements, negotiations, and treaties are seen as inappropriate tools of diplomacy to solve conflicts. The ‘political enemy’ should be met with full military strength rather than diplomacy.

The world had become too accustomed to American engagement in the world and the support of multilateral institutions during the eight years in office of President Clinton, so goes a critique of Jacksonians. It was time, the Bush administration thought, to seek primacy again in order to strengthen America’s power. “We now have an administration willing to assert American freedom of action and the primacy of American national interests. Rather than contain power within a vast web of constraining international agreements, the new unilateralism seeks to strengthen American power and unashamedly deploy it on behalf of self-defined global trends.”<sup>44</sup> The justification for such action is the assumption that international organizations and laws are inadequate mechanisms for dealing with international terrorism that kills innocent people without warning, and the old system of rules and multilateral cooperation is too inflexible to react immediately. These sources of flexibility outweigh the diplomatic costs of neglecting international agreements.

Bush’s new foreign policy doctrine shocked the international community, especially European elites and the media. The Washington Post columnist Jim Hoegland wrote about the danger of Bush’s foreign policy: “In six months the US has rejected, in aggressively stated fashion, a half-dozen important global treaties and negotiations strongly favoured by the rest of the world. Bush leaves a first impression that while his government is not deliberately isolationist, it is comfortable with being isolated.”<sup>45</sup> A high ranking National Security Committee put it slightly different. The U.S. Commission on National Security was introduced by President Clinton and published its report in 2001 arguing that because of America’s nature “the United States will increasingly find itself wishing to form coalitions but increasingly unable to find partners willing and able to carry out combined military operations”<sup>46</sup>. Again, putting Bush’s foreign policy into

a historical perspective of U.S. foreign policy schools, Jacksonians have the least regard for international rules and laws and prefer any honour code in international relations rather than binding rules. Therefore, it is not surprising that while Bush follows this approach his taste for international diplomacy is rather numb. “Honour compels us to undertake some difficult and dirty jobs, however much we would like to avoid them.”<sup>47</sup>

### Wilsonianism

A second tradition in American foreign policy is named after President Woodrow Wilson.<sup>48</sup> The spread of democracy around the globe and the rule of law were first introduced by the former President Woodrow Wilson in his Fourteen Points speech. Even though supporters of the Wilsonian tradition of U.S. foreign policy are known for their policies of spreading democracy and the rule of law, their deeper belief is that the United States has the right and duty to change the behaviour of the rest of the world. In fact, the United States has a natural right to project its values on other countries to create wealth and peace globally. Further, not only foreign policies of other countries should be of concern for the United States but also their domestic politics<sup>49</sup>. In other words, Wilsonianism is also concerned about America’s national interest, not only Jacksonians. Having said that, Wilsonian’s guiding principles are a strong commitment to human rights and the rule of law, because democracies make better and more stable partners than dictators or monarchies.

In comparison to Jacksonians, Wilsonians see the United States as the principal actor in international relations, setting values and paradigms according to their theory<sup>50</sup>. When the First World War reached its height, it became clear to President Wilson that the United States could no longer stay outside of the conflict; “they could no longer withdraw from world affairs”, as one historian put it.<sup>51</sup> Even though the President deployed troops to fight Germany, he ordered the entire administration to avoid mentioning the United States as an “allied” partner; he insisted that the U.S. was only an “associated power”<sup>52</sup>. This clearly indicates that Wilsonians wanted the United States to be detached from entangling, permanent alliances that would reduce U.S. sovereignty and flexibility. Again, we can find unilateralist tendencies in Wilson’s presidency. President Washington preached: “Put not your trust in allies, especially those who are stronger than you.”<sup>53</sup> Washington’s credo instead was to trust yourself. The essence of unilateralism at that time was to make American foreign policy independent from its European heritage, Britain and France in particular. Washington’s doctrine was to stay out of European wars and trying to

avoid, once again, permanent, entangling alliances. This became known as the ‘Monroe Doctrine’ in 1823.<sup>54</sup> President Woodrow Wilson pursued the same policies in World War I, when he issued a public statement urging Americans to be neutral.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, it is quite surprising that critics accuse the current administration of being isolationist.<sup>56</sup> The United States never pursued isolationist policies; it was always entangled with other countries. Complete isolationism was and still is impossible, because the U.S. depends largely on foreign trade to sustain its domestic economy by primarily importing raw materials. During Washington’s time, most tax revenues came from tariffs imposed on the goods imported into the country. Today, foreign investments are needed to keep the economy alive. “A current account deficit indicates that the United States is consuming and investing more than it is producing.”<sup>57</sup> In addition, America’s net international investment position has moved from a 10% surplus in the late 1970s to a trade deficit of almost 20% GDP in 2001.<sup>58</sup> The most recently released numbers show that the U.S. trade deficit rose above the \$600 billion mark to about \$618 billion for the year 2004, or more than 5% of the GDP. Further, the report to the President recommends to Congress that the current trade deficit and an increase in America’s foreign debts are not sustainable in the long term. These developments mean in reality that the United States has to borrow about 500 billion dollar from Europe and other countries.<sup>59</sup> By far, this cannot be called isolationist, but it could lead to it if the US blames other countries for these deficits.

#### Bush and Wilsonianism

Elements of the Wilsonian tradition can also be found in Bush’s foreign policy. Afghanistan and later Iraq were the most recent examples where the United States engaged in nation-building, trying to spread democracy. Overthrowing a dictator and a corrupt regime is one thing, but ensuring the effective functioning of a new bureaucracy is another. Afghanistan was a perfect example of a poor country: over the last fifty years the country was devastated by civil war and a major Russian invasion in the 1980s. The per capita gross domestic product of the economy was about \$150 per year which drove many Afghans to leave the nation state to live across the border in Pakistan where the living conditions were much friendlier. Overall, several million Afghan people were dependent on food shipments from abroad. To help them, the U.S. committed \$4.5 billion dollars over five years for rebuilding the country. Bush’s strategists thought that once the threats to liberty had been removed, peace and security would flourish in every corner of the world. This objective had strategic as well as moral origins. Strategically, poverty, crime and

corruption could pose a threat to American national security. Morally, poverty in the world affected American values: “A world where some live in comfort and plenty, while half of the human race lives on less than \$2 a day, is neither just nor stable”<sup>60</sup>. The core belief of the Bush administration was that once you give people the opportunity to make the same choices as Americans made two hundred years ago, they will choose democracy, freedom, and free enterprise. President Wilson could have said the same thing. In other words, the U.S. nation-building policy is rooted in a Wilsonian view of the world that President Bush has mixed with Jacksonian tones. Wilsonians see democracy as a cornerstone in their foreign policy, because it prevents states from going to war with each other and opens opportunities for societies to prosper. Monarchies and dictatorships are unpredictable forms of government where the will of the people is not reflected and tows the entire country into instability. Therefore, the support of democracy abroad is not only a moral duty of the United States, but also a “practical imperative”. Wilson’s rationale for going to war with Germany was to let Americans fight “to make the world safe for democracy.”<sup>61</sup> Wilson advocated, among other things, “political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike”<sup>62</sup> and proposed a league of nations, the first collective security agreement in history. Wilson himself was not a pacifist; his ideas of world peace were idealistic with a mix of realism. Wilsonians were proven correct after World War II when the United States helped educate Germans on how to be a democratic country. Ever since, the Wilsonian voice in American Foreign Policy has not been silent. The overthrow of Saddam Hussein’s regime in Iraq can be seen as the latest application of the tradition.

After the terrorist attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup>, Bush’s foreign policy shifted towards regime change in the Middle East and Afghanistan. The President made these policies one of the cornerstones of his foreign policy. The purpose of the war in Afghanistan and later on in Iraq was to change a totalitarian regime that suppresses its people into a prosperous democracy where the rule of law is one of the first principles of the state. The spread of democracy, freedom and economic liberalization would prevent these countries from becoming a threat to U.S. national security. In this sense the spread of democracy is a fundamental, global security imperative for the administration and can be seen as an element of the Wilsonian tradition.

Moreover, the United States has sought to establish market economies that would open highly regulated markets in the Middle East and foster entrepreneurship in these countries. Bush’s view was that a healthy economy is the best source of global stability. In theory, liberal

democratic states have been able to maintain peaceful relations amongst themselves, but are prone to wage war against non-liberal/democratic regimes.<sup>63</sup> Therefore, the contemporary world is characterized by three major ideas: peace, democracy, and free markets as the optimal way to organize political life.<sup>64</sup> During the Cold War, these ideas had a serious rival – Communism. Since Communism’s horizon declined, as Francis Fukuyama argued in 1989, democratic peace has no serious competitor to fear. These three values of political life brought peace and stability to the American people. Thus, it is not a surprise that the Bush administration endorses them as universal values which are applicable in all corners of the world and all nations should enjoy a life in peace and wealth. Bush’s foreign policy suggested that the absence of democracy and the rule of law in the Muslim World is a serious factor for instability and radicalization of Islamic groups. Hence, the new National Security doctrine emphasizes the goal of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East: “If others make something that you value, you should be able to buy it. This is real freedom, the freedom for a person – or nation- to make a living”<sup>65</sup>. President Bush believes that free trade in the Middle East as well as free markets will create more employment opportunities and higher income. This economic growth would also raise educational standards and employment. The expected tax revenue from higher employment rates would be used to invest into infrastructure, institutions, law enforcements, and a better health care system. Further, the promotion of peace, democracy and free markets is not restricted to the Middle East region, but applicable worldwide. “The United States will use its moment of opportunity to extend the benefits of freedom across the globe. We will actively work to bring the hope of democracy, development, free markets, and free trade to every corner of the world.”<sup>66</sup>

Bill Clinton’s foreign policy record - is Bush so much different?

Looking closer at President Clinton’s foreign policy and comparing it to George W. Bush’s foreign policy it can be argued that Bush’s foreign policies of unilateralism, fighting terrorism, and promoting democracies and free markets in the Middle East are a continuation of Clinton’s policy. President Clinton’s economic strategy was to lower trade and investment barriers all over the world. In fact, he became known as the ‘‘globalization president’’: the Clinton administration signed the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with Canada and Mexico. He also completed talks of the Uruguay Round, which brought the biggest reform to the worlds trading system and further opened economic markets around the world. Elements of Wilsonianism can be found in Bill Clinton’s foreign policy. Humanitarian concerns were the driving force for the

United States to intervene into the internal conflicts – most notably in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Haiti. According to Freedom House the level of world wide freedom significantly expanded during Clinton's tenure.<sup>67</sup> It was also in America's national interest to intervene in the Haiti crisis in 1994 and prevented bloodshed in America's neighbourhood.

However, President Bush's unilateralism was not new in the post World War II history of American foreign policy. It is true that the Clinton administration relied heavily on the support of international institutions, but only if it suited America's interests.<sup>68</sup> Otherwise, Washington made no secret of its criticism and disregard of international institutions when they did not suit U.S. interests. For example, Clinton's administration was quick to blame the UN for the humanitarian disaster in Somalia. The President was faced with a post Cold War international environment, in which domestic support for American interventions in foreign countries slipped. Sending troops to stop the spread of communism was understandable, but to send U.S. troops to re-build failed states was another. This made his foreign policy and support for it quite difficult. It was particularly difficult in his first term when the administration promoted American values rather than interests. Considering that no other country on the planet had the ability to challenge the United States militarily or economically, Americans probably felt secure and open for political idealism.<sup>69</sup> This idealist foreign policy soon disappeared when eighteen Rangers were killed in Somalia on October 4<sup>th</sup>, 1993. Operation Restore hope, inherited from the Bush Sr. administration, was supposed to protect aid supplies of the international community. Earlier, the UN promised to take over this mission from the U.S.<sup>70</sup> However, the lawlessness in Somalia continued and necessitated the Clinton administration to depart from its humanitarian mission. The tensions between the UN peacekeeping corps and the Somali National Army increased and Clinton himself vehemently disagreed with UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali about the need to send forces to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe.<sup>71</sup> The killing of twenty four Pakistani peacekeepers in an attack on June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1993 set in motion a massive U.S. response. In a mission to catch the General of the Somali Army, U.S. forces got trapped and; in the end US Rangers were killed and dragged through downtown Mogadishu while taped by the international press.<sup>72</sup> These pictures created a domestic outcry in the United States that forced the Clinton administration to withdraw U.S. forces from Somalia.

Clinton's Second Term – From Wilsonianism to selective Wilsonianism

After the disaster in Somalia, President Clinton signed the Presidential Decision Directive 25 (PDD 25) in May 1994, which reviewed U.S. involvements in peacekeeping operations. The document stated that U.S. peacekeeping operations “can be a very important and useful tool of American foreign policy. Our purpose is to use peacekeeping selectively and more effectively than has been done in the past.”<sup>73</sup> The administration recognized that neither the United States nor the international community had the mandate and resources to intervene in every conflict that occurs. Clinton, aware of this dilemma, decided to allocate American resources more carefully to international peacekeeping missions. In its national interest, the United States has to decide more carefully about where and when it can intervene:

And the reality is that we cannot often solve other people's problems; we can never build their nations for them. So the policy review is intended to help us make those hard choices about where and when the international community can get involved; where and when we can take part with the international community in getting involved; and where and when we can make, thus, a positive difference.<sup>74</sup>

In short, peacekeeping operations are in America’s national interest but the centerpiece of national security policies. The primary purpose of the American military is to “fight and win wars”.<sup>75</sup> PDD was a tool the administration used to further a humanitarian agenda without overstretching American forces.<sup>76</sup> President Clinton made clear with this directive that the United States would only be eager to work closely with the UN in peacekeeping missions if it was considered in America’s national interest. This approach to foreign crisis was labelled “selective engagement”. The important point to make in our analysis is that President Clinton returned priorities in American foreign policy to the defence of the United States homeland. Henceforth, homeland defence, international economic globalization as well as peace and stability were the cornerstones of Clinton’s foreign policy.<sup>77</sup> Clinton’s Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, explained that the United States should pursue arms control and non-proliferation, and hard line policies against international crime, terror, and drug trafficking.<sup>78</sup> Clinton himself summed up America’s global leadership ambitions: “We must continue to bear the responsibility for the world’s leadership.”<sup>79</sup> Clinton’s policy of selective engagement<sup>80</sup> called for the following: (1) strengthening the community of major market democracies (including the US) which constitutes the core from which enlargement can proceed; (2) to foster and consolidate new democracies and market economies, where possible, especially in states of special significance and opportunity;

(3) to counter aggression and support the liberalization of states hostile to democracy and markets; and (4) to pursue a humanitarian agenda not only by providing aid but also by working to help democracy and market economies take root in regions of greatest humanitarian concern.<sup>81</sup>

Further, as Madeleine Albright explained, the United States would act unilaterally as well as multilaterally – it will decide on a case by case basis.<sup>82</sup> Looking at the most recent NSS, Clinton’s doctrine of engagement and enlargement is exactly what President Bush outlined in his National Security Strategy. The self-perception of primacy led the United States to believe that it is an indispensable and inescapable nation<sup>83</sup>; a theme in American foreign policy that continues from the Clinton administration to George W. Bush. Clinton’s policies were first introduced by Clinton’s National Security Advisor, Anthony Lake, in a speech in 1996. Lake sketched six tasks which call for the use of force.<sup>84</sup> Among these tasks was to counter terrorism, to defend key economic interests, to preserve, promote, and defend democracy, to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, international crime, and drug trafficking. By the end of his tenure, Clinton used force against foreign states three times – in Bosnia, Iraq, and Kosovo. In contrast, the major difference between Clinton and Bush is that Clinton pursued ‘unilateralism with a smile’.<sup>85</sup> The differences are about style rather than substance; there is nothing revolutionary about Bush’s foreign policy that we have not seen in previous Presidents’ foreign policies.

In addition, the last National Security Strategy of the Clinton administration clearly envisioned the pre-emptive, unilateral use of force if U.S. national interests are in danger. “We will do what we must” to defend America’s national interests, wrote the Clinton national security team just before leaving office in 2000.<sup>86</sup> This included military action without consulting coalition partners where deemed necessary or appropriate. Earlier, in 1993, President Clinton made use of the unilateralist doctrine and authorized the unilateral use of force in signing the Presidential Decision Directive 39 that deals with terrorism. It points out that the United States would “seek to identify groups or states that sponsor such terrorists, isolate them and extract a heavy price for their actions”<sup>87</sup>. Further, President Clinton authorized the bombing of a chemical production facility in Sudan which was believed to be producing weapons of mass destruction. In sum, President Clinton acted unilaterally; President George W. Bush administration simply continued to follow Clinton’s doctrine despite public concerns.

## Conclusion

This paper argued that U.S. foreign policy under the current Bush administration is deeply rooted in the Jacksonian as well as Wilsonian tradition of U.S. foreign policy. In fact, as the paper has shown, the current U.S. unilateralism under the George W. Bush administration is not a new phenomenon in U.S. foreign policy; it has its roots in President Andrew Jackson's presidency. In the early 1800s President Jackson secured the nations' borders to the south with a pre-emptive military strike. In general, Jacksonians are deeply suspicious of the rule of international law as well as entangling alliances. They are sceptical about internal bureaucracies and prefer the nature of international relations as unipolar and self reliant. In fact, as this paper claimed, President Bush's concept of "coalitions of the willing" is a replica of the Jacksonian denotation of communities, which is very hard to enter. In essence, the Jacksonian school of thought in American Foreign Policy is the source of the recent hawkish foreign policy of the George W. Bush administration.

The paper also compared current U.S. foreign policies with the Wilsonian tradition of U.S. foreign policy. Wilsonians believe that the United States has the right and duty to change the behaviour of states that threaten the balance of international stability. Further, the United States possesses the natural right to project American values on other countries to ensure peace and stability in the world. Recent examples of President Bush's Wilsonianism are the spread of democracy and nation building operations in the Middle East. Wilsonians hold the belief that democracy prevents states from going to war with each other and that it opens opportunities for societies to prosper. This would prevent undemocratic states from becoming a threat to U.S. national security. Therefore, the spread of democracy around the globe is seen by supporters of the Wilsonian tradition as well as the current Bush administration as a fundamental, global security imperative.

Secondly, this paper argued that the current U.S. foreign policy is a continuation of President Clinton's presidency. In fact, President Bush's policies of unilateralism, the fight against terrorism as well as the promotion of democracy and free markets have their roots in Clinton's tenure. In his first term, Clinton became known as the 'globalization president' who promoted the NAFTA free trade agreement with Canada and Mexico. Clinton also completed the Uruguay negotiations that institutionalized the free paradigm in the World Trade Organization (WTO). Also, President Clinton invaded foreign countries such as Kosovo, Haiti, Bosnia and Iraq because of violations against humanity. Even though he tried to gain support of international insti-

tutions for his foreign policy the President disregarded them when they did not suit American interests. In his second term President Clinton shifted the gears in his foreign policy away from 'internationalism' towards 'selective engagement'. Presidential Directive 25 can be seen as a key document in this shift outlining that the U.S. would only be willing to work with International Organizations if this is in its national interest. Henceforth, homeland defence, economic globalization as well as peace and stability in the world were the cornerstones of Clinton's foreign policy. Also, the unilateral use of force was a dominant theme during Clinton's term to counter terrorism, defend economic interests, preserve democracy, and prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction. In short, as these examples show, the Clinton administration clearly envisioned the use of pre-emptive strikes against foreign aggressors when U.S. national interests were in danger.

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 106-109.

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- <sup>30</sup> Mead, *Special Providence*, p. 225.
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<sup>66</sup>*Ibid*.

<sup>67</sup>Walt, p. 75.

<sup>68</sup>Melvyn P. Lefler, "Bush's Foreign Policy", p. 24.

<sup>69</sup>Quote from Dr. Sokolsky, October 18<sup>th</sup>, 2004. I thank Andrea Charron for this quote.

<sup>70</sup>See Security Council Resolution 794, Granting the Secretary-General Discretion in the Further Employment of Personnel of the United Nations Operation in Somalis, S.C. res 794, 47 U.N. SCOR at 63, U.N. Doc. S/RES/794 (1992).

<sup>71</sup>Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali's Agenda for Peace advocated that the UN should take on the role of rebuilding failed states. Somalia was viewed as a "case test" by the Secretary General. His agenda for peace suggested an approach to peace and security which incorporated "preventive" diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping, peace-building and development. A/47/277 - S/24111; 17 June 1992, An Agenda for Peace, Preventive diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peace-keeping, Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to the statement adopted by the Summit Meeting of the Security Council on 31 January 1992.

<sup>72</sup>Exact numbers are: 500 Somalis were killed as well as 18 U.S. Rangers, 84 U.S. soldiers were wounded.

<sup>73</sup>The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, "Press Briefing by National Security Advisor Anthony Lake and Director for Strategic Plans and Policy General Wesley Wark" May 5, 1994. Accessed online [http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/pdd25\\_brief.htm](http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/pdd25_brief.htm), Feb. 26, 2005.

<sup>74</sup>*Ibid*.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid*.

<sup>76</sup>In more detail, the PDD calls for (1) ensuring that the U.S. chooses to support the right operations; (2) to reduce the cost of peacekeeping operations; (3) to improve U.N. peacekeeping capabilities; (4) to ensure effective command and control of American forces; (5) to improve the way the American government manages the issue of peacekeeping. See PDD 25 for more details.

<sup>77</sup>The first victim of Clinton's revised policy was the conflict in Rwanda and the evolving genocide. The President did not send American forces into the African country to stop the conflict and to restore peace and stability. Clinton deemed that the crisis in Rwanda was not in America's national interest. See Nicholas Wheeler, *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian Intervention in International Society* (Oxford University Press, Oxford: 2000) for details.

<sup>78</sup>Josef Joffe, "Clinton's World: Purpose, Policy, and Weltanschauung", *The Washington Quarterly* (winter 2001), p. 143.

<sup>79</sup>Address at Freedom House, Washington D.C., October 6, 1995, typescript.

<sup>80</sup>McCormick, *American Foreign Policy and Process*, p. 182.

<sup>81</sup>"From Containment to Enlargement: Current Foreign Policy Debates in Perspective", National Security Affairs Presidential Assistant Anthony Lake's speech at John Hopkins University, September 21, 1993. Lake and others were influenced heavily by a report by the Carnegie Endowment National Commission of American released in

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June 1992 entitled “Changing Our Ways”. George Szamuely, in his article “Clinton’s clumsy encounter with the world”, *Orbis*, Summer 1994, suggests that this report was largely responsible for much of Clinton’s flawed doctrine. I thank Andrea Charron for the Szamuely reference.

<sup>82</sup> Secretary of State Warren Christopher, “Building Peace in the Middle East“, address at Columbia University, September 20, 1993. U.S. Department of State Dispatch, September 1993.

<sup>83</sup> Joffe, “Clinton’s World”, p. 144.

<sup>84</sup> Anthony Lake, “Defining Missions, Settling Deadlines: Meeting New Security Challenges in the Post-Cold War World,” remarks at the George Washington University, Washington D.C., March 6, 1996, White House Press Release (Washington D.C.: Office of the Press Secretary, March 7, 1996), quoted in Joffe, “Clinton’s World”, p. 146.

<sup>85</sup> Quote from Dr. Sokolsky, September 2004.

<sup>86</sup> The White House, “A National Security Strategy for a new Century”, October 1998, p.5.

<sup>87</sup> The White House, “Presidential Decision Directive 39, June 21, Washington, 1995,

<http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/pdd39.htm> (accessed December 23rd, 2004).